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## **NSW Child Death Review Team report**

### **Spatial analysis of child deaths in New South Wales**

#### **Embargoed until 1.30pm 12 April 2018**

The NSW Ombudsman and Convenor of the NSW Child Death Review Team, Mr Michael Barnes, today tabled a report in the NSW Parliament on the *'Spatial analysis of child deaths in New South Wales.'*

The report, prepared by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare for the NSW Child Death Review Team, focuses on two key issues—the geographic distribution of child deaths across NSW, and how the risk of death varies by area-level characteristics. The report covers the 15 years between 2001 and 2015 and 8,657 children who died over that period.

**'The report shows that the child mortality rate has declined in NSW, and no area in NSW has seen a significant increase in its child mortality rate'** said Mr Barnes. **'The differences in mortality rates between areas has also declined over time. These findings demonstrate that overall, the number and rate of child deaths in NSW is being reduced'**.

However, some areas have experienced higher actual numbers of child deaths than others, or higher mortality rates. In describing the area level variations, the report does not purport to provide the answers as to why these differences exist. That said, one important finding is that certain area characteristics are associated with an increased risk of death for children.

**'The report demonstrated that child mortality rates are higher in areas of greater socio-economic disadvantage, in areas with higher levels of social exclusion, and in more remote areas'** said Mr Barnes. **'For example, the likelihood of dying during childhood is 1.7 times as high for children in areas with high poverty levels, compared with those in low poverty areas. Overcrowded housing, poor child health and development and low levels of school engagement are also associated with a greater likelihood of death in childhood'**.

The report is a first step in examining the geographic distribution of child deaths in NSW, and some of the area characteristics associated with that variation. Identifying geographic areas with high numbers of child deaths and high child mortality rates can highlight opportunities for targeted intervention.

**'More work is needed to gain a clear understanding of individual and area-level characteristics that present risks to children. As custodian of the NSW Child Death Register, the Child Death Review Team has a role in analysing patterns and trends in child deaths and in assisting and promoting research that may reduce the likelihood of child deaths'** said Mr Barnes.

The [report](#) will be available on the NSW Ombudsman's website after 1.30pm.

For technical and methodological queries, contact the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, [media@aihw.gov.au](mailto:media@aihw.gov.au).

For all other inquiries, contact Monica Wolf, Director Reviews, Inquiries and Complaints on (02) 9286 0982.