



Thursday, 23 March 2017

Preventing child deaths: looking back tells us what we can do better

An ACT Children and Young People Death Review Committee report has confirmed the importance of both

- **improving the system and culture for positively sharing information, within Government; between government and community sector support organisations; and within the community; and**
- **understanding and supporting stressed families early.**

Improvements in these areas will save young lives.

The Committee has released a report, *Retrospective: Progress in the ACT between 2004 and 2013*. The key finding from the review is the critical need for Government and related support services to improve the systems and culture for sharing information in the interests of protecting the most vulnerable children.

Chair of the Committee, Ms Margaret Carmody, said "The review is important. It helps us understand how and why children and young people in the ACT have died and what we in the community can do to prevent similar deaths in the future.

"By looking at the deaths of children and young people and understanding the context, the world in which they lived - how they lived, their health, safety, the way they interacted with our physical spaces - we can identify opportunities to reduce the risk of deaths in the future.

"We know that children and young people are dying less frequently from avoidable causes of death. However one third of deaths over the ten years were potentially avoidable."

The Committee raises concern that the relative risk of death for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people is close to three times that of non-indigenous young people. More effective strategies are needed to better support these most vulnerable children.

The report reviews the deaths of children and young people under the age of 18 years who have died in the ACT over a ten-year period to end 2013, provides analysis of trends over the period and context to these trends. The report uses a social determinants of health framework, championed by Sir Michael Marmot, of the Social Determinants of Health Commission within the World Health Organisation.

The Committee acknowledges that recent reform has been implemented in the ACT that will have improved support systems for families, and young people. The Committee will continue to report on trends, to improve the quality of data, and recommend improvements to systems and processes to help prevent future avoidable deaths. The Committee's next report will provide data for the 18-month period to end 2016.

Ms Carmody is available for further comment on the contact details below.