

# The Power of Innovation

A health care system to meet our needs

## NSW Health Symposium Oct 2012

### PREVENTING CHILDREN FALLING FROM RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS: LESSONS OF SUCCESS FROM A WORKING PARTY

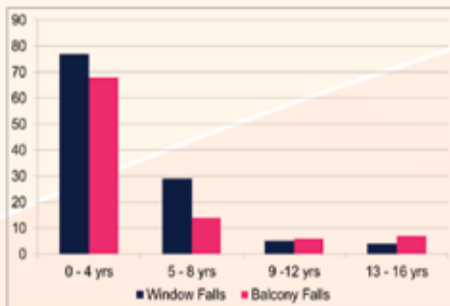
#### Keeping People Healthy to Avoid Unnecessary Hospitalisation

##### Introduction

In 2008, The Children's Hospital at Westmead (CHW) identified falls by children from residential buildings as an increasing cause of injury, often associated with serious and fatal outcomes as revealed by the number of injuries with a high Injury Severity Score.

##### Aim

To prevent children in NSW falling from residential windows and balconies.



Graph 2: CHW Admissions for Falls from Windows and Balconies by age, 1998-2008.



Graph 1: CHW Admissions for Falls from Windows and Balconies, 1998-2008

##### Method

- The CHW recognised that in order to sustainably address this issue, a multifactorial approach was needed and as such expertise outside of health was necessary. Representatives from a range of government and non-government organisations were invited to join a committee to bring a wide range of skills and experience to the prevention of this issue.
- To start, the committee identified two major pieces of work. The first was to co-ordinate a symposium, inviting discussion to help inform the hospital staff on the issue and its prevention.
- Following this, the committee produced a report, outlining the key issues and then providing recommendations to curb this growing problem.
- Initiatives identified focused on;
  - Education and awareness of the community
  - Education and advocacy of the buildings/strata industries
  - Regulatory measures for existing buildings
  - Design standards for new buildings

##### Acknowledgements

Thanks to all members of the CHW Working Party for the Prevention of Children Falling from Residential Buildings.

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Image 1: CHW 2011 Online Campaign Image

##### Results

The CHW Working Party for the Prevention of Children Falling from Residential Buildings successfully produced a report which was published in February 2011.

As a result of this report and lobbying both from the working party and individual members of the working party a number of recommendations have already been taken up.

- Changes to Australian Building Codes relating to window and balcony child safety have been approved and will appear in the 2013 Australian Building Codes. These changes relate to minimum sill heights and the installation of window guards to protect children when above ground level.
- Consultation is currently underway on NSW Tenancy Laws. Changes requested are to require landlords and owners corporations to provide safety devices on openable windows above ground level.
- Media campaigns have been run across the state between 2010 and 2012. To date there has been excellent uptake by television, radio, print and online media to promote the issue (Image 1).
- The Australian Window Association and a number of other building and hardware industries have started their own campaigns to educate their members on window safety and all continue to advocate to members on the issue (Image 2)
- A separate 'industry' working group was set up in 2012 at CHW to look at increasing uptake of the message amongst the building industry.

##### Conclusion

- A Children's Hospital has great opportunity to identify emergent child safety issues. A particular strength of this body of work has been the ability to identify this emergent issue in a timely manner and gather meaningful data as the project was being undertaken.
- Gathering a range of professionals that included child trauma treatment, building control and enforcement, building regulation, statute law, child safety, health promotion, child safety products and public relations allowed for the development of a wide range of informed recommendations that were realistic and able to be acted upon.
- The authoring of a report by the Working Party at the beginning of work undertaken ensured the success of this project. The 'Outcomes Report' included a detailed statistical analysis of the issue, a background on the current building and tenancy laws and standards, information on safety devices and enhancements and most importantly a range of recommendations that were suggested for community, industry and government departments. In the process of authoring the report it became clear that all participants brought knowledge and understanding to the table from their field of expertise and that along the way each member also became well versed in the topic and therefore strong advocates for child safety within their own professional realm.
- The online availability of the Outcomes Report has also ensured its use by government departments in their internal briefings and setting of goals and agendas, beyond the scope of the working party.



Image 2: Australian Window Association Window Safety Sticker.