



HELPING YOUNG FAMILIES SLEEP SOUNDLY: KARITANE, 10 YEARS IN SOUTH WESTERN SYDNEY

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NSW families battling sleepless nights with their baby will benefit from a unique help video launched today by Health Minister Morris Iemma, as one of NSW's leading parenting centres Karitane marks its 10-year anniversary of service to families in south-western Sydney.

"Every year Karitane's 24-hour Careline receives nearly 9,000 calls from parents seeking help for 'unsettled babies' and 'night waking'," Mr Iemma said.

"An unsettled child can be the cause of significant stress for parents and every year Karitane helps more than 4,000 parents annually through its 'sleeping and settling' programs.

"This new video offers hope for frustrated parents and can be easily watched again and again, even when a parent is feeling tired or overwhelmed," Mr Iemma said.

Up to 46 per cent of parents across Australia report a problem with their infant's sleep between six months and one year.

"The video, *Asleep at Last!* provides parents with practical strategies for helping their infant learn to soothe themselves to sleep while helping parents to identify their baby's sleep needs," Mr Iemma said.

South Western Sydney Area Health Service (SWSAHS) Infant Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service director Professor Bryanne Barnett said ongoing sleep deprivation and anxiety could be very distressing and without enough sleep people lost the capacity to address tasks effectively.

"Research has shown problematic childhood sleep behaviour can have long-lasting effects with difficulties in later childhood and adult life.

"There is also an important link between childhood sleeping difficulties and maternal anxiety and depression."

Karitane's Jade House in Fairfield is a specialised service unique in Australia that provides support for women and their families experiencing perinatal mood and related disorders.

Professor Barnett said early intervention through a range of Karitane programs was vital in determining who may be vulnerable or in need of support, while helping families get into a routine and back to a normal and loving environment

"Karitane focuses very much on improving the emotional wellbeing of parents during the early stages of pregnancy and the first few years of childhood to give a child the best start in life," said Professor Barnett.

"Babies respond better if they are not left alone for long periods of time so the *Six Steps to Settling* section on the video provides a strong focus on ensuring the baby does not feel abandoned."

Minister lemma said the video was effective because it used real families to demonstrate the impact of sleeping difficulties.

He said Karitane was recognised as a centre for best practice in child and family health after providing care and support to NSW families for more than 80 years.

Karitane moved its base to Carramar in south-western Sydney 10 years ago from Randwick to meet the growing needs of families in the area.

"Today marks an important milestone for families as we celebrate the achievements of Karitane in helping families cope with the reality of parenting and appreciating the joys of being a mother or a father," Mr lemma said.

Around 40 per cent of the population in south-western Sydney is less than 25-years-old, with the number expected to increase from 295,000 to 310,000 between now and 2011.

"Sydney's south-west is the fastest growing metropolitan area in NSW and young families are driving development so it's important they get the services they need," said Mr lemma.

The move to Carramar led to the establishment of Jade House; a Family Care Cottage at Liverpool, and a Volunteer Home Visiting Program funded by the Department of Community Services.

Karitane is an affiliated service of SWSAHS.

For further information about Karitane go to: <http://www.swsahs.nsw.gov.au/karitane/>

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