MEDIA RELEASE

EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.00hrs, Wednesday, 21 April 2010

Barnardos
We *believe* in CHILDREN

CHILDREN'S GUARDIAN ACCREDITATION CONFIRMS THAT QUALITY OUT-OF-HOME CARE COSTS

Barnardos Australia today becomes the first child welfare agency to be re-accredited under NSW standards as an agency designated to arrange out-of-home care for children and young people. Barnardo's is also the first agency to pilot the new accreditation system, administered by the Children's Guardian, which groups 22 child focused standards into four quality areas.

It has been six years since Barnardos, alongside several other non-government organisations, was first accredited to provide out-of-home care, a level of recognition which the Department of Community Services (DoCS) itself has not yet achieved, and a quality commitment unmatched by any other state in Australia. The federal government has now committed to new nationwide out-of-home care standards for all children placed in the care of state governments.

The Children's Guardian, Kerryn Boland, whose role was created by the NSW Government to promote the best interests and rights of children and young people in out-of-home care in NSW, will present Barnardos' CEO, Louise Voigt with a certificate of accreditation at a morning tea event at the offices of HSBC Bank in Sydney.

"Barnardos exemplifies the high standards we are seeing from agencies in whom the care and welfare of our state's most vulnerable children is entrusted," says Kerryn Boland, Children's Guardian. "Going into care is a very difficult and sometimes traumatic experience for children, the NSW out-of-home care standards encourage agencies to focus their work on meeting each child's individual needs."

Whilst applauding the NSW Government for committing to quality services the non-government sector is deeply worried about the government's recent response that costs to achieve a decent quality may be too high.

"Barnardos welcomes the standards set by the Children's Guardian because we believe that every child that is removed from his or her family deserves to receive a level of care equal to that of other children in our community," says Louise Voigt, Barnardos' CEO and director of welfare. "It is because we, and many other non-government agencies, are able to meet these standards, and because DoCS is not, that Justice Wood's Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW last year recommended that the responsibility for managing out-of-home care be given to the non-government sector."

Justice Wood's inquiry noted that the Children's Guardian had identified that children and young persons in the care of a non-government agency reached a higher standard of care than those cared for by DoCS.

Representatives from ACWA and from other leading child welfare agencies will attend and Barnardos foster carers, and children who have been cared for, and adopted from care by Barnardos will be there to talk about their experiences.

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For media enquiries or to arrange an interview please contact Emma Smith on 02 9218 2344 /0415 589612 or email: pr@barnardos.org.au.

Notes for editors:
Barnardos Australia is a non-government, non-denominational child welfare charity that has been helping children in need for over 120 years.

Barnardos is one of the largest children's charities in Australia, caring for children at risk of abuse and neglect. The work of Barnardos Australia focuses on the prevention of abuse, neglect and entry into care. Children of all backgrounds and cultural heritage are helped through a range of welfare programs including crisis care, family support, counseling, permanent foster care and adoption.

Our vision is that all children and young people will have caring families, in which they can grow up safely and reach their full potential supported by quality services and engaged communities.

For more information visit: www.barnardos.org.au.