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

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Background The Children's Hospital at Westmead (CHW) has seen an alarming increase in the number of children accidentally falling from windows and balconies. Most of these children suffer serious injuries and, sadly, many of them never recover. Recognising that these tragic accidents are preventable, staff at CHW formed a working party in 2009 to address this important issue.

Aim The Working Party for the Prevention of Children Falling from Residential Buildings hopes to see a dramatic reduction in the number of children admitted to hospital as a direct result of initiatives outlined in their report. These initiatives focus on education, awareness, regulatory measures for existing buildings and design standards for new buildings.

Method Representatives from government and non-government organisations were invited to join a committee to produce a report, outlining the key issues and providing recommendations to curb this growing problem.

Results The formation of a working party consisting of a wide range of professionals has been extremely useful in addressing the issue of Australian children falling from residential buildings. To date, there has been exceptional uptake of the issue within the industry and community and a wide range of changes are already in the process of implementation. Changes to Australian Building Codes have been approved and consultation is currently underway on NSW Tenancy Laws.

Significance We believe the model utilised in the prevention of children falling from residential buildings has been extremely successful in garnering support for the issue and pushing for change in a wide range of settings. In particular, the use of a document written by experts in a range of fields has created a model for future injury prevention projects undertaken at CHW.