



Trish Doyle MP

Member for Blue Mountains



02 4751 3298 | bluemountains@parliament.nsw.gov.au | 132 Macquarie Rd Springwood NSW 2777

New South Wales Parliament Legislative Assembly

Stronger Families Alliance

8 November 2016

Today I acknowledge the Stronger Families Alliance in the Blue Mountains. I specifically refer to the launch of the evaluation report which has been a long time coming. A huge number of people who work across our community services sector, health sector and education sector in the Blue Mountains were in attendance, along with the Stronger Families Alliance executive. We were joined for the official launch by the Hon. Brad Hazzard. The Blue Mountains community sector has long been recognised in this State as innovative, collaborative and smart. It comes as no surprise that a best practice model in working with children and families should emanate from my electorate.

The Stronger Families Alliance [SFA] is a pioneering network of more than 30 organisations working together to create better outcomes for children, young people and families in the Blue Mountains. The alliance formed in 2006 and has become one of Australia's most established collective impact initiatives. A key initiator of the alliance was the Blue Mountains City Council working in collaboration with local services. The Mountains Community Resource Network is a key partner in the alliance's success. By working collaboratively with services at the coalface, the Stronger Families Alliance has engaged a wide range of services which all play an important role in the lives of local families. These services include local neighbourhood centres, the Mountains Outreach Community Service, family support services, Gateway, the Blue Mountains Women's Health and Resource Centre, local schools, community health services, and childcare centres and preschools, to name just a few.

Over the years, the SFA has sponsored a number of important conferences which have brought speakers of international renown to the Blue Mountains. The SFA's groundbreaking Child and Family Plan was launched in 2010 by the then New South Wales Minister for Community Services, the Hon. Linda Burney. This plan established the framework for much of the SFA's work. Since then, the Stronger Families Alliance has

gone on to develop and foster collaborations across the Blue Mountains, including a network of school-centred community hubs located in Blackheath, Mount Victoria, Katoomba, Katoomba North, Wentworth Falls, Lawson, Hazelbrook, Winmalee, Blaxland and Warrimoo. These hubs have brought important child and family services into the school environment to work with parents, their children and staff to promote access within a prevention and early intervention framework.

Other initiatives include the child-friendly communities strategy Moving Children Beyond Vulnerability, which targets families with complex needs. More recently, the SFA has recognised the challenges for families with teenagers and also the very real difficulties for our young people in navigating this period of immense change. Yesterday, I had the pleasure of attending the launch of the Stronger Families Alliance evaluation report. The report was prepared by Associate Professor Frances Press, Dr Sandie Wong and Associate Professor June Wangmann. The Charles Sturt University team evaluated the work of the alliance.

It examined the impact of the alliance on the work of its members and their collaborations and the implementation of the objectives of the child and family plan of the alliance.

At the launch I joined Blue Mountains mayor Mark Greenhill, the community and members of the Stronger Families Alliance to welcome Minister Hazzard to see firsthand the work of this collaborative network. More importantly, it was an opportunity to celebrate the successes of the Blue Mountains Child and Family Services and the wider community sector. It is important to note that in the current environment much of this work may be placed at risk by mooted reforms and cutbacks. Services funded through community builders such as the Mountains Community Resource Network, the neighbourhood centres and the Women's Health and Resource Centre face uncertain futures.

I call on the Minister to recognise the value of those services in the prevention and early intervention response. I echo the words of the Charles Sturt University researchers and note "strong collaborations are often attempted but they hard to achieve. The model for change adopted by the Alliance has been highly successful." I congratulate all involved in the Stronger Families Alliance on their achievements to date and their role in improving the lives of children and families in the Blue Mountains.