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CHILDREN’S CHAMPIONS’ FUTURE SECURED

Children and young people involved in sexual abuse cases will receive ongoing support through difficult court proceedings thanks to a major new investment from the NSW Government that will enable a highly-successful pilot program to become permanent.

Premier Gladys Berejiklian, Attorney General Mark Speakman and Minister for Family and Community Services Pru Goward announced today that the NSW Government will invest more than $28 million in the Child Sexual Offence Evidence Program, which includes ‘Children’s Champions’ to help support young people through the courts process.

The pilot program is being made permanent after a glowing independent assessment by the University of NSW, which showed that it received very strong support from participants, reduced stress for children and resulted in a better quality of evidence from child witnesses.

“NSW is leading the country with this important initiative which delivers support to young victims of sexual abuse and child witnesses,” Ms Berejiklian said.

“We know that going to court to give evidence can be a tough experience for children and young people, so I am extremely proud that the NSW Government is investing this funding to make the experience easier.”

Mr Speakman said the program is proving vital to ensuring children understand and are understood during the court process.

“Going to court can be stressful and traumatic for anyone, let alone young people. This program ensures that some of the most vulnerable people who come in contact with the justice system get the support they need,” Mr Speakman said.

The funding announced today will ensure the program continues to be delivered in Sydney and Newcastle District Courts until June 2022.
Minister for Family and Community Services Pru Goward said the program is part of the $127 million package of reforms to deliver the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

“We are supporting government and non-government institutions to better protect children and respond to child sexual abuse,” Ms Goward said.