



Red Nose

Opening Address

Red Nose Australia CEO Keren Ludski

The Australian Parliament's Health, Aged Care and Sport Committee

***Inquiry into Sleep Health Awareness in Australia* public hearing**

Melbourne on Wednesday, February 6

Thank you for the opportunity to join you today to discuss our submission put forward to the Senate and I appreciate your time. My name is Keren Ludski, CEO of Red Nose Australia.

I think everyone who provided the Senate with their response to the inquiry would agree that the importance of sleep, good sleep hygiene and safe sleep practices is fundamental to good health and how sleep impacts long-term health and well-being cannot be underestimated.

It is an important part of overall physical and mental health for both adults and children and on behalf of myself and Red Nose, we congratulate you for acknowledging this and appreciate your efforts in addressing this important health issue.

When preparing our submission, we reflected on the successful strategies implemented by our organisation over its 40-year lifespan to reduce the rate of SIDS in Australia by 85%. As you would know, SIDS is the sudden and unexpected death of an infant under the age of one year with an onset of a fatal episode occurring during sleep. Tragically, it remains unexplained after thorough investigation, and affects close to 90 babies per year. Through 40 years of research, Red Nose was able to identify six safe sleep recommendations that could be taught to parents, care givers and health professionals. What the research highlighted was in addition to having good quality sleep that we all agree is important, a safe sleeping environment and sleep position were crucial modifiable risk factors that could aid the prevention of this terrible tragedy.

The submission put the Senate outlines our ability to make a positive impact on both the tangible and intangible costs of sleep problems through:

- The provision of safe sleep education to new and expectant parents to keep babies and children safe, reducing the number of deaths and the financial impact that has on the wider community

- The provision of up to date, evidenced based information readily available across a plethora of different channels which ensures parents are well equipped to implement safe sleep practices. This ensures parents can have a better overall quality of sleep, knowing that their babies are safe during sleep which therefore reduces the potential for mental health issues down the track which have stemmed from sleep deprivation.
- Remaining alert in order to seek research opportunities that can be translated into the provision of safe sleep education to the community. For example, Red Nose is currently co-funding research into maternal going-to-sleep position lead by Dr Adrienne Gordon of Sydney University which has identified this a modifiable risk factor to SB
- The provision of safe sleep education to health professionals including NICU and SCN staff which can be taught to parents of these more highly vulnerable children who are at greater risk of long term health problems and associated risks to SIDS
- The provision of targeted and culturally appropriate safe sleep education to higher risk groups including ABTI groups.

Red Nose (formerly SIDS and Kids) was formed by parents who had suffered loss 40 years ago. They were talented, committed, highly passionate and wanted to make a difference. The important work that they did in research and advocacy back then, stood us in good stead and assisted us in securing our position as leaders in infant and child sleep safety. Their formula was to drive research, turn breakthroughs into education and advocacy whilst continuing to provide bereavement support to families who had lost children regardless of gestation or age as they navigated the horrendous road of grief in front of them. This formula enabled Red Nose to achieve an 85% reduction in SIDS and therefore, by continuing our vital work which is ever-evolving and dynamic, we can continue to save little lives.

Thanks to the enormous efforts of everyone who believed that we could make a difference and drive change, we demonstrated tremendous success in one of Australia largest public health campaigns – the reduction of SIDS. This success ensured that Red Nose secured itself as a well-credentialed and trusted brand, a symbol of hope for families and best placed to be at the centre of any future public health project implementation.

Red Nose recognises that collaboration is key in order to streamline the messages, develop and disseminate the education across all audiences and through our strong partnerships with like-minded agencies we can have the greatest impact. This is what brings us here today, keen to listen and offer what we can to your inquiry and assist you in any way.

We have no doubt that what was achieved with the reduction of SIDS by 85% demonstrates our unique position to be able to support the government implement a public health campaign that creates a long lasting positive impact to the lives of Australians.