

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

17 SEPTEMBER 2009

**BRAIN INJURY AWARENESS WEEK 2009 FORUM
CHILDREN AND INFLICTED TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY
TODAY THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 17th 2009, 1 p.m. – 5 p.m.
RESEARCH BUILDING, CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL AT WESTMEAD, SYDNEY**

Traumatic Brain Injury is the leading cause of death and disability in children who have been abused. Infants who are beaten or shaken – sometimes called “**shaken baby syndrome**” - are at the greatest risk. **The New South Wales Government's Child Death Review Team's 10-year survey of 136 fatal assaults found that children less than 1 year old were 16 times more likely to die than those aged between 5 and 15 .**

25 children have been admitted to The Children's Hospital at Westmead, Sydney with inflicted Traumatic Brain Injuries over the last 8 years, and their numbers are increasing. Their average age was 13 months. The international research evidence indicates that around **1 in 3 will die as a result of the injuries to their brain.** And of those who survive, as many as **2 in every 3 will grow up with profound and permanent disabilities** that will affect them not only physically but also in the way they think, feel and behave.

Brain Injury Australia's Brain Injury Awareness Week forum brings together a range of perspectives on children and inflicted Traumatic Brain Injury - from child protection, surgery, rehabilitation, the law, injury prevention, and social work - to raise awareness about a complex, common, preventable but under-recognised disability. **Dr. Susan Marks** from **Westmead's Child Protection Unit** will describe some recent cases of inflicted Traumatic Brain Injury that have presented at the hospital and the reasons why as many as **1 in every 3 cases can be missed.** **Westmead neurosurgeon Dr. Ray Chaseling** will talk about the results of an **8-year study of admissions of inflicted Traumatic Brain Injury** as well as the affects of inflicted Traumatic Brain Injury on the child's developing brain. **Clinical Psychologist Suzanne Benson** and **Social Worker Martine Simons** will outline the **long-term impacts** of inflicted Traumatic Brain Injury on victims and their families. **Doctor and lawyer Amanda Stephens** will examine the **inconsistent treatment of perpetrators of inflicted Traumatic Brain Injury by Australian courts.** And **Westmead Social Worker Sue Foley** will document the **hospital's successful Shaken Baby Syndrome prevention campaign.**

The real rate of inflicted Traumatic Brain Injury is dramatically higher than the numbers of children admitted to hospital. **During 2007-08, over 12,000 of the notifications of physical abuse made to Australia's child protection agencies were substantiated** - there was reason to believe that the child had been, was being, or was likely to be physically abused. **The New South Wales Department of Community Services responded to 327 reports of “baby shaking” between 2004 and 2006 alone.** Results from overseas surveys show that for every 1 child admitted to hospital with inflicted Traumatic Brain Injury, there may be as many as 150 other children in the community who suffer inflicted trauma to their heads from caregivers.

***For more information contact Nick Rushworth, Executive Officer
Brain Injury Australia on (0417) 373 622***