

A photograph of two women hiking in a forest. The woman in the foreground has long dark hair and is wearing a purple shirt and a yellow backpack. The woman behind her has long red hair, is wearing a white hat and a blue shirt. Both women have concerned or confused expressions on their faces. The background is a dense forest with green foliage.

So...which direction are we headed?

HELP US STOP THE CUTS TO PUBLIC SERVICES

**Snapshot of just some
of the public services
being cut in
New South Wales**



Premier, this makes no sense

The travelling public

People who use public transport (including taxis) are at increased risk due to decisions by Roads and Maritime Services in August 2013 to reduce services provided by public servants.

Services lost to the travelling public include:

- NSW Police daily data matching is no longer undertaken. The process identified authorised drivers or accredited operators who have been charged with an offence overnight. This allowed public servants to suspend, cancel or vary driver authorisation and/or operator accreditation to ensure the safety of the travelling public.
- Reduced compliance activities to ensure drivers/operators/licence holders comply with legislation. The on-road activities by compliance officers are now almost non-existent with only four or five compliance officers dedicated to public passenger services. Previously, the compliance unit had 21 staff dedicated to public passenger services.
- The loss of the fraud unit for the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme. This unit investigated fraudulent claims on tax payer money made under this scheme. The scheme subsidises the cost of taxi travel for people with a permanent disability who are unable to catch public transport.
- A reduction in the number of Sydney Knowledge Tests conducted for “trained” taxi drivers. The tests, conducted daily, are now reduced by half.

The Public Passenger Services Section had 55 staff dedicated to the administration and management of the passenger transport legislation in NSW. This involved the life cycle management of authorised taxi, bus and private hire vehicle drivers and accredited bus, taxi and private hire vehicle operators including criminal and traffic history background checks and medical fitness assessments. **The Section had a budget of \$12.5 million but collected \$29 million in revenue.**

Roads and Maritime Services deleted the Section as a whole. 17 staff members were made redundant, the positions were not replaced, numerous vacant positions were deleted and the remaining staff now report to 3 General Managers removing the cohesion of the section.

Child protection

The increasing privatisation of Out of Home Care Child Protection Services in NSW has meant that the cheapest price rather than the appropriate level of care is what determines placement of a child in need.

Private providers are now “bidding” for work via an online auction process where they are required to submit a bid for a child who requires care. The work is then outsourced to the cheapest provider. A frightening development of this process is the use of the term “unit” rather than “child”.

The October 2013 Select Committee on Ministerial Propriety uncovered the fact that the NSW Government’s so called “Labour Expense Cap” directly led to a 3% cut to the staffing budget for caseworkers. This is a heartbreaking development at a time when the number of children needing to be placed in out of home care is rapidly rising with almost 72% of children at risk of harm not being followed up by Community Services as a direct result of staff shortages (Ombudsman’s Review of the NSW Child Protection System tabled in Parliament April 10, 2014).

TAFE

The introduction of a competitive funding model for Vocational Education and Training means that TAFE colleges are being forced to directly compete with private providers for funding, a process that will accelerate from 2015. Private providers are not required to provide the vital support services and programs to the community that has traditionally been done by TAFE. In Victoria, similar privatisation led to a decrease in the number and range of vital trade courses. This process has already commenced in NSW, for instance, some engineering courses have been halted at South Western Sydney TAFE.

Disability services

The total privatisation of Government disability services currently underway will end the guarantee of lifetime care for people in government provided care. These people will need to purchase services from an NDIS system that isn’t yet up and running. At the same time they will have no government provided service to maintain current care levels, no government regulator on boarding house conditions and no provider of last resort – a function that has always been the State Government’s responsibility.

This privatisation will mean the loss of choice for people with a disability and their carers.

Government property

Accountability and transparency will be reduced following the decision to contract out the Government's office accommodation services which administers State Government building assets.

Roads and Maritime Services – road maintenance

Road Maintenance in North Sydney is currently operating under a public private partnership arrangement. This too often results in public servants being called out to repair the work of contractors rather than completing their own schedule of maintenance.

In one instance, following a major accident on the M4, both the RMS staff and the private provider were called to clean up the damage and get traffic moving again. RMS staff were on site for an hour and a half undertaking works before the private provider arrived in the form of one man in a ute.

Roads and Maritime Services – truck fleets

Despite increasing publicity around safety concerns of truck fleets, the Government has continued with its policy of allowing trucking companies to self-accredit their fleets. The Mona Vale incident on 1 October 2013, which resulted in the death of two men and the hospitalisation of six others, is the result of this bad policy which the Government has persisted with in its ideological pursuit for small government.

Supreme Court reporting services

The PSA is currently fighting against plans to outsource court reporting at the Supreme Court. Impacts on court reporting staff numbers are unclear at the moment but the results of this type of outsourcing are not.

In instances where these services have been outsourced, the result has been a delay in the delivery of transcripts resulting in longer delays in cases being heard and settled. But the most serious issue is the quality of the transcripts.

In the recent case of Bundaberg surgeon Jayant Patel, the privately prepared transcripts were so inaccurate that the judge told the jury to rely on their own memory instead of the documents.

Power

The sell off of Power Stations in NSW will lead to a massive rise in power prices for NSW residents. Rejecting the sale of Macquarie Generation to AGL, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) recently stated that such a sale would destroy competition in this state and lead to higher prices.

As well as this, the recent events in Morwell, Victoria, show the dangers of privatisation. The inadequate safety measures taken by the company at Hazelwood have led to an environmental disaster for the whole Morwell Valley. This will have long term effects for the region.

Office of Environment and Heritage

The Office of Environment and Heritage has cut 350 staff, including park rangers and departmental scientists.

Also part of the cuts are four environmental forensic scientists responsible for assessing public safety during chemical emergencies such as Orica.

Air quality monitoring has been reduced

Two air monitoring jobs were lost from the public service the same day the Minister opened the new Hunter Valley Air Monitoring station. This meant that although there are the facilities, there are not adequate staff. As such NSW is no longer monitoring air quality as it once was.

Heritage in this state has also been affected. Response times on development applications for properties under heritage orders now take longer as there are less staff. This is at a time when more and more properties are placed on the register. The result is delays for people and business trying to make alterations to their properties.

Justice

Past offenders in our community are not properly supervised following the decision to leave 200 parole positions unfilled.

The risks to the public are obvious but ignored by the NSW Government.

Similarly, half way houses run by Government have been closed. These catered for offenders who had finished their sentences but required assistance in readjusting to normal life or who were awaiting the implementation of their parole conditions. Without this service, offenders either spend longer inside a correctional facility at great cost to the public or enter the community unsupported, greatly increasing their chance of reoffending – all of which comes at a cost.

Police

The failure to fill up to 80 vacant positions in Police Communication (Radio Operations) Centres located in metropolitan and regional areas of NSW has resulted in emergency radio channels now covering twice the area/population. As a consequence, it can take longer for police to get vital information when responding to incidents and the risk of error is increased, potentially putting lives at risk.

These problems with the police radio network led to the delay in police attending to a triple 000 called made by Kenneth Parker in December last year. Mr Parker called 000 in fear of his life. While the call was promptly answered, black spots and poor reception meant that police took 70 minutes to arrive at his home, by which time Mr Parker had been fatally stabbed. (SMH National, 7 April 2014).

Roads and Maritime Services

Following the loss of three jobs, a single public servant is now responsible for school safety zones across all of NSW. Although a great deal of survey and planning work has been done, the roll out of this work is severely delayed as a result of these losses, placing children at risk where these zones haven't been adjusted, repaired or implemented.

Fisheries

The closure of the multimillion dollar, world renowned Cronulla Fisheries Scientific Centre of Excellence in 2012 led to the loss of hundreds of years of fisheries research experience, as well as millions of tax payer dollars wasted along with the loss of almost 150 jobs from the local community.

Jobs were lost and others were dispersed across 13 other sites. Millions of public dollars will be needed to rebuild what already existed. The fragmentation of expertise and the abandonment of a state of the art centre of excellence will lead to poorer outcomes in fisheries research and the loss of any real regulatory presence in the Sydney basin, where 60% of recreational fishers reside.

Court House, East Maitland

It has been announced that East Maitland Court House will close once the new court complex in Newcastle opens next year. Although this is being sold as an upgrade in service, residents will now have to travel over half an hour to Newcastle for their court matters. In addition, jurors will also have to undertake the trip at their own cost. It will also impact on the local Maitland community with a drop in the daily trade in shops surrounding the courthouse.

Land and Property Insurer, Bathurst

A proposal to commercialise the Land and Property Insurer will lead to fewer jobs in Bathurst and may lead to a private monopoly over land and property insurance. Prices will no doubt be raised to commercial rates as a private provider will look to slash costs to ensure a profit.

Births, Deaths and Marriages, Wollongong

The BDM Office in Wollongong has closed and its functions moved into the new Services NSW office with the claim of “better service” through longer business hours. The people of Illawarra will now have to travel to Sydney for many of the services formerly provided by the BDM Office, with Services NSW only acting as a glorified reception centre. They will receive and refer applications for BDM services and collect fees but won't actually perform any processing. People requiring birth certificates and other documents urgently will have to make the 3 hour round trip to do so. The quickest service available to Illawarra residents who can't travel to Sydney is now three or four business days.