



MEDIA RELEASE

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Loss of 1000 community service workers places vulnerable children at risk

The O'Farrell government must act to restore staff and resources to the Department of Community Resources so thousands of vulnerable children receive the face-to-face checks and care they need, according to the Public Service Association of NSW.

Media reports today show almost three-quarters of children deemed at risk of significant harm in NSW – 44,899 children – will not see a caseworker to undergo safety checks.

Assistant Secretary Steve Turner said the O'Farrell government's slashing of community services staff is placing vulnerable children and families at risk across NSW.

A leaked internal treasury memo showed the State Government has plans to cut nearly 1000 jobs from the Department of Family and Community Services over four years.

"The O'Farrell Government and Minister Pru Goward are failing in their duty of care to thousands of the most at risk children and their families in our community," Mr Turner said.

"Early this year the NSW Ombudsman confirmed staff concerns about a lack of resources compromising outcomes for children at risk.

"His report showed there were too many serious cases with not enough caseworkers and support staff to respond.

"Job cuts, a lack of resources and a freeze on recruitment have created a crisis in the NSW Community Services Department.

"Staff find themselves overwhelmed by insufficient resources and a high administration burden that stops them from essential face-to-face work with vulnerable children and their families.

"The State government has the ability to improve the number of face-to-face visits child protection case workers are able to carry out, by boosting staff numbers.

"So far, it has overseen case worker staffing freezes and announced plans to cut 1000 positions from the department over the next four year.

"Every day these issues remain unaddressed is another day the Minister and this Government turn their backs on a potential tragedy where vulnerable children fall through the cracks in the system," Mr Turner said.

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