



UNDER-RESOURCING OF CHILD PROTECTION & THE TRANSITION OF OUT OF HOME CARE

The issue:

Chronic under-resourcing of child protection services leading to nearly 55,000 children reported as being at risk of **significant** harm (ROSH) failing to receive a face-to-face response from a child protection caseworker. *In some parts of the state that figure is as high as 84%.*

- There has been a **21% increase in ROSH reports over the past 2 years** with only a **9.5% increase of the number of face to face responses** to ROSH
- The increase of face-to-face responses doesn't address the *actual* number of children at risk in NSW
- There are chronic shortages of placements for children in OOHC
- Caseworkers are still tied to their computers and held back by red tape.

Despite considerable public investment, in terms of money, expertise and resources, the "success" of the transition to the private sector (NGOs) remains under a cloud. The private sector is not equipped to take on the full suite of cases and this has led to vulnerable children falling through the cracks.

What we are asking for:

Improve child safety in NSW by:

- Formally recognising CS will **always** have a role in OOHC and should be funded accordingly – as per Wood recommendation
- Addressing the onerous administrative and procedural systems to free up casework and support staff so caseworkers are able to spend more time working with children and families
- Maintaining discrete OOHC casework teams so the children in OOHC who are still with CS (almost half) receive quality casework
- Quaranting CS resources and funding so our already limited resources are not used as a safety net for the failures in the NGO sector, e.g. recruitment and training of carers, NGOs not providing high need placements, NGOs abdicating case management responsibility for difficult to place children
- Funding CS OOHC to recruit and train carers so stable placements are available for children removed from their families



- Bringing back early intervention programmes
- Providing adequate resourcing to CS so **all** children subject to ROSH receive a response by CS caseworkers. Current full establishment figure is 2,128 caseworkers, but less than half actually respond to ROSH reports
- Stopping emerging risky practice in which NGOs are directly responding to children subject to ROSH reports. The investigative powers in the legislation can not be delegated outside of CS
- Maintaining safe and manageable supervision ratios of 1:6 MCW to CW
- Retaining and building experience in CS by filling **all** vacancies and reducing use of temporary engagements
- FACS halting the continued roll out of changes to IT systems which has caused and continues to cause havoc (over the past 2 years starting with MVO) guaranteeing rigorous User Acceptance Testing and no further disruption to staff
- Ensuring existing and future Practice First sites have sufficient dedicated support staff, casework specialists, psychologists and admin support
- Raising community awareness of what this government has been doing and the consequences of their actions – i.e. the system is still failing children at risk of significant harm and children in care.

Government should be investing in child protection service delivery in NSW not shifting the problem to the private/charity sector.

What can you do to get involved?

- Discuss these issues with your delegates in your workplace
- Talk to your colleagues about joining the PSA
- Get involved in your workplace group meetings and union actions around this issue

It is important that as many people as possible take an active part in your union to address these concerns. If you would like a meeting to discuss these issues in your workplace, contact your local delegate or your organising team:

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