



The Hon. Gabrielle Upton MP
Minister for Family and Community Services

MCR15/140

Mr Steve Turner
Assistant General Secretary
GPO Box 3365
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Mr Turner

Thank you for your correspondence dated 26 February 2015 regarding resourcing of the state's child protection services and in particular the number of children being seen by a child protection case worker.

As you are aware, there are agreed consultative arrangements for Family and Community Services (FACS) which include formal statewide consultative meetings with the Association, as well as the capacity to engage directly with senior officers of FACS on matters of concern. I understand that the issues that you raise concerning casework resources have in the past, and continue to be, matters for discussion through those agreed mechanisms. I encourage the Association to continue to utilise these agreed mechanisms to raise matters of concern.

Since September 2014 the Community Services Caseworker Dashboard was published, an extra 389 children have received a face-to-face assessment. This information is on the 2014 December quarter Dashboard and was made available on 27 February 2015.

Since 2012, FACS has committed to the Out of Home Care (OOHC) transition to the non-government organisation (NGO) sector. This has seen a significant change and improvement in the way most vulnerable children are cared for. It was also a key recommendation of the Wood Inquiry into Child Protection.

Out of Home Care Transition

The transition of statutory OOHC from FACS to the NGO sector aims to build a responsive and sustainable non-government OOHC sector which has the capacity to achieve the best possible outcomes for children, young people and their families.

The transfer of OOHC care to NGOs has been carefully managed so that the Government can keep pace with the demands on the system, closely monitor the transfer and make any improvements needed along the way.

Since transition began in March 2012, more than 5,400 children and young people have transitioned to the NGO sector. Currently there are over 7,200 children and young people in statutory OOHC with NGOs, which equates to 57 per cent of children and young people in statutory OOHC (source: OOHC Transition Dashboard January 2015).

The target for transitioned children and young people to NGOs has been exceeded, which is indicative of the constructive and highly collaborative way in which the NSW Government and the NGO sector are able to work and plan together to deliver OOHC service delivery in NSW. We are continuously improving the system so that it is better able to respond to the contemporary challenges facing vulnerable children, young people and families is a key priority.

FACS has engaged a consortium led by the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) to undertake the independent evaluation of the OOHC Transition. The evaluation commenced in July 2014 and it is expected that the report on the findings will be available by June 2015.

Brighter Futures Lead Agencies

From July 2014, some Brighter Futures agencies commenced working with children and families identified at ROSH to support the delivery of locally integrated, flexible services that can increase safety and reduce risk for vulnerable children living at home.

From July 2014 to January 2015, over 1,100 ROSH referrals were made to Brighter Futures Lead Agencies from FACS districts enabling more families identified at ROSH to receive a face to face response and allowing FACS to continue to provide a service to other families with the highest need.

Caseworkers

The Community Services Caseworker Dashboard provides an overview of caseworker data. The NSW Government is committed to transparency and introduced the publication of the Dashboard each quarter. This is the first time that a child protection agency in Australia has been open about the size of its frontline workforce and about any gaps in resources that have come about through staff movements and attrition.

Prior to 2011, caseworker vacancy rates reached 13 per cent. In the 2014 December quarter Dashboard the vacancy rate was down to 5 per cent.

In addition, the NSW Government is recruiting 73 new caseworker assistants, who will provide much needed support to caseworkers with casework-related tasks and administration.

IT Systems

The Safe Home for Life reform is currently underway to improve the IT systems for our caseworkers. The NSW Government is investing \$100 million over four years to deliver improved technology to benefit our caseworkers, districts, partners and importantly clients.

There is always more work to do in the area of child protection. No child protection system in the world is perfect, but I am very proud of the significant progress this Government has made over the last four years. I agree with your comment that our Community Services staff have a great deal of experience, and I have appreciated their willingness to share their views and ideas with me when I have met with them.

Should you have any further enquiries, please contact Deidre Mulkerin, A/Deputy Secretary, Corporate Services on 9248 0924. Alternatively you can email her on deidre.mulkerin@fac.s.nsw.gov.au

Yours sincerely



Gabrielle Upton MP
Minister for Family and Community Services

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