

PSA meeting with Minister Hazzard

Today, 4 June 2015, the PSA Assistant General Secretary and FACS delegates met with the Minister for Family & Community Services, Brad Hazzard and senior representatives of the Department.

The Minister was very supportive and responded positively to most issues raised by the PSA.

1. The Family & Community Services Head Office is going through a major restructure. The PSA is concerned that, whilst this is occurring FACS has advertised externally for recruitment for Head Office jobs. We asked the Minister that external recruitment be put on hold to allow any current employee displaced by the restructure the opportunity to seek employment before vacancies are filled externally. The Minister asked the department representatives to ensure that "doors were not shut" and asked them to also consider delaying the external recruitment to allow for fairer and better practices to take place.

2. The PSA raised concerns that FACS will not allow JCC meetings with individual Directorates, i.e. Community Services. The Minister indicated he was initially supportive and asked the FACS Departmental representative to consider the PSA's request to have appropriate consultation.

3. The PSA raised concerns about the disturbing statistics that one in four children reported as being "at risk of significant harm" have a face-to-face visit. The PSA believes there is a need for greater resources and the filling of vacancies. The Minister made it clear that he recognises the dedication of staff to their roles and to the protection of children. However he did not accept that increasing staffing would automatically lead to improved service. He believed there is a need to look at how the

work is done and he is open to on-going consultation.

4. The PSA raised the specific issue regarding the computer system at Community Services (KIDS). The PSA was informed that \$100 million has been allocated to improving the computer system and that PSA delegates would be invited to briefings and to participate in development of the system. This invitation was also directed to the Housing delegates.

5. The PSA noted that it is 5 years since the outsourcing of Out of Home Care began. There are issues with how this has occurred and the services delivered and we asked the Minister to conduct a review. The Minister indicated he supported the outsourcing of Out of Home Care in principle, however, he had already called for a review of certain aspects, including the contracts with the NGOs, specifically with regard to setting up a contractual basis for reporting on the outcomes. He asked the PSA to provide a letter outlining their concerns.

6. The PSA raised concerns with the transfer of Housing stock to the NGO sector and the outsourcing of Housing maintenance. The Minister indicated he does not oppose the principle of the transfer. He requested the PSA to identify specific issues about this. He acknowledged that there were issues related to the maintenance of Housing stock.

7. The PSA raised issues about housing staff having to directly advocate for tenants with their Managers. The Minister accepted an invitation to come to the workplace to discuss this with members.

The Minister accepted the PSA's request for regular on-going meetings, particularly with each portfolio area. He proposed quarterly meetings.

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