

FACS

inquiry into child protection

PSA welcomes Inquiry into NSW Child Protection System

The PSA has welcomed a move by the NSW Legislative Council (Upper House) to establish an inquiry into the NSW Child Protection system.

According to the Legislative Council Media Release, the purpose of the inquiry is to “look at the role of the Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) and non-government organisations in protecting children and young people at risk of harm”. The inquiry will consider the following key issues:

- Adequacy of funding to employ specialist caseworkers and other frontline personnel, as well as funding for prevention and early intervention.
- Efficacy of the tools used to assess risk of harm reports.
- Training and monitoring of foster carers.
- Oversight by the Office of the Children’s Guardian.
- Initiatives to protect indigenous children.

The PSA has long advocated for the need to better assess the adequacy of funding for child protection services, which has demonstrably failed to meet community needs. On current funding levels less than 30 percent of children at risk of significant harm receive a visit from a child protection caseworker.

It is also timely and important to review developments **since the release of the Keep them Safe report (2009)**, and in particular the **sector’s** performance in supporting vulnerable children, families and carers in Out of Home Care (foster care) in NSW.

PSA Assistant General Secretary, Steve Turner, said, **“We welcome this Inquiry, it’s something we’ve called for, and we congratulate committee members for listening to us.**

“Governments of both persuasion have adopted privatisation of child protection services as a panacea for underfunding.

“Hopefully this inquiry will look at the reality of the challenges we face, and ask honestly whether children are really better off without a public sector provider of Out of Home Care.”

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Authorised by Steve Turner, Assistant General Secretary
Public Service Association of NSW, 160 Clarence Street Sydney



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