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In reply please quote: **TP:cw:A14/1171**

Mr Michael Coutts-Trotter
Secretary
Department of Family and Community Services
Locked Bag 10,
STRAWBERRY HILLS NSW 2012

Dear Mr Coutts-Trotter,

Re: Industrial bans on Performance Development Plans in the Department of Family and Community Services (FACS)

I refer to your letter dated 1 June 2016 and to the further correspondence between our staff and representatives of your agency regarding your Department's performance development program. The General Secretary has asked me to reply on her behalf.

I firstly wish to acknowledge that some effort has been made by the Department to address some of the concerns we have raised through correspondence and in meetings with the Department. We sincerely believe that had a proper process of consultation occurred during the development phase, many of the concerns we raised could have been easily addressed without industrial disputation.

Be that as it may, having reviewed the documents provided to us we still feel, unfortunately, that we cannot endorse implementation of the agency's performance development program at this time.

For the sake of brevity, I wish to bring your attention to the following issue which we regard as critical:

- In our view, all FACS employees should, at the very least, be provided with a capability compliant role description and appropriate face-to-face training in the PDP process, before the program is becomes operational. It is simply not satisfactory, or indeed fair, to have some FACS employees required to participate in a process of continual performance assessment – which may have real ramifications for their employment – while others are not (as suggested in your letter)

- While training and development opportunities may be reflected in performance development plans, the absence of a performance development plan must not preclude an employee's access to suitable training and development. This is essential to ensure that the inherent risks in work undertaken by employees of the agency are properly addressed and employees are enabled to make optimal contributions.
- As we have stated from the outset, the FACS PDP program is almost entirely devoid of incentive and reward for performance excellence. Again in our view, this is a major omission and missed opportunity. We think the chances of the program evolving into anything more than 'tick 'n flick' (at best), or a tool for bullying staff (at worst), are minimal in the absence of a meaningful system for rewarding high performing staff.
- There appears to be no additional administrative or other organisational support (such as additional resources) for FACS supervisors/managers (in particular, those working in a front-line operational capacity) responsible for overseeing the program.

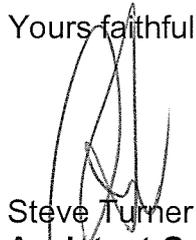
Further work also needs to be done in relation to developing and incorporating:

- a framework for specific, clear and measurable targets in performance agreements;
- a recognition that achievement may be impacted by changing priorities and excessive work load expectations;
- clear and fair policy as to the link between a performance review and informal and formal performance improvement plans; and
- clear pathways for grievances and objective review in the event of disputed performance agreements or reviews.

In truth we remain skeptical about the extent to which FACS actually supports the program. Implementing a performance management system simply because the GSE Act 'requires' the Department to do so, hardly inspires confidence.

We thank you for the opportunity to reply to your letter and would welcome further discussion on this matter.

Yours faithfully,



Steve Turner
Assistant General Secretary



July 2016