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The Hon. Pru Goward MP
Minister for Family and Community Services,
Minister for Social Housing, and Minister for the
Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
GPO Box 5341
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By email: office@goward.minister.nsw.gov.au

Dear Minister,

The Association holds grave concerns in relation to the announcement to outsource the support for Child Story to a third party non-government organisation (Accenture). One hundred million dollars has been budgeted for the build and implementation of Child Story. At this late stage with only four months until the system is planned to go live, it is crucial that all risks are thoroughly assessed and either eliminated or minimised. The decision to restructure the current support teams within FACS at this time in addition to handing over control of technical support to a third party seems irresponsible. Traditionally Community Services has provided in-house support for its electronic child protection system (KIDS). FACS employees who work in these teams have raised serious concerns that these decisions greatly increase the risks with Go Live, the future planned releases and the effectiveness of support to all users of Child Story. The implications if serious problems arise are dire to say the least and would pose considerable embarrassment for the government.

Despite the best guarantees and assurances of IT organisations that all will go without any major complications, you only need to look at the experience of other government agencies where this proved not to be the case, such as Education and the ATO. Companies such as Accenture have KPIs focussed more on volumes and response times rather than about ensuring correctness and integrity of their actions. It is also not uncommon for such organisations to allocate system administration functions to off shore service providers. FACS would likely need to implement an internal checking or monitoring function to validate/ verify the integrity of their actions, especially in the early stages of establishment when their staff will have no knowledge of Community Services business operations.

There is also concern about the security and access of highly sensitive and confidential information stored in Child Story. Highly confidential information about children, family members, carers and others will be able to be accessed by this organisation.

FACS currently has skilled and experienced employees who have effectively supported the current client systems. They are needed now more than ever; these staff are the holders of the KiDS/Child Story corporate history. The resultant disruption, recruitment and replacement of FACS current employees from the planned restructure just months from Go Live is ill-timed and extremely high risk.

It is in nobody's interest to see Child Story fail. The impact for staff, stakeholders, carers and of course children and young people would be dire to say the least. Every effort should be made to minimise risk. The Association respectfully requests that you consider the following recommendations:

- 1) The planned restructure of the current teams supporting KIDS (Child Protection Client Information System) is cancelled or at least postponed until at least 12 months post Go Live of Child Story (releases one and two).
- 2) The staff in these teams are provided with the necessary training and support to effectively continue their support role with the introduction of Child Story.
- 3) FACS does not enter into any long term contracts with a third party vendor which results in the handing over of the complete control of Level, 2, Level 3 and Level 4 support. At the very least FACS should maintain its own in house support teams to work in conjunction with the third party vendor to oversight Go Live and the expected spike in requests for support from staff and other stakeholders within the first 12 months.

In House advantages:

- Staff in these teams hold operational experience and a deep understanding of the department's priorities as well as the ever changing legislative, policy and procedural framework. They know what it is like to actually use the system at an operational level.
- Staff were able to ensure that the system was better shaped to dovetail with the operational and user requirements – fit for purpose
- The same staff maintained a contemporary understanding and experience of how the system needed to be updated and adjusted to meet the changing operational demands and practices.
- Staff were best placed to effectively communicate the needs and requirements with the technical support team (also in house) to best ensure that any changes, upgrades and modifications reflected the operational and corporate needs.
- This was able to be achieved while at the same time limiting the impacts for casework staff on how they were able to understand and use the system.
- With the limited use of contractors based on site, the department had greater control and influence on how the system was best designed to meet operational and corporate needs. At the same time minimising the impact on casework staff.
- The ICT technical support team also have an in depth understanding of the department's operations and priorities.
- The technical support team have forged very effective working relationships with the operational support teams and they work in unison to achieve the best outcomes and improvements.
- Overall the in house model (both operation support and technical support) allowed the department to maintain greater control on how the system was used by and meet the changing needs of casework staff.

Outsourcing issues:

- With the replacement of KIDS with Child Story the in house operational support teams are perfectly placed to continue providing this support to casework staff. This allows least disruption and stability at a time of such significant change with the planned Go Live of Child Story scheduled for October.

- The plan to radically restructure this support model in the few months leading up to Go Live is an unnecessary risk. Feedback from staff see the timing to do so, only serves to increase the risk of operational disruption (CP, OOHC, and Adoptions).
- The advantages as outlined above to the in house supports structures will in most part be lost as the department will have to deal with Accenture technicians who lack the operational knowledge and context.
- This will over time only serve to see a drift in how Child Story is suited and adapted to meet practitioners needs, operational needs and corporate needs.
- Control will be eroded and the teams within the proposed Operational Support Model will be left to try and respond to the requests and complaints of the staff that have to use Child Story. The effectiveness and timeliness of the support staffs' attempts to get technical fixes through generic Accenture technicians will only compound the productivity and frustrations of the those having to rely on Child Story.
- The limited time available to achieve this restructure will result in a support structure which is neither prepared nor capable or flexible to meet changing needs as the implementation and embedding of Child Story progresses. At a time of such dramatic change it is imperative that FACS maintains the current support structures with the current experienced teams.
- Given the very tight timeframes it is unrealistic to expect that the majority of key new support roles will be in place and prepared by late July (as detailed in the Change Management Plan).

Other concerns:

- The length of time scheduled for User Acceptance Testing (UAT) of 2 weeks is of great concern. Such a limited timeframe will only allow the testers to scratch the surface and not undertake thorough testing. In comparison, it was standard for testing periods for the various KIDS releases to be between 8 and 10 weeks.
- To factor in such limited UAT for the launch of a whole system with the scope of Child Story is high risk and significantly questionable.
- There is a growing concern that the Go Live of Child Story with technical support completely outsourced will result in a similar debacle to that experienced with OneSAP – only many times worse. Accenture is the company contracted for OneSAP.

The Association urges you to take urgent action to fully independently investigate the current outsourcing proposal of the support for Child Story. Experienced Community Services practioners are informing us that they are attempting to raise and explain the risks and concerns for FACS at a grass roots level however are not being listened to.

Please contact Sandra Lockey of my office on 9220 0982 to arrange a meeting.

Stewart Little
General Secretary

28 June 2017