



PUBLIC SERVICE ASSOCIATION
OF NEW SOUTH WALES

General Secretary Stewart Little
President Kylie McKelvie
ABN 83 717 214 309

In reply please quote: **KC:cj:A17/0732**

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

By email: petra.kathagen@facs.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Coutts-Trotter,

Re: Out of Home Care Accreditation – Hunter New England District

The PSA has been advised that the above district did not meet the required accreditation standards. We further understand they have been given six months to reach those standards.

Understandably, our members are very distressed by this outcome. They have advised us that in most other districts staff were taken offline for a period of time as a proactive measure to ensure their office would meet the standards for accreditation. We believe that this did not occur in the Hunter New England (HNE) Region.

As you would be aware, HNE Region has an extremely high quantity of work and individuals carry high caseloads. In addition, staff have been taken offline to do ChildStory testing and training. This, along with other changes that are constantly taking place within the Department, has meant staff are overloaded and overwhelmed by the demands placed on them.

In order to ensure the district reaches the required accreditation standards in six months' time the Department needs to take urgent action to ensure vacant positions are filled and to provide additional ongoing resources to enable the district to have a proper opportunity to meet and sustain the standards.

We also ask that you provide the PSA with more detail as to which locations within the region were problematic and in what way the standards were not met.

The union believes that the staff in the district are highly professional and have great expertise and commitment to their jobs. In short, they have been doing all that has been asked of them under very difficult circumstances for many years. They are now left feeling, by virtue of the region's failure, that they are not up to standard. We believe that their experience and institutional knowledge is invaluable to the Department and to the children and families of NSW and what is required is strong and effective leadership by the agency to support staff in what will be a challenging six months to meet the accreditation standards.

We look forward to your prompt response. Should you wish to discuss this matter further please do not hesitate to contact Carmel McKeough, Industrial Officer of the PSA on 9248 3304.

Yours faithfully,

Troy Wright
Assistant General Secretary

2 November 2017