

24 November 2017

## ChildStory – PSA makes one last attempt to urge Minister Goward to delay Go Live

Community Services DC Chair Brendan McMennamin, DC Secretary Heather Shields, Assistant General Secretary Troy Wright and Industrial Officer Carmel McKeough met with Minister for Community Services, the Hon Pru Goward on **23 November 2017**. In attendance from the Department of Community Services were Secretary Michael Coutts-Trotter and Deputy Secretary Deidre Mulkerin.

We reiterated yet again that ChildStory is simply not ready to Go Live on 28 November 2017.

The PSA advised the Minister of our concerns about:

- » the fact defects are evident in the new system despite the assurances of the Department critical defects are being addressed
- » the short time left to complete data migration – we were advised that 78,000 million records had migrated and that all essential records will be migrated by 26 November 2017
- » that ChildStory participant manuals are inaccurate in parts
- » existing support documentation is superficial and practice manuals, recording guides and policy guidelines have not been provided to staff as promised
- » the time for training has been completely inadequate
- » the staff initially trained in the first two weeks received inadequate training due to poor data set up and defects

- » coaches in districts are expected to carry a heavy caseload whilst being available to coach
- » legal officers will no longer have the capacity to make track changes in Child Story which will add to their workload and is contrary to the goal of reducing the time spent on paperwork
- » lack of support to Community Services Centres as Child Story is rolled out – the Department did not accept this and will provide the PSA with more detailed information about exactly what caseworkers can expect
- » there is a real risk that rushed implementation of ChildStory will result in problems with carers' payments – the Department acknowledged this could occur and that contingency plans will be put in place to do manual payments.

The Department openly acknowledged there will be problems post Go Live. Minister Goward listened to our concerns, particularly the potential for ChildStory to cause a delay to carers' payments at Christmas and our strong recommendation to wait until next year to Go Live so these problems can be rectified.

This meeting represented one last and significant attempt by the PSA to put our arguments to the Minister and encourage common sense instead of rushed implementation.

At the very least we are confident the Minister is seeking further urgent advice from her senior bureaucrats after our meeting.



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The PSA also referred to the current situation in Hunter/New England, where staff have been placed in the position of having to transition to ChildStory at the same time they have been told to work harder to attain OCG accreditation.

We reiterated there has been poor leadership and a clear lack of planning in Hunter/ New England with staff unsupported and inadequately resourced. We will be having further discussions with the Department at the State Community Services Joint Consultative Committee meeting on 27 November 2017 about this priority matter and the adverse impact on members.

Lastly, there was brief discussion about the State Government's response to the Upper House Inquiry into Child Protection. We urged the Government to reconsider its position in relation to the recommendation "to extend the performance audit function of the Auditor-General to include audits of all non-government organisations who have been provided with state funding to deliver children protection related services".

The PSA gave detailed examples of the end result of the lack of accountability and its impact on vulnerable children and young people.

We were advised the Government is currently undertaking a regulatory impact analysis to consider future options to improve accountability.

