

Michael Coutts-Trotter – When will you apologise to child protection workers?

Members may have noticed recent media stories about the NSW Chief Ambulance Officer's apology to paramedics for the failings of the Ambulance Service to address mental health issues and a culture of bullying, harassment and intimidation. Actions taken to address these failures include the appointment of psychologists to a Staff Health Unit and the establishment of a bullying and harassment hotline. Read more information [HERE](#).

We applaud these initiatives for the Ambulance Service and the apology.

However, we remain highly critical of the abject failure of Michael Coutts-Trotter and his Executive to take any genuine action to address: the mental health issues experienced by child protection workers, including secondary and vicarious trauma and the culture of bullying, harassment and intimidation that currently pervades Community Services.

We have written to the Secretary and asked the following questions:

- » When will you apologise to caseworkers for failing to address mental health issues, including vicarious and secondary trauma and failing to act on the bullying and harassment problems in your agency?
- » When will you acknowledge the extent of vicarious and secondary trauma experienced by caseworkers?
- » When will you introduce appropriate workplace systems to identify, manage and prevent vicarious trauma and secondary trauma?
- » When will you respond to the mental health problems experienced by caseworkers and the endemic bullying and harassment in Community Services Centres and provide specialist psychiatric and psychological support to caseworkers?

- » When will you establish a bullying and harassment hotline for caseworkers?
- » When will you introduce initiatives to prevent vicarious trauma and secondary trauma including mental health and resilience programs?
- » When will you act to determine fair, safe and achievable workloads for caseworkers?
- » When will you adequately resource Community Services?
- » When will you review the current obsession with productively targets and unit costs which are resulting in Managers Casework being effectively required to allocate excessive and unsafe caseloads in order to meet those targets?
- » When will you conduct a state-wide audit of individual caseloads and forfeiture of flex time?
- » When will you undertake a risk assessment in regard to the over allocation of cases and implement control mechanisms to manage workloads? And
- » When will you allocate sufficient resources to fund initiatives to address mental health issues including secondary and vicarious trauma and ensure that the number of caseworkers in the field is sufficient so that workloads are manageable?

The Chief Ambulance Officer faced up to past failures and set a standard that Michael Coutts-Trotter needs to follow as a matter of urgency.

We've sought a meeting with the Secretary and made clear that we will not accept the Department's failure to act any longer.

Read the General Secretary's letter to Michael Coutts-Trotter [HERE](#).

