

## PSA WIN! Additional support for ChildStory

On 28 August 2018, PSA officials and delegates again met with NSW FACS Minister Pru Goward to highlight the ongoing problems with ChildStory and how it is affecting you, our members.

The PSA tabled the results from the second ChildStory survey which clearly show no discernible improvement seven months after going live.

We know that members are still suffering under unbelievably excessive caseloads, working many additional hours only for them to be forfeited at the end of the flex period.

The PSA will send a separate bulletin detailing members' feedback from the second PSA ChildStory survey.

### **PSA win – FACS finally acknowledges need for additional support**

Since the meeting with Minister Goward, FACS has started recruiting Caseworkers specifically to support ChildStory, working directly with Caseworkers and other users of the system to deliver training and practice learning sessions across NSW.

This is a significant win for members with FACS finally acknowledging and addressing the huge gaps in support the PSA has been highlighting since before the system was even introduced.

This could only be achieved through the actions taken by members in CSCs right across the state.

Without you walking out to highlight the issues to the public and the media we would not have been able to accomplish what we have.

### **But there is still more to do...**

This is a great win for members, however, the new ChildStory roles are secondments and the PSA will

be writing to FACS to ensure that any casework roles left vacant due to secondment are swiftly backfilled or the additional ChildStory support positions will only add to the pressure members are already under.

### **The PSA continues to fight for members**

The meeting with the Minister advanced our issues considerably, with Goward agreeing that casework staff should have “first responder” status.

She also agreed with PSA that a staff health unit should be established to deal with the significant psychological pressures on staff due to the vicarious and secondary trauma that affects many members.

Although there is now recruitment action for new ChildStory support positions, we still have much work to do to ensure that FACS is properly supporting Community Services staff.

At the meeting, the PSA reaffirmed our position on the following:

1. The migration of records continues to be an issue as does navigation; chronological view of records; printing; case plans; attachments; alternate assessments – the list goes on. ChildStory is tying child protection workers to their computers causing additional administrative work – the opposite of what was promised. Based on members' feedback in the survey this equates to approximately five hours additional time per week per worker which has not been reflected in the workload planner. The PSA consequently sent members an amended workload planner on 21/08/2018 to capture the additional time taken to complete work



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- on ChildStory. You can download the new workload planner [HERE](#).
2. Major issues with migration of legal records as new staff especially make errors as they do not have access to the KIDS system. The PSA put it to Minister Goward that all new casework staff should have KIDS read only access to ensure that caseworkers have access to ALL historical records.
  3. Unreasonable expectations from management for employees to cope with excessive and unreasonable workloads leading to workers' compensation claims and performance management issues.
  4. A huge churn of Caseworkers in FACS through resignations or people taking extended leave. This week, FACS reported that 13.4% of newly recruited Caseworkers leave within their first year. Staff are unwilling to stay due to the untenable work environment. The PSA has repeatedly asked FACS for detailed data on Caseworker attrition rates but to date have only been provided with very basic information. An in-depth analysis of Caseworker attrition would identify problem offices where there are significantly higher rates of staff attrition. FACS has legal obligations under WHS legislation to address unsafe workplaces. High staff attrition rates is one indicator of many, but FACS seem intent on ignoring its duty of care to employees.
  5. Large numbers of temporary staff across districts with up to four years of service before they are converted to ongoing. The Minister expressed the view that new Caseworkers can be employed as ongoing as they are subject to probation and FACS should be able to manage this. The PSA will be pursuing this with FACS.
  6. Serious privacy concerns relating to child protection records of FACS employees and their family members being unsecured in ChildStory. Also concerns that opening portal access to ChildStory to other government and non-government agencies will inadvertently allow access to highly sensitive information and records. Minister Goward was again alarmed and expressed the view it needs to be fixed and wants a solution. In response FACS advised a recent audit of FACS employee records revealed the security of 320 employee records were compromised, 120 of whom had their own child protection histories. FACS acknowledged this was a top priority and will continue to consult with the PSA.
- The PSA will persevere in seeking resolutions to these significant issues that continue to impact members and will keep you updated on any progress.

