

State Government lets down caseworkers at the Helpline

The PSA has consistently argued that 45 temporary caseworkers at the Helpline must be converted to ongoing roles at both Helpline and State Community Services Joint Consultative Committee Meetings. The Helpline assists the state's most vulnerable children and young people and its hardworking staff should not be subject to insecure employment arrangements.

We were told FACSJA had made a budget submission to secure additional funding. We were also told when management tried to introduce the "Be Right Back" code which times toilet and other personal care breaks that data to the nth degree had to be collected to demonstrate how efficient the Helpline was and provided to Treasury to support future funding increases.

Following the release of the State Budget on 18 June 2019, the Minister for Community Services the Hon Gareth Ward MP, issued a press release which highlighted additional funding to "support the delivery of child protection services through the continuation of funding for 45 Child Protection Helpline workers". As usual the devil is in the detail and the PSA has now been advised that this funding is only for a further 12 months which means the 45 caseworkers will have their contracts extended, but are no closer to ongoing employment.

The Premier went to the State election using the slogan "NSW can have it all". However, this doesn't seem to extend to vulnerable children and young people and their caseworkers otherwise the announcement would have been 45 caseworkers permanently employed at the Helpline.

To add insult to injury, the Department has adopted a position that long-term temporarily employed caseworkers who are converted to ongoing

employment will then be placed on 12 months' probation – even if they have already worked for FACSJA for several years and proved they can do the job. This has impacted on caseworkers at both the Helpline and Community Services Centres who have been converted and then placed on a year long probation period.

The Government Sector Employment Act 2013 clearly does not mandate a 12-month probation period. The PSA wrote to FACSJA on 19 May 2019 requesting that the Department acts to:

- » determine that probationary periods are not required for all conversions of long-term temporary caseworkers due to their length of service with the Department and proven ability to undertake their role;
- » advise all affected caseworkers of this action as soon as practicable; and
- » review the Probation Policy and Procedures in order to give clear guidance about the conversion of long-term temporary employees with a specific direction that probation may be required but not mandatory in all circumstances, such as the conversion of long-term temporary employees.

The letter is attached [HERE](#). We've had an email that FACSJA is considering our letter but they have now had more than enough time to provide a response and actually make a decision that demonstrates they value their employees at the Helpline and want to retain their skills and expertise.

Members can be assured that the PSA will continue to advocate in the strongest possible terms for secure employment for FACSJA caseworkers without the added burden of a 12-month probation period.

