



Public Service Association of NSW

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In reply please quote: **GW:cj CN:127877**

The Hon Gareth Ward, MP
Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services
Parliament House
52 Martin Place
SYDNEY NSW 2000

By email: office@ward.minister.nsw.gov.au

Dear Minister,

I am writing to you concerning your Department's plan to de-commission the KIDS electronic client records system (currently in "read only" version). The Public Service Association is of the understanding that the Department is planning to turn off access to KIDS in the very near future.

I am confident that you share my view that statutory child protection workers should be given the tools to do their job efficiently and effectively in order to protect children and young people at risk, as well as supporting the most vulnerable families in NSW.

The fact remains that a significant number of child protection records migrated from KIDS to ChildStory are not visible to front line child protection workers. Our delegates have logged numerous examples with the ChildStory team since late 2017 and have brought these examples to the Department's attention. Some of the reported records are now visible in ChildStory but many are not. It is likely, based on the small number of person profiles checked by PSA delegates in ChildStory that hundreds of thousands of migrated records are not visible to frontline child protection workers.

It is extremely concerning that your Department intends to switch off the KIDS records system knowing that a significant number of child protection records are not visible in ChildStory. This raises questions relating to compliance with *The State Records Act 1998*, *The Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* and *The Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*.

Having continued "read only" access to the KIDS records system remains an important tool for child protection workers to efficiently and effectively access some 29 years of electronic child protection records relating to about one million children and adults in NSW. I should note that a substantial amount of these records dating from 1988 to 2001 appear with the date of migration from October and November 2017, and not the actual date the individual records were created. This makes it extremely difficult and time consuming to establish the true date of the records.

Statutory child protection workers require efficient and effective access to these records in making decisions and assessments relating to the safety and protection of children and young people, family finding, adoption assessments, Victims Compensation assessments, Community Services Checks for foster carer applicants, employee background checks and information sharing under *Chapter 16A of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*. Children who have been in care have the right to access their records, however since the early 2000s, most of these records are in electronic form and not in paper files.


The Association has canvassed the views, experiences and expertise of statutory child protection workers and they are emphatic that until all visibility and search functions for legacy records are reasonably and efficiently accessible on ChildStory, the KIDS electronic records system needs to remain available to them in "read only" version. Given the risks involved to children as well as the ability for these workers to readily find and review 29 years of legacy records, the cost of maintaining KIDS in "read only" version is negligible.

The Association respectfully requests on behalf of our members and your employees that any planned decision to de-commission KIDS is put on hold.

The PSA would like to meet with you as soon as practicable to discuss these key issues affecting our members.

Please contact Ms Sandra Lockey in my office on 9220 0982 in order to arrange our meeting.

Yours sincerely,



Stewart Little
GENERAL SECRETARY

 February 2020