

Child Protection Award 2025

New Award

The Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) proposes the making of a Crown Employees (Child Protection) Award for a three year period from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2028.

The new Award will apply to the operational child protection workforce including Casework Support Officers, Child Protection Caseworkers, Managers Casework and Managers Client Services.

Salary increases and movements.

Salary increases will continue to be administered in line with movements in the Crown Employees Public Sector Salaries Award (Salaries Award). This includes the 3% due for payment as at first pay period on or after 1 July 2025 and 3% as at first pay period on or after 1 July 2026.

Any subsequent increases agreed for 2027 and 2028 will also apply to this Award in line with movements in the Salaries Award for all roles covered in the Award.

The 3% effective as at first pay period on or after 1 July 2025 will be paid regardless of this Award proposal.

New Role Graduate Caseworker

DCJ proposes the creation of a new Graduate Caseworker role which is intended for new graduates with limited to no prior operational experience.

This role will be remunerated at a rate equivalent of a Clerk Grade 4 and will include the following:

- Two-year salary scale commencing at a rate equivalent to a Grade 4. This will incorporate step one and step two of that salary scale (also referred to as minimum and maximum Clerk Grade 4).
- Provision to automatically progress to the Caseworker salary scale provided the following is met:
 - o Successful completion of the Caseworker Development Program (CDP), including completion of a 6-month learning plan.
 - o Satisfactory conduct and services.

This role is intended for new graduates. New candidates for Caseworker roles who have substantial prior experience will not commence in the Graduate Caseworker role. New Caseworkers with prior experience can commence in the Caseworker range and will still be required to complete CDP.

New casework staff will no longer be remunerated at Clerk Grade 3, uplifting the salary range into the future.

Revised Caseworker salary range

The salary range for a Caseworker is proposed to be amended to a new range that is equivalent to a Clerk Grade 5 -7 as set out below.

Role	Caseworker Step (Equivalent Clerk Gradings)	New Step	Current rate \$pa	1 July 2025 including the 3% salary increase
Caseworker Entry-Level	4.1	Yr 1	87,315	89,934
	4.2	Yr 2	90,001	92,701
Soft Barrier with Progression to Caseworker				
Caseworker	5.1	Yr 1	97,027	99,938
	5.2	Yr 2	100,086	103,089
	6.1	Yr 3	104,011	107,131
	6.2	Yr 4	107,059	110,271
	7.1	Yr 5	110,266	113,574
	7.2	Yr 6	113,562	116,969

Whilst the Senior Caseworker title will not be included as a formal role or title in the new Award, existing staff who have reached Senior Caseworker through tenure and incremental movements, can continue to utilise this position title should they wish to do so.

The existing barrier for movement between Clerk Grade 6 and Clerk Grade 7 will no longer exist and staff will move through the Caseworker salary range via standard annual incremental progression (noting exception below on commencement of the new Award).

Salary Transition Existing Caseworker workforce

The existing skilled and capable workforce is valuable and recognised. As part of the implementation of this Award the following salary transition will apply. These arrangements recognise that the commencement range has been uplifted by two points.

As at 1 July 2025 staff who are at Grade 4 maximum (who did not benefit from the Determination at the end of 2024), Grade 5 and Grade 6 will all be advanced two incremental points and retain their existing annual incremental date. This is a significant benefit resulting in staff moving two full steps forward in the incremental range. Staff will also in the same year, move a further increment in line with standard annual incremental progression and provisions.

Note that staff who are at Grade 4 maximum who progressed from Grade 4 minimum to Grade 4 maximum in the implementation of the Determination at the end of 2024 will be advanced one incremental point and retain their existing annual increment date.

Staff who already benefitted from salary translation provisions from Clerk Grade 3 to Clerk Grade 4 in the implementation of the Determination at the end of 2024 are exempted and will increment through the scale in line with standard annual incremental progression.

Staff who as at 1 July 2025 are at Grade 7 minimum will immediately advance to Grade 7 maximum. The annual incremental progression date will change to 1 July, although there are no further annual increments.

Refer to the below salary table.

	Typical DCJ Tenure	Current Grade	Current Salary	Re-grading 1 July 2025	New Salary 1 July 2025	Natural Increment 25-26	Final Salary for 25-26	\$ Increase First Year
Grad	Yr1	4.1	87,315	4.1	89,934	4.2	92,701	5,386
	Yr2	4.2	90,001	4.2	92,701	5.1	99,938	9,937
Caseworker	Yr3	4.2	90,001	5.1	99,938	5.2	103,089	13,088
	Yr4	4.2	90,001	5.2	103,089	6.1	107,131	17,130
	Yr5	5.1	97,027	6.1	107,131	6.2	110,271	13,244
	Yr6	5.2	100,086	6.2	110,271	7.1	113,574	13,488
	Yr7	6.1	104,011	7.1	113,574	7.2	116,969	12,958
	Yr8	6.2	107,059	7.2	116,969	7.2	116,969	9,910
	Yr9	7.1	110,266	7.2	116,969	7.2	116,969	6,703
	Yr10+	7.2	113,562	7.2	116,969	7.2	116,969	3,407

Leading Caseworker

DCJ proposes to create 100 leading caseworker roles. This role will be remunerated at a rate equivalent to Clerk Grade 8.

Refer to salary table below.

Role	Caseworker Step (Equivalent Clerk Gradings)	New Step	Current rate \$pa	1 July 2025 including the 3% salary increase
Leading Caseworker	8.1	Yr 1	118,296	121,845
	8.2	Yr 2	122,058	125,720

It is proposed that the duties of this role include responsibility for mentoring other child protection employees and taking carriage of complex child protection matters.

DCJ intends to develop guidelines to address the allocation of these roles across Child Protection and Permanency locations across the state. DCJ will consult with the Public Service Association (PSA) in relation to the guidelines.

Manager Casework new grading

The Manager Casework grading is proposed to be revised from a salary equivalent of a Clerk Grade 9 to a salary equivalent of a Clerk Grade 9/10.

Refer to the below salary table.

	Typical DCJ Tenure	Current Grade	Current Salary	Re-grading 1 July 2025	New Salary 1 July 2025	Natural Increment 25-26	Final Salary for 25-26	\$ Increase First Year
MCW	Yr1	9.1	125,693	9.1	129,464	9.2	133,105	7,412
	Yr2	9.2	129,228	9.2	133,105	10.1	138,539	9,311
	Yr3	9.2	129,228	10.1	138,539	10.2	142,665	13,437
	Yr4+	9.2	129,228	10.2	142,665	10.2	142,665	13,437

Staff who as at 1 July 2025 have less than 12 months service at Clerk Grade 9 maximum (step 9.2) will on their next incremental date move to a salary equivalent to Grade 10 minimum and so on to the maximum of the scale in line with standard annual incremental progression. The new annual incremental date will become 1 July 2025.

Staff who as at 1 July 2025 who have 12 months or more service at that rate will translate to a rate equivalent to Grade 10 maximum. The new incremental date will become 1 July 2025, however there are no further incremental points.

Casework Specialists and Managers Permanency and Planning

The Casework Specialist roles attached to Districts, and the role which manage these staff, will cease to exist. DCJ will work with staff individually on appropriate at grade role reassignments in line with a change management plan.

It is expected that new role assignments will be finalised by 1 December 2025.

The change management plan will be subject to consultation with staff and the PSA.

There will be no loss of jobs, hence voluntary redundancy is not available.

Impacted staff have been separately briefed and individual level discussions will occur with impacted staff supported by the Human Resource Business Partner team.

New Overtime provisions

Event Driven Excessive Working Hours on a Day Overtime Provisions

A new overtime clause will apply enshrining the ability to be paid at overtime rates for Caseworker Entry-Level, Caseworker, Casework Support Officers and Managers Casework after 9 hours of continuous work (excluding meal break) where work is required and/or directed.

For this provision to be activated, there is to be a response occurring to a critical incident or event driven reason for the overtime to be worked and this can not be the continuation of normal work. Discussions are to be occurring between the worker and their line manager as to the response work underway.

Overtime arising from otherwise forfeited hours

Negotiations on a new flexible working hours agreement for DCJ are underway between the PSA and DCJ.

Where hours worked exceed the carry forward balance for the settlement period, and those hours worked can not reasonably be taken as flextime or otherwise reduced before the end of the settlement period, overtime rate may apply. Forfeiture of excess hours worked would therefore be avoided.

The focus throughout the settlement period will be on reducing balances and working reasonable hours through regular monitoring of hours worked. Staff and managers will need to be regularly discussing working hours to enable reasonable and safe working hours.

This is a significant change for the workforce with the aim to ensure reasonable and safe working hours within the bandwidth and overtime during urgent operational need or emergencies.

Disaster Welfare provisions clarified

Many child protection staff volunteer and are called upon to support disaster welfare efforts across NSW. The new Award will clarify that where disaster welfare operational duty commences, flextime and rostered shift work (for the Domestic Violence Helpline etc) will be suspended and standard hours provisions under the Public Sector Conditions of Employment Award will apply.

All employees, including child protection staff, engaged in disaster operational duties already work according to a standard hours arrangement for disaster recovery work. This new Award provision will clarify existing arrangements.

Workload Planner to be resolved

DCJ has agreed that within 12 months of the making of the new Award a new Workload Planner tool will be implemented.

This tool will support staff, Managers and leaders to ensure reasonable caseload allocation, enabling quality casework. This will in turn support the monitoring of working hours.

In the interim, existing workload planner tools can continue to be used as they currently are.

Aboriginal Casework Staff

There is no change to the qualification requirements for identified Aboriginal roles into the future. No agreement has been reached on whether a new role description for Aboriginal staff is required, however the parties have agreed that further discussions are needed to recognise that staff in Aboriginal identified roles who carry a cultural load must have a connection to the community in which they work. Further consultation will occur within 12 months of making of the new Award.

Administrative staff in CSCs

DCJ has agreed to continue negotiations with the PSA to review the placement and allocation of administrative staff in each of the roles across the State with a view to providing role clarity between roles remunerated at a Clerk 1/2, Clerk 3/4 and Clerk 5/6. This work will be undertaken within 12 months of making of the new Award.

New Role Descriptions

Where the above changes necessitate updated role descriptions, DCJ and the PSA agree to consult on those changes over the next 12 months.