

Better
Services



OUR SERVICES AT RISK

NSW needs better services for a better state



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Public services are the backbone of our community. With a growing and ageing population, over public services are going to be under growing pressure over the coming years. But despite increasing demand, our public services are constantly under threat - especially from political parties looking for ways to fund election promises.

Business lobby groups have also been looking for ways to eat into Government spending and to divert resources away from core service delivery. The Public Service Association has analysed the public statements of politicians and business lobby groups to identify the most likely target areas for cutbacks, outsourcing and privatisations. The findings of the PSA are sobering - over 25,000 jobs are at risk.

If these jobs are lost, the impact on services in NSW will be huge.

Ageing and Disability Services	10,000
Community Services	1,050
Corporate Services	10,000
Corrective Services	1,000
Education	1,600
Roads and Transport Authority	1,850
National Parks and Wildlife Service	100
TOTAL JOBS AT RISK	25,600

INTRODUCTION

Public services are the backbone of our community.

Earlier this year the Public Service Association (PSA) released an independent report compiled by Eureka Economics titled *Keeping Pace: The Impact of Population Growth on NSW Public Services*. The report found that the NSW population has grown by 1.7 million people since 1985, but the public sector has been contracting rather than keeping pace. NSW is now well below the OECD average for the number of people it employs in public service provision. Forecast population growth means that over the next 20 years an extra 1.6 million people will need access to essential services such as health, transport, education and police. If the State is to keep pace with this growing demand for services, the NSW Government will need to employ on average 4,700 extra public service workers each year.

Despite this ever-growing demand, our services are constantly under threat - especially from political parties looking for ways to fund election promises, and vested interests looking for ways to profit from the public purse. The NSW Business Chamber's 'Ten Big Ideas' manifesto, for example, calls for an 'audit of government services' as its number one priority.

With a State Election to be held in NSW on 26 March, it is highly likely that public service job cuts will be back on the agenda yet again.

The debate about public sector job cuts calls into question the fundamental purpose of government in a civilised society. A caring community looks after its vulnerable members, and looks after its environment. By portraying public services as expendable, politicians imply that the people who rely on those services are expendable as well.

The constant push to privatise public services is born of the same philosophy. There are some things that are too important to hand over to private companies, and some services fundamentally should not be run for private profit. The fad of privately-operated prisons is a classic example of an inappropriate use of the corporate sector to deliver core government services.

The Public Service Association has analysed the public statements of politicians and business lobby groups to identify the most likely target areas for cutbacks, outsourcing and privatisations. Our findings were sobering. All up, over 25,000 jobs could be lost in the next wave of cost-cutting fervour. The human cost of these cuts will not just be felt by public servants and their families. The costs will be borne by the whole community.

It's time to stop selling off our assets and soliciting our public services. It's time to start investing in better services for a better state.

John Cahill
General Secretary - Public Service Association

AGEING, DISABILITY AND HOME CARE

The Service

Ageing and Disability and Home Care (ADHC) is responsible for planning, delivering and overseeing disability and aged care services across the government and non-government sectors. ADHC administers the Home and Community Care (HACC) program, the Disability Services program and the Ageing program, including Seniors Card. ADHC also delivers community support services, respite care, supported accommodation and early intervention services, and is the largest provider of these services in the Disability Services sector in NSW.

ADHC operates:

- Around 353 Group Homes and Respite Units
- Around 10 large Residential Centres
- Around 82 Community Support Teams

Approximately 1,600 people live in Group Homes operated by ADHC and 1,200 people live in large Residential Centres.

The People

There are over 13,000 employees in ADHC, working across the following areas:

Central and Regional Offices

These offices are responsible for the development and administration of government policies, including managing the contracts and monitoring the quality of service with about 900 service providers. The Office of Ageing, located on the North Coast, is responsible for advising the NSW Government on ageing policy.

Group Homes and Respite Units

These are community based residential units. Each unit has an average of five residents. Each unit is staffed by between 6-8 residential support workers.

Large Residential Centres

Large residential centres employ nurses on-site to provide direct care. Other staff in these facilities also include administrative officers, drivers, cooks, outdoor attendants, gardeners, instructor woodwork, technical instructor, therapy aids, dieticians, and physiotherapists.

Community Support Teams (CST)

Community Support Teams are multi-disciplinary team comprised of professional staff who provide support services to ADHC clients, families and carers. Their services include assessment, care planning and management counselling, referral, therapy, family support, early intervention and behaviour management. Teams can include Community Support Workers, Case Managers, Psychologists, Occupational Therapists, Speech Pathologists, Physiotherapists and Behaviour Support Practitioners.

Home Care Service

The Home Care Service employs service coordinators and administrative staff around NSW. These staff work with people with disabilities, older people and their carers to help them live independently in their own homes.

The Risks

Past governments have at times attempted to shift more of the responsibility for disability and aged care service provision to the non-government sector. The most vulnerable services at risk of being outsourced are:

- Group homes;
- Respite services; and
- Home Care Services

Outsourcing these vital services would lead to increased costs for families and reduced standards of care.

The Solution

The government must play a critical role as a provider of disability services as well as a funding and monitoring role for the NGO sector, and needs to lead by example and be best practice provider. While both the Government and NGO sector have a role in the area, the Government must remain an active player in particular for those with severe to profound disabilities along with people who have been in contact with the Juvenile Justice System and Corrective Services, and clients being rehoused from devolution of large residential facilities.

There must also be appropriate growth money available, as clients get older and their medical and support needs increase, parents and guardians of clients are looking for the certainty and stability of care for their children that only the Government can provide.

JOBS AT RISK
10,000

COMMUNITY SERVICES

The Service

Community Services (formerly the Department of Community Services or DoCS) promotes the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and works to build stronger families and communities in NSW. Community Services is responsible for child protection services, parenting support, enhanced prevention and early intervention, out of home care and adoption services.

The People

There are around 4,600 employees in Community Services, working across various areas including:

Child Protection

Assessing reports and helping families to reduce harm to children and young people and, if necessary, taking Children's Court action.

Out of Home Care

Supporting children and their carers when children cannot live safely with their birth parents.

Early intervention

Assessing strengths and needs of families and helping them access a range of appropriate services.

Helplines

Taking initial reports about concerns for the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person, assessing what further action is needed and responding to after-hours child protection crises.

Joint Investigation Response Teams

Undertaking joint investigations of child protection matters with professionals from NSW Police, where serious physical or sexual assault of children is involved, and linking with sexual assault and other health services.

Street Teams and Adolescent Support

Reducing crime, risk-taking and anti-social behaviour by children and young people in areas such as Cabramatta and Kings Cross.

Aboriginal Services

Providing services, supporting families, consulting and advising on Aboriginal children who are 'at risk'.

Multicultural Services

Providing services to children from culturally and linguistically diverse families and communities.

Children's Services

Regulating nearly 3,500 children's services such as preschools and day care centres, and supporting better access to services.

Central and Regional Offices

Responsible for the development and implementation of programs and policies, including adoption services, disaster welfare and the Community Services Grants Program.

The Risks

After years of neglect, the Department of Community Services (DoCS) received a Reform Package of a record \$1.2 billion over five years in 2002. The reforms in this package included 350 caseworkers for early intervention work, 375 child protection caseworkers and an additional 300 Out of Home Care caseworkers, 125 new administrative staff, 350 legal officers and psychologists.

The Government has also committed \$750 million over five years for the 5-year Keep Them Safe plan rollout, with over 40 per cent of this allocated to NGOs. Much of this money is allocated to building workforce capacity in the less regulated NGO sector, and additional funding will also be allocated to build

workforce capacity in the less regulated NGO sector via the Keep Them Safe Workforce Development and NGO Capacity Building Plan projects.

Despite this, Community Services is still suffering high staff vacancies, and the caseworker to child ratio has not improved particularly for Out of Home Care work.

Community Services is a well-regulated and accountable agency with highly qualified, skilled and experienced staff. Investing funds in recreating workforce capacity in the NGO sector merely transfers the workload problem to a less regulated, less accountable sector - and one which has a higher staff turnover rate and greater difficulty in attracting staff due to lower wage rates. Funds should be invested in building upon the capacity which already exists within Community Services to respond to the demand for child protection services.

Out of Home Care

The public sector is currently responsible for 85 per cent of children placed in Out of Home Care, while the non-government sector accounts for the other 15 per cent. One of the recommendations from the Special Commission of Inquiry in 2008, however, was to outsource most of the Out of Home Care services to the non-government sector. The NSW Government has agreed to implement this recommendation over a five year period, potentially placing 700 jobs at risk. Such a move will see the loss of the capacity, skills and experience within the Community Services sector that has been steadily rebuilding since the 2002 reform package.

The ratio of Out of Home care caseworkers to children in Community Services is approximately 1 to 30. This is high compared to the NGO sector which is 1 to 12. The Children's Guardian is currently considering an appropriate ratio.

Should the Children's Guardian determine that a 1 to 12 ratio is an appropriate ratio, Community Services could still transfer a significant proportion of the

Out of Home Care placements for management by the NGO sector without the need to reduce staff. However, there is no guarantee that this will be the Government's or the Department's approach. The potential change of Government in March 2011 may lead to a decision to implement the Wood recommendation by transferring a much greater share of the placements, if not all, to the NGO sector over a much shorter timeframe.

Caseworkers in Community Services also fear that, despite injections of funding, NGOs will not be able to manage the full range of cases. This is because NGOs will only accept the numbers of referrals which allow them to maintain a workable caseworker to child ratio. Community Services does not have the luxury of rejecting cases once its worker to child ratio is maximised. If the work is transferred to the NGO sector, then they too will face the same unworkable caseload currently encountered by public sector workers in Community Services.

Furthermore, the NGOs are currently able to send back children or young people in out of home care who may be more difficult to place - for instance older people or young adolescents. They also send back those children who may not work out in their first or second placement. Community Services then picks up the pieces.

If most of the Out of Home Care work is outsourced to NGOs, then what will happen to those children that the NGOs won't work with or send back? The army of experienced and qualified staff that currently exist in Community Services will no longer be there to support the NGOs.

There are also inherent problems in that NGOs do not subject foster carers to the same checks and processes as Community Services, with some providing incentives to contractors to find foster carers quickly - further compromising probity checks.



Brighter Futures

Early Intervention program Brighter Futures is an innovative program established to help families who are most at risk of entering the child protection system. Another of the Special Commission of Inquiry's recommendations was to outsource all early intervention programs to the non-government sector as well. Following a strong union campaign and the release of an evaluation report of Brighter Futures by the Social Policy Research Centre, the current Government decided to keep Brighter Futures as a program delivered by both NGOs and Community Services. However, should a future government consider outsourcing Brighter Futures completely, 350 caseworker positions will be at risk, and a program that is proven to be helping families, will be significantly altered.

Other

The Greiner and Fahey Governments' approaches to the Department of Community Services led to the abolition of specialist child protection roles and administrative support roles between the years of 1989 and 1992.

The implementation of recommendations from the Usher Report of 1993 led to the closure of most of the Department's accommodation services for children. This led to significant homelessness for children in care as the NGO sector could not cope with the number of children in State care or the significant behavioural problems associated with children removed from their families.

The Solution

Child protection is a key government responsibility, and any attempts to outsource entire programs should be reconsidered. Community Services caseworkers have the experience necessary to work across a broad range of programs within the child protections services.

Future governments should work to maintain current staffing levels, fill vacancies that are putting pressure on existing staff and work to bring caseworker to child ratios down. Outsourcing key programs to the NGO sector completely will place children at unnecessary risk of harm. Building capacity within Community Services needs to be the number one priority for the Government to avoid the potential rising costs associated with the 24,000 children estimated to be in Out of Home Care by 2014.

JOBS AT RISK
1,050

CORPORATE SERVICES

The Service

Corporate services refers to essential support functions such as finance, human resource management, industrial relations, occupational health and safety and information technology. These functions are essential to the operation of all public services across government.

The People

There are currently around 15,000 jobs in corporate services in the NSW Government.

The Risk

The NSW Government last year released a report titled A Blueprint for Corporate and Shared Services. The report recommended that only the largest five departments should continue to run their own corporate and shared services functions in-house. These agencies included Transport NSW, Police and Emergency Services, Human Services, Education and Training, and Health NSW.

The report also recommended that the remaining eight departments shared their corporate services. These departments are:

- Department of Planning
- Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Department of Communities
- Department of Treasury
- Department of Industry and Investment
- Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water
- Department of Services, Technology and Administration
- Department of Justice and Attorney General

A new shared services agency, Service NSW, is now being created for that purpose. The new agency will have 'shared service agreements' with its eight client departments, and will employ around 10,000 staff.

Once the new agency is in place, it will be a prime target for outsourcing to the private sector. It is also possible that a future government will add shared service agreements with the five larger departments to the mix in order to outsource all departmental corporate services.

Outsourcing these key back office services will leave front-line service dangerously exposed. An administrative glitch, a computer failure, or a contract dispute could cripple the entire government. The Queensland Health payroll debacle, and the National Australia Bank IT fiasco provide sobering warnings of the likely ramifications of outsourcing these back office functions to external parties.

The Solution

Merging support services of government agencies is the first step towards outsourcing, and towards putting front-line services at risk. Agencies must continue to have access to and control of their own in-house support services.

JOBS AT RISK
10,000

CORRECTIVE SERVICES

The Service

Corrective Services NSW operates prisons and correctional facilities, runs offender rehabilitation programs and other related services around the State. Corrective Services is responsible for providing a deterrent to people who are considering criminal activities, punishing people who commit criminal activities, and rehabilitating criminals to stop them from committing further crimes in the future.

When the justice system breaks down, society breaks down. That's why Correctional Services are a vital part of State Government, and essential to maintaining law and order.

The People

Correctional Services employs over 4,500 full-time equivalent staff in correctional centres and courts around NSW. These staff operate 32 correctional centres, one juvenile correctional centre, seven periodic detention centres, two transitional centres for female inmates and 14 24-hour court cell centres.

Prison Guards have one of the toughest jobs in the public service. They are in the front-line of the justice system, constantly working under difficult conditions.

The Risks

The prison population is rising. As more prisoners enter the system, the Corrective Services budget is stretched to the max. In an attempt to save money, the State Government has outsourced the operations of two prisons (at Junee and Parklea) to the private sector. Plans to outsource Cessnock Correctional Centre, prisoner transport services and court security services were shelved, however, due to overwhelming community opposition.

The prison privatisation agenda is likely to re-emerge after the election, as the incoming Government looks for ways to cut spending to fund its election promises. Likely targets for privatisation are:

- Nowra Prison
- Mid North Coast Correctional Centre (Kempsey)
- Wellington Correctional Centre
- The new facility planned for Grafton

Another looming risk is the growing use of casual staff. Casualisation reduces the overall experience and skills base of the corrective services workforce - in a specialised and extremely challenging work environment.

Cutting back funding to the justice system is a bad idea because:

- Private prisons cut corners on security - making it more likely that dangerous criminals will escape;
- Private prisons tend to be more violent, with higher levels of assaults on staff and other prisoners; and
- Private prisons put less effort into rehabilitating prisoners which means they are more likely to commit crime after they leave prison and return to the community.

NSW already has a particularly high level of recidivism. Over 42% of prisoners released during 2006/07 ended up back in prison within two years of their release. Neglecting the justice system might look like a budget saving for the bean counters, but cost to the community is massive. Further funding cuts for Corrective Service will only make this problem worse.

The Solution

Corrective Services is too important to neglect. The misguided prison privatisation agenda must be abandoned permanently. The focus must return to providing a high-quality prison system that acts as deterrent to crime and rehabilitates offenders so they can safely return to the community.

JOBS AT RISK

1,000

EDUCATION

The Service

Schools are more than just students and teachers. It takes a whole community to run and support a successful school. School staff help students in the classroom, ensure the school environment is safe, and that all students are enrolled, their records are up to date and parents are kept informed.

The People

There are over 14,000 administrative support staff and Learning Support Officers and Aboriginal Education Officers in schools around NSW, plus a further 1,600 General Assistants. School administrative staff are responsible for everything from managing enrollments, to paying the bills and ordering equipment and assisting in the classroom. They keep our schools running.

Learning Support Officers (previously called Teacher's Aides) are responsible for supporting children with disabilities or special needs. Often these children require time-intensive one-on-one help. Having a Learning Support Officer in the classroom allows the Teacher to concentrate on the whole class, which improves learning outcomes for all students. General Assistants help out with all sorts of things around the school - from handy-man jobs to maintaining equipment, school buildings and grounds. They regularly go beyond the call of duty to help students and to contribute to the school community. Aboriginal Education Officers provide specialised support to Aboriginal students to help them through their schooling and to improve school relationships with - and retention rates in - the Aboriginal community.

The Risks

There are a number of challenges facing our school communities. Learning Support Officers, currently do not have access to permanent employment status. This means that Learning Support Officers cannot take

paid holidays, find it hard to access loans, and do not have the security of on-going employment. Equally, students do not know if their Learning Support Officer is going to stay with them throughout their school journey. The State Government has made a commitment to converting long-term temporary Learning Support Officers to permanent status, but this commitment has not yet been fulfilled.

The place of General Assistants in our schools is at risk. These positions could effectively be outsourced as part of maintenance contracts to private companies. Schools that lose their General Assistants will lose access to a vital resource.

Other States have also looked at 'flexible' models for determining staffing at the school community level. Often flexibility, however, is a by-word for staff cuts. And when support services are cut, it's the students who suffer. More 'flexibility' could see a minimum of staff at each school and others employed on a casual basis at busy times. This will reduce the quality of the relationships parents and students have with their school.

The Solution

Education is too important to be left under-funded and under-resourced. It is vital that:

- Learning Support Officers finally get the permanent employment status they need and deserve;
- The role of General Assistants in school communities is protected; and
- Guaranteed minimum staffing levels for school administrative and support staff are put in place to ensure all school can operate effectively, and deliver the highest quality education for our children.

JOBS AT RISK
1,600+

ROADS AND TRAFFIC AUTHORITY

The Service

The Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) is responsible for improving road safety, testing and licensing drivers, registering and inspecting motor vehicles, and managing our roads to ensure they are safe.

The People

Around 7,120 people are employed by RTA across NSW in motor registries, heavy vehicle checking stations and the Crashlab.

The Risks

RTA services are constantly being reviewed. The 2008 mini-budget, for example, saw the sale of the profitable RTA personalised number plates business. Future plans could see core services outsourced to the private sector in the same way - putting profits ahead of jobs and road safety.

Heavy Vehicle Inspectors

The jobs of 320 Heavy Vehicle Inspectors would be at risk if the operation of Heavy Vehicle Checking Stations was outsourced.

Huntingwood Crashlab

The RTA's Crashlab at Huntingwood is Australia's premier NATA-accredited independent crash test facility. It is a modern world-class vehicle testing facility that brings all testing and expertise together under one roof. It has the capability to crash test around 100 local and international vehicles each year. The Crashlab also tests items such as helmets, seat belts, child restraints, bus seats and industrial safety harnesses. It is the only truly independent facility for such tests as it is not owned or operated by the private sector or the manufacturers themselves.

There are around 30 positions at the RTA Crashlab that would be at risk if the facility was sold. It is understood that the Crashlab brings in around \$5 million in revenue for the State Government per year.

Motor Registries

There are 127 motor registries around the State serving local communities. If these registries were privatised, it is inevitable that the number of registries would be cut. Services to regional communities, in particular, would therefore be diminished, and 1,300 jobs would be put at risk.

RTA Contact Centre and Tolling Branch

Outsourcing the RTA Contact Centre and Tolling Branch would lead to the loss of more than 200 jobs.

The Solution

Core functions of the Roads and Traffic Authority should remain in public hands to ensure the community can access the services it needs.

Heavy Vehicle Inspections are vital to keeping our roads and highways safe and should not be sold off to private companies, which would put profits ahead of safety. Heavy Vehicle Checking Stations need to be open 24/7, in order to ensure all heavy vehicles on our roads are adequately checked.

The Huntingwood Crashlab is an important facility that is truly independent and reliable, and must remain in public hands.

JOBS AT RISK

1,850

NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

The Service

The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service manages and cares for over 820 national parks and marine parks around the state. These parks preserve our wilderness, protect our wildlife, and provide a huge range of passive recreation activities for people to enjoy. The service manages 8 per cent of the state's land mass - and this area contains 25 per cent of the state's bushfire prone areas.

Looking after our national parks, however, takes an enormous amount of work. Not only do facilities and tracks need to be maintained, and visitors kept safe, but noxious pests and weeds need to be controlled. Importantly, parks also need to be protected from illegal activities and bushfires. This means constantly undertaking preventative actions, and responding to fires quickly and effectively when they occur.

The People

Currently, there are 1,400 people employed in the National Parks and Wildlife Service, including Park Rangers. Park Rangers perform a number of important roles, such as:

- Assisting visitors and generally managing park visitation;
- Managing wildlife;
- Enforcing park regulations;
- Controlling weeds and feral animals;
- Managing fire;
- Planning and carrying out the improvement and maintenance of park facilities
- Preparing environmental assessments and other statutory responsibilities;
- Carrying out natural resource surveys and inventories;

- Managing Aboriginal and European cultural heritage - in consultation with local communities.

The Risks

The National Parks and Wildlife Service is feeling the squeeze - from the ongoing efficiency dividend and unfilled budgeted positions. Restructuring has meant about 40 positions have been lost from regional NSW since last July. Port Macquarie and Dubbo have been the hardest hit - with 20 positions disappearing in 2010.

There are around 100 budgeted field-based positions that have not been filled. This has an impact on firefighting, pest management and park management. There is a strong risk that these unfilled positions will be cut in future budgets to achieve 'efficiency dividends'.

The 2010 Annual Report from the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water demonstrates that the Ranger ranks have diminished by 30 positions - a 10 per cent drop in frontline environmental professionals working in parks.

Climate Change modeling has shown that hazard reduction activities will have to be increased three-fold to keep pace with the changing conditions. There are concerns, however, that an extra \$82 million in funding from the Climate Change Fund for hazard reduction activities may be absorbed into the overall departmental budget. Private operators are also pushing to have the agency's fire mitigation and hazard reduction activities contracted out.

The under-resourcing of additional land acquisitions to the National Parks and Wildlife reserve system has diminished the ability of Rangers to effectively manage their areas of responsibility. The addition of



Toorale Station and the Cypress Forests to the park estate are classic examples of how the agency has been given increased responsibilities, but have not been given any increased funding for new positions or operational costs.

The Solution

Budgeted positions must be filled, and promised funding must be delivered. With peak tourism and bushfire season upon us, it is literally playing with fire to continue to leave the National Parks and Wildlife Service under-resourced.

JOBS AT RISK
100

OUR SERVICES AT RISK

NSW needs better services for a better state

