

Child Protection Agreement



factsheet



WHY DO WE NEED A NEW AGREEMENT?

Currently most people who work in child protection are employed under the Public Sector CSA Agreement. This agreement covers most of the Public Sector. This can make it difficult to negotiate agency or occupation specific conditions.

Being part of a child protection specific agreement means that people working in child protection will be able to raise, bargain and campaign for conditions and entitlements that are specific to them. It also recognises that there are unique circumstances and complexities inherent in the work you do.

For example, in the current offer there is a specific allowance to assist field workers to obtain a recognised qualification.

Other workers with specific agreements include Youth Custodial Officers and school support staff. Being in occupation and agency specific agreements has meant that these groups have been able to negotiate improvements like reclassifications, conditions around safety and specific reviews in bargaining.

DOES SEPARATING FROM THE REST OF THE SECTOR WEAKEN OUR BARGAINING POWER?

Child protection district offices are some of the most unionised workplaces in the whole public sector. There is high membership, active and experienced delegates and recent experience of standing together in action.

This agreement will remain a satellite agreement, meaning that all of the benefits of the general agreement will flow onto workers covered under this agreement while at the same time we can use our high density and strength to bargain for additional conditions specific to you.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE FSO AGREEMENT?

The FSO agreement will be expanded to cover more occupational groups in District Offices.

This means FSO members will no longer have to bargain for their conditions as one small group. This will increase their bargaining power by expanding the number of workers and occupations who will join them in bargaining.

The new Agreement will function in a similar way to the FSO Agreement and it will remain a satellite agreement. A satellite agreement takes its core conditions from the Public Sector CSA Agreement (YUA) which means entitlements and conditions flow to the satellite agreements from the main Agreement but with satellite agreements members can bargain for above and beyond the conditions of the majority of workers in the public sector.

HOW DID THIS OFFER COME ABOUT?

In response to your sustained collective actions in 2024, government was forced to seek solutions to the issues facing child protection members.

Delegates made it clear that initiating one off attraction and retention bonuses for case workers would not resolve their issues.

Your union communicated this to the Government and explained that “one off” payments to caseworkers was a short term fix that would be deeply unpopular with members.

In response the Government offered this unique pathway to affect long term change.

Doing it this way means that any improvements that are achieved, including salary uplift, are enshrined in an industrial agreement and can't be taken away.

WHO WILL BE COVERED BY THIS AGREEMENT?

At this stage, most occupations in district offices will be covered by the agreement.

We are currently in disagreement with government about Customer Liaison Officers and Administration Assistants not being included. While we understand how important these two occupations are to the child protection system, we have been bound by the timeframes of the election and the caretaker period when making our arguments. Government cannot make any decisions with budget implications from Feb 5 until after the election.

Delaying the process while we continue to negotiate around these occupations would put the whole agreement at risk as any potential change of Minister post election could put the whole offer in danger.

To make sure we can continue to fight for CLO and Admin Assistants to be included we have pushed government into a review of these two occupations. This will give us more time to provide the justification for their inclusion and to seek more comprehensive feedback from members.

Please note that CLOs and Admin Assistants are no worse off right now for not being on the CPFS specific agreement.

WHY ARE ONLY SOME OCCUPATIONS RECEIVING THE ADDITIONAL PAY RISE?

When we began campaigning for more resources in child protection it was in response to high caseloads, a growing NLO and huge turnover of case workers.

Attracting and retaining this cohort of workers is still a huge challenge to government and filling the existing vacancies is a huge issue.

Having a higher baseline salary should help to attract new people into the system and help to keep the people who may be considering leaving.

This should have the most tangible impact on reducing caseloads and the NLO.

Having everyone on the same agreement means that we can campaign for improved outcomes for other cohorts through negotiations and collective action in the future.

WHAT HAPPENS IF WE VOTE NO?

Opportunities like this are extremely rare.

If the offer is voted down it could be years until we can secure any significant improvements to the pay, conditions and workloads of members in child protection.

Members would ultimately be back at square one and would have to embark on a campaign of long term strike action to influence government.

