

TREASURER TOM KOUTSANTONIS

Thursday, 7 July 2016

Measures to protect children from harm

The State Government is funding measures to help protect vulnerable children and reform the child protection system.

The 2016-17 State Budget includes \$15 million over two years for a new Families SA Northern Office, consolidating facilities at Elizabeth, Gawler and Salisbury.

The facility will consolidate three existing northern sites into one location, enabling the agency to better coordinate services for vulnerable children in the northern suburbs.

The Budget also includes \$1 million to establish a Response Unit to work through recommendations from the forthcoming Child Protection Systems Royal Commission.

The Government will allocate further funding for the State's child protection system in response to the Commissioner's final recommendations.

These measures are on top of \$10.6 million over five years for an IT system to continuously monitor people who work or volunteer with children.

Police will work with the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion and the Department for Education and Child Development to monitor those in a position of trust, ensuring crucial information - such as relevant history and any new offences - is kept up-to-date.

Background

Families SA Northern Office

Families SA currently operates three offices in the northern suburbs, at Elizabeth, Gawler and Salisbury.

Creating a central service point will allow staff to better coordinate services and information related to the provision of care and protection services to children and families in the northern suburbs.

The former Smithfield Plains High School is an ideal location for a new Northern Hub for the agency given its central location in relation to the current three offices.

Response Unit

The Child Protection Systems Royal Commission led by Margaret Nyland AM is due to report to Government on August 5, 2016.

The recommendations will provide a framework which gives South Australia an opportunity for extensive reform and rebuilding of the child protection system.

The Government has already acted on last month's interim recommendation to separate Families SA from the Department for Education and Child Development and create a new Department for Child Protection with its own chief executive, and recruitment for this role has begun.

Continuous Monitoring for Screening

The Department for Communities and Social Inclusion, SAPOL and the Department for Education and Child Development are implementing a continuous monitoring system for employment screening of people who work and volunteer with children.

This will enable new offences to be identified on an ongoing basis as opposed to the current system which only provides a snapshot of a person's history at the start of the three-year lifespan of the clearance.

This will allow the DCSI Screening Unit to alert organisations that the status of a clearance has changed as new information becomes available, providing further protection for vulnerable South Australians.

Quotes attributable to Treasurer Tom Koutsantonis

Reform to improve the child protection system is a crucial policy for the State Government which has been recognised in the Budget.

We have allocated an initial \$1 million to coordinate the Government's response to the Child Protection Systems Royal Commission, which includes the appointment of six full time staff.

The Government will allocate further funding for the State's child protection system in response to the Commissioner's final recommendations.



Quotes attributable to Child Protection Reform Minister John Rau

The Government wants to hit the ground running as soon as Royal Commissioner Margaret Nyland delivers her findings.

Serious work in analysing how to implement practical changes recommended by the commission is the next phase in creating a better system for all South Australians.

The Government is committed to rebuilding the system and restoring community confidence in this vitally important service.

Quotes attributable to Education and Child Development Minister Susan Close

While the creation of a new Department is a fresh start, I acknowledge that there is still a lot of hard work ahead of us in this area.

Creating a Northern Hub for the child protection agency will support workers who need to share resources, information and support each other in their important work.

I anticipate this will also allow for easier access to related services also working with children and families.

My priority is ensuring better outcomes for children, and I will continue to support the workers who undertake this challenging role.

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