



# **PSA Response to the National Contact Centre Organisation Design Consultation Document.**

**Submission to The Deputy Chief Executive for Children and  
Families North, Oranga Tamariki by the Public Service  
Association: Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi**

**29 March 2021.**



**For a better working life**

New Zealand Public Service Association  
Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi

# PSA Response to the National Contact Centre Organisation Design Consultation (the document) March 2021.

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### Introduction

#### *Who we are*

The New Zealand Public Service Association Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi (the PSA) is the largest trade union in New Zealand with over 78,000 members. We are a democratic organisation representing members in the public service, the wider state sector (the district health boards, crown research institutes and other crown entities, state owned enterprises, local government, tertiary education institutions) and non-governmental organisations working in the health, social services and community sectors.

The PSA has been advocating for strong, innovative and effective public and community services since our establishment in 1913. People join the PSA to negotiate their terms of employment, to have a voice within their workplace and to have an independent public voice on the quality of public and community services and how they're delivered.

The PSA is an affiliate of the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions.

The PSA represents approximately 2950 members in Oranga Tamariki and around 130 of these members work in the National Contact Centre at 490 Richmond Road Grey Lynn, Auckland 1021.

We held numerous Hui outside of the normal roster so PSA Officials could access delegates and members to discuss the proposed changes Oranga Tamariki want to implement at the National Contact Centre. This submission forms the view from membership who work at the National Contact Centre and who are the frontline people that deliver the actual work and practise in the 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days in the year environment.

## PSA submission

### Synopsis

PSA Members at Oranga Tamariki are drawn to this mahi because they are passionate in making a positive difference for the tamariki, rangatahi and their whānau. Members know what is needed to deliver the required standard of practise and service at the National Contact Centre, after all it is members that hold the practise lens and expertise.

Social workers now carry professional and ethical responsibilities to the Social Workers Registration Board with mandatory registration effective in New Zealand since 27 February 2021.

PSA advocates for professional, cultural and psychological supervision and development, workplaces free from inequity and discrimination as well as a safe workload. This will empower members to deliver 'their best practise', feel valued and support their kaimahi ora in their work.

The PSA is not convinced that these<sup>i</sup> "changes will bring about improved services for tamariki, their whānau, and notifiers, and create a better working environment for all". We think contrary to that notion.

The document looks more like a business proposal. Members deal with people and this looks like that is being lost. Increased additional resourcing and increased staffing levels which will give staff the capacity to do their work effectively and carry out their professional and ethical obligations to their clients and to the profession. We have categorised our reasons into 8 subheadings with an explanation below.

### Change Process

The PSA is guided by the agreed commitments set out in our Collective Agreement 2018-21 and Clause 9.9.1 outlines the principles for change management. We have concerns that these principles have not been met given the length of time this process has taken, the lack of bona fide engagement and consultation in the early stages and no real consideration or respect given to members who carry the institutional knowledge. It is our view that the General Manager needs to have a significant social work lens, given the NCC is effectively the intake for statutory social work in Aotearoa.

During our member meetings, there was a strong theme regarding the feeling among staff that this is a process that has been 'done to them' rather than 'done with them'. This was exacerbated by the previous Change Manager becoming the current General Manager. We believe that if there had been stronger engagement and consultation at the development stage of this process, there would have been better buy in from staff and much richer information gathered. Our members at the NCC are committed to their role and are always striving to achieve better outcomes for vulnerable Tamariki.

## **Appendix 2**

We are concerned around the timelines provided for in Appendix 2. Members will need more time than 3 days to consider and seek advice and negotiate any job offer. We ask that a PSA representative be part of the review panel and any job sizing undertaken.

We do not agree with your reassignment and equalisation proposals as these are significantly inferior to the current provisions in our Collective Agreement. We seek that any changes to our members hours of work including scheduling rosters are as far as possible, negotiated and agreed and should sit outside this proposed change document.

For clarity, we do not agree to any restrictions on access to alternatives for affected staff (including redundancy compensation) for members covered by our Collective Agreement.

## **Shift Patterns**

The PSA is aware of the numerous shift patterns and the difficulties this presents in providing cover. However, we do not support any shift change that does not prioritize health and safety, work life balance without adequate remuneration. We recommend the use of loading as an incentive and recognition for those shifts requiring consistent weekend work. We also recommend a roster group with PSA representation be established to canvas the needs and concerns of any proposed shift changes.

## **Name Change**

PSA does not support any name change to the National Contact Centre. The reason being is it would isolate and distance the Centre from the rest of the Organisation and any name change would require whakapapa to give mana to the name. The example in the document "Parenga Tamaiti" (child protection) helpline" is tokenistic.

## **Absence of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the Treaty of Waitangi**

There is no reference to Te Tiriti o Waitangi in the document nor any application of the cultural lens applied. A member reported to us that in a discussion with their line manager they were told “you have to lift your cultural lens out of this work”. The PSA is acutely aware and advocates for increased cultural responsiveness particularly for Māori. We think that the new Māori Practice Coach role appears to have a compliance function rather than supporting transformational practice.

## **Section 131A Care of Children Act 2004.**

PSA categorically rejects any of the changes proposed to section 131A Care of Children Act 2004, court report writing, which we regard as exploitative as well as being ethically and possibly legally non-compliant. We will not agree with any proposal involving a reduction in salary or role with respect to section 131A. It is our view that this would fail legal and ethical compliance and is contrary to section 6AA(2) of the Social Workers Registration Act 2003 as well as the Social Workers Registration Board’s code of conduct principles 1.2 and 1.3. We do not support the use of a “non-regulated work force” carrying out work usually undertaken by registered social workers who must hold an annual practicing certificate. The regulatory regime is designed to keep the client and the social worker safe.

We have concerns regarding the possibility of registered Social Workers being reassigned into Service Agent positions. The consultation document indicates that this would be based on an abating salary due to the different role. We do not believe that this can occur. In addition we are concerned about the professional safety of any registered social worker who transitions to this role may still be required to hold an APC.

## **Supervisors**

We do not support the change from supervisor to team leader as this does not promote a relationship of professional and pastoral support and the reflective practise element of supervision. It seems that the team leader role is more task focussed rather than about practise.

This is a radical proposal and PSA is concerned about the implications of separating off “professional “supervision from the supervisor job description. Members have expressed concern about the quality of professional supervision within Oranga Tamariki, and our recent survey reflected different views of what supervision should look like inside Oranga Tamariki. This proposed change should have been included in terms of reference for the review of supervision policy which sits in our current Terms of Settlement, and specifies supervision for “non-frontline” staff. Supervisor’s feedback included the need for a reduction of administrative line

management functions and improved access to professional development including assistance to acquire post graduate qualifications in supervision so they can deliver the highest quality of supervision to statutory social workers. This proposal of changing social work supervisors into Team Leaders Social Work, is going in a different direction.

### **The merger of Customer Service Representatives (CSR) and Social Work Resource Assistants (SWRA) teams**

This proposal is not supported by the current SWRA team because there is no assurance that following this merger SWRAs and CSRs that these distinct roles will not become interchangeable. For an example SWRAs may be required to work on the phones which they were not employed to do.

The proposed job title change to “Service Agents” does not truly appreciate the duties and skills required to undertake their work. This is particularly apparent with comments describing the need for an agile workforce capable of “multi-tasking”. These roles were originally conceived to support social workers.

### **Practise Manager Disestablishment**

There are concerns regarding the oversight of an on-call manager outside of normal business hours who would support staff when difficult situations arise. This will take away the opportunity for the ability to debrief with their staff after a serious incident. This is an organisational risk particularly now because of the professional and ethical requirements due to mandatory registration for social workers. We know that many staff at the contact centre who work these after hours are new graduates who are still developing their practise.

### **Summation**

Government moves over the last 12 months have made the practice of social work fully regulated by the Social Workers Registration Board, and this proposal effectively seeks to replace regulated social workers with information agents who are an ‘unregulated workforce’. This reflects the corporate lens of this review, which has devalued the social work / professional lens. PSA thinks because the National Contact Centre provides the initial intake for statutory social work, it must provide and promote aspirational professional practice standards. These require skills which need to be developed, nurtured and co-designed with the professionals that actually undertake the mahi. Members indicated that consultation over this proposal has been flawed with suggestions from members being discarded and not materialising in this final document. PSA expected more engagement, especially in light of Oranga Tamariki’s renewed commitment to “our relationship reset”, and

this raises further questions about the Ministry's commitment to the principles of High Performance High Engagement espoused by Te Kawa Mataaho.

**For further  
information about  
this submission  
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<sup>i</sup> Document Purpose page 6.