

## Child Safety – what are we seeking through arbitration?

We are currently in arbitration for the Child Safety, Youth & Women collective agreement. Right now we are writing a full agreement as we would want it to come out from the Commission.

This is a key document for the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission to consider. It is our aim for the end of the process. It is our pitch to the independent umpire that if union members got to draft the agreement on our own it would say this. Your Steering Committee delegates and union office staff will be making the strongest and most comprehensive arguments then to support the changes we are seeking.

Read through to find out how you can help make our case as strong as possible!

Here are the highlights of our position:

### **Caseloads**

Child Safety Officers have been struggling with excessive caseloads for far too long. It's not good for workers and it's certainly not good for the children and families you work with. Despite the figures that the Department uses to suggest caseloads are "reasonable" (on average), we know this is not the lived experience.

Our proposal for caseload management draws heavily on the model used in West Australia and includes a caseload cap at 15 cases and a strict, time-limited escalation process so that the risk does not lie with the CSO.

### **Workload management**

We know that the workload pressures in Child Safety are not just on CSOs. CSSCs are environments that rely on everyone playing their part and administration officers and professional officers across the board will always pitch in to ensure the work gets done. Currently, there are only workload management 'guidelines' for CSOs, and we are seeking that these are expanded to include all roles within a CSSC.

### **Hours of Work**

Child Safety workers are working too many hours and not being paid for them. How many hours of accrued time are you donating to the Department at the end of every work cycle? We have heard from

too many members that this is a common occurrence (that is, if timesheets are being used to accurately record actual hours). We are seeking that workers are able to convert any hours in excess of the carry-over limit to Time Off In Lieu (TOIL) or be paid out at the end of the work cycle.

### **Classifications**

AO2 staff in Child Safety work units are so vital to the working of each and every team. A number of AO2s are also the first point of contact for families and other stakeholders. The work expected of AO2s and AO3s is also very inconsistent. It's not fair that workers are expected to do the same duties and are paid differently. Our proposal is to reclassify AO2s to AO3 to make sure these staff are recognised and fairly remunerated.

Did you know that Queensland Child Safety workers are some of the lowest paid in the country? The expectations and risk placed on PO2s is completely out of line with how you are remunerated. The progression process from PO2 to PO3 is also onerous and dissuades CSOs from completing it. Our proposal, based on another state's child protection classification structure, means that CSOs would start at \$67,000 per annum and, based on annual increments, advance to \$91,000 without having to jump through progression hoops.

These are just some of the improvements we are seeking through arbitration. There is a lot to fix in Child Safety, and opportunities such as this arbitration process do not present themselves frequently.

Remember – only union members get to have a say, and only union members influence the outcome of this process. If you're not yet a member, speak to your local delegate or join online at **[www.together.org.au/join](http://www.together.org.au/join)**

For the most up-to-date information, make sure you go to **[www.together.org.au/csyw](http://www.together.org.au/csyw)** to stay informed. We will also need evidence and witness statements from members about what is really happening in Child Safety, and how our proposals will make life better for you, your co-workers and the families you work with.