

 ***Media Release****Sunday 5 March 2023*

**THE NEXT NSW GOVERNMENT SHOULD HAVE A NSW MINISTER FOR CHILDREN**

**A NSW Premier’s Priority – aimed at keeping vulnerable children safe – is at risk of failing this year.**

Based on the current trajectory, the target of decreasing the proportion of children and young people re-reported as at Risk of Significant Harm by 20 per cent by the end of 2023 will not be met.

Based on the latest [DCJ Quarterly statistical report on services for children and young people](https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=842274):

* Some 56,258 children in NSW were classified as being at “Risk Of Significant Harm” by the State Government in the July-September 2022 quarter alone.
* This was up 2.8 per cent compared to the previous quarter, and 11.5 per cent compared to the same quarter in 2021 when NSW was in the grip of the second COVID lockdowns.
* Only 8,514 children were seen by a DCJ case worker in the same period, down 7.4 per cent on the previous quarter, and down 8.2 per cent compared to the same time the previous year.
* 35.9 per cent of children and young people were re-reported at Risk of Significant Harm within 12 months of their case plan closure. The target is to get this to 32.3 per cent by June 2023.

**Today two peak social service agencies – Fams and AbSec – have come together to argue that the NSW election should be a call to arms to protect vulnerable children.**

Fams, the peak body for children and family early intervention and prevention services, has outlined how NSW can effectively protect vulnerable kids in NSW via its [new 2023 Policy Platform](https://www.fams.asn.au/2023/01/fams-2023-election-platform/).

**“What we need in this state is a dedicated Minister for Children, who’s directly responsible for an overarching framework to support vulnerable children,” said Fams CEO Susan Watson.**

“We know that the most difference – but also the most harm – can be created to children in about the first 2,000 days of their life, and the Minister will be responsible for focusing on that.

“Child safety issues traverse health, education, Aboriginal affairs, community services and justice portfolios, to name a few, and we need a Minister and a framework to bring these together.

**“If we have a responsible Minister and an overarching framework for child safety, we might be able to stop so many children falling through the cracks.”**

A second plank of the Fams election platform is a call for a significant boost to early intervention and prevention services which assist vulnerable children.

The sector says that kids in regional and remote areas, Aboriginal children and children from low socio-economic backgrounds have a higher rate of being reported at Risk of Significant Harm.

**“A Minister for Children is an obvious idea to address an urgent need from one of the most vulnerable populations – but this needs to be backed by increased investment,” Ms Watson said.**

**“A 25 per cent or higher increase in early intervention and prevention funding will help stem the tide of children classified – or tragically reclassified – as being at risk of significant harm.**

**AbSec CEO, John Leha, said the funding increase would help make tangible progress in the preservation of Aboriginal identity.**

**“We need to support vulnerable families, and ensure that Aboriginal children remain connected to their culture,” Mr Leha said.**

“Government and Aboriginal leadership need to work together to deliver structural changes to bring about change, and increased accountability and rebalancing investment will help drive this.

“We need increased accountability and to rebalance investment including, but not limited to, increasing funding by 25 per cent across early intervention and prevention programs.”

Fam’s call for increased investment in the first 2,000 days and for early intervention has also been supported by the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies.

To view the election platform and more information about Fams go to [www.fams.asn.au](http://www.fams.asn.au/)

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**About Fams**

Fams is a NSW peak body that supports the not-for-profit sector to build capacity and capability. We also advocate for improved policies for children, families, communities and services. Our Vision is that Children thrive within safe, strong and supportive families and communities.

Fams is committed to:

* Children and families receiving the support they need
* Evidence-informed and outcomes-based service delivery
* Government and sector accountability
* Influencing policy

Fams works collaboratively with:

* Government
* Policy and decision-makers
* Non-government organisations
* Academic organisations
* Peak bodies
* Family and community services sector
* Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations
* Organisations working with diverse communities