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October 13 2015 - 3:22PM

## **NSW Trustee and Guardian cuts: 'Privatisation**

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**Murray Trembath**

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 Restructure: The Hurstville office of the NSW Trustee and Guardian is to be closed. Picture: Chris Lane

**UPDATE:** Eight staff positions at Hurstville and four roles at Miranda will be affected by the closure of 10 of the 19 branches of the NSW Trustee and Guardian.

A fact sheet released by the organisation said the new system would provide faster turnaround times due to streamlined processes.

In future, clients in Sydney would be supported by a team of service officers based at Parramatta, the fact sheet said.

At present, a client was assigned to a particular officer in a branch office.

This situation limited the organisation's capacity to meet client needs and was also not financially sustainable.

The fact sheet said one drawback with the present system was that assistance could not be given if a client service officer was absent during annual leave, sick leave or for other reasons.

Another difficulty was that a number of branches did not provide a full range of services.

The State Opposition says services will be dramatically reduced through funding cuts of 20 per cent, recommended by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal.

Between 150 and 200 staff members were expected to lose their jobs, Shadow Attorney General Paul Lynch said.

"The cuts are terrible news for some of the most vulnerable in our society, including our older citizens," he said.

"This is a privatisation by stealth.

"It aims to drive people to private financial managers, a move that creates a risk of managers focusing on management fees rather than estate management for vulnerable people."

### **Hurstville and Miranda staff told, 'seek other opportunities'**

The Hurstville and Miranda offices of the NSW Trustee and Guardian are to be closed.

Ten of the organisation's 19 branches will be axed, with client services to be centralised at the Parramatta office, online help expanded and access to services provided through Service NSW centres.

There was no immediate information on how many staff in the Hurstville and Miranda offices would be affected.

A statement from the organisation said staff would be given "appropriate support" and "encouraged to seek other opportunities within government".

NSW Trustee and Guardian (NSWTG) provides financial management for more than 14,000 people and 1600 deceased estates every year.

It oversees about 7500 Trusts and end of life services (wills and powers of attorney), including 10,000 wills annually.

The statement said the organisation was "changing the way it delivers services to respond to client feedback and better protect and support vulnerable people".

The government had accepted all the recommendations made by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal to improve the sustainability, service quality and performance, the statement said.

Chief executive officer Imelda Dodds said the transformation was "a well thought out plan that puts clients' front and centre".

"We want to make it easier, faster and simpler for clients to access services, have control over their affairs and, on average, pay lower fees," she said.

"The changes include an expanded regional outreach program, more online services and access to NSWTG at Service NSW centres.

"More importantly, I want to assure everyone they can continue to have confidence that NSWTG will keep their finances safe."

The statement said a pilot of the new operating model would commence over the next few months followed by a full transition in 2016.

"NSWTG will consult extensively with clients and community stakeholders throughout this process," the statement said.

NSWTG began in 2009 with the merger of the Office of the Protective Commissioner and the Public Trustee of NSW.

Recommendations of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal: [ipart.nsw.gov.au](http://ipart.nsw.gov.au)

**Do you think the changes will enhance or detract from the NSW Trustee and Guardian's work?**

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