



MEDIA STATEMENT

Thursday, 17 March 2016

RED FLAGS POINT TO RESOURCING

KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- Finding 4 of the report notes that 'systemic issues, such as inadequate resources and excessive workloads, may have contributed to the outcome in the Bunbury case'.
- The report then goes on to say (p13) that there is 'convincing evidence of resourcing and workload issues within the Department' and that it was 'possible that excessive workload meant that the monitoring of the teenager in the period from 2011 was not as good as it could have been'.
- The CPSU/CSA also believe that staff shortages and dividing the case between 2 caseworkers (1 from Bunbury, 1 from Cannington) may have contributed to the tragic events that occurred.
- There are currently 48 caseworker vacancies across the state, including 16 in the metro area and 2.5 in the South West (servicing Bunbury).
- These positions cannot be filled because of the Barnett Government's hiring freeze.
- Finding 7 of the report states that there is 'a direct nexus between the level of staffing resources and the capacity to monitor and service.'
- The union supports the statement in Finding 7 that 'Staffing at a sustainable level, along with appropriate practices, would help prevent a similar death from occurring' and is calling on the Barnett Government to:
 - Grant the Department for Child Protection and Family Support an exemption to the hiring freeze.
 - Fill all vacant caseworker positions as a matter of priority.
 - Authorise hiring of additional caseworkers to ensure all children at risk have direct access to a caseworker.
 - Reverse the 'growth reduction target', which will mean \$40million dollars will be ripped out of the Department's budget between 2016-2019, including \$14million to be taken out this year.

COMMENTS FROM THE CPSU/CSA

The CPSU/CSA welcomes the findings of *Red flags, white flag response?* which was handed down by the Community Development Justice Standing Committee in Parliament this morning.

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It is encouraging that the report acknowledges that the tragic death of a child in Bunbury in 2014 did not occur in a vacuum, but within an under-resourced Child Protection system under immense pressure.

“For too long, the concerns of Child Protection workers have fallen on deaf ears. For years our members have reported that workloads are spiralling out of control,” says branch assistant secretary, Rikki Hendon.

“In November of last year we alerted the Committee to the excessive workloads and lack of resources within the Department and today it is clear that they have heard those concerns.

“The number of children entering state care has more than doubled since 2006, and there are hundreds of children at risk who sit on the so-called ‘Monitored List’ waiting to be allocated a caseworker.

“Until the findings and recommendations of the report are actioned by the Minister it is only a matter of time before another tragedy occurs.

“It is clear that Government should be resourcing and investing in our child protection system, in prevention as well as child-in-care work, not enforcing recruitment freezes and budget cuts.

“It is time for Government to act – to have a heart and properly resource Child Protection in WA.”

FOR FURTHER COMMENT:

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MORE INFORMATION

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