



MEDIA RELEASE

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FUNDING CUTS LEAD TO VIOLENT BEHAVIOUR

The withdrawal of funding for detainee programs and a downgraded approach to dangerous behaviours have contributed to serious safety incidents occurring at Banksia Hill Detention Centre last week, according to the Community and Public Sector Union/Civil Service Association.

There were two attacks on staff at Banksia Hill in three days.

The first occurred last Sunday whereby a detainee assaulted an officer, resulting in that officer being admitted to hospital where he was diagnosed with a perforated eardrum and a concussion.

Last Tuesday there was another incident in which a detainee armed himself with an industrial sized battery, threw this at the officer and then struck him in the face.

Both of the detainees involved in these assaults were housed in the Urquhart unit as participants in the Young Adult Development Program (YADP), a program which has come undone in the face of funding cuts.

“What has become clear to us is that these are not isolated incidents,” says branch assistant secretary, Rikki Hendon.

“They are symptomatic of broader issues at Banksia Hill and highlight the very real and immediate impact of funding cuts on the environment in the facility for both staff and detainees.”

The YADP was designed to provide age relevant education, vocational training, recreation and life skills to detainees approaching adulthood in preparation for release or transition into an adult facility.

At the core of the program was a focus on short education and vocational training courses that were to lead into more structured programs in the community or adult corrective facilities, but the funding for these courses was pulled by the Department of Corrective Service’s Office of Reform twelve months ago.

“What is left of the Young Adult Development Program is really just a shell without any of the strategies or structure to deliver on the Program’s objectives of managing detainee behaviour and preparing them for adulthood and release into the community,” says Ms Hendon.

“When you develop a holistic program like the YADP and take out key elements, you undermine the program as a whole.”

“The Barnett Government’s budget cuts has left the Department focused on penny pinching at the expense of ensuring the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs and the safety of both staff and detainees.”

An inconsistent and downgraded approach to the way in which detainees are reprimanded for poor or dangerous behaviours has also been identified as a contributing factor to the incidents.

“Combine gutted programs with limited consequences for bad behaviour and the results are incidents like those that have occurred in the past few days, which have put officers and other detainees in harm’s way,” says Ms Hendon.

“Our members have described the current conditions at Banksia Hill as “simmering” and fear an escalation of dangerous behaviour, so it is imperative that action is taken to address the situation and prevent further harm.”

FOR COMMENT:

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