



General Media Enquires

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Detention centre is a pressure cooker

The latest incident at the Banksia Hill Detention Centre where up to 90 cells were damaged and detainees were rioting on Sunday night was always going to happen according to the Community and Public Sector Union/Civil Service Association.

CPSU/CSA Branch Secretary Toni Walkington said it was the latest incident at the centre and was product of a number of different issues.

“A pressure-cooker situation has developed because of staff shortages, budget cuts and the reduction of education programs at the detention centre,” Ms Walkington said.

“There are gaps in the rosters and our members are doing far too many shifts to fill in these gaps.”

Ms Walkington said the union had been trying to work with the Department of Corrective Services to resolve the issues but the department’s “hands are tied”.

She said the department only received so much funding from the Barnett Government and was expected to deliver the same services with less resources.

Ms Walkington said only having one juvenile detention centre in Perth was extremely limiting.

“There were two detention centres and that provided some ability to manage the juvenile population but the Barnett Government in its wisdom decided to close down the Rangeview Remand Centre and move all juveniles into Banksia Hill.

“They have mixed those on remand with those who have been sentenced without sufficient staff and resources and it is a cocktail for trouble.

“The ratio of detainees to staff needs to be reduced, especially for the Special Purpose Unit and detainees on remand.

“The excessive workload has seen our members lock down cells because they don’t have enough staff to manage them properly but you can only do that for a while before something like this happens.”

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Ms Walkington said clearly handing over Rangeview to a private company to run a facility for 18 to 24-year-olds and merging the two detention centres was the wrong decision.

“We call on the Barnett Government to rethink its planning and change the situation as a matter of urgency.

“Just over a week ago a youth custodial officer was hospitalised after he was assaulted by an 18-year-old detainee who king hit him from behind and constantly kneed him when he was down.”

Ms Walkington said the detention centre staff, emergency support group and police were to be commended for their rapid and professional response which resulted in the situation being contained within hours.

“However the Barnett Government needs to give priority to addressing the causes of this incident and not rely on the staff to continue to manage in unacceptable conditions.”

FOR COMMENT:

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