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**Tuesday June 5, 2012**

## **Maintenance contract is not working says union**

The privatised maintenance contract model introduced at the Department of Housing in 2010 is not working like it was hyped up to be, particularly in the Mid-West according to the Community and Public Sector Union/Civil Service Association.

At a time when the Barnett Government is slashing millions of dollars from the public sector under a so-called 'efficiency' drive public housing tenants are experiencing delays in getting maintenance work done.

The department is not getting value from the system that was supposed to save the government money.

"Housing is paying for unfinished maintenance work because they have limited resources to confirm it has been completed," Ms Walkington said.

"Often staff are not aware the work has not been done until the property has been vacated and we have heard of examples in Geraldton, Carnarvon and Meekatharra.

"Staff have been directed to take photographs to prove the maintenance void."

The Meekatharra maintenance is coordinated by Geraldton, 541km to the east.

Housing and Property Service Officers are not allowed to communicate directly with Transfield contractors but often field requests from sub-contractors who want more information.

Ms Walkington said this layered approach was both frustrating and inefficient.

She said this was one of the many pitfalls of privatising a service that should still be handled by the public sector.

The head contractor model has been plagued by controversy since the start and was the subject of an internal audit that was tabled by Housing Minister Troy Buswell in State Parliament last month.

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The audit was from the July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011 and uncovered more than 100 examples where the date for completion of maintenance tasks was prior to the job being issued.

“While the audit only covered that time frame we are continually hearing about similar events since that time, so we have to ask how has the head contractor model improved?”

“The auditors also had concerns that the risk of human error and fault still exists.”

**FOR COMMENT:**

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