



# MEDIA RELEASE

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**For immediate release**

## Overcrowding is a serious issue

A Productivity Commission report saying WA has the worst prison overcrowding rate in the country is nothing new according to the Community and Public Sector Union/Civil Service Association.

For more than two years the union has been lobbying the Corrective Services Minister on the impact overcrowding was having on their members.

CPSU/CSA Branch Secretary Toni Walkington said overcrowding put extra pressure on staff working on programs such as education, health and counselling, leading to ongoing workload issues and increased stress for both staff and prisoners.

“We believe the resultant increase in workload and stress for staff is contributing to an increase in sick leave and overtime,” Ms Walkington said.

“We are concerned that prison numbers will continue to rise.”

Ms Walkington said outgoing Parole Board chief Natalie Johnson’s tough stance where less people were being released on parole was also straining the system.

“Prisoners refused parole are now completing their sentence and returning to their community without any initial supervision or rehabilitation.

“The Barnett Government needs to invest in crime and rehabilitation to reduce the number of people reoffending which could also reduce the number of crime victims as well.”

Ms Walkington said overcrowding also threatened prisoner and staff safety.

“Only last week we saw a prison guard king hit to the ground at Acacia Prison.”

There are 1000 prisoners in the facility east of Perth that was designed for 750.

“We are concerned that the conditions and heightened prisoner stress in a growing prison population will lead to a critical incident with major ramifications for staff and prisoners,” Ms Walkington said.

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