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Civil Service Association of WA

MEDIA RELEASE

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Barnett Government closes rehabilitation centre for young offenders

Magistrates will have reduced access to diversion programs for offenders with the Riverbank Community Work Management Branch in Caversham set to close at the end of the month, only three years after the Barnett Government talked up its future.

The Department of Corrective Services spent \$2million upgrading the former Riverbank detention centre in 2010, saying the training complex could steer offenders of all ages away from a life of crime.

Acting commissioner Heather Harker, who was the deputy commissioner at the time, said they planned to help with the rehabilitation of young offenders.

“Particularly in terms of the workshops, woodwork, metalwork, the kitchens, the laundries and use them again as an opportunity to build the employment skills of the offenders,” she told ABC’s 7.30 Report on August 27, 2010.

“What has changed in three years?” Community and Community and Public Sector Union/Civil Service Association branch secretary Toni Walkington asked.

“This is another example of the Barnett Government getting its priorities wrong and cutting back on essential community services.”

Ms Walkington said the rehabilitation programs were being rapidly decommissioned because of budget cutbacks.

“Quite simply, it’s a bad decision.

“It is wrong to cut back on programs that teach offenders valuable skills that could lead to employment opportunities.”

Ms Walkington said the programs also helped offenders develop a strong work ethic as they were diverted to a non-offending lifestyle.

“The theory is if young offenders were doing something constructive they are less likely to get into trouble.”

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Riverbank also provided a place for community work camps to be housed when it was too hot or too wet to conduct their outdoor projects such as gardening and cleanups for charity and church groups.

“Our members want to know what will happen if there is no undercover area available to work camps.”

Ms Walkington said many of the offenders were from dysfunctional homes and staff had seen positive impacts the workshop programs had on these young people.

FOR COMMENT:

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