



3 November 2015

Ms Margaret Quirk MLA  
Chairperson  
Community Development and Justice Standing Committee  
Parliament House  
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Dear Ms Quirk

Thank you for your prompt response to our letter dated 27<sup>th</sup> October 2015.

The CPSU/CSA would be pleased to elaborate on our concerns raised in the letter at a public hearing and is grateful for the opportunity to do so. We understand that the hearing will be a part of an agency review of the Department of Child Protection and Family Support's (CPFS) management of children at risk, with particular reference to the case of a teenage father in Department care who was convicted of the manslaughter of his infant son earlier this year.

From the information provided at the public hearing by the department regarding the case referred to above, it is obvious that the young man in question was hard to reach and that there were multiple reasons why it was difficult for the department to engage with him.

The incident that occurred in February 2014 brought public attention to the workings of the department. We are heartened by the statement of the previous Director General of the department, Mr Terry Murphy at the Public Hearing conducted by the Committee in March last year, that CPFS wanted to "*...in the absence of negligent or culpable behaviour by staff, to assure them that their bosses have their back-that the organization stands behind them*". We also stand with our members and do not wish to apportion individual blame.

The incident is indicative of a wider problem of a lack of resources not allowing staff to do their job properly. With this in mind, our evidence will be discussing how the incident in Bunbury is indicative of a wider problem of a department with staff ready and willing to assist but are finding their hands tied due to inadequate resourcing. This leads to children who are hard to reach slipping through the cracks. Our members are making decisions of the utmost importance to the lives of children in this state. Due to

inadequate resources, members are presented with situations where the level of risk is unacceptably high. We would be happy to share some of these stories with you at the hearing.

Without a significant injection of resources into the Department, incidents like the one in question will inevitably occur again the future.

We welcome the agency review into the identification of children at risk and believe that while the committee is looking at a particular incident a broader investigation into the Department may be warranted.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rikki Hendon', followed by a period.

Rikki Hendon  
Branch Assistant Secretary