



MEDIA RELEASE

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Staff numbers don't match increase in child protection cases

More needs to be done to protect vulnerable children in Western Australia's care according to the Community and Public Sector Union/Civil Service Association.

CPSU/CSA Branch Assistant Secretary Rikki Hendon made the comment at a local event promoting the Protecting Children is Everybody's Business theme as part of National Child Protection Week from September 2-8.

The aim of the national campaign is to prevent child abuse and neglect and to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all Australia's children.

Ms Hendon said they feared for the future of upwards of 740 children on Department for Child Protection waiting lists as case workers struggle to deal with an increased workload.

There has been a massive rise in the number of investigations in the last two years, from 951 in January-March 2010 to 3043 in the same period this year.

"This spike in the number of cases has not been reflected in the number of staff available to work with these children," Ms Hendon said.

"The Barnett Government has put a cap on the number of full-time equivalent staff the Department can employ which means many children are not getting appropriate support.

"As the number of cases increases so too does the number of children not getting timely access to a case worker."

Ms Hendon said they again call on the Barnett Government to remove the restrictions on the number of workers at the Department for Child Protection, which would not only reduce the waiting lists but take the pressure of staff already employed.

"The government continually claims that children who are on the waiting lists are monitored but it is often just the case information that is monitored.

"Just because information on a case is looked at it doesn't mean there is any more safety for the child concerned."

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According to the National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN), child abuse and neglect is Australia's most significant problem.

They say more than 30,000 children across the country were proven to have been abused or neglected in 2011.

Child abuse can cover physical abuse, psychological abuse, sexual abuse, neglect and witnessing family violence.

FOR COMMENT:

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