

DEPARTMENT FOR CHILD PROTECTION AND FAMILY SUPPORT — CHILD DEATH

**18. Hon SALLY TALBOT to the Minister for Child Protection:**

I refer to media reports that a disabled child who was in the care of the Department for Child Protection and Family Support died after his care workers lost him in bushland on the Dampier Peninsula on 14 March 2013.

- (1) What went wrong with arrangements put in place by the minister's department to care for this child?
- (2) What will change as a result of this tragedy to ensure that such a thing never happens again?

**Hon HELEN MORTON replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

- (1) The child was 15 years of age at the time of his death and was registered with the Disability Services Commission due to an intellectual disability. He was in the care of the CEO of the Department for Child Protection and Family Support at the time of registration with the commission and continued to be under DCPFS's care until his death. In 2011, DCPFS contracted a placement option for the young person with a non-government organisation, jointly funded by DCPFS and the commission. The commission's local area coordinator and the DCPFS staff on Dampier Peninsula and the case manager had regular contact with the young person for the duration of his registration with the commission and while he was in care.

Prior to the day of the child's death, DCPFS had no issues with the level of care he was receiving from his carers and the organisation contracted to provide the care. The child left the carers, against their advice, to go to the water. His carers responded very quickly, pursuing him, but lost sight of him and raised emergency services within an hour of him going missing.

- (2) The department constantly reviews its placements for vulnerable young people. It looks forward to the results of the investigation by the Ombudsman and the opportunity to receive any recommendations about any policy and procedures for children in care with high needs.