



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND JUSTICE STANDING COMMITTEE

MEDIA RELEASE

From: Ms M.M. Quirk, MLA
Chair

To: ALL MEDIA

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Teenager who assaulted baby should have been supervised: agency review

The Community Development and Justice Standing Committee has concluded that there were enough warning signs to have warranted supervised visits for a teenager in State care who fatally assaulted his newborn baby when visiting him in hospital.

The Committee contends that even though there were multiple red flags raised in relation to the troubled teenager's behaviour, the Department had not ensured that he was supervised.

This may have been due to a lack of staff and resources rather than a conscious decision to allow him unsupervised access.

The Committee made the findings in its agency review report *Red flags, white flag response? The Department for Child Protection and Family Support's management of a troubled boy with a baby*. The report, tabled in the Legislative Assembly today (Thursday, 17 March), made seven findings and two recommendations.

The Committee began its review of the Department's management of the case in March 2014, in the weeks following the death of the baby. Following the conclusion of the teenager's trial, and having been granted access to the judge's sentencing comments in relation to the case, the Committee held a second hearing with the Department in November 2015.

The Committee also conducted a hearing with the Community and Public Sector Union/Civil Service Association after receiving a letter from the organisation outlining concerns about systemic issues within the Department which may have contributed to the tragic outcome in the Bunbury case.

The Committee did not wish to apportion individual blame for the tragic incident and is mindful that the staff involved, and indeed the whole agency, would have been deeply affected by the tragedy.

However, in the interests of ensuring such a situation is not repeated, the Committee felt bound to investigate concerns that the Department is struggling to cope with a high volume of cases, which impacts on its capacity to monitor and supervise children in care.

Copies of the report are available on the Committee's website under 'Reports' at www.parliament.wa.gov.au/cdjsc

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