



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR CUNNINGHAM

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DEPARTMENT OF FAMILIES

Mr COPELAND (Cunningham—NPA) (10.28 a.m.): There is yet another issue of great concern emanating from the Department of Families. The department is currently in the process of abolishing the compulsory basic four-week centralised training block in child protection and youth justice undertaken in Brisbane by every Families officer on gaining employment with the department. This face-to-face essential basic training for new officers is likely to be replaced with online training, with the expectation that officers will complete this training in an unsupervised environment and in their own time.

I find this astounding when there is already a public perception that the Department of Families staff are inexperienced, underresourced and understaffed due to this government's refusal to increase funding. This move to remove the only centralised, basic, compulsory training these officers currently receive will serve only to exacerbate this perception and create greater unrest within the department itself.

How anyone could realistically expect these new officers to complete their training online in their offices is beyond me. Officers statewide are already forced to manage case loads to deal with an overloaded schedule, prioritise cases according to who is in the most danger of harm and write off hundreds of cases that to this day remain unassessed. This government expects its Families officers to carry an unrealistic burden, placing both the staff and their clients under unacceptable stress and, most importantly, at untenable risk.

Last month the Forde inquiry monitoring committee told state parliament that the Families Department was underfunded by \$171 million and operated in 'constant crisis'. The minister's response to this was to remove the only basic, centralised training that these Families officers receive—the only training that they currently undertake. It is not in where the tea and coffee are kept or how to log on in the morning; this is four weeks of training in child protection and youth justice, the primary responsibility of this department. This is an area of employment where getting it right can literally mean the difference between life and death. The Family Services officers know that, but apparently the minister has not yet grasped it.

Time expired.
