



Dear Premier Barnett and Mr McGowan,

September 4th is the first day of National Child Protection Week, an annual event which, for over 25 years, has reminded the community of the importance of committing to the safety and wellbeing of Australia's children. The message for the week-long event in 2016 is "Protecting Children is Everyone's Business: Play Your Part." This year, we the undersigned, urge both major parties to play your part by committing to West Australia's child protection safety net.

We, the undersigned, wish to express our concern over the shrinking funding for direct child protection services within Western Australia. In particular, we refer to the \$40.876 million cut from direct child protection services in the 2016/2017 State Budget, including the cuts to critical early intervention programs such as the Responsible Parenting Services, as well as three-year cuts to family and domestic violence services, family support services and homelessness services. An effective and well-resourced West Australian child protection network must be able to identify children and families at risk sooner, enabling early intervention and support to prevent potential harm. This approach is necessary to prevent the lifetime costs of young people with inadequate support leaving care, which has been estimated as being as high as \$738,741 per individual.

Social workers working in child protection and family support assist individuals, families and communities advance their independence and capabilities to function in our community. Investing in the protection of our children delivers rewards for our health, education, community safety outcomes as well as the future of our state. We cannot remain silent while our community's most vulnerable children are forgotten. There are now more than 4,500 children in the care of the Department of Child Protection and Family Services. In 2014-2015, 52% of children within out of home care were Aboriginal. West Australia must see real action to offer our children and families a pathway from harm.

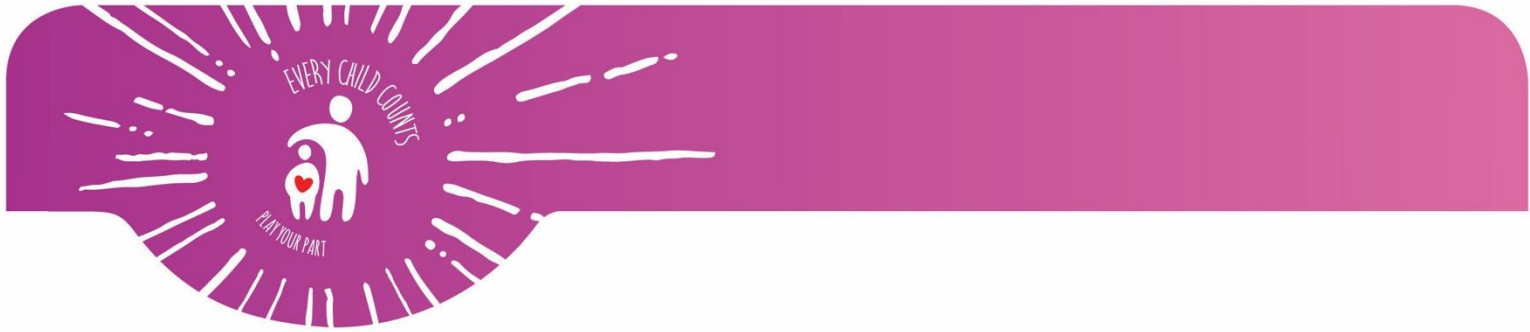
Cutting early intervention child protection and family support services at this time is a mistake given the need for specific and targeted strategies to assist West Australia's Aboriginal communities. Any strategy to defund West Australia's child protection network risks more high cost interventions, such as the removal of children from families and communities, creating further poor life outcomes and inter-generational harm.

We the undersigned urge both major parties to commit to a prompt reversal of the funding cuts to child protection services — on Father's Day, we urge you to play your part in prioritising and protecting our children.

IN SUPPORT



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