

Media Release

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Child care centre turning families away because of mining boom

A child care service will be meeting with the Community Services Minister Simone McGurk today to discuss the challenges over the provision of childcare places in Port Hedland.

One Tree Community Services, which operates the Len Taplin Children's Service has 55 babies on its waiting list. Altogether one hundred children are waiting for spots to become available.

There are four child care centres in Port Hedland. All are struggling to cope with demand as parents look for places for their children.

One Tree Community Services is currently talking to the Town of Port Hedland about working together to find a larger building, so it can accommodate more children.

Chief executive officer of One Tree, Karri Hillier says while a resurgence in mining operations is good news for the state's economy, it leads to pressure on amenities and services.

"While we all want to see WA prosper and thrive, we need to be able to offer new families the child care they need."

"We are getting calls from two to four families every day at Len Taplin Children's Service who are all seeking places. Not having enough places is preventing people from returning to work and impacting on the local economy by limiting the work force."

"All the signs are that as the year progresses our wait list will get longer. There's a real urgency to find a bigger place."

The mining industry is experiencing a period of growth again after three years of decline. The Chamber of Minerals and Energy predicts 20,000 jobs to be created in the Pilbara next year alone.

Port Hedland is a major shipping hub for iron. The biggest employers in the area are BHP, Roy Hill and Rio Tinto. The town also plays an important role in the offshore gas industry.

The mayor of Port Hedland Camillo Blanco said the town has recently seen a shift in demographics.

"Houses are so much more affordable now, you can buy a 3 X 1 for as little as \$150,000, so young families see the potential in moving here. We are looking at ways to increase child care spaces"

Ms McGurk will tour the Len Taplin Children's Service with the mayor later today.

Note to journalists

For further information, please contact the Communications Officer:

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