

'Concern over trials social workers face', The Mercury, 5 September 2015

TASMANIA'S social workers are stretched to the limit dealing with family violence, child protection and other challenges in hospitals, schools and the community, a seminar has been told.

More than 100 of the state's 280 Australian Association of Social Workers members who work, or plan to work, with the victims of family violence, attended a seminar at Campbell Town yesterday.

Forty per cent of them were students.

"It would be fair to say most Tasmanian workers feel under pressure and stretched," AASW Tasmanian branch board member Russell McCashney said.

Mr McCashney said family violence was a "high-risk situation" that impacted on the child protection system, schools and hospitals.

"Tasmania also has a high suicide rate, and in rural and isolated settings, people can be more at risk," he said.

Mr McCashney said that he welcomed pending changes to the state's child protection system in the wake of revelations more than 100 child welfare notifications were not acted on during the past 12 months.

"Hopefully the changes will take some pressure of the workers," he said. Human Services Minister Jacqui Petrusma made 11 recommendations after she sought a report from the child protection service in the state's North-West.

Those recommendations included a review of supervision arrangements for staff taking notifications, and the relocation of intake and response teams to one site.

Ms Petrusma said changing the child protection system aimed to help Tasmania's "frontline" child protection workers deliver better outcomes for children.

"Of the 11 recommendations from the review into North-West child protection notifications, six have been fully implemented, four are being implemented and the last will be part of the redesign," Ms Petrusma said.

Mr McCashney said that Tasmanian social workers were very active in the state's hospitals, where they were part of discharge planning in a bid to break the cycle of family violence.

"It is important that the public understands the depth of what social workers do," he said.

"A lot of the work is undertaken behind the scenes, but it is very important work." Mr McCashney said that the seminar helped social workers boost their skills, knowledge and expertise, while developing the appropriate qualities needed for professional practice.