



Attorney General; Minister for Commerce

Our Ref: 67-11868

Ms J.M Freeman, MLA
Chair
Education and Health Standing Committee
Parliament House
4 Harvest Terrace
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Dear Ms Freeman

Thank you for your correspondence dated 10 May 2019 on behalf of the Education and Health Standing Committee (EHSC) regarding the Coroner's Report on the Inquest into the Deaths of 13 Children and Young Persons in the Kimberley Region (the Coroner's Inquest).

In response to your query, I can advise that the Western Australian Government has released a Statement of Intent as an interim response on the issue of Aboriginal youth suicide. The document provides a preliminary whole-of-government response to each of the recommendations of the Coroner's Inquest and those of the former EHSC's 'Learnings from the Message Stick: the report of the Inquiry into Aboriginal youth suicide in remote areas' (the Message Stick Inquiry). The Government is implementing or has accepted, or accepted in principle, a large majority of the recommendations, and has not rejected any.

Action has already been taken towards implementing some of those recommendations through a range of Aboriginal wellbeing measures in this year's budget, including:

- \$6.5 million for the Aboriginal Community Connectors program to improve community safety and reduce community consequences of alcohol and other drugs and related 'at risk' behaviors;
- Diversionary programs in the Kimberley, including the Kununurra PCYC (\$2 million) and the West Kimberley Youth and Resilience Hub (\$1.3 million);
- \$20.1 million for the North West Drug and Alcohol Support Program to reduce the harm caused by alcohol and other drugs in the Kimberley, Pilbara, and Mid-West;
- Continued support for the work of the Mental Health Commission in reducing suicide risk in Western Australia via the Suicide Prevention: 2020 strategy (\$8.1 million); and
- A Kimberley Juvenile Justice Strategy (\$900,000) to develop place-based prevention and diversion initiatives for young people across the Kimberley.

These funding commitments are on top of the Government's funding commitment to continue the Regional Youth Justice Strategy in the Kimberley and Pilbara Regions (\$21.5M).

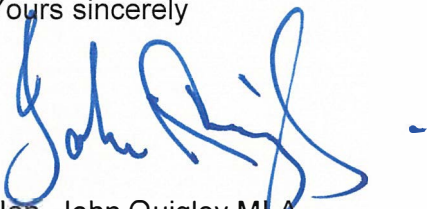
Subject to the consultation process a comprehensive response to the Coroner's Inquest and the Message Stick Inquiry is expected by the end of the year. Ultimately, this process must be informed by the community, designed by the community and driven by the community; accordingly, the Government will be engaging with key Aboriginal stakeholders over the coming months to identify ways in which these reforms, including those arising from the recommendations of the Coroner's Inquest, can be best implemented in partnership with the Aboriginal community.

Although the Office of the State Coroner sits within the Attorney General's portfolio, the Attorney General does not have any statutory authority to enforce coronial recommendations. In its Review of Coronial Practice in Western Australia Final Report, the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia recommended all coronial recommendations directed towards public statutory authorities or public entities be subject to mandatory response requirements, and the government is currently considering amendments to the *Coroners Act* which will give effect to the recommendation. Furthermore, as the Attorney General I will be working closely with my Department and the community to ensure those initiatives that reside within my portfolio are implemented in line with the Government's full response to the Coroner's Inquest and the Message Stick Inquiry.

I trust this response provides you with information that shows the current Government is committed to addressing both Aboriginal youth suicide as well as more broadly – the "Our Priorities" goal of Aboriginal wellbeing.

Thank you for your correspondence.

Yours sincerely



Hon. John Quigley MLA
ATTORNEY GENERAL; MINISTER FOR COMMERCE

17 JUL 2013