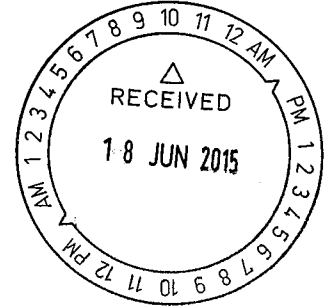




Minister for Police; Road Safety;
Training and Workforce Development; Women's Interests

Our Ref: 45-15000

Hon Simon O'Brien MLC
Chairman
Standing Committee on Environmental and Public Affairs
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000



Dear Mr O'Brien

Petition No. 81- Death in Police Custody

Thank you for your letter of 12 May 2015 regarding the above Petition, tabled in the Legislative Council and referred to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs. I understand the Committee is undertaking preliminary inquiries relating to deaths in custody, specifically the death of Ms Julieka Dhu in Police custody in South Hedland in August 2014.

As you are aware, the investigation into the death of Ms Dhu falls under the responsibility of the State Coroner, as all deaths in custody are subject to a mandatory inquest. Western Australia Police have completed an investigation into this matter and have submitted a report to the Coroner. As this matter remains the responsibility of the State Coroner, I am unable to provide any further comment on this matter.

In October 2014 the Premier made a public commitment to try and reduce Aboriginal deaths in custody and the number of Aboriginal people who are incarcerated in the justice system. A project team was established within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet to progress the commitment. The team included members from Western Australia Police, the Department of Corrective Services, the Department of the Attorney General and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

The project team consulted widely and has reported to Government who are considering a range of initiatives aimed at the creation of safer custody environments, avoiding incarceration for low level offending and prevention and diversion.

As you are aware, the Perth Watch House has a nurse present 24 hours a day, to assist with medical emergencies and provide medical services pertaining to a detainee's fitness for custody. In regional areas, it is WA Police practice that any detainee found to be in need of medical attention is assessed by a medical practitioner, who determines the detainee's fitness for custody.

Matters relating to the Inspector of Custodial Services should be referred to the Minister for Corrective Services.

WA Police through the Evidence Based Policing Project are drawing on empirical research and statistical analysis to identify, implement and evaluate policing strategies with regard to what does and does not work in the context of policing in the community. WA Police are also developing diversion programs for first time offenders, for consideration by the State Government.

In addition, the Community Crime Prevention Fund supports crime prevention initiatives by local communities, to address identified crime prevention priorities. Crime prevention priorities for this program include:

- prevention and early intervention to address the needs of children and families;
- youth justice and reducing re-offending;
- preventing and responding to antisocial behaviour;
- addressing and reducing drug and alcohol related crime; and
- targeting priority crimes.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention and trust the information provided is of assistance.

Yours sincerely



**LIZA HARVEY MLA
MINISTER FOR POLICE; ROAD SAFETY;
TRAINING AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT; WOMEN'S INTERESTS**

18 JUN 2015