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EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE

12 November 2015

Hon Colin Barnett, MLA
Premier; Minister for State Development; Science
1 Parliament Place
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Dear Premier

Extension to BHP Billiton Kurra Camp Lease

The Education and Health Standing Committee wishes to express its concern with the recent decision to grant a lease extension to BHP Billiton for its Kurra camp, located on the edge of Newman.

The Committee was commissioned by Parliament to conduct an inquiry into the impact of FIFO work arrangements on the mental health of workers. One major factor affecting worker mental health was a sense of disconnection from family and community. The placement of group or individual worker accommodation facilities integrated into a town (not out of town or even on the outskirts of town) is conducive to addressing individual isolation and community disconnect. Please note this is not about mandating residential status for workers but connecting community with FIFO workers where towns are in close proximity to the mining operation.

The Committee particularly directs the Premier to pages 129–139 in its report *The impact of FIFO work practices on mental health* in which it makes four recommendations relating to workers engaging with local communities:

Recommendation 27

Where possible, FIFO workers should be encouraged and enabled to engage with the local host community.

Recommendation 28

Mining companies should engage with local host communities to ensure that the placement of accommodation facilities brings benefits to local communities, as well as benefits to the mental health of workers.

Recommendation 29

That the Department of State Development investigate mechanisms to encourage resource companies to invest in providing workers the opportunity to reside in local communities in order to improve mental health.

Recommendation 30

The Department of State Development should develop a strategic plan for the decision-making process for the placement of FIFO accommodation camps, which must include consideration of workers' mental health and access to local communities. Such a plan should include a community impact assessment.

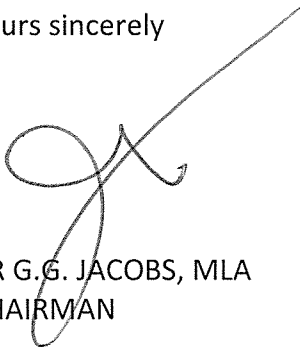
The Committee notes that in its response, the Government supported recommendations 27, 28 and 29. In noting recommendation 30, the Government gave the undertaking that 'DSD will work with relevant stakeholders to ensure that decision making for the placement of FIFO accommodation camps considers amongst other things, workers' mental and access to local communities.'

The Committee is of the view that your recent decision is not consistent with the Government's response to the recommendations of the report.

It is important to remember that the trigger to our inquiry was the publicised suicides in the FIFO workforce, and so anything we can do to reduce the feeling of isolation, while increasing the sense of community, will help to address these tragic losses.

I am happy to discuss the matters raised in this letter with you at any time.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'G.G. Jacobs', with a long, sweeping line extending upwards and to the right.

DR G.G. JACOBS, MLA
CHAIRMAN