

KEN WYATT'S LINE IN THE SAND

ONE IN FOUR

REVEALED: The shocking figure of how many deaths of indigenous children are from suicide

EXCLUSIVE ANNABEL HENNESSY

Ken Wyatt says the rate of suicide in indigenous communities is not receiving the level of attention it should be and more needed be done to tackle shocking figures showing suicide is the cause of one in four deaths of Aboriginal children.

Ahead of the Kimberley suicide roundtable in Broome today, the Minister for Indigenous Australians says the

country needs to tackle "inter-generational trauma, poverty, barriers to education and employment" to work towards stopping the deaths.

Mr Wyatt pointed to official statistics which show that in 2018 suicide was the leading cause of death for Aboriginal children, accounting for more than a quarter of all Aboriginal child deaths. "Sadly, indigenous Australians die from intentional self-harm at almost two times the rate than other

Australians," Mr Wyatt said.

"Even more distressing is that more than a quarter of the deaths of indigenous children are by suicide."

It comes as the north of the State continues to be rocked by suicides, with a 12-year-old Pilbara girl among last year's deaths. There is also concern about the community of Balgo.

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Scourge killing our children

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Ahead of the Kimberley suicide roundtable in Broome today, the Minister for Indigenous Australians said the country needs to tackle "intergenerational trauma, poverty, barriers to education and employment" to work towards stopping the deaths.

It comes as the State's North continues to be rocked with suicides, with a 12-year-old girl from the Pilbara among the deaths reported last year. There is also particular concern about the small town of Balgo, which

has a population of just 350, yet recorded three suicides of teenage Aboriginal girls in three months last year.

"The rates of suicide in our indigenous communities don't always receive the level of public attention they should," Mr Wyatt said yesterday.

"We need to commit ourselves to understanding the issues that leave people feeling hopeless. We need to work together, and with our communities to reach out and offer support to those in need."

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cial statistics which show in 2018 suicide was the leading cause of death for Aboriginal children, accounting for more than a quarter of all Aboriginal child deaths. "Sadly, indigenous Australians die from intentional self-harm at almost two times the rate than other Australians. Even more distressing is that more than a quarter of the deaths of indigenous children are by suicide," Mr Wyatt said.

"We know we need to tackle issues such as intergenerational trauma, poverty, barriers to education and employment, while at the same time building resilience through connection with culture and land."

Mr Wyatt will meet leaders from the Kimberley today to discuss the "alarming rates" of suicide in the region.

Among those meeting Mr Wyatt will be Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services chief operating officer Rob McPhee, whose organisation is helping to run the Kimberley Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Trial.

The Kimberley was chosen as the location for one of 12 national trial sites after the cluster of 13 child deaths which occurred in the region in less than four years, including five children aged between 10 and 13.

Mr McPhee said the trial

had placed community liaison officers throughout the Kimberley.

They had been running cultural camps for young people.

Other programs tested included one that gave indigenous people seeking mental health support the option for traditional healing, and additional training for GPs.

Mr McPhee said they were keen for the approach to be rolled out on a more permanent basis once the trial is completed in June.

"The issue (of suicide) still remains in the Kimberley and we need to address it," he said.

Although no decision has been made on what will happen when the trial is over, Mr Wyatt said he was "inspired by the work of some of the organisations we're funding in the Kimberley".

Lifeline: 13 11 14

