

She just felt like there was no escape

EXCLUSIVE ANNABEL HENNESSY
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The heartbroken grandmother of a woman who was found dead in Broome says she believes her granddaughter took her own life because she thought there was no escape from her allegedly abusive ex-partner.

The 34-year-old Kukatja woman from Balgo was found dead at a Broome park on Thursday, February 13. It is believed she died by suicide.

The tragedy comes after a spate of three suicides in Balgo, a remote Kimberley community with a population of about 350, within three months last year.

All were young women.

Yesterday the grandmother of the 34-year-old woman found dead in Broome told The West Australian she believed her granddaughter had taken her own life because of the violence she was allegedly experiencing from her abusive ex-partner.

"She was trying to run to safety but (I believe) he kept on hitting her," the woman, who asked not to be named, said.

She said the alleged violence had followed her granddaughter from Balgo to Perth and Broome.

She said the Balgo community wanted its own safe house for women experiencing domestic violence. At the moment the closest safe house is in Halls Creek, about three hours away.

She said she had not been able to sleep since her granddaughter's death two weeks ago.

"She was good, she would laugh, help me, talks a lot and makes people laugh," the woman said.

Wirrimanu Aboriginal Corporation joint chief executive Hugh Lovesy said the community was "feeling numb" after the spate of suicides.

He said domestic violence had also been a factor in one of the deaths last year and the

community was calling out for its own safe house.

He said that locals wanted to tell their stories to the State Government.

"What really needs to be done, more than anything, is (the Government must) listen to people and then once they've really heard the stories they'll know where to put those resources," Mr Lovesy said.

Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence Minister Simone McGurk said the Government was in discussions with Aboriginal leaders from across the State to develop more effective responses to the impact of family violence in Aboriginal communities.

Ms McGurk said the State had limited information about adult victims of family and domestic violence who had taken their own lives.

"The Ombudsman WA has indicated he will be conducting an investigation into family and domestic violence and suicide.

"His findings will be important for policy development and the State Government's ongoing work to address family and domestic violence," she said.

"While I am yet to be briefed on this case, any death related to family and domestic violence is unacceptable and one too many.

"It is well established that levels of family and domestic violence in the Kimberley are unacceptably high, and — in recognition of this — extra resources are already on the ground."

A Department of Communities spokesperson said resources for domestic violence victims in Balgo included the Kapululangu Aboriginal Women's Law and Culture Centre, which was established by Balgo Women Elders. "At times women have accessed this space for safety," they said.