

CALL FOR ACTION: THE STATE GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO COMMIT TO ADDRESSING KIMBERLEY YOUTH SUICIDE

19TH MARCH 2020



This statement is from the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre (KALACC), the Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services (KAMS) and the Centre of Best Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention at the University of Western Australia.

In anticipation of the forthcoming release of the WA Department of Premier and Cabinet's Statement of Commitment on Aboriginal Youth Suicide, we are calling on the State Government to:

1. Respond in detail to each of the 86 recommendations contained in the WA Department of Premier and Cabinet's May 2019 Statement of Intent on Aboriginal Youth Suicide, including the specific actions the State Government will take in terms of resourcing and strategies
2. Directly engage with our communities and significantly invest in long term solutions that are paced to include co-design with Aboriginal people and organisations and a clear process for the actual implementation of short, medium and long term actions
3. Immediately fund a number of critically important culturally-based initiatives in the Kimberley, namely:
 - a. The Yiriman Project, which is auspiced by KALACC
 - b. Implementation of the Empowered Young Leaders report recommendations
 - c. Support Kimberley Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services to strengthen service delivery to at risk individuals, families and communities through Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) programs and activities.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the Kimberley wait for substantive responses to each of the 86 recommendations that are outlined in the [Statement of Intent on Aboriginal Youth Suicide](#). We also ask that the state government not assume that they know what is best for Aboriginal young people. Our empowered young leaders are clear in their statement "Nothing about us without us". This means committing to a process of co-design with Aboriginal Community Controlled organisations and communities. A partnership for co-design of the solutions requires commitment, resources and action that is paced over the long term. Anything less than this will be exceptionally disappointing and will only serve to delay addressing youth suicide in region further.

The need for significant, meaningful action to address the youth suicide crisis in the Kimberley is not the latest news. Indeed, the 2016 [Learning from the message stick: The report of the Inquiry into Aboriginal youth suicide in remote areas](#) cites some 40 reports over 15 years in which Governments have failed to act on nor respond to their respective recommendations. In the meantime, Aboriginal communities have continued to suffer.

The State Government now has the opportunity to map out a long-overdue comprehensive plan to improve Aboriginal health and wellbeing outcomes in the Kimberley, in collaboration with our community.

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Further Reading & Resources

- WA Department of Premier and Cabinet's A Path Forward: Developing the Western Australian Government's Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy discussion paper – December 2019
- WA Department of the Premier and Cabinet's Statement of Intent on Aboriginal Youth Suicide – May 2019, in response to the State Coroner Ros Fogliani's Coronial Inquest Report
- Coronial Inquest Report: Inquest into the deaths of thirteen children and young persons in the Kimberley region, Western Australia – 7 February 2019
- Learnings from the message stick: The report of the Inquiry into Aboriginal youth suicide in remote areas – WA Parliament Education and Health Standing Committee, November 2016 (referred to as the Message Stick Report)
- Elders' Report into Preventing Indigenous Self-harm & Youth Suicide – People Culture Environment in partnership with Our Generation Media, 2014
- Solutions That Work: What the Evidence and Our People Tell Us: ATSIPEP Report – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Project, November 2016
- My Life My Lead – Opportunities for strengthening approaches to the social determinants and cultural determinants of Indigenous health: Report on the national consultations
- Empowered Communities website and Empowered Communities: Empowered Peoples Design Report
- 2019 Kimberley Empowered Young Leaders Forums Report, <https://www.wapha.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Empowered-Young-Leaders-Report-2019.pdf>