



Commitment to Aboriginal Youth Wellbeing

Progress Report: A response to the State Coroner's Inquest
into the deaths of 13 children and young persons in the
Kimberley, and Learnings from the Message Stick: the Report
of the Inquiry Into Aboriginal Youth Suicide in Remote Areas

September 2021



On the cover:

'13 Spirits' artwork by Darryl Bellotti. Honours the story of the 13 young people and the challenges they encountered in their lives. Originating from a single place, their spirits fly outward, pleading to be heard. The outer patterns represent the families and communities who struggle to find the right path for support and prevention to change outcomes for other young people.

Acknowledgments

We respectfully acknowledge and pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, past, present and emerging; and acknowledge the diversity and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities today.

We remember those we have lost to suicide, and their families, friends, loved ones and others affected by their deaths.

We would in particular, like to acknowledge young Aboriginal people together along with their families and carers that contributed to the development of the Commitment to Aboriginal Youth Wellbeing.

A note about language

Aboriginal People

Within Western Australia, the term Aboriginal is used in preference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, in recognition that Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants of Western Australia. Reference to Aboriginal people throughout this document is respectfully inclusive of Torres Strait Islanders.

Social and Emotional Wellbeing

The traditional Aboriginal understanding of health is holistic and does not refer to the individual but encompasses the social, emotional and cultural wellbeing of the whole community. The social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) of Aboriginal people is strongly influenced by their connection to family, Elders, community, culture, Country, and spirituality. These connections work together to provide a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal people, and helps individuals to maintain and enhance their SEWB.



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1. Foreword

Every life matters. The impact of suicide is far-reaching and long-lasting. It has a devastating effect on families, friends and services which ripples throughout communities. In particular, the impact of Aboriginal youth suicide on the Aboriginal community is felt deeply.

The Western Australian Government is committed to working in partnership with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and the Aboriginal community to make changes and improve the lives of young Aboriginal people and their communities.



Our commitment to improving lived experiences for young Aboriginal people in the State is outlined in the Western Australian Government's Commitment to Aboriginal Youth Wellbeing: A response to the State Coroner's Inquest into the deaths of 13 children and young persons in the Kimberley and Learnings from the Message Stick: the Report of the Inquiry into Aboriginal Youth Suicide in Remote Areas.

In October 2020 the Government released the WA Suicide Prevention Framework (2021 - 2025) to reduce the rate of suicide and to enhance the wellbeing of young Aboriginal people. The Framework promotes a whole-of-state approach to suicide prevention in WA, including reducing duplication of services, lessening confusion in the space for consumers, and providing the support our communities need. The framework includes the development of Aboriginal prevention strategies and dedicated regional plans that are in development.

I am pleased to release this progress report on the Government's Commitment to reducing the rate of suicide and enhancing the social and emotional wellbeing of young Aboriginal people in the state.

Action and new ways of working by the Government is necessary to improve the lives of Aboriginal people and families in Western Australia. To do this, it is vital for the Government to draw on, empower and be guided by the critical knowledge and strength of Aboriginal people and their communities.

It is important that we work in partnership - across communities and agencies to reduce suicide deaths - it is not something any government, organisation or community can do alone. We must do this together.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen Dawson".

Stephen Dawson MLC
Minister for Mental Health; Aboriginal Affairs; Industrial Relations

2. Introduction

This is the first annual progress report for the Government of Western Australia's (WA) Commitment to Aboriginal Youth Wellbeing (Commitment), which was released in March 2020.¹ The Commitment outlines how the Government proposes to work towards reducing the rate of suicide and enhancing the wellbeing of young Aboriginal people. The Commitment is the Government's response to the State Coroner's 2019 Inquest into the deaths of thirteen children and young persons in the Kimberley Region, Western Australia, and the 2016 Parliamentary Inquiry, Learnings from the Message Stick: the report of the Inquiry into Aboriginal youth suicide in remote areas (see figure 1 for a timeline of the key reports and events).

Both the Coroner's Inquest and Message Stick reports shed light on the tragic issue of Aboriginal youth suicide in WA. The reports affirm what Aboriginal people have continued to say, that Aboriginal youth suicide is not just a mental health issue, but also an outcome of complex inter-related factors arising from intergenerational trauma. The reports made a combined 86 recommendations that highlight the need for the WA Government to work with Aboriginal people and ensure they are empowered to formulate the policies and services that affect their own communities. These principles are captured in the proposed Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy and the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, to which the Government of WA is a signatory and is committed to implementing.

In May 2019, the WA Government released the Statement of Intent on Aboriginal Youth Suicide (Statement of Intent) as a preliminary response to the two reports. Following the release of the Statement of Intent, the WA Government conducted two community engagement workshops in the Kimberley – the region of focus for the Coroner's inquest. Approximately 150 people attended the two workshops, representing many Aboriginal organisations and communities in the Kimberley.

The workshops helped to develop a shared understanding of the recommendations, with a number of themes emerging about what actions were needed to move forward. Some of these were well aligned to the recommendations, but other priorities were also identified. Recognising that not all of the recommendations were unanimously supported at the workshops, the Government's response to the recommendations of the Coroner's Inquest and Message Stick reports was built on 12 commitments. These commitments address the broad intent of the 86 recommendations and outline a more holistic and long-term approach to Aboriginal youth wellbeing. Critical to these commitments is an understanding that the Government's response must be built through genuine partnerships with Aboriginal people at a regional level.

The Government is supporting regional responses through Regional Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Plans, being developed by Aboriginal community-controlled organisations in Western Australia. These Plans are being developed under the Western Australian Suicide Prevention Framework 2021-2025 and will be a key mechanism for the WA Government to ensure initiatives that support Aboriginal youth wellbeing are locally-led and supported. However, these plans alone will not address this complex issue.

¹ The Commitment and other related documents are available online from:

<https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-the-premier-and-cabinet/aboriginal-youth-wellbeing>



Why have we produced this report?

There have been many reports into Aboriginal youth suicide in WA over past decades, carrying many of the same messages and recommendations as the Coroner's Inquest and Message Stick reports. While Governments considered these reports when they were released, implementation of their recommendations was often limited, ad hoc, not resourced or did not address the issue holistically.

The Government acknowledges that it must do better in responding to these reports and being accountable to the Aboriginal communities and families that continue to be impacted by suicide. For this reason, annual progress reports on implementing the Commitment to Aboriginal Youth Wellbeing will be produced until at least 2025. Reports on the Government's efforts to achieve a significant and sustained reduction in suicide by Aboriginal people will also be included in annual progress reports about implementing the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

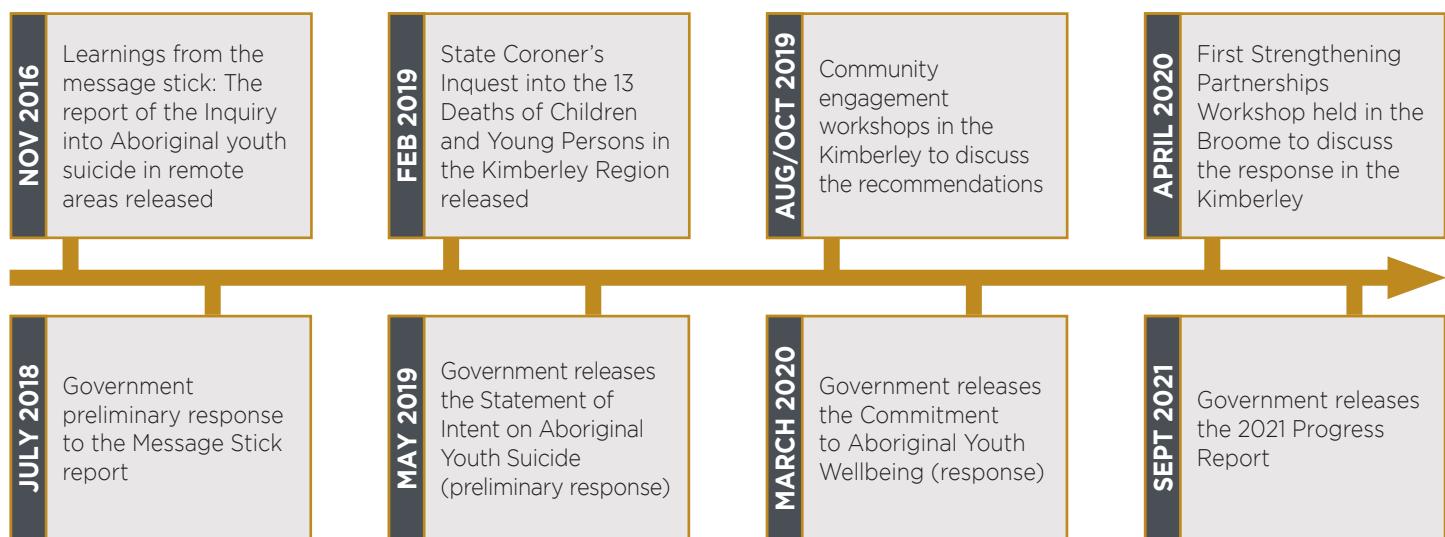
What is in this report?

This annual progress report provides an update on the Government's efforts to address Aboriginal youth suicide since the Commitment's release in March 2020. This includes; but not limited to:

- the release of the WA Suicide Prevention Framework 2021-2025;
- progress in developing an Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Strategy and dedicated regional plans;
- national mental health reforms that have followed advice from the National Suicide Prevention Adviser and the Productivity Commission; and
- signing the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

The annual report also highlights efforts towards each of the 12 commitments, including updates on five initial projects that have been funded to support the Commitment to Aboriginal Youth Wellbeing. Importantly, this annual report provides a summary of the Strengthening Partnerships Workshop held in Broome in April 2021. That workshop – attended by many government agencies and Kimberley Aboriginal community leaders (including representatives from the Empowered Young Leaders) – initiated dialogue about how the Government can work in partnership with Aboriginal organisations and communities in the Kimberley to address suicide.

Figure 1: Key reports and events for the Commitment to Aboriginal Youth Wellbeing



What does the data tell us?

The suicide rate for Aboriginal people in WA has consistently declined in the last decade. However, the suicide rate for Aboriginal people remains more than double that of non-Aboriginal people. WA data for 2015-2019 shows that the intentional self-harm death rate (per 100,000 people) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was 34.6, as compared to the non-Indigenous rate of 13.7.

The suicide rate in the Kimberley is particularly high, with the most recent data available estimating that the suicide rate among Aboriginal people in the Kimberley is twice as high as the suicide rate among all Indigenous Australians. Further, the rate of attendance to Kimberley Emergency Departments for self-harm was three times higher than the rest of WA. In the Kimberley, the majority (81%) of those who presented for self-harm were Indigenous people.

Young people in the Kimberley are at a particularly high risk of suicide and self-harm, with reported incidents of self-harm more likely to occur between 6pm and midnight on Friday and Saturday nights, and peak during the wet season. The majority of self-harm events in the Kimberley involve alcohol.

Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2020) *Causes of Death, Australia*; McPhee et al. (2021) *Unacceptably high: an audit of Kimberley self-harm data 2014-2018*, Australasian Psychiatry; and Graduate School of Education (UWA) and Rural Clinical School Western Australia (UWA) *A profile of suicide and self-harm in the Kimberley*, available from: <https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2020-08/apo-nid307753.pdf>.

Improving Data

Various reports have highlighted deficiencies in the collection of suicide and self-harm data in the Kimberley. McPhee et al. (2021) note that self-harm data are collected by multiple government agencies across the region, and that the fragmentation of data and the non-standardised definitions of self-harm hamper effective analysis. Further, data on suicide and self-harm is not made available for service providers to adequately understand and respond to current and emerging risks.

The Kimberley region has been agreed as one of six sites for a community data project under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. This site was supported by the Aboriginal Health Council of WA, who are a WA Coalition of Peaks member. The WA Government is currently undertaking scoping work to identify potential improvements to the collection and access to suicide and self-harm data in the Kimberley and will work closely with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and other data custodians. This scoping work will consider privacy requirements of the data and appropriate conditions of access for ACCOs and other service providers.

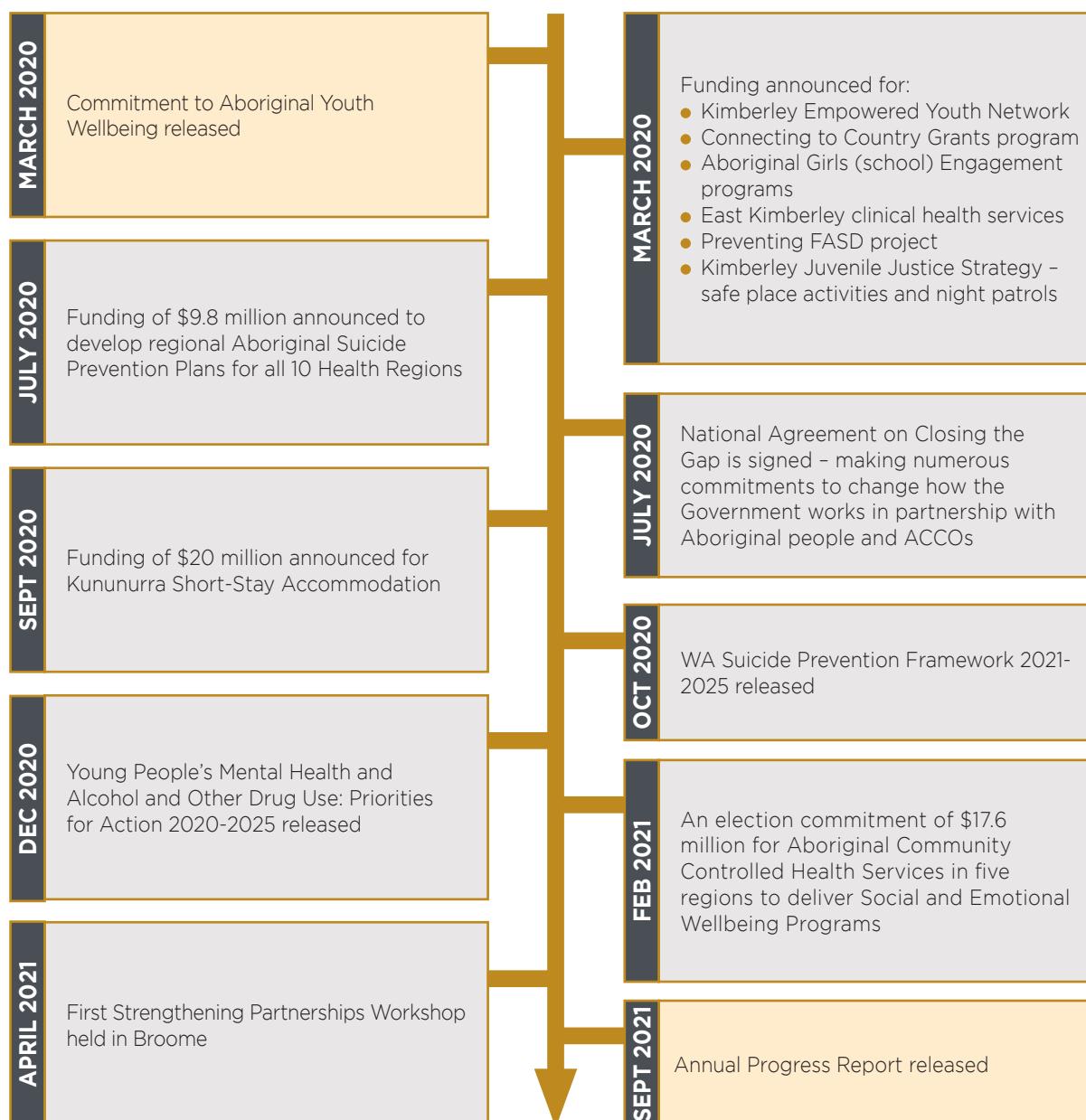
Sources: McPhee et al. (2021) *Unacceptably high: an audit of Kimberley self-harm data 2014-2018*, Australasian Psychiatry; Joint Council on Closing the Gap (2021) *Fifth Meeting of the Joint Council on Closing the Gap, 16 April 2021, Communiqué*.

3. Key undertakings since the release of the Commitment

Since the release of the Commitment the Government has undertaken many actions to support the wellbeing of young Aboriginal people, this section provides a summary of policies and reforms that have occurred since the release of the Commitment in March 2020.

The figure below provides a summary of key achievements since the release of the Commitment:

Figure 2: Key achievements since the release of the Commitment



COVID-19 pandemic and young people.

Since the commencement of the COVID-19 global pandemic, children and young people in Australia are living through incomparable times. Young people especially have been negatively affected by COVID-19, with many impacts on their mental health and wellbeing. A recent survey conducted by Youth Affairs Council of WA on the impact of COVID-19 on young Western Australians, indicated that 91% of survey respondents had experienced significant or some impact on their mental health and stress levels.

The negative effects of these disruptions are exacerbated for children and young people already facing multiple challenges in their lives, including mental health issues, family conflict, abuse and neglect, poverty, and family and domestic violence. Social isolation, long-term unemployment and homelessness are issues for youth and they contribute to, and compound, mental health issues and increase suicide risk.

For young Aboriginal people living in remote areas, access to services has been impacted and a number of key funded programs were delayed due to COVID-19 restrictions. To adjust for the impacts of COVID-19, a range of measures have been put in place to support those in need, including the expansion of mental health, alcohol and other drug services across the State, provision of community-based accommodation services, and funding for existing services.

The Department of Education's core focus has been providing safe school environments and the continuation of teaching and learning, with consideration given to support schools in remote and regional areas where additional complexities are present. The Department has developed a proposed response to the impact of COVID-19 on remote community schools. This includes consultation at state, regional and local levels, commencing with the Aboriginal Advisory Council.

Western Australian Suicide Prevention Framework 2021-2025

The Mental Health Commission launched the new Western Australian Suicide Prevention Framework 2021-2025 (Suicide Prevention Framework 2025) in October 2020.² The Suicide Prevention Framework 2025 provides a coordinated approach to address suicide prevention activity in WA under the four streams of prevention/early intervention, support/aftercare, postvention and Aboriginal people. It was developed in consultation with the community, government and non-government organisations, and the mental health sector and takes into account the most current data, research, evaluation reports and the expertise of working and steering groups.

Funding of \$32.3 million over a four-year period ensures the continuation of essential service provision established under the previous suicide prevention strategy and enables some additional initiatives to support the implementation of the new Suicide Prevention Framework 2025.

To address the anticipated impacts of COVID-19, an additional \$4.79 million has been allocated over a two-year period from 2020 to provide additional suicide prevention support, which includes aftercare following a suicide attempt; providing support for those affected by a suicide death; increasing long-term support to children who have been bereaved by a suicide death; and improving community-level data collection.

² The Western Australian Suicide Prevention Framework 2021-2025 and other related documents are available online from: <https://www.mhc.wa.gov.au/media/3505/wa-suicideprevention-a4-mk40-web-version.pdf>

Regional Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Strategy and Regional Plans

As part of the Aboriginal people stream of the Suicide Prevention Framework 2025, funding of \$9.8m over a four-year period was announced in July 2020 to develop region specific Aboriginal Suicide Prevention plans (regional plans) that prioritise a culturally secure social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) approach to suicide prevention. This is in recognition of the importance for Aboriginal people to connect an individual's health and wellbeing to the health and wellbeing of their family, kin, community, and their connections to Country, culture, spirituality and ancestry. The concept of SEWB is a deep-rooted, more collective and holistic concept of health than that used in mainstream health settings. The Mental Health Commission has commissioned an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) in each of WA's 10 Health Regions to lead the development of these regional plans. The development of the regional plans is guided by the three principles:

- Nothing for Aboriginal people without Aboriginal people;
- Aboriginal-led solutions; and
- Cultural understanding and respect.

Implementation of the regional plans will commence in July 2021 through the newly created Regional Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer program that will see an ACCO being engaged in each of the 10 WA Health Regions to lead and support the implementation of the regional plans, supported by \$100,000 activity seed funding per annum.

National Agreement Closing the Gap

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement) was signed in July 2020. It is the first National Agreement to include a non-government entity, the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations, as representatives of the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



The National Agreement goes significantly further than the previous Closing the Gap agreement in what it requires of signatories. It is focused on four Priority Reform Areas that aim to change the way governments work to accelerate improvements in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Priority Reforms Areas are closely aligned to the proposed Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy and include:

- 1. Shared decision-making:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are empowered to share decision-making authority with governments to accelerate policy and place-based progress on Closing the Gap through formal partnership arrangements.
- 2. Building the community-controlled sector:** There is a strong and sustainable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector delivering high quality services to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the country.
- 3. Improving mainstream institutions:** Governments, their organisations and their institutions are accountable for Closing the Gap and are culturally safe and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including through the services they fund.
- 4. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led data:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to, and the capability to use, locally-relevant data and information to set and monitor the implementation of efforts to close the gap, their priorities and drive their own development.

The National Agreement is supported by robust governance and reporting. In August 2021, the WA Government will publish the WA Closing the Gap Implementation Plan, and this will be updated periodically. Starting in 2022, the WA Government will produce annual reports on actions undertaken to implement the National Agreement and progress against the outcomes of the National Agreement.

Young People's Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug Use: Priorities for Action 2020-2025

On 16 December 2020, the Minister for Mental Health, released the Young People's Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug Use: Priorities for Action 2020-2025 (YPPA).³

The YPPA builds on a range of existing State and national plans, strategies and frameworks and was developed in consultation with a range of stakeholders, including: Government agencies; nongovernment organisations; the mental health, alcohol and other drug (AOD) sector; and young people, their families, carers and support people.

On 8 August 2020, the Minister for Mental Health announced a targeted independent review (the Review) led by the Chief Psychiatrist, into how the public mental health system cared for a 13-year-old girl who died by suicide. The Review was focussed on her clinical care and commented on how to improve mental health services for young people across inpatient and community-based clinical services. The Review was completed in October 2020, and the findings have informed the Young People's Priority for Action. The YPPA will guide the Mental Health Commission, and the broader mental health and AOD sector, in responding to the needs of young people aged 12 to 24

³ The Young People's Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug Use: Priorities for Action 2020 -2025: <https://www.mhc.wa.gov.au/media/3489/yppa-young-people-priorities-for-action.pdf>



years over the next 5 years. The Young People's Priority for Action will also guide the work of other organisations, including other Government agencies concerned about the mental health of, and AOD use by, young people aged 12 to 24 years.

The Mental Health Commission has now commenced work on the Implementation Plan to guide current and future YPPA initiatives. Due for completion in October 2021, the YPPA Implementation Plan will:

- be progressed as an across-government commitment, where agencies and other key stakeholders including young people, their families and carers will be engaged throughout the process;
- be informed by the feedback received during the YPPA development;
- focus on:
 - addressing social determinants; and
 - taking a holistic, culturally secure and person-centred approach;
- identify how we can work better across the sector, to promote better coordination, integration and efficiencies, and build upon the intersectional relationship between sectors; and
- highlight current priorities and identify areas to strengthen and grow.

National mental health reforms

The Productivity Commission's Inquiry Report on Mental Health was publicly released on 16 November 2020. This Inquiry examined the effect of mental health on people's ability to participate in and prosper in the community and workplace, and the effects it has more generally on the economy and productivity. It also looked at how governments across Australia, employers, professional and community groups in healthcare, education, employment, social services, housing and justice can contribute to improving mental health for people of all ages and cultural backgrounds.

On 11 December 2020, the National Federation Reform Council (comprising of the Prime Minister, Premiers, First Ministers, Treasurers and local government representation) agreed that mental health reform would be the first priority of the newly established Health National Cabinet Reform Committee. Also, that a new National Agreement on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention would be delivered by November 2021.

Kimberley Juvenile Justice Strategy

The Department of Justice has implemented the first phase of the Kimberley Juvenile Justice Strategy (KJJS), which was funded (\$6.2 million), as part of the Commitment to Aboriginal Youth Wellbeing. This funding is for delivering structured safe place activities, night patrols, an educational industry TAFE program and the Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia (ALSWA) support for bail conditions for young people.



KJJS initiatives are a component of the Commitment to Aboriginal Wellbeing Strategy and are focused on better prevention, intervention and postvention services, engagement with education, building youth and local capacity and connection to culture.

The Department of Justice has endeavoured to work in consultation with ACCOs and relevant Shires to fund culturally responsive solutions where local community members are employed to provide structured activities and conduct night patrols to engage with street present young people and ensure they are taken to a safe place. For night patrols, funding also includes a follow up service the following day for at-risk young people where referrals are made to relevant service providers. Early achievements include:

- high participation rates at structured activities. For example, close to 60 young people attending events in Broome (Broome Youth and Families Hub) and over 100 participants in Derby (Shire of Derby and West Kimberley) and in addition, engagement of young people in cultural healing camps in Kununurra (Waringarri Aboriginal Corporation);
- an average of 20 to 40 young people being engaged by night patrols per night in each of the locations of Wyndham (Wyndham Youth Aboriginal Corporation), Derby (Emama Nguda Aboriginal Corporation) and Halls Creek (Olabud Doogethu Aboriginal Corporation).

The Aboriginal Legal Service of WA are providing young people with case management, court support and referrals to service providers. There are currently 12 young people in the West Kimberley receiving support to meet their court conditions.

The second semester of the TAFE learning program at the Broome and Kununurra campuses is underway and targeted towards young people in the justice system. Achievements include improvement in attendance and referrals to other employment transition programs.

The Department of Education continues to fund a teacher and an education support officer position for the Alternative Education Program (AEP) for highly disengaged and at-risk youth, and has appointed a youth transition coordinator (YTC) in the Kimberley to support the Kimberley Juvenile Justice Strategy. **Strengthening Partnerships Workshop**

In March 2021, the Commitment was transitioned from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet to the Mental Health Commission who now lead the coordination and progression of the State Government's response.

The Mental Health Commission recognise the importance of working with Aboriginal communities as outlined in the National Agreement and the proposed Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy and



identified the need to engage with the Aboriginal Communities to deliver an appropriate response that is place-based, community-led and supports the development of genuine partnerships between the State Government, ACCOs and Aboriginal communities.

A Strengthening Partnerships Workshop was held in April 2021 and the Mental Health Commission have committed to work in partnership with the Kimberley ACCOs to prioritise and develop place-based, community-led action that works toward the 12 Commitments. The workshop was attended by State Government senior executives, including representatives from the WA Police, Department of Education, Department of Communities, Department of Justice, WA Country Health Service, Department of the Premier and Cabinet and Mental Health Commission. It was also attended by senior representatives from Kimberley ACCOs including: Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Service, Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Cultural Centre, Binarri-binya Yarrawoo Aboriginal Corporation (Empowered Communities East Kimberley), Empowered Communities West Kimberley, Kimberley Language Resource Centre and Kimberley Land Council.

The aim of the workshop was to initiate discussions between State Government and Kimberley ACCOs on how to strengthen partnerships and identify new ways of working between the State Government, ACCOs and Aboriginal communities. These new ways of working:

- acknowledge that Aboriginal people need to be heard and listened to as equal partners and ensure shared decision-making regarding Aboriginal Affairs;
- transform government organisations so they work better for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- foster the strengthening of formal partnerships between State Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; and
- build capacity in ACCOs.

The proposed new ways of working challenges Government to do business in a truly new way. One that acknowledges that Aboriginal people are the experts and need to be heard and listened to as equal partners when decisions are made that affect Aboriginal people and lead the co-creations of solutions.

Following the workshop, further collaboration will occur between the State Government Departments and the Kimberley ACCOs to formalise the partnership and to define processes and commitments. An agreed definition of partnership, co-design and shared decision making will be established which will then lead to the prioritisation for the implementation of the 86 recommendations and the 12 Commitments, including the five priorities outlined by the Call to Action letter send to Government in May 2020 from the Kimberley ACCOs. Although the Kimberley Region is the starting point, the State Government departments plan to replicate the partnership and processes with ACCOs across the state. The Commitment was released in 2020 and was informed by engagements with key Aboriginal stakeholders, including community workshops held in Broome and Kununurra in the Kimberley Region. As a result of these engagements, the 86 (see Appendix 1 for full reconciliation of recommendations) recommendations were grouped into 12 commitments, which sit in four broad focus areas: Cultural Wellbeing, Health, Community and Youth (see diagram). The 12 commitments take a more holistic and long-term approach to Aboriginal youth wellbeing whilst supporting and taking into account Aboriginal communities' views.



4. Commitment to Aboriginal Youth Wellbeing – 12 Commitments

An integral contribution to the development of the Commitment was the voices of young Aboriginal people through the Empowered Young Leaders. Collective impact statements that were developed by the Empowered Young Leaders were presented at the engagement workshops. The State Government recognises the empowered, resilient and culturally connected young Aboriginal leaders in the Kimberley and the important role they play in improving the social and emotional wellbeing of their cohort.

This section provides a progress update on each of the 12 Commitments, including actions to address the specific recommendations that they support.⁴

⁴ The progress update highlights the key actions progressed in the last 12 months and is not intended to be exhaustive. A comprehensive list of actions being undertaken by the WA Government to support the wellbeing of Aboriginal people in WA will be available in Western Australia's Closing the Gap Implementation Plan.

Diagram: the State's commitments to Aboriginal Youth Wellbeing



Commitment 1: Culturally responsive government

The engagement workshops held in 2019 called for empowerment and strengths-based service delivery that reflects Aboriginal cultural frameworks. The Commitment stated it will include:

- ensuring the right consultation and engagement processes are in place and adhered to;
- embracing the principles of co-design;
- making sure Aboriginal people are actively listened to;
- maintaining the cultural competency of agency staff; and
- ensuring that consideration of Aboriginal culture, particularly through Aboriginal cultural frameworks, is a key factor in proposed policies, programs or services.

This commitment arises from the Coroner's recommendations 19 and 42, and Message Stick recommendations 7, 12, 13, 14 and 40.

Progress update:

- The National Agreement on Closing the Gap makes various commitments to transforming mainstream institutions to be culturally safe and responsive to Aboriginal people, including through the services they fund. It recognises that Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations are better for Aboriginal people and commits the WA Government to increasing funding for ACCOs.
- Development of the Western Australian Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Strategy and regional plans.
- The Strengthening Partnerships workshop held in Broome 2021 initiated dialogue about how the Government can work in partnership with Aboriginal organisations and communities in the Kimberley to enhance social and emotional wellbeing.
- The Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework continues to drive efforts in Western Australian public schools to create culturally responsive schools that celebrate the strengths of Aboriginal students and, enable them to thrive academically and socially.



Commitment 2. Respect and appreciation for Aboriginal culture

This commitment emphasises the importance of investing in communities with strong cultural governance, recognising Aboriginal leadership structures, and using a strengths-based approach. This commitment arises from the Coroner's recommendation 42, and Message Stick recommendations 11, 12 and 40.

Progress update:

- The WA Government is a signatory to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, which reinforces the principles of empowerment, partnership and the fundamental importance of culture to improving wellbeing for Aboriginal people. The Aboriginal Advisory Council of WA has been the Government's Strategic Partner in developing the State's first Implementation Plan, which is due to be published in August 2021.
- The Government acknowledges the importance of supporting Aboriginal culture which is reflected in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. Actions to support greater appreciation of Aboriginal culture include the commitment to develop an Aboriginal Cultural Centre, the new museum - Boola Bardip, Camping with Custodians, the Aboriginal Ranger Program and the creation of Aboriginal and Dual Naming Guidelines.
- The Aboriginal Advisory Council is exploring options to establish formally recognised regional Aboriginal representative structures as a strategic priority.

Commitment 3. Supporting cultural programs

Culture is at the heart of Aboriginal communities, and a key protective factor against suicide. This commitment aims to work with and support Aboriginal people to develop and implement ways of using culture as a foundation for healing, resilience, social and emotional wellbeing.

This commitment reflects recommendations 16, 25, 39 and 42 of the State Coroner's report, and recommendations 7, 8, and 30 of the Message Stick report.

Progress Update:

- The Connecting the Country Program, which can be used to facilitate sharing and maintenance of cultural knowledge as well as support for Aboriginal leadership (page 29); and an arts programs that support artists, creative industry professionals and organisations to deliver one-off programs or activities.

- The Department of Education is working to embed local language and culture programs in schools and strengthen relationships between schools and the local Aboriginal communities.
 - The Aboriginal Languages Teacher Training (ALTT) program has been continued in 2021, with a new intake of trainees, which enables expansion to more schools or continuation of existing language programs.
 - The development of nationally recognised qualifications based on the ALTT program that will provide further education and employment pathways for Aboriginal secondary students and Aboriginal educators.
 - An online Noongar language program is in development to be implemented in 2022, starting with Year 3.
- The WA Government has funded on-country programs across the Kimberley, including for example:
 - Waringarri Aboriginal Corporation who engage young people at-risk through cultural health camping trips.
 - Wyndham Youth Aboriginal Corporation who support young people at risk through on-country cultural activities.
 - Full Circle Partnership between the Wirrpanda Foundation and Hope Community Services for young people in Broome and surrounding communities that have had contact with the Youth Justice System.
- The Kimberley Juvenile Justice Strategy has provided funding for place-based activities, night patrols, a youth-engagement program and an integrated-learning program in such places as Broome, Derby, Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek, Kununurra and Wyndham.
- The Kimberley Suicide Prevention Trial has incorporated several projects that encompass using culture as a foundation for healing, resilience, social and emotional wellbeing.

Commitment 4. Better prevention, intervention and postvention services

The Government is committed to developing new approaches according to best practice, in consultation with the Aboriginal community. This includes innovative approaches to support the social and emotional wellbeing of young Aboriginal people, along with targeted, safe and accessible clinical services.

Kimberley Aboriginal people also stressed the importance of this commitment, noting the need for suicide prevention approaches that involve family and community members, and locally implemented programs that address risk factors.

This commitment arises from State Coroner's recommendations 12, 17 and 24, and Message Stick recommendations 6, 7, 10, 15, 16, 23, 24, 34 and 37.

Progress Update:

- The Mental Health Commission launched the Western Australian Suicide Prevention Framework 2021-2025 (Suicide Prevention Framework 2025) in October 2020. The framework provides a coordinated approach to address suicide prevention activity in Western Australia under the four streams of prevention/early intervention, support/aftercare, postvention and Aboriginal people.
- The development of the Suicide Prevention Framework 2025 will prioritise Aboriginal-led and locally endorsed initiatives to accommodate a culturally informed social and emotional wellbeing approach to suicide prevention. The development of the regional plans is guided by the following principles – nothing for Aboriginal people without Aboriginal people; enabling Aboriginal-led solutions; and cultural understanding and respect.
- The Young People's Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug Use: Priorities for Action 2020-2025 (YPPA) was released in December 2020. The YPPA contains a range of initiatives, which will go towards responding to the mental health and AOD needs (particularly those at risk) across WA. An implementation plan is currently being developed to complement the YPPA.
- As part of the State Recovery Strategy, Suicide Prevention – Schools Response Program Extension, and to continue to strengthen culturally responsive approaches to enable cultural safety and healing, the Department of Education:
 - leads the regular review of the *School Response and Planning Guidelines for Students with Suicidal Behaviour and Non-Suicidal Self-Injury*; and
 - the regular review of the *Suicide Postvention Communication Process*.

Commitment 5. Building capacity in health and mental health services

Improve the capacity of agencies, service providers and community organisations to deliver services to Aboriginal people that are flexible, responsive and culturally safe. Increasing the proportion of Aboriginal employees in the health and mental health fields will be a high priority, especially in remote areas.

The need for more culturally competent clinical services was also emphasised in the community workshops, especially the need for holistic, trauma-informed, therapeutic approaches, better support for workers in remote areas, local capacity building, and the use of both cultural and clinical leads. This commitment addresses the Coroner's recommendations 12, 17, 19, 20, 21, 24, 26, 27 and 42, and Message Stick recommendations 6, 9, 14, 16, 18, 19, 39 and 44.

Progress Update:

- Government Departments are committed to implement strategies to attract, employ and support Aboriginal people in the health and mental health sector. The State will follow the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People: Action Plan to Improve WA Public Sector Employment Outcomes 2020-2025, which aims to increase the representation of Aboriginal people employed in the public sector to 3.7% and support inclusive work environments.
- The National Agreement on Closing the Gap recognises that ACCO's are better for Aboriginal people and commits the WA Government to increasing funding for ACCOs, including in the health and mental health sectors.

Commitment 6. Better access to clinical services

Young people and their families in remote areas and communities are experiencing difficulties in accessing the services and follow-up they need. Work is required to address these issues, balancing the needs of the community with the challenges posed by regional and remote Western Australia.

This addresses the Coroner's recommendations 1, 2, 3, 4, 12, 27, 28, 29, 31 and 34, and Message Stick recommendations 26, 32, 38, 39 and 43.

Progress Update:

- The development of the Suicide Prevention Framework 2025; with regional plans that prioritise Aboriginal-led and locally endorsed initiatives to accommodate a culturally informed social and emotional wellbeing approach to suicide prevention.
- The Kimberley Youth AOD Service Model and Co-Design summary were completed in December 2020. The service model outlines seven different components, delivered in an integrated way with existing services that are already available in the Kimberley to help support young people aged 10-18 years, and their families.
- WA Country Health Service have employed a Psychiatrist and a Kimberley Nurse Educator in the East Kimberley (see page 31).
- The Mental Health Commission was approved funding for four low medical withdrawal beds in the Kimberley Region. Discussion is continuing with local organisations in the Kimberley Region to provide a service, which meets local needs.
- The Mental Health Commission funded WA Country Health to operate a safe haven café in Kununurra as an alternative to the Emergency Department for those aged 16 years and above experiencing mental health distress. Located on the Kununurra Hospital site, the Safe Place opened in April 2021 and employs peer workers, including Aboriginal staff.

Commitment 7. Support for community wellbeing

Supporting community wellbeing is about having the right structures, programs and processes in place, and ensuring that these work together to help construct safe, happy and prosperous communities. Government will work to strengthen communities with ongoing investment and support, developing strong working partnerships with Commonwealth and local governments, business, the Aboriginal community-controlled sector, and Aboriginal people.

This commitment addresses the Coroner's recommendations 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18, 22, 30, 32, 33 and 42.

Progress Update:

- Elders Reference Groups have been established across the Kimberley Region and are utilised to assist police in responding to critical and sensitive issues.
- The State's first Aboriginal Family Led Decision Making Pilot, co-designed through a series of roundtables, will commence in Geraldton in 2021 and will provide support to families in making culturally based family-driven decisions through meetings facilitated by an Aboriginal practitioner that is external to Government.
- A trial of the banned drinkers register commenced in Broome and Derby in May 2021. Work has commenced on implementing banned drinkers register across the Kimberley in 2021. People identified as banned drinkers are provided with information on how to access community support services.
- The Mental Health Commission has developed and is implementing a suite of universal and targeted prevention initiatives under the Preventing Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Project.
- Drafting amendments to the WA Evidence Act 1906 regarding provision of evidence for Family and Domestic Violence complaints.
- Election commitment for a \$17.6 million investment in social and emotional wellbeing to be delivered by Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services.



Commitment 8. Building local capacity

Supporting Aboriginal people to develop and drive economic and social projects in their own communities is essential to the empowerment process.

Kimberley Aboriginal people raised the importance of investing in local people to provide services within the community, and training families and community members in mental health and suicide prevention.

This commitment arises from the Coroner's recommendations 12, 16, 17, 21, 33, 41 and 42, and Message Stick recommendations 12, 13, 16 and 39.

Progress update:

- The WA Government is a signatory to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, which reinforces the principles of empowerment, partnership and the fundamental importance of culture to improving wellbeing for Aboriginal people.
- The WA Government's Buy Local and Aboriginal Procurement Policies help preference local Aboriginal businesses. During the 2019-20 financial year, 234 contracts worth \$172 million were awarded to Aboriginal businesses, with 61% of those contracts awarded to Aboriginal businesses based in regional areas.⁵
- The development of the Western Australian Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Strategy; with regional plans that prioritise Aboriginal-led and locally endorsed initiatives to accommodate a culturally informed social and emotional wellbeing approach to suicide prevention.



⁵ WA Government (2020) Aboriginal Procurement Policy: Performance Report 2019-2020

Commitment 9. Better engagement with education

Education is crucial to equipping young people to embrace the challenges of adulthood. The State Government is committed to work towards strengthening the wellbeing and engagement of Aboriginal children and young people in education, in the Kimberley and across Western Australia. The Department has a number of proven programs and initiatives to strengthen educational outcomes for Aboriginal students.

Approaches to education in regional and remote areas that will be continually be refined include:

- Follow the Dream Program which provides enriched educational and experiential opportunities for Aboriginal students and is delivered by the Polly Farmer Foundation.
- Clontarf Academies which provide a range of in-school and extra-curricula activities for male Aboriginal secondary students to support their engagement in school and to assist their transitions through school and into post school destinations.
- Kindilink, which is jointly planned and delivered by Early Childhood Teachers and Aboriginal Educators and provides play and learn sessions for Aboriginal children and their parents or carers.

This commitment arises from the Coroner's recommendations 35, 36, 38, 39 and 40, and Message Stick recommendation 36.

Progress Update:

- The Education Department is working to embed local language(s) and culture programs in schools and strengthen relationships between schools and the local Aboriginal communities.
- The KindiLink Program has been extended and now operates in 18 schools across the Kimberley.
- The Department of Education is working toward national accreditation for the Aboriginal Language Teacher Training course.
- The Department is establishing a mandatory panel of service providers to deliver place - based engagement programs for Year 7-12 Aboriginal girls and young women in WA public schools (see page 30), contextualized to their specific needs.
- The Department of Education will continue to work closely with Nyamba Buru Yawuru to engage an Elder in Residence, who will provide cultural advice and guidance to strengthen engagement across a network of West Kimberley schools.
- The Department of Education, in partnership with other agencies, has developed professional learning and classroom resources to support students with complex learning needs including FASD.



Commitment 10. Helping young people connect to culture

Connection to culture promotes social and emotional wellbeing and provides a protective factor against suicide and self-harm. The Government and Aboriginal communities will work together to develop strategies and programs to facilitate intergenerational and on-country learning of culture and culture-inspired life skills.

The Kimberley community workshops also called for opportunities to connect children and young people with Elders and country to build skills and resilience, and to be supported by people with deep cultural knowledge.

Coroner's recommendations 16, 17, 25, 38, 39 and 42, and Message Stick recommendations 7, 8, 11, 12, 13 and 16.

Progress update:

- The WA Government is a signatory to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, which reinforces the principles of empowerment, partnership and the fundamental importance of culture to improving wellbeing for Aboriginal people. This Commitment will be supported through the current reform directions of the WA Government.
- The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries provide funding through the Connecting the Country Program, which can be used to facilitate sharing and maintenance of cultural knowledge as well as support for Aboriginal leadership.
- The WA Government is working to ensure youth engagement and social and emotional wellbeing programs support the embedding of culture in young people.
- The Department's Elders in Residence, and cultural knowledge holders in the regions such as Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), provide guidance to public schools to implement culturally responsive strategies that suit the specific needs of Aboriginal students and the context of their communities.

Commitment 11. Building youth capacity

The Government will work with the Commonwealth, local government, businesses and the community sector to help build the capacity of young people to develop the skills, knowledge and experience required to live healthy, confident and independent lives. Young Aboriginal people need better access to training and employment opportunities, and outlets for self-expression through sport, recreation and social interaction.

The Kimberley community workshops also emphasised the importance of employment, support and capacity building for young people, and better vocational, social and sporting pathways.

This commitment arises from the Coroner's recommendations 21, 30 and 37, and Message Stick recommendations 17, 19, 20 and 39.

Progress update:

- A number of recent initiatives have sought to improve facilities for young people in the Kimberley, including:
 - upgrades and new multicourt facilities for many communities through the Community Sport and Recreation Facilities Fund
 - a new PCYC in Kununurra
- Substantial additional investment in TAFE facilities throughout Western Australia, including Perth, Kimberley, Pilbara and Goldfields.

Commitment 12. A voice for young people

Building youth voice is about identifying, recognising, supporting and empowering young people and their right to have a say about decisions that affect them. Young people should be empowered to speak-up and contribute to decision making and to become leaders of change on behalf of their own and future generations.

The Kimberley community workshops provided a strong message about the role of young people and the need for a youth voice, including a representative structure for young people in the Kimberley, and a seat at the table for decision making.

This commitment arises from the Coroner's recommendation 42, and Message Stick recommendations 12 and 17.

Progress update:

- The commitment of \$1.3 million for an Empowered Youth Network (EYN) for young Aboriginal leaders in the Kimberley. The EYN project aims to support the Empowered Young Leaders (EYL) to form a network of young Aboriginal leaders across the Kimberley, who can contribute to decisions that affect them, and become leaders of change on behalf of their own and future generations (see page 28).

5. Update on the five specific Aboriginal Youth Wellbeing initiatives

As outlined in section 3, the Government has undertaken many activities to support the wellbeing of young Aboriginal people since the release of the Commitment. This section provides an update on five initiatives that were specifically funded in 2020-21 to support the Commitment and the recommendations from the Coroner's Inquest and Message Stick reports.

Empowered Youth Network

The Kimberley Empowered Young Leaders group formed following a series of workshops in 2017 for Aboriginal young people in the Kimberley. The group advocates for formal opportunities to contribute to the development of government policy and programs in the Kimberley region. The Department of Communities is supporting the Kimberley Empowered Youth Network project, which is also recognised in the WA Recovery Plan.

The Empowered Youth Network project aims to support the Empowered Young Leaders to sustain a network of young Aboriginal leaders across the Kimberley and develop a voice for engaging with government, enabling them to contribute to decisions that directly affect them and become leaders of change on behalf of their own and future generations.

The design phase (Stage 1) of the Empowered Young Network project is due for completion by 30 June 2021. The Department of Communities will also procure a registered Aboriginal business to deliver the implementation phase (Stage 2).

For 2021 - 2022, the key outcomes for the contracted provider will be:

- Recruit dedicated Kimberley EYN coordinators;
- Establish regional EYN committees; and
- Commence annual Aboriginal youth leadership forums.

Connecting to Country Grants program

The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries ran first round of the Connecting to Country grants program in November 2020 for activities commencing from 1 March 2021.

A Peer Assessment Panel consisting of Aboriginal people, with appropriate knowledge and experience to review the applications, was formed to assess the applications and make recommendations on funding. This resulted in twenty of thirty-nine applications funded totalling \$447,867.

Applications were received from all regions across the State, with the exception of Kalgoorlie. Projects were supported across the (4) Kimberley, (8) Pilbara, (5) Mid-West/Gascoyne, (1) Wheatbelt, (2) South West regions.

Of the twenty projects recommended for support, the majority describe Aboriginal Elders, youth and families coming together on-Country, some after many years away or without access to Country, to participate in cultural camps. Through visits to significant sites, storytelling, dancing, song, traditional language, lore, exploring of traditional uses for plants, bush tucker and art, Elders as cultural knowledge holders will have the opportunity to connect the next generation of cultural custodians and leaders to their Country and culture by walking alongside them and teaching with on-Country resources.

There is intent across many projects to record the sharing of knowledge, some using innovative techniques and software such as 3D mapping and cloud-based apps or utilising aerial scanning as a tool to map landforms, rock art or find lost sites of significance.

Round two of Connecting to Country is scheduled to open in July 2021 for activities commencing from February 2022.





Aboriginal Girls Engagement Programs

The Department of Education is currently undertaking a procurement process to establish a panel of service providers to deliver engagement programs for female Aboriginal students in Years 7 to 12 in Western Australian Public Schools.

The service agreement will be established under the Delivering Community Services in Partnership Policy. The resulting agreement will be a mandatory standing offer to allow schools to engage a service provider, on an as required basis. The term of the agreement will be for a five-year period.

The services within the panel arrangement will promote Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing, and supporting Aboriginal girls and young women to achieve their full learning potential, shape their own futures and embrace their cultures, languages and identities as Australia's First Nations people.

The programs provided through the panel arrangement will form part of whole-school culturally responsive approaches. They will create opportunities for schools to work in place-based, flexible and adaptive ways to meet the individual needs of Aboriginal girls and young women.

The service model and outcomes have been informed by extensive community consultation in metropolitan and regional locations throughout May to July 2020. Consultation was undertaken with Aboriginal girls and young women in Years 7 to 12, local Aboriginal community members, school staff, potential service providers and key Department of Education staff.

On 14 January 2021, the community services request was published on Tenders WA, with a closing date of 16 March 2021. The evaluation panel is currently reviewing and evaluating submissions from service providers. It is anticipated that the evaluation and recommendation process will be finalised in July 2021. The panel of service providers is expected to be established in August 2021, with contracts commencing in September 2021. Programs will be operational for the commencement on school in Term 1, 2022.

East Kimberley clinical health services

WA Country Health Service received \$699,000 to employ a psychiatrist and a Kimberley nurse educator in the East Kimberley for six months commencing January 2021.

The psychiatrist commenced in early February 2021 and the nurse educator commenced in mid-March. The minor delay in commencement was due to challenges relating to COVID-19 restrictions.

Youth presentations in the East Kimberley are being spread across the Child, Adolescent and Adult teams dependent on need and the two roles are also further supported by an additional Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist that visits the East Kimberley regularly.

Preventing Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Project

In July 2020, the Mental Health Commission was allocated \$2.7 million to develop and implement a suite of universal and targeted prevention initiatives under the Preventing Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Project (the Project). The two-year Project aims to contribute to reducing the incidence of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder in WA by increasing awareness about the risks associated with alcohol use in pregnancy and creating environments that are more supportive of women choosing to abstain from alcohol when pregnant or planning a pregnancy.

In January 2021, a state-wide, whole-of-population public education campaign was released as the Alcohol.Think Again program, titled 'One Drink'. The campaign aims to increase the proportion of the community who believe there is no safe amount or time to drink alcohol when pregnant, and that health experts recommend women who are pregnant and planning pregnancy should not drink alcohol. The campaign was developed following a robust research and consultation process which included engagement with men and women from metropolitan and regional Western Australia and was guided by an Expert Reference Group. Independent evaluation of the campaign is scheduled for June 2021 and May 2022.

A new training package that adopts the principles of trauma informed care and practice and motivational interviewing has been developed to increase the confidence and competence of health workers in talking with their clients, families and communities about alcohol use in pregnancy and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder prevention. Training delivery commenced in October 2020 and a total of 15, two-day training sessions are being held across metropolitan and regional WA in 2021. Evaluation of the training program is ongoing.

A newly created data information system has been developed to identify and target high-risk communities to support the implementation of evidence-based alcohol prevention initiatives at a community level. Identification of communities for engagement is underway with a view to commence engagement in July 2021. The implementation and evaluation of prevention initiatives will be tailored to each community based on a range of local factors, and aim to reduce levels of alcohol-related harm.

6. Next Steps

The purpose of this document is to outline the progress of some of Government's current actions, against each of the Commitments.

There is a lot of work to be done in responding to the 12 Commitments to Aboriginal Youth Wellbeing and the 86 recommendations from the Message Stick and Coroner's Report. Therefore, Government will continue to engage and work in partnership with Aboriginal people and provide the right support, at the right time, within the context of the community and cultural needs of children and young people, and their families.

To ensure that efforts to address the 12 commitments and recommendations remain ongoing, the Mental Health Commission will provide the coordination and oversight of the Commitment to Youth and Wellbeing.

Importantly, on the 18 May 2020, a letter to the State Government was received from the Kimberley ACCOs, requesting a call for action by the State Government to commit to investing in the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal people. The letter identified five priority actions the Kimberley ACCOs would like addressed. The Mental Health Commission will continue to work with the Kimberley ACCOs and other State Government departments to prioritise and address these.

Across all portfolio areas there is significant support and commitment to respond meaningfully to the issues, with an acknowledgement that change can only come through the development of Aboriginal-led solutions. This will require Government's ongoing commitment to listen to, and act on, the voices of the community.

Following the release of the 2021 progress report we will be working towards:

By December 2021

- Formalising a partnership with Kimberley Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.
- Prioritise and progress the development and implementation of the 5 call to Action priority areas identified by the Kimberley ACCOs.

By June 2022

- Continue to progress the prioritised Commitments.
- Release of the 2022 progress report.

APPENDIX 1 - Full Reconciliation of recommendations

The Government's commitments were established to guide actions to support Aboriginal youth wellbeing. The recommendations, which helped form these commitments, remain important. The Government is committed to being accountable to the Aboriginal communities and family impacted by suicide and does not want to see the good ideas from the Coroner's Inquest and Message Stick reports forgotten.

This section provides an update on the progress of the recommendations from the Coroner's Inquest and Message Stick reports. It includes an update on whether the recommendation is:

- not yet commenced;
- in progress; or
- actioned.

The Government recognises that many of the recommendations require long-term changes, and while many are in progress, it will take many years for all of the recommendation to be considered actioned.

Responses are provided for all 86 recommendations, except four recommendations (22, 25, 41 and 42) from the Message Stick report that have been superseded.

1. Culturally responsive government

Recommendation:	CR19
<p>That cultural competency training given to service providers who interact with Aboriginal persons is co-designed with Aboriginal persons and delivered in a culturally relevant manner with emphasis on the effect of intergenerational trauma and FASD, and on the importance of cultural wellbeing, and that all service providers be required to be trained and that it be funded. Further, wherever possible, that cultural competency training be delivered by involving local Aboriginal people.</p>	
Initial response:	Progress:
Accepted	In progress
<p>Progress update:</p> <p>All Government agencies provide cultural responsiveness training for staff that is relevant to their role. Key actions to support this recommendation include: Government services engaging with local Elders to ensure services are culturally secure; prioritising service providers who can demonstrate partnership and collaboration with the community when awarding contracts; and prioritising Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) for service delivery. The Government will look at how it can further improve cultural responsiveness training as part of implementation of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.</p>	



Recommendation:

CR42

I recommend that:

- i. The principles of self-determination and empowerment be given emphasis in initiatives, policies and programs relating to Aboriginal people in Western Australia and that the Western Australian Government introduce measures to enable Aboriginal people and organisations to be involved in setting and formulating policy that affects their communities;
- ii. That in developing such measures, consideration be given to negotiating mutually agreed outcomes, with service delivery responsibilities as between the Western Australian Government and Aboriginal people and organisations; and
- iii. The Western Australian Government develop a state-wide Aboriginal cultural policy that recognises the importance of cultural continuity and cultural security to the wellbeing of Aboriginal people in this State.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted

Actioned

Progress update:

The WA Government is a signatory to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, which includes four Priority Reform Areas (PRAs) that reinforce the principles of empowerment, partnership and the fundamental importance of culture to improving wellbeing for Aboriginal people. This recommendation is consistent with the current reform directions of the WA Government.

Recommendation:

MS7

That Western Australian Government agencies recognise the importance of cultural knowledge as a protective factor preventing Aboriginal youth suicide.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted

In progress

Progress update:

The WA Suicide Prevention Framework 2021-2025 acknowledges that connections to culture and spirituality can be fundamental to social and emotional wellbeing for Aboriginal people. The next step is to embed this recognition across WA Government agencies and staff.

Recommendation:

MS12

That the Western Australian Government places increased emphasis on empowering Aboriginal communities in developing and actioning all strategies, programs and services which are relevant to Aboriginal people.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted

In progress

Progress update:

The WA Government is a signatory to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, which reinforces the principles of empowerment and partnership. Recent examples of working in partnership to develop strategies and programs in partnership include engaging ACCOs to develop regional plans for the WA Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Strategy and the co-design of the Aboriginal Family Safety Strategy. The WA Government will also develop a State Commissioning Strategy to support the commitment of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap commitment to increase the amount of funding going to ACCOs.

Recommendation:

MS13

That the Western Australian Government shifts its focus from government owned and run programs and services for Aboriginal people to Aboriginal owned and run programs. The Committee acknowledges that this will be a gradual process; however, it can begin immediately by designing strategies, services and programs with the aim of empowering Aboriginal communities.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted in principle

In progress

Progress update:

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap recognises that Aboriginal Community Controlled services are better for Aboriginal people and commits the WA Government to increasing funding for ACCOs. In December 2020, the Government announced \$4.8 million in funding to strengthen the ACCO sector. The Aboriginal Procurement Policy has been a key mechanism to support greater procurement from Aboriginal businesses and the State Commissioning Strategy will further support this outcome.



Recommendation:

MS14

That the Western Australian Government implement minimum standards of engagement with Aboriginal people when developing, actioning and funding strategies, programs and services which affect Aboriginal people.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted in principle

Actioned

Progress update:

The Government of Western Australia is a signatory to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, which commits Governments to establishing policy and place-based partnerships which respond to local priorities and meet the strong partnership elements of accountable and representative; formally agreed; and shared decision-making. In essence, these commitments outline how the Government should engage with Aboriginal people.

2. Respect and appreciation for Aboriginal culture

Recommendation:

MS40

That the Western Australia Police and the Department for Child Protection and Family Support report to the Parliament on the scope for local cultural authority to be incorporated into the services provided at multi-functional police facilities.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted in principle

In progress

Progress update:

The operations and resourcing for Multifunctional Police Facilities is currently under review.



Recommendation:

MS11

The Western Australian Government should foster strategies and programs which contribute to the greater appreciation of Aboriginal culture, including placing a greater emphasis on reconciliation action plans, and providing funding for cultural events attended by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people alike.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted

In progress

Progress update:

The Government supports this recommendation and the importance of supporting Aboriginal culture is reflected in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. Actions to support greater appreciation of Aboriginal culture include the commitment to develop an Aboriginal Cultural Centre, educational programs at the WA museum Boola Bardip, Camping with Custodians, the Aboriginal Ranger Program and the creation of Aboriginal and Dual Naming Guidelines.

The response to Coroner's recommendation 41 and Message Stick recommendations 12, 40 can be found above.

3. Supporting cultural programs

Recommendation:

CR16

That the Yiriman Project or a model akin to the Yiriman Project be extended across the Kimberley, and that consideration be given to the following matters in connection with the extension:

- a. That the Western Australian government through its various health and justice branches should explore opportunities for the implementation of models akin to the Yiriman Project in other remote parts of Western Australia with priority given to those areas with high rates of Aboriginal youth suicide.
- b. That funding providers for the Yiriman Project and other programs akin to the Yiriman Project should acknowledge the need for key performance indicators that are flexible and reflect the difficulty such organisations have in providing quantitative and qualitative data on the success of individual interventions with at-risk clients.
- c. That the Western Australian government should consider guaranteed funding for the Yiriman Project on a longer term basis, whether through funding provided by the Department for Corrective Services for diversionary programs, through ATSIPEP funding, or through funding co-ordinated through the Mental Health Commission.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted in principle

Not yet commenced

Progress update:

The WA Government understands that the Yiriman project has received ongoing funding from the WA Primary Health Alliance as part of the transition of the Kimberley Suicide Prevention Trial.

The WA Government has funded a number of on-country programs across the Kimberley, including:

- Waringarri Aboriginal Corporation which engages young people at risk through cultural health camping trips
- Wyndham Youth Aboriginal Corporation which supports young people at risk through on-country cultural activities
- Full Circle Partnership between the Wirrpanda Foundation and Hope Community Services for young people in Broome and surrounding communities that have had contact with the Youth Justice System.

In addition, the WA Government made a 2021 election commitment to provide \$1.5 million to support the Olabud Doogethu project, which includes on-country mentoring.

Recommendation:

CR25

That there be funding for the development of cultural healing projects in the Kimberley, such as that being developed by the Nyamba Buru Yawuru Centre in Broome.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted

Not yet commenced

Progress update:

Aboriginal communities have access to Government funding for cultural health projects. Grants have been allocated to healing projects such as the Nyamba Buru Yawaru (NBY) Centre in Broome and can be allocated to similar organisations.

Recommendation:

CR39

That the Yiriman Project or a model akin to the Yiriman Project be linked to schools within the Kimberley Region.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted in principle

In progress

Progress update:

Public schools have the flexibility to engage with Elders, community leaders, and Aboriginal organisations. They also have the flexibility to implement strategies to suit the specific needs of Aboriginal students and their local communities. The Department of Education is working to embed local language(s) and culture programs in schools and strengthen relationships between schools and the local Aboriginal communities. On country learning programs also exist throughout the Region and engage with local community organisations and reflect appropriate cultural activities. The Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework identifies the importance of schools engaging with local Aboriginal communities and organisations in order to create culturally responsive schools.

Recommendation:

MS8

That the Western Australian Government set aside an appropriate portion of grant expenditure to fund more culture-embedded programs for Aboriginal young people across the state.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted

In progress

Progress update:

The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries provides funding through the:

- Connecting the Country Program, which can be used to facilitate sharing and maintenance of cultural knowledge as well as support for Aboriginal leadership.
- Arts 15k-plus and U-15k programs support the expression of traditional and Aboriginal culture through the arts, including to deliver cultural maintenance activities with a clearly defined arts component.

Further, the WA Government is working to ensure youth engagement and wellbeing programs embed culture

The response to Coroner's recommendation 42 and Message Stick recommendations 7, 30 can be found above.

4. Better prevention, intervention and postvention services

Recommendation:

CR12

That there be the appointment of Local Area Co-ordinators or local Family Advocates in the Kimberley Region who can assist families in need of accessing service providers and that all efforts be made to have such roles filled by an Aboriginal person.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted in principle

NA

Progress update:

The Commonwealth has funded Community Liaison Officers through the Kimberley Suicide Prevention Trial. The Trial is currently being evaluated, with the outcome of the evaluation to determine the Commonwealth's ongoing support for services in the Kimberley.

Recommendation:

CR17

That the Government and its service providers continue to ensure that the strategies for addressing Aboriginal suicide be implemented in consultation with appropriate representatives from the Aboriginal community, that the representatives which are appropriate to consult are identified on an ongoing basis, and that such representatives be provided with an opportunity for involvement in the co-design of such strategies.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted

In progress

Progress update:

This recommendation requires ongoing commitment to engagement and is being supported through the development of dedicated Regional Plans for suicide prevention with ACCOs. Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services has developed this Plan for the Kimberley Region.



Recommendation:

CR24

That mental health treatment plans for Aboriginal persons offer the option of traditional cultural healing, and where that option is accepted, that all efforts be made to work collaboratively for the benefit of the patient.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted (being implemented)

Actioned

Progress update:

The Mental Health Act 2014 includes provision for traditional healing for Aboriginal clients and collaboration with Elders. Kimberley Mental Health and Drug Service (KMHDS) have developed Cultural Protocols that identify the use of Aboriginal Elders, Aboriginal interpreters and cultural healers as important aspects of ensuring cultural healing is promoted. Aboriginal mental health workers are employed in all parts of the service to act as advocates in regards to engaging Aboriginal people.

Recommendation:

MS6

That the Mental Health Commission broadens its scope of suicide prevention for Aboriginal people to encompass all identified risk factors.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted (being implemented)

In progress

Progress update:

The Western Australian Suicide Prevention Framework 2021-2025 was released in October 2020 and recognises the broad factors that influence of social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal people. There is work underway to develop a Western Australian Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Strategy prioritising culturally secure approaches to social and emotional wellbeing and suicide prevention, with dedicated regional plans.

Recommendation:

MS10

That Western Australian Government agencies use the assessment tools and evaluation framework created by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Evaluation Project (ATSISPEP).

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted (being implemented)

In progress

Progress update:

A suitable evaluation framework will be developed for the Aboriginal People stream of the Suicide Prevention Framework 2021 - 2025, which will consider all available evidence. In particular the ATSISPEP evaluation framework.

Recommendation:

MS15

That the Mental Health Commission involves Aboriginal people in the ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the Suicide Prevention 2020: Together we can save lives strategy.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted (being implemented)

Actioned

Progress update:

The final evaluation report of Suicide Prevention 2020 was completed in 2019. The Evaluation Reference Group had Aboriginal representatives.

Recommendation:

MS16

That the Mental Health Commission provide and fund programs and strategies which emphasise developing the capacity of community members to help youth at risk of suicide.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted

In progress

Progress update:

This recommendation is ongoing and is supported by the Young People's Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug Use: Priorities for Action 2020-2025 (YPPA). The YPPA is intended to guide the State Government, the MHC, other agencies, and stakeholders across the community in their response to the mental health needs of young people aged 12-24 years. The YPPA contains initiatives that go towards community support and responses to the mental health and AOD needs of young people.

Recommendation:

MS23

That the Mental Health Commission should evaluate the success of Suicide Prevention 2020: Together we can save lives, and report on the outcomes of its evaluations at least annually, including how progress is being measured and what changes in approach have been made based on evaluation findings.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted (being implemented)

Actioned

Progress update:

The final evaluation report of Suicide Prevention 2020 was completed in 2019. Since then, the Mental Health Commission released the Western Australian Suicide Prevention Framework 2021-2025. The Suicide Prevention Framework 2025 sets the direction for future action to reduce deaths by suicide in Western Australia. Developed for use by State and local government, non-government, private organisations and communities to help identify their role in suicide prevention and to guide the investment, development, implementation and evaluation of suicide prevention across the state.



Recommendation:

MS24

That the Evaluation Reference Group should include at least one Aboriginal member and should engage with Aboriginal communities as part of its ongoing evaluative role.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted (implemented)

Actioned

Progress update:

The MHC Evaluation Reference Group that was set up to guide the work associated with the Suicide Prevention 2020 strategy had Aboriginal representatives. This group is now disbanded.

Recommendation:

MS34

That the Western Australian Government should collaborate with Commonwealth agencies and non-government organisations to strengthen the evidence base to determine the effective ways to prevent Aboriginal youth suicide.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted

Not yet commenced

Progress update:

This recommendation has not yet been commenced but it is supported by recommendations from the 2020 Productivity Commission Inquiry Report on Mental Health which may form part of the negotiation of the new National Agreement for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention.

Recommendation:

MS37

That the Mental Health Commission implement the postvention recommendations in the 'Solutions that Work: What the Evidence and Our People Tell Us, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Evaluation Project' report and the forthcoming University of Western Australia Critical Response Project report into its dedicated suicide prevention strategy Aboriginal Implementation Plan.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted in principle

In progress

Progress update:

This recommendation is in progress with planning being undertaken to develop a new state-wide postvention program/s which provide support for people and communities affected by suicide death and build community capacity to respond to the needs of those affected by suicide death. Funding has been allocated to the actions under this recommendation through the WA Recovery Plan.

5. Building capacity in health and mental health services

Recommendation:

CR20

That Department of Communities' child protection workers and school teaching staff (in the public and private sectors) who have regular contact with Aboriginal children receive appropriate training in suicide intervention and prevention, and that such training be provided at appropriately regular intervals.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted

In progress

Progress update:

Child protection workers and school teaching staff are provided with training to staff on suicide prevention, and can take refreshed training when needed. Aboriginal Mental Health First Aid training is available to all staff at the Department of Communities.

Recommendation:

CR21

That efforts continue to be made to employ Aboriginal persons in health (including mental health), education, child protection and police and, where necessary or desirable, that consideration be given to introducing bridging courses and cadet programs and/or locally accessible training courses to assist prospective employees to obtain the necessary qualifications.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted

Actioned

Progress update:

There are many different approaches across WA Government agencies to increase employment of Aboriginal people in key service areas, including the use of the exceptions in the Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (Section 50(d) and Section 51), Aboriginal traineeship programs and WAPOL Aboriginal Police cadetships.

The Public Sector Commission has developed the Workforce Diversification and Inclusion Strategy.

Recommendation:

CR26

That care or treatment provided by service providers to Aboriginal children and young people in the Kimberley operate in a trauma-informed model, and that service providers account for the need for trauma-specific care where possible.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted in principle

In progress

Progress update:

WACHS' Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy outlines a plan to develop an e-Learning package to help staff better understand trauma-informed care.



Recommendation:

CR27

That all health service clinicians in the Kimberley have the necessary skills to screen for and facilitate care for patients with alcohol, drugs and mental health issues; and that all health service clinicians in the Kimberley have access to training in the assessment and management of these issues.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted in principle

In progress

Progress update:

The Statewide Standardised Clinical Documentation (SSCD) for Mental Health Services mandates mental health services to use the SSCD documents, which will include standard processes for capturing information regarding alcohol and other drugs. The Triage to Discharge Framework (Link) also notes Additional Documentation and Support Material that Health Service Providers can use in clinically appropriate situations. As part of the suite of additional documents, the Department of Health has recently recommended the Alcohol, Smoking and Substance Involvement Screening Tool (ASSIST – SMHMR905) for Statewide usage when clinically appropriate. Where possible, clinicians should document the key findings in the mandatory SSCD documents. Draft guidelines for the additional document suite including the ASSIST Tool are currently under review and will be added to the Triage to Discharge Framework in the future.

Recommendation:

MS9

That non-Aboriginal employees of government agencies who are involved in developing strategies for, or delivering programs and services to, Aboriginal people should attend a locally-relevant cultural competency course run by suitably qualified providers.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted

In progress

Progress update:

This recommendation is closely linked to CR19 - cultural competency training for service providers. As stated in response to CR19, all Government agencies provide cultural responsiveness training for staff that is relevant to their role. Improvements to cultural responsiveness training will be considered as part of implementation of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

Recommendation:

MS18

That the Public Sector Commission mandate higher Aboriginal employment targets for Western Australian Government agencies.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted in principle

Actioned

Progress update:

The Government released its Workforce Diversification and Inclusion Strategy for WA Public Sector Employment 2020-2025 in September 2020, along with an Action Plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Strategy includes an aspirational target to increase the representation of Aboriginal people in the public sector to 3.7%, which reflects the broader WA population. In 2019-20, 2.7% of the Western Australian public sector identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Quarterly reports on the performance of different public sector agencies are published on a dashboard.



Recommendation:

MS39

That the Western Australian Government collaborates with the Commonwealth Government to train and employ local community members to fill positions in remote areas.

Initial response:

Progress:

Further discussion required

In progress

Progress update:

This is an ongoing recommendation that is supported by actions in the workforce development space. A number of strategies exist to support training and employment pathways that reflect the work needs of local remote communities.

Recommendation:

MS44

That the Minister for Health report to the Parliament on measures to address the acknowledged gap in teaching and training staff about mental health issues and Aboriginal youth suicide.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted in principle

In progress

Progress update:

The Mental Health Commission has taken this recommendation into account in the development of the Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2021-2025 and particularly in the Aboriginal-specific stream of the framework.

The response to Coroner's recommendations 12, 17, 19, 24, 42 and Message Stick recommendations 6, 14, 16 can be found above.

6. Better access to clinical services

Recommendation:	CR1
<p>a. That there be universal screening for FASD at the following points: during infant health assessments and upon a child entering into the child protection and justice system for the first time;</p> <p>b. That all children identified at risk of neurodevelopment impairment on the basis of antenatal exposure to alcohol or early life trauma be assessed by a paediatrician for development and behavioural impairments at the age of one year and in the year prior to school starting.</p> <p>c. In respect of a child entering the child protection system for the first time in addition to the FASD universal screening:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. the preliminary assessments and screening be undertaken by Department of Communities' district psychologists.ii. that referrals be made for comprehensive IQ and functional capacity assessment where and when required by presentation and behavioursiii. That there be referrals to other treatment and therapy services for trauma -related developmental and behavioural issues, including mental health issues, impulsivity, and harmful sexual behaviours, that may or may not include cognitive impairments and neuro-disabilities such as FASD.	
Initial response:	Progress:
Accepted in principle	In progress
<p>Progress update:</p> <p>Children are universally screened for developmental delays, which can be a symptom of FASD. Children found to have any development delays are referred to a GP and/or Paediatrician. Patches Paediatrics deliver Neuropsychological Assessments and Developmental Disorder Assessments in the Kimberley.</p> <p>FASD screening is not universal for children entering the justice system, but is completed when requested by the Children's Court. In addition, youth justice staff are provided with FASD training.</p>	

Recommendation:

CR2

- a. That neurodevelopmental impairment (an umbrella term which includes behavioural, developmental and cognitive impairments) incorporating the criteria defined in the Australian Guide to the diagnosis of FASD be recognised as a disability within the National Disability Insurance Scheme (“the NDIS”)
- b. that where FASD has actually been diagnosed at the appropriate level of severity, it is separately recognised as a disability within the NDIS.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted in principle

In Progress

Progress update:

As of 1 July 2018, responsibility for the delivery of the NDIS in WA has been assumed by the Commonwealth, via the National Disability Insurance Agency. The WA Government maintains discussions with the Australian Government about eligibility under the NDIS as needed.

Recommendation:

CR3

That consideration be given to whether appropriate Medicare Benefits Scheme item numbers ought to be allocated for FASD.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted in principle

In Progress

Progress update:

The WA Government accepts this recommendation in principle, and maintains discussions with the Commonwealth about items covered by the Medicare Benefits Scheme.

Recommendation:

CR4

That consideration be given to additional funding for primary care services in areas with a high burden of neurodevelopmental impairment to increase diagnostic capacity for complex conditions including FASD, and to respond to the diagnosis by way of therapeutic services for children and young people diagnosed with FASD.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted in principle

Not yet commenced

Progress update:

There is limited scope for the State to deliver primary health care services as it is a Commonwealth responsibility. The Department of Health is looking to confirm referral pathways for children with developmental concerns, including adopting new technologies to support services.

Recommendation:

CR28

That a facility be built in the East Kimberley Region which incorporates the co-morbid treatment of mental health, alcohol and drug abuse problems, or alternatively that a feasibility study be undertaken with a view to considering the need for, and impact of, such a facility.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted

In Progress

Progress update:

A Co-design of the model of service for the Kimberley youth AOD and co-occurring mental health service was completed in December 2020. The model has seven components ranging from prevention through to intensive support.

The MHC is undertaking a gaps analysis and prioritisation of the service model components in consultation with key stakeholders including local governments. A service mapping exercise with DOJ is also due to occur to inform this project



Recommendation:

CR29

That peri-natal and infant care by health service providers in the Kimberley incorporates the treatment of mental health issues and those clinicians be made aware of the role and resources developed by the WA Peri-natal Mental Health Unit.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted in principle

Not yet commenced

Progress update:

The Government accepts in-principle this recommendation but work to incorporate mental health treatment in peri-natal care has not yet commenced. This recommendation requires significant investment into developing a model of care and including the right staffing profile. The scope for treatment will also be limited and will need to be guided by a regulatory scope of practice for registered health professionals.

Recommendation:

CR31

That there be a mental health clinician permanently based in Halls Creek, or alternatively, that there be an increase in the visiting capacity of mental health clinicians for Halls Creek.

Initial response:

Progress:

Further discussion required

Actioned

Progress update:

Under the Commitment to Aboriginal Youth Wellbeing, WACHS has received \$3.0 million to establish a Psychiatrist and Development Nurse in the East Kimberley.

Recommendation:

CR34

That facilities be developed and funded in the Kimberley Region that specifically cater for the rehabilitation of children and young persons with addiction to drugs and/or alcohol, with step down processes. The development of these facilities should be informed by the principles of self-determination, cultural continuity and empowerment.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted

In progress

Progress update:

The Kimberley Youth Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Service model and co-design summary was released in December 2020.

The service model outlines seven components which address young people's AOD and co-occurring mental health issues at various stages of severity. The seven components span three increasingly intensive tiers of support- from prevention and early intervention through to intensive support.

Planning has now begun for which components of the Kimberley Youth Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Service are the most integral to commence first. MHC notes that some of the components of this service model are already being delivered in the Kimberley region. Services are expected to commence operation in mid-2022.

Recommendation:

MS26

That the Mental Health Commission, as a matter of priority, works with the WA Primary Health Alliance and other stakeholders to establish clear roles and responsibilities for approaching Aboriginal suicide prevention in Western Australia.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted

In progress

Progress update:

A new National Agreement on Mental Health may help clarify the respective roles of the state and territory Governments. MHC works with the WA Primary Health Alliance at a local level to create clear roles and responsibilities. The establishment of dedicated regional plans for the WA Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Strategy will support this approach.

Recommendation:

MS32

That the Department of the Premier and Cabinet co-ordinates and collaborates with the Mental Health Commission and WA Primary Health Alliance to integrate the Mental Health Atlas with the map of local or regional Aboriginal youth services.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted in principle

Actioned

Progress update:

The Mental Health Atlases referred to were developed by WAPHA in 2017 and included WA funded services. The 2020 Productivity Commission inquiry into mental health made recommendations about how to better link consumers with services.



Recommendation:

MS38

That the Western Australian Government collaborates with the Commonwealth Government to provide accessible 24-hour mental health and suicide prevention services in remote areas.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted (being implemented)

Actioned

Progress update:

The implementation of a 24/7 telehealth service has been implemented in regional areas through the WA Country Health Service. Additional staff and resources are provided to give guidance to 'on the ground' clinical staff. A number of other programs exist that provide 24/7 mental health and suicide prevention services such as Standby Postvention services.

Recommendation:

MS43

That the Premier and the Minister for Mental Health report to the Parliament on the establishment of wraparound services in remote communities.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted in principle

In progress

Progress update:

The Commitment to Aboriginal Youth Wellbeing includes building capacity in health and mental health services and providing holistic services. Efforts to achieve this will be included in annual reports for the Commitment.

The response to Coroner's recommendations 12, 27 and Message Stick recommendation 39 can be found above.

7. Support for community wellbeing

Recommendation:	CR5
That there be Government funding to extend to other regional centres in the Kimberley the "Making FASD History" project that ran in the Fitzroy Valley, adapted as appropriate to the prevailing circumstances of those communities.	
Initial response:	Progress:
Accepted in principle	In progress
Progress update:	
The Government recognises that FASD is a whole-of-population issue. In the 2019-20 Budget, the Government allocated \$2.7 million to support FASD prevention, and is being spent on public education, grants, training and resources for pregnant women. As part of the public education initiative, prevention and other health officers are being supported to work with Aboriginal organisations and groups to develop resources for Aboriginal people about alcohol use in pregnancy.	

Recommendation:	CR8
That there be restrictions on the purchase of take away alcohol across the entire Kimberley Region, but that such restrictions be formulated after there has been consultation with key stakeholders, including affected local Aboriginal communities.	
Initial response:	Progress:
Accepted in principle	In progress
Progress update:	
The Director of Liquor Licensing is undertaking an inquiry into alcohol-related harm in the Kimberley and will review this evidence before engaging with licensees and industry associations.	



Recommendation:

CR9

That the Western Australian Government considers and/or assesses the feasibility of a Banned Drinker Register that is modelled on therapeutic support for those who are placed on it. If the matter progresses to an assessment, that consideration be given to community consultation.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted in principle

In progress

Progress update:

Some Kimberley stakeholders were vocal supporters of a Banned Drinkers Register in the Kimberley. The Government has allocated \$1 million for a BDR in the Kimberley commenced in Brome and Derby in May 2021. People identified as banned drinkers are provided with information on how to access community support services.

Recommendation:

CR10

That in light of the passage of the Liquor Control Amendment Act 2018 relating to the proscription on “sly grogging”, that police be properly resourced to enforce it.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted

In progress

Progress update:

The WA Government has committed to recruiting an extra 800 Police Officers, including 98 Officers for regional WA, which will support WA Police to enforce the Liquor Control Act.

Recommendation:

CR11

That there be recurrent, or more long-term funding to the various town based patrols in the Kimberley for the provision of diversionary services to those who are abusing alcohol.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted

Actioned

Progress update:

Town patrols are funded through the Aboriginal Community Connectors Program. Two Youth patrols are funded by Communities to operate within the Kimberley in Broome (HYPE via Broome Youth & Family Services) and Kununurra (via Save the Children).

Funding for night patrols to ensure young people have a safe place at night has been provided under the Kimberley Juvenile Justice Strategy.

Recommendation:

CR13

That there be consideration of the funding for, and assessment of the feasibility of, the construction of culturally appropriate short term accommodation in Kununurra for Aboriginal persons visiting the East Kimberley Region.

Initial response:

Progress:

Further discussion required

Actioned

Progress update:

In September 2020 the WA Government announced a commitment of \$20 million to build an Aboriginal Short Stay Accommodation facility in Kununurra. The facility is scheduled for completion in the second half of 2023.

Recommendation:

CR14

That the Transitional Housing Project be continued in Broome, Derby, Halls Creek and Kununurra and be extended to other town sites in the Kimberley.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted (being implemented)

In progress

Progress update:

The Transitional Housing Program operates in Broome, Derby, Halls Creek and Kununurra, and since the release of the Coroner's Inquest has been expanded to Wyndham and South Hedland. A procurement process is in progress for the Traditional Housing Program to continue in the East Kimberley (Kununurra, Wyndham and Halls Creek - inclusive of Property & Tenancy Management and Support Services).

Recommendation:

CR15

That Aboriginal persons living in the Kimberley Region in public and/or transitional housing are not disadvantaged regarding accommodation in the event of their household exceeding the income threshold for eligibility.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted

In progress

Progress update:

The Department of Communities has prepared a draft Social Housing Framework (Framework), which sets out the intent of the proposed change agenda for social housing over the next 10 years, with the aim of delivering whole-of-system reform to ensure that social housing can best identify, target and respond to those with the greatest housing needs.

The Framework also considers options to address work-related disincentives for clients, while also exploring alternate rent setting approaches and defining and promoting a duration of need approach for some cohorts.

The Framework will take into consideration place-based approaches and recognise where thin markets exist, limiting transitional options and therefore requiring tenants to remain in public and transitional housing for a period of time even though they exceed income limits.

Communities will also be reviewing public housing income eligibility limits. Any increases to income limits would allow households to earn more income while retaining eligibility for housing assistance.

The Department of Communities (Communities) understands the unique issues in regions, including the Kimberley, and will take a place-based approach to social housing where possible. Communities will continue to engage with stakeholders on the Framework.



Recommendation:

CR18

That measures be introduced aimed at increasing the prospects of complaints of domestic violence being reported and maintained; and as part of such measures, that the State Government consider introducing legislation allowing for visually recorded statements taken from victims of domestic violence to be admitted as evidence-in-chief at a court hearing.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted

In progress

Progress update:

Drafting of a new Evidence Act for Western Australia has commenced and will include the introduction of provisions to enable video and audio statements of family violence complainants taken at the scene by police officers, or around the time of the alleged family violence incident, to be admitted as the evidence-in-chief of the complainant in subsequent proceedings. Decisions regarding the priority accorded to the legislation will be a matter for the incoming government.

Recommendation:

CR22

That consideration be given to extending an offer of a voluntary cashless debit card program to include the entire Kimberley Region.

Initial response:

Progress:

Further discussion required

In Progress

Progress update:

The Cashless Debit Card is a Commonwealth program. The WA Government's position, which has been conveyed to the Commonwealth, is that the Cashless Debit Card should only ever be voluntary.



Recommendation:

CR30

That the development or refurbishment of facilities for young persons to meet and engage in activities be undertaken in the Kimberley Region, in consultation with local Aboriginal communities.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted in principle

Actioned

Progress update:

A number of recent initiatives have sought to improve facilities for young people in the Kimberley, including:

- upgrades and new multicourt facilities for many communities through the Community Sport and Recreation Facilities Fund
- a new PCYC in Kununurra

Recommendation:

CR32

That police stations in the Kimberley consider expansion of “Adopt-a-Cop” or similar programs, developed in consultation with members of the Aboriginal community.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted

In progress

Progress update:

Youth Policing Officers are deployed in various locations and work collaboratively with Government and non-government services to divert young people from engaging in criminal behaviour. Additional Youth Policing Officers will be deployed across regional WA in coming years.

Recommendation:

CR33

That the Elders Reference Group presently in operation in Halls Creek be extended to other Kimberley town sites and that this work be CDP recognised, and that current police efforts continue and be supported.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted in principle

Actioned

Progress update:

Elders Reference Groups have been established across the Kimberley and are utilised to assist police in responding to critical and sensitive issues. The maturity of the group depends upon the community dynamics, cultural authority and availability.

The response to Coroner's recommendations 12 and 42 can be found above.

8. Building local capacity

Recommendation:

CR41

That a policy be introduced that ensures those who appropriately act as CEOs of their Aboriginal communities are either remunerated for their efforts or, at the very least, reimbursed for expenses incurred in executing that role.

Initial response:

Progress:

Further discussion required

Not yet commenced

Progress update:

In May 2021, WA government agencies convened a Kimberley Aboriginal Remote Community Leaders Forum for community chairs and CEOs. Participants discussed the resourcing needs of remote community organisations and agreed on priorities to be put forward to Ministers of the Western Australian and Australian Governments. The State Government has not yet agreed the suggested policy or approved the funding to implement it.

The response to Coroner's recommendations 12, 16, 17, 21, 33, 42 and Message Stick recommendations 12, 13, 16, 39 can be found above.

9. Better engagement with education

Recommendation:

CR35

That early education programs such as Kindilink be maintained for the Kimberley Region, with consideration for funding beyond the period of the pilot, and that programs be developed in consultation with the local Aboriginal communities.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted (being implemented)

Actioned

Progress update:

The KindiLink Program has been extended and now operates in 18 schools in the Kimberley.

Recommendation:

CR36

That schools within the Kimberley Region be encouraged and resourced to introduce re-engagement classrooms at a primary school level.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted in principle

In progress

Progress update:

Two of the four pillars of the Kimberley Schools Project are:

- Regular attendance: community partnerships to deliver strategies that aim to resolve issues of nonattendance in particular communities.
- Increased student and community engagement: co-designed community initiatives that build positive relationships between the school and the community.

Through these pillars, public schools in the Kimberley are working with their communities to support and encourage all primary-aged students and their families to stay connected with schooling.

Engagement strategies vary from school to school, based on the strengths of local communities and the expertise and advice of key staff such as Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers (AIEOs).

There is a co-educational Alternative Learning Setting program in Broome, which provides short term interventions for Year 7 to 12 students that address their behaviour and link them back into education. The Department of Education is establishing a panel of service providers to deliver engagement programs for Year 7-12 Aboriginal young women in WA public schools.

Recommendation:

CR38

That the Department of Education introduce or continue to expand the teaching of Aboriginal languages in its Kimberley schools, in consultation with the local Aboriginal communities.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted (being implemented)

In progress

Progress update:

Most schools in the Kimberley teach an Aboriginal language. Some schools teach more than one language. Aboriginal language programs are only implemented with community support and endorsement.

The Aboriginal Languages Teacher Training (ALTT) course provides training for Aboriginal educators to become Aboriginal languages teachers and teach Aboriginal languages in schools. This program focuses on language revitalisation strategies and teaching methodologies.

The Department is developing nationally recognised qualifications based on the current Aboriginal Languages Teacher Training course. The qualifications will be accredited by the Training Accreditation Council and recognised within the Australian Qualification Framework, providing further education and employment pathways for Aboriginal secondary students and Aboriginal educators.

Recommendation:

CR40

That consideration be given to residential facilities being built for school aged students in the Kimberley Region, after consultation with local Aboriginal communities, and that any such colleges be co-designed and informed by the principles of self-determination, cultural continuity and empowerment. Further that admission is voluntary, with the consent of the parents and/or caregivers, and the consent of the child.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted in principle

In progress

Progress update:

The Broome Residential College provides a model that could potentially be expanded to other regions. The Department of Education considered adopting a similar model in the Fitzroy Valley, but it was found unsuitable to local needs.



Recommendation:

MS36

That the Minister for Education increase the number of Child and Parent Centres operating in remote areas.

Initial response:

Progress:

Further discussion required

Not yet commenced

Progress update:

This recommendation remains under consideration. Extensive community engagement is required to properly understand the viability of Centres in larger remote communities with outreach to smaller communities as well.

10. Helping young people connect to culture

The response to Coroner's recommendations 16, 17, 25, 38, 39, 42 and Message Stick recommendations 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 16 can be found above.

11. Building youth capacity

Recommendation:	CR37
That high schools in the Kimberley region be provided with facilities that enable non-academic students to engage in vocational programs.	
Initial response:	Progress:
Accepted in principle	In progress
Progress update:	
The School of Isolated and Distance Education Registered Training Organisation (RTO) provides students in remote areas with access to RTO services. Other opportunities being pursued include: making more effective and targeted use of the four trade training centres located in the Kimberley and providing flexible delivery options of Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs in qualification areas linked to local employment opportunities and industry workforce shortages. Additional training places have been provided jointly by the Department of Education and the Department of Training and Workplace Development, enabling North Regional TAFE to begin negotiating additional training with local schools.	
Recommendation:	MS17
That the Western Australian Government support the development of future Aboriginal leaders, by providing support and funding to existing leadership development organisations, funding scholarships and connecting future leaders with secondment opportunities to gain specific skills, and assisting with the early identification of leaders through school based programs.	
Initial response:	Progress:
Accepted in principle	In Progress
Progress update:	
In March 2020 WA Government committed \$1.3 million for the Empowered Youth Network (EYN) in the Kimberley. The EYN project aims to support the Empowered Young Leaders (EYL) to form a network of young Aboriginal leaders across the Kimberley, who can contribute to decisions that affect them, and become leaders of change on behalf of their own and future generations.	



Recommendation:

MS19

That Western Australian Government agencies should recruit greater numbers of Aboriginal people, relying on section 51 of the Equal Opportunity Act 1984 if necessary. These positions should not be limited to Aboriginal liaison or cultural advisory positions, but should be generally spread across all positions at all levels in all agencies.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted in principle

In progress

Progress update:

The Workforce Diversification and Inclusion Strategy provides guidance on how to use the exceptions in the Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (Section 50(d) and Section 51) to employ more Aboriginal people. The Public Sector Commission has expanded its advertising for the Aboriginal Traineeship Program and maintains a database of trainees and refers graduates to agencies seeking to fill entry-level positions.

Recommendation:

MS20

That the Western Australian Government establish clear and more attractive career paths for Aboriginal employees.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted (being implemented)

In progress

Progress update:

This recommendation is very similar to CR21 - employment of Aboriginal people in key service areas. As the response to CR21 states, there are multiple approaches across WA Government agencies to increase employment of Aboriginal people in key service areas, including using the exceptions provided in the Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (Section 50(d) and Section 51); Aboriginal traineeship programs; and WA Police Force Aboriginal Police cadetships.

The response to Coroner's recommendations 21, 30 and Message Stick recommendation 39 can be found above.

12. A voice for young people

The response to Coroner's recommendation 42 and Message Stick recommendations 12, 17 can be found above.

Recommendations related to Government structures and accountability

Recommendation:	CR6
That education campaigns be conducted in all secondary schools in Western Australia to alert students to (i) the dangers of consuming alcohol during pregnancy and (ii) the prevalence of FASD (with a culturally relevant education campaign for Aboriginal children).	
Initial response:	Progress:
Accepted	In progress
Progress update:	
The Department of Education has reviewed its Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) education professional learning and work has commenced to develop a FASD prevention education and teaching resource that is culturally relevant for Aboriginal children.	



Recommendation:

CR7

That the State Government appoints a person who is a Special Advisor on matters concerning Aboriginal children and young persons, or considers appointing an additional Commissioner for Aboriginal children and young persons.

Initial response:

Progress:

Further discussion required

In progress

Progress update:

The WA Government has recognised the need to strengthen government accountability in respect of Aboriginal people's outcomes, including Aboriginal children and young people. In 2018, the Government released a discussion paper proposing the establishment of an independent statutory office to address this accountability gap. The community engagements which followed addressed the question of whether a Commissioner (or Co- or Deputy Commissioner) for Aboriginal Children and Young People should be established in addition to, or instead of, a broader office for accountability in Aboriginal affairs. One view put forward was that, rather than having a distinct Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, a proposed Office for Accountability in Aboriginal affairs should work closely with the existing Commissioner for Children and Young People to ensure that they serve Aboriginal children and young people as effectively as possible. The Government will continue to engage with key stakeholders about how best to resolve this question.

Recommendation:

CR23

That the use of video-conferencing for mental health assessments be expanded throughout the Kimberley Region, including an after-hours service.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted (being implemented)

Actioned

Progress update:

The Government recognises the success of this program. The Mental Health Emergency Telehealth Service has allowed more than 80 percent of their patients to remain on country and receiving care in their local area. The 24/7 service also provides mental health training to local hospitals and health services, which can expand the capability of on-country facilities. This improves cultural security outcomes for community members which directly contributes to this recommendation.

Recommendation:

MS1

That Western Australian Government agencies revisit reports listed in Appendix Six and outline their actions of how the intention and recommendations of these reports will be implemented.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted in principle

Actioned

Progress update:

Many of the reports listed in the Message Stick report have been considered by the Government and their intent and recommendations have been incorporated into current Government strategies, including the Commitment to Aboriginal Youth Wellbeing and the WA Suicide Prevention Framework 2021-2025.



Recommendation:

MS2

That the Premier co-ordinates and provides a response to the recommendations of this Inquiry which have not been directed to a specific agency or Minister.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted in principle

Actioned

Progress update:

The Department of the Premier and Cabinet has coordinated a whole-of-government response to the recommendations of this Inquiry and has provided responses to recommendations where an agency has not been specified. The Mental Health Commission is assuming lead agency responsibility for the Commitment to Aboriginal Youth Wellbeing, and will publish updates on progress in implementing the recommendations in the annual reports.

Recommendation:

MS3

That the Premier and each Minister to whom recommendations are directed should report to Parliament at six monthly intervals for no fewer than five years after the tabling of this report on the progress of implementing recommendations made in this report.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted in principle

Actioned

Progress update:

The WA Government has committed to annual reports on the Commitment until 2025 (five years). Annual Reports on the WA Government's implementation of National Agreement on Closing the Gap commitments will supplement these reports in working to improve Aboriginal wellbeing.

Recommendation:

MS4

That the Department of the Premier and Cabinet create a centralised database of inquiry recommendations made to Western Australian Government agencies. Further:

- the Department of the Premier and Cabinet retains overall responsibility for maintenance of the database and ensuring government agencies update the database in a timely fashion
- the database should include the government's initial response to recommendations, and be updated at six monthly intervals to advise of progress made in implementing supported recommendations contained in the database. This advice should include detailed information of specific actions taken in response to particular recommendations, and not just whether actions are 'in progress' or 'complete'.
- information in the database should continue to be updated until implementation of a recommendation is 'complete' or superseded, in which case the reasons why the recommendation is no longer being implemented should be stated.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted in principle

Actioned

Progress update:

The Department of the Premier and Cabinet has established a database on recommendations from the Coroner's Inquest and Message Stick reports. This database will be transferred to the Mental Health Commission, which is assuming responsibility for the Commitment to Aboriginal Youth Wellbeing. WA Government agencies are responsible for inquiry recommendations pertaining to their portfolio responsibilities.



Recommendation:

MS5

That Western Australia be mindful of its obligations under international human rights agreements and take all possible measures to ensure these obligations are met.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted

Actioned

Progress update:

The WA Government contributes to the United Nations Universal Periodic Review National Report and Australia's periodic report to the Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) - International Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

Recommendation:

MS21

That the Western Australian Parliament explores the option of employing an Aboriginal liaison officer based on the Queensland Parliament's experience.

Initial response:

Progress:

Further discussion required

Not yet commenced

Progress update:

The Government has decided not to employ an Aboriginal Liaison Officer in the WA Parliament at this time.



Recommendation:

MS25

That the Western Australian Government urge the Commonwealth Government to now release the funds for the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Strategy.

Initial response:

Progress:

Further discussion required

Not yet commenced

Progress update:

NATSISPS Commonwealth funding may form part of the negotiation of the new National Agreement for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, expected to be finalised by November 2021.

Recommendation:

MS27

That the Premier, in conjunction with Cabinet, create or designate a government agency or authority to lead the Western Australian Government's actions in responding to issues affecting Aboriginal wellbeing.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted in principle

Actioned

Progress update:

The Department of the Premier and Cabinet is the agency principally assisting the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs with the administration of the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority Act 1972, which gives the Minister an overall coordination role in relation to government actions to promote economic, social and cultural outcomes for Aboriginal people.



Recommendation:

MS28

That the designated government agency responsible for Aboriginal wellbeing is fully resourced and provided with sufficient authority to fulfil its leadership role, and cause other government agencies to take action in accordance with its directions.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted (being implemented)

Actioned

Progress update:

The Department of the Premier and Cabinet's position as a central agency supports its role in providing advice to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and leading whole of government policy relating to Aboriginal wellbeing. The Department's Director General is the chair of the Aboriginal Affairs Coordinating Committee, comprising of key Directors General and the co-chairs of the Aboriginal Advisory Council of WA.

Recommendation:

MS29

That the Western Australian Government redesign its agency structure to achieve an integrated whole-of-government approach to addressing issues facing Aboriginal people in remote areas. The redesign should be led by senior public servants from within each agency which provides services to Aboriginal people in remote areas.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted (being implemented)

Actioned

Progress update:

Multiple agencies, including the Departments of Communities; Planning, Lands and Heritage; and the Premier and Cabinet, work collaboratively to support a whole-of-government approach to address issues affecting Aboriginal people in remote areas. More recently, the Remote Aboriginal Communities Mobilisation Unit has supported the State's COVID-19 response in remote communities.



Recommendation:

MS30

That the Western Australian Government improve collaboration and co-ordination between agencies that develop strategies for, and deliver programs and services to, Aboriginal people in remote areas.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted (being implemented)

In progress

Progress update:

Various formal mechanisms to coordinate government policy exist to support collaboration between key agencies. The Department of the Premier and Cabinet is responsible for coordinating whole-of-government policies that affect Aboriginal people, including those in remote areas.

Recommendation:

MS31

That the Department for Child Protection and Family Support in conjunction with the Public Sector Commission prepare a circular outlining the operation of the information sharing provisions under the Children and Community Services Act 2004 to be circulated to all government agencies.

Initial response:

Progress:

Accepted (implemented)

Actioned

Progress update:

New information sharing provisions came into effect in January 2016.



Recommendation:

MS33

That the Department of the Premier and Cabinet amend the Aboriginal Youth Investment Priority and Principles to allow funding amounts of less than \$300,000 to be granted to Aboriginal organisations.

Initial response:

Progress:

Further discussion required

In progress

Progress update:

The Aboriginal Youth Investment Priority and Principles aims to improve outcomes and certainty for youth services and programs by addressing the acute fragmentation in targeted Aboriginal youth services. However, this can be achieved by supporting and strengthening the involvement of Aboriginal people and organisations in designing and establishing locally owned programs.

This balance will be examined in the WA Government's forthcoming State-wide Commissioning Strategy which will incorporate individual Agency Commissioning Plans. The Strategy will reflect the State's commitment under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap to increase the proportion of services delivered by Aboriginal organisations, particularly Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

Photography:
Aboriginal Policy and Coordination Unit

The Government of Western Australia
acknowledges the traditional custodians
throughout Western Australia and their
continuing connection to the land, waters
and community.

We pay our respects to all members of the
Aboriginal communities and their cultures;
and to Elders both past and present.

We also thank those who have dedicated
their time to participate in the various
workshops on the delivery of the
Commitment to Aboriginal Youth Wellbeing.

