



Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia

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.....MEDIA STATEMENT.....

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AHCWA calls for genuine consultation with Suicide Response

The Aboriginal Health Council of WA (AHCWA) today called on the State Government to consult genuinely with the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Sector in the development of Aboriginal specific health and wellbeing strategies like the State Suicide Prevention Strategy.

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Mental Health, the Hon Helen Morton, was a keynote speaker at the opening of AHCWA's State Conference, "Developing New Health Leadership" today (25 March), and discussed the State Government's commitment to developing a State Suicide Prevention Plan for Western Australia in partnership with Aboriginal communities.

AHCWA CEO Darryl Kickett said the partnership would work if genuine ongoing consultation processes are undertaken. This is paramount in ensuring culturally safe Aboriginal community controlled mental health services were provided in regional areas – and in particular, Albany and Narrogin, where suicides are currently at crisis levels.

"Community controlled healing centres are needed to ensure we provide suicide prevention and response strategies in areas where suicide is threatening the fabric of Aboriginal communities," Mr Kickett said.

"We need to build the Aboriginal community controlled capacity of mental health, social and emotional wellbeing services in WA. Our Aboriginal Medical Services have this experience, and can provide valuable contributions to this new strategy. Aboriginal communities need to endorse all parts of the strategy from staffing selection to policy assembling to ensure it is effective in the community.

"Our concern ultimately sits with Government commitment to Aboriginal people, families and communities facing mental health crises; rushed or ill advised decisions could see solutions and funding progressed without genuine input from the people who are handling the suicide issues in these communities."

In 2008, the Narrogin Aboriginal Community and WA Country Health Service recommended funding options for an Aboriginal community controlled health and wellbeing model that provides much needed support to individuals, family and community groups. This model is currently with the State Government for consideration, and was developed by the Narrogin Aboriginal Community, in partnership with the Health Department, AHCWA and Aboriginal psychologist Darrell Henry.

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The model focuses on building capacity and strength for healing through Culture and Aboriginal ownership, and integrates referral pathways with the Government and other mainstream services. It incorporates a Narrogin Aboriginal Community Controlled Men's Crisis Accommodation Centre and Counselling Service, of which the Counselling Service is central.

For comment:

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