



Commissioner for Children and Young People  
Western Australia

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**Submission No. 19**  
(Youth Suicide)  
Date: 11/03/2011

[Redacted]

Inquiry Secretary  
House of Representative Standing Committee  
On Health and Ageing  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

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### **Roundtable forum on youth suicide prevention**

I refer to your letter of 17 December 2010, extending an invitation to participate in the roundtable forum on youth suicide prevention in Perth on the 31 January 2011. I apologise for the lateness in my response, however a subsequent telephone follow up was made with you by my Aboriginal Advisor, Leah Bonson on the 14 January 2011 regarding the format of the forum and advising of my non-attendance.

As Western Australia's inaugural Commissioner for Children and Young People I have responsibility for advocating for the half a million Western Australian citizens under the age of 18 years and for promoting and monitoring their wellbeing.

### **Inquiry**

Recently I commenced an inquiry into the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people.

The Inquiry will examine and report on:

1. the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people in Western Australia.
2. the experiences of children and young people and their families in relation to the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people.
3. agencies that have a critical role to play in strengthening the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people.
4. models and interventions that strengthen the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people in Western Australia, including those that reduce the risk or prevent mental health problems or disorders.

*Caring for the future growing up today*

5. opportunities for coordination and collaboration within the government sector and between government, non government and private sectors to assist in the promotion of the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people.
6. positive approaches and partnerships that are evidenced based and are proving effective in strengthening the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people (in Western Australia or elsewhere and which would be relevant to Western Australia).
7. recommendations to inform future directions that will strengthen the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people, including interventions aimed at reducing the risk or preventing mental health problems and disorders and effective treatment.

The Inquiry received over 140 submissions. I anticipate that the report from the Inquiry will be completed shortly and tabled in the Western Australian Parliament in the first half of this year.

### **Wellbeing Research**

I commissioned a major research project in 2009 to investigate children and young people's view on what is important to their wellbeing. Approximately 1,000 children and young people participated, with 10% being Aboriginal. The most important aspects of wellbeing they identified were:

- a loving supportive family
- good friends
- fun and activity
- being safe
- a good education
- the basics (such as food, clothing, shelter and enough money to live)
- acknowledgement
- freedom and independence.

A full copy of the findings can be found on my website:  
<http://www.ccyp.wa.gov.au/content.aspx?cId=326>

I will be using the findings from both the research and the Inquiry to talk with governments and the wider community about what more can be done to support children, young people and their families.

Addressing suicide prevention is a shared responsibility across a range of government and service providers. It is also important that the views of children and young people are considered in any strategy or services that will support their mental health and wellbeing.

I would be happy to further expand on these issues as required.

Yours sincerely



MICHELLE SCOTT

Commissioner for Children and Young People WA

21 February, 2011