

## Senate Community Affairs Committee

### ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

#### HEALTH PORTFOLIO

#### Budget Estimates 2017 - 2018, 29 & 30 May 2017

Ref No: SQ17-000676

**OUTCOME:** 2 - Health Access and Support Services

**Topic:** Indigenous Suicide

**Type of Question:** Written Question on Notice

**Senator:** Sterle, Glenn

**Question:**

In November 2016 the WA Parliament Education and Health Standing Committee brought down its Learnings from the message stick The report of the Inquiry into Aboriginal youth suicide in remote areas. In his Chairman's Foreword, Dr Grahame Jacobs writes as follows: "The various reports and inquiries the Committee considered during this Inquiry made a broad range of recommendations. Perhaps the most important, yet least enacted, were about the role of Aboriginal culture, both as a primary protective factor building resilience in young people, and also ensuring that programs and services are culturally appropriate." Finding # 8 in that Message Stick Report reads as follows: "Finding 8 Page 57 There is increasing evidence that culturally-based programs have the greatest impact in preventing suicide." What actions is the Commonwealth Government taking in order to ensure that the majority of its suicide prevention investments are directed to the most efficacious programs ie culturally – based programs?

**Answer:**

The Department of Health is working to ensure that funding is directed to culturally-appropriate, evidence-based services to support suicide prevention in the indigenous community.

Regional approaches to suicide prevention are being implemented by Primary Health Networks (PHNs). As part of this role, PHNs are required to identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that are at heightened risk of suicide in their region and support the implementation of culturally appropriate community based suicide prevention activity. PHNs are required to consult with local communities and stakeholders, including those with a lived experience of suicide, to clarify local needs and priority areas for action.

The Australian Government has also committed \$84.75 million over three years, through PHNs, to improve access to culturally sensitive mental health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, under the Indigenous Mental Health Programme.

Further, two Indigenous-specific suicide prevention trial sites have been established in the Kimberley and Darwin regions. These two trial sites are part of a \$34 million commitment to fund twelve suicide prevention trial sites across Australia. The Indigenous-specific trials are

seeking to develop a community led approach to suicide prevention that is culturally sensitive to the needs of Indigenous communities.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Evaluation Project (ATSISPEP) report will form a blueprint for the Indigenous-specific suicide prevention trial sites in the Kimberley and Darwin regions. The ATSISPEP report is being used by the relevant community working groups and the PHNs to guide the evaluation of the trial sites in determining based on evidence, what strategies are successful in preventing suicidal behaviour among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In addition, the University of Western Australia has been selected to establish a Centre of Best Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention and will receive funding of \$1.75 million commencing in April 2017 and ceasing June 2019. This Indigenous led project will help build the capacity of PHNs, Indigenous organisations and communities in the development of suicide prevention activity tailored to regional needs.