

## Senate Community Affairs Committee

### ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

#### HEALTH PORTFOLIO

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

Ref No: SQ17-000678

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

**Topic:** Indigenous Suicide

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

**Senator:** Sterle, Glenn

**Question:**

On 08 April 2017 the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, Ms Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, delivered her United Nations End of Mission Statement on the rights of indigenous peoples following her recent visit to Australia. She spent two days in the Kimberley, in which time she engaged with a wide range of Aboriginal organisations, including KALACC. Ms Tauli – Corpuz writes as follows: “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders told me about feelings of powerlessness, loss of culture and lack of control over their lives. Suicide rates among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are escalating at a shocking rate and are double that of non-Indigenous Australians. The current situation has been described as a suicide epidemic. While I was in the Kimberley, I learnt about youth developed and driven projects to prevent suicide among Aboriginal adolescents and strongly urge that such initiatives be supported and replicated. Adopting a holistic approach to social and emotional well-being, which recognises the need for cultural connection, is key to achieve sustainable improvement in health indicators.” What actions is the Commonwealth Government taking in order to respond to the clear recommendations from the United Nations that the programs that need to be invested in in the Kimberley region are holistic and focus on cultural connections?

**Answer:**

The Australian Government has announced two Indigenous-specific suicide prevention trial sites in the Kimberley and Darwin regions. The trials are part of a \$34 million commitment to fund twelve suicide prevention trial sites across Australia. The Indigenous-specific trials will help the Australian Government develop a suicide prevention model that is culturally sensitive to the needs of Indigenous communities. These trials are lead with significant input from the community and the importance of cultural connections has been part of the working group discussions. KALLAC has been involved in all working group meetings.

The Australian Government supports research into self-harm and suicide among children and young people, with a view to incorporating findings into broader support services for Indigenous Australians. The Department of Health is funding the establishment of a Centre of Best Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention to continue to build the evidence base of what works to ensure we are continuously learning and adapting to what is working on the ground.

The Australian Government is increasing access to culturally sensitive mental health services, including suicide prevention services, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. For example:

- the Australian Government has committed an additional \$85 million over three years under the Indigenous Mental Health Programme;
- \$6.3 million annually is also committed for national and regional Indigenous-specific suicide prevention activities under the National Suicide Prevention Strategy. This includes \$5.6 million annually to PHNs for the planning and commissioning of regionally and culturally appropriate suicide prevention services and \$700,000 per annum for a Centre of Best Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention;
- Governments are working together to develop the *Fifth National Mental Health Plan* which prioritises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and suicide prevention; and
- The Government is expected to announce in July 2017 a renewed *National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing 2017-2023*. The Framework provides a dedicated focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing and mental health.

The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet also fund a range of initiatives supporting Indigenous suicide prevention including the National Indigenous Critical Response Service which aims to improve services so that the needs of Indigenous families affected by suicide are met in a timely, culturally-appropriate and coordinated way and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Evaluation Project, which is informing future work on Indigenous suicide prevention, including the Indigenous suicide prevention trials.