

**Senate Community Affairs Committee**

**ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**HEALTH PORTFOLIO**

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

**Ref No:** SQ17-000681

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

**Topic:** Indigenous Suicide

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

**Senator:** Sterle, Glenn

**Question:**

The minutes of the 1 May meeting of the Kimberley Regional Suicide Prevention Working Group contain these words: “Steering Committee to action the following items from working group discussion before the next working group meeting: .... “Progress mapping/project development of Minister Wyatt priority - Culturally based activities.’ According to the Productivity Commission’s 2014 Indigenous Expenditure Report, combined Federal and State Government funding on direct Aboriginal cultural activity in WA was \$36.40 million (0.74 per cent of the combined total Federal and State Government expenditure in Aboriginal services in 2012-13 in WA). <http://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/indigenousexpenditure-report>. What steps is the Commonwealth taking to ensure that the support for Aboriginal culture does not in future represent less than one percent of Government Indigenous expenditures in Western Australia?

**Answer:**

The Australian Government provides a broad range of mainstream and specific services to Indigenous people across the vast spectrum of geographic locations from cities and major regional towns through to remote and very remote areas. To meet the needs of Indigenous clients, these services must be both physically accessible and culturally appropriate.

The Productivity Commission’s 2014 Indigenous Expenditure Report attempts to identify the level of expenditure that relates to the Indigenous population. A key point in the 2014 report claims that total direct expenditure on services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in 2012-13 was estimated to be \$30.3 billion, accounting for 6.1 per cent of total direct general government expenditure.

The report also noted that the most efficient and effective approach to meeting the needs of Indigenous communities is through mainstream services designed to address disadvantage in the wider community. Mainstream services continue to adopt practices that consider cultural appropriateness – such as cultural competency training, cultural awareness training and the establishment of Indigenous advisory committees and groups. Mainstream services are complemented by Indigenous specific programs and services in some areas, as noted in the report.

While estimates in the Productivity Commission report represent the best collective effort of the jurisdictions, they should be interpreted with due consideration of the associated caveats. Identifying the Indigenous component of expenditure is not straightforward, with a number of data and methodological challenges that affect the quality of some of the estimates.

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

From 2016-17, \$6.3 million annually has also been committed for national and regional Indigenous-specific suicide prevention activities. This includes planning and commissioning of regionally and culturally appropriate mental health and suicide prevention services by Primary Health Networks and the establishment of a National Centre of Best Practice on Suicide Prevention.

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 Primary Health Networks, Indigenous organisations and communities in the development of suicide prevention activity tailored to regional needs.