



Drug and Alcohol Office  
Government of Western Australia

Submission No: 144

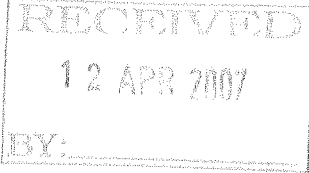
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STANDING C

17 APR 2007

on Family and Human Services



The Hon Bronwyn Bishop MP  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Family and Human Services  
IG 34  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mrs Bishop

Please find below information about child deaths in Western Australia where parental drug use was a factor, as requested following the hearing of the Standing Committee on Family and Human Services held in Perth.

Western Australia is one of three states in Australia (along with Victoria and New South Wales) to have a Child Death Review Committee. Criteria for a child death to be reviewed review include:

- when a deceased child's family has had a number of contacts with the Department for Community Development (DCD) within the past 24 months and an emerging pattern is indicated and
- when the deceased child, young person or other children in a deceased child's family have been the subject of an allegation of child maltreatment or child concern report recorded by DCD within the past 24 months and an emerging pattern is indicated.

While it is the role of the Child Death Review Committee to examine the circumstances of a death, they have no role in establishing causation. This role rests with the Coroner's Office. The Coroner's Office does not collect data on parental alcohol and drug use.

Since 2003 the Child Death Review Committee has reviewed 44 child deaths. In 77% of these cases there was found to be parental alcohol and drug use. It is important to note that no conclusions can be drawn on the role of parental alcohol and drug use in the cause of these deaths.

The Advisory Council on the Prevention of Deaths of Children and Young People was formed in 2003. Among its terms of reference is the review and analysis of data relating to the deaths of children and young people. Although data is available about the role of the young person's own alcohol and drug use in the cause of death, the Council does not include parental drug use within its terms of reference.

Yours sincerely

**Terry Murphy**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

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