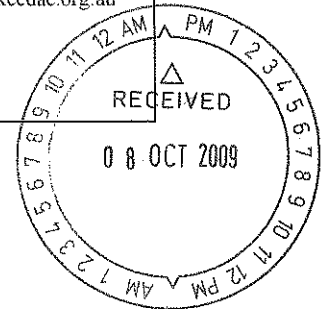


NARROGIN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY REFERENCE GROUP

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Australian Senate

SELECT COMMITTEE ON REGIONAL AND REMOTE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Dear Senators,

The Narrogin Aboriginal Community Reference Group (NACRG) desires to present the following matters to the Select Committee on regional and Remote Indigenous Communities

NACRG has been prominent in highlighting, often to the displeasure of service providers, of their perplexing response through irrelevant, ineffective, duplicated, uncoordinated, totally culturally inappropriate and apathetic service delivery to the Aboriginal community of Narrogin following but not exclusive to the spate of suicides.

NACRG membership comprises of volunteers who recognized gaps within, Education, Health and Mental Health, WA Police, Housing, Sport and Recreation, Town of Narrogin when a timely and applicable response was needed but not provided to the families traumatised by losing their loved ones to suicide.

These gaps existed prior to these distressing events but were never addressed collectively.

In reference to the Terms of Reference of this Inquiry, I will address the issues as outlined

The Northern Territory Emergency Response:

- Health and Mental Health continue their same practices making miniscule adjustments to indicate that they now deliver a culturally appropriate service
- ✚ Funding has been made available to employment an Indigenous Health Promotions officer who has developed a strong Mens Program. The group has just harvested their first crop of vegetables from the community garden.
- Aboriginal people are at an even greater risk of self harm and suicidal behaviours because the welfare actions taken have imposed on their rights to lead and direct their lives

- Education has generally not been able to validate their indolence to evaluate their curriculum and implement practices which can impact on a family to support the school and a student to value the need for education.
- ✚ The Department of Education has held meetings with community members some of whom have been elected on to the Aboriginal Education Advisory Board.
- Narrogin Specific - Law and order are floundering when they see a need to call in Department of the Attorney General to mediate between individuals who are embroiled in individual disputes and labelling this behaviour as community feuding.
- ✚ Currently supporting an Aboriginal Police Liaison Officer to train and graduate as Constable First Class

Impact of State territory Government policies on the wellbeing of Regional and Remote Indigenous communities:

- The impact has primarily been negative because it has increased an untrue perception by Wadjella and others, that all Aboriginal people are incapable of making informed empowering choices for themselves, therefore requiring that this innate right be taken from them.
- ✚ Elders are reclaiming their right to lead their people and invite agencies to participate in planning and progressing a future that has previously been unavailable to their children and grandchildren
- An emergency response is normally implemented to help people regain the capacity to lead and direct themselves, however the Emergency Response implemented, applauded by those who have never been subjected to such discriminating actions, reduced the potential for Aboriginal Community Controlled organisations to be seen as valid and viable options except for tokenistic gestures through funding grants which would never permit sustainable, long term community initiatives to exist whether remote or regional.
- ✚ Nicola Roxon has freed funds for 7 regions to develop community controlled aPHaMS

Health, Welfare, Education and security of children in regional and remote Indigenous communities:

- The above services have been seen to act only when issues become critical.
- ✚ Attempting to develop workable strategies to assist with the social, emotional, health and wellbeing of the community, however this is hindered by defensive behaviours of government agencies/representatives.

- ✚ Health ensures visits to the community promoting vaccination drives as an intervention practice to halt and eliminate the spread of potential epidemic and even pandemic disease
- Welfare programs hold tokenistic workshops on parenting, drug and alcohol use etc; but none of these are long term or accessible to families who need to develop skills which would keep them above the threshold the Department of Child Protection is guided by and therefore making these programs irrelevant to a people immersed in socially debilitating crisis.
- Minister Rudd delivered one of the most powerful speeches of this century when he, on behalf of the current government and governments passed, apologised to the Aboriginal people of Australia for the many wrongs imposed upon them. Yet this disempowering behaviour continues.
- Aboriginal students, and today I comment specifically on schools within Narrogin, are disengaging from education as soon as they reach Narrogin Senior High School. Systemic racism is prevalent within this school and to a degree within the junior schools but is denied by Narrogin District Education Office and the schools, yet incidents continue to occur and the students continue to disengage.
- Red cards are the way to deal with racism, discrimination, behaviour issues (even though a student is grieving from the loss of a loved one to suicide, or a brother, father, uncle imprisoned, domestic violence) a practice that is better utilized in a memory game and still the schools and department will not acknowledge that this system is irrelevant, demeaning and ridiculous.
- How are regional and remote District Offices and schools realistically monitored, by reports which do not demonstrate absolute truth, and who follows up on the validity of these reports to validate them.

Employment and Enterprise opportunities in regional and remote Indigenous communities

- The cessation of CDEP which was managed by KEEDAC, created tremendous stress on the families and left the workers with a sense of hopelessness regarding employment. In their eyes no one will employ an Aboriginal person.
- Multiple Job Networks who won proportional tenders for the Narrogin District have created confusion for the Aboriginal community. This process my work in Metropolitan areas, however, Regional and remote areas do not have the population to require this multiple duplicated service
- ✚ KEEDAC continues to provide a service enabling access for Aboriginal community members into employment pathways through higher learning and training

- ⚡ It is hoped that the winning applicant for the PHaMS tender will be the service that is most wanted by the community. There has always only been one the one model requested by the families that lost loved ones to suicide. It is a model which promotes Aboriginal Community Control and culturally appropriate, holistic practices, a 24 hour service which supports clients from the first point of contact, through to referrals and continues by reaching out and involving the family, extended family and social networks in the healing process which has no time limits or constraints.
- ⚡ IBM, Aus Aid and ICV have met with community members who have voiced an interest in establishing their own businesses.

It is the hope of the Reference Group that the apparent problems which are inflicting health issues on the Aboriginal community, which are also not privy to Narrogin only, are realistically equal to a pandemic crisis. If applicable and effective changes are not made, if the people are not given the right to have a voice then the true decision makers can only be seen as those who neglect the wealth of this country, the Aboriginal people

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Australian Senate

SELECT COMMITTEE ON REGIONAL AND REMOTE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Mr Chairperson, Honourable Nigel Scullion (Northern Territory Senator)

Senator David Johnson (Western Australia, Liberal Party)

Senator Louise Pratt (Western Australia, Australian Labour Party))

Senator Judith Adams (Western Australia, Liberal Party)

Senator Rachel Siewart (Western Australia, Australian Greens)

My name is Priscilla Kickett, and I am a descendant of the main family of Traditional Land Owners of this Country. I welcome you to my country and acknowledge the value of this Inquiry into Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities, which includes Narrogin.

Norma Lady
As a Moorditj Yorga, my roles within the community of Narrogin are many, however, first and foremost, I am a mother, a daughter, an aunt, and a granddaughter of one of the most senior elders of this land.

I am a single mother because my partner committed suicide over 10 years ago. The suicides continue and there is an increase in attempted suicides, self harm, depression, family dysfunction, drug and alcohol usage, offences and disengagement of our children from education.

Today I represent the Narrogin Aboriginal Community Reference Group (NACRG) and Kaata-Koorliny Employment Enterprise Development Aboriginal Corporation (KEEDAC).

The NACRG is proactive in showing gaps in services which have negative effects on the social, emotional, social health and wellbeing of many Aboriginal people in Narrogin.

I work for KEEDAC which is an Aboriginal Corporation which is a well functioning organisation and has representation throughout the Wheatbelt.

The majority of government services Narrogin are managed from Northam, Perth, Albany or Bunbury Narrogin. Many of these services are delivered in a way that does not meet the needs of Aboriginal people and result in unequal outcomes for Aboriginal people. The main areas where this happens is Health, Education and Policing. This type of racism needs to be acknowledged by those who are responsible for the delivery of these services and steps taken so that there are better outcomes for Aboriginal people in Narrogin.

I can provide you with many examples of this type of racism.

Thank you

Priscilla Kickett
Representative for
Narrogin Aboriginal Community reference Group
Kaata-Koorliny Employment Enterprise Development Aboriginal Corporation
Date: 8th September 2009