

# WA STATE GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE HOPE REPORT

7 April 2008

The serious nature of the challenges facing many Indigenous people in Western Australia today is a key focus for the State Government. We want and need to work with Aboriginal people to deliver lasting positive change.

In February 2008 the Coroner of Western Australia, Mr Alistair Hope, released his findings into the 22 alcohol and drug related deaths of Indigenous people in the Kimberley (the Hope Report).

Coroner Hope raised again the many issues impacting on the Indigenous communities in the Fitzroy Valley. I welcome the Hope Report. It highlights again the grave nature of problems being faced by Indigenous people. The tragic circumstances of the deaths of these Western Australians are to be lamented and indicate the immense challenge we share.

It is widely recognised that the issues negatively impacting on Indigenous Western Australians are very complex and multifaceted. There is not a single solution.

This publication outlines the State Government's response to the Hope Report. It highlights the efforts being made currently in Fitzroy Communities and the leadership that is being provided to involve Indigenous people more closely in the work that is being done.

The response has as its platform the key areas of housing, infrastructure, education, young people, health and leadership.

The State Government will continue to work in partnership with Indigenous people and all levels of government to address the issues raised by the Coroner and more broadly reduce the level of Indigenous disadvantage in Western Australia.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Western Australian (WA) State Government welcomes the report released by Coroner Hope on 25 February 2008 (the Hope Report). It recognises the issues raised in the report and the critical nature of community participation to ensure the work it undertakes with Indigenous Western Australians has a lasting positive impact on them.

Significant efforts have been made in Fitzroy Crossing specifically in the area of housing and infrastructure, education and health services. The WA Government knows that more has to be done before sustained positive outcomes are achieved in Indigenous communities across WA

This response to the Hope Report is consistent with the new way of working in stronger partnerships at the local level. It takes into consideration the significant work of the Gordon Action Plan and the successes it has gained in building trust and strong partnerships with Indigenous people. It highlights the need for continued effort in the application of short, medium and longer term intervention that is consistent with *Safer Communities Safer Children*,<sup>1</sup> the State Government model for partnering and supporting Indigenous communities in restoring safety and security for all members, particularly the young and vulnerable.

This response is collaborative. The Directors General Group on Indigenous Affairs (DGGIA) has developed the response with direction from the Cabinet Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs (CSCIA).

The Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Hon Michelle Roberts MLA, as chair of the CSCIA, has overseen the development of this *WA State Government response to the Hope Report*.

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<sup>1</sup> *Safer Communities Safer Children* – State Government response to the high level of disclosures to child abuse in the Kimberley

## **BACKGROUND**

In October 2007 Western Australian Coroner, Alastair Hope, commenced an inquest into 22 deaths in the Kimberley, in the one inquest pursuant to section 40 of the *Coroners Act 1996*. The inquest was held to explore the reasons for a large number of deaths of Indigenous persons in the Kimberley, which appeared to have been caused or contributed to by alcohol abuse or cannabis use and also, if possible, to identify reasons for a marked increase in suicide rates.

The inquest itself arose from the drive of the local people, in particular, the women. The scope of the inquest resulted from representations made by the Kimberley Indigenous Law and Culture Centre (KALACC).

On 25 February 2008 the Coroner released his report (the Hope Report), which found the suicide rates of Indigenous people in the Kimberley increased dramatically in 2006. In that year there were 21 Indigenous self-harm deaths in the Kimberley (an increase of more than 100%). By contrast, in the non-Indigenous Kimberley population, there was no increase in suicides and there were only 3 deaths by self-harm.

The Indigenous suicide rates for the Fitzroy Crossing region were particularly alarming with 8 self-harm deaths in 2006 in an estimated population of 3,500.

The Hope Report describes the circumstances of the 22 deaths. Subsequently the Coroner made 27 recommendations, which suggested a range of actions to address the Hope Report findings. The complexity and multi-faceted nature of the problems faced by Kimberley Indigenous people, including those associated with alcohol and drug abuse, and subsequent mental health issues are recognised in the report.

The State Government also recognizes the complex nature of the challenges facing Indigenous Western Australians and understands how important it is to adopt locally driven approaches to bring about lasting and positive change.

## **CURRENT GOVERNMENT RESPONSE IN FITZROY VALLEY COMMUNITIES**

Although the Coroner's Inquest uncovered issues being experienced by communities across the Kimberley it highlighted the particularly high rates of suicide in the Fitzroy Valley.

Both in the lead up to and during the Coroner's Inquest, media reports have detailed the concerns of senior Indigenous representatives from the region about the high number of alcohol related deaths in Fitzroy Crossing. Leaders of the Fitzroy community circulated a list linking the deaths of 200 people in the past five years to alcohol misuse.

On 27 July 2007, leaders of the Fitzroy Crossing community met with Mr Bob Mitchell, then DHW Director General, and Ms Jackie Tang, A/Director General, DIA. The discussion centred on a request to appoint a Government Services Coordinator to facilitate provision of necessary government services to the community.

In August 2007 the Department of Indigenous Affairs (DIA), in agreement with the DGGIA, created the position of Government Services Coordinator (GSC) Fitzroy Crossing, for an initial 12-month period. The position will facilitate collaboration at the local level to address these issues as part of the DGGIA immediate response model *Safer Communities Safer Children*.

Outlined below are some of the specific current initiatives that the WA Government has been progressing in Fitzroy including:

1. **Partnerships that Work** - Housing and Works and Infrastructure Investment
2. **Building Capacity** – Training and Employment
3. **Regionally Managed; Local Results** - Drug and Alcohol Management

4. **A Focus on Our Future; Children** – Young people, Child Protection and Income Management.
5. **Regional Mental Health** – Increased Health Services
6. **Leadership** – In Government and Indigenous Participation

## **1. HOUSING AND WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT IN FITZROY**

### **Community Infrastructure and Planning (Recommendations 2, 17 and 18)**

Over the last three years the DHW has spent over \$17m in major construction and infrastructure projects for Indigenous housing, with an anticipated expenditure of over \$42m in 2007/08 on construction, infrastructure and housing management costs for Indigenous housing, a school and Indigenous community infrastructure.

#### **Works Construction**

The Fitzroy Crossing District High School is currently under construction at a cost of \$32m. The new school will consist of administration and staff facilities; early childhood classrooms; primary and secondary learning areas; senior students study block; facilities for computer, science, materials, food and textiles, music and drama; library resource centre; covered assembly area with canteen; and change rooms. Site works on the new school site commenced at the beginning of September and construction is due to commence shortly. The school is proceeding as planned and due for completion early 2009.

#### **Housing Construction**

Through the *Commonwealth State Bilateral Agreement for the Provision of Housing, Infrastructure and Essential Services for Indigenous People in Western Australia*, Commonwealth and State funds are provided for housing and infrastructure costs.

New construction provided through this program in the Fitzroy area is detailed below:

| <b>Community</b>     | <b>Location</b>                              | <b>New Construction<br/>04/05 to 06/07</b> | <b>Current construction<br/>07/08</b> |
|----------------------|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Joy Springs</b>   | 10km from Bayulu, 20km from Fitzroy Crossing | 4  |                                       |
| <b>Wangkatjungka</b> | 120km SE of Fitzroy Crossing                 | 18   | Some ongoing                          |
| <b>Bayulu</b>        | 13km from Fitzroy Crossing                   | 14   | Some ongoing                          |
| <b>Darlungunaya</b>  | Fitzroy Crossing                             | 2  |                                       |
| <b>Djugerari</b>     | 110km SE of Fitzroy Crossing                 | 1  |                                       |
| <b>Mindi Rardi</b>   | Fitzroy Crossing                             | 2  | Some ongoing                          |
| <b>Ngurtuwarta</b>   | 17km from Fitzroy Crossing                   | 1  |                                       |
| <b>Yakanarra</b>     | SW Fitzroy Crossing                          | 5  |                                       |
| <b>Yunggora</b>      |  |  | 5                                     |
| <b>Gillaroong</b>    |  |  | 3                                     |
| <b>Junjuwa</b>       |  |  | 5                                     |
|                      | <b>Total</b>                                 | <b>47</b>                                  | <b>13</b>                             |

Marra Worra Worra, a Regional Housing Management provider funded by the DHW, manages the majority of housing in the Fitzroy Valley, being 355 houses in 29 communities, including the town based communities. The public housing presence is limited to 37 houses. Government Regional Officers Housing (GROH) manages 45 houses. Marra Worra Worra will receive funding of \$572,500 in 2007/2008, plus \$532,500 for repairs and maintenance for the year. In 2006/07, over \$600,000 was collected in rent, and over \$400,000 was used for maintenance.

The Marniwarntikura Women’s Group is funded at an annual level of \$176,000 to provide the In Home Practical Support Program to all the communities to assist families to manage in their homes. The program focuses on developing families and individuals skills in order to manage and maintain a healthy living environment, covering areas such clean and healthy living practices, family budgeting and knowledge of tenancy obligations to maintain a healthy home.

### **Housing Refurbishments and Upgrades**

The major repairs and maintenance projects to lift the standard of housing currently underway in the Fitzroy Valley are as follows:

- Yungngora – 5 upgrades \$100,000
- Ngumpan – 7 major upgrades \$1,500,000
- Ngalinkadji – 13 major upgrades \$2,000,000
- Junjuwa – 5 major upgrades \$200,000
- Djugerari – 15 major upgrades \$1,146,000
- Fitzroy Crossing – Maintenance backlog costs \$100,000

### **Swimming Pool (Recommendation 23)**

The Department of Housing and Works has sought funding to enable the construction and operation of a swimming pool in Fitzroy Crossing.

## **2. TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT ( Recommendation 3, 4 and 5)**

The Premier has called on all State Government CEOs to increase the number of Indigenous staff they employ in the Kimberley region.

In recognition of the need for appropriate support and job readiness services, the State Government recently committed \$9.7 million funding for an Indigenous Trade Training Package, including:

- the Indigenous Training Support Program targeting Indigenous people in regional and remote areas that are not engaged in the workforce. The program commits an additional \$3 million over three years to improve access to VET via the provision of mentoring and other support services, leveraging matched funding from the Commonwealth. This program has been developed to support training and employment in two key stages:
  - Engagement – to include literacy, numeracy, and job and training readiness support; and
  - Retention – to include mentoring and cross-cultural training in the workplace;
- an additional \$1.64 million over three years to enable Group Training Organisations to provide greater pastoral care and work readiness skills for those that have already left school, and reduce charge-out rates for small businesses who employ Indigenous apprentices and trainees. An additional \$2,000 is being provided to Group Training Organisations for each additional Indigenous Apprentice or Trainee above previous levels;

- an additional \$5 million over three years to expanding the Aboriginal School Based Traineeship Program (ASBT).

In addition, four Mobile Indigenous Trades Training Units (MITTUs) are to commence in 2008, with TAFE Colleges visiting Indigenous communities located in the Kimberley, Pilbara, Central West and Goldfields regions.

### **Community Development and Employment Program (CDEP) (Recommendations 15 and 16)**

Through the COAG Indigenous Reform Agenda the State Government will work with the Commonwealth Government to review the CDEP Program and its potential to support employment and skill development in Indigenous Communities in WA.

Additionally the State Government will provide closer links between the future CDEP Programs and the relevant education and training bodies to ensure maximum benefits at the local level.

### **Training in Fitzroy to complement the Infrastructure Investment**

The DHW, in partnership with local training providers and industry, has established and funded programs that address regional skills shortages by delivering nationally recognised construction industry apprenticeships and traineeships. The Fitzroy Crossing program, attached to Fitzroy Futures, is commencing five apprentices.

Throughout 2006 and 2007, the DHW has extended its Industry Training Program into regional Western Australian towns, particularly in locations with high Indigenous populations, low employment skills and limited opportunities.

The DHW has taken advantage of construction activity in these locations to leave a lasting benefit to these communities. Disadvantaged locations such as Halls Creek, Port Hedland and Fitzroy Crossing have been targeted for Indigenous training programs attached to major construction programs.

The Halls Creek program, attached to the Halls Creek Housing Construction Program, currently employs four apprentices and two trainees. The Port Hedland program, attached to South Hedland New Living, currently employs five trainees. The Fitzroy Crossing program, attached to Fitzroy Futures, is commencing five apprentices.

These programs are a significant investment by the State Government in the long-term future of the construction industry and communities in regional Western Australian towns.

### **Government Regional Officer Housing (GROH) (Recommendation 9 and 10)**

GROH provides 45 properties to six different Government departments in Fitzroy Crossing. 43 of these are owned by GROH and two are leased from the private sector.

Until recently vacant land has not been readily available in Fitzroy Crossing. Consequently, GROH has demolished some of its older properties to create blocks for construction and redevelopment. Using this method GROH has constructed four two-bedroom properties and two three-bedroom properties in April 2006 (allocated to DET) and completed a further two three-bedroom units June 2007 (allocated to WAPS). In addition GROH is currently constructing six two-bedroom units estimated for completion in December 2007 (four will be allocated to DET and two will be allocated to DCP).

GROH is purchasing three group sites from Landcorp for \$455,000 from GROH's own capital funds and this should enable GROH to address future accommodation requirements in the town. Subject to confirming client demand for additional accommodation and overall budget commitments, GROH will consider a staged development of these lots over the next two financial years.

### **Essential Services (Recommendation 23)**

In December 2006, the DHW handed over responsibility for the provision of power services to Mindi Rardi and Kurnangki, to Horizon Power. The DHW invested \$850,000 in this initiative, which now provides individual metering at uniform tariffs to the community residents. The DHW is currently undertaking the following essential services initiatives within Fitzroy Crossing.

#### **Kurnangki Indigenous Community Project**

This project upgrades the water and sewer services to a standard acceptable for the Water Corporation to assume responsibility for these services in the future. This project was completed in late November 2007 at a cost of \$530,000.

#### **Mindi Rardi Indigenous Community Project**

This project upgrades the water and sewer services to a standard acceptable for the Water Corporation to assume responsibility for these services in the future. This project was completed in late November 2007 at a cost of \$816,000.

#### **Remote Area Essential Services Program (RAESP)**

The RAESP is a service to support 91 of the largest remote Indigenous community organisations in WA to effectively deliver the essential services (power, water and sewerage) in their own communities. The

Commonwealth provides funds for capital works to all communities while DHW funds repairs and maintenance to selected larger communities.

The following communities in the Fitzroy area receive this service at an average cost of \$150,000 per annum: Muludja, Bayulu, Joy Springs, Yungnora, Koorabye, Ngalingkadji, Yakanarra, Kadjina, Galeru Gorge, Ngumpan, Moongardie, Kupartiya, Dgugerari and Wangkatjunka.

### **Fitzroy Futures – Building a Preferred Future**

It was recognised by relevant government agencies that there was a need to involve the community in *Fitzroy Futures*, a government infrastructure and service delivery initiative that intended to upgrade and increase the services being provided to the Fitzroy Valley communities. It recognised that to ensure maximum and lasting benefits, the community needed to be involved in any State Government investments in Fitzroy Crossing.

The DHW undertook a series of consultations with the relevant community groups and priorities for the community were identified. The State Government established the *Fitzroy Futures Fund* of \$500,000 per annum for a five-year period, to be administered by the DHW.

### 3. DRUG AND ALCOHOL MANAGEMENT

#### Liquor restrictions (Recommendation 20)

On 2 October 2007, the Director of Liquor Licensing imposed conditions under section 64 of the *Liquor Control Act 1988* on the Crossing Inn Hotel at Fitzroy Crossing. This occurred as a result of an inquiry into alcohol-related harm, which was in turn responding to requests made by the local women for such an inquiry and recent broad community consultation. That condition states:

*The sale of packaged liquor, exceeding a concentration of ethanol in liquor of 2.7 per cent at 20°C, is prohibited to any person, other than a lodger (as defined in section 3 of the Act).*

This restriction was imposed for a six-month period. It is currently under review. The Minister for Racing and Gaming, the Hon Ljiljana Ravlich MLC, met with the local communities in October 2007 to discuss the impact of the current ban and future considerations for alcohol management, including ways of complementing the restrictions in Fitzroy Crossing.

With the support of the Shire of Derby/West Kimberley, the Commissioner of Police and the Wangkatjungka Community Council, consideration is being given to promulgating a regulation under section 175(1a) of the *Liquor Control Act 1988* to declare Wangkatjungka in the Fitzroy Valley a restricted area, prohibiting:

- (i) the bringing of liquor into the Wangkatjungka Community; and
- (ii) the possession of liquor in the Wangkatjungka Community.

## **Evaluation - Alcohol and Drug Prevention and Treatment Initiatives**

The Drug and Alcohol Office (DAO) has funded an independent evaluation by University of Notre Dame to assist the review of the application of liquor restrictions in Fitzroy, and also to assess new alcohol and drug prevention and treatment initiatives. The report has been made available to the State Government and to the Director of Liquor Licensing.

The following major benefits have been identified by the evaluation.

### **Domestic violence**

- There has been a 27% reduction in alcohol related domestic violence incidents reported to the Fitzroy Crossing police for the period of October 2007 to February 2008 in comparison to the same period in October 2006 to February 2007.
- Women's Refuge staff have observed, that women are now self-referring much sooner after the occurrence of domestic incidences and are expressing their concerns and need for support in a more confident manner.
- A high incidence of alcohol-related domestic violence has been replaced by significantly less violence, happier families and communities.

### **Police activity**

- When comparing police data between October 2006 to February 2007 and October 2007 to February 2008 it was found that there was a decrease in the following:
  - after hours callouts (65%);
  - overtime worked (54%);
  - liquor Infringements (51%);
  - drink Driving Charges (15%);
  - total road crashes (56%);

- reported alcohol-related crime incidents (34%);
- reported alcohol-related offences (22%);
- and street/park drinking infringements (54%).

### **Education**

- There has been a month by month 4% to 14% increase in school attendances for October 2007 to February 2008 when compared to October 2006 – February 2007.
- Respondents reported that since the restriction has been in place, children are no longer wandering around the town late at night, are attending school regularly, engaging positively in the learning process and can be seen out with their families.

### **Emergency Department Presentations**

- There has been a 48% reduction in the number of Fitzroy Crossing residents presenting to the Fitzroy Emergency Department with alcohol related problems for the period of October 2007 to February 2008 when compared to the same period in 2006/07.
- Hospital staff have reported a significant decrease in unconscious persons being brought to the hospital for treatment and a significant reduction aggressive behaviour by persons attending hospital for treatment.
- Ambulance call outs to deal with community emergencies have reduced since the restriction. Within the first month of the restriction being applied, ambulance call outs had reduced by 60%.

### **Impact on Surrounding Communities**

- It was reported that there was no significant impact made by Fitzroy residents on other towns' Sobering Up Centres, apart from seasonal fluctuations occurring each year.

- There has been no significant increase in Fitzroy Crossing residents presenting at hospital Emergency Departments in the adjacent towns of Broome, Derby and Halls Creek.

#### **Litter and Drinking in Public**

- Respondents have reported that the town is no longer littered with large amounts of empty beer cans and that there are no groups of intoxicated people drinking in public throughout the day. Adjacent communities close to the town of Fitzroy Crossing are reported as being quiet with no major disturbance or drunken behaviour.

#### **Purchase of alcohol in Fitzroy Crossing**

- In total, (after factoring in increased alcohol sales over the bar) there has been a 77% reduction in the amount of pure alcohol being purchased from the Crossing Inn.
- The Drug and Alcohol Office (DAO), through the Executive Director of Public Health, has recommended an extension of the take-away liquor restrictions for at least 3 years.

At this time all indicators strongly suggest that alcohol restrictions have reduced harm in Fitzroy Crossing. This in turn has enabled rational and informed discussion within the community about how better to address the needs of the community and how to reduce substance abuse.

Success so far has relied on the alcohol restrictions and community support for action. All parties acknowledge that while these are vital factors, a multi-agency approach is needed over an extended period, underpinned by community support and action.

Further investment and coordinated action with both short and long-term objectives are needed, as is community commitment to working with Governments (State and Commonwealth), the Private Sector and Indigenous Trusts.

Whilst the evaluation of the Fitzroy Crossing restrictions noted some concerns about alleged unsupervised youths and vandalism, police advise that there is no increase in problems of this nature, that the benefits of the restrictions are very positive and that issues such as this may simply have become more noticeable due to a reduction in the overall community disharmony due to the alcohol restrictions.

The DAO is working with key agencies to develop a Kimberley-wide approach to addressing alcohol related problems. This will include working with local communities to develop local alcohol management strategies relevant to their unique community characteristics.

This approach involves identifying acceptable basic takeaway alcohol licensing restrictions that may be applicable to all communities but with scope to increase these for individual communities where appropriate and where there is strong support within a community to do so. Applying the ban that exists in Fitzroy Crossing, for example, may not be appropriate in Broome.

This approach has involved consultation with the WA Police and Kimberley Interagency Working Group and will be provided to the Directors General Indigenous Affairs Group for their endorsement by 9 April 2008. It will then be forwarded to the relevant Ministers for their consideration.

The Kimberley Interagency Working Group is keen to progress the proposed regional alcohol management plan and has identified an implementation team to work with the DAO on this matter if Government supports the proposal.

### **Drug and Alcohol Services**

There are significant existing and new alcohol and drug services being provided in the Fitzroy Valley. WA Country Health Service (WACHS) has made available detoxification at all Kimberley hospitals.

#### *Nindilingarri Cultural Health Service (NCHS)*

The DAO has negotiated with Nindilingarri and WACHS (that operates the Kimberley Community Drug Service Team) to establish a new alcohol and drug treatment and prevention service. Funding of \$373,000 (which is an increase of 20% on the previous allocation) is provided by the DAO. Nindilingarri will provide the prevention services and contract the WA Country Health Service (WACHS), through the existing partnership between Nindilingarri and WACHS, to provide clinical treatment services.

The new services consist of 1FTE prevention worker and 1FTE Indigenous alcohol and drug worker (Nindilingarri) whose focus is prevention activities, and 1FTE treatment worker (WACHS). The new services operate out of the existing sobering-up centre building. In addition, the DAO has provided \$50,000 to enable modification of the sobering up centre. Prevention staff are in place and the treatment worker commenced in March.

It is a 12-month pilot service, which is replacing the sobering up centre, which was previously not well attended. However, it is expected that this service will remain in place for longer term.

### *Community Drug Service Team (CDST)*

The CDST provides a visiting service to Fitzroy fortnightly via Derby for the delivery of counselling services (the worker remains in the area for approximately two days each visit). An additional CDST service provides Indigenous drug diversion services. Visits are approximately four to six weekly, depending on court services and client demand.

### *Marninwarntikura Fitzroy Women's Centre*

The DAO provided \$20,000 one-off funding to Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre to undertake community consultation to inform the development of a drug and alcohol action plan for the town in conjunction with Nindilingarri, as part of the development of the new alcohol and drug services. This work is complete.

### **Drug and Alcohol Office Training local people (Recommendation 3)**

The DAO recognises the need to grow and embed local talent. It is a registered training provider and trains about 20 to 30 Indigenous people each year in the *Certificate III in Community Services Work (Alcohol and Other Drugs)*. These people are employed in government and NGOs and are in great demand both during and after their qualification period.

### **Leedal Pty Ltd (Recommendation 21)**

The DIA and the DAO will commence discussions with Leedal Pty Ltd – who own and operate one of the two liquor outlets in Fitzroy Crossing - with consideration to the recommendation made in the Hope Report and the recommendations made in the Irving Report, commissioned by Minister Hockey through Indigenous Business Australia in 2007.

It should be noted that neither the DIA or the DAO have any authority over Leedal Pty Ltd and cannot direct it to act in accordance with any recommendation in the Hope Report or any other report. Discussions will be pursued in the spirit of building a stronger relationship and partnership, to enhance the efforts currently being made in Fitzroy and the region.

### **Policing (Recommendations 25, 26 and 27)**

Fitzroy Crossing is currently served by 12 WA Police Service (WAPS) staff in its Fitzroy Crossing office. The office is also supported and reinforced by staff from nearby towns when required.

The adjacent police sub-districts are: Derby - 260 kilometres (15.5 x police officers and 1 x Aboriginal Police Liaison Officer (APLO)); Halls Creek 288 kilometres (20 police officers); and Broome - 394 kilometres (41.5 x police officers and 5 x APLOs).

Reinforcements are available from any of those sub-districts on a needs basis (for emergency situations) and for identified events (funerals, public events, race meetings). Additional staff are deployed in advance to address any identified need or risk. As is the case for any major incidents, reinforcements can be deployed from other districts including the metropolitan area.

In addition to this, the WAP has a team of five police investigators, accompanied by three Specialist Child Interview Unit (SCIU) staff, currently working in the region as part of the child abuse investigations in the Kimberley.

Protective behaviours staff have been contracted to deliver programs to the schools in the Fitzroy Valley and to skill up local education and child protection staff.

As outlined in the interim report on the liquor restrictions commissioned by the DAO significant positive developments have occurred in Fitzroy Crossing, which in turn, have sparked community renewal, directed by local Indigenous people. The effectiveness of the restrictions also highlights the need for a case-by-case approach to alcohol related harm in remote areas.

There are reports that the restrictions in place in Fitzroy Crossing may have had unintended consequences, causing some Indigenous people to travel to other areas to purchase full strength alcohol. Consequently, future applications of such Section 64 restrictions by the Director of Liquor Licensing may need to take this possible consequence into account.

The effectiveness of measures to address alcohol related harm requires extensive consultation with the community, coordinated support from a range of government agencies (as described in *Safer Communities Safer Children*) and local ongoing support for the measures in place. The recent work undertaken by the License Enforcement Division and local police at Oombulgurri points to alternative approaches which may prove the most effective for isolated remote communities.

#### **4. YOUNG PEOPLE, CHILD PROTECTION AND INCOME MANAGEMENT**

The State Government funds a wide range of support programs for young people delivered through the Fitzroy Crossing District High School. The key programs are outlined below.

##### **School (Recommendation 14)**

###### ***Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Program (ITAS)***

The ITAS In-School Program is a partnership between the Department of Education and Training (DET), the Department of Education, Science and Training and schools and is aimed at achieving improved literacy and numeracy skills for Indigenous students in Years 4, 6 and 8.

###### ***Indigenous Education Specialist Teacher***

This program targets Indigenous students' numeracy and literacy. Indigenous Education Specialist Teachers have been appointed to schools to work with Year 3-7 teachers and students in a culturally inclusive and collaborative program.

###### ***Indigenous and Islander Education Officers (10FTE)***

Indigenous and Islander Education Officers are employed to assist the teachers and education assistants in implementing culturally inclusive education programs. They conduct their role in collaboration with teachers and the school principal.

###### ***Behavior Management***

Flexible funding of \$47,500 is provided to improve student behaviour.

###### ***Indigenous Literacy Strategy***

The School is part of the Indigenous Literacy Strategy that has been established, as a statewide procedure for addressing literacy needs in Indigenous students.

The process seeks to provide a uniform teaching strategy that meets the needs of a highly mobile and transient population of students.

### ***Family Links Program***

The Family Links Program supports schools to work collaboratively with parents, caregivers and the school community. A key component of the Family Links initiative is the employment of School-Based Community Liaison Officers.

### ***Indigenous Language program***

The Indigenous Language Speaking Students Program is designed to target Indigenous students who exhibit English language usage below the accepted level and allocates \$2,300 per eligible student.

### ***Resilience program***

The sudden deaths of young boys have led to the current development of resilience programs with students, community groups and teachers.

### ***Vocational Education and Training Program***

The school's Vocational Education and Training program has been expanded to include rural skills conducted at Leopold Station and the establishment of an Aquaculture-Training Centre as part of a school/community project.

### ***Inclusive schooling***

A learning Support Coordinator works with staff to develop inclusive school practices and to facilitate the development of a learning support team.

A visiting teacher (Inclusive Education) provides direct face to face staff support in the development and implementation of educational programs for students with learning disabilities and diverse learning needs.

The Disability High Support Team provides direct staff support for students who require significant levels of teaching and learning adjustments to enable them to successfully engage in the school program

***Other specialist services***

Also visiting specialist services in Students with visual needs; Speech and Language services; and Schools Careers and Transition program.

**Kimberley Indigenous Law and Culture Centre Indigenous Corporation (KALACC)**

**- Services for Young People**

The Department of Child Protection (DCP) 2007-08 funding is \$90,393. The Service Agreement, which is currently being finalised, is for the period 1 October 2007 to 30 September 2010. The organisation is confirming its volunteer insurance requirements prior to signing the agreement. The service is for young people at risk commencing secondary education up to 18 years of age. The service focus is on culturally appropriate support and coordination of recreational activities for young people. The service commenced in May 1996.

**Community Grants**

The Department for Communities (DFC) provides over \$160,000 to Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) in the Fitzroy Valley. This includes:

- \$93,193 in ongoing funding to NGOs to provide local playgroups in Eight Mile Creek and Fitzroy Crossing;
- \$71,100 in one-off grants this financial year to provide improved well being for 0 to eight year olds with Early Years Activities project activities for teenagers

### **Community and Child Care Centre**

As part of the current year's capital works budget, DFC has allocated \$1.5m for a Fitzroy Crossing Community and Child Care Centre. The original concept of the (then) Department for Community Development (DCD) was to enter into a partnership with the Shire of Derby/West Kimberley to construct a Community Resource Centre and Child Care in Fitzroy Crossing. The Shire cancelled this in December 2006.

A new initiative by the DHW involved the DCD constructing a Child Care Centre in conjunction with a proposed new school and entering into an agreement with KALACC for new staff accommodation.

The DHW's original estimate of \$2.6m for constructing a new centre has been reduced to \$2m because of the savings anticipated from co-locating with the new school. The DFC will provide \$1m to the Indigenous group Marra Worra Worra and will seek \$1m from the Commonwealth Government.

### **Child Protection**

The Department for Child Protection (DCP) has an office in Fitzroy Crossing with five staff currently employed and an additional administration support officer currently being advertised. Other DCP staff in Broome provide a visiting service to Fitzroy Crossing including a District Director, Senior Practice Development Officer, Senior Officer Aboriginal Services, Community Development and Funding Officer and Children's Services Officer.

The DCP is working closely with the Police in the current investigations of child abuse throughout the Kimberley and has dispatched teams of child abuse investigators and counselors from Perth to back up local staff as part of these operations. In addition, Community Child Protection Workers are now located at Multi-Function Police Facilities in Kalumburu, Balgo, Bidgydanga, Dampier

Peninsula, Warmun and Oombulgurri. The DCP also work closely with the Department of Education (DET) to provide support to children who have been part of this investigation and are attending school.

Two field staff continue to visit Wangkatjungka once a week and in January the Aboriginal Support Worker (ASW) organised for several local girls to participate at a cultural camp with other girls. The camp included Protective Behaviours and cultural activities. The Aboriginal Support Worker (ASW) is a female staff member with strong cultural ties to the community who has built links and is now undertaking programs with the girls such as Protective Behaviours.

### **Protective Parenting Service (Recommendation 19)**

In addition to the DCP's child protection services, it has established a Protective Parenting Service, which includes the *Best Beginnings Home Visiting Service* and the *ParentSupport* Program (Responsible Parenting Initiative). These services could be both a source of referral to the Department where there are child protection concerns for a child, and a support service for families on compulsory income management.

Both *Best Beginnings* and *Parent Support* are voluntary. Legislation to introduce Responsible Parenting Orders in WA was passed recently by the WA Parliament.

### **Income Management and Truancy (Recommendations 11, 13 and 20)**

Discussions have occurred across Government agencies on the Commonwealth Government's initiative to pilot *Financial Income Management in Cases of Neglect of Children* in Western Australia (compulsory income management – child protection measure).

Compulsory Income Management as a child protection measure (CIM) is established in the *Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Welfare Payment Reform) Act 2007 (Commonwealth Act)*.

WA has indicated support for CIM as a child protection measure - it has not been implemented or piloted elsewhere in Australia.

The State is currently planning to implement CIM in the following stages:

1. Halls Creek and Kununurra (Kimberley) by 1 July 2008;
2. Fitzroy Crossing and Wyndham, commencing two months after Stage 1;  
and
3. Broome and Derby, commencing two months after Stage 2.

Expansion to remote communities will occur over the period of implementation.

## **5. IMPROVED HEALTH SERVICES (Recommendation 22)**

Health services in the Fitzroy Valley are delivered through a formal partnership between Fitzroy Valley Health Service (WACHS), Northern Country Health Service (NCHS) and Kimberly Population Health (WACHS). Its aim is to coordinate available resources through joint management – essentially, to integrate client services and care.

The partnership is unique as it provides comprehensive role delineation between the activities of the Department of Health and an Indigenous Community Controlled Health Service. The WACHS provides all clinical services in the Fitzroy Valley but partners with the NCHS, which undertakes parallel prevention services. All services are provided under the umbrella of a joint management forum.

### **Fitzroy Crossing Hospital**

There is a new \$15.71 million hospital, with 12 acute beds plus two boarder beds to replace the old eight-bed hospital.

The hospital provides inpatient care, emergency care, community and primary health care, dedicated consulting rooms, public dental services and a transit lounge for those patients required to travel to Derby, Broome and Perth for higher level care.

### **Partnership with Nindilingarri Cultural Health Service**

The NCHS is finalising construction of its new facilities, co-located with the new Fitzroy Crossing Hospital. The NCHS is expected to occupy its new premises within the next month.

### **Dialysis/Renal Services**

There are 379 diabetic patients in the Fitzroy Valley. Roughly 23 patients for the area are on dialysis: four in Perth; 12 at Kimberley Indigenous Medical Services Council; and the remainder, nearly all in the Fitzroy Valley area, are on Continuous Ambulatory Peritoneal Dialysis (CAPD).

There are approximately 20 patients pending dialysis in the next two years. The type of dialysis required is assessed on their individual medical and personal needs. WACHS Kimberley funds a regular visiting nephrology service from Royal Perth Hospital to whom patients are referred for assessment and monitoring as appropriate.

Preparations are being made for the introduction of self-care home haemodialysis services into Fitzroy Crossing through NCHS. All patients would need to be assessed by the Nephrologist and the Kimberley Dialysis Medical Team prior to being considered suitable.

A "Dialysis Room" has been planned for the new NCHS facility. This is to be used by patients who are able to self-dialyse with assistance from a carer. Carers are ordinarily responsible family members who have been trained (in Perth) and can assist the patient to self-dialyse (where such a patient is unable to assist themselves). Self-dialysing patients do not require intervention from health staff or specially trained renal nurses. In other settings such patients would dialyse at home without assistance. Due to the poor home environment of the majority of the Fitzroy patients, this is not possible, hence the need to provide a safe, clean environment in which they can self-dialyse away from home.

### **Family Violence Support Services**

#### ***Marninwarntikura Fitzroy Women's Refuge - Fitzroy Women's Shelter.***

The 2007/08 funding is \$421,930 through the joint Commonwealth/State Supported Accommodation Assistance Program. The current Service Agreement is for the period 1 October 2006 to 30 September 2009. The service provides crisis/short term accommodation and support for women and women with children escaping domestic violence.

The refuge has four large family rooms and can accommodate four women with four to five children per room. The service commenced in May 1992.

#### ***Prevention Services***

Additionally there is significant prevention and long-term social investment being made to complement the immediate intervention and to enable ongoing community building to occur.

### ***Preventative Health Services: New Family Centre***

The Department of Health (DOH) is establishing a family centre through funding provided by the Commonwealth's *Healthy For Life Program* (HFLP). This is planned as a forum where many programs, such as men's health, sexual health, mental health, drug and alcohol programs, parenting support and other health promotion programs, can be interlinked and coordinated.

Recruitment has commenced for a Family Centre Coordinator and three Indigenous Healthy For Life Project Officers. Once recruitment has been completed, the Family Centre will commence operation from temporary premises until such time as permanent accommodation is arranged after the completion of the Fitzroy Crossing Hospital.

### ***Sexual Health Services***

The NCHS deliver culturally appropriate health promotion services as part of their functions within the partnership with WACHS. This specifically includes such strategies: media campaigns; encouraging sexual health check-ups, supporting the Mooditj Program (a Family Planning WA program targeting sexual health in the 11 to 14 year age group) and the provision and maintenance of a condom tree.

Action by WACHS (Kimberley) on sexual health includes:

- creation of a sexual health nurse position in Fitzroy Crossing;
- the employment of a male Indigenous health worker (through the HFLP);
- and Establishment of the family centre;

### ***Mental Health Services (Recommendation 24)***

People from Fitzroy Crossing and across the North West of WA will be able to access mental health services closer to home with the establishment of a \$9.4

million Acute Psychiatric Unit (APU) in Broome. This 14-bed unit will be the first of its kind in the north of the State and will reduce the need for patients to travel to Perth.

The new APU will mean that people living in the Kimberley and Pilbara regions who are experiencing an acute psychiatric episode will not, in the first instance, need to be flown to Perth for treatment. Once this unit is operational in late 2009, patients will be able to receive high-level care much closer to home, leading to better patient care and a reduced demand on the Royal Flying Doctor Service and acute psychiatric facilities in Perth.

It is anticipated that 80 per cent of acute mental health patients from the Pilbara and Kimberley regions will be treated in Broome.

Construction of the APU will be undertaken as part of the \$53.35 million upgrade to transform Broome Hospital into a fully resourced Regional Resource Centre.

The APU project is part of the \$507 million WA Mental Health Strategy 2004-2011, which is currently being implemented and will provide greater choice in treatment and a wider range of mental health facilities across the State.

Funding for the new APU is in addition to more than \$100 million currently being spent to upgrade health facilities and staff accommodation in the Kimberley region, including:

- \$53.35 million for major upgrades to Broome Hospital, which will see it become the regional resource centre for the Kimberley;
- \$15.7 million for the new Fitzroy Crossing Hospital and dental clinic (officially opened in February 2008). The hospital provides inpatient care, emergency care, community and primary health care, dedicated consulting rooms, public dental services and transit lounge for those

patients required to travel to Derby, Broome and Perth for higher level care;

- \$14.4 million to upgrade Derby Hospital and dental clinic (opened in September 2007);
- \$6.8 million to upgrade Kununurra Hospital and provide a new public dental clinic (opened in October 2007);
- \$8.7 million for the new Halls Creek Hospital (which opened in 2006);
- \$2 million to build a high care residential aged care facility in Kununurra (opened in 2005);
- \$4.5 million to upgrade health infrastructure in Wyndham including the hospital; and
- Upgrades to staff accommodation across the region.

## **6. LEADERSHIP (Recommendations 1, 2, 3, 7 and 8)**

In August 2007 Cabinet endorsed a *'reinvigoration of the commitment to deliver appropriate services to Indigenous West Australians by harnessing current investment within State Government agencies and developing stronger accountability mechanisms through leadership in government outcomes'*.<sup>2</sup>

Since then the State Government has been building stronger leadership and accountability in the portfolio. It established the Cabinet Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs (the Committee) to provide leadership and accountability in service delivery to government in Indigenous Affairs. The Committee provides policy directions, sets priorities and outcome targets, monitor and report on the State Government's performance to reduce Indigenous disadvantage in Western Australia.

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<sup>2</sup> Premiers Statement in Parliament on 20 August 2007

The Committee's membership includes:

- The Minister for Indigenous Affairs;
- The Treasurer;
- The Minister for Child Protection;
- The Minister for Police and Emergency Services; and
- The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure.

The committee meets quarterly and has direct relationship with the Directors General Group on Indigenous Affairs. The Directors General Group on Indigenous Affairs was also established to coordinate and address immediate, medium and longer-term resource and service delivery in relation to Indigenous peoples .

Membership includes the Directors General of the following agencies:

- Dept of Indigenous Affairs (Chair);
- Health Dept of WA;
- Dept of Child Protection;
- Dept for Communities;
- Dept of Education and Training;
- Department of the Premier and Cabinet;
- Dept of Corrective Services;
- Drug and Alcohol Office;
- WA Police;
- Department of Industry and Resources;
- Dept of Racing Gaming and Liquor;
- Dept of the Attorney General;
- Dept of Housing and Works;

- Dept of Local Government and Regional Development;

Other Directors General are invited onto the group as required.

On the release of the Hope Report, the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, the Hon Michelle Roberts MLA, publicly asserted her responsibility and that of the DIA as those responsible for leading the response to the Hope Report.

### **Involving Indigenous Leadership (Recommendations 4 and 5)**

The Director General of the DIA will establish a representative group (Indigenous Advisory Council) which will provide Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander people with the framework to influence decisions that will impact on their lives in WA. The Indigenous Advisory Council will, in particular, provide a forum in which Indigenous leaders will be able to provide advice to Government.

### **Measuring Success (Recommendation 1)**

The Hope Report has brought Indigenous disadvantage into focus. This continues despite efforts by all levels of Government to provide better outcomes for Indigenous people.

*"Families and communities are the mainstay of our society. The extent to which they are functional and resilient influences a range of outcomes for Indigenous people. A caring, protective and supportive environment, together with positive health outcomes and cultural awareness, are particularly important. Dysfunctional families and communities can lead to breakdown in relationships and social alienation, and contribute to physical and mental health problems. Ultimately, life expectancy, education,*

*imprisonment, violence, employment and income can be affected.”<sup>3</sup>*

The *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage* (OID) framework has provided the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments with evidence that a holistic approach coordinated at the local level will be more relevant and effective than one that is controlled centrally.

The State Government has been progressing a range of initiatives, some of which have been highlighted in the 2007 OID Report as “Strategies that Work”. These assist WA Indigenous communities to reduce the negative impacts of drug and alcohol abuse, build resilience and establish positive future directions,

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<sup>3</sup> Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage - Key Indicators - Overview 2007

## **SUMMARY**

The themes and issues raised in the Hope Report are recognised by the State Government as critical in ensuring that the work it is doing with the Indigenous community has a lasting effect.

The Cabinet Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs, chaired by the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, the Hon. Michelle Roberts MLA will continue to provide the critical leadership to improve outcomes for Indigenous people in Western Australia.

There is no simple answer but efforts must be sustained and the State Government will sustain them.

The State Government, through the DIA, will continue to share the responsibility for providing a safe and secure environment with the people of the Fitzroy Valley.