EAST KIMBERLEY
Youth wellbeing
17TH OCTOBER, 2019

Artworks by Glenn Stephenson
### Aboriginal Youth Wellbeing Forum: East Kimberley, 17 October 2019

#### SUMMARY

The Aboriginal Youth Wellbeing Forum brought together over 45 attendees from the East Kimberley and Western Australia on Miriwoong Gajerrong Country in Kununurra to identify opportunities for action to prevent Aboriginal youth suicide. The workshop was jointly hosted by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPC), the Kimberley Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Trial and Binarrinyinja yarrawoo (BBY), the backbone organisation for Empowered Communities in the East Kimberley. It was co-designed and co-facilitated by young Aboriginal leaders from the region and Nous Group (Nous).

#### KEY MESSAGES

1. **COMMUNITY STRENGTH** - Invest in local community level capabilities to build skills, knowledge and support for Aboriginal people, including those that provide frontline services.

2. **CULTURAL SAFETY** – Build a culturally safe service system including investing in non-Aboriginal workers cultural competency to enhance the effectiveness of services and community safety.

3. **POOLED FUNDING AND LOCATION BASED PROCUREMENT** – Service commissioners should align state and Commonwealth investment and implement a location based co-design approach to the procurement of services.

4. **SELF-DETERMINATION** – Aboriginal people need to be joint decision-makers in issues that effect them.

5. **CHOICE AND CONTROL** - Aboriginal people need access to a range of services that allow them to make choices regarding who, where and how they receive support.

6. **SYSTEM INTEGRATION** - Local, regional, state and national agencies need to work better together, to develop integrated systems that can respond to community priorities.

#### YOUTH STATEMENT

“We represent a Generation of Change and Action. We accept this responsibility on behalf of our families and communities... We stand together in solidarity, to ensure We Are Included; Our Voices Are Heard and We Are supported and given opportunities to Lead and take Action on behalf of the Kimberley Young People. With passion and determination, we seek your support to walk alongside us as we pave a new way forward into our future. In hope, strength and solidarity”

#### OBJECTIVES

1. To develop a shared understanding of ‘Message Stick’ and State Coroner’s reports recommendations through the experience and perspective of Kimberley Aboriginal people.

2. To begin to describe what successful implementation of the recommendations ‘looks like’ and identify opportunities for future community, state and Commonwealth actions.

3. To deepen community, WA and Australian Government relationships and better understand opportunities for partnership and joint effort.

#### NEXT STEPS

1. **REFLECT** – DPC will reflect deeply on the perspectives and insights of Kimberley people.

2. **LISTEN** – DPC will listen to the perspectives of communities in other WA regions.

3. **PRIORITISE** – DPC will bring together government and partners to prioritise future actions.

4. **RESPOND** – The WA Government will commit to future action through a whole of government response.
Workshop overview
The forum reflects a commitment by the WA Government to engage Aboriginal communities and other service providers in the development of its comprehensive response to policy and service recommendations issued in two contemporary reports relating to the issue of suicide in Aboriginal communities in WA.

The 2016 ‘Learnings from the message stick: The report into the Inquiry into Aboriginal youth suicide in remote areas’ (Message Stick) and 2019 the WA Coroner’s Inquest into the deaths of thirteen children and young persons in the Kimberley region, WA (the Coroner’s report) include 86 recommendations to the WA Government to promote youth wellbeing and reduce suicide through policy change, service delivery and more.

In May 2019, the WA Government responded to both reports and their respective recommendations in a Statement of Intent on Aboriginal youth suicide (Statement of Intent). The Statement of Intent is a preliminary response outlining the WA Government’s broad intent to fulfil the core recommendations of each report. It also committed to engaging with communities before making a detailed plan to implement its response.

In August 2019, a forum about Aboriginal youth wellbeing in the Kimberley was held in Broome, WA. It was co-hosted by the WA Government and Kimberley Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Trial (KASPT) Working Group and co-facilitated by young Aboriginal leaders associated with the Kimberley community and Aboriginal health sector and Nous.

Recognising the diversity of perspectives in the Kimberley region and the importance of ensuring that community members and service providers in the East Kimberley could be heard and understood, a second forum was agreed, to be held in Kununurra in October 2019.
Workshop scope and objectives

The purpose of the forum was for East Kimberley Aboriginal people, Aboriginal organisations and other service providers to provide direct input into the development of the WA Government’s plan to address Aboriginal suicide, including its impact on youth in particular.

Specifically, the forum related to the WA Government’s commitment in its Statement of Intent to engage Aboriginal people in formulating a whole-of-government response to the recommendations of the Message Stick and State Coroner’s reports. A key aim of the WA Government, represented by the DPC was to listen deeply to forum attendees.

Like the Broome forum, the Kununurra forum had three key objectives:

1. To develop a shared understanding of ‘Message Stick’ and State Coroner’s reports recommendations through the experience and perspective of Kimberley Aboriginal people.

2. To begin to describe what successful implementation of the recommendations ‘looks like’ and identify opportunities for future community, state and Commonwealth actions.

3. To deepen community, WA and Australian Government relationships and better understand opportunities for partnership and joint effort.

The workshop was conducted on Miriwoong Gajerrong Country and a personalised Welcome to Country was provided by Mr Teddy Carlton, Miriwoong Gajerrong Corporation Director. More than 45 people attended the workshop, coming from a variety of locations and organisations, including WA and Australian Government, Aboriginal community leaders and members, and service providers. The workshop was facilitated by Nous Group, with support from BBY, DPC and Kimberley Aboriginal young people. Artwork was developed during the workshop by Glenn Stephenson.
Kimberley Aboriginal young people co-design and leadership
Kimberley Aboriginal young people: Co-design and leadership
Ten young people from many communities of the Kimberley region came together to work with BBY, Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Service (KAMS) and Nous to understand the objectives of the workshop, form a dynamic group of young leaders, and help design the workshop, including its objectives and activities.

The group of young leaders developed a shared understanding of their aspirations for the workshop, identified key ‘ground rules’ to support attendees to work together, and agreed upon their individual and collective roles as workshop co-facilitators.

### Young Aboriginal leaders

1. Zeneth Cox, Halls Creek
2. Lorenzo Gordon, Halls Creek
3. Chloe Malay-Murphy, Wyndham
4. Sanchaz Charles, Kalumburu
5. Corey Rivers, Warmun
6. Steve Brown, Kununurra
7. Sienna Howard, Kununurra
8. Courtney Birch-Topliss, Kununurra
9. Bianca Graham, Broome
10. Jacob Smith, Broome

### Their hopes for the forum

1. Clear answers
2. Clear agreements/resolutions
3. Confidence in future action
4. Sense of achievement
5. Sense of hope
6. Many generations, together
7. Ongoing dialogue and work
8. Seat at the table for youth

### Their ‘ground rules’

1. Respect each other
2. Focus on our common goals
3. Respect culture and community
4. Take time to listen to each other
5. Balance ‘needs’ and ‘wants’
6. Phones on silent
7. Care for each other
8. Allow people to leave
9. Ensure youth voice
10. No judgements
Government Statement of Intent, community feedback
Statement of Intent: Community dialogue

Sarah Charbonneau (DPC) presented a summary of the origin and purpose of the Government of WA’s Statement of Intent and Rob McPhee (KAMS) provides a summary of the aims and progress of the KASPT, in order to invite feedback, reflections and questions from East Kimberley community members and seek to understand diverse perspectives. A range of key messages were shared by attendees, of which a sample is provided below, reflecting key themes of the discussion.

“Everyone needs to work together – we need to see collaboration”

“Support needs to be provided for and through Aboriginal families”

“Work by Aboriginal staff ‘on the ground’ isn’t easy and requires support”

“We must build Aboriginal workforce in hospitals, schools and other services”

“Aboriginal voices, including young people, needs to be formalised, authorised and resourced”

“Cultural knowledge, skills and safety are critical”

“Government is part of the community, community needs to be part of government”

“We need to see talk translated into action”

“We should celebrate the resilience and courage of Aboriginal young people”

“Local government is a critical resource and needs to be brought into the discussion”

N.B. Paraphrased statements are provided to capture key contributions from attendees, however, as much as possible key phrases and terms are used.
Statement of Intent: Community dialogue

Artworks by Glenn Stephenson
Focus group discussions
Recommendation analysis and development: Four thematic group discussions

In order to allow all attendees an opportunity to contribute to all recommendations, attendees were invited to provide their feedback on contemporary recommendations of the Message Stick and State Coroner’s reports and provide recommendations of future actions in four thematic service areas:

1. **YOUTH SERVICES**: Including but not limited to the provision of early education, school engagement initiatives, access to vocational programs and employment opportunities, improved youth facilities, and safe residences for young people.

2. **COMMUNITY SERVICES**: Including but not limited to the training and employment of community members, access to child and parent centres, alcohol services and policies, financial management approaches, and transitional and public housing.

3. **HEALTH SERVICES**: Including but not limited to trauma-informed health services, suicide prevention awareness and training, traditional cultural healing, mental health services, and access to rehabilitation facilities.

4. **CULTURAL WELLBEING**: Including but not limited to cultural healing, cultural education and the teaching of Aboriginal languages in schools, promoting wider appreciation of Aboriginal culture, and services that promote connections to Country.

Four corresponding focus group were formed – including a mix of ages, genders, cultural backgrounds and organisational backgrounds – to consider existing recommendations within each theme and provide recommendations for the future. Subsequently, all attendees were given an opportunity to review and contribute to the output of each group discussion.
Recommendation analysis and development: East Kimberley voices

WE ARE YOUNG PEOPLE!

- Funding to Language Centres
- Implanting Language & Culture in Schools, All Languages to All People
- Invest in Local Industry
- Sustainable Funding Jobs
- Safe Houses - Children
- Resource Funding Men for Remote Communities

WE WOULD LIKE TO FOCUS ON THE AGE GROUP 17-25 YEARS OLD

"WE WANT TO PROVIDE SERVICES" - LET'S BE INCLUSIVE BUT SPECIFIC

"WE AS A GOVERNMENT NEED TO GET BETTER AT CO-ORDINATING" Sarah

YOUTH VOICE AT TABLE
- Encourage Specialisation
- Service Mapping - Let's map our needs first
- CoV. Commitment for Procurement (Buying Stuff)
- Increase RSA Pricing Not Banning
- Policy Review - Housing

I WANT TO BUY THE HOUSE I'M IN!

LAW & CULTURE FRAMEWORK
- Identifying Cultural Leaders - Including Elders & Organisations
- Recognition of Appropriate Culture
- Formalise Traditions
- Cultural Confidence & Competency

WE HAVE COMPLEX SPIRITUAL CONSIDERATIONS WHEN DEALING WITH MENTAL HEALTH

ELDERLY PEOPLE NEED TO BE FRONT & CENTRE

SELF DETERMINATION
- We want skilled Mob on Country
- Balance on Western & Aboriginal Models of Health
- Holistic Health Services - Safe Space
- Less Clinical Service Provision - How about more focussed provision...

ARTWORKS BY GLENN STEPHENSON
# Recommendation analysis and development: Six key messages

Attendees provided a range of insights to support WA Government contextualise the recommendations of the Message Stick and Coroner’s reports, through the perspectives of East Kimberley people, and identify new actions and cross-cutting issues for consideration in shaping the future response plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMUNITY STRENGTH</th>
<th>CULTURAL SAFETY</th>
<th>POOLED FUNDING AND LOCATION BASED PROCUREMENT</th>
<th>SELF-DETERMINATION</th>
<th>CHOICE &amp; CONTROL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Invest in local capabilities – directly or indirectly through local services – to <strong>build skills, knowledge and support for Aboriginal people</strong>, including those that provide formal and informal frontline services.</td>
<td>Non-Aboriginal community and professionals, including health workers, public servants and private sector staff, need to <strong>build cultural competency and to enhance safety of communities in the Kimberley.</strong></td>
<td>Commonwealth, state and other service commissioners should <strong>align resources and funding mechanisms to enhance sustainability and coverage of programming</strong>, including of locally developed and managed programs.</td>
<td>All voices, including young Aboriginal people, need to be involved in service, system and policy decision-making through <strong>formal mechanisms of self-determination</strong> and informal norms of community engagement.</td>
<td>Aboriginal people need access to a range of services, including traditional or cultural and non-traditional or clinical healing modalities, that allow them to make <strong>choices regarding who, where and how they receive support.</strong></td>
<td>Local, regional, state and national agencies, including government, need to <strong>work better together</strong>, to develop integrated systems, services and policy that respond to community identified priorities.</td>
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**Recommendation analysis and development: Youth services**

In each focus group, attendees reflected on existing recommendations from Message Stick and Coroner’s reports, provided feedback on those recommendations, and identified new actions for the future.

### Recommendation examples

Some of the recommendations made in the Message Stick and Coroner’s reports, include, but are not limited to the following:

- **School re-engagement and vocational programming.**
- **Connection to Country programs, such as the Yiriman Project, be extended.**
- **Residential facilities for school-aged students.**
- **Improving youth facilities, through refurbishment and development.**
- **Supporting the development of future leaders.**
- **Establishing attractive career pathways.**
- **Teaching Aboriginal languages in schools.**

### Community feedback

Attendees reflected on the current recommendations to provide their feedback, which is paraphrased below:

- **There is support for teaching languages in schools, requiring adequate resourcing and ensuring that languages are relevant to the local community.**
- **Decisions about services and policies should be made at regional levels.**
- **Youth leadership and reference groups need to be properly funded, including paid positions for young people.**
- **There is support for programs that connect young people to Country and culture, this should be supported with long-term funding.**
- **Better career pathways should be expanded to foster ways to sports, social activities, training and careers.**
- **Young mothers need childcare support to be able to participate in training and employment.**
- **Less drive/fly-in services and more place-based services accountable to local people and needs.**

### Community actions

Attendees identified new actions that were recommended for government consideration, which are summarised below:

- **The government should fund a Kimberley language centre, with Elders to work with education providers to deliver language education at schools.**
- **There is a need to invest in the local workforce by developing local talent – capacity building which should be a part of all activities.**
- **Safe houses are needed for young people, in addition for women with children (including young men, and men).**
- **Local young people need a voice in decision-making about services and policies, including what gets funded and how it is implemented.**
- **Services should be community led and authorised to achieve greater impact, including contracts that position community to hold providers to account.**
- **Peer support networks should be promoted to engage, train and coach young people.**

_N.B. Paraphrased statements are provided above to capture a range of perspectives from attendees and do not necessarily reflect a consensus of views._
Recommendation analysis and development: Community services

In each focus group, attendees reflected on existing recommendations from Message Stick and Coroner’s reports, provided feedback on those recommendations, and identified new actions for the future.

Recommendation examples

Some of the recommendations made in the Message Stick and Coroner’s reports, include, but are not limited to the following:

- Restrictions of take away alcohol purchasing, in consultation with community.
- Funding of town-based patrols to divert alcohol abuse.
- Provision of culturally appropriate short-term accommodation.
- Continuing transitional housing project.
- Extending an offer of voluntary cashless debit cards.
- Undertaking a ‘adopt a cop’ program.
- Early education programs, such as Kindylink.
- Considering a banned drinker register.
- Proscribing ‘sly gogging’.

Community feedback

Attendees reflected on the current recommendations to provide their feedback, which is paraphrased below:

- There is not support for voluntary cashless debit cards, there is no evidence it works and people sign up without understanding the consequences.
- Services need to be better integrated, so there is less duplication and confusion.
- Services need to focus on cultural competency and ensuring co-design.
- There is support for training and employment of community members, requiring better pathways for Aboriginal people to build their career.
- Any alcohol response needs to be holistic, including therapeutic, education and other responses.
- ‘Sly-groggers’ need support to find pathways away from the practice.
- Parent and child centres will only work if local staff are engaged and supported.
- More information, engagement and transparency is required for the transitional housing program.
- Transitional housing should be a pathway to the housing market.

Community actions

Attendees identified new actions that were recommended for government consideration, which are summarised below:

- There is a need for youth voices at the table with government.
- Services should be more specialised, so there is less competition for resources, ideally working towards collective impact.
- One-stop services, with wrap around support for young people and families, are needed.
- Government should prioritise funding/procurement of services through ACCOs, and support sector development, staff development and mentoring.
- Coordination of Government services should be supported by the establishment of an ACCO peak body.
- A ‘rethink’ of alcohol restrictions is required to deter ‘sly groggers’, with a focus on responsible service and education.
- Funding is needed for Aboriginal community connectors.
- Transitional housing program requires review to allow people to buy the houses they are in.

N.B. Paraphrased statements are provided above to capture a range of perspectives from attendees and do not necessarily reflect a consensus of views.
**Recommendation analysis and development: Health services**

In each focus group, attendees reflected on existing recommendations from Message Stick and Coroner’s reports, provided feedback on those recommendations, and identified new actions for the future.

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<tr>
<th>Recommendation examples</th>
<th>Community feedback</th>
<th>Community actions</th>
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<td>Attendees identified new actions that were recommended for government consideration, which are summarised below:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• That services operate in a trauma informed way.</td>
<td>• Aboriginal culture needs to be reflected in service delivery - western mental health models don’t match with cultural models.</td>
<td>• Young people need access to one-stop shops or service hubs, in which multiple services/programs are provided.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Extend funding and scale of FASD programming.</td>
<td>• There is support for suicide prevention training, including promotion of positive health and psychology and using strength-based approaches and language.</td>
<td>• Remote communities require programs that mitigate the risk of FASD and ‘stop kids having kids’.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Multidisciplinary capacities for screening for care needs related to AOD and mental health.</td>
<td>• There is support for strength based approaches, requiring an understanding of trauma histories.</td>
<td>• Community members need education in mental health treatment compliance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Expand video-conference for mental health assessments.</td>
<td>• 24 hour or after hour services will be critical, particularly in remote areas.</td>
<td>• The capacity of Aboriginal people from communities to provide services needs to be invested in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Suicide prevention training and awareness raising.</td>
<td>• Video and teleconferencing assessments are supported, however, young people need a choice of face-to-face and other services.</td>
<td>• A unit for youth mental health is needed in Halls Creek.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Considering the establishment of youth rehabilitation facilities.</td>
<td>• There is too much focus on FASD – there is a need to focus on a range of issues.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Increasing access to clinicians, including in Halls Creek.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>• 24-hour access to mental health services in remote areas.</td>
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*N.B. Paraphrased statements are provided above to capture a range of perspectives from attendees and do not necessarily reflect a consensus of views.*
### Recommendation analysis and development: Cultural wellbeing

In each focus group, attendees reflected on existing recommendations from Message Stick and Coroner’s reports, provided feedback on those recommendations, and identified new actions for the future.

#### Recommendation examples

Some of the recommendations made in the Message Stick and Coroner’s reports, include, but are not limited to the following:

- Connection to Country programs, such as the Yiriman Project, be extended.
- Funding of cultural healing projects, such as Nyamba Buru Yawuru Centre.
- That Aboriginal languages be taught in schools.
- Encouraging more appreciation of Aboriginal culture.
- Inclusion of cultural healing in mental health treatment plans.
- Recognition of culture as a protective factor.

#### Community feedback

Attendees reflected on the current recommendations to provide their feedback, which is paraphrased below:

- Projects similar to Yiriman projects should be supported and promoted.
- Language centres should be central, and lead the training of Aboriginal language speakers as teachers.
- Sharing of cultural practices and life skills is important, including language.
- The evidence base for cultural approaches needs to be developed.
- The recommendations are ‘right’, there is a need to build on intergenerational teaching.
- Aboriginal people should be the authorities of Aboriginal culture.

#### Community actions

Attendees identified new actions that were recommended for government consideration, which are summarised below:

- Law and cultural frameworks should be embedded across all systems from policy to community levels.
- Traditional owners and Elders should be the conduit for the inclusion of all voices in decision-making.
- Cultural competence requirements should be established for all non-Aboriginal and Indigenous peoples from other regions working in the region.
- A formalised ‘circle of Elders’ process is needed in the Kimberley.
- There need to be intergenerational activities that connect young people to country and culture.
- Local Aboriginal leadership groups need to be formalised and authorised.
- Services and treatment should recognise the role of spirit, and family.

N.B. Paraphrased statements are provided above to capture a range of perspectives from attendees and do not necessarily reflect a consensus of views.
Women, youth and men met separately to deepen discussion and connect

Guided by East Kimberley Aboriginal people women, young people and men met separately to deepen discussion.
Working together
Youth voice: 2019 Kimberley Young Leaders Collective Impact Statement

Reflecting on the outcomes of the day and building on a statement previously developed during the 2019 Empowered Young Leaders Forum, young leaders developed a Kimberley-wide statement to established government, non-government and community leaders.

On behalf of our families and communities, We, the next generation of Kimberley Leaders and descendants of First Nations people from across the region, gathered on Yawuru, Miriuwung and Gajerrong country to attend the Empowered Young Leaders Forums held on the 26 – 28 March and 14 – 16 May 2019. As a result of these Forums, we now present this document as Our Collective Impact Statement to amplify our voices and assure our place in leading change to address youth suicide in our region.

We have lost too many loved ones to suicide, Through our own lived experience, we bear witness, to the heavy burden our families and communities endure in grappling with the never ending cycle of grief and loss. We no longer accept the normalisation of suicide. We no longer choose to be disempowered by the issues that continue to impact on us as a result of intergenerational trauma. The lives of our children and grandchildren are in our hands.

As Empowered Young Leaders, we commit to lead and action positive change to improve our future and the future of our next generations; and, in doing so, we acknowledge and accept our inherent obligation being passed onto us.

We represent a Generation of Change and Action. We accept this responsibility on behalf of our families and communities. The path laid before us by our Elders and Leaders past and present, has enabled us to become Actionist who walk proudly as Empowered Young Leaders in Two Worlds.

We stand together in solidarity, to ensure We Are Included; Our Voices Are Heard and We Are supported and given opportunities to Lead and take Action on behalf of the Kimberley Young People.

With passion and determination, we seek your support to walk alongside us as we pave a new way forward into our future.

In hope, strength and solidarity.
Working together

All attendees – from a range of backgrounds, professions, and ages - shared an expectation to continue to work together to prevent Aboriginal youth suicide. Attendance voiced a hope for more opportunities to work with the WA Government to advance shared priorities.
Next steps: Working together to develop a whole of government response plan

**PRIORITISE**
DPC will bring together other government department’s and partners to prioritise future actions

**LISTEN**
DPC will listen to the perspectives and experiences of communities in other WA regions

**RESPOND**
The WA Government will commit itself to future action through a whole of government response

**REFLECT**
DPC will reflect deeply on the perspectives and insights of the greater Kimberley region
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