



Date: 31 August 2018

Ms Michelle Andrews  
Director, Aboriginal Policy Unit  
Department of the Premier and Cabinet  
2 Havelock Street  
Perth WA 6005

Dear Ms Andrews

**SHIRE OF HALLS CREEK SUBMISSION – AN OFFICE FOR ADVOCACY  
AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS IN WESTERN  
AUSTRALIA**

The Shire of Halls Creek (the Shire) is pleased to be able to provide the following comments in respect to Minister Ben Wyatt's idea for making government work better for Aboriginal people as outlined in the Minister's letter and Discussion Paper of 28 June 2018.

The Shire acknowledges that past efforts of not only by the State and Federal Governments but other agencies and service providers, while well intended, have not worked particularly well. Generally, there appears to be a duplication of effort and significant money expended on overheads, resulting in very little of the funding getting to the people who need it the most.

Therefore, the Shire, while concerned that this may be another bureaucratic layer, believes in principle, it is worth giving this concept a try.

The Shire has some general questions and comments in respect to this proposal, as summarised following:

- The organisation will need to be able to dispel perceptions that it is another bureaucratic layer.
- The organisation will need to demonstrate positive results quickly. To take too long will lose credibility.

- This proposal will need a commitment and buy-in from Federal Government agencies and service providers as well as the not-for-profit service providers – there will be no benefit to just “speak about” these agencies and service providers unless they are listening and prepared to respond.
- There will also need to be a commitment and buy-in from Aboriginal communities and organisations as well. The current situation is not just a one-way street and if the new organisation identifies issues in respect to Aboriginal communities and organisations, then they need to be prepared to respond accordingly.
- How is this new organisation being funded? Will the funding of this new organisation, reduce “on the ground” funding? The State has already reduced funding coming into the Shire that was directed to work with vulnerable youth on behalf of the State, so will our young people with complex needs requiring sophisticated evidence informed, specialist services and expertise be further compromised?
- Recently published by this Government was a report by the Regional Services Reform Unit (*Resilient Families, Strong Communities – Mapping service expenditure and outcomes in the Pilbara and the Kimberley (October 2017)*) Halls Creek area is extremely socially and economically disadvantaged in comparison with the rest of the Kimberley, the State of Western Australia and the whole country. Overall outcomes are at the very bottom of the rankings for the Kimberley and Pilbara. Expenditure is at 4<sup>th</sup> place overall however this may well reflect the cost of providing a service in such a remote area rather than the actual quality of investment in services. Within this publication the best outcome documented for Halls Creek was for the area of Juvenile Diversion indicators which placed Halls Creek second highest in the region. This reflected the quality of services in the region yet sadly this Government significantly reduced the funding and service levels to Australia's most vulnerable youth engaged. There is a significant need to address problems locally rather than from Perth where most of the policy decisions are being made, and are being made without contemporary knowledge or understanding of the levels of deprivation our communities endure daily.
- According to the 2016 National Census Data, the Shire of Halls Creek holds an Indigenous population figure of 2,340 people, to the Kununurra figure of 2,332 people – a remarkably similar number but with remarkably different levels of services as outlined in the table below. Developing a ground-up funding model that is not only geographically relevant, but culturally relevant is required. Service hub models do not appreciate the unique cultural, language, and

demographic assets of the many different communities in the Kimberley nor are they directly considering the complex needs of varying Aboriginal groups, to achieve this we require strong advocacy that protects each and every one of our Kinship groups, not just those located to economically viable towns. Supporting our communities to remain connected to traditional lands and their culture should be done without judgement and respected by policy writers located in Perth or Canberra.

Table 1: Value and Proportion of Estimated Indigenous Direct Service Provision Expenditure and Income Support Expenditure Per Capita (\$) attributed to each OID area in the Kimberley and Pilbara by Sub-Region (SA2), 2015-16

SA2	Governance, Leadership and Culture		Early Child Development		Education and Training		Healthy Lives		Economic Participation		Home Environment		Safe and Supportive Communities		Total	
	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%
Broome	\$1,820	5.7%	\$1,357	4.2%	\$3,195	10.0%	\$12,506	39.0%	\$9,047	28.2%	\$92	0.3%	\$4,017	12.5%	\$32,034	100%
Darby – West Kimberley	\$1,212	4.4%	\$648	2.4%	\$4,383	15.9%	\$7,563	27.4%	\$6,735	24.4%	\$3,549	12.9%	\$3,620	12.7%	\$27,609	100%
Halls Creek	\$911	3.5%	\$237	0.9%	\$2,718	10.4%	\$7,082	30.6%	\$9,892	26.4%	\$2,606	10.0%	\$4,716	18.1%	\$26,031	100%
Kununurra	\$821	3.1%	\$551	2.1%	\$3,856	14.5%	\$8,241	30.9%	\$6,786	25.4%	\$2,048	7.7%	\$4,373	16.4%	\$26,676	100%
Roebuck	\$218	1.0%	\$40	0.2%	\$3,218	15.3%	\$2,790	13.3%	\$6,614	31.6%	\$3,739	17.8%	\$4,381	20.9%	\$21,009	100%
Ashburton (WA)	\$190	1.2%	\$266	1.8%	\$3,312	22.6%	\$2,001	13.7%	\$4,714	32.2%	\$2,400	16.8%	\$1,709	11.7%	\$14,643	100%
East Pilbara	\$416	2.3%	\$123	0.7%	\$2,026	11.1%	\$3,248	17.8%	\$4,733	25.9%	\$4,869	26.7%	\$2,840	15.6%	\$18,262	100%
Karriatha	\$195	1.2%	\$98	0.6%	\$6,498	38.7%	\$3,453	20.6%	\$4,796	28.6%	\$73	0.4%	\$1,680	10.0%	\$16,794	100%
Newman	\$432	2.6%	\$93	0.6%	\$4,592	29.5%	\$3,921	25.2%	\$4,684	30.1%	\$18	0.1%	\$1,818	11.7%	\$15,558	100%
Port Hedland	\$558	2.4%	\$243	1.1%	\$1,833	7.9%	\$13,400	57.8%	\$4,706	20.3%	\$462	2.0%	\$1,076	8.5%	\$23,177	100%
Roebourne	\$1,042	5.5%	\$440	2.3%	\$2,662	14.2%	\$6,759	30.6%	\$4,843	25.8%	\$439	2.3%	\$3,608	19.2%	\$18,792	100%
South Hedland	\$504	3.0%	\$252	1.5%	\$4,094	24.2%	\$4,211	24.8%	\$5,106	30.1%	\$83	0.5%	\$2,692	15.9%	\$16,945	100%

Source: Resilient Families, Strong Communities – Mapping service expenditure and outcomes in the Pilbara and the Kimberley (October 2017)

In respect to a suggested name of the organisation, the Shire suggests **“Commissioner for Aboriginal Empowerment”**. The reasoning behind this, is that if this proposal works the intended end goal would be to empower Aboriginal people to ultimately take responsibility for their own future and outcomes and not rely on Government agencies and service providers. They should be the ones who make decisions for themselves.

We wish the State Government well with this initiative and hope that it achieves the outcomes that everyone would want to see.

Yours sincerely

Steven J Deckert  
**Acting Chief Executive Officer**