

## Legislative Council

Tuesday, 22 February 2011

**THE PRESIDENT (Hon Barry House)** took the chair at 3.00 pm, and read prayers.

### **KIMBERLEY — SUICIDE PREVENTION**

*Statement by Minister for Mental Health*

**HON HELEN MORTON (East Metropolitan — Minister for Mental Health)** [3.02 pm]: I am deeply saddened by the deaths of 11 people in the East and West Kimberley who recently took their own lives. Suicide is a major concern amongst the whole community and its impact is far reaching. To the families, friends and communities who have lost loved ones, my sympathy goes out to each and every one of you during this extremely difficult time.

When I was advised of the situation in the Kimberley, I met with state managers from the Department of Health and Ageing, the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, and the Mental Health Commissioner to discuss immediate actions to be put in place on the ground, and to ensure that the state is providing all necessary culturally appropriate support to the people affected. The state government has been working with the Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services Council to develop a suite of community action plans in conjunction with the commonwealth-funded StandBy program, which is coordinated through KinWay. This community-based program provides a 24-hour-a-day response to assist families, friends and acquaintances who have been bereaved through suicide. Two community coordinators doorknocked in the community to assess the social and emotional wellbeing of affected people in the wake of the deaths. Meetings have taken place between commonwealth and state agencies and the communities in respect to the provision of ongoing concentrated support services. In addition, the state government's Kimberley Mental Health and Drug Service has deployed five community health professionals to various towns to respond to the immediate crisis. I have advised the Mental Health Commission to fund the extra support staff required for the WA Country Health Service's mental health and drug service, and also the StandBy service. These extra resources will back up the already extensive work being undertaken by local coordinators. I will fly to Broome on 11 March to show my support to the people who have been affected by these events, as well as the incredible team of people who have spent tireless hours with each family, including personally visiting them to assess their wellbeing following these tragedies. The Mental Health Commissioner and the director of the suicide prevention strategy will visit Derby this Thursday, 24 February 2011 to discuss further actions with the Kimberley Aboriginal mental health planning forum.

This government established the Ministerial Council for Suicide Prevention and has committed \$13 million to localised suicide prevention strategies. This issue highlights the need to fast-track the rollout of the \$13 million suicide prevention strategy in the Kimberley to ensure that people in need of support receive help. This builds on the initiatives identified through the two suicide prevention summits that I attended on the Dampier Peninsula last year and the year before.

Consideration of the statement made an order of the day for the next sitting, on motion by **Hon Ed Dermer**.

### **PAPERS TABLED**

Papers were tabled and ordered to lie upon the table of the house.

### **ELECTRONIC TRANSACTIONS BILL 2011**

*Notice of Motion to Introduce*

Notice of motion given by **Hon Michael Mischin (Parliamentary Secretary)**.

### **DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES**

*Appointment*

**HON NORMAN MOORE (Mining and Pastoral — Leader of the House)** [3.10 pm] — without notice: I move —

That Hon Brian Ellis be appointed as Deputy Chair of Committees.

By way of explanation, Hon Helen Morton has resigned from that position on becoming a minister.

Question put and passed.

**63. Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH to the Minister for Mental Health:**

I refer to the ministerial statement today about the 11 people who recently took their own lives in the Kimberley.

- (1) When did the Kimberley mental health drug strategy deploy the five health professionals to the various towns in the Kimberley to respond to the immediate crisis?
- (2) When did the minister advise the Mental Health Commission to fund the extra staff support required for the WA Country Health Service mental health and drug service?
- (3) Why was the \$13 million suicide prevention strategy in the Kimberley not fast-tracked prior to now, given that the strategy was announced almost a year and a half ago?

**Hon HELEN MORTON replied:**

I thank the member for the question.

- (1)–(3) As I mentioned earlier, these suicides are an absolute tragedy across the entire region of the Kimberley. People working in the Kimberley area have been aware of these problems occurring and have been briefing me about them on an ongoing basis throughout January and February. I cannot remember the exact date it was determined that the five people would be deployed. That took place through one or other of those meetings over the past six weeks. The same applies regarding the extra staff support to the rapid response team —

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich:** You can't remember?

**Hon HELEN MORTON:** The member asked for a date, but I do not know the exact date because I have had many meetings about this.

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich:** I asked when.

**Hon HELEN MORTON:** What does "when" mean; is that a date or a time?

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich** interjected.

**Hon HELEN MORTON:** I cannot tell the member precisely what date it took place, but I can tell the member that I have had ongoing discussions over the past six weeks with people who have been informing me about the situation, and it is being monitored.

In response to the member's query about why the \$13 million suicide prevention strategy has not been fast-tracked at this stage, the member might recall that I have spoken in this chamber on a number of occasions about the work the Billard Aboriginal community is undertaking in determining suicide prevention strategies that are culturally safe and appropriate to people in the Kimberley. I attended the five-day Billard summit on suicide prevention two years ago and I attended the one just last year. Throughout that process a number of initiatives have been identified by people from across the Kimberley and across Australia generally on what would work best in the different communities. The most important message that came out of those suicide summits is that community plans for creating suicide-proof communities in the Kimberley need to be developed by the people for the people. They need to own them.

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich:** Why didn't you fast-track —

**Hon HELEN MORTON:** If the member waits, she will get the information she is looking for. The objective of trying to create the community action plans requires the communities themselves to identify what action they believe will work best for them in their communities. That sort of work is not something that can happen quickly. A lot of work is going on at the moment in many of those communities to develop community awareness and understanding of specific initiatives that suit that one community or the next. We are now at the stage at which we want to fast-track that information or those initiatives into the communities. A lot of that work has been done and will continue now at a faster rate.