

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**  
**Question on notice**

Wednesday, 6 May 2015

3074. Hon Robin Chappie to the Minister for Mental Health.

I refer to the media statement *Long-term investment for Aboriginal Youth*, dated Monday, 4 May 2015, announcing that the State Government will require all departments to comply with a new set of funding criteria, such as providing larger grants to a more focused number of programs and for longer periods of time, and I ask:

- (a) how will this affect those projects recently funded under the One Life WA Suicide Prevention Small Grants scheme that were announced by the Minister for Mental Health on Tuesday, 28 April 2015;
- (b) will the Minister please clarify which statement is correct regarding funding criteria: that the Government prefers to provide larger grants for long-term projects or small grants for short-term goals, or do the changes to funding criteria to which the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs refers apply to Aboriginal services only;
- (c) does the Minister agree with the following finding from the recent *National Mental Health Commission Review of Mental Health Services* that "There needs to be a focus on the socio-cultural issues contributing to suicide: there is too much attention paid to medical responses. There has been some progress e.g. Yiriman Project, but there needs to be more":
  - (i) if no to (c), why not; and
  - (ii) if yes to (c), when will the State Government invest in socio-cultural responses to Aboriginal mental health, and what will be the focus for that investment;
- (d) does the Minister agree that knowledge of, and connection to, culture plays a key role in the social, mental, emotional and intellectual well-being of Aboriginal people:
  - (i) if yes to (d), what scope is there for organisations promoting culture for these purposes to apply for funding under present arrangements; and
  - (ii) if no to (d), what does role does the Minister consider that culture play in maintaining the social, mental and intellectual well-being of Aboriginal people; and
- (e) will the *Western Australian Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015-2025* and the new *State Suicide Prevention Plan* follow the recommendations of the *National Mental Health Commission Review of Mental Health Services* and, if not, why not?

**Answer**

- (a) The proposed reform to funding for Aboriginal services comes into effect on 1 July 2015, and will therefore have no effect on programs funded under the One Life WA Suicide Prevention Small Grants in April 2015.



(b) This should be referred to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

(c) Yes.

(i) Not applicable.

(ii) The Western Australia Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015-2025 is currently being finalised. The Plan will include details of proposed services and supports for Aboriginal people with mental health and alcohol and other drug problems.

The State-wide Specialist Aboriginal Mental Health Service (SSAMHS) has been operating since January 2011 and provides a range of specialist and community-based services to specifically address the mental health needs of Aboriginal people with severe and persistent mental illness.

SSAHMS funding provides 59 staff, about two-thirds of whom are Aboriginal people, who are employed through the Department of Health and the Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services Council.

The State Government provided \$29 million over three years to continue and evaluate this important service, including, \$9.7 million in 2015-2016 to the Service to support Aboriginal people and their families.

(d) Yes.

(i) The MHC is currently reviewing the criteria for its One Life WA Suicide Prevention Small Grants scheme. It is anticipated that community controlled organisations will continue to be able to apply funding to promote culture to reduce the incidence of mental illness and suicide.

(ii) Not applicable.

(e) The National Mental Health Commission Review of Mental Health Services echoes many of the reform and service directions of both the Western Australia Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015-2025 and the new State Suicide Prevention Plan.

