

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
Question On Notice

Thursday, 16 August 2018

1577. Hon Robin Chappie to the Minister for Regional Development representing the Minister for Tourism

The Rottnest Island Deaths Group Aboriginal Law Men and Elders have always maintained that there are many more than one Burial Site on Wadjemup/Rottnest Island and have constantly attempted to consult with and advise the Government/Rottnest Island Authority (RIA) of this fact. This position has now been supported by historian Neville Green. In an article in *The West Australian*, 'Map Link to mystery of Rotto Graves' 24-25, March 2018 by Kent Ascott", it is noted that at least two cemeteries exist on Wadjemup, with one location remaining unknown to date pending further research. Ascott notes that the Island, with nearly 400 known Aboriginal deaths occurring during its time as a gaol, was 'one of the biggest deaths in custody sites in Australia.' I ask:

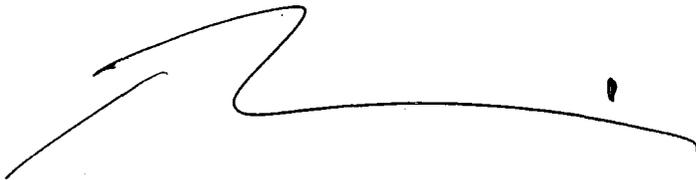
- (a) does the Government have any plans to locate other burial sites on Wadjemup;
- (b) if yes to (a), when will these plans commence;
- (c) if no to (a), why not;
- (d) are there plans in place to handle any additionally located burial sites;
- (e) if no to (d), why not;
- (f) if yes to (d), what do these plans involve;
- (g) if yes to (d), do the plans allow Rottnest Island Deaths Group Aboriginal Corporation, members, descendants and traditional owners to properly honour those sites and their ancestors under their lore/law, custom and spirit, and allow full self-determination and control of how those sites are cared for and maintained into the future;
- (h) if no to (g), why not; and
- (i) if yes to (g), will the Minister table the plans?

(a) **Answer**

 No.

(b) Not applicable.

- (c) While it is accepted that other burial sites may exist on Wadjemup/Rottnest Island, there is no strong evidence pointing to the location of such other sites. The Rottnest Island Authority, in association with the Rottnest Foundation, is currently consulting with peak Aboriginal organisations statewide in order to determine how to most appropriately commemorate the lives of the men and boys incarcerated on the Island during the prison era, including not only those who remain buried on the Island in the Wadjemup Aboriginal Burial Ground but also those who perished during transportation or exile from their home countries.
- (d)-(i) Any previously unrecognised burial sites will be investigated in accordance with legal requirements. Arrangements for protection and recognition of any previously unrecognised burial sites will be developed in consultation with the Aboriginal community and be consistent with the plans currently being developed for the Wadjemup Aboriginal Burial Ground.

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