

Our Ref: 2011/1094~1
Your Ref:

Ms Marion Scrymgour MLA
Chair
Select Committee on Youth Suicide in the NT
GPO Box 3721
DARWIN NT 0801



Dear Ms Scrymgour

**RE: PRELIMINARY SUBMISSION TO THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON YOUTH
SUICIDE IN THE NT**

I refer to your letter dated 31 August 2011 in which you outline the terms of reference of the Committee and invite me as the Children's Commissioner, to provide a submission to the Committee. For the particular purpose of making a submission to the Committee I feel it is more pertinent to do so in my capacity as the Convenor of the Child Deaths Review and Prevention Committee. This role is not mandated by statute, but one that has been given to me by administrative fiat. It is distinct from my role as the Children's Commissioner.

In 2009-2010, the Child Deaths Review and Prevention Committee (CDRPC) identified that since 2006 there had been a relatively high number of suicide deaths that had occurred and almost exclusively the method utilised was by hanging. As a result the CDRPC conducted a preliminary comparative analysis for hangings in the NT with a number of other jurisdictions between 2006 and 2009 (see enclosed CDRPC Annual Report 2009-2010, specifically pages 47-49). The analysis clearly highlighted that the NT had experienced a substantially higher rate of suicide during that period.

Due to these high rates and the relative small amount of research in the NT regarding this issue, the CDRPC decided to commission the Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies) to conduct an exploratory study of recent trends in suicide among NT children and youth. The study will focus on case reviews for suicide deaths from 2006 to 2010 where the coronial investigation has concluded.

The study will also encompass a literature review on recent national and international research relating to this area. It is anticipated that the study will provide recommendations regarding the linkage of information for instances where a child is suspected of committing suicide to provide a holistic approach to government and community post-vention



responses and for broader research purposes, policy development and service delivery planning.

Currently, the CDRPC has not received a final report for this research, however, it is anticipated that it will be provided by Menzies shortly, and providing a period of time for the CDRPC to analyse the report it, we hope that it might be available to you by 31 October 2011 contingent on any confidentiality restrictions.

It is my understanding that Menzies will also be providing a submission to the Committee that will encompass the literature review from the study, which will provide some insight into this issue from a national and international perspective. The review provides particular attention to the prevalence of Indigenous suicide not just in Australia but other nations such as the U.S.A and Canada. It also articulates known risk factors which can precede suicidal behaviour in children.

I thank you for providing me with an opportunity to providing a submission to the Committee should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me on 8999 6076.

Yours sincerely



Dr Howard Bath
Convenor
Child Deaths Review and Prevention Committee
27 September 2011

Enc: CDRPC Annual Report 2009-2010

