

INDIGENOUS HEALTH AND WELLBEING — HOPE REPORT RESPONSE

**Hon SHELLEY ARCHER to the minister representing the Minister for Indigenous Affairs:**

I refer to the report tabled by the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Hon Michelle Roberts, in the Legislative Assembly titled “The Western Australian Government’s Response to the Hope Report”.

- (1) What decision-making powers will representatives on the government’s Indigenous Affairs Advisory Committee be given to ensure that Aboriginal people can effectively influence policies relating to their health and wellbeing?
- (2) Has any additional funding been allocated to address the findings contained in the coroner’s report into the 22 alcohol and drug-related deaths of Indigenous people in the Kimberley?
- (3) If yes, will the minister please provide details of the programs to be funded and the amounts involved over the next three years?
- (4) If no additional funding has been allocated, why not?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH replied:**

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The Department of Indigenous Affairs advises —

- (1) In accordance with its draft terms of reference, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisory committee will: provide strategic advice to the Department of Indigenous Affairs on Indigenous aspirations, issues and interests across all priority sectors; offer guidance for practical implementation of policy and programs; provide a solid foundation for the Department of Indigenous Affairs to advocate for improved outcomes for Indigenous people across a range of priority issues; and provide insight on improved ways of doing business with Indigenous people and effectively investing in Indigenous Western Australia. The council’s terms of reference are the subject of ongoing consultation with relevant stakeholders and will be approved at the council’s first meeting scheduled for mid-July 2008. The Directors General Group on Indigenous Affairs will be apprised of all advice received from the council through its convener, the Director General of the Department of Indigenous Affairs, who also chairs the DGGIA. The DGGIA will, in turn, communicate the council’s advice to the cabinet standing committee on Indigenous affairs.
- (2)-(4) The coroner raised complex issues that are the subject of ongoing government attention. Sustainable solutions to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Western Australians demand long-term strategies for change. An overview of the programs that the state government is funding in Fitzroy Valley is provided in the state government’s response to the Hope report, which was tabled in Parliament on 8 April 2008. This includes key initiatives such as the development of an alcohol management plan for the Kimberley region as a whole; the establishment of a \$9.4 million acute psychiatric unit in Broome; the completion of a new \$34 million district high school, due to be completed in 2009, and upgrades to more than 45 houses in Fitzroy Crossing; and the appointment of a government services coordinator. The Premier also announced on 14 April 2008 the allocation of up to \$5.4 million to build and operate a new aquatic facility in Fitzroy Crossing in recognition of the positive impact that swimming pools can have on the health of Indigenous children. The Directors General Group on Indigenous Affairs is continuing to progress work in response to the issues raised by Coroner Hope. Its recommendations will be presented to the cabinet standing committee on Indigenous affairs by mid-September 2008.