

## **VISIT TO REMOTE COMMUNITIES IN MINING AND PASTORAL REGION**

### *Statement*

**HON SHELLEY ARCHER (Mining and Pastoral)** [9.52 pm]: I rise tonight to talk about a trip that I undertook in the last week of May when I had the opportunity to visit some of the most remote communities in my electorate. My first stop was Kalumburu Remote Community School, where I had the chance to meet the chief executive officer, Leonie Cameron, community elders, the police, the principal and many more community people in the community of Kalumburu.

During the visit I had the privilege of participating in a women's meeting with the local women's group. This is a group of community women who have come together and decided that enough is enough and have resolved that they will take control of their own and their children's lives and implement programs that will improve their lives. In conjunction with the community development officer, they have organised a day-care facility to be run by some of the younger women. This will enable mothers who have worked within the community to participate in a work environment and to leave their children in a safe and friendly environment within the community. It is also a facility for those women who want to get together with their little ones and share ideas about the different issues that occur within the community.

Another initiative the women have decided on is a second-hand clothing shop. During the meeting, I gave an undertaking that on my next visit I would endeavour to take as many second-hand clothes as I could. If anyone has second-hand clothes for kids and mums, please hand them my way.

**Hon Kim Chance:** What about the fellows?

**Hon SHELLEY ARCHER:** The shop is for women, if the Leader of the House does not mind. The blokes can look after themselves.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT:** Members should not think about their wardrobe until Friday night. Hon Shelley Archer has the call.

**Hon SHELLEY ARCHER:** I will fix them up. The women in the community also talked about a place of their own where they could go and have a chat and take time out from their families. They also talked about setting aside a number of days for beauty treatments, including manicures, pedicures and facials. These are things that are second nature to us in Perth, whereas these women do not understand them and have not encountered them in any way.

It was a great privilege to see the women of the community come together to try to address their concerns positively by putting together these great initiatives, which will be for the women and run by the women of Kalumburu. It was heartening to see that the women wanted to implement serious programs for their benefit and the benefit of their children. They also wanted to put programs in place that would add some fun and laughter to their lives. It seems that there is not much of that in Kalumburu at the moment.

I was also encouraged when I visited the school in that remote community to see that more than 100 students were in attendance. I am told that it is not unusual in Kalumburu for all the students to attend school. I congratulate the principal and her team of teachers for creating an environment that brings the children to class most days. The principal indicated that the school had a program in place in which it did a sweep of the community and picked up those children who were just wandering around and should have been attending school. Most of these students were quite happy to be at school and stayed for the day; it just seemed a matter of actually getting them in the front gate.

I also want to congratulate the high school kids of Kalumburu, who had just done their weekly rubbish collection around the community when I arrived. I understand that this is a program that helps the children to become aware of their surroundings and the impact rubbish can have on the community. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the government for supporting the recommendations of the Gordon inquiry by providing a permanent police presence in this community. The permanent presence of police at Kalumburu is obviously making a marked difference to the community. Even though I was told that it could be a painful process for some families to see their relatives in trouble, the police in charge indicated that they had the full support of the community in upholding its by-laws and the laws that apply to all West Australians. I also had an opportunity to look at the new multipurpose facility, which is nearing completion, and I look forward to visiting Kalumburu again when it is fully operational.

After Kalumburu, I visited the Oombulgarri community. For those who do not know the remote parts of Western Australia, Oombulgarri is near Wyndham but is accessible only by barge or aircraft. The chairperson of the community, Floyd Grant, who is also acting as the chief executive officer, met with me and raised a number of issues. Mr Grant indicated that the community has been without a CEO for some time now but has recently

begun a recruiting process, which should result in a new CEO being appointed within the next two months. I was pleased to hear the new initiative announced by the Minister for Housing and Works in Geraldton a few weeks ago of a regional recruitment and workplace relations service for remote indigenous communities, which will boost the levels of support and quality of staff provided to these isolated communities.

A number of issues related to the recent high incidence of suicides within the community, which had caused a twofold problem in that a number of the residents had left there to go and stay with relatives elsewhere and were unsure about when they would return. This made it difficult for Mr Grant and other elders to then formulate decisions regarding the long-term needs of the community, as they were unsure what the long-term number of residents would be. While I was in Oombulgurri, a team from the health department visited for the purposes of meeting those who needed some counselling about issues such as suicide and drug and alcohol abuse. Whilst I was there, the police department was involved in fruitful discussions with Mr Grant regarding the police presence in the community and how the community and the police can work together.

I then travelled to Warmun, where I met the new CEO, who had only been there for five weeks and was unsure about the issues he could raise with me. He took me to the art gallery, which showcases Aboriginal arts and crafts from the region and houses interpretive displays of the traditional ways of the Gidja people. This is a fantastic initiative and I was able to meet and talk to quite a number of the artists, which was a great privilege.

We then travelled to Ringers Soak, where the main issues centred around the lack of transport between Halls Creek and Ringers Soak, especially when a patient was returning from a hospital visit. On making inquiries with the Halls Creek shire and the health department, I was able to reassure the community that a program had been implemented whereby those returning from a hospital visit would be met by staff from the Halls Creek District Hospital and would be housed at the hospital until such time as transport was organised for them to return to Ringers Soak.

Our final stop was in Halls Creek, where I attended the Kimberley zone forum, which is a forum of all the shires in the Kimberley region. The forum invites government departments and non-government organisations to present papers of interest to the shires. On this occasion we were addressed by Jake Zahl, who manages the Clean Up the Kimberley campaign. He was inspiring when he spoke about the Kimberley region as pristine and untouched and one of the last great wilderness areas of the world. Jake believes that to ensure that the region lives up to this reputation, steps need to be taken to clean up the rubbish hot spots, increase awareness, change behaviour and improve waste management infrastructure.

On Saturday evening I had the pleasure of attending a farewell function for Peter and Carmel McConnell, who are leaving Halls Creek after 11 years in the town and moving to Mt Magnet. Although Halls Creek is losing a great chief executive officer, Mt Magnet is gaining a great CEO. Among some of his achievements, Peter has coordinated the Clean Up the Townscape program, gained funding for the community resource centre and finally achieved what some believed was the unachievable in building a terrific swimming pool-sporting complex in the town. I had a sneak preview of this facility and it is truly an amazing sight. Peter has had a long history in local government and has achieved many great outcomes in the communities in which he has worked, and I know that those who stay behind in Halls Creek will miss him. I am sure that everyone in this house will join with me in wishing Peter and Carmel all the best in Mt Magnet. Again, I thank Peter for the wonderful work he has done in Halls Creek. Many issues and areas of state government responsibility still need to be addressed in these communities. I will continue to work with these communities to improve the lives of the men, women and children in all the communities that I represent.