

DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT - COST OF FUNERALS

3491. Hon Nigel Hallett to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Community Development

I refer to a report in *The West Australian* of Friday 24 February 2006 on page five that states that 'A spokeswoman for the Department of Community Development which last year paid up to \$5 000 each for 225 Aboriginal funerals...' and ask -

- (1) What was the cost of the least expensive Aboriginal funeral paid for last year?
- (2) What was the cost of the most expensive Aboriginal funeral paid for last year?
- (3) What is the cost of a 'typical' Aboriginal funeral paid for last year?
- (4) For (1), (2) and (3) please provide a detailed breakdown of -
 - (a) the costs for items making up the cost of each funeral (e.g. the internment in the grave);
 - (b) the cost of holding a funeral;
 - (c) the cost if the funeral was held on a Saturday, Sunday or a public holiday; and
 - (d) travel expenses for family?

Hon KATE DOUST replied:

- (1) The Department for Community Development can provide families with funeral assistance if after a financial and assets test they do not have the resources to fund a funeral. Funeral assistance is provided under a contract system across the State. The contract does not differentiate between Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients.
The lowest contract price for a funeral is approximately \$1,400.
- (2) The highest contract price for a funeral is approximately \$4,700.
- (3) The Department for Community Development does not differentiate between Indigenous and non-Indigenous funerals. The policy has the flexibility to take into consideration cultural factors such as the use of a culturally appropriate funeral director or returning the deceased to their lands.
The average net cost (after contributions and recovery action) for a government assisted funeral is approximately \$1,700.
- (4)(a-b) The costs of holding a funeral will vary from location to location. In the metropolitan area the Department has one contractor. The contract price for conducting a funeral would be approximately \$1,700. This can be broken down to i) cemetery and grave digging fees \$770, ii) minister's fee \$100, iii) press notice \$70, iv) coffin \$210, v) funeral director's fees \$550.
As regional and remote areas are serviced by numerous contractors, both the contract price and the cemetery/grave digging fees will vary from one Local Government Authority to another.
- (c) Departmental policy is for the funding of funerals on a weekday. However, the Department can approve a Saturday funeral in remote and regional centres where the applicant can demonstrate that exceptional circumstance exist. At this stage the cost of such a funeral is not known as no weekend funeral has been funded.
- (d) The Department does not assist family with travel expenses.