

KIMBERLEY — SUICIDES — BATON OF LIFE

Petition

MS J. FARRER (Kimberley) [12.02 pm]: I have the following petition, which contains six signatures —

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled.

We, the members of the community of the Kimberley, undersigned say —

That Western Australian Aboriginal communities, have the highest suicide rates not only in the nation but in the world. Mowanjum and Derby have the highest Aboriginal youth suicide rates in Australia. The suicide epidemic has affected every single community and town in the Kimberley.

On 17th September a community event, the ‘March for Life’ was held by the Beagle Bay community to advocate for unity on proactive approaches to suicide prevention.

This special baton was carved from a special medicine tree by Walmajarri elder Dunba Nunju and presented to the Member for the Kimberley as ‘The Baton of Life’ during the community event.

The story of this baton originates from many years ago. Dunba reflects back to when he was a young boy.

“Dunba would always take notice of his uncle. His uncle would come from his walk about, walking from station to stations waterholes to waterholes. Along the way hunting and gathering. This old man he would always have his special baton with him. Everywhere this old man would go and every person he would meet; this special baton was always with him. This old man put Dunba through ceremony. This old man taught Dunba everything that he knows now. He never consumed alcohol and lived to a very old age. When he passed away they buried the baton with him” Mary Victor-O’Reeri.

Dunba said that this baton his uncle carried with him was a baton of survival, strength and shared the message of hope to all people from all areas.

The baton was symbolically handed to the Member for the Kimberley by members of nine Beagle Bay families who have lost numerous loved ones to suicide. Each family member poured their strength, hope, love, and a special blessing into the Baton of Life.

We now ask that the Western Australian Parliament and Members assembled take immediate and effective action to address this tragic loss of life in the Kimberley.

[See petition 60.]

The SPEAKER: I believe the member wants to table that and the baton.

Ms J. FARRER: Yes.

The SPEAKER: We will table the petition, which is non-conforming, and the baton, for the remainder of today’s sitting.

Ms J. FARRER: I would like to present this baton as a message stick from the community of Beagle Bay, representing the pain and loss these families experienced. As we can see, this baton has five lines at each end. They represent the families who have lost members of their family to suicide. Nine families are represented on this message stick; one line represents the whole of the Kimberley. This baton tells a very sad story but, hopefully, with the symbol of the sun, the giver of life, it will give hope to members of the family in understanding why they have lost loved ones.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, member.

[Applause.]

Point of Order

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Mr Speaker, I am wondering why you said the petition was non-conforming. I understand that it conforms.

The SPEAKER: It has not been put through the Clerk’s office, from what I understood from you yesterday, but we can check that. In any event, it is on the table.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I understand it has been.

The SPEAKER: We can check that later in the day, but the baton and the petition will be laid on the table.

[The material was tabled for the information of members.]