



Hon Simone McGurk MLA
Minister for Child Protection; Women's Interests;
Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence; Community Services

Our ref: 74-20274

The Hon Peter Foster MLC
Chair
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
4 Harvest Terrace
WEST PERTH WA 6005
env@parliament.wa.gov.au

Dear Chair

Thank you for your correspondence received 16 September 2021 seeking my comments to issues raised in the submission and petition No.024 – Murder of Stacey Robyn Thorne.

I note the complexity of matters raised in the submission and petition and have provided comment to each issue as set out below:

1. Release of the 2013 Corruption and Crime Commission Report into Ms Thorne's murder

These are matters for the Corruption and Crime Commission.

2. Inquiry into murdered and missing Indigenous women in Western Australia

Requesting an Inquiry of this nature is a matter for the Attorney General to consider.

3. Acknowledge violence against First Nations women

The McGowan Government acknowledges the disproportionate rates of violence and abuse experienced by Aboriginal women. This is simply unacceptable, and we are committed to addressing and preventing all forms of violence and abuse against women and their children. We know that three in five Aboriginal women have experienced violence. Aboriginal women are 32 more times likely than non-Aboriginal women to be hospitalised from family violence.¹

The safety of Aboriginal women is a key priority in the Department of Communities' (Communities) Path to Safety: Western Australia's strategy to reduce family and domestic violence 2020-2030.

¹ Department of Communities (WA) Path to Safety Western Australia's strategy to reduce family and domestic violence 2020-2030 (2020) 15.



Communities is leading the development of the Aboriginal Family Safety Strategy, which will provide an overarching framework to drive action across government and in the community towards improved safety for Aboriginal women and children.

The McGowan Government is also committed to working with the Commonwealth Government and across jurisdictions to inform the next National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children.

4. Investigate the media reporting of First Nations women's deaths

Inappropriate reporting of violence can perpetuate the normalisation of violence for particular social and cultural groups, which can result in the underreporting of violence against First Nations women.

Australia's leading organisation for the prevention of violence against women, Our Watch, has developed a resource aimed at tackling the prevalence of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Changing the picture contains a set of clear actions that are needed to address the many drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and is aimed at encouraging, guiding and supporting a national effort to prevent this violence. Our Watch has also developed National Guidelines for reporting violence against women, with specific guidance on reporting violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children.

Communities works with Our Watch to ensure that initiatives implemented in Western Australia are informed by these guidelines and evidence base.

One of the initiatives that will be launched during the 2021 16 Days in WA Campaign is a guide for media outlets to provide guidance on responsible reporting of violence against women.

5. Commit to addressing the structural and systemic discrimination that disadvantages and impedes First Nations women's access to legal services, victim supports and justice

The McGowan Government is committed to the new National Agreement on Closing the Gap. The State's 2021 Closing the Gap Jurisdictional Implementation Plan prioritises working in partnership with Aboriginal people to develop culturally appropriate responses/programs to reduce violence against Aboriginal women and children and to ensure Aboriginal women and children benefit from all support services that are available.

Examples under this plan, and other initiatives more broadly that demonstrate the Government's commitment to addressing these systemic issues include:

- Co-designing and implementing a dedicated Aboriginal Family Safety Strategy. - acknowledging the unique drivers of family violence for Aboriginal people and the importance of solutions being grounded in culture and led and owned by Aboriginal people;



- The development of a WA Department of Justice Aboriginal Family Safety Strategy in consultation with Aboriginal people and communities, to ensure justice system responses for Aboriginal victims and perpetrators of family violence are culturally appropriate;
- Establishing two Family and domestic violence one-stop hubs located in Kalgoorlie and Mirrabooka, that provide a culturally safe and trauma informed services and support for Aboriginal families;
- Establishing WA's first therapeutic refuge in Peel, 'Warlang Bidi', which means "healthy path" in Noongar language, reflecting the therapeutic goals of the refuge in supporting each individual's needs in a culturally safe way;
- \$2.6 million for the Kimberley Family Violence Grants Program, which will deliver place- based services with built in evidence-based interventions that are culturally responsive and designed by or in partnership with Aboriginal Controlled Community Organisations;
- A \$10.3 million investment for a two-year expansion of the Aboriginal In-Home Support Service providing intensive in-home practical support to Aboriginal families to address safety issues. keep children safely at home and reunify children where possible; and
- Trailing Aboriginal Family Led Decision Making, a model that provides a culturally safe space for family and extended family to have input into decisions regarding their children, supporting improved collaboration with families to help keep their children safe and connected to their community.

The McGowan Government's Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy 2021-2029 underpins its approach to meeting commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. This Strategy is a framework to reforms required to ensure Government policies, plans, initiatives and programs are effective in meeting the needs of Aboriginal people across a range of different circumstances.

The McGowan Government has undertaken significant reforms to address some of the barriers that impede Aboriginal women's culturally safe access to legal and justice services and supports.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on this petition.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simone McGurk'.

HON SIMONE MCGURK MLA
**MINISTER FOR CHILD PROTECTION; WOMEN'S INTERESTS;
PREVENTION OF FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE; COMMUNITY SERVICES**

7 October 2021