



Hon M.F. (Matt) Benson JP MLC

Member for Agricultural Region

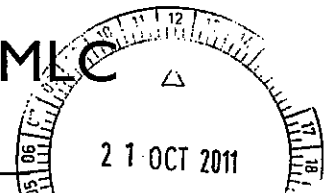
Deputy President and Chairman of Committees (Legislative Council)

1139 Hay St West Perth WA 6005

Tel: 94816070 Fax: 94816071

PO Box 295 West Perth WA 6872

Email: matt.benson@mp.wa.gov.au



Hon Brian Ellis MLC
Chair
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
Harvest Terrace
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Chair

Petition 134 – Violence in the Community of Geraldton and the Midwest Region

The above petition presented on 22nd September is a prescient wake up call to the issues that have plagued Aboriginal communities not only in Geraldton and the Midwest but the rest of Western Australia for a considerable amount of time.

Matters of violence within Aboriginal communities have received significant attention in the media, particularly since the recent publication of an article by Police Commissioner O'Callahan on Aboriginal juvenile offending. It is apparent that the fundamental issues of domestic violence and sexual assault within various communities are not being addressed in an holistic policy environment.

Statistics quoted show that in this year alone 46% of those charged in Western Australia with domestic violence and sexual assault were Aboriginal. This is a concerning statistic considering that only 3% of the population is Aboriginal. Especially troubling is the fact that young Aboriginal offenders are over-represented, with Aboriginal children and youths aged 10-17 making up more than 34% of offenders charged with sexual assault this year.

Hannah McGlade, CEO of Aboriginal Family Law Services has indicated that Aboriginal violence and victimisation has often been neglected by agencies typically focused on criminal offending. Notwithstanding that there have been previous inquiries that have recommended an holistic approach, these recommendations have not been adopted by either State or Federal Governments.

It is clear from the principal petitioner that the issues of violence in the Geraldton and Mid-West communities are not being resolved. Meaningful and proactive measures need to be undertaken to address the dysfunctionality which is destroying these local communities.

Investigation of violence in Geraldton and Mid-West communities, together with associated issues, would appear to be a significant regional priority.

Yours sincerely

Hon Matt Benson MLC
Member for the Agricultural Region
20th October 2011

PUBLIC