



YOUTH ISSUE – BRIEFING

TO: CHIEF MINISTER

DATE:

FROM: JERMAINE CAMPBELL

TOPIC: SAFE HOUSE IN GALIWIN'KU

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Northern Territory Government:

1. establish a Safe House in Galiwin'ku for young people aged 12 – 25 years;
2. encourage service providers to provide access to and information on mental health, safety and counselling services at the Safe House;
3. pilot the Safe House and programs in Galiwin'ku to be rolled out in other remote communities; and
4. fund headspace and other youth service providers to spend more time in remote communities and provide services to the Safe House,

BACKGROUND

There are many ways that young people can access information on mental health. They can seek it out on the internet, they can talk to their friends and family or speak to health workers. There are many different ways that this issue affects people and there are many different ways they can approach seeking help.

However, in regional and remote areas young people may not have as many options or resources. For example, on Galiwin'ku I would like to see a Safe House up and running. A Safe House is a place like a 'home environment' that members of the community can access. I would like to see a variety of services such as counselling, social workers and education programs made available. Most importantly it needs to be a safe place where young people can feel a sense of belonging.

It is with this in mind that I put forward that remote communities should have access to a Safe House to offer support to the community when they need a place to seek help and recover. If this concept was adopted as an early intervention program it may prevent young people needing further medical attention in Darwin if they access help early and ultimately reduce the overall cost to the health system.



DISCUSSION

This briefing recommends that a safe house be established in Galiwin'ku (this can be by using existing infrastructure).

Through my own experiences I have participated in and witnessed events that may not have occurred if there was a place for young people to go to such as a safe house in Galiwin'ku.

One personal story as an example

One personal example of where a safe house would have helped a relative of mine who was suicidal and depressed and had nowhere to go happened on a Dharratharra (or cold July) night. First we were happy and told each other a lot of stories on the oval grandstands.

It then went quiet and I started telling my friend my experiences about being teased at school, being called a poofa and how difficult it was that I had to live my life without help and to get through these bad times I would teach myself to be strong. My friend started crying, I thought he was crying for me and my story, but eventually he told me he was crying for himself as he was going through the same situation as I was and his parents didn't want to have anything to do with him. His parents would bully him and although he wanted to live with his parents he had to find other places to sleep. Sometimes when we had nowhere to sleep we would walk the streets until day break.

One afternoon I went looking for my friend, I went to his house and found out he had been in a fight with his mother because he wanted \$10 from her to buy food, his mother is a heavy gambler and didn't want to give him money. Feeling hopeless he then a few minutes later had drank half a bottle of bleach and was flown out to Darwin.

When he came back to Galiwin'ku he was on medication, saw counsellors and the Police got involved, but this was all after the damage was done. I knew that because he had done this self-harm as he felt that he didn't belong to his mother and in the Yolngu culture your mother is important through your childhood because your mother's language and kinship to other clan groups is the first thing a child knows before he understands his father's language and kinship, this he/she then inherits. I believe that a safe house in Galiwin'ku would employ older people that have been through these experiences and have the words and the heart and soul to prevent such issues from occurring.



Benefits of a Safe House in Galiwin'ku

In Galiwin'ku a safe house could also prevent other issues such as:

community break-ins to the local store (sometimes this is from things such as gambling, illegal drugs to make money or to get food when hungry);

- young people becoming suicidal;
- young people feeling like they don't belong; and
- boredom amongst young people (I have observed this leading to things that are harmful such as petrol sniffing and inhaling things that are harmful).

Northern Territory reports and statistics about mental health and suicide

The Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, Select Committee on Youth Suicides in the NT produced 'Gone Too Soon – A Report into Youth Suicide in the NT' March 2012.

Below are some of their findings of importance to my report.

Youth suicide is most acute in the indigenous population in the Northern Territory. For Northern Territory Indigenous children under 15 years of age between 2001 and 2006, the suicide rate was five times the Australian rate¹.

Suicide rates for young people aged 15-24 years increases with remoteness. For 2003-05, the age-standardised suicide rate in remote and very remote areas was three times higher than in major cities (31 per 100,000 compared to 9 per 100,000 young people)². Rates for young males in rural and remote Australia are almost twice the rate of young males living in capital cities³.

Northern Territory Police told the Select Committee on Youth Suicides in the NT that in the period July 2006 to June 2011, police officers responded to 419 attempted suicides of which 196 were young men aged 18 to 25; 153 were young women in the same age bracket and 189 were Aboriginal youth⁴. Data from Northern Territory Police also indicates a higher rate

¹ Pridmore, S. and Fujiyama, H., 2009 'Suicide in the Northern Territory, 2001-2006', cited in Submission No. 12, Menzies School of Health Research, Centre for Child Development and Education, 30 September 2011, p4

² National Suicide Prevention Strategy, Living is for Everyone, 'Youth: Statistics and Trends', <http://www.livingisforeveryone.com.au/Youth.html>, at 9 March 2012

³ Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne, 'Youth Suicide in Australia', http://www.rch.org.au/cah/research.cfm?doc_id=11036, at 9 March 2012

⁴ Committee Hansard, Darwin Public Hearing, 4 November 2011, Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services, 4 November 2011



of suicide attempts in regional, rural, and remote areas. Police recorded 239 suicide attempts made by young people aged between 15 and 25 years in rural, regional and remote areas in the period between July 2006 and June 2011. This accounts for over 57% of the number of suicide attempts attended by Police in that period⁵.

The Review of the Northern Territory Youth Justice System Report from September 2011 highlights the issues and crime statistics affecting young Indigenous Territorians.

The Report found that young people involved in the youth justice system are mostly male and Indigenous (76%)⁶. Property offences such as theft and unlawful entry with intent are the most common type of crimes committed by young offenders. Traffic and motor vehicle offences represent the second biggest category of youth crime⁷. Indigenous offenders are more likely to commit their first offence at a younger age than non-Indigenous offenders, and are more likely to have been charged multiple times⁸.

Another issue discussed in my report is that LGBTI Indigenous Australians living in remote areas face a lack of visibility and inclusive services to access support in terms of their sexuality. NTAHC, Northern Territory Aids & Hepatitis Council supports a program 'Sistergirls and Brotherboys' to promote freedom from harm and myths surrounding sexual orientation and gender identity issues⁹. This program could be run from within the Safe House and information and support services for LGBTI people in Galiwin'ku could be provided here.

About the Safe House

The target age range for a safe house in Galiwin'ku would be 12-25 years old. It is envisioned that the safe house be like a drop in centre/home for someone who has a problem, and can go at any time to talk about their problem to access a worker who can initially help with counselling and link the young person up to services needed to reengage with their community and families. This would also keep young people off the street and harming themselves or committing crimes when they are at their time of need.

What services are needed at a safe house

- Sport and recreation/youth services (connections and engagement)

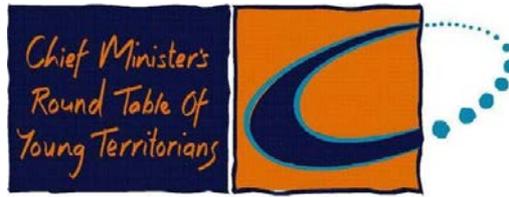
⁵ Submission No. 34, 'Northern Territory Police, 18 October 2011, Attachment 1, 'Attempted Suicides from 1 July 2006'

⁶ Review of the Northern Territory Youth Justice System: Report September 2011, p11.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Review of the Northern Territory Youth Justice System: Report September 2011, p11.

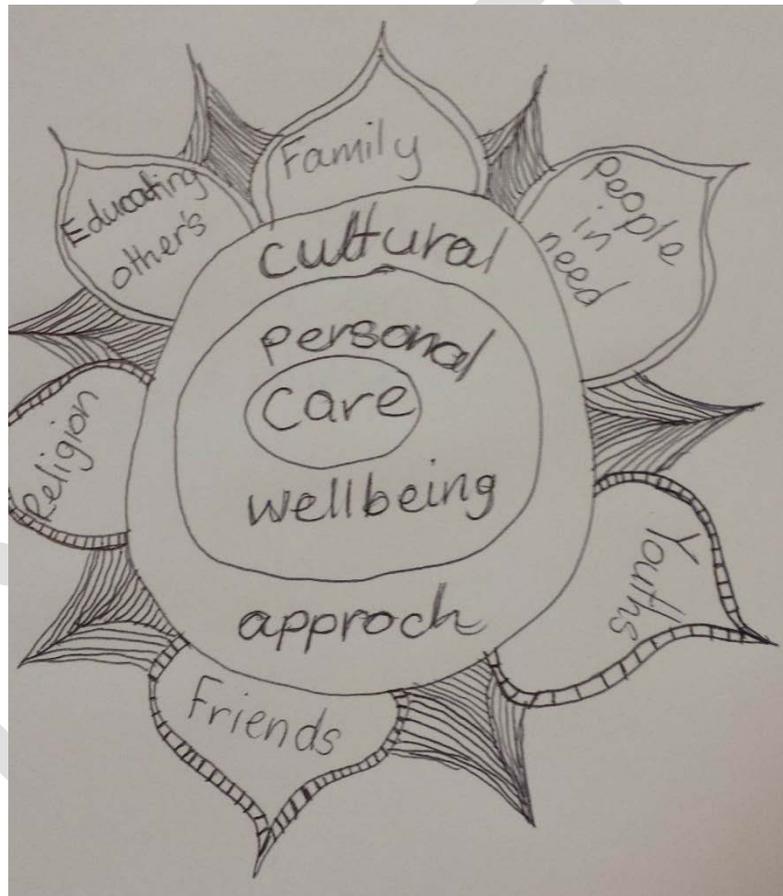
⁹ Northern Territory Aids & Hepatitis Council, <http://www.ntahc.org.au/programs/aboriginal-a-torres-strait-islanders>



- Police – visits (for people to feel safe)
- Health centre
- Visiting headspace/beyond blue and other mental/sexual health services
- Marthakal Employment Services
- Shepherdson College (connections and engagement)

The safe house would have a strong connection to Elders who have been through the same experiences and can provide hope to the young people that there is a way out of their situation culturally. There are people in the community who specialise in different areas from their experiences (such as petrol sniffing, break-ins and mental health).

Below is a diagram of the concepts behind a Safe House for Galiwin'ku by Jermaine Campbell:



FRAMING THE FUTURE

State what section(s) of Framing the Future your project links in with.

- Confident Culture
- Strong Society



CONCLUSION/SUMMARY

It is my view that if a Safe House would be established in Galiwin'ku it could support young people who have mental health issues, are committing crimes, have been excluded from the community because of their sexuality or just need support and guidance. This Safe House for young people could be a pilot for others to be implemented across remote aboriginal communities in the future.

As a result of my story and findings from this report, it is recommended that the Northern Territory Government:

1. establish a Safe House in Galiwin'ku for young people aged 12 – 25 years;
2. encourage service providers to provide access to and information on mental health, safety and counselling services at the Safe House;
3. pilot the Safe House and programs in Galiwin'ku to be rolled out in other remote communities; and
4. fund headspace and other youth service providers to spend more time in remote communities and provide services to the Safe House,

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