

INVESTMENTS FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

WACOSS is pleased to see that the Government has quarantined investments specifically for Aboriginal people, families and communities, and that these have been organised around place and building longer-term opportunities. Examples include:

COMMUNITY

- Aboriginal Community Patrols to be re-launched as Aboriginal Community Connectors in 14 communities across WA, and includes an additional \$6.5M in 2019-20
- \$1.3M to support the West Kimberley Youth and Resilience Hub Project and \$3M for Carnarvon and Kununurra PCYCs
- \$900K to develop a Kimberley Juvenile Justice Strategy in collaboration with Aboriginal people over three years
- \$4.8M for the Enhanced Driver Training and Education Program for regional and remote communities over four years

HEALTH

- Culturally appropriate accommodation for Aboriginal patients and carers, \$400K for services, and \$1.2M for capital costs
- Aboriginal Family Wellbeing Pilot Project delivering training to Aboriginal workers and community members across Western Australia, including the Central Desert, Goldfields, Kimberley and Kununurra
- \$8.1M for the continuation of Aboriginal Family Wellbeing program for a further 18 months prior to the release of the new strategy to address Indigenous suicide

LAND, HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT

- \$2.8M for establishment of Noongar Boodja Trust to progress Native Title Settlement
- \$2.8M for new land use development programs in the Kimberley, including a new Fitzroy River National Park which will be created and managed jointly by the Department and Traditional Owners
- \$388K for Traditional Owner land management activities for the Gibson Desert Nature Reserve
- A minor increase of \$3.6M to support Aboriginal tourism or \$900K per annum
- \$11.6 M for solar farms and energy storage in six remote Aboriginal communities to 2021-22
- Establishment of the North West Aboriginal Housing Fund, in partnership with Aboriginal groups, to build 50 homes in Kununurra, Halls Creek and Wyndham and refurbishment of a further 40 existing transitional houses in South Hedland for Aboriginal families

With a broader focus, some of these initiatives contribute to re-balancing the inadequate target of 'reducing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in custody' that is presently the sole key performance *Aboriginal Wellbeing* indicator in the [Our Priorities](#) whole-of-government strategy 'to deliver better outcomes for all Western Australians'.

Announcements were also positive in the sense that they have recommended measures relating to some of the critical issues.

However, there seems no major shift in policy directions and the funding commitments were very modest amounts against the Government's banked savings of \$89M from underspend in Royalties for Regions. We also believe that there are essential details missing in some of these announcements. This includes specific budget allocations, reference to other reforms, and how the impact of the investments will be measured.

WACOSS is especially disappointed that there was nothing new included to redress the shockingly unacceptable rates of Aboriginal children entering the out-of-home-care system, which shows no signs of changing. As the sector is aware, WACOSS has been advocating with others about the urgent need for reform in this sector. Something clearly needs to be done differently, as more of the same is not working. In addition to the missed opportunity to demonstrate commitment in this issue, connections and integrations with the Department of Communities policies, such as the [Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations Strategy to 2022](#), were also omitted.

The narrative regarding funding for remote Aboriginal housing makes no reference to an ongoing commitment for State Government investment beyond the Commonwealth's final instalment of \$121M in the National Partnership Agreement. While Federal Labor have pledged they will maintain the agreement and contribute \$125M to Western Australia if elected, there has been no such commitment from the Coalition. The State Government's financial commitment to remote Indigenous housing will therefore remain undetermined until after the Federal election.

Although it was referenced, there was also no funding assigned to the recommendations in the Sustainable Health Review relating to Aboriginal people and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services. The pathway to achieving targets and measuring impact will be fundamentally flawed without resourcing allocated to this.

We urge the Government to be steadfast to a community development approach, to ensure that the delivery of these programs, services and other enterprises is undertaken in genuine partnership with Aboriginal people, families and communities, and that there is coordination across these to optimise impact.