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## Minister for Mental Health; Disability Services; Child Protection

Our ref: 43-14528

Dameyon Bonson  
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Indigenist Consultancy  
Email: dameyon@indigenist.com.au

Dear Mr Bonson

### ONE LIFE SUICIDE PREVENTION SMALL GRANTS

Thank you for your letter dated 5 November 2014 regarding the One Life Suicide Prevention small grants and their expansion to Aboriginal-controlled health organisations, as well as the copy of your article you provided.

Like you, I am very concerned about suicide and mental health issues affecting individuals and families in all areas of Western Australia. In your letter, you raise particular concerns about the suicide rates of Indigenous Australians and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) community. Both of these groups face higher suicide rates than the Western Australian average, and are priority groups for the suicide prevention work of the State Government.

I am pleased to hear of your goal to establish a national foundation to support Indigenous LGBTI people's mental health in the coming year. The work of the Mental Health Commission (MHC) recognises the specific challenges faced by LGBTI people and Aboriginal communities. The 10-year Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015-2025 (the Plan) will provide a blueprint for the optimal mix of programs and services needed to provide a better, more responsive and more equitable mental health system in Western Australia. The Plan will give consideration to the specific needs of LGBTI and Aboriginal Western Australians.

I continue to meet with a range of Aboriginal stakeholders to see how we can improve mental health outcomes. For example, during my visit to Kununurra for Regional Cabinet in October, I met with Aboriginal controlled health organisations to discuss issues and needs surrounding Aboriginal people and communities in the region. I met with the Kununurra Waringarri Aboriginal Corporation responsible for implementing the Kununurra Community Action Plan (CAP) in 2013-14. The Kununurra CAP involved the delivery of Youth Aboriginal Mental Health First Aid Training, as well as Back to Country Camps, and aimed to improve the mental health and wellbeing of Aboriginal youth in Kununurra. I also met with Ngnowar Aerwah Aboriginal Corporation (NAAC) to discuss Men's Shed Wyndham, which provides men with specific health and education programs and ensures men have their own place within the community. NAAC also provides a range of culturally appropriate alcohol and other drug treatment and rehabilitation services for Aboriginal people in the Wyndham region. These Aboriginal controlled health organisations can now apply for the \$600,000 in suicide prevention small grants.

Since 2011 the MHC has provided \$185,000 to Living Proud to deliver 'Opening Closets' training to frontline mental health workers in government and community managed organisations such as Lifeline. Opening Closets training aims to raise awareness of the needs of LGBTI people and increase accessibility to mental health services. As part of the One Life Suicide Prevention Strategy 2009-2013, the MHC provided Living Proud with funding to implement community capacity building initiatives within the LGBTI community. These initiatives aimed to increase awareness of LGBTI suicide and encouraging help-seeking behaviours of individuals at risk.

In 2013-14 to 2014-15 the MHC provided over \$400,000 to Freedom Centre (FC), a mental health service for LGBTI youth. FC is run by young people for young people under 26 years of age using a peer-support model. Run by the WA Aids Council, FC offers a safe drop-in space for like-minded LGBTI youth to seek support from one another, and also offers training courses, retreats, support groups and events. For more information, visit the FC website at [www.freedom.org.au](http://www.freedom.org.au).

On Thursday, 20 November 2014, I co-hosted the event 'Celebrating Pride at Parliament' alongside Hon Stephen Dawson MLC and Hon Lynn MacLaren MLC. The event occurs during Pride Month, a celebration of LGBTI people. This event provides up to 50 LGBTI stakeholders and community members campaigning for equality the chance to strengthen their networks, celebrate milestones of achievement, as well as look forward to what can be achieved in the future. The event demonstrates cross-party support and co-operation towards improving the wellbeing of LGBTI people in Western Australia. I shall make sure you are on the mailing list for any follow up events.

For further information on suicide prevention initiatives in Western Australia, please visit the One Life WA website regularly at [www.onelifewa.com.au](http://www.onelifewa.com.au). The website is intended to serve as an online resource hub for communities and health professionals, featuring information on how to get help, information on small grants and training, news and events, and resources. The website also features a comprehensive directory of suicide prevention education and training programs.

Again, thank you for your letter and for your commitment to the mental health and suicide prevention for LGBTI people and Aboriginal communities.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Helen Morton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Helen Morton MLC  
**MINISTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH**

13 JAN 2015