



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

Our ref: 74-22057

Ms Sarah Linton
Deputy State Coroner

Dear Ms Linton

Thank you for your correspondence to the State Solicitor's Office received 15 December 2021, regarding your findings following the inquest into the death of Child J. I have been provided a copy of that correspondence and the findings (pending publication on the Coroner's Court website) from the Department of Communities (Communities), the agency responsible for assisting me with the administration of the *Children and Community Services Act 2004*.

The findings attend to the tragic circumstances of Child J's death and highlight the ongoing importance of addressing and facilitating treatment of the long-term neurodevelopmental, emotional and behavioural impacts of trauma, and the importance of familial and cultural connections for children in out-of-home care.

Addressing these issues, and the disproportionate rate of Aboriginal youth suicide in the Kimberley, remains a priority for the Western Australian Government as stated in the 'Commitment to Aboriginal Youth Wellbeing - Progress Report: A response to the State Coroner's Inquest into the deaths of 13 children and young persons in the Kimberley', and 'Learnings from the Message Stick: the Report of the Inquiry Into Aboriginal Youth Suicide in Remote Areas' (the Commitment), September 2021. I acknowledge and support your comments regarding the Commitment and the importance of the timely implementation of this work to create meaningful change for vulnerable Aboriginal children and young people.

Please be assured that Communities is committed to protecting children and young people from harm and to improving their outcomes to ensure our most vulnerable community members are supported to live in a safe and secure environment. Communities will continue this work and work with other agencies on progressing the Commitment. This work will also be complemented by implementation of legislative amendments, via the *Children and*



Community Services Amendment Act 2021 (Amendment Act). These changes are intended to build stronger connections to family, culture and Country for Aboriginal children in out-of-home care through working more closely with Aboriginal families and communities, including Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

As the Minister for Child Protection, I am acutely aware and deeply saddened by the circumstances of Child J's death and will ensure the focus of government efforts remains on implementation of important changes required to prevent such tragedies in the future.

For any further information on the progress of these initiatives, please contact Kelly Van Maanen, Director Central Review Team, by telephone on _____ or by email at coronials@communities.wa.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

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

11 February 2022