

Inquiry into Response by Government Agencies to Complaints of Family Violence and Child Abuse in Aboriginal Communities, Western Australia

28 November 2001 – 31 July 2002

Other Names: • Gordon Inquiry

Details

[From the Australian Indigenous Law Reporter]

On the 28 November 2001, the Premier of Western Australia, the Honourable Dr Geoff Gallop, announced that the State Government planned to hold a Special Inquiry into the Response by Government Agencies to Complaints of Family Violence and Child Abuse in Aboriginal Communities.

This was prompted by the coronial inquest into the death of 15-year-old Susan Ann Taylor at the Swan Valley Nyoongar Community (SVNC) in Lockridge in 1999. The Coroner's report included allegations of physical and sexual abuse at the community, and raised questions, such as the mandatory reporting by health officials of sexually transmitted diseases and the practices of various government departments and other agencies.

The Inquiry commenced its preliminary work and planning on 14 January 2002.

The terms of reference for the inquiry were to:

- Examine the issues raised by the Coroner's inquiry into the death of Susan Taylor in relation to the way that Government agencies dealt with the issues of violence and sexual abuse at the Swan Valley Nyoongar community.
- Examine how State Government agencies respond to evidence of family violence and child sexual abuse that may be occurring in Aboriginal communities generally.
- Report with recommendations on practical solutions for addressing incidents of sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities, including any necessary legislative and administrative measures.
- Examine the activities of State Government agencies in addressing complaints and the reporting of sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities.
- Identify the barriers and capacity of Government agencies to address the issue of family violence and in particular child sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities.
- Comment and make recommendations on the mandatory reporting of sexually transmitted diseases occurring among children and juveniles.
- Comment on any limitations of DNA testing in the Aboriginal community.
- Propose support measures for children reporting abuse.

The inquiry was also to 'consult widely' with Aboriginal community representatives, young people, health services and 'related organisations'.

Magistrate Sue Gordon was appointed as Chairperson with the Hon Kay Hallahan (a former Minister for Community Services) and Mr Darrel Henry as Inquiry Members and Mr Richard Hooker as Counsel Assisting the Inquiry. The final report, 'Putting the Picture Together' was published on 31 July 2002.

The Inquiry made 200 recommendations and proposed a framework for an holistic approach to 'raising awareness about Aboriginal family violence and child abuse and neglect' with a 'comprehensive integrated response' from agencies and communities. These responses needed to take account of and address 'underlying factors and current social problems'.

More info

Related Entries

Related Organisations

- [Department for Community Development, State of Western Australia \(1 July 2001 - 30 June 2007\)](#)

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