

Dear Premier,

The Australian Health Promotion Association (WA Branch) urges you to reconsider your Government's response to the forced closure of between 100 and 150 of the 274 remote communities in Western Australia. We are calling for greater transparency about the proposed process and urging consultation with communities to be undertaken prior to any action.

We appreciate that the Federal Government has vacated this territory and created a difficult space to identify any solutions. However the potential short and longer term poor health outcomes from such a forced move are inevitable.

The undersigned 100 health promotion practitioners do not agree that forcing Aboriginal people from their land would be in the best interests of Aboriginal people and suggest that dispossessing them of their land, culture and all of their belongings will only bring future suffering to health and wellbeing.

Given the focus on closing the gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples during the past decade, this decision to now forcibly remove Aboriginal people from their land will have devastating consequences and will in fact, increase the life expectancy gap.

The need for consultation with Aboriginal people about any forced closures is imperative. Consultation must be at the centre of the process, particularly given the incredibly poor history of consultation in the past, where Aboriginal people have been treated as second-class citizens and given little control over their own lives, or those of their children. The Aboriginal people affected need to be respectfully consulted and it is imperative that they are able to provide input into any decisions about their own or their children's lives.

We recognise that your government has contributed funds to assist remote Aboriginal communities in the past and that you feel this decision has been forced by the Federal Government. However, we are urging you to reconsider the process of any forced closures of WA communities and urge you to provide specific details on which communities are earmarked to close, the proposed timeframe for such closures and the level of consultation that will be undertaken to ensure any changes to communities will be done in partnership with local people and organisations.

Thank you for considering our request.

Health Promotion Professionals

100 signatures