



Media Release

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White Australia reborn and WA takes the lead.

The Ethnic Communities Council of Western Australia has condemned the State government's decision to close the Kimberly Interpreting Services (KIS) and the changes it has made to language services provision at the Fiona Stanley Hospital (FSH).

Council President, Dr, Zarrin Siddiqui said "these changes make a mockery of the Government's commitment to bridge the gap between indigenous Western Australians and the rest of the community and the commitment to ensure that Western Australians especially those who are unable to communicate in English are treated fairly."

"It's Multiculturalism Charter, its Language Services policy and its Substantive Equality policy have all effectively been trashed by this short sighted attempt to save monies and the State government has effectively resurrected the White Australia policy perspective of assimilation in its pretence that all Western Australians are able to communicate in English to navigate the health, welfare, housing, justice and other systems" she added.

"Indigenous and ethnic minority Western Australians who are not proficient in English are direct and indirect taxpayers are entitled to receive state government services in a language that they understand' just like other Western Australian's." "Indigenous Western Australians are already very disproportionately represented in our criminal justice system and the closure of the Kimberly Interpreting Service will worsen this situation further," emphasised Dr. Siddiqui.

"The State government is oblivious to the grave consequences to patients and carers who are unable to communicate in English at the Fiona Stanley."

"It is our understanding that an agency has been contracted by the State government to provide the language services at FSH and this has been done without the tender process being followed. The said agency has no experience in the provision of such services and have in turn subcontracted the work to a Melbourne based entity without local WA language services providers (including one that received an Award by the Minister for Multicultural Interests, the Hon. Dr. Mike Nahan in 2013) being given the opportunity to tender for this service."

"Patients who had access to professional interpreters at Royal Perth Hospital are no longer guaranteed such services when they attend FSH. The non-use of professional accredited interpreters will place medical and other allied health professionals in a precarious situation as they can no longer ensure that an informed consent is in place before undertaking treatment, and the diagnosis that they make and they treatment that they prescribe are also being placed at risk by the use of unaccredited interpreters."

"The Premier should move to restore KIS immediately and call an open tender for the provision of

language services at FSH and place strict conditions on bidders having to employ professional accredited interpreters in providing the required services and to ensure that they employ such people locally other than in urgent exceptional circumstances. They also should be required to comply with conventional industrial relations policies and practices at all times and not engage in practices such as fining interpreters \$800 for being late.”

Zarrin S Siddiqui

President

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