

# Use mining royalties to help Aboriginals: Wyatt

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Pressure is mounting on the State Government to establish a new form of regional government to overcome Third World living conditions in remote Aboriginal communities, with a research paper by outspoken Labor MP Ben Wyatt revealing he backs the controversial idea.

Alan Carpenter has ruled out the proposal on the basis it would create more bureaucracy but Mr Wyatt argues it could be achieved by restructuring local governments into bigger, better-resourced regional bodies.

Mr Wyatt argued that a percentage of WA's mining royalty stream should be used to fund the new governance structure in the disadvantaged regions, including the Kimberley.

Former governor Lt-Gen. John Sanderson, the State Government's special adviser on indigenous affairs, recommended a new form of regional government, starting in the Kimberley and Pilbara, in one of his reports to the Premier.

A parliamentary committee headed by Labor MP Tom Stephens backed Lt-Gen. Sanderson's push in a report tabled in Parliament last month, saying the idea had significant support

among Aboriginal people.

A group of prominent Kimberley Aboriginal leaders this week called for a single regional government to be accountable for services to Aboriginal communities after a damning report from State Coroner Alastair Hope on 22 drug and alcohol-related indigenous deaths, mainly suicides, in the Kimberley.

The group, which includes Peter Yu, Joe Ross, Doreen Green and Judy Butters, estimates that up to 14 young indigenous people have committed suicide in communities across the region in the past 12 months.

Though no official figures on the number of suicides in the Kimberley in 2007 are yet available, of 24 suicides in the region in 2006, 21 were Aboriginals.

In his paper, titled *Regional Development — A Tale of Two Economies*, Mr Wyatt refers to a speech by Lt-Gen. Sanderson in which he spoke about the problems associated with a lack of governance in WA's regions.

Mr Wyatt said the lack of governance created instability, an enormous sense of hopelessness and big areas of social disadvantage.

He argues the new regional government would need a committed, reliable and ongoing funding stream.

"I would anticipate that the problems I have outlined in this paper would require an overall restructure of local government into larger, better resourced parishes of regional government," Mr Wyatt's paper states.

"Our State is very well defined by our regions, whether it be the Kimberley, Goldfields, Murchison, Gascoyne, Pilbara or the Great Southern. It is at this level that we need to consider an appropriate governance structure.

"It is unacceptable that regional WA has such a small return on its contribution to the national wealth, and a certain percentage of the royalty stream should go directly into funding this new governance structure.

"The idea of regional governance structures is not new, but never before have we reached a point at which the delivery of public policy has become so impossible and, accordingly, the ad hoc, palliative approach has become the norm."



Solutions sought: A regional government has been suggested as a way to help WA's remote Aboriginal communities