

MEDIA RELEASE

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NT Child Deaths Review and Prevention Committee Annual Report 2012-2013

The Northern Territory *Child Deaths Review and Prevention Committee* has released its Annual Report for 2012-13 to be tabled in the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly by the Minister for Children and Families, the Hon John Elferink MLA. The report reviewed the deaths of 42 NT children in 2012 as well as 241 deaths that occurred between 2008 and 2012.

Infants generally make up a large proportion of all child deaths; in the NT half of all child deaths were of infants under 12 months of age. For the 5-year period looked at, the child death rate was 76 per 100,000 children, mainly due to the high infant death rate (656 per 100,000), followed by the rate among children aged 15 to 17 years old (71 per 100,000). Whilst many infant deaths are from maternal conditions or those arising from the perinatal period, nearly a quarter of infant deaths were from causes as yet unknown such as 'Sudden and Unexpected Death in Infancy' (SUDI), including Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

The Committee is currently conducting further research in this area looking at 38 'sleep-related infant deaths' that occurred over the past 6 years (2006-2011) - and is developing recommendations to target the risk factors associated with these deaths.

Other key findings in the Annual Report include:

- A disproportionate number of child deaths are of Aboriginal children. Although they make up less than half (42%) of the child population, over 70% of child deaths are of Aboriginal children. The Aboriginal child death rate (127 deaths per 100,000 children) is over three times that of non-Aboriginal children.
- A disproportionate number of child deaths (72%) are from outside the Greater Darwin area despite the child population being equally divided between Darwin and the rest of the NT.
- A large number of child deaths are from potentially preventable 'External causes' (including injuries and accidents). These include 60 per cent of 1-4 year-old child deaths and over 70 percent of 10-17 year-old deaths.
- Suicide and other intentional deaths from self-inflicted injury continue to be of major concern in the NT as they account for more than a quarter of deaths among 10 to 17 year olds.

The Convenor, Dr Howard Bath observed that while the Committee has been guided by the *NT Care and Protection of Children Act 2007* in maintaining and reporting from the Child Deaths Register, it is extremely mindful of the human tragedy involved in each of the deaths that would have deeply affected parents, extended families, friends and communities. "A primary objective of the Committee is to understand the underlying causes of each death in order to learn lessons and thus prevent other children dying in similar circumstances.", he said.

**For more details, contact Mr G Chandran of the CDRPC Secretariat on 89996047
The Annual Report is located at:**

<http://www.childrenscommissioner.nt.gov.au/publications.html> - The research report into sleep-related infant deaths in the NT, once published, will also be available here.