POSITION STATEMENT COVID-19 21 March 2020

CONTEXT

1. COVID-19 has been declared a global pandemic and a State of Emergency was declared in Western Australia on Sunday 15 March.

2. In response, the State Government has effectively closed Aboriginal communities due to the extremely high vulnerability of that cohort.

3. As of today, the Kimberley region is COVID-19 free, even though the incubation period for the disease and the lack of testing means we might have to assume that there could be some asymptomatic people here already, however if we could keep cases to a minimum it could mean that the medical system is able to manage the many health issues endemic in the region with a minor caseload increase for CV19. This will not be the case if the community spread that is now starting to occur in the cities.

4. The Kimberley receives around half a million visitors each year – however the tourism season has not yet commenced and predictions are that it is unlikely to occur this year. The Kimberley pastoral sector has not yet started mustering or undertaking other high intensity activities. This means that action over the balance of March/April will not have as much impact as later in the season and may allow for systems, exemptions and other arrangements to be put into place. It is noted that if the pandemic spreads this may be unlikely.

5. The Kimberley is not self-reliant for goods and will continue to require supplies including food, construction materials, equipment for the pastoral and mining sector amongst other materials. These can be distributed under emergency arrangements that from time-to-time are rolled out in the region at times of isolation and natural disaster.

At their extraordinary meeting held on the 20 March 2020 a Joint meeting of the Kimberley Zone and Kimberley Regional Group considered the merits and risks associated with reducing the movement of people into the Kimberley and determined the following position. It was agreed that:

1. Consideration should be given to the introduction of the maximum level of travel restrictions across and around the region that is consistent with some level of function in our communities. Obviously those exemptions and other exemptions would be determined on public health grounds and a case by case basis

This is taken to mean:

- Movement associated with the function of our communities including the delivery of goods and services that would normally be available including for commercial activities and, where this may be possible in the coming weeks and months, industrial purposes.
- The movement of staff in and out of the Kimberley where protocols have been put in place to ensure safe practices are enforced and contact trails can be maintained in the case of a confirmed case of COVID-19.

The movement of tourists should be highly restricted. Self-drive holidays where contact trails cannot be maintained are not supported.

2. Regional decision making should be included in the process to enable swift and relevant decisions to be made.