



MEDIA RELEASE

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MORNINGTON ISLAND IN STATE OF CRISIS

The Mayor of Mornington Shire Council is calling for an independent audit of health and welfare services delivered to Mornington Island as he seeks urgent help to address a health and social welfare crisis affecting his community.

Mayor Kyle Yanner met with Minister Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships Craig Crawford to ask for help to address high rates of chronic disease, death, poverty and crime being experienced by his community.

He said the State Government was taking his calls for an independent audit seriously with Minister Crawford agreeing to strongly advocate on council's behalf.

Current data for the Shire shows that 40 per cent of the current 634 First Nation patients of the island's major health provider Gidgee Health are suffering from chronic disease, with many suffering from two or more serious health issues including diabetes, heart disease, mental health and renal impairment.

The death rate for Mornington Shire was some 40 per cent higher than the average for Queensland in 2019, with residents dying younger than non-indigenous Queenslanders.

"It is my responsibility to ensure that health and welfare services delivered to my community on Mornington Island are working successfully. When they are not, things must change," Mayor Yanner said.

"It is only through an independent audit by people who are passionate to discover new ways to address the Shire's 'third world' living conditions, will we find a solution to my Community's living conditions and health outcomes.

"For too long we have been accepting 'white mans' ways to address these problems.

"I want this audit to be the start of a revolution in health and welfare delivery, by listening to my people and understanding the cultural differences and how to incorporate those differences into service delivery.

"You have only got to look at the Chief Health Officer, Dr Jannette Young PSM, Health Reports to know that Indigenous health is at a crisis point.

"Myself personally I lost three brothers in one year, two being in their thirties and one in his Forties. This is a sure sign that the health services being delivered are failing, and this is having a devastating impact on my Community," said Mayor Yanner.

Mayor Yanner called for more accountability across all levels of Government, service providers and the community if things were going to improve.

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The current situation on Morningson Island is:

- Morningson Island's unemployment rate sits at about 25 per cent, more than four times the statewide unemployment rate for Queensland.
- More than 40 per cent of families with children under the age of 15 years are jobless.
- The total median family yearly income is \$39,624 on Morningson Island, compared to \$86,372 for the state.
- According to the Queensland Government Statistician's Office, 100 per cent of residents on Morningson Island are in the most disadvantaged category under their Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Index.
- The homelessness rate for the Island sits at 11 per cent.
- There is significant overcrowding with up to 11 people living in a two-bedroom home in some cases.
- In semester 1, 2019 just 18% (or 36 students) of the Island's 201 primary students attended at least 90% of school days. In Term 3, 2016, overall school attendance was recorded at 66%. This dropped to 44% in Term 3, 2020.
- Reportable criminal offences are eight times higher than the Queensland average.
- Youth Justice supervised orders were 43.7 per 1,000 persons aged 10-17 years, compared to 3 per 1,000 for Queensland as a whole.
- Breaches of domestic violence orders on Morningson Island were 110.6 per 1,000 residents, compared 6.6 persons per 1,000 for Queensland.

Mayor Yanner said the list went on and on and it could only be linked to failed service delivery.

He said he was devastated by the situation and wanted better for his people.

"These issues must be addressed immediately.

"I applaud the Minister for agreeing to advocate for an independent audit, it demonstrates that he is taking his responsibilities seriously.

"You don't have to be a health expert to know that the economic and social circumstances on the island were contributing directly to the community's poor quality of life.

"We have 'fly-in-fly-out' service delivery that no one seems to be accountable for – how can these people sleep at night?"

"We want to know exactly what funding is coming to the Island and what analysis is being made of the success of this funding. Why aren't people reporting to the local council and community on progress and success of their programs?"

“What role does diet play? We pay some of the highest prices for fresh fruit and vegetables in the state – there are a lot of questions that need to be answered.”

Mayor Yanner said the high crime rates plaguing his community were also a direct result of the failure of health and social welfare systems.

“I consider the failed health systems on Mornington Island and very poor family income are directly linked to why my people – including our youth – are going to jail. Things must change, and this is ultimately why I stood for Mayor,” Mayor Yanner said.

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