

Kate Washington MP

Member for Port Stephens

Jenny Aitchison MP

Member for Maitland



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DEPUTY PREMIER SHOWS GOVERNMENT'S APPALLING LACK OF CARE OVER DEATH IN CUSTODY

Deputy Premier and Minister for Police, Troy Grant, has revealed an appalling lack of care and concern for the family of Rebecca Maher who died in Maitland Police Station on 19 July, admitting at a Budget Estimates Committee hearing today that he had not contacted the family of the deceased woman.

The Deputy Premier's comments follow the admissions of the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Leslie Williams on Monday of her failure to raise the tragedy with her Ministerial colleagues or contact the family.

The Deputy Premier advised the Committee that he could not remember when he found out about the death.

When the Member for Maitland, Jenny Aitchison learned of the tragedy, she immediately called the Deputy Premier to ask for a briefing on the matter, but was fobbed off to a ministerial adviser as it was "an operational matter".

After subsequent calls to the Deputy Premier's office, his ministerial adviser arranged a cursory briefing, but Ms Aitchison was still not given any contact details for the woman's family, only to be told it was likely the she had resided out of the area.

As Minister for Police, the Deputy Premier was in a unique and responsible position to contact the family, to express condolences and ensure appropriate supports were made available.

It was not until the 15th of August that it was revealed in the media that the woman was an Aboriginal who had lived with her family in Port Stephens.

In the absence of any contact from the responsible Ministers, the family has been left having to resort to crowd funding for funeral expenses.

Quotes attributable to Member for Port Stephens, Kate Washington

"It is appalling that neither Troy Grant, the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Police nor the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Leslie Williams, have bothered to contact Rebecca Maher's family."

"The Ministers have only cared about the government's potential liability instead of caring for a family who has suffered a tragedy. This is a Government with no empathy."

Quotes attributable to Member for Maitland, Jenny Aitchison

"Anyone who dies while in the care of the state government deserves respect and dignity, the Deputy Premier has failed Rebecca Maher and her family and should be deeply ashamed of his treatment of them."

"As Minister for Police, the Deputy Premier should have made a call to the family."