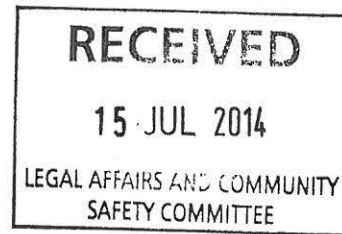


Research Director
Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000



14th July 2014

Inquiry on strategies to prevent and reduce criminal activity in Queensland

Dear Director of this Committee

I would like to offer the following submission, as I am most concerned about the over representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the prison population, and in the justice system in general.

1. Reinstate and fund the Murri Court system

As I understand, the **Murri Courts** which were set up in 2006 and were closed by the present Queensland government in 2012, played an important role in "rehabilitating offenders, reducing the rate of crime and creating considerable long-term cost savings for the community" (Dr. John de Groot, Queensland Law Society, 2012). I submit that these need to be reinstated, with adequate funding to maintain their existence. Indigenous consultation and input is vital here.

2. Adequately fund the ATSIWLAS

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Legal and Advocacy Service (ATSIWLAS) which provides legal advice, information and referrals for Indigenous women, focusing on the areas of domestic violence, family violence and family law, with court support, and family support, have suffered funding cuts. This is another organisation that needs long- term financial support for their vital work.

3. Reinstate funding of Sisters Inside.

The independent community organisation, **Sisters Inside**, works alongside women in the criminal justice system, and has a variety of programs running. Indigenous women are currently the most over-represented population in both Queensland and Australian prisons.

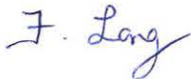
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It has been shown that Indigenous women are more likely to return to prison than non-Indigenous women which seems to indicate that the "correctional system" is not meeting the needs of Indigenous women, and failing to provide the services and support they need to prevent further incarceration.

Sisters Inside are addressing these issues, and yet funding was withdrawn by the Queensland government in 2012, resulting in the cancellation of services in Townsville. This funding needs to be reinstated, so that assistance can be available to women prisoners to recover from sexual and physical abuse.

I submit that adequate and **long term funding** be given as required to the above named organisations, which have proven records in assisting vulnerable members of our society.

Sincerely



Frances Long

