



Speech by

Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

Hansard Thursday, 19 August 2010

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Community Justice Groups, Funding

Hon. CR DICK (Greenslopes—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations) (10.12 am): The Bligh government is committed to ensuring that all Queenslanders have a fair and accessible justice system. In keeping with that commitment, I am pleased to advise the House today that the government will boost funding for Indigenous community justice groups in 2010-11 to more than \$4 million.

Community justice groups play a crucial role in helping to reduce the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have contact with the criminal justice system and, particularly, the disproportionately high rates of Indigenous imprisonment. These groups strive to respond to justice issues in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, providing invaluable support to Indigenous victims, witnesses and defendants at all stages of the legal process. They also provide support directly to the courts, making submissions on cultural issues to magistrates and judges when sentencing offenders.

The Bligh government is determined to ensure that people in Queensland's Indigenous communities have access to not only safe communities but also a culturally appropriate justice process. Queensland's community justice groups work closely with Murri Courts, the remote justices of the peace program and the Queensland Indigenous Alcohol Diversion Program. They also encourage diversionary and early intervention processes through their networks with government and non-government agencies.

Community justice group members are respected elders, traditional owners and people of 'good standing' within local communities, and we thank them for their contributions. During 2009-10, they helped provide assistance and support to more than 43,000 people across our state.

This financial year, the government has increased total funding by \$150,000 to \$4.04 million, with the money to be distributed to 52 community justice groups across Queensland. These groups cover the length and breadth of our state, from Logan to the Torres Strait islands, our major regional communities and out west to places such as Normanton, Mount Isa, Cunnamulla and St George.

The increased allocation of funding for 2010-11 to these groups is evidence of this government's commitment to reducing the number of Indigenous people who have contact with the criminal justice system. It is part of our determination to ensure that people in Queensland's Indigenous communities have access to a fair justice system.