

Question on Notice

No. 843

Asked on 18 August 2004

MR MULHERIN asked the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy (MS CLARK)-

QUESTION:

Will she detail how the State Government is working with community justice groups to lower the over representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the criminal justice system?

ANSWER:

In response to recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, the Local Justice Initiatives Program (LJIP) was developed. The LJIP initiatives are mainly in the form of community justice groups that aim to reduce the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people coming into contact with the criminal justice system through the development and implementation of local strategies that deal with justice issues.

The State Government funds 44 community justice groups in urban, rural and remote communities across the state. An amount of \$2.9m was included in the 2003-04 Budget for the Local Justice Initiatives Program.

Following the *Meeting Challenges, Making Choices* strategy announced in 2002, we have established statutory community justice groups in 19 Deed of Grant in Trust Communities and in the Shires of Aurukun and Mornington.

Community justice groups carry out a range of activities that include; providing advice and assistance in the development of alcohol management plans, providing sentencing submissions to the district and magistrates courts, night patrols, crime prevention activities and assistance in family violence matters.

Other strategies and initiatives progressed include: training of Indigenous justices of the peace to convene magistrates courts in remote areas; state wide availability of youth justice conferencing; changes to the bail and arrest system to reduce the number of young people in custody on remand; expansion of Murri courts and inclusion of Australian Bureau of Statistics Standard Indigenous identifier in data collection by all justice-related agencies to enable better targeted justice policies, programs and service delivery.

The Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy has completed a training and resource needs analysis into the operations of community justice groups and has recently conducted a number of regional training forums across Queensland. These training forums have brought together members of community justice groups and government representatives to discuss training initiatives for community justice groups.

DATSIP has also developed a data collection instrument so that it is in a better position to provide a more accurate picture of the outcomes, activities and contributions being made by community justice groups to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Queensland.