

**Question on Notice
No. 437
Asked on Thursday 24 March 2005**

Ms Nelson-Carr asked the Minister for Police and Corrective Services (Ms Spence)

QUESTION: Will she provide details of the booklet which has been developed by the Queensland Police Service and distributed through Far North Queensland to decrease the number of unlicensed driving offences in Indigenous communities

ANSWER:

The Queensland Police Service, in conjunction with Queensland Transport has implemented the Indigenous Driver Licensing Program.

The booklet, "Indigenous Licensing Program" has been developed by the Queensland Police Service as part of this program to assist people to obtain the necessary knowledge to pass their driver licence test. The booklets were first printed in July 2004 and a second reprint is being prepared. The small coloured booklet, which was written and designed in a simple format, outlines road rules, signals and written information necessary for obtaining a driver license.

The Indigenous Driver Licensing Program was developed in response to the large number of people residing in remote, isolated areas and Indigenous communities who were appearing before the judicial system on matters relating to driving matters and particularly unlicensed driving. Many were repeat offenders and their appearances before the courts often resulted in incarceration.

The major aim of this program is to make the process of obtaining a driver licence available to all eligible people who reside in isolated, remote areas and Indigenous communities, at comparative costs to their city and provincial town counterparts.

The program provides written or oral 'learner licence' testing in a culturally acceptable, legislation compliant and user friendly format. The program then provides practical testing of applicants in their local area or community, reducing the cost of travel for participants to access this facility. The provision of all aspects of licensing requirements and renewals is available 'on site'.

The positive aspects of the program are that:

- a) by providing the program to isolated remote areas and Indigenous communities the Queensland Government is taking a pro-active approach to satisfy the needs and concerns of residents in these areas;
- b) the program is delivered by persons independent of local policing/community interests and are seen as impartial in the testing process;
- c) the decrease in traffic and licensing offences is helping to reduce the number of persons held in custody. This is particularly relevant to achieving the aim of the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice Agreement;

- d) the attendance and practical interaction of Mr Col Edmonston, from the Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety, Queensland, (CARRS-Q) has resulted in the program being viewed and assessed by a recognised independent party, commissioned by Queensland Transport.

Feedback since the program commenced has shown a reduction of traffic and licence related offences in targeted areas and a reduction in the number of people appearing before the courts.

To date more than 1500 licence transactions including licence testing, licence renewals, learner's permits, heavy vehicles and bus testing/licences have been completed.

During an eight week period from 31 January 2005 to 24 March 2005, the project team visited many communities including Mt Garnett, Cairns, Poruma, Yarrabah, Lockhart River, Murray Upper, Chillagoe, Badu Island, Normanton, Doomadgee, Mornington Island, Longreach and Cherbourg.

Future sessions are planned for Yarrabah, Palm Island, the Torres Strait and Lockhart River.

