

Question on Notice

No. 304

Asked on 8 March 2006

MR MCNAMARA asked the Minister for Energy and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy (MR MICKEL)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the diversion from custody programs—
Will you explain the importance of these programs?

ANSWER:

The Diversion from Custody Program was established by the Queensland Government in 1992-93 in response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. At the time of the inception of this program the nominated locations for these centres was Brisbane, Rockhampton, Townsville, Cairns and Mt Isa.

A primary objective of the program is to reduce the incidence of deaths in custody among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

These centres provide temporary care, in a safe and friendly environment, to Indigenous people who are intoxicated and would otherwise be placed in watch-houses. Centres also deliver cell visitor services. There is a stand-alone cell visitor service at Mackay.

I am advised that since inception of the program in the nominated locations, no deaths have occurred in those watch-houses or the area serviced by the Mackay cell visitor service.

The Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy is working with other government agencies to co-ordinate diversion initiatives to reduce Indigenous over-representation in the criminal justice system. Included in this is the development of alternative models for responding to public drunkenness, especially in regional centres and rural and remote areas.