

**Question on Notice
No. 519
Asked on 19 April 2006**

Mr V JOHNSON asked the Minister for Police and Corrective Services (MS SPENCE)-

QUESTION:

With reference to the comments in the North West Star on 7 March 2006 by Mount Isa Magistrate Bevan Manthey, about the inability of the Corrective Services Department to provide support for community corrections orders in Mount Isa and that as a consequence he would be forced to impose custodial sentences on offenders who would otherwise be suitable for a community service order.

What immediate steps is the Government taking to avert this crisis and to ensure that community service orders are adequately supervised and supported in the Mt Isa region?

ANSWER:

The Department of Corrective Services has been implementing a strategy to improve the supervision of offenders in the Mt Isa and Lower Gulf communities. This strategy includes the appointment of additional staff to the Mt Isa Community Corrections Area Office.

On 14 March 2006, an additional full-time community service supervisor was seconded to the Mt Isa office doubling the number of officers supervising community service offenders to two. This additional staff member provides the office with the ability to have closer liaison with community service supervisors and to respond quickly to those community service workers who are not performing.

The Regional Director, Northern Region has also been meeting with the Stipendiary Magistrate (SM) Manthey on a monthly basis. SM Manthey has not previously raised the issues mentioned in the newspaper article, nor his concerns regarding the supervision of offenders subject to community service orders.

The Executive Director, Community Operations and the Regional Director, Northern Region requested a meeting with SM Manthey on 20 March 2006 to provide a detailed brief on the Mount Isa lower gulf strategy. The SM Manthey declined the meeting indicating time constraints. He did extend an invitation to attend a stakeholders meeting on 20 March 2006 and the invitation was accepted. On 7 March 2006 a further request for an individual meeting was made, however no response has been received to date.

The Mount Isa area manager has met informally on a fortnightly basis with the SM Manthey. A formal meeting occurred when the area manager took on the role in December 2005. The informal meetings tend to occur during breaks in court proceedings. On a number of occasions the area manager has attended court proceedings on a Saturday morning, and there have usually been opportunities to discuss matters with SM Manthey. The area manager has kept the Magistrate informed regarding the new pilot model and changes to the Mount Isa district.

There are currently 16 active community service projects in the Mount Isa district:

- Blue Care
- Uniting Church
- Mount Isa Family Support
- Women's Shelter
- Yallambie Aboriginal Corporation
- Christian Outreach Centre
- SVDP Shop
- ATSI Young Female Shelter
- KASH Rehab Centre
- Laura Johnson Home
- Jimayla Topsy Harry Centre
- Kalkadoon Tribal Council
- Arthur Peterson Special Care
- Job Futures Youth Services
- Outback Arts Assoc Inc
- Arilla Paper

During April 2006, 68 new community service/fine option orders relating to 53 offenders were made and two previous project sites have again become active projects. Mt Isa has also secured two additional sites being the The Catholic parish of Centacare and the Mt Isa Judo Association.

During the period 1 March 2005 – 16 May 2006, 14,729 hours of community service were performed in the Mount Isa district. This equates to \$220,935 reparation to the Mount Isa community. There are currently 169 offenders subject to community service orders in Mount Isa of which only four are currently allocated to the Kalkadoon Night Patrol.

On 16 February 2006 the pilot of the new community corrections model was announced. For the first time, community corrections offices will be established in the lower gulf and Torres Strait in Doomadgee, Mornington Island, Normanton and Thursday Island. Community corrections staff will be based in these areas to provide a permanent community corrections service by May 2006.

The Mount Isa office currently supervises approximately 455 offenders. One-quarter of them live in Doomadgee, Mornington Island and Normanton.

A new area manager has been appointed and is due to commence in the position in June 2006. This person has a broad range of work and life experiences including roles in both educational and medical fields as well as experience in managing community corrections area offices. The new manager brings a wide range of experience in working cross culturally in indigenous communities including the Murri Court.

These additional resources will provide the Mt Isa area office with the ability to more effectively manage the community service function in the Mt Isa and surrounding areas. The Queensland Government considers community service as a critical non custodial penalty that diverts offenders away from custody and also provides significant benefits to the community.