

**Question on Notice
No. 359
Asked on 8 March 2007**

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

QUESTION:

With reference to the work that has been carried out by the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Police (QATSIP) pilot program that has been successfully trialled at Woorabinda – where there were four officers, Yarrabah – eight, and Badu Island – six - Why has this program been disbanded after seven years?

ANSWER:

On 1 December 2006, the Beattie Government tabled its response to Professor Chris Cunneen's 2005 evaluation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice Agreement. This response stated:

The Queensland Police Service (QPS) is committed to the progressive replacement of the current Community Policing model, (funded by a combination of council funds and CDEP funds), and the QPS funded QATSIP scheme, with a combination of sworn QPS officers and QPS Indigenous Police Liaison Officers.

Underpinning this decision is a principle that policing services should be provided equitably to all communities in Queensland using a consistent service delivery model. This model uses sworn police officers and Police Liaison Officers (PLOs) to provide a professional policing service.

QATSIPs currently enforce local community by-laws/local laws and undertake additional policing functions in accordance with the powers and prescribed limits conferred to them as 'Special Constables' by virtue of the Commissioner's Instrument of Appointment under provisions of the *Police Service Administration Act 1990*.

QATSIPs are limited in their ability to perform a wide range of roles normally performed by sworn state police officers and have no legislated use of force powers. QATSIPs rely on *Criminal Code Act 1899* provisions (available to ordinary citizens) to perform certain tasks, such as restraining offenders when they have committed a crime.

Unlike QATSIPs, state police officers are able to perform the full range of roles and responsibilities expected of law enforcement personnel. State police officers have use of force powers, are initially instructed in operational skills and tactics and continue with ongoing training in the use of firearms, handcuffs, batons and capsicum spray. Furthermore, state police officers are not limited to discharging duties solely within specific geographical areas in Queensland, such as those policed by QATSIPs.

The role of PLOs is to form links with communities by building trust, helping to reduce and prevent crime and diverting people from the criminal justice system. PLOs provide advice on customs, traditions and work with all communities to improve knowledge of policing services and law and order issues. PLOs are also provided with initial and on-going nationally recognised training up to Certificate 3 in Public Safety (Police Liaison).

The combination of state police officers and PLOs represents what the Beattie Government believes to be 'best practice' professional policing and this should be available to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in Queensland.

For currently employed QATSIPs the QPS will now work towards developing a suitable transitional arrangement and will ensure they are kept informed as planning progresses. There will be ongoing support, consultation and negotiation with all QATSIP officers regarding future employment as PLOs and career planning assistance will be provided to those desirous of becoming state police officers, through direct entry or via the Justice Entry Program.

The work that has been performed by QATSIP officers over a number of years is important and highly valued by the QPS. While the QATSIP Program will eventually be concluded, the primary objective of the transitional arrangement being developed is to provide permanent positions for existing QATSIP officers, ensuring continuity of employment with the organisation.