

**Question on Notice
No. 558
Asked on 17 April 2007**

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

QUESTION:

With reference to the Deed of Grant in Trust (DOGIT) Aboriginal Communities-

- (1) What steps are the commissioner and the police service taking to better service Indigenous communities in DOGITs?
- (2) Why is the service not listening to its members as to the levels needed for sufficient and effective levels of policing numbers in these communities?

ANSWER:

- (1) The Beattie Government has endorsed a model for policing Indigenous communities that involves a combination of sworn police officers and Police Liaison Officers (PLOs). Underpinning this decision is a philosophy that Indigenous communities should be provided with the same level of policing as non-Indigenous communities. A move to a Police/PLO model will ensure this.

The Commissioner and the Queensland Police Service are actively working to implement the Government-endorsed model.

This is only one of the many steps being taken to improve policing services in Indigenous communities.

The Service maintains a statewide network of police Cross Cultural Liaison Officers to improve relations between members of the Service and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and ethnic community groups and to assist these communities to access policing services.

In addition, there are currently 144 PLO positions throughout the State. PLOs foster communication and cooperation between culturally specific communities and members of the Service.

The Queensland Police Service is establishing Indigenous Community/Police Consultative Groups (ICPCGs) across many areas of the State to develop genuine partnerships between police and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by providing local forums to discuss matters of mutual concern. ICPCGs act as a facilitating instrument through which representations can be made at local level for the purpose of enhancing policing services, specifically, but not exclusively for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

The Government Champions Program was an initiative developed as part of the Queensland Government's *Meeting Challenges, Making Choices* strategy. The Government Champion's role is to work with the community to cut through the red tape that can be frustrating for communities, achieve outcomes and provide advice for better delivery of vital services. The Commissioner of Police is the Government Champion for two communities – Mornington Island and Wujal Wujal (in conjunction with the Assistant Commissioner, Far Northern Police Region).

The Queensland Police Service supports the Police-Citizens Youth Clubs (PCYCs) by providing 54 full-time police officers in management positions to oversee the operations of the 44 PCYCs across Queensland. Six Police Liaison Officer positions have been created to assist three of those police officers to manage the PCYCs located in the Aboriginal communities of Yarrabah, Mornington Island and Palm Island. Police Liaison Officers also work with PCYCs and youth centres throughout Queensland subject to their availability.

Following a review of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and ethnic (cross cultural) educational and training programs in 1999, the Service continues to develop a phased training program for members of the Queensland Police Service, with specific components for those transferring to remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities.

These are just some of the many things the Beattie Government and the Queensland Police Service are doing to improve policing services to Indigenous communities.

(2) Following the recent events at Palm Island and Aurukun, the State Government asked the Crime and Misconduct Commission (CMC) to examine policing in Indigenous communities, and specifically to consider:

- possible changes to police policies and procedures that would improve relations between the police and people in remote Indigenous communities;
- police practices regarding detention in police custody, including the monitoring of people in watch-houses and whether community justice groups or others should do this monitoring; and
- the best use of State Government resources in delivering criminal justice services in remote Indigenous communities.

Since announcing the CMC Inquiry, the Service has agreed to provide more police officers in Kowanyama, Bamaga and Aurukun, and to install closed circuit digital recording equipment in the custodial areas of police stations in Aboriginal communities within 12 months.

The Premier also announced that the Queensland Police Service will conduct an audit, with police union representation, of all existing surveillance facilities in watch-houses, to identify priorities for upgrading facilities across Queensland. The Service will also consider staffing numbers in Aboriginal communities and discuss with the police union priorities for deploying any additional resources.

A working party has been established within the Police Service to progress these issues.