

**Question on Notice
No. 66
Asked on 7 February 2007**

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

QUESTION:

With reference to her statement on 6 February 2007 that there were more deaths in custody in non-indigenous watchhouses and due to the deaths in custody at the Bundaberg watchhouse and other watchhouses in Queensland in recent years:—

Will these facilities be modified to meet all work place health and safety requirements in relation to staff and prisoner safety and be adequately staffed to meet the requirements of the Royal Commission on Deaths in Custody?

ANSWER:

Since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody the Queensland Police Service (QPS) has undertaken a program to upgrade its watchhouses to meet the recommendations of that Inquiry. All facilities are constructed to comply with the Building Code of Australia and the QPS Building Code, which includes specific references to watchhouses. All buildings are certified by a building surveyor at the time of construction. Additionally, the QPS appoints a health and safety representative to all construction projects to provide advice and assistance.

The QPS, like other agencies, must also comply with the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995* and associated Regulations. The QPS is continually monitoring work environments across the State and to this end each police region has appointed workplace health and safety officers and established appropriate workplace health and safety committees.

Regional and district managers are responsible for maintaining human resources in every watchhouse and they place utmost importance on the safety of officers under their control. All major watchhouses are staffed by a permanent component of experienced police officers, to ensure the appropriate custody and welfare of prisoners and the safety of officers.

The QPS has also recently committed to conducting an audit of watchhouses in every police region, which will examine the functionality of surveillance systems and identify overall priorities for any necessary upgrading of watchhouse facilities.

Attached is the media release issued on 6 February on this matter.

**Premier and Minister for Trade
The Honourable Peter Beattie**

Tuesday, February 06, 2007

STATE GOVERNMENT TO PROVIDE EXTRA RESOURCES FOR POLICING IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

The Beattie Government will provide additional resources to aid policing in remote indigenous communities throughout Queensland, Premier Peter Beattie said.

Mr Beattie made the announcement after a meeting with the Minister for Police Judy Spence, Police Commissioner Bob Atkinson and representatives of the Queensland Police Union and the Queensland Police Commissioned Officers Union late this afternoon.

"I have already asked the Crime and Misconduct Commission to conduct a review into policing issues in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities," Mr Beattie said.

"The CMC will report back to the Attorney General by the end of August.

"However, in the interim union representatives and the Police Commissioner have raised a number of issues that may assist police in these communities in the performance of their duties.

"These initiatives include a commitment to fund the installation of closed circuit digital recording equipment in all custodial areas in police stations, to complement the CCTV in watchhouses on Aboriginal Deed of Grant in Trust communities within 12 months, and that work will commence immediately in those facilities at Woorabinda, Palm Island and Aurukun.

"In relation to the installation of surveillance facilities in all watchhouses, the Police Commissioner has undertaken to conduct an audit, with union representation, of all existing surveillance facilities in watchhouses. He has invited the Unions to be involved in this process.

"The audit will compare the functionality of current electronic surveillance systems and the extent to which this falls short of the Police Unions' expectations.

"The audit will also identify the extent to which any cost involved in upgrading facilities to the standard expected by the Unions can be absorbed within the existing capital works budget within the Queensland Police Service or would require consideration of budget supplementation in this year's budget process.

"In addition, the audit will identify overall priorities for upgrading facilities across Queensland's watchhouses.

"Finally, the Police Commissioner has agreed to bring staffing levels to nine at Kowanyama, Bamaga and Aurukun and to upgrade the status of the Officer in Charge at each station from Sergeant to Senior Sergeant.

"In relation to the broader question of staffing levels in Aboriginal communities, the Commissioner offered to set up a working party in conjunction with the Unions to look at staffing numbers in Aboriginal communities and discuss Union priorities for the deployment of any additional resources."

Minister for Police Judy Spence welcomed the progress in this afternoon's talks, saying the government was committed to providing a safe environment for the state's police officers.

"This funding will help improve conditions in police stations in these communities and in areas of custody where police officers might find themselves vulnerable.

"By setting up these working parties it will help us provide increased safety for police officers who may have allegations brought against them by those who are detained in police custody."

6 February, 2007

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