

Question on Notice
No. 1082
Asked on Wednesday, 2 September 2009

MS MALE asked the Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services (MR ROBERTS) —

QUESTION:

As I understand Queensland Corrective Services ensures prisoners are placed in facilities

most appropriate to their level of risk to the community—

Will the Minister provide details of the financial and social benefits of community service work performed by low risk prisoners and offenders on community service orders?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for her question, and for her continued interest in, and support for, the Department of Community Safety.

The community service work performed by low-risk prisoners and offenders on community service orders makes a significant financial and social contribution to the Queensland community.

In 2008-2009, low-risk prisoners from low security correctional centres and work camps performed work in the community valued at \$2.4 million.

By participating in work camps, low-risk prisoners gain a sense of social responsibility by making a positive contribution to society while developing new skills. Regional communities also benefit from the completion of projects, which are identified in consultation with local community advisory committees.

In August 2009, the contribution by Corrective Services staff and prisoners to communities in regional Queensland was recognised at the 18th Annual Work Camp Awards, held in St George.

The top award, the Bunny Powne Perpetual trophy for Best Capital Works Project, was awarded to the Charleville Work Camp for the Charleville Racecourse Stable Complex project. From January to July 2009, prisoners from the Charleville Work Camp completed almost 1200 hours of work at the complex, using their skills in welding, concrete and construction.

Another work camp award recently presented was the Townsville Correctional Centre's Ingham Flood Relief Project. This project was awarded the 'Engaging and Services Communities' category at the 2009 Minister's Awards for Excellence in Community Safety. Following the damage caused in Ingham in early 2009 after extensive rainfall, work camp prisoners from the Townsville and Capricornia Correctional Centres contributed almost 3000 hours of work to the clean up effort.

In 2008-2009, offenders on community-based orders performed work valued at \$4.8 million. This included over 2 000 offenders performing community service across approximately 500 community service project sites throughout Queensland.

Low-risk prisoners and offenders on community-based orders perform a range of activities, including garden and lawn maintenance, removing rubbish, sorting clothing and general cleaning.

Offenders on community-based orders are also cleaning up graffiti in our communities. The impact of graffiti is far-reaching and potentially devastating to local residents, government and business. Graffiti can make people feel unsafe in their community and, unfortunately, encourage other offenders to damage property. That's why the Queensland Government has taken measures to stop it.

In September 2008, the Government passed legislation allowing graffiti removal teams to access private property for the purpose of removing graffiti from in and around public places.

Through collaboration with local government, Queensland Corrective Services is proud to be a partner in the fight against graffiti.

An example of this collaboration is Queensland Corrective Services' ongoing partnership with the Brisbane City Council's graffiti reduction unit. Offenders on community service orders have already given back hundreds of hours of graffiti clean-up to the Brisbane community.

Removing graffiti is an ideal way for offenders to give back to the community as part of their community service orders.

As well as valuable ongoing community projects, low-risk prisoners and community service offenders are deployed to assist in cleaning up after emergencies and natural disasters. In 2008-2009, low-risk prisoners helped to clean up after storm damage at The Gap in Brisbane, Rosewood and Ingham. Both low-risk prisoners and offenders on community-based orders assisted with the clean-up on the Sunshine Coast after the oil spill in March 2009.

Local communities benefit through the community service activities undertaken by low-risk prisoners and offenders on community-based orders.

Community service also provides a meaningful opportunity for offenders and low risk prisoners to give back to the communities they have offended against through performing of unpaid labour. This work provides offenders with an opportunity to gain skills and a work ethic which may help them to find employment and stop them re-offending.

Communities with work camps also benefit financially through work camps buying local supplies and materials and through employment of community members to supervise projects.