

Question on Notice

No. 1705

Asked on Tuesday, 10 November 2009

MR LAWRENCE SPRINGBORG asked the Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations (Mr Dick) -

QUESTION:

With reference to the Murri Court –

- (1) How many matters were referred to the Murri Court in 2006-07, 2007-08, and 2008-09 (reported by year and court location)?
- (2) How many matters were finalised by the Murri Court in 2006-07, 2007-08, and 2008-09 (reported by year and court location)?
- (3) How many persons referred to the Murri Court in 2006-07, 2007-08 and 2008-09 were sentenced to actual terms of custodial imprisonment (reported by year and court location)

ANSWER:

Murri Courts have been operating in Queensland since 2002. The Murri Court is a Queensland Magistrates Court which deals with sentencing Indigenous offenders. The Murri Court takes into account cultural issues by providing a forum where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have an input into the sentencing process.

The Murri Court handles only Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who plead guilty to an offence and both the prosecution and offender consent to the matter being dealt with in the Murri Court. The offence must be one which falls within the jurisdiction of the Magistrates Courts of Queensland.

The Murri Courts are an important element of the criminal justice system in Queensland, allowing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders a voice in the sentencing process.

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General conducted a Review of the Murri Court program in 2006 detailing the support of Indigenous communities for the program. Consequently the government injected funds into five key locations to conduct a full two year evaluation of the program and provide support for Indigenous Elders participating in the program. The evaluation report for the Murri Court is currently being considered.

The data provided below is from the Brisbane, Rockhampton, Townsville and Mount Isa Murri Courts from 1 January 2007, and for the Caboolture Murri Court from 16 May 2008.

Numbers finalised in Murri Court are less than referrals as some referred defendants are unsuitable for Murri Court and are returned to the Arrest Court for sentence.

The Murri Court in Brisbane was referred 103 matters in 2006/07, finalised 18 matters with 4 persons sentenced to a term of imprisonment; was referred 265 matters in 2007/08, finalised 223 matters with 34 persons sentenced to a term of imprisonment; and, was referred 230 matters in 2008/09, finalised 159 matters with 16 persons sentenced to a term of imprisonment.

The Murri Court in Caboolture was referred 1 matter 2007/08 and finalised 1 matter; and, was referred 10 matters in 2008/09, and finalised 3 matters.

The Murri Court in Rockhampton was referred 22 matters in 2006/07 and finalised 18 matters; was referred 48 matters in 2007/08, finalised 39 matters with 7 persons sentenced to a term of imprisonment; and, was referred 56 matters in 2008/09 and finalised 31 matters.

The Murri Court in Townsville was referred 60 matters in 2006/07, finalised 46 matters with 14 persons sentenced to a term of imprisonment; was referred 168 matters in 2007/08, finalised 110 matters with 34 persons sentenced to a term of imprisonment; and, was referred 138 matters in 2008/09, finalised 112 matters with 36 persons sentenced to a term of imprisonment.

The Murri Court in Mount Isa was referred 71 matters in 2006/07 and finalised 6 matters; was referred 52 matters in 2007/08, finalised 34 matters with 4 persons sentenced to a term of imprisonment; and, was referred 65 matters in 2008/09, finalised 32 matters with 3 persons sentenced to a term of imprisonment.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS ANSWER REPLACES THE PREVIOUS
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE NO. 1075 TABLED ON 10 DECEMBER
2009.