

## Question on Notice

No. 1374

Asked on 17 October 2018

**MS J PEASE** ASKED THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL AND MINISTER FOR JUSTICE (HON Y D'ATH) –

### QUESTION:

Will the Attorney-General advise of any innovative strategies or programs which are being undertaken to support Queenslanders' engagement with, and access to, the justice system?

### ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Lytton for her question.

Recognising the increasing demand in the criminal justice system, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG) has progressed a number of innovative programs and pilot projects to support Queenslanders' engagement with, and access to, the justice system. Examples include:

- **The introduction of Court Link**

Court Link is a 12-week bail based program that assesses the risk and needs of defendants and facilitates connections to appropriate referral and support services to address the causes of offending behaviours.

Court Link commenced in Brisbane in November 2017, following the *Queensland Drug and Specialist Courts Review Final Report*. Court Link has already expanded to Cairns and will continue to expand to Ipswich, Southport and Mt Isa over the coming months.

Court Link officers provide targeted and individualised case management to defendants and support courts to monitor the progress of defendants through the provision of progress reports.

- **The re-introduction of Drug and Alcohol Court**

The Queensland Drug and Alcohol Court (QDAC) is an intensive and tailored response for adult offenders with severe drug and alcohol use directly associated with their offending. The QDAC provides a collaborative multi-agency response for 'high-risk offenders with the aim of improving community safety by focusing on the rehabilitation of offenders so they can reintegrate back into the community as productive members of our society. The QDAC commenced operation in Brisbane in January 2018 following recommendations in the *Queensland Drug and Specialist Courts Review Final Report*.

The QDAC team includes a dedicated Magistrate and representatives from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, Queensland Corrective Services, Queensland Health, Queensland Police Service and Legal Aid Queensland to ensure

that all participants receive the necessary supervision, treatment and interventions to address their drug and alcohol related offending.

A dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Liaison Officer is also an integral part of the team assisting QDAC to be culturally appropriate and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

- **The re-introduction of Murri Courts**

The Palaszczuk Government has re-introduced 14 Murri Courts across Queensland. Murri Courts encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander defendants, who are pleading guilty to their charges, to take responsibility for their offending behaviours. Murri Court is not a "soft" option. Murri Court participants must engage in activities that address the causes of their offending behaviours. Participation includes meeting with Elders, participating in cultural activities, attending treatment services and appearing in the Murri Court.

I have great confidence that the reintroduction of Murri Courts will help to address the ongoing overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the criminal justice system.

- **The introduction of SMS reminders for defendants on bail**

On 1 June 2016 a pilot project commenced in the Mackay Magistrates Court, sending SMS messages to adult defendants on bail. SMS messages are being sent as reminders one day prior to scheduled court appearances, as a prompt to encourage attendance at court.

Between 1 June 2016 and 30 September 2018 approximately 8,000 SMS messages were sent to defendants. The pilot is being evaluated by the University of Queensland. The results of the evaluation will inform whether SMS reminder messaging is rolled out across Queensland, to all adult defendants on bail.

- **New resources to help to build Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' awareness about domestic and family violence, and the court process.**

The Queensland Government last week launched new resources to help to build Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' awareness about domestic and family violence (DFV), and the court process.

To create the materials, we worked with community Elders, an Indigenous creative agency, and government partners, and tested prototypes within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

I am very proud to have released a discrete booklet with information for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people affected by domestic and family violence, as well as a discrete wallet card containing basic information about the importance of preparing for court, asking questions and seeking help.

There's also a short video explaining the variety of forms domestic and family violence can take, and an A5 card explaining how community organisations and service providers can support people who are going to court.

They reinforce the message that domestic and family violence is not part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, and that all people, families and children should be safe, protected and free from fear. They are written in a way that will resonate and engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the printed resources are available in Torres Strait Island Yumplatok and Wik Mungkan.

These innovative programs are directly increasing the accessibility of the justice system for vulnerable Queenslanders.