

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 1164

asked on Tuesday, 10 October 2023

MR T NICHOLLS ASKED MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT AND SMALL BUSINESS, MINISTER FOR TRAINING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND MINISTER FOR YOUTH JUSTICE (HON D FARMER)

QUESTION:

Will the Minister provide an update on the 'rolling set of evaluations' the department is conducting into youth justice programs since the Estimates Hearing, including (a) what programs have now been evaluated, (b) of those programs, which will be (i) continued and (ii) discontinued and (c) what data was gained from these evaluations to assess their effectiveness?

ANSWER:

Youth Justice is leading a program of rolling evaluations to better understand not only 'what works', but what works for different cohorts of young people.

As the Honourable Minister Farmer noted at the 2023 Estimates Hearings, if it is identified that 'anything we are doing is not working, we will stop doing it'.

The department regularly undertakes program evaluations and reviews, with findings used to inform policy and program decision-making and practice enhancements. This is in addition to ongoing operational performance reviews and regular service monitoring through contract management of services and quality assurance processes undertaken across all Youth Justice service and detention centres.

In 2023 the Queensland Government allocated \$446 Million in additional funding for Youth Justice initiatives, including funding to support comprehensive evaluations of how well Youth Justice-related initiatives and programs are working, and how government can better intervene earlier across the broader system to reduce youth offending and reoffending.

The Queensland Audit Office (QAO) has commenced its comprehensive review Diverting Young Offenders from Crime. QAO will assess Youth Justice strategies and program effectiveness for high risk and serious repeat offenders. The department is working with the QAO and providing information and content to inform their review.

In response to the questions raised:

- a) There is a rolling program of evaluations and reviews, and the following are some examples:
 - **On Country** - evaluated by Queensland Council of Social Services this year, shows improvements in participants behaviour, emotional regulation, effective communication, managing conflict, and family circumstances. The report is under review by the department, with publication to occur in December 2023 along with separate quantitative analysis.

- **Community Youth Response and Diversion** - evaluation underway by Nous Group and is expected to be completed in mid-2024. Preliminary findings indicate the program is achieving positive outcomes for young people, such as increased access to prosocial activities and other services, and a positive shift in young peoples' sense of belonging, their cultural connectedness and orientation towards the future.
 - **Intensive Case Management** - evaluation completed May 2023, showed a 51% reduction in offending frequency, 72% reduction in proportion of crimes against the person, and 42% of former clients have not reoffended. Intensive Case Management has consistently proven its effectiveness in delivering on the Government's commitment for community safety by reducing re-offending, and as a result the program has expanded to 16 locations across Queensland. The evaluation report is published on the department's website, with a progress review scheduled to commence early-2024. Given the positive evaluation results this program was expanded to 16 sites.
 - **Restorative Justice Conferencing** - program evaluation completed by KPMG in July 2020, which found that the program is an effective intervention in reducing reoffending magnitude. Further analysis recently undertaken by the department found that 48% of young people who attended a Restorative Justice process in 2021 did not reoffend in the following 12 months.
 - **Transition 2 Success** - evaluated in September 2018 by Deloitte found that 42% of program participants with a prior offending history who completed a course did not reoffend within 12 months of completing their course. Further analysis recently undertaken by the department found that 54% of young people who completed a course in 2021 did not reoffend in the following 12 months. Transition 2 Success is a core program for the department and is subject to ongoing monitoring and data reviews to inform program enhancements.
- b) The first priority evaluation to be initiated through the evaluation framework will focus on Multi-Agency Collaborative Panels, to assess their impact on addressing the underlying factors contributing to a young person's offending behaviours and their efficacy in unblocking system barriers which prevent integrated service responses.

Where appropriate, services will be reshaped or funds repurposed to better address the needs of young people involved in the Youth Justice system.

- For example, in 2022 the Government provided increased funding of \$5 million over four years and \$1.3 million per annum ongoing to repurpose Specialist Multi-Agency Response Teams into Statewide Multi-Agency Collaborative Panels (the panels) to address serious repeat offenders.

This repurposing will significantly improve information sharing, cohesive case management approaches, transition from detention, and represents a commitment by all agencies to undertake activities focused on reducing the reoffending behaviour. Monitoring by the department indicates the panels are contributing to more coordinated case management service responses, with the Department of the Premier and Cabinet leading an independent outcome evaluation of the repurposed program to be completed by mid-2024.

- c) Evaluations are ongoing and we continue to fully support the QAO and welcome recommendations to improve program effectiveness through high quality, evidence-informed program and initiative design, monitoring and evaluation. The QAO is expected to provide its report by the end of March 2024.

Recommendations on program delivery and approaches to program outcomes and effectiveness monitoring and evaluation identified in the report, will be actioned to continuously improve and strengthen Youth Justice monitoring and evaluation processes, to better position to determine what is working and what is not, based on robust data, as soon as possible through program development and delivery processes, to inform decision-making on program continuation and future resourcing.