

## Commissioner Catherine Lourey - Questions on Notice

Taken from 3 December 2021 RRR Health Inquiry Uncorrected Transcript

1. **The Hon. WALT SECORD:** Oh, you have? When did you meet the new Premier?  
**Ms LOUREY:** I met him when there was an announcement of mental health funding four weeks ago. I can get back to you with the exact date.  
**The Hon. WALT SECORD:** Could you take that on notice? I would like to know.

**Answer:** The date was 17 October 2021.

2. **Ms CATE FAHRMANN:** My first question is to Ms Lourey. This morning we heard from Just Reinvest, who brought to the Committee the really unacceptable link between undiagnosed, unaddressed and untreated cognitive impairment, mental ill health and trauma amongst young Aboriginal people going through the Youth Justice system. I asked the witness for Just Reinvest about whether there was any statewide programs to try to address this issue with vulnerable young Aboriginal people. **Is there a statewide program in terms of mental health, particularly for the most vulnerable, to try to address that issue before they enter the criminal justice system? Are there any statewide programs you are aware of?**  
**Ms LOUREY:** I am not aware of those. I could find out. But that would either be from the Justice and Communities cluster or from the Justice and Forensic Mental Health Network.

**Answer:** The Commission is aware of statewide programs and initiatives listed below, which seek to support vulnerable cohorts including people experiencing mental health issues before they enter and in their encounters with the criminal justice system, to prevent crime including by reducing recidivism. Further information about these programs can be obtained from the relevant Departments (NSW Ministry of Health and the Department of Communities and Justice).

- A. The **Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ)** conducts the Crime Prevention Programs which leads the development of policies and programs to prevent crime and reduce re-offending in NSW through targeted measures focussed on the criminal justice system.
- B. The **DCJ Housing** team works with other agencies, councils and NGOs to support people off the street through initiatives such as the Together Home and Assertive Outreach programs.
- C. **Youth Justice** administers the youth justice conferencing diversionary legal process including facilitating youth justice conferences, referring young offenders to services in the community and monitoring outcome plans.
- D. The **Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network** delivers health care to people in contact with the forensic mental health and criminal justice systems, and conducts the following programs:
  - a. **The Community Forensic Mental Health Service** provides health care in custodial and forensic mental health settings including the services of psychiatrists, nurses and allied health staff.
  - b. **The Connections Project** provides continuity of care for inmates with histories of problematic drug use who are being released into the community.
  - c. **The Adolescent Community and Court Team** works with other government agencies and Area Child Adolescent Community Mental Health Services to divert young people from custody.
  - d. **The Community Integration Team** is a pre and post release program offering continuum of care to recently released adolescents, with an emerging or serious mental illness and or problematic drug and alcohol use or dependence.

- e. **The Adult Drug Court program** is a diversion program for drug dependent offenders to reduce a person's dependency on drugs and eliminate their need to commit crime to support the drug dependency.
  - f. **The Compulsory Drug Treatment program** is an abstinence focused residential rehabilitation program that is court mandated and targets male offenders with long term addiction who have committed multiple offences over a long period to support their addiction.
  - g. **Statewide Community and Court Liaison Service** assists magistrates, solicitors and police prosecutors at local courts with diversion of people with mental health problems and disorders by referring them to appropriate mental health services in the community and to hospital settings.
- E. The **New South Wales Local Court** conducts diversion programs for people facing criminal charges in court, which may refer them to a rehabilitation, treatment or intervention program to address underlying problems, including mental illness including:
- a. The **Magistrates Early Referral Into Treatment (MERIT)** program is a voluntary, pre-plea program, which provides access to treatment services to improve health and well-being and reduce offending for people who have issues related to their alcohol and other drug use.
  - b. The **Circle Sentencing Intervention Program** under Part 7 of the Criminal Procedure Regulation 2017 provides an alternative sentencing court for adult Aboriginal offenders, and directly involves local Aboriginal people in the process of sentencing offenders, with the aims of making it more meaningful and improving confidence in the criminal justice system.
- F. **Corrective Services NSW** provides treatment programs and services to people (in custody and in the community) to reduce their risk of re-offending.