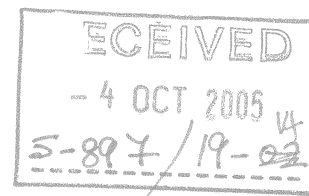


COMMUNITY OFFENDER SERVICES

Legislative Standing Committee on Law and Justice Inquiry into Community-based Sentencing Options

Questions and Answers
September 2005



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. ***Can you please tell the Committee about the guidelines for private organisations and businesses to provide community service placements?***

The Community Service Order program only operates in partnership with not-for-profit agencies and organisations (See extract from the Policy and Procedures Manual: **Tab 1**).

Promotional material is currently being re-developed for all COS business which includes a CD ROM and presentation template describing the Community Service Order scheme. This package will be used for both promotional and information purposes.

- ***Could you please provide the Committee with a copy of the guidelines?***

Guidelines have been previously supplied and a further copy is attached (*Guide to Voluntary Agencies and Supervisors*: **Tab 2**).

2. ***Previous witnesses have sited occupational health and safety issues and public liability concerns as possible reasons for not providing a community service placement. Are offenders engaged in community service orders covered for public liability?***

Yes, offenders who are engaged in Community Service Order work are fully covered for public liability. There is legislative provision whereby the Crown assumes civil liability in place of the community agency providing community work. Reference Section 121 CAS Act.

The *Guide to Voluntary Agencies and Supervisors* makes it clear that the Crown assumes civil liability (**Tab 2**).

- ***Do they receive occupational health and safety training?***

Information regarding occupational health and safety is provided for all offenders involved in CSO work sites at an induction session routinely held at District Offices.

The occupational health and safety training provided to offenders depends on their work location and the work they will be undertaking. **A video and standardised operating procedures covering various work undertaken by offenders have been developed and are used in District Offices.** For example, standard operating procedures exist for working in kitchens, clerical duties, general outdoor duties, whipper snippers/brushcutters, lawnmowers and ride on mowers, and tractors. Examples of standard operating procedures provided to offenders during the CSO induction are attached (**Tab 3**).

The *Guide to Voluntary Agencies and Supervisors* (**Tab 2**) also requires the agency to provide training on site, even with equipment as simple as a lawn mower. All community agencies are required to follow the NSW Governments OH&S guidelines at all times.

- ***Who covers the cost?***

The cost of the occupational health and safety training as described above for offenders is covered by Community Offender Services, Department of Corrective Services.

- ***Is information on these matters provided to all organisations participating in the community service scheme?***

Information on responsibilities and obligations of agencies who provide work for offenders undertaking Community Service work is covered in the *Guide to Voluntary Agencies and Supervisors* (**Tab 2**).

3. ***What can be done to assist smaller agencies to provide a community service order placement, but who do not pass the occupational health and safety assessment performed by the Probation and Parole Service?***

Provide them with information about what they need to do or put into place in order to address any OH&S issues. CSO Administrative Assistants and CSO Organisers are all trained in OH&S risk assessment.

4. ***The Committee has heard previous evidence that developing relationships with the business community to encourage businesses to provide employment opportunities for people on good behaviour bonds or parole would be beneficial. Does the Department encourage businesses in this way?***

- Community Offender Services works closely with job network providers to ensure that offenders receive assistance and support to access employment opportunities. Some District Offices provide facilities for Centrelink psychological services to directly assist offenders to identify and overcome barriers to employment.

An example of local co-operation with Centrelink is Campbelltown District Office. A Centrelink advisor attends at Campbelltown District Office on a weekly basis to interview offenders who have recently been released from correctional centres. The aim of the interview is to ensure that the offender is aware of the possible benefits available to them and that administrative procedures to enable them to access such benefits have been completed. In addition, the Centrelink have visited Campbelltown District Office to meet staff and to discuss schemes operated by the Commonwealth (for example, the Personal Support Program) which benefit offenders. A result of this interaction is that Centrelink and Community Offender Services now work in a close and mutually co-operative manner.

- Following a successful application for Drug Summit funding, Community Offender Services, in partnership with TAFE, trialed the Pathways to Employment, Education and Training program (PEET) in five District Offices in the year 2003-2004. A further twelve courses were delivered in the second half of 2004 and 24 courses were implemented in the first half of 2005.

PEET was developed to assist offenders to develop the necessary skills to either enter employment or the adult education system or both. The aim of PEET is to assist offenders to identify realistic employment/education options and appropriate educational pathways and to develop the basic skills to achieve chosen options.

The PEET program is linked to further appropriate standard TAFE courses or to short-term training courses directly linked to government agency and local industry needs.

An example of the outcomes achieved by PEET participants is demonstrated by the results of a program at one District Office conducted last year. Of the eleven offenders who attended PEET, two found work, one enrolled in a TAFE Foundation

Education course to complete his school certificate, three planned to enrol in a TAFE computer course and one was undertaking a retail course while attending TAFE vocational counselling.

- At a local level, Community Offender Services staff are encouraged to meet with local groups such as Rotary and local Chambers of Commerce to encourage the employment of offenders.

- ***How could this be improved?***

The benefits achieved by attendance at PEET could be anticipated for more offenders if additional resources were available to Community Offender Services to implement the PEET program in larger numbers of District Offices.

- ***How could the number of businesses participating in the scheme be increased?***

- An Offender Employment Pathways Project, a recent whole-of-department initiative, will focus on employment needs of offenders in the community and post-release. Intrinsic to the program are links with Job Network providers and employer groups. Staff positions are currently being established. Aspects of the project have a June 2006 completion date; other components will be on-going.
- The numbers of businesses willing to employ offenders would be increased by the private sector having a greater awareness of community-based offenders and the role of Community Offender Services.
- Offenders would also benefit from being given priority status by commonwealth and state government agencies providing services to the unemployed.
- A Centrelink Program Protocol Agreement was signed with the NSW Department of Corrective Services in November 2003. The focus of the Agreement, reflecting Centrelink's national approach, was service provision for offenders in custody. A review of the Agreement and its implementation has commenced. At the same time, further development of the Agreement is in progress to encompass Centrelink issues experienced by Community Offender Services (COS) staff and offenders in the community. Under consideration are:
 - closer working relationships between Centrelink and staff in District Offices; reduction of violence in Centrelink

Customer Service Centres has stemmed from local initiatives

- information exchange on participation requirements in Centrelink, Job Network and COS programs to prevent conflicting obligations
- addressing needs for Proof of Identity documentation and debt issues
- implications of the new Welfare to Work initiative for COS clients.

5. ***The Committee has heard previous evidence that community based sentencing options should be made available across rural and regional NSW but the biggest impediment is lack of resources to support offenders in the community. What additional resources would the Probation and Parole Service need to allow greater coverage of the State?***

- Access to groupwork programs to address specific issues related to offending behaviour. This could be achieved by:
 - Modification of Groupwork programs to being available for delivery on a one-to-one basis or in small groups of 2-3 offenders. Through enhancement funding received COS is seeking to modify the Drug and Alcohol Addiction Program and the Relapse Prevention Program
 - Development of a small pool of specialised program coordinators who would travel around to remote District Offices.
- Availability of services by other government agencies in rural and remote areas eg mental health, disability services
- Additional psychological services based in regional areas providing consultancy and liaison services to COS District Offices within the area.
- Access to work for CSO is not just a question of resources but also exploring and developing other models to provide work, eg. Dubbo CSO combining with the mobile camp from Yetta Dhinnakkal to promote greater access to work opportunities.
- Improve access to Community Service Order program with the provision of transport to work sites (small buses) and equipment stores at area offices and available to District Offices in that area.
- Publicity of all community based programs. COS is developing PR material which can be presented by Managers, with standardised information and an ability to tailor the presentation to meet the local requirements to encourage partnerships
- Extension of COS Intensive Supervision Program with increased staff, additional Aboriginal Client Service Officers and more electronic monitoring/satellite tracking equipment.

Intensive supervision of offenders could include any or all of the following depending on the offender's level of risk posed to the community:

- Curfew
- Electronic/satellite monitoring
- Intensive case management
- Program intervention targeting factors relating to offending
- Other jurisdictions are also looking at strengthening Community Corrections in order to reduce the impact of incarceration. Examples of this successful approach to diversion are strategies developed by Victoria (2003) and Queensland (2005).

6. ***What resources would be required for education, training and other programs such as anger management, which are currently provided in correction centres to be extended to offenders on community based sentences?***

- Community Offender Services currently provides a range of group work cognitive-behavioural programs to community-based offenders to address offending behaviour and education and training programs to improve changes of resettlement for ex-prisoners. These programs include:
 - Drug and Alcohol Addiction/Relapse Prevention
 - Managing Drug and Alcohol Abuse
 - Sober Driver
 - Anger Management/Violence Prevention
 - Women's issues
 - Sex offenders in combination with Departmental Sex Offender Programs Unit
 - Domestic Violence Perpetrators
 - Parolee Insight
 - ThinkFirst.
 - Pathways to Employment, Education and Training
 - Think & Link
 - Preparing to Change

See *Group work Program Intervention Schematic* summary for managers (Tab 4)

In addition, specific programs have been developed with Aboriginal communities to address offending behaviour within an appropriate cultural framework. These programs include Rekindling the Spirit (Lismore and Tabulam/Casino) and Yin Yama La (male) Family Violence and Yind Yama La Vinaa (female) Family Violence programs at Dubbo.

However, difficulties exist in providing group work programs in rural and remote areas because of problems in forming viable groups. As noted earlier, this could be overcome by resources to develop the group work programs already provided to offenders in metropolitan and major regional centres in a format to suit smaller groups and one-to-one delivery.

For example, Community Offender Services have recently developed a new Drug and Alcohol Addiction program and a complimentary Relapse Prevention Program. A version of both of these programs is being developed for small groups and individuals. However, resources are not available to allow for similar development of other programs specifically for small groups and individuals. Increased resources would alleviate these issues.

In Aboriginal communities, increased resources would allow for programs to be developed to meet the needs of offenders in those communities in a culturally appropriate framework.

- In addition, changes to legislation, which are currently progressing through Cabinet, will promote increases in group work programs to address offending behaviour in rural and remote areas. For example, greater flexibility for Community Offender Services under the Crimes (Sentencing Procedures) Act 1999 to determine the number of hours that could be set aside for group work programs under a Community Service Order would result in more offenders being available to attend such programs.
- Further, if Periodic Detention Stage 1 could be served in a home setting, Stage 2 (work component) could also include attendance at group work programs to address offending behaviour. The larger numbers of offenders available to participate in groups would promote the viable groups required by District Offices to implement programs.

7. *The Committee has heard previous evidence that the current home detention model is not suitable for Aboriginal offenders. If the definition of the 'home' was to be re-defined, for example, to a broader settlement or group of homes, what implications would this have for the monitoring of offenders by Probation and Parole staff?*

- *How could any issues with monitoring be overcome?*
- *How else could home detention be modified to make it more suitable for Indigenous offenders?*

Background

Before the Home Detention program can be expanded to rural NSW the management and reporting structure of the program has to be changed.

Until now the nine Intensive Supervision Units have reported to a Director who has been located at Head Office.

A pilot is currently being underway to implement the regionalisation of the program.

Four sites have been selected which have commenced the process of devolving management responsibility for Home Detention and the Drug Court to District Managers and Executive Directors of Community Offender Services.

he piloting of regionalisation commenced in May 2005 and will last for 6 months.

Regionalisation will then expand to encompass the remaining units.

The devolution of management responsibility is seen as critical to support further expansion of Home Detention programs.

Further research and planning into the expansion of Home Detention programs to more remote areas has commenced involving:

- Investigation of models presently operating in other states and countries,
- Examination of suitable technologies, and
- Detailed analysis of the human and material resource implications of expansion and budgetary requirements.

A major impediment to expansion of the Home Detention program has been lack of resources and the potential impact on existing staff. A different staffing model is under consideration.

Another impediment is the restrictive nature of the legislative eligibility criteria for the Home Detention program. It may be more suitable to employ the methodology of intensive supervision using case management and close monitoring to other high-risk groups who are given either community based orders or parole supervision.

Thirdly, in more remote communities current methods of electronic monitoring may not be feasible and other methods of monitoring will need to be considered.

Expansion of home Detention

Expansion of Home Detention (or similar intensive programs requiring 24/7 offender management) will be very resource intensive. Because of the very different work requirements for staff supervising home detainees, this work cannot easily be incorporated with more traditional P & P workloads. Establishing the program in new areas would need some increase in dedicated intensive supervision staff subject to different working conditions & attracting additional compensation in respect of the extended working hours. As the current program involves around-the-clock monitoring of offenders in their environment, it also requires higher levels of equipment. Establishing the program in an area will only be cost effective if the resources necessary to set it up are adequately utilised.

- Analysis of the inmate population in NSW Correctional Centres suggests that roughly half of the Home Detention eligible inmates from areas where Home Detention is not available are from the north-east quadrant of the state.
- Within this area the mid North Coast has been identified as the region with the densest population of eligible offenders. A snapshot of the NSW Inmate Census indicate that on the day 30 June 2004 there were 127 inmates in the mid-north region serving a period of full time imprisonment. Of the 127 inmates 66 (45%) identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders.
- The Department proposes, therefore, that, subject to funding approval, an Intensive Supervision program be established in the mid North Coast town of Kempsey in FY 2005-2006 to cover the Taree to Coffs Harbour region. The major reasons for the delay in commencing the program at Kempsey have been resource constraints and the recent major expansion of the Probation and Parole District Office at Kempsey to accommodate the newly established Mid North Coast Correctional Centre.
- This initial team, placed in the area where demand is expected to be greatest, will allow us to refine operational procedures in the regional environment before extending to other areas.
- It is expected that the proposed expansion will be of particular benefit to indigenous offenders as the proportion of indigenous inmates coming from regional areas is substantially greater than non-indigenous inmates.

Electronic Monitoring System

The use of electronic monitoring has the potential to improve the cost-effectiveness of correctional programs, provide enhanced opportunities for offender rehabilitation and extend the range of sentences available to the courts as well as provide the community and judiciary the confidence to

include the more serious type of assaults currently excluded by Home Detention legislation.

One suggestion for the use of electronic monitoring systems within a rural type of system, (presently being considered by Northern Territory) covers remote areas and communities by reporting compliance information to a designated responsible person (or elder) within the community.

After initial setup of a computer at the designated person's home (which does not require a telephone line however would require access to power/electricity to keep unit charged) communication would be via radio frequencies received from several receiver units distributed in close proximity of one another within the community (for approximately half kilometre square area 5-6 receiver units would be required).

The receiver units pick up signals from a transmitter unit (s) (anklets) worn by one or any number of offenders on the program. The receiver units are solar powered which means the offenders do not require a phone line. The signals picked by the receiver units are relayed to the computer (a form of a pager system that processes the data) and relates the information to the responsible person who is monitoring the compliance levels of the detainees in the community i.e. whether there is a strap tamper, the removal of a transmitter (anklet), whether the detainee has wandered away from the community during curfew, or whether they have returned to the community at the time required etc.

Extending eligibility criteria

Currently offenders who are assessed as suitable for a Home Detention order are likely to fall into the lower risk groups in terms of risk recidivism due to the eligibility criteria.

- 1) One rationale is to extend eligibility to more serious offenders has several bases:
 - (a) serious assaults is a category in which Aboriginal offenders are over represented;
 - (b) the more serious, longer serving offenders may have a greater need for this more intensive monitoring and support if they are to be safely and successfully reintegrated with the community;
 - (c) as these offence categories are heavily represented among longer serving inmates a blanket exclusion is likely to seriously reduce the pool of eligible offenders and, therefore, the potential of the proposal to reduce gaol numbers.

Mixed Workloads in Regional Areas

- Due to distances between rural centres some IS Officers may require workspace at offices other than the office where the Team Leader is based.
- As well, in some circumstances, available IS work will not be enough to establish full officer caseloads. In preference to part time IS officers, in such instances, IS officer workload would comprise both IS and District Office workload.

Judicial Discretion

Utilisation of Home Detention as a sentencing option is very much subject to judicial officer discretion & preference. When the first 18 months of Home Detention operations were reviewed, wide discrepancies were noted in the extent to which different courts referred offenders, sentenced to terms of full-time custody eligible for service by way of Home Detention, for assessment of suitability. Some magistrates clearly did not see this as an appropriate option for anyone while others seemed to hold a wide range of views about which eligible offenders might be considered for the program. Within the more populous areas this range of utilisation has been manageable because of the number of different courts & magistrates served by each of the Home Detention teams. In less populous areas efficient utilisation of intensive supervision resources will be highly dependent on the views of one or two magistrates.

It is also important to note that, in fringe areas, it will likely be impossible to provide the level of direct personal supervision on which Home Detention is based. As the legislative provisions for Home Detention require that our assessment of suitability consider whether the circumstances of an offender's residence would inhibit effective monitoring, there will be frequent instances when offenders in the most remote communities would be assessed as not suitable for Home Detention while resident at that place. Provision already exists for offenders living beyond current supervision areas to nominate an alternative residence for further assessment. However for those who are not able to provide an alternative residence designated beds specific to program detainees could be purchased to be readily available to potential detainees who could not otherwise live with their families.

Approach to AOD issues/strengthening community sentences

Case management of alcohol and illicit drug use related offending requires stringent accountabilities as well as the involvement of other agencies in the case management decision process.

Due to the complexity of problems when dealing with ATSI identified offenders, referral to generally available and culturally appropriate treatment/counselling/educational programs for chronic relapsing drug and alcohol dependant offenders would be required in the rural and remote areas. Alongside this, multi-agency teams, including health, employment and housing representatives, together with police and community Offender Services officers should case manage persistent offenders.

8. *Can you please provide the Committee with details of the number of Aboriginal Liaison Officers (ALO) employed by Community Offender Services and where they are located?*

COS has no Aboriginal Liaison Officers, but rather Aboriginal Client Service Officers. These officers are located in the following areas:

- Forbes,
- Newtown,
- Kempsey,
- Dubbo, Lismore,
- Dubbo,
- Moore,
- Metropolitan, South West

• *What resources would be required for ALOs to cover the whole State?*

COS in developing strategies to meet the needs of Aboriginal offenders works in partnership with the local Aboriginal communities eg Rekindling the Spirit (Lismore and Tabulam/Casino) and Yinda Yama La (male) Family Violence and Yinda Yama La Vinaa (female) Family Violence programs at Dubbo. Extending these services to other Aboriginal communities such as Toomelah, far south coast Aboriginal communities, Broken Hill and Bourke would be a considerable advantage.

• *Does the Department train local Indigenous people for these positions? If not, why not?*

Community Offender Services provides induction training for Aboriginal Client Service Offices and advertises vacancies for these positions in the local newspapers and the Koori Mail and Indigenous Times.

9. *A previous witness suggested to the Committee that weekend detention served in the home rather than a periodic detention centre could be an alternative community based sentence. Do you believe this could be an effective community based sentence? Why/why not?*

In other jurisdictions a version of Intensive Supervision has been adopted for an alternative to imprisonment, for example, Queensland. (The only other jurisdiction with Periodic Detention is the ACT).

Such a model does not necessarily occur over a weekend period but rather combines components of the Intensive Supervision Model which could include any or all of the following depending on the offender's level of risk:

- Curfew
- Electronic/satellite monitoring
- Case Management
- Program intervention targeting factors relating to offending
- Community work

An effective sentence could address punishment (community work, incapacitation (restricted movement) and reintegration/rehabilitation (based on offence related needs) concurrently.

10. *Could periodic detainees be transported by prison truck to gaol in areas where regular runs are already made for other towns*

No.

- Prison escort vehicles are for transporting full-time prisoners.
- Mixing full-time inmates with other detainees in prison escort vehicles would require legal consideration
- Mixing detainees with full-time inmates will increase the opportunity for trafficking of contraband into correctional centres
- In terms of travel time, under the current legislation PD commences at the time the detainee arrives at the PD Centre.

Can you provide the Committee with any examples where this is already occurring?

See above. However, the use of Periodic Detention Centre buses has been applied in transporting detainees and has proven expensive in terms of staffing.

- *Has the Department considered providing transport for periodic detainees by expanding the model operating in the Bateman's Bay Circuit where transport is provided to a periodic detention centre in Wollongong?*

A service has operated on a circuit from Batemans Bay, Nowra and Ulladullah to Wollongong with numbers of offenders ranging from 4-15. The Batemans Bay service operates when needed and when numbers are low (1-2 offenders). The main pick up points are from Ulladallah and Nowra.

The use of transportation is resource intensive. Where larger areas are to be covered it is even more difficult.

- ***Could travel time from a local police station to the periodic detention facility be included in an offender's detention time?***

No. Periodic Detention is an alternative to full-time imprisonment and time commences when the detainee reports for detention to a gazetted prison

11. ***The Committee heard from Probation and Parole Officers about a successful program run in Inverell called Linking Together. Can you please tell the Committee about other innovative programs? Is the Department going to expand these types of programs to other areas across the State?***

- The Linking Together program targets children in the city of Inverell and was developed by way of a partnership between the South Inverell Resident's Association and the Linking Together Centre.

Community Offender Services provide a CSO field liaison officer (supervisor) who works one day each week to supervise offenders undertaking work as a part of a Community Service Order. The wider community is very aware of the Community Service Orders workers and the program is well received.

Work for the program includes ground maintenance, painting playground equipment and repairs to public equipment. The program has provided an opportunity several Aboriginal offenders to complete Community Service Orders in a culturally appropriate setting. The program builds the necessary team cohesion to allow offenders to later fully participate in the Aboriginal Men's Program.

- There are a number of other such programs throughout the state. For example, the Keepa Keepa – Aboriginal CSO Project operated by Lake Macquarie District Office is designed to provide Aboriginal offenders with strategies to address criminogenic needs in order to assist in reducing offending behaviour. A main aim is to introduce

participants to community based services providing valuable links to other agencies within the area, whilst providing culturally appropriate interaction with Aboriginal elders while completing their Community Service Orders. At present the project includes offenders from the Awabakal, Worimi, Darkinjung, Wonaruah Indigenous groups and the Mindaribba Lands Council. This project is being piloted for two days each week with one day being dedicated to the intervention component and the other day focusing on the establishment of walking trails, shelter and other basic requirements.

Three Community Offender Services District Offices are included in the project – Maitland, Newcastle and Lake Macquarie. An Aboriginal Client Service Officer is employed on a temporary basis to provide supervision and guidance. The project has involved a number of government agencies and community groups with major input from local Aboriginal elders.

Specific programs have also been developed with Aboriginal communities to address offending behaviour within an appropriate cultural framework. These programs include Rekindling the Spirit (Lismore and Tabulam/Casino) and Yin Yama La (male) Family Violence and Yind Yama La Vinaa (female) Family Violence programs at Dubbo.

12. *In your opinion what is the role of the Probation and Parole Service in working with other government and non-government agencies? Does the Department have any formal memoranda-of-understanding with other government or non-government organisations?*

Community Offender Services is committed to a whole-of-government approach based on inter-agency co-operation in order to meet the complex needs of offenders under supervision. The development of partnerships with government and non-government organisations is central to the work of COS. The Department is represented on a number of Senior Officer Groups and Working Parties operating at a cross Justice and Human Service agency level. For example:

Partnerships Against Homelessness
Mental Health Senior Officers' Group
Intellectual disability and criminal justice Senior Officers' Group

Local examples of partnerships are:

- Bourke District Office has developed partnerships with public sector agencies (for example, Department of Health, Drugs and Alcohol) to assist with delivery of group-based interventions to address offending

behaviour. The result of these partnerships is improved service delivery to offenders based in remote locations.

- The *NSW Sober Driver Program*, developed under collaborative partnership arrangements, is jointly funded by the Roads and Traffic Authority and the Motor Accidents Authority and is delivered by the Probation and Parole Service throughout New South Wales.

The *NSW Sober Driver Program* is a court-based, post-conviction, mandated program which targets adult offenders convicted of a repeat drink driving offence within the past five years. The program addresses issues such as consequences of drink driving, effects of alcohol on driving, managing drinking situations, alternatives to drinking and driving and relapse prevention and stress management.

An inter-agency working group is responsible for the development and implementation of this program. The agencies represented in the group include the Roads and Traffic Authority, Motor Accidents Authority, Department of Corrective Services and Attorney General's Department.

- The Domestic Violence Intervention Court Model (DVICM) is an integrated criminal justice and community social/welfare response to domestic violence that adapts national and international best practice to the NSW context. The Attorney General's Department is the lead agency and the Department is a member of the DVICM cross-agency working group.

The fundamental principle of the DVICM is that the safety of victims is paramount and that their safety is enhanced through appropriate and efficient criminal justice responses.

Piloted in 2002 in the Penrith/Mount Druitt area, the DVICM aims through improved prosecution of domestic violence offences to improve safety for victims of domestic violence offences in Wagga and Campbelltown in contact with the criminal justice system and to ensure perpetrators of domestic violence offences in Wagga Wagga and Campbelltown are held to account for their actions.

- The Department's Community Funding Program (CFP) allocates funding to a number of community-based non-profit organisations. These organisations provide a range of support services to inmates, ex-inmates and their families.

Funded services provide support to offenders in custody and their families. They assist offenders maximise post release opportunities such as offering short term supported accommodation, linking offenders in with specialist community services (eg. mental health

services, drug and alcohol services) and supporting families to maintain relationships.

Funded organisations are a key part of the delivery of the Department's Throughcare Strategy. Agencies are often involved in case management processes throughout an offenders' sentence period, from entry point into the correctional system to reintegration into the community following release.

The following agencies were provided with CFP funding in the 2004-05 financial year:

- Glebe House and Judge Rainbow Memorial Fund to provide supported accommodation services for recently released male offenders;
 - Guthrie House to provide the above service for women offenders and ex-offenders;
 - Prisoners Aid Association to provide property minding and financial services to inmates;
 - CRC Justice Support to provide support services to offenders, ex-offenders and their families, including a family transport service to correctional centres;
 - Yulawirri Nurai Aboriginal Corporation to provide post-release services for Indigenous women;
 - Link-Up (NSW) Aboriginal Corporation to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inmates establish and strengthen their families links;
 - SHINE for Kids, formerly known as Children of Prisoners Support Group, to deliver services to support children of offenders;
 - Bundjalung Tribal Society Ltd to operate the residential based rehabilitation project for male indigenous offenders with alcohol and other drug dependence (NSW north coast); and
 - New Horizons Enterprises Limited to operate supported accommodation project for male offenders with a mental illness (metropolitan).
- The Child Protection Watch Team trail is designed as a whole-of-government initiative reflecting the *Child and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act* and the *Interagency Guidelines for Child Protection of 2000*. The Child Protection Watch Team project includes representation from the NSW Police, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Department of Community Services, The Department of Health, the Department of Housing, the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care and the Department of Education and Training as well as Community Offender Services. The agencies have joined together to test a new way of managing child sex

offenders in the community and the model will initially be tested in south-western Sydney to identify and manage high risk offenders who present a serious risk to children.

- Community Offender Services has been a leading agency partner in the Mount Druitt Community Solutions and Crime Prevention initiatives developed by Premier's Department in 2002. These initiatives have allowed Community Offender Services to form strong agency-partnerships with a wide range of government and non-government agencies operating in the Mt Druitt area to meet the needs of offenders supervised by COS Mt Druitt District Office. Programs developed as a result of these successful partnerships include addressing housing needs, cultural specific programs for Aboriginal and Pacific Islander offenders, violence prevention and drug and alcohol programs and Mt Druitt Pathways to Employment, Education and Training as well as suburb safety and beautification work for offenders on CSO orders.
- MOU's Department has with Government Agencies (**See Attached Listing**)

13. *The Committee has heard previous evidence that difficulties in running group programs in rural and remote areas could be overcome by using video conferencing and computer terminals in community locations.*

- ***Is the Department aware of any evaluations of these methods?***

Community Offender Services is unaware of any evaluations of groupwork programs to address offending behaviour delivered by way of video conferencing and computer terminals.

- ***How else do you believe the challenges of providing group programs in a remote location could be overcome?***

As indicated earlier, the challenges of providing group programs in remote locations could be overcome by the provision of one-to-one and small group interventions and by increasing access to group work programs by legislative changes. Such legislative changes would need to include access to group work programs for all types of community-based sentencing options. For example, a potential single court order which combines CSO work (punishment), supervision/monitoring (incapacitation) and intervention programs (rehabilitation). Also required are additional staffing and technology to deliver such programs.

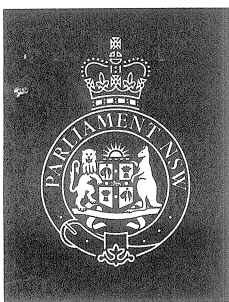
Delivery of groupwork programs from centralised locations and transporting offenders to the location is another method adopted by Community Offender Services.

Delivering the program in an intensive mode eg over 2- 3 days is a model being applied with the Sober Driver Program for rural areas.



Catriona McComish
Senior Assistant Commissioner
Community Offender Services

30 September 2005



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

STANDING COMMITTEE ON LAW AND JUSTICE

8 September 2005

Ms Catriona McComish
Senior Assistant Commissioner, Community Offender Services
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Dear Ms McComish

Community based sentencing options for rural and remote areas and disadvantaged populations

Thank you for appearing before the Law and Justice Committee on Tuesday 30 August 2005. A transcript of your evidence is enclosed. Please correct any errors that may have been made during the transcription process. The highlighted passage indicates a question taken on notice.

The transcript is a record of what you said during the hearing. It is requested that you read the copy and make your amendments bearing the following in mind:

- The transcript should show what you said; therefore you may make alterations only if they are necessary to correct the record. Specifically, you should not attempt to improve sentence construction or refine meaning.
- The transcript is regarded as a record of oral evidence, with its normal differences from written expression. Material alterations or insertions may be made only upon your being further examined before the Committee.
- Corrections should be made in the left margin and the relevant text circled or underlined. Do not obliterate the original words. If possible, please use a red pen.
- Do not change content or style, or correct evidence or questions of the Committee or other witnesses.

If, during your appearance you made an error of fact or if you wish to clarify certain issues, you should provide the details in a separate letter which should be returned with your corrected transcript.

The corrected transcript should be returned by ³⁰Friday ^(extension granted by michelle)23 September 2005 along with any additional information you wish to provide to the Committee. If we do not receive your corrections by the due date, we will assume that there are no corrections to be made and the transcript will be made public as is.

The Chair requests that your answers to the highlighted Question on Notice be returned to us by Friday 23 September 2005.

COPY

If you have any questions in relation to this matter, please do not hesitate to contact the Committee staff on 02 9230 3311.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Newbery', written in a cursive style.

Michelle Newbery
Principal Council Officer
