

**INQUIRY INTO COMMUNITY BASED SENTENCING  
OPTIONS FOR RURAL AND REMOTE AREAS AND  
DISADVANTAGED POPULATIONS**

**Organisation:** Gunnedah Shire Council  
**Name:** Mr Baharak Saheb  
**Position:** Manager Community Services  
**Telephone:** 02 6740 2249  
**Date Received:** 5/10/2005

---

**Theme:**

**Summary:**

**GUNNEDAH SHIRE COUNCIL**

Submission  
to  
**Parliamentary Inquiry-  
Community based sentencing options  
for rural, remote areas  
and disadvantaged populations**

Gunnedah Shire Council  
PO Box 63  
63 Elgin Street  
GUNNEDAH NSW 2380

Telephone: 02 6740 2249  
Fax: 02 6740 2259  
[www.infogunnedah.com.au](http://www.infogunnedah.com.au)

**GUNNEDAH-OVERVIEW**

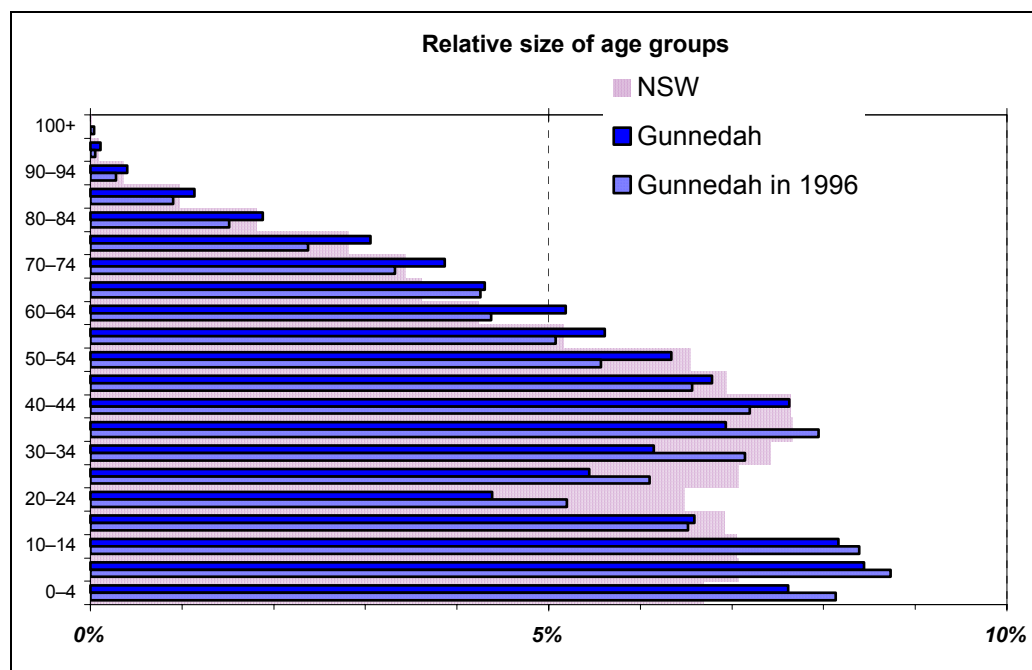
In 2001 on the census night Gunnedah had a population of 11993. There were 1,204 Indigenous people in Gunnedah, most of whom were of Aboriginal descent. Overall the Indigenous community was younger than the non-Indigenous community, due to shorter Indigenous life spans.

63 Elgin St, PO Box 63 GUNNEDAH NSW 2380  
Administration Tel: (02) 6740 2100. Fax: (02) 6740 2119  
E-mail: [council@infogunnedah.com.au](mailto:council@infogunnedah.com.au)  
Web: [www.infogunnedah.com.au](http://www.infogunnedah.com.au)

On Census night 2001, 1,877 young people aged 12 – 24 were counted in Gunnedah. Of these 1,145 were young people of high-school ages (12-17). There were similar numbers of young (e.g. 12 and 13) and old (e.g.16 and 17) suggesting the teenage population is fairly stable. Among young adults 18-24 years old, there were noticeable differences between the numbers in each age. There were more young than old, suggesting young adults were leaving the area (eg for work or study).

Young people and crime

Over 1999-2000, there were 27 Children’s Court appearances by Gunnedah young people aged 10-17 years. The gender ratio was 5.8 boys for every girl. The most common crimes that they were charged with were property offences (26%) and break, enter and steal (15%); other common charges were motor vehicle theft (15%) and assault (11%).



**Submission to the Inquiry:**

Gunnedah Shire Council- Crime Prevention Committee submits the following for consideration as part of the Inquiry in to Community Based Sentencing options:

In Gunnedah the whole spectrum of the Community Sentencing options is *not* available. The most common options exercised are: good behaviour bonds and community service orders and Court ordered courses such as anger management.

Currently periodic detention is not available due to lack of resources such as transport. Nearest correctional facility is in Tamworth (70 km away) with no public transport. An option would be to have group Transport available either through Police or Probation and Parole. However both these organisations will require additional resources to manage this service. Similarly Home Detention is not available as there are no resources for implementation.

Lack of resources is also an issue for Gunnedah in terms of availability of meaningful programs for people placed on Community Service Orders particularly young people. Programs that affect change or break cycle of disadvantage and assist a young person to re-engage with the community are effective tools of redirecting young people from crime activities.

Currently manual work is the most available option, which does not facilitate meaningful change or present viable options for the offenders. In Gunnedah there is a significant unemployment rate; youth unemployment across the board is 20% (census 2001) and

amongst Aboriginal youth the unemployment rate is 40%. Meaningful projects that facilitate young offenders reconnecting with the Community and access to employment, training and education would be very effective in a shire such as Gunnedah.

Gunnedah has a PCYC, which could run programs if funding was available. It is the Committee's understanding that innovative and effective programs are available in bigger centres, which could be implemented in Gunnedah with adequate funding.

In Gunnedah implementing/issuing of Community Based Sentencing is also of concern to the community. A progressive- step- like approach would be desirable where in the case of re-offenders the option of community based sentencing is not exercised. And that a person is made aware that subsequent appearances in front of Court for similar offences will receive the next level of community based sentencing and that once the available options of Community Based Sentencing are exhausted, custodial sentencing would be the next step.