

**STANDING COMMITTEE OF  
ATTORNEYS GENERAL  
Hobart, 26-27 July 2007**

**Tasmanian Report on Indigenous Issues**

**SPEAKING NOTES**

Tasmania's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is dispersed throughout the State. Apart from Cape Barren Island there are virtually no identifiable discrete communities and there are no language barriers so interpreters are not required, making the situation in Tasmania somewhat different from that in some other jurisdictions.

However, Tasmania has a number of strategies designed to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the criminal justice system. These include:

- In 2006, the Department of Justice commenced the Aboriginal Family Violence Offender Rehabilitation Project, funded through Family and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

The aims of the project are to:

- support service providers to better assist Aboriginal offenders through the rehabilitation system, as well as reduce re-offending;
- assess suitability and effectiveness of existing models of Aboriginal Family Violence offender rehabilitation within the Safe at Home framework;
- identify a culturally appropriate rehabilitation model for Aboriginal family violence offenders in Tasmania;
- provide a proposal for a culturally appropriate model for the rehabilitation of Aboriginal family violence offenders within the Safe at Home framework.

By way of explanation, Safe at Home is a whole-of-Government criminal justice response to family violence that has been implemented in Tasmania.

- The Tasmania Prison Service employs an Aboriginal Liaison Support Officer to ensure that culturally significant issues are dealt with appropriately, and that programs which take into account cultural issues can be developed and delivered to Aboriginal prisoners. The Officer is currently undertaking study to enable facilitation of the

“Family Wellbeing Program” which is an Aboriginal specific program. Delivery of the Wellbeing Program to Aboriginal prisoners is expected to commence in early 2008. This program looks at the basic requirements of life, including emotional, physical, mental and spiritual.

- Tasmania provides cultural awareness training to all new Correctional Officer recruits and to all police recruits.
- Tasmania has implemented a number of initiatives, including:
  - The Yala-Edmonds Art Trust Program, a prison based art program. The paintings are sold and after handling costs are taken from the sale price a small portion of the profits go back into the Yala-Edmonds Trust Account and the remaining profits are put into trust for the inmate.
  - The Aboriginal Inmate Cultural Reconnection Program is a partnership program between the Tasmanian Prison Service and Department of Recreation – Tasmania’s Wilderness Program. The primary aims of the program are to enhance the integration of Aboriginal inmates into society following their release. The program focuses on improving the participant’s health and wellbeing by using Aboriginal culture, outdoor recreational activities and wilderness therapy workshops
- Probation officers consider Indigenous status when making referrals. If a client identifies as Aboriginal, the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC), Aboriginal Legal Service, Aboriginal Health Service or Aboriginal Housing Services can be contacted to assist with case management issues. There are also designated Aboriginal liaison officers, for example at TAFE, who can also assist with clients.
- When clients are undertaking Community Service Orders, project sites can be arranged with Aboriginal organisations. Attending training programs/literacy can also be considered under personal development.
- Community Corrections has developed a Memorandum of Understanding with Offender Services, Tasmania Prison Service to facilitate ‘Throughcare’ principles in offender management within both divisions. This incorporates issues that may affect Aboriginal clients.
- A Working Party has been set up to look at common programs facilitated in Community Corrections and Tasmania Prison Service. These programs include cognitive skills, substance abuse, violence, sober driving and sex offending. Assessments for these programs will take into account cultural factors.

- In appropriate circumstances, Tasmania Police utilises Aboriginal Elders to assist aboriginal youth undergoing diversion programs under the Youth Justice Act.
- If it is necessary to detain or interview an Aboriginal person, Tasmania police are required to notify a friend or relative and the Aboriginal Legal Service.
- Tasmania police has Aboriginal liaison officers in all parts of the State, who work closely with Aboriginal elders.

In addition to programs specifically aimed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the criminal justice system, Tasmania has also addressed broader issues of historical injustice by seeking to redress the wrongs of the past the Tasmanian government is promoting reconciliation, inclusiveness and a positive future for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Tasmanian Government recently initiated legislation to create a \$5 million fund to provide payments to eligible members of the Stolen Generations of Aborigines and their children. The [\*Stolen Generations Act\*](#) was passed by all members of both Houses of Parliament in November 2006. The amount each eligible person is entitled to receive will be determined by the legislation.

In December 1995, the Tasmanian Government handed back 12 areas of land to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community. They are, in the North West, Preminghana (Mt Cameron West) and Steep Island; in the Furneaux group of islands, Mt Chappell Island, Badger Island, Wombat Point (on Cape Barren Island), Great Dog Island and Babel Island; in the South West, Kutikina Cave, Ballawinne Cave and Wargata Mina Cave; and in the South, Risdon Cove and Oyster Cove. In 1999, title to Wybalenna on Flinders Island was also returned to the community. In 2005, title to Cape Barren and lungtalanana (Clarke) Islands was returned to the Aboriginal community.

In addition, a number of other areas of land including 'Murrayfield' on Bruny Island, Thule Farm on Flinders Island, Trefoil Island, Saltwater River and Fanny Cochrane's Church at Nichols Rivulet have been purchased through funding provided by the Indigenous Land Corporation or the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission.

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