

## **North West Queensland Indigenous Catholic Social Services**

### **Justice Division**

#### **Submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee**

#### **Value of a justice reinvestment approach to criminal justice in Australia**

March 2013



**Yurru Ngaratathati**  
Murri Men's Group



**Marapai Ngaratathati**  
Murri Women's Group

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## Our conviction is:

**A:** The history of Justice Reinvestment in Mount Isa has been one that has had no co-ordination until our involvement in the approach to draw all parties together, so as to achieve better outcomes for the clients. It has been one where an efficient system of recycling clients has prevailed and which produced a lack of drive by clients to better their people and empower themselves to address issues affecting their lives.

**B:** Our local analysis is based on 130 clients who have successfully completed the programme in the first instance. This figure does not account for those who have returned through the system and have been offered more support. Some of these have been challenged to make changes before being resentenced and have responded positively. Others have reoffended in some other manner and have appeared before the Court system again. Our analysis of these 130 clients has provided the State Government a saving of \$13 million over 5 years.

**C:** It is estimated that over 80% of clients in incarceration suffer from a mental illness. It is an indictment on our system that we offer so little appropriate support to clients with mental illness. The right to privacy is one of the most complex and soul destroying aspects of our work in this area as no information can be released to people working with mentally ill clients, yet we are dealing with these clients on a daily basis at times and it can be difficult to make any progress.

**D:** The perceived failure of Murri Courts in Queensland, which was stated by the State Government, centred on the Review of the Murri Courts that was undertaken in 2009/2010 (AIC Reports Technical and Background Paper 39). This report demonstrated many flaws as there was no contact with our Mount Isa Murri Court people. This report was based only on statistics, without taking into consideration the fact that no one actually served a custodial sentence.

To have an effective program in supporting clients in Mount Isa through the Court processes, is to engage in a community-based model with an 'extensive wrap around service', which we are able to provide. Most issues are not Court related, yet end up in Court because no action is taken to help clients to discover the root causes of their lifestyle which leads to incarceration.

**E:** The costs associated with this 'wrap around model' would not be one tenth of the cost of an inmate in incarceration. In fact if we had \$10,000 per client, compared to the \$100,000 for their cost in jail, we would be able to offer a case management model of ten clients per worker. This would enable us a more personal, in-depth and targeted approach to clients with more services offered to them.

**F:** Due to our remote location, we have had little contact with other overseas systems. There has been the occasional visitor to our area from overseas who has shared their experiences with us. There are also no real and effective means of sharing information within Australia. Most people/groups could be seen to be disconnected from others working in the same areas of justice reinvestment, often almost 'doubling up' on each other's work. Unfortunately organisations competing for funding in many areas of service provision puts strain on meaningful sharing of information.

**G:** I see the benefits of implementing from our experience to be mainly for the individuals who experience a new sense of trusted and being listened to – sometimes for the first time. There is a lead agency that they trust which helps establish other relationships and helps them to see beyond jail to the real issues that need to be faced. They are empowered to ask questions on health, culture, lifestyle, growing up ...

I see the challenges to implementing a system to be: the multiple and extreme barriers to being healthy, the need of a whole of Government approach, the lack of long term funding to guarantee results that take many years to be evaluated and being caught in addictions and lack of education as real every day barriers.

**H:** Our activity is cost-effective given that it is based on an established programme that has been able to deliver a consistent and continuous service over many years. The Murri Men's and Women's programmes have built a solid reputation within the community. This reputation has extended to not only its Indigenous

client base, but with the local Court, Probation and Parole, Police and other stakeholders as being able to provide a soft entry point for Indigenous offenders to receive one on one case management and group work in an appropriate cultural manner.

The programme works with other stakeholders to efficiently reduce costs in terms of programme delivery. The other services accessed, and programmes offered by NWQICSS, complement and support the delivery of the Restorative Justice programme. It is cost beneficial in terms of the savings gained from alternative sentencing options whilst addressing each client's particular circumstances and their offending behaviour. It attempts to develop respectful relationships with and between clients and the various stakeholders within the Justice system.

## Introduction and Background

North West Queensland Indigenous Catholic Social Services (NWQICSS) is a non-profit entity established by Good Shepherd Parish Mount Isa. The organisation's aim is to provide direct relief and support to Indigenous people of the region, through innovative and sustainable programmes and activities.

We are staffed by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. We work specifically with Indigenous people in disadvantaged situations by identifying needs and creating opportunities in response, where possible we aim for 80% of staff to be Indigenous. NWQICSS works closely with other community organisations to establish programmes and activities to address issues in three divisions. A: Indigenous families and children, B: those at risk of homelessness and C: those in contact with the criminal justice system, usually the unskilled for employment.

NWQICSS is a well-established service provider in the North West Queensland region, with existing integrated networks, established referral pathways and protocols, reputable long term relationships and a range of collaborative programmes and services across the region and within the Court system. It has been the recipient of funding from the Federal Attorney General's Department for its Restorative Justice initiatives in 2010/11 and more recently in 2012/13. It has also received funding to deliver the Community Justice Programme Co-ordinator's position 2012 to 2014. This has been reduced from the original funding because of budget cutbacks. We began our Court services by funding a position ourselves because the need was shown to be valued by the men and the development of a Murri Men's Group was showing results in our community. The Cell Visitor position is associated with the Arthur Petersen Diversionary Centre and was established after the Black Deaths In Custody Report. This service has been outsourced to NWQICSS for three years.

The North West Queensland Indigenous Catholic Social Services (NWQICSS) recognises within our community the need to address the urgent challenge of accelerating rates of Indigenous offending and incarceration in Queensland. NWQICSS addresses these issues by providing a diversionary case management programme. Since 2008 we have responded locally to this challenge by providing a soft entry point into case management by the establishment of the Yurru Ngartatathi Murri Men's Group and Yurru Marapai Murri Women's Group. These provide Indigenous offenders with the opportunity of participating in an Indigenous Sentencing List since January 2013, previously Murri Court, to receive case management support and access to a range of other specific services. NWQICSS through its work with Indigenous male and female clients, recognises the need for these two necessary and complementary cultural groups to address issues around assaults, domestic and family violence, substance and alcohol misuse, tribal conflicts between and within families, personal life history issues and cultural cohesion, in order for lifestyle changes to occur.

The work of the Murri Men's and Murri Women's Group is integral to the delivery of justice outcomes in Mount Isa. It is envisaged that the work that these groups undertake will be further enhanced by the establishment of NWQICSS's Child and Family Centre later in 2013 and its leadership of the Community Justice Groups in this region. Offenders, being case managed by NWQICSS, will benefit from our integrated approach to service delivery and our ongoing provision of a platform of engagement with other local service providers in the area.

The Murri Men's and Murri Women's Groups will respond to the specific issues or problems of each client by case managing offenders, supporting them through the Court process and by working with Probation & Parole and other service providers to reduce the high rate of recidivism. In addition to ongoing one on one case management of clients NWQICSS will provide a connection back to community and culture through its regular weekly Men's and Women's Groups meetings and opportunities to be involved in its Bush Healing, 'Narrative Video Therapy' and Life Management programmes. Clients are assisted to gain consequential knowledge of their own behaviour and an understanding of what eventually needs to be

addressed and altered in their lives. NWQICSS believes that through initial and ongoing case management and through building trustful and respectful relationships with clients we can assist them to understand and challenge their lifestyle choices, behaviours and addictions, particularly those which lead to incarceration or violent behaviour.

NWQICSS, through the recent data collection and work with an external evaluation team from James Cook University, aims to gain greater insights into the underlying causes of Indigenous offending and recidivism and the success of our current responses.



## Response to the Terms of Reference

Our Submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee, 'Value of a Justice Reinvestment approach to criminal justice in Australia' is really our narrative of what has happened in Mount Isa Courts since our dedicated involvement in the Justice System, our attempts to bring about greater justice for all involved and more meaningful outcomes for clients and those who make a living out of the justice system. Our story is revealed in what we do each day with a dedicated team of people, passionate about making the justice system answerable to all, who each day come in response to 'breaking the law' and 'need to have their matters heard'. In responding to the questions asked we hope to share some of our story.

## Imprisonment in Australia: trends, consequences and alternatives

### ***(A) The drivers behind the past 30 years of growth in the Australian imprisonment rate.***

I believe that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People make up just over 3 per cent of Queensland's population and are 25 per cent of North West Queensland. 'A 2008 study showed that in Queensland jails, 75% of the male population were Indigenous and 90% of the female population was Indigenous.' (Page 37 MJA 197 (1) 2 July 2012). From our limited experience in the Courts system in North West Queensland I believe the past has been characterised by: a poor standard of representation, years of lack of understanding or failure to act on any knowledge of clients and their background by most involved in the Court system, young and inexperienced police officers seeking a career, magistrates frustrated with the recycling each day, few peer supports or positive role models involved in the justice system and little support for clients in dire need with issues in their lives that are not really related to the Court system. There was no co-ordinated approach to draw all parties together to achieve better outcomes for clients. In essence it was an efficient system for recycling clients, which produced good employment for those in the justice system, solicitors and Police alike, but a lack of drive by Indigenous clients to better their people and empower themselves to address issues affecting their lives.

### ***(B) The economic and social costs of imprisonment.***

With reference to costs involved in the prison system and the relevant work NWQICSS has delivered over the past five years with little funding, it is calculated that there has been a possible saving to the Queensland Government of \$13 million. This analysis is based on one third, or 130 clients, who have successfully completed the programmes in the first instance. The Government has not disputed this in a series of correspondence I have had with them over the closure of Murri Courts in Queensland at the end of 2012. This cost was derived from one third of the number of people supported by NWQICSS before sentencing and because individuals addressed some significant issues through the Murri Men's and Women's Groups which resulted in a non-custodial sentence and serving that sentence without any breach, thus avoiding the court system again. A much greater saving would also include the time we have spent in working with Probation and Parole Officers here in Mount Isa for other Indigenous clients living in Mount Isa on various probation and parole orders and for other clients returning from Custody, mainly in Townsville. We have arranged to meet transport arriving in Mount Isa from prison destinations and to accommodate clients here in Mount Isa and then arranged to transport them to the plane for their home destination as well. We have approximately two thirds of our clients who have breached their sentencing conditions and reoffended. However, with sustained efforts more than one third of our clients, or half of those who have reoffended, have been supported through the various stages of the system to maintain a life within the community. It is really those clients who have returned through the system, who have been offered more support and challenged to make changes before being resentenced, and who have responded positively. Others have reoffended in some other manner and have appeared before the Court system again. The financial implications of this would make an even greater impost and it is also an even more significant saving to the Government.

My favourite saying to one guy who has had over \$1 million spent on him in incarceration and with little effect until he came into contact with us and was then offered serious support to help him – ‘You are our million dollar man!’. It is a disgrace to me that this has resulted in such a waste of tax payer’s money.

***(C) The over-representation of disadvantaged groups within Australian prisons, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people experiencing mental ill-health, cognitive disability and hearing loss.***

It is estimated that around 80% of clients in incarceration suffer from a mental illness. ‘72.8% of males and 86.1% of females suffered from at least one mental health disorder in the previous 12 months’ – 2008. (Page 39 MJA 197 (1) 2 July 2012). In most cases this is undiagnosed or maltreated. In some cases a person is sentenced to jail as the only means of being assessed by a mental health team. It is an indictment on our systems that offer so little appropriate support to clients or has ready access by groups trying to deal with such clients. It also reflects on a system that sees people having an absolute right to privacy and no one is then able to intervene when mental health issues are recognised. So often dealing with the offence by the Court is more important than any long term support for any need to address their mental health. Helping the client to engage with appropriate health care for a diagnosis or ongoing support is most challenging and is not helped by a system that needs constant badgering to obtain a positive result. Intensive case management is one way to engage with mental health professionals and even then it is not always possible to see a good outcome for diagnosis and appropriate on-going treatment.

As previously stated, the right to privacy is one of the most complex and soul destroying aspects of our work in this area as no information can be released to people working with mentally ill clients.

***(D) The cost, availability and effectiveness of alternatives to imprisonment, including prevention, early intervention, diversionary and rehabilitation measures***

Our experience of working with very little funding, but with real passion for our clients, has shown excellent results. Outlined here is the approach we have offered. The perceived failure of Murri Courts, which I have had correspondence with the State Minister for Justice and Attorney-General about, centres on the Review of the Murri Courts that was undertaken in 2009/2010 (AIC Reports Technical and Background Paper 39) and which was a flawed review in my opinion. It did not take into account local knowledge (there was no local input into this review, even though it reviewed our local Murri Court. Nor did it take into account the fact that nearly all sentences were not served in jail but were wholly suspended because of the preparation work with clients before sentencing. North West Queensland Indigenous Catholic Social Services practice is to combine both ‘Bail Based’ with ‘Sentence Based’ clients. This allows for NWQICSS to provide clients with ‘Wrap around Service’ supports, including both Government and Non-government services. **This strategy is what differentiates the Mount Isa Indigenous Sentencing List (or Murri Court) from all other such Courts in Queensland and has been highly regarded for doing so.**

Current activities that North West Queensland Indigenous Catholic Social Services (NWQICSS) provides to support clients in Mount Isa through the Court processes with our community-based model are:

**1. Engagement/ Assessment**

Staff through the ‘Restorative Justice Officer’ programme visit every Court day and offer Support and Information to Indigenous clients. This allows for early engagement between staff and clients and is a preferred method by the courts; as clients are better informed about processes.

Staff, through the Cell Visitor programme, visit the Watch House on a daily basis to provide support to Indigenous clients. This is the first point of contact for most and allows early engagement between staff and client. The Cell Visitor, at the request of clients and where approved by Police, will contact families. All other matters involving clients are relayed from the Cell Visitor to the relevant Justice Support Officers within NWQICSS.



NWQICSS Men's and Women's Groups have developed a unified approach to the delivery of Court assessments of offenders eligible for the Murri Court bail programme. They have also developed an induction process that provides a needs analysis of each client and enables clients to set goals to be achieved. This provides valuable information around the particular issues that need to be addressed.

Men's Group attendance from January to August 2012 was 650 attendances at Men's Group. This is an average of 25 men each Monday night. It has been over 30 each Monday night since then.

## **2. Offender Case Management**

NWQICSS has developed records and case notes in relation to participants which may be shared with other stakeholders when needed to assist Magistrates, Court Co-ordinators, Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Legal Service representatives, Police Prosecutions and others for the purpose of supporting participants through the legal process. The Murri Men's and Women's Groups are able to capture valuable information that would not always be available to other stakeholders due to our ongoing, often daily contact with clients.

## **3. Offender Monitoring and Support**

NWQICSS, in conjunction with Community Elders, have developed Murri Men's and Women's Groups, according to gender, to demonstrate that cultural norms have been accounted for in our service delivery. Traditionally from original Cultural Practices, men and women have gone to respective gender camps to discuss and settle issues. This structure reflects and acknowledges a cultural awareness of the relevant cultural factors present to each gender. It has also allowed for the delivery of more targeted programme that provides early intervention and prevention. These meetings are conducted for 2 hours each week and provide a safe environment to share stories, gain mutual support and find encouragement from other participants. Other workshops are offered on a wide range of topics (e.g. Domestic Violence, Triggers and Cravings, Parenting, Life Management Skills, Anger Management, Substance Misuse, Relationships, to name some) and are aimed at assisting offenders to understand the impact of possible incarceration on themselves, their families and the community left to support them. Offenders are supported to attend these meetings and to build relationships with other stakeholders. The regular attendance of offenders provides for a better means of monitoring progress and providing the necessary emotional and other supports to complete a bail programme.

## **4. Bail and Sentence Submissions**

NWQICSS, as the Community Justice Group co-ordinators, provides a variety of oral and/or written bail submissions as well as oral and/or written sentencing submissions (commonly called Cultural Reports) and other submissions as requested by the Courts. These take numerous hours to complete as the client is asked to review their life from childhood and seek solutions to their issues.

## **5. Integrated Case Management and Service Partnerships**

The Yurru Ngartathai Men's Group and Marapai Ngartathai Women's Group support clients (offenders, those on probation, parole orders, self-referrals) from the Mount Isa community, Northern Territory and other North West Communities (Doomadgee, Mornington Island, Camooweal, Normanton, Boulia, Cloncurry, Dajarra) who are transient or living in this community. NWQICSS have developed a partnership with CEA to deliver the ORSS (Offender Reintegration Support Service) to assist offenders returning to the community from long term imprisonment. In addition, to this reintegration service, NWQICSS works closely with other local stakeholders to build constructive and co-operative working relationships and have developed protocols for appropriate information exchange and referrals. Men's and Women's Group meetings provide community stakeholders with a platform to meet with and engage with their respective target groups. Much of the Court related side of this management is provided by our Case Court Co-ordinators who work closely with the Community Justice Group and Men's and Women's Groups in sharing appropriate client information.

## **6. Individual Support Programme.**

Men's and Women's Group programmes conduct yarning circles each week that are places of learning, bonding and relating. In addition to this, we try to encourage participants to talk and reflect on why they have offended. Participants work with restorative justice workers to unravel the deep seated issues that led them to offend. This is also done through Bush Healing which connects men and women back to culture and also with a narrative therapy programme.

**Life Management Course** is a course developed in the USA by Earnie Larsen, but adapted in Mount Isa for Indigenous people to help them discover their own patterns of behaviour for living the way they do. It gives insights into early experiences in life which help a client to name and understand their behaviour patterns today and gives them the tools to make the necessary changes to their lives.

**'Narrative Video Therapy'** was developed here by using a video camera to record, and rerecord, their own story of life of life and to see how their behaviour results from the extensive trauma and life experiences that have led to addictions, apparent lack of commitment and childhood and family complexities in growing up. These patterns are often being repeated in their own life now. This method allows participants to see themselves through the eyes of the video camera and to begin to make connections between their past and present situations and to begin a healing process. Each time they record their story they are able to make more connections.

## **7. Court Support**

NWQICSS through its Community Justice Group and Restorative Justice workers provide daily support to the Mount Isa Courts attending on Arrest Court days (usually Monday/Tuesday), Murri Court days (providing transport and support, information to Elders and stakeholders in regard to clients) and as requested by legal representatives, the clients, or other stakeholders. This support is provided to Magistrates and District Courts' participants as well and is keenly sought after by visiting barristers and judges.

## **8. Post Sentence & Transitional Support**

NWQICSS works closely with the Department of Community Safety, Probation and Parole Office in Mount Isa, to provide assistance with prisoner transition support on a regular basis. Sourcing accommodation for those in transit, bus collections and airport drop offs, as well as general assistance with location of clients on the various probation and parole orders when required. NWQICSS also supports their client's reintegration into the community by accepting referrals from Department of Community Safety to both Men's and Women's Groups.

Work with Department of Child Safety has been helpful where clients are in discussion about their children. The Women's Group has had good relationships with this Department. Men may often feel aggrieved by actions of this Department in relationship to their children.

## **9. Supervision /Community Service Orders**

NWQICSS provides support to the Mount Isa Department of Community Safety by providing supervision and projects for offenders on Community Service Orders. Approximately 1120 hours was provided to their clients for the six months from January to June 2012.

## **10. Emergency Relief**

With the provision of Emergency Relief offered through the Parish agency and also from St Vincent de Paul office here as well, we offer formal times on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Outside of these hours for other special cases we are able to meet immediate needs. The issues of travel for Court in Townsville for custody of children, of extra payments for rent or power, or special emergencies for children

or family in hospital in Brisbane or Townsville all require extended care. With 'Food Rescue from Woolworths' and financial grants we are able to alleviate immediate needs. We estimate that with both direct financial support, supplying food packages and meals every day from our premises, we would offer well over \$100,000 in direct relief to people. It is amazing how this direct support can be used to tide clients over immediate needs so that longer term or personal needs can be embraced. We can never underestimate how this Emergency Relief helps the process of those at risk. Of course, not all Emergency Relief is used for those at risk of incarceration.

## **12. Cell Visitor Match House**

NWQICSS currently provides the Cell Visitor programme to the Mount Isa Watch House and daily provision of meals. As part of our "wrap around" service delivery model we are able to support offenders from the beginning of their contact with the Justice system through the courts, whilst on bail and post sentencing. The Cell Visitor provides the first point of contact for many of our programme participants.

**The costs associated with this model would not be one tenth of the costs of an inmate in incarceration. In fact if we had \$10,000 per client compared to the \$100,000 as a cost of jail, we would be able to offer a case management model of ten clients per worker and an even more personal, in depth and targeted approach to clients.**

## **Understanding Justice Reinvestment: existing approaches and experience**

### **(E) The methodology and objectives of justice reinvestment.**

Justice reinvestment is a broad description of discovering ways to understand the cost in financial and other terms, such as the effects of life style and community pressures on people who would normally be incarcerated for what is deemed crime. The usual aim of this reinvestment is to divert a significant proportion of the costs currently spent on served jail sentences to the pre-and post-sentencing of offenders, to realise a more just outcome that helps to address and support, in the long term, the issues in each person's life. This normally entails community supports that help to rebuild a more ordered society and stable individuals.

### **(F) The implementation and effectiveness of justice reinvestment in other countries, including the United States of America;**

We have had little contact with other systems, other than the occasional visitor to our area from overseas who has shared their experiences with us. There has also been the occasional use of resources (e.g.; DVD's, programme – Life Management by Earnie Larsen) from overseas, in particular the United State of America.

As well as this, there does not seem to have been any real and effective means of sharing information within Australia by the building up of resources or networks. Most people/groups seem to be disconnected from others working in the same areas of justice reinvestment.

## **Implementing a justice reinvestment approach in Australia**

### **(G) The benefits of, and challenges to, implementing a justice reinvestment approach in Australia**

*"A group of university researchers, Professor Elena Marchetti (University of Wollongong), Professor Kathleen Daly (Griffith University) and Dr Jacqui Huggins (consultant) are currently conducting research on the use of Indigenous sentencing courts for partner violence matters. The research commenced in 2009 and is funded by a five-year Australian Research Council Discovery Grant. The Indigenous sentencing courts that are being studied are the former Mount Isa and Rockhampton Murri Courts (now run as*

*Indigenous Sentencing Lists), the Canberra, Nowra and Kempsey Circle Courts and the Geraldton Barndimalgu Court.*

*The research not only involves interviewing court staff, Elders and service providers, but also interviewing offenders who have been through the Indigenous sentencing court process, and their partners at the time of the offence. To date, more than 30 offenders and 25 victims have been interviewed for the study.*

*Although the data collection is still ongoing and no official findings from the study have yet been reported, Professor Marchetti has, in personal correspondence and discussions with NWQICSS, indicated that the data does appear to support a justice reinvestment approach to combating Indigenous over-representation in the criminal justice system. The majority of offenders attribute changes in their behaviour and attitude to having appeared before an Indigenous sentencing court, where, as a result of the therapeutic and restorative process, they have received more suitable sentencing outcomes. Mainstream courts, where the penalties imposed are normally imprisonment or a fine, do not have the same impact as Indigenous sentencing courts, where an offender receives the support of their community Elders and sentencing orders that require them to attend appropriate rehabilitation programmes such as anger management, alcohol and drug rehabilitation or family violence prevention programmes. Although the fear of being sentenced to another term of imprisonment has also been identified by some of the offenders as being a catalyst for change, these offenders have noted that serving time in prison provides them with no opportunity to learn new ways of coping with the challenges they face back in their communities once they are released."*

Written by: Professor Elena Marchetti, Faculty of Law, University of Wollongong, Wollongong NSW 2522.

#### **I see the benefits from our experience to be:**

- The individual is offered individual treatment
- There is a series of possibilities for them to work through at their own pace
- There are trusted people to go to when in trouble – night or day
- They experience care and being listened to – sometimes for the first time
- That there is basically one lead agency that they trust which helps establish other relationships to help them
- That different approaches are being trialled to see what works for different people
- Seeing beyond jail possibilities to the real issues that need to be faced
- Giving confidence to do it themselves but not alone
- Being empowered to ask questions on health, culture, lifestyle, growing up ... which shows they are not alone and also have support in dealing with issues, from others in the Group, from leadership, from mentors

#### **I see the challenges to implementing a system to be:**

- There is no men's place – no safe house for men
- most have multiple and extreme barriers to being well again
- needs a whole of Government approach - costs are not fitting into any box – saves Corrective Services budget but funded from Justice & Attorney General's budget
- good health is affected at an early stage in life by the barriers they face
- family life is so fractious
- sexual relationships formed early in life produce children – there is a lifelong series of decisions around child rearing as a father or mother and it is difficult to get out of the relationships the were never really formed out of love for the person, because of children,
- caught in additions to sexual pleasure, to pornography, to aggressive behaviour (it gives a high),
- replaying the tape of their own child rearing (lack of or dysfunction) and knowing only lifestyles from the family they have known as children
- few role models to inspire them – as fathers/mothers, men/women, culturally, for child rearing, as house makers
- allowing them to feel accepted and to grow beyond where they are at - poor numeracy and literacy and little formal education that is equivalent to the Year level when they left school
- Domestic violence cases usually judge one party is right and one is wrong and not leading both to work on the relationship

***(H) the collection, availability and sharing of data necessary to implement a justice reinvestment approach;***

I am concerned that, with the official closure of Murri Courts in Queensland, all available data, which is so precious at this stage of development, will be rendered ineffective or lost as the Court processes move on.

The following by Professor Elena Marchetti, Faculty of Law, University of Wollongong, Wollongong NSW adds to my concerns. “The findings of the quantitative component of the AIC evaluation referred to earlier (as with many quantitative evaluations of Indigenous sentencing courts), which considers the impact of the Murri Courts on imprisonment and re-offending rates must be interpreted with caution due to the following reasons:

1. It is too early to make any claims about the impact of Indigenous sentencing courts on recidivism - the Murri Courts had only been operating for approximately 10 years (prior to their cessation last year) and it is unrealistic to expect that with such a short-lived history, one day in court would dramatically change an offender's behaviour without proper and sustained support post an offender's Murri Court appearance. Indeed, **if recidivism is the only measure used to evaluate the 'success' of court programmes, mainstream courts should be dismantled.**

2. The AIC evaluation admits that the control group used in their evaluation may not be representative of all offenders sentenced in the Murri Court. This is a common issue with studies that attempt to measure the impact of an Indigenous sentencing court process (such as the Murri Courts) on recidivism.

3. **A relative cost-benefit analysis was unable to be performed** between the Murri Court and mainstream Magistrates'/Children's Court processes (and is unlikely to be properly undertaken in future) because of a lack of reliable court data.

4. **Incorrect or missing court and offending history data is a common problem with evaluations that rely solely on quantitative analyses of such data.** This obviously impacts on the validity and reliability of any findings of such quantitative analyses.

5. Interpreting any findings in relation to sentencing outcomes is difficult due to the procedural differences that exist between Murri Courts and mainstream Magistrates'/Children's Courts, as well as **the underlying rationale for the type of sentencing imposed in Murri Courts which differs from the rationale that exists with mainstream Magistrates'/Children's Courts.** Indeed, if one carefully reads the conclusions reached by the AIC in relation to determining whether or not Murri Court participants were more or less likely than Indigenous offenders in mainstream courts to be sentenced to a term of imprisonment, you will find that the findings are in fact qualified by the following explanations:

- Firstly, the report admits that there may be differences in the facts of the various charges laid against offenders referred to the Murri Court and those in the control group. It is likely that the Murri Court offenders committed more serious violent offences than those in the control group and this could not be controlled for in the selection process for the purposes of the comparative analysis;

- Secondly, **the assessment process for approving an offender to appear before a Murri Court requires that they be at risk of receiving a custodial sentence** ('as they have already pleaded guilty' is my addition). As the AIC report notes, this is not a criteria that is applied to the control group and it is uncertain how much impact such a criteria has on the eventual penalty imposed;

- Thirdly, **sentencing decisions are undoubtedly influenced by sentencing options and what services are available to support offenders if they are sentenced to a community-based order.** As acknowledged by the AIC such factors may have had an impact on sentencing outcomes; and

- Lastly, **the views of Elders and others involved in the Murri Court sentencing process may influence the sentences imposed** in ways in which are not relevant for mainstream courts. .” Written by: Professor Elena Marchetti, Faculty of Law, University of Wollongong, Wollongong NSW 2522

NWQICSS through it data collection and work with an external evaluation team from James Cook University aims to gain greater insights into the underlying causes of Indigenous offending and recidivism and the success of our current practices.

- **It is hoped this evaluation will provide NWQICSS's with valuable objective insights** into our diversionary programmes and the internal supports. These will include:
  - Intensive Case Management of clients primarily to address the significant needs of offenders or those at risk of reoffending.
  - The provision of accessible and culturally sensitive, safe groups and appropriate rehabilitation processes and appropriately skilled staff
  - Maintaining good working relationships with local Community Elders/Traditional Owner groups and other community stakeholders.
  - The alignment of our goals with that of the Indigenous Justice Programme and other local stakeholders such as the local Magistrates' Court, Probation & Parole, James Cook University and other stakeholders to deliver an evidence based approach to our service and measurable justice outcomes.
  - Obtaining clearer understandings of the underlying causes and successful solutions to offending and recidivism.
- Through highlighting aspects of successful delivery of the programme/activities a reduction in offending and recidivism will achieve a safer and supportive community.

The base location for the activity is Mount Isa, Queensland. However, this activity has benefits and impacts on other communities in the North West and Gulf Region of Queensland (including Doomadgee, Mornington Island, Normanton) and the Northern Territory (close to the border and as far away as Tennant Creek and Alice Springs) as there is a flow on effect present with Mount Isa being the hub in North West Queensland. NWQICSS is also the first contact point through Probation and Parole for offenders transitioning back to community.

This process is value for money given that it is based on an established programme that has been able to **deliver a consistent and continuous service over years**. The Murri Men's and Women's programmes have built a reputation within the community not only amongst its client base, but with the local Court, Probation and Parole, Police and other Stakeholders as being able to provide a soft entry point to Indigenous offenders to receive one on one case management and group work in an appropriate cultural manner. The programme works with other Stakeholders to save costs in terms of programme delivery. The other services accessed and programmes offered by NWQICSS complement and support the delivery of the Restorative Justice programme.

**It is cost effective in terms of the savings gained from alternative sentencing options** whilst addressing each client's particular circumstances and their offending behaviour. It attempts to develop respectful relationships with and between clients and the various stakeholders within the Justice system. NWQICSS is a recognised Indigenous agency already being utilised by the Mount Isa Court with connections to other Gulf communities e.g. Doomadgee, Mornington Island, Burketown and Normanton.” Written by: Professor Elena Marchetti, Faculty of Law, University of Wollongong, Wollongong NSW 2522.

It is envisaged that the James Cook University (Mount Isa Centre for Rural and Remote Health) evaluation and ongoing support will provide NWQICSS with evidence and data around the underlying causes of offending and recidivism. This will provide NWQICSS with the opportunity to adjust its programme delivery/services/case management. It will help us to concentrate on what works to reduce offending and recidivism and to build stronger and safer communities into the future. Should we be offered renewed



Federal funding by the Department of Justice and Attorney General from July 2013, we will be able to be involved in a more substantive research project with James Cook University.

This will involve:

- 1) Offenders involved in family or domestic violence, addictive behaviours or substance misuse and at risk of offending.
- (2) Offenders referred from Corrective Services or Offender Reintegration Support Service (ORSS) on Parole or Probationary orders at risk of reoffending.
- 3) Participants of the Yurru Ngatathati Men's Group and Yurru Marapai Women's Group referred via Indigenous Sentencing List - adult offenders or those at risk of offending, and those returning from incarceration.
- (4) Stakeholders with the capacity to support the specific issues or problems that are faced by the client group.

NWQICSS has linkages with a number of agencies and stakeholders. Currently it operates the Community Justice Group in Mount Isa and through its work in the Magistrates' Court has strong linkages with court based personnel, legal representatives, police and local Indigenous Elders. NWQICSS also has established links with Probation/Parole through its involvement in pre court meetings, transition of offenders and support of referred clients. NWQICSS works with the Salvation Army Recovery Service in support of clients undertaking drug/alcohol rehabilitation programmes and with North West Queensland Domestic Violence Service in support of programmes and mutual referrals. NWQICSS works closely with Queensland Health Services /ATODS and in particular Mental Health and the local Indigenous Medical Centre - Gidgee Healing. NWQICSS works with the Topsy Harry Centre, Arthur Petersen Diversionary Centre, Department of Housing and OzCare Mount Isa to address homelessness issues of offenders and to support a justice reinvestment approach.

The Queensland Government has indicated to NWQICSS that they are not currently in a position to support diversionary programmes, client case management or any supports around offending issues. Local staff of the Court House have been directed by the current Minister Hon. Jarrod Bleijie, Attorney General and Minister for Justice, (Copy of Letter Appendix 1.1 from the Minister is attached to this document) to help us apply for ongoing support from the Federal Attorney General's Department for this project. NWQICSS is the only Indigenous organisation in the Mount Isa region offering an Indigenous Justice programme of this nature. See Attachment 2.9 Certificate of Appreciation for Australia Day this year, the only one offered in Queensland, by the State Government, in recognition of our efforts.

Best practice will benefit through a deeper understanding and analysis from the James Cook University evaluations of the causes and solutions to offending or recidivist behaviours and suggested methodology for future directions.

Any reduction in the levels of offending/recidivism and greater community awareness of issues will be a huge benefit.

- Personal benefits for clients come from a greater understanding of the required education of clients around behaviours and the development of skills sets that address the underlying causes of crime.
- Increased community support for relevant crime prevention programmes brings community safety to the fore.
- An Integrated community based approach amongst stakeholders to addressing the needs of a targeted client base is of benefit to all involved.
- Stronger and Safer family and community environments.
- A model of best practice that can be implemented in other locations.
- Integration of clients into mainstream services and individual client benefits

Five support letters are attached from:

1. Mr. Craig Casey, DJAG Regional Justice Coordinator Mount Isa;
2. Mr Michael Reidel, Regional Manager of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (QLD) Ltd;
3. Ms Lucy Rockett, A/District Manager Mount Isa and Lower Gulf District Probation and Parole Service;
4. Mr Vincent Byrne, Regional Manager Salvation Army Mount Isa Recovery Services; and
5. Ms Shirley Slann North West Queensland Domestic Violence Service.

The Traditional Owners, the Kalkadood People, have been consulted and have offered their support through the use and access to Traditional land for the conduct of Bush Healing and other associated cultural activities.

An external evaluation of the programme's success in achieving these goals by James Cook University will involve: Reductions in the level of offending behaviour and recidivism amongst the client base and achievement of performance indicators; Increased levels of compliance and interaction of clients over the initial contact period and post sentence probationary/parole period; Feedback from existing Criminal Justice agencies and service providers around service provision; individual feedback offered by clients in case management at various stages of their journey.

Data is collected upon entry and into the programme in the form of initial assessments, bail conditions, induction forms, case notes, case management plans, cultural reports, pre-sentence reports, attendance and reporting data and court lists. Analysis of data via Client / Stakeholder surveys, data base of Court results - date of entry/exit (period of contact), types of offences and number of offences , penalty and outcomes, episodic histories, non-convictions/convictions, community based orders, non-returns/returns to prison for duration of project funding period.

Suggested areas of difficulty encountered by us are:

- 1) Staff changes within the organisation
- 2) Inability to attract qualified staff or replace staff in a timely manner, especially Indigenous staff with required abilities to undertake the work over a long period of time.
- 3) Staff are offered alternative employment for higher wages by another employer (e.g. a good number of Mines are in proximity to our community).
- 4) Providing on-going professional development and training to programme staff and then have them leave our organisation for higher wages in another field.
- 5) Attracting qualified and stable staff to coordinate and support programme with some ability to undertake one on one case management and an inability to attract sufficient funding to employ enough staff to carry out the breadth of the programme.
- 6) Lack of understanding of the breadth of processes involved by wider community.
- 7) Lack of support from other key agencies through constant changes in staffing at both management and client support levels.
- 8) Impacts of Community Business and Sorry Business on clients and staff.
- 9) Difficulty in quantifying financial payment for cultural knowledge.
- 10) Securing adequate and long term funding to implement case management of clients accessing the Murri Men's and Women's programme and other associated activities.
- 11) Improving the data capturing process/tools to further develop evidence based support and outcomes.
- 12) Domestic violence cases usually judge one party is right and one is wrong and not leading both to work on the relationship
- 13) Transport is a particular problem in Mount Isa, as there is not public transport in Mount Isa

***(1) the scope for federal government action which would encourage the adoption of justice reinvestment policies by state and territory governments;***

Targeted approaches to enable agencies in different areas to work together or learn from each other, without taking up too much time, is important. This should lead to an integrated community by community based approach encouraging stakeholders to address the needs of a targeted client base which is of benefit to all involved - Stronger and Safer family and community environments. Any models of best practice that can be implemented in other locations or considered in another place at least will be most informative and educational. Integration of clients into mainstream services and individual client benefits will be at the heart of any reform.

We are happy to provide access to NWQICSS's integrated diversionary programme and internal supports including approaches to:

- \* Intensive Case Management of clients primarily to address the significant needs of offenders or those at risk of reoffending.
- \* The provision of accessible and culturally sensitive, safe groups and rehabilitation processes with appropriately skilled staff \*
- Maintaining good working relationships with local Community Elders/Traditional Owner groups and other community stakeholders.
- \* The alignment of our goals with other local stakeholders such as the Magistrates' Court, Probation & Parole, James Cook University and other stakeholders to deliver an evidence based approach to our service with measurable justice outcomes.
- \* Obtaining clearer understandings of the underlying causes and successful solutions to offending and recidivism, including Life Management Workshops and Narrative Therapy with video.
- \* Successful delivery of the programme/activities for a reduction of offending and recidivism and the achievement of a safer and supportive community.

# List of Appendices

## Supporting documentation

Appendix	Description
1.1	Letter of Response from Qld Attorney General and Minister for Justice
2.1	Letter of Support – DJAG Mount Isa
2.2	Letter of Support – ATSILS (North West Region)
2.3	Letter of Support – Salvation Army Mount Isa Recovery Centre
2.4	Letter of Support – North West Queensland Domestic Violence Service
2.5	Letter of Support – Department of Community Safety (Probation/Parole)
2.6	Australia Day Award 2013 (Contribution to Community Safety) Department of Community Safety
2.7	Letter JCU (Centre for Rural and Remote Health) – Evaluation support letter



The Hon Jarrod Bleijie MP  
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice

In reply please quote: 547326/1; 2066756

08 JAN 2013

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50 Ann Street Brisbane 4000  
GPO Box 149 Brisbane  
Queensland 4001 Australia  
Telephone +61 7 3247 9068  
Facsimile +61 7 3221 4352  
Email attorney@ministerial.qld.gov.au

Father Michael Lowcock  
North West Queensland Indigenous Catholic Social Services  
PO Box 324  
MOUNT ISA QLD 4825

Dear Father Lowcock

Thank you for your further letter dated 18 November 2012 regarding the Mt Isa Murri Court.  
I apologise for the delay in responding.

The decision to cease funding the Murri Court program was based on evidence in the evaluation by the Australian Institute of Criminology Technical and Background Paper 39 that you refer to in your letter. I note comments that relate to your experience of the outcomes for the Mt Isa Murri Court, however, reiterate that generally the evidence was that the Murri Court had not reduced imprisonment rates for indigenous offenders and had not stopped recidivism in the short term.

I understand that Mr Craig Casey, Indigenous Justice Officer, Courts Innovation Programs, Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG) has been working with all stakeholders including the North West Queensland Indigenous Catholic Social Services (NWQICSS) regarding the support that can be provided in 2013 to the Indigenous Sentencing List.

DJAG will continue to provide funding through the Community Justice Group Program to enable Community Justice Groups to support Elders and Respected Persons to support court processes, including Indigenous Sentencing Lists. An additional allocation from DJAG of \$3,000 has recently been approved for the NWQICSS to assist with this support from 1 January 2013 to 30 June 2013.

Further, the Australian Government Attorney-General's Department has recently released the Indigenous Justice Program Guidelines 2012-13/2013-14. A previously funded project that is outlined in the guidelines as one which would be suitable to submit an applications is as follows:

*"a diversion program to provide case management and support services to 40-60 Indigenous males referred by the local magistrates court or other justice agencies or*

(2)

*following periods of incarceration or detention to address their offending behaviour and provide a way back to community and culture”.*

Should NWQICSS decide to submit an application for this funding from the Australian Government, Mr Casey has been directed to assist in the development of the submission.

I can also confirm that Mr Casey will continue to be employed by DJAG as the Indigenous Justice Officer for the Mt Isa Region with the responsibility of supporting Mt Isa, Doomadgee, Normanton, Cloncurry and Mornington Island.

Yours sincerely

~~JARR~~ROD BLEIJIE MP  
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice





Queensland  
Government

Your ref :  
Our ref :  
Telephone : 47472011  
Email : [courthouse.mountisa@justice.qld.gov.au](mailto:courthouse.mountisa@justice.qld.gov.au)

17 January 2013

Department of  
Justice and Attorney-General

To whom it may concern

I write in support of the Mount Isa Murri Mens and Murri Womens Groups (Yurru Ngartathati Murri Mens Group and Marapai Ngartathati Murri Womens Group) which are facilitated by North West Queensland Indigenous Catholic Social Services (NWQICSS).

Both are key stakeholders to the Indigenous Sentencing list operating in Mount Isa. Both provide a body of work spanning pre and post sentence engagement, case management, watch-house support, prisoner release support, community service projects and general support. Significant time is spent with clients on bail conditions (up to several months), including weekly attendance at the Mens or Womens groups. Time is spent identifying and addressing underlying issues or root causes influencing offending and recidivist behaviours.

A suite of program assistance is provided through narrative therapy, behaviour and life management skills, substance misuse education, bush healing, links with other government and non-government agencies and general training. Targeted outcomes include emphasis on the family unit and dynamics, increased social skills and positive social engagement and safety plans to avoid re-lapsing negative behaviours and patterns. A court based example includes training clients to confidently speak to the Magistrate to: (a) engender trust; (b) have an active voice in the court process; consistent with broader Indigenous Justice Program objectives.

The Mens and Womens Groups are continually evolving to meets the changing needs of their client bases. Since 2008, both groups have adopted and expanded a case management focus, program activities and increased links with other service providers. As a result, weekly attendance and positive contact rates have increased with both groups. Each has a large network of mutual referral pathways with government and non-government agencies. Various agencies regularly attend Mens and Womens Group meetings as guest speakers, providing support information to clients.

In conjunction with the local Community Justice Group, the Men's and Women's Groups are providing key court based support to the Indigenous sentencing list. As a result, they are strongly meeting all associated financial and performance reporting requirements pertaining to Court based, client support processes.

I strongly support the work currently being undertaken by the Mens and Womens Groups. They are uniquely providing culturally appropriate, holistic diversionary programs to identify client issues and assist positive, rehabilitative behaviours.

Yours faithfully,

Craig Casey/  
Regional Justice Program Coordinator, Mount Isa

Mount Isa Magistrates Court  
Isa Street, Mount Isa  
PO Box 1660, Mount Isa  
Queensland 4825 Australia  
Telephone (07) 47472011  
Facsimile (07) 47472077  
Website [www.justice.qld.gov.au](http://www.justice.qld.gov.au)  
Email:  
[courthouse.mountisa@justice.qld.gov.au](mailto:courthouse.mountisa@justice.qld.gov.au)  
ABN 13 846 673 994



# Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (Qld) Ltd

[www.atlsils.org.au](http://www.atlsils.org.au)

Friday, 25 January 2013

MOUNT ISA OFFICE  
4 Simpson Street, Mount Isa Qld 4825  
PO Box 2269, Mount Isa Qld 4825  
T: 07 4744 0900 | F: 07 4743 7231  
**RE: North West Queensland Indigenous Catholic Social Services**  
**(NWQICSS)** Freecall: 1800 012 255  
ABN 1111 6314 562

To whom it may concern,

I write this letter in support of the abovementioned group. Their support of the Mount Isa Murri Mens Group (Yurri Ngatathati) and the Mount Isa Murri Womens group (Marapai Ngatathati) has been outstanding during the period of time that I have been involved with them.

In the course of our interactions with NWQICSS we have found them to be tremendously helpful in attaining our mutual goals of assisting indigenous people charged with criminal offences in their rehabilitation (pre and post sentencing), participation in the Indigenous Sentencing List and it's Murri Court predecessor.

We have found that due to the support and assistance that NWQICSS provides to the Mens and Womens groups that the level of recidivism of our most susceptible clients has fallen significantly. I am also very happy to say that even with the changeover from the Murri Court system to the new Indigenous Sentencing List, the level of attention given to our mutual clients has not materially diminished, due in no small part of the involvement of NWQICSS.

When speaking with our clients in relation to their dealings with NWQICSS, we have overwhelmingly found that the vast majority of them have a very high regard for the staff of the group, their being culturally appropriate and the assistance that the group has afforded them.

When contacting the group for assistance in attending upon our clients in custody, we have found that they have been very quick to respond and provide the assistance sought.

I am happy to provide my support to the group and the invaluable assistance that they provide without reservation.

Regards,

Michael Riedel  
**Regional Manager**



The Manager  
NWQICSS  
17 Stanley Street  
Mount Isa  
Qld 4825

25<sup>th</sup> January 2013

To whom it may concern

The Salvation Army was invited by the Dept of Health and Ageing to re establish a drug and alcohol treatment service at Mount Isa.

As a result, Mount Isa Recovery Services (MIRS) - formerly known as KASH, began taking participants into a residential recovery setting managed by the Salvation Army in July 2012. The Centre delivers a Recovery focused rehabilitation program to a current population of men women and children involving group work, case management and one on one support sessions. The program is based on the Salvation Army Bridge Program which is managed in nine treatment settings on the Eastern coastline of Australia and provides in excess of 500 beds across these Centres. The Mount Isa Services has been our first experience with an Aboriginal Specific service (Aboriginal participants at other Centres represent about 15% of our client population.)

Establishing a new service in a completely new area was a big task and we relied on the co operation of existing stakeholders in Mount Isa to introduce us, make us welcome and support us in establishing the new service

NWQICSS was very much a part of that process. NWQICSS has been instrumental in referrals from the community and in particular from the Murri Court process. As a result of our co operative work 20 participants have been referred from the Murri Court since we opened in July.

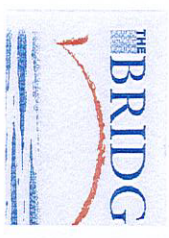
NWQICSS also co ordinates the weekly Murri Group mens and womens meetings (including an evening meal at their Centre on a weekly basis). Our Murri Court participants attend those group activities and NWQICSS staff have helped out a great deal by providing transport to the group on a weekly basis.

We have developed a very helpful working relationship, sharing information about clients of mutual interest and supporting each other in preparation of Court reports. NWQICSS undertakes a detailed cultural assessment of Murri Court clients and has close linkages with the Murri Court Elders. NWQICSS cultural assessments have been helpful in providing a basis on which we at MIRS can develop case plans for our participants. The participants have a great deal of confidence in and trust of NWQICSS staff and we welcome their regular visits to MIRS and the information sharing and support that arises from these visits.

Yours faithfully

Vincent Byrne  
Program Director

Mount Isa Recovery Services  
PO Box 602  
Mount Isa 4825  
Phone 07-47492553 Fax 07-47436617  
William Booth, Founder | Linda Bond, General





PO Box 6061 Townsville Qld 4810  
Telephone (07) 4721 2888  
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E-mail: [minqdvrs@bigpond.net.au](mailto:minqdvrs@bigpond.net.au)

7<sup>th</sup> February 2013

To Whom It May Concern

This is to advise that North Queensland Domestic Violence Resource Service Mount Isa supports North West Qld Indigenous Catholic Social Services application for funding.

NWQICSS works in partnership and collaboration in regards to assisting the Murri Men who attend Murri Men's Group. The men that attend Murri Men's group have a range of underlying issues and NWQICSS assists and empowers the men and gives them the opportunity to be able to voice their problems and issues in a group setting.

Although the Qld Government have ceased funding for Murri Court, Mount Isa Magistrates Court will still proceed with Indigenous Sentencing and the work and assistance provided by NWQICSS is paramount in regards to rehabilitation for most Murri Men who are offending and find themselves before the court. Indigenous incarceration rates are high as compared to Non Indigenous and NWQICSS looks at ways of stopping the offending behaviour and assists and encourages men to make the right choices in their lives, that not only impact on themselves, but also their families and also the community in general.

North Qld Domestic Violence Resource Service provides community education, resources and support on Domestic Violence and also runs two programs called MI MENTER and also GO FARR. Both these programs focus on the affects of Domestic & Family Violence not only on the perpetrator of violence but also the victim and the children. NWQICSS staff observes in the groups and also brings men to the groups to enable them to change their behaviour. The men are taught that although things happen in our lives, violence is a choice and it is up to you to stop using violence.

NWQICSS run Murri Men's groups on a Monday evening and also run a Murri Women's Groups on a Tuesday evening. These groups give both men and women the opportunity to look at the issues that are affecting their lives and also their behaviour and the effects that it can have on a family setting. A number of participants attending the groups have had Child Protection issues as well as Drug and Alcohol problems, housing issues and no employment prospects. The Murri Men's and Murri Women's Groups give a voice to the individuals, supports the individuals and encourages them to get their lives back on track and also teaches them to have a better way of life.

Both groups assist those and help those individuals to get their lives back on track. NWQICSS have a great reputation and refer clients to a range of services, depending on the needs of the individuals.

I hope that funding for NWQICSS is continued so that assistance provided for Murri Men's Groups and Murri Women's Group will continue. NWQICSS deals with individuals at grass roots level and helps those that are homeless in regards to finding their way in society that is acceptable to the rest of the community. Most individuals would never have the confidence or the know how to get the support or assistance that is needed.

There have been a number of success stories from individuals attending NWQICSS and this service makes a difference to the lives of those that have high incarceration rates, high number of child protection issues as well as a high rate of homicide as compared to the rest of Australia.

North Qld Domestic Violence Resource Service works in collaboration and partnership with NWQICSS and appreciates the assistance offered by NWQICSS. Attendees attending programs offered by NQWICSS quite often attend programs offered by NQDVRS. NQDVRS also refers a number of clients to Murri Men's and Murri Women's Groups provided by NWQICSS for assistance.

Further funding provided to NQWICSS is imperative in ensuring that those in high need are given the assistance, education, knowledge they need to make the right decisions and choices in their lives.

Father Mick Lowcock and Br Marty McHugh and staff employed by NQWICSS have understanding and compassion and the knowhow on how to work with those in need.

If you require further information, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

SHIRLEY SLANN

SENIOR WORKER

1 February 2012

NWQICSS  
17 Stanley Street  
Mount Isa  
Queensland, 4825

Queensland  
Department of Community Safety  
Probation and Parole Service  
Mount Isa and Lower Gulf District

Dear Father Mick,

On behalf of Corrective Services I would like to express our gratitude for the ongoing support and assistance the team at NWQICSS continually provide to the Mount Isa Probation and Parole office.

Mount Isa District Office is part of Northern Region Probation and Parole and has a high Indigenous population. Our offender group comprises of more than 80% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. NWQICSS is a key stake holder for Probation and Parole and we are grateful for the positive working relationship which allow for a effective service delivery to our client group and the community as a whole. The transitions work undertaken by NWQICSS including assisting retuning people to their home community has been invaluable in terms of reducing the rate of offenders being returned to secure custody.

Furthermore, your work has been a key force in assisting Mount Isa Probation and Parole achieve goals in accordance with its strategic plan, namely:

- Reduced homelessness within Mount Isa and surrounding communities
- Reduced rates of recidivism
- Reduced rates of Domestic Violence in the community
- Compliance with court orders, namely the completion of community service orders and increased development of meaningful community service projects
- Reduced rates of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in custody. The NWQICSS Restorative Justice Workers play a key supporting role to the Mt Isa District Office in locating Men and Women subject to Community Based Orders, thus reducing the number of warrants issued.

Given our client group the importance of culturally appropriate interventions and forums is paramount to address the needs of the community. Our agency will continue to refer men and women to the Murri Men's and Women's group given the positive influence participation has on the Mount Isa Community.

I look forward to a continued working relationship with the NWQICSS team, the Murri Women's Group and the Murri Men's Group.

~~Yours sincerely,~~

~~Lley Rockett~~  
A/District Manager  
Mount Isa and Lower Gulf District  
Probation and Parole Service

Leaders in corrections:  
Partners in criminal and social justice

8 Miles Street  
MT ISA Qld 4825

Telephone (07) 4747 2044  
Facsimile (07) 4747 2147  
ABN 19 823 962 345





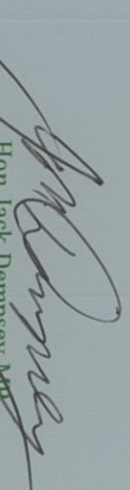
# Certificate of Appreciation


presented to

North West Queensland  
Indigenous Catholic Social Services

by

Department of Community Safety

  
Hon Jack Dempsey MP  
Minister for Police and Community Safety  
26 January 2013

  
Kelvin Anderson  
Director-General  
Department of Community Safety  
26 January 2013







## Mount Isa Centre for Rural & Remote Health

P O Box 2572  
100 Joan Street  
Mount Isa QLD 4825  
Australia

14 February 2013

North West Queensland  
Indigenous Catholic Social Services  
Father Mick Lowcock  
PO Box 324  
Mount Isa QLD 4825

Dear Fr Mick

### Re: **Funding Application to the Australian Government Attorney-General's Department**

In 2012, Mount Isa Centre for Rural and Remote Health (MICRRH) was pleased to be offered the opportunity to work collaboratively with NWQICSS to evaluate and further develop their Yurru Ngartathati Men's Group and Marapai Ngartathati Women's Group as funded under the Attorney-General's Indigenous Justice Program. The work that we are currently doing with NWQICSS provides us with an opportunity to assist the organisation to systematically identify the key features of their program that have been identified as helpful by clients and hence contribute to a reduction in the recidivism rate among Indigenous people in the Mount Isa region.

It is our understanding that NWQICSS are currently applying to the Attorney-General's Department to seek funding for a three-year Indigenous justice program in Mount Isa. This is exciting news that will enable the organisation to significantly build on their current learnings. Should their application be successful, MICRRH has accepted the offer of NWQICSS to continue in our evaluator role with the organisation. We would view this on-going role as supporting the organisation to articulate a program logic model and develop a systematic method for collecting, analyzing, and using information to inform quality control and ensure the program is having the intended effect. Given the remote location of the service in North West Queensland, the high Indigenous population and the intense isolation from services, this is a rare opportunity to implement and evaluate a program that is specifically designed to meet the unique limitations imposed by an extreme geographical location. Thus, the evaluation work undertaken as part of the project proposed by NWQICSS has the potential to significantly contribute to the literature on preventing recidivism in remote Indigenous communities.

We believe we will be able to significantly contribute to the program proposed by NWQICSS and strongly support their application.

Warm regards

Associate Professor Louise Roufeil PhD, FAPS, MAICD  
Head of Research/Mental Health Academic



*A Healthy and Vibrant Outback Queensland.*

A Participating University Department of Rural Health.  
T: 07 47454500 F: 07 47495130 E: [micrrh@jcu.edu.au](mailto:micrrh@jcu.edu.au) W: [www.micrrh.jcu.edu.au](http://www.micrrh.jcu.edu.au)