



Minister for Community Services

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Submission No 71

Hon Lisa Neville MP

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Mr Bob Debus MP
Chair - Parliament of Australia
House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Aboriginal
& Torres Strait Islander Affairs
PO Box 6021
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Debus,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the *Inquiry into the high level of Indigenous juveniles and young adults in the criminal justice system* terms of reference.

As you may be aware, this overrepresentation occurs for community based supervision as well as detention. In Victoria, the proportion of Aboriginal young people on average subject to youth justice supervision in 2007-2008 was 11.1 per cent. This equates to 138 young people who were of Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander descent.

The Victorian Department of Human Services has five initiatives specifically designed for Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander clients of the youth justice system. They are:

- Koori Youth Justice program
- Koori Intensive Bail Support program
- Koori Pre and Post Release program
- Yannabil Aboriginal Community Visitors program
- Koori Early School Leavers and Youth Employment program.

In responding to your terms of reference, I would make the following comments. First, I would encourage you to add an item to your terms of reference, to reflect the input of engaging with the Aboriginal community, particularly in relation to program development.

I would also recommend that when reviewing diversion and support programs, you consider the role which policing practice, i.e. formal cautions, plays in diversion.

I would value hearing the experiences of the other jurisdictions. As part of that, I would also be interested in identifying common barriers for young people to exit criminal lifestyles, for example difficulties youth justice clients find in obtaining birth certificates which may impede access to services and support.

Yours sincerely



Hon Lisa Neville MP
Minister for Community Services
30/12/2009