

Chapter 6

Current Programs

Introduction

6.1 Much of the evidence the committee received during this inquiry has been reflective, focussing on underlying issues in the provision of legal assistance services and the factors driving Indigenous incarceration rates. In contrast, this chapter focusses on examples of the positive programs operating across the criminal justice system – from pre-incarceration to post-incarceration – which are either specifically targeted at Indigenous offenders, or have a high rate of Indigenous participation.

Fines and infringements

6.2 Submissions noted the disproportionate impact that incarceration for non-payment of fines had on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders people. The UNSW Law Society, particularly referred to the impact on Indigenous women:

Fine defaulting is a substantial cause for the rising rate of incarceration for Indigenous women. In Western Australia, the number of Indigenous women in prison for fine defaults escalated by 576 per cent since 2008. Alarmingly, two thirds of women serving a custodial sentence for fine defaults are Indigenous. The policy operates disproportionately on those most vulnerable, particularly Indigenous women and only exacerbates poverty and disadvantage, It furthermore fails to deter fine defaulting or gather fine revenue.¹

6.3 The UNSW Law Society referred to the case of Miss Dhu, an Aboriginal woman who died while in custody after being detained for an unpaid fine.²

6.4 At the public hearing in Canberra, Mr Nick Parmeter, Executive Policy Lawyer, Law Council of Australia, noting the 'sometimes tragic outcomes' of imprisonment for 'a relatively trivial indiscretion', stated that there are 'obvious alternatives to imprisonment for fine defaults', citing NSW's Work and Development Order (WDO) program.³ At the public hearing in Sydney, Ms Monique Hitter, Executive Director, Civil Law Division, Legal Aid NSW, explained the WDO program:

What the program involves is: if you are vulnerable and disadvantaged—essentially, if you are on a benefit of any kind—and you have an unpaid fine, you can work off that unpaid fine by attending counselling or drug and alcohol treatment or mental health treatment or doing voluntary work and paying that fine off at \$30 an hour[.]

1 *Submission 14*, p. 19.

2 *Submission 14*, p. 19. See also Chief Justice Wayne Martin, *Submission 1*, p. 11.

3 *Committee Hansard*, 4 April 2016, p. 16. See also National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS), *Submission 13*, p. 18.

...

People can do gardening, cut people's hair or do anything. They can volunteer or receive counselling or treatment and, while they are doing that, they are working off their fines. In a sense they are doing something that is going to benefit them as individuals and, at the [same] time, they are reducing their fine debt.⁴

6.5 In its submission, Legal Aid NSW noted:

Approximately twenty-five percent (25%) of all fines and WDO advice and minor assistance services to individuals were provided to Aboriginal clients in 2013-2014.⁵

6.6 Ms Hitter stated that the program had led to a huge reduction in unpaid fines, particularly in some Aboriginal communities in remote and regional areas:

While you are on a work and development order, you also get your licence back immediately, which is cancelled if your fines are underpaid. Driving without a licence is also a very common way of Aboriginal people being incarcerated. This program allows people to work off their fines, get their licence back, get to work, drive their kids to school and reduce the debt. That has had a huge impact.⁶

6.7 Ms Jemima McCaughan, Executive Director, Civil Law Division, Legal Aid NSW, explained the relative simplicity in setting up a WDO for a client:

[B]ecause the Work and Development Orders program is a partnership between Legal Aid, State Debt and the Department of Justice we have a much more functional relationship with State Debt. There is a State Debt advocacy line. If I am working out in an Aboriginal community, all I need to do is ring that phone number and I can get those driver sanctions lifted immediately and get someone on a time-to-pay arrangement immediately. You can also get stays while you try and organise a Work and Development Order. So you might be able to say to a person who is having drug and alcohol issues, 'Let's get you into a treatment program and then you can work off your fine in that way.['] In the three months that it takes us to do that, there is a stay on any enforcement proceedings in that process...

[T]he other incentive is that often the clients are getting benefits and engaging in support services that they did not know existed. Because people are making the links to those services, they are getting support services that they would not have otherwise had. That is a huge benefit to them and to society.⁷

6.8 In terms of the impact of the WDO program on incarceration rates, Ms Hitter emphasised:

4 *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2015, p. 34.

5 *Submission 36*, p. 8.

6 *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2015, p. 34.

7 *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2015, p. 35.

[In New South Wales] there is no longer any relationship between unpaid fines and incarceration in that direct way.⁸

6.9 On this issue, Ms McCaughan stated:

The escalation into crime in New South Wales for fines is around things like, if there are unpaid fines, there are then driver sanctions and then you get arrested for driving whilst unlicensed or disqualified. And that happens time and time again. Because you have no way of paying for the fines...that leads to incarceration. So it is still a criminal offence rather than the fines that lead directly to the incarceration.⁹

6.10 Since the establishment of the WDO program \$44 million worth of fines have been waived, of which \$9 million has been in Aboriginal communities.¹⁰

Custody Notification Service

6.11 The Custody Notification Service (CNS) is a 24-hour telephone legal advice service for Aboriginal people taken into custody by the police in NSW and the ACT. The Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) (ALS) website explains how the service operates:

Under NSW law, Police must contact the ALS whenever they have taken an Aboriginal person into custody.

The Police phone our CNS, and the Aboriginal person receives early legal advice from an ALS lawyer, ensuring their fundamental legal rights are respected and less Aboriginal people are imprisoned.

The ALS lawyer also asks the Aboriginal person: RU OK? Often, the answer is no. Threats of self-harm or suicide are common. Concerns about access to medication are common. Notifications of injuries sustained that need to be examined by a health professional are common.

Our CNS lawyers are trained to carefully respond to these concerns, including notifying custody Police who partake in appropriate duty of care.

Our CNS lawyers can also contact the person's family and an Aboriginal Field Officer, ensuring parental or family concern for that person's whereabouts and health are minimised.¹¹

6.12 The CNS was set up in 2000 as a response to the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. Until July 2016 there had not been an Aboriginal death in a police cell in NSW since the CNS was established. In July 2016, the CNS was not

8 *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2015, p. 35.

9 *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2015, pp 35-36.

10 Ms Monique Hitter, Executive Director, Civil Law Division, Legal Aid NSW, *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2015, p. 34.

11 Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) website, *Custody Notification Service*, available at: www.alsnswact.org.au/pages/custody-notification-service (accessed 10 March 2016).

notified and an Aboriginal woman died in police custody. An internal police investigation was launched and the matter will be examined by the NSW coroner.¹²

6.13 At the public hearing in Sydney, Mr David Porter, Senior Solicitor, Redfern Legal Centre, described the CNS as a 'powerful tool', however:

[I]t still faces opposition by some officers because, concomitant with notifying the ALS that the person is in custody, that person gets to speak to an ALS solicitor and they get informed of their legal rights, which are that they do not need to answer any questions, and that sometimes frustrates the officer involved.¹³

6.14 In terms of the cost of the CNS and the volume of calls received, a media release from ALS states:

The cost to run the CNS is nearly the same as holding two juveniles in detention for one year, yet the CNS assists over 15,000 Aboriginal people each year with early legal advice and an RU OK welfare check.

...

The CNS receives over 300 calls per week at a per unit cost of \$32 per call with ALS lawyers working 24/7 to provide the service, without attracting penalty rates.

...

The phone line costs \$526,000 per annum to support six lawyers working around the clock and one administration officer.¹⁴

Funding uncertainty

6.15 In June 2015, the ALS campaigned to 'Save the CNS' as government funding had not been renewed for the service.¹⁵ The Acting Chief Executive Officer of ALS, Mr Kane Ellis, stated that an application for funding through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy had been rejected and attempts to gain further grant funding had been 'ignored'.¹⁶ Mr Ellis continued:

[The CNS] gives vulnerable Aboriginal men, women and children access to an experienced lawyer for timely legal advice which is crucial given the

12 Sarah Gerathy, 'Rebecca Maher: Family friend calls for answers about death in custody at Maitland', ABC News, 17 August 2016.

13 *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2015, p. 52.

14 Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT), 'Save the Custody Notification Service (CNS) and prevent Aboriginal deaths in police cell custody', Media release, 3 June 2015 (accessed 10 March 2016).

15 Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT), 'Save the Custody Notification Service (CNS) and prevent Aboriginal deaths in police cell custody', Media release, 3 June 2015 (accessed 10 March 2016).

16 Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT), 'Save the Custody Notification Service (CNS) and prevent Aboriginal deaths in police cell custody', Media release, 3 June 2015 (accessed 10 March 2016).

already shamefully high rates of Aboriginal over-representation in the criminal justice system.¹⁷

6.16 On 1 July 2015 it was reported that the Minister for Indigenous Affairs committed \$263,000, of the annual operating budget but the NSW Government was resisting the call to fund the remainder of the \$500,000 budget. The NSW Attorney-General stated that 'the Commonwealth has historically funded the CNS and they are sidestepping their responsibility'.¹⁸ ALS noted that the funding was sufficient for the CNS to operate for a further six months.¹⁹

6.17 On 1 December 2015, the Minister for Indigenous Affairs announced a further \$1.8 million in funding for the CNS, which enables to service to operate until 30 June 2019.²⁰

Expansion to other jurisdictions

6.18 In his media release of 1 December 2015, the Minister noted:

All states and territories have arrangements in place to notify an Aboriginal legal service when an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person is taken into custody. But in the case of NSW, this is specifically mandated under its own statute books and as such, it beggars belief the NSW Government won't fund the CNS.²¹

6.19 In June 2015 it was reported that Western Australia would be introducing a Custody Notification Service.²² In February 2016, the Deaths in Custody Watch Committee noted there was disappointment at the nature of the CNS which was subsequently introduced into Western Australia:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people held in prisons or police lock-ups in Western Australia will be able to request access to a 24-hour hotline that will connect them with the Aboriginal Visitors Scheme (AVS), a support and counselling service that is primarily staffed by Aboriginal people.

17 Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT), 'Save the Custody Notification Service (CNS) and prevent Aboriginal deaths in police cell custody', Media release, 3 June 2015 (accessed 10 March 2016).

18 Sarah Whyte, Fergus Hunter, 'The fight to save phone line helping prevent Aboriginal deaths in Custody', *The Canberra Times*, 1 July 2015.

19 Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT), 'CNS funded for six months', Media release, 6 July 2015 (accessed 10 March 2016).

20 Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion, Minister for Indigenous Affairs, *\$1.8m for NSW Custody Notification Service*, 1 December 2015.

21 Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion, Minister for Indigenous Affairs, *\$1.8m for NSW Custody Notification Service*, 1 December 2015.

22 Calla Wahlquist, *Indigenous people in West Australia's prisons to get 24/7 legal advice*, *The Guardian*, 25 June 2015 (accessed 10 March 2016).

The government says the expanded scheme will effectively act as a custody notification service and will reduce the potential for self-harm or suicide among in custody.

But long-time campaigners in this area, including relatives of Aboriginal people who have died in custody, said the announced measure was a 'disappointing reductionist version' of the type of service they had been promised.²³

6.20 Mr Porter, Redfern Legal Service, described the NSW model for the CNS, which is run by one organisation, which has a state-wide catchment as the 'gold standard'.²⁴

In prison programs

New South Wales

6.21 At the public hearing in Sydney, Dr Anne-Marie Martin, Assistant Commissioner, Offender Management and Policy, Corrective Services New South Wales informed the committee:

[W]e have a number of services and program staff—around 300—who provide a range of fundamental support to people who are received into custody. They do not provide any legal advice, but they enable offenders to receive legal assistance of some kind, in addition to providing a range of services and programs to assist in adjusting, understanding their order and addressing offending behaviour.²⁵

6.22 Mr Adam Schreiber, Principal Manager, Aboriginal Strategy and Policy Unit, Corrective Services New South Wales, spoke about the Yetta Dhinnakkal Centre, in Brewarrina, which teaches offenders about rural skills, and includes a cultural component.²⁶ Mr Schreiber explained the program has been on hold over the last 12 to 18 months due to uncertainty of the centre:

Now we are actually looking at rewriting the program itself with the involvement of the local community through some of the roles and positions we have there. We have two Aboriginal-specific positions. One is in service provision. It looks at the compendium programs and providing a service around welfare and reintegration back into the community. The other position is a cultural position. It is engaging with the local community and providing advice on what we actually provide for the inmates around the program. That is just about to be rewritten.²⁷

6.23 Mr Schreiber also spoke about the Kariiong Correctional Centre:

23 Deaths in Custody Watch Committee, *Indigenous prisoners in policy custody get 24-hour counselling hotline*, 18 February 2016 (accessed 10 March 2016).

24 *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2015, p. 52.

25 *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2015, p. 19.

26 *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2015, p. 43.

27 *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2015, p. 43.

[That centre] is predominantly for young adult Aboriginal offenders with short sentences. It is looking at programs around addressing their offending behaviour. Obviously there is a cultural side with that.²⁸

6.24 Dr Martin explained that the corrections service had recently taken over the Kariong Correctional Centre:

[W]e have put adults into that centre. The priority group under our former minister...included young adult Aboriginal inmates—that is, 25 years and under. We have started a community engagement program around that program. The nature of that program is an intensive program for inmates with sentences under two years to be there for up to four months of intensive assessment and education to try to move people. We have a high churn of people taking up maximum security beds, particularly young Indigenous men—there is a real cycling in and out. The aim is to try to work intensively with a group and push them out more into minimum security areas, where they can then start to do more community-based programs and work. As it stands, we tend to keep them in locations where that cannot happen.²⁹

6.25 Dr Martin continued:

If we can engage them in positive lifestyle-type programs as well as education, and then push them on into other centres where there is more meaningful work and activities, we hope that will lead to some sort of skill development that they value and enjoy, and that they engage in ongoing work post-release and try to reduce their coming back into custody.³⁰

6.26 Dr Martin also noted that there were funds for an Elder from the community to regularly come into the centre and for more Indigenous-based programs to be run at the centre.³¹

6.27 Mr Schreiber also referred to a building and construction program, the Gundi program:

That is predominantly Aboriginal—up to 40 Aboriginal offenders—teaching building and construction. We are now just engaging with Aboriginal Housing to provide houses to be built through the year so that there is a constant flow of work to be done. It will teach them everything from plumbing and electrical right through. They get those skills and then we look to getting them into employment on release.³²

6.28 In addition, Corrective Services New South Wales run art programs. As Mr Schreiber noted, these types of programs are not aimed at addressing offending behaviour:

28 *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2015, p. 43.

29 *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2015, p. 22.

30 *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2015, p. 23.

31 *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2015, p. 23.

32 *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2015, p. 43.

We have the Girrawaa program, which is at Bathurst Correctional Centre. They do production items so that they can actually earn some money upon release. On top of that they do their own art work and look at helping them to set themselves up in their own business upon release—having their own profiles on the internet and selling their own artwork online.

We have the Nurra Warra Umer program, which is very similar to that but in a maximum security environment in Goulburn. Again, it involves production items, and they do their own art. That was originally set up because of an incident we had there back in [about] 2003...It was to ensure that, because of the environment Goulburn has, the offenders got out of the yard to do something and gain some skills. They go from there across to the Girrawaa program, at Bathurst. Also, we are just now setting one up in Broken Hill. It can be a flow-on when they come through the classification process.³³

6.29 Mr Schreiber also noted the Aboriginal Elders program, the Pinta Kulpi program:

[W]hich is an elders program around the state, so each centre can engage with the local community and the local lands council. We have those elders come in and provide advice. That is where we can engage with them.

...

We normally bring them in once a week or once every fortnight through the centre, and through the centre's budget. They bring them in to provide cultural advice or any specific advice to management as well as offenders.³⁴

6.30 Corrective Services New South Wales also has a number of mentor positions made up of people from the local community and involved with the local land council, who provide cultural advice on what can be done to assist offenders.³⁵

Post release

Moorditj Ngoorndiak

6.31 In March 2015, the Wirrpanda Foundation, in partnership with the Department of Corrective Services and the Youth Justice Board, launched the Moorditj Ngoorndiak longitudinal mentoring program (MN), which focuses on reducing recidivism of Indigenous youth in Western Australia (WA). The Wirrpanda Foundation's submission explained further:

Moorditj Ngoorndiak (MN) is a pilot program aimed at re-engaging Aboriginal boys aged 12-19 in contact with the youth justice system with education, employment and community and ultimately reduce recidivism. The program delivers intensive individual mentoring which is culturally appropriate for participants and their families:

33 *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2015, p. 43.

34 *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2015, pp 47-48.

35 Mr Adam Schreiber, Principal Manager, Aboriginal Strategy and Policy Unit, Corrective Services New South Wales, *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2015, p. 44.

The program offers a robust approach to mentoring that connects participants – pre and post release from detention [at the Banksia Hill Detention Centre (BHDC) in Perth] – and their families to services.³⁶

6.32 The pre-release phase of MN aims to develop strong relationships between the participants and their Aboriginal role models. The mentors visit BHDC twice a week to run a fitness session and a cultural learning session. At the public hearing in Perth, Mr Walter McGuire, Moorditj Ngooandjak Program Mentor, Wirrpanda Foundation, explained that the pre-release phase of the program was also used to engage with a participant's family:

Whilst they are inside, we talk to them, we identify their families, we speak with their families and we also try and help the families with the issues they have—with employment such as [the Vocational Training and Employment Centre (VTEC)] that is there, and the Deadly Sista Girlz program that is there for the young ladies in the schools. We have one of our Aboriginal Nyungar ladies also working in the program. She speaks to the grandmothers and mothers at home about any issues. We try to help them and give them advice or bring them to the people who may help and assist.³⁷

6.33 Mentors also attend each participant's Youth Admission and Review Meeting (YARM), prior to release from BHDC:

This is an opportunity for all relevant stakeholders to come together and discuss the young person's time at BHDC and develop a plan for their release. When we first [began] attending the YARMs, the young person, their guardian and the [Aboriginal Welfare Officers (AWOs)] were not present. We believe it is essential that the young person is present for discussions regarding their progress and future and just as vital a guardian attends as they will play a key role in helping the young person with their Supervised Release Order (SRO). Furthermore the Aboriginal staff at BHDC have a wealth of knowledge about the young people that are being referred to the program, and offer great insight into their time in BHDC and the issues they face.³⁸

6.34 The post-release phase of the program is aimed at continuing to build capacity in the participants, and reduce the likelihood of recidivism.

Regular and consistent engagement with the participants will allow for mentors and local community services to focus on each participant and their family holistically by providing Individual Care Plans.³⁹

6.35 The Wirrpanda Foundation submission emphasised the importance of developing participants' connection with their culture through the MN program:

36 *Submission 47*, p. 1.

37 *Committee Hansard*, 4 August 2015, p. 15.

38 *Submission 47*, p. 4

39 *Submission 47*, p. 2.

Both [pre-release and post-release] phases aim to build proud Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men with good spirit, by helping them discover the strong spiritual connection to country and culture many Aboriginal people have. It is important for our young people to practice culture on country to build the strength in their Aboriginal identity and be blessed with the 'good spirit' of the land which gives you a healthy body and mind to make good decisions.⁴⁰

6.36 The Wirrpanda Foundation submission described 'cultural camps' as a way of building cultural identity:

In these cultural camps, local elders of the region will be engaged to attend and share traditional stories, knowledge of the land and bush foods. Participants will be encouraged to challenge themselves, take part in problem solving, co-operate with others in a team environment and connect to country. This component is included in the MN program due to our stakeholders and community elders all affirming the importance of connection to culture and country in building capacity in young Aboriginal people to partake in positive and healthy life pathways. The camps are an opportunity for personal healing and nurturing the strong connection to the land Aboriginal people have.⁴¹

6.37 At the public hearing in Perth, Mr Edward Brown, a MN Program Mentor with the Wirrpanda Foundation, explained the impact of the cultural camps:

The first question you ask another Aboriginal person is, 'Where are you from,' and 'Where are your family from.' Some of these young men could not answer that for me and my alarm bells started ringing straight away. It goes back to that cultural identity and building who they are and where their families come from. It is very important not just with Aboriginal identity but also for any human being's identity. During my exposure with the foundation, I have had the opportunity to take a couple of young men on some cultural camps—to take them fishing and down to the country where I grew up—and I could see the brightness on one young man's face when he hooked a fish—just the simple thing of hooking a fish. He shouted and shouted at me for about five minutes. I said, 'Pull the fish in then. Don't shout at me, pull it in!'⁴²

6.38 Mr Dale Kickett, MN Program Manager, Wirrpanda Foundation, emphasised that MN was not just about reducing recidivism:

This pilot program, for us, is not really about how successful we can be at keeping these boys out. It will be in the end, but it is more about finding every little issue, problem, with all the people we are dealing with—not just the boys who are reoffending but the system that puts them there and their families.⁴³

40 *Submission 47*, p. 2.

41 *Submission 47*, p. 3.

42 *Committee Hansard*, 4 August 2015, pp 13-14.

43 *Committee Hansard*, 4 August 2015, p. 16.

6.39 Mr Kickett provided the following example of some of the issues confronting the Wirrpanda Foundation as it develops the MN program:

We want more to be done on the educational side of things. Some of these boys, you have got to understand, have been most of their lives in and out of a detention centre. Some of them start at 10 or 12. We were in there yesterday looking at footy photos, and there are the same boys in them every year—the same ones coming back. A lot of those young men's education is within the confines of the Banksia Hill Detention Centre. Education does not seem to be a big deal in there. Nobody is pushing it or making it exciting for them. Some of these young fellows, or young men—16, 17, 18—have severe numeracy and literacy problems. That is just another thing that we have got to fix up. Do we go in and try to change the education system in Banksia Hill? I do not know. Is it going to be too disruptive for us if we do that or highlight other issues and problems in there, where we could open a can of worms or someone could prevent us from getting more access?⁴⁴

6.40 Mr Kickett pointed out that the challenges continue once offenders return home:

It makes it doubly hard when the boys' family homes and structures are not conducive to getting up in the morning, going to school or going to work. So it is left to us and our small resources to pick the boys up most times. We have to walk a fine line to do that as well, because we do not want them to become dependent on us, as they have done with many other organisations.⁴⁵

6.41 Mr Kickett indicated that the MN program is evolving all the time and it will continue to evolve:

We had a designed program that looked a hell of a lot different even after a couple of hours in Banksia Hill. It continues to change to this point and it will probably change again after we have stopped talking in here. When we walk out, we will be saying, 'We'll do this and that.' It will be forever changing. At this stage for us in this area, with some of the individual issues and problems, drugs and alcohol could take quite a while in itself to address. And we talk about literacy and numeracy. Some blokes [are] 10 years behind. The issues and problems of one person are not, 'Okay, he needs to learn how to read and write. Let's fix that next week.' It is just not that easy.⁴⁶

6.42 In terms of the length of the pilot program, Mr Kickett stated:

We get funded just under \$300,000 to run our program. There are four of us in that program. We need the best people to help run this program with just under \$300,000, and we have been told it costs about \$300,000 or just over

44 *Committee Hansard*, 4 August 2015, p. 16.

45 *Committee Hansard*, 4 August 2015, p. 16.

46 *Committee Hansard*, 4 August 2015, p. 16.

to keep one of these boys in Banksia per year. So you have to understand we are running on a shoestring, and we have got extra funding for this through moneys coming from elsewhere...

We are going to have quite a few teething problems throughout this period, and we are trying not to upset other organisations in what we are doing, because we want to work closely with them all. Our common goal is to keep these boys out of prison. As we teach our boys through our fellas, our culture is a culture of free people, not incarcerated people. On the length of that program, we have a pilot program that is supposed to run over 12 months. Corrective services have been very supportive in saying, 'Let's not call this a pilot program; as long as we keep progressing, let's see how we go.' In length, it will probably be until we run out of money, which we do not have a whole lot of. When our money runs out, that will probably determine how long we run this pilot program.⁴⁷

Aboriginal client service officers

6.43 Corrective Services New South Wales has Aboriginal client service officers (ACSOs) who ensure that post-release offenders engage with services and programs in the community. There are 18 ACSO positions across New South Wales.⁴⁸ Mr Jason Hainsworth, Acting Assistant Commissioner, Community Corrections, Corrective Services New South Wales, described the role of the ACSOs as 'to work with the local communities engaging with the families [and] elders'.⁴⁹

6.44 The committee also heard that it was possible that ACSOs may engage members from the Aboriginal Elders program, or the local land council, to be involved in working with offenders post-release.⁵⁰

6.45 Mr Jason Hainsworth, Acting Assistant Commissioner, Community Corrections, Corrective Services New South Wales, referred to other work by ACSOs developing and supporting programs within the community:

A lot of things do get coordinated on a local level, so it is not a formal, head office driven process. We do have circumstances where, for example, I am aware of a program recently being set up for Indigenous males at a remote community where we were not able to provide the service, so the client services officer worked with the local community around establishing somebody that could come in and provide this support program for the offenders in the local community there. That sort of stuff happens all the time, but it is very ad hoc—which I think it needs to be—working with the

47 *Committee Hansard*, 4 August 2015, p. 16.

48 Mr Schreiber, Corrective Services New South Wales, *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2015, p. 48.

49 *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2015, p. 23.

50 Mr Schreiber, Corrective Services New South Wales, *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2015, p. 48.

client service officers and the local community corrections manager and working out what the local need is at that particular point in time.⁵¹

51 *Committee Hansard*, 23 September 2015, p. 23.

