

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S PORTFOLIO

Group: 3

Program: 1.3

Question No. SBE14/162

Senator Wright asked the following questions in writing:

1. What work has occurred, with the aim of including incarceration rates or other justice-related measures in the Closing the Gap targets?
2. What measures is the Government putting in place to address Indigenous disadvantage in the justice system and to honour its stated commitment to reducing the incarceration rate of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders?
3. Has the government done any work or had any further consideration about a justice reinvestment approach to criminal justice?
 - a. Why/why not?

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

1. The Commonwealth considers that work to reach existing targets (such as, outcomes regarding school attendance and employment) should contribute to improved community safety and justice outcomes. The Commonwealth is working closely with States and Territories to pursue practical, on-the-ground initiatives which will improve community safety and reduce incarceration.
2. The Commonwealth is focussed on addressing the underlying disadvantage that leads to Indigenous contact with the justice system. The Commonwealth is funding initiatives which will get children to school, adults into work and make communities safer. The Commonwealth has committed \$4.8 billion over four years under a new Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) to fund initiatives under five programme areas:
 - Jobs, land and the economy
 - Children and schooling
 - Safety and wellbeing
 - Culture and capability, and
 - Remote Australia strategies.

Under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy, approximately \$993.5 million is available over four years through the Safety and Wellbeing programme area specifically to target community safety outcomes, which may include:

- legal services, court support and counselling
- early intervention, and violence prevention activities
- parenting support services
- community education and community strengthening projects, and
- activities, which seek to change violent attitudes and behaviours.

Separately, the Government manages the Indigenous Legal Assistance Programme which ensures that Indigenous Australians receive culturally sensitive and accessible legal assistance and related services so that they can fully exercise their legal rights as Australian citizens. Eight Indigenous organisations are funded under the Indigenous Legal Assistance Programme so that they can deliver services at a number of permanent sites, court circuits and outreach locations in urban, rural and remote areas across Australia.

3. The Commonwealth provides funds for initiatives that could support a justice reinvestment initiative through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy. However, justice reinvestment is a matter for the States and Territories to pursue if they choose to redirect or reallocate corrections budgets. This is because State and Territory governments are responsible for the administration of the criminal justice system, including corrections.