

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

Program 1.1

Question No. 120

Senator Boyce asked the following question at the hearing on 18 October 2011:

Thank you for your very comprehensive answer to question no. 75 in budget estimates about aboriginal prisoners with intellectual or cognitive impairment; however as you noted, much of the work referred to prisoners with mental illness. Are you able to give me a further update on work regarding prisoners with an intellectual disability or cognitive impairment?

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

State and Territory governments have primary responsibility for policing, courts and corrections. For this reason, the Attorney-General's Department is working with State and Territory counterparts through the National Justice Chief Executive Officers (NJCEOs) to improve responses to people with disability in the criminal justice system.

NJCEOs have established a Working Group on Mental Illness and Cognitive Disability which will investigate mechanisms currently employed in the justice system to address the needs of clients with a mental illness, intellectual disability or acquired brain injuries who are involved with, or at risk of involvement with, the criminal justice system. The Working Group will investigate the role that the justice system can play in supporting diversion outcomes for people with a mental illness, intellectual disability or acquired brain injury in order to reduce any overrepresentation of these groups.

The Working Group on Mental Illness and Cognitive Disability will report back to NJCEOs on their findings in 2012.