



Minister for Police and Corrective Services and
Minister for Fire and Emergency Services

Ref No: 2021/7554
Your Ref: A677314

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Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of Parliament
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Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to your correspondence in relation to petition number 3437-20.

While the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) report led to significant reforms across health, education, housing and the criminal justice system in Queensland this government knows that there is more work to be done to address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the criminal justice system.

In acknowledging the issues raised by the petitioners, I can advise that the Queensland Government remains committed to continuing to work with the community and all stakeholders, so that together we can continue to make reforms in this important area.

In this regard, the Queensland Police Service has undertaken a major revision of policies, practices and training, and has implemented many changes to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in police custody, including:

- diverting intoxicated persons to a place of safety;
- police-initiated referrals to the Drug Diversion Assessment Program as an alternative to commencing court proceedings to avoid time in custody on remand; and
- the Murri Watch Cell Visitor Program, which provides support and referral services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

A range of initiatives around police custody programs, cultural understanding and policing services in remote Indigenous communities have been implemented, including the establishment of cross-cultural liaison officers, police liaison officers and the First Nations and Multicultural Affairs Unit.

Additionally, Queensland Corrective Services remains committed to enhancing responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the criminal justice system. The department works in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on a First Nations Strategy and a Reconciliation Action Plan to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the criminal justice system.

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The safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Queensland facilities is further supported through the Murrighagun Cultural Centre, which provides advisory, planning and support services. It also delivers a mental health program and annual cultural awareness training to staff.

Further, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group provides advice to senior management and other staff in dealing with sensitive and cultural issues. Cultural development officers, cultural advisors, and cultural liaison officers work across correctional facilities to provide support and guidance to prisoners and cultural advice to staff.

While an independent review has noted that Queensland has implemented most of the recommendations from the RCIADIC, we know that more work can be done across government; and through the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, this government has also committed to justice targets that focus on reducing incarceration rates.

Our targets are to reduce the incarceration rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults by at least 15 percent by 2031, and to reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in detention by at least 30 percent.

To support these efforts, this government, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the community are working in partnership to build a reframed relationship through:

- the *Queensland Government's Reconciliation Action Plan*;
- the *Human Rights Act 2019*, which acknowledges the importance of the right to self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders;
- legal recognition of traditional Torres Strait Islander child rearing practices through *Meriba Omasker Kaziw Kazipa (Torres Strait Islander Traditional Child Rearing Practice) Act 2020*;
- the appointment of the First Nations Housing Advisor;
- progressing a Path to Treaty or treaties with First Nations Queenslanders through the establishment of the Treaty Advancement Committee;
- implementing Local Thriving Communities, a long-term whole-of-government reform based on mutual respect and collaboration to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to shape their future;
- the establishment of the Queensland First Children and Families Board;
- *Our Way: A generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families 2017 -2037*;
- *Queensland Framework for Action – Reshaping our approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander domestic and family violence*, enabling and supporting families and communities to live free from violence and undertake healing;
- the commitment to ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have increased representation on government boards and committees; and
- the whole-of-government strategy *Moving Ahead: A strategic approach to increasing the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland economy 2016 -2022*.

The government acknowledges that there is more progress to be made and we will continue to work collaboratively with stakeholders to strive for better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mark Ryan', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

The Honourable Mark Ryan MP
**Minister for Police and Corrective Services and
Minister for Fire and Emergency Services**