

Question on Notice
No. 1654
Asked on 26 October 2005

MS MALE asked the Minister for Police and Corrective Services (MS SPENCE)-

QUESTION:

Will she provide details of how community service orders are working and the benefit they provide to both the offender and the wider community?

ANSWER:

Community service and fine option orders are work orders that allow offenders to 'give back' to the community by making reparation.

Every day throughout Queensland, community service workers are involved in worthwhile local community service projects, such as helping to maintain and improve local amenities and assisting charitable organisations.

The completion of community service enables offenders to make reparation to the community as well as providing positive social experiences and work skills that otherwise may not have been available to those offenders. It also ensures that offenders have the opportunity to continue to fulfil their employment and/or family obligations.

In turn, community service generates significant benefits for the local community by supporting the work of many local "not for profit" organisations such as Meals on Wheels, St Vincent de Paul, Queensland Ambulance Service, local churches, councils, sporting organisations, environmental groups, cemeteries and the RSPCA. Through these projects the offenders perform work such as kitchen duties, sorting of second hand items, landscaping, restoration and painting.

The community service program is of extreme value to small rural towns as it provides a work force to assist them in the enhancement of community facilities. A significant project worth noting in the Glasshouse electorate is coordinated with the Mooloolah Valley Country Club and Sporting facility. The project sees offenders working on the extensive sporting facilities and grounds which require constant maintenance. Offenders are supervised by a grounds person in the performance of a variety of tasks including mowing of sports fields, general maintenance of the facilities and assisting when special events are held.

The Beerwah and Witta Recycling Depots Project involves the collection, repair and sale of second hand goods. These projects utilise a significant number of community service workers to recycle goods which are then sold back to the community. Offenders learn different skills in the repair and presentation of second hand goods.

In Caboolture, the Lagoon Creek community service project has seen a useful partnership between the Department of Corrective Services and the local council demonstrating how agencies can work together. This involves the weekend placement of offenders working on the restoration requirements of the creek.

In response to the 2005 Clean-Up Australia Day project, community service workers attached to the Lagoon Creek project targeted the removal of rubbish from black spot areas of the creek. Some of the items removed were 25 full bags of litter, 14 car tyres, roofing sheets a mattress and sofa, a bed frame and barb wire.

Other projects also providing positive benefit to the community in the Caboolture area include offenders assisting in warehouse recycling tasks for Lifeline and the Salvation Army. The Caboolture Showgrounds and the Historical Village also caters for workers who assist in maintenance type tasks.

In 2004-2005, 5,124 community service and fine option orders were issued with communities across Queensland benefiting from over 493,000 hours of community service. This represents a value to the community of nearly \$7.4 million.