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

QUESTION:

What strategies are being proposed to address the over-representation of Indigenous people in crime statistics?

ANSWER:

The Queensland Police Service (QPS) is establishing Indigenous Community/Police Consultative Groups (ICPCGs) across many areas of the State to develop genuine partnerships between police and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by providing local forums to discuss matters of mutual concern. ICPCGs act as a facilitating instrument through which representations can be made at local level for enhancing policing services.

Six Police Liaison Officer (PLOs) positions have been created to assist police officers to manage the PCYCs located in the Aboriginal communities of Yarrabah, Mornington Island and Palm Island. Subject to their availability, PLOs also work with PCYCs and youth centres throughout Queensland. In addition, the PCYC Community Activity Program through Education (CAPE) Indigenous Program commenced at Wujal Wujal and Hopevale. This crime prevention initiative was developed to support the future expansion of community capacity development through the professional management guidelines of the Queensland Police-Citizens Youth Welfare Association.

The QPS believes that minor offences committed by young Indigenous offenders are best dealt with through the juvenile caution process. The process allows for prompt finalisation of minor matters for young offenders by specialist trained police. The process addresses the offending behaviour expeditiously, provides early opportunity for police assisted rehabilitation and diverts young people from the court system and possible detention. The current focus by QPS on juvenile justice and child protection issues is being extended into the Operational Performance Reviews to include monitoring of rates of cautioning and attendance notices.

The QPS maintains a state-wide network of police Cross Cultural Liaison Officers to improve relations between members of the Service and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and ethnic community groups and to assist these communities to access policing services.

In addition, there are currently 146 PLO positions throughout the State. PLOs foster communication and cooperation between culturally specific communities and members of the Service.

The Queensland Indigenous Alcohol Diversion Program (QIADP) is a major whole-of-government initiative which commenced in July 2007 involving funding and support from six separate government departments and agencies including the QPS. The QIADP is aimed at rehabilitating people charged with minor offences and providing intensive support for parents with an alcohol problem in Cairns, Townsville and Rockhampton.

Recently the Queensland Government endorsed a model for future policing in all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The model will involve progressive replacement of QATSIP and Community Police Officers with state police officers and PLOs. The Executive Steering Committee, Coordination of Indigenous Projects is responsible for coordinating several projects that relate to the delivery of policing services to Indigenous communities across Queensland.
Projects officers are applying a coordinated approach to ensure these projects are progressed in a consistent way which will contribute to improved outcomes for communities, including socioeconomic beneficial effects which will help lower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander imprisonment rates.

The Government Champions Program was an initiative developed as part of the Queensland Government’s Meeting Challenges, Making Choices strategy. The Government Champion’s role is to work with the community to cut through the red tape that can be frustrating for communities, achieve outcomes and provide advice for better delivery of vital services. The Commissioner of Police is the Government Champion for two communities – Mornington Island and Wujul Wujul (in conjunction with the Assistant Commissioner, Far Northern Police Region).

The Justice Entry Program (JEP) is a traineeship for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to provide the necessary education qualifications for entry into the police recruit training program. The JEP assists persons of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent who may not have had the educational opportunities of the wider community to gain qualifications necessary to join the recruit training program.

A Cultural Appreciation Project, aimed at providing culturally appropriate in-service training to members of the Service to follow on from the initial pre service training is currently being refined through consultation with community and other stakeholders. The first stage of the cultural awareness training is the development of three generic Competency Acquisition Program units to provide a basic understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues including history and culture. As at the end of September 2007, over 12,000 CAP books have been distributed to police throughout Queensland. The final stage is a community specific – ‘on-the-job’ training package for delivery on arrival in a community. It is currently being developed in stages. A draft final for stage one is expected in late 2007 and will cover five communities – Palm Island, Aurukun, Doomadgee, Woorabinda and Mornington Island.

The QPS Indigenous Licensing Project has now been adopted by Queensland Transport to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples prepare to obtain driver’s licenses and thereby improve their opportunities for employment and prevent contact with the criminal justice system through unlicensed offences. The QPS remains as a support agency to the program as part of the Queensland Whole-of-Government Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples Drivers Licensing Program Coordination Committee.