

Significant Policy Moments: Queensland 1990-2002¹

Last updated: 16 February 2014

Alisa Wicks

1990

- *Departmental changes*

The Division of Protective Services and Juvenile Justice became operational in July 1990. The focus of the Division is on the provision of statutory services to children and adolescents and their families.

- *Community-based Adolescent Support Schemes*

The program provides an alternative to custody and provides time-limited family placements within a community-based program. Commenced in the Far North and Brisbane West regions. Based on a therapeutic program operating in the South Coast for young offenders who are at risk to themselves and the community.

- *Transition from Care Program*

Established to assist young people who face a high risk of becoming homeless and offending when they exit from care.

- *Mediation program in Bundaberg*

Developed a mediation program in Bundaberg to support adolescents who have left home, and their families. Introduced as a response to the Burdekin Report (1989), which called for increased focus on youth homelessness and interagency and community cooperation.

- *Young women's shelter in Brisbane*

Following consultation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the Brisbane South region in regards to homelessness and offending, it was identified that the most urgent need was a shelter for young women in Brisbane. The Department committed to funding the project.

1991

- *Procedures for detention of young people in watchhouses*

Developed in conjunction with Queensland Police and introduced in December 1991. Aims to reduce the number of young people held in watchhouses and the period of time they are held.

- *Review of Serious Offenders Review Panel*

The structure and operation of the panel were reviewed in 1991 and new procedures were issued in June 1992.

- *Pilot group work program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people*

A program for young Aboriginal people on supervised community based orders was developed and piloted in the Brisbane South region.

- *New procedural standards for supervision*

¹ Note: This work is based on departmental annual reports only.

New standards were developed in relation to supervision of young offenders, alongside procedures relating to the admission and release of young people placed in detention centres.

– *Employment of female youth workers and expansion of rehabilitation programs*

Female youth workers were appointed at Westbrook Youth Centre for the first time. The detention centre also expanded the range of programs available to young people in detention to include an anger management program and a drug and alcohol program with an anti-smoking emphasis.

– *Justice assistants at court*

A volunteer court support group was established at Townsville Children's Court.

1992

– *The Juvenile Justice Act 1992 and the Children's Court Act 1992*

Enacted by Parliament on 19 August 1992 (and proclaimed on 1 September 1993).

Key features of the Juvenile Justice Act are:

- provision of a legislative basis for police cautioning of young people guilty of first or minor offences;
- establishment of a range of community based sentencing options including reprimand, good behaviour orders, probation, and community service orders;
- provisions to allow Magistrates and the Children's Court Judge to sentence young offenders to detention, however only as an option of last resort;
- provisions which will allow the Children's Court Judge to review quickly, if requested, any sentences made by Magistrates;
- a range of alternative sentence options for young people found guilty of very serious offences which will allow for the repeal of the indeterminate sentencing provisions of the current legislation.

The Children's Court Act established the office of President of the Children's Court of Queensland. The President is responsible for issuing practice directions for all Children's Courts and will have a role in reviewing sentencing.

– *Juvenile Crime Strategy*

The new legislation is one part of the Government's two-pronged Juvenile Crime Strategy which is being phased in over two years. The Department received an additional \$4 million in 1992-93 to begin implementing the strategy with funding to increase to \$6 million in subsequent years. The second part of the strategy is a crime prevention initiative known as the Youth and Community Combined Action Program (YACCA). Through YACCA, 22 community based projects have been established to engage disadvantaged young people in projects that offer alternatives to offending.

– *The Queensland Government's Response to the Final Report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody*

An Overview Committee of 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander regional representatives was established to provide advice to an inter-departmental Committee and the Queensland Government on the implementation of the Queensland Government response to RCIADIC. The 1992-93 State Budget committed \$10.5 million over three years to support the Government's response to

key recommendations of the Royal Commission. The Department has administrative responsibility for the following initiatives:

- The Diversion from Custody Program which funds the establishment and ongoing costs of Cell Visitors Services and Diversionary Centres located in regional centres throughout the State. Diversionary Centres provide facilities so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people likely to be held in police custody for drunkenness can be diverted to a health and welfare setting;
- The Community Governing Structures Program which supports the development and implementation of appropriate alternative governing structures in Aboriginal communities;
- Development of the Cross-cultural Awareness Training Package, which will be used in all State Government departments from early 1994.

– *Rural Industry Access Program*

Commenced at Westbrook Youth Centre. Aims to help young offenders gain necessary skills to secure employment post release.

1993

– *Community and Culture Integration Program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in detention*

Commenced in April following recommendations of RCIADIC. Aims to maintain, develop and/or restore cultural, community and familial links. Includes visiting service and cultural integration components.

– *Practice manual for detention centre staff*

A manual was drafted for detention centre staff with the aim of incorporating recommendations of RCIADIC relating to incarceration.

– *Evaluation by Griffith University of the Youth and Community Combined Action Program (YACCA)*

Griffith University was commissioned to evaluate YACCA; which aims to increase the capacity of communities to engage disadvantaged young people and is focused in areas where there are high levels of juvenile crime. Funding for 1993-1994 amounted to \$2.3 million.

1994

– *Enhancement Program for Detention Centres*

A review of youth detention centres was completed in March 1994. The Government subsequently announced a 3 year program in April, involving:

- Closure of Westbrook YDC in Toowoomba in June 1994 and the closure of Sir Leslie Wilson YDC in 1996. These centres will be replaced by a new centre near Brisbane, due to open in 1996.
- A new centre was planned for construction in south-east Queensland. Cleveland YDC (Townsville) and Joan Oxley YDC (Wacol) will be upgraded as a result of the review of detention centres.

– *Investigation into incident at Westbrook YDC*

On 19 March 1994 a serious incident occurred at the centre, resulting in substantial damage to the centre's facilities. A report of a subsequent investigation was tabled in Parliament on 12 April 1994.

- *Appointment of Official Visitors (OV)*

Introduced to provide children in detention centres with access to an independent complaint resolution system. Parents also have access to OVs, who have power to hear and investigate complaints, and to comment on broader issues relating to the delivery of services to children in detention. Each centre must be visited by an OV at least once per month and a report on each visit be provided to the Director General.

- *Youth Homeless Protocol*

Introduced in October 1994 to clarify responsibilities of the Commonwealth and States to provide services for people under 17 years old.

1995

- *Conditional Bail Program introduced*

- *Crime Clean Up Team*

Established to provide community correctional programs for young offenders. Juvenile offenders on the program can be required to 'repay' the community for their crimes by doing community work such as cleaning up graffiti or park maintenance. Commenced initially at Inala.

- *Young offender programs extended*

Projects were established at Ipswich and Logan City, in response to high rates of offending and admission to detention from these areas.

- *Aboriginal Outreach Project at Cherbourg*

Operates from the new Jumbunna Outreach Centre, offering structured activities and supervision to support young people on juvenile justice orders and gives court a viable alternative to sentencing young offenders to detention. The Department's Annual Report 1997 found that the project helped reduce the rate of offending with appearances in the Murgon Children's Court dropping significantly each year since the program began in November 1995.

- *Victim Awareness Package*

Intended to be used by juvenile justice practitioners to encourage young offenders to understand the impact of their actions, to assist them to develop empathy and to reduce re-offending.

1996

- *Juvenile Justice Legislation Amendment Act 1996*

Provided for the transfer of responsibility for the administration of youth detention centres to the Corrective Services Commission. Also made amendments to sentencing provisions.

- *Children's Commissioner and Children's Services Appeals Tribunal Act 1996*

Established Queensland's Children's Commission, with the Commissioner reporting to the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care. The initial work of the Children's Commission focused on researching organised paedophilia as well as providing advocacy and complaints resolution services.

- *Departmental restructure*

Following the change of State Government in February, the Department of Justice was given responsibility for the administration of the *Juvenile Justice Act 1992*. The administration of youth detention centres was transferred to the Queensland Corrective Services Commission in August 1996 (see above). The Department of Families, Youth and Community Care retained responsibility for the development and implementation of programs for young offenders in the community.

- *Development of a new JJ client information system*

Designed to accommodate the amendments to the Act and to provide improved staff access to case management, court appearance and criminal history data.

- *Development of suicide awareness training for all staff working with young offenders.*

1997

- *Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 1997*

The Act consolidates police powers and responsibilities into one piece of legislation.

- *National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families*

Chapter 24 of the report relates specifically to Juvenile Justice, highlighting the over-representation of Indigenous youth and how this varies across jurisdictions.

- *Community conferences pilot (June)*

Trialled at Logan City, Ipswich and Palm Island by the Department of Justice between young offenders and their victims.

- *Young offenders projects*

Development of new programs at Ipswich and Logan City. The projects specifically address issues of supervision, monitoring and support of young people who have difficulty complying with and completing community service orders. Aboriginal Outreach Projects also commenced at Murgon and Cairns.

- *Implementation of strategies to reduce remand length*

Developed a Legal Practitioners Guide and new administrative procedures in the District Court.

- *Release of information booklet for parents: If your child breaks the law*

Provides practical advice about the risk of re-offending and what parents can do to minimise these risks.

- *Rural and Remote Youth Strategy*

Government and NGO sectors were involved in identifying opportunities for improving service delivery to rural young people. The strategy was implemented with a focus on the Callide-Dawson Valley.

- *Youth Options*

Run by Bundaberg Area Youth Service, the program combines residential life skills and a linking service for young people at risk of long term unemployment, self harm and entering the juvenile justice system.

- *Evaluation of the Local Justice Initiatives Program*
- *Development of standards for residential facilities for people on juvenile justice orders*

1998

- *Departmental restructure*

Youth Justice was fully reintegrated into the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care, with the transfer of youth detention services (back) from the Queensland Corrective Services Commission.

- *Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions (The Forde Inquiry)*

Established in August to report on the care and treatment of children in out-of-home residential facilities and juvenile detention centres. The Inquiry also reported on general deficiencies in the legislative framework for children in institutions and made recommendations to strengthen the Children's Commission.

- *Young offenders pilot projects*

Introduced in Mackay and Logan in December 1998 (with Commonwealth funding until December 2001). Aim to assist young people meet the requirements of Youth Allowance and complete community based orders. Each project is funded to take up to 25 young people at a time.

- *New style Youth Justice Service announced for Townsville (July)*

1999

- *Developmental restructure*

Responsibility for initiatives to prevent offending behaviour was transferred to the Youth Justice Program within the Department in April 1999.

- *Review of the Juvenile Justice Act 1992*

A review of the Act commenced in July 1999.

- *Youth Detention Centre Infrastructure Development Plan*

Approved in February 1999. The 10-year plan includes:

- The design of a new centre at Wacol to accommodate all young men sentenced and remanded, and all female young people from South Queensland (Renovations began at the John Oxley Youth Detention Centre in April 1999);
- Rebuilding of Cleveland YDC at Townsville to accommodate all detained young people from North Queensland;
- Plans for the closure of Sir Leslie Wilson YDC at Windsor;
- A new action research project, Securing the Care, aimed to develop more effective operational practices in youth detention centres. All young people in detention will have a Secure Care Plan that integrates assessment and intervention planning undertaken by all groups throughout a young person's stay in detention.

- *Community conferencing introduced in Far North Queensland*

A new Cairns based service became operational in June.

- *YACCA Crime Prevention Projects*

The Department assumed responsibility for 21 crime prevention projects and administered \$3.5m of funds over 4 years announced in the 1998-1999 budget. In addition \$0.582m on non-recurrent grants were provided to 22 organisations in relation to youth crime prevention across Queensland.

- *Townsville/Thuringowa Youth Justice Service commenced*

2000

- *The Commission for Children and Young People Act 2000*

The Act extended the Commission's mandate as an advocate for all children and young people in Queensland; established the Commission as an independent statutory body, expanded the community visitor program; and increased the Commission's powers and functions in relation to complaint handling. An employment-screening program (later called the blue card system) for child-related employment was also introduced.

- *Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000*

The Act completes the process of consolidation of police powers, which commenced with the passing of the *Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 1997*. Extends certain powers including 'move on' powers.

- *Launch of Queensland Youth Participation Strategy and Youth Charter (March)*

- *MOU signed between DFYCC and Queensland Police Service regarding watchhouse detention*

The Department reports an 80% reduction in the number of young people being detained for more than 2 nights in watchhouses (DFYCC Annual Report 1999-2000, p.51)

2001

- *New Brisbane YDC commissioned*

The new centre was commissioned in Feb 2001. It has an operating capacity of 86 beds and a built capacity for 102 beds (84 beds for young men and 18 beds for young women). The total budget for the new centre was approximately \$42.7m. The Sir Leslie Wilson Centre was decommissioned in Feb 2001 and formally closed in April 2001.

- *MOU between Department of Families, Department of Employment and Training and Education Queensland*

Designed to provide enhanced vocational and educational services within youth detention centres for semester 1, 2001.

- *Agreement with Queensland Health*

An improved service for young people in detention is planned following Queensland Health's agreement to provide a comprehensive, integrated service.

– *Establishment of a Youth and Family support service for the Brisbane City Region*

Developed as a service providing immediate crisis intervention and casework to divert young people at risk from offending or engaging in prostitution and to reduce youth homelessness. Developed in partnership with Police, the Brisbane City Council and a number of youth agencies.

– *Establishment of a specialist assessment and treatment service for young sex offenders*

Established in partnership with Griffith University. Provides pre-sentence assessment reports to courts and post-sentence treatment to young offenders and their families. Available to courts in all parts of Queensland.

– *Community conferencing reassigned*

Services in South East Queensland that were previously outsourced have been integrated into the Department's service delivery structure along with the far north Qld service, to provide greater consistency and to facilitate expansion of the service.

2002

– *Juvenile Justice Amendment Act 2002*

Developed following a major review in 2000. The Act introduces significant legislative reform to the *Juvenile Justice Act 1992, Bail Act 1980 and Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000*. Includes amendments following the Forde Inquiry; provides for the powers of courts to name serious offenders; introduces new intensive supervision order for very young offenders; introduces a Charter of Principles for Juvenile Justice; refines diversionary processes; and clarifies the process of granting bail for children.

– *Initiatives to reduce the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth in prison*

Indigenous youth workers and program support officers were employed in youth detention to assist with rehabilitation and reintegration.

– *Videoconferencing facilities were established in both youth detention centres*

Introduced as part of a strategy to assist families and communities in rural and remote areas to keep in contact with detained young people; in collaboration with Legal Aid.