

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Mr Guyula to the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice:

**Aboriginal Justice Unit**

1. The 23/24 Budget states the Aboriginal Justice Unit will aim to complete 20% of the Agreement. Can you provide a breakdown of what work has already been done, and what this 20% will achieve?
2. Budget Paper 3 outlines a \$4 million increase in the AJU budget this year, how many full-time staff does this provide for and what are their roles?
3. Has the AJU completed its review of systemic racism in the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics? What is the process of these reviews, are they made public, how long do they take and which Agency will be next?

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**ANSWERS**

1. The Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA) comprises three overarching aims and within those aims, are 13 commitments and 42 actions.

As at the beginning of the 23/24 financial year the AJU has implemented 24 per cent of the AJA actions.

A breakdown of the work completed and work that continues to be implemented under the AJA includes:

**Establish and offer alternatives to custody (ATC)**

- The Aboriginal Justice Unit has established a the ATC in Alice Springs, (known as the 'Life Skills Camp'). As of June 2023, 28 women have completed the six month residential program. Of the women who have completed the program, only six have reoffended or breached their bail conditions.
- An ATC facility on Groote Eylandt is under construction with an anticipated operational date by the end of 2023.

### **Establish Community Courts**

- The *Sentencing Legislation Amendment Act 2023* (the Act) provides for Community Court sentencing processes. Three Community Courts will be established this year.
- The AJU has co-designed a template for an Aboriginal Experience Report that outlines factors, other than criminal, that will be considered when sentencing Aboriginal offenders before Community Courts.

### **Review and reform legislative provisions within the justice system that are unfair, discriminatory or detrimental to Aboriginal people**

- The AJU engaged a contractor to review the *Bail Act 1982*, *Sentencing Act 1995*, *Juries Act 1962*, and *Parole Act 1971*. Work towards the delivery of the final report is underway.

### **Expand community-based sentencing options and non-financial options for the payment of fines**

- The AJU has collaborated with Courts, Community Corrections and the Fines Recovery Unit (FRU) to understand fines recovery process in the NT.
- An internal working group is reviewing and refining processes for greater access to community work and offender programs as an alternative to pay off outstanding fines.

### **Increase opportunities for prisoners to participate in high quality programs to reduce reoffending**

- The AJU, with the support of a contractor, interviewed prisoners and reviewed programs in the Darwin and Alice Springs Correctional Centre's, the Dajtala Work Camp and the ATC Life Skills Camp in Alice Springs.

This report is under consideration by the AJA Governance Committee.

### **Establish and support Law and Justice Groups**

- The AJU and the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet continue to support the Law and Justice Groups including in Kintore, Maningrida, Groote Eylandt.

### **Promote the uptake of leadership roles for Aboriginal people including appointments as Justice of the Peace and Commissioner for Oaths**

A communications and marketing strategy is in development to inform options for increasing participation and streamlining the process.

### **Identify and eliminate systemic racism in government agencies and contracted service providers that directly or indirectly discriminate against Aboriginal Territorians engaged in the justice system**

- The AJU engaged an expert in systemic racism to develop a framework for a consistent methodology for the identification and elimination of racism in NT Government agencies.
2. This year's budget increase of \$4 million focuses on the establishment of Community Courts and Law and Justice Groups in three NT communities as well as funding towards to the expansion of the ATC in Alice Springs.
  3. The review and report of DIPL has been completed and is with the agency for consideration and comment.

The public release of the report is subject to approval. The selection of the next NT Government agency to be reviewed is at the recommendation of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement Governance Committee and this is yet to be decided.