



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

Inquiry: Inquiry into Victoria's criminal justice system

Hearing Date: 21 October 2021

Question[s] taken on notice

Directed to: Mr Harrison – Aboriginal Justice Caucus

1. Ms Watt Page no. 44

Question asked.

I believe, with the healing program, I think, is we have put up a funding bid in relation to it, which we can take on notice and then share back to the committee just so you have it all here, which will give you a full breakdown of what is entailed in the program and the costing around it and everything that it covers.

Response:

The Aboriginal Justice Caucus continue to advocate for comprehensive community-based programs and services to divert people away from justice system involvement, provide access to culturally appropriate initiatives to rehabilitate, and post release support to help prevent future offending. Alternatives to incarceration, such as diversion, are effective in steering people away from offending behaviour by strengthening connections to community, culture and Country.

The Aboriginal Justice Caucus and broader community has long expressed the need for a women's residential facility for Aboriginal women in contact with the system to divert them from further contact with the justice system. Through AJA4, funding has been made available to undertake a feasibility study which will identify the preferred residential model. Establishing a residential, community-based, healing program for Aboriginal women remains a key priority of Caucus.

Aboriginal Healing Unit in Dame Phyllis Frost Centre

Under AJA4, Corrections Victoria committed to a 20-bed Aboriginal Healing Unit delivered collaboratively with the Aboriginal community. Utilising cultural strengthening as a protective factor and providing unique case management and support specifically developed for Aboriginal women in prison, this initiative aims to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal women in the criminal justice system.

This project will provide the necessary supports to Aboriginal women to build essential life skills required to maintain pro-social connections following release from prison. Funding of \$4.846 million over four years was provided through the 2021-22 state budget and \$1.900 million for required infrastructure upgrades. The Aboriginal Healing Unit is anticipated to commence operations in 2023.