



# **Community Justice Groups**

## **Murri Courts**

## **Jawun**

**Kurunna Mwarre “Make My Spirit Inside Me Good”**

### **COMMUNITY JUSTICE GROUPS**

#### **Community Justice Group Program**

The Department of Justice and Attorney General’s *Community Justice Group Program* (CJGP) provides support to Indigenous people dealing with the justice system. They are a representative group of Aboriginal people who come together to examine the crime and offending problems in their communities and develop ways to address these issues. The CJGP are based on the idea that local Aboriginal people know their own communities and problems. The program allocates funding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organizations to develop strategies within their communities for dealing with justice-related issues and to decrease Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' contact with the justice system. It gives members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organizations the opportunity to work cooperatively with magistrates, police, corrective services personnel and staff from other government agencies.

#### **Program Objectives:**

- Increase knowledge and skills in the ATSI communities in relation to the justice system
- Assist local courts when dealing with ATSI people
- Facilitate improved links between ATSI communities and statutory workers, police, courts and other parts of the justice system including the juvenile justice
- Establish partnerships with both community organizations and responsible state agencies leading the development of community-based diversionary and interventionist strategies aiming to prevent and provide alternatives to arrest and custody
- Provide opportunities for community participation and input into the rehabilitation of offenders
- Sensitise the justice system to the needs and cultural values of ATSI people

- Monitoring of and coordination with, local community legal organisations assisting indigenous offenders
- Advocate for appropriate changes to the criminal justice system thru court based initiatives
- Develop skills and competencies in relation to court operations
- Establish good relations with magistrates and court staff
- The provision of administrative support structures for statutory Community Justice Groups to fulfill their statutory responsibilities under the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities (Justice, Land and Other Matters) Act 1984* and the *Aboriginal Communities (Justice, Land and Other Matters) Regulation 2008*,

### **Core Activities**

- Prepare and present written bail and sentencing submissions to the courts
- Prepare and present oral bail and sentencing submissions to the court
- Attend court sittings to provide assistance to victims and offender
- Link victims with support and legal service.
- Assist victims prepare Victim Impact Statements

## **QUEENSLAND MURRI COURT**

The Murri Court was established in 2002 as Queensland's first sentencing court for Indigenous offenders. Based upon the Nunga Court model in South Australia, it aims to address Indigenous over-representation in the criminal justice system through greater community involvement, more informal procedures, and sentences that focus on rehabilitation. Murri Courts are initiated through joint agreements between local Magistrates and Elders from local Indigenous communities. Court outcome objectives include: reducing the over-representation of Indigenous offenders in prison and juvenile detention; reducing the rate of non-attendance in court; and decreasing the rate of reoffending and court orders breaches.

It has often been said that Indigenous offenders can feel alienated by the criminal justice system, the 'white man's law', struggle to understand the process and its consequences for them, and be left with the feeling that justice was nowhere in sight. Murri Court is an Indigenous justice initiative specifically related to sentencing.

A principal object of Murri Court is to divert Indigenous offenders from imprisonment where possible by imposing other appropriate penalties, and by that means reducing the over-representation of Indigenous offenders in prisons. A further aim is to make the Court process less alienating for Indigenous offenders and the Indigenous community as a whole. Murri Court is one attempt by Queensland Magistrates to include and respect some aspects of Indigenous customary ways and values in the existing criminal justice system.

The process encourages a degree of Indigenous community ownership of crime and justice, and an opportunity to address offending behaviour in a more constructive manner than was previously possible.

### **'Bigger jails' if Murri Court axed**

The Murri Court has rehabilitated hundreds of indigenous offenders through its bail program and the Queensland Indigenous Alcohol Diversion program. Stakeholders argue it saves the government hundreds of thousands of dollars each year when offenders avoid jail, and instead are integrated back into the community. Elders, along with Murri Court success stories, have passionately advocated the system ahead of the State Budget to be handed down tomorrow. They fear the Murri Court, along with other special courts, will disappear in the cuts, and Mr Newman has offered little reassurance. Elder Bradley Henaway said Mr Newman would have to "build bigger jails" if the Murri Court went.

"It's something that's working, why would they want to cut it? They'll cut off their own foot," he said. "I think it's given our people enough time to make appropriate changes. "This way so many start to realise where they're going in their lives and have other people help. If not, you've got to build bigger jails."

Mr Henaway, who sits in as an elder once a month, said he could see "big changes" in the majority of participants. Alfred Smallwood said the Murri Court system "empowers" participants, especially indigenous men. "We make them a warrior in the family again, we make them the provider," he said. "They become the role model in their family."

A stakeholder said the Murri Court system broke the cycle of offending by helping indigenous people gain employment. "If someone's employed they're busy, they're not bored and they're feeling good about themselves," the stakeholder said.

Murri Court success story Lawrence Kemp said the program changed his life. "The big difference is it's in our own culture," he said.

In a statement to the Bulletin, a spokeswoman for Mr Newman said the state was "working to reign in Labor's debt" and couldn't promise the Murri Court system would remain.

"Murri court axed to save millions" Kate Lemmon, 15th Sep 2012 The Queensland Times

## **JAWUN**

[www.jawun.org.au](http://www.jawun.org.au)

Jawun is essentially people sharing their stories. Our corporate secondees share their stories – their expertise, skills and knowledge. In return, our Indigenous Partners share their stories – their values, culture and point of view.

### **What do we do?**

At the heart of Jawun are the diverse capabilities of skilled people from our Corporate Partners, and the desire and determination of Indigenous people to regenerate their communities.

Knowledge and expertise is shared by:

- Supporting Indigenous leadership to deliver their own strategies and vision
- Using corporate and philanthropic involvement to build the capabilities of Indigenous people and organisations
- Fostering Indigenous economic and social development in a way that encourages people to take responsibility for their own lives
- Focusing our efforts 'in place' with communities who are ready and willing to engage with us
- Building a network where Indigenous, government, corporate and philanthropic ideas can be shared

### How Jawun works?

1. Identifies projects for support. Indigenous organisations outline their priorities.
2. Articulates required resource. Jawun helps the Indigenous organisations think through the corporate secondees required.
3. Locates suitable resource. Jawun works with Corporate Partners to identify suitable secondees.
4. Applies and supports resource. Jawun manages the local induction and provides ongoing support to secondees.

### How the corporate secondees work:

To begin their time, secondees spend a few days on an induction programme learning about Indigenous culture, the region they will be working in and interacting with Indigenous organisations and people.

In remote regions, they next attend an off-road driving course and have the opportunity for a weekend camping trip where they can experience the region, get to know their fellow secondees and get back to nature.

Secondees then start their time with the organisation and project they are working for, with regular support from their local Jawun Regional Director.

Why the Jawun model works

- Provides a clear framework for our partners
- Has clear understanding of realities, constraints and opportunities
- Builds trusted relationships with our partners
- Includes hands-on management of corporate secondees so any issues are addressed early

*"(Jawun has) a decisive role in our work in Cape York Peninsula. (It) gave us people from the private sector who have helped us to see beyond the welfare horizons that used to dominate Indigenous affairs when our sole source of input was Government. The combination of key organisations, their sustained commitment over a long period of time, the commitment of their most valuable resource – their people – makes (Jawun) a new model for corporate-community partnerships aimed at tackling disadvantage."* Jawun Patron, Noel Pearson (2000).

This resource and further information about Creating A Safe Supportive Environment is available to download at [www.casse.org.au/resources](http://www.casse.org.au/resources).

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