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# **The Queensland Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Driver Licensing Program**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This paper outlines the development of the Queensland Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Driver Licensing Program. The paper also examines the whole-of-government approach to improving Indigenous disadvantage in the areas of licensing, road safety and over-representation in the criminal justice system in terms of unlicensed driving. These areas remain over-represented when compared to whole population data.

Unlicensed driving is a major social problem for Indigenous Queenslanders and the rate of Indigenous imprisonment is nearly 12 times that of the non-Indigenous rate. Indigenous Australians are overrepresented in road fatalities by approximately 3.5 times and almost a third of controllers are unlicensed. (QT 2006)

Statistics for the Queensland Transport Northern Region show that the controller in almost fifty percent of serious casualty crashes involving Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people did not hold the appropriate drivers licence. (QT 2004)

Data provided by the Department of Corrective Services show that 75% of inmates at Lotus Glen and Stuart Correctional facilities are Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people. 57% of these inmates are incarcerated for licence related offences. (QT 2004)

Research revealed many reasons for unlicensed driving including literacy and numeracy issues, a lack of understanding of the licensing system and a fear of authority - including police and government agencies. Additionally, the isolated nature of many communities, including those in the Torres Strait, meant that travel costs associated with obtaining a license was prohibitive for most people. (Styles and Edmondstone, 2005)

A lack of cultural awareness in terms of individual and community capacity and expectations was also identified as a major deterrent to Indigenous people obtaining drivers' licences utilising 'mainstream' programs.

Efforts to address this imbalance occurred informally for almost ten years. In 1998 the Queensland Police Service commenced a mobile license testing program and successfully delivered over 3,500 transactions (new and renewals) in remote and isolated areas of Queensland, including the Torres Strait.

In 2003, the Premier's Law and Justice Chief Executive Officers Committee requested Queensland Transport lead a project to increase Indigenous licensing and a concerted effort from a Whole-of-Government approach has resulted in the Queensland Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Driver Licensing Program officially commencing in July 2006 under the auspices of Queensland Transport.

A successful budget application in the 2006-2007 State Budget has seen funding allocated to further develop and deliver the program over an initial four-year period. The effort will be steered by a Whole-of-Government Coordination Group to ensure the level of Indigenous road safety, license participation and over-incarceration for unlicensed-related offences equalises to the state averages in these areas.

## INTRODUCTION

It has been estimated that indigenous Australians are over-represented in road fatalities by about three times, however the dearth of quantifiable data continues to be a problem. (ATSB 2005) The Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety (CARRSQ) reported that it has been estimated that in some communities the rate may be as high as 17 times the general population. (CARRSQ 2003)

Many causal factors for unlicensed driving have been identified including attitude, education, training, access to services and enforcement. Additionally, many remote communities are not exposed to promotional or educational resources to assist people in knowing and undertaking the steps to be taken to enter the driver licensing system.

In 1998, the Queensland Police Service (QPS) designed an Indigenous Drivers Licensing Program as a means of delivering an alternative for Indigenous people to obtain licences through an easily understood 'hands-on' instructional process. The program essentially involved taking licensing testing and assessment to the communities as a mobile unit and delivering the program in a culturally sensitive manner. The program was continually fine-tuned and delivered by Senior Sergeant Pryde.

From July 2004 to June 2005, delivery of the QPS program was intensified through internal Problem Oriented Policing Program (POPP) funding. This enabled the program to be delivered to many remote and isolated communities – particularly in Cape York and the Torres Strait. From 1998 to June 2006 over 4,000 people participated in the program statewide and received Learner's Licenses and Driver's Licenses – many for the first time.

During this time, Queensland Transport initiated the formation of a whole-of-government coordination group: *The Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Driver Licensing Project Coordination Group*. The group's main work has involved identifying and examining the three main facets to Indigenous licensing in Queensland: Education and Training, Delivery and Assessment and Evaluation.

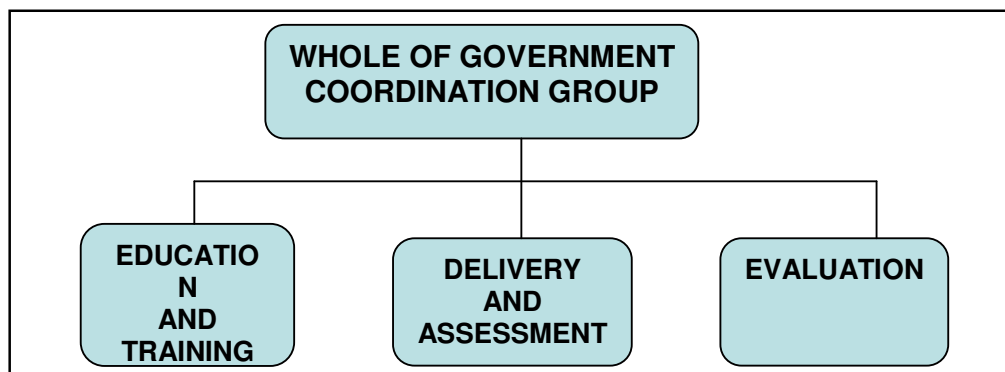


Figure 1 – Program structure

The development of the QPS program formed the basis for the Delivery and Assessment component of the new project. The QPS project continued throughout the development of the whole-of-government deliberations and was a valuable resource for ongoing development of content.

In addition to Queensland Transport and Queensland Police, other key agencies involved are the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, Department of Justice and Attorney General, Department of Employment and Training and Department of Corrective Services. External agencies are James Cook University and the Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety, Queensland (CARRSQ). Queensland Transport is the lead agency and performs the coordination role.

The Education and Training group facilitates the training of community educators, develops training materials and evaluates training programs. Queensland Transport, Queensland Police and James Cook University are the key agencies. Other agencies are encouraged to have input into the community education material to increase a whole-of-government approach.

Delivery and Assessment is the responsibility of Queensland Transport as the lead agency. Queensland Transport and Queensland Police work cooperatively in all aspects of this area.

The Evaluation group is lead by Queensland Transport and is strongly supported by CARRSQ, Queensland Police and Department of Corrective Services. The major function of this group is to supply both qualitative and quantitative data on the project's outcomes.

In the 2006-2007 State Budget, the project was successfully funded for an initial four year period. During this time it is expected over 4,000 people will enter the licensing system and a reduction of incarceration of Indigenous people for driving-related offences is expected. This will result in approximately 70% parity with whole-of-state license participation (QT 2006)

The project is now titled: The Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Driver Licensing Program (A&TSIDL) and work is continuing to design and deliver the program to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland.

## **LICENCE PARTICIPATION**

License ownership amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland is significantly disparate to the broader state community. In the Northern Region (QT regional area Bowen to Mt Isa and all areas north) Indigenous communities, as Local Government Authorities (LGAs) have a licence ownership rate for all classes of licences of 38%.

In comparison, other LGAs which have a licence ownership rate of 89.7% and overall the northern region has a licence ownership rate of 87.7%

The licensing program will focus on this part of North Queensland because it contains 30 of the 32 remote communities' Indigenous people which make up over 10 % of the population of this area.

To bring just the remote communities up to the licensing ownership rate of approximately 90%, will require 7546 licences to be issued and a further 350 to 500 extra per year (from 2004) as new cohorts become eligible to hold licences.

Within Indigenous LGAs there are 4,489 persons licensed to drive or ride, this represents 33.6% of licence-eligible residents in these communities, compared with 84.5% for other LGAs. (QT, 2006)

Of note is the fact that at June 30 2004, there were 618 learner licensed people within Indigenous communities. This represents 12.1% of licence holders or 4.6% of the licence eligible population, compared with 6.3% of licence holders or 3.2% of licence eligible population for other LGAs. One likely explanation for this higher average is the success of the QPS program operating in the area at that time.

| LGA Group                    | Population Est | Licence Holders June 2004 |             |          |          | % Open Prov | % Learners |
|------------------------------|----------------|---------------------------|-------------|----------|----------|-------------|------------|
|                              | 16.5-75 yrs    | Open                      | Provisional | Learners | Licensed |             |            |
| Indigenous Communities       | 13,372         | 3,990                     | 499         | 618      | 5,107    | 33.6%       | 4.6%       |
| Other LGA's                  | 330,805        | 267,658                   | 18,704      | 10,327   | 296,689  | 86.6%       | 3.1%       |
| <b>Total Northern Region</b> | 344,177        | 271,648                   | 19,203      | 10,945   | 301,796  | 84.5%       | 3.2%       |

**Table 1: Licence eligible population and Licence Holders, Northern Region 2004**

## INTERSECTORAL PARTNERSHIPS AND GOVERNMENT STRATEGIES

*The Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Driver Licensing Program (A&TSIDLDP)* is a whole-of-government project involving a number of individual agencies playing significant roles in the three key areas of Education and Training, Delivery and Assessment and Evaluation.

The program is closely aligned with the Government's priorities to protect children, enhance community safety and strengthen services to communities and coexists within the Queensland government *Partnership Queensland* (PQ) framework.

This is the Government's strategic policy framework which brings together all existing Queensland Government initiatives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. It guides all future Queensland Government policies and services affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Partnerships Queensland aims to improve government performance. All Queensland Government departments are guided by:

- A set of goals and policy objectives - strong families, strong cultures, safe places, healthy living and skilled and prosperous people and communities
- A new way of doing business based on partnership, community engagement, improved governance, better performing and more accountable service providers, and shared responsibility. (PQ 2005)

The State Budget funding elevated the Indigenous Driver Licensing Project from Project to Program status. Specific funding has enabled:

- Implementing the QT/QPS Indigenous Mobile Licensing Unit.
- Implementing sustainable driver education programs in remote communities.



## CORRECTIVE SERVICES

The Indigenous population of Queensland makes up 3.2% of the population. In 2002-3 and 2003-4 the Indigenous people made up 31% of incarcerations and in 2004-5 Indigenous people made up 35% of the incarcerated.

There are approximately 2500 Indigenous people released from Correctional facilities per year and the vast majority do not hold a drivers licence.

If Indigenous people were incarcerated with unlicensed driving as the *'Most Serious Offence'* at the same rate per population as non-Indigenous people there would be a significant reduction in imprisonment.

Similarly, if Indigenous people were placed on a Community Service Order with unlicensed driving as the *'Most Serious Offence'* at the same rate per population as non-Indigenous people there would be fewer community service orders. As the Program is implemented there is an expectation that this over-representation will be reduced significantly.

The consequences of unlicensed driving on custodial sentences and in court made community orders can be seen in the two tables below.

|   | 2002/03    |                | 2003/04    |                | 2004/05    |                |
|---|------------|----------------|------------|----------------|------------|----------------|
|   | Indigenous | Non-Indigenous | Indigenous | Non-Indigenous | Indigenous | Non-Indigenous |
| <b>Custodial Population</b>             | 969        | 3075           | 957        | 3037           | 1077       | 3052           |
| <b>MSO of Unlicensed Driving</b>        | 24         | 71             | 24         | 71             | 33         | 103            |
| <b>Unlicensed Driving in Episode</b>    | 210        | 601            | 182        | 569            | 184        | 559            |
| <b>MSO of Other Traffic Offence</b>     | 34         | 100            | 21         | 119            | 32         | 112            |
| <b>Other Traffic Offence in Episode</b> | 252        | 849            | 220        | 798            | 245        | 704            |

**Table 4 - Custodial population by ethnicity by type of driving offence**

If Indigenous people were incarcerated with unlicensed driving as the *'Most Serious Offence'* at the same rate per population as non-Indigenous people, the 2003 figure would be 2.4 not 24.

|   | 2002/03    |                | 2003/04    |                | 2004/05    |                |
|---|------------|----------------|------------|----------------|------------|----------------|
|   | Indigenous | Non-Indigenous | Indigenous | Non-Indigenous | Indigenous | Non-Indigenous |
| <b>Community Population</b>             | 1770       | 9389           | 1841       | 9297           | 2061       | N/A            |
| <b>MSO of Unlicensed Driving</b>        | 65         | 362            | 73         | 396            | 101        | N/A            |
| <b>Unlicensed Driving in Episode</b>    | 325        | 1325           | 364        | 1385           | 408        | N/A            |
| <b>MSO of Other Traffic Offence</b>     | 182        | 1574           | 195        | 1548           | 207        | N/A            |
| <b>Other Traffic Offence in Episode</b> | 428        | 2643           | 426        | 2557           | 439        | N/A            |

**Table 5: Community population by ethnicity by type of driving offence (court-made community service orders only)**

If Indigenous people were placed on a Community Service Order (CSO) with unlicensed driving as the 'Most Serious Offence' at the same rate per population as non-Indigenous people, the 2003 figure would be 12.2 not 65. (QT 2006)

## **THE QPS PROGRAM**

Queensland Transport (QT) has the primary responsibility in Queensland for issuing drivers' licences. However, police in remote stations have responsibility for issuing licences in their communities in the absence of QT Client Service Centres. Research found these police were experiencing difficulties in the provision of adequate licensing services – due mainly to a lack of cultural awareness and the demands of prioritising responses to a wide range of policing requirements.

The QPS Indigenous Licensing Program commenced in 1998, due mainly to the efforts of Senior Sergeant Alan Pryde. It is worth noting that the success of the program has occurred because of his efforts and dedication – honed from working in remote parts of the state for many years. Pryde's unique style of communication with, and reciprocal respect for, Indigenous people is noteworthy for a non-Indigenous person. Not coincidentally, this style of communication has been instrumental in gaining trust for and acceptance of the QPS program by Indigenous people.

The gaining and development of trust by license program providers is not to be under-estimated if successful interaction with Indigenous participants is to be expected long term.

The QPS program essentially involves taking licensing testing and assessment to the communities as a mobile unit and delivering the program in a culturally sensitive manner. This involves the use of easily understood teaching aids (model cars, signs, etc) to assist participants in understanding the learner's licensing questions and practical testing in the communities with community vehicles.

Cooperation from Indigenous Community Councils is required and normally enthusiastically welcomed as it provides the councils with more drivers for council vehicles: community buses, trucks, etc. Employment opportunities were also enhanced – particularly in those communities where mining companies were keen to employ Indigenous workers in vehicle use.

The program developed as an effective means of increasing Indigenous participation in the licensing process and also as a credible way of reducing Indigenous incarcerations - the primary goal of the 2001 Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice Agreement (The Justice Agreement). This agreement aims to reduce the number of Indigenous incarcerations by 50 percent by 2011.

The QPS program was delivered in a variety of locations and settings – dependant on the resources of the community. The benefits of delivering the program under the shade of a tree, or on a verandah are obvious when breaking down barriers of mistrust of government buildings, particularly police stations and court houses.

Where QPS Police Liaison Officers are stationed in remote areas, they often assist with the program – again helping to enhance liaison between police and the community. Community Police Officers (employed by local community councils) are also used where appropriate for the same reasons.

The QPS program has also been successfully trialled in support of Department of Corrective Services *Transitions Program* and in Youth Detention Centres. This has enabled those people exiting the correctional system to improve their employment prospects by obtaining a Learner's License just prior to their release.

In June 2005, a request was made by Indigenous Magistrates Jackie Payne and Zac Sarra for a briefing on the IDLP. The magistrates saw the program as a credible diversionary option. Mr. Sarra has previously used the program as such when he was a magistrate in the Yarrabah community near Cairns.

Anecdotal information from Magistrates Courts in the areas where the Indigenous Licensing Unit has visited indicated a significant drop in traffic court cases.

The program content includes detailed communication strategies. These enable delivery of the program in a basic, logical format easily understood by people who have literacy, numeracy and cultural issues that would ordinarily preclude them from understanding standard licensing requirements.

Queensland Fire and Rescue Service saw the program as an opportunity for their Indigenous Liaison Officer, Senior Fire Officer Norm Clarke, to travel with the team and deliver concurrent fire-safety and rural fire service presentations. Mr. Clarke, a former international football player, is well known throughout Indigenous communities. This was seen as a positive step to show essential services working together for Indigenous communities. Anecdotal evidence from many communities showed this to be a successful strategy. Many barriers were broken down through this partnership.

In early 2005, the Registrar General for Births, Deaths and Marriages, Mr Des Tanner, accompanied the IDLP team to Badu Island to examine the problems of evidence of identity in Indigenous communities. This was initially identified by the IDLP team. As a result, Mr. Tanner has made recommendations through his Coordinating Group member, to utilise the IDLP program to increase the number of

people registering their birth and the births of their children. Negotiations are ongoing with this strategy.

In July 2005, additional QPS funds were utilised to continue the program into August 2005. By this time, over 1600 participants obtained drivers licences, learners licences and renewals in the 13 month period.

In September 2005, the QPS program was awarded a Queensland Transport / Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety Queensland (CARRS-Q) Road Safety Award. The program was nominated by the abovementioned Brisbane Magistrates.

As awareness of the QPS program spread, many requests were received from metropolitan Indigenous communities and more recently the program was successfully delivered in metropolitan areas within Brisbane and South East Queensland including Arana Hills, Zillmere, Inala, Beenleigh, Beaudesert and Ipswich. This work was undertaken with the support of Queensland Transport.

In 2006, the QPS program was delivered to the Sudanese community with a view to enhancing their future employment prospects by obtaining drivers licenses. While the program was delivered successfully, as expected, many challenges were identified – particularly in displaying adequate understanding of practical driving skills. These sessions have shown however, that with some modification, the program has potential to be utilised in a variety of multicultural settings.

Development of the QPS program is now complete. In the past two years, Senior Sergeant Pryde has developed extensive material including many recommendations that will serve as the basis for the future of the program under the auspices of Queensland Transport.

## **OVERCOMING BARRIERS**

**Appreciation of culture** represents perhaps the most significant barrier to the overcoming the current disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people entering the drivers licensing system. The current program is designed around acknowledging a wide range of cultural aspects including family and kinship, lack of trust in government agencies, fear of failure and loss of respect both for self and within the community.

The QPS is also developing a comprehensive Cultural Appreciation Program (CAPro) for use by all Police Service members. This project is being developed with assistance from a wide group of stakeholders – particularly Indigenous community members. The material developed will also be utilised to assist with the training of driving instructors and testers.

Similarly, the selection of appropriate Driving Instructors and Examiners is crucial to the success of delivery in Indigenous communities. Currently Driving Instructor training is industry-based and Queensland Transport certified.

Whilst it is preferable to have Indigenous personal involved in instructing and examining, this is not always practical. Experience with the QPS program has found that a person's aboriginality does not automatically mean they are suitable for such work. Awareness of family, kinship and community loyalties must be

acknowledged in order to prevent both the trainer/examiner and the community being put in a position of compromise.

Non-Indigenous driving instructors and examiners will be provided with cross-cultural training, so that they are better able to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients to feel comfortable in the learning and testing environment.

Queensland Transport in Cairns has one Indigenous driving examiner, and there are only a few Indigenous instructors in the area. Cherbourg is notable for having its own driving school. However there is generally a shortage of Aboriginal people or Torres Strait Islander people qualified as instructors or examiners.

Developing **user-friendly learning and testing materials** was also seen as a significant breakthrough in assisting Indigenous people to understand complex reading material that was not originally designed with culturally-specific characteristics in mind.

The QPS program material proved invaluable in designing culturally appropriate training material - in particular a small Learner's Licence Test booklet that is now in its third reprint with over 20,000 copies printed. The QPS program is registered internally as a training program (QCO -225) for police officers in remote communities to access.

**Evidence of identity** (EOI) was identified as a major barrier to the provision of licenses by both the QPS program and the new A&TSIDL coordination group. Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people often lack a birth certificate or any other recognised form of identification. The Assistance of the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Department of Justice and Attorney General, was invaluable in assisting to resolve this issue.

Traditionally, verification of identity occurred by a number of different agencies and proof of residency through production of receipts for rent, power, etc. This process did not always overcome the problems for some people, notably young people and those who have recently moved to a new area. A current Queensland Transport brochure outlines the EOI requirements. There are options for people who do not have a birth certificate, but these still prove difficult in some circumstances.

A task force has been established to recommend a package for alternative EOI requirements to Queensland Transport (and other agencies) for consideration. This will incorporate:

- a range of alternative ways of obtaining EOI documentation for people who do not have birth certificates
- creation of an easy pathway for retrospective issue of birth certificates, based on the alternative EOI documentation
- provision for safe storage of EOI documentation, particularly on remote communities.

Whatever alternatives are considered, it would still be preferable to reinforce the obtaining of a birth certificate as the prime means of proving identification. The provision of confirmation of identity could be used as a stop gap measure, but should then lead to retrospective application for a birth certificate.

## **TESTING LOCATIONS**

Two major debilitating factors to providing equitable Indigenous licensing services are the remoteness of a significant number of communities – particularly in North Queensland and the Torres Strait, and the ‘Wet’ season.

Travel to undertake driving tests is a major cost impediment in the present system. For example, for an applicant to travel from Darnley Island in the eastern Torres Strait, to Thursday Island to be tested and return home, involves a cost of \$1,200 in airfares, hire of vehicle at testing venue, accommodation as well as normal fees.

Remote area police stations are currently contracted to undertake licensing, but there are difficulties arising from the heavy workload of police (resulting in driver testing receiving a relatively low priority) as well as the reluctance of many clients to present themselves at the police station.

The QPS Program has had considerable success from introducing a Mobile Testing Unit in the remote communities and the Torres Strait Islands, and this will be replicated in the new program and may be expanded into other (less remote) regions.

There are demands for instruction and testing tracks to be established on some remote communities, and for instruction/testing in 4WD vehicles in addition to the conventional driver instruction and testing.

In the new program, the Learner’s License written questions can be delivered in a more culturally appropriate setting – compared to the clinical surrounds of a Client Service Centre. In the QPS program, as many sessions occurred under trees as in community rooms, verandahs and classrooms. These sometimes occurred individually and sometimes in small groups. Many pre-test nerves were settled simply because individuals feel more comfortable conducting the sessions with others.

There is also some scope for remote area police stations to become more proactive in encouraging driver licensing, and provision of a CDEP placement for administrative support might provide a useful incentive (as well as improving relations between the police and the community).

It is seen as a particularly high priority to license people who can already drive. Experience with the QPS program has found that the actual driving skills of most Indigenous people tested is high – no doubt as a result of their familiarity with vehicles and less-than-ideal driving conditions from an early age.

## **BALANCING ENFORCEMENT AND LICENSING REQUIREMENTS**

Currently people are losing their licences as part of the state Penalties Enforcement Register (SPER) penalty system for non-payment of fines, and many people in remote areas may be unaware of the fact that their licenses have been cancelled in this way. People whose licences are suspended are often unaware that they can apply to reactivate them.

Magistrates inform people whose licences are suspended or cancelled about the options for re-issue of licences, and letters are sent explaining these options. However many clients do not understand the explanations given in court or by letter, and some do not receive the written explanation at all.

Conviction for driving without a licence often leads to imprisonment, due to the lack of any alternative sanctions. This results in high financial costs to the State as well as high personal costs for prisoners and their families.

Police operating in remote communities, where people may be charged with breach a number of regulations, are not conducive to developing constructive approaches to addressing driver licensing problems. A balance is always sought between the need of incentives to regulatory compliance and licence compliance. Enforcement activities are tempered with the need for helping people obtain licenses and keeping them. Efforts were also made to contact persons approaching licensing age to assist them in applying for a birth certificate before they reached licensing age.

Alternative sentencing options are currently being explored for a range of driving offences. Development of community based programs will assist magistrates to refer people convicted of these offences to such programs. Promotion of the current program amongst the Judiciary as a means of providing viable diversion from custody options in continuing in a positive way.

Further action is being undertaken by the Whole-of-Government Coordination Group to ensure viable diversions to custody for license-related offences are considered.

## **CHANGE MANAGEMENT**

There can be no doubt that significant change is required to reduce the high number of unlicensed drivers in remote communities. Similarly the high level of involvement of Indigenous people in road trauma is unacceptable as is the high level of Indigenous incarceration for unlicensed driving.

A lack of cultural awareness in terms of individual and community capacity and expectations, was also identified as a major deterrent to Indigenous people obtaining drivers' licences.

From 1998 to 2006, the QPS program has visited all major Indigenous Communities in Cape York and many in the Torres Strait. In 2005-2006, both QT and QPS program officers have worked together to attend many communities as well.

Experience has shown that once people learn of the program and learn how it is delivered, most are willing to participate. The oldest participant in the QPS program was a 72 year old Elder who was driven 3 hours by his similarly-aged brother to obtain his Learner's Licence for the first time.

Word of the program has spread quickly through community 'grape-vines' and the program is well-respected and sought-after by communities. Concurrent with the

program's development is the need to impress upon people the need to hold a driver's license and how to keep it.

Local community agencies play a vital educative role to assist delivery and retention of drivers' licences and cross agency collaboration and community partnerships are essential to achieving best results. Councils, schools, health clinics and police all play a role in promoting licensing.

## **EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have access to vehicles do not hold a driver licence. In many obvious ways this has a detrimental affect to both individuals and communities. The Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Driver Licensing program is developing community-based education programs to address this problem. The strategies, range of learning, and likely outcomes embodied in this program make it an important example of lifelong learning. (Vick and Avery 2006)

A key component of the program's broad educational strategy for remote communities is the development of community-based educator positions and roles. This follows the findings of the initial consultative research by CARRSQ and Queensland Transport (2003) which clearly showed a long history of community angst and distrust to programs which are seen as outside impositions. (Vick and Avery 2006)

From a governmental perspective, the high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander drivers without licences constitutes a policy, administrative, and fiscal problem through over-representation in incarcerations, road trauma, and dysfunctionality of communities. This program offers realistic prospects of moderating some of these problems and, in the process, of reducing some fiscal pressures and achieving some positive (e.g., justice related) policy targets. (Vick and Avery 2006)

The Education and Training component forms an integral part of the Queensland Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Driver Licensing Program. Already a range of service delivery options have been identified and further expanded on by the Whole-of-Government coordination group. From 2006, these will begin to take effect in remote communities. The progress will be closely monitored.

## **PROGRAM PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND EVALUATION**

A specific set of Milestones and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) have been approved by the Whole-of-government Coordination Group as a means of tracking the progress of the program – particularly during the ensuing four-year funding period. These KPIs are expanded in Table 6 below:

| Milestone   | Key Performance Indicator   |
|---|---|
| Increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with appropriate drivers licences   | Annual increase in licence holders in remote communities to 90%.  |
| Increased licence retention rates   | Attain licence renewals rates that are reflective of the wider community  |
| Reduction in the number and proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons charged with, or incarcerated for, licence-related offences at a much reduced social and financial cost to society. | Annual numbers reduced: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Incarceration</li> <li>- Licensing related offences</li> </ul> |
| Reduction in road casualties  | Annual reduction in serious injury reported to health agencies.   |
| Reduction in road fatalities  | Annual reduction in fatalities.   |
| Community acceptance of the method of delivery of licensing services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities   | Acceptance by communities.  |
| Development and implementation of an educational diversionary program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander licence-related offenders in Queensland.  | Sustainable diversionary program implemented.   |
| Development of better alliances between government and communities to increase the capacity of communities to address their own transport and road safety needs.  | Community based training programs implemented.  |
| Increased access to qualified driver trainers in communities and culturally-appropriate licensing facilities/services.  | The majority of communities have access to qualified driver trainers.   |

**Table 6: Key Milestones and Key Performance Indicators**

CARRS-Q has developed a short- and long-term evaluation framework to monitor progress against the milestones and KPIs identified above. The evaluation framework has both process and outcome components and draws on information from: progress reports from program deliverers; external crash, injury, and licensing datasets; stakeholder consultations; and observation of process.

While the Queensland Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Driver Licensing Program has a number of crime prevention, road safety and social justice imperatives, the two primary objectives are to: (1) increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with appropriate drivers licences, particularly in remote areas; and (2) reduction the number and proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons charged with, or incarcerated for, licence-related offences.

While it is important to recognise that positive change in behavioural outcome measures typically takes about five years after a program's introduction, a

preliminary evaluation of the first formal 18 months of the program provides evidence that it is moving towards achieving these objectives.

Firstly, a review of Queensland Transport's licensing database (TRAILS) shows an increase in the total number of licence holders in Indigenous communities in North Queensland. The period June 2004 to May 2006 shows an increase of 7.73% in licence ownership with 266 additional provisional licenses and 242 additional open licenses issued. This also demonstrates that delivery staff are successfully moving participants along the licensing cycle from the knowledge component (Learners licence) to the higher classes which has been a concern in the past. In North Queensland, overall the number of total licences issues have increased from 5,107 in 2004 to 5,502 in 2006 (QT, 2006).

An analysis of state-wide custodial data from Department of Corrective Services shows a steady increase in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous incarcerations for licensing offences over the last few years. However, the increase in 'custodial receptions' for licensing offences was lower for Indigenous populations (+ 21%) than non-Indigenous populations (+ 25%) in the last year. In 2004/05, the number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons receiving a custodial sentence for a licensing offence (either at the 'most serious offence' or in the 'episode of offences') was 283 and 701 respectively. In 2005/06, these figures rose to 342 and 873 respectively. Given that the licensing rate per eligible population remains much lower in Indigenous communities, this comparison is meaningful. (CARRSQ 2006)

The evaluation process is also geared to inform strategic service delivery in remote areas. CARRS-Q are currently pinpointing priority communities for outreach by identifying communities with low licensing rates per head of population and communities with high rates of unlicensed driving.

## **THE FUTURE**

Funding for the initial stage of the program will address development and initial implementation of the initiatives. By 2007/08 a full implementation plan will be available for ongoing programs.

Ongoing management and development of the program will be undertaken by Queensland Transport, Queensland Police, the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, Department of Justice and Attorney General, Department of Employment and Training, Department of Corrective Services and the Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety – Queensland.

The program's goal is to achieve licence holding parity (with state licence levels) in Indigenous Communities, particularly in North Queensland. Considering that only 33.6 per cent of *eligible* licence aged residents of Indigenous communities *are* licensed, to achieve a 60% licence level this will require 3,534 unlicensed persons to be trained and examined. To achieve 90% parity, this goal rises to 7,546.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Queensland Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Driver Licensing Program is a credible demonstration of the level of commitment the Queensland Government has invested in towards overcoming the disadvantage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in the road safety arena.

In the next four years, the Whole-of-Government Group is aiming to introduce effective strategies that will improve road safety, improve license participation, increase employment opportunities and most importantly- reduce the over-representation of Indigenous people incarcerated for licence-related offences.

The Government's four million dollar funding represents a considerable investment in the program. Reciprocal investment in terms of time and effort is expected from a range of stakeholders including community, Councils, government agencies and private sector service providers.

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