

Thursday, 22 May 2008

\$11.5 MILLION TO BREAK THE CYCLE OF YOUTH OFFENDING

The Attorney-General Michael Atkinson has announced that \$11.5 million will be devoted in the state budget to breaking the cycle of youth offending.

“Young offenders and children at risk of becoming involved in crime will be the focus of this co-ordinated package aimed at stopping youth crime at every stage,” Mr Atkinson said.

The measures directly address Monsignor David Cappelletti’s recommendations in his report “To Break the Cycle”. The five initiatives focus on intense attention to chronic repeat offenders, cross-discipline management of other young offenders and preventing children from becoming involved in crime.

\$11.5 million will be spent over four years:

Community Protection Panel (C.P.P.) - \$5.6 million

Intensive case management and concentrated support services will be provided to serious repeat offenders. A panel of experienced members of the community and government will oversee this, and will recommend their return to custody if they do not fully take part in tailored programs.

Youth Justice Teams - \$4 million

Young offenders not covered by the C.P.P. will receive tailored support from departments such as Families and Communities, Health, Education and police. This will be co-ordinated by youth justice teams with specialist professional qualifications.

Tirkandi school retention program - \$1 million

Three school support workers will help keep at-risk Aboriginal students at school.

The David Kennedy Model - \$829 000

Internationally renowned Professor David Kennedy, from the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York, will devise a program tailored to address local youth offending problems. Professor Kennedy’s grass roots approach has resulted in remarkable drops in crime in many towns and cities across the world.

Kurruru Indigenous Youth Performing Arts - \$143 000 (additional funding)

Twenty adult artists and mentors will work with 100 young men and boys to provide a diversion from anti-social and criminal behaviour.

“In most cases, the youth justice system is very effective in deterring first-time offenders from further criminal behaviour,” Mr Atkinson said.

“But the Commissioner for Social Inclusion, Monsignor David Cappelletti, found there are some gaps in the system’s response to the small group of young repeat offenders.

“This \$11.5 million investment takes direct action on Monsignor Cappelletti’s recommendations. It will help address gaps and provides top-to-bottom strategies to reduce youth offending.

“The C.P.P. will focus on the most dangerous young offenders and make sure they’re closely supervised and comply with court orders, while the justice teams will help less serious offenders steer away from further trouble.

“Professor David Kennedy’s innovative and assertive approach has led to major reductions in crime rates in scores of towns and cities in America, Europe and the U.K. While the nature of offending is different in South Australia, there are parallels in perpetrators and their patterns of offending.

“The Tirkandi retention officers and the arts diversion project will help prevent children and young people becoming involved in anti-social and criminal behaviour.

“I thank Monsignor Cappelletti for his hard work and I look forward to working with him to help young people and reduce crime in our state.”

Today’s announcement comes on top of previous state government action on Monsignor Cappelletti’s report, including:

- News laws passed giving the D.P.P. greater authority to refer youths straight to adult courts
- News laws passed allowing higher penalties for adults who involve children in crime
- Work underway to establish a Youth Parole Board
- Support for youth sporting and cultural events.