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Department of
Primary Industries and Fisheries

1 1 JUL 2007

Mr Robert Needham
Chairperson
Crime and Misconduct Commission
GPO Box 3123
Brisbane Qld 4001

Dear Mr Needham

CMC Inquiry into Policing in Indigenous Communities

Thank you for your letters of 19 April and 15 May 2007 seeking my input to the Crime and Misconduct Commission Inquiry into Policing in Indigenous Communities.

As Queensland Government Champion for the Lockhart River community, I believe there is a need for enhanced community policing activities, incorporating educational policing, not only the enforcement of law. For example, police officers can play an active role in helping community members to understand the law, explain society's expectations of individuals as articulated in law, and explain the potential consequences of illegal activities. In community policing, community leaders can be encouraged to take on a role in education and communication, supporting the administration and enforcement of law in the community.

An officer's ability to communicate and their attitude to the job can also significantly impact on their success in a community. For example, I have recently received very good reports of a new officer in Lockhart River, who has communicated clearly with the community about his role and his expectations of individual behaviour. His willingness to engage directly with community members, even speaking some local language, should enable him to be a successful and respected leader within the community.

On this basis, I would strongly support additional efforts being made to allow police officers in Indigenous communities to complete the Cape York Strategic Leaders Program. The program has a great success rate in building leadership skills and connectedness between police officers and community leaders, encouraging police to step beyond traditional roles and strengthen relationships. These relationships can support their activities as a police officer.

As you would appreciate, the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F) is not directly involved in providing police services to Indigenous communities. However, DPI&F is involved in service delivery and legislative compliance activities in areas such as animal welfare, boating and fisheries management.

The Department has interacted with the Queensland Police Service (QPS) in a number of communities in response to animal welfare issues. Given the remoteness of most Indigenous communities, police officers have assisted the Department in reporting incidents, providing information and addressing management issues. The cooperation and support provided by QPS officers is appreciated by the Department, as is reflected in the protocol currently being developed by DPI&F with QPS and the RSPCA on the management of animal welfare incidents.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide input to the Inquiry. I look forward to receiving advice regarding your findings and recommendations for future action.

If you require any further information regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to contact Justine Severin on telephone 07 323 93229 or email justine.severin@dpi.qld.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Jim Varghese
Director-General