



NPA LICENSING MUSTER INITIATIVE

Briefing Report 2019-2020

Prepared by:



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Overview

The Northern Peninsula Area (NPA) Licensing Muster Initiative is a Justice Reinvestment strategy that has been providing cross-agency, holistic, evidence-based and proactive support to the five NPA communities (Bamaga, Injinoo, New Mapoon, Seisia and Umagico) around licensing, registration and identity documents since July 2019.

The ultimate goal of the Licensing Muster Initiative is to reduce unnecessary contact that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience with the criminal justice system related to driving and vehicle related offending.

This Muster was developed in response to the disproportionately high levels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from the NPA coming into contact with the police and the criminal justice system for licence and vehicle related offences. Such contact ultimately leads to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people being sent to correctional facilities that are located thousands of kilometres away from their community at great social and economic cost. The flow-on impacts of incarceration are significant and cause ongoing trauma and disruption for that person, as well as their family and the wider community.

Justice Reinvestment

The Licensing Muster Initiative is a Justice Reinvestment strategy. Justice Reinvestment is a cost-effective approach aimed at reducing the rates of incarceration through targeting the root causes of offending. Through investment in resources that include evidence-based, data-driven and community-led early intervention and prevention programs like the Muster, disadvantaged people are provided key supports and access to services that divert them away from the justice system.

Justice Reinvestment

“Justice reinvestment (JR) is about building safer, stronger communities. It recognises that there is a strong link between locations where there is high disadvantage and high rates of people coming into contact with the criminal justice system – that is, the Police, the Courts and the prison system. JR is a smarter approach to criminal justice. It builds stronger communities by supporting community-led initiatives and strategies.

The focus is on getting to the underlying causes of crime and stopping crime from occurring in the first place. JR is also about diverting the funds saved from less interactions with the criminal justice system and reinvesting those funds back into communities. JR is about building communities, not prisons.”

Read more here: <http://www.justreinvest.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/JR-Toolkit-V13-250119-1.pdf>



By reinvesting money into initiatives like the NPA Licensing Muster, we can both reduce the rates of contact with the criminal justice system for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as well as save precious resources otherwise directed toward the ineffective punishment and detention of people for nonviolent driving-related offending in these communities.



The Cost of Incarceration

“At the margin, the costs of imprisonment are likely to outweigh the benefits, with increasing imprisonment working to reduce community safety over time:

- It costs around \$111,000 per year to accommodate a prisoner, with indirect costs in the order of \$48,000 per person, per year.
- Prisons are not effective at rehabilitation, and can increase the likelihood of reoffending.
- Without action to reduce growth, the government will need to build up to 4,200 additional cells by 2025. This will require investments of around \$3.6 billion....

“There are over 11,000 sworn police officers, 200,000 criminal lodgements dealt with by the courts each year and 9,000 prisoners managed in custody (11 high security prisons, 6 low security prisons, and 13 work camps). In 2017–18, the budgetary cost of the criminal justice system in Queensland (police, the courts and corrections) was around \$3.5 billion.”

Read more here: <https://www.qpc.qld.gov.au/inquiries/imprisonment/>

Reinvestment of even a fraction of the costs of running the criminal justice system and incarceration will lead to significant gains for community. Early intervention and prevention initiatives like the Muster are therefore not only beneficial to communities, they are cost effective.



Muster Partners

The Licensing Muster Initiative utilises a “collective-impact” framework which sees multiple stakeholders work collaboratively as Muster Partners, led by a Backbone Team who coordinate the Initiative.

Collective Impact

“Collective impact is the commitment of a group of actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a complex social problem. The underlying premise of collective impact is that alone, no single individual or organisation can create large-scale, lasting social change. “Silver bullet” solutions to systemic social problems do not exist; they cannot be solved by simply scaling or replicating one organisation or program. Strong organisations are necessary but not sufficient for large-scale social change.”

Read more here: <http://www.justreinvest.org.au/collective-impact/>

These Muster Partners utilise a case management approach, whereby all services work to assess a person’s holistic needs and then coordinate and advocate to ensure those needs are met in a systematic and collaborative way. This is in contrast to a siloed approach, whereby each service might perform one piece of the puzzle without understanding the whole picture or taking the steps necessary to ensure a person’s holistic needs are met.

The Backbone Team are:

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (ATSILS)
Queensland Police Service (QPS)
The NPA Community Justice Group (NPA CJG)

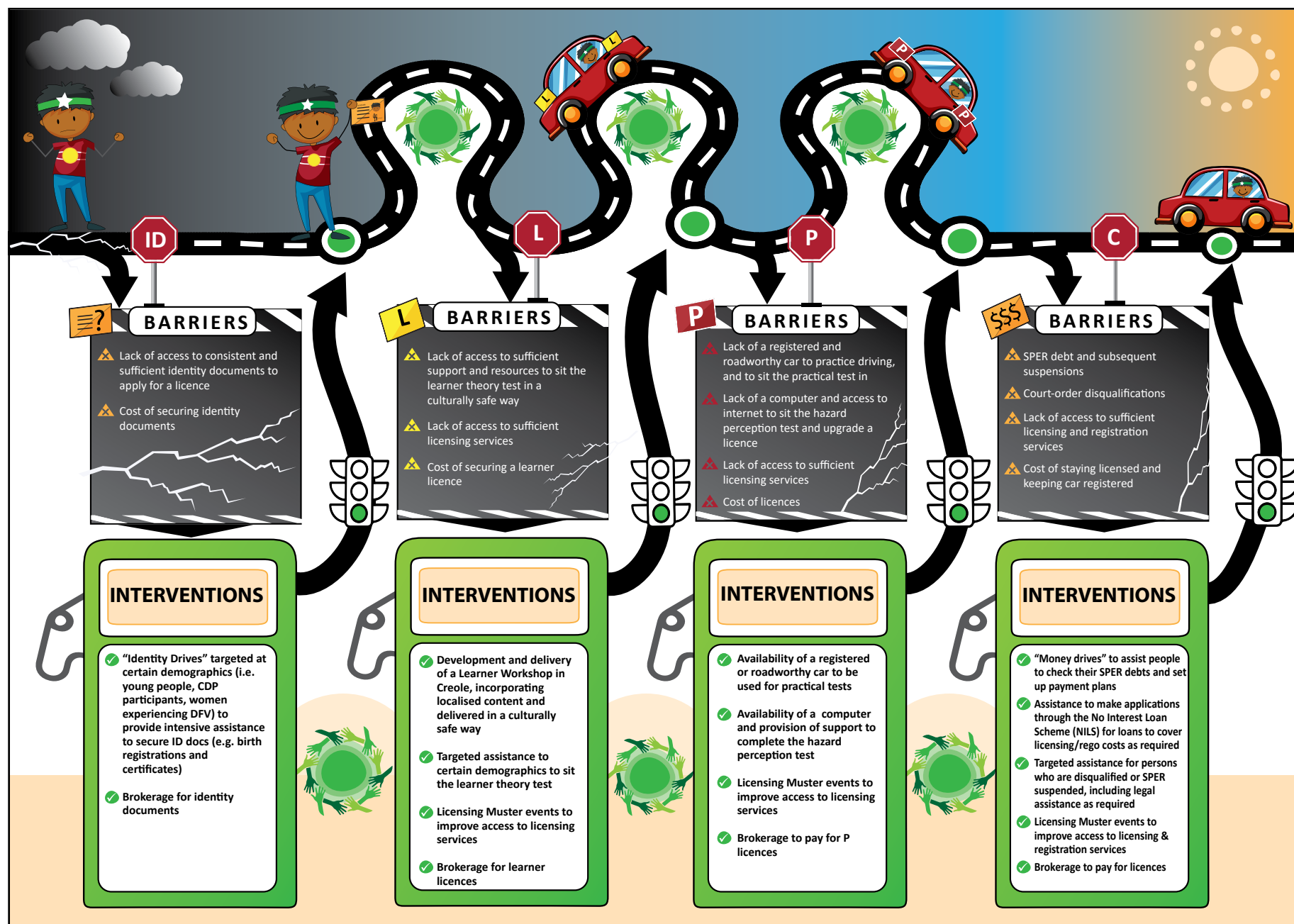
The Muster Partners include:

Department of Transport and Main Roads (DTMR)
Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG)
Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages (RBDM)
NPA State College (Senior Campus)
NPA Family and Community Services (NPA FACS)
Community Corrections (Queensland Corrective Services)

Photos from Licence Muster Events 2019/2020



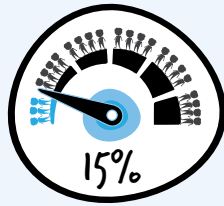
Licensing Muster Initiative: Identified Barriers and Interventions



Licensing Muster Initiative: Achievements

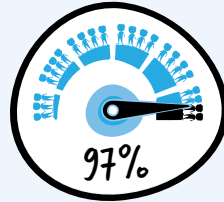


Demographics



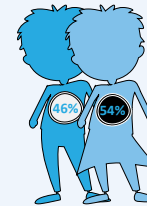
15% Aged 16+

Over 15% of the NPA licensable population (persons over 16 years) have been helped through the Licensing Muster since July 2019.



97% Identify

97% of participants identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. All NPA communities have had strong turnout, with even numbers across the five communities relative to their population.

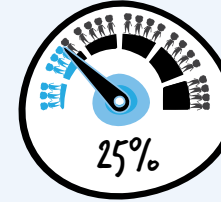


54% ♀ 46% ♂

54% of participants are female
46% of participants are male

43% Young People

43% of participants are young people (ages 16-20).

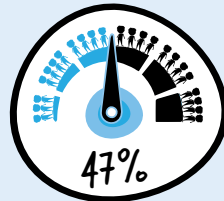


25% on Newstart

25% of participants are in receipt of Newstart payments and taking part in the Community Development Program (CDP).

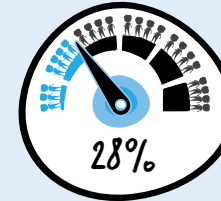


Identification



47% Helped with ID

47% of Licensing Muster participants have been helped with securing or amending a primary identity document.



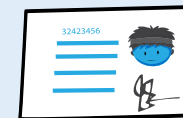
28% Without ID

28% of persons who attended a Licensing Muster event did not have enough ID, or did not have consistent ID, to be helped with a licence-related query on the day.

200+

200+ Applications for ID

Over 200 applications have been made to RBDM for birth registrations, birth certificates and change of name applications.



30 People Assisted to Secure Photo ID

We have assisted 30 participants to secure photo ID for the first time (e.g. a Proof of Age card or Learner Licence).



Licensing



38 Assisted

We have assisted 38 participants to obtain a learner licence for the first time, or upgrading their existing licence (e.g. Ls to Ps).

12 Assisted

We have assisted 12 participants to sit their practical driving test.



Revenue

over \$25K Raised

Over \$25,000 of revenue has been raised for Queensland government services, including:

\$15,000 worth of licensing and registration fees paid to the DTMR.

\$10,000 worth of application fees have been paid to the RBDM.

Where to from here?

We are excited to see the Licensing Muster Initiative evolve and expand as we go forward. The Muster represents the best of what a community can do if given the support, tools and resources to find localised solutions to the problems they face. This is at the heart of any Justice Reinvestment strategy.

By working in partnership with the communities, we can significantly reduce unnecessary contact with the criminal justice system for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities of the NPA, and possibly beyond.



Community-led Responses to Local Issues

“Directly affected people are best placed to identify local issues in their community and implement local solutions. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations have the unique capacity to provide culturally appropriate services, and are able to develop localised, tailored solutions that have the support of the community.”

Read more here: <https://changetherecord.org.au/solutions>

Some plans for the future include:

- Developing and running a Learner Workshop in Torres Strait Creole that will allow participants to sit for the learner theory test in an accessible and culturally safe way.
- Working in partnership with our Muster Partners, including DTMR's Indigenous Driver Licensing Unit (Licensing Mob) to deliver licensing and registration services in an effective and culturally safe way.
- Continuing to work closely with RBDM to undertake both Identity Drives and a Birth Registration Initiative, to ensure each person in the NPA is registered at birth and has access to the primary identity documents they need to get and stay licenced.
- Purchasing a vehicle for use by the Muster, to give access to community members who need a registered and roadworthy car to sit for their practical test.
- Establishing a learner driver program for people who wish to get their P licence but need access to a car and supervisor to get their 100 hours of practice completed.
- Expanding the Licensing Muster Initiative to nearby regions where it could also be of benefit, including Thursday Island and the Torres Strait region.

