

Toward Building a Community Owned Justice Re- Investment Strategy on Palm Island

Dr Garry Coventry<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>James Cook University



**TASA 2015 Conference Abstract**

**Toward a Community Owned Justice Re-Investment Strategy on Palm  
Island Garry Coventry  
Adjunct Senior Research Fellow  
James Cook University**

As governments struggle to rein-in the costs of incarceration, including construction and operational costs, the concept of justice re-investment (JRI) has gained traction in recent years. This paper begins by providing a brief overview of the variance in JRI operational meanings applied in various international jurisdictions. Ideally, JRI has the central objective of reducing prison/detention numbers. That has not happened in most jurisdictions in the US and UK. Why? Most often, correctional budgets are diverted to policing, leading to 'more cops, more arrests, more court time and more imprisonments'. Turning attention to the Australian context, it is essential that any JRI strategy must address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples caught up in the correctional services web. Clearly, a community based and owned approach is no easy task. In 2014, a pilot study was initiated with respect to developing a JRI strategy for Palm Island, a community which has substantial rates of incarceration. Findings to date are related to offending trends and mapping of the social and economic status of the community, as well as the indirect costs associated with incarceration borne by government, families of the incarcerated and other social actors.