

Clear Horizon

Evaluation of the partnership arrangements of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement (Phase 3)

**Prepared for Victorian Department of Justice and Regulation
Koori Justice Unit**

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Design. Evaluate. Evolve.

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Language in this report

Throughout this document, the term Aboriginal is used to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Use of the terms 'Koori', 'Koorie' and 'Indigenous' are retained in the names of programs and initiatives and, unless noted otherwise, are inclusive of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Acknowledgements

Through this evaluation we have been fortunate enough to speak with a broad range of Aboriginal people across the state. We would like to acknowledge their contribution and especially their willingness to share their views, ideas and stories.

Our special thanks to the members of the Koori Caucus who we know are time poor but who made the time to speak with us.

Executive Summary

The Victoria Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA), first signed in 2000, has articulated the State's and Aboriginal communities' commitment to improving justice outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians. Its achievements over the past 17 years have rested on the dedication and drive of numerous individuals working together to bring about the change needed to lessen the extent and impact of contact of Aboriginal people with the criminal justice system. These individuals have steadfastly worked in local communities, across regions and at the whole-of-state level.

As Phase 3 of the Agreement was nearing completion the Koori Justice Unit within the Department of Justice and Regulation commissioned an evaluation of the governance structures and partnership arrangement of the AJA. The evaluation, conducted by Clear Horizon Consulting, used a qualitative methodology to gather the views and opinions of those who were currently, or had previously been engaged with one or more of the AJF governance structures.

The Terms of Reference for the evaluation described the key objectives were to:

- Investigate whether the partnership model and governance structures of the AJA increase collaboration and contribute to improved justice outcomes.
- Explore whether self-determination in the justice system has been enabled through the partnership model and governance structures; and whether self-determination can be further enhanced.
- Determine whether the current partnership and governance models are still the most appropriate and efficient considering the changes in the landscape since the commencement of the AJA.

This evaluation is focused on the structures for enabling action. As such, we have not investigated the initiatives or programs that may have had their genesis in any one of the structures. Not have we investigated achievement of outcomes of the AJA – that would be a very different type of evaluation. The focus in this evaluation is solely upon the governance structures and whether those structures are meeting the objectives for the partnership as articulated in the AJA. That is, the “Victorian Government and Koori Community working together to improve justice outcomes for the Koori community” (p. 61, AJA3).

The evaluation team has conducted interviews with over 100 individuals including members of the Koori Caucus, representatives from each of the signatory agencies to the Agreement, Chairs and Deputy Chairs of the nine Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees, members of the Local Aboriginal Justice Action Committees, representatives of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and peak bodies, and other non-signatory government agencies. We also made a Discussion paper available and invited submissions from existing and former members of the various structures. The framework for the evaluation was informed through an extensive literature review that has drawn from a broad body of work pertaining to partnerships and collaborations. Findings from the evaluation were presented to the AJF in December 2017 and participants had an opportunity to respond to the findings through a facilitated discussion. This session provided additional data for analysis and the contributions of the participants is appreciated.

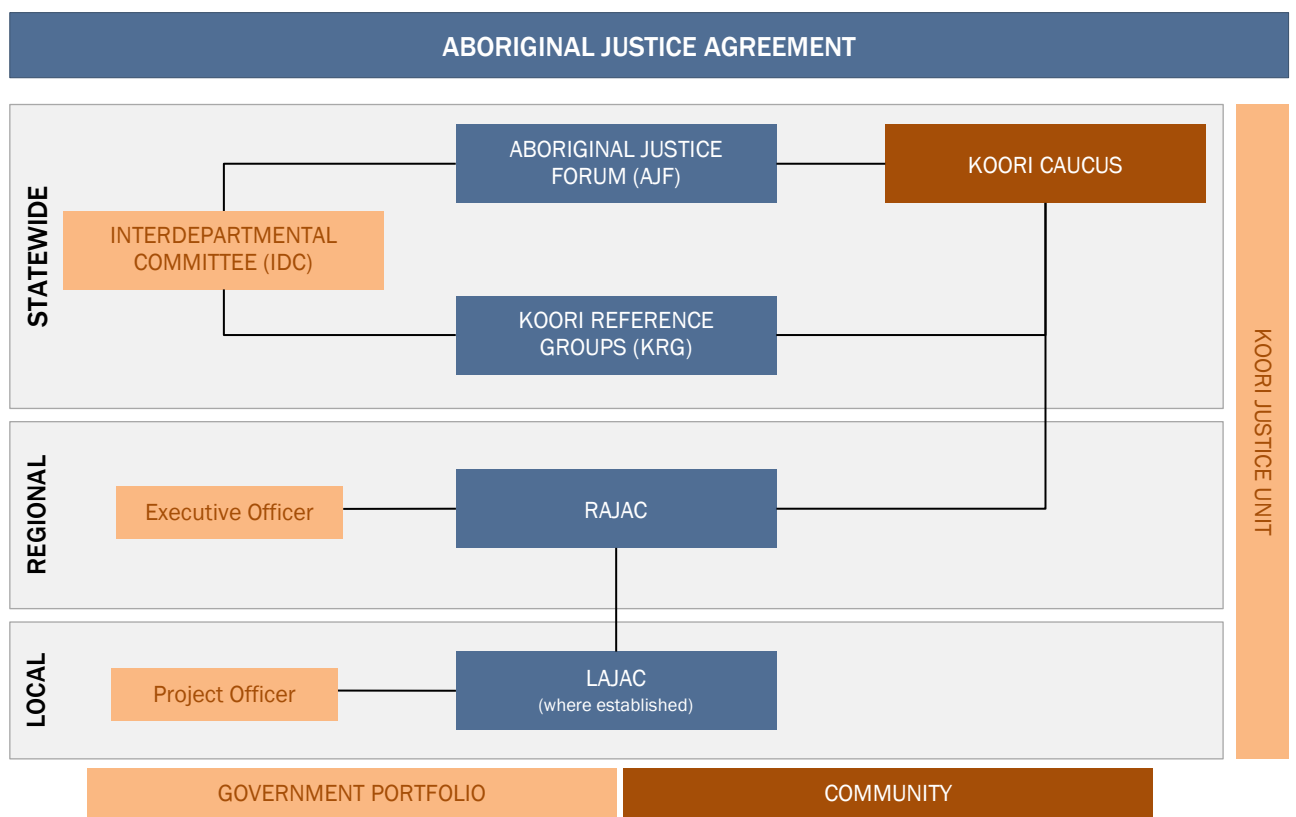
The key finding from this evaluation is that the AJA governance structures have been instrumental in giving voice to Aboriginal people across the state – from small regional communities through to highly urbanised centres. They have provided a conduit for government agencies to better connect with the people they serve – to gain insights and understanding that has previously eluded them. All partners have benefited from the partnership. Too often we think about initiatives like the AJA as something

that government does for (and sometimes, to) its citizens and we fail to acknowledge that Government is a beneficiary itself. That is the main story from this evaluation. The AJA has built the capacity of government as much as it has strengthened the capacity of community.

The evaluation has focused upon four key structures – the Aboriginal Justice Forum, the Koori Reference Groups, the Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees and, to a lesser extent, the Local Aboriginal Justice Action Committees and the other structures that support them. A summary of the principle structures is provided in the section below.

Structures of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement

When it was first implemented, the AJA made provision for the establishment of a number of structures that would facilitate collaborative working.



At the highest level are two structures:

- the Aboriginal Justice Forum (AJF), comprised of the senior representatives of government signatories to the Agreement (and other invited Government representatives), members of the Koori Caucus and Aboriginal community organisations and peak bodies. The AJF had state-wide responsibility for the development and implementation of the Agreement including a monitoring function and provides strategic guidance on justice issues affecting Aboriginal communities in Victoria.
- the Koori Caucus, comprises Aboriginal community members of the AJF who are leaders in their communities. The Koori Caucus meets six weeks prior to and the day before each AJF to shape the agenda, discuss key issues of interest and concern, share ideas and solve problems.

Supporting the AJF are two structures with responsibility for reviewing the actions and other outputs from the meeting of the Forum and to see that they are dealt with appropriately. The Interdepartmental Committee (IDC) of government representatives who have attended the AJF or their delegates confirms actions arising from the AJF and determines responsibility for addressing such actions. The seven Koori Reference Groups (KRGs) comprising government and Koori Caucus membership offer an opportunity for individual members to monitor and report on progress towards addressing the actions raised at the AJF. The KRGs are also responsible, in collaboration with Government business units, for the development of AJA Action Plans. In part, these Action Plans outline how each business unit will maximise opportunities for Aboriginal employment and career development and articulate the strategies to be used by business units and agencies to reduce Aboriginal over-representation in the criminal justice system, including how and when they will be implemented.

Nine Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees (RAJACs) bring together key Aboriginal community members and government agencies in each justice region. The RAJACs are crucial to the delivery of the AJA on the ground through the development of *Regional Justice Action Plans*. An elected Aboriginal Chairperson leads each of the nine RAJACs and represents it on the Koori Caucus and AJF.

At a town or city level in some regions are Local Aboriginal Justice Action Committees (LAJACs). The LAJACs bring together local Aboriginal community members and justice representatives in selected locations experiencing poor justice outcomes.

Key findings

The literature review enabled us to create a framework by which to analyse the governance structures. This framework comprised four key areas: context, structure, process and outcomes. Findings are presented in each area.

Context

The need for the Agreement was first voiced in the findings and 339 recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. There was no doubt that a new approach to addressing, not only Aboriginal deaths in custody, but the wider systemic, structural discrimination that Aboriginal people face in Australian society was needed. The partnership approach offered by the AJA was not only about government working in partnership with community, it was also very much about government agencies working together and breaking from entrenched siloed responses that isolated dynamic, complex issues into singular and static portfolio level problems. The need for the AJA has not diminished over the period of the three phases.

As we near the end of Phase 3 of the Agreement interviewees to the evaluation have consistently stated that the conditions that led to the signing of the first AJA remain as valid today as they were in 2000. This is not to say that these interviewees have not seen progress over the past 17 years. Rather, the issues were of such a magnitude that real change would take some time to show impact.

Each of the interviewees understood and supported the overarching vision for the AJA, that of reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system. Not only that, but interviewees also supported the vision for the partnership arrangements that puts effect to the Agreement itself. There was no suggestion of any alternative arrangement that would provide a more effective mechanism. Specifically, it was recognised that government working alone, even if it were more 'joined up' could not achieve the changes necessary to achieve the aims of the Agreement.

The AJA is an agreement of the government and it has had bi-partisan support since its inception. That the Agreement aligns with other government commitments to addressing Aboriginal disadvantage only further strengthens its legitimacy. Having an Agreement in place that is signed by parliamentarians provides an authorising environment to frame agency decision-making and resourcing.

The AJA is very much led by the Department of Justice and Regulation with support from other partner agencies. DJR established the Koori Justice Unit to support the AJA. Government partners to the Agreement, namely the various business units within the DJR, Court Services Victoria, Victoria Police and the Departments of Health and Human Services and Premier and Cabinet have shown an ongoing but at times inconsistent commitment to the partnership evidenced in their attendance at RAJACs and the AJF. The commitment of community representatives to the partnership, including representatives associated with Aboriginal organisations, remains strong although there is some frustration that more has not been achieved over the 17 years of the Agreement. Concerns were raised by a number of community representatives that the focus of the partnership is not as sharp as it once was, and words are not being turned into actions.

Support for the AJA is critically dependent upon the investment made by Aboriginal leaders to the Agreement. Aboriginal community controlled organisations (ACCOs) are crucial to the AJA not only because they deliver essential services to the community but also because they represent the community voice to the partnership. Their involvement at the local, regional and state level forums is particularly crucial where organisationally unaffiliated community voices are more difficult to engage. Representatives from ACCOs make up slightly more than 50 per cent of the Koori Caucus.

Structures

The intention of AJA structures and processes is to enable effective participatory decision making and support ownership and accountability. The structures were well established at the commencement of AJA3 and are operating much the same as at the time of their establishment.

The structures as they stand now are generally supported by interviewees. That they were devised through a process of collaborative engagement between government and community is highly regarded. In doing so, the structures have responded to cultural expectations of community members including operating the AJF with a co-chair arrangement (government / community), the layout of the Forum in a circle arrangement, and the inclusion of the community forums at each of the AJFs.

The venue for the Forum is rotated through the regions and allows for a Welcome to Country to be performed at each AJF giving an opportunity for a local Elder to welcome members and to share their own experiences in the region.

One aspect of the AJF that is highly regarded is the community forum. This provides a forum for any interested community members to put questions to any members of the AJF and, more importantly, to seek a satisfactory response. These community forums can sometimes be uncomfortable for agency staff, but they are an important demonstration of the willingness of government to listen to the community and to make efforts to address the issues that have been raised. For many senior government managers, the community forums are the only place where they hear the individual stories of hardship and despair that characterise the lives of so many Aboriginal people caught up in the criminal justice system.

The RAJAC and LAJAC have wide support. There are regional differences between RAJACs in terms of the level of engagement that each RAJAC meeting attracts but the inconsistency in attendance is not a result of the structure itself. The role of the RAJAC Executive Officer was accentuated in every region. The EO provides a crucial function and has been described as the glue that holds the RAJACs together.

The Koori Justice Unit has responsibility for a raft of activities and with 15 FTE staff it is stretched in meeting all of these. The implementation of the AJA is dependent upon the effective functioning of this Unit, given its responsibility for attracting funding, coordinating the Forums and the provision of strategic policy advice, amongst other tasks. The Unit and the staff serving it are held in high-regard by community and government, particularly as a contact point for those based in the regions

The one structure that garnered the most criticism was the Koori Reference Group. There is considerable difference in opinion on the KRGs. Although they are seen by some as a useful accountability mechanism and a good forum to exchange information in a meaningful way, attendance is inconsistent, and some groups struggle to achieve a quorum. Previous revisions to the way KRGs function have not fully resolved the issues. There remain concerns that the groups are not adding the benefit that was envisaged with their creation.

On the matter of equality

A key principle of the AJA is equality in the partnerships between the Aboriginal community (represented at the LAJAC, RAJAC and AJF) and government. There is no doubt that all partners ascribe to this principle but in practice there remain structural power imbalances that are difficult to redress within the existing partnership arrangements. That opportunities are provided for the voice of the Aboriginal community to be heard is not sufficient to claim that the partnership is equal for all partners.

At the heart of the inequality is the disparity in resources made available to each of the partners. Here government representatives hold the greatest power as they have access to the majority of resources. Members of the Koori Caucus have very limited resources available including one important resource, time. The disparity in resourcing is also financial. Government agencies have all the financial resources and ultimately make the decisions about where that money will be spent. The financial decisions will be influenced to a lesser or greater extent as a result of the discussions and deliberations of the forums but ultimately decisions and accountability for those decisions rests with government. The Koori Caucus as well as ACCOs sit in a client-patron type relationship with government, meaning genuine equality cannot be achieved.

A changed context

The partnership is operating in a very different context now than when it was first established. When the AJA was first executed some 17 years ago it was the only partnership structure of its kind that enabled this collaborative approach to problem solving. The connection that the AJF and the RAJACs provided between government and community was sought after by many agencies and by the Aboriginal community organisations to identify and address issues.

The authors of the AJA in all three phases have understood that achieving the objectives requires consideration of matters that are beyond the scope of criminal justice agencies. The partnership structures have expanded to include membership from other non-justice agencies and that is seen as a positive and fruitful expansion. It has enabled the AJF to look for remedies beyond criminal justice boundaries and many of these remedies have had, and are continuing to have, a positive effect on the rate of contact Aboriginal have with the criminal justice system.

As more and more agencies began to establish their own partnership arrangements (often modelled on the AJA) there has been an increasing level of overlap and duplication of effort. There is certainly a greater demand on the time and expertise of community members who are invited to participate in the ever-expanding range of forums. However, with the establishment of these other Departmental forums there now exists an opportunity for the AJF to take stock and reconsider what its focus might be for the coming phase of the AJA. No one denies that criminal justice effects are the consequence of non-criminal justice experiences and events and the AJF cannot lose sight of this. Through their long-term involvement in the AJF, these other agencies now have a deeper understanding of the potential future impacts of their own policy decisions. Policy officers at the Department of Education and Training understand how continued engagement in education can keep young people from criminal offending. The Housing Branch of the Department of Health and Human Services understand the importance of housing for prisoners transitioning to the community. Their involvement in the AJF has opened up a holistic view of their policy decisions in a whole-of-government context and there is no doubt that the message has been amplified through the voices of Aboriginal community members at the Forums.

With the new structures at other agencies the AJF can afford to re-focus its attention on criminal justice matters providing they have robust lines of communication with the other forums and a mechanism of referral of issues raised at one forum that might be better addressed by another. How this is established needs further consideration, however, it may require the execution of a Memorandum of Understanding or for communication to be facilitated through Secretaries Group meetings. However it is achieved, the opportunity for a reset has been heightened by the establishment of the new forums

Outcomes

One of the most reported achievements of the AJF is that it has facilitated and enabled the development of strong and durable relationships between agencies and with members of the Victorian Aboriginal community. The partnership has come a long way since it first formed in 2001. At that time there was understandable distrust and scepticism by Aboriginal community members towards government. The partnership has evolved and there are now high levels of trust between the partners. This has not led to complacency on the part of any of the partners and there remains a high demand for accountability and action. Some of the comments we heard during interviews reflect the outcome of the AJA journey thus far:

We have had a really positive experience with the AJA. We remember how far we've come.... especially compared with other jurisdictions (Aboriginal Peak body representative)

It's been the signature piece for better engagement both at the local/regional level and state-wide level – showing commitment to 'we're in it together', being able to test our thinking in that environment, hearing the instant feedback, also demystifying some [justice] processes. (Government AJF member)

At a regional level there have developed strong and positive relationships between the RAJAC membership that allows for communication and problem solving through more informal means. In most regions it has become possible for the RAJAC Chair, for example, to assist members of their community who have encountered issues with government agencies including police, by directly advocating with the relevant authorities on the community member's behalf. There have been numerous instances where minor issues or miscommunications have been resolved before they become more damaging.

The ongoing meetings of community and government allow for these relationships to be strengthened and maintained. It is questionable whether they could be maintained without the formal structures that are in place particularly as agency representation shifts as staff move out of one region and into another.

Summary

The AJA partnership structures are viewed as successful and interviewees want to see them be continued but with some modifications. Here we bring together the criticisms of the current structures and offer suggestions for improvements.

1. The impact of other forums

There are a growing number of forums and mechanisms for Aboriginal involvement in decision making of government departments. Given many of the determinants for criminal offending behaviour lie outside of the criminal justice system it is likely that the discussions at these other forums and the actions that arise from them will contribute to justice outcomes – positive or negative. The question for the current partners of the AJA is how to interact with these other forums to minimise the potential for duplication of effort and maximise the benefits.

One of the major consequences of the emergence of these new forums is the demand it places on Aboriginal community representatives. They are invited to participate in many forums and they are already spread very thin and many are close to burn-out. We expect that many Aboriginal representatives will prioritise their involvement in the forums of most interest and the ones where they expect to achieve real results. For some, the AJF may not be the forum of choice.

We see two main opportunities available to the AJF partners to lessen the demand on Aboriginal representatives at the Forum. If the focus for the agenda was directed towards criminal justice matters and strong links to other forums (which could be through the Secretaries Leadership Group for Aboriginal Affairs and a similarly convened group of Aboriginal representatives) were established this might allow for members to attend the one forum of most interest to them and be confident that they will continue to be informed of discussions happening at other forums. This change will only be successful if the links and communication flow between forums are strong. A second opportunity (and these should not be considered as either / or approach), is to develop programs that strengthen the capacity and capability of Aboriginal community members not already engaged with the AJA or AJF to encourage more to participate in the partnership. This opportunity is for 'sharing the load', so that the already engaged members have broader support from the community. This capacity strengthening task is a whole-of-government responsibility, not only for the AJA, but for all other forums including those established for self-determination and treaty. For the AJA partnership to continue to add value there will need to be some way to connect all of the players across all of the forums.

2. Are all of voices heard?

The voice largely missing from the AJA partnership is that of youth (up to 18 years) and young people (18 to 24 years). The youth and young people's voices are represented at the AJF with the inclusion of the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Youth and the Manager of the Koori Youth Council. At most RAJACs they are absent. This is not to say that the AJF or the RAJACs do not have a focus on the issues affecting youth and young people as they clearly do.

The absence of a direct youth voice is a detriment to the value of the partnership. Given the young population profile of Aboriginal people in Victoria and increasing numbers of youth entering the

criminal justice system it is essential for the partnership to maintain a focus on programs and initiatives that help to divert young people from the system and to prevent their entry into the system in the first place. The best programs will be those that take account of what young people want. Encouraging more involvement by young people in the partnership, particularly at the regional and local levels, should be a focus and efforts to do so increased.

3. Succession planning

The capacity strengthening advocated above leads into enabling succession planning, particularly for RAJAC Chairs and Deputy Chairs and also for RAJAC Executive Officers.

At present, RAJAC Deputy Chairs are not being fully utilised or engaged. They tend to be used largely as a proxy for when the Chair is not available. Given the time constraints on most Chairs we suggest that the role of the Deputy Chair be boosted. In one region the RAJAC has implemented a portfolio approach similar to that of the KRG. RAJAC members, including the Deputy Chair, are assigned portfolio areas and attend the KRG in that capacity. Having this greater role in the KRG has brought a number of benefits including easing the load on the Chair, allowing other RAJAC members to become more fully engaged and building their knowledge of how decisions are made and progressed through government. It would be hoped that this would also help with the retention of community members in the RAJAC.

The role of the EO is crucial to the effective functioning of the RAJACs. The DJR is increasingly challenged in recruiting quality staff into these roles as the level of interest appears to have waned over recent years. The value added by EOs is well-accepted and when they leave these roles there is a significant impact on the RAJAC, particularly if the position remains unfilled for any period of time. We have made a recommendation aimed at addressing this issue.

4. Are all of the structures adding value?

The one partnership structure that attracted the most criticism is the Koori Reference Group. They have variously been described by critics as “cumbersome”, “bureaucratic”, “time consuming” and a “talk-fest”. Such criticism appears to us as valid. The KRGs add one further layer to an already multi-layered partnership and the role that the KRGs play may be able to be achieved through other means.

5. Would devolution improve effectiveness and sustainability?

One of the strengths of the AJA partnership is the ability to gather and share information at a local level. The relationships that have formed at the regional and town-based level have led to greater understanding of the issues that Aboriginal people are confronted with and, in turn, has built greater cultural awareness in government service providers. From this improved understanding government agencies have been introducing more and more Aboriginal liaison roles as well as increasing their Aboriginal workforce. Agencies have some limited discretion at the regional level which has enabled local initiatives to proceed. These have brought positive results on a small-scale. It may time to consider further devolution of decision making away from the centre and towards the regions.

We consider the AJA partnership a sustainable model. It has endured for 17 years and over that time has been the catalyst for significant change in the justice sector. We have not encountered, in over 80 interviews, any individual or organisation that thought the partnership had not been worthwhile. Nor did we hear from anyone who thought it should not continue. What we did hear is that the partnership needs to be revitalised, refocused and redirected.

The AJA model is fantastic - there's respect, openness, true engagement and genuine listening. (Aboriginal Peak Body organisation)

The AJA was a stepping stone, but we've got to take the next step now. In its current form it has exhausted itself (Government AJF member)

I think the AJA does do good work and I think it's needed but it is definitely time for change and to be really focused on what the purpose is. Because it is really big, and I think some of the focus gets lost and I think many people sitting around the table are feeling that (RAJAC Chair)

What has emerged often during interviews is a desire to see the AJF narrow its focus to justice-specific issues, that is, issues pertaining to police, courts and corrections in both the youth and adult spaces. This view doesn't discount the determinants of criminal offending behaviour in areas such as health, housing, employment, drug and alcohol use, or child protection. It argues that responsibility for those areas are best left to the specialists in the specific agencies and organisations with responsibilities for addressing them. There is also a view that these other agencies are now much more advanced in their own engagement mechanisms allowing for the Aboriginal voice to be heard.

This is a view that is shared by the evaluators. There is a real opportunity to push reset on the AJF so that it can make criminal justice matters the centre of attention. If this were the case, there might then be an opportunity for the partnership to have an impact on justice policy decisions and legislative change that continues to disproportionately and adversely affect Aboriginal Victorians.

Summary of recommendations

Throughout this report we have made 17 key recommendations as well as some other suggestions for improvement. The recommendations are listed below and organised by theme.

Building the strength of RAJAC/LAJACs

Recommendation 1: Regional Justice Action Plans need to be responsive to the dynamic change that occurs in society and that generate new issues of concern to the RAJAC and its members. We recommend the introduction of annual Regional Justice Action Plans which focus on two to three priority issues. It would be the role of the RAJAC to determine annual priorities but their determinations could be informed through allowing for community input via online means (if not directly via attendance at the RAJAC meetings). We understand the KJU is considering expanding its online presence. This is ideal time to also consider how that presence can incorporate the ability for community input. (p. 47)

Recommendation 5 - Attracting greater participation in regional (and local) forums by Aboriginal community members, particularly those representing specific interests (e.g. youth, education, housing, etc.) is crucial for the ongoing relevance and effectiveness of RAJACS and LAJACs. Some efforts should be directed towards investigating the barriers that keep people away and addressing these so that participation is encouraged and new people are welcomed into the forum. To ensure diversity of views it would be beneficial to attract participation from community members who are not necessarily aligned with government or community organisations (p. 55).

Recommendation 6: KJU investigate options to assist RAJACs in recruiting new community members to the RAJAC and developing the leadership capacity of new members that they might take on a leadership role in the RAJAC. This capacity building opportunity should also be made available to existing Chairs and Deputy Chairs. An

amendment to the RAJAC Framework of Operations will be required to expand eligibility to community members not affiliated with an ACCO. (p. 57).

Recommendation 7: As a first step we recommend that KJU independently evaluate the position description for EOs against the tasks actually undertaken and the responsibilities of the role. There is an opportunity to expand the role in the regions so that it becomes the key coordination position for Aboriginal justice matters. We would expect that any evaluation of the role would closely consider the resourcing sufficient to perform the tasks delivered by the EO and the professional development needs of the EOs to contribute as leaders in their communities. (p. 59).

Recommendation 10: That LAJAC and RAJAC Chairs and Deputy Chairs are surveyed to gain an understanding of their need and desire for skills and capacity development to assist them in their roles. Once the needs assessment has been completed the KJU should facilitate the necessary training for those interested. (p. 70).

Recommendation 12 – RAJAC Chairs would benefit from sharing ideas about how to maintain the vibrancy and relevance of RAJAC Forums to all members. Some RAJACs struggle to attract new community members and others are challenged by inconsistent membership. In coming together (this could be at regular Koori Caucus meetings) there is an opportunity to share innovative ideas from which all RAJACs can benefit. The networking opportunity should include Chairs and Deputy Chairs of RAJACs and should be extended to Executive Officers, LAJAC Project Officers and where appropriate LAJAC chairs so that the capacity building is offered to all who are supporting the AJA in the regions. (p. 75).

Recommendation 16 – We recommend that:

- each LAJAC have a dedicated Project Officer supporting it
- non-metropolitan based RAJAC EOs have permanent access to a vehicle to enable them to easily travel around the region
- trainee positions similar to those within the Sheriff's Office be introduced to assist with succession planning. A trainee would have networks to the community and have developed the skills necessary to engage with community and government to be able to step into the role should a vacancy arise (p. 86).

Managing the demands on community

Recommendation 4: Given the number of forums, meeting, workshops and the range of consultations taking place it would be useful if government agencies holding these forums could better coordinate and communicate activity. Government cannot expect Aboriginal community members will be available for all forums but their ability to do so will be enhanced if they are able to see a schedule of all of the forums being planned for the next six months. A whole-of-government calendar of events could be developed and made publicly available to enable forward planning. (p. 48).

Innovative use of technology and online platforms

Recommendation 9 – Online platforms enable real-time and ongoing communications to occur and provide a useful mechanism to share and disseminate information, either to selected members of a portal or publicly. The KJU should investigate how to expand their

online presence so that information can be shared outside of the formal face-to-face forums. (p. 64).

Recommendation 15 – We understand the KJU is in the process of developing a stronger web presence. That presence needs to tell these stories where change has been effected and it also needs to tell the stories of how the AJA partnership is working towards addressing other factors contributing to over-representation. As one interviewee made clear “knowledge is a powerful tool” and placing that knowledge where it can have the most influence is the first step. We also recommend that the KJU considers building in the facility for people to raise their own issues and concerns through a moderated section of the website. This could help to attract the youth voice and bring greater diversity to the discussions. (p. 80).

Monitoring the implementation of the agreement

Recommendation 2 - In developing their Regional Justice Action Plans the RAJAC should identify one action or initiative that is expected to have a significant impact and provide the details of the action, including lead agency/organisation to the KJU Evaluation Team to enable them to develop a methodology for a review. The purpose of the review is to determine the impact of the action against the objectives of the AJA. As it is possible that up to nine reviews will be required annually, it is likely that additional resources will need to be made available to the Evaluation Team to design and implement the studies. (p. 48)

Recommendation 13 – A recommendation that the KJU design and implement an annual survey of AJA partners at the state, regional and local levels to gather their views on the performance (strengths and weaknesses) of the partnership. Survey responses should be anonymised and confidentiality of respondents assured. Results from the survey should be presented back to the relevant forum. (p. 77).

Recommendation 14 - Regional Justice Action Plans should be assessed each year by the RAJAC to monitor the extent to which actions have been addressed and the contribution the actions have made to the objectives of the AJA in the region. The assessment should also identify any actions that remain outstanding and RAJACs should identify how they will be addressed in the coming Plan (if at all). This assessment report should be made publicly available through the KJU. (p. 80).

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Nurturing and strengthening the partnership

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Recommendation 10 - That LAJAC and RAJAC Chairs and Deputy Chairs are surveyed to gain an understanding of their need and desire for skills and capacity development to assist them in their roles. Once the needs assessment has been completed the KJU should facilitate the necessary training for those interested. (p. 70).

Reducing the over-burden

Recommendation 3 - The Koori Action Plans are not providing any benefit to the AJA that is not already provided through other mechanisms. We recommend that they be reconsidered. There is potential for the KRG Terms of Reference to be expanded to include any matters previously included in the Koori Action Plan that are not addressed either in the AJA, Regional Justice Action Plans or other procedural documentation. (p. 48).

Also,

Recommendation 8 – The KRGs are currently not functioning effectively, largely due to resourcing and scheduling issues but also because a lack of role clarity. We recommend the KRGs remain in place at least in the short-term. To assist in improving their functionality, we recommend that the KJU investigate the benefits of using web-based platforms to allow more frequent communication between KRG members. This evaluation has only skimmed the surface of what the underlying issues are with the KRGs. As such, we recommend a more in-depth analysis of the diversity of opinions about the KRGs and to better understand all of these positions. With this understanding in place the KJU should work with Koori Caucus to determine whether, and in what form, the Koori Reference Groups might continue, if at all. (p. 62).

Strategically focussing on justice

Recommendation 8 – The KRGs are currently not functioning effectively, largely due to resourcing and scheduling issues but also because a lack of role clarity. We recommend the KRGs remain in place at least in the short-term. To assist in improving their functionality, we recommend that the KJU investigate the benefits of using web-based platforms to allow more frequent communication between KRG members. This evaluation has only skimmed the surface of what the underlying issues are with the KRGs. As such, we recommend a more in-depth analysis of the diversity of opinions about the KRGs and to better understand all of these positions. With this understanding in place the KJU should work with Koori Caucus to determine whether, and in what form, the Koori Reference Groups might continue, if at all. (p. 62).

Recommendation 11 – One AJF each year should be dedicated to identifying three key themes for the subsequent Forums. Identification of the themes should be based upon issues that have emerged over the previous 12 months that have been highlighted by RAJACs, Koori Caucus, KRGs and government business units or that have emerged from an analysis of criminal justice data. The KJU may offer suggestions for themes for consideration by the AJF if this assists in expediting the process. Themes should be aligned to the priorities for the AJA. Once determined it will be the responsibility of the KJU, in collaboration/discussion with the AJF members (out of session) to create an agenda aligned to the theme. Creation of the agenda will include identification of speakers/presenters particularly those who might offer a view not typically encountered at an AJF. (p. 72).

Recommendation 17 – That the AJF take the opportunity to refocus its agenda on criminal justice matters, provided that strong links are established between the AJF and other Aboriginal-focussed forums established by other Government agencies. While the AJF agenda could focus on criminal justice matters there is a continuing need for a holistic approach and the Forum will still need to draw on knowledge and ideas from a range of experts across different sectors. Representation from a similarly wide range of stakeholder groups as currently engaged should continue. Where links are established with other forums they will need to allow for an open flow of information and for issues that might be raised in one forum to be referred to, and acted upon, by a more relevant forum. It is crucial that accountability for addressing actions is maintained and communicated. If the links between forums cannot be established the AJF should continue to maintain the broad focus it currently has, understanding that duplication of effort will occur. (p. 90).

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Acronyms

AJA	Aboriginal Justice Agreement
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services
DJR	Department of Justice and Regulation
EO	Executive Officer
KJU	Koori Justice Unit
KRG	Koori Reference Group
LAJAC	Local Aboriginal Justice Action Committee
RAJAC	Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee
RCIADIC	Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody
VACCA	Victorian Aboriginal Childcare Agency
VACCHO	Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
VACCO	Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
VAEAI	Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc
VALS	Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service
VEOHRC	Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission

1. Introduction

The Aboriginal Justice Agreement is a response to the disadvantage impacting the lives of Aboriginal people across Victoria. The need for such an Agreement was articulated in the findings and recommendations of the Commonwealth Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) which reported in five volumes in 1991. Responsibility for implementing the Commission's findings rested with State governments and their service delivery agencies. The first recommendation of the Royal Commission made clear that governments should do this through a process agreed in partnership and after consultation with Aboriginal organisations. In 1997, a national Ministerial Summit examined the status of the implementation of the recommendations. A significant outcome from the Summit was a national agreement to develop jurisdictional based agreements in partnership with Aboriginal communities to move States and Territories forward in implementing the Commission's recommendations. Following the Summit, the Victorian Government, in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) and Victorian Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee (VAJAC), worked together to develop the first Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA)¹.

The Agreement acknowledges that Aboriginal children, young people, adults and families experience ongoing disadvantage across the areas of education, employment, rates of child protection notifications and substantiations, criminal justice, housing and homelessness, and health and wellbeing. As a result, they are disproportionately more likely than non-Aboriginal people to come into contact with the criminal justice system at some point in their lives.

Previously, governments have attempted to resolve the issue of the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system largely through the adoption of top-down approaches. These have had little success. Over 17 years ago a new approach was taken founded on collaboration and allowed for the very people who were being adversely impacted by government policy to help identify and prioritise issues and to devise solutions. It was this new approach that culminated in the first Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement in 2000. In implementing this Agreement (described in more detail below) the partners recognised that to address disadvantage and eliminate over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system it would require government and community to work in partnership to effect large-scale system change. In itself, this suggests a further acknowledgement that earlier top-down approaches had failed because they were incommensurate with the complexity of challenges and the transformation that would be required to 'shift the needle' on justice outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians.

Clear Horizon Consulting was commissioned by the Department of Justice and Regulation to conduct an evaluation of the partnership and governance structures of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 3 (AJA3). We have also adopted a partnership model to conduct the evaluation through partnering with Aboriginal consultants from Atkinson Consulting Group and Murawin Consulting. We have also engaged closely with the Department of Justice and Regulation's Koori justice Unit and with the members of the Aboriginal Justice Forum, specifically the Koori Caucus.

The aim of this evaluation has been to:

- Investigate whether the partnership model and governance structures of the AJA increase collaboration and contribute to improved justice outcomes.

¹ Department of Justice and Regulation (2005) Victorian Implementation Review of the Recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, Vol. 1, Sec. 2, October 2005 retrieved from https://assets.justice.vic.gov.au/justice/resources/de03947c-907f-470f-b14c-5c47b84e76f7/implementation_review_vol1_section2.pdf

- Explore whether self-determination in the justice system has been enabled through the partnership model and governance structures; and whether self-determination can be further enhanced.
- Determine whether the current partnership and governance models are still the most appropriate and efficient considering the changes in the landscape since the commencement of the AJA.

In this report, we present the findings from an extensive program of consultation with government and community contributors to the implementation, delivery and management of the AJA3.

1.1. About the Agreements

1.1.1. Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 1 (2000 – 2005)

The Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement was first established in 2000. Developed jointly by the State Government, the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and the Aboriginal community, it offered a structure to maximise Aboriginal participation in the development of policies and programs in all areas of the justice system². The contributors to the Agreement acknowledged that it was “not possible to tackle the over-representation of Aboriginals in the criminal justice system without also tackling the disproportionately high levels of Indigenous disadvantage” (p.3).

One of the key actions of the first Agreement was to “create a shared vision and agreed priorities for action within government and community sectors”. In responding to this, the key aim for the Agreement was:

To minimise Indigenous over-representation in the criminal justice system by improving accessibility, utilisation and effectiveness of justice-related programs and services in partnership with the Aboriginal community (p.25).

Delivering on the aim was to be achieved through six strategic objectives, being:

1. **Community participation** - achieve maximum Aboriginal community participation in processes for legislative, policy, and program development, service delivery and monitoring and review.
2. **Culturally appropriate programs and services** - identify and respond effectively to the needs of Aboriginal people through the development and delivery of culturally appropriate policies, programs and services.
3. **A co-ordinated and strategic approach** - develop a coordinated and strategic whole-of government approach that ensures that the design, development, delivery and monitoring of programs and services for Aboriginal people is in accordance with agreed principles, policies and planning frameworks.
4. **Fair and equitable justice services for Aboriginal people** - address issues that limit or prevent Aboriginal access to legal protection, and ensure the discretionary administration of law does not adversely impact on Aboriginal people and culture.
5. **Increasing community safety, security and wellbeing** - strengthen Aboriginal families and communities. Develop targeted strategies to address the underlying economic, social and

² Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement: A Partnership between the Victorian Government and the Koori Community

cultural issues behind the breakdown of families and the over-representation of Aboriginal people coming in contact with the criminal justice system.

6. **Reducing the risk of involvement of Aboriginal children and youth in the criminal justice system** - develop a whole-of-government approach that focuses on early intervention strategies to strengthen and support families experiencing difficulties, and on primary care as a means of reducing the risk of involvement of Aboriginal children and youth in the justice system.

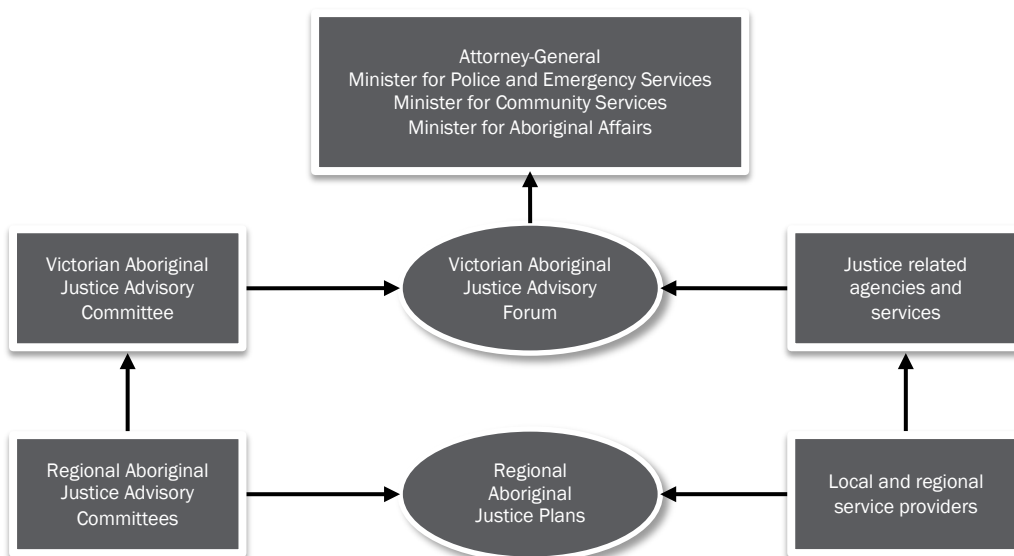
The overarching governance structure put in place to support the implementation of the Agreement comprised three levels. At the highest level was the Aboriginal Justice [Advisory] Forum comprised of the government signatories to the Agreement, and representatives from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and the Binjirru and Tumbukka Regional Councils. The Aboriginal Justice Forum had state-wide responsibility for the development and implementation of the Agreement including a monitoring and evaluation function. The secretariat executive support services were delivered by the (then) Department of Justice’s Indigenous Issues Unit.

An Aboriginal Justice Working Group was established to support the Aboriginal Justice Forum (AJF). In part, the functions of the Working Group was to assist the Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees (see below) develop their Regional Aboriginal Justice Plans. The Group also assisted in identifying and developing best practice approaches in program development and service delivery. It was comprised of government representatives only.

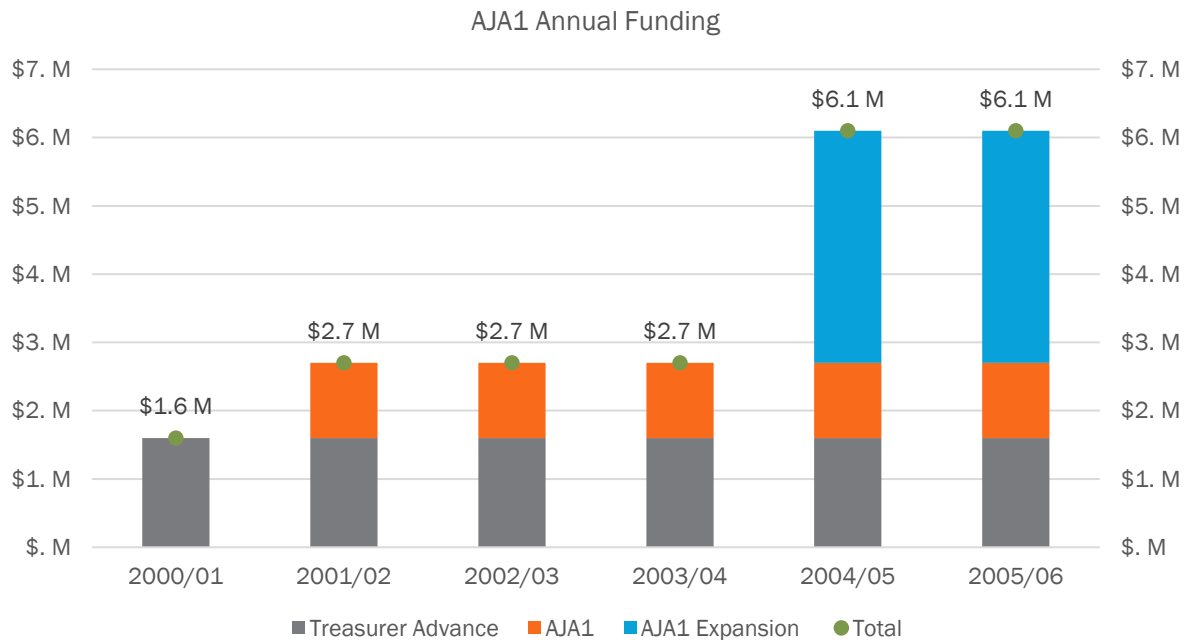
Six Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees (RAJAC) were established across the state and supported by an Executive Officer. The RAJACs included representatives from Aboriginal organisations including Tumbukka and Binjirru Regional Council, and government agencies with responsibilities in the justice sector. On establishment, RAJACs were to assess local community needs and map service provision and utilisation.

The Statewide Action Plan outlines the structures and processes established to implement the Agreement as shown in Figure 1-1.

Figure 1-1: Organisational Structure of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement (Phase 1)



Initial funding of \$1.6 million was provided to establish the AJA in 2000/01. This was increased to \$2.7 million in 2001/02 through to 2003/04, then further increased to \$6.1 million for the final two years of the agreement. This represented an investment of \$21.9 million over the life of the first agreement.



A review of Phase 1 of the AJA was completed by Atkinson Kerr and Associates and presented to the Department in April 2005. The report noted the many initiatives that had been established under the first phase of the Agreement including:

- Koori Courts (Shepparton, Broadmeadows and Warrnambool, with Mildura, Gippsland and the Children’s court to commence);
- A number of Community-based initiatives that explore different local interventions such as night patrols, youth clubs, mentoring and other programs which provide a firm basis for innovative approaches to combat over-representation;
- The Men’s Residential Diversionary Facility (to be commissioned as a major project);
- Employment of Indigenous Community Corrections Officers;
- Employment of Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers in Victoria Police

While there was no shift in the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system the report stated that “over-representation is not the product of a few discriminatory practices easily swept away by good will and a few procedural changes. It is a product of entrenched social disadvantage that will require a much longer term effort than the AJA has been able to apply since June 2000” (Atkinson, Kerr and Associates 2005: 116). As such, the reviewers recommended that government and community renew their commitment to the agreement. That commitment was reviewed in the execution of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 2.

1.1.2. Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 2 (2006 – 2012)

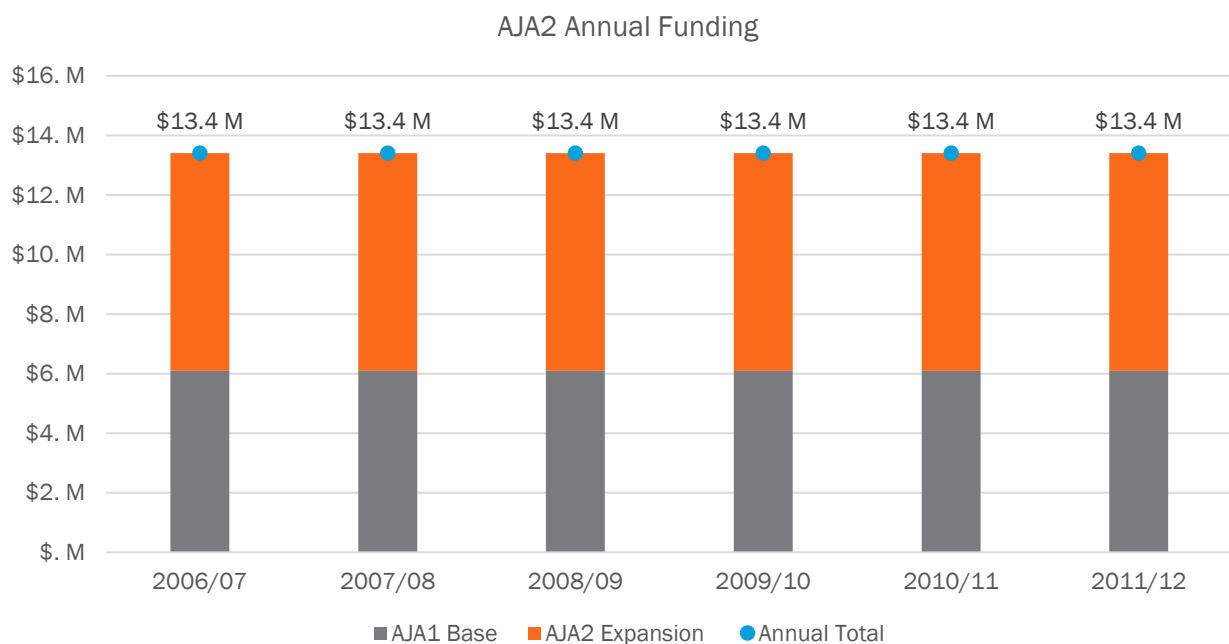
The AJA Phase 2 was signed in 2006 (to 2012) maintaining the aim of Phase 1 and adding a second aim to:

Have a Koori community, as part of the broader Victorian community, that has the same access to human, civil and legal rights, living free from racism and discrimination and experiencing the same justice outcomes through the elimination of inequities in the justice system.

AJA2 defined six objectives as follows:

- **Crime prevention and early intervention** - Reduce the number of Koori youth coming in contact with the criminal justice system by promoting protective factors and reducing risk factors for offending behaviour.
- **Diversion/Strengthening alternatives to imprisonment** - Increase the rate at which justice agencies divert Koories from more serious contact with the criminal justice system and strengthen community-based alternatives to imprisonment.
- **Reduce Re-offending** - Reduce the rate at which Koories re-offend by changing environmental and behavioural factors that contribute to that offending.
- **Reduce victimisation** - Reduce the negative impact that the high rate of victimisation has on Koori communities, families and individuals so that intergenerational contributors to offending are reduced.
- **Responsive and inclusive services** - Make mainstream and positive justice-related services more responsive and inclusive of the needs of the Koori community.
- **Strengthen community justice responses** - Build capacity in and strengthen Koori communities so they are better able to improve their justice outcomes, particularly through the delivery of place-based initiatives.

The base funding of approximately \$6 million from AJA1 was supplemented in Phase 2 with additional annual funding of \$7.3 million, bringing the annual budget of AJA2 to \$13.4 million. This funding supported the operation of the Koori Justice Unit and provided funds to other justice agencies (Corrections Victoria, Courts, Department of Human Services, and Victoria Police) and supported the operational aspects of the RAJACs and Local Aboriginal Justice Action Committees (LAJACs).



Phase 2 was based on strategies of prevention; early intervention; increased diversion; reduced re-offending and; interventions at every point in the criminal justice system. There was also a focus on

making the justice system more responsive and inclusive to Aboriginal people. Phase 2 adopted a place-based approach to establishing initiatives in partnership with local communities. Such a place-based approach recognises the importance of ‘community voice’ in building capacity to address justice issues locally.

Koori Action Plans were developed within the newly established Koori Reference Groups (KRG) which included government and members of the Koori Caucus. The Action Plans were completed for each business unit with responsibility for actions under AJA2 and were reported on to each Aboriginal Justice Forum. The KRGs aligned to business units such as the Indigenous Issues Unit, Courts and Tribunals, Police, Victims Support Agency, Correctional Health Services (now Corrections Victoria and Justice Health Services), and Youth Justice were convened on an as needs basis when decisions were required about specific projects and/or new activities, with some groups more active than others. The Plans were intended to enable each of the business units to measure performance against the activities of the AJA that are within their remit.

The independent evaluation of the AJA2 in 2012 found there continued to be over-representation of Aboriginal people in the justice system, however concluded that the number would have been greater if not for the AJA2 ” (Nous Group 2012). The evaluation reported positive outcomes in reducing the number of youth coming into contact with police and reducing the number of Aboriginal people re-offending. Further, the evaluation noted that community-based justice responses had increased along with an increase in the responsiveness of justice services. The place-based approach adopted in phase two was seen as providing stronger connections for the broader Aboriginal community to the AJA and recommended government and community sign a third AJA. The evaluators felt that “progress to date shows that Koori overrepresentation in the justice system can be addressed over time with senior level commitment, community involvement and focus” (Nous Group 2012: 7).

1.2. Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 3 (2012 – 2017)

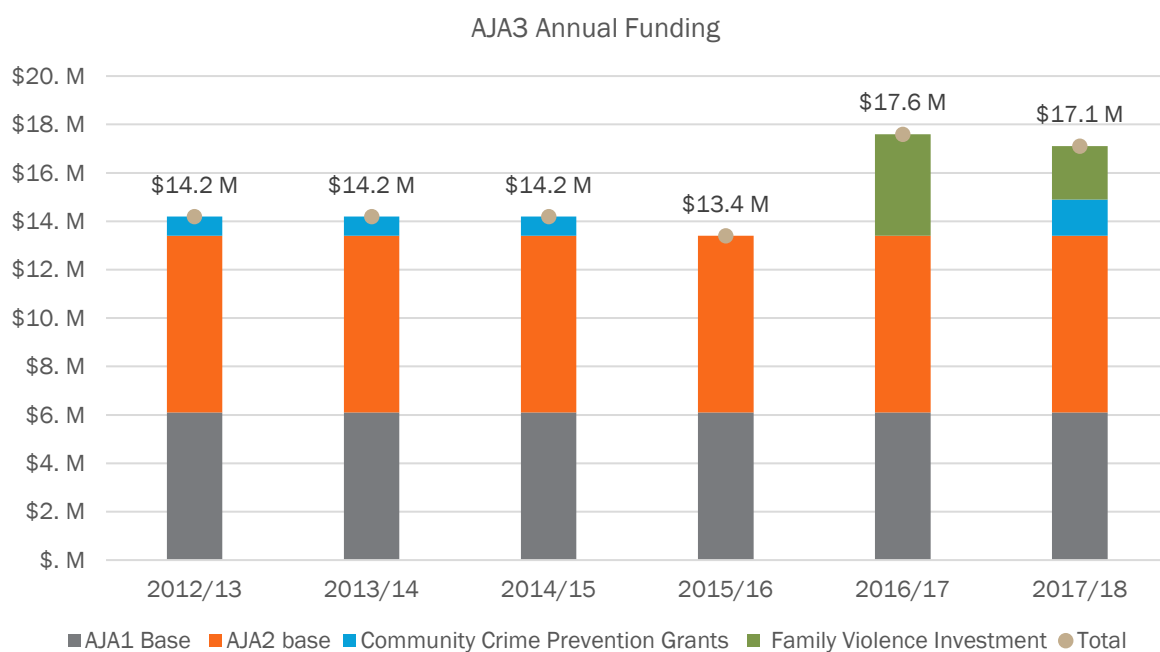
The AJA3 aimed to build on the results achieved through phase 1 and 2 with the following six strategic objectives:

- continued focus on crime prevention and early prevention
- continued emphasis and extend diversion and alternatives to imprisonment across the justice system
- increased focus on reducing re-offending across the justice system
- expanded focus to include reducing conflict and violence as well as victimisation
- increased focus on responsive and inclusive services through Koori Inclusion Action Plan and Koori Employment Strategy 2011-15
- expanded focus on strengthening community justice responses to also include increasing community safety.

Twenty eight strategies and 82 sub-strategies are described in the Agreement with an intent to build stronger families and safer communities as a means of improving justice outcomes. The governance structures were retained as they were established in AJA1 with an expanded number of KRGs from Phase 2. The KRGs themselves were refreshed at the same time, in part to address their failure as an engagement mechanism in the final years of Phase 2 of the Agreement. For example, the revitalised Justice KRG adopted a broader coverage across the Department of Justice and Regulation (DJR) than previously covered by the Indigenous Issues Unit and addresses issues associated with the Koori Justice unit (KJU), Infringement Management and Enforcement System (IMES), Victims Support Agency and the Justice Assurance and Review Office (JARO). Similarly, the Courts KRG adapted in response to the establishment of Courts Services Victoria as an independent entity separate to DJR.

The Corrections and Health KRGs combined into one, reflecting the establishment of Justice Health. The People and Culture KRG was a new addition, and was followed by the creation of the Alcohol, Drugs and Mental Health KRG in 2015.

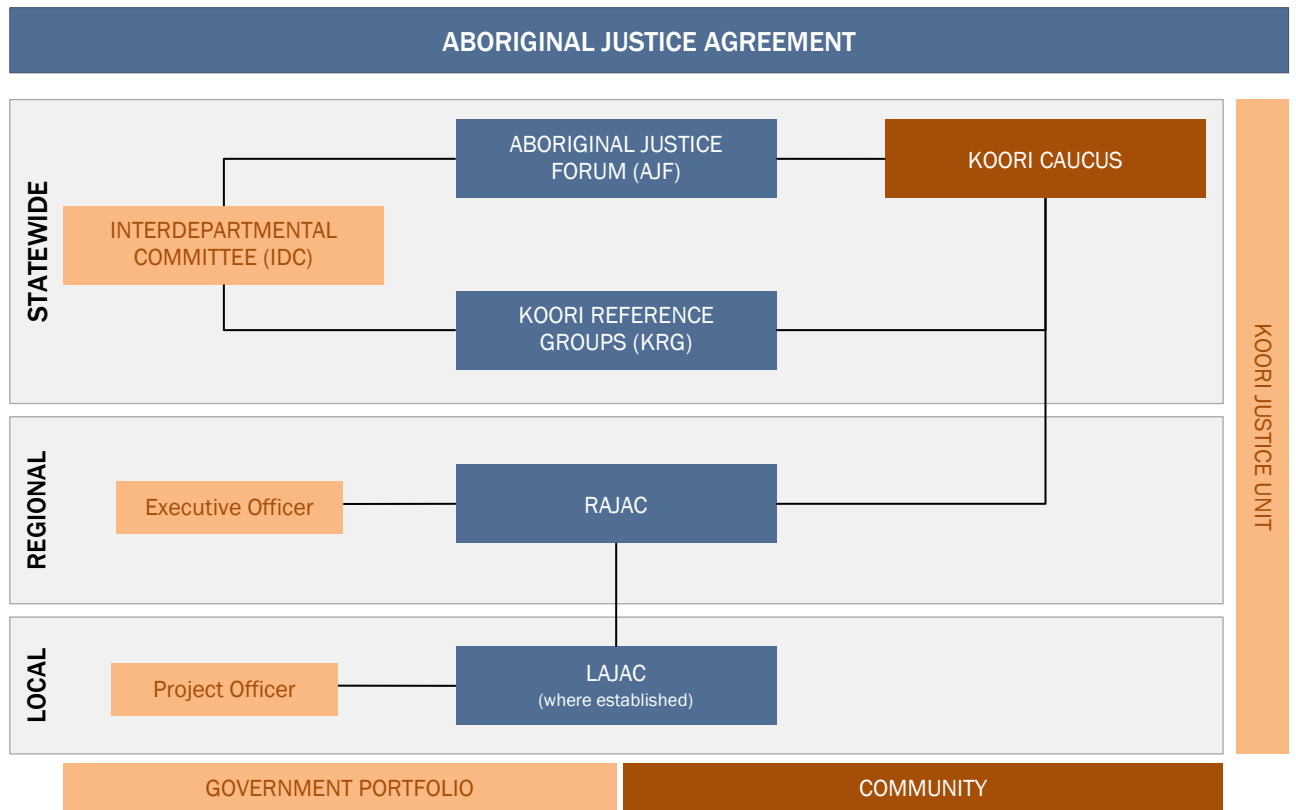
AJA3 was underpinned by a recurrent budget allocation which supports the administration of the Agreement and implementation of key initiatives (such as Koori Courts and Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers (ACLOs)). New AJA3 action implementation has been largely unfunded through government budget processes. This has necessitated a focus on making improvements in the delivery of existing programs, services and infrastructure including process improvements (e.g. improving the referral, intake or case management process) or product delivery improvements (e.g. procedural documents or program reviews)³. Funding has also been supplemented from time to time by leveraging funding off other funded activities and opportunities. In recent years, funding for initiatives aimed at reducing conflict, violence and victimisation was provided in response to the Royal Commission into Family Violence and related budget allocations.



³ Koori Justice Unit (2016). *Interim Process Evaluation: Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 3 (Draft)*, Unpublished internal document made available to Author, TRIM ID CD/15/330441

2. Governance structures of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement

The governance structures put in place to support the implementation of the Agreement comprises three levels, as shown in the figure below.



At the highest level are two structures:

- the Aboriginal Justice Forum (AJF), comprised of the senior representatives of government signatories to the Agreement (and other invited Government representatives), members of the Koori Caucus (see further below) and Aboriginal community organisations and peak bodies. The AJF has state-wide responsibility for the development and implementation of the Agreement including a monitoring function, and provides strategic guidance on justice issues affecting Aboriginal communities in Victoria.
- the Koori Caucus, comprised of the Aboriginal community members of the AJF. The Koori Caucus meets six weeks prior to and the day before each AJF to shape the agenda, discuss key issues of interest and concern, share ideas and solve problems.

Supporting the AJF are two structures with responsibility for reviewing the actions and other outputs from the meeting of the Forum and to see that they are dealt with appropriately. Minutes are recorded during the AJF and these are provided to an Interdepartmental Committee (IDC). Membership on the IDC is typically the government representatives who have attended the AJF or their delegates. Persons attending the IDC are expected to be at a sufficiently senior level to allow for decisions confirming the assignment of actions from the AJF to the responsible business unit.

The IDC confirms actions arising from the AJF and determines responsibility for addressing such actions. The seven Koori Reference Groups (KRGs) comprising government and Koori Caucus

membership offer an opportunity for individual members to monitor and report on progress towards addressing the actions raised at the AJF. This monitoring function informs the subsequent AJF delivering on accountability and transparency expectations.

The KRGs are also responsible, in collaboration with Government business units, for the development of AJA Action Plans. In part, these Action Plans outline how each business unit will maximise opportunities for Aboriginal employment and career development, and articulate the strategies to be used by business units and agencies to reduce Aboriginal over-representation in the criminal justice system, including how and when they will be implemented.

KRGs have been established in the following seven portfolio areas:

- Youth
- Justice
- Corrections Victoria and Justice Health
- Police
- People and Culture
- Courts
- Alcohol and Mental Health

Nine Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees (RAJACs) bring together key Aboriginal community members and government agencies in each region. Those regions are:

- Barwon South West
- Grampians
- Gippsland
- Hume
- Loddon Mallee
- Eastern Metropolitan
- Northern Metropolitan
- Southern Metropolitan
- Western Metropolitan

The RAJACs are crucial to the delivery of the AJA on the ground through the development of *Regional Justice Action Plans*. An elected Aboriginal Chairperson leads each of the nine RAJACs and represents it on the Koori Caucus and AJF.

At a town or city level in some regions are Local Aboriginal Justice Action Committees (LAJACs). The LAJACs bring together local Aboriginal community members and justice representatives in selected locations experiencing poor justice outcomes. The LAJACs develop and guide responses to local justice issues, with representation at the AJF through the RAJACs. LAJACs are located at⁴:

- Bendigo (Loddon Mallee)
- East Gippsland (Gippsland)
- Echuca (Loddon Mallee)
- Geelong (Barwon South West)
- Glenelg (Barwon South West)
- La Trobe (Gippsland)
- Mildura (Loddon Mallee)
- Robinvale (Loddon Mallee)
- Shepparton (Hume)
- Swan Hill (Loddon Mallee)
- Warrnambool (Barwon South West)
- Wodonga (Hume)

⁴ A LAJAC has previously operated in the Grampians region at Horsham. Information received during field visits suggests the Horsham LAJAC has not met for about 4 years but is about to be recommenced in the near future.

2.1. The Aboriginal Justice Forum

2.1.1. Role of the AJF

The AJF brings together leaders in the Aboriginal community and the most senior representatives of the Justice, Health and Human Services, and Education government departments and Aboriginal Victoria (within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet). It operates as the peak coordinating body responsible for overseeing the development, implementation and direction of the AJA. Aboriginal community representation at the Forum includes each of the nine RAJAC chairs as well as senior representatives from a number of key Aboriginal community organisations and peak bodies (for example, Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, Victorian Aboriginal Childcare Agency, Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated, Djirra etc.).

The AJA emphasises that the effectiveness and success of the AJF is contingent upon a strong and enduring partnership between justice agencies and the Aboriginal community.

The functions of the AJF have been spelt out in the Agreement. Its purpose is to:

- promote and coordinate the AJA principles and initiatives in the Aboriginal community and across the justice system
- promote discussion and awareness of Aboriginal justice issues and the identification or development of solutions to address improved justice outcomes for the Aboriginal community
- promote increased positive participation of the Aboriginal community in the justice system and AJA
- promote greater accountability and transparency of the justice system in its relationship with the Aboriginal community
- promote innovative and best practice approaches to the design, development, implementation and evaluation of AJA3 initiatives and other justice-related programs and services that impact on the Aboriginal community
- report to the Victorian Government on justice issues impacting on the Aboriginal community
- monitor, review and report on the implementation of AJA-related initiatives and other justice-related initiatives that impact on the Aboriginal community
- monitor, analyse and report on data describing Aboriginal contact with the justice system
- promote cross-sectoral linkages and partnerships with other Aboriginal based structures in government and the community to tackle Aboriginal disadvantage and over-representation.

2.1.2. AJF schedule

The AJF meets three times per year with an aim to promote accountability, support community participation and engagement and provide momentum to progress major policies and initiatives. These meetings are held over two days, alternating between metropolitan and regional locations. The agenda includes an open community forum to provide access for local community members to ask questions of, and discuss issues with members of the AJF.

A typical agenda for an AJF will include presentation of a justice profile of the region in which the Forum is being held and a discussion of the initiatives that are being implemented in that region under the umbrella of the AJA. The minutes from the previous meeting will be tabled and there will be some discussion on progress against outstanding actions arising from previous meetings. Each of the

RAJAC Chairs have an opportunity to deliver a report on challenges and achievements in their respective regions. The agenda may also include presentations on areas of interest to the members which may originate from the members themselves or from the KJU.

The agenda for the AJF includes a dedicated Community Forum which allows any interested community member to put questions to, and obtain feedback from the AJF membership. This direct access to high level Forum members is seen as an important component of the Forum and is highly regarded by both Forum and community members.

The agenda for the two days is full and comprehensive. Interviews with AJF members during the course of the evaluation data collection phase suggest it is not uncommon to conclude without all items being discussed or with some discussion being rushed.

Information papers covering a range of topics are provided to members two weeks prior to the Forum meeting to enable their review by Forum members. A summary of some of the papers presented at the 48th AJF in Frankston on 29-30 June 2017, for example, were in response to action items or were standing items. These included topics such as:

- Utilisation of Section 58, whereby a person can apply to have the warrant recalled and cancelled under section 58 of the *Magistrates' Court Act* – one of the “social justice initiatives”. (presented by Infringement Management and Enforcement Services, Department of Justice and Regulation)
- Update on the Review of the Expansion of Aboriginal Wellbeing Officers Program (presented by Corrections Victoria)
- Confirmation of Aboriginality and the Use of Statutory Declarations (presented by Aboriginal Victoria, Department of Premier and Cabinet)
- Update on Housing and Homelessness (Standing Item)
- Wulgunggo Ngalu Update (Standing Item).

At present, the information provided to Forum members is broad in content and in volume. Many members we spoke with admitted that they rarely had time to read and digest all of the information provided prior to the Forum.

2.1.3. AJF membership

The membership of the AJF has evolved over the 17 years since AJA1. Originally membership was limited to representatives of those government justice agencies and peak groups that were signatories to the Agreement. Other organisations or agencies could be invited to participate where the agenda would benefit from their input. In more recent years the membership to the AJF has expanded to include non-justice agencies/organisations, such as education and housing as well as statutory government bodies with an interest in, or responsibility for justice matters, such as the Victoria Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission.

The extension of the membership is an acknowledgement that resolving criminal justice issues requires consideration of factors outside of the criminal justice sector. The underlying causes of offending behaviour are complex and result from the “chronic cumulative effects of social and cultural disadvantage in education, employment, health and housing, together with substance abuse” (Aboriginal Legal Service of NSW and ACT, North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency, Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service 2010).

The expansion has seen membership increase to close to 50 participants at last count, inclusive of government, non-government and community representatives. There has been some discussion in

recent AJF meetings for the Forum to return to its focus on criminal justice matters although this view is not held across the entire membership. The primary reason for this suggestion is that the Forum's attention is now spread thinly across multiple complex issues and the focus diffused.

2.2. Koori Caucus

The Koori Caucus comprises the Aboriginal community members of the AJF. In addition to the nine Chairs of the RAJACs (see Section 2.3) the Koori Caucus also includes Aboriginal representatives of Aboriginal peak bodies and some Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

The Caucus meet prior to each AJF:

- on a day approximately six weeks out for agenda setting and consideration of minutes and actions arising from the previous forum, as well as discussing key issues of interest or concern
- on the day immediately before, to consider the agenda and share views on relevant issues.

A key feature of the Koori Caucus is that it provides an opportunity for members to discuss issues, share ideas and experiences, problem solve and develop a common view of key issues, prior to reporting to the AJF.

We heard varying viewpoints during interviews with key stakeholders as to whether attendance at Koori Caucus was restricted to Caucus members. Some stakeholders suggested that it was while others suggested that RAJAC Executive Officers were able to attend. There was consensus across the stakeholders that allowing RAJAC Executive Officers to attend would add benefit as they offer additional support to Caucus members particularly where their time is limited.

2.3. Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees

Nine Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees (RAJACs) operate throughout Victoria. Each RAJAC is supported by a full-time Executive Officer employed by the DJR who is responsible for day-to-day management and planning for the committee. The Executive Officer is located within the DJR regional office and reports to the DJR Regional Director in the region they are located.

RAJACs meet a minimum of four times per calendar year.

The role and responsibilities of RAJACs are described in the RAJAC Framework of Operations (June 2017) and are to:

- advocate for and promote improved justice outcomes and Aboriginal justice initiatives to both Aboriginal communities and government agencies
- develop and implement Regional Justice Action Plans that address Aboriginal over-representation
- promote and participate in cross agency and partnership forums, such as the Aboriginal Justice Forum, and other initiatives to address Aboriginal disadvantage
- work with other regional Aboriginal advocacy groups
- monitor and comment on Aboriginal contact with the justice system at a regional and state-wide level
- promote and nurture the LAJACs, providing advocacy for them at the regional level
- participate in the assessment process for government grant funding applications for Aboriginal justice-related programs
- aiding in the successful delivery of Aboriginal programs under the AJA.

2.3.1. Regional Justice Action Plans

A key output of the RAJAC is the Regional Justice Action Plan. These typically span the period of the Agreement (i.e. five years) although there is variation with some plans being operational for three years. The Regional Justice Action Plans outline strategies for improving Aboriginal justice outcomes and service delivery to local Aboriginal communities, and include:

- Identification of the needs of local communities.
- Locally agreed priorities for service reform and community initiatives.
- Agreed protocols and processes between community and justice agencies.

During the consultation process for the evaluation there was some discussion about the ability of the Regional Justice Action Plans to respond to the rapidly changing environment. At the outset, the intent was for Plans to be reviewed on an annual basis with actions for the coming year prioritised. Interviews with some RAJAC members suggest that this was not always happening. Further, the Plans were considered to contain more actions than could be addressed in a realistic time frame. Representatives from the KJU have advised that the hardcopy Plans developed under AJA2 were “static” and, once expired, were not always updated. This led to the Plans becoming less relevant and, therefore, under-utilised.

The plans under AJA3 were intended to be much more flexible. Five year plans were outlined and published in folders provided to all RAJACs with priority actions for the current annual period identified. The folders were specifically designed to accommodate progress updates provided to each AJF and annual reviews/ updates of plans. While these updates didn't occur as frequently as intended, KJU worked closely with all RAJACs to review, revise and prioritise their plans since 2014-15 and most RAJACs do have updated plans. Many of the original plans, and the updates came about due to the involvement of external facilitators and KJU staff in the process. (KJU staff member)

Notwithstanding issues with the currency of some of the Regional Justice Action Plans, they are generally seen as a useful mechanism to identify regionally specific issues and devise solutions in a collaborative way. We did hear from several stakeholders that the Plans replicated actions contained in regional agency strategies rather than being a reflection of RAJAC priorities. These comments were not necessarily critical but they did question whether the identified actions were sufficiently aspirational and whether they accurately reflected community interests and priorities rather than agency priorities. Nevertheless, the Plans have provided a useful accountability function and they are referenced at each RAJAC meeting.

It will be important that some attention be directed towards the ongoing utilisation of Regional Justice Action Plans through regular review and update of actions. It would be beneficial for a more systematic and thorough monitoring process to be implemented that not only checks for action completion but that also assesses the ongoing effect and long-term changes brought by the completion of the action. We suggest this monitoring functioning be the responsibility of the KJU where there is the capability for this role, recognising that the capacity and resourcing is not currently available (refer Recommendation 2 on page 48 and Recommendation 14 on page 80).

2.3.2. RAJAC Membership

According to the RAJAC Framework of Operations, membership to the RAJAC is expected to comprise (at a minimum) the following representation:

Community

- A member from each of the Local Aboriginal Justice Action Committees in the region (where established)
- A representative from the Koori Youth Council
- A Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service representative
- An Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service representative (where available)
- A representative from each of the Aboriginal Community Justice Panels in the region
- A representative from community based organisations with justice-related programs
- A representative from each of the Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Groups
- A Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group representative
- An Aboriginal Official Visitor (where available)
- An Aboriginal Bail Justice (where available)
- An Elder or Respected Person from each of the Koori Courts in the region

Government

- Regional Director, Department of Justice and Regulation
- Regional Director, Department of Health and Human Services
- Regional Director, Department of Health
- Regional Director, Department of Education and Training
- Local Government representative
- Magistrate or Registrar
- Community Correctional Services Location Manager
- Sheriff's Operations Regional Manager
- Sheriff Aboriginal Liaison Officer (where available)
- Victim Services Manager
- Superintendent (Divisional Commander) or above, Victoria Police
- Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer, Victoria Police (where available)
- General Manager of prison (where located)
- Koori Court Officer
- Youth Justice

Each RAJAC has the flexibility to include other community representatives not otherwise specified above.

The RAJAC Chairperson position is integral in the effective functioning of the AJA, Koori Caucus, Koori Reference Groups, the AJF and the many sub-committees. Only Aboriginal community representatives are eligible to stand for election and be appointed as Chairperson/Deputy Chairperson.

Elections of Chairperson/Deputy Chairperson are held every two years in the first meeting of the calendar year. The method for election of the RAJAC Chairperson/Deputy is by secret ballot. A call for nominations for the positions is made on the day of the RAJAC meeting. The KJU is responsible for coordinating the process with scrutineers drawn from the RAJAC membership.

2.4. Local Aboriginal Justice Action Committees

Local Aboriginal Justice Action Committees (LAJACs) have been established to develop close relationships and build trust with local Aboriginal communities experiencing poor justice outcomes.

The LAJACs are responsible for promoting and nourishing improved relationships, linkages and reconciliation between the wider local Aboriginal community, justice agencies, local government and community service providers. The role and responsibilities of LAJACs as detailed in the AJA are to:

- Identify and address justice issues that contribute to poor justice outcomes for the local Aboriginal community. This will be done through the development and implementation of local justice plans.
- Advocate, monitor and comment on Aboriginal contact with the justice system at the local level.
- Promote justice related initiatives to Aboriginal communities and government agencies.
- Promote Aboriginal participation in the design, development, implementation and evaluation of local justice initiatives.
- Participate in and provide advice to the RAJAC network.
- Through the RAJAC, participate in and provide advice to the AJF, the VAJAC and related forums.
- Develop, promote and participate in relevant and local cross agency and cross sectoral forums and initiatives.

In some cases the LAJACs are supported by a dedicated LAJAC Project Officer, employed by the DJR and located within one of the DJR regional offices. In other cases, the RAJAC Executive Officer also supports the function of the LAJAC. A RAJAC Executive Officer may be required to support more than one LAJAC (as is the case in the Barwon South West region).

2.5. Koori Reference Groups

Koori Reference Groups (KRGs) were first initiated under AJA2, during the period of 2006-2012⁵. The KRGs were initially created to provide Aboriginal community input to government business units as they developed their AJA Actions Plans. In 2016, the role of the KRGs was expanded such that they now support the implementation of AJA initiatives and action of items raised in the AJF and allow for Koori Caucus partners to have oversight of initiatives and actions. The intent is to progress government business at the KRG to reduce the demands on the AJF and allow the Forum to concentrate on high level strategic business.

KRGs cover seven different portfolio areas as follows:

- Youth
- Justice
- Corrections Victoria and Justice Health
- Police
- People and Culture
- Courts
- Alcohol and Mental Health

The terms of reference for KRGs under AJA3 describe their responsibilities are to:

- Assist in the timely development of an Agency's AJA Action Plan.
- Endorse an Agency's AJA Action Plan on behalf of the Aboriginal Justice Forum.

⁵ from *Guidelines for Koori Reference Groups, April 2014*, KJU unpublished document

- Monitor progress of an Agency's AJA Action Plan, prior to the business unit providing a progress report to the AJF.
- Assist in the implementation of the AJA initiatives for which an Agency is the identified lead agency or supporting agency, to improve Aboriginal justice outcomes.
- Maximise alignment of AJA Action Plans with Regional RAJAC Plan priorities.
- Participate in annual reviews of an Agency's AJA Action Plans.

To ensure appropriate levels of consultation each KRG is required, under the Guidelines, to have a minimum of four Koori Caucus members. The KRG is expected to comprise at least:

- three RAJAC Chairs, including both a regional and metropolitan Chair
- one State-wide agency and/or one specialist representative as required
- appropriate senior business unit representation.

This membership is expected to assist in achieving quorum and providing broad representation, should one Koori Caucus member be unable to attend.

KRG meetings are co-chaired by the appropriate Business Unit/Agency Executive member and the appropriate member of the Koori Caucus.

The seven KRGs meet over one day with two groups meeting concurrently in three time periods. This meeting schedule makes it difficult to obtain the recommended Koori Caucus representation as it requires a high number of Caucus members to be available over the full day of the meeting. As a result, consistency of attendance and quorums are not regularly achieved.

The situation is compounded because of the diversity of KRGs, with some being more closely aligned to Caucus members' interests than others. For example, the Koori Youth Reference Group is of great interest to all of the RAJAC chairs who have been consulted for the evaluation. On the other hand, the People and Culture KRG has struggled to attract Caucus members. This is not to say that there is no interest in this KRG, rather, the schedule requires that Caucus members must prioritise their time and attendance.

2.6. The Koori Justice Unit

The core role of the Koori Justice Unit (KJU) within the DJR Service Strategy Reform Branch is to develop and support improved and equitable justice outcomes for the Aboriginal community. The role of the KJU is to:

- act on behalf of the AJF to coordinate the delivery of the AJA and related programs
- provide advice and executive support services to the AJF and the RAJAC and LAJAC networks
- provide advice to Ministers and Executives on policy and program matters affecting Aboriginal communities
- maintain a data base detailing Aboriginal contact with the criminal justice system
- coordinate and monitor the annual AJA budget allocation
- coordinate the AJA contribution to the annual Victorian Government Aboriginal Affairs report
- coordinate, implement and support related grants and relevant community programs
- develop and implement a robust monitoring and evaluation framework
- provide information to Aboriginal community and government stakeholders about progress and activities

- support and monitor the RAJAC and DJR regional offices in the delivery of AJA commitments.

The KJU promotes the partnership of both the Aboriginal community and government, by facilitating community engagement initiatives to build strong networks, and enables wide participation in the delivery of Aboriginal justice-related policies, programs and initiatives.

Current staffing of the KJU comprises a Director with overall responsibility for five teams including Community Programs, Policy Coordination, Strategic Initiatives, Monitoring and Evaluation and Stakeholder Engagement. The total number of FTE in the Unit at the time of this evaluation was 15.

3. Understanding the AJA Model

The partnership arrangements put in place in the 2000 Aboriginal Justice Agreement have remained largely consistent over the three phases of the Agreement. Those structures have endured over the past 17 years and have been replicated in other areas. For example, the Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Groups and the Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum represent a similar community/agency structure. The durability of the AJA structures and their replication would suggest that they have been effective. If that is the case, then it would be useful to know why, and whether there are specific elements in the structures and governance that work well and, conversely, whether there are elements that might be improved (or removed). Ultimately, as a partnership agreement, the success of the AJA is dependent upon how well those partnerships function.

To understand the components and characteristics of this partnership approach we have undertaken a literature scan to provide information on the emergence of partnership based approaches by government to address complex social problems such as those faced by the partners to the AJA. The literature scan has guided the development of the evaluation questions and provides the framework for asking how the AJA partnership compares with what is considered good practice.

3.1. Governance (and partnerships)

Research on governance generally agrees that it is aligned with democracy and the ability for people (citizens) to contribute to decision-making.

The process of good governance is highly participatory, dynamic and engaging; it links people and institutions in complex networks of, for example, policy dialogue, alternative service delivery and accountability. Governance promotes the building of solutions to problems through establishing frameworks to support dialogue and communication (United Nations 2000).

One such framework for supporting dialogue is partnership. Partnerships bring together a variety of stakeholders and seek to strengthen the participation of individuals and groups in decision-making on matters affecting them. Partnerships contribute to building a 'strong, independent and dynamic civil society' through increasing the capacity of the non-government sector while developing the institutional infrastructure vital to its long-term sustainability (United Nations 2000).

Brinkerhoff (2007: 68) states that governance is "fundamentally about managing competing interests for the common good". To do so requires three related components be in place: effectiveness, legitimacy and security. Traditionally, governance has focused on the quality of structures and with that, the legitimacy of the structure. With partnerships, the focus is on how the structure supports more informal processes that tend to evolve over time. The performance of partnerships depends on their legitimacy to key stakeholders and on how well they enable decision-making. This in turn depends on their governance and accountability structures, processes and norms.

Bryson et al (2015) differentiate between collaborative governance and the governance of collaborations, a distinction which applies equally to partnerships. Their research refers to the work of Vangen, Hayes, and Cornforth (2014: 8, cited in Bryson et al 2015) who suggest that the "governance of a collaborative entity entails the design and use of a structure and processes that enable actors to direct, coordinate, and allocate resources for the collaboration as a whole and to account for its activities". According to Bryson et al (2015), understanding and assessing the governance of partnerships needs to take account of the context in which they operate including existing

government policies and the pre-existing relationships among members. Further, because governance structures are also influenced by internal factors, some attention needs to be directed towards the number of members and levels of trust between members. The governance of partnerships also needs to take account of power imbalances that necessarily come from, for example, government partners having special authority by virtue of representing the public. As a result, less powerful partners may have reduced commitment to the partnership because they fear they will be exploited.

Given the above, albeit brief, discussion it is clear that an evaluation of the governance structures of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement is, in essence, an evaluation of the partnership model.

3.2. Types of partnerships

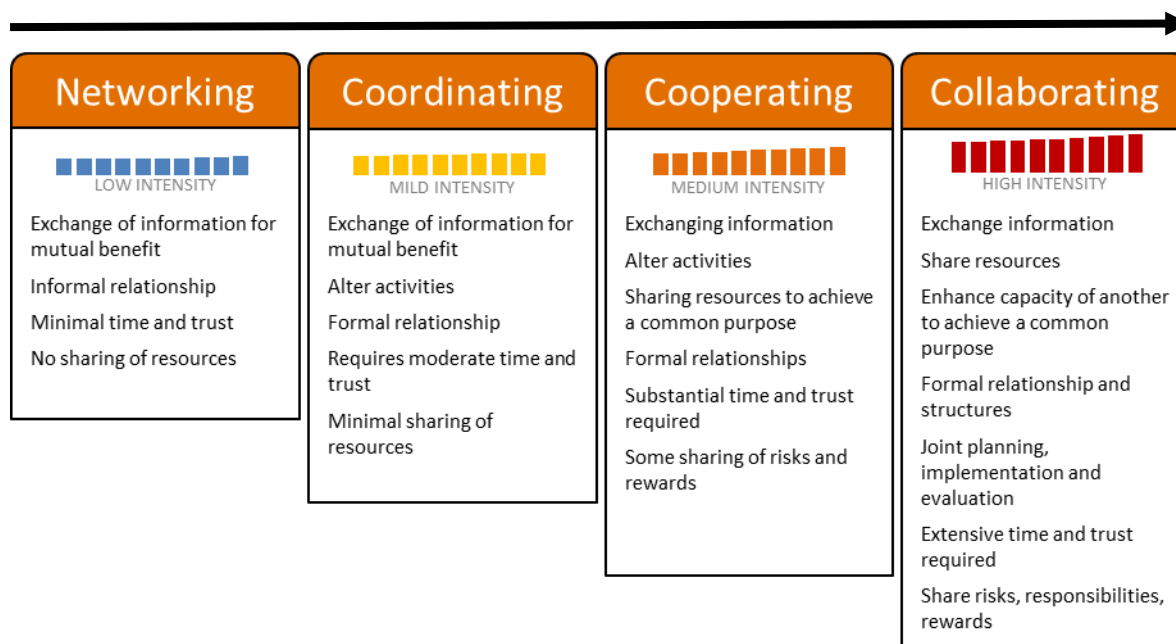
Partnership is a dynamic relationship among diverse actors, based on mutually agreed objectives, pursued through a shared understanding of the most rational division of labour based on the respective comparative advantages of each partner. Partnership encompasses mutual influence, with a careful balance between synergy and respective autonomy, which incorporates mutual respect, equal participation in decision-making, mutual accountability, and transparency (Brinkerhoff, 2002).

A collaboration refers to formalised joint working arrangements between organisations that remain legally autonomous, while they engage in coordinated collective action to achieve those outcomes that none of the partners can achieve on their own (Vangen and Huxham 2012).

'Partnership' is a broadly defined concept frequently used interchangeably with collaboration, network and alliance. The term partnership has been described as two or more actors that ... "make a commitment to work together on something that concerns both, to develop a shared sense of purpose and agenda, and to generate joint action towards agreed targets" (Stern & Green 2005).

A distinction can be made between the purposes and nature of partnerships. Himmelman's Developmental Collaborative Continuum (Himmelman 1996) conceptualises different levels of partnerships (see Figure 3-1 below). 'Networking' is characterized by minimal involvement between partners, usually limited to exchanging information. 'Coordinating' involves the exchange of information and some mutual activities that have common objectives. 'Cooperating' partnerships involve sharing resources and are likely to require greater investments of time to the partnership and require higher degrees of trust between partners. 'Collaborating' involves joint planning, greater exchange of information and sharing of resources, extensive investment of time and high levels of trust, sharing of risks, rewards and responsibilities. In Australia, Himmelman's model has been adopted by VicHealth as part of their broader Partnership Analysis Tool. Himmelman notes that most partnerships move up and down the continuum and that not all partnerships will operate at the highest level. The level will be determined by need, the purpose for the partnerships, and the capacity and willingness of partners.

Figure 3-1: The Partnership Continuum (Source: adapted from Himmelman 1996)



Based on a review of the literature, the Aboriginal Justice Agreement can be seen as a collaborative form of partnership and has been positioned at this level since its inception. The AJA partnership model is one where there are common goals, formal structures, and shared risks, responsibilities and rewards. Partners to the Agreement recognise the interdependencies between themselves and other partners and there is a high level of integration. The AJA partnership is one that rests upon collaboration between all of the signatories as well as with organisations which are not formally signatories but which share the same vision and goals.

3.2.1. The partnership lifecycle

In addition to the Partnership Continuum, another useful concept is that of the Partnership Lifecycle (Educe Ltd and GFA Consulting; Figure 3-2 below). This posits that partnerships (like developing teams) go through a series of stages – ‘forming’, ‘frustration’, ‘functioning’ and ‘flying’ – with the potential for ‘failing’. At each stage particular methods and approaches are more or less appropriate to ensuring partnership progress and success.

Some partnerships may never get through ‘frustration’, and may go directly to ‘failing’ (the downward arrows on the graph). This is where the partnership disintegrates perhaps because of a lack of a sufficient common cause, changes in people involved or a failure to work at the partnership. Partnerships need to work through the stages of the life cycle in order to function with the greatest effectiveness (or ‘fly’). The authors say that even in the best partnerships, there is a tendency to falter and perhaps fail, unless the partners consciously manage their progress through the critical stages of the life cycle.

Quite often, partnerships find themselves in a crossover zone between ‘frustration’ and ‘functioning’. In these cases, partners may have a heightened sense of failings, and could doubt the point of the partnership. Sweeping action may be needed to get it back on track, refocusing on the potential and vision, benefits and some early wins to build confidence and commitment.

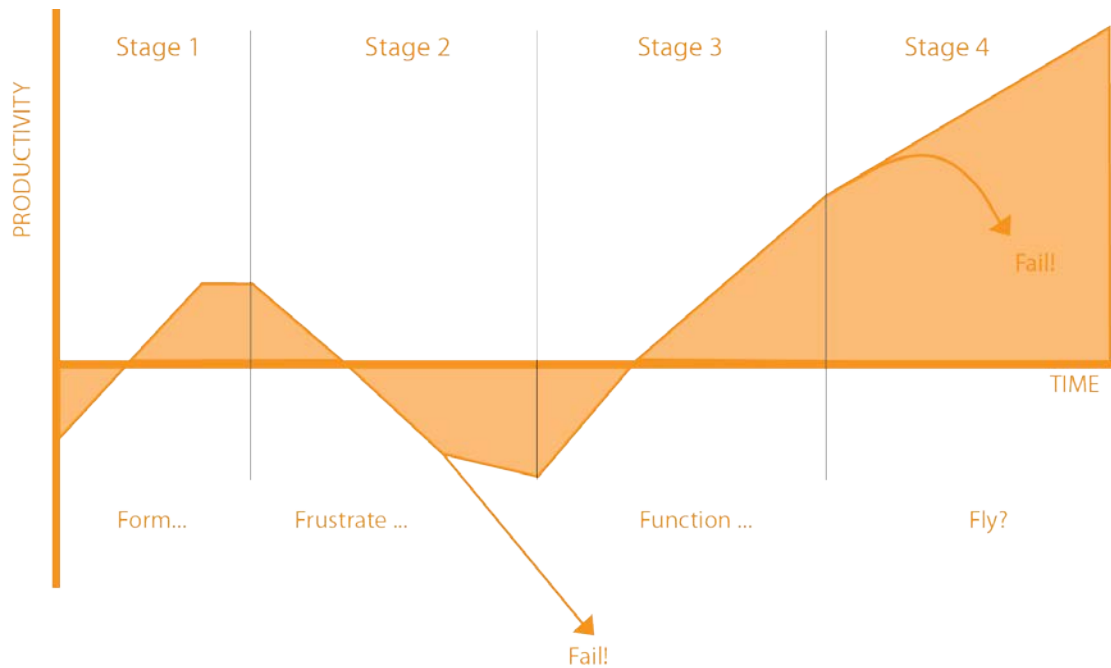


Figure 3-2: The Partnership Lifecycle (Reproduced from Educe Ltd and GFA Consulting)

Understanding where a partnership is on the life cycle can help to focus where efforts need to be made to ensure its continued operation and effectiveness. Each of the stages requires attention in different areas. For example, in the early stages of partnership formation (stage 1) some effort needs to be directed towards developing a common vision. In stage 2, demonstrating early wins is important. At stage 4, directing attention to the future relevance of the partnership is necessary. Table 3-1 describes the typical characteristics of each stage to assist in identifying whether corrective action might be necessary to keep the partnership on track towards success.

Table 3-1: Characteristics of each stage in the Partnership Lifecycle (Source: South Gloucestershire Council 2007)

Typical characteristics of each stage	
Forming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • common cause, arising from shared interests, opportunities, threats • clear vision • early enthusiasm: build personal relationships • exploring what's needed, what's possible • combine strengths • focus on most critical issues • nature of commitments unclear
Frustration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • partners feel "in a fog" • disputes or tension over priorities and methods • individuals questioning purpose of the partnership and reasons for being there • hidden agendas influencing what partners do • doubts about what each other brings to the party • partners competing for credit and control
Functioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • renewed vision and focus • progress through joint project teams • partners talk in terms of "we" not "you" • clear roles and responsibilities • full accountability to each other for actions
Flying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • successful achievement of partnership goals • shared leadership • partners changing what they do and how they do it to achieve partnership objectives • trust and mutual respect • partnership priorities central to partner activities
Failing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • disengagement • lack of commitment • recurrent tensions • breakdown or frittering away of relationships

As partnerships proceed and mature, members and resource capacity tends to become the core driver of partnership activities. The number of partners within the partnership may ebb and flow over time but will tend to plateau due to reaching resource capacity, though short-term increases may still occur around strategic points. At this point, a re-evaluation of the existing partners may be necessary to ensure there is continued alignment with stated strategic goals. Mature partnerships benefit from focusing on those partners that bring unique skills, resources, or stakeholders to the larger partner portfolio (CDC n.d.).

The skillsets required to manage partnerships also change over time as partnerships mature. Initially, partnerships need to establish credentials and build trust but as they proceed, a greater emphasis might be placed on relationship management to maintain (or expand) the existing partnership. Recognising this shift enables partnership leaders to adjust members and partner skillsets over time through training or recruitment.

The AJA arguably sits somewhere between stage 3 (functioning) and stage 4 (flying). Regardless of where it is situated, it will be important to take stock of the characteristics defining the partnership after 17 years of operation to ensure that any potential or looming shortcomings can be addressed.

3.3. The shift by government to using collaborative approaches to address complex issues

Globally and nationally, the concept of partnership involving collaboration between agencies, institutions and organisations is commonly seen as providing solutions to meeting multiple, interrelated needs in areas of social policy, including justice (NCSEHE 2014). Because of the growing challenges in dealing with complex social problems and the failure of traditional responses (i.e. top-down or single issue programs) there has resulted a turn to inter-sectoral partnerships. Working in partnership has subsequently become commonplace for government and non-government organisations throughout the world (Horton et al. 2009).

The potential of partnerships is realised through the combination of people and organisations coming together “to support each other by leveraging, combining and capitalizing on their complementary strengths and capabilities” (Lasker et al. 2001: 180; Horton et al. 2009). A successful partnership is one which produces increasing returns, providing more to the partners than they would achieve independently (Child and Faulkner 1998). Waterhouse and Keast (2011) agree, arguing that agencies are increasingly using “relational governance arrangements” to better address the complex, large-scale and ‘wicked’ problems they encounter. Such arrangements create “collaborative advantage” (Huxham & Vangen 2005) delivering outcomes that are beyond single agencies and organisations to achieve⁶. Partnerships are pursued precisely because each partner has something unique to offer, whether resources, skills, relationships, or consent (Brinkerhoff 2002). Bryson et al (2006: 46) captures the intent of the framers of the AJA highlighting that;

Public policy makers are most likely to try cross-sector collaboration when they believe the separate efforts of different sectors to address a public problem have failed or are likely to fail and the actual or potential failures cannot be fixed by the sectors acting alone.

Shared visions and collaborative advantages are important remedies to wicked problems but a lack of trust, and what Thomson and Perry (2006: 24) call enforcement mechanisms, can lead to suboptimal choices. They stress that partners “must understand how to jointly make decisions about the rules that will govern their behaviour and relationships [and] create structures for reaching agreement on collaborative activities and goals”. Huxham and Vangen (2004: 199) argue that partnerships need to be concerned with “the design of structures and processes that are effective for the particular purpose, and with monitoring their performance and evolution”.

Research suggests that organisations enter into partnerships for different reasons and over varying lengths of time (Stobart 2010). In a literature review prepared by Duffield et al (2013), the factors motivating organisations to partner can be internally and externally driven. Internal factors are those associated with the benefits that come from leveraging resources, pooling talent and expertise, sharing common goals and collaborating to solve the most challenging issues. The most important factor, they argue, is the presence of common goals (see more below). The external factors motivating a partnership approach are often associated with funding directives for collaboration, and the potential efficiency gains that are expected as a result of sharing resources.

⁶ Compare this to Huxham’s notion of ‘collaborative inertia’ which is a situation that arises when the apparent rate of work output from a collaboration is slowed considerably compared to what a casual observer might expect to be able to achieve (Huxham 1996: 4).

In general, the literature agrees that a range of benefits result from working in partnership. These benefits include:

- achieving greater impact through collaborative effort
- a heightened ability to influence policies
- promotion of ownership and responsibility
- capacity building through shared working
- mutual knowledge transfer and learning
- greater flexibility and adaption to changing conditions
- greater potential to improve reach, scope and accessibility of services.

There is ample evidence for the successes that can be achieved through partnership models of working and the literature offers direction on the sorts of enabling factors that help to drive that success.

3.4. Enabling factors

3.4.1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnership with government and mainstream service providers

There is some research literature on partnerships between government and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations, in the fields of health, early childhood services, and environmental and natural resource management activities.

In terms of partnerships between mainstream service providers and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC 2012, see also VACCA 2010) have identified the following good practice factors which align with and extend those discussed above:

1. Commitment to developing long-term sustainable relationships based on trust.
2. Respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural knowledge, history, lived experience and connection to community and country.
3. Commitment to self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
4. Aim to improve long-term well-being outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities.
5. Shared responsibility and accountability for shared objectives and activities.
6. Valuing process elements as integral to support and enable partnership.
7. A commitment to redressing structures, relationships and outcomes that are unequal and/or discriminatory.
8. Openness to working differently with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, recognising that the mainstream approaches are frequently not the most appropriate or effective.

SNAICC states that each of these principles must be present and integrated within each partnership stage to achieve potential partnership outcomes.

... these principles form the bedrock of genuine and successful partnerships, and ... they have major implications for partnership development, operation, management and resourcing (p. 6)

3.4.2. International evidence

Partnership theory, as discussed in the literature, identifies a variety of key factors for successful partnerships. The following aspects are common across much of the literature.

1. Common vision or purpose

A common vision or shared purpose is widely perceived as an important starting point for partnerships (Huxham & Vangen 2004). One certain way for a collaboration to stall is when the partners have different agendas and visions (Albani and Henderson 2014). It is for this reason that almost all of the literature recommends the development of a shared vision of what the partnership wants to achieve (Taylor 2014; Horton et al. 2009; Huxham & Vangen 2004). As well as setting simple and realistic goals, Albani and Henderson (2014) and Taylor (2014) promote the development of an aspirational or “stretch” goal that inspires partners. Vance (2004) suggests that where possible all partners should be included in the development of the partnership’s vision or purpose, or at the very least all partners need to share this vision/goal. Taylor (2014) also promotes regularly reminding partners of the agreed vision/goal to keep everyone on the same track.

2. A collaborative advantage

Another factor aligning individual and partnerships is synergies, that is, something is achieved that could not have been achieved by any one of the organisations acting alone – the ‘collaborative advantage’ (Huxham & Vangen 2004).

3. Trust

Much of the literature highlights the need for trust to be created and nurtured as part of the partnership (Horton et al. 2009; Huxham & Vangen 2004; Stobart 2010). Thomson and Perry (2006: 28) have described trust as the central component of collaboration “because it reduces complexity and transaction costs more quickly than other forms of organisation”.

4. Recognition of power and resource differences

Statham (2000) found that to meaningfully involve people representing the voice of their community enough time has to be provided to enable them to consult their wider membership. She found that brief consultations benefit hierarchical organisations, those who have the most resources and those who are familiar with the formal and informal workings of government.

5. Effective leadership

Among the reviewed literature, leadership was frequently reported as a critical factor in determining a partnership’s effectiveness. Committed, clear and effective leadership can facilitate shared vision and goals, and navigate all parties through the (often difficult) planning stage (Armistead and Pettigrew 2004; Vance, 2004). Successful leaders have been described by Armistead and Pettigrew (2004) as those who are able to reach consensus by promoting mutual

goals, removing barriers that obstruct those goals and challenging conventional thinking that leads to inertia.

In collaborative contexts, leadership is not about a single formal leader influencing members to achieve partnerships goals, it is enacted by many individuals who bring diverse resources, experiences, and professional expertise. Three leadership media – structures, processes and participants – influence whether or not collaborative advantage is achieved. Leadership comes to be enacted by many individuals who bring diverse resources, experiences and professional expertise. Success is achieved by balancing the facilitative roles (i.e. empowering, involving, mobilising) with directive roles (i.e. manipulating the collaborative agenda and playing politics). (Huxham & Vangen 2005; Vangen & Huxham 2003).

6. Communication

Having agreed and open avenues of communication is vital for a partnership to succeed (Stobart, 2010). It is important therefore to ensure that all partners are continually engaged and updated about the process and progress throughout the partnership effort (Vance, 2004). Partnerships that provide for an honest exchange of information between all partners, based on sharing (rather than withholding) knowledge, and the clear and regular communication of agreed key issues outside the partnership have been shown to be effective (Audit Commission, 2002; Cameron and Macdonald, 2007; Huxham and Vangen, 2005). Communication extends to information and data sharing to enable decision making based on best available evidence.

7. Learning and capacity development

Learning and innovation are connected to the development of successful partnership, particularly when these partnerships are designed to tackle complex, interlinked issues which individual agencies have failed to resolve in isolation. Training and capacity development can help individuals to work in partnership, to cope with the stress caused by uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity and to bond together into an effective whole (Armistead and Pettigrew 2004). Some of the skills of particular use in partnership working include (UK Home Office 2007):

- Communication
- Political awareness
- Conflict resolution
- Leadership skills
- Negotiating skills and 'win-win'
- Team dynamics
- Understanding benefits of, and barriers to successful partnership working
- Developing and maintaining constructive working relationships
- Understanding and managing change

8. Transparent governance and decision-making

Having a transparent and effective management structure can help overcome issues as they arise. It is also important that any expectations or requirements of the partners are made explicit, and where necessary provided in written form to ensure agreement by all parties. Agreeing clear lines of accountability for the partnership helps to tie in ownership of complex issues to the appropriate level of decision making. The governance arrangements should allow for decisions to be made collaboratively, and to strive for consensus to be reached between organisations

(Vance, 2004). People attending meetings must have sufficient responsibility for making decisions.

9. Continuity

Continuous change has a negative, destabilising impact and major reorganisation can impede progress. Partners should try to minimise and avoid change for the sake of it. However, change is, to a degree, inevitable. When partners' representatives are replaced, attention to succession planning, contingency planning and knowledge transfer, and reducing the reliance on individuals, can help to ameliorate the impact of changes in the membership. Partners should assume that their partnership will need to be continually nurtured and renewed to cope with the inevitable shifts (Joint Improvement Team 2009; Huxham and Vangen, 2004).

10. Resourcing and investment in the partnership

Partnerships are more successful when each of the partners have independent access to resources, as well as when they share those resources for the good of the partnership. The pooling of resources in a collaborative partnership has a synergistic effect in that the collective strength will be greater than the sum of the efforts of each partners acting independently. In addition to increasing the pool of available resources, partnerships may bring in different types of resources such as information, expertise, and connections with other stakeholders which would otherwise not be available or accessible to the other partner (McQuaid, 2000a; 2000b).

McQuaid argues that a commitment to partnership working must come with a commitment to:

- Contribute financial resources proportionate to the problem being addressed - long-term, complex problems will need stable long-term funding and administrative support.
- Share resources and decision making.
- Use resources efficiently and incorporate sound financial planning and accountability.
- Avoid assumptions that partnership working will make immediate efficiency gains.

11. Evaluation and continuous improvement

Wherever possible, partnerships should build relevant data collection into their activities from the outset, deriving clear indicators and targets from the shared vision and outcome priorities. A simple, shared performance management system will ensure that progress is charted against core objectives and the focus is on outcomes rather than (purely) on process. The results of performance monitoring should be to review and reflect on practice and to take hard decisions on changing or abandoning programmes which are not achieving the planned goals and trying new ideas. It should also provide the evidence to allow celebration of success – found to be important in the literature to maintaining momentum and ownership (Joint Improvement Team 2009).

The factors described above are seen as essential for the success of all partnerships.

4. Evaluating partnerships

Frey and others (2006) caution on the challenges in assessing partnerships and collaboration, with the various models of partnerships being difficult to translate into valid and reliable instruments that can measure meaningful changes in the partnership. Funnell (2006) advocates for viewing a partnership as a ‘project’ in its own right and for evaluators to not only measure the outcomes or impact of the partnership but also the way in which the partnership itself functions. Serafin (2008) adopts a similar view, focusing on the way in which partnerships are organised, the impact they have and the outcomes they achieve, and the value created as a result of the partnership. The Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (Keast & Mandell 2013: 1) offer some direction for evaluating collaborations which can also be applied to partnerships. They support an emphasis on using relational or non-traditional performance measures to assess:

- the relationships and processes that enable collaboration
- the level of participation and engagement of collaboration members
- how well the structure of the collaboration allows participants to contribute to and influence the collaboration’s work and outcomes.

From the literature scan, the conceptual framework described by Brinkerhoff is seen to offer a solid base for evaluating the partnership arrangements of the AJA. That the framework has been successfully applied to multiple cases of partnerships is further validation for its utility.

The Brinkerhoff (2002; 2007) framework suggests four central pillars shape overall partnership performance: the context in which partnerships form (pre-requisites), the structural characteristics, the process of the partnership functioning entailing partnership practice and performance, and the partnership outcomes (see Figure 4-1). There are, she argues, causal relationships between them: context and partnership prerequisites, partnership structure, partnership process, and outcomes, or the added value of the partnership.

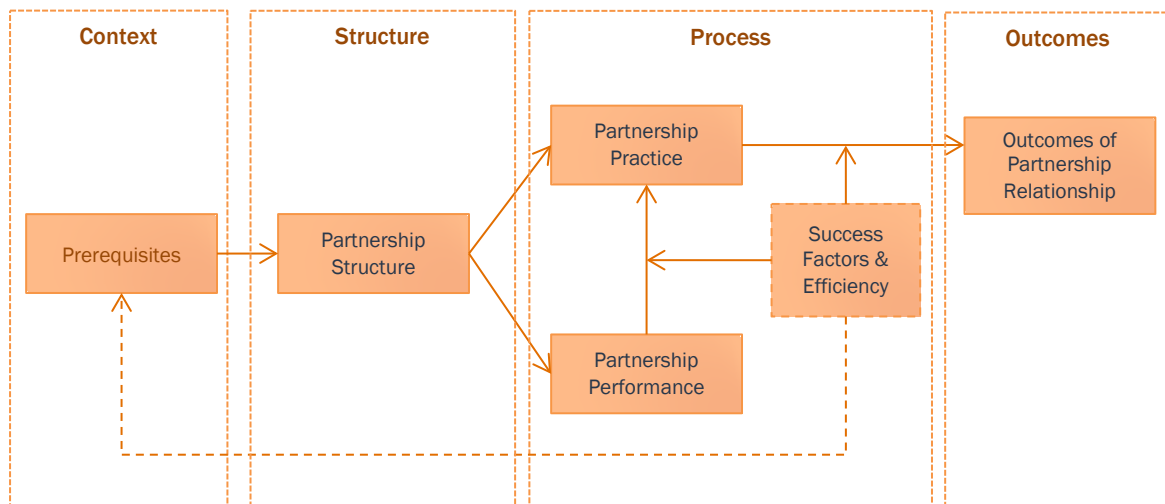


Figure 4-1: Causal chain for relationship outcomes (Source: Brinkerhoff 2007)

The context in which the partnership functions is determined by contextual factors and pre-requisites, which may include the characteristics and history of the issue, the existence of champions, a history of partnerships, and/or the broader political environment. Caplan et al (2007: 5) suggest that each partnership has “a specific, though constantly changing, context that determines its scope and direction”. The context incorporates the ‘external environment’, ‘organisational environment’ and

'individual partner motivations' which drive partners to become involved. The framework offered by Caplan et al, which is consistent with Brinkerhoff's approach, is presented diagrammatically below (Figure 4-2).

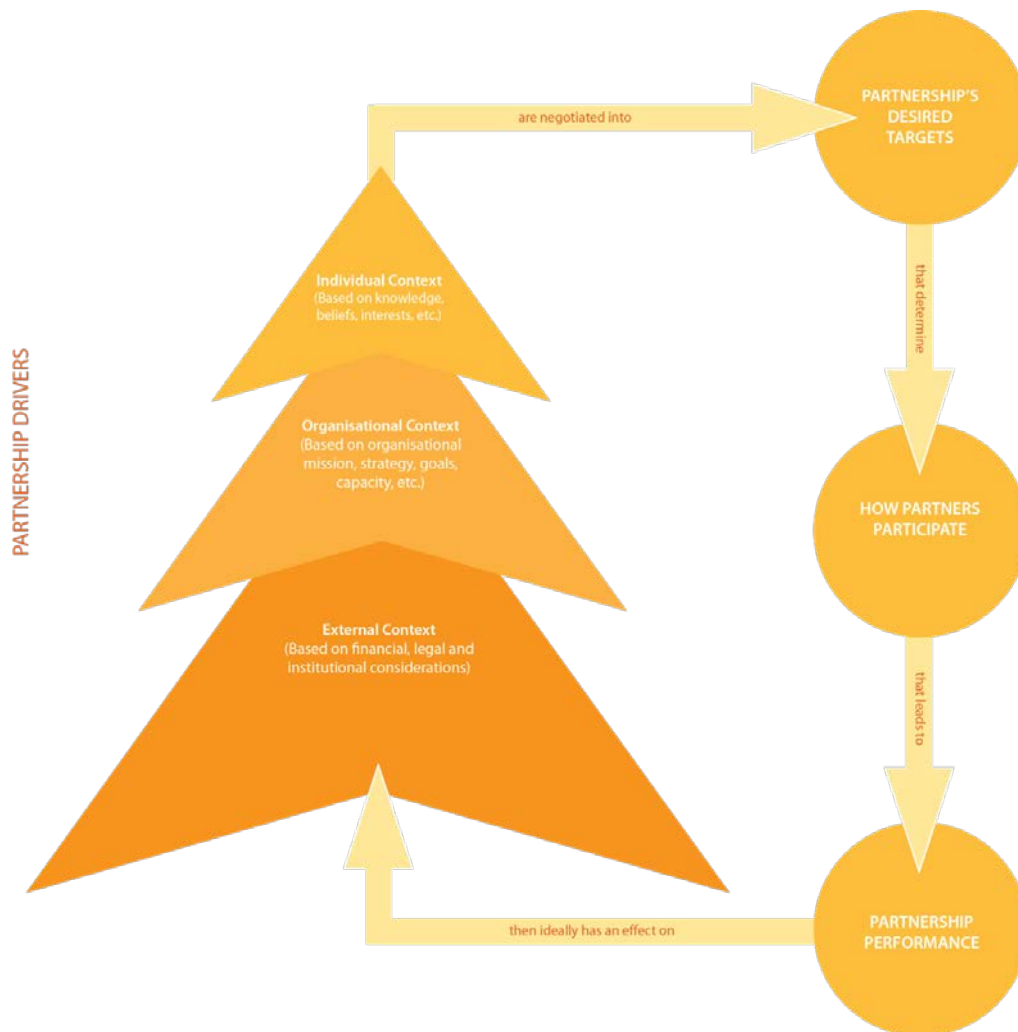


Figure 4-2: Caplan's Partnership Assessment Framework (Source: Caplan et al 2007)

Returning to the Brinkerhoff model, the partnership structure reflects the nature of connections between partners, and their respective functions. Partner performance describes each partner's comparative advantage, roles and responsibilities, and their effectiveness in fulfilling these roles. Partnership practice refers to the behaviours and mechanisms among the partners that enhance or diminish the value of a partnership on the process and contributes to outcomes, or the added value of the partnership. As Mahanty et al (2009) note, Brinkerhoff's framework resonates with the success factors described in other partnership research, such as the importance of strong and trustful personal relationships; the need to address power differentials for a partnership to be 'authentic'; the importance of learning within the partnership; and the need for compatible organisational conditions as well as equal standing.

Brinkerhoff defines the targets for analysis for each of the five dimensions captured in Figure 4-1 as shown in Table 4-1 below.

Table 4-1: Brinkerhoff's targets for analysis in partnership evaluation (Source: Brinkerhoff 2002)

I. Presence of pre-requisites and success factors
A. Pre-requisites and facilitative factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptions of partners' tolerance for sharing power • Partners' willingness to adapt to meet partnership's needs • Existence of partnership champions
B. Success factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Character-based: perceptions of integrity, honesty, moral character, reliability, confidentiality as appropriate, etc. – Competence-based: perceptions of competence in prescribed/assumed skill areas, business sense, common sense, judgment, knowledge, interpersonal skills, understanding of partnership, etc. • Confidence: standard operating procedures, contractual agreements and their degree of formality • Senior management support • Ability to meet performance expectations • Clear goals • Partner compatibility • Conflict
II. Degree of partnership (Partnership functioning)
A. Mutuality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mutuality and equality • Equality in decision-making • Resource exchange • Reciprocal accountability • Transparency • Partner representation and participation in partnership activities • Mutual respect • Even benefits
B. Organisational identity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determining partner organisation identities Partner interview • Organisation identity within the partnership
III. Outcomes of the partnership relationship
1. Value-added
2. Partners meet own objectives
3. Partnership identity
IV. Partner performance
A. Partners and partner roles enacted as prescribed or adapted for strategic reasons
B. Partner assessment and satisfaction with their partners' performance
V. Efficiency and strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of critical factors influencing partnership's success • Extent to which these are continuously monitored • Extent to which these are strategically managed

The targets for analysis offered by Brinkerhoff provide a useful starting point for structuring evaluation questions for this partnership evaluation of the AJA. In addition to investigating useful frameworks for analysis, the literature scan has reviewed a number of existing tools that have been developed to evaluate the progress and success of partnerships and these have also informed the development of

key evaluation questions. Many of these tools adopt a similar framework for analysis as that offered by Brinkerhoff. Two studies identified in the literature scan have been useful as they have conducted a full analysis of a variety of partnership assessment tools. It is worth discussing these briefly.

Mahmood et al (2015) sought to develop a checklist for inter-sectoral partnerships in health promotion through an analysis and synthesis of some 75 sources of information. From the review of the source material they identified that each tool had a unique purpose and set of domains which differed from others. According to the purpose and subject area of the resource, various domains overlapped and appeared as either core or subdomains. A total of 82 partnership domains were identified across these tools. Mahmood et al clustered the domains into a matrix of nine high level domains.

1. Need for the partnership – the benefits of a partnership approach are clear.
2. Mission - refers to the purpose of the partnership and encompasses the idea of a shared vision and aligned goals which draws together the individual, organisational and financial partners.
3. Context - refers to the external environment within which the partnership exists. It includes the individual contexts of all the partners as well as the economic, political, social and cultural context.
4. Partners' profile – refers to the partners' overall skills and expertise, and willingness to share resources to fulfil the mission.
5. Resources - encompass financial and other resources such as time, skills, expertise, reputation, personal networks and connections, etc.
6. Leadership – refers to single leaders, co-leaders, or a team of leaders who provide strategic direction to achieve the partnership's mission.
7. Roles and structures – refer to the level of formalisation and working arrangements with the partnership.
8. Communication - the ways partners (including leadership) convey information both within the partnership and externally.
9. Partnership functioning – tasks and activities that maintain the partnership and keep it productive pertaining to the partnership's mission.

The resulting Partnership Checklist includes 49 items which each respondent is asked to score using a Likert scale where 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, and 4=Strongly agree. Once the questions have been answered for each domain, an overall single score for that domain is calculated based on the average. The compilation of these scores gives an indication of the overall success of the partnership.

Another study explored inter-organisational partnership self-assessment tools in the context of Australian Aboriginal-mainstream partnerships (Tsou et al 2015). In the detailed analysis of seven tools Tsou et al identified 190 process (80), relational (100) and outcome (10) elements. The process and relational elements were mapped against principles for Aboriginal-mainstream partnerships to identify consistencies and deficiencies. The key deficiency in the process elements related to timeframes and level of resourcing required to achieve determined outcomes. Key deficiencies in the

relational elements relate to respecting Aboriginal cultural knowledge, lived experience and honouring the ‘Aboriginal ways’.

The main findings from the Tsou study confirms good alignment between a range of self-assessment tools and Aboriginal-mainstream partnership principles. However, the tools do not fully take account of “the historical context, lived experience, cultural context and approaches of Australian Aboriginal people” (Tsou et al 2015: 19). For assessing the effectiveness of Aboriginal-mainstream partnerships the authors recommend a bespoke tool using the either the VicHealth Partnership Analysis Tool⁷ or the New York PSAT⁸ as starting points. The deficiencies in these tools, they suggest, can be satisfied through the incorporation of elements from other tools.

It should be pointed out that these tools have not been directly applied to this evaluation. Rather, the tools, along with the framework developed by Brinkerhoff discussed above, have provided the guiding structure for framing the key evaluation questions that have been put to partners to the AJA in interviews. The guiding interview questions are discussed in the following section.

4.1. Synthesising the questions for a partnership assessment

Following the advice of Tsou et al (2015) we have developed a bespoke framework for the evaluation of the partnership structures of the AJA. It draws heavily from Brinkerhoff (refer Figure 4-1) and incorporates questions included in the VicHealth and National Collaborating Centre for Methods and Tools partnership assessment tools and others. The framework used for the AJA partnership evaluation questions is structured around four key areas: context, structure, process and outcomes - and is described in greater detail below. Further detail of the types of questions that might be asked is included where the over-arching question may have a number of subsidiary components.

Interviews with partners to the Agreement were framed around the questioning provided below.

4.1.1. Context

The extent to which...	Possible sub-questions
... there was a need for the Aboriginal Justice Agreement	Would a partnership approach deliver benefits not achievable through other (traditional) means? Could a partnership realistically influence the wider context?
... there was a common and shared vision	What are you trying to solve/achieve with the partnership?
... the objectives for the partnership were realistic and obtainable	What kind of changes would you see? Where or within which organisations or institutions? What would success look like?
... there was (and continues to be) political & community support for the AJA	Are there champions for the partnership?
... there was (and is) organisational and political commitment towards achieving partnership objectives	What is the level of investment in the partnership of time, personnel, materials, facilities and other resources? Is it sufficient? Are there champions for the partnership? Do partners’ understand their organisational objectives and the interdependence of these? Are organisational commitments clear?

⁷ can be viewed at <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/the-partnerships-analysis-tool>

⁸ can be viewed at <http://www.nccmt.ca/resources/search/10>

The extent to which...	Possible sub-questions
... partners are committed to working together and sharing their ideas, resources, influence and power	
... partnership is seen as a legitimate leader in the community	<p>Are the partners involved the ones that need to be at the table?</p> <p>Do they have the necessary skills, capacity and time to contribute?</p> <p>Do they have sufficient decision making authority and the necessary influence to make a difference?</p> <p>Does the range of partners provide a comprehensive understanding and coverage of the issues being addressed?</p> <p>Has there been a history of partnership or collaboration in this area? With these partners?</p>

4.1.2. Structure

The extent to which...	Possible sub-questions
... the partnership structures and processes enable effective participatory decision making	<p>Were partners involved in developing the working arrangements for the partnership?</p> <p>Is the partnership recognised and accepted by stakeholders?</p> <p>Are the decision-making processes transparent, understood, agreed, and appropriate?</p> <p>Do they facilitate the work of the partnership?</p>
... formal roles and structures have been laid out support ownership and accountability	Are the lines of communication, roles and expectations of partners clearly defined?
... transparent mechanisms exist to manage financial and other resources each partner brings to the partnership	
... partners contribute and allocate a fair share of resources (financial and non-financial)	Is there sufficient investment in the partnership of time, personnel, materials or facilities?
... there is a clear commitment to partnership working from the most senior levels of each partner organisation	
... the partnership structure recognises and values each partner's contribution	Are all partners involved in planning and setting priorities for collaborative action?
... the partnership allows for strategic alliances and joint working arrangements across organisational boundaries	
...there are processes for review and evaluation of the partnership and the partners	

4.1.3. Process

4.1.3.1. Partnership practice

The extent to which...	Possible sub-questions
... partners trust and respect each other to commit and deliver on commitments	<p>Do the structures and processes in place reinforce trust and respect?</p> <p>Are partners able to freely express their interests and opinions?</p> <p>Are meetings scheduled such that they are convenient and accessible to partners?</p>
... partners bring the required knowledge, expertise and judgement to the partnership	<p>Is partners' capacity acknowledged, respected and strengthened?</p> <p>Do partners have knowledge and understanding of the objectives, operations and constraints of all partners?</p>

	Are there connections to community so that community needs and problems can be responded to?
... the partnership has well-defined leadership (single leader, co-leader, team of leaders, leading organisation).	Does the leadership have the capacity to bridge differences and facilitate interaction between partners? Does the leadership have the capacity/commitment to share power, plan and oversee work? Does the leadership have the capacity to create space for dialogue and challenge assumptions? Does the leadership have the capacity to promote openness, trust, autonomy, and confer respect?
... there is an ethos of collaboration, communication and learning	Are partners provided good opportunity for face-to-face communication? What are the formal structures for communication? What opportunities exist for informal contact between partners?
... there is equality in decision making, resource exchange, partner representation and participation	Are sufficient resources available to partners to enable their full engagement in the partnership? Are commitments for partner organisations a diversion from priorities or do they directly contribute to meeting priorities? Are there barriers to contributing to decision-making (associated costs, timing of meetings, agenda setting, chairing styles, document preparation, etc.)?
... each partner takes responsibility and is accountable to others for its actions	Do partners have access to the information needed to judge performance?
... strategies are planned to ensure that alternative views are able to be expressed	What is the level of satisfaction that all views are considered?
... partners are consistently represented within the partnership	Is there a level of churn in the representation of senior management at partnership forums?
...the partnership accommodates different cultures	Is there evidence of an openness to working differently with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples? Is the partnership planned to be culturally appropriate to the public/community/ setting.

4.1.4. Outcomes

4.1.4.1. Partnership performance

The extent to which...	
... partners address issues effectively, efficiently and in ways that are supportive of ongoing partnership effort	Are there planned, formal structures for sharing information and resolving conflicts?
... partners are aware of what makes for good practice and performance and work to creating and strengthening these	
... plans exist to deal with changing structures, leadership issues and communication problems	
... there are strategies for enhancing the skills of the partners and the partnership	
... positive partner relationships have formed and are being maintained	
... partnership effectiveness is reviewed and practices adapted as required	How is partnership monitoring information shared with partners? What learnings have been shared and how have they been acted on?
... the partnership influences the organizational decisions of partners independent of the partnership	

4.1.4.2. Partnership Outcomes

The extent to which...	
... agreed objectives are being met	How satisfied are partners with each other's performance?
... the partnership is perceived as being successful	Are partners satisfied with the partnership? What are the critical success factors? Are the benefits of the partnership evenly distributed across partners? Does each partner see a benefit in continuing their association with the partnership? Do benefits outweigh costs?
... there is widespread ownership of the partnership across and within all partners	
... individual partners meet their own objectives	Are partners delivering on their commitments?
... the Aboriginal Justice Agreement is 'known' and respected as a vehicle for change	Are community members more trusting of, or have greater confidence in, the organisational partners as a result of that organisation's participation in the partnership?
... the partnership provides for all relevant actors to have a voice	Is each partner comfortable in working with other partners? Are clear systems in place to address grievances between partners?
... are achievements of the partnership disseminated publicly	Is there sufficient recognition for the contributions of partners?
... the partnership adds value	What value is added through the partnership? Does the partnership add value rather than duplicate services?
... the partnership is sustainable	Is the commitment to partnership working sufficiently robust to withstand threats to its working? Is the partnership dependent for its success upon individuals? are partnership practices subject to continuous improvement?

-

5. Approach

5.1. Evaluation framework

The evaluation was underpinned by the adapted Brinkerhoff framework described in Section 4 and a guiding set of key evaluation questions (KEQs). Together, these guided the focus of consultation with stakeholders.

The Terms of Reference describe the key objectives for the evaluation are to:

- Investigate whether the partnership model and governance structures of the AJA increase collaboration and contribute to improved justice outcomes.
- Explore whether self-determination in the justice system has been enabled through the partnership model and governance structures; and whether self-determination can be further enhanced.
- Determine whether the current partnership and governance models are still the most appropriate and efficient considering the changes in the landscape since the commencement of the AJA.

A set of key evaluation questions were also described in the Terms of Reference and these have formed the basis for the specific line of questioning used in interviews and have guided the document reviews, as described in Section 4. For the purposes of transparency we include the questions as proposed in the Terms of Reference.

1. What are the intended purpose and principles of the Aboriginal Justice Forum, Koori Caucus, RAJAC and LAJAC; and Koori Reference Group structures? Are these being met/upheld?
2. To what extent do the partnership model and governance structures improve accountability and community participation in justice and other relevant policies and initiatives?
3. To what extent do the RAJAC and LAJAC structures influence inclusion, engagement and decision-making at local and regional levels?
4. To what extent do Koori Reference Groups drive action and the progression of justice and other relevant policies and initiatives?
5. How efficient and how effective are the governance structures of AJA? What are their key strengths and weaknesses? Do they facilitate a 'joined up' government approach?
6. How do stakeholders define 'success' or 'health' of the partnership model and governance structures, and in light of that - how 'healthy' is the Koori community-government partnership?
7. What improvements could be made to the AJA governance structures based on evidence of effective practice, current requirements, and alignment with other governance mechanisms?
8. Is it possible to assess the costs and benefits of the Aboriginal Justice Forum?

5.1.1. Assessing the costs and benefits

One of the key evaluation questions proposed by the KJU when it released its tender documents for the evaluation asks if it is possible to assess the costs and benefits of the Aboriginal Justice Forum. This is not an easy question to answer for the AJF, just as it isn't an easy question to answer for any

complex social program aimed at addressing disadvantage. Typically, it is much easier to calculate the financial and monetary cost of implementing a program or, in this case, convening a forum although it should be said that there are also many costs that are difficult to quantify. Monetising the benefits of a partnership, particularly one like the AJF that is working across multiple domains and with outputs that difficult to articulate, let alone measure presents an even greater challenge.

At the heart of the assessment conundrum is the question - are we measuring the value of the partnership forum or its impact? The impact of the partnership implies a causal link between the activities of the Forum and the outcomes achieved by programs and other efforts by a multitude of actors. Value, in contrast to impact, is the cumulative benefit, where results are achieved across the justice system and the network of partners. While impact is focussed on the question of 'what' happened and to 'whom', value is focussed on the questions of 'why' and 'how' it happened. In these key respects, where impact is fixed at points in time, value is dynamic and driven by focussing in on the systems and networks. Where impact seeks to reduce and measure complexity, value seeks to understand and harness complexity towards designing effective policy, programmes and projects.

The value of the AJF occurs within the membership - consisting of positive changes in the members and/or the partnership itself and external to the AJF - consisting of improved conditions for the individuals and/or communities served by the partnership.

Individual AJF members gain value through their exposure to diverse expertise and knowledge, access to different cultural perspectives and approaches, widening of the perspective of analysis and interpretation, and facilitated access to local knowledge, contacts and perspectives that might otherwise be unavailable. The partnership itself benefits from all of these as well but also from the co-operative development of solutions to address justice challenges and the building of a mutual understanding and resolution of differences. Coming together at the AJF enables the pooling of intellectual resources to create larger and more extensive networks of knowledge and the state-wide collaboration increases the reach and impact of localised solutions and interventions.

If we were to explore the usefulness of a cost benefit analysis (CBA) of the AJF we would need to consider each of the multiple beneficiaries of the collaboration and the variations in benefit accrued to each. Direct involvement in the Forum delivers value to the member in the immediate term and would be expected to have a longer-term value to the organisation the AJF member is affiliated with through organisational capacity-building, cultural awareness and practice change. That organisational benefit will likely not be the same for an ACCO as it is for government agency in terms of effect and scope and will be difficult to quantify in either case.

Notwithstanding the challenges in identifying all of the benefits of the AJF, there is the issue of how they are measured. In practice, the included costs and benefits in a CBA tend to be limited to those that are easily measurable. Add to that the long-time frame required for the partnership to establish, for trusting relationships to form and for on-ground actions to bring meaningful change in such disadvantaged communities and we are compounding the challenges. As well as these general critiques of economic evaluations, critiques specific to evaluations of large-scale policies and interventions have drawn attention to three main areas: (1) determining the total costs of activity, (2) determining the 'wider' effects attributable to the activity and (3) putting a monetary value on the effects of the activity (Perkins et al 2015).

Taking Perkins first point - determining the total costs of the activity - we can identify five costs that would need to be factored into any CBA but that are exceptionally difficult to quantify.

1. Relational Costs – the success of the AJF rests on the relationships formed between the Forum members. In particular, its success rests upon the level of trust within the relationships which can only be built up over a long time period. Relational costs are those associated with the coordination of effort, cost of time spent in meetings and travelling to these meetings, communication outside of the Forum, building relationships, engaging in joint projects, etc.

Maintaining the relationship may require extra effort on the behalf of some of the members who, as we have heard through the evaluation interviews, have at times ‘gone the extra mile’ putting in time and effort beyond formal meetings. Capturing this extra effort, particularly in an evaluation conducted long after the event occurred is another of the challenges that a CBA would encounter.

Finally, in the case of the AJF there are numerous staff and other assistants who contribute to the functioning of the AJF but who are not directly involved in its running. Their effort would need to be quantified for inclusion in the analysis.

2. Personal Costs – The evaluation has uncovered that many partners, both government employees and community representatives, including those working in ACCOs and other Aboriginal organisations often draw on their own resources, use their own personal time and networks to aid their contributions to the AJF. We referred above to those members who go the extra mile to maintain the relationships of the Forum. There are other personal costs that are intangible, and these are costs associated with stress and burnout and the health and wellbeing effects this creates. There are studies that calculate the cost of burnout on a workplace but whether these methodologies can be applied to a partnership forum such as the AJF is questionable.
3. Systems Change Costs – the cost of systems and resources set up to support collaboration can be considerable as they require the development of new procedures and the allocation of additional resources. The KJU has been established with the prime function of supporting the implementation of the AJA including supporting the functioning of the AJF. However, inclusion of the cost of the KJU in an economic analysis fails to acknowledge that other partners may have also implemented system change in support of their participation. Additionally, it is possible that their system change may be supporting other collaborative forums and arrangements beyond the AJF. If we are to include the total cost of the AJF, then these would need to be taken into account.
4. Lost Opportunity Costs – economic analysts are always concerned with opportunities that are foregone as a result of directing resources to collaboration. The opportunity cost is the estimated benefit from the project not undertaken. We do not know whether partners have forgone other opportunities but if they have then this would need to be factored in to the analysis.
5. Future costs - as well as the upfront and ongoing operational costs, there are future costs arising from sustained actions, connections and evaluations. Estimates of the magnitude of staff and support costs are difficult to obtain because they are often embedded in the

expenses associated with other tasks⁹. <http://www.powertopersuade.org.au/blog/the-cost-of-collaboration-more-than-budgeted-for/13/4/2017>

Taking the above into account, we return to answering the question first raised in the Request for Quote: Is it possible to assess the costs and benefits of the Aboriginal Justice Forum? Our response to that is yes but we have doubts that any analysis would fully capture the total costs and benefits of the Forum. If it is not doing that, then what is the value in undertaking the economic analysis?

We believe that the information collected through the evaluation and outlined in the discussion below provides a good, although not economic, assessment of the costs and the benefits that the AJF is providing. We strongly believe that this evaluation is a sufficient, robust and valid informer of policy and that a cost benefit analysis would confound understanding because of the detail it would miss or fail to adequately monetise.

5.1.2. Evaluation audience

The evaluation has been conducted with a view to inform the following key audiences:

- Koori Justice Unit, Department of Justice and Regulation
- Koori Caucus
- Aboriginal Justice Forum
- Department of Justice and Regulation
- Signatories to the AJA3
- Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees
- Local Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees.

5.2. Data collection

Data collection has been primarily driven by three tasks – document / literature review, qualitative data gathering through interviews and feedback received through a presentation to the AJF. Feedback has also been received from an Evaluation Steering Committee convened for the express purpose of providing oversight to evaluations conducted or commissioned by the KJU. Each of these tasks is described below. All data collection has been guided by the Evaluation Project Plan which was submitted to the Evaluation Steering Committee. A table showing the key evaluation questions and supplementary questions is provided in **Appendix A**.

5.2.1. Document audit and literature review

A document audit and review of the relevant literature were conducted to provide contextual information and compare key elements of the governance structures of the AJA with any similar government-community partnership arrangements (where possible). The literature review encompassed both Australian and international research. The literature review has been instrumental in driving the evaluation approach and is described in Section 4.

⁹ The above discussion has been informed by the discussion blog 'Power to Persuade' and the blog entitled The Cost of Collaboration: More than budgeted for?, 13 April 2017, retrieved from <http://www.powertopersuade.org.au/blog/the-cost-of-collaboration-more-than-budgeted-for/13/4/2017>

5.2.2. Interviews with strategic and operational stakeholders

A range of strategic and operational stakeholders were identified in collaboration with the KJU, the commissioners of this evaluation. Interviews were conducted with more than 100 individual stakeholders either separately or as part of a group discussion.

All stakeholder consultation was guided by an interview guide with specific questions tailored to interviewee role in the partnership. That is, at the LAJAC, RAJAC, or AJF level of the structure.

Information has been gathered from the following government agencies and business units:

- Department of Justice and Regulation including Koori Justice Unit
- Corrections Victoria
- Infringement Management & Enforcement Services
- Victoria Police
- Court Services Victoria
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Department of Education and Training
- Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Aboriginal Victoria
- Family Safety Victoria

Non-government organisations that have contributed to the evaluation include:

- Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative
- Dandenong and District Aboriginal Cooperative Ltd
- Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative
- Gunditjmara Aboriginal Co-operative Ltd
- Njernda Aboriginal Corporation
- Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People
- Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency
- Victorian Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee
- Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
- Eastern Community Legal Centre
- Aboriginal Housing Victoria

A full list of interviewees is provided in **Appendix B**.

5.2.3. Discussion Paper

A discussion paper was prepared using the information gathered through the literature and document review, and from the key informant interviews.

The paper described the partnership model of the AJA and sought the views of interested stakeholders. To prompt reflection, a number of questions, were posed throughout the paper.

The Discussion Paper was made available to all members of the AJF and to the RAJACs and their network in October 2017. The submission period closed 1 December 2017. Unfortunately only seven responses to the Discussion Paper were received. We consider that the timing for making the Paper

available was less than ideal and clashed with a particularly busy time for stakeholders. The timing coincided with the final AJF of the year and, being late in the year, many organisations had their attention on planning for the new year ahead.

5.2.4. Findings presentation

Findings from the evaluation were presented to the Koori Caucus when they met prior to AJF 49 on 11 December 2017. The findings were then presented to the full membership of the AJF the following day where Forum members formed three groups to discuss the findings in more depth and to provide suggestions where they considered improvements could be made.

5.3. Data analysis

The evaluation team undertook a preliminary analysis of the findings at a two-day workshop in October 2017. As part of this analysis, a process of inductive coding was used to identify themes that emerged from the data. Following the presentation to the AJF in December we incorporated additional data into the complete analysis.

6. Findings

6.1. Context

In this section we discuss the findings with respect of questions asking the extent to which:

- there was a need for the Aboriginal Justice Agreement
- there was a common and shared vision
- the objectives for the partnership were realistic and obtainable
- there was (and continues to be) political & community support for the AJA
- there was (and is) organisational and political commitment towards achieving partnership objectives
- partners are committed to working together and sharing their ideas, resources, influence and power
- the partnership is seen as a legitimate leader in the community.

6.1.1. Need for the Agreement

The need for the Agreement was first articulated in the findings and 339 recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) which reported in five volumes in 1991. Responsibility for implementing the Commission's findings rested with State governments and their service delivery agencies. The first recommendation of the Royal Commission made clear that governments should do this through a process agreed in partnership and after consultation with Aboriginal organisations. In 1997, a national Ministerial Summit examined the status of the implementation of the recommendations. A significant outcome from the Summit was a national agreement to develop jurisdictional based agreements in partnership with Aboriginal communities to move States and Territories forward in implementing the Commission's Recommendations. Following the Summit, the Victorian Government, in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) and Victorian Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee (VAJAC), directed efforts towards the development of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement (Department of Justice and Regulation 2005).

There was no doubt, at that time, that a new approach to addressing, not only Aboriginal deaths in custody, but the wider systemic, structural discrimination that Aboriginal people face in Australian society was needed. The partnership approach offered by the AJA was not only about government working in partnership with community, it was also very much about government agencies working together and breaking from entrenched siloed responses that isolated dynamic, complex issues into singular and static portfolio level problems. The tendency of government agencies had been to focus on highly visible and tangible pieces of what is a complex problem rather than adopting a more holistic approach. The signing of the AJA in 2000 was a first step, recognising "that it is not possible to tackle the over-representation of Aboriginals in the criminal justice system without also tackling the disproportionately high levels of Indigenous disadvantage"¹⁰.

The need for the AJA has not diminished over the period of the three phases. The over-representation of Aboriginal people in the justice system remains disproportionately high. Despite representing less than 1 per cent of the Victorian population, Aboriginal people made up 9.3 per cent of the total adult prison population in June 2017¹¹. The overall imprisonment rate for the September 2017 quarter in

¹⁰ Attorney-General Rob Hulls MP in the Foreword to the Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 1 (2000)

¹¹ Corrections Victoria Data Report to the Aboriginal Justice Forum, August 2017

Victoria was 145.5 per 100,000 adult population (the lowest of all states and territories). Aboriginal imprisonment rates for the same period were 1,929.3 per 100,000 equivalent population, over 13 times the rate for the total population. The imprisonment rate for Aboriginal males (3472.5/100,000) is 12½ times higher than that for the total population of Victorian males. The rate for Aboriginal females (384.1/100,000) is even higher at 19.3 times the rate for all females¹².

Aboriginal young people are also over-represented in the criminal justice system. As at June 2017 there were 109 Aboriginal young people in a youth justice detention centre, 15 per cent of the total detention centre population. Data for 2015-16 year prepared by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare noted the rate of Victorian young people aged 10–17 under supervision on an average day in 2015–16 was 14 per 10,000. The comparable rate for Aboriginal young people was 152 per 10,000. Over the three year period from 2012/13 this rate had remained relatively constant, although had shown an increase in the previous 12 months (see Figure 6-1).

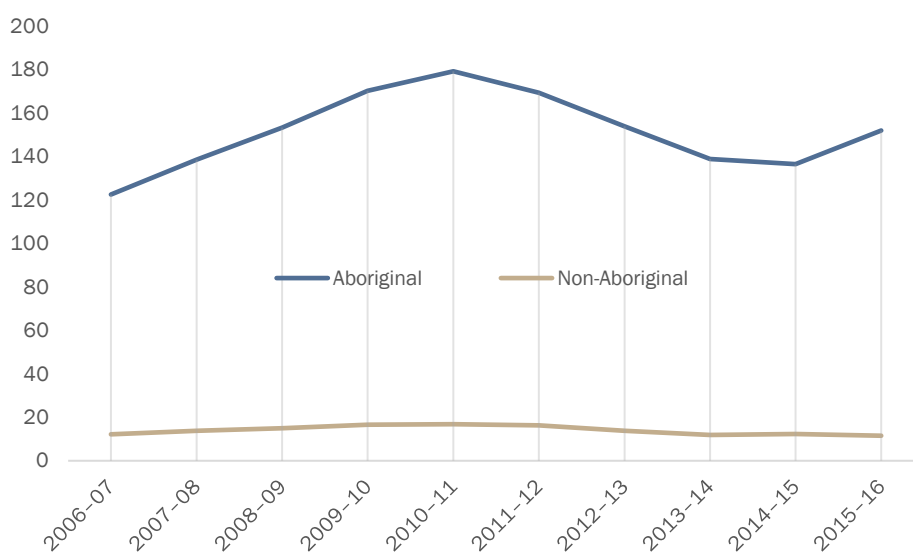


Figure 6-1: Rate of young people aged 10–17 under supervision on an average day by Indigenous status, Victoria, 2006–07 to 2015–16 (Source: AIHW Bulletin no. 139. Cat. AUS 211)

The over-representation is an outcome of a range of factors contributing to high levels of disadvantage in Aboriginal communities in Victoria which was recognised by the framers of the original AJA. To a large extent those factors remain and their relevance is reflected in the focus of the AJA, through three phases, on strategic objectives that fall beyond the scope of the criminal justice sector.

As we near the end of Phase 3 of the Agreement interviewees to the evaluation have consistently stated that the conditions that led to the signing of the first AJA remain as valid today as they were in 2000. This is not to say that these interviewees have not seen progress over the past 17 years. Rather, the issues were of such a magnitude that real change would take some time to show impact. While there is consensus that the AJA remains necessary there is also a recognition that the institutional landscape has changed considerably since AJA1. Specifically, other government agencies have developed portfolio-specific strategies to address Aboriginal disadvantage. The consequence of this is an extended demand on Aboriginal people to participate in a broader range of forums or other partnerships than was the case in the past and the establishment of alternative forums to discuss

¹² ABS Catalogue 4512.0 *Corrective Services, Australia*, September Quarter 2017

matters that were often raised at the AJF or RAJACs. One ex-Government stakeholder reflected on the environment at the time the AJA was created and how that environment has now changed.

... my view around the partnership was that it was great for Justice, it did enable a community perspective into the delivery of a range of Justice programs and that was fundamental because there were significant issues about how people were being treated by the police and by the prisons and in the court system as well. In government, it was difficult because of where the boundaries were around the Aboriginal Justice Agreement. Some of those things that the Agreement was attempting to do weren't strictly relating to Justice Services but to the kind of drivers for people entering into the criminal justice system. That was always challenging. When the Justice Agreement was set up there wasn't much else going on around those drivers. All across government. They [Department of Justice and Regulation] took that space, but as other agencies lifted their game a bit over time they've retreated from that a bit even though there still needs to be a focus on what's happening in community.

AJA4 will need to respond to the shifting landscape to retain its relevance to community and to other agencies that will no longer have a reliance on the access to community the AJA structures have previously afforded them. This is discussed further below.

6.1.2. A common and shared vision

Each of the interviewees understood and supported the overarching vision for the AJA, that of reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system. Not only that, but interviewees also supported the vision for the partnership arrangements that puts effect to the Agreement itself. There was no suggestion of any alternative arrangement that would provide a more effective mechanism. Specifically, it was recognised that government working alone, even if it were more 'joined up' could not achieve the changes necessary to achieve the aims of the Agreement.

Six strategic objectives are defined in the Agreement that, if achieved, should contribute to the realisation of the vision for the AJA.

1. Crime prevention and early intervention

- Reduce risk factors associated with youth offending and increase protective factors.
- Minimise the circumstances in which Koories are at risk of negative contact with police.
- Increase opportunities for the ongoing involvement of Elders in AJA initiatives.

2. Diversion and strengthen alternatives to imprisonment

- Increase the rate at which:
 - o Koori youth are diverted from the youth justice system.
 - o Koories are diverted from further contact with Victoria Police.
 - o The court system diverts Koories from further contact with the criminal justice system.
 - o Koories are diverted from further contact with the correctional system.
 - o Infringement Management and Enforcement Services diverts Koories from further contact with the criminal justice system.

3. Reduce reoffending

- Ensure conditions support the rehabilitation of Koori offenders.

- Address cultural strength, education, training and employment and mental health and social and emotional wellbeing, as protective factors that will help reduce re-offending for Koori prisoners and offenders.
 - Address individual offence-specific characteristics that put Koori prisoners and offenders at high risk of re-offending.
 - Ensure that Koories in custody are able to reintegrate effectively into their communities upon release.
4. Reduce conflict, violence and victimisation
- Develop the knowledge base on violence in Koori communities.
 - Prevent violence and increase the safety of Koori families and communities.
 - Address alcohol and drug abuse as a driver of violence.
 - Promote healing models for Koories that address underlying causes of violence and victimisation.
 - Reduce the impact of crime on victims.
5. Responsive and inclusive services
- Integrate AJA3 implementation into agency planning processes and operations.
 - Increase the number of Koories working in the justice system.
 - Ensure that justice agencies are culturally competent, responsive and inclusive.
 - Ensure that Koories have access to Koori-specific services.
 - Increase capacity to ensure high quality data, research and evaluation on Koori contact with the criminal justice system.
 - Increase the accountability of agencies that deliver justice services to Koories
6. Strengthen community justice responses and increase community safety
- Support the provision of local, place-based approaches and solutions to crime and violence prevention, diversion, rehabilitation and re-integration.
 - Prioritise community safety planning as a place-based crime prevention approach.
 - Develop a place-based strategy covering the North and West Metropolitan regions

As is the case with the Vision, these strategic objectives and the strategies underpinning them are accepted as the 'right' focus for the Agreement. There were, however, varied opinions as to how these objectives are operationalised in a way that maintains a focus on improved criminal justice outcomes and minimises duplication with other agencies strategies and plans.

With establishment of many new Government-Aboriginal community partnerships by other Departments and non-government bodies there was some concern of potential duplication and overlap of effort and resources at both the state and regional levels. The following comment from an interviewee in the Southern Metropolitan region highlights this concern:

I think with all those different groups there is duplication pretty much most of the time. If it's RAJAC or IFVRAG or it's the LAN. It can kind of come back to family violence. Obviously, family violence is a justice issue, yet it sits with the Department of Health and Human Services as well as the LAN, which covers the whole range of community interests. So, we can't say "oh, you can't run a family violence session or you can't do this or you can't do that because it doesn't sit within your remit". At the end of the day, regardless of what departments are doing, if you're in the Aboriginal space you get mixed into all of the issues. It's not just saying that's just for justice to deal with or that's for health and human services to deal with. There's cross-over. (Aboriginal Government Representative)

This interviewee (and others who offered similar insights) makes an important point that will need to be addressed as the AJA moves into Phase 4. There is overlap that cannot be avoided given the inter-relatedness of the issues being addressed. The question is, how do the partnership structures of the AJA minimise the duplication of effort and maximise beneficial outcomes. More importantly, what can be put in place to minimise the demand on community members who will likely be invited to participate in many of the alternative forums?

6.1.3. Objectives for the partnership were realistic and obtainable

We look at this question in two parts. The first focuses on the objectives for the partnership itself. The second focuses on the objectives for the Agreement as they relate to the partnership.

The objectives for the partnership are for the “Victorian Government and Koori Community working together to improve justice outcomes for the Koori community” (p. 61, AJA3). The framework and action plan with strategies and initiatives were planned to be implemented by:

- lead business units or agencies, through Koori Action Plans developed in partnership with Koori Reference Groups
- Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees, through Regional Justice Action Plans.

These two plans were to be embedded in the core business plans for agencies that are signatories to the AJA3, forming the basis for coordination of action across agencies and portfolios at state-wide and regional levels.

The overarching objectives for the partnership are realistic and have shown to be achievable given their resilience over the course of the past 17 years. Eleven business units within the government signatories had developed Koori Action Plans during the second phase of the Agreement and were finalised at commencement of Phase 3. The intent with the development of Koori Action Plans was to guide implementation of specific business unit-based initiatives arising from the Agreement. The Plans were expected to be the primary mechanism for agencies to plan and report on their implementation of AJA3 activities. Reporting and updating on Action Plans was expected to be a function of the KRGs and occur at the AJF.

The evaluation team has not reviewed these plans and we have heard mixed messages as to their usefulness as guiding documents. A process for updating Plans was commenced in 2016, however, it is not clear how many of the 11 plans have been updated. Reporting against the Plans typically occurs at the individual KRG and there had previously been a process of reporting at the AJF although, as we heard, reporting individually against around 1,000 action lines is neither possible nor overly useful (KJU Representative). It is understood that the most recent report on Koori Action Plans to the AJF occurred in November 2016 where a revised format was offered. The KJU prepared a report showing the key achievements and future challenges of the Koori Action Plans. The KJU has also trialled other formats such as ‘traffic light’ reports in an attempt to maintain its transparent approach and to keep the AJF aware of progress.

That progress against the Action Plans is no longer reported to the AJF suggests that the utility of the Plans to encourage action is diminished; or may have been overwhelmed by other strategic plans and the sheer volume of material considered at a typical AJF. It is not immediately apparent that the Koori Action Plans offer benefit to the implementation of actions emerging from the AJF, or indeed, from the KRGs themselves. While they do document a commitment to working towards AJA objectives, this commitment is captured in many other forms including ongoing attendance by government business units at RAJACs and the AJF, and in already existing corporate strategies, policies and business plans.

Regional Justice Action Plans are developed by the RAJACs and perform a similar function to the Koori Action Plans in that they document the actions that agencies and organisations in the regions will take to implement the AJA. In most RAJAC meetings, progress against the Plans is reviewed. This offers a useful accountability mechanism and agencies/organisations that have not implemented actions can be questioned by other RAJAC members as to the reasons for the lack of progress. Like the Koori Action Plans noted above, the Regional Justice Action Plans appear to have lost their ability to encourage new actions or innovation in addressing issues contributing to over-representation. Like the Koori Justice Plans they are typically used in a 'tick the box' type of fashion prompting little discussion about how things are progressing as a result of the actions and where things might be done differently.

During consultations we heard that Regional Justice Action Plans would be more effective if they covered a shorter time period, for example, 12 months rather than the current five years. This would prompt action to be achieved more rapidly and would allow the plans to be revisited on an annual basis and therefore be more responsive to rapidly changing environment. There are some constraining factors that make this difficult, not least being a lack of resources at RAJACs. The lack of resourcing of RAJACs is even more limiting when you consider that Regional Justice Action Plans are developed following an intensive period of community consultation. The ability to conduct such consultation on an annual basis is restricted and RAJACs may have to consider conducting one round of consultation that includes prioritising annual action areas for multiple ensuing 12-month Plans. This would not be ideal given the dynamic nature of the issues that arise and contribute to Aboriginal over-representation in the criminal justice system. An alternative approach may be to make use of online consultation options, for example, through the targeted use of social media. This could allow ongoing community input to RAJAC discussions and decision-making at less cost – financially and in human resource terms.

Recommendation 1 - Regional Justice Action Plans need to be responsive to the dynamic change that occurs in society and that generate new issues of concern to the RAJAC and its members. We recommend the introduction of annual Regional Justice Action Plans which focus on two to three priority issues. It would be the role of the RAJAC to determine annual priorities but their determinations could be informed through allowing for community input via online means (if not directly via attendance at the RAJAC meetings). We understand the KJU is considering expanding its online presence. This is an ideal time to also consider how that presence can incorporate the ability for community input.

As noted above, monitoring of the Regional Justice Action Plans typically occurs at the RAJAC. This monitoring is not typically an assessment of the effects of an action(s) in the Plan, rather, it is more typically an acknowledgement that an action has been completed. In many cases RAJACs are only able to provide anecdotal evidence of the outcomes achieved from actions contained within their Regional Justice Action Plans.

For actions that are expected to have wide-reaching or significant impacts (as determined by the RAJAC) it would be worthwhile to undertake a more thorough review of what has been achieved through the action and whether it has made an impact on any of the objectives of the AJA. Such a review would be beyond the capacity and capability of the RAJAC and would be better undertaken by experienced evaluators. For this reason, we suggest that the KJU's evaluation team be tasked with responsibility for such a review. It will be the responsibility of the KJU to determine the size and scope of any review undertaken.

Recommendation 2 - In developing their Regional Justice Action Plans the RAJAC should identify one action or initiative that is expected to have a significant impact and provide the details of the action, including lead agency/organisation to the KJU Evaluation Team to enable them to develop a methodology for a review. The purpose of the review is to determine the impact of the action against the objectives of the AJA. As it is possible that up to nine reviews will be required annually, it is likely that additional resources will need to be made available to the Evaluation Team to design and implement these studies.

We have already noted that, to some extent, the Koori Action Plans appear to be less of a priority for government business units, likely because of other corporate Aboriginal strategies and plans that are already in place. The Koori Action Plans do not appear to be a priority mechanism in driving action suggesting their relevance has faded. One of the functions of the Koori Action Plans is as an accountability mechanism in monitoring business unit action on identified issues. Provided this function is occurring through some other mechanism we see no reason for maintaining the Koori Action Plans.

Recommendation 3: The Koori Action Plans are not providing any benefit to the AJA that is not already provided through other mechanisms. We recommend that they be reconsidered. There is potential for the KRG Terms of Reference to be expanded to include any matters previously included in the Koori Action Plan that are not addressed either in the AJA, Regional Justice Action Plans or other procedural documentation.

The question of whether the objectives for the partnership are realistic and obtainable also refers to the objectives set for the AJA for reducing over-representation. Despite making little progress towards the overarching aim, interviewees were generally positive about the achievements that have resulted from the efforts of the partners to the Agreement. The AJA has been instrumental in effecting real change within Departments in terms of embedding cultural awareness and the adoption of an Aboriginal lens for the development of new strategies, policies and initiatives. The partnership structures of the Agreement have also championed the continuance of existing actions (e.g. the Koori Courts established under AJA1 and AJA2) and the implementation of new initiatives (e.g. Women's Diversion program) that are making a real difference to people's experiences of contact with the criminal justice system.

There was consensus that over-representation can be reduced but it was generally held that it will take more than the AJA to enable this change to take effect, although the AJA has been a driver for many of the structural and systemic changes needed. There are external factors that the partners to the Agreement have little control over that contribute to actions and decisions in the criminal justice sector disproportionately impacting Aboriginal people. However, through the partnerships that have formed under the AJA there is greater opportunity to inform and potentially influence decision-making of others outside of the partnership.

6.1.4. Community, organisational and political commitment towards the partnership

The AJA is an agreement of the government and it has had bi-partisan support since its inception. That the Agreement aligns with other government commitments to addressing Aboriginal disadvantage only further strengthens its legitimacy. Having an Agreement in place that is signed by parliamentarians provides an authorising environment to frame agency decision-making and resourcing. Agencies are able to frame business cases and resourcing requests with reference to the Agreement in the knowledge that support is already expressed. In saying that, we acknowledge that this has not always resulted in success where funding submissions have occurred, in part because other factors will also contribute to decisions around funding. However, the Agreement has removed one barrier to success in that it provides the rationale for funding requests.

The AJA is very much led by the DJR with support from other partner agencies. DJR established the Koori Justice Unit to support the AJA. One of the roles of the Unit is to build budget submissions for the funding necessary to implement the Agreement.

Since the commencement of the AJA in 2000 funding has been provided. Funding commenced with an initial \$1.6m Treasurer Advance which was furnished by an additional \$1.1m per annum in 2001/02, further expanded by \$3.4m per annum in 2004/05. A significant increase occurred in 2006/07 and saw a total of \$13.4m per annum allocated to Phase 2 of the Agreement. The initiatives identified in the action plan associated with AJA2 were funded largely through the \$7.3 million increase in the 2006/07 budget. These initiatives, including the creation of adult and children's Koori Courts and the Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place, continued to operate in AJA3 with the \$13.4 million funding allocation in subsequent years.

Although new funding was not made available through the Budget processes for the third phase of the Agreement, the funding that had been provided for AJA1 and AJA2 continued, as indicated in Figure 6-2. As the new initiatives identified in AJA3 were unfunded, the KJU and other business units were required to either attract funding from other sources or to fund initiatives from existing budget allocations. This has included:

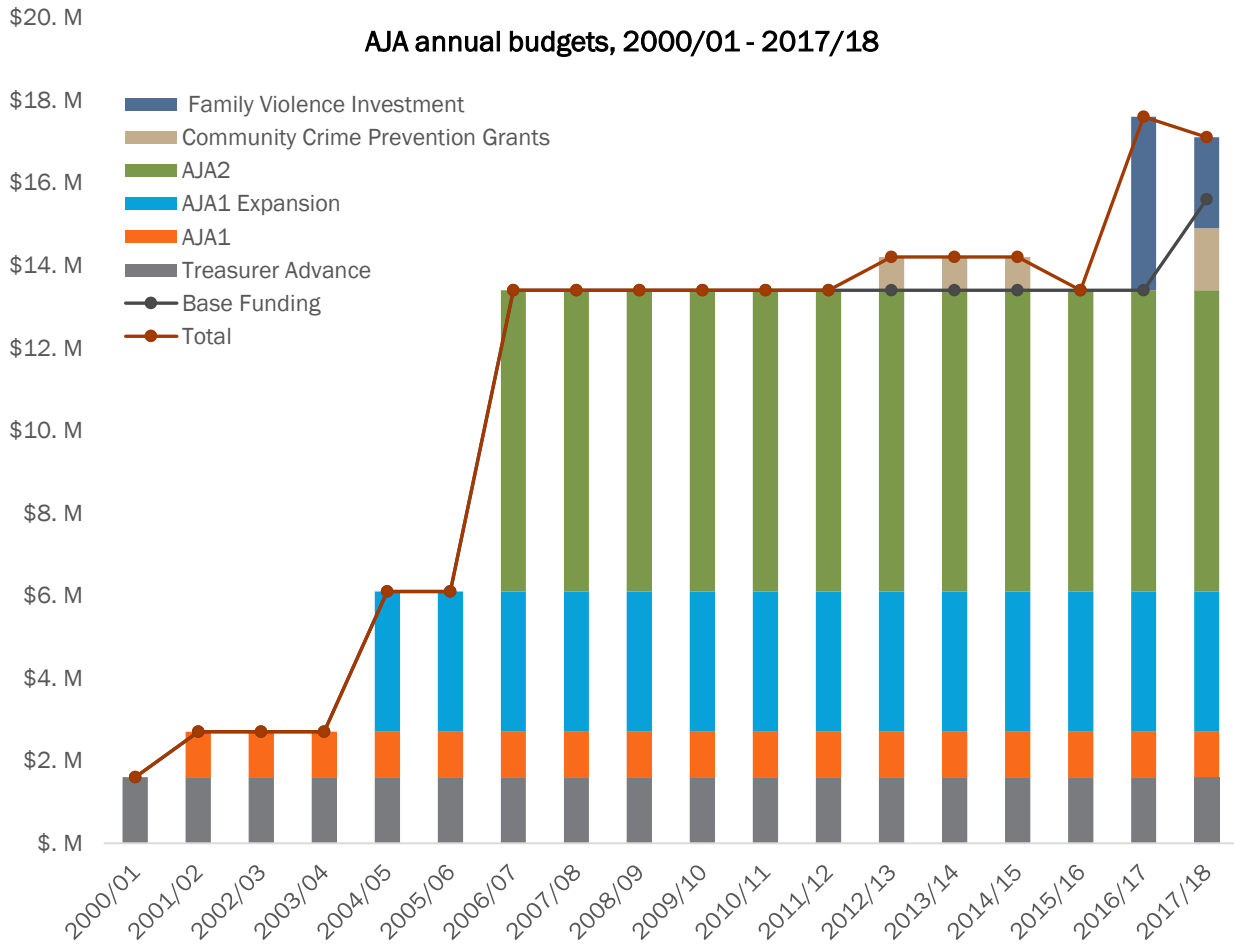
- Grants funding via the Community Crime Prevention Unit, comprising:
 - \$2.4 million for the Koori Community Safety Grants program in 2012/13
 - \$1.5 million for the Koori Youth Crime Prevention Grants in 2017/18
- Funds via the 2016/17 Family Violence Investment Package, comprising of:
 - \$1.55m for the Koori Women's Diversion Program
 - \$2.6m to recruit an Aboriginal Dispute Resolution Team in the Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria
- In the 2017/18 state budget, further funding was received for multiple family violence initiatives:
 - \$3.66m over four years and \$1.21m ongoing was allocated to the continuation of the Koori Women's Diversion Program and its expansion to a fourth site.
 - \$3.19m over four years and \$1.062m ongoing to continue the Aboriginal Dispute Resolution Program.
 - \$11.0 million for culturally appropriate family violence legal services for Aboriginal communities.
 - Djirra (the Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Legal Service) received \$4.29m (and \$1.43m ongoing) to offer its *Sisters Day Out*, *Dilly Bag* and *Young Luv* program. They also received funding to pilot the Koori Women's Place in Abbotsford.

- Dardi Munwurro received \$3m over four years and \$750,000 ongoing to commence the Ngarra Jarranounith intensive residential program for Aboriginal male perpetrators.

Since 2013-14, DJR, Courts, Corrections Victoria, and Victoria Police have contributed discretionary funding to increase the scale or scope of AJA initiatives. This funding support is not included in Figure 6.2.

The absence of a *new* budget, commitment for AJA3 has been viewed by agencies and, more importantly, community as a weakening of the commitment by government to the Agreement especially in comparison to that offered in the AJA2. However, the attraction of additional monies is noteworthy as one of the strategies for AJA3 in the absence of additional investment was to leverage other funded activities from agencies with commitment to, and a belief in the AJA partnership structures and processes to achieve the desired results¹³.

¹³ This partnership evaluation has not specifically investigated the effect of the steady funding allocation although it has been raised in interviews.



	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
	Millions \$																	
Treasurer Advance	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6
AJA1	.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1
AJA1 Expansion	.	.	.	.	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4
AJA2	.	.	.	.	.	.	7.3	7.3	7.3	7.3	7.3	7.3	7.3	7.3	7.3	7.3	7.3	7.3
CCP Grants	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	0.8	0.8	0.8	.	.	1.5
Family Violence	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	4.2	2.2
Base Funding	1.6	2.7	2.7	2.7	6.1	6.1	13.4	13.4	13.4	13.4	13.4	13.4	13.4	13.4	13.4	13.4	13.4	15.6
Total	1.6	2.7	2.7	2.7	6.1	6.1	13.4	13.4	13.4	13.4	13.4	13.4	14.2	14.2	14.2	13.4	17.6	17.1

Figure 6-2: Aboriginal Agreement Funding 2000/01 - 2017/18

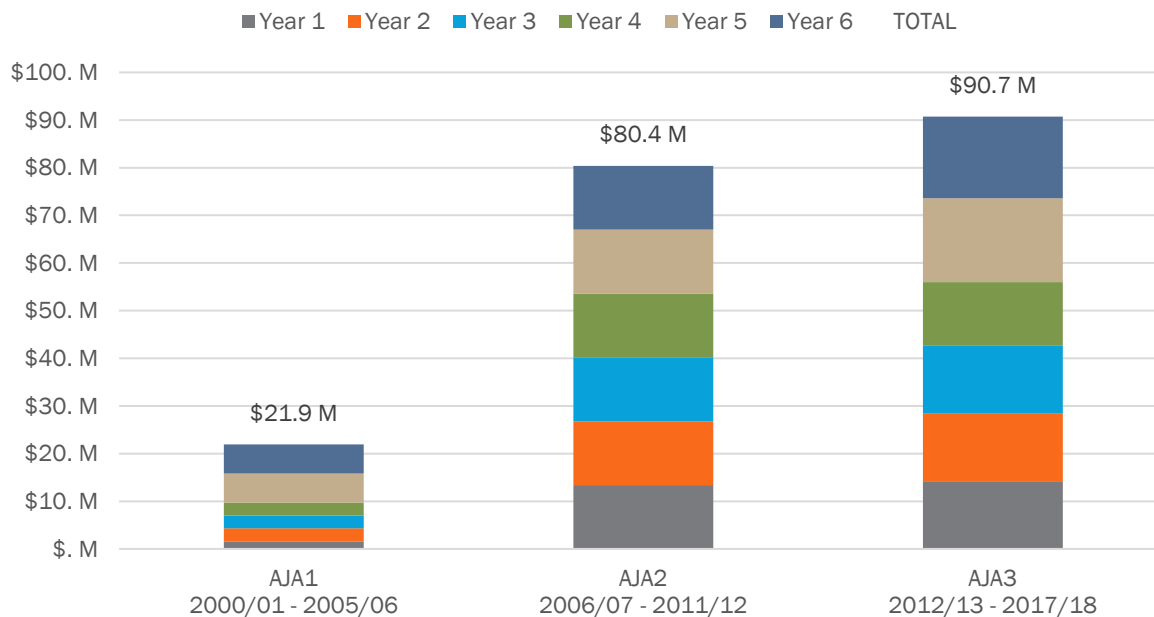


Figure 6-3: Total allocated budget for each phase of the Agreement

AJF Attendance

Government partners to the Agreement, namely the various business units within the DJR, Court Services Victoria, Victoria Police and the Departments of Health and Human Services and Premier and Cabinet have shown an ongoing but at times inconsistent commitment to the partnership evidenced in their attendance at RAJACs and the AJF.

We have conducted a review of the attendance register for the AJFs over the period of AJA3. It has not been possible to ascertain where, within some of the larger organisations, the commitments for attending sit. An agency such as DHHS, for example, is large and comprised of numerous divisions and branches. Attendance at the AJF from the branch level has shown consistency in some areas, particularly those that have a specifically Aboriginal focus such as Aboriginal Outcomes and Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing, but less in others. However, there are other indicators showing this Department's commitment to addressing Aboriginal disadvantage and the factors contributing to offending. The *Korin Korin Balit Djak Strategy*, released in October 2017, has a focus on the health, wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal people across Victoria and has been developed with recognition for the policy context of the AJA. This Strategy supports the commitment of the DHHS to improving health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal people which should bring a flow-on effect to justice outcomes. Such a Department-wide strategy is applauded, however, the benefit of the AJF is the forum it provides for many different voices to be heard. For that reason, it is essential that initiatives and programs implemented by agencies whose work impacts in some way on criminal offending are communicated to the Forum. Whether this communication occurs through ongoing attendance by agencies such as DHHS and its housing, alcohol and other drugs, mental health, out of home care and child protection branches or through other mechanisms, it is crucial that information sharing continue for the long-term aims of the AJA to be achieved.

With regard other Government members of the AJF we have found Victoria Police and Courts have been consistently represented at the AJFs at the highest level, as has the Department of Education and Training, Koorie Outcomes Division. Attendance by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet

has been somewhat inconsistent in more recent years which may be a result of that agency's focus on establishing Aboriginal self-determination and Treaty.

A clear commitment to partnership working from the most senior levels of each partner organisation is an essential constituent for the AJA partnership structure. Senior representatives such as departmental secretaries and the Police Commissioner attend the AJF. There were some interviewees who were critical of high level government representatives attending only on the first day of the Forum and delegating to another staff member for day 2. One RAJAC Chair expressed some regret that this was the case, stating;

They could stay a little bit longer not just say their bit and leave but I understand the demands on their time. I think we should have more secretaries attend from the different departments. (RAJAC Chair)

The attendance records do not show where this has occurred so we are unable to make any judgement of the extent to which it happens nor the position level of the delegated attendee. We expect that if the delegated attendee is at a sufficiently high level (i.e. decision-making) then the impact on the Forum would be minimal. However, the 'optics' of attendance on one day only contributes to a perception that there is a lack of high-level commitment.

We suggest the major factors contributing to inconsistency in attendance are threefold. For agencies such as DHHS it is the sheer size of the organisation and the multitude of divisions and branches. As noted above, engagement with the AJF tends to occur at the branch level. A second factor contributing to inconsistent attendance, particularly in more recent years, is that the partner agencies have been focused on establishing their own, similar mechanisms for addressing Aboriginal disadvantage including the DHHS *Korin Korin Balit Djak Aboriginal Health, Wellbeing and Safety Strategic Plan 2017–2027*. DPC has been very much focused on progressing discussion on self-determination and establishing a treaty with the Victorian Aboriginal community. This refocus is likely to have shifted priority away from the AJA and towards their own priorities and initiatives. Finally, we have heard from several agency representatives that the Forum is not always providing meaningful benefit and this contributes to a view that delegation of representation is an appropriate response. Such a view is not without foundation. Successful partnerships, as discussed in Section 4, should be delivering a 'value-add' to all partners. If any partner is not receiving value from their membership it would be expected that their contribution (i.e. of senior level attendance) might lessen to match the value being derived.

The partnership is having to deal with the impacts of the changed environment. As one interviewee noted;

In the engagement process we've been missing Chairs because they're more engaged in the family violence space or in the children's forum, which is not a bad thing, but we are losing some of our key partners and our critical stakeholders because we haven't been able to keep up [with the demands from other forums]

The AJA will need to respond to the changed policy environment and, with the development of AJA4, some attention will need to be directed towards how it maintains engagement with these agencies. It will be especially important to consider what it means to the AJA in having responsibility for youth justice move from DHHS to DJR.

Victoria Police has shown an ongoing and strong commitment to the AJA and its objectives. A stakeholder from Victoria Police noted the efforts made by that organisation over the period of the

AJA3 and the commitment towards implementing further reform through AJA4 can be limited because they are not a funding agency.

When my community get to the police it's because they've navigated a broken system or they haven't been supported in the broader system. So, for anything positive to happen we require to be able to divert them to something that's going to be holistic, address the underlying causes and work to build their resilience for themselves, their family and the broader community. We're at the mercy of all these other agencies [to provide the holistic remedies]. If they keep saying "No", we're going to be stuck and we're just going to be processing people into the system and we don't want to do that. (Victoria Police informant)

This statement highlights the need for a cross-agency commitment and approach to dealing with the underlying causes of criminal offending behaviour. Addressing these causes can only partly be achieved by Victoria Police but can be more fully achieved if multiple agencies work together towards a common goal, such as that offered by the AJA.

The commitment of community representatives to the partnership, including representatives associated with Aboriginal organisations, remains strong although there is some frustration that more has not been achieved over the 17 years of the Agreement. Concerns were raised by a number of community representatives that the focus of the partnership is not as sharp as it once was and words are not being turned into actions. This is discussed further below in the section dedicated to the outcomes of the partnership (Section 6.4).

One factor that is impacting on the ability of community members to engage with the partnership relates to the situation described above where there has been a rise in the number of government-community partnerships established over recent years. The AJA partnership places demands on community members' time to attend meetings associated with RAJACs, KRGs, Koori Caucus and the three Forums per year. Many community representatives are in senior positions in full time employment as well as contributing to numerous committees, boards and other forums. Community representatives are now having to make decisions about how to prioritise their time and where they will get the greatest reward for the effort put in. Sometimes these decisions will be made on the basis of who will be sitting at the table. If a forum organised by DPC to discuss self-determination and treaty matters includes a government Minister it makes more sense for community representatives to attend that in place of other meetings scheduled at the same time. The structures established for the AJA are likely to suffer as a result. Already the KRGs are struggling to achieve a quorum of Aboriginal representatives and this is likely to continue at least in the short term.

[the establishment of more forums is] another thing that pushes and pulls community from left, right and centre. Then they have to choose. You have the self-determination and treaty, self-determination and the justice system, AJA4 development, DHHS social and emotional wellbeing plan development, Aboriginal Victoria doing their self-determination works as well on top of the treaty stuff... people who are in paid roles in fulltime jobs ... they have fulltime gigs supporting the community so where are they going to find the time to do this. Local organisations can let their staff go and do this other work because it's important but then the community suffer. They've been over consulted, bombarded... they get burned out. (KJU Representative)

One of the challenges noted by an Aboriginal government worker who sits on a number for committees is that the same people often sit on a number of those structures. This worker asked whether these committees are hearing *"the voice of the community or are we listening to the voice of Aboriginal workers that are working across agencies because that's pretty much who is sitting at the*

table at most of these events whether you go to LANS, LAJAC, RAJAC or the Kulin Balit committee. While we are very busy engaging in those processes and those same people are being drawn to the table at every one of them are we really hearing the voice of local Aboriginal communities?"

A somewhat different view was expressed by one KJU staff member who noted that while the state-wide /peak Aboriginal organisations were represented on a range of committees and forums across government, the RAJAC chairs and deputies were not and that there was very little overlap. This interviewee highlighted the importance of the RAJAC and LAJAC structures for broadening the base of Aboriginal community input into justice policy and decision making. Regardless, there is a continuing need for engagement with, and encouraging the recruitment of more people willing to represent their local community at the RAJAC.

Recommendation 4 - Given the number of forums, meeting, workshops and the range of consultations taking place it would be useful if government agencies holding these forums could better coordinate and communicate activity. Government cannot expect Aboriginal community members will be available for all forums but their ability to do so will be enhanced if they are able to see a schedule of all of the forums being planned for the next six months. A whole-of-government calendar of events could be developed and made publicly available to enable forward planning.

6.1.5. Partnership is seen as a legitimate leader in the community

The question of legitimacy is concerned with an understanding of whether the partners that are involved are the ones that need to be at the table. Do they have the necessary skills, capacity and time to contribute? It also asks whether the partners have sufficient decision-making authority and the necessary influence to make a difference.

Support for the AJA is critically dependent upon the investment made by Aboriginal leaders to the Agreement. It is widely recognised that the passion and profile of one leader in particular, Dr Alf Bamblett, was instrumental in driving the Agreement through the first two phases. His passing in 2015 was keenly felt by all who were involved with the AJA and it has been difficult to reignite the passion and fill the void left by his passing. New leaders have stepped into the breach and others are emerging.

One senior government interviewee noted a shift in the past year or two with a sense of stronger engagement with the Koori Caucus.

They were always involved ... but now they have a strong voice ...that is our key to success. The AJF and Koori Caucus voice is powerful and the department and the government take that voice very seriously. The Koori Caucus is a key stakeholder and highly regarded – policy design, development and interventions don't progress without the tick of approval of Koori Caucus. It has come a long way even since the beginning of AJA3 (Government Representative)

Aboriginal community controlled organisations (ACCOs) are crucial to the AJA not only because they deliver essential services to the community but also because they represent the community voice to the partnership. Their involvement at the local, regional and state level forums is particularly crucial where organisationally unaffiliated community voices are more difficult to engage. Representatives from ACCOs make up slightly more than 50 per cent of the Koori Caucus. Although representatives

from these organisations routinely sit at the AJF, in some regions it has become increasingly difficult to ensure their representation at RAJAC meetings. As a result, many RAJAC meetings are over-represented by government representatives with additional burden placed on the RAJAC Chair to represent the community voice. As noted above, the inconsistent attendance is not necessarily indicative of a lack of interest, rather many of these organisations are resource-poor and are having to prioritise where they focus their attention.

At the AJF level, representation from community is achieved through the participation of the Koori Caucus - RAJAC Chairs and representatives from ACCOs and Aboriginal peak bodies such as Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc. (VAEAI), Victorian Aboriginal Childcare Agency (VACCA), Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention & Legal Service (now Djirra), Aboriginal Housing Victoria, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO), Koori Youth Council and Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS). Organisational representatives tend to be located in Melbourne although have services that extend throughout the state. The regional view is largely expressed via the RAJAC Chairs.

The partnership has struggled to attract the youth voice except in circumstances where there has been specific attention to organising forums with a youth focus. The Framework of Operations guiding the operation of the RAJAC prescribes the membership composition to include a representative from the Koori Youth Council. This has rarely been achieved in any RAJAC and even where it has there is an argument that a member of the Koori Youth Council offers only one perspective of the youth voice.

An AJF with a youth focussed session was convened in 2015 with the Koori Youth Council playing a key role in engaging young participants and facilitating workshops over the two days. This was frequently referred to by interviewees as a particularly good forum as it gave voice to the young participants who were heard by all AJF members present. The enthusiasm expressed for this forum was, in part, because of the theme being of interest to the AJF members but also because it was said to have focused the discussions. However, this was a one-off event and has not been replicated at the regional level.

The October 2015 AJF had a youth themed approach and was the most effective I've seen. The theme helped to focus attention. A suite of information was provided by Youth Justice. A young people's session was held in place of the community forum and that was really powerful (Government AJF member)

One of the difficulties to consistently involve young people in the partnership is that the structure is not welcoming to youth and does not take account of the differing expectations of younger people.

... when young people come through the door and enter those opportunities how do you best support them in that space. Sitting around a justice forum space you've got Chief Commissioner of Police and sometimes parliamentary secretaries for justice - how is it that young people are equally seen and heard and engaged in that space was part of the challenge (Aboriginal Government Informant).

The Koori Youth Council, established in 2003, provides a voice to government and community of the views, concerns, ideas and aspirations of Aboriginal young people in Victoria. The appointment of a Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People in 2013 saw a strong push to establish an Aboriginal Children's Forum focused on the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal children and young people in, or at risk of entering, out-of-home care. While neither forum has a specific focus on criminal justice the work they are doing will have an impact on criminal justice outcomes. The AJF can draw great insights from these two bodies and their continued attendance at the AJF is important to

maintain. The ongoing difficulty is in attracting the youth voice at the regional level. Some regions are better placed than others to achieve this (and some RAJACs are already well-connected to the youth population) but all could be better supported to investigate how they might improve engagement. The comment noted above provides some guidance on the types of actions that could be implemented at the regional (and local) level to attract the youth voice.

Given the difficulty in attracting the youth voice across the board and community representation in some regions it would be useful for attention be directed to identifying the barriers to participation and what might need to be changed to attract more Aboriginal community members to the RAJACs, in the first instance. Participation might be improved through simple changes such as arranging for meetings to occur outside of business hours or, as noted above, making the venue and format more welcoming of youth. Perhaps it will require RAJACs to become much more focused for a certain period (e.g. 6-12 months) so that during that period they can attract people who have particular interests. Youth is one example where this could work but it might also focus on housing or education or employment. Involvement in such forums will be encouraged if participants are able to clearly see the impact they and the partnership is having and this will require improved communication of the evidence that things are changing.

Recommendation 5 - Attracting greater participation in regional (and local) forums by Aboriginal community members, particularly those representing specific interests (e.g. youth, education, housing, etc) is crucial for the ongoing relevance and effectiveness of RAJACS and LAJACs. Some efforts should be directed towards investigating the barriers that keep people away and addressing these so that participation is encouraged and new people are welcomed into the forum. To ensure diversity of views it would be beneficial to attract participation from community members who are not necessarily aligned with government or community organisations.

6.2. Structure

This section investigates the structures that have been established to deliver of the AJA. In this section we investigate the extent to which:

- the partnership structures and processes enable effective participatory decision making
- formal roles and structures have been laid out support ownership and accountability
- transparent mechanisms exist to manage financial and other resources each partner brings to the partnership
- partners contribute and allocate a fair share of resources (financial and non-financial)
- there is a clear commitment to partnership working from the most senior levels of each partner organisation
- the partnership structure recognises and values each partner's contribution
- the partnership allows for strategic alliances and joint working arrangements across organisational boundaries
- there are processes for review and evaluation of the partnership and the partners

6.2.1. Formal roles, structures and processes

The intention of AJA structures and processes (described in Section 2, Governance Structures) is to enable effective participatory decision making and support ownership and accountability. The structures were well established at the commencement of AJA3 and are operating much the same as at the time of their establishment. There has been minor fine-tuning of process aspects of the structures but this has largely been around reporting and communications.

6.2.1.1. Aboriginal Justice Forum

The structures as they stand now are generally supported by interviewees. That they were devised through a process of collaborative engagement between government and community is highly regarded. In doing so, the structures have responded to cultural expectations of community members including operating the AJF with a co-chair arrangement (government / community), the layout of the Forum in a circle arrangement, and the creation of the community forums at each of the AJFs.

The venue for the Forum is rotated through the regions and allows for a Welcome to Country to be performed at each AJF giving an opportunity for a local Elder to welcome members and to share their own experiences in the region.

We heard that the AJF is conducted in a respectful way with all members having an opportunity to have their voice heard. Interviewees noted that decision-making processes, lines of communication, roles and expectations of partners are well defined but they also highlighted the challenge of implementing the structure efficiently. For example, it was reported that regional issues are sometimes raised at the AJF without having been through the RAJAC.

For me that wasn't working. If the RAJAC was working it would have been discussed [before the AJF], there would have been strategies and reporting and we would have been aware of the issue. It was almost like it was back to front. (Regional DHHS member)

Consequently, when this occurs representatives at the state-wide level are unprepared to respond on the spot and have to refer back to the regional level.

6.2.1.2. Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees

The Framework of Operations¹⁴ guides the RAJAC operation including criteria for membership (Refer Section 2.3 for the list of community members and government representation). The roles of the RAJAC Chair and Deputy Chair are filled by Aboriginal people who are connected to community and to 'the justice space'. Increasingly the chairs are or have been part of an ACCO.

Interviewees have suggested that the membership list contained within the RAJAC Framework of Operations does not accurately reflect the attendance at all RAJACs. Currently seats for community members are open to anyone and the KJU encourages changes depending on what best suits the community. One interviewee has observed a diverse range of people sit on the RAJACs who might not strictly fit the categories specified. However, they attend every meeting, they are engaged in the process and they are important to that community and contribute positively to the RAJAC. Such attendees would never be excluded but if the RAJAC were strictly following the guidance contained in the Framework of Operations they might inadvertently exclude unaffiliated community members who offer great insight. We understand that the Framework of Operations is being reviewed to ensure that the membership categories accurately reflect the intent of the AJA and the capacity of regional

¹⁴ From the Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee Framework of Operations, 19 June 2017

communities to contribute. It will be important that any revision to the Framework of Operations do not inadvertently exclude any members of the community who wish to engage.

Elections of the Chairperson/Deputy Chairperson are held by secret ballot every two years in the first meeting of the calendar year. The KJU coordinates the process with scrutineers drawn from the RAJAC membership. A call for nominations for the positions is generally made on the day of the RAJAC meeting. There is currently no limit to the number of terms a Chairperson or Deputy Chairperson can serve. While there are benefits to imposing limits to the number of terms a Chair can consecutively serve including the respite the Chair would receive, it is ultimately a decision for the community to make through the election process. What is important is that opportunity is provided for eligible community members to nominate for the role and those that do nominate to be provided with the necessary support and direction to do so.

To assist in opening up the candidate field the KJU could offer mentoring or other capacity building support. Such capacity building is a key strategy of the AJA and so fits with the overall intention. It needs to be understood by all candidates that the role is demanding in terms of time and energy. It requires certain skills in communication, negotiation, conflict resolution, facilitation and strategic thinking. There also needs to be recognition that the role is not always viewed favourably by the community as one Chair noted;

It's not an easy role. A lot of Koories don't want to have anything to do with the forum because there's still distrust. They say "all you do is sit around". (RAJAC Chair)

If being a RAJAC Chair were the only role that these people were dedicated to it would perhaps take less of a toll but most of the Chairs are either in employment and are also contributing to a range of other boards and committees. It is a complex role and not all candidates will be suitable. Some consideration must be given to succession planning which includes expanding the pool of potential candidates through recruitment and with capacity building.

Recommendation 6 - KJU investigate options to assist RAJACs in recruiting new community members to the RAJAC and developing the leadership capacity of new members that they might take on a leadership role in the RAJAC. This capacity building opportunity should also be made available to existing Chairs and Deputy Chairs. An amendment to the RAJAC Framework of Operations will be required to expand eligibility to community members not affiliated with an ACCO.

6.2.1.3. RAJAC Executive Officers

RAJAC Executive Officers have been described as the glue that holds the RAJACs together. They play a crucial role as the conduit between community and government and between the wider community and the RAJAC. The Framework of Operations describes the responsibilities of the EO for the following activities but their actual role typically extends beyond these:

- Provide key support, secretariat services and advice to the RAJAC including the preparation of meeting papers, agenda, venue, catering and minute taking
- Provide key support, secretariat services and advice to the LAJAC including the preparation of meeting papers, agenda, venue, catering and minute taking (where the region doesn't have a LAJAC Project Officer employed)

- Maintain regular contact with the RAJAC Chairperson to uphold the partnership and implementation of AJA3
- Attend, participate and support the RAJAC Chairperson's participation in AJA related activities including the Aboriginal Justice Forum, Koori Caucus and Koori Reference Groups.
- Actively promote the AJA and Community Grants Programs in the region.
- Engage and consult with members of Aboriginal Communities, Cooperatives and groups in the region to identify key issues for Communities and work in partnership with others to address the underlying causes
- Act as a senior advisor to regional Justice Program areas on issues affecting Aboriginal clients and serve as a point of connection between DJR service workers and community service providers in efforts to improve client outcomes.
- Actively develop and maintain cross agency linkages for the RAJAC and provide leadership between the Koori community and justice agencies
- Manage, co-ordinate, monitor and assist in the implementation of the RAJAC Regional Justice Action Plan
- Report regularly to the RAJAC and Koori Justice Unit on the regional implementation of the AJA3 and related initiatives
- Report regularly to the RAJAC, Regional Director, RAJAC Chairperson, and the Koori Justice Unit on justice issues impacting on the Koori community
- Represent the RAJAC and the Koori Justice Unit on other related forums as directed.
- Provide a written monthly report to the Regional Director and Deputy Director, KJU

This is an extensive range of responsibilities. RAJAC EOs are faced with a number of challenges, not least being the scope of their work. Some of the other challenges are:

- A sense of isolation – EOs are located within the DJR Regional Offices and several EOs noted that their role is often not well-understood by other DJR staff members in the office and they can feel excluded from the everyday activities. All EOs come together on a monthly basis at DJR Melbourne where they can interact and share stories with other EOs. The monthly meeting of EOs is an important get-together and helps to ease some of the anxiety of working in isolation in the regions. Many have established strong relationships with other Aboriginal liaison officers in the region (e.g. Local Justice Workers or Sheriff's Aboriginal Liaison Officers and Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers). Professionally, support for EOs will typically come from the Koori Justice Unit which provides an induction to new EOs and coordinates the monthly meeting. The KJU feeds information into the EO meeting and, in turn, will provide information back to the KJU in terms of the issues being identified in the regions. What has been described is the formal arrangement for management. The reality is that EOs will often seek support from the Manager Stakeholder Engagement in the KJU, an Aboriginal man with a deep understanding of the role of the EO and the issues they encounter. This support is not a formal part of the Manager's role but is accepted as his responsibility to the EOs and to the wider community.
- On-call to the community – by necessity RAJAC EOs must be connected to their community. The connection enables them to best understand the issues being encountered and helps them to develop appropriate solutions. However, this connection also means that EOs are often the person a community member will call in a crisis and these calls are more than likely outside of business hours, including weekends. RAJAC EOs tend to be 'on call' 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and this can lead to burnout if not managed successfully. One RAJAC EO, very

aware of the potential for burnout, will take himself out of the role and onto country where he can rest and regenerate before coming back to immerse himself in the role. Not all RAJACs are taking the same opportunities. It is important that their Line Managers understand the demands on the time and energy and to encourage time away from the role as often as is needed.

- On-call to the agency – while the number of Aboriginal employees in government agencies has increased considerably over the period of the AJA there are few in management positions within the DJR and particularly in regional offices. This results in the RAJAC EO often being called upon to provide guidance to Regional Directors on Aboriginal matters including assistance in building organisational cultural awareness. RAJAC EOs are currently at Level VPS5 and will be invited to participate at Executive Team meetings. The disparity in levels can make it difficult for EOs to speak up and be heard. Given that they are typically the highest ranked Aboriginal employee in the region their current level of recruitment should be reconsidered in light of their roles and responsibilities.
- According to some interviewees, EOs can be seen either as community members who work for government or as government employees who help and support the community. There is uncertainty and confusion, for example, about which meetings they can attend. We heard varying views as to whether the EOs were able to attend the Koori Caucus meetings. Some interviewees advised that the Caucus meetings were closed to Caucus only while others noted that this position had changed and EOs were in attendance. Some formal clarity on this matter is required.
- RAJAC EOs and LAJAC Project Officers report to Regional Directors in each of the regions with the exception of the Western Metropolitan Region where they report to an Assistant Director. During the evaluation we heard the benefits of, and issues with having these AJA support officers reporting regionally. There is general agreement that a position that is based in the regions will be better served if co-located with the line manager in the region they are serving. Line Managers will have a greater understanding of the regional issues and should be able to offer support when it is needed. However, given that EOs are calling upon KJU staff for mentoring support and other assistance there may well be some inconsistencies in direction given. The current arrangement appears to be the most appropriate but some thought about the impacts of this on EOs should be undertaken.
- There has been some difficulty in recent months to fill vacant EO positions. At one stage the EO role was seen as “the job of choice” for Aboriginal job seekers but with the increase in the number of designated roles available there has been a lessening of interest. If, as the EOs have expressed, there is a lack of understanding in the regional offices about the role of the EO less attention may be directed towards succession planning, career development and training and recruitment strategies. This is a challenge for both the regional office and the KJU who both have an interest in attracting and retaining staff.

The above discussion has identified a number of areas where improvements might be made that would assist EOs in their role. RAJAC Executive Officers are a crucial lynchpin to the LAJACs and RAJACs as well as to the operation of the Koori Caucus and thus the effectiveness of the AJF and the KRGs. EOs are at the centre of the network of Aboriginal liaison roles in the regions helping integrate the work of the SALOs, PALOs, LJWs, KYJWs and other staff with responsibility for Aboriginal clients. They are currently under-supported in terms of resourcing and professional development. The expectations for the role by both government and community do not appear commensurate with the position level (VPS5) nor with the assistance offered. We recommend additional resources be allocated that assist EOs in carrying out their duties. In larger regions such as Gippsland, Loddon Mallee and Barwon South West access to a dedicated vehicle would assist EOs in travelling to all

parts of the region. Consideration of dedicated administrative support would also benefit EOs and enable them to concentrate their efforts on more strategic matters. It may also allow EOs to expand their roles to better address specific regional issues.

Recommendation 7 - As a first step we recommend that KJU independently evaluate the position description for EOs against the tasks actually undertaken and the responsibilities of the role. There is an opportunity to expand the role in the regions so that it becomes the key coordination position for Aboriginal justice matters. We would expect that any evaluation of the role would closely consider the resourcing sufficient to perform the tasks delivered by the EO and the professional development needs of the EOs to contribute as leaders in their communities.

6.2.1.4. Koori Reference Groups

Of all the structures that have been established under the AJA the one which attracted the most criticism is the Koori Reference Group (refer Section 2.5 for an overview of the 7 KRGs).

KRGs were first initiated under AJA2, during the period of 2006-2012. The KRGs were initially created to provide community input to government business units as they developed their AJA Actions plans. In 2016 the role of the KRGs were expanded such that they support the implementation of AJA initiatives and action of items raised in the AJF and to ensure Koori Caucus partners have oversight. The intent is to progress government business at the KRG to reduce the demands on the AJF and allow it to concentrate on high level strategic business.

There is considerable difference in opinion on the KRGs. Although they are seen by some as a useful accountability mechanism and a good forum to exchange information in a meaningful way, attendance is inconsistent and some groups struggle to achieve a quorum. We understand that there have previously been attempts to rectify issues with the operation of the KRGs including a restructure implemented in 2014. There remain concerns that the groups are not adding the benefit that was envisaged with their creation.

Many interviewees felt the KRG was a good concept but that it was not working in practice.

Some good things come through the KRGs and some good work gets done but there's got to be a better way than that to do that work - the demand is too great we can't continue to operate that way. (KJU representative)

Some considered the KRGs were a place of robust discussion while others thought they acted in more of a 'tick the box' fashion. With regard the Youth KRG we have heard that its broader focus, that is, beyond justice matters, made for a difficult fit with actions identified in the AJA. Others thought the membership was too narrow to offer a truly place-based approach;

KRG does drive action however it needs greater representation and input from local communities and Aboriginal organisations. (ACCO representative)

One interviewee proposed refreshing the KRG structure by organising around multidisciplinary themes, such as youth justice;

Why aren't we looking at youth justice as a reference group and having all of the players at the table. To me that would be a more effective use of our time because it is requiring

everyone to be together and to problem solve and to walk away with commitments to address the issues. (Victoria Police Member)

Others, however, simply stated that the KRGs need to be replaced entirely and suggested that resourcing for greater autonomy in the regions would enable place-based initiatives to evolve that could respond more effectively at the local level. That would mean that the decision-making in the KRGs could be devolved to the regional level with input from the RAJACs. This suggestion has merit but further consideration of how it would work in practice is necessary.

Some of the explanations expressed for why the KRGs were not functioning well are process-related. The seven KRGs meet over one day in Melbourne three to four times per year. Three sessions are run with two KRGs meeting in the concurrent first two sessions and three in the final session. Koori Caucus members will have to travel to Melbourne (generally the day before a KRG) and will need to make themselves available to attend at least one, but generally more, KRGs. Government representatives tend to be based in Melbourne and usually sit on only one KRG so do not encounter the same issues as Koori Caucus members. Most Caucus members have nominated a portfolio(s) of interest aligned to each KRG which assists in maintaining consistency over time. If two of the KRGs are meeting in the same session they will need to choose which to attend and, if possible, nominate a proxy to attend the other. Such an approach has been designed to ensure coverage across all KRGs and enables reporting back to Koori Caucus of the key activities in each of the portfolio areas. It is not known, but would be worth investigating, the extent to which portfolio matters are discussed at the Koori Caucus meetings held on the day following the KRGs. Unfortunately, this question was not put to Caucus members during the data collection but is important to understand in the context of increasing demands on Caucus.

While most KRGs struggle to achieve a quorum of Caucus members, the KRGs, as the place where actions are defined, progressed and monitored are important and there is support for this function. However, the general consensus is that they are not functioning as well as expected. Several attempts have been made to improve the functioning of the KRGs but in most cases there have been unintended consequences that then need addressing. There are clearly resourcing and scheduling issues that need to be addressed to improve effectiveness. There may be opportunities to use information technology more fully not only in the dissemination of papers but also to facilitate discussion and debate. Use of web-based platforms may not necessarily negate the need for a face-to-face discussion but it could alleviate issues around receiving information in time to allow for a thorough review.

We routinely heard that the KRGs was not sufficiently focused on strategic matters. Rather, the KRGs have become overwhelmed with details of individual issues and do not have an eye to enabling systemic change. If that is the case then it is a waste of expert resources for the one day that the KRGs are meeting. This is a meeting of senior level bureaucrats and senior community leaders who have considerable experience in the issues contributing to the high rate of over-representation. Their role is to assist in the implementation of the AJA3 initiatives for which specific government business units have responsibility. This should not be a 'down in the trenches' role but offer more of a directing function advocating for change at the policy level to assist in resolving the wider systemic issues.

Because Aboriginal affairs in Victoria is in a state of flux it would be practical to retain the KRG in the short-term. However, there is clearly a need for change but what form that change takes needs to take account of what is already in place and any new structures that might emerge from the discussions around self-determination. Additionally, any amendments to the functioning of the KRGs must be developed collaboratively with the Koori Caucus members who are the most impacted by the current KRG processes.

Recommendation 8 – The KRGs are currently not functioning effectively, largely due to resourcing and scheduling issues but also because a lack of role clarity. We recommend the KRGs remain in place at least in the short-term. To assist in improving their functionality, we recommend that the KJU investigate the benefits of using web-based platforms to allow more frequent communication between KRG members. This evaluation has only skimmed the surface of what the underlying issues are with the KRGs. As such, we recommend a more in-depth analysis of the diversity of opinions about the KRGs and to better understand all of these positions. With this understanding in place the KJU should work with Koori Caucus to determine whether, and in what form, the Koori Reference Groups might continue, if at all.

The continuation of the KRGs may be required if it is decided to bring the AJF back to a focus on criminal justice matters (as discussed below in Sections 6.2.2, 6.4.1.2 and 6.4.2.7 and in Recommendation 16 on Page 90). The KRGs could be one structure that maintains the links between the ‘reset’ AJF and other government forums that have been established in the interim years.

6.2.1.5. Koori Justice Unit

KJU has responsibility for a range of time-intensive activities including:

- coordination of three Forums each year in various locations across the state (including some locations with limited infrastructure to support such a large gathering)
- oversight and reporting against all the AJA initiatives
- preparation of submissions to Expenditure Review Sub Committee
- strategic policy and coordination
- administration of grant funding – about \$6m to community organisations – and other grant funding, such as under recent Family Violence ERSC money – about \$6m
- support of the RAJAC network in the regions
- monitoring and evaluation of funded programs and provision of data to others such as the Family Violence Partnership Forum
- briefing to Ministers and Executive Branch
- engagement with and representation on various committees.

With 15 FTE staff, the KJU is stretched in meeting all of these commitments. Several staff members we spoke with during the evaluation relayed how they were often required to respond to issues outside of their stated position responsibilities. These types of comments have been common across many stakeholder groups that we have interviewed – people are undertaking tasks beyond their area of responsibility that would otherwise not be addressed but that are seen as essential to achieving AJA objectives.

Although we have not conducted an organisational review of the KJU it does appear that current staffing numbers are insufficient to meet the responsibilities and expectations for the unit and for the AJA. Below we make recommendations that, if accepted, will require additional resourcing to the KJU to enable those recommendations to be acted upon.

One further point on the matter of staffing; there are currently two management positions employing Aboriginal staff members – the Director and Deputy Director positions. These are designated positions, that is, only Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people are eligible to apply. All other

positions within the Unit are 'identified' with a preference for Aboriginal employees. At the time of this evaluation, over half of positions were filled with Aboriginal employees. We expect that the staffing requirements for the Unit provide good career development opportunities for Aboriginal employees to progress to roles with higher levels of responsibility.

6.2.2. Partnership allows for strategic alliances and joint working arrangements across organisational boundaries

The partnership itself could be considered a strategic alliance as it has brought together a broad collection of actors (agency and community) to work together towards achieving the objective of the AJA. This is both an accomplishment and a challenge for the partners. When the AJA was first executed some 17 years ago it was the only partnership structure of its kind that enabled this collaborative approach to problem solving. The connection that the AJF and the RAJACs provided between government and community was sought after by many agencies and by the Aboriginal community organisations as a means to identify and address issues.

The authors of the AJA in all three phases have understood that achieving the objectives requires consideration of matters that are beyond the scope of criminal justice agencies. The partnership structures expanded to include membership from these other non-justice agencies and that has been seen as a positive and fruitful expansion. It has enabled the AJF to look for remedies beyond their boundaries and many of these have had, and are continuing to have, a positive effect on the rate of contact Aboriginal have with the criminal justice system. For some AJF members it has also led to a broadening of the focus beyond solely criminal justice matters.

As more and more agencies began to establish their own partnership arrangements (often modelled on the AJA) there has been an increasing level of overlap and duplication of effort. There is certainly a greater demand on the time and expertise of community members who are invited to participate in the ever-expanding range of forums. However, with the establishment of these other Departmental forums there now exists an opportunity for the AJF to take stock and reconsider what its focus might be for the coming phase of the AJA. There is no getting away from the fact that criminal justice effects are the consequence of non-criminal justice experiences and events and the AJF cannot lose sight of this but, as a result of their long term involvement in the AJF, these other agencies now have a deeper understanding of the potential future impacts of their own policy decisions. Policy officers at the Department of Education and Training understand how continued engagement in education can keep young people from criminal offending. The Housing Branch of the Department of Health and Human Services understand the importance of housing for prisoners transitioning to the community. Their involvement in the AJF has opened up a holistic view of their policy decisions in a whole-of-government context and there is no doubt that the message has been amplified through the voices of Aboriginal community members at the Forums.

With the new structures at other agencies the AJF can afford to re-focus its attention on criminal justice matters providing they have robust lines of communication with the other forums and a mechanism of referral of issues raised at one forum that might be better addressed by another. How this is established needs further consideration, however, it may require the execution of a Memorandum of Understanding or for communication to be facilitated through Secretaries Group meetings. However it is achieved, the opportunity for a reset has been heightened by the establishment of the new forums (see Section 6.4.2.6 for further discussion.)

6.2.3. There are processes for review and evaluation of the partnership and the partners

There are processes in place to monitor progress towards achieving the objectives for the AJA but this evaluation is the first formal evaluation of the partnership itself. As previously noted, a revision to the functioning of the KRGs was implemented in 2014 after members of the Koori Caucus expressed some dissatisfaction with its operation. At that time, KRGs were scheduled and held by business units. The challenges expressed by Caucus members were that:

- Many Koori Caucus members were members of multiple KRGs.
- KRGs were often not proceeding due to a lack of quorum (at best three community representatives);
- This had led to a backlog of business unit work.

The KJU facilitated a series of workshops in 2014 to explore the role of the Caucus in the AJF and more broadly. The Caucus recommended the KJU, in its role as secretariat, support the group to look at streamlining KRGs. It was suggested that KRGs be held in conjunction with the Koori Caucus meetings held in between AJFs which could enable:

- the majority of Koori Caucus members to be present for meetings
- maximise community consultation opportunities
- reduce the overall burden of consultation for both government and community.

This is the form that the KRGs are presently taking but the changes do not appear to have resolved the issues first raised in 2014.

It is understood that the KJU is also reviewing the Framework of Operations guiding the operation of the RAJACs to ensure the Framework remains relevant. No further information was gathered on this review except that it demonstrates that the KJU are engaged in monitoring the operational aspects of the AJA partnership arrangements.

The relationship between members of the Koori Caucus and the KJU is such that Caucus members can bring any operational issues to the Unit and be assured that they will be investigated and, where necessary, actions will be taken. The longevity of the AJA has fostered the strong relationships between the various partners and enabled a responsive environment to develop.

6.3. Process

6.3.1. Partners trust and respect each other to commit and deliver on commitments

The AJA partnership has now been in place for over 17 years and while there have been many changes in membership there are a considerable number of members who have been involved over many years, some since its inception. Strong personal relationships have developed across organisational boundaries that are premised on genuine trust and respect. These strong relationships are not only the result of individual preferences and attributes but have been supported through the structures of the AJA that enable responsiveness, accountability and accessibility.

The partnership between the Victorian Government and Koori community is fundamentally about relationships and surrounds the model. The AJA simply cannot exist without it, expressed at local, regional and state level. These partnership structures have matured

over the years, enabling increased collaboration through a positive spirit of confidence and trust (Aboriginal Justice Agreement, p.61).

This is not to say that differences of opinions and views don't occur. They do. It is only because there is trust that such differences can be raised with an expectation that they will be heard and responded to. Because of the relationships that have been established it has been possible for individuals to make contact with each other outside of the formal structures as this comment from one Government member of the AJF highlights.

I believe the forum [AJF] has given Koori Caucus members confidence that we listen. They know they have a direct line into [agency] and know that we'll respond (Government AJF Member)

We have previously discussed the concerns regarding attendance by senior government representatives at the AJF on day one only and a delegation for day two. Several Koori Caucus members have noted this as showing a lack of respect for the partnership. We are not aware that this view has been relayed to the members who are attending on day one only.

A number of action items have been recurring over several forums. One action item that was frequently referred to in interviews with Koori Caucus members was that of confirmation of Aboriginality. A number of Caucus members expressed their frustration on this matter in particular and wondered whether it is seen as a priority by those who are working on it in government. An ACCO member attributed the lack of AJF-related action to the persistence of government siloes:

The partnership model is strong but it needs constant effort from partners to maintain that relationship, e.g. regular communication. The AJF has previously been efficient and effective. However, a current weakness has been the recent reduced priority on government meeting action items determined at the AJF. Government representatives previously had a stronger focus on ensuring they were proactive in responding to AJF action items. The government approach is not joined up – government departments appear to be working in siloes with their approach being fragmented/patchy. (Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation)

In more general terms, both Caucus members and government representatives of the AJF did indicate some frustration that some action items have remain unresolved over a number of Forums. However, AJF members can be confident that these matters will remain on the Action List until they have been resolved to the satisfaction of all members. At present all action items are equally weighted with no item taking priority over any other item. In most cases, it would be difficult, and likely counter-productive, to rush a resolution simply to remove an item from the action list. AJF members do understand the importance of responding appropriately and in an evidence-based manner to what are complex issues. However, when there has been agreement for an action to be pursued and it remains outstanding over a number of years dissatisfaction should be expected. At present there are no formal mechanisms to escalate the dissatisfaction other than raising it at the AJF.

The extent to which there is trust and respect at the regional level varies between regions. In some regions we have found very strong levels of trust between members of the RAJACs and this has enabled very flexible responses to issues that have been raised. For example, strong relationships between Sheriffs, police and Aboriginal liaison officers in the Barwon South West region means that police are comfortable in the abilities of Local Justice Workers resolving issues before they escalate rather than immediately responding with a prescriptive or bureaucratic reaction. In other regions there

appears less or inconsistent engagement by government agencies with the RAJACs and this might be read as a lack of respect for the structure of the RAJAC.

6.3.2. Partnership has well-defined leadership

The structures of the AJA have well-defined leadership at all levels and these leaders show a continuing commitment to the AJA.

As the lead agency to the AJA the DJR is represented by the Secretary at the AJF table. The Koori Caucus is represented by the RAJAC Chair of the region in which the AJF is hosted.

RAJACs and LAJACs have a designated, elected Chair whose roles and responsibilities are defined in the Framework of Operations. RAJAC Chairs and some LAJAC Chairs are supported by an Executive Officer, a DJR employee located in the regional offices. Some LAJACs are supported by Project Officers, also located in DJR regional offices.

The Koori Justice Unit is integral to the functioning of the AJF, RAJAC and LAJAC networks and the delivery of the AJA and related programs.

6.3.3. Partnership ethos of collaboration, communication and learning

Two questions were put to interviewees that asked what they gain from their involvement in the forums (whether that is at the state-level AJF or the regionally-based RAJACs) and, what do others gain from the involvement of the interviewee's organisation at the forum. In response to the first question most interviewees noted the benefit associated with gaining access to others operating in the justice space. Government representatives appreciated the opportunity of being able to engage directly with leaders within the Aboriginal community to learn from them and to gain a better understanding of the issues of greatest importance. Such contact has enabled personal relationships of trust to develop which allows contact outside of the forums and can lead to the resolution of issues that might otherwise escalate before being addressed.

A second benefit gained by Government agencies attending forums is that it presents a visible indication of the commitment of the organisation to the Agreement and this has an influencing effect internally. Staff and clients can see that the agency is fully committed and can be held accountable for any actions that do not fulfil this obligation. Some agencies referred to a flow-on accountability effect whereby staff hold a personal commitment to accountability for meeting AJA objectives.

The accountability function of the forums is also seen as a benefit to agencies who understand they "don't always get it right" (Government AJF member). Over the 17 years of the Agreement, and because many in leadership positions have been consistent over the long term, the relationships between members of the forum have matured and strengthened. Some government agencies are critiqued harshly in forums which can be "pretty uncomfortable" but there is a shared understanding that the aim is to effect change. In holding agencies to account, the Aboriginal representatives are concerned not only with how an issue is dealt with but the individual's response to the issue – is it genuine and is there a sincere commitment to address it? Having strong and trusting relationships through the forums has brought some confidence that problems and issues raised at the forum will be addressed.

In relation to the second question, Government representatives felt that the forums provided an opportunity to share information with the community and with other agencies. Some of this information sharing is around the statistical data of, for example, trends in contact with the criminal justice system. The justice sector is a complex and multi-faceted space where the simple

presentations of statistics is often not sufficient to present the 'whole story'. The forums provide an opportunity to present information in context. An upward trend in any indicator does not show the factors that have contributed to it nor the actions being taken to address it. Being able to present the complexities of information and of the factors that influence decision making is highly valued for both the agency presenting it and the recipients of the information. An example offered by Corrections Victoria highlights this well.

Sometimes I have to make decisions that might seem at odds with what the Aboriginal community thinks or wants. If we take funerals, for example. We do our best to allow prisoners to be released to attend family funerals. But I have to balance this with safety and security of the corrections system. Because we've formed such good relationships with Caucus members I've been able to explain to the community forum why we aren't always able to let people out. I was able to explain that if we allowed high-risk prisoners out and something went wrong then it would make it difficult for everyone who came after. When you get the chance to explain the rationale for our decisions people are much more accepting of them.

The example offered above shows how the forum has enabled trust to develop between government and community representatives and how this trust and understanding flows to the wider community as a result.

Koori Caucus members, however, have expressed some frustration that the AJF does not offer the opportunity to fully discuss issues. The agenda is full and time tends to be taken up with information provision and there is little time for discussion or debate. As one Koori Caucus member noted;

... anything that comes out of the RAJAC then gets taken up the line [to the AJF] but at the AJF level it is all about presentations and people might make a comment and that but I don't think there's much learning involved or much take away. I think sometimes we've been to state forums and we think what's the purpose of this ... what did we achieve? I personally have raised things and they haven't been dealt with so I think what's the purpose of going, what's the point of my involvement? It can be very frustrating (Koori Caucus member)

This is not an isolated view amongst the Koori Caucus. A second issue raised by a Caucus member relates to the frequency of communication.

I think there's a need for everyone that's involved to be kept in the loop and I think sometimes it seems to be "oh, the forum's happening" so it's all around the forum instead of ongoing communication. The Caucus does meet outside of the forum but they're the meetings you can't get to, so, the attendance of the Caucus might be a bit haphazard It's not free flowing open communication.

6.3.3.1. Information Flow

A variety of views were encountered when questions were put to interviewees about how information flows from one structure to another. There is no shortage of information presented to the AJF with a typical agenda including regional reports and multiple discussion papers. Many interviewees noted that the volume of information provided and the short timeframe offered for review presented a barrier to information *flow* as there was too much for members to realistically absorb prior to an AJF meeting.

Views on the effectiveness of information flow from the RAJAC to the AJF (and vice versa) are mixed. We heard of one instance where a major long-standing issue of localised criminal activity was first

raised at the AJF that had not previously been discussed at the RAJAC which took the Department representative the issue was directed at by surprise.

Information flow from the AJF to the RAJAC is the responsibility of the RAJAC Chair. RAJAC members felt that they were generally well-informed of the discussions that occurred at the AJF particularly those directly related to their region. It would be useful for the Chairs to be able to present a copy of the minutes from the AJF at the next RAJAC meeting following the forum. These minutes may need to specifically prepared for the purpose of dissemination to ensure that any confidential information is redacted.

There are opportunities to improve information flow and provision without overwhelming partners with paperwork. Greater use could be made of online platforms that makes relevant information available. Provided it is easy to navigate, the AJA partners could negotiate their own way around the platform and access the information of most interest in their own time.

Recommendation 9 – Online platforms enable real-time and ongoing communications to occur and provide a useful mechanism to share and disseminate information, either to selected members of a portal or publicly. The KJU should investigate how to expand their online presence so that information can be shared outside of the formal face-to-face forums.

6.3.4. Equality in decision making, resource exchange, partner representation and participation

Strengthen community justice responses by supporting the right of Koori communities to participate as equal partners in the development, delivery and evaluation of all justice-related policies and programs specifically impacting the Koori community. (Principle 7, AJA).

A key principle of the AJA is equality in the partnerships between the Aboriginal community (represented at the LAJAC, RAJAC and AJF) and government. There is no doubt that all partners ascribe to this principle but in practice there remain structural power imbalances that are difficult to redress within the existing partnership arrangements. That opportunities are provided for the voice of the Aboriginal community to be heard is not sufficient to claim that the partnership is equal for all partners.

Having the justice forum where you have that equal partnership at the table with community voices and senior level government representatives should facilitate a greater understanding of the issue and an opportunity for the partnership approach to propose solutions. For me the frustrating bit is that, as an Aboriginal person from Victoria, it appears that the Aboriginal voice has less ability to require government departments to effectively respond. In Aboriginal community there is what is called "deep listening" and there's some government departments that are not listening. They hear the frustration but they don't understand it's driven by not being heard (Government Aboriginal representative)

At the heart of the inequality is the disparity in resources made available to each of the partners. Here government representatives hold the greatest power as they have access to the majority of resources. Members of the Koori Caucus have very limited resources available including one important resource,

time. As we have noted previously, many Caucus members hold full-time employment and are required to take time out of their jobs to attend to Caucus business. Even those that are no longer employed are contributing to other forums and committees. We acknowledge that senior government officials are also time-poor but the activities described in the AJA are the core business of the agencies they lead and not an addendum to their work. There is also the issue of support resources – researchers, policy officers, administrative assistants and the like. These supporting staff are available to government members of the AJF (and RAJACs) but are not available to Caucus members. This lack puts the Caucus at a disadvantage in comparison to the other participants in the state and regional forums.

The disparity in resourcing is also financial. Government agencies have all of the financial resources and ultimately make the decisions about where that money will be spent. The financial decisions will be influenced to a lesser or greater extent as a result of the discussions and deliberations of the forums but ultimately decisions and accountability for those decisions rests with government. The Koori Caucus as well as ACCOs sit in a client-patron type relationship with government, meaning genuine equality cannot be achieved.

Imbalances also occur at an individual, as opposed to institutional, level. As the venue for the AJF is rotated through the state (and this is appreciated) the role of Aboriginal Co-Chair will rest on which region the forum is hosted. The Departmental chair has the advantage of always being in the role and growing in understanding, confidence and competence in carrying out the duties that come with the role. Our observation of attending two AJFs is that the Departmental Co-Chair tends to proportionally lead the chairing to a greater extent than the Aboriginal co-chair. As the Aboriginal Co-Chair role continually changes there is less opportunity to gain from the experience of co-Chairing in an ongoing way.

... some RAJAC Chairs are there to represent their local community to ensure that issues are raised. Beyond that they might be looking for somebody to understand we're raising it but we're expecting you to pick up on the issues and run with it. Other chairs are quite strong and strategic and therefore able to challenge equally at the table. It's a dilemma in itself. You're getting people there because they are representing their local issue but with varying degrees of ability to influence (Government representative).

In discussions with RAJAC Chairs we heard that some are more confident in the co-Chair role than others and because they inhabit the role so infrequently they are unable to build their confidence and competency. There may be opportunities outside of the forums for Chairs to build their confidence through mentoring or other learning possibilities.

The role of chairperson is crucial in ensuring participation, following up on all actions, and ensuring frank and fearless discussion to generate better justice outcomes (Government AJF member).

Both RAJAC and LAJAC Chairs play an important role in the realisation of AJA goals. Amongst other roles they are the voice of the people in their respective communities. They are advocates, champions and change agents who are expected to engage with a very broad range of people in positions of power on behalf of the powerless. Such advocacy requires skills that many have but others do not. Building the capacity and confidence of RAJAC and LAJAC Chairs will benefit them as well as the communities on whose behalf they are working. It will also help to achieve equity between the Chairs (and community representatives) at the local, regional and state forums and the Government representatives who will have had greater access to skills development through their employment.

Recommendation 10 - That LAJAC and RAJAC Chairs and Deputy Chairs are surveyed to gain an understanding of their need and desire for skills and capacity development to assist them in their roles. Once the needs assessment has been completed the KJU should facilitate the necessary training for those interested.

In the New Zealand context Michael Peters has questioned whether genuine partnership can be achieved between such unequal entities as the state and its indigenous people. He distinguishes three main notions of partnership as they affect education policy in New Zealand. The first is strongly connected to the notion of “community” and “governance”; the second is the notion of partnership inherent in the model of “public private partnerships”; and the third is a concept of partnership construed as “collaboration”. He suggests the first two notions mask power relations while the third is more visionary and arises in the context of the social knowledge economy as a form of collaboration that builds on the principles of social media. This is the ideal for the AJA partnership.

Community partnership is intended to draw together government, private enterprise and community in pursuit of common goals. Peters suggest this model actually shifts responsibility from states onto communities [employing] performance management techniques often framed in terms of “empowerment” and “engagement”. Public-private partnerships, he argues, is typically government service delivered through the private sector driven by user demand and the pursuit of cost-effectiveness. A collaboration, on the other hand, is a mutual and reciprocal partnership between professionals and community who engage and make use of personal networks as the best way of transferring knowledge and supporting change. It may be best to classify the AJA as a collaboration between government and community. If not a collaboration, then there needs to be an acknowledgement that there are aspects of the partnership that are not equal.

6.3.5. Partner takes responsibility and is accountable to others for its actions

There are two main mechanisms by which partners are held accountable for the actions. The KRGs assisted business units within government to develop Koori Action Plans. RAJACs have developed Regional Justice Action Plans. Both of these plans set out the commitments of agencies and others to deliver on actions to contribute to achieving the objectives of the AJA.

Progress of actions outlined in the Regional Justice Action Plans are monitored at RAJAC meetings and responsible agencies/organisations will be required to account for their progress by other members of the RAJAC. This monitoring function also occurs at some of the KRGs. Other KRGs no longer track progress against their Koori Action Plans which are now seen as out of date. We have earlier recommended that Koori Action Plans be discontinued (see Recommendation 2 on Page 48).

The second accountability mechanism is the minutes recorded of the AJF discussions. These minutes, including actions arising, are documented by the KJU and made available to the Inter-Departmental Committee and the KRG and Koori Caucus. Progress against actions is an ongoing agenda item for each AJF and forum members have an opportunity to query action progress and completion.

Some concerns have been raised that the minutes do not always match the recollection of participants. One Koori Caucus member noted;

In my experience, the minutes have had gaps in them...you say what about this discussion and that sort of thing. (Koori Caucus member)

We understand that KJU has offered to digitally record the proceedings but this offer was not agreed to by the Forum. To ensure better capture of the discussions the KJU now uses a number of note-takers with each of the notes compared and compiled before dissemination. The Koori Caucus is in the process of recruiting an Executive Officer who will take on an expanded role now that funding has been made available for a full-time position. Once this position is filled it would be beneficial for the Caucus Executive Officer to document the minutes of AJF proceedings to minimise differences of opinions on the discussions that have taken place.

6.3.6. Strategies are planned to ensure that alternative views are able to be expressed

Hosting the AJF in different regions around the state provides a good opportunity for out-of-region AJF members to understand the particularities of other regions. One very important mechanism that is highly regarded is the community forum. This provides a forum for any interested community members to put questions to any members of the AJF and, more importantly, to seek a satisfactory response. These community forums can sometimes be uncomfortable for agency staff but they are an important demonstration of the willingness of government to listen to the community and to make efforts to address the issues that have been raised. For many senior government managers, the community forums are the only place where they hear the individual stories of hardship and despair that characterise the lives of so many Aboriginal people caught up in the criminal justice system.

Community meetings are a special opportunity. A community member can speak directly to the Police Commissioner. It's a really good thing for those of us in these public roles to face the community and feel the sentiment on the ground. (Aboriginal Peak Body representative)

Two regions have established a community forum modelled on that of the AJF which operates during RAJAC meetings. Those two regions are Hume and Barwon South West. The ability of community members who are often not otherwise engaged with the RAJAC an opportunity to attend and raise issues is seen as a very positive addition to the RAJAC agenda. It is appreciated by both community and RAJAC members and offers nuanced insights into issues faced by individuals in their everyday lives. At times the issues raised will be unique to the individual raising them, at other times, they will reflect broader systemic issues that the RAJAC can turn itself to addressing. In both cases, resolutions can be discussed and actions to address the issues put in place.

6.3.7. Partnership accommodates different cultures

All members of the AJF and RAJACs exhibit cultural awareness and respect for cultural protocols is expressed in each meeting. Building the cultural awareness of non-Aboriginal members is seen as an important requirement for any who serve on the AJF. Those we spoke with who have undertaken cultural awareness training noted the value that it provides to them in carrying out their work roles.

When I did the cultural competency camp at Shepparton I spent a night out in the Barnwood forest. Aside from the training there was also immersion with the community group and learning about stories and cultural history. It was interesting and valuable to me in doing my job (Government AJF representative)

6.4. Outcomes

Two outcome domains are discussed here at two levels: first at the level of performance against the criteria for effective partnership and then at the level of achievements and perceived success in the justice system and beyond.

6.4.1. Partnership performance

6.4.1.1. Efficient collaborative practice

To a great extent the partners have addressed performance issues effectively, efficiently and in ways that are supportive of ongoing partnership effort. There is awareness of what makes for good practice and performance and partners continue to work at strengthening these practices.

Victoria Police interviewees highlighted good practice at both senior and local levels. Senior leaders attend the AJF and its community forum, appreciating the direct contact with community members, while at the local levels,

they wear their relationship with the RAJAC Chairs and the Executive Officers with pride so when things don't go to plan there's a real impetus to actually look at what fell over and why couldn't you bring that to us so that we can resolve it together at the local level. There's a real desire to keep reinforcing that we're there, we're central, we're open to be able to be held to account. (Government AJF representative)

Interviewees support the partnership and do want to see it continue but suggest that there are areas where improvements can be made. A frequent comment from many different interviewees representing community and government was about the need for a sharper focus on action, as reflected in the following comment:

The AJA model is fantastic - there's respect, openness, true engagement and genuine listening. But in the AJF, there's a sense of the same old thing - cycles of talking and a lot of good thinking. But where's the strategy? We could improve accountability by focusing on five or six big initiatives and track actual progress, based on a theory of change. There is a lot of reporting back but I sometimes wish it was a bit more rigorous. We could start the meeting by reviewing actions against goals. To ensure traction and reflect on impact. [There needs to be] ongoing and deeper monitoring. (ACCO representative)

This suggestion for focusing on a limited number of priority areas was also offered by several government AJF members. As noted previously, many interviewees referred favourably to an AJF held in 2015 which adopted a themed approach. This approach was seen as focusing attention on one area (youth) and enabling far-reaching discussion on a range of factors driving offending behaviours in young Aboriginal people. We support the implementation of a theme-based approach to the conduct of the AJFs believing that it broadens discussion and can generate 'out-of-the-box' solutions to ongoing and seemingly intractable problems. Such theme-based approaches should help to drive 'big ideas' rather than issue specific actions. It can help to build deeper understanding of the context encouraging critical thinking. Rather than limit what can be discussed, a theme-based approach opens up discussion and dialogue.

Adopting a theme-based approach will require some changes to the way that the AJF are planned. There should be agreement between AJF members on what the themes are for each year. The youth theme has previously been explored (and can again be explored if the AJF sees the merit in doing so). Other themes might include 'access to housing', 'employment and employability', 'sentencing and

diversion', 'connecting to culture' or 'responding to racism' or example. These are issues that were discussed as factors contributing to imprisonment and offending but there are likely to be many more. The themes should be broad but maintain a justice focus. Subject matter experts could be invited to present on the theme and encourage debate. The aim is to generate new ways of thinking about old problems and activate new ideas that can be explored and potentially implemented creating new outcomes in criminal justice.

The following suggestion from one Government representative (paraphrased below) highlights what could be achieved if the AJF took a high level, big picture view:

If you ask me what the top priorities are I would say bail decisions around Aboriginal kids - we have an increase in recidivism around youth offending. As a result of that we are remanding more Aboriginal kids in the system. That's leading to worse outcomes than getting bailed because they are getting remanded into a system that is not set up well for them in the first place. Working collaboratively with the community we might ask what other options might be there other than remand. The arrest might be a trigger to a community intervention with that person to discourage further offending. Perhaps that person doesn't have their family around or they're from another state and staying with relatives and they're committing offences. What does wrap-around support look like because they're out there committing offences. The system says, well, we remand them now. That's not going to benefit that kid one bit. What does an alternative program look like with police and community in partnership and DHHS and education potentially. What does that support look like that might actually get us making decisions to not remand but get consent from the young person to get involved in this community program. That's one example but what we're doing at the meeting is looking at the data. And the data is saying young Aboriginal men, and now increasingly girls, are now more represented in the remand population. We look at that stat but don't do anything about it. The forum should be the strategic opportunity to talk about a piece of work to try and address that...

This is exactly where a theme-based approach is ideal as it looks at the wider context, the 'triggers' and proposes actions to address the triggers and not the outcome (i.e. the statistic of young people on remand).

Recommendation 11 – One AJF each year should be dedicated to identifying three key themes for the subsequent Forums. Identification of the themes should be based upon issues that have emerged over the previous 12 months that have been highlighted by RAJACs, Koori Caucus, KRGs and government business units or that have emerged from an analysis of criminal justice data. The KJU may offer suggestions for themes for consideration by the AJF if this assists in expediting the process. Themes should be aligned to the priorities for the AJA. Once determined it will be the responsibility of the KJU, in collaboration/discussion with the AJF members (out of session) to create an agenda aligned to the theme. Creation of the agenda will include identification of speakers/presenters particularly those who might offer a view not typically encountered at an AJF.

The theme-based approach proposed in our recommendation can also assist in addressing the issue raised by one Departmental AJF member who voiced a concern about the agenda:

A frustration we have is the conversations have been about 50% of the time about issues and responsibilities of DHHS. It's frustrating to see a whole lot of issues around justice for Aboriginal people don't get a lot of air time at the forum. We need clearer demarcation on what we deal with at the AJF and what could be better dealt with elsewhere. (Departmental AJF member)

We heard similar frustrations exist at the regional level where RAJAC members reported some dissatisfaction with management of agendas and decision-making. For example, one government stakeholder perceived the RAJAC as operating solely for information sharing and networking:

At the meetings I have attended in the last year and half I don't think we had one agenda item which required a decision. In terms of what the department gets out of attending, it's just the opportunity to network with another range of stakeholders in the space and an opportunity to present work the Department is doing in this space. (Regional Departmental representative)

Another Departmental interviewee described raising similar concerns about discussions being more action-focused, finding that others agreed, but seeing no change in practice within the partnership. A theme-based approach may work at the RAJAC level but this would need to be a decision taken within the RAJACs as they vary in terms of the operation.

6.4.1.2. Plans exist to deal with changing structures, leadership issues and communication problems

The AJF membership has expanded over the years as it has accommodated the broadening of interests to address the broader determinants of contact with the criminal justice system. There has always been an acknowledgement that addressing over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system requires directing attention to elements outside of the system, elements such as housing, education, child protection, mental health and the like. AJF membership now reflects this wider view and is considered by many interviewees as “too big”.

One of the consequences of the expanded membership that was most reported by interviewees is the impact it has had on discussion at the forum. This was variously described as “not as rich”, without “passion”, and too “polite”. Further, the forum has been described as “information sharing and not problem solving”.

We have conducted interviews with almost all of the AJF members and without exception each has raised some concerns with the effectiveness of the forum. There has been an overwhelming recognition that current arrangements are not as effective as they need to be and there is a desire for a refocus, if not a full reset. There is also a general agreement that now is the time to do this. The majority of interviewees have stated that the expanded membership, while necessary at the time, is no longer adding value and has caused the AJF meetings to become “transactional and not transformational”.

Recognising that there is diversity across the regions in how each RAJAC is structured and operated, concerns were raised that some RAJACs have become too process oriented and focus too much on the actions identified in the Regional Justice Action Plans. In itself, monitoring achievements is a necessary and useful exercise but only if there is evidence that achieving the actions has led to change on the ground with regard the objectives that are being sought. It was also said that in performing this accountability function the RAJAC meetings are left with too little time to discuss

emerging issues and how they might be responded to. We have heard from several interviewees that becoming more responsive might be aided through the introduction of Regional Justice Action Plans covering one year only. This would assist in focusing attention on one or two priority areas and would provide more opportunity to introduce emergent issues into the plans. The RAJACs that are experiencing “stagnation” are struggling to define a way out.

A regionally-focused group has been established in the Loddon Mallee region – the Loddon Mallee Aboriginal Reference Group (LMARG). LMARG is a consortium of ACCOs who are committed to working cooperatively and taking a joint approach to addressing issues. LMARG provides a mechanism for the delivery of regional health and wellbeing programs and projects within a framework of self-determination. LMARG members include: Bendigo and District Aboriginal Cooperative; Mallee District Aboriginal Services in Mildura, Swan Hill and Kerang; Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation in Wodonga; Murray Valley Aboriginal Cooperative in Robinvale; and Njernda Aboriginal Corporation in Echuca.

This group meets quarterly over three days. The first day is devoted to the CEOs of the ACCOs. On day two they might dedicate half a day to human services and half a day to health, Day 3 might dedicate a half day to justice and the other half to education. The group invite representatives from those sectors to attend in the relevant sessions. LMARG have a focus on one regional priority area, for example, they might focus on transition from prison or out of home care and devote attention to that one priority in the quarterly meeting.

This is an alternative model, led by Aboriginal organisations to which the state agencies are invited to participate in targeted discussion and very much focused on developing solutions to problems in the region. A representative from the DHHS has stated that this has been a very successful model in the region and suggest that it be looked to as an example of what can be achieved through collaborative effort.

Recommendation 12 – RAJAC Chairs would benefit from sharing ideas about how to maintain the vibrancy and relevance of RAJAC Forums to all members. Some RAJACs struggle to attract new community members and others are challenged by inconsistent membership. In coming together (this could be at regular Koori Caucus meetings) there is an opportunity to share innovative ideas from which all RAJACs can benefit. The networking opportunity should include Chairs and Deputy Chairs of RAJACs and should be extended to Executive Officers, LAJAC Project Officers and where appropriate LAJAC chairs so that the capacity building is offered to all who are supporting the AJA in the regions.

6.4.1.3. Positive partner relationships have formed and are being maintained

One of the most reported achievements of the AJF is that it has facilitated and enabled the development of strong and durable relationships between agencies and with members of the Victorian Aboriginal community. Having such relationships in place means that forum members can contact each other outside of the official channel provided by the forums and committee meetings. The direct contact has resulted in many justice issues being clarified or resolved before they escalate.

It's been the signature piece for better engagement both at the local/regional level and state-wide level – showing commitment to 'we're in it together', being able to test our thinking in that environment, hearing the instant feedback, also demystifying some [justice] processes. (Departmental AJF member)

At a regional level there have developed strong and positive relationships between the RAJAC membership that allows for communication and problem solving through more informal means. In most regions it has become possible for the RAJAC Chair, for example, to assist members of their community who have encountered issues with government agencies including police, by directly advocating with the relevant authorities on the community member's behalf. There have been numerous instances where minor issues or miscommunications have been resolved before they become more damaging.

The ongoing meetings of community and government allow for these relationships to be strengthened and maintained. It is questionable whether they could be maintained without the formal structures that are in place particularly as agency representation shifts as staff move out of one region and into another.

6.4.1.4. Partnership effectiveness is reviewed, and practices adapted as required

We have previously discussed the changed environment in which the AJA is now operating. Many government agencies have more fully developed their own policy and strategy responses to addressing Aboriginal disadvantage. Added to that is the Victorian government support for the activation of self-determination and steps towards establishing a treaty with Aboriginal Victorians. In some respects, these recent events have overtaken AJF members. There is a sense that the structures supporting the AJA will need to adapt to the changed environment but, because there is currently a state of flux in the changes, it has been difficult to pin down how and what needs to adapt. The recommendations from this evaluation should assist in identifying where adaptations can be made to drive the changes needed to ensure the continued relevance of the AJF and RAJACs in guiding the Agreement into the next phase.

6.4.1.5. The partnership influences the organizational decisions of partners independent of the partnership

Two agencies in particular highlighted that the AJA partnership had influenced how they do business. These agencies have taken the view that "core business is Koori business".

Corrections Victoria are a key partner agency to the Agreement. The agency has implemented a number of strategic decisions which offer a good insight into their commitment to the Agreement and its objectives. The Commissioner for Corrections, Jan Shuard, stated that decisions taken within the agency are "always looked at through the lens of investment in Aboriginal prisoners and offenders". The agency does look to such investment as a proportionate response, that is, an investment ratio that considers the number of Aboriginal offenders as a proportion of non-Aboriginal offenders. The agency also attempts to avoid decisions that would require adaptation of mainstream services to suit the specificities of Aboriginal culture. As the Commissioner noted, "the AJA is embedded into our DNA" and placing Aboriginal culture and needs at the centre of decision making has become their 'business as usual' approach. An example of the impact that partnership with Aboriginal community members can have comes in the renaming of the Corrections Victoria Aboriginal Programs Unit to Naalamba Ganbu and Nerrlinggu Yilam. The Commissioner for Corrections sent out notification to all staff about the name change and encouraged the use of the Aboriginal language name. To assist the agency provided sound bites so that non-Aboriginal people could pronounce it correctly.

Now people walk around actually referring to the unit as Naalamba Ganbu and Nerrlinggu Yilam, they're not using English and we were very clear about saying not to use acronyms or putting English definition in brackets. We want to encourage people to use this language and we gave them the sound bite because everyone fears if they've said it wrong and they get embarrassed but we encouraged them to practice in their own time. One of the last presentations I went to the Minister for Corrections actually said Naalamba Ganbu and Nerrlinggu Yilam quite freely, quite easily. People didn't even stop to think. It just registered that the Minister had just used language in her speech. It's those critical things by simply understanding language and its place in our mainstream business we're maintaining aboriginal ancient language. It's those, little things that are having an impact but are quite simple to do.

Victoria Police was also highlighted as taking an organisation-wide approach;

There is an overwhelming desire to actually understand any opportunities for improvement and a desire to do better. It's quite unique to be able to walk into a big agency such as Victoria Police and from the chief down you've got an overwhelming sense of 'How do we do things better?' (Departmental AJF member)

The Priority Communities Division within Victoria Police is an example where organisational change has occurred. The Division is now centrally located and engages much more intensely with community enabling a more agile approach to dealing with on-the-ground issues. As the Chief Commissioner has noted;

That's a central piece for us and they are central to our involvement to the AJF. They guide and shepherd and coordinate it. They can get involved in all parts of the organisation so have a role in directing our policy

The Sheriff's Office reported similar changes:

[AJA] has enabled a great deal more understanding in our sheriff's offices about Koori issues more generally and we are becoming much more Koori aware.

6.4.1.6. Reviewing performance

There is room for a limited annual review of partnership performance so that practices can be adapted as required and steps taken to enhance the collaborative skills of the partners and the partnership. The review could be a simple survey of members of each of the major structures – AJF, RAJAC, LAJAC. If necessary the review may also include other structures such as the KRGs and potentially the Koori Caucus. If the Caucus is subject to review it should be conducted by an independent party endorsed by the Caucus. An assessment tool such as the ones referred to in Section 4 offer a useful base from which to build a review tool suitable for the AJA partnership¹⁵.

Recommendation 13 – A recommendation that the KJU design and implement an annual survey of AJA partners at the state, regional and local levels to gather their views on the performance (strengths and weaknesses) of the partnership. Survey responses should be anonymised and confidentiality of respondents assured. Results from the survey should be presented back to the relevant forum.

The above recommendation focuses on the performance of the partnership. The Evaluation Branch within the KJU do commission independent, and sometimes conduct internal evaluations of various aspects of the AJA. The outcomes of these evaluations are reported to the AJF. We consider it would be useful for a process of review of achievement of the goals identified in Regional Justice Action Plans be undertaken to gain greater insight into initiatives unique to each region. Information from such an assessment would help to inform the roll out (or not) of similar initiatives in other regions under the place-based model advocated within the AJA. This review would not be an evaluation, rather a simple assessment of progress in the regions towards addressing identified justice issues. This assessment would be in addition to the recommended evaluation discussed in Recommendation 2 (page 48).

Recommendation 14 – Regional Justice Action Plans should be assessed each year by the RAJAC to monitor the extent to which actions have been addressed and the contribution the actions have made to the objectives of the AJA in the region. The assessment should also identify any actions that remain outstanding and RAJACs should identify how they will be addressed in the coming Plan (if at all). This assessment report should be made publicly available through the KJU.

¹⁵ For example, see the Partnership Self-Assessment Tool from the Centre for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies in Health at https://atrium.lib.uoguelph.ca/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10214/3129/Partnership_Self-Assessment_Tool-Questionnaire_complete.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

6.4.2. Partnership Outcomes

6.4.2.1. Agreed objectives are being met

The objectives of the AJA3 partnership model and its governance structures, in summary, are to: increase collaboration and accountability; enable Aboriginal self-determination; and thus contribute to better justice outcomes.

Collaboration and accountability

Several interviewees felt that the AJF was not making enough concrete progress toward its objective. It was recommended to us that each AJF focus on a few major priorities and develop actions required in the following six months to make progress against them. If this approach were adopted it would result in less time being spent on cycles of reporting and allow for a strategic agenda less distorted by the issue of the day.

We want actions and results but we can't get traction. It might be that we can form around a particular issue and a group of people from police and community can be formed to work on solving a particular problem and getting a quite tactical outcome. Then I come back to the AJF on progress and the result. Then we can say 'OK we've done this. Now what's next? Over a couple of years, we will have nailed a whole bunch of things (Government AJF member)

An example of a top priority was reducing the remand rates of young Aboriginal people. Collaborative work can explore community interventions and wrap-around support, and how to gain the young person's consent to participate. While this work is happening (e.g. through Aboriginal Case Management Review Meetings, for example), the AJF is focusing more on the recidivism data (another interviewee spoke of being 'swamped' with data) than on action.

One interviewee felt that too much time is spent in the AJF discussing the absence or perceived shortcomings of services. They argued it would be more effective to adopt and maintain a collaborative and solution-focussed approach. While this argument has merit, it fails to acknowledge that there are real absences and shortcomings in service delivery with much of that service delivery reliant upon government – as delivery agents or via funding of non-government sector service delivery organisations. Discussions at the AJF about the absence of services is part of the accountability function of the forum and cannot be dismissed.

Another government interviewee described the potential of the AJF to drive the requirement to work better together, and the unrealised need for genuine equality around the table. This constrains the AJF's ability to set strategic direction, in this view, because government commitments are not being made and followed through:

The departments are not making commitments there and then to community to actually work together to resolve a systemic issue or look at reform. What you are getting is a lot of departments ducking and weaving. Therein lies the issue and you can sense the frustration. They've got the resources, they hold the data, they provide the service system responses so they fund the local delivery model. They absolutely have got all the power (Aboriginal Government representative)

The community forum at the AJF meetings will often raise issues related to individual cases of grievance or ongoing concerns. Having the high-level government representatives in the circle allows for resolutions to be offered but it also provides an opportunity for government to see each individual

issue as part of a systemic problem and develop a whole-of-system response based on their data and their ability to fund the service system. This would extend accountability from the individual case to the system.

Self determination

There was a mix of opinions about progress towards self-determination. Several participants considered that the AJA was ready for a renewed momentum as a vehicle for change within the context of progress towards Aboriginal self-determination.

We are on the steering committee for AJA4 because self-determination is at the heart of it. We want to be there as advocates and set out more clearly how self-determination looks so that it's more enforceable. This is the lens through which change can happen - with that lens we can approach things differently and it will lead to better outcomes all round. Self determination was originally flagged as a right in the Victorian Human Rights Charter. But more work was needed then with the community, to really understand it. With AJA4 and the treaty discussions we can define the rights and the obligations attached to it. The Human Rights Charter is our mechanism for making things happen. If self determination is at the centre, legislative processes such as bail and parole will have to take into account the consequences of any changes, in terms of self determination. (Aboriginal Peak Body representative)

In some cases, we have heard that government partners are cautious about wielding their power and prefer to defer to community leadership:

The last thing we want to do is impose or seize control ...we want solutions to be community led with our support - not us placing solutions on community.' (Government AJF member)

We support this view but caution against an expectation that the community are solely responsible for devising solutions or setting a strategic agenda. The AJA is a partnership arrangement and there is a desire for it to be an equal partnership (but refer to Section 6.3 where we discuss the power imbalances that are present). Discussions and debate should not be thought of as one party imposing their ideas on the other, rather, the forums should be seen as a two-way dialogue that enables the joint development of solutions with input from all partners.

Meanwhile, others are of the view that power sharing cannot be a reality without radical structural change:

The AJA was a stepping stone but we've got to take the next step now. We needed to start somewhere but 17 years on, the AJA remains in my view a colonial document. White fellas have the money and black fellas have to ask for it. That sets up at least two sets of problems: we assuage our guilt by handing out money, the statutory responsibility and money sits over here and we hand it out to make ourselves feel better. As for the ACCOs, accountabilities are nothing like governments and the agencies rightly say the money alone isn't enough. (Government RAJAC member)

For self-determination to progress, government has to hear and respond to Aboriginal voices in the spirit of equal partnership:

Having the justice forum where you have that equal partnership at the table with community voices and senior level government representatives should facilitate a greater understanding of the issue and an opportunity for the partnership approach to propose

solutions. For me as an Aboriginal person from Victoria, the frustrating bit is that it appears that the Aboriginal voice has less ability to require government departments to effectively respond. In Aboriginal community there is what is called "deep listening" and there's some government departments that are not listening. They hear the frustration but they don't understand that it's driven by not being heard. (Government AJF member)

So, while the structures and processes of the AJA build in a voice for all actors, the power of those voices remains unequal.

Improved justice outcomes

The KJU tracks the key achievements of the initiatives of the AJA and reports these on an annual basis. The last document of achievements reviewed for this evaluation were those reported for the 2015/16 period. This document extends over 48 pages and 111 achievements including:

- Establishment of the new Local Justice Worker Program assisting offenders to complete community corrections orders and successfully resolving outstanding fines and warrants.
- Implementation of the Koori Women's Diversion Program in Mildura involving intensive case-management to address many of the complex drivers of offending behaviour among Koori women and resulted in reduced offending and increased diversion from prison.
- Amendments to the Bail Amendments Act whereby children are no longer charged with the offence of breaching bail conditions.
- Aboriginal Community Fines Initiative provides Aboriginal community with information on the Infringements process and tools to action their infringements, including access to an Infringements Court Registrar and legal assistance.
- Aboriginal Prisoners Transition Housing Project whereby two facilities, one for males and one for females were built as a short term transitional option for people leaving prison.

These achievements are significant in themselves and the actions that led to them have been informed by the discussions that have occurred at the regional and state level forums. To date the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system remains high but without the AJA initiatives it would likely be much higher.

6.4.2.2. The partnership is perceived as being successful

... the fundamental threshold to determine whether something is worthwhile. Without this could you achieve what you can with it. I think the answer is a resounding no. Even if you did achieve things you definitely couldn't have achieved as much as you have with it in place. Is there more you want to achieve? Of course, there is. Is there disadvantage we need to eliminate? Of course, there is but would removing a forum like this make that harder. Absolutely (Government AJF member).

One of the most reported achievements of the AJF is that it has facilitated and enabled the development of strong and durable relationships between agencies and with members of the Victorian Aboriginal community. The partnership has come a long way since it first formed in 2001. At that time there was understandable distrust and scepticism by Aboriginal community members towards government. The partnership has evolved and there are now high levels of trust between the partners. This has not led to complacency on the part of any of the partners and there remains a high demand for accountability and action. Some of the comments we heard during interviews reflect the outcome of the AJA journey thus far:

We have had a really positive experience with the AJA. We remember how far we've come.... especially compared with other jurisdictions (Aboriginal Peak body representative)

It's been the signature piece for better engagement both at the local/regional level and state-wide level – showing commitment to 'we're in it together', being able to test our thinking in that environment, hearing the instant feedback, also demystifying some [justice] processes. (Government AJF member)

The partnership is perceived as being successful in creating and enabling programs, such as women's diversion, where the current AJA has a specific focus area. There is both a groundswell of community support and the responsible government agency recognises and embraces AJA principles:

Diversion of women from prison was highlighted as a joint priority of government and community making it easier to work in partnership. The pilot program benefited from being a key focus area of AJA3. In my current position, without the AJA framing how I do my job, I always have had to argue the case for working in partnership and for recognising Aboriginal people's aspiration for self-determination. It's just that this workplace isn't used to doing business that way ... I still hold to the guiding principles of the AJA (Government AJF member)

It is not only the high-profile initiatives that provide an indicator of success but local programs with seemingly small results can effect much wider change:

I can't talk for others but I think some of the projects have been change-makers in our region. We're a very small region but when you look at the statistics...if we can stop one or two Koori kids from going into the system then we might deem that to be a success. Certainly, if you look at how much it costs to keep one person in prison. There is respect for the RAJAC. Community are looking on and saying "what are you doing?" and we can say, well we brought in these things and they've made a difference (RAJAC Chair).

6.4.2.3. The partnership provides for all relevant actors to have a voice

The structures that have been established under the AJA provide an opportunity for the community voice to be heard at the local level (in some regions), regionally and at the state level. Incorporation of community forums at the AJF and in some RAJACs allows for any interested community member to confront the AJA partners - ask questions, demand answers. This opportunity has been welcomed by those who have participated.

The justice forum brings together not only the members all around the state but the open community forum. It's an opportunity for real grassroots community members to come out and its emotive, it's raw. Some of the feedback is targeted to all government agencies but predominantly the police interactions are quite confrontational. Victoria Police have never shirked their responsibility and not only do they take ownership of it to the person at the time very publicly but also are very quick to follow it and make sure it is resolved down the track to the satisfaction of the individual (Government AJF member).

The AJF is attended by senior government leaders from agencies with responsibility for improving justice outcomes and Aboriginal leaders from across the state. The Forum attracts in excess of 50 individuals depending upon the agenda and the location for the forum. Other attendees may be invited, as needed. Currently, the AJF includes representation from DJR, Victoria Police, all court jurisdictions, Corrections Victoria, Youth Justice, Health and Human Services, Education and Training, Commonwealth Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (Indigenous Affairs Network), Victorian

Department of the Premier and Cabinet (Aboriginal Affairs), and Victims Support. Other quasi-government groups and peak bodies represented are Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, Koori Youth Council, Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, Victorian Aboriginal Education Association, Victorian Aboriginal Childcare Agency, Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, Koori Independent Prison Visitor Program, and Aboriginal Housing Victoria. RAJAC Chairs from the nine justice regions represent regional communities.

The forums at all levels are open to all-comers to observe and, thus, have high levels of transparency. It is therefore incumbent on all participants that the commitments they make are followed up and reported on. We have heard some frustration that some matters have not been resolved after being on the agenda for over three years. Those items have remained in the agenda which enables members to constantly raise them until they are resolved which demonstrates the levels of accountability that are built into the processes.

The AJF membership covers a broad spectrum of interests. Some consider the spectrum to be too broad and have advocated for a reduction in the size of the AJF membership and for it to narrow its focus on justice issues specifically. This is discussed further in Section 6.4.2.7 below.

6.4.2.4. The Aboriginal Justice Agreement is 'known' and respected as a vehicle for change

Amongst the partners and partner organisations the Aboriginal Justice Agreement is known and is respected as a vehicle for change. Although we have not specifically interviewed people not directly associated with it, partners have suggested that it is not well-known in the community. This, in itself, is not a negative because people in the community know about, have used, or come into contact with many of the initiatives that have developed as result of the AJA. That is more important than knowing about the AJA because they are the initiatives that make a difference in people's lives.

Across government the AJA has been a guiding document and has formed the basis for many recent and new strategies developed by other government agencies. It could be argued that the AJA created the momentum for the current discussions around self-determination and treaty. To maintain that momentum partners to the AJA will need to take account of the more crowded landscape (see Section 6.1) and how they will connect and interact with the new partnerships that are coming together around education, health, policing, human services, etc.

6.4.2.5. Are achievements of the partnership disseminated publicly

The achievements of the AJA partnership are not disseminated publicly but there would be great benefit if they were. We have encountered interviewees who question what has been achieved because they see that there has been little change in some of the indicators, in particular, the over-arching indicator of over-representation. If people who are closely involved in the AJA have this view then it is highly likely that a similar view is held across the community. It is true that this indicator has not shifted but that does not mean that the AJA partnership has not recorded significant achievements over its course as was discussed above. There is also an acknowledgment that had the AJA not been in place the indicators may have been far worse as this one interviewee notes:

Communication is critical. Knowledge is a powerful tool and the effort to that is important because I mentioned earlier the rate is increasing in terms of Aboriginal over-representation but the justice forum and the agreement slows that down and that's the narrative that people need to know as opposed to this thing is not going to be the be-all and end-all but it does hold a system accountable and that's what we need to continually tell the communities. That's what we need to tell those people who are hard to reach, that this is

the situation. Even those who are in the know as well because that narrative comes back that we have this justice agreement and it's not doing nothing. It's important for people to know the narrative and the outcomes of the forums. The forum and the system have to get better at doing that, hands down and better at acknowledging that there are other voices and other people with expertise and knowledge and understanding to assist. (Government AJF member)

This is a passionate plea for better, wider communication. There are many success stories that have come out of the AJA and these need to be shared.

Recommendation 15 – We understand the KJU is in the process of developing a stronger web presence. That presence needs to tell these stories where change has been effected and it also needs to tell the stories of how the AJA partnership is working towards addressing other factors contributing to over-representation. As one interviewee made clear “knowledge is a powerful tool” and placing that knowledge where it can have the most influence is the first step. We also recommend that the KJU considers building in the facility for people to raise their own issues and concerns through a moderated section of the website. This could help to attract the youth voice and bring greater diversity to the discussions.

6.4.2.6. The partnership adds value

As we have highlighted previously, the AJA partnership structures are viewed as successful and interviewees want to see them be continued but with some modifications. Here we bring together the criticisms of the current structures and offer suggestions for improvements.

1. The impact of other forums

There are a growing number of forums and mechanisms for Aboriginal involvement in the strategies and decision making of government departments. Given many of the determinants for criminal offending behaviour lie outside of the ‘justice system’ it is likely that the discussions at these other forums and the actions that arise from them will contribute to justice outcomes – positive or negative. The question for the current partners of the AJA is how to interact with these other forums to minimise the potential for duplication of effort and maximise the benefits.

One of the major consequences of the emergence of these new forums is the demand it places on Aboriginal community representatives. They are invited to participate in many forums and they are already spread very thin and many are close to burn-out. We expect that many Aboriginal representatives will prioritise their involvement in the forums of most interest and the ones where they expect to achieve real results. For some, the AJF may not be the forum of choice.

We see two main opportunities available to the AJF partners to lessen the demand on Aboriginal representatives at the Forum. If the focus for the agenda was directed towards criminal justice matters and strong links to other forums (which could be through the Secretaries Leadership Group for Aboriginal Affairs and a similarly convened group of Aboriginal representatives) were this might allow for members to attend the one forum of most interest to them and be confident that they will continue to be informed of discussions happening at other forums. This change will only be successful if the links and communication flow between forums are strong. A second option (and these should not be considered and either / or approach), is to develop programs that strengthen the capacity and capability of Aboriginal community members not already engaged with the AJA or AJF to encourage

more to participate in the partnership. This option is for 'sharing the load', so that the already engaged members have broader support from the community. This capacity strengthening task is a whole-of-government responsibility, not only for the AJA, but for all other forums including those established for self-determination and treaty.

... we had a community leadership program here run by one of the universities was very successful it could be something that to start people thinking about if they want to pursue a more intense leadership role, but some of the basics there needs to be a starting point (RAJAC Chair)

One interviewee's perception was that partnership forums were brought together satisfactorily –the government has a common framework and, at the community level, consistency comes from community leaders having a lived, whole-of-community perspective:

Between the Family Violence Partnership forums and the AJA3 there's a clear delineation when you get to the AJF they won't cross-over into FV they know it's the remit of the FV partnership forum and vice versa. There's cross representation on the forums so there's consistency and that sharing of information. The Victoria Aboriginal Affairs Framework brings together all that annual reporting anyway so it's almost the overarching framework to drive all activity to close the gap on all the domains. While there is cross-over, the membership is consistent across both forums and it's really the leadership in the community that are driving the raising of issues and the systemic reform required to address the issues. It is consistent but when you've got a small community that is interconnected anyway it's easier to understand that the themes are consistent if they're raised at the FV forum or the AJF because it's the same voices, the same people representing the issues because we all live and breathe in the community. (Regional Government Representative)

This works in the case of these two forums, both very much focused on justice matters, but with other forums in education or health, where the justice link is not so obvious, there is a risk that duplication can occur or, worse that gaps might emerge because neither forum is focused on a particular issue.

For the AJA partnership to continue to add value there will need to be some way to connect all of the players across all of the forums.

2. Are all of voices heard?

The voice largely missing from the AJA partnership is that of youth (up to 18 years) and young people (18 to 24 years). The youth and young people's voices are represented at the AJF with the inclusion of the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Youth and the Manager of the Koori Youth Council. At most RAJACs they are absent. This is not to say that the AJF or the RAJACs do not have a focus on the issues affecting youth and young people as they clearly do. In some cases, the focus on youth is at the expense of other age cohorts. Several times we heard comments such as "we have to focus on the kids to stop them getting caught up in the justice system; its too late for the adults". This focus may be strengthened because the youth voices are not being directly and consistently canvassed at the regional and state forums. Certainly, some of the young people we spoke with did not share the same pessimism about rehabilitation of older age groups.

The absence of a direct youth voice is a detriment to the value of the partnership. Given the young population profile of Aboriginal people in Victoria and the risk of increasing numbers of youth entering the criminal justice system it is essential for the partnership to maintain a focus on programs and initiatives that help to divert young people from the system and to prevent their entry into the system

in the first place. The best programs will be those that take account of what young people want. Encouraging more involvement by young people in the partnership, particularly at the regional and local levels, should be a focus and efforts to do so increased.

3. Succession planning

The capacity strengthening advocated above leads into enabling succession planning, particularly for RAJAC Chairs and Deputy Chairs and also for RAJAC Executive Officers.

At present, RAJAC Deputy Chairs are not being fully utilised or engaged. They tend to be used largely as a proxy for when the Chair is not available. Given the time constraints on most Chairs we suggest that the role of the Deputy Chair be boosted. In one region the RAJAC has implemented a portfolio approach similar to that of the KRG. RAJAC members, including the Deputy Chair, are assigned portfolio areas and attend the KRG in that capacity. Having this greater role in the KRG has brought a number of benefits including easing the load on the Chair, allowing other RAJAC members to become more fully engaged and building their knowledge of how decisions are made and progressed through government. It would be hoped that this would also help with the retention of community members in the RAJAC (**See Recommendation 5 on Page 57**).

We've got people in the region who work in FV who could go to the FV KRG or people working with police can go police KRG and coordinate the region's response and bring information back (Former RAJAC EO).

As noted previously, the role of the EO is crucial to the effective functioning of the RAJACs. The DJR is increasingly challenged in recruiting quality staff into these roles as the level of interest appears to have waned over recent years. The value added by EOs is well-accepted and when they leave these roles there is a significant impact on the RAJAC, particularly if the position remains unfilled for any period of time.

We have discussed previously the challenges faced by RAJAC EOs and offer a number of suggestions for addressing, or minimising the impacts of, the challenges they face. Many EOs struggle to cover their whole region and to support both RAJAC and LAJACs.

To address the challenges faced by RAJAC EOs we make the following recommendation.

Recommendation 16 – We recommend that:

- each LAJAC have a dedicated Project Officer supporting it
- non-metropolitan based RAJAC EOs have permanent access to a vehicle to enable them to easily travel around the region
- trainee positions similar to those within the Sheriff's Office be introduced to assist with succession planning. A trainee would have networks to the community and have developed the skills necessary to engage with community and government to be able to step into the role should a vacancy arise.

4. Are all of the structures adding value?

The one partnership structure that attracted the most criticism is the Koori Reference Group. They have variously been described by critics as “cumbersome”, “bureaucratic”, “time consuming” and a “talk-fest”. Such criticism and that described in Section 6.2.1.3 appears to us as valid. The KRGs add

one further layer to an already multi-layered partnership and the role that the KRGs play may be able to be achieved through other means. In Section 6.2.1.3 we have made a recommendation that the KRGs continue to operate as they are in the short-term and in the absence of any other mechanism to assign responsibility for addressing actions raised at the AJF and to monitor progress against those actions.

5. Would devolution improve effectiveness and sustainability?

One of the strengths of the AJA partnership is the ability to gather and share information at a local level. The relationships that have formed at the regional and town-based level have led to greater understanding of the issues that Aboriginal people are confronted with and, in turn, has built greater cultural awareness in government service providers. From this improved understanding government agencies have been introducing more and more Aboriginal liaison roles as well as increasing their Aboriginal workforce. The Sheriff's office is one business unit that has benefited from the insights they have gained:

The SALOs enable us to have far more understanding of Koori issues and the cultural significance by the officers but also a lot of Koori communities who we have been able to work with are far less intimidated by the things that we do and the fact of our existence so we've been able to engage with individuals as a result which has been a really significant positive. People are better able to meet with community and community are better able to deal with us much more directly. (Sheriff's representative)

Agencies have some limited discretion at the regional level which has enabled local initiatives to proceed. These have brought positive results on a small-scale. It may time to consider further devolution of decision making away from the centre and towards the regions.

6.4.2.7. The partnership is sustainable

We consider the AJA partnership a sustainable model. It has endured for 17 years and over that time has been the catalyst for significant change in the justice sector. We have not encountered, in over 80 interviews, any individual or organisation that thought the partnership had not been worthwhile. Nor did we hear from anyone who thought it should not continue. What we did hear is that the partnership needs to be revitalised, refocused and redirected.

The AJA model is fantastic - there's respect, openness, true engagement and genuine listening. But in the AJF, there's a sense of the same old thing - cycles of talking and a lot of good thinking. But where's the strategy? We could improve accountability by focusing on five or six big initiatives and track actual progress, based on a theory of change. There is a lot of reporting back but I sometimes wish it was a bit more rigorous. We could start the meeting by reviewing actions against goals. To ensure traction and reflect on impact (Aboriginal Peak Body organisation)

The AJA was a stepping stone but we've got to take the next step now. In its current form it has exhausted itself (Government AJF member)

I think the AJA does do good work and I think it's needed but it is definitely time for change and to be really focused on what the purpose is. Because it is really big and I think some of the focus gets lost and I think many people sitting around the table are feeling that (RAJAC Chair)

I remember one comment from a very senior person who said this forum should just be called the Aboriginal Forum because we don't focus on anything justice we focus on anything Aboriginal (Government AJF member).

What has emerged often during interviews is a desire to see the AJF narrow its focus to justice-specific issues, that is, issues pertaining to police, courts and corrections in both the youth and adult spaces. This view doesn't discount the determinants of criminal offending behaviour in areas such as health, housing, employment, drug and alcohol use, or child protection. It argues that responsibility for those areas are best left to the specialists in the specific agencies and organisations with responsibilities for addressing them. There is also a view that these other agencies are now much more advanced in their own engagement mechanisms allowing for the Aboriginal voice to be heard.

This is a view that is shared by the evaluators. There is a real opportunity to push reset on the AJF so that it can make criminal justice matters the centre of attention. If this were the case, there might then be an opportunity for the partnership to have an impact on justice policy decisions and legislative change that continues to disproportionately and adversely affect Aboriginal Victorians.

Recommendation 17 – That the AJF take the opportunity to refocus its agenda on criminal justice matters, provided that strong links are established between the AJF and other Aboriginal-focussed forums established by other Government agencies. While the AJF agenda could focus on criminal justice matters there is a continuing need for a holistic approach and the Forum will still need to draw on knowledge and ideas from a range of experts across different sectors. Representation from a similarly wide range of stakeholder groups as currently engaged should continue. Where links are established with other forums they will need to allow for an open flow of information and for issues that might be raised in one forum to be referred to, and acted upon, by a more relevant forum. It is crucial that accountability for addressing actions is maintained and communicated. If the links between forums cannot be established the AJF should continue to maintain the broad focus it currently has, understanding that duplication of effort will occur.

7. Recommendations

Throughout this report we have made 17 key recommendations as well as some other suggestions for improvement. The recommendations are listed below and organised by theme.

Building the strength of RAJAC/LAJACs

Recommendation 1: Regional Justice Action Plans need to be responsive to the dynamic change that occurs in society and that generate new issues of concern to the RAJAC and its members. We recommend the introduction of annual Regional Justice Action Plans which focus on two to three priority issues. It would be the role of the RAJAC to determine annual priorities but their determinations could be informed through allowing for community input via online means (if not directly via attendance at the RAJAC meetings). We understand the KJU is considering expanding its online presence. This is ideal time to also consider how that presence can incorporate the ability for community input. (p. 47)

Recommendation 5 - Attracting greater participation in regional (and local) forums by Aboriginal community members, particularly those representing specific interests (e.g. youth, education, housing, etc) is crucial for the ongoing relevance and effectiveness of RAJACs and LAJACs. Some efforts should be directed towards investigating the barriers that keep people away and addressing these so that participation is encouraged and new people are welcomed into the forum. To ensure diversity of views it would be beneficial to attract participation from community members who are not necessarily aligned with government or community organisations (p. 55).

Recommendation 6: KJU investigate options to assist RAJACs in recruiting new community members to the RAJAC and developing the leadership capacity of new members that they might take on a leadership role in the RAJAC. This capacity building opportunity should also be made available to existing Chairs and Deputy Chairs. An amendment to the RAJAC Framework of Operations will be required to expand eligibility to community members not affiliated with an ACCO. (p. 57).

Recommendation 7: As a first step we recommend that KJU independently evaluate the position description for EOs against the tasks actually undertaken and the responsibilities of the role. There is an opportunity to expand the role in the regions so that it becomes the key coordination position for Aboriginal justice matters. We would expect that any evaluation of the role would closely consider the resourcing sufficient to perform the tasks delivered by the EO and the professional development needs of the EOs to contribute as leaders in their communities. (p. 59).

Recommendation 10: That LAJAC and RAJAC Chairs and Deputy Chairs are surveyed to gain an understanding of their need and desire for skills and capacity development to assist them in their roles. Once the needs assessment has been completed the KJU should facilitate the necessary training for those interested. (p. 70).

Recommendation 12 – RAJAC Chairs would benefit from sharing ideas about how to maintain the vibrancy and relevance of RAJAC Forums to all members. Some RAJACs struggle to attract new community members and others are challenged by inconsistent membership. In coming together (this could be at regular Koori Caucus meetings) there is an opportunity to share innovative ideas from which all RAJACs can benefit. The networking opportunity should include Chairs and Deputy Chairs of RAJACs and should be extended to Executive Officers, LAJAC Project Officers and where appropriate LAJAC

chairs so that the capacity building is offered to all who are supporting the AJA in the regions. (p. 75).

Recommendation 16 – We recommend that:

- each LAJAC have a dedicated Project Officer supporting it
- non-metropolitan based RAJAC EOs have permanent access to a vehicle to enable them to easily travel around the region
- trainee positions similar to those within the Sheriff's Office be introduced to assist with succession planning. A trainee would have networks to the community and have developed the skills necessary to engage with community and government to be able to step into the role should a vacancy arise (p. 86).

Managing the demands on community

Recommendation 4: Given the number of forums, meeting, workshops and the range of consultations taking place it would be useful if government agencies holding these forums could better coordinate and communicate activity. Government cannot expect Aboriginal community members will be available for all forums but their ability to do so will be enhanced if they are able to see a schedule of all of the forums being planned for the next six months. A whole-of-government calendar of events could be developed and made publicly available to enable forward planning. (p. 48).

Innovative use of technology and online platforms

Recommendation 9 – Online platforms enable real-time and ongoing communications to occur and provide a useful mechanism to share and disseminate information, either to selected members of a portal or publicly. The KJU should investigate how to expand their online presence so that information can be shared outside of the formal face-to-face forums. (p. 64).

Recommendation 15 – We understand the KJU is in the process of developing a stronger web presence. That presence needs to tell these stories where change has been effected and it also needs to tell the stories of how the AJA partnership is working towards addressing other factors contributing to over-representation. As one interviewee made clear “knowledge is a powerful tool” and placing that knowledge where it can have the most influence is the first step. We also recommend that the KJU considers building in the facility for people to raise their own issues and concerns through a moderated section of the website. This could help to attract the youth voice and bring greater diversity to the discussions. (p. 80).

Monitoring the implementation of the agreement

Recommendation 2 - In developing their Regional Justice Action Plans the RAJAC should identify one action or initiative that is expected to have a significant impact and provide the details of the action, including lead agency/organisation to the KJU Evaluation Team to enable them to develop a methodology for a review. The purpose of the review is to determine the impact of the action against the objectives of the AJA. As it is possible that up to nine reviews will be required annually, it is likely that additional resources will need to be made available to the Evaluation Team to design and implement the studies. (p. 48)

Recommendation 13 – A recommendation that the KJU design and implement an annual survey of AJA partners at the state, regional and local levels to gather their views on the performance (strengths and weaknesses) of the partnership. Survey responses should be anonymised and confidentiality of respondents assured. Results from the survey should be presented back to the relevant forum. (p. 77).

Recommendation 14 - Regional Justice Action Plans should be assessed each year by the RAJAC to monitor the extent to which actions have been addressed and the contribution the actions have made to the objectives of the AJA in the region. The assessment should also identify any actions that remain outstanding and RAJACs should identify how they will be addressed in the coming Plan (if at all). This assessment report should be made publicly available through the KJU. (p. 80).

Also;

Recommendation 7 - As a first step we recommend that KJU independently evaluate the position description for EOs against the tasks actually undertaken and the responsibilities of the role. There is an opportunity to expand the role in the regions so that it becomes the key coordination position for Aboriginal justice matters. We would expect that any evaluation of the role would closely consider the resourcing sufficient to perform the tasks delivered by the EO and the professional development needs of the EOs to contribute as leaders in their communities. (p. 59).

Nurturing and strengthening the partnership

Recommendation 13 – A recommendation that the KJU design and implement an annual survey of AJA partners at the state, regional and local levels to gather their views on the performance (strengths and weaknesses) of the partnership. Survey responses should be anonymised and confidentiality of respondents assured. Results from the survey should be presented back to the relevant forum. (p. 77).

Also,

Recommendation 6 - KJU investigate options to assist RAJACs in recruiting new community members to the RAJAC and developing the leadership capacity of new members that they might take on a leadership role in the RAJAC. This capacity building opportunity should also be made available to existing Chairs and Deputy Chairs. An amendment to the RAJAC Framework of Operations will be required to expand eligibility to community members not affiliated with an ACCO. (p. 57).

Recommendation 10 - That LAJAC and RAJAC Chairs and Deputy Chairs are surveyed to gain an understanding of their need and desire for skills and capacity development to assist them in their roles. Once the needs assessment has been completed the KJU should facilitate the necessary training for those interested. (p. 70).

Reducing the over-burden

Recommendation 3 - The Koori Action Plans are not providing any benefit to the AJA that is not already provided through other mechanisms. We recommend that they be reconsidered. There is potential for the KRG Terms of Reference to be expanded to include any matters previously included in the Koori Action Plan that are not addressed either in the AJA, Regional Justice Action Plans or other procedural documentation. (p. 48).

Also,

Recommendation 8 – The KRGs are currently not functioning effectively, largely due to resourcing and scheduling issues but also because a lack of role clarity. We recommend the KRGs remain in place at least in the short-term. To assist in improving their functionality, we recommend that the KJU investigate the benefits of using web-based platforms to allow more frequent communication between KRG members. This evaluation has only skimmed the surface of what the underlying issues are with the KRGs. As such, we recommend a more in-depth analysis of the diversity of opinions about the KRGs and to better understand all of these positions. With this understanding in place the KJU should work with Koori Caucus to determine whether, and in what form, the Koori Reference Groups might continue, if at all. (p. 62).

Strategically focussing on justice

Recommendation 8 – The KRGs are currently not functioning effectively, largely due to resourcing and scheduling issues but also because a lack of role clarity. We recommend the KRGs remain in place at least in the short-term. To assist in improving their functionality, we recommend that the KJU investigate the benefits of using web-based platforms to allow more frequent communication between KRG members. This evaluation has only skimmed the surface of what the underlying issues are with the KRGs. As such, we recommend a more in-depth analysis of the diversity of opinions about the KRGs and to better understand all of these positions. With this understanding in place the KJU should work with Koori Caucus to determine whether, and in what form, the Koori Reference Groups might continue, if at all. (p. 62).

Recommendation 11 – One AJF each year should be dedicated to identifying three key themes for the subsequent Forums. Identification of the themes should be based upon issues that have emerged over the previous 12 months that have been highlighted by RAJACs, Koori Caucus, KRGs and government business units or that have emerged from an analysis of criminal justice data. The KJU may offer suggestions for themes for consideration by the AJF if this assists in expediting the process. Themes should be aligned to the priorities for the AJA. Once determined it will be the responsibility of the KJU, in collaboration/discussion with the AJF members (out of session) to create an agenda aligned to the theme. Creation of the agenda will include identification of speakers/presenters particularly those who might offer a view not typically encountered at an AJF. (p. 72).

Recommendation 17 – That the AJF take the opportunity to refocus its agenda on criminal justice matters, provided that strong links are established between the AJF and other Aboriginal-focussed forums established by other Government agencies. While the AJF agenda could focus on criminal justice matters there is a continuing need for a holistic approach and the Forum will still need to draw on knowledge and ideas from a range of experts across different sectors. Representation from a similarly wide range of stakeholder groups as currently engaged should continue. Where links are established with other forums they will need to allow for an open flow of information and for issues that might be raised in one forum to be referred to, and acted upon, by a more relevant forum. It is crucial that accountability for addressing actions is maintained and communicated. If the links between forums cannot be established the AJF should continue to maintain the broad focus it currently has, understanding that duplication of effort will occur. (p. 90).

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Appendix A Key Evaluation Questions and sub-Questions

KEQ 1 What are the intended purpose and principles of the Aboriginal Justice Forum, Koori Caucus, RAJAC and LAJAC; and Koori Reference Group structures? Are these being met/upheld?		
No.	Evaluation sub-questions	Methods/ Sources
1.1	What is the purpose and guiding principles of the functional components of the AJA?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of program documentation including the AJF, RAJAC Plans, terms of reference
1.2	Is the AJA, at all levels and across all partnership groups, operating according to its intended purpose and principles?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews with representative members of the AJF, RAJACs, Koori Caucus, reference groups established
KEQ 2 To what extent do the partnership model and governance structures improve accountability and community participation in justice and other relevant policies and initiatives?		
No.	Evaluation sub-questions	Methods/ Sources
2.1	What makes for successful partnership and governance?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literature scan of publicly available sources
2.2	For what and to whom are AJA partners accountable?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of program documentation including the AJF, RAJAC Plans, terms of reference, etc Interviews with representative members of the AJF, RAJACs, Koori Caucus, reference groups established Responses to Discussion Paper
2.3	What evidence is there of a commitment to accountability at all levels of AJA functioning? Systems in place?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of program documentation including the AJF, RAJAC Plans, terms of reference
2.4	What opportunities exist for community to provide input to AJA decision-making?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews with representative members of the AJF, RAJACs, Koori Caucus, reference groups established
	What opportunity is there for the AJA to interact with government decision-makers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews with representative members of the AJF, RAJACs, Koori Caucus, reference groups established
KEQ 3 To what extent do the RAJAC and LAJAC structures influence inclusion, engagement and decision-making at local and regional levels?		
No.	Evaluation sub-questions	Methods/ Sources
3.1	What mechanisms are in place at the local and regional level to allow for input to the functioning and decision-making of the LAJA/RAJAC?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews with representative members of the AJF, RAJACs, Koori Caucus, reference groups established
3.2	How do LAJAC/RAJAC obtain intelligence from local and regional communities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews with representative members of the AJF, RAJACs, Koori Caucus, reference groups established
3.3	How successfully is local/regional information integrated into decision-making processes at LAJAC/RAJAC?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews with representative members of the AJF, RAJACs, Koori Caucus, reference groups established Responses to Discussion Paper

KEQ 4 To what extent do Koori Reference Groups drive action and the progression of justice and other relevant policies and initiatives?		
No.	Evaluation sub-questions	Methods/ Sources
4.1	What is the role and membership of the Koori Reference Group?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews Koori Reference Group members • KRG Terms of Reference
4.2	What are the communication processes of the Koori Reference Group that enable policies and initiatives to be influenced/influential?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews Koori Reference Group members • KRG Terms of Reference
4.3	What level of influence has the Koori Reference Group in the justice sector?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews Koori Reference Group members • Interviews with representative members of the AJF, RAJACs, Koori Caucus, reference groups established KRG Terms of Reference • Responses to Discussion Paper
KEQ 5 How efficient and how effective are the governance structures of AJA? What are their key strengths and weaknesses? Do they facilitate a 'joined up' government approach?		
No.	Evaluation sub-questions	Methods/ Sources
5.1	How do AJA partners view the functioning of the governance structures?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with representative members of the AJF, RAJACs, Koori Caucus, reference groups established • Responses to Discussion Paper
5.2	What is the extent to which partners perceive and/or measure organisational benefits attributable to the AJA governance structures?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with representative members of the AJF, RAJACs, Koori Caucus, reference groups established KRG Terms of Reference • Responses to Discussion Paper
5.3	What is working well with the governance structures that are in place?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with representative members of the AJF, RAJACs, Koori Caucus, reference groups established KRG Terms of Reference • Responses to Discussion Paper • Summit Workshop outcomes
5.4	Are there opportunities for improvement to the governance structures?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with representative members of the AJF, RAJACs, Koori Caucus, reference groups established KRG Terms of Reference • Responses to Discussion Paper • Summit Workshop outcomes

KEQ 6 How do stakeholders define 'success' or 'health' of the partnership model and governance structures, and in light of that - how 'healthy' is the Koori community-government partnership?		
No.	Evaluation sub-questions	Methods/ Sources
6.1	What is working well with the governance structures that are in place? [refer 5.1 & 5.3]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with representative members of the AJF, RAJACs, Koori Caucus, reference groups established KRG Terms of Reference • Responses to Discussion Paper • Summit Workshop outcomes • Literature and document review
6.2	What makes for successful partnership and governance? [refer 2.1]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature scan of publicly available sources
6.3	How successfully is local/regional information integrated into decision-making processes at LAJAC/RAJAC? [refer 3.3]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
6.4		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
KEQ 7 What improvements could be made to the AJA governance structures based on evidence of effective practice, current requirements, and alignment with other governance mechanisms?		
No.	Evaluation sub-questions	Methods/ Sources
7.1	What makes for a successful partnership and governance? [refer 2.1]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature scan of publicly available sources
	Are there opportunities for improvement to the governance structures? [refer 5.4]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with representative members of the AJF, RAJACs, Koori Caucus, reference groups established • Responses to Discussion Paper • Summit Workshop outcomes
KEQ 8 Is it possible to assess the costs and benefits of the Aboriginal Justice Forum?		
No.	Evaluation sub-questions	Methods/ Sources
8.1	What are the costs of convening and supporting the Aboriginal Justice Forum?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial records obtained from KJU
8.2	What benefits have been delivered as a result of the AJF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with representative members of the AJF, RAJACs, Koori Caucus, reference groups established • Responses to Discussion Paper • Summit Workshop outcomes

Appendix B Stakeholders consulted

First name	Surname	Position/Title	Organisation
Larry	Kanoa	Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, Ballarat	Aboriginal Affairs Victoria
Karen	Heats	Ballarat Aboriginal Co-op,	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
Rod	Jackson	CEO Wathaurang Co-op, Geelong	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
Jason	Kanoa	Gunditjimara	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
Jon	Kanoa	Ballarat Aboriginal Co-op	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
Rebecca	Westphal	Local Justice Worker Bendigo and District Aboriginal Corporation (BADAC)	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
Antoinette	Braybrook	CEO	Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service
Darren	Smith	CEO, Aboriginal Housing Victoria	Aboriginal Housing Victoria
Esme	Bamblett		Aborigines Advancement League
Andrew	Jackomos	Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People	Commission for Aboriginal Children and Young People
Wayne	Harper	General Manager, Margoneet	Corrections Victoria
Jan	Shuard	Commissioner	Corrections Victoria
Annette	Stephens	Acting regional Manager, Hume	Corrections Victoria
Angela	Singh	Executive Director, Koori Outcomes Division, Early Childhood and School Education Group	Department of Education
Nicky	Foy	Dept of Education and Training, Ballarat and Geelong	Department of Education and Training
Ross	Broad	Assistant Director, Drug Policy and Reform	Department of Health and Human Services
Anne	Congleton	DHHS AJF Member	Department of Health and Human Services
Nicola	Jeffers	DHHS, Central Highlands region	Department of Health and Human Services
Taryn	Lee	Acting Director, Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Branch	Department of Health and Human Services
Phillip	Perry	Grampians Regional Director, DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services
Leanne	Barnes	Executive Director, West Area and Barwon South West Region	Department of Justice and Regulation
Bill	Bethune	Regional Director, Department of Justice and Regulation, member BSW RAJAC	Department of Justice and Regulation
Peter	Ewer	Acting Executive Director, North Area	Department of Justice and Regulation
Carolyn	Gale	Deputy Secretary, Department of Justice and Regulation	Department of Justice and Regulation
Kylie	Kilgour	Deputy Secretary, Criminal Justice Strategy and Co-ordination	Department of Justice and Regulation
Gabrielle	Levine	DJR Southern Metro Director	Department of Justice and Regulation
Wayne	McEwen	Geelong Koori Court	Department of Justice and Regulation
Jan	Noblett	Executive Director, Justice Health	Department of Justice and Regulation
Peter-Shane	Rotumah	Victims of Crime	Department of Justice and Regulation
Annette	Stephens	Acting Gen Manager, CCS, Hume region	Department of Justice and Regulation
Greg	Wilson	Secretary, Department of Justice and Regulation	Department of Justice and Regulation
Kaylee	Anderson	LJW Manager, KJU	Department of Justice and Regulation, Koori Justice Unit
Tom	Bell	Deputy Director and Manager Stakeholder Engagement	Department of Justice and Regulation, Koori Justice Unit
Antoinette	Gentile	Director, KJU	Department of Justice and Regulation, Koori Justice Unit
Aislinn	Martin	Manager, Strategic Initiatives, KJU	Department of Justice and Regulation, Koori Justice Unit
Lisa	Moore	Manager, Policy Coordination, Koori Justice Unit	Department of Justice and Regulation, Koori Justice Unit
Mary	Morison	Manager, Community Programs, Koori Justice Unit	Department of Justice and Regulation, Koori Justice Unit
Thomas	Hugh	Acting Director, Aboriginal Affairs Policy	Department of Premier and Cabinet

First name	Surname	Position/Title	Organisation
Michael	Smith	Eastern Community Legal Centre (ECLC) Manager	Eastern Community Legal Centre
Sue	Clifford	Family Safety Victoria	Family Safety Victoria
Rebecca	Lannen	Director	Indigenous Affairs Network, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet
Brian	Bissell	Sheriff Office, Geelong	Infringement Management and Enforcement Services
Brendan	Facey	Executive Director	Infringement Management and Enforcement Services
Roger	Williams	Operations Manager, Sheriff's, Bendigo and Echuca	Infringement Management and Enforcement Services
Patsy	Doolan	Chair, Loddon Mallee LAJAC - Mildura/Robinvale	LAJAC Chair
Nicola	Perry	Project Officer - Swan Hill/Kerang/Echuca; Acting EO Loddon Mallee	LAJAC Chair
Linda	Bamblett	Chair, Northern Metropolitan RAJAC	RAJAC Chair
John	Bell	Chair Barwon South West RAJAC	RAJAC Chair
Aileen	Blackburn	Chair, Gippsland Region	RAJAC Chair
Aileen	Blackburn	Chair, RAJAC, Gippsland Region	RAJAC Chair
Jemmes	Handy	Chair, Loddon Mallee RAJAC	RAJAC Chair
Marion	Hansen	Chair, Southern Metro Region	RAJAC Chair
Tony	Lovett	Chair, Grampians Region	RAJAC Chair
Robert	Nicholls	Chair, Hume Region RAJAC	RAJAC Chair
Lois	Peeler	Chair, Eastern Metropolitan RAJAC	RAJAC Chair
Annette	Vickery	Chair, Western Metropolitan RAJAC	RAJAC Chair
Vicki	Atkinson	RAJAC Executive Officer, Grampians	RAJAC EO
Matthew	Graham	RAJAC Executive Officer, Grampians	RAJAC EO
Jarrold	Hughes	RAJAC Executive Officer, SM	RAJAC EO
Anne-Marie	Kirkman	RAJAC Executive Officer, WM	RAJAC EO
Nicole	LeSage	RAJAC Executive Officer, Gippsland	RAJAC EO
Allan	Miller	RAJAC Executive Officer, BSW	RAJAC EO
Paula	Murray	RAJAC Executive Officer, LM	RAJAC EO
Sam	Nolan	RAJAC Executive Officer, EM	RAJAC EO
Troy	Austin	Deputy Chair, NM Region RAJAC	RAJAC Member
Peter	Lake	Director, member of BSW RAJAC	RAJAC Member
Kym	Monaghan	Co-Chair Barwon South West RAJAC	RAJAC Member
Graham	Ashton	Chief Commissioner	Victoria Police
Graham	Banks	South West Division Police	Victoria Police
Jonathan	Henderson	Shepparton ACLO	Victoria Police
Paul	Hollowood	Superintendent, Victoria Police	Victoria Police
Shane	Keogh	Warrnambool Police	Victoria Police
Taylor	Stewart	Police, ALO, Southern Metropolitan Region	Victoria Police
Jeannie	McIntyre	VACCA	Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency
Muriel	Bamblett	CEO	Victorian Aboriginal Childcare Agency
Jill	Gallagher	CEO	Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation Inc
Geraldine	Atkinson	Chair	Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc.
Alfie	Bamblett	Chair, Victorian Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee	Victorian Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee
Wayne	Muir	CEO	Victorian Aboriginal Legal Services
Jida	Clark	Senior Aboriginal Advisor, VEOHRC	Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission

First name	Surname	Position/Title	Organisation
Catherine	Dixon	Executive Director, VEOHRC	Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
DHHS Southern Region Focus Group		DHHS Southern Region	Department of Health and Human Services
Koori Reference Group Meeting			Koori Reference Group
Barwon South West Region RAJAC		Barwon South West RAJAC members	RAJAC
Eastern Metropolitan Region RAJAC		Eastern Metropolitan Region RAJAC members	RAJAC
Grampians Region RAJAC		Grampians RAJAC members	RAJAC
Hume Region RAJAC		Hume Region RAJAC members	RAJAC
Loddon Mallee Region RAJAC		Loddon Mallee RAJAC members	RAJAC
Northern Metropolitan Region RAJAC		Northern Metropolitan RAJAC members	RAJAC
Southern Metropolitan Region RAJAC		Southern Metropolitan Region RAJAC	RAJAC
Western Metropolitan Region RAJAC		Western Metropolitan RAJAC members	RAJAC

Appendix C The context in which the AJA has operated

C.1 Taskforce 1000

The Taskforce 1000 systemic inquiry was launched in 2014 by the Commission of Children and Young People and the Department of Health and Human Services to investigate how to stem the rapidly rising numbers of Aboriginal children in out of home care in Victoria – then totalling 922. In the course of the two year inquiry, their numbers rose by nearly 60 per cent to 1,700.

Aboriginal children represent 20 per cent of all children in state care despite Aboriginal people representing less than 1 per cent of the Victorian population. They are nearly 12 times more likely than non-Indigenous children to be put in out-of-home care.

The Taskforce 1000 report, *Always was, always will be Koori children: a systemic inquiry into services provided to Aboriginal children and young people in out-of-home care in Victoria*, was released in October 2016. The Taskforce found that the majority of Aboriginal children in care are not connected to their community and culture; do not know their heritage (particularly when their community is outside Victoria); have lost contact with their siblings; and lack cultural plans and cultural experiences.

Young people leaving care are amongst the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in our society. Research has shown that when young people transition from out-of-home care they have little emotional, social and financial support. Further, their educational outcomes are poorer compared with their peers. They are over-represented in the youth justice system and are at higher risk of mental illness, homelessness and early parenthood. (Commission for Children and Young People 2016: 96).

The trajectory from out-of-home care to youth justice is a disturbing reality for many young people. This is particularly the case for Aboriginal young people. Research has found that Aboriginal young people are particularly vulnerable to becoming immersed in a cycle of contact with the criminal justice system. The cycle is intensified by contributing factors such as limited education and employment opportunities, drug and alcohol dependence and insecure accommodation. (Commission for Children and Young People 2016: 97).

Many of the issues identified through the Taskforce inquiry have been the subject of discussion at the Aboriginal justice Forum including the matter of Certification of Aboriginality. At the completion of the inquiry eleven key findings led to nine high-level recommendations and 78 specific recommendations within the higher-level. Many of these have direct implication for justice agencies. Others are also important considerations for justice even though their impact may be more indirect.

C.2 Family Violence Royal Commission

A Royal Commission into Family Violence was established by the State Government on 22 February 2015 in the wake of a series of family violence-related deaths in Victoria. The Commission investigated criminal law, corrections and the courts and considered the role of support services, the health system and alcohol and drug treatment services, as well as those of refuges, housing and education. It also considered the resources and tools available to police.

The Commission found Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, especially women and children, are disproportionately affected by family violence. The available data shows that Aboriginal peoples—

women and children in particular—experience family violence at significantly higher levels than other Victorians. They are more likely to be affected by family violence and face unique barriers to obtaining assistance—whether from a mainstream or culturally appropriate service. In its final report the Commission noted that “the injustices experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including the dispossession of their land and traditional culture, and the grief and trauma associated with policies leading to the wrongful removal of children from their families, have had a profound impact on these communities” (State of Victoria 2016: 7).

The Commission investigated a number of programs delivered in the justice sector that are highlighted as good examples of effective prevention and early intervention programs for women. These include ‘Sisters Day Out’, ‘DillyBag’ and ‘DillyBag: The Journey’ programs run by FVPLS Victoria. The report also refers to the Koori Community Safety Grants where \$2.4 million was made available for four three-year projects in Koori communities (part of an overall allocation of \$7.2 million under the Reducing Violence against Women and their Children grants program). Also, the Koori Family Violence Police Protocols, agreements between local Aboriginal communities and Victoria Police that document how local police must respond to family violence incidents; the Koori Family Violence and Victims Support Program.

A total of 227 recommendations were made to transform Victoria’s response to family violence. Recommendations pertain to:

- Support and Safety Hubs to make it easier for victims/survivors to find help and gain access to a greater range of services
- immediate funding boost to services
- a 'blitz' to rehouse women and children forced to leave their homes
- family violence training for all key workforces
- new laws to ensure that privacy considerations do not trump victims/survivors' safety
- a Central Information Point to funnel information about perpetrators to the Hubs
- expanded investigative capacity for police, mobile technology for front-line police, trial of body-worn cameras
- more specialist family violence courts that can deal with criminal, civil and family law matters at the same time
- expanded respectful relationships education in schools
- an independent Family Violence Agency to hold government to account.

As a result of the focus on family violence the Victorian Government budgeted \$80.6 million in 2014 – 15 for expenditure on programs and services addressing family violence. The Royal Commission was also advised that in relation to family violence involving Aboriginal people, ‘approximately \$10 million was spent directly on Aboriginal family violence in 2014–15. Of this 25 per cent was for prevention through broader programs and 75 per cent on responses to family violence’. Funding for Aboriginal services in the 2015–16 Victorian Budget included \$1.3 million for projects that improve Victoria’s immediate response to Aboriginal family violence, particularly in high risk communities, including targeted statewide and regional education and awareness campaigns. A further \$0.6 million was provided to Aboriginal support services and \$1.8 million was allocated to help Aboriginal community controlled organisations to respond to the findings of Taskforce 1000, including addressing some complex safety and wellbeing issues identified by the Taskforce. The Commission was told that an additional \$2.54 million was sourced from the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness which expired on 30 June 2017. This includes funding for Aboriginal

legal support, Indigenous men's case management and intensive case management for women and children (State of Victoria 2016: 30).

C.3 Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2013-2018

The *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework (VAAF) 2013-2018* replaced the previous *Victorian Indigenous Affairs Framework (VIAF)*. The new VAAF aims to integrate actions across government and direct existing and future government investment to those areas that demonstrate positive benefits and measureable outcomes for Indigenous Victorians. The VAAF has a strong focus on economic development and participation as a key means of ensuring Indigenous Victorians have every equal opportunity to fulfil their aspirations and achieve their full potential.

The VAAF also includes measureable targets for improving infant health, participation in kindergarten, secondary schooling attainment and labour force participation, whilst recognising and valuing Aboriginal culture. The VAAF is currently being reviewed with a new version to be developed by the end of 2018.

C.4 Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People

The Commission for Children and Young People appointed the first Commissioner specifically for Aboriginal children and young people in 2013 (an Australian first). The position had been recommended in the 2012 *Report of the Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry* to bring an increased focus to improving outcomes for vulnerable Aboriginal children across all service systems.

The Commissioner played an important role with the Koori Youth Council in facilitating the *Koorie Youth Summit* which led to the creation of the Koorie Youth reference Group which meets with the Commissioner on a regular basis to discuss views, experiences and emerging issues. The Commissioner has been a consistent contributor to the AJF representing Aboriginal children and young people who have been caught up in the justice system.

C.5 Release of the DHHS Korin Korin Balit Djak Strategy

The Department of Health and Human Services released the Korin Korin Balit Djak: Aboriginal Health, Wellbeing and Safety Strategic Plan 2017-2027 in October 2017. Korin Korin Balit-Djak covers five domains:

- Aboriginal community leadership
- prioritising Aboriginal culture and community
- system reform across the health and human services sector
- safe, secure, strong families and individuals
- physically, socially and emotionally healthy Aboriginal communities.

The strategy is accompanied by the *Aboriginal Governance and Accountability Framework* which sets out a set of governance mechanisms including:

- up to 17 Area Aboriginal Governance Committees (in line with the existing 17 local areas of the department), including conducting at least two community conversations per year for broader community engagement
- four Divisional Aboriginal Governance Committees (one for each Operational Division)

- one Aboriginal Strategic Governance Forum (state-wide), including an Aboriginal Evaluation and Research Committee.

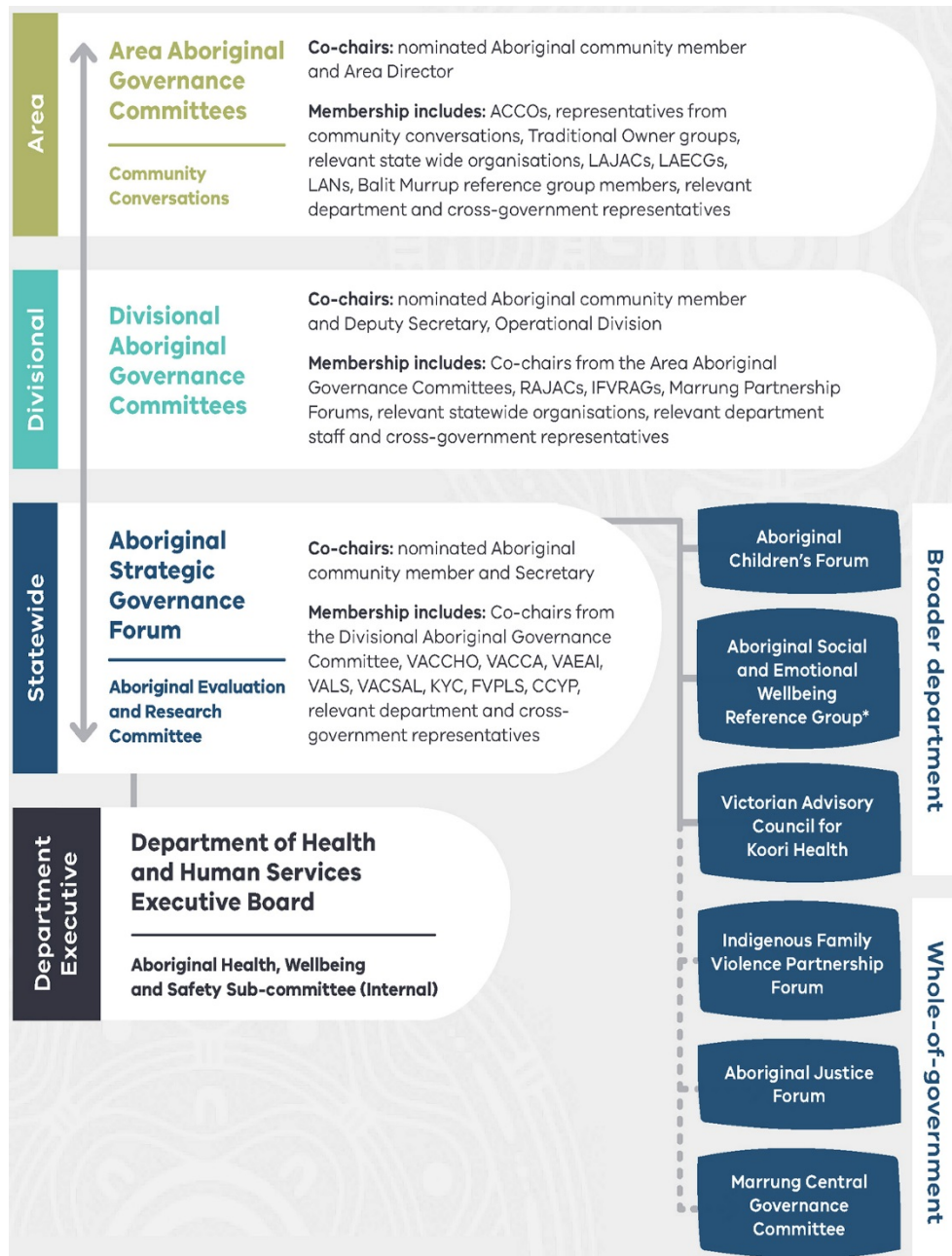


Figure C.1: Aboriginal governance and accountability framework – governance mechanisms

C.6 Release of the Department of Education's Marrung Education Plan

The Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan was developed by the Department of Education with Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated, Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency and Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation. The ten-year integrated plan aims to improve educational outcomes for Koorie Victorians across the early childhood, schools and higher education and training sectors.

In releasing the Plan the Minister also announced \$12.7 million to support key school-based programs within the plan, including:

- A cultural understanding and safety program to help schools better support Koorie students
- Extended Early Years Koorie Literacy and Numeracy to provide an additional two years' support to Koorie students in Years 4 and 5 who have not met National Minimum Standard in Year 3 NAPLAN
- Expansion of the Koorie Academy of Excellence to encourage Koorie students to complete Year 12 and continue onto further study
- Koori Children's Court Liaison Officers to support Koorie children and young people who appear before the Court to continue learning (Media Release of the Minister for Education, July 2016).

It has been well-established that the difference in educational attainment between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth is a powerful determinant of the overrepresentation of Aboriginal youth in the justice system (Commonwealth of Australia 2011). Investment into improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people should bring a flow-on effect to reducing their rate of contact with the justice system.

The governance structure for Marrung includes Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups, Koorie Education Roundtables, Regional Partnership Forums as well as the state level Marrung Governance Committee.

C.7 Legislative reform

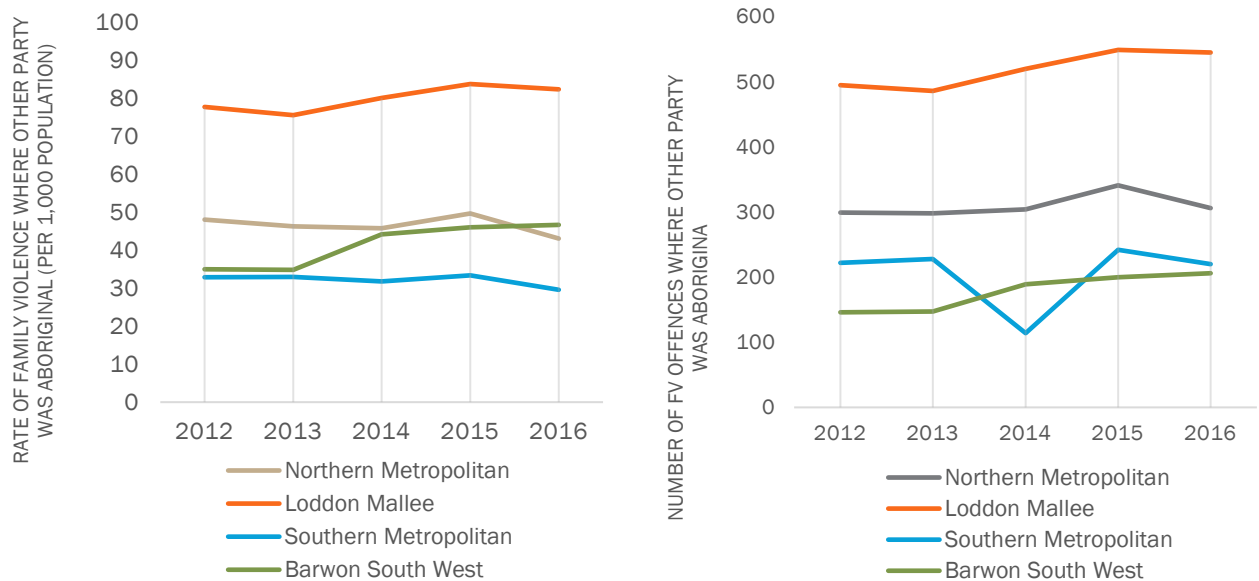
Leading up to the signing of AJA3 and during its operation a number of legislative reforms in the criminal justice space were enacted that have disproportionately impacted Aboriginal people in Victoria. Following is a brief discussion of the major reforms implemented as part of a 'tough on crime' agenda. Reforms centred on family violence, bail provisions and sentencing.

C.7.1 Reforms in family violence

The issue of family violence was brought to the fore in the wake of a series of family violence-related deaths in Victoria. A Royal Commission into Family Violence was established in 2015 tasked in part to "develop and refine systemic responses to family violence—including in the legal system and by police, corrections, child protection, legal and family violence support services".

Research commissioned by the Royal Commission tracked family violence incidents in Victoria between 2009 and 2014. Over that period, the incidence of family violence had increased across all aspects of the family violence system. The number of family incidents recorded by Victoria Police increased by 82.7%; the number of finalised applications heard in the Magistrates' and Children's court increased by 34.5% and 33.0% respectively; the number of people accessing family violence services increased by 11.7%; and the total number of services provided by Victoria Legal Aid where the primary matter was family violence related also increased in the five years from July 2009.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data were only available for in the Victorian Emergency Minimum Dataset (VEMD), Victims Assistance Program (VAP) and Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC) datasets¹⁶, with data either not recorded or of low quality amongst the other contributing datasets. In the five years from July 2009, the proportion of recorded indigenous status across these three datasets has remained relatively stable. In 2013–14, 5% of patients in the VEMD and VAP datasets identified as Indigenous, and in the three years to July 2011, on average 10% of SHSC clients identified as Indigenous. Police data contained within the Crime Statistics Agency Aboriginal Justice Indicators – Victoria Police dashboard reviewed for this evaluation shows data for the period 2012 to 2016. The number of offences where the other party was Aboriginal has remained relatively static over the period in the four regions under investigation as the figures below indicate.



The data, however, does not correspond to information we were hearing from agencies and communities during this evaluation. Without exception interviewees, when they referred to Aboriginal family violence, talked about how it was increasing and of the deleterious impact it had on individuals, families and communities. We suspect that the disparity between the 'official' data and the perceptions on the ground is the recording of Aboriginal status by justice agencies does not accurately reflect an individual's Aboriginality. The data presented to the Royal commission does show an alarming increase in the number of Aboriginal family members affected by family violence, particularly when seen in comparison to the non-Aboriginal population as shown in Figure 3-1 below. An Aboriginal person was 7.3 times more likely than a non-Aboriginal person to be an affected family member in a family violence incident (State of Victoria, 2016).

¹⁶ The Victorian Emergency Minimum Dataset contains information detailing presentations at Victorian public hospitals with designated Emergency Departments; Data collected from the VAP includes demographic information of the victim, location data, information on the crime type and how the client was referred to the agency; SHSC data is sourced from agencies providing homelessness services.

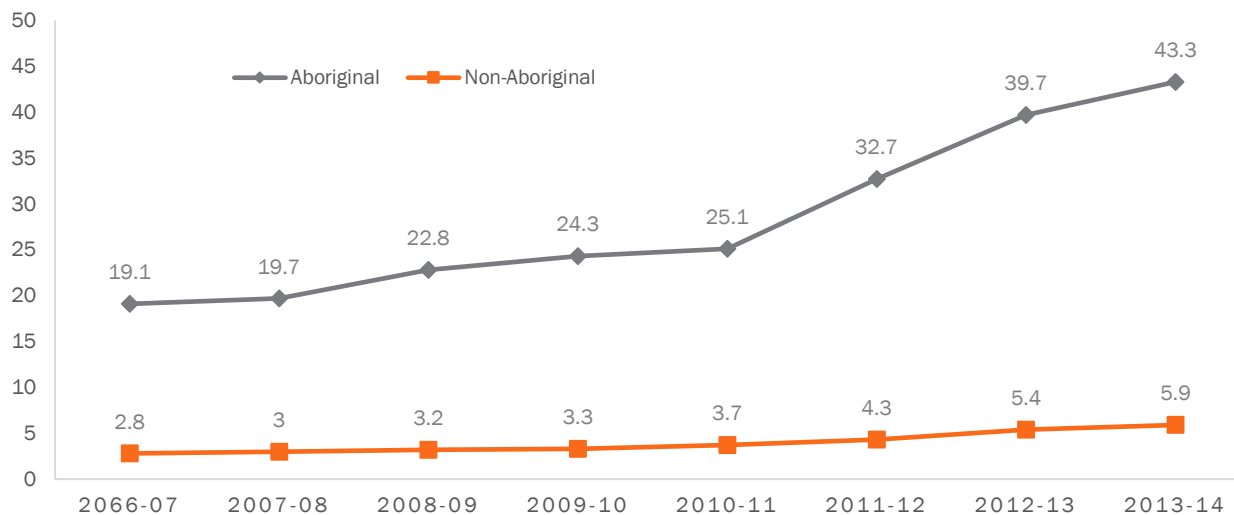


Figure C.1 Family violence incidents per 1000 population: Indigenous and non-Indigenous affected family members, 2006-07 to 2013-14 (Source: State of Victoria, 2016)

C.7.2 Reforms to bail management

A 2010 amendment to the *Bail Act 1977* required that bail decision-makers must take account of a person's Aboriginal status when making a determination. Further, courts must take account of issues that arise because of a person's Aboriginality including consideration of

7. the persons cultural background, including the person's ties to extended family or place and
8. any other relevant cultural issue or obligation (Section 3A, *Bail Amendment Act*, 2010).

The five years following proclamation of the *Bail Amendment Act 2010* there was a 90 per cent increase in the number of bail applications in the Magistrates' Court. The number of Aboriginal people released to bail increased over the period 2009-10 and 2014-15 from 71 to 252 (Corrections Victoria, 2016a).

Further amendment to the Act occurred in 2013 and sought to list commonly imposed bail conditions; make it an offence to contravene certain bail conditions and make it an offence to commit an indictable offence and ensure the same magistrate or judge heard further bail applications (*Bail Amendment Act, 2013*). In the year following the implementation of the *Bail Amendment 2013*, the total number of bail breaches grew significantly – an increase of 67 per cent.

In their report *Unfinished Business*, the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (2013) suggested that bail decision makers are not fully utilising the provision of Section 3A of the Act to take account of a person's cultural background, especially for Aboriginal women. This, they argued, represented "a lost opportunity to reduce the number of Koori women entering prison on remand, especially when less than 15 per cent of these women end up receiving a custodial sentence". In many situations, women are denied bail because of a chronic lack of safe, stable and secure accommodation to which they can be bailed, particularly in regional locations.

The *Bail Amendment (Stage One) Act 2017* amends the *Bail Act 1977* so that decision makers, including magistrates and judges, will be required to place a higher priority on community safety when making bail decisions. Bail will be refused for a range of new offences, including aggravated home

invasion and aggravated carjacking, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Additionally, bail will be refused for many more offences unless the accused can demonstrate compelling reasons. These offences include:

1. rape
2. kidnapping
3. armed robbery
4. intentionally or recklessly causing serious injury with gross violence
5. culpable driving causing death
6. dangerous driving causing death or serious injury
7. dangerous or negligent driving while pursued by police
8. persistent contravention of a family violence intervention order

People who commit serious indictable offences while on bail, summons, parole, a community correction order or under sentence will not be granted bail again unless they can prove there are exceptional circumstances.

The effects of this latest amendment will need to be investigated to determine whether it will have a disproportionate impact on Aboriginal Victorians. On the basis of earlier amendments, it seems likely that such impacts will be felt.

C.7.3 Reforms in sentencing

Major sentencing reforms occurred in 2010, in 2013 and again in 2016. The 2010 legislative amendments to sentencing aimed to provide more flexible non-custodial sentencing by allowing courts to impose Community Corrections Orders for longer periods, include higher numbers of community work hours and attach a greater range of conditions to address specific offending behaviours. In 2013 the provision for suspended sentences was abolished for all offences¹⁷. The amendment also brought in a modernisation of provisions in relation to fines, including new sentencing powers to deal with unpaid court fines. This aimed at keeping disadvantaged people who are unable to pay fines out of prison by introducing the following:

1. A new right to apply for the rehearing of a fine order.
2. New and wider sentencing options where fines are unpaid.
3. Greater flexibility in dealing with persons with an undisclosed/unidentified mental illness or intellectual disability or other special circumstances.
4. Allows courts to determine whether special circumstances may exist or whether there is new or previously disclosed information that may render imprisonment excessive, disproportionate or harsh.

¹⁷ The abolition of suspended sentences began in 2010 for serious offences including death, serious injury, sexual penetration and robbery. In 2011, suspended sentences were unable to be used for “significant offences” including serious injury recklessly, arson offences, aggravated burglary and serious drug trafficking offences. In 2013 they were removed from supreme and county court sentences before being abolished in magistrate courts the following year.

5. Allows courts to reduce or discharge court-ordered fine if the offender cannot pay their fine because of a material change in their circumstances.
6. Further reform to empower the courts to take away an offenders' licence for any offence where the court considers doing so will better protect the community or send a clear message to the offender.

Following the introduction of community corrections reform and the abolition of suspended sentences, 70 per cent of offenders who would typically have received a suspended sentence received a Community Corrections Order, resulting in a significant increase in offenders reporting to community correctional services across the state. This increase in offender numbers was felt to a greater extent within the Aboriginal population. The Aboriginal offender population being managed by Community Corrections Services increased by 48 per cent between June 2011 and June 2015 (Corrections Victoria, 2016a). More than half of this increase (26%) occurred between 2014 and 2015 and was followed by a further 20 per cent increase from June to December 2015 (Corrections Victoria, 2016a). The consequence of the change was particularly felt in the Grampians and West Metropolitan regions, which saw an increase of 172 per cent and 96 per cent respectively between 2014 and 2015 (Corrections Victoria, 2016a).

Amendments introduced in 2017 disallowed the use of Community Corrections Orders and other non-custodial options for ten category 1 offences including rape, murder, and causing serious injury. CCOs and other non-custodial orders were also not permitted, except where special reasons apply, for category 2 offences such as manslaughter, child homicide, kidnapping and intentionally causing serious injury. Further, the length of imprisonment that could be combined with a CCO was halved from two years to one year or less. A non-parole period now cannot be fixed as part of a combined order – meaning offenders must serve their full term of imprisonment before beginning their CCO. Previously, a CCO could be imposed for up to the maximum term of imprisonment for the relevant offence. The proposed laws limit the maximum length a CCO can be imposed to five years. (*Sentencing (Community Correction Order) and Other Acts Amendment Act 2016*)

C.8 Reforms in correctional services (parole)

Parole reform in 2013 and 2014 brought significant shift in the number of parole applications granted and declined. Specifically, there was a doubling of the number of applications denied and decrease of about a third in the number of applications granted. Additionally, there was a 38 per cent decrease in the number of parole review requests accepted and a 146 per cent increase in the number rejected. The result of these shifts was an increasing trend in the total prisoner population.

Findings included in an unpublished DJR report¹⁸ on the reforms concluded the parole reforms had disproportionately affected Aboriginal Victorians. As a result of these reforms, Aboriginal offenders are more likely to receive sentences without a parole period and have limited opportunities to access parole. Once in prison, Aboriginal offenders are less likely to be considered for parole due to their overrepresentation in violent offences. Aboriginal offenders are also more likely to spend extended periods of time on remand, limiting their access to rehabilitation programs required for parole. Further, as prisoners need a release address before applying for parole, Aboriginal offenders are further disadvantaged due to the high rates of homelessness within the community. Finally, the new requirement for prisoners to apply for parole, instead of automatic consideration, is likely to have disproportionately affected Aboriginal offenders based on their access to other justice services.

¹⁸ Department of Justice and Regulation Koori Justice Unit (2016). *Is 'Tough on Crime' legislation tougher on Koories?*, October 2016

Aboriginal prisoners released to parole have low-levels of completion and high rates of returning to prison under a parole breach. Aboriginal prisoners we interviewed for this evaluation reported a preference for completing their term in prison to be released to freedom because they felt their chance of completing a parole order was low because of the conditions imposed and the challenges they faced reintegrating back into the community.

C.9 Reforms in youth justice

The transfer of Youth Justice Services from the Department of Health and Human Services to the DJR occurred in April 2017. At the same time Corrections Victoria assumed responsibility for maintaining the safety and security of youth justice facilities. Opposition to the move came from a number of quarters with concerns that it “risks the system losing its focus on rehabilitation and age appropriate responses which critically makes it far less likely for young people to be repeat offenders. Restrictive and punitive approaches do not work”¹⁹. It is yet to be seen whether these concerns were justified nor whether the transfer of responsibility for youth justice had had a disproportionately worse outcome for Aboriginal young people.

The *Children and Justice Legislation Amendment (Youth Justice Reform) Act 2017* introduced a range of reforms in the youth justice area including those listed below:

1. increased penalties for young people committing serious and violent crimes.
2. young offenders will face longer detention periods of up to four years, risk having their cases being heard in higher courts, and youths who assault youth justice officers while in detention may face more severe penalties.
3. uplifting serious youth offences, such as aggravated home invasion and aggravated carjacking, from the Children’s Court to the higher courts for those aged 16 years or older.
4. serious youth offenders aged 18-21 will no longer be able to be sentenced to detention in a youth justice facility, unless exceptional circumstances apply.
5. a new presumption that young offenders who damage property, escape or attempt to escape from a youth justice facility will serve their sentences on top of an existing period of detention, regardless of age.
6. a new Youth Control Order imposing intense requirements for supervision, support and court monitoring for up to 12 months.
7. a new offence for adults aged 21 or over who recruit a child aged under 18 to engage in criminal activity, and will have a maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment
8. the Youth Parole Board to impose certain parole conditions (e.g. rehabilitation and treatment, curfews, non-association) when granting parole to an offender serving detention for a serious youth offence.
9. establishes a tailored pre-plea youth diversion scheme in both the criminal division of the Children's Court and the Children's Koori Court.

¹⁹ This comment was made by Tiffany Overall of the justice advocacy group Smart Justice for Young People and cited in the Law Institute Journal March Flipbook article ‘Lawyers fear youth crackdown’, 1 March 2017 retrieved from <https://www.liv.asn.au/Staying-Informed/LIJ/LIJ/March-2017/Lawyers-fear-youth-crackdown>

It is too early to determine if the amendments introduced through this Act are adversely affecting Aboriginal youth and young people more so than their non-Aboriginal peers.

Clear Horizon

Place-based evaluation of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement (Phase 3)

Prepared for Department of Justice and Regulation Koori Justice Unit

10 June 2018



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Language in this report

Throughout this document, the term Aboriginal is used to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Use of the terms 'Koori', 'Koorie' and 'Indigenous' are retained in the names of programs and initiatives and, unless noted otherwise, are inclusive of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land in the state of Victoria and pay our respects to their Elders both past, present and future.

Through this evaluation we have been fortunate enough to speak with a broad range of Aboriginal people across the state. We would like to acknowledge their contribution and especially their willingness to share their views, ideas and stories. We would especially like to acknowledge the time of prisoners and offenders who openly shared their life stories with us.

Our sincere thanks to the members of the Aboriginal Justice Forum, members of the Koori Caucus and representatives of the State Government, who gave their time to this evaluation. There is a strong commitment to the Aboriginal Justice Agreement from these parties and a real desire to achieve the objectives of the Agreement.

Executive Summary

The Victoria Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA), first signed in 2000, has articulated the State's and Aboriginal communities' commitment to improving justice outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians. When the second phase of the AJA was implemented in 2006 there had been sufficient evidence gathered through the first phase to identify the benefits of delivering services and programs that were responsive to individual community needs, that is, place-based. The attention to place-based delivery was strengthened in phase 3 with the Agreement emphasising the commitment for the development of initiatives that could be established in partnership with local communities. The aim was for local Aboriginal communities to continue to "develop solutions responsive to local needs" (AJA3: p.29)

The Koori Justice Unit within the Department of Justice and Regulation has commissioned this evaluation of place-based initiatives that have been implemented in four justice regions: Barwon South West, Loddon Mallee, Northern Metropolitan and Southern Metropolitan. The evaluation, conducted by Clear Horizon Consulting, used a qualitative methodology to gather the views and opinions of key stakeholders in each of these regions drawn from government, non-government and community. Overall this evaluation is seeking to understand how the AJA3 is being implemented on the ground, what is working well and why, as well as to identify gaps and opportunities for implementation of the next stage of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA4). The specific objectives for the evaluation are to provide independent insights into the following matters:

1. Whether AJA3 initiatives have contributed to improved Aboriginal justice outcomes in specific locations
2. Are there differences in outcomes between, and within the four regions and, if so, why?
3. How effectively the AJA3, as a strategy, addresses issues underlying Aboriginal over-representation in the justice system and identify opportunities to improve this response.

We have sought to examine the similarities and differences of implementation and outcomes in different areas, examining critical success factors in the four study locations, while considering any broader contextual factors which may exert influence over the effectiveness of different approaches in different areas.

The evaluation has sought to answer eight key evaluation questions, as follows:

1. What have the outcomes of the AJA3 been in each location? Have there been any unintended impacts?
2. To what extent has the AJA3 improved positive contact with the criminal justice system and increased access to, and use of, justice related programs for Koori youth and adults?
3. To what extent does the AJA3 complement, make use of and build upon individual, community and organisational strengths, resources and services?
4. What specific factors (geography, history, service mix, location, etc.) influence outcomes in the locations and need to be considered in applying findings from this area to other locations?
5. What is the experience of Aboriginal offenders and Aboriginal youth as they engage with the 'service mix' under AJA3? Are there points in the system where Aboriginal offenders are at risk of 'falling through the gaps'?
6. How well does the current mix of AJA3 activity (including processes, programs and services) respond to local community needs and drivers of Aboriginal contact with the justice system in each location?
7. What are the opportunities to improve service, coverage and integration of AJA initiatives to progress justice outcomes in the locations?

8. Is it possible to assess the cost and benefits of the AJA in each location?

Through interviews and focus groups, the evaluation team has collected information and views from over 180 people including 30+ prisoners and offenders on community orders. We have sought the views of members of the Koori Caucus, representatives from each of the signatory agencies to the Agreement, Chairs and Deputy Chairs of the Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees, members of the Local Aboriginal Justice Action Committees, representatives of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and peak bodies, and other non-signatory government agencies. Our approach to the evaluation was informed through an extensive literature review of place-based practice in Australia and overseas. This has helped to isolate the key characteristics of initiatives that truly respond to *place*. Findings from the evaluation have been presented to each of the four RAJACs and have been reviewed by the Evaluation Steering Committee established by the Department.

A key finding from this evaluation is that the AJA governance structures have been instrumental in giving voice to Aboriginal people across the state – from small regional communities through to highly urbanised centres. They have provided a conduit for government agencies to better connect with the people they serve – to gain insights and understanding that has previously eluded them. All partners have benefited from the partnership. Too often we think about initiatives like the AJA as something that government does for (and sometimes, to) its citizens and we fail to acknowledge that Government is a beneficiary itself. That is a main story from this evaluation. The AJA has built the capacity of government as much as it has strengthened the capacity of community.

Summary of findings

The level of engagement

The AJA is a partnership with an emphasis on engagement and collaboration. Each of the initiatives has emerged as a result of broad discussions involving input from community and government. In most cases the Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee (RAJAC) has been key to bringing the parties together and in the case of the larger government-driven initiatives (e.g. the Koori Women's Diversion project or the Aboriginal Community Fines Initiative) the RAJAC has acted as a conduit and the place where discussions were held, not least to ensure that new initiatives are place-based rather than simply replicated from elsewhere.

Overall, the initiatives we have investigated have adopted the same commitment to engagement as is articulated in the AJA. There is an acknowledgement that involving the voices of the people who are most disadvantaged and whose lives might be most affected is crucial to grounding initiatives in local strengths and needs and to ultimate success.

Leadership and community strengthening

In adopting a place-based approach the AJA is seeking to address complex issues in particular locations that are contributing to high levels of contact between Aboriginal people and the justice system. The LAJACs and RAJACs are at the centre of the approach.

Interviews conducted with RAJAC members representing community and government have confirmed that the partnerships created through the RAJAC/LAJAC are helping to create a sense of ownership at the local level. RAJACs facilitate the participatory identification of needs and the development of plans to address those needs. Because they are part of, and own, the plan, local community organisations and groups and government agencies are motivated to contribute to its success. Involving the RAJACs/LAJACs in setting priorities also allows for prioritisation according to community strengths so that programs have the greatest chance of impact and success.

We have found strong leadership in each of the four regions under investigation and it is this leadership that has driven the AJA3 over the past five years. High levels of trust between RAJAC members are reported and

are apparent in all four locations. We suggest this has been facilitated in large part by the leadership shown from both the community and agency representatives.

Adequate time and a long-term focus

The AJA has now been a feature on the landscape for over 17 years and over that time strong relationships of trust have developed, particularly through the RAJACs and at the Aboriginal Justice Forum. All interviewees truly understood the complexity of the issues that would need to be addressed and the size of the task in addressing them. All understood that some issues would not be shifted easily and would take time and commitment to do so. There is an acknowledgement that no single strategy or set of strategies is going to make quick and significant inroads into the over-representation problem.

All of the initiatives had been developed through long consideration, enabling consultation to occur and relationships to form. Their design has largely had the benefit of time but not all initiatives have the benefit and security that long term funding provides. Initiatives funded through grant money are the most likely to face the insecurity of short-term funding. Little can be achieved over short time frames and this ultimately creates uncertainty and frustration.

Complicating matters is that funding for programs being delivered in the community tends to be offered through competitive rounds where organisations are pitted against each other to attract funding. These arrangements do not lend themselves to collaboration, which is a key aim of the AJA.

Programs that come and go, especially programs that have been achieving good results and that are supported by community, creates distrust. This makes it more difficult for new, or even revitalised old, programs to be rolled out because community members are less inclined to engage with them for fear that they will not continue in the short-term.

Responding to the context

We found a good understanding in each of the regions of the particularities of the issues that are contributing to contact with the criminal justice system. This understanding is driving the planning around programs that might be best placed to address these issues. Initiatives that have been pursued are taking account of the disadvantage faced by members of the community as well as the capacity of organisations to deliver services. In that sense, these initiatives are both spatially and socially targeted.

Overall, the initiatives implemented under the umbrella of the AJA can be said to respond to place. To successfully work within a community deemed ‘high-risk’ requires more than simply addressing the challenges; it requires an acknowledgment of the strengths that are apparent in the face of those challenges. The evidence from this evaluation shows us that it continues to be imperative to play to unique community strengths, to allow adequate time and other resources for local program design and planning, to be flexible in allocating funds, to incorporate real costs into service or program funding, and to apply government resources and expertise to build community capabilities and skills. Building community capacity and capability entails going out to communities, recognising differences, supporting leaders, encouraging knowledge-sharing across organisations, rewarding collaboration and ensuring a flow of up to date information on available resources, services, programs, data and research. Such an emphasis on place helps to localise and culturally-situate any program or initiative to best respond to the local need. Once contextualised, successful and innovative programs and services can more readily be adapted for transfer to other regions.

Flexibility

Common practice in the delivery of place-based initiatives suggests that there needs to be a flexible approach and “locally grounded” design and implementation. We found that most initiatives were able to respond or adapt to the situation on-the-ground and even occurred within the more bureaucratic setting of government agencies. For example, the CCS Case Manager in Geelong found that case management through outreach offered a more effective outcome for his client on a community order. Similarly, the Koori Women’s Diversion

program is adapting to the needs of the women it is helping through the process. The flexibility is enabled, in part, because of the multi-sectoral approach that has been adopted. The client is at the centre of the initiative and bringing together each of these different service providers means that all develop a collective understanding of the client's needs and this gives support to responsiveness and flexibility.

There are opportunities for further flexibility but it will require greater autonomy in decision-making at the local level. That may mean devolving decision-making authority to non-Government organisations and, in some cases, to individuals such as the Local Justice Workers. Such an approach draws on the expertise of local (and sometimes community) leaders. If this were allowed then local decision-making will need to be made within defined boundaries but these might be negotiated on a case-by-case basis.

Joined up working

Joined-up and collaborative working is an integral requirement of successful place-based initiatives. It is also an aim of the AJA. This approach recognises that no one organisation can provide solutions to all of the issues driving offending behaviours. Joined-up working was demonstrated to some extent by all the initiatives reviewed. Achieving the necessary 'flow' is a continuing aspiration throughout the system. The concept of 'flow' or continuity of care was a major theme in discussion of this report by the Evaluation Steering Committee.

Responding to the key evaluation questions and recommendations

KEQ 1: What have the outcomes of the AJA3 been in each location? Have there been any unintended impacts?

Initiatives and programs implemented under the umbrella of the AJA are achieving positive outcomes in the regions, although the overarching aim to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system has not been achieved. There have been a number of factors that have contributed to this, including legislative change, and such factors are beyond the control of the AJA partners. In many cases the impact of regulatory or legislative change on Aboriginal and other vulnerable communities is not sufficiently considered, particularly given the disproportionate negative impact that much of this change renders. It would be beneficial if consideration of such impact were prescribed for those with responsibility for the development of new or amended legislation to try to lessen the potential for adverse unintended outcomes.

Recommendation 1: that the Victorian Government develop and put in place structures and processes to ensure consideration of the potential impact of new or amended legislation to try to lessen the potential for adverse unintended outcomes for Aboriginal people (children, young people and adults), including:

- that the Department of Justice and Regulation liaise with Office of the Commissioner for Better Regulation to determine the need for a revision to the Victorian Guide to Regulation to indicate where Local Impact Assessments (LIAs) and Regulatory Impact Assessments (RIAs) should specifically describe any disproportionate impacts of legislative/regulatory change in the justice sector on Victorian Aboriginals.
- that the Department of Justice and Regulation liaise with the Department of Premier and Cabinet to determine whether changes to the *Subordinate Legislation Act 1994* and/or its regulations, or the Premier's Guidelines are appropriate to ensure impacts on Aboriginal people are adequately assessed.

There have been significant contributions made towards delivering on the AJA's six strategic objectives across all regions in varying ways.

Each of the regions has specific, and often unique, characteristics contributing to the specific criminal justice issues encountered by Aboriginal communities in those regions. A number of AJA initiatives have been implemented in each of the justice regions and have not specifically been designed in response to the unique context (and so are not considered 'place-based' in the truest definition of the term). However, even these centrally designed programs do respond to context in their local implementation. One useful example worth exploring is the Koori Courts. This AJA initiative follows the same overarching model regardless of the region they operate in but they take advantage of the presence of connected Elders and Respected Persons in the region. This not only provides cultural relevancy but also ensures that those coming before the court are facing Elders from their own community who understand the local environment and the contributing factors to offending behaviours. The involvement of the local Elders contextualises the discussion and the decision-making in the 'place' where the actions are taking place.

There are few examples of initiatives that more truly align to a place-based approach. A prime example we highlight is the Koori Women's Diversion Program (KWDP) piloted in the Loddon Mallee region. The KWDP was not rolled out by government in a standard format, but was designed in, and with, the local community to suit the local context, local needs and the available service mix, that is, the community strengths. While there are core principles guiding implementation particularly around intensive case management, operational structures and details are specific and responsive to the Mildura context.

In terms of unintended impacts, we have not heard of any that have been adverse. One impact that might be considered adverse is the considerable demands placed upon people in various liaison type roles, although they would not describe it as such. The success they are having in their roles in supporting community members through the justice system means that they are called upon well beyond their operational hours and to assist with matters that are beyond their job description. This suggests two things – 1) that they are providing a valuable and necessary service and 2) that more liaison officers are required.

Recommendation 2: that additional Aboriginal liaison officer positions (LJWs, YJWs, ACLOs and SALOs) be established in the regions to match specific regional needs. Support structures should be put in place to connect Liaison Officers regardless of whether they reside in or are funded by justice agencies or are located in non-justice agencies. Further, Liaison Officers should be provided with personal development opportunities through the provision of training and/or education relevant to the many roles they play. Other support should be considered, for example, access to a vehicle to allow for out of hours assistance to be provided. Remuneration packages will need to account for the work that officers undertake outside of normal business hours including weekends.

KEQ 2: To what extent has the AJA3 improved positive contact with the criminal justice system and increased access to, and use of, justice related programs for Aboriginal youth and adults?

From its inception the AJA has promoted an approach to justice that is more therapeutic and less punitive. It focuses on early intervention and diversion aiming to minimise contact with the justice system to the greatest extent possible. As a partnership that includes non-justice agencies such as Education and Health and Human Services, the AJA encourages a holistic approach to deter children from criminal activity and thus avoid contact with the criminal justice system. If contact does occur, diversion options are in place that lessen the severity of that contact and the likelihood of further offending. If diversion is not an option, as would be the

case in serious offences, offenders may be managed in the community on a community order or imprisoned.. In both cases, opportunities to participate in treatment and/or rehabilitation should be available to help the offender in addressing the drivers of their offending behaviours.

The forums that have been established under the AJA provide a setting where government and community can come together to discuss issues, learn from and about each other and propose solutions. These forums are highly regarded. Representatives from government agencies talked about how their understanding of the importance of culture to Aboriginal people and of the challenges they encounter had improved. The improved understanding and cultural awareness had led them to think differently about how the justice system and other systems can better respond.

It is evident in the strategies and policies announced by Victorian Government agencies they have maintained a commitment to addressing the inequalities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians. The AJA has played a role in highlighting and keeping a focus on the issues that contribute to the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system. The organisational shifts are making a difference to building relationships of trust but there is further work to do. Access to culturally appropriate, and more importantly, Aboriginal designed and delivered programs for offenders and prisoners needs to be extended. That agency staff are adopting more flexible approach to their service delivery is encouraging. These approaches help to improve access by removing some of the structural barriers to service access. Continuing the practice may require giving greater autonomy to individual staff members and devolving authority to regional, and even local, centres. It has been shown to work and investment in this should reap benefits for the agency and for the people they are serving.

Recommendation 3: that consideration be given to expanding the number of Aboriginal designed and delivered programs for Aboriginal offenders (young and adult) in the community and in prisons. Resources should be directed towards building the evidence base of what works in programs to address offending behaviours including treatment programs for AOD and mental health problems. Some consideration should be given to expanding accessibility to programs for Aboriginal prisoners and detainees on short sentences. Continuity of services has been highlighted as problematic for adult prisoners and young detainees transitioning to the community. Improving the transfer of information from prison to community service providers will help with this.

KEQ 3: To what extent does the AJA3 complement, make use of and build upon individual, community and organisational strengths, resources and services?

The AJA3 advocates for place-based strategies and approaches that respond to particular local contexts. Place-based approaches are reliant upon local individuals becoming engaged with and investing their time and efforts in a problem and its solution. Sharing knowledge and information in these collaborations is helping to build capacity and capability in all partners.

The partnership structures of the AJA3 allow for local and regional input into the identification of the primary justice issues and into the development of solutions. The effectiveness of the RAJAC and LAJAC is contingent upon the strength and passion of individual members. In that regard the AJA3 is making good use of the individuals working together towards the objectives of the Agreement, but this is not without a cost. That cost is the demand placed upon each of the individuals in terms of time and effort. Aboriginal community members participating in LAJAC, RAJAC and the AJF are mostly engaged with the AJA in addition to their full-time roles. They are very active in their community and are members of other boards and committees. In more recent

years, their time has also been taken up with engaging in discussion around self-determination and the development of a treaty. Additionally, several State Government agencies have established AJA-like structures which also place demands on Aboriginal leaders' time. The involvement of community leaders in the Forum and RAJACs brings great insight and benefit to the AJA, but it is taxing. It would help if there were more members of the community able to step into leadership roles. This requires an investment in younger Aboriginal men and women to development their skills and abilities to facilitate their participation in the AJA. The investment can come from government in the form of awareness raising, leadership programs, networking opportunities, cadetships and mentoring. The investment can also come from older community members and Elders acting as mentors and role models for younger people as they develop their own skills.

Recommendation 4 – that the Department of Justice and Regulation:

- revise the RAJAC operating framework to allow and encourage the involvement of 'lay' community members
- develop a strategy for encouraging greater involvement of Aboriginal men and women, including young people, in the Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees that includes a pathway to leadership roles.

The involvement of ACCOs and other Aboriginal organisations or bodies (e.g. gathering places) as the prime delivery agent for services to Aboriginal people is central to the AJA's place-based approach. Led by Aboriginal people, these organisations are at the heart of, and chief advocates for community. They are best placed to understand community needs and deliver responsive services.

This report discusses numerous examples of impactful programs, but gaps do remain. One major gap is simply the few services that are available. Not all regions have a good coverage of ACCOs causing a reliance on mainstream services that may not always be culturally appropriate. Other regions may have one or two excellent services but a gap in some other service area. The major gaps across all areas are in post-release housing, alcohol and other drug treatment, mental health services, residential treatment/healing options, and transition to study and employment programs.

Not only has the AJA3 contributed to strengthening Aboriginal organisations, it has been instrumental in fostering cultural change within Government. Our interviews with non-Aboriginal government staff would often include discussion of the role of cultural awareness training in raising awareness, shifting attitudes and encouraging new relationships. Aboriginal employment strategies that have led to more Aboriginal employees have had a similar impact on the non-Aboriginal workforce – improving understanding and forming new friendships.

Grants and other funding

It is common for Government grants and program funding to be limited to Aboriginal organisations (or non-Aboriginal organisations auspicing to Aboriginal organisations) as they are considered the most appropriate location for the services to reside. The criteria that prescribes what organisations are eligible to receive funding are one way to direct resources to organisations that can assist in internal capability strengthening while also assisting clients. The funding can assist in an organisation building on its existing service offering, furthering recruitment, and encouraging skills development. However, there may be downsides to government funding for some of these organisations, particularly smaller entities whose existence is reliant upon ongoing receipt of funding.

There is an administrative burden on organisations in applying for and managing grants and the lack of recognition of the financial cost of grant management. There are also difficulties in implementing long-term

programs with funding that is issued over short time periods. Organisations that have few funding options outside of government grants face great uncertainty. The impact of loss of funding is particularly harsh for recipients who had previously been receiving services from the organisation and who are often faced with no other alternatives in the locality they reside.

Initiatives implemented under the AJA3 and the structures that have been established to support it are contributing to community strengthening. There is a sense, however, that some of the upskilling that is occurring is a coincidental and positive by-product of initiatives rather than a purposeful intent. Undeniably there are adverse effects on Aboriginal organisations and the people they are assisting when funding is withdrawn. We do not suggest that funding be automatically granted but there may be opportunities to improve grant schemes to minimise the effects of an abrupt loss of funding. It will take some 'out-of-the box' thinking to do this but we have no doubt that the talent that sits around the AJF table is such that new solutions can be explored.

Recommendation 5 – that grants programs incorporate specific requirements for recipients to include capacity building for their Aboriginal workforce or for the community they are serving and include this as a measure of success. If this recommendation is implemented then funding amounts will need to reflect the additional resources required to action this new requirement.

KEQ 4: What specific factors (geography, history, service mix, location, etc.) influence outcomes in the locations and need to be considered in applying findings from this area to other locations?

Where success has been achieved the overarching factor that has contributed to that success is strength of identity and strength of culture. Where challenges have been difficult to overcome, we commonly heard statements that 'people had lost their way'.

The Barwon South West region has been held up as the exemplar, the model to be imitated. There is no doubt that Barwon South West is somewhat unique in comparison to other regions in this study. The individuals that participated in the evaluation referred to the cultural strength of the region and how that has encouraged greater direct engagement by Aboriginal community members in addressing the problems encountered by the whole community. There is a coherence in the region that allows for people to come together no matter what their language group or ethnicity. This coherence is not effortless. It has been created through the active and largely uninterrupted participation of Aboriginal leaders, young and old, over many generations, and of non-Aboriginal leaders in government and community. The AJA offers the structures (RAJAC and LAJAC) to enable this to happen.

The other three regions do not appear to have the same level of coherence and this is largely a function of migration and history. The two metropolitan regions have extremely diverse Aboriginal populations. That diversity comes in the form of their cultural attachments, their kinship affiliations and the lives they lead. There are also issues associated with population mobility and the difficulties this brings in continuity of service delivery. The Loddon Mallee region is also subject to high levels of population mobility, particularly in the north. Although these regions are challenged by these factors the presence of numerous strong ACCOs in Loddon Mallee and Northern Metropolitan offer a focal point for activity and action to take place. In many cases these ACCOs are taking the lead in supporting their communities.

While the Southern Metropolitan region does not have the same range of ACCOs it does have strong leadership within the ACCOs, the Gathering Places and on the RAJAC, although it appears to be somewhat

uncoordinated, occurring independently of each other. The challenge for the Southern Metropolitan region is that responsibility for leadership rests with few individuals in a region with the largest Aboriginal population of all regions in Victoria. The large population should be seen as a positive as it suggests there are opportunities to tap into the skills and experiences of the people living there. Doing so will take some effort and investment in raising awareness, establishing networks and providing opportunities for engagement. At present the Gathering Places seem to be the ideal location for this to take place. However, their current resourcing is stretched and insecure. Greater security of funding would provide the Gathering Places with the necessary certainty and the financial capacity to introduce programs aimed at encouraging stronger engagement, particularly of younger Aboriginal men and women.

Recommendation 6 – that the Department of Justice and Regulation work with other agencies and local governments to investigate options for providing resources (financial and in-kind) that support the operation of Gathering Places (or similar grass roots organisations) as spaces where Aboriginal people can come together in a safe and welcoming environment and where programs and services can be delivered.

Some key informants and the Evaluation Steering Group Steering Group reflected on the challenges face by Chairs and Executive Officers in maintaining RAJACs and LAJACs. A need for Project Officer support was felt necessary, as well as ongoing professional support and development.

Recommendation 7 – the RAJACs and LAJACs are important structures in the regions allowing for government and community to come together to discuss justice issues and to develop solutions. Their continued operation is essential to maintain the momentum of the AJA and they will need to be adequately resourced to allow for continued impact. We recommend that Government continue to support the resourcing of these structures and to develop strategies to encourage increased participation by both community and government representatives in the regions. The specific roles of the RAJAC Chair and EO must be better supported through the provision of sufficient financial, physical and human resources (such as Project Officers, professional development) to enable improved engagement across the region they operate in.

One point we would like to highlight is the dependence of community organisations on government funding. The funding opportunities over the period of AJA3 included Frontline and CIP as well as grants provided through Community Crime Prevention. Regardless of the source, access to the grants creates competition between regions and between organisations. Rather than promote competition it would be beneficial if the grants encouraged collaboration, particularly between organisations servicing the one region.

The competition for grant funding will tend to favour larger, better resourced and longer established organisations. Requiring collaborative applications can help those smaller, less well-resourced organisations to learn from the larger organisations, build their own internal capacity to apply for grants and deliver on programs they might not necessarily be involved in. Collaboration in this way levels the playing field between the different ACCOs throughout the state.

One further point about the grants that were available during AJA3: there appeared to be considerable overlap in the targets for the grant applications that were successful. Certainly, Frontline and CIP tended to favour projects aimed at youth. It was not clear why the two separate programs were established. Efficiencies are likely to be achieved in management through rolling the two programs into one.

Recommendation 8: that guidelines for grant programs encourage collaboration between organisations to develop programs and then implement them in a partnership way. In particular:

- to allow for relationships to be established and applications to be developed, sufficient time (at least three months) should be allowed between announcing the availability of the grant and the deadline for applications.
- to ensure local initiatives arise from and match local strengths and needs, allow adequate program time for community engagement and program co-design.
- that the DJR set up a single grant mechanism, in place of CIP and Frontline, for funding initiatives that are relevant to AJA objectives, allowing sufficient flexibility for applicants to determine their own focus.

KEQ 5: What is the experience of Koori offenders and Koori youth as they engage with the 'service mix' under AJA3? Are there points in the system where Koori offenders are at risk of 'falling through the gaps'?

The experience of adults

Interviews with adult prisoners and offenders revealed common experiences. In most cases first contact with the criminal justice system occurred at an early age. It often followed disengagement from schooling and escape from a dysfunctional home. There ensued a cycle of sanction and reoffending leading to imprisonment. This was true of many, although certainly not all, prisoners we spoke with.

Prisoners' stories diverged when the discussion moved to rehabilitation and treatment. There were varying views on access to appropriate programs and of their effectiveness. More favourable views were expressed about Aboriginal specific programs, and especially about those delivered by Aboriginal service providers. However, access to these programs is not universal in either the prison setting or in community. We have heard that some successful programs have been discontinued, sometimes through lack of funding and at other times the result of program staff leaving. It does appear that some programs are contingent upon one or two individuals driving the delivery and this makes the programs susceptible to ending when one individual leaves.

Programs offered in the community will often be delivered by ACCOs, with many of these organisations serving the local language group. There are occasions where offenders are not on country and are reluctant to use these service providers. In cases where the offender is on country there may be a reluctance to use these local services because of shame. Where these offenders have conditions to attend a program the only viable alternative is to attend a mainstream service provider who may or may not offer culturally appropriate programs.

Several initiatives are effectively delivering services in the community. The Justice Bus alleviates the need for people with justice issues to travel the long distance to Melbourne to obtain a birth certificate as a first step in obtaining a driver's licence. Equally, the Aboriginal Community Fines Initiative is helping people to resolve

multiple issues in one place, in one day. Both initiatives are helping to reduce the levels of distrust and anxiety that many Aboriginal people have in dealing with Government.

Over the period of the AJA3 there has been an increase in the availability of culturally relevant programs across regional Victoria, but the number is insufficient to meet demand. Those that are operating are achieving good results and, more importantly, are sought after by Aboriginal offenders and prisoners. The success of these programs has been attributed to the holistic approach taken to 'healing the spirit' and not simply focusing on criminal behaviours. Such an approach focuses on reconnecting men and women with, or further strengthening, their culture, strengthening their spirit and connection to country, and building respect for land, self and others. Such approaches do not offer a short-term fix. They are dealing with complex, long-standing traumas that may take many years to fully resolve, if they ever do. We would like to see a system that recognises change is a long-term prospect and values the shorter-term achievements people accomplish through program participation. Recidivism is a key indicator of program success but should not be the only indicator. Attendance at, and completion of a program should be acknowledged as an achievement in itself.

Further and ongoing investment in Aboriginal service providers delivering Aboriginal programs will allow for greater access and is likely to achieve better justice outcomes in the long-term. This will require the development of an Aboriginal workforce with capability and skills in areas of need, within government agencies and in ACCOs. The AJA can assist in this in encouraging the partners to explore opportunities to promote education in health or justice services, promote entry to professions in these fields and to build upon their Aboriginal employment strategies.

Recommendation 9: that the Aboriginal Justice Forum devote time and effort to the development of a justice workforce strategy, including strategies to boost Aboriginal employment in agencies and organisations assisting with the rehabilitation and treatment of offenders and prisoners/detainees.

The experience of youth and young people

Our data gathering centred on the experience of adults in the justice system although the subject of youth was never far from the discussion. Certainly, the RAJACs each had identified youth as a priority focus area. There was a real desire to implement actions that would deter criminal behaviour and prevent first and ongoing contact with the criminal justice system. The focus on youth at RAJACs reflected a conviction that, with the right support, children would choose to refrain from criminal or anti-social behaviours.

Funding provided through the Community Initiatives Program, the Frontline Youth Program and the Koori Youth Crime Prevention Grants has delivered over \$2.5 million towards youth specific projects in the four study regions. The projects have largely focused on reconnecting young people, aged up to 24 years, with their culture, strengthening positive attitudes and self-esteem as well as providing opportunities to develop new skills. The data does not indicate whether the youth involved in these projects had been in contact with the criminal justice system. We have not been able to access any reporting on whether the intended outcomes for these programs have been achieved.

We speculate that the transfer of youth justice to the DJR may exacerbate the disconnection between non-justice agencies and the business units of the DJR. While Youth Justice sat within the Department of Health and Human Services there was a connection between justice and other social services like health, housing, drug and alcohol, etc., at least at an agency level. It is too soon to know what effect the transfer of Youth Justice will have but it is worth keeping a watching brief on this at the regional and state level.

Recommendation 10: that a future evaluation have a primary focus on children and young people up to the age of 24, capturing prevention, early intervention and justice needs and interventions and including an evaluation of responses at key transitions in age and in pathways through services for young men and young women.

KEQ 6: How well does the current mix of AJA3 activity (including processes, programs and services) respond to local community needs and drivers of Aboriginal contact with the justice system in each location?

AJA3 activity is variable across and within the four regions. The RAJAC in each region has been instrumental in identifying the main justice issues of concern. The RAJAC (and LAJACs) have a good understanding of the drivers for contact with the criminal justice system for their communities. As a result, each RAJAC has identified one or two principal areas of focus and promote actions around those focus areas. This approach concentrates effort and would be expected to offer greater benefit than trying to resolve multiple issues simultaneously which is likely to stretch already thin resources.

Some constraints to action on specific issues are the result of centralised decision-making. Government agencies have some, but not extensive, autonomy at the regional level which limits their ability to respond to emerging issues in a timely way. In some cases, it requires a regional manager to refer the matter to their head office for a decision on what actions to put in place.

Another factor impacting on the ability of the RAJAC to make progress on identified issues is the level of influence it has on government agencies (and others) that have their own priorities. These may not always coincide with the priorities of the collective RAJAC members. Government agencies have their own strategies to be pursued and for an agency like Education and Training, for example, their strategies are not typically aimed towards improving justice outcomes. There is an acknowledgement that improving education outcomes can bring about improvement in justice outcomes (e.g. by keeping children engaged in education they are less likely to engage in criminal or anti-social activity) but it is not core business for the Department of Education and Training.

It appears that the influence of RAJACs is increased where there are strong and active ACCOs and Aboriginal leadership advocating for action. It is improved where the ACCOs and leaders work collaboratively towards a shared goal rather than pursuing a singular organisational objective. The RAJAC provides a place to come together to agree on and prioritise objectives. The Koori Women's Diversion Program in Mildura is a good example where a program has been developed in response to a specific identified issue. The issue of women's imprisonment is complex but there was agreement that it was an issue that needed a different way of thinking about how to resolve it. The resolution is multi-faceted and depends upon collaboration and cooperation between key service providers.

In a separate evaluation of the partnership structures of the AJA we have advocated for RAJACs to revisit their Regional Justice Action Plans, identifying the key issues in the region and providing a range of actions to address them. Our recommendation centres on limiting the number of actions to two or three priority areas and focusing on these over a period of 12 months. We reiterate that recommendation here.

Recommendation 11: that the Koori Justice Unit work with RAJACs to prioritise two to three key issues within their Regional Justice Action Plan that will be the focus of attention in the ensuing 12 months.

We have noted in the report that Barwon South West might best be thought as two regions – one centred around Geelong and the other the areas west of Geelong and including Warrnambool, Portland and Heywood. We consider the context in these two areas is sufficiently different to warrant a separation between the two. It is not that we advocate for the justice region to be redefined as such but if place-based initiatives are being considered for the Barwon South West region then there should not be an expectation that a program or initiative designed for Warrnambool will work in Geelong, and vice versa. Following place-based best practice this this would not occur as it would have been identified in the planning for the program or initiative. However, programs that are developed centrally and implemented locally may not necessarily take account of such contextual differences. The situation described for Barwon South West could equally apply in Loddon Mallee with the area around Bendigo being considered distinct from the area to the north around Mildura. Similarly, in the Southern Metropolitan region there is a difference between communities in and around Dandenong and those further east.

We also note that the regional boundaries assigned by the DJR do not necessarily align to cultural boundaries that have meaning to the Aboriginal communities living there. It may be appropriate to redefine the geographic boundaries such that they more accurately reflect the communities living in them and the services that are available to those communities.

Recommendation 12: that, to better reflect different social, economic and environmental contexts, DJR determine the need for and benefits that might result from assessing needs and planning the delivery of AJA place-based initiatives at the level of sub-regions, towns and communities.

KEQ 7: What are the opportunities to improve service, coverage and integration of AJA initiatives to progress justice outcomes in the locations?

Our key recommendations for improving service delivery centre on increasing the capacity (i.e. number of individual and organisational service providers across the state) and capability (i.e. the skills and expertise of Aboriginal employees in community and government organisations) of those with a responsibility for delivering justice services to Aboriginal offenders and prisoners.

The evidence-base for what works in justice services is lacking. Few evaluations, this one included, have explored the factors that make for successful programs in great depth. We have skimmed the surface to identify that programs delivered with cultural relevance have shown to be successful at promoting engagement and improving the social and emotional wellbeing of participants. To what extent this translates to reducing offending behaviours cannot be definitively stated. More research is needed. There are likely opportunities for collaboration between government agencies and academic institutions across the country. Similarly, agencies in Victoria might look to establishing collaborative research proposals with their counterparts in other jurisdictions. If the cost of research can be shared then the burden on one agency acting alone can be significantly reduced.

Recommendation 13: that opportunities to collaborate on research projects to evaluate success factors for program delivery to Aboriginal offenders and prisoners be investigated with a view to developing new, or improving existing, service delivery. The findings from the research should be publicly available on completion of the study to further knowledge sharing.

KEQ 8: Is it possible to assess the cost and benefits of the AJA in each location?

We strongly believe there is a high potential for false calculations to emerge from an economic assessment of a complex program addressing a complex problem. The challenge is captured well by Payne (2006) who has cautioned on the use of cost evaluations in evaluations of specialty courts:

Cost evaluations, particularly cost–benefit evaluations are a crude measure of financial success because they only account for nominal benefits which can be valued in financial units. Such evaluations cannot determine or measure the other benefits derived from a specialty court program. For example, what monetary value can be placed on a participant’s capacity to re-kindle their relationship with an estranged family member? ... In this sense, cost evaluations ... often underestimate the true benefits delivered by a program to a participant and the community.

This could apply equally as well to an evaluation of the AJA. In our view the AJA presents even more challenges to cost evaluation than a specialty court. Just one case in point, how do we measure the costs and benefits of the hours that proponents of the AJA put into resolving issues that go beyond their paid role? In conducting this evaluation, we have been hard-pressed to definitely identify some programs as being under the umbrella of the AJA. Should we consider a program delivered by the Department of Education that helps to keep Aboriginal children in school as an AJA program even if it achieves positive justice outcomes. There are many more contributions that would not, and some might argue, cannot be monetised.

We are not suggesting that no analysis of costs and benefits should be conducted. We do caution that a diligent cost-benefit analysis will need to ensure all costs are identified, even those that are difficult to quantify. It is generally more difficult to quantify benefits. Economic benefits are generally more accessible and quantifiable than social benefits. In either case, there is a need for good data and this is patchy at best.

Programs and initiatives implemented under the AJA are being delivered by government agencies and community organisations, including some small organisations with very limited resourcing. We have encountered no robust evidence of the outcomes achieved by these programs. For most we have not been able to access any data on the activities conducted, nor outputs from those activities. This lack of data seriously undermines any efforts to understand the costs and benefits of the AJA. Until this data is routinely collected and shared with the KJU there is a real risk that an evaluation would inadequately account for all of the costs and all of the benefits.

Recommendation 14 – that systems for data collection during the implementation of Government programs be strengthened to monitor, track and evaluate the inputs, outputs and outcomes of the program. Further, where public funding is provided to community organisations these organisations should be supported to establish their own system for monitoring, tracking and evaluating the programs/projects enabled through the funding. Grant funding agreements should require grantees to provide ongoing monitoring data and a final evaluation report to the funding body throughout, and at the completion of the funding period. For AJA initiatives, such data should be made available to the KJU, if they are not the funder, to allow for the compilation of an AJA dataset that can be made available to future evaluation studies.

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Acronyms

AAL	Aborigines Advancement League
ACCHO	Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
ACCO	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
ACLO	Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer
AJA	Aboriginal Justice Agreement
AJA2	Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 2
AJA3	Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 3
AJF	Aboriginal Justice Forum
AOD	Alcohol and other drugs
AWO	Aboriginal Wellbeing Officer
CCO	Community Correction Order
CCS	Community Corrections Services
CIP	Community Initiatives Program
CMRM	Case Management Review Meeting
CSA	Crime Statistics Agency
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services
DJR	Department of Justice and Regulation
DPFCC	Dame Phyllis Frost Correctional Centre
FVPLS	Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service
KCEO	Koori Court Engagement Officer
KJU	Koori Justice Unit
KRG	Koori Reference Group
KYJP	Koori Youth Justice Program
KYJW	Koori Youth Justice Worker
LAJAC	Local Aboriginal Justice Action Committee
LAN	Local Aboriginal Network
LGA	Local Government Area
LJW	Local Justice Worker
LJWP	Local Justice Worker Program
MAYSAR	Melbourne Aboriginal Youth Sport and Recreation
NPACC	Northern Police Aboriginal Consultative Committee
PALO	Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer
PIP	Prison Invisit Program
RAJAC	Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee
RCIADIC	Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody
SALO	Sheriff's Aboriginal Liaison Officer
SHSC	Specialist Homelessness Services Collection
SIAPC	Statewide Indigenous Arts in Prison and Community
VACCA	Victorian Aboriginal Childcare Association
VACSAL	Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Limited
VAHS	Victorian Aboriginal Health Service Cooperative Limited
VALS	Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service
VAP	Victims Assistance Program
VEMD	Victorian Emergency Minimum Dataset
VEOHRC	Victoria Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
VIC	Victoria

Introduction

This is the report of an evaluation of one aspect of the outcomes of Phase 3 of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement (2013-2018). The focus is on the 'place-based' approach, where local Aboriginal communities develop solutions responsive to local needs. To that end, the evaluation focused on four regions of Victoria.

The evaluation team spoke to stakeholders individually and in groups, observed meetings, reviewed research and evaluation literature and analysed AJA-related documents and available data.

The report is structured as follows: Sections 1 to 6 describe the evaluation approach and sets the state-wide context: the evolution of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA) since 2000 as a partnership between the Victorian Government and the Aboriginal community; the characteristics of a successful place-based approach; the contemporary legislative landscape and the impact on Aboriginal people of changes relating to family violence, bail provisions and sentencing; an overview of AJA3 initiatives in policing, the courts, corrections and youth justice, and in the provision of funding to communities; and findings from prison data and interviews with prisoners and staff.

The four Sections 7 to 10 are case studies of the four regions chosen by the Koori Justice Unit for a place based evaluative focus: Barwon South West, Loddon Mallee, Northern Metropolitan and Southern Metropolitan.

Section 11 summarises findings against key characteristics of a place based approach and answers the key evaluation questions. Recommendations for action during AJA4 are identified.

We have found that initiatives and programs implemented under the umbrella of the AJA are achieving positive outcomes in the regions studied. The AJA has continued to promote a place based approach to justice that is more therapeutic and less punitive. Our recommendations, refined in dialogue with an Evaluation Steering Group, relate to: assessing the adverse impact of legislative changes; a justice workforce strategy and several specific workforce improvements; access to culturally appropriate programs for Aboriginal offenders (young and adult) in the community and in prisons; facilitation of community members' involvement in Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees; resourcing issues for RAJACs and for Gathering Places; and future data collection and evaluation.

1. Aboriginal Justice Agreements 2000 – 2017

1.1.1. Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 1

The Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA) was established in June 2000 as a partnership between the Victorian Government¹ and the Aboriginal community to improve justice outcomes for Aboriginal people. Establishment of the agreement came in response to the recommendations emerging from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody in 1991. Following the release of the Commission's findings, the Commonwealth, States and Territories agreed to develop a national response to the Commission's recommendations. This response was to include full consultation with Aboriginal people, community organisations and peak bodies.

The aim of the AJA Phase 1 (AJA1) was:

To minimise Indigenous over-representation in the criminal justice system by improving accessibility, utilisation and effectiveness of justice-related programs and services in partnership with the Aboriginal community.

AJA1 was accompanied by an action plan containing 51 initiatives clustered around the six primary objectives of:

- **Community participation** – *to achieve maximum Aboriginal community participation in the process for legislative, policy and program development, service delivery and monitoring and review.*
- **Development of culturally appropriate programs and services** - *identify and respond effectively to the needs of Aboriginal people through the development and delivery of culturally appropriate policies programs and services.*
- **Development of a coordinated and strategic approach** - *development of a co-ordinated and strategic whole-of-government approach ensures that the design, development, delivery and monitoring of programs and services for Aboriginal people is in accordance with the Aboriginal Justice Agreement*
- **Delivery of fair and equitable justice services** - *address issues that limit or prevent Aboriginal access to legal protection and ensure that the discretionary administration of law does not adversely impact on Aboriginal people and culture*
- **Increasing community safety, security and wellbeing** - *develop targeted strategies to address the underlying economic, social and cultural issues behind the breakdown of families and the over-representation of Aboriginal people coming into contact with the juvenile and criminal justice systems*
- **Reducing the risk for Aboriginal children and youth** - *through the development of a whole-of-government approach, focus on strengthening families and primary care prevention as a means of reducing the risk of involvement of Aboriginal children and youth in the justice system.*

Oversight for AJA1 rested with the Aboriginal Justice Forum (AJF), made up of representatives from Victorian Aboriginal community organisations including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, Tumbukka Regional Council, Binjirru Regional Council and Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee; state government agencies and/or entities (Department of Justice, Corrections Victoria, Victoria Police, Department of Human Services, Department of Education, Employment and Training,

¹ Specifically, the then Department of Justice, Department of Human Services, the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

Equal Opportunity Commission) and Victorian Courts. The AJF was supported by the Aboriginal Justice Working Group, set up to advance inter-agency coordination of programs and services, and to provide support to Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees (RAJACs). Representatives from a similar range of Government and community organisations contributed to the functioning of the Working Group with additional contribution from the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service and the Crime Prevention Agency.

An evaluation of AJA1 was conducted in 2004 and reported in April 2005 (Atkinson, Kerr & Associates 2005). While the review found no “compelling evidence that over-representation is diminishing” (p2) the authors noted the short time frame over which the AJA had been operating and the efforts that would be required to address entrenched social disadvantage in many Victorian Aboriginal communities. Notwithstanding this, the review noted the substantial progress made on the majority of the initiatives proposed and recommended the continuation of the AJA into Phase 2.

1.1.2. Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 2

The AJA Phase 2 (AJA2) was signed in 2006 (to 2012) maintaining the aim of Phase 1 and adding a second aim:

... to have a Koori community, as part of the broader Victorian community, that has the same access to human, civil and legal rights, living free from racism and discrimination and experiencing the same justice outcomes through the elimination of inequities in the justice system.

AJA2 defined six objectives as follows:

- **Crime prevention and early intervention** - Reduce the number of Koori youth coming in contact with the criminal justice system by promoting protective factors and reducing risk factors for offending behaviour.
- **Diversion/Strengthening alternatives to imprisonment** - Increase the rate at which justice agencies divert Koories from more serious contact with the criminal justice system and strengthen community-based alternatives to imprisonment.
- **Reduce Re-offending** - Reduce the rate at which Koories re-offend by changing environmental and behavioural factors that contribute to that offending.
- **Reduce victimisation** - Reduce the negative impact that the high rate of victimisation has on Koori communities, families and individuals so that intergenerational contributors to offending are reduced.
- **Responsive and inclusive services** - Make mainstream and positive justice-related services more responsive and inclusive of the needs of the Koori community.
- **Strengthen community justice responses** - Build capacity in and strengthen Koori communities so they are better able to improve their justice outcomes, particularly through the delivery of place-based initiatives.

The base funding of approximately \$6 million from AJA1 was supplemented in Phase 2 with additional annual funding of \$7.3 million, bringing the annual budget of AJA2 to \$13.4 million. This funding supported the operation of the Koori Justice Unit (KJU) within the Department of Justice and Regulation, provided funds to other justice agencies (Corrections Victoria, Courts, Department of Human Services, and Victoria Police) and supported the operational aspects of local committees: Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees (RAJACs) and Local Aboriginal Justice Action Committees (LAJACs).

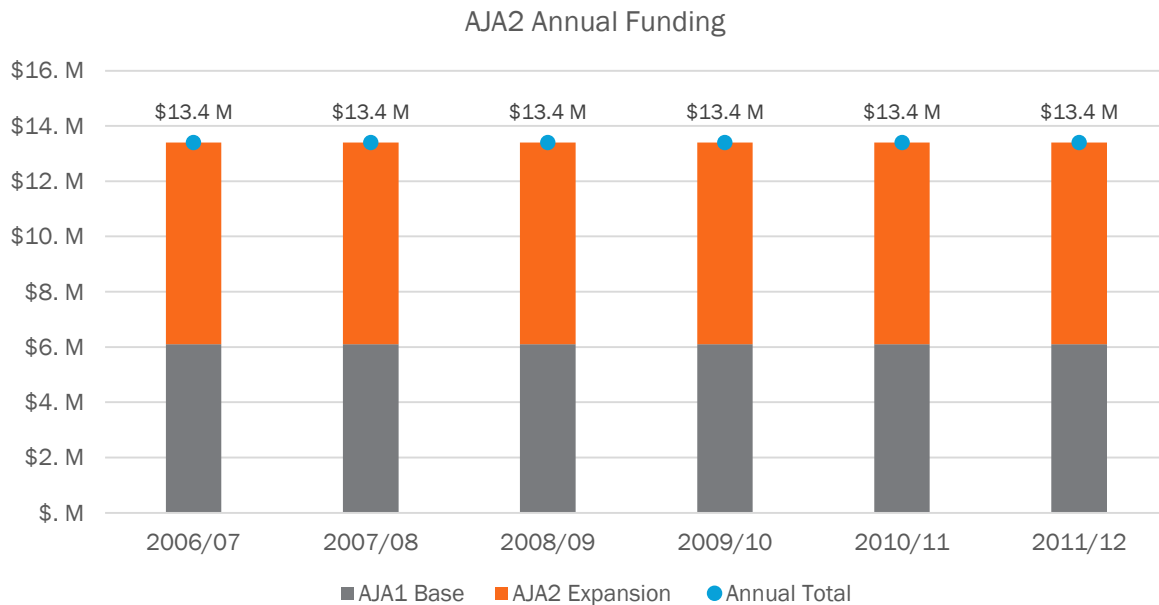


Figure 1-1: AJA2 annual funding 2006-2012

Funding was directed towards strategies aimed at prevention, early intervention, increased diversion, reduced re-offending and interventions at every point in the criminal justice system. There was a focus on making the justice system more responsive and inclusive to Aboriginal people. AJA2 adopted a place-based approach to establishing initiatives in partnership with local communities, recognising the importance of ‘community voice’ in building capacity to address justice issues locally.

Direction for what place-based initiatives might be pursued was provided through the *Regional Action Plans* developed by the RAJACs. These plans identified the primary criminal justice issues in the region and contained a number of actions that would be pursued through the period of the Plan to address those issues. Progress against the Plan was tracked at each RAJAC meeting.

The independent evaluation of the AJA2 in 2012 found that, although there continued to be over-representation of Aboriginal people in the justice system, the number would have been greater if not for the AJA2 (Nous Group 2012). The evaluation reported positive outcomes such as a reduction in the number of youth coming into contact with police and a reduction in the number of Aboriginal people re-offending. Further, the evaluation noted that community-based justice responses had increased along with an increase in the responsiveness of Justice Services. The place-based approach adopted in AJA2 was seen as providing stronger connection to the AJA for the broader Aboriginal community. The evaluation recommended a continuation of the place-based approach in subsequent phases of the Agreement.

1.1.3. Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 3

AJA3 aimed to build on the work done in the Phases 1 and 2 with the following six strategic objectives:

- continued focus on crime prevention and early prevention
- continued emphasis on diversion and strengthened alternatives to imprisonment and extending this emphasis across the justice system
- reduce reoffending with increased focus across the justice system
- reduce victimisation and expand focus to include reducing conflict and violence as well as victimisation

- increased focus on responsive and inclusive services through Koori Inclusion Action Plan and Koori Employment Strategy 2011-15
- expanded focus on community justice responses, to also include increasing community safety.

Twenty eight strategies and 82 sub-strategies are described in the Agreement. The AJA3 focus is on building stronger families and safer communities as a means of improving justice outcomes. Following consultation with communities, strategies were designed in collaboration to meet the needs of the local communities in which they were operating. The place-based approach has been continued in AJA3 as an acknowledgment that traditional models of government service delivery have proven ineffective in addressing the levels of disadvantage experienced by Victorian Aboriginal people. Although many initiatives within AJA3 do not have a criminal justice-specific focus, they address the drivers of offending behaviour such as poor infrastructure, low education levels, high unemployment and low community capacity (Gilbert, 2012).

AJA3 was underpinned by a recurrent budget allocation which supports the administration of the Agreement and implementation of key initiatives, such as Koori Courts and Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers (ACLOs). New AJA3 action implementation has been largely unfunded through government budget processes. This has necessitated a focus on making improvements in the delivery of existing programs, services and infrastructure including process improvements (e.g. improving the referral, intake or case management process) or product delivery improvements (e.g. procedural documents or program reviews) (Koori Justice Unit 2016). Funding has also been supplemented from time to time by leveraging funding off other funded activities and opportunities.

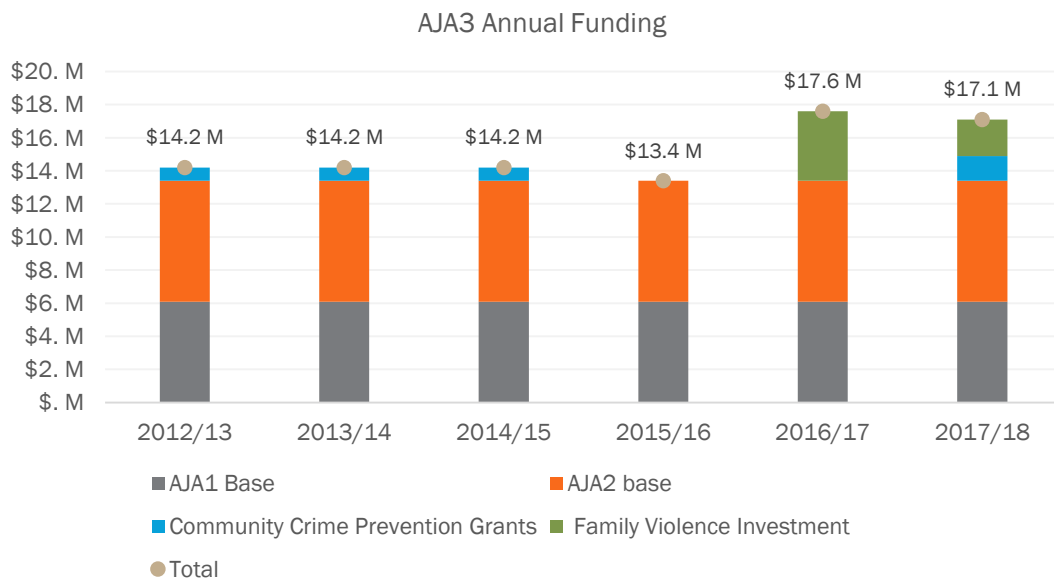


Figure 1-2: AJA3 annual funding 2012-2018

Although new funding was not made available through the Budget processes for the third phase of the Agreement, the funding that had been provided for AJA1 and AJA2 continued. As the new initiatives identified in AJA3 were unfunded, the KJU and other business units were required to either attract funding from other sources or to fund initiatives from existing budget allocations. This has included:

- Grants funding via the Community Crime Prevention Unit, comprising:
 - \$2.4 million for the Koori Community Safety Grants program in 2012/13
 - \$1.5 million for the Koori Youth Crime Prevention Grants in 2017/18

- Funds via the 2016/17 Family Violence Investment Package, comprising:
 - \$1.55m for the Koori Women's Diversion Program
 - \$2.6m to recruit an Aboriginal Dispute Resolution Team in the Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria
- In the 2017/18 state budget, further funding was received for multiple family violence initiatives:
 - \$3.66m over four years and \$1.21m ongoing was allocated to the continuation of the Koori Women's Diversion Program and its expansion to a fourth site.
 - \$3.19m over four years and \$1.06m ongoing to continue the Aboriginal Dispute Resolution Program.
 - \$11.0 million for culturally appropriate family violence legal services for Aboriginal communities.
 - Djirra (the Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Legal Service) received \$4.29m (and \$1.43m ongoing) to offer its *Sisters Day Out*, *Dilly Bag* and *Young Luv* programs. They also received funding to pilot the Koori Women's Place in Abbotsford.
 - Dardi Munwurro received \$3m over four years and \$750,000 ongoing to commence the Ngarra Jarranounith intensive residential program for Aboriginal male perpetrators.

Since 2013-14, DJR, Courts, Corrections Victoria, and Victoria Police have contributed discretionary funding to increase the scale or scope of AJA initiatives



Every problem magnifies the impact of the others, and all are so tightly interlocked that one reversal can produce a chain reaction with results far distant from the original causes. A rundown apartment can exacerbate a child's asthma, which leads to a call for an ambulance, which generates a medical bill that cannot be paid, which ruins a credit record, which hikes the interest rate on an auto loan, which forces the purchase of an unreliable used car, which jeopardizes a mother's punctuality at work, which limits her promotions and earning capacity, which confines her to poor housing ... If problems are interlocking, then so must solutions be. A job alone is not enough. Medical insurance alone is not enough. Good housing alone is not enough. Reliable transportation, careful family budgeting, effective parenting, effective schooling are not enough when each is achieved in isolation from the rest².

Shipler 2004. p. 11.

2. A Place-Based Approach

Wiseman has defined a *place-based approach* as “one that seeks to address the collective problems of families and communities at a local level, usually involving a focus on community-strengthening – efforts to strengthen the engagement, connectedness and resilience of local communities” (Wiseman, 2006). Such approaches² are identified in the literature as being well-suited to dealing with complex wicked problems including, but not limited to, Aboriginal disadvantage experienced in a particular geographic location (Bellefontaine & Wisener, 2011; Shugart & Townsend, 2010; Gilbert, 2012).

By their very nature, complex problems are multi faceted and require the input of multiple stakeholders to design and implement suitable responses. The aim of place-based approaches is to strengthen communities and build their resilience to address issues at the local level in ways which are relevant and sustainable at that time and into the future. They target communities rather than individuals, and recognise that as localities differ, “...each will raise unique solutions” (Centre for Community Child Health, 2011; 2012: 5). The strongest justification supporting place-based approaches, according to Byron (2010), is that they lead to responses to people *and* place and provide a platform for the delivery of a more integrated and holistic suite of services and supports.

Far from being viewed as a replacement for mainstream approaches, they are widely considered to provide a complementary form of support that can be used where the breadth and complexity of disadvantageous factors may limit people's ability to benefit from mainstream services and supports. Indeed, the overall success of place-based programs is largely considered to be contingent on the extent to which targeted place-based policies and mainstream people-based services and support are integrated and mutually reinforcing (Byron 2010: 21).

From a comprehensive investigation of place-based initiatives from across the world, Wilks and others (2015) have noted the tendency for some initiatives to focus on ‘place’ (geographic areas) and others

² Sometimes referred to as area-based approach; neighbourhood approach; integrated approach; district approach and community based approach (Parker & Maynard, 2015).

to focus on ‘person’ (the socio-economic characteristics of the population) or, more recently, to have a focus on both simultaneously using:

- **Spatial targeting:** initiatives designed with sensitivity to boundary issues and the shape of the “natural community”. For place-based initiatives aiming to address Aboriginal disadvantage the natural community might be defined culturally and correspond to the area occupied by particular language groups or clans.
- **Social targeting:** focuses the initiative on particular population groups. In the case of AJA initiatives, the social grouping is already defined as Aboriginal people living within the geographic boundary. Targeting can be further refined within the broader population, as has been the case for some AJA place-based initiatives. For example, many target youth and the Women’s Diversion pilot in Loddon Mallee has targeted female offenders.

2.1. AJA3 emphasis on place

Reconciliation Victoria argues that the strength of the Aboriginal community is reflected in the range of Aboriginal organisations and networks in the region. These organisations are seen as vital to the health, wellbeing and liveliness of the Aboriginal community. Not only do they offer physical services in the areas of health, law or housing, they act as focal points for the local Aboriginal community and the mainstream service sector.³

Types of Aboriginal organisations and networks found across the state include:

- **Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs)** deliver a range of services (health, welfare, justice, housing, community services, arts) and are often a focal point within a community.
- **Traditional Owners Groups** – Traditional Owners are Aboriginal people who have an ongoing relationship with their traditional country that precedes European settlement.
- **Registered Aboriginal Parties** – The Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council appoints Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) to protect and manage cultural heritage under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*.
- **Peak and State-wide bodies** – There are a number of organisations that represent Victoria’s Aboriginal community priorities and/or provide services in locations across the state. These include the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service, Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Limited, Aborigines Advancement League, Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc., and Aboriginal Housing Victoria.
- **Local Aboriginal Networks (LANs)** are made up of Aboriginal people who work together to provide a voice for their community, identify local issues and priorities and plan for the future. There are 39 LANs operating across the State that regularly engage with Aboriginal people living in Victoria.
- **Other local and regional Aboriginal community engagement structures** – The Aboriginal community operates a number of engagement structures to ensure it is inclusive of members of its community, for example in justice, family violence and education.

³ Reconciliation Victoria’s Maggolee website resource for local councils to work more closely with Aboriginal communities at <http://www.maggolee.org.au/engagement-and-participation/just-a-page-1/>.

A key objective for AJA3 is to improve community justice responses through increasing community strength and capacity to develop local solutions to local issues. This objective captures the intent to implement place-based strategies in response to findings from the evaluation of AJA2. This earlier evaluation found regional variation in outcomes that was, in part, attributed to the effectiveness of programs that were more responsive to the specific needs of a particular place.

At the commencement of AJA3 the KJU Monitoring and Evaluation team developed a program logic model to clarify the theory behind the approach taken and describe the planned activities and outputs under AJA3 and how these aim to contribute to interim and long term outcomes. In developing the program logic, the Evaluation Branch identified three pathways to outcomes: through systems and service capacity, through contact with the criminal justice system, and through community strengthening. Place-based initiatives have impact in all three outcome areas but are particularly centred on community strengthening. The AJA3 Monitoring and Evaluation Plan describes the logic in the community strengthening outcome area as shown in Box 2-1 and the pathway is shown in Figure 2-1. We acknowledge that this program logic was prepared at the commencement of the AJA3 and has not been revised since then. As a result, it may not accurately reflect the activities that have been implemented under the Agreement. It is included here to show how the long-term outcomes were expected to be achieved and has helped to guide our analysis of the initiatives under evaluation. It also highlights that place-based initiatives are only one of a number of activities designed to effect change.

Community strengthening

Activities in this area include community awareness raising and training opportunities, community development plans and processes, and programs and services for victims, and youth strengthening activities. These areas all interrelate and overlap in their ability to influence initial and sustained contact with the criminal justice system.

Responses in this area are not necessarily within remit of the justice system, but include activities undertaken by the Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Education and Training, among others. It includes collaborative activity between justice services and other parts of the service system.

Long term outcomes in this area include:

- Increased community safety
- Reduced violent offending
- Reduced family violence
- Reduced youth contact with police

Box 2-1: Activities to support community strengthening (AJA3 Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, KJU, 2013)

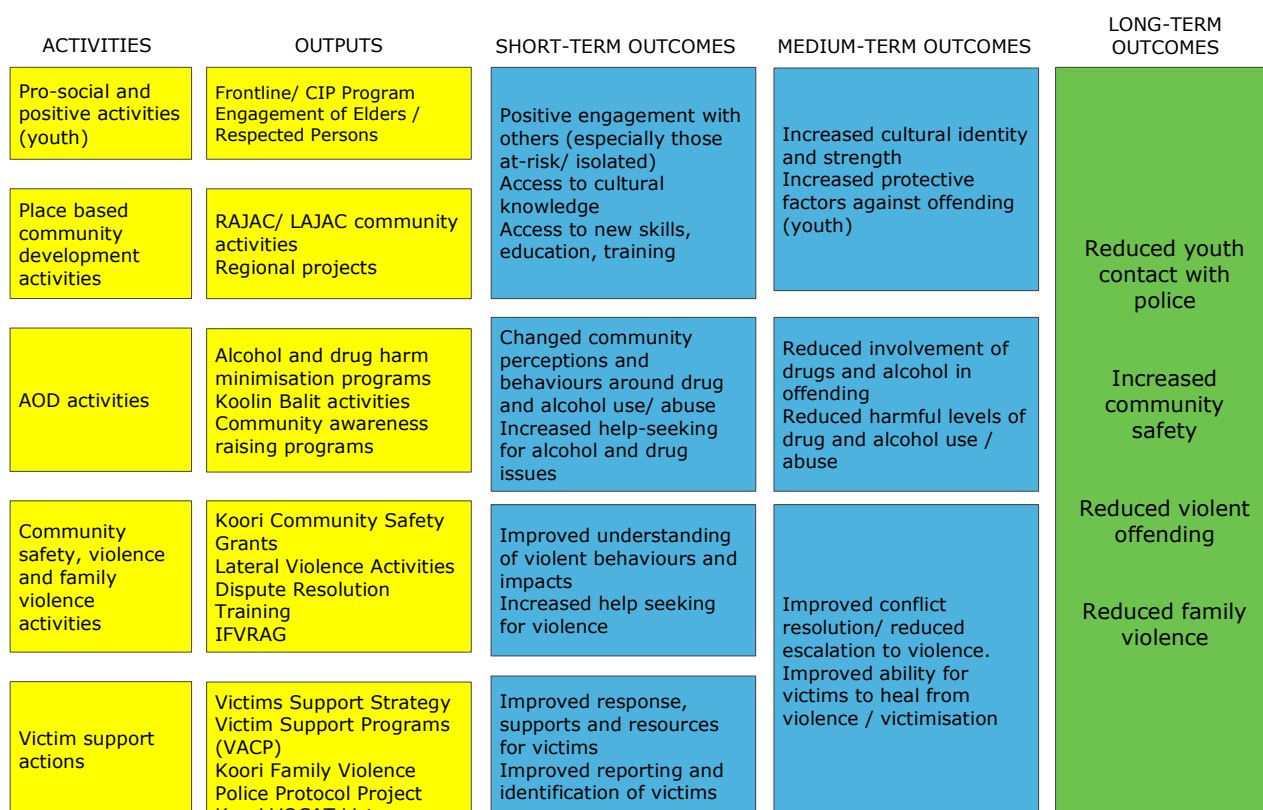


Figure 2-1: Broad based community strengthening pathway program logic model (AJA3 Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, KJU, 2013)

The logic for inclusion of place-based activities under the AJA3 suggests that programs initiated at the regional level and co-ordinated through the RAJACs or the LAJACs would allow for ‘positive engagement’ with program design informed by ‘local knowledge’. The logic implies that implementation of locally-designed programs would facilitate skills development, as local Aboriginal organisations (and individuals) would be exposed to new opportunities to learn. Ultimately, the place-based programs could deliver positive outcomes for beneficiaries as well as strengthening the capacity of those involved in program delivery.

2.2. Characteristics of an effective place-based approach

2.2.1. Evaluation evidence for place-based approaches

Moore et al (2014) identified that limited evidence was available for place-based approaches due to variation in evaluation methodologies used and the absence of long term evaluations. Similarly, Gilbert (2012) noted that “it can be difficult to separate the influence brought to bear by existing [place-based] initiatives ... in achieving improvements in community wellbeing”. This is due to the fact that there are typically multiple initiatives running within communities and usually over a considerable length of time. This adds to the complexity of linking outcomes with any individual initiative.

Gilbert (2012) noted, however, that although there is little documented evaluative evidence of the success or otherwise of place-based initiatives, they do have the potential to effect meaningful change within Aboriginal communities.

2.2.2. A framework for place-based inquiry

The research and evaluation evidence has shown (Larsen 2007, Parker & Maynard 2015; Vinson 2009a, Wilks et al 2015) that successful place-based initiatives tend to share a set of common characteristics. We have used these characteristics as a framework for developing interview questions to evaluate the effectiveness of the place-based approach that has been advocated through AJA3, although somewhat more narrowly defined than the literature advocates. Our reporting focuses on the extent to which specific initiatives have built in these components and to critically assess what effect that has had on their delivery and the successes achieved.

The key common characteristics arising from our analysis and research lie in the seven domains of engagement, participation, leadership, time, relevance to context, flexibility in delivery, and joined up working:

- **Engagement:** Extensive local community engagement is at the heart of all successful place-based partnerships.
- **Participation:** Allison and Cunneen (2013) and Bellefontaine & Wisener (2011) contend that programs are more likely to be implemented successfully and are more likely to achieve their intended outcomes if they incorporate quality community engagement. Involving the local community in developing responses to local issues creates services that are grounded in local needs and conditions and are more likely to be accepted by the community. The approach should lead to clearly defined and agreed goals and clear, tangible benefits (Wiseman, 2006)
- **Leadership:** Community and organisations need to have the capacity to design and implement place-based initiatives to respond to the issues to be addressed. At the outset, capacity resides in the leaders or drivers of an initiative and it is their responsibility to enable capacity building to occur.

Successful place-based initiatives include a local decision-making body that brings together service providers (e.g. non-government community service representatives), community leaders (e.g. local council representatives, local businesses), local decision makers (e.g. departmental officers) and people with lived experience of the problems that are trying to be solved.

An important role for community leaders is to facilitate the strengthening of community by establishing connection and trust between people and organisations. This assists with building confidence for self-management and problem solving, so that community members are equipped to “pull together” to achieve common goals (Moore & Fry, 2011, Wiseman (2006). Community capacity is not a given. It requires nurturing and the investment of time and resources. The more disadvantaged a community the less practised it is in working in a focused, collaborative way (Vinson 2009a).

- **Adequate time:** Problems that have often been decades in the making cannot be reversed in a few short years. Designing an initiative that responds to the complexity of the problem to be addressed and that takes account of the common elements noted above requires sufficient lead times to build relationships and capacity. Time also needs to be allowed to fully understand the context in which the initiative is operating. The factors contributing to Aboriginal over-representation are well understood and there is acknowledgement that a long-term focus is necessary to ‘turn the tide’. Such a long-term focus requires sustained investment through the allocation of long-term funding. Stable, dependable and predictable policy is seen to be imperative in the successful delivery of place-based initiatives (Wilks et al 2015). This is often difficult with changes of government, even with bipartisan support. A long-term focus by necessity demands adequate funding to maintain momentum. Some consideration should also be given to brokered solutions, as opposed to traditional competitive models of grant allocation. The

competition created through traditional models is at odds with a collaborative approach, and only encourages competition between local organisations that would achieve more through working together.

- **Context:** At the heart of place-based initiatives is attention to the characteristics that differentiate markedly disadvantaged areas from other areas. Further, attention to the specific needs of the area, identified either by formal indicators or through engagement, helps to target the program spatially and socially.
- **Flexible delivery:** refers to having autonomy in how a program is delivered locally as well as discretion in how funding is utilised. “The ability to adjust the rules in order to adapt government place-based policies and programs to meet the needs of local communities is considered vital to the success of place-based initiatives” (Wilks et al 2015: 7). It is important to adopt an evolving process that allows for adaptive learning and stakeholder interests, and to be opportunity driven, drawing on local talent and resources, and considering local constraints (Bellefontaine & Wisener 2011)
- **Joined-up working:** coordinating and developing partnerships leading to effective engagement between organisations within local areas across the government, private and community sectors. The approach should be integrated across ‘silos, jurisdictions and dimensions of sustainability in an effort to achieve synergies’ (Bellefontaine & Wisener, 2011).

Katz (cited in Wilks et al 2015) proposes partnerships between local organisations with complementary strengths and a mix of skills and experience in order to deliver holistic place and people-focused interventions. Programs implemented under the umbrella of the AJA3 must be responsive to the cultural context and include Aboriginal service providers, preferably as the primary service delivery agent. This requirement is challenging when there are few, or under-resourced, local organisations available to enter into partnerships or implement programs.

3. AJA3 in context

Leading up to the signing of AJA3 and during its operation a number of legislative reforms in the criminal justice space were enacted that have disproportionately impacted Aboriginal people in Victoria. Following is a brief discussion of the major reforms implemented as part of a ‘tough on crime’ agenda. These reforms related to family violence, bail provisions and sentencing.

3.1. Reforms in family violence

The issue of family violence was brought to the fore in the wake of a series of family violence-related deaths in Victoria. A Royal Commission into Family Violence was established in 2015, tasked in part to “develop and refine systemic responses to family violence—including in the legal system and by police, corrections, child protection, legal and family violence support services”.

Research commissioned by the Royal Commission tracked family violence incidents in Victoria between 2009 and 2014. Over that period, the incidence of family violence had increased across all aspects of the family violence system. The number of family violence incidents recorded by Victoria Police increased by 82.7 per cent; the number of finalised applications heard in the Magistrates’ and Children’s court increased by 34.5 per cent and 33.0 per cent respectively; the number of people accessing family violence services increased by 11.7 per cent; and the total number of services provided by Victoria Legal Aid where the primary matter was family violence-related also increased in the five years from July 2009.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data were only available in the Victorian Emergency Minimum Dataset (VEMD), Victims Assistance Program (VAP) and Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC) datasets⁴, with data either not recorded or of low quality amongst the other contributing datasets. In the five years from July 2009, the proportion of recorded Indigenous status across these three datasets has remained relatively stable. In 2013–14, 5 per cent of patients in the VEMD and VAP datasets identified as Aboriginal, and in the three years to July 2011, on average 10 per cent of SHSC clients identified as Aboriginal. Police data contained within the Crime Statistics Agency Aboriginal Justice Indicators – Victoria Police dashboard reviewed for this evaluation shows data for the period 2012 to 2016. The number of offences where the other party was Aboriginal has remained relatively static over the period in the four regions under investigation, as the figures below indicate.

⁴ The Victorian Emergency Minimum Dataset contains information detailing presentations at Victorian public hospitals with designated Emergency Departments; Data collected from the VAP includes demographic information of the victim, location data, information on the crime type and how the client was referred to the agency; SHSC data is sourced from agencies providing homelessness services.

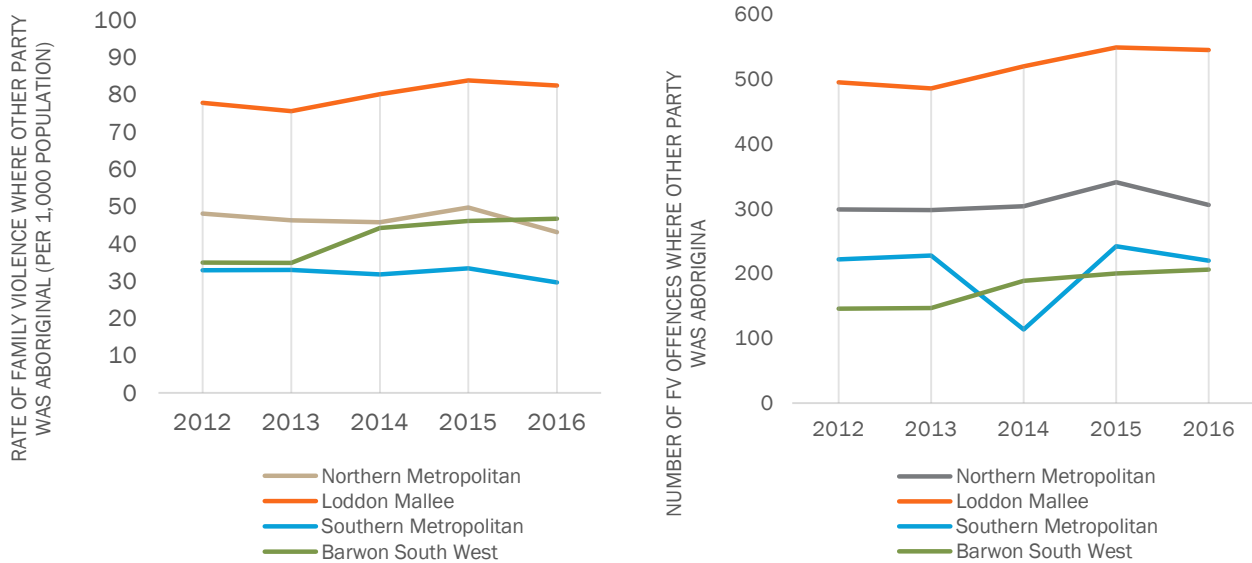


Figure 3-1: Rate and number of family violence incidents where other party was Aboriginal (Source: Crime Statistics Agency Aboriginal Justice Indicators)

The data, however, does not correspond to information we were hearing from agencies and communities during this evaluation. Without exception, when they referred to Aboriginal family violence, interviewees talked about how it was increasing and of the deleterious impact it had on individuals, families and communities. We suspect that the disparity between the ‘official’ data and the perceptions on the ground is because the recording of Aboriginal status by justice agencies does not accurately reflect an individual’s Aboriginality. The data presented to the Royal Commission, however, does show an alarming increase in the number of Aboriginal family members affected by family violence, particularly when seen in comparison to the non-Aboriginal population as shown in Figure 3-2 below. An Aboriginal person was at least 7.3 times more likely than a non-Aboriginal person to be an affected family member in a family violence incident (State of Victoria, 2016).

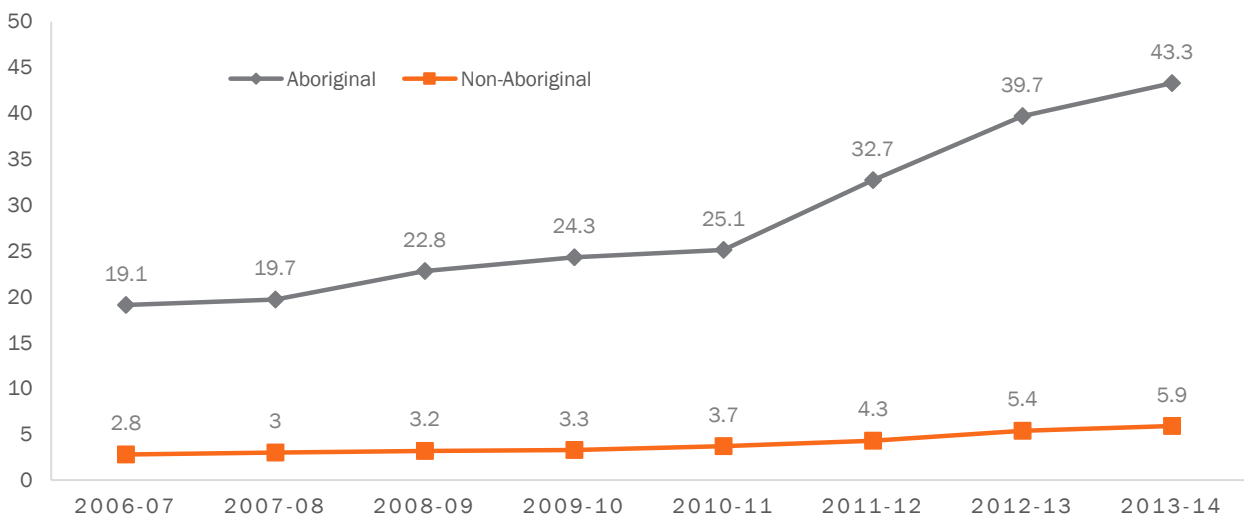


Figure 3-2: Family violence incidents per 1000 population: Indigenous and non-Indigenous affected family members, 2006-07 to 2013-14 (Source: State of Victoria, 2016)

3.2. Reforms to bail management

A 2010 amendment to the *Bail Act 1977* required that bail decision-makers must take account of a person's Aboriginal status when making a determination. Further, courts must take account of issues that arise because of a person's Aboriginality, including consideration of

- the person's cultural background, including the person's ties to extended family or place
- any other relevant cultural issue or obligation (Section 3A, *Bail Amendment Act*, 2010).

In the five years following proclamation of the *Bail Amendment Act 2010* there was a 90 per cent increase in the number of bail applications in the Magistrates' Court. The number of Aboriginal people released to bail increased over the period 2009-10 and 2014-15 from 71 to 252 (Corrections Victoria, 2016a).

Further amendment to the Act occurred in 2013 and sought to: list commonly imposed bail conditions; make it an offence to contravene certain bail conditions; make it an offence to commit an indictable offence; and ensure the same magistrate or judge heard further bail applications (*Bail Amendment Act*, 2013). In the year following the implementation of the *Bail Amendment 2013*, the total number of all bail breaches grew significantly – an increase of 67 per cent.

In their report *Unfinished Business*, the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (2013) suggested that bail decision makers were not fully utilising the provision of Section 3A of the Act to take account of a person's cultural background, particularly for Aboriginal women. This, they argued, represented "a lost opportunity to reduce the number of Koori women entering prison on remand, especially when less than 15 per cent of these women end up receiving a custodial sentence". In many situations, women are denied bail because of a chronic lack of safe, stable and secure accommodation to which they can be bailed, especially in regional locations.

The *Bail Amendment (Stage One) Act 2017* amended the *Bail Act 1977* so that decision makers, including magistrates and judges, will be required to place a higher priority on community safety when making bail decisions. Bail will be refused for a range of new Schedule One offences, including aggravated home invasion, aggravated carjacking, trafficking and cultivation offences under the *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981* and terrorism offences, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Additionally, bail will be refused for many Schedule Two offences unless the accused can demonstrate compelling reasons. These offences include:

- manslaughter and child homicide
- a threat to kill that is family violence
- family violence offences including persistent contravention of a family violence intervention order
- sexual offences including rape
- driving offences including culpable driving causing death; dangerous driving causing death or serious injury; dangerous or negligent driving while pursued by police.

People who commit serious indictable offences while on bail, summons, parole, a Community Corrections Order (CCO) or under sentence will not be granted bail again unless they can prove there are exceptional circumstances.

Further bail amendments were enacted in February 2018 with the passing of the *Bail Amendment (Stage Two) Act 2017*. This Act: reformulated and clarified how the tests for bail should be applied; introduced a police remand system to enable police to remand an adult accused until a court is available; requires an accused, other than a child, Aboriginal person or vulnerable adult, who is already on undertakings of bail for indictable offences, to be brought before a court in relation to any bail decision in relation to particular

serious offences; provides an express power for a court to bail or remand a person appearing on summons (refer to Bail Amendment (Stage Two) Bill 2017 Explanatory Memorandum).

The effects of this latest amendment will need to be investigated to determine whether it will have a disproportionate impact on Aboriginal Victorians. On the basis of earlier amendments, it seems likely that such impacts will be felt.

3.3. Reforms in sentencing

Major sentencing reforms occurred in 2010, in 2013 and again in 2016. The 2010 legislative amendments to sentencing aimed to provide more flexible non-custodial sentencing by allowing courts to impose CCOs for longer periods, include higher numbers of community work hours, and attach a greater range of conditions to address specific offending behaviours. In 2013, the provision for suspended sentences was abolished for all offences⁵. The amendment also brought in a modernisation of provisions in relation to fines, including new sentencing powers to deal with unpaid court fines. This aimed to keep disadvantaged people who are unable to pay fines out of prison by introducing the following:

- A new right to apply for the rehearing of a fine order.
- New and wider sentencing options where fines are unpaid.
- Greater flexibility in dealing with persons with an undisclosed/unidentified mental illness or intellectual disability or other special circumstances.
- Permission for courts to determine whether special circumstances may exist or whether there is new or previously disclosed information that may render imprisonment excessive, disproportionate or harsh.
- Permission for courts to reduce or discharge a court-ordered fine if the offender cannot pay their fine because of a material change in their circumstances.
- Further reform to empower the courts to take away an offender's licence for any offence where the court considers doing so will better protect the community or send a clear message to the offender.

Following the introduction of community corrections reform and the abolition of suspended sentences, 70 per cent of offenders who would typically have received a suspended sentence received a CCO, resulting in a significant increase in offenders reporting to community correctional services across the state. This increase in offender numbers was felt to a greater extent within the Aboriginal population. The Aboriginal offender population being managed by Community Corrections Services increased by 48 per cent between June 2011 and June 2015 (Corrections Victoria, 2016a). More than half of this increase (26%) occurred between 2014 and 2015 and was followed by a further 20 per cent increase from June to December 2015 (Corrections Victoria, 2016a). The consequence of the change was particularly felt in the Grampians and West Metropolitan regions, which saw an increase of 172 per cent and 96 per cent respectively between 2014 and 2015 (Corrections Victoria, 2016a).

Amendments introduced in 2017 disallowed the use of CCOs and other non-custodial options for ten Category One offences including rape, murder, and causing serious injury. CCOs and other non-custodial orders were also not permitted, except where special reasons apply, for Category Two offences such as manslaughter, child homicide, kidnapping and intentionally causing serious injury. Further, the length of

⁵ The abolition of suspended sentences began in 2010 for serious offences including death, serious injury, sexual penetration and robbery. In 2011, suspended sentences were unable to be used for "significant offences" including serious injury recklessly, arson offences, aggravated burglary and serious drug trafficking offences. In 2013 they were removed from supreme and county court sentences before being abolished in magistrate courts the following year.

imprisonment that could be combined with a CCO was halved from two years to one year or less. A non-parole period now cannot be fixed as part of a combined order – meaning offenders must serve their full term of imprisonment before beginning their CCO. Previously, a CCO could be imposed for up to the maximum term of imprisonment for the relevant offence. The proposed laws limit the maximum length a CCO can be imposed to five years. (*Sentencing (Community Correction Order) and Other Acts Amendment Act 2016*)

3.4. Reforms in correctional services (parole)

Parole reform in 2013 and 2014 brought a significant shift in the number of parole applications granted and declined. Specifically, there was a doubling of the number of applications denied and a decrease of about a third in the number of applications granted. Additionally, there was a 38 per cent decrease in the number of parole review requests accepted and a 146 per cent increase in the number rejected. The result of these shifts was an increasing trend in the total prisoner population.

Findings included in an unpublished DJR report⁶ on the reforms concluded that the parole reforms had disproportionately affected Aboriginal Victorians. As a result of these reforms, Aboriginal offenders are more likely to receive sentences without a parole period and have limited opportunities to access parole. Once in prison, Aboriginal offenders are less likely to be considered for parole due to their over-representation in violent offences. They are also less likely to access and complete the offender behaviour programs offered in prison. Aboriginal offenders are also more likely to spend extended periods of time on remand, limiting their access to rehabilitation programs required for parole. Further, as prisoners need a release address before applying for parole, Aboriginal offenders are further disadvantaged due to the high rates of homelessness within the community. Finally, the new requirement for prisoners to apply for parole, instead of automatic consideration, is likely to have disproportionately affected Aboriginal offenders based on their access to other justice services.

Aboriginal prisoners released to parole have low levels of order completion and high rates of returning to prison under a parole breach. Aboriginal prisoners we interviewed for this evaluation reported a preference for completing their term in prison to be released to freedom, because they felt their chance of completing a parole order was low because of the conditions imposed and the challenges they faced reintegrating back into the community.

3.5. Reforms in youth justice

The transfer of Youth Justice Services from the Department of Health and Human Services to the DJR occurred in April 2017. Corrections Victoria assumed responsibility for maintaining the safety and security of youth justice facilities. Opposition to the move came from a number of quarters with concerns that it “risks the system losing its focus on rehabilitation and age-appropriate responses, which critically makes it far less likely for young people to be repeat offenders. Restrictive and punitive approaches do not work”⁷. It is yet to be seen whether these concerns were justified and whether the transfer of responsibility for youth justice has had a disproportionately worse outcome for Aboriginal young people.

The *Children and Justice Legislation Amendment (Youth Justice Reform) Act 2017* introduced a range of reforms in the youth justice area including those listed below:

⁶ Department of Justice and Regulation Koori Justice Unit (2016). *Is 'Tough on Crime' legislation tougher on Koories?*, October 2016

⁷ This comment was made by Tiffany Overall of the justice advocacy group Smart Justice for Young People and cited in the Law Institute Journal March Flipbook article 'Lawyers fear youth crackdown', 1 March 2017 retrieved from <https://www.liv.asn.au/Staying-Informed/LJJ/LJJ/March-2017/Lawyers-fear-youth-crackdown>

- increased penalties for young people committing serious and violent crimes.
- young offenders will face longer detention periods of up to four years, risk having their cases being heard in higher courts, and youths who assault youth justice officers while in detention may face more severe penalties.
- uplifting serious youth offences, such as aggravated home invasion and aggravated carjacking, from the Children’s Court to the higher courts for those aged 16 years or older.
- serious youth offenders aged 18-21 will no longer be able to be sentenced to detention in a youth justice facility, unless exceptional circumstances apply.
- a new presumption that young offenders who damage property, escape or attempt to escape from a youth justice facility will serve their sentences on top of an existing period of detention, regardless of age.
- a new Youth Control Order imposing intense requirements for supervision, support and court monitoring for up to 12 months.
- a new offence with a maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment, for adults aged 21 or over who recruit a child aged under 18 to engage in criminal activity.
- the Youth Parole Board to impose certain parole conditions (e.g. rehabilitation and treatment, curfews, non-association) when granting parole to an offender serving detention for a serious youth offence.
- a tailored pre-plea youth diversion scheme in both the criminal division of the Children's Court and the Children's Koori Court.

It is too early to determine if the amendments introduced through this Act are more adversely affecting Aboriginal youth and young people than their non-Aboriginal peers.

3.6. Summary

There is evidence that ‘tough on crime’ legislative responses tend to deliver disproportionately worse outcomes for Aboriginal people regardless of the intended target for those reforms. It has certainly been the case that Aboriginal Victorians have experienced poorer outcomes in gaining access to bail and parole. Given they are already over-represented in prisons it follows that legislation that increases sentence length for youth or adults will have worse outcomes for Aboriginal prisoners and detainees.

It is against this backdrop that the initiatives of the AJA have been implemented. This needs to be kept in mind as we explore the achievements that have been made over the period of AJA3. More importantly, to understand why we have seen no shift in the over-arching aim of reducing over-representation, it is imperative to consider these reforms that have effectively reduced access to non-custodial sentencing options, increased sentence lengths or introduced mandatory sentencing.

4. Evaluation Approach

4.1. Evaluation objectives

Overall this evaluation is seeking to understand how the AJA3 is being implemented on the ground, what is working well and why, as well as to identify gaps and opportunities for implementation of the next stage of the AJA (AJA4). The specific objectives for the evaluation are to provide impartial insights into the following matters:

1. whether AJA3 initiatives have contributed to improved Koori justice outcomes in specific locations
2. are there differences in outcomes between, and within the four regions and, if so, why?
3. how effectively the AJA3, as a strategy, addresses issues underlying Aboriginal over-representation in the justice system and identify opportunities to improve this response.

We have sought to examine the similarities and differences in implementation and outcomes in different areas, examining critical success factors in the four study locations, while considering any broader contextual factors which may exert influence over the effectiveness of different approaches in different areas.

The key principles underpinning our evaluation approach are that it was conducted:

- as a partnership approach
- with cultural sensitivity, including a strengths based and holistic perspective
- minimising the burden on participants
- with clear and consistent communication.

4.2. Target regions

Four DJR regions were selected for the evaluation brief based on the following criteria:

- investment – sites where there are major investments and examples of AJA3 initiatives
- population - size of Aboriginal population and potential to demonstrate outcomes
- readiness - capacity of regions to support and participate in intensive research activity
- comparability - whether there are similar projects that have been implemented across more than one region.

The four regions under investigation were:

- Loddon Mallee
- Barwon South West
- Northern Metropolitan
- Southern Metropolitan.

4.2.1. Out of scope

Our work did not attempt to evaluate any specific programs at the activity level; rather, it sought to draw broad lessons about the effectiveness and impact of the AJA3 as a whole.

4.3. Evaluation audience

Table 4-1 outlines the audiences for the evaluation and their information requirements from the evaluation. The primary audiences were prioritised for this evaluation.

Table 4-1: Evaluation audience information needs

Audience	Information needs
Primary Audience	
Aboriginal Justice Forum	Assessment of the outcomes of the AJA3 in Loddon Mallee, Barwon South West, Northern Metropolitan and Southern Metropolitan regions - effectiveness, value for money and lessons learnt
RAJACs & LAJACs	
Koori Justice Unit, Department of Justice & Regulation	
Secondary Audience	
Victorian Koori Community	Outcomes achieved by the AJA3
Attorney General	
Providers of services delivered under the umbrella of the AJA3 not represented on the AJF	Lessons learnt to inform future program design

4.4. Evaluation Questions

Key evaluation questions (KEQs) are focused questions that guide the direction of the Evaluation Plan. These questions are not asked as part of any data collection tool, rather they guide the type of questions these tools should be asking.

The KJU articulated the KEQs in their request for quote and these informed interview design. The base questions and accompanying sub-questions are detailed in the Table below.

Key and sub-evaluation questions and data sources

In the following table the KEQs are broken down into subsidiary evaluation questions which have been addressed through multiple lines of evidence drawn from a variety of sources. These multiple lines use the perspectives of different stakeholders and sources so as to ensure that balanced and broad-based perspectives inform the evaluation findings.

KEQ 1 What have the outcomes of the AJA3 been in each location? Have there been any unintended impacts?	
No.	Evaluation sub-questions
1.1	What specific programs are operating in the [name] region under the umbrella of the AJA3
1.2	To what extent have programs progressed in [name] region in terms of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Crime prevention and early intervention 2. Diversion and strengthening alternatives to imprisonment 3. Reducing re-offending 4. Reducing conflict, violence and victimisation 5. Responsive and inclusive services 6. Strengthening community justice responses and increasing community safety
1.3	Has any aspect of program been adapted to suit the local context? What? Why?
1.3	Have any aspects of the original program model not been implemented? Why?
KEQ 2 To what extent has the AJA3 improved positive contact with the criminal justice system and increased access to, and use of, justice related programs for Koori youth and adults?	
No.	Evaluation sub-questions
2.1	How has the AJA3 influenced criminal justice responses in Victoria?
2.2	Has there been an extension of the number/range of programs to assist Aboriginal adults and youth to change contact with criminal justice agencies as a result of the AJA3?
2.3	What are the views of offenders about their experiences of contact with criminal justice agencies?
2.4	What are the views of offenders about accessing programs to help them with their offending behavior? Is access better or worse than previously? Are there barriers to access?
2.5	What feedback about the program are key service providers receiving?
KEQ 3 To what extent does the AJA3 complement, make use of and build upon individual, community and organisational strengths, resources and services?	
No.	Evaluation sub-questions
3.1	What are the community assets in [name] region?
3.2	Do the programs implemented under the AJA3 make use of existing community strengths? Do gaps in service availability remain? Is there duplication of service delivery?

KEQ 4	What specific factors (geography, history, service mix, location, etc.) influence outcomes in the locations and need to be considered in applying findings from this area to other locations?
No.	Evaluation sub-questions
4.1	Where has success been achieved in contributing to achievement of AJA3 objectives and strategies?
4.2	“What works” in this region for offenders? For service providers? What have been the key factors that have facilitated or impeded project delivery?
4.3	Have there been any unexpected benefits / negative consequences?
KEQ 5	What is the experience of Aboriginal offenders and Aboriginal youth as they engage with the ‘service mix’ under AJA3? Are there points in the system where Aboriginal offenders are at risk of ‘falling through the gaps’?
No.	Evaluation sub-questions
5.1	What are the views of offenders about their experiences of contact with criminal justice agencies? [2.3]
5.2	What are the views of offenders about accessing programs to help them with their offending behavior? Is access better or worse than previously? Are there barriers to access? [2.4]
5.3	Are available programs addressing Aboriginal disadvantage more broadly than criminality?
5.4	Are there gaps in service provision for Aboriginal youth and adults?
KEQ 6	How well does the current mix of AJA3 activity (including processes, programs and services) respond to local community needs and drivers of Aboriginal contact with the justice system in each location?
No.	Evaluation sub-questions
6.1	What are the primary drivers for contact with the criminal justice system by Aboriginal adults and young people?
6.2	Are these drivers being addressed? If so, by whom? To what effect?
6.3	Are there valid reasons why any/some drivers are not being addressed?
6.4	What more can be done?
KEQ 7	What are the opportunities to improve service, coverage and integration of AJA initiatives to progress justice outcomes in the locations?
No.	Evaluation sub-questions
7.1	What have we learnt? What has worked/not worked? [also 4.2]
7.2	Where can improvements be made? [also 6.4]
KEQ 8	Is it possible to assess the cost and benefits of the AJA in each location?
No.	Evaluation sub-questions
8.1	What are the costs of delivering AJA3-affiliated programs?
8.2	What benefits have accrued to the regions as a result of the AJA3?
8.3	How can the benefits be monetised?
8.4	What are the limitations of monetising benefits?

4.5. Evaluation methodology

The evaluation used a mixed methods approach employing both quantitative and qualitative research methods. It drew on both quantitative and qualitative data sources:

- AJA-related program documents including relevant program operational documents, monthly reports, project reports, financial reports and governance documents
- RAJAC and LAJAC documents including Regional Action Plans, meeting minutes
- semi structured interviews with RAJAC and LAJAC Chairs and other members representing both community and government
- semi structured interviews with ACCOs, ACCHOs and other non-government / private sector service delivery organisations
- semi structured interviews and/or focus group discussions with Aboriginal prisoners and offenders on community correction orders
- semi-structured interviews with agency personnel with responsibilities for delivering services to Aboriginal prisoners and offenders
- Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data (2006, 2011, 2016)
- Crime Statistics Agency Aboriginal Justice Indicators – Victoria Police (2012 – 2016)
- Corrections Victoria Aboriginal prisoner and offender populations data (2012 - 2017).

Quantitative data were collated and analysed using Microsoft Excel. Semi-structured interviews were transcribed and analysed thematically.

Throughout the data analysis, the evaluation team has sought to identify regional stories of AJA achievements. Data collected through the interviews and focus groups has been added to insights gained from field observations and document analysis to inform the development of case studies of place-based initiatives that are showing positive results.

Data were synthesised and aggregated to report against the key evaluation questions.

Ethics Approval

At commencement of the evaluation we sought ethics approval from the Department of Justice and Regulation Human Research Ethics Committee and the Corrections Victoria Research Committee. This was sought to confirm and support our ethical approach to interviews and focus groups with adult offenders in the community and with prisoners. Ethics approval was received in August 2017.

Limitations

Throughout our findings we note that assessing the contribution of AJA3's place based approach to particular outcomes is an inexact process: the AJA a complex phenomenon embracing many different players addressing complex problems.

The evaluation was commissioned (as noted in 4.2.1) to focus at the level of the AJA's place based approach, rather than effectiveness at the activity level. We have drawn on individual program evaluations where relevant, although these are rarely available.

As the evaluation questions noted above make evident, there was originally an intention for the evaluation to give equal consideration to young people and their interactions with the criminal justice system. Due to time constraints it was decided by the Evaluation Steering Committee established to

oversee the evaluation that the youth component be removed from the ethics application. Also influencing this decision was an existing study then being completed by the Koori Youth Council which had gained ethics approval from the Justice Human Research Ethics Committee. The overlap between the stakeholder groups and the outcomes being sought was considered sufficient to enable sharing of information. The Koori Youth Council's *Justice for Koorie Youth Project* sought the views of Aboriginal young people with experience of the justice system to improve understanding of young people's experiences and perspectives on issues related to effective diversion, reducing recidivism and opportunities for participation within the justice system.

As a result of the above we have not directly gathered the views of Aboriginal young people except where they have been involved as members of RAJACs or LAJACs. We have, instead, sought to understand their experiences of contact with the criminal justice system through consultation with agency representatives with responsibility for managing young people in correctional facilities and those being managed in the community. We have also sought the views of representatives of organisations providing support to Aboriginal youth including ACCOs, ACCHOs, the Koori Youth Council, Local Justice Workers and other Aboriginal liaison officers. Despite this consultation we do not consider that the youth voice has been sufficiently 'heard' in our interviews and this remains somewhat of a shortcoming in the evaluation. We have included available data and information on community and youth-focussed initiatives. We have recommended that a further evaluation have a primary focus on children and young people up to the age of 24, capturing prevention, early intervention and justice initiatives and including an evaluation of responses at key transitions in age and in pathways through services for young men and young women. This would also be timely given the transfer of responsibility for Youth justice from the DHHS to DJR.

5. AJA3 initiatives implemented in the regions

5.1. Key achievements of AJA3

In late 2016 the KJU prepared a summary of the key achievements of the AJA for the period 2015 to 2016 as part of a presentation to the 45th Aboriginal Justice Forum. This extensive 62-page document captures 111 activities giving a brief description of the activity, describing what was achieved through implementation and how each has contributed to Aboriginal justice outcomes. The achievements documented in the report are shared across the signatories of the AJA. Some of the initiatives are those that have been highlighted by stakeholders in the course of the evaluation. For example, a key achievement of the KJU has been the implementation of the Koori Women's Diversion Program in Mildura, and later in Morwell. Similarly, the roll out of a revised Local Justice Worker program is highlighted as a key achievement of the KJU, a view shared across all regions where LJWs are based (as well as other Aboriginal liaison roles supported under the AJA). It was particularly welcomed in the Loddon Mallee region where LJWs are having a positive impact assisting offenders in the community to complete their orders.

The initiatives highlighted in the key achievements report align with what we heard were the primary issues to be addressed in the regions. This includes, in addition to the initiatives noted above, initiatives dealing with prisoner transitional housing, the reintegration of prisoners to community including continuity of health care provision, prisoner/offender mental health and drug and alcohol treatment, responses to family violence including the introduction of family violence protocols within Victoria Police, cautioning of youth by Victoria police, and programs aimed at cultural strengthening. The list of initiatives is provided in **Appendix B**.

Unlike AJA2, the third phase of the Agreement did not receive additional funding to implement new initiatives identified in the Agreement. Funding was available to continue initiatives commenced in AJA2 such as the Koori Courts and the Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place program but implementing the majority of the 28 strategies and 82 sub-strategies has required KJU (and other business units) to either attract funding from other sources or encourage agencies to fund initiatives from existing budget allocations.

A number of AJA initiatives have been implemented in each of the regions of this study. Some have been implemented across the state and could be considered 'core business' while others have been designed and are specific to particular regions and are more rightly considered 'place-based', for example, the Koori Women's Diversion Program (discussed in Section 8.7.2). The KJU has also assisted in the implementation of Koori Case Management Review Meetings in the Northern and Southern Metropolitan regions (see some discussion on the implementation of this in the Northern Metropolitan Region in Section 9.7.2). Another initiative emerging from the AJA3 has been the training and gazetting of Dispute Resolution Officers in Barwon South West, Loddon Mallee and Northern Metropolitan regions overseen by Dispute Settlement Centre Victoria. The introduction of Koori Family Violence Protocols by Victoria Police in a range of locations (Ballarat, Bairnsdale, Dandenong, Darebin, Mildura, Shepparton, Swan Hill and Wimmera as at August 2017) is another initiative of the AJA. These protocols have been shown to be an "effective, useful and necessary tool for improving the relationship between police and Aboriginal communities" (Clear Horizon 2015). Other Victoria Police initiatives implemented throughout the period of AJA3 are detailed in Section 5.1.1 below.

Other AJA initiatives that are showing good results across the regions include the various Aboriginal liaison positions created in a number of Departments. These include the Local Justice Workers (funded by DJR and located largely within ACCOs regionally), Sheriff's Aboriginal Liaison Officers

(SALOs) within the Sheriff's Offices, Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers (ACLOs) and Koori Court officers. The Koori Courts, introduced in AJA2, were significantly expanded and continue to operate across the state (see further below).

A number of initiatives implemented by AJA signatory agencies are discussed below. Other specific initiatives are discussed in Sections 7 through 10 covering each of the four regions under investigation for this study.

5.1.1. Initiatives in policing

Victoria Police are an active partner to the AJA and have implemented a number of initiatives to reduce contact between Aboriginal people and the police. A key focus in recent years has been on building the cultural awareness of staff across the organisation. Throughout interviews with police across the state we have heard the benefits that have resulted from participation in locally initiated cultural awareness training. This view is held at the highest level with the Chief Commissioner describing his experience in participating in a cultural competency camp at Shepparton;

I spent a night out in the Barmah forest. Aside from the competency training we also had immersion with the community group and learning about stories and cultural history. It was interesting and valuable to me in doing my job, in having local networks through Rumbalara.

Discussions with frontline officers and regional managers reflected a view similar to that of the Chief Commissioner. Having a deeper understanding of Aboriginal culture has been helping police officers to better engage with community and is providing the impetus for responding to criminal justice matters in a more culturally appropriate way. One stakeholder in the Barwon South West Region has noted that the police and other justice related services are becoming "smarter and more insightful" in their understanding of the complexity of Aboriginal situations.

Victoria Police have Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers (ACLO) located throughout Victoria that report directly under the Victoria Police operational regions, and a state-wide coordinator located within the Priority Communities Division, Corporate Strategy and Operational Improvement Department. ACLOs are Victoria Police employees who work to improve relationships and trust between Aboriginal communities and police. They play an important role in cross-cultural communication, providing police with a greater awareness of local issues and cultural protocols to improve the effectiveness of services and responses provided to Aboriginal people. They also provide community with a greater understanding of police protocols and practices.

A second type of liaison role is the Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers (PALOs). PALOs are Victoria Police Officers who perform operational duties, in addition to performing the Aboriginal portfolio role. PALOs have a liaison role, both independently and in partnership with ACLOs, to resolve issues concerning Aboriginal people within their local area.

In 2014, Victoria Police partnered with the Victorian Equal Opportunities and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) and the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) to pilot a Third Party Reporting (Report Racism) Scheme to allow people to report incidents of racially motivated crime or racial vilification to/through a community organisation, rather than directly to police. Pilots were run in Shepparton and Northern Melbourne. The consulting firm Price Waterhouse Cooper's Indigenous consulting arm conducted the project evaluation with reference to the project's objectives of:

1. building the capacity and confidence of the community and individuals to report racist incidents
2. building the capacity of the project partners to support individuals to report racism and where appropriate provide responses to reports by improving internal systems and processes

3. establishing an intelligence driven third party reporting mechanism that is culturally safe and accessible for the Aboriginal community
4. reducing barriers to reporting racist incidents including complicated complaint processes
5. identifying and responding to issues of systemic racism.

The Report Racism initiative was instrumental in the establishment of a Northern Police Aboriginal Consultative Committee (NPACC) in the Northern Metropolitan region. This Committee is driving the development of the Koori Family Violence Police Protocols and joint work between Victoria Police and the Aboriginal community in this region.

5.1.2. Koori Courts

Magistrates' and Children's Koori Court

The Magistrates' and Children's Koori Courts continue to operate across the state for those who plead guilty and opt to be heard in a culturally safe court before their Elders and Respected Person's (ERP's). Koori Courts are funded from base AJA funding and have expanded to the additional locations within the initial allocated AJA funding and have not received any additional funding since 2005. Koori Courts are provided by Courts Victoria under the *Magistrates Court Act 1989*. The Children's Koori Court was established under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*.

Koori Courts commenced sitting as a pilot program in Shepparton in 2002 and Broadmeadows in 2003 and were reviewed after 2 years of operation. Following this review, the program was confirmed as ongoing, and was expanded to a further eight locations as list below:

There are currently 9 adult Koori Courts in Victoria: - (11 if count Hamilton and Portland circuit)

- Shepparton (commenced sitting: October 2002)
- Broadmeadows (commenced sitting: April 2003)
- Warrnambool circuit (commenced sitting: January 2004)
 - Hamilton
 - Portland
- Mildura, (commenced sitting: July 2005)
- Latrobe Valley (commenced sitting: May 2006)
- Bairnsdale, (commenced sitting: March 2007)
- Swan Hill, (commenced sitting: July 2008).
- Melbourne, (commenced sitting August 2014)
- Geelong, (commence sitting July 2016)

There are also currently 10 children's Koori Courts in Victoria:

- Melbourne (commenced sitting October 2005)
- Mildura (commenced sitting November 2007)
- Warrnambool (commenced sitting June 2012).
- Latrobe Valley (commenced sitting December 2012)
- Bairnsdale (commenced sitting December 2012)
- Swan Hill (commenced sitting September 2013)

- Shepparton (commenced sitting November 2013)
- Heidelberg (commenced sitting September 2014)
- Dandenong (commenced sitting September 2014)
- Geelong, (commenced sitting August 2016)

Each Koori Court location has a designated Koori Court Officer with exception to Geelong and Dandenong

Court which have Koori Community Engagement Officers (KCEO) The role of the KCO and KCEO is to work with and support the engagement of Aboriginal accused that come before the courts by assisting them with advice and access to culturally appropriate and sensitive services. The KCO and KCEO liaises with members of the local Koori communities to inform them of the court process whilst also raising regional awareness of Indigenous and cross-cultural issues. KCEOs can be found in Geelong

Two Koori Elders and Respected Persons (ERP), a male and female sit with a Magistrate to provide cultural advice, they are the cultural point of difference which ensures the court is a culturally safe place for Aboriginal defendants and their families who are encouraged and supported to contribute during the Court hearing. The KCO, KCEO and the ERP's help to reduce perceptions of cultural alienation to ensure sentencing orders are appropriate to the cultural needs of Aboriginal offenders assisting them to address underlying issues relating to their offending behaviour. Over 100 ERP's have been recruited state wide as casual staff to support the Koori Court sittings on a roster basis.

A central, five person Koori Courts Unit located in Melbourne (Magistrates Court of Victoria) plays a key role in implementing, coordinating and overseeing the operations of the Koori Courts, recruiting and supporting the 11 Koori Court Officers and 100 Elders and Respected Persons, works with Judicial staff including Registrars and Magistrates to maintain sitting days, collect, collate and provide data analysis to identify patterns of behaviour and causal issues, works to supports community engagement to ensure that each court is connecting to its local community in culturally appropriate ways through local Koori Court Reference Groups which are made up of key community stakeholders.

Whilst centrally coordinated and funded, the Koori Courts model has a built-in place-based approach in that:

- Local communities have a say in whether they need, want and can support, a Koori Court
- The Koori Caucus advises on Court locations, which ensures the program is socially targeted and that offenders have support for the behaviour change they have committed to through a cultural sentencing conversation with Elders and Respected Persons and the Magistrate during the Koori Court process
- Koori Courts are located where there are established ACCO or ACCHO services.
- Regional Koori Court Reference Groups have been established to monitor trends in offending in their community to develop localised culturally appropriate responses and referral pathways to ACCO's and mainstream services.
- Koori Court Officers and the Elders and Respected Persons know their communities and play a key role to encourage and support service accountability, flexibility and collaboration supporting a join-up approach to working with their community and accused to help reduce offending and reoffending.

Our informants were positive about the strength of the Koori Court Model as one that contributes to flexible solutions for local communities. Challenges include ensuring consistent processes and procedures (e.g. referrals and maintenance of links between the Koori Court Unit Court Services

Victoria, the Koori Justice Unit and Koori Caucus. Interest was reported during our stakeholder consultation in increasing the number of Koori Courts so that each site has both an adult and a children's court.

The operation of the Koori Courts has been facilitated through a number of AJA3 initiatives. Some of these are listed below⁸:

- Creation of the Koori Hearing Day, Marram-ngala Ganbu⁹, at the Children's Court (Family Division) at Broadmeadows. This enables a number of matters to be listed on the one day so that support agencies can be present to assist the accused.
- Expansion of the Koori Court Model in various locations has allowed for the appointment of over 100 Elders and Respected Persons to Koori Courts with training provided.
- Koori Courts complaint process was reviewed and revised to make it consistent with mainstream equivalent. A complaints register was established to record complaints and the actions taken to address them.
- Development of a Human Resources Manual for Elders and Respected Persons who sit on Koori Courts (outlining recruitment, appointment, complaint processes, conflicts of interest, travel allowances, and remuneration, etc.)
- Koori Court Conferences provide professional development and networking opportunities for KCO's, ERP's, judicial staff, agencies and community.

County Koori Courts

The County Koori Court was established as a Division of the County Court by the County Court Amendment (Koori Court) Act 2008. The County Koori Court draws on the successful implementation of the Koori Court model in both the Magistrates' Court and the Children's' Court.

The objective of the County Koori Court is to ensure greater participation of the Aboriginal community in the sentencing process of the County Court through the role played in that process by the Aboriginal Elders or Respected Persons and others such as the Koori Court Officer.

The County Koori Court is the first sentencing court for Aboriginal offenders in a higher jurisdiction in Australia. The County Koori Court currently sits at Melbourne, Latrobe Valley and Mildura.

The County Koori Court is currently supported by a Coordinator and Koori Court Officer and is funded through the County Courts own budget.

Other Courts Services Victoria initiatives

In addition to the continued expansion of Koori Courts across the state Courts Services Victoria has implemented a number of initiatives that have sought to address AJA objectives. These include the following:

- development and implementation of a Koori Recruitment and Koori Employment Policy across the agency
- review of the Koori Inclusion Action Plan and development of Koori Resource Kits for all six jurisdictions

⁸ Sourced from AJA3 Key Achievements 2015-2016 report (unpublished)

⁹ Marram-Ngala Ganbu is not a specific initiative of the AJA3 but is a government funded response to addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the justice system and has been included here as it supports the objectives of the AJA3

- support and continued the expansion of the Court Integrated Services Program (CISP) and Credit Bail programs into areas of high Aboriginal justice contact, with the aim to reduce the likelihood of imprisonment
- increasing access to culturally appropriate support whilst on bail through the Bail Support Program
- funding for Sentencing Advisory Council research into sentencing outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians
- advocacy for the development of early intervention programs in collaboration with community organisations (e.g. *New Directions*, Baroona Healing Service).

5.1.3. Initiatives in corrections services

With responsibility for prisoners and for managing offenders in the community, Corrections Victoria is arguably the department that has the most to benefit from the AJA achieving its objectives. The former Commissioner for Corrections Victoria highlighted the department's commitment to incorporating culturally appropriate service provision into its standard practices. The former Commissioner for Corrections, Jan Shuard, stated that decisions taken within the agency are "always looked at through the lens of investment in Aboriginal prisoners and offenders". The Commissioner also notes that the department also attempts to avoid decisions about services and programs that would require adaptation of mainstream services to make them better suit the Aboriginal cultural needs. As the Commissioner noted, "the AJA is embedded into our DNA" and placing Aboriginal culture and needs at the centre of decision making has become their 'business as usual' approach.

An example of the importance given to cultural appropriateness is in the renaming of the Corrections Victoria Aboriginal Programs Unit to Naalamba Ganbu and Nerrlinggu Yilam. The Commissioner for Corrections sent out notification to all staff about the name change and encouraged the use of the Aboriginal language name. To assist the agency provided sound bites so that non-Aboriginal people could pronounce it correctly. A former Corrections Victoria employee recalled;

Now people walk around actually referring to the unit as Naalamba Ganbu and Nerrlinggu Yilam, they're not using English and we were very clear about saying not to use acronyms or putting English definition in brackets. We want to encourage people to use this language and we gave them the sound bite because everyone fears if they've said it wrong and they get embarrassed but we encouraged them to practice in their own time. One of the last presentations I went to the Minister for Corrections actually said Naalamba Ganbu and Nerrlinggu Yilam quite freely, quite easily. People didn't even stop to think. It just registered that the Minister had just used language in her speech. It's those critical things by simply understanding language and its place in our mainstream business we're maintaining Aboriginal ancient language. It's those little things that are having an impact but are quite simple to do.

Corrections Victoria (CV) has implemented a number of initiatives and programs to improve access to services to Aboriginal prisoners and offenders across the state. A key program is the Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place in the Gippsland region managed by the agency.

Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place is a live-in facility providing Aboriginal men aged over 18 years and on a CCO with the opportunity to complete their orders while receiving rehabilitative support, work and training designed to reduce their risk of offending in the future. CV undertook a study of CCO completion rates using participant data collected by Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place, which found that Aboriginal men were more likely to complete their CCO if they completed the Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place program.

CV, in partnership with Justice Health, developed and implemented an *Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Plan* as an initiative of AJA3. The Plan identifies five priority areas that the agency – in partnership with the Aboriginal community – will focus on to improve the mental health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people while imprisoned and upon their release:

- prevention and health promotion
- culturally capable workforce
- culturally safe and responsive services
- continuity of care
- working from and building an evidence base.

The Plan recognises the fundamental role of culture, community and spirituality in Aboriginal wellbeing and aims to support such connections.

Another initiative of the agency is the Kaka Wangity, Wangin-Mirrie Aboriginal Cultural Programs Grants Scheme providing funding of \$2.25 million over three years from 2016 to 2019 for programs that focus on:

- cultural strengthening
- family violence aimed at perpetrators
- healing
- parenting
- women's healing and victimisation.

The Grants Scheme supports organisations to deliver Aboriginal programs within prisons and Community Correctional Services for Aboriginal prisoners and offenders. Programs funded by the Kaka Wangity, Wangin-Mirrie cultural grants include:

- **Sisters Day In** - a program dedicated to the prevention of family violence against Aboriginal women, by addressing the root causes of family violence and victimisation
- **Women's Healing Program** - a group-based cultural strengthening and healing program for Aboriginal women, supported by Aboriginal elders and leaders
- **Growing Up Kids** - focused on the development of culturally focused parenting practices, ensuring that children are provided for and protected
- **Men's Healing Program** - a group-based cultural strengthening and healing program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, supported by Aboriginal elders and leaders
- **Dilly Bag** - an intensive cultural-strengthening program that helps Aboriginal women recover from trauma they may have experienced in their lives
- **Women's Journey** - a cultural strengthening and healing program, supporting women who have experienced trauma from violence and victimisation
- **Men's Cultural Journey** - a cultural resilience program, including follow-up support from Aboriginal community elders.
- **Marumali Healing Program** - a group-based healing program for stolen generation members, their families and their communities.

CV also funds a program supporting high risk and high profile male and female prisoners as they transition back to the community. The *ReConnect* program is part of the agency's 'Reintegration Pathway' and assists in creating transition plans for adults exiting prison.

5.1.4. Initiatives in youth justice

The Koori Youth Justice Program (formally known as the Koori Juvenile Justice Program) was established by the Department of Human Services in 1992 in response to the findings of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody inquiry. It was a key initiative of AJA1 and AJA2 and has continued to operate in AJA3. Koori Youth Justice Workers are located in ACCOs throughout the state including Warrnambool, Geelong, Echuca, Mildura, Ballarat and Melbourne.

The Koori Youth Justice Workers' (KYJW) role is to provide a diversionary and rehabilitation service for young Aboriginal people on statutory youth justice orders or who are at risk of entering/re-entering the youth justice and criminal justice systems, by providing a culturally responsive service through:

- diversionary strategies
- working with statutory clients
- enhancing linkages to community
- advising on policy and cultural competencies
- administrative, supervision and professional development (Department of Human Services 2007).

The community-based KYJW works closely with an allocated youth justice case worker to ensure that the best interests of the young Aboriginal person are met and managed appropriately. The program also includes the employment of Koori intensive support practitioners (KISP) within area youth justice teams. The KISP role is distinct from the community-based KYJP with the role located within the youth justice service. The KISP has responsibility for youth justice supervision and case management of Aboriginal young people who are:

- subject to a court order supervised by youth justice
- subject to a period of supervised bail.

KISPs provide support to young people to prepare for release from a youth justice precinct on parole with the support continuing after release, and for the duration of their parole.

The program is said to have contributed to a period of no Aboriginal young people on youth justice orders in the Barwon South West region, specifically Warrnambool and Glenelg areas, for a period of 18 months between 2013 and 2015 (Houlihan 2016). The KYJW had implemented a number of strategies in those locations to engage Aboriginal young people in the region including prioritising transport for young people to their desired activity (often sport based) to help them engage in a program and community that would not otherwise be available. He also visited the homes of young people to meet with their parents/carers directly and ensure that genuine engagement and support is provided at home as well as with students during school visits.

A Case Study was prepared that describes the work of the KYJW in the Barwon South West region and provides a summary of the aspects of delivery that have been particularly successful. This Case Study is available online at <http://youthlaw.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Western-District-case-study-report.pdf> and provides useful guidance to other youth justice workers throughout the state.

5.2. Initiatives enabled through the provision of grants

Organisations in each of the regions are able to apply for funding from five main sources administered by the KJU. These four funding sources are:

- Local Justice Worker Program (LJWP)
- Community Initiatives Program (CIP)
- Frontline Youth Initiative
- Koori Community Safety Grants
- Koori Youth Crime Prevention Grants.

Some discretionary funding (\$40,000) is made available to each of the RAJACs to distribute funds to implement local initiatives.

5.2.1. Local Justice Worker Program (LJWP)

Through the Local Justice Worker Program, Aboriginal offenders are provided case support to meet the conditions of their orders through supervised community work opportunities in culturally-appropriate environments and connecting with relevant programs and services available in the community. Local Justice Workers can also assist with outstanding fines to negotiate payment plans with the Sheriff's Office and act as one key point of contact between local Aboriginal communities and Justice agencies. The program was launched in 2008 and is delivered by community organisations in 20 locations across Victoria, which are based on the daily average number of Aboriginal offenders reporting to Community Correctional Services offices in each region.

5.2.2. Community Initiatives Program (CIP)

The aim of CIP is to provide communities with the opportunity to develop pilot initiatives and undertake research that will reduce negative contact between the Aboriginal community and the criminal justice system.

Funding was for a maximum of \$55,000 (including GST) per annum for a period not exceeding two years. The RAJAC and RAJAC EO are responsible for monitoring funded initiatives through regular and ongoing visits and supporting grant recipients through the provision of advice and liaising with relevant local contacts.

Projects considered for funding under CIP were those that:

- increased community participation in the development of culturally-appropriate and innovative early intervention programs
- promoted reconciliation and partnerships between communities and justice agencies
- assisted in research and the identification of community based best practice initiatives and
- were a catalyst to, or basis for, long term sustainable capacity building programs.

Eligibility is limited to incorporated Aboriginal Community Controlled and/or incorporated community organisations in which a majority of both members and directors are Aboriginal. A non-Aboriginal incorporated organisation may also apply for funding, if all of the following conditions are met:

- The non-Aboriginal organisation must demonstrate that there is no suitable incorporated Aboriginal organisation in the area to deliver the project.

- The non-Aboriginal organisation is applying as the auspice for a Aboriginal group/unit/organisation.
- The non-Aboriginal organisation meets all other guideline requirements for eligibility (other than being a Aboriginal organisation).
- The application is endorsed by the relevant RAJAC.

5.2.3. Frontline Youth Initiatives Program (Frontline)

The aim of Frontline funding is to provide communities with the opportunity to engage Aboriginal youth at risk of contact with the criminal justice system in health and wellbeing activities that reduce the likelihood of future negative contact with the justice system.

A maximum of \$110,000 (including GST) per annum was available to ACCOs for a period not exceeding three years. The RAJAC and RAJAC Executive Officer (EO) are responsible for monitoring funded initiatives through regular and ongoing visits and supporting grant recipients through the provision of advice and liaising with relevant local contacts.

Frontline had a strong focus on engaging at risk Aboriginal youth from the ages of eight to 24 years who were:

- victims of family violence and/or have been affected by family violence
- currently/or have been, in out of home care
- disengaged from education and/or employment
- in contact with the criminal justice system.

Key focus areas for the Frontline funding included:

- youth leadership
- sporting activities (both individual and team based)
- cultural strengthening
- music
- arts and performance based activities
- engagement with education, training or vocational activities
- employment readiness.

5.2.4. Koori Youth Crime Prevention Grants

The Victorian Government invested \$10 million over two years to help local communities tackle the underlying causes of youth crime. The Youth Crime Prevention Grants comprised three streams of funding: \$6.5 million directly allocated to eight communities with high crime rates and high numbers of recidivist youth offenders; a \$2 million competitive program open to all other areas, with 10 identified priority areas; and \$1.5 million for Koori youth crime prevention activities.

The Koori Youth Crime Prevention Grants were a partnership between the Community Crime Prevention Unit and the KJU. The focus for funding was on projects that delivered community strengthening, enhanced family relationships and parenting skills, and offered a holistic approach.

Funding of \$165,000 was allocated to each of the nine RAJACs, who invited proposals from ACCOs within their region. Generally, the maximum grant allocation was \$50,000 over two years. Project proposals were then endorsed by the RAJAC and LAJAC and submitted to DJR for a merit assessment

before a recommendation was made to the Minister for Police. Once approved a funding agreement was put in place to allow project delivery to proceed¹⁰.

The RAJAC EOs were responsible for monitoring funded initiatives and the provision of support and advice to grant recipients. EOs were supported in this role by the KJU Community Programs Branch.

5.2.5. Koori Community Safety Grants

The Koori Community Safety Grants were established to address violence against women and children in Aboriginal communities in Victoria. The \$2.4 million grant program was funded by the Crime Prevention Branch and were administered by the KJU, in partnership with RAJACs over a period of three years (EMS Consultants 2016).

The grants were available to ACCOs to work in partnership with each other and the local government to address various forms of violence experienced by the community. This included lateral violence, family violence, community/family feuding, clan rivalry, inter-generational feuding, same-sex fighting and Elder abuse.

Four grants were awarded: the *Strong Men Strong Communities* project, the *Family and Community Violence Prevention* project, the *Aboriginal Family Violence Harmony* project, and the *Strong Relationships Strong Community* project.

The *Strong Men Strong Communities* project worked with Aboriginal adult men in six towns across East Gippsland, and aimed to prevent all forms of family and community violence. The program received \$530,974 and focused on building the capacity of Aboriginal men to choose alternatives to violence, and provided opportunities for the participants to become leaders and mentors for others in the program. The program aimed to prevent all forms of family and community violence.

The *Family and Community Violence Prevention* project aimed to create a large network of Aboriginal people with increased capacity to deal with issues that compromised their safety. Funding of \$560,000 was provided to the Mallee and District Aboriginal Service (MDAS) to deliver activities between 2013 and 2015 in Mildura, Robinvale, Ouyen, Kerang, Red Cliffs, Irymple and Swan Hill. The program delivered a suite of family violence prevention activities, working with the community as a whole, women of all ages, parents expecting or with young children, young men aged 14-17 years, and the staff of MDAS.

The *Aboriginal Family Violence Harmony* project provided a range of activities promoting anti-violence prevention for Aboriginal communities in the Greater Shepparton area. Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative received \$531,000 for 3 years from 2013-2015.

The *Strong Relationships Strong Community* project aimed to increase understanding of violence, and provide skill development to increase community safety, as well as increase Aboriginal community participation in mediation services. The program was provided by the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service and targeted Aboriginal people living in the northern and western metropolitan areas. The grant totalled \$531,000.

¹⁰ KJU (2016). *Koori Youth Crime Prevention Grant Guidelines*, 6 December 2017

5.3. Other funding trajectories

The pilot Koori Women's Diversion Program is an example of a local initiative where funding depended on proponents seizing opportunities as they arose – initially an opportunity for the KJU to reprioritise within the unit's budget and subsequently by two years and then ongoing funding in subsequent State budgets (2016-17, then 2017-18).

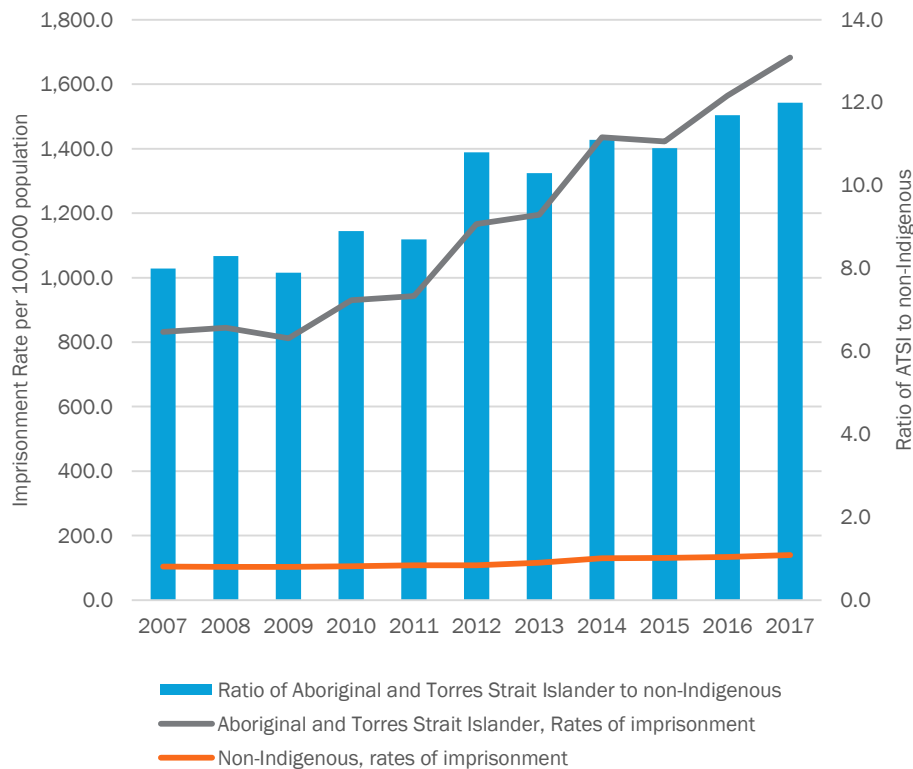
Many initiatives that can be at least partly attributed to AJA3 depended on funding from other national and state government departments and, in some cases, local government. Gathering Places are one example. These are growing in Doveton, Hastings (Willum Warrain), Frankston (Niarm Marr Djambana), Croydon (Mullum Mullum) and Werribee.

There are also grants that are “state-wide” that provide a service in local areas – they are not competitive but negotiated (for example, the Aboriginal Community Justice Panels, and legal services).

6. Prisons and imprisonment

6.1. Aboriginal Imprisonment in Victoria (adults)

While this study has not specifically investigated the *rates* of over-representation at a regional level, we refer to Australian Bureau of Statistics data which shows a continuing increasing trend for the state, as shown in Figure 6-1 below. The data show that adult Aboriginal Victorians were 12 times more likely to be imprisoned than non-Aboriginal people in 2017 and this ratio has been increasing steadily over the past ten years.



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Cat. 4517.0, Prisoners in Australia, 2017. Age-standardised rate is shown.

Figure 6-1: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Non-Indigenous Imprisonment in Victoria – Rate and ratio (2007-2017)

The number of Aboriginal males and females in Victoria's prisons has increased over the past five years. Corrections Victoria (2017) have noted the increase between 2012 and 2016 has been driven primarily by the growth in male prisoners, increasing 50.5 per cent, compared to 20.6 per cent for females. However, rate of female imprisonment had increased at a higher rate than male imprisonment in 2016-2017 period.

Sentence lengths have seen a shift over the term of the AJA3 with an increase in the proportion of Aboriginal people sentenced to less than six months and a corresponding decrease in sentences of six to 12 months for both male and female prisoners (Figure 6-2). Overall, about 80 per cent of male prisoners are serving a sentence of less than 12 months with about 70 per cent of female prisoners serving less than six months.

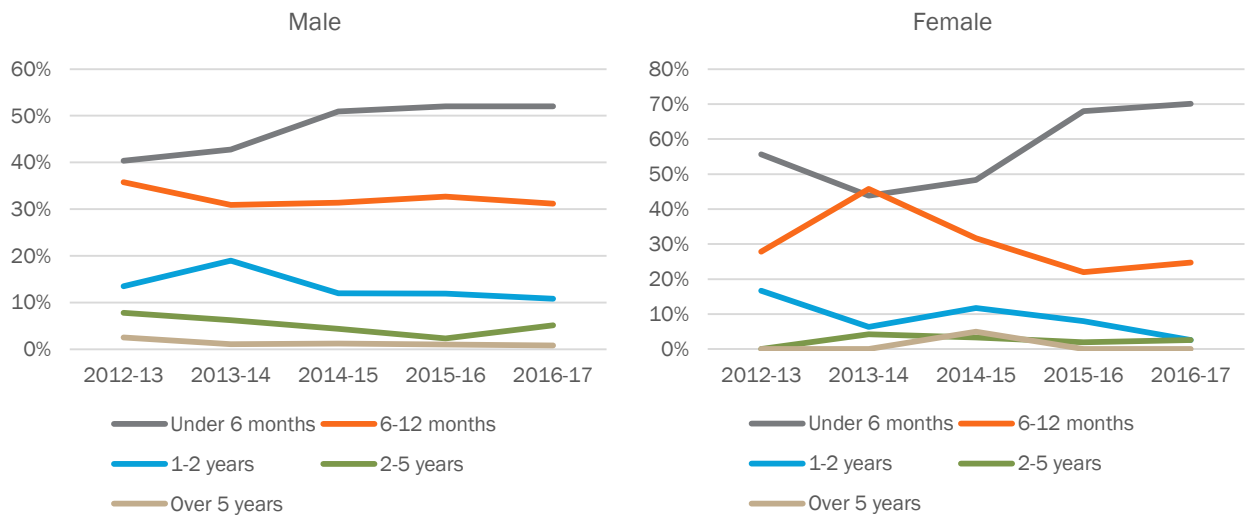


Figure 6-2: Male and Female prisoner sentence lengths, 2012 - 2017 (Source: Corrections Victoria 2017)

There has been an increasing proportion of both male and female Aboriginal prisoners who are unsentenced at the time of entry to prison. In 2012-13, about 21.4 per cent of prisoners were unsentenced at reception (34.5 per cent of female prisoners and 30.8 per cent of male prisoners). In 2016-17 this has increased to 32.5 per cent (50.0 per cent of female prisoners and 86.3 per cent of male prisoners). This increasing trend has been attributed to bail reforms resulting in fewer people bailed by police and courts, as well as a reduction in the overall number of sentenced prisoners through the introduction of sentences combining prison with a CCO.

Over half of the total Aboriginal prison population had been in prison previously (77% of males and 84% of females). This has been consistent for male prisoners over the past five years but is showing an increasing trend for female prisoners.

Data on the most serious offence or charge for which Aboriginal male prisoners were received demonstrates that the increase in receptions in 2015-16 occurred across several offence categories, with the most prevalent categories being assault, robbery and extortion, and other property offences. However, of these, only receptions for assault continued to increase substantially in 2016-17, increasing 30.1 per cent from 236 in 2015-16 to 307 in 2016-17. The other noticeable increase in 2016-17 was for fraud, with 18 receptions, compared to five in 2015-16.

There was a substantial increase in receptions for Aboriginal female prisoners between 2012-13 and 2015-16 (from 82 to 175, an increase of 113.4%). This increase continued in 2016-17, increasing a further 18.9 per cent to 208. This increase occurred primarily in unsentenced receptions. However, sentenced receptions for Aboriginal females increased from 17 in 2015-16 to 24 in 2016-17, the largest increase in the past five years.

Receptions of Aboriginal male prisoners in 2016-17 indicate the most serious type is assault (31.9%) and this has been the case in the previous three reporting periods. Prior to that, breach of order was the most serious offence. Data for female receptions shows the most serious offence for 2016-17 was 'other property offences' (30.8%), with burglary the second most prevalent (22.1%). These two offence types have been the most common over the past five years.

6.2. Young people involved with the Youth Justice Service

Aboriginal youth are imprisoned at 25 times the rate of non-Aboriginal youth across Australia and in Victoria at about 12 times the rate of non-Aboriginal youth. The Koori Youth Council described the main drivers for this high rate of over-representation of Aboriginal young people in the youth justice system highlighting the disproportionate extent of contact of Aboriginal young people aged between 10 and 17 years with the justice system (Koori Youth Council 2017). The Koori Youth Council also noted issues such as poor mental health, disengagement from school, drugs and alcohol and family violence as contributing factors. In our interviews with adult prisoners we heard many stories of individuals coming into contact with the justice system as youths for the reasons cited above. Not all of these early contacts led to youth detention but all left a lasting impact on the offenders and prisoners we spoke to.

Youth justice data is presented to each AJF to provide regular updates on data and programs relating to Aboriginal children and young people in the youth justice system. The most recent report made available to the evaluators was that provided to the Swan Hill AJF in October 2017. Data from that report is replicated here and offers a summary of the trends in young people involved with the Youth Justice Service.

Table 6-1 shows the total number of young people involved with the youth justice service from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017.

Table 6-1: Number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal young people in a youth justice detention centre.

Children / Young People	Grevillea Youth Justice Centre		Malmsbury Youth Justice Precinct		Parkville Youth Justice Precinct		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
Aboriginal	0	0%	44	15%	65	16%	109	15%
Non-Aboriginal	11	100%	259	85%	332	83%	602	85%
Unknown	0	0%	0	0%	1	0%	1	0%
Total	11		303		398		712	

Of the 712 Aboriginal young people in a youth justice detention centre 23 (21%) were female and 86 (79%) were male. Two-thirds of the young people in detention in 2016/17 had a previous custodial order. The offence types for which young people had received custodial orders are shown in Table 6-2.

Table 6-2: Offence types for young people receiving custodial orders

Offence Type	Total
Abduction, harassment and other offences against the person	2
Acts intended to cause injury	27
Dangerous or negligent acts endangering persons	7
Homicide and related offences	1
Illicit drug offences	3
Offences against justice procedures, government security and government operations	1
Prohibited and regulated weapons and explosives offences	12
Property damage and environmental pollution	3
Robbery, extortion and related offences	40
Sexual assault and related offences	4
Theft and related offences	1
Unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter	8

The most recent trend data presented to the AJF occurred in 2015 with the data showing the period 2004-05 to 2014-15. The data also show forecast projections out to 2030-31. Figure 6-3 below shows the trends for rates of youth justice supervision per 1,000 youth in youth justice centres between 2006-07 and 2014-15. As can be seen from the graph, the rates of youth detention of Aboriginal young people is significantly higher for than those for non-Aboriginal young people and with greater fluctuation between years. The rate of detention, however, is forecast to trend downwards.

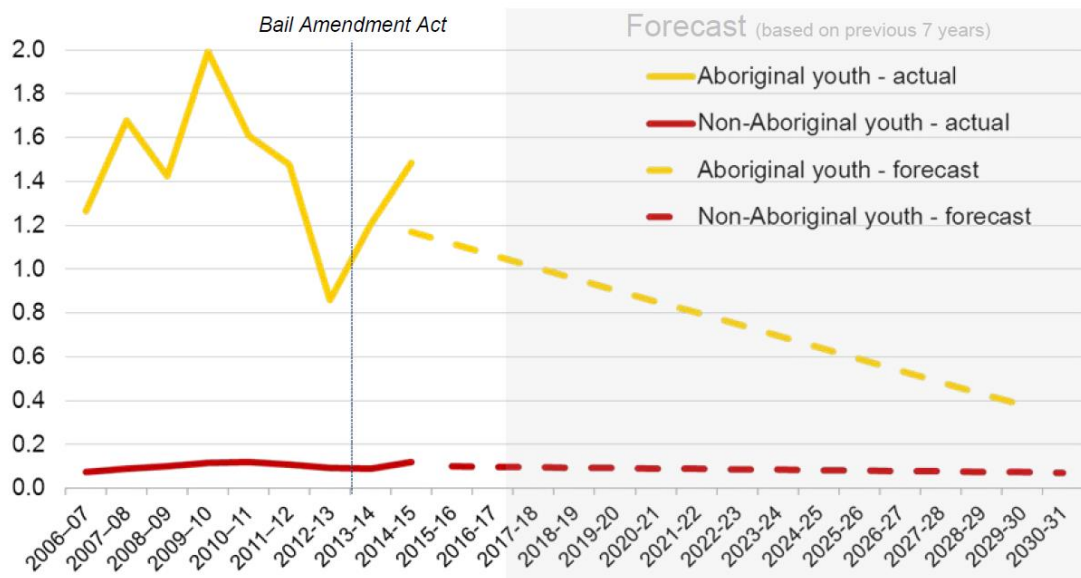
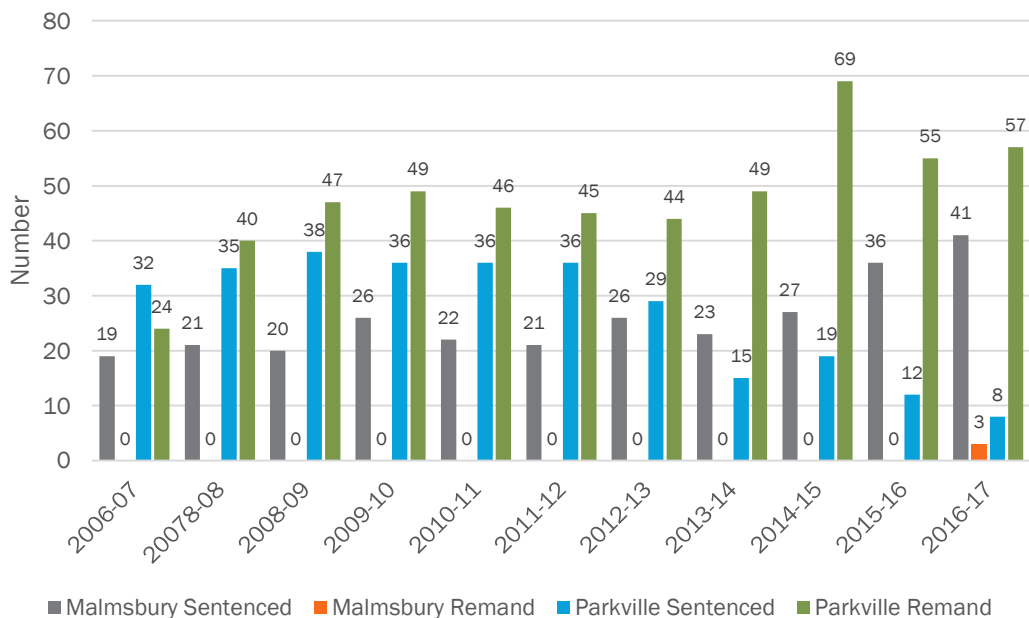


Figure 6-3: Youth Justice supervision in youth justice centres (rates)

At that time (2015) the data was showing a marked increase in the number of Aboriginal young people on remand. Subsequently, the number of young people on remand has decreased although over the longer term the trend continues on an upward trajectory.



Data sourced from: Youth Justice Data Report, AJF49 – Swan Hill and Presentation to AJF41 by DHHS entitled *Addressing over-representation of Koori Youth in the Justice System*

Figure 6-4: Number of unique Aboriginal young people sentenced and remanded (2014 - 2017)

A submission by the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (2017) to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Youth Justice Centres in Victoria has noted the drivers for the increase in the number of young people on remand. The key driver, they argue, is the inability to secure acceptable accommodation to enable the young person to be bailed. They also note the combination of delays in the court's processes, drug and alcohol misuse by young people, homelessness and care issues all contributing to offences being committed and thus higher numbers on remand. Stakeholders consulted for this evaluation reinforced these views with many emphasising the detrimental effect of out of home care on young Aboriginal people.

6.3. Findings from the evaluation interviews

The evaluation has sought the views and opinions of Aboriginal prisoners to understand the effects of programs delivered in the prisons but also to understand the drivers leading to their imprisonment. Although it was intended to gather views from both adults and young people in prison we did not proceed in seeking ethics approval to visit youth detention centres due to time constraints. It was intended to provide the youth perspective via consultations with agency representatives with responsibility for young offenders and by drawing on the findings from research conducted by the Koori Youth Council. This has not occurred to the extent that we had hoped and so the following discussion has an adult prison/prisoner focus.

Barwon Prison

Barwon Prison, a male-only maximum-security prison, the only maximum-security prison located outside the metropolitan area, with an operational capacity of 478. The prison was housing a total of 450 prisoners in December 2017, of which 31 (7%) were Aboriginal¹¹.

Margoneet Correctional Centre

Margoneet Correctional Centre is a medium security centre for male prisoners and offenders on remand. The prison population as at December 2017 was 783 including 38 (5%) Aboriginal prisoners

A 216-bed annexe to Margoneet opened in late 2016. Karreenga is also a medium security facility with a strong focus on rehabilitating prisoners and improving their employment prospects once they complete their sentences. A range of education programs and clinical services such as drug and alcohol treatment and offending-behaviour programs are delivered to help prisoners better transition to the community.

Loddon Prison

Loddon Prison is a medium security facility in Castlemaine which was housing 635 prisoners in December 2017. 5.2 per cent of prisoners at Loddon Prison are Aboriginal. It is a campus-style prison with four-bedroom, self-contained units and two-storey single cell blocks divided into units of 34 or 36 cells.

Summary of findings from prison interviews - male

Interviews and/or focus groups were conducted in each of the male prisons noted above with 36 male prisoners ranging in age from their early twenties to fifties. Interviews were also conducted with Aboriginal Wellbeing Officers and Aboriginal Liaison Officers in the prisons.

¹¹ Corrections Victoria, Monthly Prisoner and Offender Statistics, 2014-15 to 2017-18, retrieved from <http://www.corrections.vic.gov.au/utility/publications+manuals+and+statistics/monthly+prisoner+and+offender+statistics>

The male prisoners we interviewed typically began offending when they were children, some around seven years of age. Some of the men were wards of the state or in foster care at the time of their first contact. Others were living at home with parents who were also in contact with the justice system or were using alcohol or other drugs, contributing to family violence within the home. In many cases crime was seen as “normal”.

In most cases the men were with their peers at the time of their first offence. Their memories of their first contact with police recalled discrimination and for some, abuse. Several noted that they continue to face discrimination and racial abuse in prison.

Programs for prisoners

Two mainstream programs were referred to during interviews as having a positive impact on Aboriginal prisoners. These are the *SHINE for Kids Prison Invisit* program (PIP) and the *Re-Connect* program.

The *SHINE for Kids Prison Invisit* program supports children of prisoners when they visit with their parents in prison. The program uses qualified childcare workers and trained volunteers to keep children occupied between times spent talking to their parent. The program is helping boost emotional wellbeing and increase resilience in the children. Having their children occupied during the visit means that the prisoner and his partner can spend their time together without having to worry about the welfare of the child.

A 2013 evaluation of the SHINE program was generally positive about the effects of the program on children visiting the prison.

The impact of the PIP supporting broader family connections in the prison is an important unanticipated finding in the study. This indicates the PIP is not limited to supporting the child-parent relationship in the prison environment, but can apply to the wider family context including children with other family members in prison. The PIP promotes family bonding by normalising family interactions through shared child friendly activities in the prison environment (Devadason, 2013).

The *ReConnect* program is funded by Corrections Victoria and run by Jesuit Social Services in association with Australian Community Support Organisation, Victorian Association for the Care & Resettlement of Offenders and the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service. *ReConnect* has a targeted stream (up to four weeks support) and an extended stream (up to 12 months support). It provides up to four weeks of targeted and intensive post-release reintegration outreach services for serious violent or sex offenders, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners, and other prisoners with high transitional needs. It is designed to provide responsive, tailored and flexible support.

These two programs are addressing an identified need to assist male prisoners in re-integrating back into the community. We heard from many interviewees of the challenges faced by a large number of prisoners on leaving prison. In many cases, male prisoners are unable to return to the family home because of their previous violence against the family and have difficulty in accessing other accommodation options. They struggle to reconnect with children who they may not have seen for many months or years. Finding meaningful employment is difficult for many and impossible for some. Gaining access to services, particularly health services, is challenging and there will often be no continuity of care. That is, health services provided in prison are not always accessed outside of the prison (see further below).

In terms of access to programs to help address his offending behaviour one prisoner remarked;

I've been 22 years in gaol, on and off – never had the chance to do rehab (Male prisoner)

Another prisoner suggested that participating in programs produces ‘worse’ outcomes because “if you’ve done a course and then reoffend it goes worse for you because you should know better”.

Some access to Aboriginal-specific programs was reported. The four-day *Beyond Survival* program was highlighted as one that provided a benefit to participants;

I got more out of it than out of any of the others. And they [program deliverers] are coming back to visit – they genuinely care (Male prisoner)

It’s the most enthusiastic I’ve seen the men. Four days in a row in a classroom setting and they were waiting at the door every morning. (Aboriginal Liaison Officer)

Beyond Survival was funded in 2017-2018 under Kaka Wangity Wangin-Mirrie – Aboriginal Cultural Programs Grants Scheme, to address cultural strength as a protective factor to help reduce re-offending for Aboriginal prisoners and offenders.

Ten Loddon prisoners completed a 44-hour Aboriginal specific AOD program delivered by Aunty Trudy Cooper (Caraniche). The aim was to provide effective drug and alcohol treatment targeting the relationship between substance use and offending in a way that was culturally secure. The AWO reported that the men respected Aunty Trudy as she talks to them on their level. This was a pilot and has not been repeated to date. Program development commenced in early 2016, funded by Justice Health. A program advisory board included community representatives to guide development and delivery of the model. This was the first Aboriginal specific criminogenic Alcohol and Drug treatment program being offered in Victoria’s prison system. Engagement with the local Aboriginal community informed program development and delivery which includes involvement of Elders¹².

Similar positive views were expressed of the Dardi Munwurro’s Men’s Behaviour Change programs.

Positive engagement with the Statewide Indigenous Arts in Prison and Community (SIAPC) program provided by The Torch was most apparent in evaluation interviews at Marngoneet, held in a dedicated Aboriginal space. The SIAPC, delivered in men’s and women’s prisons, aims to reconnect prisoners with their culture while building their artistic skills and business acumen.

Challenges

Some of the challenges the men faced on leaving prison included access to suitable housing or accommodation, gaining employment and continuing access to appropriate rehabilitation services. The two comments below sum up the differing experiences these men have had:

Rehabilitation – I forced myself to do it. Galliamble was good – regular health worker visits, community support, helped by Indigenous workers in the employment area. You can get taken directly from here to Galliamble – they’re good (Male prisoner)

Courses are bullshit – we need real support when we get out. (Male prisoner)

Aboriginal Wellbeing Officers (AWOs) and Aboriginal Liaison Officers considered the extent to which client information is shared an issue in the service network. A factor facilitating service delivery is that AWOs share information about clients as the client moves from prison to prison:

A traumatised young man going to [higher security prison] because he’s become unmanageable.. They put him in isolation here and the first couple of days he was hitting himself and going crazy. I know him and I know he’s been kidnapped and put in the boot of a car. Our system doesn’t allow for that sort of thing. We’ll liaise with the other AWOs before he goes so that they know. And I got his back story from the previous prison (Aboriginal Wellbeing Officer)

¹² See fnError! Bookmark not defined.

The AWO and Aboriginal Liaison Officer positions are vitally important for supporting the men, fostering a “positive brotherly vibe” (e.g. through a weekly men's yarning circle) and often managing anxiety and clearing up confusion about the system.

Mainstream behaviour change programs are difficult to access and have attracted negative feedback. The prisoners we interviewed considered they made better progress in Aboriginal-specific programs.

Educational courses (provided through the TAFE) are appreciated.

The interviews highlighted several service gaps and limitations for prisoners including:

- Links to outside services for prisoners prior to release are extremely limited (note: the service organisations we interviewed noted that they are not funded to visit clients in prison).
- After release from prison, case management is time limited which means that support is not continued and parolees/offenders are not receiving the ongoing services they may require to address their issues
- Release on parole is currently limited, owing to some high profile serious and fatal breaches by non-Aboriginal offenders. We heard that parole officers can approach their duty therapeutically (rather than simply as a compliance officer), looking at underlying issues and offering help.
- Release on parole is also unavailable to many offenders as they are on short sentences of less than 12 months.
- Release on parole is also unavailable to many offenders if they are unable to provide an address that is approved, owing to the criminal record of others in the house.

They get 6, 7, 8 addresses knocked back, so they stay in prison and are left to their own devices when they are freed. (Aboriginal Wellbeing Officer)

Programs need to address disadvantage more broadly than having a singular focus on criminal offending behaviours and they need to be culturally appropriate:

- In prisons, many of the men interviewed felt disconnected from self, family and community. Asked about their spirit, 'lost' and 'broken' were common replies. Social and emotional wellbeing are the focus of *Beyond Survival* and *Dardi Munwurro* programs, which are both described as effective because they address the whole person in a culturally safe way and recognise underlying issues such as past trauma.
- One Aboriginal Liaison Officer and a prison programs officer suggested that increasing the number of community members to come into the prisons to support prisoners would assist. Without this support the prison-based liaison and wellbeing officers struggle to meet the needs of all of the Aboriginal prisoners.

After cultural programs they feel empowered but there's little or no follow-up. We have a men's group every week but we do struggle to get community people to come in for it – and there's no pay (Aboriginal Liaison Officer)

As well as supporting Aboriginal prisoners some consideration needs to be given to the support offered to AWOs and Aboriginal Liaison Officers. They operate somewhat independently and 'outside' of the system and the support they offer is generally intensive. We have heard that there has been a high turnover of AWOs at some prisons and attracting suitable people to the role has been difficult. One Officer noted

I don't think the role is compensated at the right level, at VPS3. We are called to do so many things – with prisoners, their community, and we manage our own day. We are looked to for a lot of answers. Senior education Officers, with similar demands, are on VPS4. I need to be equipped to deal with whatever I hear. There's no counselling or professional supervision, other than the Employee Assistance Scheme. But we have quarterly Aboriginal staff networking meetings within Corrections, led by the Aboriginal Programs Unit. (Aboriginal Liaison Officer)

Dame Phyllis Frost Correctional Centre

Dame Phyllis Frost Correctional Centre (DPFCC) is a maximum security women's prison located in Ravenhall about 30 kms west of Melbourne. The prison has an operational capacity of 482. The facility houses female prisoners of all classifications and there are medium and minimum security units providing separate rooms with kitchen and dining facilities.

The prison population in December 2017 was 440 including 62 Aboriginal prisoners, 14 per cent of the total prison population.

Summary of findings from prison interviews - female

This was the only women's prison visited for this evaluation and so we provide this discussion as a summary of findings of the issues facing women in prison¹³.

Interviews were conducted with the General Manager of the facility and staff including the Aboriginal Wellbeing Officer, Assessment and Transition Co-ordinator and the Remand Coordinator. We also spoke with nine prisoners in a focus group discussion.

There are five Aboriginal staff at DPFCC who are supporting the women in prison. Currently there are no permanent full-time Aboriginal health workers or counsellors and this is seen as a deficit for the women in prison. At the time of the field visit the prison housed 62 Aboriginal women, about 14 per cent of the total prison population. This number represented an increase of about 10 per cent in three months. Most of the women were said to be in prison for low-level offences which tended to be driven by financial motivations or associated with illicit drug use.

Staff report a significant number of women are in the Centre for very short periods of time between one and seven nights. Just prior to our site visit 14 women were received who were in prison for one night and then released the next day. One of the concerning issues about these short stays is the difficulty the released women have in returning home, as the case relayed by one staff member attests;

One woman was released at 4.30pm and expected to attend the Probation and Parole office in Warrnambool the next day. We've had similar stories for women released who had to travel to Mildura. Then they've got a CRN [Corrections Reference Number] and they lose their access to housing and maybe lost their children (Staff member).

There have been occasions where prison staff have driven released prisoners home so that they don't breach their bail or other conditions. This is clearly outside of their formal responsibilities but is seen as a necessary undertaking.

Women have access to a number of programs while in prison including the art program delivered by The Torch. Prisoners producing art through The Torch's program are able to sell their works with any interest earned on monies held in Trust paid to a victims of crime fund. A program delivered by the Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service (AFVPLS) Victoria is *Dilly Bag*, a two-day personal development workshop focused on healing and wellness. Another program, also offered by

¹³ During our data collection period there was reported to be only one Aboriginal woman at Tarrengower, the other women's prison.

AFVPLS at DPFCC is the *Sisters Day In*. Delivered in a workshop setting this program brings women together to raise awareness of family violence and encourages self-care and connection.

Factors contributing to offending

Staff at DPFCC have noted the impact of increasing usage of drugs, particularly methamphetamine (ice), by women entering the Centre. They are also noticing an increasing number of women referring to family breakdowns and how this is contributing to their offending behaviour.

The women we spoke with ranged in age from 30 to 42 years (not all women gave their age). The number of times these women had been in prison ranged from one (this current sentence) to eight and for offences of stealing and violence. All but one woman had children who were being looked after by family members or who were in out of home care with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal carers. Of the women with children, two said that they communicated regularly with the children by telephone [“I don’t want the children coming to the prison to visit me”]; one has no contact with her children as they have been placed into care and she does not hear how they are progressing; the remainder did not divulge whether they had contact with their children.

The women we interviewed referred to a number of programs and courses they are participating in while in prison including a TAFE course, literacy and numeracy classes, the Peer Listener program, Koori Art program and the Koori Women’s Meetings to assist in preparing for release.

The major concerns raised by the prisoners related to the following areas:

- lack of housing on release and the difficulty in accessing housing because of their criminal record. related to this is a fear of returning to accommodation they were in prior to arrest and “reconnecting to the old crowd and reoffending”
- child welfare and the issue of having their children placed into care and the difficulty of re-establishing contact and caring
- access to mental health services in prison (particularly for remand prisoners) and the community.

7. Barwon South West

7.1. The Place - About the Barwon South West Region

The Barwon South West region extends from Geelong on Port Phillip Bay in the east to the South Australian border in the west and north to Balmoral in the Southern Grampians. The area includes the local government areas of Greater Geelong, Queenscliffe, Colac Otway, Surf Coast, Warrnambool City, Moyne, Corangamite, Glenelg and Southern Grampians covering 29,130 square kilometres (about 13% of the state of Victoria).

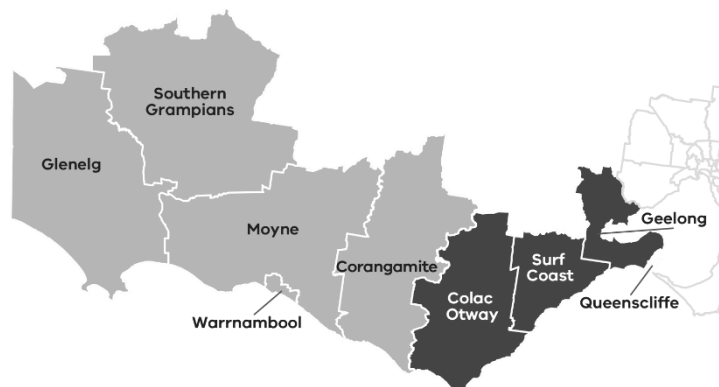


Table 7-1: Population of local government areas in the Barwon South West Region (ABS Census data 2016)

LGA	Total Population	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal	% Aboriginal
Colac – Otway	20,971	249	20,722	1.2
Corangamite	16,053	150	15,900	0.94
Glenelg	19,556	478	19,074	2.43
Greater Geelong	233,426	2,402	231,015	1.03
Moyne	16,499	200	16,306	1.16
Queenscliffe	2,854	8	2,839	0.24
Southern Grampians	15,941	237	15,698	1.5
Surf Coast	29,402	185	29,211	0.64
Warrnambool	33,655	555	33,101	1.65
TOTAL	388,355	4,480	383,880	1.15

The total resident population of the Barwon South West region at the last census (2016) was about 388,355 with Aboriginal people accounting for about 1.2 per cent of this population. The actual number of Aboriginal people is likely to be higher given the high number (23,932) who did not nominate their Indigenous status on the census forms. The City of Greater Geelong is the local government area with the highest number of Aboriginal residents of all local government areas (LGAs) in this study. The Aboriginal population in Greater Geelong has increased by close to 70 per cent in the past ten years. The Glenelg Shire has the highest proportion of Aboriginal people of all LGAs across the region at 2.4 per cent. Queenscliffe has the lowest proportion of Aboriginal people at 0.3 per cent. The total population of the region has increased by nearly 14 per cent over the past ten years with the Aboriginal population in the region increasing by a substantial 60.5 per cent (1,688 persons) over that period. Such increases are likely to have considerable impact on service delivery, particularly if resourcing is not matching population growth.

As is the case in most regions across Australia the Aboriginal population in Barwon South West is young, with a median age of 21 years. By comparison, the median age for the non-Aboriginal population is double this at 42 years. The population pyramid below shows the age distribution of

Aboriginal men and women in the region. The young population profile of this region has important ramifications for policy and program development as there is sizeable number of young people who are about to reach an age where first contact with the criminal justice system often occurs.

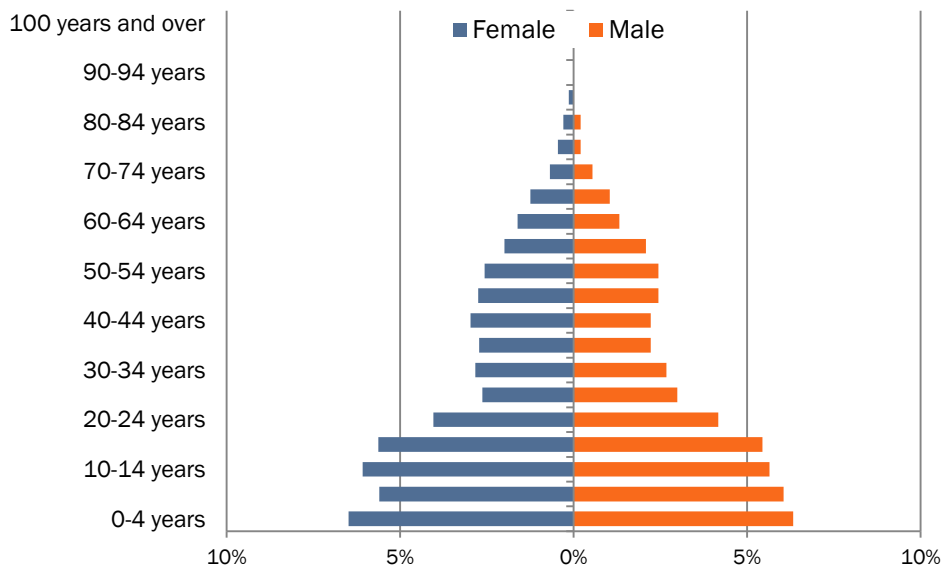


Figure 7-1: Age distribution of Aboriginal population in Barwon South West (ABS Census data 2016)

Educational attainment across the region is comparable to the state with about 33 per cent of Aboriginal people having achieved Year 12 (36% for Victoria). About 5.5 per cent of the Barwon South West Aboriginal people aged 15 or older has a Bachelor’s degree (compared to 6.2 per cent of the same cohort across Victoria).

The area has a diverse economy with industries providing manufacturing, retail trade, health care, construction, education and training, agriculture, forestry, fishing and tourism. The largest employing industries in the region are manufacturing, health and retail trade.

7.2. Aboriginal people in Barwon South West

The region is home to eight Aboriginal language group territories. In the west is the land of the Dhauwurd Wurrung (**Gunditjmara**) people centred around the town of Portland on the southern coast. The Gunditjmara people hold native title over a large area of land in the western area of the Barwon South West region and hold native title over an area between the Shaw and Eumeralla Rivers with Eastern Maar Peoples.

North from here, in the northern and western Gariwerd ranges, and on the Wimmera Plains to the west is the land of the **Jardwadjali** people.

The town of Halls Gap lies on land which was occupied by clans speaking the Djab Wurrung language. The language group boundary generally extended from Stawell in the north to Mt. Napier and Hexham in the south.

The Watha Wurrung (**Wathaurong**) people are the direct descendants of the original custodians of the Geelong, Ballarat and Beaufort districts and are part of the Kulin Federation, which is made up of five distinct but closely related language groups.

The area that is now the Surf Coast Shire is the traditional home of three Aboriginal nations, the Wathaurong, the Gulidjan and the Gadubanud. The **Gulidjan** were based to the west of the Barwon

River at Winchelsea and past Colac. The **Gadubanud** were located west of the Painkalac Creek along the Otway Ranges.

The **Djargurd Wurrung** people are the traditional Aboriginal owners of the land around Camperdown and districts. The Djargurd Wurrung consisted of 12 clans, sharing a common language and strong cultural and family links, but each with its own territory and traditions.

The **Girai** Wurrung traditionally occupied the territory extending from Warrnambool and the Hopkins River eastwards to the coastal town of Princetown, and inland as far as Lake Bolac and Darlington; east to beyond Camperdown.

7.3. Justice issues in Barwon South West

Community and government stakeholders interviewed for this evaluation were asked to identify what they thought to be the main justice issues of concern in the region. There were several that were thought to bring the greatest impact: these were the growing number of women being imprisoned on very short sentences and the resultant impact of their imprisonment on their families; the high number of fines incurred for driving without a licence (often the result of the inability of people to obtain a birth certificate) and suspended licences due to road related fines. Non-payment of fines sometimes results in short term incarceration. There are high levels of alcohol and other drug problems and family and domestic violence. One Aboriginal health worker said “we are failing our men, there are huge drug and alcohol and domestic violence problems in our community. The use of ice and the link this has to domestic violence and theft is increasing”. Drug use was highlighted as an issue in all regions we visited.

Barwon was one of three areas (the others being Gippsland and Hume) that were targeted in the 2017/18 state budget allocation of \$81.1 million for stage three of the Ice Action Plan. The government committed funding to acquire land in the Barwon region to build a residential drug rehabilitation facility (Neville 2017). This more recent funding builds on other state funding for community-based withdrawal treatment beds in Geelong (2015/16) and a residential rehabilitation facility in the Grampians region (2016/17). Such regionally-based facilities, although not Aboriginal-specific, assist in eliminating the need for those seeking residential treatment to go to Melbourne, keeping people closer to their families and community support networks.

7.3.1. Police data

Data referred to below is from the Crime Statistics Agency Aboriginal Justice Indicators – Victoria Police dashboard and covers the period 1 January 2012 to 31 December 2016 unless otherwise stated.

Police data prepared by the Crime Statistics Agency (CSA) present 2016 crime data by offence type and are reported as the rate per 1,000 population to allow comparison across regions. These data show that the highest rate of offending by Aboriginal people in Barwon South West relates to ‘property and deceptions’ offences. This includes offences such as property damage, burglary/break and enter, theft, arson, deception and bribery.

The second most prevalent types of offence are those against justice procedures, including breaches of orders. Crimes against the person are the third most prevalent offence type. This includes assault, sexual offences, stalking, harassment and threatening behaviour, and homicide.

‘Other’ offences include regulatory driving offences and would include driving without a licence. According to the CSA data no offences of this type were recorded in 2016. Given this was raised as an issue during consultation it may be that initiatives to assist people to obtain their driving licence may already be having an impact or that this is not the most serious offence a person is charged with. The

CSA data shows 12 offences in the 'other' category but this dropped to around 3 in 2013 and 4 in 2015.

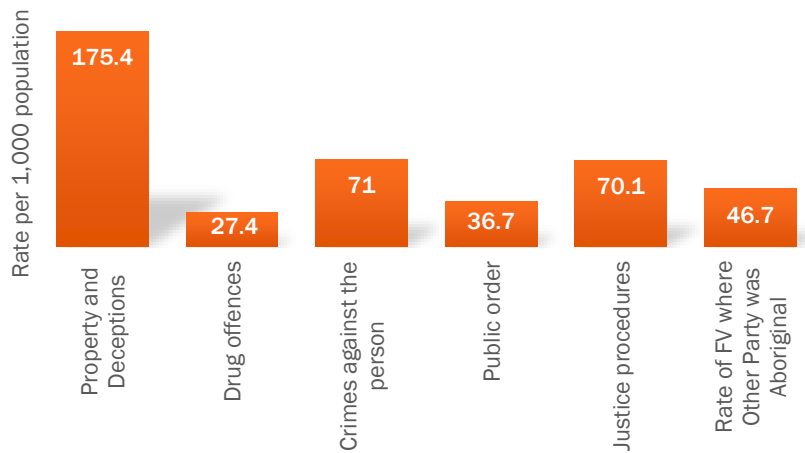


Figure 7-2: Offence types Barwon South West Region (2016)

The figure above shows the rate of family violence where the perpetrator ('other party') was Aboriginal. In 2016, family violence incidents occurred at a rate of 46.7 per 1,000 population. Over the past five years this has been showing an increasing trend as indicated in Figure 7-3 (compare three other regions investigated in this evaluation). With 146 incidents of family violence recorded in 2012 compared to 206 in 2016 there has been an increase of 41 per cent.

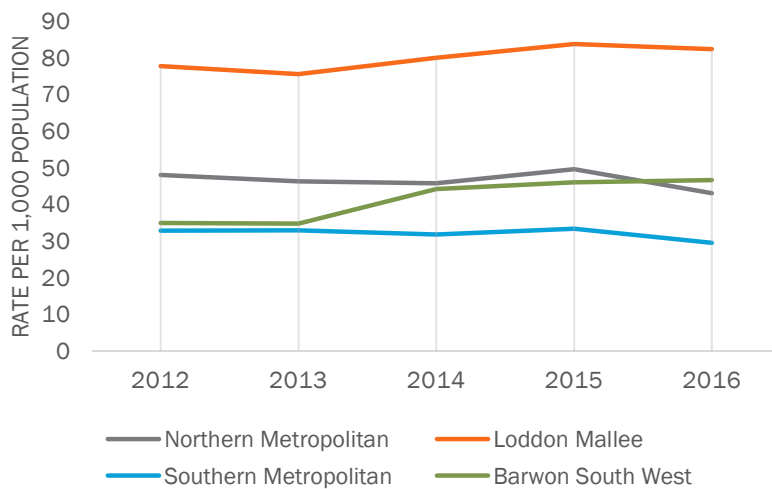


Figure 7-3: Rate of family violence where other party was Aboriginal (per 1,000 population, 2016)

Diversion is a key objective of AJA3, specifically the diversion of young people from further contact with police. One indicator of the extent to which young people are being diverted is the level of police cautioning of young offenders. Police cautioning of first time young offenders in Barwon South West increased between 2012 and 2016 after initially falling in 2013. In 2016, 77.3 per cent of first time young offenders received a caution by police.

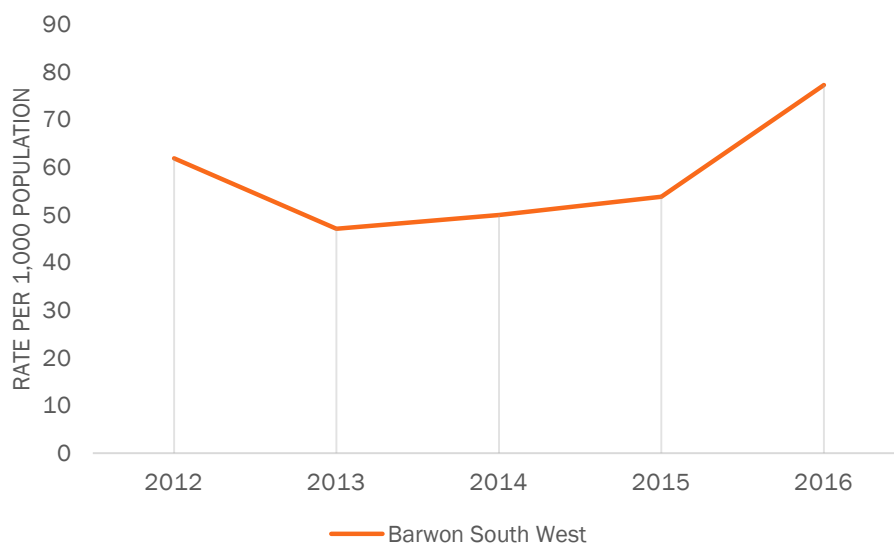


Figure 7-4: Proportion of first time young offenders who received a caution by police, by year, 2012-2016

7.3.2. Community corrections (adults)

While Aboriginal people comprise about 1 per cent of the total population of the Barwon South West region but are over-represented in the number of people serving CCOs: about 8 per cent of adult offenders serving orders in the region are Aboriginal.

Similar to other regions in Victoria, Barwon South West has seen a steady increase in the number of female offenders subject to CCOs over the period of the AJA3. Although the absolute numbers are low, between 2013 and 2017 the number of female offenders has more than doubled to 39. The 116 per cent increase in female offenders compares with an increase, over the same term, of 71 per cent for male offenders. The age group that has seen the greatest increase in offending are those aged between 25 and 34.

Interviews conducted with Community Corrections Services (CCS) Officers in Geelong reported on the increasing number of all offenders, but particularly female offenders being managed on a CCO in the City. To give an indication of the workload in the Geelong CCS, as at August 2017, the office was managing 7 per cent of all Aboriginal female offenders on CCOs in the state. Between 2016 and 2017, the number of female offenders being managed had doubled from 9 to 18. Further, over 55 per cent of all Aboriginal offenders on CCOs are categorised as high risk, necessitating a higher level of case management.

The caseloads of all case managers and case officers at the Geelong CCS are said to be difficult to contain.¹⁴ It is understood that the recommended caseload for an Advanced Case Manager is 25 high- and medium-risk offenders with complex needs. The Advanced Case Managers at Geelong are managing between 40 and 50. A similar story is evident for Case Managers who are managing 60 or more cases when the recommended number is 25 to 40. Case Officers, managing low risk offenders, have upwards of 120 cases when the recommended case load is 80. Such caseloads make it extremely difficult for case managers of clients with complex needs to provide sufficient time to each offender and reduces the effectiveness of the management. In contrast, a Supervisor in Geelong related a conversation with an officer from Box Hill in the Eastern Metropolitan region who noted that

¹⁴ A Regional Director later identified this as a transitional effect of expansion and difficulties in recruitment and training, which had worked its way through the system.

caseloads for Advanced Case Managers had been capped at 25 in that location and they were seeing an increase in the number of successful completions of CCOs as a result.

Data for 2016-17 show the largest proportion of orders were issued for offences of assault (21.8%) and offences against good order (21.1%). It should be noted that the proportion of offences for assault is considerably lower than all other regions. Conversely, the proportion of offenders on CCOs for good order offences is the highest of all regions and in some cases by a very wide margin (e.g. 1 per cent in the Eastern Metropolitan region). Driving offences and other property offences were the next most common offence types receiving a community order sentence. The most common type of order was a 'fine order' accounting for almost half of all orders issued and the highest proportion of fine orders in any region.

CCOs were successfully completed by about 62 per cent of both male and female Aboriginal offenders. This successful completion rate was slightly higher than the rate across of all regions at 57.1 per cent. The highest success rates occurred for offenders aged between 45 and 54 years.

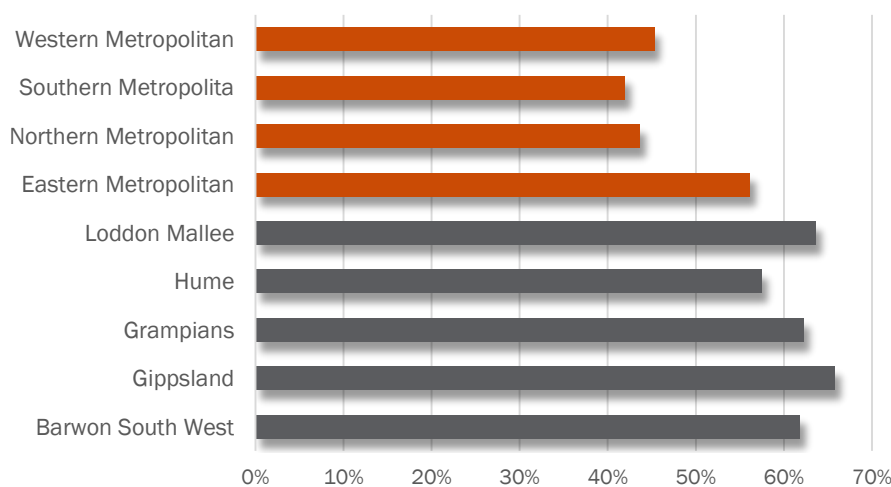


Figure 7-5: Proportion of orders successfully completed for Aboriginal offenders by region, 2016-17

CCOs will often have conditions attached including a condition for the offender to complete treatment or rehabilitation programs. In Barwon South West, 71 per cent of orders included a condition to undertake at least one alcohol and other drug treatment program. Almost 65 per cent included a condition to complete a program to reduce re-offending (up from 35 per cent in 2012-13). These programs are typically delivered by service providers within the region, so it would be expected that an increasing trend towards placing conditions on orders will place greater pressures on service providers. Of the 75 unsuccessful order completions, about three-quarters were the result of a breach of conditions.

Most CCOs being served by Aboriginal offenders in the Barwon South West region were for a duration of six months or less. Overall, about 80 per cent of orders were 12 months or less in length. There has been a decreasing trend (-12%) in shorter CCO duration between 2012 and 2017 and a corresponding increasing trend (+14%) in CCOs of 13 to 18 months duration. This is likely the result of legislative change and other justice reforms.

A number of issues were raised about the effectiveness of CCOs in Barwon South West. There was a view that they were not working because of high levels of reoffending. Where they are ineffective it has been put down to offenders not taking them seriously and because the consequences of a breach are not acting as a sufficient deterrent. Interviewees suggested that where CCOs do work is when offenders are open to them and will take on board the tools that can make positive change. As noted,

however, adequate access to adequate case management time and to appropriate specialist programs are among other likely factors.

7.3.3. Youth justice community orders

The Youth Justice Service presents data to the AJF at each forum. According to the report delivered to AJF49 in October 2017 and for the period 30 June 2016 to 30 June 2017, the average daily number of young people on youth justice community orders in Barwon South West was as shown in the table below.

Table 7-2: Average daily number of young people on youth justice community orders Barwon South West region, by gender (2015-17)

Year	Aboriginal		Non-Aboriginal		Not known	Grand Total
	Female	Male	Female	Male		
2016-17	4.0	13.4	11.2	47.4	0.0	76.0
2015-16 ¹⁵	2.7	13.7	16.5	13.7	67.9	81.6

The table below shows the age distribution of Aboriginal young people in Barwon South West who are on youth justice community orders. Female offenders on orders are more likely to be aged between 15 and 17 years. Male offenders on orders are typically aged 15 years and older.

Table 7-3: Average daily number of young Aboriginal people on youth justice community orders, by gender and age (2016-17)

Region	Female			Male			Total	
	12-14	15-17	18+	10-11	12-14	15-17		18+
BSW	0.4	3.2	0.4	0.0	1.1	6.2	6.2	17.4

7.4. Major places in Barwon South West

Barwon South West is a large, mostly rural area with two major population centres; Geelong and Warrnambool.

7.4.1. Geelong

Geelong is the second largest city in Victoria, and the largest population centre in Barwon South West. Over the past ten years the population of the City of Greater Geelong has increased by about 18 per cent. The Aboriginal population has increased by 69 per cent - a 75 per cent increase in the female population and 62 per cent increase for males.

A survey on the health and wellbeing of Victorians conducted by VicHealth in 2015 found perceptions of safety in Geelong very high. Almost all (96%) Geelong residents felt safe walking along during the day and over half (55%) felt safe walking alone at night.

In 2013, Justice Connect Homeless Law, a specialist legal service for people experiencing, or at risk of homelessness, undertook an analysis of housing and legal need in Geelong. It is well recognised that many of the factors contributing to homelessness also contribute to contact with the justice system. Respondents to the study indicated an increasing trend in referrals related to family violence,

¹⁵ Data sourced from Youth Justice Data Report presented to AJF46, Ballarat

family breakdown and associated financial issues. Services indicated that the increase in local redundancies and changes to the Centrelink Parenting Payment have increased financial hardship. Accommodation options are limited. The combined pressures of rental affordability and the limited accessibility of public and community housing in Geelong mean people are staying in transitional housing, and crisis and refuge accommodation for longer periods. The prevalence of these issues is also likely to drive offending behaviours.

The city hosts a number of service providers assisting people in situations like those described above. Many of these services have been established with the specific intention of supporting Aboriginal people who have been caught up in the justice system. Some of the major service providers and services referred to during the evaluation consultations are:

- **Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative** formed in 1978 to support the social, economic, and cultural development of Aboriginal people, particularly within the Geelong and surrounding areas. Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative aims to “achieve minimisation and elimination of our community's contact with the justice system, through education and intervention, as well as working closely with other programs and services to address core issues that lead to individual offending”. The organisation oversees the completion of CCO community work hours at Wurdi Youang where offenders undertake conservation and land management work. This gives offenders and prisoners an opportunity to contribute to the Aboriginal community as well as obtain qualifications relating to the work undertaken.
- **Barwon Child, Youth and Family** is a not-for-profit community service organisation providing a range of services including some justice related services, including Youth Justice Community Support and Youth Justice Conferencing. They currently provide individualised intensive support for young people on Youth Justice Orders complementing the case management undertaken by Youth Justice Units. Young offenders are offered support in the areas of employment access, education and further training, mental health, alcohol and other drug services, housing and connectedness to family and community.
- **Barwon Community Legal Service** provides free legal advice, education and support to people who live in the Geelong, Bellarine Peninsula, Surf Coast and Colac Otway regions.
- **Justice Connect** offers pro bono legal services and provides legal information directly to clients and not-for-profit organisations and via their online website. In 2017, about 12 per cent of Justice Connect's clients were Aboriginal. Justice Connect also offer social work support through their Homeless Law Program.
- **Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service** Geelong office provides 24-hour support including referrals, duty work and case work assistance to Aboriginal people in the Barwon South West region. They are also heavily engaged in delivering community education to help people understand their rights and responsibilities under the law.
- **Murrenda Aboriginal Community Care Ltd** is a separately incorporated company of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress which is wholly controlled by Aboriginal people. Murrenda aims to address the disproportionately high levels of social disadvantage within the Aboriginal community to achieve equitable outcomes for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community by delivering culturally appropriate programs and initiatives. The centre is visited by the Mobile Justice Service Centre (Justice Bus), which is operated by the Department to bring justice services to regional areas. Murrenda is a partner in the Geelong Project (see below).
- **The Geelong Project** is an innovative, place-based, ‘community of schools and youth services’ model and platform for early intervention with young people at risk of disengaging from school

and becoming homeless. It is an initiative of Time for Youth with partners Swinburne University and Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network.

7.4.2. Warrnambool

Warrnambool is the largest coastal city outside Port Phillip Bay and is the fastest growing economy and population centre in the Barwon South West region. Tourism is central to the economy of the city which attracts more than 700,000 tourists each year.

Perceptions of safety in Warrnambool mirror those of Geelong with almost 97 per cent of people feeling safe walking along during the day and 56 per cent feeling safe walking alone at night.

The city has a number of Aboriginal organisations and services providers, including:

- **WG Enterprises** (formally known as Worn Gindidj Aboriginal Cooperative) provides pre-employment support services, employment placement services and mentoring services aimed at assisting employers to retain their Aboriginal employees. The organisation also offers community support services including Positive Peer Pressure Programs that are aimed at building connectedness and broadening social networks.
- **Gunditjmara Aboriginal Cooperative Ltd** is a non-profit organisation set up in 1982 by the local Indigenous community to serve the needs of its members and the Aboriginal community in Warrnambool and across the Western District of Victoria. Gunditjmara provides services in adult day care, aged care, home care and community care.

The *Close the Gap* program run out of Gunditjmara focusses on healing and family support. Participants in the program have a Cultural and Healing Plan developed as part of the project. Justice clients are referred to Gunditjmaram to gain access to this program.

Gunditjmara received funding from the Koori Youth Crime Prevention Grants to engage young people in cultural heritage workshops, managing bullying, road and bike safety (facilitated by Victoria Police), information regarding alcohol and other drugs, meaningful and respectful relationships and physical health.

- **Djirra** (formerly Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria) is an ACCO established in 2002 to provide assistance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims/survivors of family violence and sexual assault and to work with families and communities affected by violence. They provide free legal advice, ongoing casework and court representation and also deliver legal education in the community. FVPLS have an office in Warrnambool which covers the Barwon South West region.
- **Warrnambool Local Aboriginal Network (LAN)** meet regularly to plan and build community strengths and increase community participation, which includes social, economic, cultural, sporting and civic activities. The LAN program objective is to:
 - provide a voice for local Aboriginal communities
 - be a mechanism to identify community aspirations through community planning
 - provide a means to work together to implement plans in partnership with a range of stakeholders (partnerships include all levels of government, business, philanthropy and the extended community)
 - connect services and individuals to enable greater coordination of community engagement, participation, collaboration and implementation of programs.

7.4.3. Elsewhere

There are two Aboriginal organisations operating in Portland - Winda-Mara Aboriginal Corporation and Dhauwurd Wurrung Elderly & Community Health Services Inc. These, and other services, are listed below.

- **Winda-Mara Aboriginal Corporation** provides services to the local Aboriginal communities in and around the far south west Victorian towns of Heywood, Hamilton and Portland. Winda-Mara provides a broad range of services in the following fields:
 - health
 - community services
 - housing
 - land management
 - heritage & culture
 - economic development
 - tourism
 - family services and kinship care
 - home and community care
 - education & training and employment

Winda Mara received funding through the Koori Youth Crime Prevention Grants to deliver cultural, wellbeing and safety activities aimed at cultural enhancement, understanding family history and personal safety, particularly around alcohol and other drugs.

- **Dhauwurd Wurrung Elderly and Community Health Service Inc.** provides a wide range of health services to the Portland community. DWECHS has a Psychologist, GP, practice nurse and Aboriginal Health Workers providing:
 - home and community care services
 - alcohol and other drug services
 - ear and eye health
 - diabetes management
 - nutrition and health promotion programs
 - mental health services.

Dhauwurd Wurrung Elderly and Community Health Service is a member of the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO).

Funding from the Koori Youth Crime Prevention Grants enabled Dhauwurd Wurrung Elderly and Community Health Service to deliver three, two hour weekly sessions to young people aimed at cultural strengthening, health and wellbeing, rights and responsibilities and leadership activities.

- **Youth Referral and Independent Person Program** operates in police stations across Barwon South West (specifically, Anglesea, Apollo Bay, Colac, Geelong, Lara, Torquay and Warrnambool). Youth Referral and Independent Person Program delivers a high-quality system of adult volunteers called "Independent Persons" who attend police interviews with young people in police custody when a parent or guardian is not available. Youth Referral and Independent Person Program also seeks to divert young people from future offending through early intervention at the point of police contact. It also provides volunteer Independent Persons to over 3,000 police interviews with young people per year.
- **Kirrae Health Service** is located on the Framlingham Aboriginal Community and supports the physical, mental and emotional health of Aboriginal people in the community.
- An **Aboriginal Community Justice Panel**, staffed by volunteers who are on stand-by 24 hours, seven days per week to assist any Aboriginal person taken into custody operate in Warrnambool and Geelong.

7.5. Justice services in Barwon South West

The region is served by two primary DJR service locations:

1. Geelong Regional Office: services provided include birth, death and marriage enquiries, community corrections, correctional facilities and prisons, resolving disputes and reaching agreements and sorting out fines and warrants.
2. Warrnambool Justice Service Centre: services provided include birth, death and marriage enquiries, consumer help and information, community corrections, correctional facilities and prisons, resolving disputes and reaching agreements, regional and local Aboriginal Justice Committees and sorting out fines and warrants.

The region is also home to three correctional facilities: Barwon Prison, Marngoneet Correctional Centre, and Karreenga, all located at Lara (Refer Section 6).

Koori Courts have been established in Warrnambool and Geelong. Sittings are held in both the Magistrates' and Children's Court jurisdictions.

Barwon South West is served by three LAJACs located in Geelong, Glenelg and Warrnambool. The RAJAC Chair is based in Portland and the Executive Officer in Warrnambool but meetings are held throughout the region.

The Koori Youth Justice Program in Barwon South West delivers the following place-specific programs:

- Advanced Koori Intensive Support Practitioner operating out of DJR- Geelong Office
- Community Based Koori Youth Justice Program delivered by Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative
- Community Based Koori Youth Justice Program operating delivered by Gunditjmara Aboriginal Cooperative.

7.6. Current community grants funding in Barwon South West

The following organisations are currently funded to provide the Local Justice Worker Program in the Barwon South West region:

- Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation (Heywood).
- Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative (Geelong).

The Local Justice Worker Program provides case management support for Aboriginal offenders to manage fines and outstanding warrants, and successfully complete community based orders to reduce breach rates.

Organisations in the Barwon South West region have also been successful in receiving grants funding through the Community Initiative Program and through the Koori Youth Crime Prevention Grants administered by the Crime Prevention Unit (see

Table 7-4).

Table 7-4: Current community grants funding – Barwon South West

Program	Organisation name	Project description	Location	Funding
Community Initiative Program	South West Alternative Medium Inc (SWAMP)	The Marmoot Karman (SWAMP Painters) Project provided opportunities for 20 Aboriginal artists of all ages to find a medium to express identity and self, access mentoring, art and craft resources, development opportunities, meet and connect with other artists and develop a social enterprise. This project targeted Aboriginal youth, men and women who have had minimal contact with the justice system, those who had been incarcerated and those who had completed their community correction orders and were rebuilding their lives.	Portland, Warrnambool and Hamilton centres	\$60,248
Koori Youth Crime Prevention Grants	Kirrae Health Service Inc	Led by Kirrae Health Service Inc, the <i>Koko Blokes</i> project targeted Aboriginal boys aged 8-17 from the Framlingham Aboriginal Community in a series of workshops over two years. The workshops focused on positive role modelling, alcohol and other drug use, domestic violence, isolation (the community is some distance from Warrnambool and not well serviced by public transport to support participants in social, sports events and carnivals), acculturation, respect, traffic incidents, cyber safety and culture. The program will challenge the participants to explore where these issues fit in with Aboriginal culture.	Framlingham	\$33,332
	Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative	Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative led this program to address issues of Aboriginal youth disengagement by creating an environment that is safe for youth to gather, learn and yarn with each other. Regular sessions were held (26 per annum in Geelong and 13 per annum in Colac) and involved a wide range of speakers and presenters to empower and inspire youth. The sessions promoted cultural connection, highlighted education opportunities and local initiatives for Aboriginal youth.	Geelong and Colac	\$36,240
	Winda Mara Aboriginal Cooperative	Winda Mara Aboriginal Cooperative delivered this project to enhance participant's cultural understanding, wellbeing and personal safety development by providing 120 hours each year for two years of cultural, wellbeing and safety activities. Activities were delivered in two and three hour sessions with 40 hours dedicated to each key area including cultural enhancement, wellbeing, personal safety (includes alcohol and other drug use) and understanding family history. The project engaged a range of stakeholders including Victoria Police, Local Aboriginal Networks, Koori Engagement Support Workers, Koori Youth Justice Workers and leveraged other services offered by the organisation	Heywood and Hamilton	\$33,332
	Dhauwurd Wurrung Elderly and Community Health	Dhauwurd Wurrung Youth Program delivered three, 2-hour sessions each week for two years for Aboriginal young people. The content of the sessions developed in partnership with Aboriginal youth identified through local Police and the Aboriginal Community Justice Panels (ACJP) as suitable participants. The sessions included	Portland	\$33,332

Program	Organisation name	Project description	Location	Funding
		cultural strengthening, health and wellbeing, rights and responsibilities and leadership activities.		
	Gunditjmara Aboriginal Cooperative	Gunditjmara Youth Program engaged young people residing in and around the Warrnambool area in a series of activities including cultural heritage workshops, managing bullying, road and bike safety (facilitated by Victoria Police). Speakers provided information regarding alcohol and other drugs, meaningful and respectful relationships and physical health. The project delivered a three day camp each year for up to 25 youth which included information sessions along with fun recreational and cultural activities. In addition, participants contributed to the development of a positive parenting calendar to provide education regarding positive role models and healthy relationships with a focus on strong families	Warrnambool	\$33,332

7.7. Informant interviews key findings – Barwon South West

A range of key informant interviews were conducted to gather views and perceptions on justice matters affecting Aboriginal people in the region. Interviews have been conducted with representatives of ACCOs and other community organisations, and government agencies delivering services in the justice sector. We have also spoken with those people who are implementing the AJA in Barwon South West, specifically members of the RAJAC and LAJACs.

Below we describe several initiatives that are seen as providing benefit to the region and that are having a positive impact on reducing contact with the criminal justice system.

7.7.1. The importance of relationships and leadership

Although not a place-based initiative *per se*, the AJA3 itself is held as a model of effective practice. It has provided the framework, specifically through the RAJAC and LAJACs around which people have been able to coalesce, to build relationships and strengthen trust.

In discussions with key informants we heard there are low numbers of Aboriginal young people in the justice system and this has been the case consistently over the last several years. Informants have attributed this to the strong and long-lasting relationships between community and justice services (principally police) that have been built over the years through the proactive support of Aboriginal leaders. We have heard, and witnessed first-hand, the strength of the leadership right across Barwon South West.

There is a core group of young and older leaders who have been actively advocating for the community over a number of years. Importantly, there has been an acknowledgement that continued strong leadership requires opportunities for younger people with a commitment to, and aspirations for the community to move into leadership roles. A number of younger individuals have stepped into these roles including taking on the Chairing role of the RAJAC and supporting the RAJAC and LAJAC operation. A Police Officer noted;

[there are] strong young leaders in the Aboriginal community that just step up and [have] really brought their community along.

The community leaders show a great deal of capacity to perform in these roles. They are confident and committed to doing what it takes to make the region strong and to eliminate continuing disadvantage in their communities. As one leader noted;

We're invested in our community. If you have strong individuals, you have strong families (RAJAC Member).

They also acknowledge that their role is not only to hold government agencies and service delivery organisations to account, but also to hold each other and the ACCOs in the region to account;

... we work with government workers to get them to understand their Cultural Load and Black fellas holding each other to account, not just government (RAJAC Member).

Having strong leaders represented in forums that bring Aboriginal people and government agencies together has reduced power imbalances that tend to typify such fora. The nature and extent of the power imbalance between the parties often makes it difficult for equitable negotiations to take place, both in terms of process and outcomes. At the leadership level, the relationships are considered more equitable. To a large extent, this has filtered through the community and lower ranks of agencies more generally.

Interviews consistently referred to the very strong relationships that have evolved between Aboriginal community and government service providers, especially Victoria Police and Sheriffs.

...we have meaningful relationships with government agencies; it is all about strong partnerships, which we count as relationships (RAJAC Member)

Historically, the relationship between justice agencies, and Police in particular, and the Aboriginal community has been tenuous at best. The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) noted the circumstances which have led to "Aboriginal people regard[ing] police as enemies". The liaison roles noted above have helped to foster improved relationships and built strong communication channels between the justice agencies and the local Aboriginal community in the region.

The importance of achieving better relationships and more open dialogue is one area that received some attention in the RCIADIC. A number of recommendations referred to communications including the following two which highlight the importance of *appropriate* communication:

Rec. 217 Consideration should be given to the creation of specific liaison officer positions employing Aboriginal people to facilitate communications between the court and the community

Rec. 247 Effective communication between non-Aboriginal health professionals and patients in mainstream services is essential for the successful management of the patients' health problems. Non-Aboriginal staff should receive special training to sensitise them to the communication barriers most likely to interfere with the optimal health professional/patient relationship.

The region is now well-served with Aboriginal personnel within government in community liaison type roles. For example, Sheriff's officers are supported by SALOs, the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer provides a conduit to the Aboriginal community and police, young offenders are supported by Koori Youth justice Workers, prisoners are offered support from the Aboriginal Wellbeing Officers and courts are supported by a Koori Court Officer. The Local Justice Worker role has been a direct result of the AJA and funded through the grants offered by the KJU..

To improve the historically poor relationship all justice agencies have implemented a range of strategies and protocols to remove individual and institutional discriminatory practices and

behaviours and to promote positive partnerships with Aboriginal members of the community. Several community representatives noted that the introduction of the Koori Family Violence Police Protocol was a good demonstration of the types of outcomes that can be achieved through strong and trusting partnerships between Police and mainstream family violence organisations and the local Aboriginal communities.

Across Barwon South West, police are involved in cultural awareness training courses for new members where Aboriginal Elders provide their insights and their experiences of culture. Police officers are invited to join the Elders on-country and have reported getting so much from the experience that their attitudes and behaviours have changed to reflect what they have learned. Relationships have been given a particularly strong boost from the commitment to, and engagement with culturally appropriate policing from the very top of the Police regional division. More than that, junior officers are responding to cultural awareness training because of the benefit it gives them in the role and not simply because it is a mandatory requirement. There was a strong desire for Police and community to work together to improve Aboriginal justice outcomes.

The efforts of Police to develop their own cultural capacity has occurred over the entire AJA period, not just through AJA3. A 2011 review conducted by the Office of Police Integrity of the Victoria Police Aboriginal Strategic Plan 2003-2008 included the following quote from an Aboriginal Community Justice Panel member highlighting how their communications and liaison with police has improved relationships:

The Warrnambool Aboriginal Community Justice Panel has been in operation for approximately 15 years. The relationship between the Aboriginal people in the Warrnambool area and the local police has improved considerably. There has definitely been a more conscious effort to work together on a number of issues. The reason why this relationship has worked is due to a number of contributing factors: the Aboriginal Community Justice Panel members are well-respected members of the community; they introduce themselves to new members at the police stations; they invite police to cultural functions; and they have 'an open door' to police members. One other factor that strengthens the relationship between the Aboriginal Community Justice Panel and the police is the role both the Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer and the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer play in the liaison process. (Office of Police Integrity 2011: 22)

Cultural awareness training is also embedded in other justice agencies. Correctional officers and other judicial officers who came into contact with Aboriginal offenders are encouraged to participate in cultural awareness training. This training is regionally specific encompassing elements of local Aboriginal culture and history and explores the social factors which have contributed to the disadvantaged position of many Aboriginal people in the region.

There is a view that the police and other justice related services are becoming “smarter and more insightful” in their understanding of the complexity of Aboriginal situations. Several senior government officers commented their involvement in the RAJAC meant they were “comfortable” in going directly to Aboriginal leaders to discuss issues of joint concern. The same view was held by Aboriginal RAJAC members. Representatives from both community organisations and government agencies expressed recognition of the role that the RAJAC has in providing a platform for community to work with the government on issues on a broader perspective than just justice issues.

Staff spoke of critical portfolio cross overs between, for example, family and domestic violence, child protection and housing. One example was shared with us to demonstrate the benefits that can be achieved through agencies working together and with Aboriginal community.

Making a difference

One Sunday afternoon, an Aboriginal community member got in touch with the Regional Director of Housing about her nephew, a 10 year old boy who was constantly getting into trouble with police and finding himself in potentially dangerous situations. Rather than remove the child, the Regional Director offered her sister access to a house. This kept the boy out of residential care and helped him to settle down, attend school regularly and get off the police radar. Since then child protection involvement has gone quiet.

Innovative solution – the Regional Director DHHS has also requested his staff stop raising debts from tenants fleeing domestic violence. This is now a policy within that regional office.

The strong and close networks that have been established between Aboriginal leaders and justice service providers are built on trust. This enables all parties to be far more adaptable and responsive to issues where earlier responses may have been prescriptive or bureaucratic. This has been particularly evident where the Local Justice Worker is concerned.

7.7.2. The Justice Bus (Portland)

The Mobile Justice Service Centre, better known as the 'Justice Bus' travels the state stopping in various towns where workers can engage with community members to provide advice and justice services to the community. Discussions between the Sheriff's office and the RAJAC were instrumental in bringing the bus to the region.

Unpaid fines are one of the reasons Aboriginal people are ending up in court and receiving CCOs in Barwon South West. Officers on the Justice Bus provide a range of services including delivery of a program that identifies number plates and therefore identifies whether people might have an unpaid fine. With staff from the Sheriff's office on hand, they are able to discuss options with the person owing the fine to either make a payment or sign up for community work.

The office of Birth, Deaths and Marriages are also part of the bus. As noted previously, there have been issues in the region where people have not been able to obtain a driving licence because they do not have a birth certificate. Generally, people would have to travel to Melbourne to apply for a birth certificate, which can be challenging for many. People, especially women who are caring for children, find it difficult to use public transport over such a distance and struggle with the costs involved. The justice bus operates as an outreach service eliminating the costs and time needed to travel. The service aims to assist people obtain their birth certificates which then enables them to apply for a licence. In doing so, it has decreased the number of unlicensed drivers in the region.

This is a good example of the provision of a service that has responded to the local context and takes the service to the area of need. It also provides an opportunity for multiple justice issues to be addressed at the same time

7.7.3. Integration of Culture

The integration of Aboriginal culture into policy design and program delivery in the Barwon South West region, driven by local community leaders, has clearly resulted in effective and strategic partnerships being formed between the community and justice sector agencies. Just as government has a pivotal part to play in building the capacity of Aboriginal communities, and the leaders within those communities are crucial in advocating for real change, the same applies to Aboriginal communities being able to play a key role in building the cultural competencies of non-Aboriginal decision-makers, policy advisors and operational staff in the justice sector. This is exactly what is happening in the Barwon South West region.

Throughout the consultation with stakeholders, it was evident that there is ongoing and robust dialogue between government and non-government agencies and Aboriginal leaders in relation to how best to tackle issues where Aboriginal people find themselves involved in the justice system. People spoke of the consistent Aboriginal leadership at local, regional and state levels from Aboriginal community representatives representing key locations in the region. The effect that this inter-generational leadership has had on strengthening trust between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal stakeholders in the justice arena was a common element in all of the interviews we conducted. Stronger relationships have created a way of working that enables agencies to develop more innovative solutions to problems facing Aboriginal clients and deliver them in way that is far more flexible and responsive.

The region is home to significant Aboriginal cultural heritage sites and places of high cultural significance. The sites are continually being used to not only help Aboriginal people to reconnect to their culture and their land but to also build understanding of non-Aboriginal staff of the importance of culture to a large proportion of their client base. The approach to growing cultural competencies in the justice sector is occurring at all levels from senior executives to officers providing services on the ground. In relation to what makes programs effective, several CCS Officers spoke of the importance of culture and how they are using Aboriginal art and language to communicate with their case management clients. They have found that some young people do not identify strongly with their Aboriginal culture. As Aunty Pam Pederson stated when commenting on the Melbourne County Court, “a lot of offenders who come before the courts have lost their connection with community, a lot of their problems are about that lack of identity and self-understanding”¹⁶. Where offenders do not have a strong connection to country the case managers will work with their clients to help them to reconnect.

We have noted previously that a significant proportion of the Aboriginal population in and around Geelong has migrated into the region and is therefore not on country. This can sometimes result in a reluctance by these ‘off-country’ people to attend ACCOs to complete the conditions of their CCOs. In those cases, they may be directed to a mainstream service provider. If that is the case, it becomes crucial that those service providers are able to deliver the services in a culturally appropriate way. This is where cultural awareness training is essential.

*A lot are reluctant to go to the co-ops because ‘I’m not in the family, why will they help me?’
(Aboriginal Wellbeing Officer)*

ACCOs only help their own – you have to have the right last name (Aboriginal prisoner)

The Geelong case management team is adopting a more flexible approach and will now leave the office and supervise clients at Wathaurong. They are also using case conferences with all of the services involved akin to the Case Management Review Meetings approach, to be more responsive to the needs of offenders. These approaches are delivering higher successful completions of CCOs. They

¹⁶ from <https://www.liv.asn.au/Staying-Informed/LIJ/LIJ/October-2016/Koori-Court-no-soft-option>

also noted increased success when Advanced Case Managers are able to dedicate more time to the offenders they are managing. At the time of conducting this evaluation there was only one Aboriginal Case Manager in the Geelong CCS team. Given that the City of Geelong has the largest Aboriginal population outside of Melbourne it would be beneficial to increase the number of Aboriginal employees to help break down ongoing historical barriers between offenders and those that are managing them.

Vignette of an Advanced Case Manager

An Advanced Case Manager was managing an Aboriginal woman with an intellectual disability and mental health issues and a whole gamut of other challenges. He's worked out the only way he can engage her is through meeting with her at the mental health service that she goes to at 11 o'clock every Tuesday. He goes in casual clothes. He doesn't bring any files or pens and they just have a conversation. Because he's got a smaller caseload so that he can do his role, he's doing really well in getting out of the office and being creative. That's the way he needed to work with her otherwise we weren't going to get any results. She would have ended back at court without it. (CCS informant)

7.7.4. The Fishing for Answers program

The *Fishing for Answers* program was a behaviour change program for Aboriginal men in the Geelong region that combined cultural activities and psychological therapy. The men involved were on CCOs and recruited via the Wathaurong Justice program.

An Aboriginal Local Justice Worker employed by Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-op worked with a psychologist to provide a program aimed at assisting Aboriginal men to deal with their anger management issues and build their communication skills. Each participant had a Mental Health Plan which gave them access to psychological services. The program, delivered through individual and group therapy sessions, focused on the triggers for anger and identified strategies for behaviour change.

A key element of the program was the location in which it was delivered. Usually the Local Justice Worker would take a group of men each week to a property at the Wurdi Youang which is a significant cultural place for the Wathaurong people. The men would be working on their community work order projects and while they were out working "the psychologist would talk to them about what was going on for them". The approach was laid back and very informal encouraging the men to open up about things that were troubling them. This 'yarning style' provided a useful way to engage the men in the first instance and often led to more traditional one-on-one counselling sessions. The program out at Wurdi Youang also included some group anger management sessions on the riverbank while fishing. A CCS Officer at Geelong Justice Centre stated that a high proportion of men who undertook this program successfully completed their CCOs.

The approach was seen to be highly effective because the psychological/counselling sessions occurred in a non-clinical environment.

Unfortunately, the Local Justice Worker left the role and the program did not receive funding to enable it to continue. We understand that the success of the earlier program has assisted in Wathaurong receiving additional funding for a psychiatrist and additional alcohol and other drug workers. As a result, a new program is expected to be launched in the near future. The current Local Justice Worker is also advocating for a similar women's program at the property which will focus on traditional basket weaving and be called *Weaving for Answers* (CCS Officer). This is seen as a welcome addition because there are no programs in the region specific to female offenders.

7.7.5. A region in two parts

The Barwon South West region might best be considered as two quite distinct sub-regions. The east centres on the City of Geelong while the west centres on the Warrnambool-Portland-Heywood areas. Geelong is an urban centre with a large Aboriginal population, many of whom are from other places in Victoria and even Australia. Outside of Geelong the towns are perhaps better described as rural and have far fewer people living in the towns and surrounding areas. The stories we heard from these more rural areas was of a strong community with an equally strong attachment to their culture and history. In Geelong, the stories were less focused on culture and, to some extent, less focused on 'community'. Service provision appears to rely far more on mainstream services that may or may not be delivered in a culturally appropriate way. Where services were delivered by an Aboriginal organisation there might be reluctance for Aboriginal offenders to make use of the services because they weren't 'my mob'. There were also some offenders who were on country but preferred not to use the service because they feared other family members finding out.

The positive stories we did hear were largely of services being delivered in areas outside of Geelong where 'place' seemed to be a more understood feature. This is an important finding for any place-based initiative as it points to limiting the boundaries of place to a geographical area that has consistencies within the boundaries. Barwon South West is too large and too diverse an area to be useful as a 'place' and might be better considered as two or more regions.

8. Loddon Mallee Region

8.1. The Place – About the Loddon Mallee Region

The Loddon Mallee region lies to the north-west of Melbourne and spans just under 59,000 square kilometres, more than a quarter of the state, the largest of the four regions in this study. The region extends from the Macedon Ranges in the south to Mildura in the north incorporating the ten local government areas of Buloke, Campaspe, Central Goldfields, Gannawarra, Greater Bendigo, Loddon, Macedon Ranges, Mildura, Mt Alexander and Swan Hill.



The total resident population of the Loddon Mallee region at the last census (2016) was 324,103, with Aboriginal people accounting for about 2.1 per cent of this population, the highest of all the regions and twice the Victorian average. The actual number of Aboriginal people is likely to be higher given the high number (24,139 or about 7.5% of the population) who did not nominate their indigenous status on the census forms.

Table 8-1: Population of local government areas in the Loddon Mallee Region (ABS Census 2016)

LGA	Total	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal	% Aboriginal
Buloke (S)	6,200	63	6,137	1.0%
Campaspe (S)	37,063	878	36,185	2.4%
Central Goldfields (S)	12,993	193	12,800	1.5%
Gannawarra (S)	10,544	195	10,349	1.8%
Greater Bendigo (C)	110,471	1,843	108,628	1.7%
Loddon (S)	7,505	111	7,394	1.5%
Macedon Ranges (S)	46,102	300	45,802	0.7%
Mildura (RC)	53,876	2,064	51,812	3.8%
Mount Alexander (S)	18,757	209	18,548	1.1%
Swan Hill (RC)	20,592	837	19,755	4.1%
Total	324,103	6,693	317,410	2.1%

The Mildura Rural City Council has the highest proportion of Aboriginal people of all LGAs across the region at 3.8 per cent. Macedon Ranges Shire has the lowest proportion of Aboriginal people at 0.7 per cent.

From 2006, the total population of the Loddon Mallee region has increased by 10.4 per cent (compared to 20.2 per cent across Victoria) with the Aboriginal population in the region increasing by 45.4 per cent (2,088 persons), slightly less than the 58.5 per cent increase for the whole of Victoria.

Like other regions across Victoria the median age of Loddon Mallee Aboriginal people is roughly half that of the non-Aboriginal population (Table 8-2). The distribution of the population by age and gender is shown in Figure 8-1 and shows a structure less skewed to a young profile in comparison to other regions. Just over a third of the Loddon Mallee Aboriginal population is aged under 25 years with similar proportions aged between 35 and 50 years and over 50 years.

Table 8-2: Median age of Loddon Mallee population

Region	Median Age	
	Aboriginal Population	Non-Aboriginal Population
Bendigo (SA4)	22	42
Murray River-Swan Hill (SA3)	21	46
Mildura (SA3)	20	41

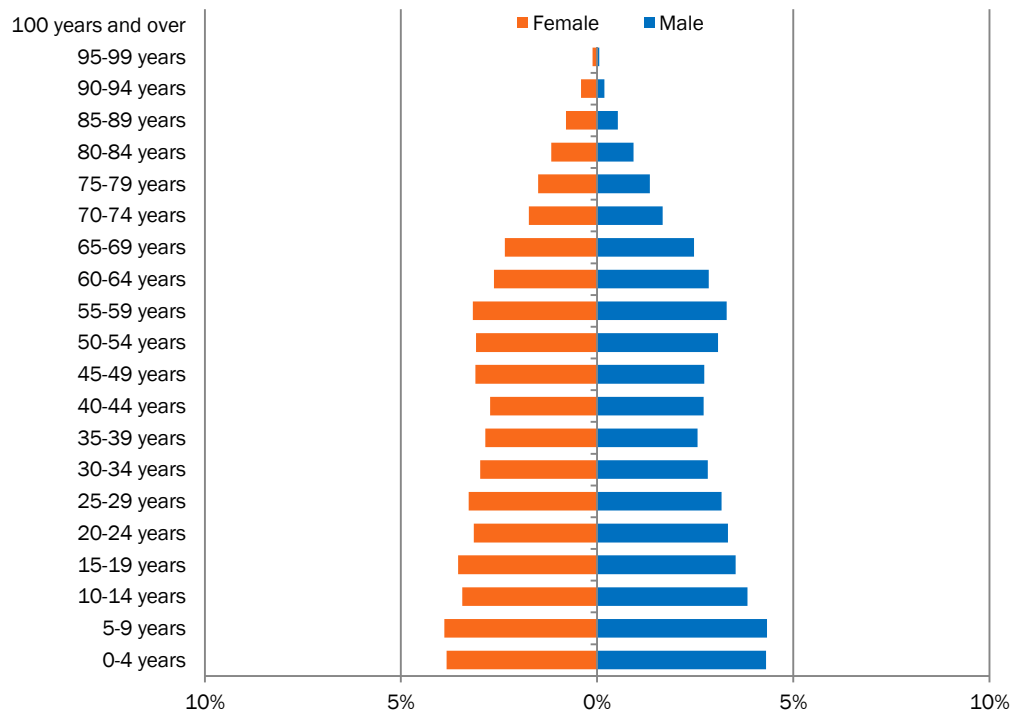


Figure 8-1: Age distribution of Aboriginal population in the Loddon Mallee region

Cultural diversity is otherwise low, with 4.9 per cent of the population born in a non-English speaking country and 4.8 per cent speaking a language other than English at home.

Educational attainment is lower in the Loddon Mallee region than for the state. The proportion of Aboriginal people aged 15 years and over who have completed year 12 at the last census was 29 per cent, somewhat lower than the state total of 36 per cent. About 3.7 per cent of Aboriginal people in Loddon Mallee aged 15 or older have a Bachelor’s degree (compared to 6.2 per cent of the same cohort across Victoria).

The Loddon Mallee population as a whole has higher than average unemployment and higher than average proportions of low income families and individuals. A proportion of the Aboriginal population is employed in what we have termed the “Aboriginal Services Network”; that is, Aboriginal controlled organisations or government liaison type roles. While a fair number of Aboriginal workers are employed in this sector there are limited opportunities in these positions (i.e. no career path), and recruitment and retention is an issue. Very few Aboriginal people are in mainstream employment even though attempts have been made in the past to encourage Aboriginal people into private sector or

mainstream employment. Key economic drivers in the region are tourism and agriculture but few Aboriginal people are employed or are key landholders (farming and horticulture).

A statistical profile of the Loddon Mallee region prepared by the Department of Health paints a picture of disadvantage. The proportion of low income families with children, and of people with food insecurity, is the highest in the state. The region has the highest rate of obesity and cancer. Life expectancy is lowest in the state for females and second lowest for males. Emergency department presentations per 1,000 population are higher than average, while GP attendances are below average. The proportion of registered mental health clients and alcohol and other drug clients per 1,000 residents is second highest in the state.¹⁷ Up to date Aboriginal-specific health data is not available.

The region has also seen an increasing refugee population moving into the area which is placing greater strain on Aboriginal service organisations, who have welcomed these newcomers to the area and have opened their services to them.

8.2. Aboriginal people in Loddon Mallee

Traditional owners include Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung, Latji Latji, Tati Tati, Mutti Mutti, Wadi Wadi, Wemba Wemba and Barapa Barapa. Many descendants of NSW-based Paakantji (Barkindji) reside in the Mildura area. There are high levels of in- and out-migration to Loddon Mallee resulting in a high proportion of Aboriginal people resident in the region who are not on country.

The **Dja Dja Wurrung** Clans Aboriginal Corporation (on behalf of the Dja Dja Wurrung traditional owner group) and the Victorian Government entered into a 'Recognition and Settlement Agreement' which formally recognises the Dja Dja Wurrung people as the traditional owners for part of Central Victoria. The agreement area extends from north of the Great Dividing Range near Daylesford and includes part or all of the catchments of the Richardson, Avon, Avoca, Loddon and Campaspe Rivers. It includes, inter alia, Crown land in the City of Greater Bendigo, Lake Boort and part of Lake Buloke.

Taungurung Country encompasses the area between the upper reaches of the Goulburn River and its tributaries north of the Dividing Range, from the Campaspe River to Kilmore in the West, eastwards to Mount Beauty. Benalla in the north and south to the top of the Great Dividing Range.

The **Latji Latji** Nation is centred around Mildura and includes dramatic geographical features at Lindsay Walpolla Island and Hattah Lakes. The Latji Latji has close ancestral connections to its neighbours the Mutti Mutti and Ngarrindjeri – particularly through trade and marriage¹⁸.

The **Mutti Mutti** Nation lies at the heart of southern Murray Basin and includes the centres of Balranald, Robinvale and Euston. Mutti Mutti Country features mallee scrub and lakes such as Lake Benenee and is characterised by the Murrumbidgee River which flows into the Murray River just south of Balranald. Mutti Mutti traditional territory also extends to the south-western end of the Lake Mungo and Wilandra Lakes system. This is an ancient lake system forming an ancestral and cultural domain that is World Heritage Listed and is a major National Park.

The Wadi Wadi, Wemba Wemba and Barapa Barapa First Nations Aboriginal Corporation submitted an application for Registered Aboriginal Party over an area extending from Echuca to north of Nyah West and extending east to Sea Lake and Birchip. The area includes the towns of Kerang and Wycheproof. The application was declined in March 2017.

¹⁷ Statistical profile of Loddon Mallee Region, 5 Dec 2014 <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au>

¹⁸ Sourced from <http://www.mldr.org.au/membership/latji-latji-nation/>

8.3. Justice issues in Loddon Mallee

The region is faced with a broad range of justice issues related to high levels of alcohol and other drug use (with ice use stated as an acute problem across the region), young people becoming disengaged from school, a lack of housing and a lack of mental health services, and in some areas high levels of community conflict.

In 2013, a campaign called *Project ICE* commenced in Mildura. At that time there was concern amongst health, welfare and justice agencies when 'ice' became, after cannabis, the second most common illicit drug in Mildura. *Project ICE* was a collaborative effort to promote issues around its prevalence and effects, with a high-profile awareness campaign. An evaluation, completed in 2014, found the campaign had been successful in raising awareness across the community. Perhaps more importantly, the project was found to have "provided an avenue of building stronger networks, social bonds and strong social cohesion" (Harley, Forbes and Cordoma, 2014, p. 27).

Other programs that have been delivered in the region and aimed at addressing justice issues include the *Family and Community Violence Prevention Project*, a multi-faceted approach to addressing community safety. The project, delivered by Mallee District Aboriginal Services (MDAS), principally in Mildura, Swan Hill, Robinvale and Kerang,, aimed to:

- reduce family violence
- break the cycle and reduce intergenerational impacts of family violence
- increase community safety
- reduce the need for child protection and family violence interventions.

Activities comprised:

- a community wide media campaign
- Sisters Day Out Workshops for all Aboriginal women
- Dilly Bag Women's Behavioural Change Programs for small groups of Aboriginal women;
- Dardi Munwurro Male Youth Behaviour Change Programs
- Early Years Cultural Safety Workshops for young parents
- a cultural safety training program.

An evaluation of this project was completed by Clear Horizon Consulting (2016) and found "that the project had reached the right people in culturally competent ways that were an adequate fit with existing community resources and services. The cultural competence of the project design is evident in the use of a community-wide (and individual community-specific) approach to awareness-raising that recognised that family violence is everyone's business, across families, kinship networks and communities".

Actions have been taken in response to the learnings identified in the report, namely that:.

- Sisters Day Out, Dilly Bag and the community media campaign stood out as models that could be applied in other organisations.
- The project steering group was keen to continue to build local capacity in each Mallee community and rely less on external input, so that action is more attuned to local needs and interests and better able to build cultural strength and pride, as well as being more cost-effective.

- The project steering group learned of particular gaps in the family violence response in Swan Hill and Kerang, and that there was a need for MDAS to become more ‘family violence capable’ across all services.

Family violence is another major justice issue in Loddon Mallee, and specifically in Mildura and Swan Hill. These two towns have some of the highest rates of family violence in Victoria – 40 per cent above the State average. On the basis of state-wide averages, these rates are likely to be far higher in Aboriginal communities.

8.3.1. Police data

Data referred to below is from the Crime Statistics Agency Aboriginal Justice Indicators – Victoria Police dashboard and covers the period 1 January 2012 to 31 December 2016 unless otherwise stated.

As is the case in each of the four regions, the highest rate of offending by Aboriginal people in the Loddon Mallee region relates to ‘property and deceptions’ offences although this type of offending has been relatively stable over the past five years. The next most prevalent offence type is those ‘against justice procedures’ including breaches of orders where there has been a doubling of rate of offending since 2012 (71 per 1,000 in 2012 to 144.9 per 1,000 in 2016). Crimes against the person are the next most prevalent offence type and this shows a slight increase between 2012 and 2016. This includes assault, sexual offences, stalking, harassment and threatening behaviour, and homicide (Refer Figure 8-2).

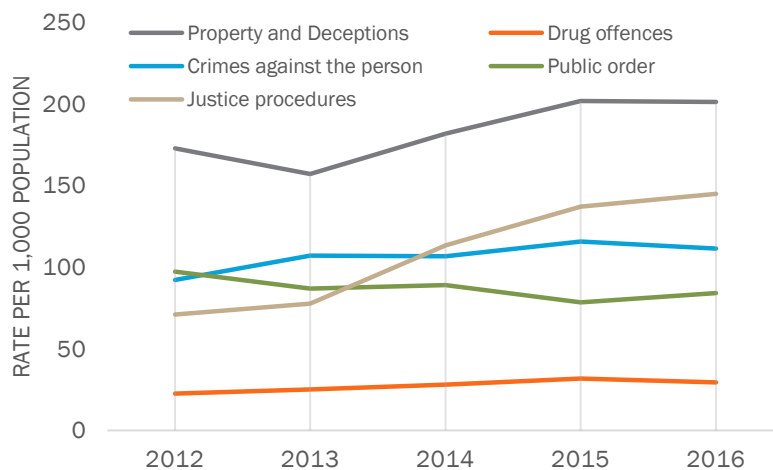


Figure 8-2: Offence type trends Loddon Mallee region (2012-2016)

Interestingly and given the regularity that we heard that the major justice problem in the region is illicit drug use, the rate of drug offences in the Loddon Mallee region is low in comparison to other offending types and is comparable to the other regions in this study. This may simply reflect that drug users are committing and being charged with offences under the property and deceptions classification, which includes theft, property damage and burglary/break and enter, rather than with drug offences. Superintendent Naylor noted during a presentation to an Australian Institute of Criminology workshop on substance use in Indigenous communities in urban, rural and remote areas that while there were “relatively few offences which occur as a direct result of drug use, in the experience of police, drug use is often an underlying issue contributing to offending behaviours and social problems” (Naylor 2008).

In 2016, family violence incidents occurred at a rate of 82.4 per 1,000 population. This is significantly higher than the other three regions in this study – nearly three times that of the Southern Metropolitan Region and close to double that of Barwon South West and the Northern Metropolitan region. The Gippsland region is the only region in the state recording a higher rate of family violence

offending (95.1 per 1,000 population). The rate of family violence offences in Loddon Mallee has increased from 77.8 per 1,000 population in 2012. In absolute numbers there has been an increase from 495 family violence offences in 2012 to 545 offences in 2016.

Police cautioning of first time young offenders in Loddon Mallee has fluctuated over the period 2012 and 2016 but is showing an overall increasing trend. In 2016, about two-thirds of first time young offenders received a caution by police.

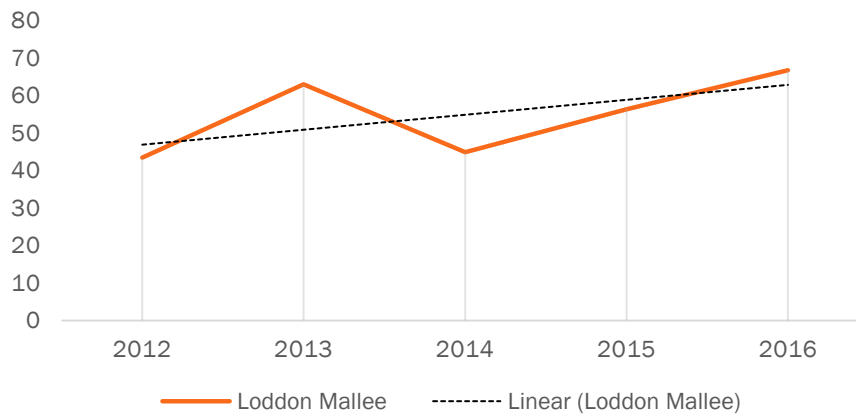


Figure 8-3: Proportion of first time young offenders who received a caution by police, by year

8.3.2. Community corrections (adults)

According to a CCS interviewee, Community Corrections are managing around 1,200 offenders of which about 17 per cent are Aboriginal (as at June 2017). Over the period of AJA3 there has been an upward trend in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders on community orders, which has been attributed to legislative and other justice reforms. The number of Aboriginal male offenders on CCOs has increased by around 85 per cent over the past five years while the number of female offenders has increased at a much lower rate of around 20 per cent.

Almost three-quarters of Aboriginal people on CCOs have at least one CCO treatment condition relating to alcohol or other drugs. There has also been an increase in the proportion of offenders with a condition related to treatment for mental ill-health – from 40 per cent in 2012 to 55 per cent in 2017.

Since 2012, there has been a small decrease in the proportion of offenders on CCOs aged under 25. Other age groups have remained relatively stable over the same period. Almost half (45.7%) of orders are for a duration of six months or less with the majority of orders being fine orders (44.9%).

Completion rates for orders of all types are currently sitting at around 64 per cent (cf. 57 per cent for all regions). The main reason for failing to complete an order relates to breach of conditions, particularly for offenders who have been unsupervised.

Data for 2016-17 show that assault (28.5%) and driving offences (21.2%) formed the largest proportion of primary offences for which CCOs were issued. This is consistent with all other regions. Other property offences were the next most common ‘most serious offence’ type.

8.3.3. Youth justice community orders

The Youth Justice Service presents data to the AJF at each forum. According to the report delivered to AJF49 in October 2017 and for the period 30 June 2016 to 30 June 2017, the average daily number of young people on youth justice community orders in Loddon Mallee was as shown in the table below.

Table 8-3: Average daily number of young people on youth justice community orders Loddon Mallee region, by gender (2015-17)

Year	Aboriginal		Non-Aboriginal		Not known	Grand Total
	Female	Male	Female	Male		
2016-17	3.7	17.6	2.5	29.0	0.4	53.2
2015-16 ¹⁹	3.4	17.9	3.9	21.3	26.2	30.1

The table below shows the age distribution of Aboriginal young people in Loddon Mallee who were on youth justice community orders in the 2016-17 period. Female offenders on orders are more likely to be aged between 15 and 17 years. Male offenders on orders are also mostly aged 15 and 17 years.

Table 8-4: Average daily number of young Aboriginal people on youth justice community orders Loddon Mallee, by gender and age (2016-17)

Region	Female			Male			Total	
	12-14	15-17	18+	10-11	12-14	15-17		18+
LM	1.2	2.2	0.0	0.0	2.5	10.7	4.7	21.3

8.4. Major places in Loddon Mallee

There is considerable diversity in the region with highly urbanised and highly populated centres as well as small regional and rural townships with limited to no service availability. The main population centres in the region are Bendigo and Mildura with smaller populations located in the towns of Castlemaine, Echuca, Kerang and Swan Hill.

8.4.1. Bendigo

Bendigo is a service and infrastructure centre for the north-central region and is Victoria's fourth largest city. Data provided by Regional Development Victoria notes that the City of Bendigo had approximately 7,589 businesses and a workforce of around 42,000 people. In the five year period 2009-2014, there was strong employment growth in construction; arts and recreation services; transport, postal and warehousing; healthcare and social assistance; professional services and financial and insurance services²⁰.

The VicHealth Indicators Survey (2015) found perceptions of safety very high. The average rating of respondents to the survey reported an average resilience score of 6.6 out of 8, slightly higher than the whole of Victoria average of 6.4. Three quarters of respondents thought that people in their neighbourhood were willing to help each other and a similar proportion considered people in their neighbourhood can be trusted.

The **Bendigo and District Aboriginal Co-operative**, located in Bendigo, offers a range of health and social welfare services as well as a number of programs to Aboriginal people in the region. Programs include Aboriginal Family Decision Making, Indigenous Tenants at Risk, and Aboriginal Women's and Children's Case Management. The Co-operative also provides services to Aboriginal youth through programs such as the Local Justice and Youth Justice program, Koori placement and support, Young Wellbeing program, and male and female youth groups.

¹⁹ Data sourced from Youth Justice Data Report presented to AJF46, Ballarat

²⁰ Sourced from <http://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/victorian-regions/greater-bendigo>

Njernda Aboriginal Cooperative, based in Echuca, operates in the Loddon sub-region providing a range of social, health and healing services. Njernda Aboriginal Corporation has a partnership with the Aboriginal Health Partnership Group which includes:

- Echuca Regional Health
- Bendigo Health
- Shire of Campaspe
- Primary Care Partnership
- Loddon Mallee Murray Medicare Local
- St Lukes Anglicare
- Murray Shire Council
- YMCA
- Campaspe Cohuna Local Learning and Employment Network

The **Baroona Healing Centre** makes use of a farm house to assist in the reduction of alcohol and other drug problems amongst young Aboriginal people aged between 14 –22 in the Echuca and surrounding areas. Referrals to Baroona can be made by police and courts as well as self-referral or referral from other agencies. The centre offers a 16-week Residential Journey to Heal the Spirit. The stay is then followed by a Post Support Program over a time decided by staff and the young person themselves.

As a large regional service centre Bendigo hosts the regional offices of most government agencies, including those with a justice focus. A Community Corrections Services office is located within the Bendigo Justice Service Centre. The city has a Magistrates' Court and County Court. There is no Koori Court in the city.

8.4.2. Mildura

Mildura is the largest city in north west Victoria and strategically vital to what is an important agricultural area. It is located on the Murray River on the border of New South Wales and South Australia, about 550 kilometres north-west of Melbourne and 400 kilometres north-east of Adelaide.

The city is a significant service centre for north west Victoria as well as parts of South Australia and New South Wales, delivering transport and warehousing services, professional services, health services and tertiary education. Mildura produces premium agricultural and aquaculture products for domestic and international markets. Food and beverage manufacturing are among Mildura's major exports. It is also a base for regional industry. There are around 5,046 businesses in the city and a workforce of approximately 20,800 people.

In recent years Mildura has been figuring prominently in the press as the incidence of crime increases. In early 2017, the Crime Statistics Agency released data showing the offence rate (per 100,000 population) increased by 8.1 per cent, more than three times the increase experienced by the state as a whole. The increasing crime rate prompted the allocation of nearly \$200,000 from the Youth Crime Prevention grants program for the *Mildura Youth Commitment Program*. The program provides intensive, wrap-around case management support for 10 at-risk young people aged between 10 and 14 years and their families. Young people are referred on a voluntary basis and include both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth who have been identified as serious and recidivist offenders, to create a pathway away from offending.

The city and broader region is represented by a strong ACCO, the **Mallee and District Aboriginal Services (MDAS)**. MDAS provides a wide range of services to meet the needs of the local Aboriginal

communities in cross border locations along the Murray River in Victoria and into New South Wales. Services cover health, family services, housing, aged care, alcohol and other drug services, training, community development, rehabilitation and justice. Programs are delivered in Mildura, Swan Hill and Kerang.

Some of the justice specific services offered by MDAS include:

- Local Justice Worker program (formerly Koori Offender Support and Mentoring Program)
- Koori Youth Night Patrol
- Women On Bail
- Youth Justice
- Koori Women's Diversion program.

A medical and dental clinic in Robinvale is supported by **Robinvale Aboriginal Co-operative**.

In responding to the high rate of family violence in Mildura, the **Mallee Domestic Violence Services** provides assistance to women and women with children who are in crisis as a result of domestic violence including 24-hour emergency crisis support, refuge accommodation, outreach services and support.

The **Loddon Mallee Aboriginal Reference Group** (LMARG) is an Aboriginal forum comprising member ACCOs in the Loddon Mallee Region. LMARG seeks to improve the health and social outcomes of Aboriginal communities in the region through targeted services and through the hosting of regular regional forums involving representatives from State and Federal government departments and other external stakeholders. Through these meetings LMARG provides feedback on regional Indigenous issues in an interdepartmental setting. It also takes on information and responds to policy consultations in a streamlined fashion. LMARG members include: Bendigo and District Aboriginal Cooperative; Mallee District Aboriginal Services in Mildura, Swan Hill and Kerang; Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation in Wodonga; Murray Valley Aboriginal Cooperative in Robinvale; and Njernda Aboriginal Corporation in Echuca.

During interviews LMARG was held as a good example of a community led partnership which directs its attention to a range of social and health issues experienced by Aboriginal people in the Loddon Mallee. The Group meets every quarter over three days to share information and develop joint solutions to pressing issues. The agenda is broad-ranging and dedicates time each day to focus on specific issues. The government agencies with responsibility for those issues will be invited to attend for the period they are being discussed. The State and occasionally Federal Government departments represented at the LMARG forum (Day 2 of the meetings) include the DHHS, the Department of Education (DET), the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC), Aboriginal Victoria, and the DJR (Atkinson Consulting Group 2014).

Other services delivered to people in the region include:

- Statewide Aboriginal service providers who work in the region include VALS, and the Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Legal Service.
- Offenders are frequently referred outside the region to residential programs including Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place and Odyssey House Victoria
- In Mildura, the DHHS is funding the trial of a new mental health treatment model for Aboriginal people in contact with the justice system.

- Wiimpatja Healing Centre (formerly Warrakoo Rehabilitation Hostel) is a MDAS centre providing a community-based alternative to prison for Koori men on remand, sentenced or on warrant.

8.5. Justice services in Loddon Mallee

Loddon Mallee is served by five Local Aboriginal Justice Action Committees located in Bendigo, Mildura, Robinvale, Echuca and Swan Hill. Each LAJAC has a dedicated Project Officer providing support and assistance and acts a conduit between the LAJAC and the Aboriginal community at each location.

The region is served by three primary Department of Justice service locations:

1. Bendigo Regional Office and Justice Services Centre
2. Mildura Justice Service Centre
3. Swan Hill Justice Service Centre

Victoria Police employ an Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer (ACLO) in Mildura and Echuca. There are Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers (PALOs) in Mildura, Echuca, Swan Hill and Bendigo. Local Koori Family Violence Police Protocols have been initiated in Mildura and Swan Hill and provide an important initiative guiding the relationship between the police and the community around family violence.

Koori Magistrates', Children's and County Courts are located in Mildura and Swan Hill²¹. The region is also home to two correctional facilities: Loddon Prison in Castlemaine and Tarrengower Prison in Maldon.

There are Local Justice Workers²² based in Mildura, Swan Hill, Echuca and Bendigo. These positions are located within an ACCO funded by the KJU's Local Justice Worker Program.

A Koori Youth Justice Worker is located within Bendigo and District Aboriginal Co-operative to support young Aboriginal people who are at risk of offending as well as those on community-based and custodial orders.

Aboriginal Community Justice Panels, staffed by volunteers who are on stand-by 24 hours, seven days per week to assist any Aboriginal person taken into custody operate in Bendigo, Echuca, Robinvale, Swan Hill and Mildura.

The Koori Youth Justice Program Loddon Mallee delivers the following place-specific programs:

- Community Based Koori Youth Justice Program delivered by Mallee District Aboriginal Services (MDAS) in Mildura and Robinvale
- Koori Early School Leaver Program delivered by Mallee District Aboriginal Services (MDAS) in Robinvale and Mildura
- Community Based Koori Youth Justice Program delivered by Bendigo and District Aboriginal Cooperative
- Community Based Koori Youth Justice Program delivered by Njernda Aboriginal Corporation
- Aboriginal Youth Support Service delivered by Mallee District Aboriginal Services (MDAS)-Mildura.

²¹ <https://www.magistratescourt.vic.gov.au/koori-court>; <http://www.countycourt.vic.gov.au/county-koori-court>

²² Local Justice Worker Guidelines, May, 2016, Koori Justice Unit

8.6. Current community grants funding in Loddon Mallee

The following organisations are currently funded to provide the Local Justice Worker Program in the Loddon Mallee region:

- Njernda Aboriginal Corporation (Echuca)
- Mallee District Aboriginal Services (Swan Hill & Mildura)
- Bendigo and District Aboriginal Cooperative (Bendigo)

The Local Justice Worker Program provides case management support for Aboriginal offenders to manage fines and outstanding warrants, and successfully complete community based orders to reduce breach rates

Mallee District Aboriginal Services (MDAS) is funded to provide the Koori Women's Diversion Program (KWDP), detailed in 8.7.2. MDAS are also funded to provide the Koori Night Patrol Program (KNPP), which commenced during AJA2.

Organisations in the Loddon Mallee region have also been successful in receiving grants funding through the Frontline Youth Program, and through the Koori Youth Crime Prevention Grants (funding from the Crime Prevention Unit)

Table 8-5: Current community grants funding – Loddon Mallee

Program	Organisation name	Project description	Location	Funding
Frontline Youth Initiative	Mallee District Aboriginal Services	The Horizons Intervention Project aimed to engage 150 Aboriginal youth aged 10-19 years in Swan Hill who were at risk of disengaging from education, training or employment. The project works on the principle of mutual obligation and supports youth to achieve their goals and overcome barriers. Youth who demonstrated improved attendance, literacy and numeracy levels, behaviour or attainment of careers goals, were supported to attend excursions, cultural activities, careers days, leaderships programs and sporting activities.	Swan Hill	\$330,000
	Njernda Aboriginal Coporation	This healthy lifestyles and sports/gym program for young Aboriginal offenders and those at risk of offending, aimed to build self-esteem, resilience, accountability and connection with the Aboriginal community. It targeted 60+ Aboriginal 10-18 year olds from Campapse Shire. Young people were referred from Njernda services, child and welfare services (including VACCA), schools, Night Patrols, Victoria Police and Echuca Regional Health. Assessment measured a number of domains, including confidence, knowledge of healthy lifestyles, pride in culture, strength of cultural identity and community connectedness	Campapse Shire.	\$297,000
Koori Youth Crime Prevention Grants	Bendigo and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BDAC)	The Bendigo Koori Youth Project program targeted Aboriginal youth aged 12-17 years based in the Bendigo region. The program comprised fortnightly sessions focused on drug and alcohol prevention, cultural strengthening, family violence, self-worth, health and fitness, legal rights, and anger management. The aim of these sessions was to increase positive interactions, develop positive influences and to	Bendigo	\$55,000

Program	Organisation name	Project description	Location	Funding
		support participants to reach their goals. The Koori Youth Justice Worker delivered the program in conjunction with Community Elders and local ACCOs staff.		
	Njernda Aboriginal Corporation	The <i>Yarning up on Wellness</i> program targeted Aboriginal Youth aged 8- 24 years at risk of entering the justice system. Njernda established an intensive 12 week youth program to address the drivers of offending in a culturally appropriate manner. The program was enriched with cultural strengthening and engaged respected persons and Elders into the delivery of the program. The program utilised existing staff resources such as the Youth Justice Worker and the Community Engagement Worker to deliver the program and engage appropriate stakeholders.	Echuca	\$55,000
	Mallee District Aboriginal Services (MDAS)	The MDAS <i>Koori Connect</i> program targeted Aboriginal youth aged 14-17 years in the Mildura region who were disengaged and at risk of being involved or in the early stages of involvement with youth justice. The program delivered a range of educational, cultural, community strengthening, enhancing positive social connections and social and emotional health activities once a week for 12 weeks. The Aboriginal youth partnered with Mentors and Elders to enhance the participants social support network. The program was integrated into existing Aboriginal youth programs currently being delivered by existing staff.	Mildura	\$55,000

8.7. Informant interviews key findings – Loddon Mallee

This study focuses on two initiatives operating in the Loddon Mallee region and considers how they align with the key characteristics of a place-based approach. Both initiatives seek to divert Aboriginal offenders from further contact with the justice system.

- Offering a culturally safe bridge between Aboriginal people and the criminal justice system, several liaison roles were strengthened under AJA3 to reduce re-offending rates. Workers are variously employed by ACCOs, Police and the Sheriff.
- The Koori Women’s Diversion Program was introduced in Mildura as a pilot and now has ongoing funding for two Aboriginal case managers. The program provides intensive case management, without a time limit, for women with complex needs, to prevent imprisonment or re-imprisonment.

8.7.1. Liaison positions

The AJA3 is credited with establishing or further developing designated liaison positions for Aboriginal workers in the region:

- Local Justice Workers have three main functions: to work with CCS to support Aboriginal offenders to complete their CCO, to work with Sheriff’s officers to assist Aboriginal offenders to successfully resolve their fines and warrants and to deliver community education; to offer

case management and referral regarding housing, family violence, mental ill-health, alcohol and other drug problems, court support and financial counselling.

- In a role that is similar to that of the Local Justice Worker, the Sheriff's Aboriginal Liaison Officer assists Aboriginal people to navigate the justice system over non-payment of fines. With a client management focus, the SALO supports the Sheriff's officers to recognise that clients have complex issues, are at a real disadvantage, and may not have the capacity to pay fines. Building the community's trust is critical. The team works in the community and also visits the region's prisons to make sure all fines are called in during a prisoner's sentence.
- Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers (ACLOs) are employed as unsworn Police members to help build a solid foundation of trust and respect between Victoria Police and the Aboriginal community, and foster communication and interaction between Police and the Aboriginal community to resolve issues.²³
- Koori Youth Justice Workers (KYJW) work with at-risk clients to prevent offending or re-offending behaviour by ensuring that young Aboriginal people are connected to their families and communities, and are provided with access to any supports and services that they require. Koori Youth Justice Workers are located in three metropolitan Melbourne and 11 rural locations as well as the three Youth Justice Custodial Centres.
- Aboriginal Wellbeing Officers (AWOs) are located at, or regularly visit, all of Victoria's prisons. AWOs have full-time responsibilities for the ongoing welfare, advocacy and support of Aboriginal prisoners.

A Local Justice Worker interviewed for the evaluation sees building close and empathic relationships with the client group as the key building block for addressing justice issues. The role, located within an ACCO, includes outreach as well as office-based work.

One CCS manager described the positive effect of working together with a Local Justice Worker so that community members complete their CCOs with fewer complications:

If they don't get through their orders we have to go back to court and the orders may be reimposed; or they've left Swan Hill and get picked up elsewhere and end up engaged with the system for two years instead of a few months, because there can be huge time lapse between being breached and getting back to court. The current system helps people get through their orders better. The LJW plays a big part in that, as well as CCS having an Aboriginal Case Manager. Clients feel more comfortable that someone understands the issues that affect them and has cultural knowledge.

This account reflects not only the LJW role but also the importance of a case management style in CCS that is culturally appropriate and more therapeutic than punitive. Stakeholders reported a trend towards CCS employing people with experience outside of the justice system who could bring the necessary therapeutic approach. The backgrounds and perspectives of the people interviewed (Aboriginal and otherwise) attested to this.

This more responsive approach is reported to be associated with improvements in the management of community orders and a better client experience. One LJW reported that clients on orders appreciate that the conditions are now much more flexible;

They can fulfil them by attending health appointments and programs. It's empowering them to look after themselves as well as get the Sheriff off their backs and getting licences back.

²³ http://www.police.vic.gov.au/content.asp?Document_ID=287

A client completing a CCO reported;

The local ACCO is really helpful. I've got psych problems, heart problems... I've just finished a program making cloaks of possum skin for three weeks. I had opportunity to say yes or no about doing groups with them, which is good because sometimes I'm a bit anxious and want to stay home.

High expectations are placed on these liaison roles and our consultations found a number of challenges. Continuity of staff is an issue. The roles carry many demands – being a 'gateway to community' for mainstream agencies, engaging community members who have multiple problems and a fear of authority, and being effectively always on call as a local community member. Their proximity to the issues also places a considerable emotional strain on the LJWs (and other Aboriginal liaison personnel).

We heard occasional reports of gaps or shortcomings in service delivery owing to the (a) difficulty of attracting, recruiting and retaining skilled Aboriginal staff or (b) nepotism in appointments to positions in ACCOs.

Several stakeholders commented that the liaison roles depend very much on the individuals in the positions and on their being able to work flexibly, doing what they can on their knowledge of what seems to work, based on their own skills and experience and on their relationships with government and community. Ongoing training, development and support are required so that LJWs can work effectively and sustainably in the Aboriginal and mainstream service network.

The KJU is responsible for providing professional development and support for LJWs. They provide staff induction and organise regular state-wide networking meetings to share experience and ideas. Local service providers are required to provide day to day management and support.

Some stakeholders pointed out the ongoing and significant need for 'serious' cultural training for all workers in the criminal justice system, to minimise barriers for the liaison workers and clients. The evidence from Barwon South West attests to the benefits that are derived from cultural awareness training and its consistent adoption across the other regions would likely deliver the same benefits.

8.7.2. Koori Women's Diversion Program (KWDP)

Of all the initiatives investigated for this evaluation, the KWDP shows the closest alignment to a place-based approach according to the characteristics identified in the literature. In part because of this alignment we have been able to provide more detail on the design and delivery of the program and discuss the effect that a place-based approach can achieve.

Context and needs

Aboriginal women in Victoria are imprisoned at a higher rate than non-Aboriginal women and Aboriginal men. A high proportion of Aboriginal women are on remand who subsequently do not receive a custodial sentence. According to the report *Unfinished Business – Koori women and the justice system* (VEOHRC 2013), this over-representation in arrest, conviction and imprisonment is driven by family violence and sexual abuse, inter-generational trauma, mental illness, drug and alcohol problems and high rates of re-imprisonment.

The number of Aboriginal women in the justice system is rising quickly, although from a low base (VEOHRC 2013). Our interviewees reported that when Aboriginal women go to prison there is a 'devastating ripple effect', in terms of the family and particularly children placed into out of home care. These women are described as 'at the top of the scale of complexity', with acquired brain injuries, alcohol and other drug problems, having children in care, low education, previous prison

terms, and poor or no housing. Somewhat overlooked, and with multiple needs, the cohort is now seen as extremely significant and requiring a web of service support.

Unfinished Business (VEOHRC 2013: 6-7) provided an in-depth analysis of the needs of Aboriginal women in the justice system. It highlighted that effective interventions, including prevention, diversion and post-release programs, should:

- be culturally and gender specific
- draw on community knowledge in their design and delivery
- recognise the significant role of Koori women in family and community life
- ensure Koori women have a stable base, especially safe and secure housing
- allow Koori women to be with their children and support families to rebuild
- deal with experiences of violence, trauma and victimisation
- promote and strengthen connection to culture
- support Koori women to navigate the complex and fragmented service system
- use a “wrap-around” approach, providing life skills, parenting skills, mental health services, drug and alcohol support and disability support, as required.

The Koori Women’s Diversion Program team has taken on board these principles for design and delivery, in particular drawing on local community knowledge. It has also considered the ‘strength’ of the community in terms of service provision, with the team calling on the services best able to respond to the context.

Maximising women’s diversion is a strategic focus of AJA3.

The development of effective diversion options for Aboriginal women was one of the main unfinished tasks from AJA2 and a priority recommendation from its evaluation. AJA3 recognises that offending at a level that leads to incarceration places individuals at much higher risk of subsequent incarceration, potentially exposing children to the risks of neglect, abuse, hunger and homelessness, and increasing their likelihood of adverse contact with the criminal justice system in future (AJA3, p30, also AJA3 pp101-102).

The program

In responding to the complexity of issues leading to Aboriginal women’s imprisonment, the *Koori Women’s Diversion Program* (KWDP) uses intensive case management to support Aboriginal women, to break the cycle of victimisation, violence and offending. The first pilot has been designed and run in Mildura.

Although a priority under AJA3, funding had to be found internally within the KJU, with the program reprioritised to provide a pilot program in Mildura. Subsequently two years of funding was allocated in the State budget and in 2017-2018 KWDP has ongoing funding and funds for expansion. The importance of the initiative was recognised and it won the KJU’s first new AJA money in 10 years.

MDAS employs a KWDP case manager and a case worker. They are supervised and well supported within the organisation’s Social and Emotional Wellbeing team (which is also responsible for a new collaborative mental health project).

Interviewees reported that the program offers holistic wrap-around support so that women can navigate the justice system and its silos. The program links women to MDAS and other services (ensuring that the women can choose which services) and provides intensive case management for as long as it is needed. The intensive case management approach allows for support to be tailored to

the individual, allowing multiple determinants of criminal behaviour, disadvantage and distress to be addressed.

There's a huge complexity of issues. Safe housing with 12-18 months (or longer) tenancy. Intensive support stands out – intensive case management for the whole family that's family-centred, therapeutic and trauma-informed. (DJR stakeholder)

We need to help people recover from the roots up, like a strong river gum. (CCS officer)

By contrast, mainstream issue-specific programs or approaches can be difficult to engage with, as 'they don't want to hear about just anything - just about their special area'.

Informants noted that contact with the justice system was only one part of the picture for the program's clients. That is why the program offers multifaceted support that is valuable for all those with multiple and complex needs.

The program is connected to mainstream specialist services where appropriate. A prime example is the Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) residential rehabilitation service of Odyssey House Victoria, which has dedicated KWDP beds, employs an Aboriginal women's worker and runs a culturally specific education program among a suite of programs that are open to all. Childcare is provided within the program for residents' children.

The Mildura pilot was designed and continues to be developed 'in place'. Rather than being rolled out by government in a standard format, the KWDP was designed in and with the local community, to suit the local context and the available service mix. While there are core principles, particularly around intensive case management, operational structures and details are context-specific. For example, the Mildura pilot started with a plan for six months of engagement for each client but soon established that the clients needed longer to engage with the program and make best use of it, and that 12 months was still not enough for some of those with the complex needs. To achieve real outcomes it is arguable that there should be no set time limit for participants. This acknowledgement of the complexity of the issues being addressed and that they will not be resolved in the short-term has been identified as a necessary component of place-based initiatives.

Effectiveness

Participants in the Mildura pilot have demonstrated reduced offending, minimal disengagement and positive outcomes in relation to family re-unification²⁴. One key success indicator is that some women started the program as part of a CCO and have continued voluntarily after the order expired.

A few of my women clients are painting gravestones. At first, they don't want to go but they get there and it's all about having a yarn and finding similarities – all ages, lunch provided (that always brings people) and it's part of their community work – if they go they knock off work hours from the CCO. (CCS Officer)

Odyssey House is seen as offering culturally appropriate, evidence-informed, family-based residential care that has been enhanced through the KWDP. Aboriginal women are staying longer in the Odyssey program; better outcomes are associated with longer stays.

Program stakeholders are aware of the need to collect activity and outcome data and disseminate evaluation findings. The KJU supports the KWDP team to document the number of inward and outward referrals. Odyssey House adds data on length of stay, and details of any accompanying children. Some written case studies / significant change stories are being collected and it is hoped that ongoing evaluation will occur.

²⁴ Koori Justice Unit (2016). *Key Achievements 2015-2016*, Unpublished report

Learning and improvements

The KWDP report the need for better access to housing, otherwise the “good work in case management gets undone”. There is more work to be done in linking women in prison to services (diversionary or other), for example, getting remandees out on bail to Odyssey House. The recommendations of the *Unfinished Business* study remain relevant.

Some concern was expressed about the caseloads of workers and the need to manage these to maintain responsiveness without overload.²⁵ The KWDP’s position in the MDAS Social and Emotional Wellbeing Program should enable nuanced management. The issue of caseloads for all Case Managers is consistently raised across all regions.

As the program develops it has become clear that clients need more accessible options designed specifically for women. Culturally safe alcohol and other drug treatment services, both residential and community based, are lacking. Clients electing to go to a residential rehabilitation centre or a healing centre are often placed elsewhere in the state or interstate, and the opportunity may be lost if there is a gap between withdrawal (detox) and the availability of a bed. There is a demand for effective local residential healing centres.

There is a need for further local women’s diversion programs, designed in partnership to suit the local context. There is also a growing demand for supporting Aboriginal young women through a state-wide Aboriginal young women’s diversion program²⁶. Some stakeholders advocated for a men’s diversion program inspired by the Mildura KWDP.

For program development and growth there is a need to monitor and evaluate progress to understand if, and why, the KWDP works in the particular Mildura context.

If this approach is shown to work for those with the highest risks and the highest needs (the women in the KWDP), then it will work for any people with multiple and complex needs,

²⁵ Intensive case management models indicate less than 10 individuals (in the mental health literature) and as few as two families (in family support literature - Tilbury, Clare (2015) Moving to Prevention research report: Intensive family support services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Griffith University <http://www.snaicc.org.au>

²⁶ For example, Koori Youth Council submission, March 2017:

https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/images/stories/committees/SCLSI/Youth_Justice_System/Submissions/Submission_22-Koorie_Youth_Council.pdf

9. Northern Metropolitan Region

9.1. The Place – About the Northern Metropolitan Region

The Northern Metropolitan Region covers 1,650 square kilometres and comprises the metropolitan LGAs of Banyule, Darebin, Melbourne, Moreland and Yarra, and the semi-rural LGAs of Hume, Nillumbik and Whittlesea.

This highly urbanised area has a total resident population of the Northern Metropolitan region at the last census (2016) was 1,109,916, with Aboriginal people accounting for about 0.6 per cent of this population.



Table 9-1: Population of local government areas in Northern Metropolitan Region (2016)

LGA	Total	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal	% Aboriginal
Banyule (C)	121,863	702	121,163	0.6%
Darebin (C)	146,723	1,166	145,547	0.8%
Hume (C)	197,377	1,456	195,926	0.7%
Melbourne (C)	135,965	478	135,490	0.4%
Moreland (C)	162,560	819	161,748	0.5%
Nillumbik (S)	61,276	234	61,045	0.4%
Whittlesea (C)	197,494	1,648	195,853	0.8%
Yarra (C)	86,658	383	86,265	0.4%
Total	1,109,916	6,886	1,103,037	0.6%

Since the census of 2006 the total population of the Northern Metropolitan region has increased by 30.3 per cent, the second highest increase of all justice regions. The Aboriginal population in the region increased by nearly 50 per cent over the same time period, from 4,614 to 6,886 people.

The age profile of the Northern Metropolitan region is shown in Figure 9-1 indicating a young population with 50 per cent aged under 25 years.

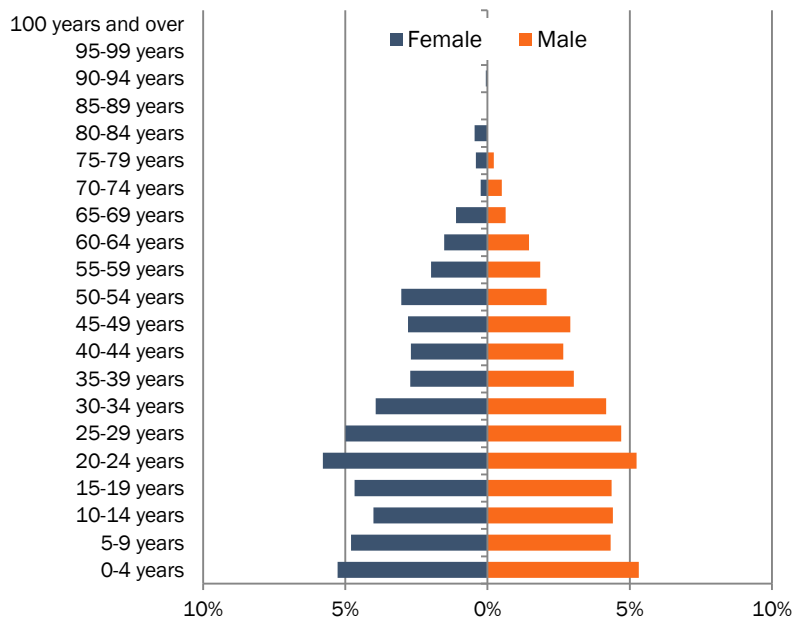


Figure 9-1: Age distribution of Aboriginal population in the Northern Metropolitan region (2016)

Forty-five per cent of Aboriginal people aged 15 years and over have completed schooling to year 12 and about 10 per cent has a Bachelor’s degree (compared to 6.2 per cent of the same cohort across Victoria).

As would be expected for a region largely comprising metropolitan local government areas, the Northern Metropolitan region has a diverse economy. Across the region the main industries of employment are those involved with health care and social assistance. Other significant sectors of employment are Professional, Scientific and Technical Services, Education and Training and Retail Trade. While many Aboriginal people are employed in health and social services there are similar numbers employed in public administration and safety, education and training and construction. The sectors where there are high rates of employment of Aboriginal people are supported by data gathered during stakeholder interviews in the region. The Northern Metropolitan region contains the headquarters of many ACCOs delivering health and social services. There are also several government agencies in the region employing many Aboriginal people in their workforce.

At the time of the 2016 census the unemployment rate for Aboriginal people in the region was around 7 per cent. The lowest rate was recorded in Nillumbik (2.5%) and the highest in Moreland (8.2%) and Hume (8.1%). At that time the state-wide unemployment rate was 4 per cent. This suggests that the region has pockets of unemployment affecting areas on the urban fringe.

A regional health profile has been prepared by the Department of Health and Human Services for the Northern Metropolitan region. Although not current (it was prepared in 2015) the indicators are unlikely to have significantly shifted over the past two years. In terms of social disadvantage, the region experienced higher than average unemployment rates, a high proportion of social housing with the rate of homelessness per 1,000 population the highest in the state. About 12 per cent of households in the region experience mortgage stress and 24 per cent experience rental stress.

There is a high percentage of people reporting Type 2 diabetes and the overall percentage of people reporting fair or poor health is the highest in Victoria. At the same time the proportion of general

practitioners, allied health service sites and pharmacies per 1,000 population are the lowest in the state²⁷. Up to date Aboriginal-specific health data is not available.

There is a cycle of poverty from a lack of housing and jobs to a lack of education and compromised health. Among the Aboriginal community, one informant estimated that “a third of the community is in dire straits, a third are struggling and a third can cope and can help the other two thirds” (ACCO Interviewee).

9.2. Aboriginal people in the Northern Metropolitan region

The Northern Metropolitan region is the land of the Wurundjeri people. The area the City of Yarra occupies was looked after by the Wurundjeri-willam family group of the Wurundjeri-balluk clan. The Wurundjeri-willam mainly spoke Woi Wurrung language, but also spoke other languages of their nation.

With its proximity to the capital of Victoria the Northern Metropolitan region has attracted significant in-migration of Aboriginal people from across the state. There are now many clans represented in the region, although it maintains a strong connection to its historical and cultural roots. The area has become a centre for Aboriginal politics.

In the late 1950s Pastor Sir Douglas Nicholls led an effort to purchase the All Saints Church Vicarage in Northcote to help combat the problem of Aboriginal homelessness. Around the same time a committee had formed in response to a welfare crisis in the Warburton Ranges in Western Australia. The Save the Aborigines Committee formed in Melbourne and later became the Victorian Aborigines' Advancement League with Pastor Nicholls, Gordon Bryant, Stan Davey and Doris Blackburn at the helm. From this, the northern metropolitan area became the centre for Aboriginal activism in the state and became a meeting place for Aboriginal people to link-in with family, community and services.

During interviews many of the ACCOs in the area expressed a strong respect for the efforts of their predecessors in providing the historical framework for their continued presence and work in the region.

9.3. Justice issues in Northern Metropolitan region

In the evaluation of the AJA2 the Northern Region was one of two regions where there was an increase in the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system (the other being the Western Metropolitan region). Over-representation had increased by 36 per cent in the period of AJA2. This was largely attributed to an increase in the proportion of offenders sentenced to imprisonment rather than community-based orders. The evaluators found people in the Northern Metropolitan region were about 15 per cent more likely to receive a prison sentence.

One of the primary justice issues raised during interviews related to the previously poor relationship between Victoria Police and the Northern Metropolitan Aboriginal communities. Improving this relationship has been a specific focus of the RAJAC in the region.

A second area of concern was the extent of family violence, which was perceived as worsening over the years. One of the factors contributing to family violence in the Northern Metropolitan region, according to a representative of the RAJAC and the Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group, relates to lack of services available to men leaving prison. Of some concern is the lack of continuity between prison-based service providers and service providers in the community. Information about

²⁷ Statistical profile of North & West Metropolitan Region - North LGAs, 2016 <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au>

the mental and physical health status of prisoners and the services they have accessed while in prison is not always shared with community-based service providers. This concern was also raised in interviews for the partnership evaluation interviews conducted in the Western Metropolitan region. As one Northern Metropolitan stakeholder noted;

Information stops at gate, not shared with community services.

Accommodation options for men released from prison are limited in the Northern Metropolitan region. There had previously been a hostel where men could stay post-release but this is no longer in operation. If men are unable to return home they will tend to 'couch surf' with family members where they can. The transience of these arrangements can often contribute to a return to offending behaviours. It certainly makes it difficult for men to re-engage in employment or other meaningful activity (RAJAC Member).

The situation is compounded as more and more prisoners are not applying for parole and are leaving prison having served their full sentence. As a result, these prisoners are not subject to supervision of any kind on release.²⁸. This becomes an issue when people are released without having addressed their offending behaviours, particularly those associated with anger management or problematic alcohol and other drug use. The chance of reoffending is much higher for this cohort.

We've seen more men being locked up for family violence. While they're in prison they learn other criminal behaviours. Then when they're released they revert to what they 'know best' especially if they're not under any conditions attached to parole. Without that there's little incentive for them to address their offending behaviours. (RAJAC Member)

Data on offenders in the region identified as Aboriginal in 2012-2016 (reported to the RAJAC meeting, 25 August 2017) indicated that between June 2012 and June 2016 average Aboriginal offender numbers grew from 87 to 134. As a proportion of the overall offender population, however, Aboriginal offenders decreased from 4.9 per cent to 4.4 per cent. When age is considered, the data show that the proportion of Aboriginal offenders who were under 25 marginally declined from 19.5 per cent in 2012 to 14.2 per cent in 2016, after a peak of 33 per cent in 2013. A report provided by the DJR Acting Regional Director to the RAJAC noted that reoffending, offending by young women, and family violence were increasing. Further, data indicated that many offenders had mental health problems.

²⁸ The main reason for serving a full sentence is around a desire to be released to freedom rather than conditions, such as reporting to a community corrections office, attending programs etc.

9.3.1. Police data

Data referred to below is from the Crime Statistics Agency Aboriginal Justice Indicators – Victoria Police dashboard and covers the period 1 January 2012 to 31 December 2016 unless otherwise stated.

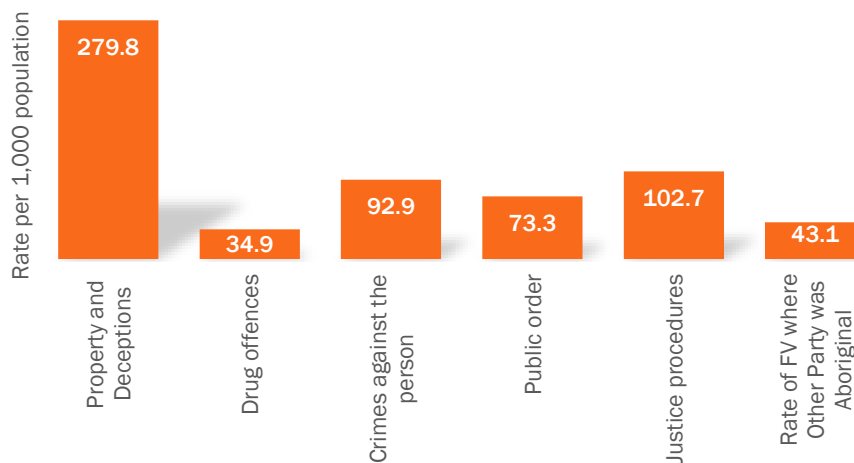


Figure 9-2: Most Serious Offence types Northern Metropolitan region (2016)

Property and deception type offences account for the majority of offences in the region and at 280 offences per 1,000 population the rate is the highest of all four regions. This is followed by offences against justice procedures and crimes against the person. This pattern in offence type reflects the other regions under investigation.

Anecdotal evidence has suggested that cautioning of young people has increased although the data from the Crime Statistics Agency does not bear this out. There had been an increasing trend in police cautioning between 2012 and 2013 but that began trending downward in 2013 through 2016. It may be that 2017 saw an upward shift but that data is not yet available for review. Figure 9-3 shows the trend in youth cautioning in the Northern Metropolitan region.

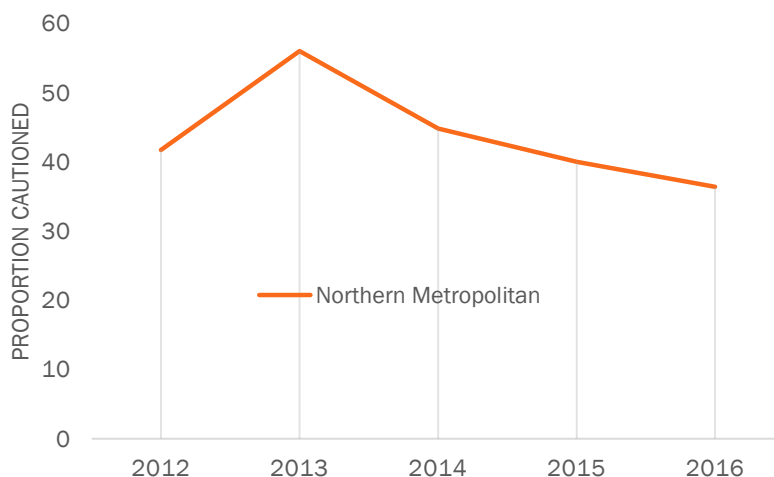


Figure 9-3: Proportion of first-time Aboriginal young offenders cautioned by police (Northern Metropolitan)

Although there is a perception that family violence offending is increasing the police data from 2012-2016 suggest that the rate of family violence had reduced in 2016 after increasing significantly between 2014 and 2015 (Figure 2-1). Data for 2017 are not available.

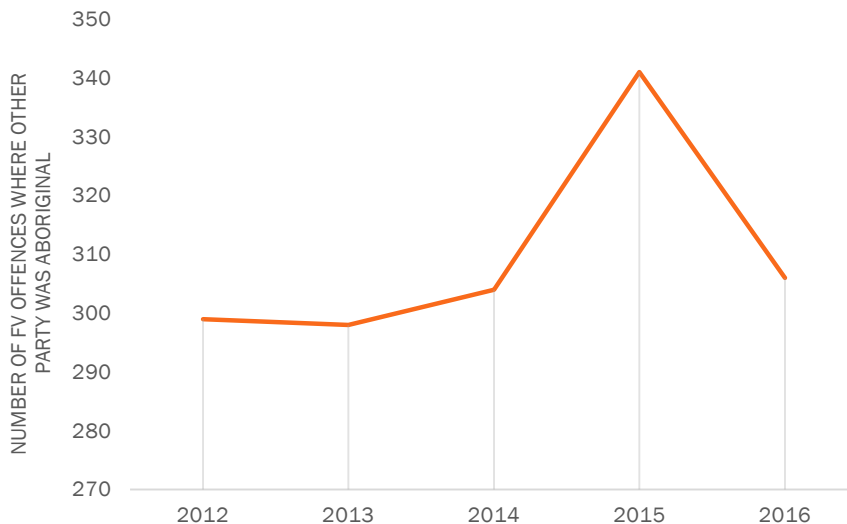


Figure 9-4: Number of family violence offences where ‘other party’ (perpetrator) was Aboriginal (Northern Metropolitan)

A worrying trend is the increasing rate at which Aboriginal offenders are breaching Family Violence Intervention Orders. This has increased by 185 per cent over the past five years such that in 2017 half of all orders had been breached.

9.3.2. Community corrections

Interviews with Corrections Victoria noted a significant increase in the number of people on CCOs²⁹ in the region since the abolition of suspended sentences and changes to parole conditions. Between 2012 and 2017 the region has seen an 87.5 per cent increase in the offender population on CCOs. While the number of males on CCOs has decreased in the past 12 months, the number of females has increased by close to 40 per cent. The Northern Metropolitan region had the second highest volume of orders registered for Aboriginal offenders in 2016/17 (at 220 this was significantly lower than the highest ranked region, Loddon Mallee, where 278 CCOs were registered)³⁰. It would be worth investigating the extent to which ACCOs in the region will be able to meet demand should these increasing trends continue.

The proportion of offenders on CCOs that are Aboriginal is now about 4.6 per cent which has been relatively stable over the period. Offenders aged under 25 years comprised 21.5 per cent of the total number on CCOs but there has been an increasing trend for CCOs for people aged between 35 and 44 years over the past five years.

The majority of orders (54.7%) are supervised court orders and only 13.3 per cent of offenders are unsupervised. Almost half of orders are for 7 to 12 months in length which tends to be higher than non-metropolitan regions. Of the community orders served in 2016-17, half had a community work component, close to 80 per cent included at least one drug or alcohol condition and close to 60 per cent included a mental health treatment condition. Offenders in the Northern Metropolitan region were more likely to be subject to judicial monitoring than other regions (34.5%). The allocation of conditions has been stable over the past years.

²⁹ The community correction order (CCO) is a flexible sentencing order that the offender serves in the community. A court can impose a community correction order on its own or in addition to imprisonment or a fine. In early 2012, the community correction order replaced a number of sentencing orders, including the intensive correction order, home detention and the community-based order. <https://www.sentencingcouncil.vic.gov.au/about-sentencing/sentencing-options-for-adults/community-correction-order>

³⁰ Data sourced from The October 2017 Corrections Victoria Data Report to the Aboriginal Justice Forum provides information on the number of Aboriginal offenders on community correction orders.

Successful completion rates for orders of all types are currently sitting at around 43.7 per cent, the second lowest completion rate in the state (Southern Metropolitan region recorded a completion rate of 42% in 2016/17). Both male and female offenders recorded similarly low completion rates. The lowest completion rates were for those aged between 25 and 34 years (40.5%). The main reason for failing to complete an order relates to breach of conditions, for both supervised and unsupervised offenders. Such low completion rates and the rate of breach suggests the need for further analysis to determine if there are any systemic factors contributing to this situation. Nearly a quarter of offenders on supervised court orders were unsuccessful because they committed further offences.

Data for 2016-17 show the largest proportion of orders were issued for a most serious offence of assault (29.5%) and 'other property' offences (21.4%). Driving offences were the next most common most serious offence type at 20 per cent.

9.3.3. Youth justice community orders

The Youth Justice Service presents data to the AJF at each forum. According to the report delivered to AJF49 in October 2017 and for the period 30 June 2016 to 30 June 2017, the average daily number of young people on youth justice community orders in the Northern Metropolitan region was as shown in the table below.

Table 9-2: Average daily number of young people on youth justice community orders North West Metropolitan region, by gender (2015-17)

Year	Aboriginal		Non-Aboriginal		Not known	Grand Total
	Female	Male	Female	Male		
2016-17	6.7	15.0	30.5	202.8	0.1	255.0
2015-16 ³¹	2.6	18.1	20.7	35.7	184.3	220.0

The table below shows the age distribution of Aboriginal young people in the Northern Metropolitan region who were on youth justice community orders in the 2016-17 period. Female offenders on orders are evenly represented across all age groups. Male offenders on orders are mostly aged between 12 and 14 years.

Table 9-3: Average daily number of young Aboriginal people on youth justice community orders, by gender and age – North West Region (2016-17)

Region	Female			Male			Total	
	12-14	15-17	18+	10-11	12-14	15-17		18+
NWM	2.1	2.2	2.3	0.0	12.2	2.8	2.8	21.6

9.4. Community organisations in the Northern Metropolitan Region

Many headquarters for Aboriginal providers of family, legal, educational, health and welfare services are located in the Northern Metropolitan region. Some in this extensive Aboriginal services network have a state-wide remit.

Community organisations that operate across the metropolitan area include the Aborigines Advancement League (AAL), the Victorian Aboriginal Childcare Association (VACCA), Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Limited (VACSAL), the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service

³¹ Data sourced from Youth Justice Data Report presented to AJF46, Ballarat, North West Metropolitan former DHHS region

Cooperative Limited (VAHS), and Melbourne Aboriginal Youth Sport and Recreation (MAYSAR). We have estimated employment within these organisations is likely more than 800 people.

Organisations with offices and programs in regional as well as the metropolitan area are the Aboriginal Family Violence and Prevention Legal Service Victoria (FVPLS Victoria), the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI), and the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS). The Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) is the peak body for the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people living in Victoria.

We note that the presence of a large number of ACCO headquarters in the region does not necessarily equate with better service accessibility.

The **Aboriginal Centre for Males** can offer community work opportunities. This is a referral service (a program operated by the Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association) working with men on CCOs. The service focuses on family violence & homelessness and aims to culturally strengthen the family, bring awareness and responsibility to the male for their actions and their role as a father/husband/partner, and to keep the family together.

Family reunification work has increased with the creation of a DHHS family reunification unit, part of the Children's Court, as a prevention and early intervention strategy. CCS Officers report frank and open discussions with DHHS about client needs, and productive attendance at family meetings:

We're invited because there's a lot of carer and custodial issues that we have information on, and it's about being transparent so that clients know what's going on. Some clients used to refuse to work with Child Protection, understandably. Having us all in the room allows the offender to see we all want the same thing – reunification. It helps break that cycle. A long way to go but a lot has been happening in the last few months. Our role is around risk but it doesn't stop us working holistically with various support agencies. (CCS Interviewee)

The process described here demonstrates a collaborative, holistic and trust-building approach typical of effective place-based programs.

The **Minajalku Healing Centre** can be accessed by Aboriginal men, women, children, youth and Elders from a wide variety of backgrounds and who are at different stages of their healing and life journey. Minajalku aims to provide a culturally safe environment to assist healing and recovery that will strengthen connections, self-esteem, sense of cultural identity and healthy lifestyles. The space hosts services such as Dardi Munwurro Men's Group.

CCS make use of **Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place** in Gippsland. The centre is valued as a place to meet requirements of CCOs in a safe space. The centre is strongly linked with Dardi Munwurro Men's Behaviour Change, and the local TAFE.

Most of my male offenders are linked there, also through VAHS. They can stay three months or up to six. It's free, so it is an opportunity to save Centrelink payments, then we can help them get housing afterwards. (CCS Officer)

Community Crime Prevention Victoria provided funding for the delivery of the **Dardi Munwurro Journeys Program** to Aboriginal youth in the region. Dardi Munwurro also deliver their Strong Spirit Men's Behaviour and Healing Program targeting men who have lived through trauma and inter-generational violence. This work occurs locally as well as at Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place.

Vignette of a former ice user

My first contact with justice system was eight years ago and I've had four or five CCOs since then. Never had a negative relationship with police or the justice system. I couldn't comply with orders because of ice addiction. I went through Koori Court and always tried to comply.

There aren't many places I could do community work. They always asked too much of you – urine tests, etc. But a CCO is better than prison. I've been clean for 15 months now and I have had the option to come here to Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place again, for the third time here. I can complete my CCO hours here. I've done anger management through the CCS and the men's behaviour change program and AOD counselling here.

I'm connected to community and not judged. I got a lot of help and it's helped my spirit – I'm a lot stronger. I feel I don't have to answer to anyone any more. Also, I now have a young family – two kids – so I want to be a good father. I'm hoping to get into full time work as soon as I get out. This time (at Wulgunggo Ngalu) I knew what I had to do here.

The Victorian Aboriginal Health Service has staff who regularly see offenders and are described as providing a safe and supportive service. They provide counselling for a wide range of issues, including mental health, alcohol and other drugs, gambling and anger management. With funding and support from the Victims Assistance Program an Aboriginal Victim Support Worker is located at Victorian Aboriginal Health Service. Offenders who are also victims of crime may also be referred there.

9.5. Justice services in the Northern Metropolitan Region

The region is well-served with justice services which is unsurprising given it is metropolitan and also the location for the headquarters of many ACCOs. Below is a summary of the justice services available.

Broadmeadows Regional Office houses DJR services such as Births, Deaths and Marriages and Community Corrections Services (CCS). Support for the regions RAJAC is provided by the Executive Officer based at the Broadmeadows office. There are no LAJACs in this region. There is also a Justice Service Centre in Carlton and CCS offices at Reservoir, Greensborough and Heidelberg. The Judy Lazarus Transition Centre, a minimum-security facility providing a supervised pathway back into society for selected prisoners nearing the end of their sentence, is within the boundaries of the Northern Metropolitan region.

VALS employs two Local Justice Workers. The role of these LJWs was described by one (CCS) worker as helping “with transitional needs, [and forming] relationships with case managers. It helps to have someone who is not part of Corrections, while we are seen as authority figures. And she is an active member of the community and knows families”. The LJW accompany CCS staff on home visits to people on CCOs who are unable to attend the office, for example, because they are new parents, have health or mobility problems or are simply disengaging from the process. The aim of these visits is to resolve issues and prevent a breach of the CCO.

VALS is also delivering:

- a *ReConnect* program for Aboriginal prisoners and offenders (complementing mainstream services run by Jesuit Social Services, ACSO Victorian Intake & Referral Service and the Victorian Association for the Care & Resettlement of Offenders).
- a Youth Justice Legal Service for civil, child protection and family matters for young people aged under 17 years. A separate office with its own team (separated from the adult legal service) enables client representation without a conflict of interest.

Victoria Police employ an ACLO for the region. ACLOs are employed as unsworn Police members to help build trust and respect, and foster communication and interaction between Victoria Police and the Aboriginal community to resolve issues. Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers or assistant PALOs (sworn Police members) are also designated and their number has increased during AJA3.

A SALO offers days at the Neighbourhood Justice Centre and Victorian Aboriginal Health Service to advise on unpaid fines. They gather information on the fines that individuals have and 'act as a buffer' to intervene before issues get to arrest warrant stage. A CCS worker noted that the SALO "hasn't made great inroads but is showing promising signs".

The Department of Justice and Regulation have also created a number of Aboriginal youth trainee positions. As a result, three young people have gone on to permanent positions – one SALO, one Justice Officers Team Leader and an Aboriginal Parole Officer.

A CCS Aboriginal Case Manager role has been in place for up to five years, and is highly regarded;

It's invaluable for building bridges and improving our understanding (CCS)

The Case Manager manages a case load of offenders on orders which involves conducting risk assessments, preparing case plans, providing interventions, proactively challenging offending behaviours, addressing the underlying factors in offending whilst directing and monitoring compliance with order obligations.

The Northern region also hosts the Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group which has cross-representation with the RAJAC. The 2003 Victorian Taskforce on Indigenous Family Violence had identified that Victoria's Indigenous men were being neglected. One of the recommendations from the report was the establishment of a resource and support centre for men who were struggling with domestic violence. This program/service is delivered across the state. The Indigenous Men's Resource and Advisory Service (IMRAS, under the Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association) works with the existing Indigenous Family Violence Strategy networks. IMRAS' main aim is to establish local partnerships that will strengthen and support Aboriginal men's networks in the area. Members have expressed some concern that Aboriginal representatives from the KJU are not represented at the mainstream family violence table. The concern is that decisions taken with regard to legislative amendments and other policy changes are not being informed by an Aboriginal perspective even though evidence from past legislative change has shown a disproportionate negative impact on Aboriginal people.

The Neighbourhood Justice Centre (NJC), located in the City of Yarra, employs two Koori Justice Workers who offer court support, referrals to service providers and other assistance, case management and support for Aboriginal offenders on CCOs.

Koori Courts operate in Broadmeadows and Melbourne, and Broadmeadows court also holds a monthly Aboriginal Hearing Day on which all cases involving Aboriginal defendants are heard. The Aboriginal Hearing Day differs from the Koori Court in some key respects:

- the Aboriginal Hearing Day operates within a mainstream court context – it is not a specialist court
- clients do not have to plead guilty to access the Aboriginal Hearing Day
- respected Elders are not a feature of the Aboriginal Hearing Day but may participate in sentencing conversations³².

³² Refer to NJC (2014). Aboriginal Hearing Day Study of the partnership between the Aboriginal community and the Heidelberg Magistrate's Court that led to the formation of the Aboriginal Hearing Day. Online at <http://assets.justice.vic.gov.au/njc/resources/27beb3e1-9561-4487-8a4b-021afd8b35fd/aboriginal+hearing+day+-+heidelberg+magistrates+court.pdf>.

The special list was developed in order to provide better support for Aboriginal clients and to increase court attendance. NJC has reported greater engagement of Aboriginal defendants through the use of this model with attendance at 95-100%.

The Koori Youth Justice Program delivers the following programs in the Northern Metropolitan region

- Senior Cultural Practice Advisor, Youth Justice
- Koori Intensive Support Program
- Koori Intensive Support Practitioner
- Koori Court Advice Worker
- Community Based Koori Youth Justice Program delivered by Bert Williams Aboriginal Youth Services (BWAYS) and VACSAL in Hume, Moreland, and North Metro
- Koori Early School Leaver Program delivered by Bert Williams Aboriginal Youth Services (BWAYS)
- Aboriginal Youth Support Service operating out of Dardi Munwurro & VAHS.

9.6. Current community grants funding in the Northern Metropolitan Region

Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative Ltd (Hume, Melbourne) are currently funded to provide the Local Justice Worker Program in the Northern Metropolitan region.

The Local Justice Worker Program provides case management support for Aboriginal offenders to manage fines and outstanding warrants, and successfully complete community based orders to reduce breach rates

Organisations in the Northern Metropolitan region have also been successful in receiving grants funding through the Frontline Youth Program, Community Initiative Program and through the Koori Youth Crime Prevention Grants (funding from the Crime Prevention Unit)

Table 9-4: Current community grants funding – Northern Metropolitan

Program	Organisation name	Description	Location	Funding
Frontline Youth Initiative	Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency	Our Voice Our Future Koori Youth Solutions Project engaged 48 Koori youth aged 12-25 years who were currently engaged with the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency and disengaged or at risk of disengaging from education or employment. The project aimed to engage youth in a 23-week structured program (two programs per year) of education, research and activities to reconnect with culture, strengthen positive attitudes and self-image as well as provide opportunities to develop new skills.		\$327,250
	Songlines Music Aboriginal Corporation	Songlines Youth Project engaged 80 Koori youth from predominantly the Northern Metropolitan region in a series of music workshops and over 3,000 Koori youth in festivals. The project aims to improve the self-esteem, confidence, cultural knowledge, education and social outcomes of Koori youth through the delivery of music and dance		\$330,000

Program	Organisation name	Description	Location	Funding
		workshops, performance opportunities and youth events.		
	Aborigines Advancement League (auspicing for Fitzroy Stars Incorporated)	<p>Partnership in Sport – Youth Engagement project expanded upon the success of the Fitzroy Stars Football and Netball Club sporting and community social hub activity to develop and implement a Youth Engagement Strategy.</p> <p>The project targeted Aboriginal youth aged between 10 and 24 and who were (or are at risk of) disengaging from school, training and/or employment. They may be experiencing family conflict, be in contact with the youth justice system or be experiencing drug and/or alcohol abuse. Approximately 200 young people were to be supported over three years. The project also supports the young people’s families by providing a place for families to connect, access information about support services and strengthen identity and cultural pride.</p>		\$330,000
Community Initiative Program	Aborigines Advancement League (auspicing for Fitzroy Stars Incorporated)	<p>Junior Stars- This project enabled Fitzroy Stars Football and Netball Club (FSFNC) to establish a junior football and netball club, providing a supporting pathway for young people to remain engaged in sport, the club and their community.</p> <p>Approximately 40-50 young people aged between 5 and 17, mainly from across the Northern Metropolitan area, were expected to benefit by participating within the junior teams.</p>		\$110,000
Koori Youth Crime Prevention Grants	The Long Walk Trust – Melbourne Vic	<p>The <i>Deadly Race</i> targeted Koori youth aged 12-18 years based in the Northern Metropolitan suburbs of Broadmeadows, Craigieburn, Meadow Heights, Sunbury and Coolaroo. The program delivered four <i>Deadly Races</i> which consisted of numerous challenges including cultural activities. The aim of the program was to improve community connectedness and enhance relationships between young people and local service providers. Partners to the program were Wandarra Aboriginal Cooperation, Local Aboriginal Networks, Melbourne Victory and Federation University.</p>	Broadmeadows, Craigieburn, Meadow Heights Sunbury, Coolaroo	\$40,000
	Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Limited	<p>The <i>Youth Resilience Camps</i> project targeted Koori youth from the Northern Metropolitan Region aged 13-17 years to address issues related to youth suicide. Four camps over two years - two in winter and two in summer focused on cultural strengthening, Aboriginal identity, health and wellbeing, cyber safety and drug and alcohol misuse prevention. The program partnered with the Community Development Officer and staff from BWAYS Koori Youth Justice Program.</p>	Northern Metro Region and State-wide	\$50,000

Program	Organisation name	Description	Location	Funding
	Melbourne Aboriginal Youth Sports Association	The CARMS (Culture, Art, Recreation, Music and Sport) project targeted Koori youth aged 10-17 years. The program aimed to increase social engagement, build social skills and positive diversion activities that create an alternative to offending or at-risk behaviour. The program was delivered through cultural, art, recreation, music and sport activities through after school training sessions, delivered twice a week and five day a week holiday programs held over six weeks. CARMS partnered with Whitelion, Songlines Aboriginal Music Corporation and Fitzroy Stars.	Yarra and Darebin	NK

9.7. Informant interviews key findings – Northern Metropolitan

The main issue that has dominated discussion at the RAJAC since the commencement of AJA3 related to the poor relationships between police and community. Improving that relationship was a commitment rather than a structured place-based initiative but the manner in which it has been achieved reflects many of the ‘good practice’ components we have referred to above.

The design of the Aboriginal Case Management Review Meetings, likewise do not demonstrate a strictly place-based approach but the implementation of them does take account of the context of the area and brings together a range of service providers to offer a more holistic service.

These initiatives are discussed below.

9.7.1. Policing issues

Ongoing issues with policing have been raised consistently in interviews with many noting high levels of mistrust between police and members of the Aboriginal community. To address these concerns, the Northern Metropolitan region RAJAC embarked on a campaign to shift this situation. Subsequently, Police established the Northern Police Aboriginal Consultative Committee (NPACC), to drive and lead the Koori Family Violence Police Protocols and improve working relationships between Victoria Police and the Aboriginal community.

The NPACC is seen by Police as a useful mechanism by which to engage the community (and may be preferred over other mechanisms including the RAJAC, for specific local issues) as one RAJAC member noted during interview;

Police cautioning of young people wasn’t happening because people were unwilling to plead guilty – the RAJAC helped to educate the kids – it’s a good example of keeping kids out of the justice system.

Police attitudes have changed because of relationship-building – police and community, ACCO CEOs, ministers. Our attitude has changed too. I know some really good police. PALOs experience their own attitude changes and then they change others. The ACLO broke down barriers. We are a relationship people – knowing where the relationship is [that] is what’s important. (RAJAC member)

The relationship between police and the community was further supported through the implementation of pilot *Report Racism Initiative*, a collaboration between Victoria Police, VALS and VEOHRC.

This was a good project because Aboriginal people don't see themselves as victims and so don't report racism. Also, there's cynicism about lodging complaints, some small concerns about possible retribution, and sometimes not wanting to re-live an incident.

The *Report Racism Initiative* and cultural awareness training for police has brought significant returns in terms of improving relationships in the region. In addition, VACSAL is supporting the training of new recruits to Melbourne Assessment Prison (MAP), which gives trainees “a view of Aboriginal people that they won't see when they are working with Aboriginal people in custody”.

Other initiatives that are assisting in building stronger relationships include the *Dungulayin Mileka* (Blues and Brothers). This is an annual group bringing Aboriginal young people and Police together to form teams in the “Massive Murray Paddle”. Although initiated from outside the region it has been adopted as a priority in the Northern Metropolitan Region and funds have been allocated to support the ACLO and PALO to take part. Numerous examples are reported of Police and youth changing their opinion of each other over the course of the 4-5 days of the Paddle. A strong cultural element to the program connects the youth to traditional protocols and practices. A deeper personal connection among the participants and support workers is important for future community relationships. VACSAL are seeking funding to sustain annual participation in the event.

Also, the *Parkies program*, funded by the regional DHHS office, and involving Police, the Neighbourhood Justice Centre and CoHealth, responded to a specific local issue around public gathering places (and drinking) in Fitzroy and Collingwood.

9.7.2. Aboriginal Case Management Review Meetings

The Northern Metropolitan region was the first region to establish Aboriginal Case Management Review Meetings (CMRMs) for people on Community Correction Orders who are seen as at risk of non-compliance. CMRMs assist CCS case managers to develop and implement effective, tailored, culturally appropriate wrap-around plans. Participants in the face-to-face meetings include a CCS Aboriginal Case Manager and other case managers, a local Aboriginal Elder, DHHS disability and child protection officers, the VALS Local Justice Workers, the RAJAC's Executive Officer, the SALO and local community organisations. Presented cases are ‘unpacked’ collectively and the group devises a raft of strategies to address poor engagement and compliance.

CCS clients recounted their experience of case management. For example:

This order has been good – I told CCS when my uncle got sick and they were a bit flexible. I looked after him for 12 months through his brain cancer – he was living with us (me, my missus and my daughter, who's in Grade 1 now). Everything I'd done before helped me through that – I was a role model, an example, and it felt good. CCS have been more helpful recently too. For example, they had sent me to do community work at the cemetery where the funeral was, but they changed it because it was too stressful for me. I'm now doing things normally, not escaping through alcohol and drugs. I'm sorted out a bit in my head. I hear voices and I'm now on medication for schizophrenia, via VAHS. I also see a doctor in Coburg. (A, male)

Pleaded guilty and went to Koori Court. Elders knew me and knew my family. That made it worse. Got stripped by my elders. Overwhelmed and shocked. I broke down when the judge mentioned prison. He saw I was deeply sorry. Got 2 year sentence, finish next May. I welcomed a non-custodial order – AOD counselling, anger management. Very impressed with Aboriginal Case Manager. I'd like to see more Koori workers in Corrections. (D, female)

[After a long offending career] this CCO is the first. It has helped – I used to think Community Corrections people were like the gaol screws. I now realise these people are here in the middle to support us. This order has helped heaps. I didn't think I could come good. (A, male)

A CCS Aboriginal Case Manager describes the collective and holistic approach that is necessary and is fostered by such processes as the CMRMs:

I'm always putting out spot fires. This is consistent with what's occurred in their lives. I'm now dealing with three generations of one family. It's good that I now know the family. I do a lot of extra stuff on top of my role, working with the family as a whole, being across the other issues affecting them. It's always a struggle. And if one doesn't turn up for an appointment, neither do the others. Then I'll reach out to Dardi [Munwurro], or the VALS Local Justice Worker will do a home visit and see what's going on. (CCS Officer)

This comment about doing a “lot of extra stuff” is common across all of the Aboriginal workers we interviewed. Their role is not 9-5 on a week day. It is largely 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

There's increased awareness. Cultural awareness programs should be done annually as a refresher (I don't know how stringent that is). Having an identified position makes a difference. Having the Aboriginal CMRMs convened here has also put cultural matters on the radar for us. (CCS Officer)

Vignette of a parolee (by North Metro CCS case manager)

A serious violent offender has completed 11 months parole with us. In his forties, he had a long history of offending and of exposure to a culture of drinking in Victoria and WA. He is disconnected from his WA community.

He completed intense and in-depth [mainstream] Offending Behaviour Programs (OBP) in prison targeting offence-specific matters as a prerequisite for release on parole. Once in the community he was involved with Aboriginal services. VAHS picked him up and took him to multiple appointments. Recognising underlying schizophrenia and getting depo shots was crucial. Deluxe treatment was crucial. Without it he would have gone backwards.

How do we judge success? In the case of this man, the bare minimum would be achieving some insight, some realisation about what influenced his decision-making. Linking this to the likelihood of reoffending is a long bow to draw: it's a success if he walks away with at least some skills or insight for managing his own behaviour. Situations are complex. We address the key things. But there's a lot to be done with men around culture, the spiritual side, and understanding the barriers.

Determining the success of place-based initiatives like the CMRMs does not rest on shifts in whole of community indicators. For complex and entrenched issues that are being dealt with in the management of Aboriginal offenders in the community it is the individual successes that matter. The story of the 40-year-old offender above should be celebrated as a real achievement. And given the relational basis of Aboriginal culture, the success of this one man has the potential to be multiplied across the community as he shares his achievement with others.

9.7.3. Future directions in the Northern Metropolitan region

Although the introduction of CMRMs is having a positive effect in assisting offenders on CCOs, suggestions for improvement or growth arose from the consultations. Interconnected issues are: access to Aboriginal programs, coordination of the response to clients, and availability of community resources. Additionally, workforce development requires ongoing attention.

In terms of new initiatives, implementation or expansion of diversion options for younger offenders is seen as a local priority. It was hoped that the AJA would continue, and that RAJACs would be maintained at a regional level. To build the capacity and influence of the RAJAC some intensification of the EOs role in program coordination was recommended.

Availability of Aboriginal programs

Some frustration with access to culturally specific programs was expressed in the consultations:

Program availability isn't as consistent as we would like and we've struggled. Then in the last three months we have had so many invitations to send people to programs but we can't necessarily respond because it's a timing thing, the location, whether there's child care, and things like that. We can go six months with nothing, then we are suddenly under pressure to facilitate referrals to programs. (CCS Officer)

Culturally specific programs are available and we've tapped our clients into them, but often they are not run if there are insufficient numbers. So, we then look at individual counselling through private psychologists or other community-based programs. So, there are some opportunities for growth there (CCS Officer)

A CCS Case Manager and prison staff suggested that it would be helpful if the facilitators of community programs could reach out to meet clients to introduce the program rather than simply expecting a referral. This could help to address the 'discontinuity' referred to earlier where 'information stops at the gate'. It also highlights that the approach taken by the CCS Case Manager in Geelong where he met his client at one of her other appointments is the exception and not the rule.

There are opportunities to improve coordination of Corrections and some KJU programs and the extent to which the Aboriginal service sector works as an integrated network.

Coordination of the response

Information flow

Case managers expect information about clients to be shared appropriately by prison staff prior to a prisoner's release and by community providers during the period of a community corrections or parole order. Coordination of contact between those people with a significant role in a client's journey is reported to be difficult, as the following statements from CCS Officers attest;

Issues with staff in prisons, where they are struggling to find ALOs [Aboriginal Liaison Officers] and AWOs [Aboriginal Wellbeing Officers], so there's a lot of pressure on those in the roles. I struggle even to contact the different prisons and it's sometimes quite difficult. (CCS Officer)

It's hard to obtain info about attendances and engagement in the community programs so that we can assess risks. (CCS Officer)

Local Justice Workers also reported sometimes having little or no prior information before meeting a CCS client. Clarity and consistency of goals was reported as in need of work – and time:

I'm going to be a bit more controversial and say there's a disconnect between us and partner agencies – it's fragmented, different philosophies, different objectives. Resourcing is always an issue. We could work more collaboratively with partner agencies. Our expectations sometimes don't mirror each other, and they work on a different framework. e.g. Around treatment services, we expect an episode of treatment and they might not have the same definition and we often come to different conclusions about how the person is progressing. (CCS Officer)

Community organisations - barriers

Resource limitations and competition for funding are endemic features of the community services sector.

Our organisation is funded for welfare and support but we never have enough to do the job properly – we deal with the needs at the time, not the real problems. (RAJAC member)

Competition for funding is an issue for community organisations. What does it do for those who don't get the funds? The short timeframe to respond to a funding round makes it difficult to work collaboratively with other organisations. There is a disincentive to collaborate. Organisations are working on getting rid of silos but we find ourselves doing it. (RAJAC member)

For some, the problem is insufficient ownership of offender rehabilitation:

Other community agencies need to come on board, e.g. by accepting offenders to do community work. They say they don't have resources to dedicate to supporting the person. But we need to change the thinking to broader ownership by the community. (CCS Officer)

Workforce development

Police and CCS staff pointed out the need for ongoing cultural training. CCS staff emphasised the need for all case managers (not just the Aboriginal case managers) to have the knowledge and skill to work with Aboriginal clients – this became obvious when an Aboriginal case manager was on extended leave.

We need to build cultural competence across all staff, beyond basic cultural awareness and the historical story. Being comfortable to ask people what their story is and who is their mob. It's noticeable when case managers don't have that knowledge and skill. (CCS Officer)

Diversion

Early intervention to divert offenders from prison was a priority for many stakeholders:

Once they've gone to gaol the chances of them returning are greater, for all of them but particularly young Koori men. Keeping them out in the community leads to better outcomes. (CCS Officer)

AJA governance

While stakeholders were keen to see the AJA continue to maintain the momentum achieved to date. There was a question around how close the RAJAC EO was expected to be to local program coordination and delivery, and whether this part of the role could be strengthened. EOs are already under-resourced and time poor, so adding another layer to their already wide-ranging role is likely only to lead to burn-out. There is an opportunity to revisit the role of the EO and investigate whether it does need to expand into a program delivery function. It is doubtful it could be achieved without better role definition and strengthened resources.

10. Southern Metropolitan Region

10.1. The Place – About the Southern Metropolitan Region

The Southern Metropolitan Region covers the area from South Melbourne down to the Mornington Peninsula and east to Melbourne's growth corridors of Casey and Cardinia.

The region comprises 10 local government areas of Melbourne's south-eastern suburbs and comprises an area of about 2,886 square kilometres. The total population at the 2016 census was approximately 1.46 million people, representing about one-quarter of the state's total population. The total Aboriginal population living in the region was 7,277 but with over 80,000 census respondents not stating their Indigenous status we expect that the actual Aboriginal population is significantly higher.



The City of Frankston has the highest proportion of Aboriginal, comprising 1 per cent of the total LGA population. The City of Casey has the highest total population and the highest Aboriginal population of all the region's local government areas.

Table 10-1: Aboriginal population of Southern Metropolitan Region (ABS Census data 2016).

Local Government Authority	Total Population	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal	% Aboriginal
Bayside	97,092	188	96,905	0.2%
Cardinia	94,130	782	93,352	0.8%
Casey	299,296	1,617	297,679	0.5%
Frankston	134,144	1,346	132,809	1.0%
Glen Eira	140,875	256	140,624	0.2%
Greater Dandenong	152,052	511	151,532	0.3%
Kingston	151,389	577	150,809	0.4%
Mornington Peninsula	154,996	1,303	153,692	0.8%
Port Phillip	100,863	398	100,470	0.4%
Stonnington	103,831	306	103,525	0.3%
TOTAL	1,428,668	7,277	1,421,397	0.5%

The total population of the region has grown considerably over the past ten years with an increase of close to 22 per cent. The Aboriginal population has grown by more than 60 per cent over the same time period, increasing from 4,273 in 2006 to 7,266 in 2016.

The region's communities are numerous and diverse, including rapidly changing inner urban communities and outer suburbs with significant population growth.

Half of the population of the region is aged below 25 years and a significant proportion aged under ten years. This population profile has important implications for justice planning as there is a large proportion of the population who would benefit from early intervention strategies that will assist in

keeping them out of the criminal justice system in later years. The population pyramid below shows the age distribution of Aboriginal men and women in the region.

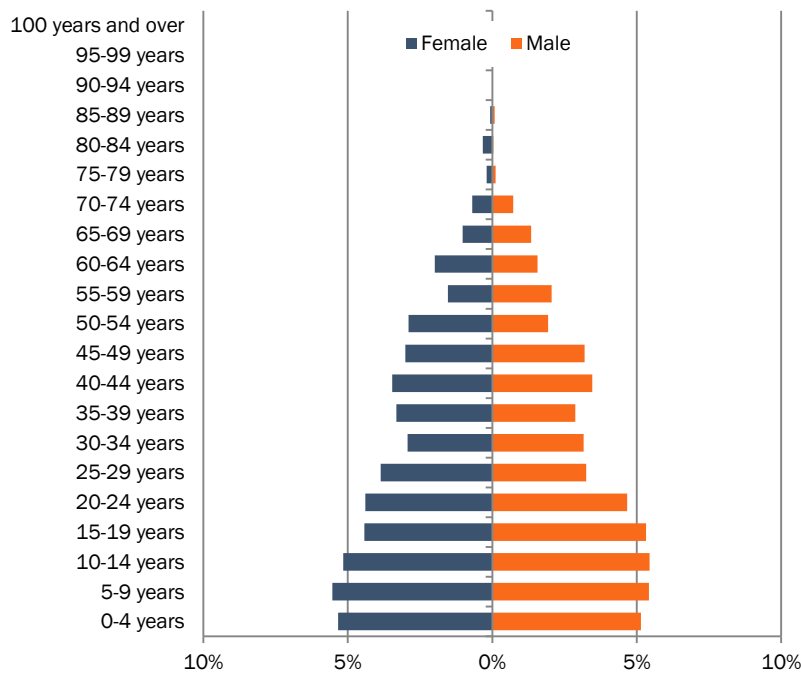


Figure 10-1: Age distribution of Aboriginal population in Southern Metropolitan Region (ABS Census data 2016)

Educational attainment across the region is comparable to the state with about 33 per cent of Aboriginal people having achieved Year 12 (36% for Victoria). About 5.5 per cent of the Aboriginal people aged 15 or older has a Bachelor’s degree (compared to 6.2 per cent of the same cohort across Victoria).

The region has a diverse economy with manufacturing, health and retail trade the largest employing industries in the region.

10.2. Aboriginal people in the Southern Metropolitan Region

The traditional owners of land in and around Frankston are the Bunurong (or Boon Wurrung) and Wurundjeri people. The Bunurong people are Indigenous people from south-east Victoria, their traditional lands are from the Werribee River in the north-west, down to Wilson's Promontory in the south-east, taking in the catchments of the old Carrum swamp, Tarwin River and Westernport Bay, and including Mornington Peninsula, French and Phillip Islands.

The Wurundjeri People take their name from the Woiwurrung language word ‘*wurun*’ meaning the Manna Gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*) which is common along ‘*Birrarung*’ (Yarra River), and ‘*djeri*’, the grub which is found in or near the tree. Wurundjeri are the ‘Witchetty Grub People’. The territory of the Wurundjeri lies within the inner city of Melbourne and extends north of the Great Dividing Ranges, east to Mt Baw Baw, south to Mordialloc Creek and west to Werribee River.

10.3. Justice issues in the Southern Metropolitan Region

In a focus group discussion with members of the Southern Metropolitan RAJAC the two main issues contributing to offending behaviours in the Aboriginal population were reported as being the

fragmentation of the community and the lack of Aboriginal service providers. The region has the largest Aboriginal population of any region in the state, at over 7,200 in the last census. It is a region that experiences seasonal population flows with an increase in the number of people moving to areas like St. Kilda and other metropolitan beach-side suburbs during summer months. There is also a relatively high number of people living in the region who are not 'on country' but have travelled from other parts of the state to live closer to the metropolitan hub of Melbourne. As a highly populated region, the Southern Metropolitan region has a lack of affordable housing and many Aboriginal families are living in crowded conditions, which is contributing to conflict and family violence incidents. The lack of housing is also contributing to a high level of homelessness.

Some of the other justice issues discussed at RAJAC meetings include the use and abuse of alcohol and other drugs, with a particular concern for increasing use of the drug ice (methamphetamine) by young people, and heroin amongst the older population. The adverse effects of problematic drug use have been especially felt in the more highly urbanised and densely populated areas, for example, on the Prahran housing estate.

I'm sick of seeing young fellas being locked up. I know that I and others do great stuff but it's not enough. In Prahran there is no gathering place, no community we are dealing with inter-generational drug use and drug dealing – there is no community there. It's a long road (RAJAC member)

There is also some concern with the number of Aboriginal children and young people in contact with the child protection system and in out of home care. The successful reintegration of these children back into the community is seen as one avenue to addressing criminal offending behaviour. Overall, the RAJAC has adopted a strong focus on youth issues to respond to the "small number of repeat offenders" who have no strong links to culture and are banding together to offend in groups (RAJAC member).

One further issue often discussed at RAJAC meetings is the low rate of police cautioning in the region. Police have advised that this is due in large part because alleged offenders are receiving legal advice to make no comment in interview. Police are unable to issue a caution as they need the offender to admit to the offence. The advice is being given to stop alleged offenders from possibly incriminating themselves but has an adverse effect in that they are then held in custody.

VALS are notified when Police take an Aboriginal person into custody but because they do not have a permanent presence in the region advice is often given over the telephone and alleged offenders can sometimes face delays in obtaining legal representation. This may also explain why there are a reportedly high number of people attending court without representation.

The *Southern Metropolitan Closing the Gap Health Plan (2009-2013)* published by the Victoria Department of Health identifies issues with access to health services in the Southern Metropolitan region given there is only one ACCHO (Dandenong and District Aborigines Cooperative) and that organisation mainly serves only three of the 10 LGAs in the region (Casey, Cardinia and Greater Dandenong). This limits the primary health care choices available to Aboriginal people and heightens the need for mainstream services to be culturally safe, competent and responsive. In fact, the region is under-represented by Aboriginal organisations across the board with only one ACCO, the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) and the specialist drug and alcohol rehabilitation and outreach support service provider, Ngwala Willumbong.

While the focus in the *Closing the Gap Health Plan* is necessarily on health, the lack of Aboriginal organisations in the region also has an impact on the delivery of justice services. In regions with a strong network of Aboriginal service providers there is a greater opportunity for culturally appropriate services to be offered to, for example, offenders on CCOs with conditions to attend AOD, mental

health or offending behaviour treatment programs. In the Southern Metropolitan region, the demand for culturally appropriate services is difficult to service given the few Aboriginal organisations available to deliver them.

The DHHS Southern Region staff interviewed for the evaluation noted their tendency to use mainstream family violence programs in the absence of effective Aboriginal programs. These are not considered entirely appropriate for many Aboriginal people. They add;

The few organisations that do offer culturally specific programs tend to be over-referred to and their case management load becomes almost unmanageable

Analysis of RAJAC meeting minutes suggest that, as elsewhere, the region has faced considerable difficulties in recruiting Aboriginal people to many of the liaison roles including the Local Justice Worker, Koori Community Engagement Officer at the Dandenong Magistrates' Court, Sheriff's Aboriginal Liaison Officer and, for a period, in the Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer role. The period of the AJA3 has seen a relatively high turnover in these roles with some personnel taking other positions within the organisations that are hosting them. A Local Justice Worker is employed by the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service but, it is understood, the Worker is not often in the southern region (RAJAC Member).

10.3.1. Police data

Data referred to below is from the Crime Statistics Agency Aboriginal Justice Indicators – Victoria Police dashboard and covers the period 1 January 2012 to 31 December 2016 unless otherwise stated.

Police data crime data by offence type shows the highest rate of offending in the Southern Metropolitan region relates to 'property and deceptions' offences. This includes offences such as property damage, burglary/break and enter, theft, arson, deception and bribery. In 2016, these offences occurred at a rate of 175 offences per 1,000 population. The next most prevalent offence types are against justice procedures including breaches of orders (64.3 per 1,000 population) and crimes against the person (55.5 per 1,000 population).

As shown in Figure 10-2, property and deceptions offences have been showing an increasing trend over the past five years.

Although the data does not confirm it, police in the Southern Metropolitan region have noted an increase in family violence offending. They suggest that this may be due to a lack of understanding by many family violence perpetrators as to what a Family Violence Order is and what it means to be the recipient of one, and also the types of contact that constitute a breach of contact (e.g. telephone calls). The Dandenong Aboriginal Family Violence Police Protocols were released in May 2016 and may have assisted in minimising an increasing trend in family violence incidents.

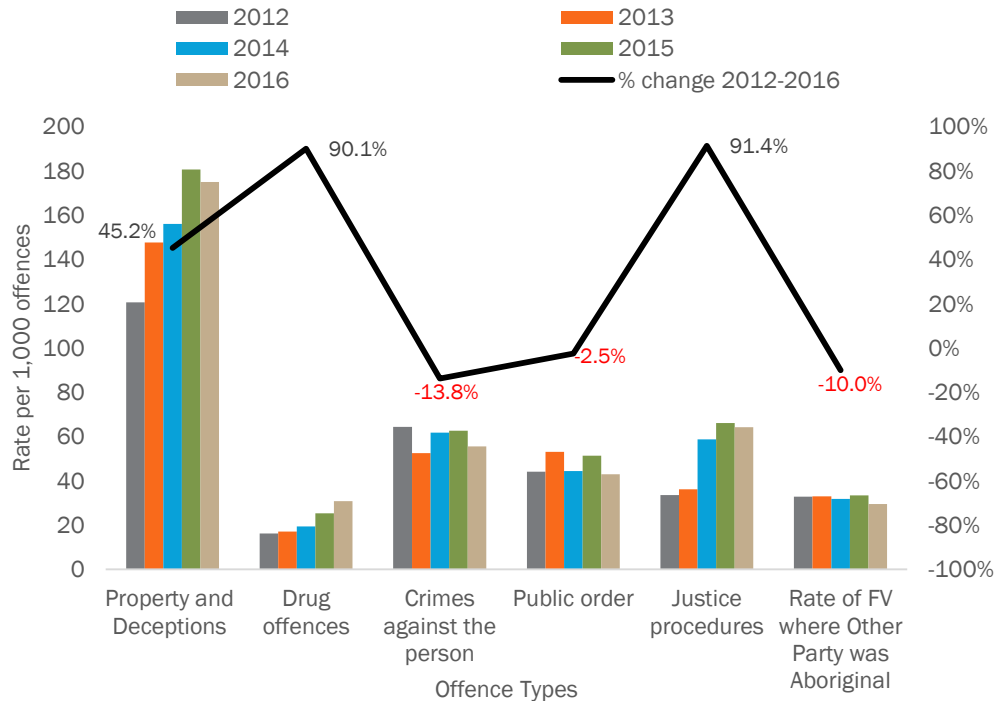


Figure 10-2: Offence type trends Southern Metropolitan region (2012-2016)

10.3.2. Community corrections

Between 2012 and 2017 the offender population on CCOs has increased by close to 60 per cent largely as a result of an increase in the number of males on CCOs. There were 70 males on CCOs in 2017 in comparison to 43 in 2012. The increase for female offenders has seen the numbers grow from 13 in 2012 to 19 in 2017. With 89 offenders on CCOs, the Southern Metropolitan region has the lowest numbers of the four regions of this study. Most CCOs are accumulated in the 25 to 34 year age group (44.9%) with the same proportion (22.5%) in the Under 25 year age group and the 35-44 year group.

The majority of orders (78.7%) are supervised court orders and 20.2 per cent of offenders are unsupervised. There was only one parole order in 2016/17, confirming that few Aboriginal prisoners are being released to parole. Close to 30 per cent of orders are fine orders. There were 30 CCO imprisonment orders, a significant increase from the five in 2012/13. Half of all orders in 2016/17 were of 7 to 12 months duration and about a third were of 6 months or less.

Of the community orders served in 2016-17, half had a community work component, 76 per cent included at least one AOD treatment condition and close to 65 per cent included a mental health treatment condition and/or a requirement to attend a program to reduce offending behaviour. The proportion of CCOs with a mental health treatment condition is about 10 per cent higher than the state proportion. Similarly, the proportion of justice plans is significantly higher in this region. These higher rates of issuing an order with a mental health treatment or justice plan component is likely to have ramifications for the CCS offices and service providers in the region. Over the past five years there has been an increasing trend in these treatment and rehabilitation conditions on CCOs.

Successful completion rates for orders of all types are currently sitting at around 42 per cent, the lowest completion rate in the state. Successful completion by males (37.3%) is far lower than that of females (69.2%) and very low for offenders under the age of 25 (16%). The disparity between male and female order completions is not seen in any other region. The most common reason for failing to complete an order in 2016/17 related to the commission of further offences combined with breach of

conditions (44.1%) for those on supervised orders, and the commission of further offences (50%) for those on unsupervised orders.

Data for 2016-17 show the largest proportion of orders were issued for a most serious offence of assault (36.8%) and driving offences (20.5%) followed by 'other property' offences (17.4%).

10.3.3. Youth justice community orders

The Youth Justice Service presents data to the AJF at each forum. According to the report delivered to AJF49 in October 2017 and for the period 30 June 2016 to 30 June 2017, the average daily number of young people on youth justice community orders in the Southern Metropolitan region was as shown in the table below.

Table 10-2: Average daily number of young people on youth justice community orders Southern Metropolitan region, by gender (2015-17)

Year	Aboriginal		Non-Aboriginal		Not known	Grand Total
	Female	Male	Female	Male		
2016-17	0.0	10.4	16.2	52.5	0.0	79.2
2015-16 ³³	1.9	9.3	11.2	14.3	123.3	137.6

The table below shows the age distribution of Aboriginal young people in the Southern Metropolitan region who were on youth justice community orders in the 2016-17 period. No female offenders are recorded in the data for the Southern Metropolitan region for the 2016-17 period. Male offenders on orders are mostly aged between 15 and 17 years.

Table 10-3: Average daily number of young Aboriginal people on youth justice community orders, by gender and age – Southern Metropolitan Region (2016-17)

Region	Female			Male			Total	
	12-14	15-17	18+	10-11	12-14	15-17		18+
NWM	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	6.2	3.9	10.4

10.4. Community organisations in the Southern Metropolitan Region

The **Dandenong and District Aborigines Co-operative Ltd (DDACL)** was established in the 1970s by families in the local area who saw the need to provide support for the growing Koori community. Initially supported by the then Dandenong City Council, DDACL later expanded its program of services with assistance from the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service. DDACL now has two main funding streams - Indigenous & Rural Health Division and Department of Health and Human Services along with other minor funding.

DDACL is the principal Aboriginal organisation in Southern Metro delivering social and community services programs such as home and community care, family services, Youth and Youth Group Program, includes Boys on the Bounce and Girls on the Go, Aboriginal Best Start. They also deliver primary health care, maternity services and allied health and ITC programs. DDACL plays a prominent role in the region as the only ACCHO and is routinely in the position of auspicing funds for external groups to deliver services to the Aboriginal community, including the Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group and Aboriginal Community Justice Panel.

³³ Data sourced from Youth Justice Data Report presented to AJF46, Ballarat

DDACL is represented on the Southern Metropolitan region RAJAC by the CEO. Additionally, the current Chair sits on the RAJAC in his role as Police Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer at Dandenong.

The **Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA)** is an accredited organisation providing programs and services to Aboriginal children and families across Victoria. Headquartered in Preston (Northern Metropolitan region), VACCA has southern offices in Dandenong and Frankston. Southern VACCA serves a community extending from the southern suburbs around Dandenong all the way into the Mornington Peninsula. The agency provides early intervention and family services, a referral service across a range of domains, and offers training to external organisations. VACCA is represented on the Southern Metropolitan RAJAC.

Ngwala Willumbong Ltd provide specialist alcohol and drug rehabilitation and outreach support services to the Aboriginal communities of Victoria. Based in St Kilda the service offers four recovery centres for men and women and a range of outreach programs. Koori Youth Justice Workers are employed to provide intensive case management support Aboriginal young people who are at risk, or subject to, statutory court orders. In addition, the KYJ Workers also link young people into specialist services including medical, education and/or training, housing, and counselling. They also co-ordinate regular weekly group activities - currently art therapy, basketball and participation in the *YSAS REVAL Program* in Dandenong.

An Indigenous Integrated Family Violence Case Management Support Worker is located at Ngwala Willumbong to provide referral and case management of Aboriginal men, as part of the Integrated Family Violence Services System (IFVSS) for the Southern Metropolitan Region.

Ngwala is represented on the RAJAC.

Bunjilwarra is a 12-bed residential rehabilitation and healing service situated in Hastings for Aboriginal young people (male and female) aged between 16 and 25 years. It offers a voluntary program for young people to manage their alcohol and other drug issues through active participation in therapeutic and structured programs designed to assist them, to develop their living skills, and to strengthen their cultural identity and spiritual wellbeing.

The program, based on recovery principles, is staged and allows the residents to move through a Care and Recovery Plan at their own pace with short and long-term goals, and a community connection and reintegration component which involves active involvement of the community they will be returning to. Bunjilwarra offers post discharge support, especially with youth AOD service agencies and ACCHOs, including assistance to (re)connect with the Aboriginal community, access to safe, secure and affordable accommodation, links with education, training and employment, and ongoing access to relevant services.

Bunjilwarra is not a member of the RAJAC.

Although not based in the Southern Metropolitan region, many offenders make use of, or are referred to **Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place** in the Gippsland Region. Participants at the Learning Place live on-site for between three and six months where they are able to participate in employment, education and life skills programs and comply with their community work obligations. Community work is usually done on site. The aim with the Learning Place is to assist offenders to transition back to life in the community.

VALS, based in Preston, offers legal support but does not have a site in the region..

YSAS, Youth Support and Advocacy Service, is a mainstream service provider with a site in Dandenong. Services provided at this site include youth outreach, AOD services and some primary health services. The REVAL Day Program based in Dandenong is a structured program for young

people aged 14-21 with AOD issues to assist with developing social, emotional and intellectual skills. The 'Aboriginal Rec Program', facilitated in conjunction with Youth Justice and Ngwala runs out of the YSAS building which has assisted YSAS to become a more culturally safe space for young people, broadening their access to mainstream AOD services. Young people have then been supported to access the Healing Centre or other AOD supports.

10.5. Justice services in the Southern Metropolitan region

In addition to the DJR Regional Office located in Dandenong, justice service centres can also be found at Rosebud, Frankston, Moorabbin, Box Hill, Lilydale and Ringwood. These centres offer services such as Births, Deaths and Marriages and Community Corrections Services (CCS).

The Dandenong Children's Koori Court opened in 2014 and a Koori Community Engagement Program operates out of the Dandenong Magistrates' Court.

The Koori Youth Justice Program delivers the following programs in the Southern Metropolitan region:

- Community Based Koori Youth Justice Program delivered by Ngwala Willumbong in Dandenong area, and the Mornington Peninsula
- Koori Intensive Support Program

A Koori Intensive Support Practitioner is located within the DJR at Bayside Peninsula servicing Frankston.

VALS provide an outreach service in Dandenong from their central Melbourne office.

Victoria Police employ an ACLO who is based at the Dandenong office and who services the whole of the Southern Metropolitan region. This officer helps to support the Dandenong Koori Family Violence Police Protocols which covers the local government areas of Dandenong, Cardinia and Casey.

10.6. Current community grants funding in the Southern Metropolitan Region

The Doveton Aboriginal Gathering Place (Casey) is currently funded to provide the Local Justice Worker Program in the Southern Metropolitan region.

The Local Justice Worker Program provides case management support for Aboriginal offenders to manage fines and outstanding warrants, and successfully complete community based orders to reduce breach rates

Organisations in the Southern Metropolitan region have also been successful in receiving grants funding through the Frontline Youth Program, Community Initiative Program and through the Koori Youth Crime Prevention Grants (funding from the Crime Prevention Unit) and Place-based Targeted Grants as shown in

Table 10-4.

Table 10-4: Current Community Grants Funding – Southern Metropolitan =

Program	Organisation name	Project description	Location	Funding
Frontline Youth Initiative	VACCA	Strong and Deadly Koori Youth Program	Southern Metropolitan region	\$330,000
Community Initiative Program	Willum Warrain Aboriginal Association	Right Way, Strong Way	Hastings	\$114,544
Koori Youth Crime Prevention Grants	Ngwala Willumbong	Ngwala Youth Program targeted Koori youth from the South Metro Region who are in contact or at risk of contact with the justice system. The program will create culturally safe opportunities to participate in structured positive lifestyle activities, diversionary activities, cultural strengthening, employment readiness, health and wellbeing and independent living skills education. Activities will be delivered on a weekly basis with key partners including AFL Reclink, government departments, justice services, local ACCOs and Aboriginal community members	Southern Metropolitan region	\$147,900
	Ngwala Willumbong auspiced by St Kilda Police Citizens and Youth Club,	The Koori Youth Bootcamp program was designed to target Koori Youth aged 12- 25 years living in the Cities of Port Phillip and Stonnington. The aim of the program was to increase awareness of health and wellbeing practices and to create healthy lifestyles through Koori Youth Bootcamp training sessions. The sessions will create an opportunity for the young people to meet on a weekly basis in a supportive environment. The program will create an alternative to offending and promotes positive interactions and community connectedness. The program will partner with local health organisations and Koori Youth Workers.	Port Phillip and Stonnington	\$24,000
Place Based Targeted Grants	Frankston City Council	Cultural, Community, Career Connections for Young Aboriginal, Maori and Pacific Islander Adults in Frankston North	Frankston North	\$200,000
	Jesuit Social Services Limited	Connections	Doveton	\$149,000

The region also received an allocation of \$40,000 from the Frontline/CIP funding pool to be used to progress actions related to their RAJAC Action Plan. Spending allocation of this allocation for the 2014/15 period was reported to the AJF and is shown in Table 10-5 below.

Table 10-5: 2014/15 Discretionary funding allocation spend - Southern Metropolitan (Source: Southern Metropolitan RAJAC Agenda Paper to AJF42)

Action Plan Reference	Amount	Activity	Details
Objective 1- Crime prevention and early intervention	\$10,000	Support Community Programs	Allocated to the Family Violence Legal Prevention Service
	\$5,000	Cultural Identity Building	Mornington Secondary College indicated to Baluk Arts that there were 30 Koori students attending the college and that they were increasingly disconnected from their culture and community. The college worked in partnership with Baluk Arts to engage, connect and build the cultural identity of these students
	\$6,000	Connection Knowledge Engagement	Inner South Community Health program for disengaged young people
1.1.1 Support families to manage youth at risk	\$6,000	Mechanisms to engage parents/ family members in support programs for youth at risk	Allocated to Southern VACCA to support the implementation of their <i>Dad's Program</i>
2.2.3 Continue to improve the relationship between the police and the Koori community	\$5,000	Cultural awareness activities, Victoria Police	Used to improve police cultural awareness for VicPol and other agencies to develop coordinated cultural awareness opportunities; and exploring and developing informal cultural exchange and yarning camps between VicPol and the Koori community
2.4.1 Assist Koori offenders to meet the conditions of their Community Correction Orders	\$6,000	Develop specific programs for Koori women on Community Correction Orders	Used to develop specific programs for Koori women on Community Correction Orders – allocated to the Family Violence Legal Prevention Service.

Funding in subsequent years from this allocation as well as from DJR Regional Office discretionary funding has assisted in the delivery of the following initiatives:

- *Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service (FVPLS) Young Luv workshops* – Three Young Luv workshops were delivered by FVPLS to young Aboriginal women and address healthy relationships and safety when dating.
- *Koori Youth Leadership Program* – a 12-month Youth Leadership Program was delivered in partnership with the Building Stronger Youth regional coordinator. The program included an urban-exchange to Redfern, New South Wales and monthly gatherings.
- *Doveton Koori Homework Centre* – DJR Southern Metropolitan funded a Koori Homework Centre based at the Doveton Aboriginal Gathering Place. The Homework Centre provides local Koori youth with access to a tutor (an Aboriginal university student), internet, dinner and a positive cultural environment.
- *Dandenong Koori Auskick* – DJR Southern Metropolitan provided financial support to the Dandenong Koori Auskick program to enable parents to undertake level 2 coaching training and will explore further opportunities to support the program.

- *Sisters Standing Together Workshop* – DJR Southern Metropolitan funded FVPLS to deliver a Sisters Standing Together workshop specifically to Aboriginal women from across the South East Metropolitan region on a CCO and fine default orders. The workshop included well-being activities, access to relevant support services and a community legal education session.

Key informant interviews have noted the difficulty in attracting funding in a region where there are few ACCOs, as captured in the following comment;

[we] can't deliver through [the ACCOs] because they're already focused on something else. Even if a mainstream service wants to deliver services for Aboriginal people they need to tap into an ACCO or gathering place to make sure it is culturally appropriate. We had a few programs in the past where we've had mainstream organisations apply and they had a lack of participation (ACCO representative).

Another funding issue identified during informant interviews is the short-term nature of funding where organisations are having to deliver programs in a 12-month period and then report on the outcomes or impacts that have been achieved. Given the types of issues that are being addressed with the program funding it is unrealistic to expect any noticeable impacts to have occurred over that period.

10.7. Informant interviews key findings – Southern Metropolitan

10.7.1. The importance of Gathering Places

A report prepared by the City of Port Phillip provided insights into gathering places in the urban south region of Melbourne (City of Port Phillip (2015) *Where do you mob want to meet up? Urban South Indigenous Gathering Place Report 2014/15*, City of Port Phillip). The study explored the “concept of ‘gathering’ by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in an inner-city environment and identifies the importance of partnership and shared goals in relation to the advancement of health and wellbeing outcomes through integrated and culturally responsive service settings” (p.3).

In Indigenous communities, culturally sensitive places are essential in fostering trust and belonging. Culturally sensitive places can nurture pathways and linkages to services and supports through the generation of trusting relationships which make referrals and connections easier. Having such dedicated places for Aboriginal people strengthens cultural identity and offers greater visibility within the broader mainstream community. Culturally sensitive places will become settings for people to meet new people and reconnect with old friends and family. Through this process networks form and often extend beyond the physical setting.

In a similar vein, DHHS commissioned a number of evaluations of their *Koolin Balit Investment* in 2015 with one focusing on the Gathering Place Model in Victoria. The University of Melbourne was contracted to complete this evaluation and provided their findings in 2016. The evaluation studied 13 gathering places across the state including Willum Warrain, in Hastings. They refer to this as an example of a ‘site-specific hub’ which offer “ongoing community engagement and capacity, multiple programs and activities, multiple staff members, established links with mainstream service providers and strong community governance mechanisms” (Indigenous Health Equity Unit, University of Melbourne 2016).

A conceptual model for a successful gathering place was created encompassing four key enablers and nine overarching principles. The authors argued that a gathering place supported by these enablers and successfully adopting the principles, should necessarily lead to health and wellbeing impacts and other outcomes. The model symbolises the role of a bird’s nest or ‘home’—in this evaluation gathering places have frequently been referred to as ‘home’ and have been seen as a

'safe place' providing support and connection. This program model is shown in Figure 10-3 below (Sourced from the final evaluation report).

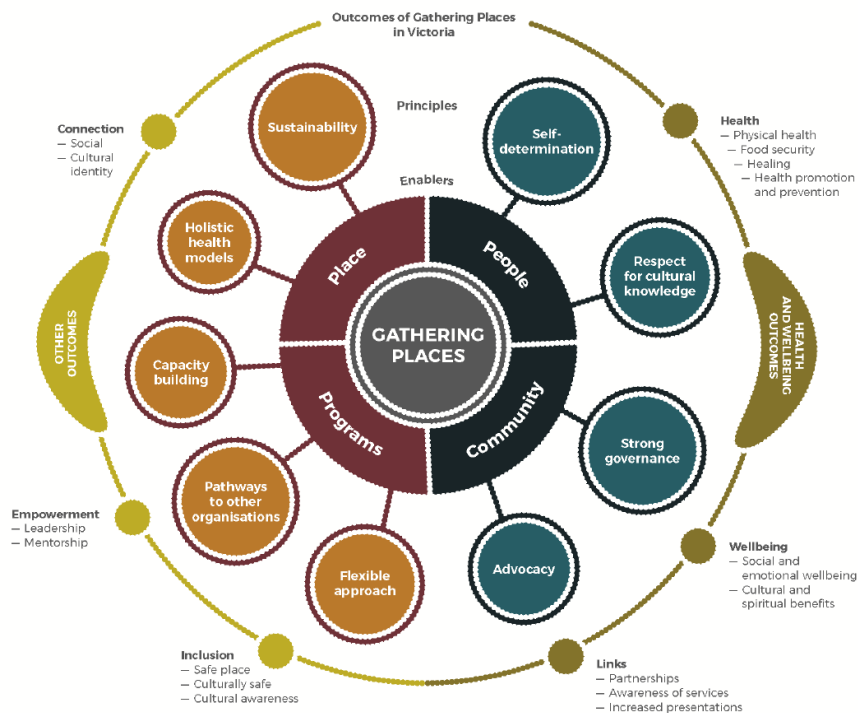


Figure 10-3: Gathering Place Model (Source: Indigenous Health Equity Unit, University of Melbourne (2016))

Some of the key findings from the evaluation indicate that the Gathering Places that were investigated have delivered a positive impact on Aboriginal health and wellbeing with improved physical health, social and emotional wellbeing, social connectedness and strengthening of cultural identity. Each of these outcome areas are well-known to be protective factors against reoffending and would therefore be contributing to achieving the aims for the AJA. Gathering Places offer a site where initiatives can be developed and executed that take account of the local context, specifically the needs of, and resources available at the local level.

The evaluation did also highlight some of the challenges faced by Gathering Places, and these have been raised during our interviews in the Southern Metropolitan region. Those issues include: Gathering Places tend to be reliant upon short-term, sometimes project-based funding which hinders program continuity and community development; they tend to operate in isolation of one another making information sharing about good practice, and simply for the benefit that support can offer, is difficult; they also operate outside the usual boundaries of government agency experience and are thus misunderstood and have difficulty in gaining the legitimacy they deserve from government.

An example of Gathering Place – Doveton

A focus on the activities at one of the Gathering Places gives an idea of the breadth their contribution. The Southern Metropolitan RAJAC EO worked closely with the co-ordinators of the Doveton Gathering Place in the City of Casey to support the establishment of a **homework group**. Students who attend the homework group receive homework support from Aboriginal students enrolled at a local tertiary institution (e.g. Monash University) as well as volunteers from the community. Those who attend are also provided with a meal. The initiative has been supported financially by the DJR Southern Region office. During a focus group discussion with RAJAC members convened for this evaluation, the homework club received strong support and positive feedback from DHHS and Department of Education and Training representatives.

The Gathering Place at Doveton offers a **breakfast program** to children in the area who can go to the centre around 06:30am before school and have breakfast, take a shower and get ready for school. This simple program is said to be having good results and is “keeping kids out of trouble” (RAJAC member). The fact that the Gathering Places are able to adopt flexible opening hours gives them an advantage over other ACCOs that may operate on a more strictly business hours arrangement. This is one of the reasons that the Gathering Places are seen as more accessible and responsive to community.

Our Youth program has undertaken an early morning program this last year and it has been quite successful with young people on the brink of more serious contact with VicPol ([Victoria Police]. The program has engaged those young people and others to participate and this has been a great credit to the Youth Worker and the BoB Worker. The young people are picked up between 6:00 am to 6:30 am and taken to a venue to participate in a fitness or physical activity, and then are taken to the Casey Aboriginal Gathering Place in Doveton for breakfast, and then are taken to school where it has shown proof positive that their school attendance is up, they are learning better (healthier and happier) and things are better at home. This is an all-around win for the young people and the team supporting them (ACCO informant).

A number of community justice events have been held at the Doveton Gathering Place (as well as Dandenong and District Aborigines Cooperative) where staff from Victoria Legal Aid, Births Deaths and Marriages, Consumer Affairs and the Sheriff’s Aboriginal Liaison Officer are available to provide advice and information to any interested community members. The events have been said to be well attended and help to build trust between the community and justice agencies. There is a commitment from the representatives of the justice agencies that the events are purely for information provision and community members should be free to discuss any matter. Specifically, if a community member has an outstanding warrant or fine, they will not be taken in to custody at that time.

The Doveton Gathering Place has been the site of at least two community work programs specific to male and female offenders on community orders and is seen as offering a space where people are more inclined to complete their orders than others that have been used in the past.

The Doveton Gathering Place is also a key partner in the delivery of the **Kulcha Konnect** program funded through a Place-based Crime Prevention grant. The project is a partnership between Jesuit Social Services and the Dandenong and District Aborigines Cooperative with a focus on Aboriginal youth with a connection to the Doveton area at risk. This 11-week Cultural Awareness and Leadership program seeks to build participants’:

- Connection to self, family, community and culture
- Understanding of respectful, healthy relationships
- Cultural awareness, leadership and mentoring skills
- Protective factors that reduce and influence offending

A Milestone Evaluation completed by Urbis (2017) for Jesuit Social Services in June 2017 reported on the outcomes for 15 Koori youth³⁴ (nine male, five female, one undisclosed) aged up to 25 years who had participated. Four participants were, at that time, in contact with DHHS child protection services, 12 participants were disengaging from school, three were not enrolled in school, nine had substance abuse/misuse issues either personally or indirectly and one experienced periods of ‘couch surfing’.

When asked about their connection to culture 13 participants agreed or strongly agreed to the statement “I feel more connected to my culture since starting the program”. The evaluation report

³⁴ The number of people engaged with the program was reported as 27 as at December 2017 (reported in the Southern Metropolitan report to AJF49)

also includes a case study on the changes experienced by one participant. This case study is replicated below (Box 10-1).

The Kulcha Konnect program has been well-supported by the Doveton Gathering Place since its inception and the links provided to other initiatives at the Gathering Place (e.g. the Homework Club) are providing useful synergies for participants. It also provides a safe and culturally appropriate venue where Aboriginal children and young people feel comfortable, safe and welcomed, which is also contributing to the successes being achieved. An interview with a representative from the proponent organisation, Jesuit Social Services, acknowledged that their ability to deliver such a program would have been far more challenging without the collaboration with the Gathering Place.

Funding for the Gathering Places in the Southern Metropolitan region

The Doveton Gathering Place is funded by the City of Casey. Niarm Marr Djambana-Gathering Place in Frankston is an organisation in its own right established with funding from the City of Frankston and DHHS. As is the case with Doveton, it has no recurrent funding and operates with volunteers and a limited opening schedule. The Hastings Gathering Place (Willum Warrain) is also an organisation in its own right with support from the Mornington Shire Council. It has no full-time co-ordinator.

The issue of funding for these Gathering Places has long been a concern of the RAJAC and requests have been put to DHHS to consider ongoing funding particularly given the Department's acknowledgment of the benefits that are derived from them.

Participant “A” is a 17 year old Indigenous male who resides in Doveton. He will be turning 18 next month. He has not been enrolled in any educational setting, be it alternative or mainstream, for over 3 years nor been engaged in employment whether it be part time, casual, work experience or voluntary. Up until a month ago he was couch surfing due to homelessness. While he is not ‘officially’ involved in the justice system yet, he is known to police due to the company he keeps and the young people he spends his time with, is at a high risk of being involved in justice system. These factors, coupled with his disengagement from education, training and /or employment and his pending 18th birthday are strong risk factors for a potential trajectory into the justice system.

Since participating in the Kulcha Connect program at the Casey Gathering place in Doveton there has been an observable shift in candidate “A”’s behaviour and his aspirations for the future. Candidate “A” attends the Kulcha Konnect program “week in and week out” where he receives the support of the ‘Building Strong Aboriginal Youth Regional Co-ordinator’ (Aunty Emma) and a male youth worker from the Dandenong District Aborigine’s Corporative Ltd and the other Koori youth attending the program. The program has provided candidate “A” with a culturally safe space where he is comfortably able to explore his connection to self-family and more broadly his Indigenous culture. Candidate “A”, over time, has responded well to the cultural strengthening and awareness workshops/ discussion where he has explored more about where he comes from, his language group, tribe, and clan. Previously he would sit back with closed body language, keep silent and shy away from discussions. Now he is opening up, talking more freely, his body language is open and he is actively engaging in discussions, asking questions and keen to learn more about his mob / family. He has become more vocal in what he would like to learn and discuss.

Nathan, the youth worker from DDAFL has engaged candidate “A” to assist him with the pre-program setting up activities on a Monday. Nathan would call candidate “A” around 2pm every Monday and pick him up to take him shopping to purchase the food for program. He would get candidate “A” to assist him with other tasks required to set up the weekly program sessions: setting up the room, preparing the food, cleaning the kitchen. Candidate “A” then started initiating the 2pm Monday phone call to Nathan and commenced taking responsibility to shop for the group, set up the room, cook, prepare food and do some cleaning. As his confidence in himself builds, candidate “A” is demonstrating more initiative, increased personal responsibility and active participation in the program compared to his initial watch and observe approach. He now makes his own way to the program by public transport. Another example of his improved confidence is he is now wearing his eye glasses which he hasn’t done for nearly 8 months. He attends the homework club at the Gathering place where he connects with the other kids some of whom are his cousins.

Candidate “A” is now initiating discussion with Nathan around returning to school/ education and future work. Nathan is liaising with Chisholm TAFE about candidate “A” eligibility and suitability to sign up to its Department of Education funded Reconnect program. Candidate “A” is now engaging and meeting his jobactive provider. He is accessing the support of a youth worker from Ngwala who has assisted him to get a tax file number, photo identification and centrelink support.

Candidate “A”’s family now has stable housing so he is now back living with family. The best way to demonstrate the shift for candidate “A” is by this – an exercise in the homework club is for participants to share a personal good news story. An exercise candidate A did not participate in. Last week he shared a personal good news story... for the first time!

Box 10-1: Case Study of the impact of Kulcha Konnect program

10.7.2. Aboriginal Community Fines Initiative (ACFI)

The *Infringements Act* provides individuals with a number of options to resolve outstanding Enforcement Orders and Warrants, including applications for revocation of enforcement orders, access to payment plans and payments made in full.

Infringement Management Enforcement Services developed an initiative in late 2015 in conjunction with Inner South Community Health whereby Fines Victoria staff (previously Infringements Court Registrars) attend Aboriginal community events and provide advice on infringement matters and can assist with payment arrangements and enforcement review applications (previously revocation applications) for people with outstanding fines. ACFI is integrated with the SALO and the LJWs and clients receive comprehensive support in relation to their fines. The service commenced at events in St Kilda and at the Dandenong Back to School Day (where a VALS lawyer and financial counsellor were also present to offer advice and information). Trialling of ACFI commenced at the DDACL with the support of the SALO in late 2016 and the feedback from attendees at that event was positive.

Up to 31 January 2017 there have been 21 community events involving 102 participants. Close to \$280,000 in outstanding infringements had been addressed with 18 people enrolled in an Application for Payment Order (to a value of \$62,883) and 19 people receiving revocations (\$127,054). Fifteen applications were pending a decision. Three participants had finalised an open court warrant and 31 participants required further action on their matters³⁵.

By mid-2017, a RAJAC report to the AJF indicated over 200 community members from the region had been supported to address over \$300,000 in outstanding infringements, through the creation of payment plans and revocations.

This initiative has been successful because it is delivered in the community with the government services travelling to the community events to assist people with their fines and other matters. It is a less formal arrangement and people are said to be much more comfortable in talking about their issues in the community setting. A number of these community justice events have been held at the Doveton Gathering Place (as well as Dandenong and District Aborigines Cooperative) where staff from Victoria Legal Aid, Births Deaths and Marriages, Consumer Affairs, and Sheriff's Aboriginal Liaison Officers are available to provide advice and information to any interested community members. The events have been said to be well attended and help to build trust between the community and justice agencies. There is a commitment from the representatives of the justice agencies that the events are purely for information provision and problem resolution and community members should be free to discuss any matter. Specifically, if a community member has an outstanding warrant or fine, they will not be taken in to custody at that time.

This initiative, like the Justice Bus in Barwon South West, is delivering good outcomes not because it offers alternative services to what would be available in a justice centre, but because they take the service to where there is the need and they do so in a more casual manner. This outreach type approach demonstrates a willingness and desire by government services to respond to the reluctance of some people to go into offices where they may have had bad experiences in the past. The initiative also addresses the lack of knowledge of what is available to help people with justice issues that does not involve punitive measures.

A new administrative body called Fines Victoria was introduced in December 2017 as part of the *Fines Reform Act 2014*. The reforms brought in a number of changes including the ability for the Director, Fines Victoria to delegate powers to enable staff to undertake functions to assist Koori

³⁵ Data provided by KJU on request

clients in dealing with their fines by processing enforcement review applications or payment arrangements.

11. Summary of findings

The place-based initiatives investigated through this report fall into two broad categories:

1. An initiative introduced by a government agency and designed and delivered through a partnership approach (e.g. the Koori Women's Diversion program)
2. An initiative designed at the local level to respond to particular community needs.

They have adopted different approaches and there are differences in the level of resourcing each has at their disposal but they share many similarities. Here we must declare that we have taken a liberal interpretation of 'place-based approach' and are more concerned with how each of the initiatives has adopted the characteristics of a place-based approach as defined in the literature.

This section draws the findings from each region together and analyses them against the six characteristics of successful place-based initiatives discussed in Section 2. Later in this section we respond to the key evaluation questions as described in Section 4.4.

11.1. The level of engagement

The AJA is a partnership and places an emphasis on engagement and collaboration. Each of the initiatives has emerged as a result of broad discussions involving input from community and government³⁶. In most cases the RAJAC has been key to bringing the parties together and in the case of the larger government-driven initiatives (e.g. the Koori Women's Diversion project or the Community Fines Initiative) the RAJAC has acted as a conduit and the place where discussions were held, not least to ensure that new initiatives are place-based rather than simply replicated from elsewhere. Program funding via the Community Initiatives Program (CIP) and Frontline schemes requires endorsement of initiatives by the RAJAC who will often provide support to applicants in the submission stage. RAJACs also provide a key accountability function by monitoring the progress of initiatives and as a forum to bring any issues with delivery or performance to the table. The shift in the relationship between police and Aboriginal community members in the Northern Metropolitan region has occurred largely through the coordinated efforts of both parties to engage more respectfully with each other. The establishment of a mechanism to facilitate engagement, the Northern Police Aboriginal Consultative Committee (NPACC), was fundamental in driving the shift and continues as a place where open and honest dialogue can occur. The openness to dialogue has created learning on both sides and has contributed to changes in practice, such as increased cautioning which is helping to keep young people out of the courts and youth detention centres, implementation of the Koori Family Violence Police Protocols and improved working relationships between Victoria Police and the Aboriginal Community.

The establishment of Aboriginal liaison roles has been highlighted in the Loddon Mallee region, although is recognised across all regions, as an important factor in opening up channels of communication and information flow between community and government. One Local Justice Worker in Loddon Mallee sees the role as building close and empathic relationships with the client group, and service providers as a key building block for addressing justice issues. These LJWs 'walk between the two worlds' of community and government and act as a mediator and at times translator for both. The RCIADIC recognised the need and recommended that such roles be established to improve communications and lessen the potential for miscommunication.

³⁶ We heard that the LMARG commissioned research that found that the state government had spent something like \$4 million on consultation with Aboriginal people. The interviewee challenged us to "think about what could have been achieved if that \$4 million had been directed to addressing an issue".

Overall, the initiatives have adopted the same commitment to engagement as is articulated in the AJA. There is an acknowledgement that involving the voices of the people who are most disadvantaged and whose lives might be most affected is crucial to grounding initiatives in local strengths and needs and to ultimate success..

11.2. Leadership and community strengthening

The role of the RAJAC and LAJACs in place-based planning

In adopting a place-based approach the AJA is seeking to address complex issues in particular locations that are contributing to high levels of contact between Aboriginal people and the justice system. Place-based approaches are particularly well-suited to addressing Aboriginal disadvantage because of the “Indigenous emphasis on Indigenous Nations and communities” and the importance of place (Brown et al 2016). These authors argue that a flexible approach to place-based initiatives must include ‘communities of interest’ as well as of geography and notes this has resonance to Aboriginal people living in urban locations where they may constitute a small minority. He adds that recognition of Aboriginal nations extending beyond specific geographic locations means that ACCOs can play a fundamental role in developing justice initiatives.

The LAJACs and RAJACs are at the centre of the approach.

Interviews conducted with RAJAC members representing community and government have confirmed that the partnerships created through the RAJAC/LAJAC are helping to create a sense of ownership at the local level. RAJACs facilitate the participatory identification of needs and the development of plans to address those needs. Because they are part of, and own, the plan, local community organisations and groups and government agencies are motivated to contribute to its success. Involving the RAJACs/LAJACs in setting priorities also allows for prioritisation according to community strengths so that programs have the greatest chance of impact and success.

We have found strong leadership in each of the four regions under investigation and it is this leadership that has driven the AJA3 over the past five years. High levels of trust between RAJAC members are reported and apparent in all four locations. We suggest this has been facilitated in large part by the leadership shown from both the community and agency representatives.

The major difference between regions is how broadly the leadership extends. In Barwon South West there are a number of community leaders engaged with the AJA and, more importantly, a number of young leaders with the skills and capacity to step into senior leadership roles. The Northern Metropolitan region has a long history of Aboriginal activism and leadership so there are many leaders across the region but, for several organisations in the region, their efforts are directed towards other specific areas of disadvantage such as housing, employment or education. Because of their state-wide mandate we also suggest that their focus may be broader than the region. Further, as headquarters their focus is more upon the functioning of the organisation and not necessarily on service delivery. We have also not made contact with younger members of the community who might become further engaged with the AJA as time goes on. Maintaining momentum for the AJA in a region with these multiple focuses is a challenge. The Southern Metropolitan region has the largest Aboriginal population of the four regions and the fewest ACCOs. The RAJAC has not always had strong representation from the community, suggesting broader engagement with the AJA is low. The RAJAC Chair is a strong advocate for the AJA and has developed purposeful and effective relationships with government agencies and this has enabled initiatives to be pursued. Community members have contributed to the Regional Justice Action Plan as a result of a targeted program of community consultation – that is, the RAJAC went directly to the community. Encouraging and attracting greater involvement by the community will be crucial to the development and implementation of place-based

initiatives that are responsive to community needs. Loddon Mallee is the largest of the regions and has a very strong, coherent and expansive Aboriginal services network and an equally strong leadership right across the region. We have witnessed a number of formal and informal place-based projects and initiatives (not least being the Women's Diversion Pilot) that have emerged from the local level and are achieving good results.

Leadership from the government agencies is also evident in each of the RAJACs. The DJR Regional Directors attend on a regular basis and there is good representation from other agencies. Direct involvement by government leaders in the development and implementation is one aspect. A second aspect is the leadership they show within their own organisations and how that affects their staff at all levels. Victoria Police leaders have been enthusiastic advocates for addressing biases within the organisation through raising awareness of Aboriginal culture for themselves and for all staff. Police officers in Warrnambool are routinely invited to join the Elders on-country and have reported getting so much from the experience that their attitudes and behaviours have changed to reflect what they have learned. Relationships have been given a particularly strong boost from the commitment to, and engagement with, culturally appropriate policing from the very top of the Police regional division. More than that, junior officers are responding to cultural awareness training because of the benefit it gives them in the role and not simply because it is a mandatory requirement. There was a strong desire for Police and community to work together to improve Aboriginal justice outcomes.

Local governments are generally less engaged with the RAJACs although have contributed intermittently throughout AJA3. Victorian local governments have a key role to play in the delivery of place-based initiatives and have been the recipient of funding to implement programs aimed at addressing Aboriginal disadvantage. Many local governments are offering community development support through the provision of programs, employment of dedicated Aboriginal community officers and through the provision of funding or spaces to allow external programs to proceed (the Gathering Place in Doveton is a good example of such an initiative). There are synergies between the work being pursued in local government and through the RAJACs so it would make sense for them to come together and work more collaboratively.

11.3. Adequate time and a long-term focus

The AJA has now been a feature on the landscape for over 17 years and over that time strong relationships of trust have developed, particularly through the RAJACs and at the AJF. All interviewees truly understood the complexity of the issues that would need to be addressed and the size of the task in addressing them. All understood that some issues would not be shifted easily and would take time and commitment to do so. There is an acknowledgement that no single strategy or set of strategies is going to make quick and significant inroads into the over-representation problem.

All of the initiatives had been developed through long consideration, enabling consultation to occur and relationships to form. Their design has largely had the benefit of time but not all initiatives have the benefit and security that long term funding provides. Initiatives funded through grant money are the most likely to face the insecurity of short-term funding. Funding offered through programs like the CIP or Frontline are for terms of two years or less. Some funding offered through DHHS was for a period of six months. Little can be achieved over these short time frames and this ultimately creates uncertainty and frustration.

The *Fishing for Answers* program being delivered in Barwon South West was demonstrating good results but the ACCO running the program could not continue it without the additional funding they received. Similarly, programs run through the Gathering Places are achieving good results, particularly with disengaged youth. It is not only the programs that make a difference. The simple fact that a

gathering place exists and is open to anyone to make use of it is an important factor in itself. Yet they struggle to attract consistent funding and thus ensure their sustainability.

Complicating matters is that funding for programs being delivered in the community tends to be offered through competitive rounds where organisations are pitted against each other to attract funding (at the expense of other organisations that won't be successful). These arrangements do not lend themselves to collaboration, which is a key aim of the AJA and will likely result in more effective program delivery.

Competition for funding is an issue for community organisations. What does it do for those who don't get the funds? The short timeframe to respond to a funding round makes it difficult to work collaboratively with other organisations. There is a disincentive to collaborate. Organisations are working on getting rid of silos but we find ourselves doing it. (RAJAC member)

Discussions with ACCOs highlighted the need for grant funding to sufficiently cover the full costs of implementing a program. They suggest that administrative costs for programs is realistically between 18 to 25 per cent of program costs. Some grant programs only offer 7 to 10 per cent and so the balance of funds to audit and systematically manage the financial budgeting and payments and such has to be absorbed within other programs. This places an unfair burden on these organisations.

Programs that come and go, especially programs that have been achieving good results and that are supported by community, create distrust. This makes it more difficult for new, or even revitalised old, programs to be rolled out because community members are less inclined to engage with them for fear that they will discontinue in the short-term.

Initiatives such as the Local Justice Workers and other liaison roles have been in operation for some time and are expanding across the state. While there have been some issues in recruitment and retention of staff, the agencies funding or employing for these positions maintain their commitment to the roles. It is not clear that there is a full appreciation of the demands of the roles and the high potential for burnout. The same applies to the RAJAC Executive Officer and LAJAC Project Officer roles. The success of the roles depends on the relationships that the liaison officers form with government and community. Relationship building takes time. It is therefore important that liaison officers are supported to enable them to remain in their role over the long-term. It is our view that additional supports are needed which might be physical supports in the form of additional staff, or professional and emotional supports in the form of providing more opportunities for liaison workers to come together and share their experiences and support each other.

The Mildura pilot of the Koori Women's Diversion Program established that the clients needed more than six months to engage with the program and make best use of it, and that 12 months was still not enough for some of those with the complex needs, suggesting that, to achieve real outcomes, there should be no set time limit for participants. In particular, transitioning successfully out of the program and into wider community connection or support services is critical if achievements made in the program are not to be wasted. This appears to be a program that, responsive to the complexity of clients' issues, is taking a longer view where needed.

11.4. Responding to the context

We found a good understanding in each of the regions of the particularities of the issues that are contributing to contact with the criminal justice system. This understanding is driving the planning around programs that might be best placed to address these issues. Initiatives that have been pursued are taking account of the disadvantage faced by members of the community as well as the

capacity of organisations to deliver services. In that sense, these initiatives are both spatially and socially targeted.

Informants have strongly emphasised the unique nature of local communities and their organisations. It is important, for example, to be aware that differences can play out in the operation of government funding programs, where some organisations have greater capacity to compete for support, and smaller organisations require help (such as from the RAJAC EO or the KJU) with planning and making submissions.

Many initiatives, most of which have not been discussed in detail in this report, are captured in Regional Justice Action Plans developed with wide community engagement by the RAJACs. The actions included in the Action Plans are regionally specific and tend to be prioritised according to need. The RAJACs have a very good understanding of the region and this understanding is constantly updated as they meet every two to three months. The Plans are not updated but certainly the thinking is.

Overall, the initiatives implemented under the umbrella of the AJA can be said to respond to place. In that respect they are meeting that characteristic of being place-based. To successfully work within a community deemed 'high-risk' requires more than simply addressing the challenges; it requires an acknowledgment of the strengths that are apparent in the face of those challenges. The evidence from this evaluation shows us that it continues to be imperative to play to unique community strengths, to allow adequate time and other resources for local program design and planning, to be flexible in allocating funds, to incorporate real costs into service or program funding, and to apply government resources and expertise to build community capabilities and skills. Building community capacity and capability entails going out to communities, recognising differences, supporting leaders, encouraging knowledge-sharing across organisations, rewarding collaboration and ensuring a flow of up to date information on available resources, services, programs, data and research. Such an emphasis on place helps to localise and culturally-situate any program or initiative to best respond to the local need. Once contextualised, successful and innovative programs and services can more readily be adapted for transfer to other regions.

11.5. Flexibility

Common practice in the delivery of place-based initiatives suggests that there needs to be a flexible approach and "locally grounded" design and implementation. We found that most initiatives were able to respond or adapt to the situation on-the-ground and even occurred within the more bureaucratic setting of government agencies. For example, the CCS Case Manager in Geelong found that management through outreach offered a more effective outcome for his client on a CCO.

Flexibility and responsiveness has also been shown in the Koori Women's Diversion program that is adapting to the needs of the women it is helping through the process. The flexibility is enabled, in part, because of the multisectoral approach that has been adopted. The client is at the centre of the initiative and bringing together each of these different service providers means that all develop a collective understanding of the client's needs and gives support to responsiveness and flexibility.

The Justice Bus is another outreach service that has inherent flexibility. The bus goes to where the need is and the officers on board respond to that need. It offers the flexibility to refer clients to the different services provided on the bus. This same approach is used by the Aboriginal Community Fines Initiative in the Southern Metropolitan region. Here Sheriffs and other justice staff attend community events to provide information and advice to people who have unpaid fines, to help them acquit those fines through payment or community work. Both initiatives demonstrate responsive outreach approaches that make the services more accessible to community and alleviates some of the issues

associated with having to travel to multiple and sometimes distant locations to have a number of issues resolved.

The discussion on funding suggests that flexibility will often be constrained because of the conditions placed on grant funding. However, some flexibility is offered through the discretionary funding (\$40,000) made available to RAJACs. This discretionary funding gives the RAJAC the autonomy to allocate funds to small local programs that might not otherwise be eligible for larger grant programs like Frontline or CIP.

Flexibility has been built into the Case Management Review Meeting approach adopted in the Northern Metropolitan region. It is highlighted through the comments received from one offender on a CCO who said;

This order has been good – I told CCS when my uncle got sick and they were a bit flexible. CCS have been more helpful recently too. For example, they had sent me to do community work at the cemetery where the funeral was, but they changed it because it was too stressful for me.

There are opportunities for greater flexibility but it will require greater autonomy in decision-making at the local level. That may mean devolving decision-making authority to non-Government organisations and, in some cases, to individuals such as the Local Justice Workers. Such an approach draws on the expertise of local (and sometimes community) leaders. If this were allowed then local decision-making will need to be made within defined boundaries but these might be negotiated on a case-by-case basis. The challenge is that devolved decision-making exposes the government to risks, particularly with regard to its accountability for the expenditure of public funds. A report on Commonwealth place-based service delivery initiatives (Wilks et al 2015) provides some examples of mechanisms that have been implemented that allow for devolved decision-making. These might offer the Victorian Government agencies some guidance on the options that are available.

11.6. Joined up working

Joined-up and collaborative working is an integral requirement of successful place-based initiatives. It is also an aim of the AJA. This approach recognises that no one organisation can provide solutions to all of the issues driving offending behaviours. Joined-up working was demonstrated to some extent by all the initiatives reviewed and achieving the necessary 'flow' is a continuing aspiration throughout the system. The concept of 'flow' or continuity of care was a major theme in discussion of this report by the Evaluation Steering Committee.

Two initiatives best illustrate how a joined-up approach is fundamental in seeking to address issues.

The Case Management Review Meetings bring together a CCS Aboriginal Case Manager and other case managers, a local Aboriginal Elder, DHHS disability and child protection officers, the VALS Local Justice Workers, the RAJAC's Executive Officer, the SALO and local community organisations with the client on a CCO. The aim is to deliver tailored, culturally appropriate wrap-around plans to the client. Presented cases are 'unpacked' collectively and the group devises a raft of strategies to address poor engagement and compliance.

This approach allows for greater coherence around individual client needs. Greater coherence is also provided through the joined-up approach adopted for the Koori Women's Diversion Program delivered through the local ACCO. MDAS employs a KWDP case manager and a case worker. They are well supported within the organisation's Social and Emotional Wellbeing team. Interviewees reported that the program offers holistic wrap-around support so that women can navigate the justice system and its silos. The program links women to MDAS and other services (ensuring that the women can choose which services) and provides intensive case management for as long as it is needed.

11.7. Responding to the Key Evaluation Questions

11.7.1. What have the outcomes of the AJA3 been in each location? Have there been any unintended impacts?

Given the multiple systemic and contextual causes of the over-representation of Aboriginal Victorians in the criminal justice system, the AJA will only ever be a complementary strategy in efforts to reduce this. Initiatives and programs implemented under the umbrella of the AJA are achieving positive outcomes in the regions, although the overarching aim to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system has not been achieved. There have been a number of factors that have contributed to this, as discussed in Section 3, and these factors have been beyond the control of the AJA partners. In many cases the impact of regulatory or legislative change on Aboriginal and other vulnerable communities is not sufficiently considered, particularly given the disproportionate negative impact that much of this change renders. It would be beneficial if consideration of such impact were prescribed for those with responsibility for the development of new or amended legislation to try to lessen the potential for adverse unintended outcomes.

Recommendation 1: that the Victorian Government develop and put in place structures and processes to ensure consideration of the potential impact of new or amended legislation to try to lessen the potential for adverse unintended outcomes for Aboriginal people (children, young people and adults), including:

- that the Department of Justice and Regulation liaise with Office of the Commissioner for Better Regulation to determine the need for a revision to the Victorian Guide to Regulation to indicate where Local Impact Assessments (LIAs) and Regulatory Impact Assessments (RIAs) should specifically describe any disproportionate impacts of legislative/regulatory change in the justice sector on Victorian Aboriginals.
- that the Department of Justice and Regulation liaise with the Department of Premier and Cabinet to determine whether changes to the Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 and/or its regulations, or the Premier's Guidelines are appropriate to ensure impacts on Aboriginal people are adequately assessed.

There have been significant contributions made towards delivering on the AJA's six strategic objectives across all regions in varying ways.

Each of the regions has specific, and often unique, characteristics contributing to the specific criminal justice issues encountered by Aboriginal communities in those regions. These have been described in Sections 7 through 10. A number of AJA initiatives have been implemented in each of the justice regions and have not specifically been designed in response to the unique context (and so are not considered 'place-based' in the truest definition of the term). However, even these centrally designed programs do respond to context in their local implementation. One useful example worth exploring is the Koori Courts. This AJA initiative follows the same overarching model regardless of the region they operate but they take advantage of the presence of connected Elders and Respected Persons in the region to not only provide cultural relevancy but also to ensure that those coming before the court are facing Elders from their own community who understand the local environment and the contributing factors to offending behaviours. The involvement of the local Elders contextualises the discussion and decision-making in the 'place' where the actions are taking place. Although the design of the Koori Courts program is not strictly place-based, their implementation largely is. There is evidence

that other centrally designed AJA initiatives operate locally in the same manner as the Koori Courts. That is, there is sufficient autonomy in the regions to allow for many programs to be responsive to the conditions in which they are implemented.

There are few examples of initiatives that more truly align to a place-based approach. A prime example we highlight is the Koori Women's Diversion Program piloted in the Loddon Mallee region. As discussed in Section 8.7.2, the KWDP was not rolled out by government in a standard format, but was designed in, and with, the local community to suit the local context, local needs and the available service mix, that is, the community strengths. While there are core principles guiding implementation particularly around intensive case management, operational structures and details are specific and responsive to the Mildura context. For example, the pilot commenced with a plan for six months of engagement for each client but soon established that the particular clients being serviced had complex needs requiring longer engagement with the program to make best use of it. For some clients with very complex needs, 12 months engaged was still not enough.

We have described other initiatives that have been highlighted by stakeholders in each of the four regions as being particularly successful (in Sections 7 through 10) and we have pointed to other AJA initiatives in Section 5. Even then, these do not fully capture all of the program activity that has taken place under the AJA, rather it refers to the larger-scale activities implemented by government for the most part. There has been smaller scale activity initiated more locally and this is achieving positive results for Aboriginal people in those locations.

Each of the regions has been able to access varying amounts of grant funding for short-term initiatives that respond to local needs and that have been developed locally. The amount of funding that has been sought has varied. Some regions have attracted hundreds of thousands of dollars, others have had more limited amounts. Interviews with program proponents and other interested stakeholders have consistently raised a number of issues with the reliance on these, often ad hoc, funding opportunities and some of these are discussed below.

The first issue, noted in the 'responding to context' discussion above (Section 11.4) relates to the capability and capacity of organisations to apply for the funding. While applications are typically made by larger ACCOs that have the capability, they are often constrained by their own internal resource capacity to complete the often lengthy application process. Smaller organisations have the added constraint of limited internal capability to complete applications – their focus being on service delivery.

A second issue raised in regard to grant funding is that it will generally be short-term, typically one to two years but sometimes six months. This limits the ability to make far-reaching inroads into the complex problems that organisations are seeking to address. We also heard that some grants do not provide for ongoing funding applications at the completion of one round to continue the work commenced. The result of this is a series of small-scale, less ambitious actions that equate to 'tinkering at the edges'.

Administering grant funding and reporting on outcomes to the funding bodies is time and resource intensive and consumes financial resources. Many grant recipients noted that the provision in grants for this administrative function is insufficient. One recipient noted that it often only accounts for 20 per cent of the total administrative effort. It is necessary to have a high level of accountability in the management of grants. It is equally important that grant recipients are able to show what the funding is achieving in terms of outcomes and for this information to be shared with the funding body. For this to occur requires that grant recipients have sufficient resources for management and evaluation. This will either need to be a pre-condition of approval or the grant must allow for these activities to take place within the funding provided (i.e. sufficient funding should be allocated to management functions). Recommendations 6 and 7 in Section 11.7.4 refers to these points.

In terms of unintended impacts, we have not heard of any that have been adverse. One impact that might be considered adverse is the considerable demands placed upon people in various liaison type roles, although they would not describe it as such. The success they are having in their roles in supporting community members through the justice system means that they are called upon well beyond their operational hours and to assist with matters that are beyond their job description. This suggests two things; 1) that they are providing a valuable and necessary service and 2) that more liaison officers are required.

Recommendation 2: that additional Aboriginal liaison officer positions (LJWs, YJWs, ACLOs and SALOs) be established in the regions to match specific regional needs. Support structures should be put in place to connect Liaison Officers regardless of whether they reside in or are funded by justice agencies or are located in non-justice agencies. Further, Liaison Officers should be provided with personal development opportunities through the provision of training and/or education relevant to the many roles they play. Other support should be considered, for example, access to a vehicle to allow for out of hours assistance to be provided. Remuneration packages will need to account for the work that officers undertake outside of normal business hours including weekends.

11.7.2. To what extent has the AJA3 improved positive contact with the criminal justice system and increased access to, and use of, justice related programs for Aboriginal youth and adults?

From its inception the AJA has promoted an approach to justice that is more therapeutic and less punitive. It focuses on early intervention and diversion aiming to minimise contact with the justice system to the greatest extent possible. As a partnership that includes non-justice agencies such as Education and Health and Human Services, the AJA encourages a holistic approach to deter children from criminal activity and thus avoid contact with the criminal justice system. If contact does occur, diversion options are in place that lessen the severity of that contact and the likelihood of further offending. If diversion is not an option, as would be the case in serious offences, offenders may be imprisoned or managed in the community on a CCO. In both cases, opportunities to participate in treatment and/or rehabilitation should be available to help the offender in addressing the drivers of their offending behaviours.

The forums that have been established under the AJA (AJF, RAJAC, KRG, LAJAC) provide a setting where government and community can come together to discuss issues, learn from and about each other and propose solutions. These forums are highly respected. Representatives from government agencies talked about how their understanding of the importance of culture to Aboriginal people and of the challenges they encounter had improved. The improved understanding and cultural awareness had led them to think differently about how the justice system and other systems can better respond. All of the agencies had, or were about to, implement strategies, policies and practices that are more culturally responsive with an aim for this responsiveness to become their new 'business as usual'.

As a partner in the AJA, Corrections Victoria has implemented a number of structural changes to better respond to issues identified through the AJF. The agency aims to deliver services that are not an add-on to already existing mainstream services but are designed and delivered with cultural relevance. Where possible the agency seeks support from the Koori Reference Group for programs that are designed specifically for Aboriginal offenders and prisoners.. According to the Commissioner for Corrections Victoria, "the AJA is in our DNA" and this view is filtering throughout the organisation.

Another AJA partner reporting organisational change influenced by the AJA is Victoria Police. Victoria Police have established Aboriginal employment targets in its *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Plan* which advocates for the creation of employment and career development opportunities for Aboriginal Victorians. Also, the creation of the centrally located Priority Communities Division responsible for supporting frontline members to better engage with the most vulnerable members of the community has assisted in improving relationships between police and the Aboriginal community. The Chief Commissioner notes;

[it] has now sharpened its teeth a fair bit on its engagement with the Indigenous community. It is more agile in dealing with issues in the community they see across the board. That's a central piece for us and they are central to our involvement to the AJF. They guide and shepherd and coordinate it. They can get involved in all parts of the organisation so have a role in directing our policy (pers. comm. Chief Commissioner of Police, 22 September 2017)

In the Northern Metropolitan region Victoria Police have established the Northern Police Aboriginal Consultative Committee (NPACC), to drive and lead the Koori Family Violence Police Protocols and improve working relationships between Victoria Police and the Aboriginal community. The Committee has been instrumental in guiding police as they sought to improve what had been very poor interactions with Aboriginal community members. Relationships have been improved through initiatives that bring police and community together in a casual context. The Massive Murray paddle, a 404km canoeing event over a week, provides an opportunity for police officers and young Aboriginal children to come together to paddle stretches of the river. This enables conversation, enhances relationships and helps to build trust. A quote taken from the website of Aboriginal Victoria about the event highlights the impacts from this joint participation³⁷;

It is really, really awesome... You see day-to-day in Ballarat the impact of when you have positive relationships with police officers... If anything happens in Ballarat the young people will call the police they know from the marathon, to get advice or for help... If that was run as a continuous thing, even if like a diversion thing, the kids who do it wouldn't think of committing a crime in their wildest dreams.

Corrections Victoria also provides a good case study in responsive practice. The treatment programs referred to in the report are not always available, and if they are, are not always accessed by offenders and prisoners. A number of factors contribute to program accessibility. Access to programs in prisons is not always available for prisoners on shorter sentences or those on remand. Prisoners that do have sentences of a length that enables access to programs have sometimes found themselves transferred to a different prison that either does not have an appropriate program or the wait list is so long it precludes access. Where programs are available they may not be culturally appropriate or gender specific. Programs delivered in the community to offenders on CCOs or prisoners on parole orders also lack cultural specificity in many cases. This both diminishes their attractiveness to and effectiveness for Aboriginal participants. Corrections Victoria have sought to introduce more Aboriginal specific programs into their correctional facilities so that Aboriginal prisoners and detainees receive appropriate and culturally relevant services. For offenders in the community, Corrections Victoria typically support ACCOs to deliver the programs. We have heard, anecdotally, that these programs are returning positive outcomes. Evaluations of programs like the Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place are reporting good results and these are likely to improve as further learnings are fed back into program design. Corrections Victoria has demonstrated a commitment to improve the cultural relevance of their programs and to improve the cultural appropriateness of their facilities. The introduction of 'Koori' spaces within prisons has helped to make prisoners feel safer

³⁷ <https://www.vic.gov.au/aboriginalvictoria/policy/victorian-aboriginal-affairs-framework/aboriginal-affairs-report-2017/safe-families-and-communities-and-equitable-justice-outcomes.html>

and for some, has reduced their anxiety at being imprisoned. There is more work to be done to extend their service offerings to all locations but it is apparent that the changes made to date have altered the culture internally and improved the situation for Aboriginal people who find themselves under the management of Corrections Victoria. We have heard from staff at CCS offices that they have the ability to operate with some flexibility in their management of offenders in the community (refer Section 7.7). This has enabled them to deliver their services/support in a far less formal manner and this has improved their engagement with offenders and offender compliance. Similar positive results have been achieved with the introduction of the Case Management Review Meetings in the Northern Metropolitan region as discussed in Section 9.7.2. Improving access to a collection of services has also been enhanced through initiatives such as the Justice Bus (Section 7.7.2) in Barwon South West and the Aboriginal Community Fines Initiative (Section 10.7.2) in the Southern Metropolitan region. These are instances where the service providers are going to the recipient and not the reverse. Again, positive results have been achieved.

It is evident in the strategies and policies announced by Victorian Government agencies that they have maintained a commitment to addressing the inequalities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians. The AJA has played a role in highlighting and keeping a focus on the issues that contribute to these inequalities. The organisational shifts are making a difference to building relationships of trust but there is further work to do. Access to culturally appropriate, and more importantly, Aboriginal designed and delivered programs for offenders and prisoners needs to be extended. On the matter of treatment and rehabilitation there remains a lack of evidence on the effectiveness of such programs and further evaluations of what works is required. This is particularly so for Aboriginal designed and delivered programs.

That agency staff are adopting more flexible approach to their service delivery is encouraging. These approaches help to improve access by removing some of the structural barriers to service access. Continuing the practice may require giving greater autonomy to individual staff members and devolving authority to regional, and even local, centres. It has been shown to work and investment in this should reap benefits for the agency and for the people they are serving.

Recommendation 3: that consideration be given to expanding the number of Aboriginal designed and delivered programs for Aboriginal offenders (young and adult) in the community and in prisons. Resources should be directed towards building the evidence base of what works in programs to address offending behaviours including treatment programs for AOD and mental health problems. Some consideration should be given to expanding accessibility to programs for Aboriginal prisoners on short sentences. Continuity of services has been highlighted as problematic for adult prisoners and young detainees transitioning to the community. Improving the transfer of information from prison to community service providers will help with this.

11.7.3. To what extent does the AJA3 complement, make use of and build upon individual, community and organisational strengths, resources and services?

The AJA3 advocates for place-based strategies and approaches that respond to particular local contexts. Place-based approaches are reliant upon local individuals becoming engaged with and investing their time and efforts identifying the problems and developing appropriate solutions. The AJA3 is a partnership and it advocates for partnership ways of working and it facilitates bringing multiple organisations and people together to create a synergy of effort. Sharing knowledge and

information in such a partnership builds capacity and capability in all partners. We have seen examples where the partnerships have allowed for stronger relationships to develop between government and community (Section 7.7.1) and within government agencies (Section 5.1.3).

The effectiveness of the RAJAC and LAJAC is contingent upon the strength and passion of individual members. In that regard the AJA3 is making good use of the individuals working together towards the objectives of the Agreement, but this is not without a cost. That cost is the demand placed upon each of the individuals in terms of time and effort. Aboriginal community members participating in LAJAC, RAJAC and the AJF are mostly engaged with the AJA in addition to full-time roles. They are very active in their community and are members of other boards and committees. In more recent years, their time has also been taken up with engaging in discussion around self-determination and the development of a treaty. Additionally, several State Government agencies have established AJA-like structures which also place demands on Aboriginal leaders' time. While the involvement of community leaders in the Forum and RAJACs brings great insight and benefit to the AJA, it is taxing. It would help if there were more members of the community able to step into leadership roles. This requires an investment in younger Aboriginal men and women to development their skills and abilities to facilitate their participation in the AJA. The investment can come from government in the form of awareness raising, leadership programs, networking opportunities, cadetships and mentoring. The investment can also come from older community members and Elders acting as mentors and role models for younger people as they develop their own skills.

Recommendation 4 – that the Department of Justice and Regulation

- revise the RAJAC operating framework to allow and encourage the involvement of 'lay' community members
- develop a strategy for encouraging greater involvement of Aboriginal men and women, including young people, in the Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees that includes a pathway to leadership roles.

The involvement of ACCOs and other Aboriginal organisations or bodies (e.g. gathering places) as the prime delivery agent for services to Aboriginal people is central to the AJA's place-based approach. Led by Aboriginal people, these organisations are at the heart of, and chief advocates for community. They are best placed to understand community needs and deliver responsive services. Many initiatives of the AJA3 are managed or delivered through ACCOs. The Local Justice Workers, which we have identified as a highly successful initiative, are recruited into, and managed by ACCOs. Partnerships between justice services, local Aboriginal community organisations, and mainstream community health services have been developed to address a range of issues including alcohol and drug use. ACCOs are delivering many of the rehabilitation and treatment programs for prisoners and offenders. Each of these initiatives are supported through the AJA3.

This report has discussed numerous examples of impactful programs, but gaps do remain. One major gap is simply the few services that are available. Not all regions have a good coverage of ACCOs, the Southern Metropolitan region being a case in point. There is then a reliance on mainstream services that may not always be culturally appropriate. Other regions may have one or two excellent services but a gap in some other service. The major gaps across all areas are in post-release housing, alcohol and other drug treatment, mental health services, residential treatment/healing options, and transition to study and employment programs.

Not only has the AJA3 contributed to strengthening Aboriginal organisations, the Agreement (from its commencement) has been instrumental in fostering cultural change within Government. Our interviews with non-Aboriginal government staff often included discussion of the role of cultural awareness training in raising awareness, shifting attitudes and encouraging new relationships. Aboriginal employment strategies that have led to more Aboriginal employees have had a similar impact on the non-Aboriginal workforce – improving understanding, forming new friendships. This is commended and must be continued as we recognise that Aboriginal workforce development is a long-term task. None of the agencies that participated in the interviews indicated they had done all they can to improve their service delivery and recruit more Aboriginal employees. Each of them acknowledged that more could be done and were actively seeking to introduce new policies and strategies that would ultimately have flow-on effects to the AJA.

Grants and other funding

It is common for Government grants and program funding to be limited to Aboriginal organisations (or non-Aboriginal organisations auspicing to Aboriginal organisations) as they are considered the most appropriate location for the services to reside. The criteria that prescribes what organisations are eligible to receive funding are one way to direct resources to organisations that can achieve internal capability strengthening while also assisting their clients. The funding can assist an organisation in building on its existing service offering, furthering recruitment, and encouraging skills development. However, there may be downsides to government funding for some of these organisations, particularly smaller entities whose existence is reliant upon ongoing receipt of funding.

We have discussed the administrative burden on organisations in applying for and managing grants and the lack of recognition of the financial cost of grant management (Section **Error! Reference source not found.**). We have also discussed the difficulty in implementing long-term programs with funding issued over short time periods. We have heard of instances of organisations having to reduce their service provision because they have been unable to attract continuing funding for specific programs that have been delivering positive results. There is uncertainty for those organisations that have few other funding options outside of government grants. The impact of loss of funding is particularly harsh for recipients who had previously been receiving services from the organisation and who are often faced with no other alternatives in the locality they reside.

AJA3 includes a specific objective for community capacity building, specifically to:

Build capacity in and enable Koori communities to improve local justice outcomes and increase community safety, through place-based approaches to crime and violence.

In summary, initiatives implemented under the AJA3 and the structures that have been established to support it are contributing to community strengthening. Numerous examples point to instances where individuals and organisations have taken advantage of opportunities to build on existing skills or develop new skills.

There is a sense, however, that some of the upskilling that is occurring is a coincidental, albeit positive, by-product of initiatives rather than a purposeful intent. Undeniably there are adverse effects on Aboriginal organisations and the people they are assisting when funding is withdrawn. We do not suggest that funding to be automatically granted but there may be opportunities to improve grant schemes to minimise the effects of an abrupt loss of funding. It will take some ‘out-of-the box’ thinking to do this but we have no doubt that the talent that sits around the AJF table is such that new solutions can be explored.

Recommendation 5 – that grants programs incorporate specific requirements for recipients to include capacity building for their Aboriginal workforce or for the community they are serving and include this as a measure of success. If this recommendation is implemented then funding amounts will need to reflect the additional resources required to action this new requirement.

11.7.4. What specific factors (geography, history, service mix, location, etc.) influence outcomes in the locations and need to be considered in applying findings from this area to other locations?

Where success has been achieved the overarching factor that has contributed to that success is strength of identity and strength of culture. Where challenges have been difficult to overcome, we commonly heard that ‘people had lost their way’.

The Barwon South West region has been held as the exemplar, the model to be imitated. There is no doubt that Barwon South West is somewhat unique in comparison to other regions in this study. The individuals that participated in the evaluation referred to the cultural strength of the region and how that has encouraged greater direct engagement by Aboriginal community members in addressing the problems encountered by the whole community. There is a coherence in the region that allows for people to come together no matter what their language group. This coherence is not effortless. It has been created through the active and largely uninterrupted participation of Aboriginal leaders, young and old, over many generations, and of non-Aboriginal leaders in government and community. The AJA offers the structures (RAJAC and LAJAC) to enable this to happen.

The other three regions do not appear to have the same level of coherence and this is largely a function of migration and history. The two metropolitan regions have extremely diverse Aboriginal populations. That diversity comes in the form of their cultural attachments, their kinship affiliations and the lives they lead. There are also issues associated with population mobility and the difficulties this brings in continuity of service delivery. The Loddon Mallee region is also subject to high levels of population mobility, particularly in the north. Although these regions are challenged by these factors the presence of numerous strong ACCOs in Loddon Mallee and Northern Metropolitan offer a focal point for activity and action to take place. In many cases these ACCOs are taking the lead in supporting their communities.

The Loddon Mallee Aboriginal Reference Group (LMARG) brings together five of the region’s ACCOs (Mallee District Aboriginal Services, Bendigo and District Aboriginal Co-operative, Njernda Aboriginal Corporation, Murray Valley Aboriginal Co-operative and Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation) to advocate on behalf of their community members and ensure that culturally appropriate services are being delivered. This Group invites mainstream services to participate in their quarterly planning sessions to cooperatively develop innovative solutions to the regions health problems. The LMARG is pursuing its agenda through self-determination which empowers its members and, ultimately, the regional community.

While the Southern Metropolitan region does not have the same range of ACCOs it does have strong leadership within the ACCOs, the Gathering Places and on the RAJAC, although it appears to be somewhat uncoordinated, occurring independently of each other. The challenge for the Southern Metropolitan region is that responsibility for leadership rests with few individuals in a region with the largest Aboriginal population of all regions in Victoria. The large population should be seen as a positive as it suggests there are opportunities to tap into the skills and experiences of the people

living there. Doing so will take some effort and investment in raising awareness, establishing networks and providing opportunities for engagement. At present the Gathering Places seem to be the ideal location for this to take place. However, their current resourcing is stretched and insecure. Greater security of funding would provide the Gathering Places with the necessary certainty and the financial capacity to introduce programs aimed at encouraging stronger engagement, particularly of younger Aboriginal men and women.

Recommendation 6 – that the Department of Justice and Regulation work with other agencies and local governments to investigate options for providing resources (financial and in-kind) that support the operation of Gathering Places (or similar grass roots organisations) as spaces where Aboriginal people can come together in a safe and welcoming environment and where programs and services can be delivered.

Some key informants and the Evaluation Steering Group Steering Group reflected on the challenges face by Chairs and Executive Officers in maintaining RAJACs and LAJACs. A need for Project Officer support was felt necessary, as well as ongoing professional support and development. Challenges included clarity of role and confidence in its legitimacy, which can be complex. Chairs may also be government employees. There is particular tension for EOs when identifying as community and fulfilling their EO role: their government status means, for example, they are not officially part of Koori Caucus. One EO described their role as ‘driving with no control’ yet being answerable to two different leaders, their DJR line manager and the RAJAC Chair.

Recommendation 7 – the RAJACs and LAJACs are important structures in the regions allowing for government and community to come together to discuss justice issues and to develop solutions. Their continued operation is essential to maintain the momentum of the AJA and they will need to adequately resourced to allow for continued impact. We recommend that Government continue to support the resourcing of these structures and to develop strategies to encourage increased participation by both community and government representatives in the regions. The specific roles of the RAJAC Chair and EO must be better supported through the provision of sufficient financial, physical and human resources (such as Project Officers, professional development) to enable improved engagement across the region they operate in.

One point we would like to highlight is the dependence of community organisations on government funding. The funding opportunities over the period of AJA3 included Frontline and CIP as well as grants provided through the Community Crime Prevention. Regardless of the source, access to the grants creates competition between regions and between organisations. Rather than promote competition it would be beneficial if the grants encouraged collaboration, particularly between organisations servicing the one region.

The competition for grant funding will tend to favour larger, better resourced and longer established organisations. Requiring collaborative applications can help those smaller, less well-resourced organisations to learn from the larger organisations, build their own internal capacity to apply for grants and deliver on programs they might not necessarily be involved in. Collaboration in this way levels the playing field between the different ACCOs throughout the state.

One further point about the grants that were available during AJA3: there appeared to be considerable overlap in the targets for the grant applications that were successful. Certainly, Frontline and CIP tended to favour projects aimed at youth. It was not clear why the two separate programs were established. Efficiencies are likely to be achieved in management through rolling the two programs into one.

Recommendation 8: that guidelines for grant programs encourage collaboration between organisations to develop programs and then implement them in a partnership way. In particular:

- to allow for relationships to be established and applications to be developed, sufficient time (at least three months) should be allowed between announcing the availability of the grant and the deadline for applications.
- to ensure local initiatives arise from and match local strengths and needs, allow adequate program time for community engagement and program co-design.
- **that the DJR set up a single grant mechanism**, in place of CIP and Frontline, for funding initiatives that are relevant to AJA objectives, allowing sufficient flexibility for applicants to determine their own focus.

11.7.5. What is the experience of Koori offenders and Koori youth as they engage with the 'service mix' under AJA3? Are there points in the system where Koori offenders are at risk of 'falling through the gaps'?

Data gathering to capture the youth perspective was limited in this evaluation as described in the Limitations (Section 4.5 above). In large part our understanding of youth issues has been confined to the perceptions and views of adults working with youth, and in some limited cases with young people working in the community sector. The discussion that follows presents our findings on the views of mainly adult offenders, although we are able to present some thoughts regarding AJA responses to youth and young people.

The experience of adults

As discussed in Section 6, interviews with adult prisoners and offenders revealed common experiences. In most cases first contact with the criminal justice system occurred at an early age. It often followed disengagement from schooling and escape from a dysfunctional home. There ensued a cycle of sanction and reoffending leading to imprisonment. This was true of many, although certainly not all, prisoners we spoke with.

Prisoners' stories diverged when the discussion moved to rehabilitation and treatment. There were varying views on access to appropriate programs and of their effectiveness. More favourable views were expressed about Aboriginal specific programs, and especially about those delivered by Aboriginal service providers. However, access to these programs is not universal in either the prison setting or in community. We have heard that some successful programs have been discontinued, sometimes through lack of funding and at other times the result of program staff leaving. It does appear that some programs are contingent upon one or two individuals driving the delivery and this makes the programs susceptible to ending when one individual leaves.

Programs offered in the community will often be delivered by ACCOs, with many of these organisations serving the local language group. There are occasions where offenders are not on country and are reluctant to use these service providers. In cases where the offender is on country there may be a reluctance to use these local services because of shame. Where these offenders have conditions to

attend a program the only viable alternative is to attend a mainstream service provider who may or may not offer culturally appropriate programs.

Another access issue identified in interviews with offenders and their case managers relates to travel. One CCS Case Manager noted the difficulties offenders face in trying to access the Aboriginal Programs Unit in East Melbourne as it requires a full day of travel to attend a program. That the program is delivered off country only adds to the reluctance to attend.

Several initiatives discussed in this report deliver services in the community. These are helping to remove barriers inhibiting problem resolution. The Justice Bus alleviates the need for people with justice issues to travel the long distance to Melbourne to obtain a birth certificate as a first step in obtaining a driver's licence. Equally, the Aboriginal Community Fines Initiative is helping people to resolve multiple issues in one place, in one day. Both initiatives are helping to reduce the levels of distrust and anxiety that many Aboriginal people have in dealing with Government.

Over the period of the AJA3 there has been an increase in the availability of culturally relevant programs across regional Victoria, but the number is insufficient to meet demand. Those that are operating are achieving good results and, more importantly, are sought after by Aboriginal offenders and prisoners. The success of these programs has been attributed to the holistic approach taken to 'healing the spirit' and not simply focusing on criminal behaviours. Such an approach focuses on reconnecting men and women with, or further strengthening, their culture. strengthening their spirit and connection to country, and building respect for land, self and others³⁸. Such approaches do not offer a short-term fix. They are dealing with complex, long-standing traumas that may take many years to fully resolve, if they ever do. The government and community stakeholders we interviewed understand this, but the systems sometimes fall short. We would like to see a system that recognises change is a long-term prospect and values the shorter-term achievements people accomplish through program participation. Recidivism is a key indicator of program success but should not be the only indicator. Attendance at, and completion of a program should be acknowledged as an achievement in itself. It is an achievement in overcoming barriers and commencing a journey towards long-term change and the value of this should not be under-estimated.

Further and ongoing investment in Aboriginal service providers delivering Aboriginal programs will allow for greater access and is likely to achieve better justice outcomes in the long-term. We have not provided the specifics of what makes such programs successful - our evidence is anecdotal but it is compelling. At its heart, the evidence suggests that more Aboriginal service provision is key. This will require the development of an Aboriginal workforce with capability and skills in areas of need, within government agencies and in ACCOs. The AJA can assist in this in encouraging the partners to explore opportunities to promote education in health or justice services, promote entry to professions in these fields and to build upon their Aboriginal employment strategies.

Recommendation 9: that the Aboriginal Justice Forum devote time and effort to the development of a justice workforce strategy, including strategies to boost Aboriginal employment in agencies and organisations assisting with the rehabilitation and treatment of offenders and prisoners/detainees

³⁸ Refer to www.atca.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/.../Wulgunggo-Ngalu-Learning-Place.pdf

The experience of youth and young people

As noted previously, our data gathering centred on the experience of adults in the justice system although the subject of youth was never far from the discussion. Certainly, the RAJACs had identified youth as a priority focus area. There was a real desire to implement actions that would deter criminal behaviour and prevent first and ongoing contact with the criminal justice system. The focus on youth at RAJACs reflected a conviction that, with the right support, children would choose to refrain from criminal or anti-social behaviours.

Funding provided through the Community Initiatives Program, the Frontline Youth Program and the Koori Youth Crime Prevention Grants has delivered over \$2.5 million towards youth specific projects in the four study regions. The projects have largely focused on reconnecting young people, aged up to 24 years, with their culture, strengthening positive attitudes and self-esteem as well as providing opportunities to develop new skills. The data does not indicate whether the youth involved in these projects had been in contact with the criminal justice system. We have not been able to access any reporting on the whether the intended outcomes for these programs have been achieved.

Maintaining a focus on youth was being pursued at the regional (RAJAC) and state (AJF) level. There have been numerous short-term community programs and many government initiatives targeting youth. It was interesting that when regional stakeholders were asked to identify good practice that the programs most referenced were targeted to adults. We are uncertain as to why this is the case but offer the following suggestion. The strong desire to prevent offending behaviour before it happens requires programs that are typically the responsibility of non-justice agencies, that is, agencies with responsibility for family services, education, housing, health services and welfare provision. These agencies do sit at the AJA forums and have identified actions they will undertake to contribute to AJA objectives. If these actions are successful we can assume that the young person will have been diverted from the criminal justice system. If we are looking to measure a justice outcome (as opposed to an education or health outcome) we would have to measure the lack of contact and this is difficult. The adult programs that were offered as examples of good practice have direct justice outcomes. Their success (or not) is immediately evident. We wonder whether the inability to show the direct link to justice outcomes may create perception that the programs are not 'properly' justice programs.

We speculate that the transfer of youth justice to the DJR may exacerbate the disconnect between non-justice agencies and the business units of the DJR. While Youth Justice sat within the DHHS there was a connection between justice and other social services like health, housing, drug and alcohol, etc., at least at an agency level. It is too soon to know what effect the transfer of Youth Justice will have but it is worth keeping a watching brief on this at the regional and state level.

Recommendation 10: that a future evaluation have a primary focus on children and young people up to the age of 24, capturing prevention, early intervention and justice needs and interventions and including an evaluation of responses at key transitions in age and in pathways through services for young men and young women.

11.7.6. How well does the current mix of AJA3 activity (including processes, programs and services) respond to local community needs and drivers of Aboriginal contact with the justice system in each location?

AJA3 activity is variable across and within the four regions. The RAJAC in each region has been instrumental in identifying the main justice issues of concern. The RAJAC (and LAJACs) have a good understanding of the drivers for contact with the criminal justice system for their communities. As a

result, each RAJAC has identified one or two principal areas of focus and promote actions around those focus areas. This approach concentrates effort and would be expected to offer greater benefit than trying to resolve multiple issues simultaneously which is likely to stretch already thin resources.

Some constraints to action on specific issues are the result of centralised decision-making. Government agencies have some, but not extensive, autonomy at the regional level which limits their ability to respond to emerging issues in a timely way. In some cases, it requires a regional manager to refer the matter to their head office for a decision on what actions to put in place. This was the situation with the issues that were evident on the Prahran Housing Estate (Section 10.3).

Another factor impacting on the ability of the RAJAC to make progress on identified issues is the level of influence it has on government agencies (and others) that have their own priorities. These may not always coincide with the priorities of the collective RAJAC members. Government agencies have their own strategies to be pursued and for an agency like Education, for example, their strategies are not typically aimed towards improving justice outcomes. There is an acknowledgement that improving education outcomes can bring about improvement in justice outcomes (e.g. by keeping children engaged in education they are less likely to engage in criminal or anti-social activity) but it is not core business for the Department of Education.

It appears that the influence of RAJACs is increased where there are strong and active ACCOs and Aboriginal leadership advocating for action. It is improved where the ACCOs and leaders work collaboratively towards a shared goal rather than pursuing a singular organisational objective. The RAJAC provides a place to come together to agree on and prioritise objectives. The Koori Women's Diversion Program in Mildura is a good example where a program has been developed in response to a specific identified issue. The issue of women's imprisonment is complex but there was agreement that it was an issue that needed a different way of thinking about how to resolve it. The resolution is multi-faceted and depends upon collaboration and cooperation between key service providers.

In a separate evaluation of the partnership structures of the AJA we have advocated for RAJACs to revisit their Regional Justice Action Plans identifying the key issues in the region and providing a range of actions to address them. Our recommendation centres on limiting the number of actions to two or three priority areas and focusing on these over a period of 12 months. We reiterate that recommendation here.

Recommendation 11: that the Koori Justice Unit work with RAJACs to prioritise two to three key issues within their Regional Justice Action Plan that will be the focus of attention in the ensuing 12 months.

We have noted in the report that Barwon South West might best be thought as two regions – one centred around Geelong and the other the areas west of Geelong and including Warrnambool, Portland and Heywood. We consider the context in these two areas is sufficiently different to warrant a separation between the two. It is not that we advocate for the justice region to be redefined as such but if place-based initiatives are being considered for the Barwon South West region then there should not be an expectation that a program or initiative designed for Warrnambool will work in Geelong, and vice versa. Following place-based best practice this this would not occur as it would have been identified in the planning for the program or initiative. However, programs that are developed centrally and implemented locally may not necessarily take account of the contextual differences. The situation described for Barwon South West could equally apply in Loddon Mallee with the area around Ballarat being considered distinct from the area to the north around Mildura.

Similarly, in the Southern Metropolitan region there is a difference between communities in and around Dandenong and those further west.

We also note that the regional boundaries assigned by the DJR do not necessarily align to cultural boundaries that have meaning to the Aboriginal communities living there. It may be appropriate to redefine the geographic boundaries such that they more accurately reflect the communities living in them and the services that are available to those communities.

Recommendation 12: that, to better reflect different social, economic and environmental contexts, DJR determine the need for and benefits that might result from assessing needs and planning the delivery of AJA place-based initiatives at the level of sub-regions, towns and communities.

11.7.7. What are the opportunities to improve service, coverage and integration of AJA initiatives to progress justice outcomes in the locations?

This question has largely been covered in the discussion in the preceding sections and is not repeated here. Our key recommendations for improving service delivery centre on increasing the capacity (i.e. number of individual and organisational service providers across the state) and capability (i.e. the skills and expertise of Aboriginal employees in community and government organisations) of those with a responsibility or delivering justice services to Aboriginal offenders and prisoners.

The evidence-base for what works in justice services is lacking. Few evaluations, this one included, have explored the factors that make for successful programs in great depth. We have skimmed across the surface to identify that programs delivered with cultural relevance have shown to be successful at promoting engagement with the program and improving the social and emotional wellbeing of participants. To what extent this translates to reducing offending behaviours cannot be definitively stated. More research is needed. There are likely opportunities for collaboration between government agencies and academic institutions across the country. Similarly, agencies in Victoria might look to establishing collaborative research proposals with their counterparts in other jurisdictions. If the cost of research can be shared then the burden on one agency acting alone can be significantly reduced.

Recommendation 13: that opportunities to collaborate on research projects to evaluate success factors for program delivery to Aboriginal offenders and prisoners be investigated with a view to developing new or improving existing service delivery. The findings from the research should be publicly available on completion of the study to further knowledge sharing.

11.7.8. Is it possible to assess the cost and benefits of the AJA in each location?

We strongly believe there is a high potential for false calculations to emerge from an economic assessment of a complex program addressing a complex problem. The challenge is captured well by Payne (2006) who cautions on the use of cost evaluations in evaluations of specialty courts:

Cost evaluations, particularly cost–benefit evaluations are a crude measure of financial success because they only account for nominal benefits which can be valued in financial units. Such evaluations cannot determine or measure the other benefits derived from a specialty court program. For example, what monetary value can be placed on a participant’s capacity to re-kindle their relationship with an estranged family member? ... In this sense, cost evaluations ... often underestimate the true benefits delivered by a program to a participant and the community.

This could apply equally as well to an evaluation of the AJA. In our view the AJA presents even more challenges to cost evaluation than a specialty court. Just one case in point, how do we measure the costs and benefits of the hours that proponents of the AJA put into resolving issues that go beyond their paid role? In conducting this evaluation, we have been hard-pressed to definitely identify some programs as being under the umbrella of the AJA. Should we consider a program delivered by the Department of Education that helps to keep Aboriginal children in school as an AJA program even if it achieves positive justice outcomes. There are many more contributions that would not, and some might argue, cannot be monetised.

We are not suggesting that no analysis of costs and benefits should be conducted. We do caution that a diligent cost-benefit analysis will need to ensure all costs are identified, even those that are difficult to quantify. It is generally more difficult to quantify benefits. Economic benefits are generally more accessible and quantifiable than social benefits. In either case, there is a need for good data and this is patchy at best.

Programs and initiatives implemented under the AJA are being delivered by government agencies and community organisations, including some small organisations with very limited resourcing. We have encountered no robust evidence of the outcomes achieved by these programs. For most we have not been able to access any data on the activities conducted, nor outputs from those activities. This lack of data seriously undermines any efforts to understand the costs and benefits of the AJA. Until this data is routinely collected and shared with the KJU there is a real risk that an evaluation would inadequately account for all of the costs and all of the benefits.

Recommendation 14 – that systems for data collection during the implementation of Government programs be strengthened to monitor, track and evaluate the inputs, outputs and outcomes of the program. Further, where public funding is provided to community organisations these organisations should be supported to establish their own system for monitoring, tracking and evaluating the programs/projects enabled through the funding. Grant funding agreements should require grantees to provide ongoing monitoring data and a final evaluation report to the funding body throughout, and at the completion of the funding period. For AJA initiatives, such data should be made available to the KJU, if they are not the funder, to allow for the compilation of an AJA dataset that can be made available to future evaluation studies.

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Appendix A Stakeholders consulted

First name	Surname	Position/Title	Organisation
Joe	Day	Chair	Aboriginal Community Justice Panels
Justin	Homer	Member	Aboriginal Family Violence Partnership Forum
Antoinette	Braybrook	CEO	Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service
Darren	Smith	CEO	Aboriginal Housing Victoria
Esme	Bamblett (DR)	CEO	Aborigines Advancement League
Michael	Connelly	Youth Justice Worker	Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative
Karen	Heats		Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative
Jon	Kanoa	Director, Koori Family Services	Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative,
Rebecca	Westphal	Local Justice Worker	Bendigo and District Aboriginal Co-operative
Andrew	Jackomos	Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People	Commission for Aboriginal Children and Young People
Alannah	Easton	Supervisor, Court Case Manager	Corrections Victoria
Wayne	Harper	General Manager, Marngoneet Correctional Centre	Corrections Victoria
Janine	Holt	A/Manager Court Practice Bendigo CCS	Corrections Victoria
Tracy	Johnson	Manager Court Practice, Mildura CCS	Corrections Victoria
Tim	Kanoa	Former Manager of Naalmba Ganbu and Nerrlingu Yilam (Aboriginal Programs)	Corrections Victoria
Roberto	Lay	Advanced Case Manager, Broadmeadows CCS	Corrections Victoria
Michelle	Pellegrino	Justice Services Coordinator	Corrections Victoria
Damiano	Roda	Advanced Case Manager	Corrections Victoria
Alex	Rose	Aboriginal Parole Officer	Corrections Victoria
Luke	Searle	CCS Geelong Case Manager/Aboriginal Portfolio Manager	Corrections Victoria
Emelia	Senaya	Former Aboriginal Liaison Officer, Barwon Prison	Corrections Victoria
Jan	Shuard	Commissioner	Corrections Victoria
Gabrielle	Simmons	Aboriginal Parole Officer	Corrections Victoria
Tracey	Jones	General Manager, Dame Phyllis Frost Correctional Centre	Corrections Victoria
Lyndon	Turvey	Former Aboriginal Wellbeing Officer	Corrections Victoria
Raelene	Walker	Aboriginal Liaison Officer, Marngoneet	Corrections Victoria
Sally	Wolfe	Aboriginal Case Manager	Corrections Victoria
Aunty Lyn	Killeen	Aboriginal Liaison Officer, DPFCC	Corrections Victoria
Linda		Assessment & Transition Coordinator, DPFCC	Corrections Victoria
Rosa		Remand Coordinator, DPFCC	Corrections Victoria
Tom	Jose	Aboriginal Liaison Officer, Marngoneet	Corrections Victoria

First name	Surname	Position/Title	Organisation
Paul	Grant	Judge, Supreme Court of Victoria	Courts Services Victoria
Simone	Gristwood	Manager Koori Family Violence	Courts Services Victoria
Peter	Lauritson	Chief Magistrate	Courts Services Victoria
Wayne	McEwen	Koori Community Engagement Officer, Magistrates Court	Courts Services Victoria
Andrew	Gardiner	CEO	Dandenong & District Aborigines Co-operative Ltd
Angela	Singh	Executive Director, Koorie Outcomes Division, Early Childhood and School Education Group	Department of Education and Training
Nicole	Foy	Koorie Cultural Advisor, Lookout Centre, South Western Victoria Region	Department of Education and Training
Chris	Asquini	Deputy Secretary, Children, Families, Disability and Operations	Department of Health and Human Services
Anne	Congleton	Deputy Secretary, Community Participation, Health and Wellbeing Division	Department of Health and Human Services
Anita	Francis	DHHS Southern Metropolitan Region	Department of Health and Human Services
Nicola	Jeffers	Director, Central Highlands Area	Department of Health and Human Services
Lorraine	Langley	Acting Assistant Director, System Policy and Integration, Mental Health Branch	Department of Health and Human Services
Taryn	Lee	Acting Director, Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Branch	Department of Health and Human Services
Jenny	Lisas	DHHS Southern Metro	Department of Health and Human Services
Roxanne	Mayer-Marks	Aboriginal Liaison Officer	Department of Health and Human Services
Di	Mosseton	DHHS Southern Metro	Department of Health and Human Services
Phillip	Perry	Grampians Regional Director, DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services
Kaylee	Anderson	Senior Grants Lead, Koori Justice Unit	Department of Justice and Regulation
Vicki	Atkinson	RAJAC Executive Officer, Northern Metropolitan	Department of Justice and Regulation
Leanne	Barnes	Executive Director, West Area and Barwon South West Region	Department of Justice and Regulation
Tom	Bell	Deputy Director & Manager Stakeholder Engagement, Koori Justice Unit	Department of Justice and Regulation
William	Bethune	Regional General Manager, Community Correctional Services	Department of Justice and Regulation
Will	Crinall	Regional Director, Gippsland	Department of Justice and Regulation
Patsy	Doolan	Project Officer , LAJAC, Loddon Mallee	Department of Justice and Regulation
Peter	Ewer	Acting Executive Director, North Metropolitan Region	Department of Justice and Regulation
Carolyn	Gale	Deputy Secretary, Service Strategy Reform	Department of Justice and Regulation
Antoinette	Gentile	Director, Koori Justice Unit	Department of Justice and Regulation
Matthew	Graham	RAJAC Executive Officer, Grampians	Department of Justice and Regulation
Jarrold	Hughes	(former) RAJAC Executive Officer, Southwern Metropolitan	Department of Justice and Regulation
Kylie	Kilgour	Deputy Secretary, Criminal Justice Strategy and Co-ordination	Department of Justice and Regulation
Anne-Maree	Kirkam	RAJAC Executive Officer, Western Metropolitan	Department of Justice and Regulation
Nicole	LeSage	Executive Officer, Gippsland RAJAC	Department of Justice and Regulation

First name	Surname	Position/Title	Organisation
Gabrielle	Levine	Regional Director, Southern Metropolitan Region	Department of Justice and Regulation
Aislinn	Martin	Manager, Strategic Initiatives, Koori Justice Unit	Department of Justice and Regulation
Allan	Miller	RAJAC Executive Officer, Barwon South West	Department of Justice and Regulation
Lisa	Moore	Manager, Policy Coordination, Koori Justice Unit	Department of Justice and Regulation
Mary	Morison	Manager, Community Programs, Koori Justice Unit	Department of Justice and Regulation
Paula	Murray	RAJAC Executive Officer, Loddon Mallee	Department of Justice and Regulation
Jan	Noblett	Executive Director, Justice Health	Department of Justice and Regulation
Sam	Nolan	RAJAC Executive Officer, Eastern Metropolitan	Department of Justice and Regulation
Sharon	Paten	Manager, Aboriginal Portfolio	Department of Justice and Regulation
Nicola	Perry	Acting Executive Officer, RAJAC Loddon Mallee LAJAC	Department of Justice and Regulation
Peter-Shane	Rotumah	RAJAC Executive Officer, South Eastern Metropolitan	Department of Justice and Regulation
Amelia	Seymoure	RAJAC Executive Officer, Southern Metropolitan	Department of Justice and Regulation
Annette	Stephens	Acting General Manager, Community Correctional Services	Department of Justice and Regulation
Greg	Wilson	Secretary, Department of Justice and Regulation	Department of Justice and Regulation
Thomas	Hugh	Acting Director, Aboriginal Affairs Policy	Department of Premier and Cabinet
Larry	Kanoa	Aboriginal Victoria	Department of Premier and Cabinet
Sue	Clifford	CEO	Family Safety Victoria
Jason	Kanoa	CEO	Gunditjmara Aboriginal Co-operative
Rebecca	Lannen	Director	Indigenous Affairs Network, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet
Brendan	Facey	Executive Director	Infringement Management & Enforcement Services
Brian	Bissell	Manager, Divisional Operations, Barwon South West Region	Infringement Management and Enforcement Services
Tegan	Smirl	Sheriff's Aboriginal Liaison Officer	Infringement Management and Enforcement Services
Roger	Williams	Regional Manager, Sheriff's Operations, North Area	Infringement Management and Enforcement Services
Josephine	Boffa		Jesuit Social Services
Zeta	Thomson	Manager	Koori Independent Prison Visitor Program
John	Mitchell	Deputy CEO	Njernda Aboriginal Corporation
Corey	Wanganeen	Local Justice Worker	Njernda Aboriginal Corporation
Tegan	Wanganeen	Youth Justice Worker	Njernda Aboriginal Corporation
Troy	Austin	Deputy Chair, Northern Metropolitan	RAJAC
Linda	Bamblett	Chair, Northern Metropolitan	RAJAC
Aileen	Blackburn	Chair, Gippsland Region	RAJAC
Marion	Hansen	Chair, Southern Metropolitan	RAJAC
Tony	Lovett	Chair, Grampians Region	RAJAC

First name	Surname	Position/Title	Organisation
Annette	Vickery	Chair, Western Metropolitan	RAJAC
John	Bell	Chair Barwon South West RAJAC	RAJAC
Jemmes	Handy	Chair, Loddon Mallee RAJAC	RAJAC
Kym	Monaghan	Co-Chair Barwon South West RAJAC	RAJAC
Robert	Nicholls	Chair, Hume Region	RAJAC
Lois	Peeler	Chair, Eastern Metropolitan	RAJAC
Graham	Ashton	Chief Commissioner	Victoria Police
Graham	Banks	South West Metropolitan Division	Victoria Police
Bernie	Cowley	PALO Echuca	Victoria Police
Jonathon	Henderson	Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer	Victoria Police
Paul	Hollowood	Superintendent, Dandenong Division	Victoria Police
Shane	Keogh	Warnambool	Victoria Police
Peter	Lake	Barwon South West Region RAJAC Member	Victoria Police
Tony	Ryan	Inspector	Victoria Police
Stewart	Taylor	Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer	Victoria Police
Jeannie	McIntyre	Beyond Survival Program Coordinator	Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency
Muriel	Bamblett	CEO	Victorian Aboriginal Childcare Agency
Jill	Gallagher	CEO	Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation Inc
Geraldine	Atkinson	Chair	Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc.
Alfie	Bamblett	Chair	Victorian Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee
Wayne	Muir	CEO	Victorian Aboriginal Legal Services
Tenisha	Ellis	Local Justice Worker, Northern Metropolitan	Victorian Aboriginal Legal Services
Darah	Morris	Local Justice Worker, Northern Metropolitan	Victorian Aboriginal Legal Services
Jidah	Clark	Senior Advisor, Aboriginal Policy and Research	Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
Catherine	Dixon	Executive Director, Commissioner's Office	Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
Rod	Jackson	CEO	Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative
Michael	Bell	CEO	Winda-Mara Aboriginal Corporation

In addition to these organisational stakeholders we also interviewed 36 male prisoners housed at Marngoneet, Barwon and Loddon prisons and nine female prisoners at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre. Eleven adult offenders (3 women and 8 men) on CCOs also participated in one-on-one interviews. We have not named these interviewees to maintain the confidentiality of their contributions.

Appendix B Key achievements of the AJA (2015-16)

Unit or Organisation Project / Activity Name	Brief description – what was it, who was involved, funding & resources etc
Koori Justice Unit	
1. Local Justice Worker /Koori Offender Support and Mentoring Programs Remodelling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Local Justice Worker and Koori Offender Support and Mentoring Programs work with offenders to complete their CCOs and resolve outstanding fines and warrants. Workers are located in ACCOs in 18 locations around Victoria and partner with local Community Corrections Officers, Sheriff's officers and Police to provide a community based response to justice issues.
2. The Koori Women's Diversion Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Koori Women's Diversion Program places Aboriginal women in the criminal justice system into community-based alternatives with intensive case management to break the cycle of victimisation, violence and offending. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o It addresses the drivers of offending behaviour for Koori women, which includes experiencing family violence, substance abuse, mental health issues and homelessness.
Criminal Law, DJR	
3. Bail Amendment Act 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Koori young people have been particularly affected by bail reforms introduced in 2013 that made it an offence to breach a condition of bail. Large numbers of children were being arrested for breaches and then refused bail, resulting in increasing numbers of children on remand. This offence was brought in by the former Coalition government in 2013, and was repealed by State Parliament in February this year.
Victim Support Agency, DJR	
4. DJR funded Victims Assistance Program (VAP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding and recruitment of additional 2 Aboriginal Victim Support Workers for Eastern metro and North Metro VAP services Establishment of Aboriginal victim support workers in Gippsland and Grampians
Office of Correctional Services Review, DJR	
5. Recruitment of Koori Independent Prison Visitors (IPV) to the Independent Prison Visitor Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The IPV Scheme is a volunteer program with a ministerial advisory function. Its purpose is to engage volunteers to provide independent, objective advice from a community perspective to the Minister about the operation of Victoria's prison system through regular observations of daily prison routines. o Recruiting Koori IPVs is a key focus area to ensure that Koori prisoners have access to a Koori IPV, in addition to other IPVs.

Dispute Settlement Centre Victoria	
6. DSCV Koori Community Engagement program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DSCV's community engagement program uses existing resources to promote awareness of good conflict management techniques and build community capacity to resolve their own conflict.
Infringement Management and Enforcement Services	
7. Aboriginal Community Fines Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Aboriginal Community Fines Initiative is a new initiative designed to assist the Aboriginal community to engage with the infringements system. The initiative is run by the Director Fines Victoria with support from IMES together with the RAJAC EO's for the South East Metropolitan Region. The initiative is also run in collaboration with local community groups, Local Justice Workers and SALO's. The initiative provides the Aboriginal Community with information on the infringements process including options to assist with outstanding infringements, including assistance with payment arrangements and enforcement review applications.
8. Provide financial support to the Local Justice Worker Program and Sheriff's Aboriginal Liaison Officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The LJWP assists Aboriginal offenders with managing fines and outstanding warrants, and successfully completing community based orders to reduce breach rates. The SALO liaises between the Aboriginal community and the Sheriff's Office to assist Aboriginal people to address their outstanding infringements. IMES has provided funding for both the LJWP and SALO programs including funding for 4 SALOs in 2014/15 and 5 SALOs in 2015/16.
Corrections Victoria	
9. Kaka Wangity Wangin- Mirrie – Aboriginal Cultural Programs Grants Scheme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CV released its Kaka Wangity Wangin-Mirrie – Aboriginal Cultural Programs Grants on 6 April 2016. These grants sought submissions from Aboriginal organisations to deliver programs under 5 key areas including, cultural strengthening, healing, parenting, family violence and women.
10. Aboriginal Prisoners Transition Housing Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$2.6million has been allocated for the development of this project. This project will build two purpose-built facilities, one for males and one for females that will function as a short term transitional facility Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV) and the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) will be responsible for the delivery of the project that is overseen by the Governance Group made up of representatives from CV, DHHS, AHV and VALS.

11. Aboriginal Disability Reintegration Pathway Programs (ADRPP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CV engaged the Australian Community Support Organisation to implement a six-month pilot Aboriginal Disability Reintegration Program (ADRPP) • The aim of the ADRPP is to assist participants to be release ready by providing them with the opportunity to build their cultural strength, identity and understanding. The program further aims to give participants an understanding of how their disability affects them in their everyday life in a family and community setting, and how to overcome the challenges they face due to their disability. • Target cohort for this program are Male Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners located in PPP that are identified with a disability or acquired brain injury. • The program delivered group sessions delivered by a facilitator with involvement of mentors. Sessions will include cultural group sessions, disability group sessions, one on one sessions.
12. Corrections Victoria Reintegration Pathway (CVRP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of the CVRP the Victorian • Aboriginal Legal Service has been engaged as a complimentary service to deliver a <i>ReConnect</i> program for Aboriginal prisoners and offenders. • In addition, the following mainstream organisations deliver the <i>ReConnect</i> program; Jesuit Social Services, Australian Community Support Organisation, Victoria Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders.
Justice Health	
13. The Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Plan (ASEWP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Plan (ASEWP) was formally endorsed at AJF 40 in 2014 and released by the Department of Justice and Regulation on 19 March 2015. Since its release, Justice Health and Corrections Victoria have commenced implementing key actions outlined in the Plan.
14. Evaluation of initiatives under the ASEWP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation of initiatives under the ASEWP
15. Aboriginal Clinical Consultant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Aboriginal Clinical Consultant (ACC) will build capacity and develop best practice in health and mental health staff operating in Victoria's public prisons. • The ACC position provides expert advice and conducts secondary consultations and is to be a guide for health staff working in prisons to support and enhance service responses to Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander prisoners.
16. Provision of cultural safety training (CST) to health services staff in prisons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of cultural safety training (CST) to health services staff in prisons
17. Provision of Mental Health Assessment Training (MHAT) to health services staff in prisons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of Mental Health Assessment Training (MHAT) to health services staff in prisons
18. Justice Health Koori Tertiary Scholarships Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justice Health has awarded five students scholarships in two rounds under the program since May 2015. • In May 2015, Justice Health awarded scholarships to two nursing students • In December 2015, Justice Health awarded three further scholarships to successful applicants studying in the fields of nursing, psychology and medicine.

19. Continuity of Health Care Pilot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Continuity of Aboriginal Health Care Pilot is an initiative under the Plan to support continuity of health care for sentenced Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander prisoners on release from prison. The pilot is an opportunity for culturally safe health services in the community to enhance continuity of health care and contribute to the design and delivery of a Victorian transitional health service with a strong focus on Aboriginal concepts of health and wellbeing. There will be three pilot sites operating from September 2016 to July 2018 at Dhurringile Prison, Fulham Correctional Centre and the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre.
20. Health literature and resource list	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A qualitative review conducted by the JH operations and quality team in Q3 2014-15 found that there was inconsistent use of culturally specific health literature in prison health services. In response Justice Health has developed a health literature and resource list primarily for the use of health service providers in the Victorian prisons.
21. 44 hour Criminogenic AOD program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 44-Hour Koori AOD Criminogenic Program is a culturally appropriate forensic AOD treatment program for moderate to high risk male Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander prisoners The aim is to provide effective drug and alcohol treatment that targets the relationship between substance use and offending in a way that is culturally secure.
Courts Services Victoria	
22. Family Drug Treatment Court (FDTC) in the Melbourne Children's Court at Broadmeadows.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not Koori specific but a therapeutic court to assist families with entrenched/significant alcohol and other drug use where this impacts on the capacity to parent effectively. FDTC clinicians work with families, are culturally aware and have an understanding of court processes
23. Koori Hearing Day (Marram-ngala Ganbu) at the Children's Court (Family Division) at Broadmeadows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Koori Hearing Day where matters can be listed and 'docketed' to the one day Support received by services/agencies for a presence on the day (FV, MH VACCA etc.).
24. Koori Court Model and County Koori Court Model expansion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for continued expansion of the Koori Court model in both metropolitan and regional Magistrates' and Children's courts Improved cultural sensitivity of court processes
25. Koori Courts complaint process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and formalise complaints processes for Koori Courts to ensure consistency with mainstream equivalent. Disseminate policy to relevant staff. Complaint(s) processes to accommodate both non-judicial and judicial members. Establish a complaints register that records each Koori related complaint and what action was taken.
26. Elders and Respected person Human Resources Manual.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a Human Resources Manual for Elders and Respected Persons who sit on Koori Courts (outlining recruitment, appointment, complaint processes, conflicts of interest, travel allowances, and remuneration etc.)
27. Koori Courts Conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More coordinated and collaborative program/service delivery (across agencies and between community and government) Aim to provide professional development and networking opportunities

28. Service Mapping exercise for Courts Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved coordination of services Local service mapping raises awareness of specific support provided by Aboriginal Community Health Services. Koori Court Officers mapping services and stakeholders as part of community engagement exercise.
29. Koori Employment Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a Koori Recruitment and Koori Employment Policy for implementation across CSV
30. CISP and Credit Bail Program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and continue the expansion of the CISP and Credit Bail programs across the state with the aim to reduce the likelihood of imprisonment
31. Bail Support Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased access to culturally appropriate support whilst on bail
32. Court Services Victoria Koori Inclusion Action Plan (CSV KIAP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the CSV KIAP and develop Koori Resource Kits for each Jurisdiction. Launch the CSV KIAP Improved capacity for monitoring implementation of the KIAP
33. Data Paper/Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To improve evidence base for decision making OR Improve quality of Aboriginal data Undertake providing annual targeted data updates to the AJF relating to Aboriginal specific data. The updates will include data from Koori Courts, CISP and Family Violence.
34. Sentencing Advisory Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete the second stage of the Sentencing Advisory Council research project on sentencing outcomes for Koories. Compare sentencing outcomes for Koori and non-Koories in the Magistrates' and higher courts, taking into account current and prior offending.
35. Follow up and seek Koori community membership on the Sentencing Advisory Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased community input in governance and decision making
36. Family violence perpetrator programs/support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the numbers of people seeking help for violence Lobby and advocate the development of early intervention programs in partnership with community / organisations
37. Koori Family Violence Victim and Applicant Program (MCV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programs / services and facilities more culturally appropriate / safe Encourage the Melbourne, Sunshine and Ballarat Family Violence Courts to continue supporting Koori clients and accessing Koori appropriate services.
38. Koori Court Officer (KCO) role in FV perpetrator Program referral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Koori Court Officer and other personnel continue to engage and maintain relationships with Koori community organisations who deliver culturally appropriate programs targeted at men who perpetrate violence towards family members programs targeted at men who perpetrate violence towards family members
39. VOCAT family violence and victim support services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved response, supports and resources for victims Continue to engage and maintain relationships with family violence and victim support services, including VOCAT, who delivery culturally appropriate programs. The aim being to increase program participation by victims of family violence.

Victoria Police	
40. Koori Youth Cautioning Pilot Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victoria Police previously conducted a pilot program which aimed to test a model of Koori- specific child and youth cautioning that might reduce barriers to cautioning and increase the rate of cautioning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. The program, known as the Koori Youth Cautioning Pilot Program, involved the removal of the requirement to admit responsibility for the alleged offence and required police members to submit a 'Failure to Caution' notice if choosing an alternative method of processing. Importantly, the program also focused on the provision of culturally relevant referral and follow-up.
41. Building Cultural Capability, Aboriginal Cultural Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing inclusiveness, particularly promoting and facilitating Aboriginal cultural respect training for Victoria Police employees, is a priority under the Victoria Police Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Plan 2014-2018.
42. Implement the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer/Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer Service Delivery Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are currently nine ACLOs located throughout Victoria that report directly under the Victoria Police operational regions, and a state-wide coordinator located within the Priority Communities Division, Corporate Strategy and Operational Improvement Department. ACLOs are Victoria Police employees who work to improve relationships and trust between Aboriginal communities and police. ACLOs play an important role in cross-cultural communication – providing police with a greater awareness of local issues and cultural protocols to improve the effectiveness of services and responses provided to Aboriginal people. They also provide community with a greater understanding of police protocols and practices. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers (PALOs) are Victoria Police Officers who perform operational duties, in addition to performing the Aboriginal portfolio role. PALOs have a liaison role, both independently and in partnership with ACLOs, to resolve issues concerning Aboriginal people within their local area.
43. Standard Indigenous Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victoria Police and other policing jurisdictions have adopted the Standard Indigenous Question (SIQ) as endorsed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Victoria Police supports initiatives which raise awareness in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities about the importance of identifying as an Indigenous person when engaging with government services.
44. Victoria Police Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Employment Plan 2014-2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victoria Police launched its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Plan in early 2014.
45. Ensure the welfare of Koories in the justice system, particularly in prisons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the safety and welfare of Aboriginal persons held in police custody within a human rights framework.
46. Koori Family Violence Police Protocols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch and implementation of the Koori Family Violence Police Protocols
47. Report Racism Pilot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Victorian Equal Opportunities and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) has partnered with Victoria Police and the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) to pilot a Third Party Reporting (Report Racism) Scheme to allow people to report incidents of racially motivated crime or racial vilification to/through a community organisation, rather than directly to police.

Drug Policy and Services, DHHS	
48. Investigation of responses to public intoxication on behalf of the alcohol and other drugs and mental health Koori Reference Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DHHS commissioned DLA Piper to conduct a rapid review of the literature on service model responses and other interventions for public intoxication, both in Australia and other relevant jurisdictions, with reference to Aboriginal populations. • The purpose of the review was to gather research, evidence and information about the range of different health and justice related responses to public intoxication. • The review considered literature published between 2005 and 2015 on how to reduce harm to people who are intoxicated in public.
49. Improving access to Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place for clients requiring withdrawal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place is funded by DJR to provide a culturally safe community for Aboriginal men to fulfil the requirements of their Community Correction Orders and build cultural connections. • The Aboriginal Justice Forum identified that access to timely withdrawal from alcohol and other drugs is a barrier to access for some men wishing to attend Wulgunggo Ngalu. People are expected to maintain abstinence while at the site and so withdrawal is sometimes necessary prior to attendance.
50. Access to Pharmacotherapy in Healesville	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Eastern RAJAC highlighted an ongoing issue with the lack of pharmacotherapy available within the outer East area, particularly in the Healesville area. The Victorian model of dispensing methadone by community pharmacies is currently not available in Healesville as the owner of the two pharmacies in Healesville has not been willing to dispense methadone • DHHS provided funding to Eastern Health to employ a project worker to scope possible models of pharmacotherapy dispensing in Healesville and the sustainability of these models. • The project officer, in collaboration with the South East Area Pharmacotherapy Network Eastern coordinator has been exploring options for the dispensing of Methadone in Healesville.
51. Aboriginal Metropolitan Ice Partnership Pilot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pilot initiative, which commenced in February 2015, is being implemented across four metropolitan areas to help improve access to services for Aboriginal people affected by ice and other drugs. It will continue under current arrangements until 30 June 2017. • Working in partnership, selected Aboriginal-controlled community organisations and mainstream alcohol and drug service providers are providing assertive outreach and treatment, as well as help to streamline access to more intensive services where required. • Key objectives include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - build the capacity of mainstream alcohol and other drug services to provide culturally-responsive care for Aboriginal people - strengthen the capacity of ACCOs to provide effective treatment and support for ice and alcohol and other drug issues - develop evidence and best practice on effective approaches and practices

Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission	
52. Aboriginal Cultural Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although Aboriginal cultural rights are protected under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006, preliminary evidence suggests that they are rarely raised in courts or tribunals, used as an advocacy tool by Aboriginal peoples, or used as an engagement tool by public authorities. This project aimed to increase awareness, understanding and use of Aboriginal cultural rights so that they are used as part of everyday interactions between public authorities and Aboriginal Victorians.
53. Report Racism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research conducted by the Commission found that racism and conduct motivated by racial or religious hatred is a daily experience for many Aboriginal Victorians, but that most Aboriginal people choose not to report the racism that they experience or witness. To address the issues identified by the research the Commission collaborated with Victoria Police and the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service to trial a third party reporting system. Third party reporting allows an individual to report racial vilification or discrimination to a community organisation, rather than directly to police or a regulator. The Commission worked with the Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees (RAJACs) to select Shepparton and Northern Melbourne (Cities of Yarra, Darebin and Whittlesea) as the two trial sites.
RAJACS	
Hume RAJAC	
54. Mansfield Local Aboriginal Network for NAIDOC celebrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2015 NAIDOC Celebrations Day in Mansfield, attended by approximately 250 people
55. Youth of the River	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project focused on prevention of crime by providing diversionary activities – the gathering space allows for young people to discuss offending rationale and education would be available to enforce the long term ramifications of offending.
56. Burraja; Koori Prisoner support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project established a native bush tucker garden and outdoor living space, whilst delivering on- the-job training opportunities to participating prisoners. The prisoners will benefit from additional opportunities to meet, talk and network with local Elders and Aboriginal workers from various social sector agencies & organisation that can provide ongoing support to the prisoners as they prepare themselves for transitions & reintegration into the community upon release. External stakeholder included; Wodonga TAFE, Wodonga City Council, Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation and Beechworth Correctional Centre – Burraja Executive Group.
57. T-Shirt development group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The T-shirt Development Group is represented by a small group of Aboriginal people from the Seymour area who were involved in developing a t-shirt design that was aimed a raisin awareness about Alcohol harms and drinking Alcohol responsibly and to prompt people to talk about Alcohol and if necessary seek help.
58. Murray River Marathon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The overall budget is based on estimated figure of \$500 per person.
59. VACSAL junior Sports Carnival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The VACSAL junior sports carnival is a Drug & Alcohol-free event that promotes health life style choices.

60. Deadly Start Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6-week program for Aboriginal young people aged 12 -17 aimed to empower youth that may be experiencing disengagement within their school, social or family environment, and those that may be at risk of being involved in anti-social behaviour resulting in them coming before the courts • Partners; Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation, Gateway Health, Wodonga Raiders Football/Netball Club, • Juvenile Justice & Hume RAJAC
Northern Metro RAJAC	
61. Aboriginal Men's Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A meeting of Aboriginal men / fathers from within the NM region came together to discuss issue of concern and share their experiences as fathers in our community • Presentations by services in the community including the Child Protective Services • The men discussed issues of grief and loss. This session identified a sense of frustration from the men who believe that there is a gap in services and that there are a lot of forums that discuss issues but the men want more practical interactive activities • Some men have difficulty / are denied access to their children once they are separated from their families. The men requested a Fathers and Children activity so that they can connect to their children in a fun and safe environment
62. Father's Fun Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A collaboration of Aboriginal and mainstream services coordinated a family centred approach to connect men to their children. Where possible this event incorporated the father, children's and the children's mother
63. Aboriginal CMRM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Department of Justice and Regulation (DJR), North West Metro Area invited Aboriginal organisations have Government agencies to attend Aboriginal Case Management Review Meetings (CMRM). • The CMRMs provides a forum that identifies achievements and challenges experienced by Aboriginal offenders on Community Correction Orders • A key support for this program has been the involvement of various programs including the Koori Offender Support & Mentoring Program and the Local Justice Worker program, these programs are funded by the Koori Offender Support & Mentoring Program
64. Northern Police Aboriginal Consultative Committee (NPACC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NM RAJAC advocated for a mechanism to strengthen the relationship between the Aboriginal community and the local Police. The NPACC has been established to identify systemic issues to improve Police's engagement with the Aboriginal community. • The NPACC receive updates on issues such as Police Aboriginal Family Violence Protocols, Cultural Awareness Training for local Police and the work of the Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers and the Aboriginal Community Police Liaison Officer • The NPACC has initiated the development of a Youth Cautioning program and diversionary options to reduce the level of Aboriginal youth that are being incarcerated

65. Men's Social and Emotional Wellbeing Camp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Men's Social and Emotional Wellbeing camps have been held to support disadvantages Aboriginal men to engage with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal services to support their health and wellbeing For many of the men they have a longing to connect to country and participation in cultural activities, the men's health and wellbeing is also addressed in this environment as the men are removed from the distraction and stresses of their daily lives
66. Legal Health Check Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Victorian Aboriginal Health Service & Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service coordinated a Legal Health Checks event to provide information to Aboriginal community members with the information about services that are available to the community
67. Fitzroy Stars Partnerships in Sport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Fitzroy Stars Football & Netball Club (FSFNC) have been supported to develop partnerships with key agencies to address issues within the Aboriginal community actively promote / engage community in healthy lifestyle activities The programs that have been developed through these partnerships provide strong diversion from the Justice system for the participants of FSFNC and their families.
68. Fitzroy Stars Young Stars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Fitzroy Stars Young Guns is a project to engage children, youth and families in healthy lifestyle programs A major component of this project is the Aus. Kick program that has drawn participants from across the region The FSFNC will utilise the success of the senior football & Netball Club and the Aus. Kick program to commence a junior program in 2017 and beyond
69. Elders Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An Aboriginal Elders Forum was held to promote services to Elders in the community. A range of services attended this forum including the SALO, Consumer Affairs, VALS, Police and financial services.
70. KOSMP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Koori Offender Support and Mentor Program (KOSMP) has provide support to male and female offenders on Community Correction Orders The KOSMP coordinator has attended the Aboriginal Case Management Review Meetings in the region and has been a support for the NWMA Regional Director at Administrative Review Hearings
71. LJW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Local Justice Worker (LJW) program employs a worker to assist Aboriginal offenders on CCOs and assist community members to address outstanding fines and respond to warrants. The LJW coordinator has attended the Aboriginal Case Management Review Meetings in the region
72. Massive Murray Paddle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Massive Murray Paddle (MMP) provides an opportunity for Aboriginal services to link with young community members at risk of contact with the Justice system The MMP connects the youth to Police, Sheriff's officers, Youth Justice Workers and other services The MMP provide the opportunity and agency staff and the youth to get to know each other and understand the issues that each party is dealing with. There have been some great transformations in attitude by staff and youth that have attended the MMP
73. Koori Youth Leadership in Action (KYLA) program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The KYLA program is a cultural and educational program to support children and youth in out of home care
Eastern Metro RAJAC	

74. Eastern Eaglehawks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Eastern Eaglehawks is an initiative that supports disengaged Koori men from the Eastern region. The Eaglehawks Football team helps support young men through football to engage in further education and training pathways. • The Eaglehawks partnership engages, Victoria Police, Hawthorn Football club, Epic Good foundation, Eastern RAJAC, Worawa Aboriginal College. • Funding is auspiced through Worawa Aboriginal College and has been supported by RAJAC, KJU Frontline funding and previously IFVRAG CIF Funding.
75. Culture Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture Group at the MMIGP gathering place was identified as a key community mechanism in creating culturally stronger Koori kids in the eastern region • The group is conducted by two community elders and based at MMIGP Gathering place. • Over 30 Koori kids are engaged in the program and perform Dance, Song, and Speak language and engage in performances building their confidence and strength within the community.
76. Implementation of Koori Case Management Review Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EMR has held 10 CMRM and they occur monthly. • Koori CMRMs involve intensive case management of at-risk Koori offenders and include a local Elder, LJW, RAJAC EO.
77. Pharmacotherapy Delivery in the Healesville Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over three years the Eastern RAJAC has been advocating strongly with DHHD, DHS, and Eastern Health to address the gap of no dispensing of Pharmacotherapy in the Healesville area. • The main issue was highlighted about the lack of communication between government departments and the lack of communication from the head office to regional office. • Other key issues presented as who is responsible for the delivery, what network or partnership would address the issue, issues of duplication and funding responsibility.
78. Community Justice Information Days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Justice Information days are heavily supported by the RAJAC with the LJW • Engaging community and service providers from the Inner and Outer Eastern region sharing information on relevant services and contacts in the justice area. • Funding is provided through DJR and the local organisations to hold Justice Information days. • The RAJAC also takes the opportunity to take on board the communities feedbacks about justice related issues within the community.
79. Cultural Strengthening Youth Justice Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of Cultural Strengthening program with a focus on Youth Justice Koori clients initiated by community feedback about the lack of culturally specific programs for Koori kids engaged in contact with the justice system. • Funding was from the Regional DJR budget.
80. Murray River Marathon Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The MRM Blues and brothers program is a well-known and strong initiative led by the Grampians RAJAC. • The Eastern region over the past two years has competed and taken a team form the east with over 15 kids engaged and competing. • The eastern RAJAC funded the initiative and the team including Victoria Police members.

81. Supporting Junior and Senior representation at sports carnivals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Grampians RAJAC has supported various groups and teams across the region to attend sports carnivals across the state.
82. Local Justice Worker Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The LJW program is currently running out of both Ballarat and Horsham locations and deals directly with Koori offenders, clients and community who need assistance within the justice space.
Southern Metro RAJAC	
83. City of Casey Aboriginal Gathering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Koori Homework Centre commenced on 20 April and takes place at the City of Casey Aboriginal Gathering Place (Doveton) on a weekly basis. The Homework Centre provides local Aboriginal students with access to tutors (Aboriginal university students), computers with internet and dinner. The Homework Centre has been funded by the DJR until the end of the 2016/17 financial year and the RAJAC EO has played a central role in establishing and supporting the Centre.
84. Implementation of Koori Case Management Review Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The SMR held its first Koori CMRM on 12 January and they occur monthly. Koori CMRMs involve intensive case management of at-risk Koori offenders and include a local Elder, LJW, RAJAC EO and service providers including VALS and Ngwala Willumbong.
85. Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV) – Community Work Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SMR DJR entered into an MOU with AHV to enable Koori offenders to undertake community work on vacant AHV properties in the SMR (AHV own over 165 properties in SMR). This program commenced on 19 April and runs on a weekly basis. The AHV Community Work Program now includes 2 hours of pre-accredited training on each community work day.
86. Aboriginal Women’s Craft and Yarn Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Craft and Yarn Program was funded by the SMR RAJAC as a women’s craft group that can be credited towards community work hours. The Craft and Yarn Program commenced on 20 April and ran weekly for 12-months at the City of Casey Aboriginal Gathering Place (Doveton). The Program was co-facilitated by the City of Casey Aboriginal Health Coordinator and the Ngwala women’s family violence worker.
87. Aboriginal Youth Leadership Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The SMR RAJAC funded a 12- month Aboriginal Youth Leadership Program. The Program engaged 8 Aboriginal youth from across the region and including monthly gatherings and an urban-exchange to Redfern, NSW.
88. Young Luv Workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The SMR RAJAC funded FVPLS to deliver 3 <i>Young Luv</i> workshops across the SMR. The workshops were delivered to young Aboriginal women aged between 13-18 and address healthy relationships and safety when dating.

89. Launch of Aboriginal Family Violence Police Protocols (Dandenong)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Aboriginal Family Violence Police Protocols (Dandenong) were launched on 27 May at the Dandenong Council Chambers. As part of the launch, 30 Police members from Dandenong received half a day of cultural relations training from Kellawan. • The Aboriginal Family Violence Police Protocols (Dandenong) allow for a holistic response to Aboriginal victims, children and perpetrators of family violence and are the first protocols to cover three Local Government Areas (Dandenong, Casey, Cardinia). • SMR RAJAC provided financial support to the Launch to enable more protocols materials to be printed and circulated in community.
90. Quarterly RAJAC meetings in community locations across SMR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SMR RAJAC conducted quarterly meetings in community locations across the SMR. In 2016, RAJAC meetings have been held at the City of Casey Aboriginal Gathering Place (Doveton) and Ngwala Willumbong (St Kilda). • RAJAC meetings for the remainder of 2016 are intended to be held at Frankston and Hastings.
91. Update of SMR RAJAC Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SMR RAJAC Action Plan was updated at the beginning of 2016. The update reflects new regional priorities and activities and removes activities that have been completed or are no longer relevant.
Western Metro RAJAC	
92. Wangal United Aboriginal Controlled Organisation-Cultural Strengthening Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wangal delivered successful programs for approximately 14 months with minimal resources or a formal physical location of business however the organisation has achieved remarkable outcomes in such period of time. • The WM RAJAC has agreed to fund Wangal \$5000 to run this Cultural Strengthening Program
93. Wayapa Wuurrk Wellness Foundation- Wyndham Warran Warran Maar Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warran Warran Maar (boy to Man) is a long-term, preventative, intensive mentoring program based for Aboriginal male adolescents aged 12 to 16 years on cultural immersion and traditional concepts of taking a boy into the first steps of being a respectful, young man. • Warran Warran Maar is aimed at boys who are at risk or have already come into contact with the justice system; those who are in out of home care; those who are at risk or have already experienced family violence; and for those who are "doing well" as it is important to mix those who are struggling with those who aren't for good role modelling. It is also vital to demonstrate that a boy doesn't have to come into contact with the justice system to share in a cultural mentoring program.
94. Wayapa Wuurrk Aboriginal Wellness Foundation-Mens Business means business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mens Business Means Business (MBMB) Program brings men together for social, emotional and cultural support. MBMB is for Indigenous Men aged 16 years and over. Non-Indigenous partners and fathers of Indigenous children are also welcome to participate. The Program is run by Jamie Thomas, who has been culturally mentoring men for over 20 years and holds a Post Graduate Certificate in Family Therapy.

<p>95. Wayapa Wuurrk Aboriginal Wellness Foundation- Meerreeng Warran Warran</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Meerreeng Warran Warran (Earth to Boy) Program is a cultural learning, strengthening and connection program for Indigenous boys aged between 7 to 11 years that have experienced or are at risk of experiencing family violence. The Program is based on saying no to violence. • The West Metro Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group (IFVRAG) has funded Wayapa Wuurrk Aboriginal Wellness Foundation to deliver the Meerreeng Warran Warran (Earth to Boy) Program through the Victorian Government's Community Initiative Funding (CIF) Grant and proudly supported by Relationships Australia Victoria (RAV) and in conjunction with the Wyndham Aboriginal Community Centre Committee (WACCC).
<p>96. Wyndham Leaders Kokoda Trek</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wyndham Police in conjunction with Wyndham City, sponsors and partners, delivered the 'Wyndham Leaders Of The Future.' (WLOF) event. • The WM RAJAC funded \$3,500 to support the 3 Aboriginal participants to secure their spot in the program.

Gippsland RAJAC	
97. Youth Governance Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Youth Leadership and Governance Workshop provided one-off funding by the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People for young people in the Latrobe Valley in November 2015. The Workshop was delivered by Victoria University and offered 18 - 26 year old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people a safe environment to express their views, aspirations and issues regarding being active in their community, Aboriginal community organisation and working with community. A number of planning meeting were held with stakeholders since and a wider number of stakeholders were kept in the loop through email and other contact.
98. CAV Koori Trainee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment of Koori Trainees within the Department of Justice and Regulation in the Gippsland Region. The traineeship is funded through CAV with supplementary funding sourced through the DJR Regional Director's discretionary budget
99. Graduate program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following previous unsuccessful attempts to recruit a Koori graduate from the DJR Koori Graduate program, People and Culture and DJR Gippsland worked together to target Koori university students in the Gippsland Region to improve employment opportunities in Gippsland for Koori people studying criminal justice and related fields. DJR Gippsland was allocated a Gippsland based Koori graduate position through DJR Koori Graduate Program, funded by People and Culture. A mainstream VPS 3 role will be allocated to the successful person at the end of the program in Gippsland.
100. Ice forums – Bairnsdale, Lakes Entrance, Orbost, Morwell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ice forums were held in conjunction with Gippsland East and Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative. Forums were open to the general public. Guest speakers and specialists attended from the Police, Magistrates Court, Ambulance, YSAS and Department of Health.
101. Frontline Grant – Young BungYarnda choices program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funded through the Koori Justice Unit Frontline/CIP community grants program, the aim of the program is to provide cultural, safe, peaceful, healthy and healing activities and events that are youth focused, but inclusive of all community members. The program covers from Cann River to Lakes Entrance and employed two Aboriginal workers
102. Frontline Grant Staying strong Staying out of trouble (Run by Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funded by DJR to assist Aboriginal young people from Gippsland to build their protective factors through a series of camps and reduce contact with the criminal justice system. The program and the camps are informed by a group of local Elders, Community Members and experts in the field of young people. Outside of the camps, existing case management supports, are used to strengthen the aspects of their lives that make them less likely to participate in risk taking behaviour. The program targets young Aboriginal people living in Gippsland, aged between 14-24 years engaged with statutory services like Child Protection, Out of Home Care, and/or come to the attention of Police.
Loddon Mallee RAJAC	
103. Investigate the potential for mediator training for interested Koori community members in the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 Aboriginal participants from Loddon undertook a mediation course over 2 weeks facilitated by DSCV

104. Investigate provision of a family cultural camp for Koori families in each community in the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural camps funded for the Bendigo and Robinvale communities. The funding proposal was presented to the Loddon Mallee Aboriginal Reference Groups (LMARG), which is made up of all the ACCOs in the Loddon Mallee region. LMARG proposed the Bendigo and Robinvale communities be funded for the cultural camps.
105. Establishment of LAJAC Echuca	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loddon Mallee LAJACs have expanded from 4 to 5 with the establishment of a LAJAC in Echuca.
106. Cultural awareness training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numerous Koori Cultural Awareness training delivered to DJR staff and Vic Police in Loddon Mallee
107. Ensuring Koori youth cautioning program is implemented across the region (Victoria Police)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Previously Koori Youth Cautioning Program only in Division 6. RAJAC Action Plan was to have the program also implemented in Division 5.
108. Cultural wraparound plans for Koori justice clients are in place via developing a Koori-specific Multiple and Complex Needs Initiative (MACNI) type panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural wraparound plans are implemented for Koori justice clients
109. Expand culturally- strengthening programs and activities for Koories in custody/community orders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The prisons in Loddon Mallee have maintained and expanded cultural celebrations such as NAIDOC week, Koori art expos and exploring Aboriginal traditional practices
110. Connecting to Country Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a first of its type and is a partnership between DJR and the Dja Dja Wurrung Group. The program has two key components: Koori cultural sessions only for Koori prisoners and conservation and land management The sessions took place on three sites owned by Dja Dja Wurrung - Yapenya, Franklinford (former Aboriginal Mission school site) and Carisbrook (ceremonial site). Two crews of up to eight Koori and non-Koori prisoners undertook land works to regenerate the land and repair fencing on the three sites. Prisoners were enrolled in units from the Cert III Conservation and Land Management with Bendigo Kangan, and their work assessed on-site
111. LAJAC Project Officer based in Mildura (oversee Mildura & Robinvale communities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LAJAC Project Officer recruited, funding provided by the Secretary

**Evaluation of the Aboriginal
Justice Agreement Phase 3:
Synthesis of Program Evaluations**



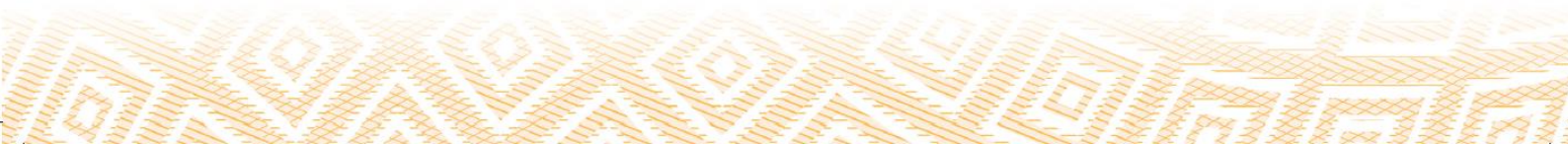


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Prepared by the Koori Justice Unit, Department of Justice and Regulation, as part of the evaluation of the third phase of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement

A note on terminology

The term ‘Aboriginal’ is used throughout this report to refer to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of Victoria. Where the original data, program title or direct quote refers to this population as ‘Indigenous’ or ‘Koori’, these terms have been kept for the sake of consistency.



Introduction

It has been nearly 20 years since the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement ('the Agreement') was first launched in response to the high and growing number of Aboriginal people in contact with the criminal justice system. Since the inception of the Agreement, there have been numerous evaluations conducted of Aboriginal justice initiatives across various government sectors, including courts, corrections services and police, among others. This is the first time that findings and recommendations from these individual evaluations have been brought together and presented in a single report.

This Synthesis identifies the common strengths of, and challenges faced by, programs and initiatives delivered under the Agreement to date, with a focus on the most recent five-year phase. It highlights what the collective evidence suggests works, and what is commonly recommended to improve the development and implementation of future Aboriginal justice programs and services in Victoria. In doing so, it draws on more data than a single evaluation can offer alone to bring about a broader perspective.

The Synthesis also makes a number of observations about the overall quality of the evaluations themselves, pointing to opportunities for improving research methodologies and processes. In particular, it explores ways in which future evaluation could be more consistent with key principles for undertaking evaluation and research with Aboriginal people.

The Evaluation of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 3

The Synthesis is one activity that forms part of the evaluation of the third phase of the Agreement. The Evaluation of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 3 (AJA3) commenced in April 2017 in parallel with the development of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 4 (AJA4). The purpose of the Evaluation was to

- Investigate whether the partnership model and governance structures of the AJA increase collaboration and contribute to improved justice outcomes;
- Determine whether the current partnership and governance models are still the most appropriate and efficient;
- Examine how effectively AJA3, as a strategy, addresses Aboriginal over-representation in the justice system and identify opportunities for improvement for AJA4.

A comprehensive approach which ensured the extensive engagement of Aboriginal community members, and the best alignment of skills and experience with the scope of work required, was taken to design the AJA3 Evaluation. The Evaluation was undertaken in five projects, comprised of a partnership evaluation; a place based evaluation; development of a data dashboard; preparing outcome papers; and this evaluation synthesis.

Aims and objectives

The aim of the Synthesis is to bring together the findings and lessons learned from recent evaluations of Aboriginal justice programs in Victoria to gain a comprehensive understanding of what is working well, what the challenges are, and what is commonly recommended to strengthen future initiatives so that they can better meet the needs of the Aboriginal community. More specifically, the objectives of the Synthesis are to:

1. Understand which initiatives have demonstrated improvements in Aboriginal justice outcomes.
2. Identify Aboriginal justice initiatives, or features of initiatives, that show evidence of good or promising practice.
3. Identify the major challenges and barriers that impede the effective development and implementation of Aboriginal justice initiatives.
4. Identify the main recommendations that have been made to improve the design and delivery of future initiatives.

A second aim of the Synthesis is to assess the overall quality of the evaluations themselves, in order to highlight where there may be opportunities for improving evaluation practices and research methods in future. A fifth objective is then to:

5. Reflect on the overall quality of the evaluations and explore ways in which future methodologies and processes can be brought into closer alignment with principles for undertaking evaluation and research with Aboriginal people.

Methodology

Twenty evaluations – covering twenty-three Aboriginal justice initiatives – are included in the Synthesis. These were selected from a larger pool of evaluations primarily on the grounds that the program fell directly under the Aboriginal Justice Agreement and the evaluation had been conducted within the past five years. In some cases, a report older than five years was included where this was the most recent evaluation of a major program.

To ensure the Synthesis spanned a wide range of program and services, efforts were made to source evaluations from various government stakeholders, including Victoria Police, Courts Services Victoria, Corrections Victoria, Youth Justice, the Koori Justice Unit, as well as programs implemented by community controlled organisations. External contractors had conducted most of the evaluations, although in a number of cases reviews carried out internally by government agencies were included where they were considered to have particular relevance and value.

Each of the evaluations were individually summarised to draw out its main findings and recommendations. The information was then coded and grouped, along with similar information from other evaluations, to form ‘themes’. The themes that emerged through this process are described in subsequent sections of this report.

Since all of the evaluations were completed before the Synthesis was undertaken, this report should not be read as reflecting the current status of programs. The findings of the evaluations relate to the time at which they were reported, and it is expected that there will have been changes to the programs since the evaluation.

Table 1 – Programs and evaluations included in the Evaluation Synthesis

	Program/initiative	Implementing agency or organisation	Year	Evaluator
1	Koori Intensive Support Program	Youth Justice (DHHS)	2010	SuccessWorks
2	Koori Youth Justice Worker Program			
3	Custodial Aboriginal Support Worker Program			
4	Koori Youth Justice Western District Case Study	Youth Justice (DHHS)	2015	Department of Health and Human Services
5	Koori Family Violence Police Protocols	Victoria Police	2015	Clear Horizon
6	Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer Program	Victoria Police	2009	Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia (CIRCA)
7	Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place	Corrections Victoria	2013	Clear Horizon
			2011	Corrections Victoria
8	Aboriginal Cultural Immersion Program	Corrections Victoria	2013	Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia
9	Murumali Program			
10	Koori Cognitive Skills Program			
11	Dardi Munwarro	Corrections Victoria	2011	Clear Horizon
12	Koori County Courts Program	Court Services Victoria	2011	Clear Horizon
13	Children’s Koori Court	Court Services Victoria	2009	LaTrobe University
14	Koori Family Violence Court Service	Court Services Victoria	2012	Department of Health and Human Services
15	Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 2	Victorian Government	2012	Nous Group
16	Baroona Youth Healing Place	Njernda Aboriginal Corporation	2016	Australian Institute of Criminology
17	Local Justice Worker Program <i>and</i>	Coordinated and funded through Koori Justice Unit, implemented by a number of ACCOs	2015	Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia (CIRCA)
18	Koori Offender Support and Mentoring Program		2013	Koori Justice Unit
19	Dilly Bag/ Sisters’ Day Out	Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service	2014	Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service
20	Strong Men, Strong Communities Project	Yoowinna Wurnalung Healing Service / Lakes Entrance Aboriginal Health Association	2015	Clear Horizon
21	Family and Community Violence Prevention Project	Mallee District Aboriginal Services	2016	Clear Horizon
22	Rumbalara Family Harmony Project	Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative	2016	EMS Consultants
23	Strong Relationships, Strong Community Project	Victorian Aboriginal Health Services	2016	EMS Consultants

Common program outcomes

The evidence suggests that programs and initiatives implemented under the Aboriginal Justice Agreement have achieved, or made some positive contributions to a number of outcomes. While it is important to note that not every program demonstrates all of these outcomes, there is, on the whole, considerable evidence of progress.

Improvements in Aboriginal justice outcomes

Several evaluations found improvements in Aboriginal justice outcomes as a result of the programs' delivery. Examples include an increase in the completion of community correction orders among participants of the Wulgunngo Ngalu and Local Justice Worker programs, and a significant difference in the time taken to reoffend between participants who completed the Baroona Youth Healing program and those who terminated or absconded.

Although demonstrating clear links between justice outcomes and specific programs is often very difficult (as discussed later in the report), there is evidence from the evaluation of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 2 to suggest that, on the whole, there have been better outcomes in regions of Victoria that have attracted more program funding. The evaluation also found that non-metropolitan regions of Victoria have seen a reduction in the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in prison, and concluded that "despite uneven progress across regions and locations, there is reason to believe that without the Aboriginal Justice Agreement, the projected increase in overrepresentation would have been much greater".

The Aboriginal community is more empowered


A number of evaluations have found that under the Aboriginal Justice Agreement, the Aboriginal community in Victoria has had greater involvement in the governance, design and implementation of justice-related programs at state, regional and local levels than previously

Evaluations of Rumbalara, Strong Relationships and Sisters' Day Out programs describe the increased capacity of locally-based Aboriginal organisations to deliver support to community members impacted by family violence, while the Wulgunngo Ngalu evaluation points to the extensive input and oversight of the Aboriginal community in the program's design through the Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee and the state-wide Aboriginal Justice Forum.

The experience of Aboriginal offenders in the justice system has improved

Programs that provide culturally appropriate support have been found to be more engaging, inclusive and less intimidating than mainstream services. Consultations with clients indicate that these programs have had a positive impact on the experience of Aboriginal offenders in the justice system by making people feel more at ease, comfortable and safe, during what are typically confronting processes.

For instance, an evaluation of the Koori Family Violence Court Support Program found that assistance provided by support workers eased clients' anxieties and stress through the workers' ability to build rapport, trust and confidence with their clients, and provide culturally appropriate and relevant support. Likewise, the perception among Aboriginal defendants that the County Koori Court was an equitable and culturally



appropriate system, was found to enhance their respect of sentencing decisions, which, in turn, resulted in increased intention to adhere to court orders and motivation to address the causes of offending behaviour.

Improved connections to culture and community

Across a number of programs, participants report a heightened sense of belonging, cultural pride and identity, and a stronger sense of family and community responsibility. The majority of Wulgunggo Nglau participants, for example, felt that an important benefit of the program was the opportunity to spend time with other Aboriginal men, both participants and staff members. The chance to ‘have a yarn’ and share experiences was emphasised by these men as a crucial part of the healing process, as it gave them an opportunity to relieve their stress and to reconnect with community in a culturally appropriate way.

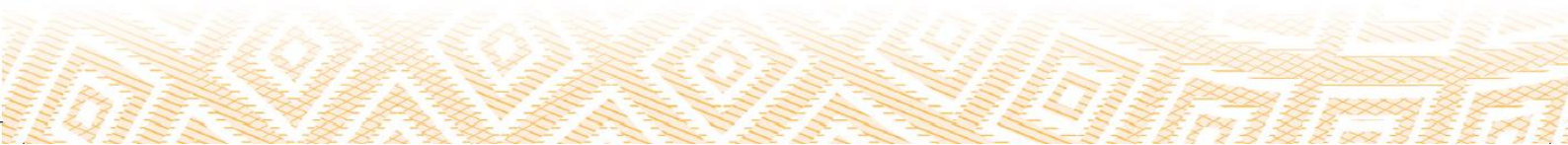
Justice agencies have greater cultural awareness

There is evidence to suggest that programs have increased the level of awareness and understanding among police, court and prison staff of the unique needs of Aboriginal people and the historical, cultural and social factors underlying the circumstances that may lead to an individual’s offending behaviour. As an illustration, the evaluation of the Koori Youth Justice Program found that advice provided by program workers to courts, parole boards and Youth Justice Management enabled these justice agency staff to make better informed and culturally relevant decisions when considering options for Aboriginal young people.

Communication and relationships between stakeholders are stronger

The majority of evaluations found that, to various degrees, programs have facilitated communication and strengthened relationships between justice agencies, service providers and the Aboriginal community, resulting in improved access to programs and services.

This is clearly exemplified in the evaluation of the Local Justice Worker Program, which found that many of the program’s achievements were based on mutual respect between Local Justice Workers, staff from community organisations and justice agency officers. The program effectively enhanced communication between Sherriff’s Officers and the Aboriginal community, where the community had previously tended to avoid contact. Similarly, the evaluation of the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer Program noted an increase in the confidence of the Aboriginal community to present at police stations where there was an Aboriginal representative or ‘face’ at the station who could act as an advocate on their behalf.





Good and promising practice

The evaluations consistently highlight a number of features that show evidence of good or promising practice and are likely to enhance program effectiveness.

Community involvement in the oversight, design and delivery of initiatives

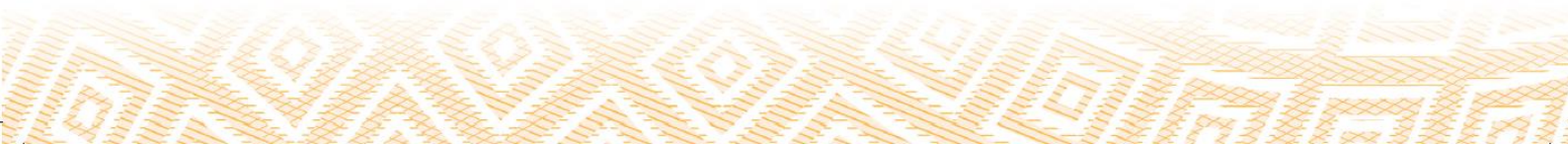
Through the partnership structure of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement, the Aboriginal community has had substantive involvement in the oversight, design and delivery of programs. In particular, the vast majority of evaluations emphasise the importance of community input at the local level through Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. Under the Agreement, significantly more services are now being delivered through community organisations. Locating programs in local organisations allows for greater community ownership and has enhanced the capacity of Aboriginal people and organisations to deliver justice-related programs and services.

Several evaluations also note the salience of community involvement at the regional and state levels through representation at the Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees and Aboriginal Justice Forum, in which senior representatives from justice agencies and the community work together to improve justice outcomes

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN THE DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF ABORIGINAL JUSTICE INITIATIVES THROUGH THE AGREEMENT'S PARTNERSHIP STRUCTURE

The Local Justice Worker and Koori Offender Mentoring Support programs are based on models of services that were formerly delivered (generally unfunded) by Aboriginal organisations around Victoria. As such, the two programs were designed with considerable involvement of Aboriginal community members and organisations. Nowadays, local organisations contracted by the Department of Justice and Regulation recruit and employ workers to deliver the service in each location. The Chief Executive Officers of the organisations - themselves respected members of the Aboriginal community - typically worked closely with the Local Justice Workers and Mentoring Support Coordinators to design and implement the program at the specific project sites.

An evaluation conducted in 2013 found that the programs reflect a strong partnership framework that allows for effective community consultation and participation. In particular, the evidence suggests that the success of the programs relies on the fact that they are delivered through Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. In addition, the programs are effectively structured so that they include avenues for continued input from, and feedback to, the Aboriginal community via Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees and the local project steering committees at each project location.



Culturally appropriate program models

There is extensive evidence to suggest that programs which incorporate the following elements into their designs are able to provide a more culturally appropriate response to the needs of Aboriginal clients, and consequently tend to have higher rates of client participation. These key elements are:

- A holistic approach to culture, where culture is not viewed as a set of stand-alone activities that can be separated or isolated from other programs and services.
- Aboriginal staff who are known in the community, respected and trusted by program participants, highly motivated, well-trained, and skilled at providing cultural support. The importance of finding the right people for staff roles was a widespread finding across the evaluations.
- The Involvement of Elders as cultural mentors and positive role models. Elders have also been found to play a valuable role in helping to introduce participants to programs and services, and in connecting participants to their community.
- Physical spaces dedicated to Aboriginal program delivery, as these 'culturally safe' settings enhance feelings of security and community for participants.
- Flexibility in the design of the program structure that allows it to adapt to local contexts.
- Cultural awareness training for justice agency staff that enhance their understanding of the unique needs and circumstances of Aboriginal offenders and the historical, social and cultural factors that may contribute to an individual's offending behaviours.

WULGUNGGOO NGALU LEARNING PLACE: AN EFFECTIVE MODEL FOR CULTURAL STRENGTHENING

Wulgungoo Ngalu Learning Place is a state-wide, community-based, residential facility and diversion program that supports Aboriginal men to complete their supervised corrections orders and address their offending behaviours. Through attendance in the program, participants unanimously reported feeling stronger in their culture, indicating that the program's approach to cultural strengthening had been effective. The evaluation identified a series of good practices within the Wulgungoo Ngalu program model that has enabled the achievement of these outcomes:

- Cultural strengthening processes are embedded within and central to all aspect of the program. Culture underpins and is at the centre of the program's rationale.
- All core staff are Aboriginal men, providing participants with an opportunity to connect with strong positive role models from the Aboriginal community.
- Elders and Respected Persons play an important role in providing cultural advice and mentoring.
- The program has established a culturally safe physical environment that incorporates locally significant totems, as well as traditional protocols around meeting places.
- The program has a highly individualised approach to cultural strengthening where each participant is supported to engage with culture in a way that is most appropriate to his needs as an individual.
- The program promoted cultural awareness throughout the justice system and local residents in the Yarram area by encouraging opportunities for informal interactions with participants. Local police, in particular, highlighted the respectful way that the men behaved when in town and described the advantages of engaging with the men in more positive way.

Active networking and strong relationships

The evidence shows that in locations where programs have been successful, there tends to be a high level of active networking and strong collaboration between justice agencies, service providers and the Aboriginal community. Although work needs to continue to build on existing relationships, there are lessons that can be learned from these programs in regard to effective stakeholder engagement:

- In general, successful programs have adopted a holistic approach to the provision of services that focus on underlying protective factors, such as employment, education, housing, drug and alcohol services.
- Referral processes, where they exist, have improved client access to various support services. In some cases, referral systems between justice programs have also increased client participation in these programs.
- Programs that have strong stakeholder relationships provided staff with opportunities for networking and sharing information, and ensured they had the necessary time and resources dedicated to undertake these activities.
- Basing program workers in Aboriginal organisations has been found to improve the credibility of programs within the community, strengthen the level of coordination at the local level, and increase client access to a range of programs and services.
- Where they have been well-functioning, steering committees located in project locations have been instrumental in strengthening collaboration between local stakeholders, and in providing oversight and management support to project activities.
- A client-centred approach was found to be effective for connecting people with appropriate services. In a client-centred approach, support is tailored to each person in accordance with his or her individual needs and circumstances.

BUILDING EFFECTIVE NETWORKS AND RELATIONSHIPS

The Koori Youth Justice Worker Program aims to prevent offending and re-offending behaviours of young Aboriginal people by ensuring they are connected to their families and communities and provided with access to services they require. The Western District Case Study explored the factors that contributed to a reduction of the number of Aboriginal young people on youth justice orders in the Warrnambool and Glenelg areas, during 2013 and 2014, with the aim to document and share these good practices across the Koori Youth Justice Program. Effectively building relationships and networks between programs and services featured strongly among the good practices identified in the case study, including:

- Establishing a range of informal and formal networks between local services that worked to support each other, including police, Koori Education Support Officers, and the Aboriginal Community Justice Panel.
- Liaising with schools so that teachers proactively contact the Koori Youth Justice Worker when they began to have concerns regarding an Aboriginal young person, preventing issues from escalating further.
- Locating the Koori Youth Justice Worker in the Gunditjmara Aboriginal Cooperative so that the worker is able to link clients up with a wide range of community programs offered by the organisation.
- Providing individualised support to meet the young persons “where they are at” in terms of physical locations, such as home and school visits, and also in terms of connecting them to their interests through sports clubs and other activities.

Challenges and barriers

The collective findings of the evaluations point to a number of challenges and barriers to the effective design and delivery of Aboriginal justice programs.

Intended justice outcomes are often too ambitious

On account of poor program planning, the intended outcomes of initiatives are often unrealistic and cannot be achieved nor measured. In the vast majority of cases, program aims and objectives that relate to crime prevention and reduction were found to be too high level for the small-scale, short length and type of initiatives being implemented, and were not commensurate with funding nor human resourcing.

In addition, there are a range of limitations that make it difficult to attribute the impacts of specific programs to justice outcomes, including the relatively small population size of the Aboriginal community in Victoria, the inaccuracy of Aboriginal identification data, and the wide range of complex and interrelated factors that influence the level of crime.

CHALLENGES WITH LINKING CRIME PREVENTION AND REDUCTION OUTCOMES TO SPECIFIC PROGRAMS

Like many of the evaluations of Aboriginal justice programs, the evaluation of the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer Program was not able to make direct causal claims linking the program's impacts to crime prevention or reduction. A few police who participated as interviewees, questioned whether it was realistic to expect the program to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system, and felt that expectations should instead focus on improving stakeholder relationships between the police and community.

Evaluations carried out of the County Koori Court, Children's Koori Court and Family Violence Court Support programs found that that the anticipated outcomes were difficult to achieve within the length of the time that the programs had been running. The Children's Koori Court evaluation, for instance, concluded that "it is unrealistic to expect that Aboriginal sentencing courts will result in a major reduction in recidivism and, in turn, the overall rate of incarceration, at least in the short-term".

In similar vein, three separate evaluations of projects funded under the Koori Community Safety Grants scheme – Rumalara, Family and Community Violence Prevention, and Strong Relationships – reported that measurable justice and community outcomes were unlikely to appear within the project timeframes. The evaluators found that while the grants scheme intended to achieve broad, societal level goals related to the prevention of family violence, in reality, the three year projects were insufficient to do so on account of their length, size and funding.

Overlaps in the scope of programs and duplication in staff roles

The devolved governance structure of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement has created significant program diversity and innovation across the state – however, this also has meant that there are a large number of activities, piecemeal funding and no cohesive program logic. Consequently, the evaluation findings indicate that there is some overlap in the scope of different programs and duplication in staff roles and responsibilities.

OVERLAP IN PROGRAM SCOPE

The Koori Youth Justice Program covers four different programs; the Koori Youth Justice Worker Program, Koori Intensive Bail Support Program, the Koori Pre and Post Release Program, and the Custodial Aboriginal Support Worker Program. In 2010, a review undertaken of the Koori Youth Justice Program in its entirety drew attention to the need for greater clarity and demarcation between the roles and responsibilities of workers across these four programs and recommended that the issue be continually discussed and regularly reviewed at local levels to ensure minimal overlap. Similarly, a 2015 review of the Local Justice Worker Program found some duplication between the Local Justice Worker and Sheriff Aboriginal Liaison Officer roles and a lack of clarity among these staff in terms of who is responsible for doing what.

Inadequate, fragmented and short-term funding

Program delivery has been seriously impeded by resourcing constraints. Funding arrangements for programs implemented under the third phase of the Agreement have typically been short-term and fragmented. Funding shortfalls for the employment of program staff are especially acute. Many of the evaluations conclude that current resourcing arrangements are inadequate given the complexity and long-term nature of the issues being addressed and call for a different resourcing structure to build on the gains made so far.

In addition, the lack of resourcing for support services has been a significant barrier to their engagement in a number of justice programs and their capacity to respond to referrals. This has, in turn, affected the delivery of these programs.

IMPLICATIONS OF FUNDING CONSTRAINTS ON THE DELIVERY OF ABORIGINAL JUSTICE PROGRAMS

The Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria (FVPLSV) provides a range of services for Aboriginal victims of family violence and sexual assault, including the Sisters Day Out and Dilly Bag programs. An evaluation of these programs, conducted in 2014, found that insecure funding has significantly impeded planning processes, resource allocation and program implementation. Funding cuts in 2012 and 2013 resulted in low program participant rates due to a sharp decrease in the number of workshops that were held during the two year period.

Likewise, delivery of the Aboriginal Cultural Immersion, Murumali and Koori Cognitive Skills programs in Corrections Victoria prisons have been heavily impacted by funding cuts. For instance, resourcing constraints precluded the Marumali healing program from being run between 2008 and 2011. Although deemed part of the agency's core business, funding for these programs has been ad hoc year to year, and consequently they are only run when funding permits. An evaluation carried out in 2013 reported that these three programs were not being run frequently enough to include all Aboriginal prisoners who may have wanted to participate.

An evaluation of the Children's Koori Court conducted in 2009 found the absence of service delivery representatives in some Court hearings to be highly problematic, noting that the support services on which the Court relies had not been sufficiently funded and required substantive additional resources. A number of stakeholders interviewed for the evaluation felt that it was almost nonsensical to invest in the establishment of an innovative court without a commensurate investment in the support services upon which its success so greatly depends.

Constraints on staff resourcing

Almost all of the programs were affected by serious constraints on staffing resourcing. In particular, programs experienced difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff and engaging the participation of Elders. Evaluation findings also point to the need for increased capacity development and cultural awareness training.

- The evidence in the evaluation reports clearly demonstrates that programs suffer alarmingly high staff turnover. Staff burnout is common due to overburden and a shortage of staff has meant that programs are often unable to meet client demand. Further, many staff are on low-paid, part-time and short-term contracts. In some programs, positions have remained vacant for periods of time, leading to disruptions in service delivery.
- Aboriginal staff report their roles can be stressful given the fine line they are often required to walk between community and program expectations. This is especially challenging where staff have to balance the demand for assistance from community members outside their normal work hours.
- Engaging Elders and Respected Persons to participate in programs has been challenging in some locations. These community members are often overstretched with other commitments.
- More induction and ongoing professional development training for program staff is needed, as well as Aboriginal cultural awareness training for justice agencies and mainstream service providers. Notably, there are examples of low attendance at training courses where staff were not able to prioritise participation due to competing demands on their time and resources.

STAFFING SHORTAGES AND OVERBURDEN

Two separate evaluations of the Local Justice Worker and Koori Offender Support Mentoring Programs, conducted in 2013 and 2015, raised a number of concerns with respect to staff resourcing. The examples described below are representative of staffing issues that have been identified in a multitude of other Aboriginal justice programs evaluations:

- In the context of limited resourcing, positions are often part-time. These part-time positions tended to generate a high turnover of personnel as people would leave the position to take on a full-time role elsewhere.
- Staff wages were not considered to be competitive. A minimum wage component was not stipulated in the funding agreements.
- Clients often required assistance outside of the workers' part-time schedules. This was particularly an issue when participants had court dates that did not fall on the workers' usual working days.
- Some program sites encountered staff recruitment difficulties whereby positions remained vacant for several months, leading to disruptions in service delivery.
- Program staff who were new to the role indicated that their experience was overwhelming and suggested that some issues could have been addressed through more structured induction training.

Maintaining project steering committees

In locations where project steering committees had been established, they appeared to lose momentum as time passed. In the absence of a steering committee, these projects were left without much needed guidance, support and strategic linkages to other programs and organisations.

CHALLENGES WITH ESTABLISHING AND SUSTAINING PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEES

The Strong Men, Strong Relationships, and Koori Family Violence Police Protocols projects each experienced considerable difficulties in setting up or sustaining project steering committees.

- A lack of strong project governance, including the failure to establish a cross-sectoral steering committee, was detrimental to the Strong Relationships project as evidenced by the continual changing of project plans, and the scope and timing of activities. The steering committee met three times in the first year, and only once more in the second year, with declining attendance.
- A local reference group was initially formed to steer the development of the Koori Family Violence Police Protocols. However, it was not established strongly enough to guide the process beyond the launch of the Protocols.

Relationships and referral pathways

Weak collaboration between stakeholders was repeatedly identified as a significant barrier to the effective implementation of programs.

- There is a need for regular, systematic communication and networking opportunities between programs, services and justice agencies.
- Referral pathways between programs and services require clarity and strengthening.
- There are widespread resourcing constraints that limit the capacity of support services to effectively respond to referrals, engage in networking, and participate in programs as required.

THE NEED FOR A COMPREHENSIVE AND INTEGRATED SERVICE MODEL

The majority of the informants consulted for the evaluation of the Strong Relationships program were aware of some participation of external agencies, particularly in the project activities assisting Aboriginal men. Overall, however, they felt there could have been stronger linkages between related programs to enhance support and deliver more positive outcomes for participants. The general view among interviewees was that a lot more work could be done to develop collaborative approaches with other stakeholders working in family and community violence, especially in regards to support for Aboriginal women. The evaluators observed that where connections and cross-referrals occurred it was mainly because of professional and personal relationships and individual practice, rather than the application of across-agency service model.

Monitoring and evaluation requires strengthening

Opportunities exist to better capture, record and share program information. Many evaluations discussed the need for improved data collection and reporting on program outcomes, program delivery and referral processes. According to these evaluations, there is a need for more regular and systematic monitoring, as well as the establishment of information sharing systems across programs and departments.

The collective evidence also points to a clear need for improved evaluation frameworks and processes. Evaluation activity is not consistently being built into the design of every program, and where evaluations have been conducted, the quality is variable and overly reliant on qualitative feedback from people with some vested interest in the outcome.

Most frequent recommendations

The Synthesis identified the most common recommendations that appear across the twenty evaluations of Aboriginal justice programs.

Design programs with realistic objectives, outcomes, indicators and targets

- At the program planning stage, develop appropriate, achievable and measurable objectives, outcomes, indicators and targets that are commensurate with the scale, timeframe and type of program being implemented.

Provide sufficient and longer-term funding to programs and support services

- Provide sufficient and stable funding to ensure ongoing and frequent program delivery.
- Increase resourcing for support services to enhance their capacity to effectively engage with programs and respond to referrals.

Increase staff resources and training

- Create full-time roles and appropriately remunerate staff. Ensure salaries are competitive and there is consistency in wages across locations.
- Explore opportunities to increase the engagement of Elders in programs, particularly in some locations.
- Increase professional development training and support for program staff, and resource accordingly.
- Ensure consistent delivery of Aboriginal cultural awareness training for staff from justice agencies and mainstream services, and resource accordingly.

Strengthen local governance structures in project locations

- Establish local project steering committees with clear governance structures and multi-year plans.

Strengthen relationships and referral pathways between programs and services

- Strengthen coordination and communication across Aboriginal-specific, mainstream, justice, and non-justice programs and services, particularly at the local level.
- Provide regular opportunities for information sharing and networking in each location, and ensure staff have time and resources dedicated to undertake these activities.
- Develop and formalise referral pathways between programs and services.

Improve monitoring and evaluation

- Improve data collection and reporting systems that record information on program outcomes, program delivery and referral processes.
- Ensure evaluation frameworks are routinely embedded within program designs and adopt measures to improve evaluation quality.
- Provide ongoing support and coaching to Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and local partners to build their capacities in project management and monitoring and evaluation.
- Create systems to share information within and across government departments.

Considerations for evaluation under AJA4

The synthesis provides an opportunity to reflect on the overall quality of the evaluations themselves, in order to identify opportunities for improving future research methodologies and processes. Suggestions are made here as to how future evaluations can be brought into closer alignment with accepted guidelines for conducting ethical research

Actively engage Aboriginal community stakeholders in all aspects of evaluation

As routine practice, the Aboriginal community should have input at all stages of evaluation, including:

- As members of evaluation reference or governance groups
- As researchers or evaluators
- As participants and key informants
- Through analysis and dissemination of results

In general, the Synthesis found limited examples of community involvement in evaluation processes. Of particular concern, there was either no or very little evidence of consultation with program participants in over half of the evaluations. Consequently, the voices and perspectives of this important group of people have not been adequately reflected in evaluation findings to date. Efforts should be made to understand and address any barriers to the engagement of program participants in future evaluation and research.

Moving forward in the next phase of the Agreement, government stakeholders may wish to consider adopting a system whereby evaluators are required to submit a 'community inclusion strategy' alongside the submission of a final evaluation report, outlining what steps were taken to consult and involve community members throughout the various stages of the evaluation process.

Ensure evaluation findings are communicated and provided to relevant stakeholders

In gathering evaluations for the purpose of this Synthesis, the researchers experienced difficulties with sourcing reports as they had to approach each government agency directly. Plans for the communication and use of evaluation findings should be agreed between evaluators, evaluation commissioners and Aboriginal community members at the start of every evaluation, and consideration should be given to the development of an information sharing system.

Ideally, findings should be made available and presented to a range of stakeholder audiences, including evaluation participants, using methods to communicate information in ways that are appropriate, clear and comprehensible to them. This is an area with scope for real improvement.

Produce findings that can be used to inform future program design and policy

It appears that a number of evaluations included in the Synthesis were simply conducted as a compliance mechanism or for the sole purpose of sourcing additional funding. Several evaluations concluded that the programs warranted a continuation of funding on account of their strengths, without giving balanced consideration to the program challenges. Several others described the challenges and barriers, but did not make associated recommendations. Findings such as these limit the usefulness and application of the evaluations. Efforts should be made to ensure that evaluation findings under the fourth phase of the Agreement are practical and contribute to the improvement of programs and policies.



Community-based crime prevention programs for Aboriginal young people

Final evaluation (extract for Community Crime Prevention)

November 2019





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Acronyms

DJCS	Department of Justice and Community Safety
KESO	Koori Education Support Officer
KJU	Koori Justice Unit
KYCPG	Koori Youth Crime Prevention Grants
KYJW	Koori Youth Justice Worker
RAJAC	Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee

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A note on terminology

The term ‘Aboriginal’ is used throughout this report to refer to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of Victoria. Where the original data, program title or direct quote refers to this population as ‘Indigenous’ or ‘Koori’, these terms have been kept for the sake of consistency.



1. Koori youth crime prevention program

1.1 Crime prevention programs for Aboriginal young people in Victoria

The YCPG allocated \$1.5 million in grants to programs that empower and re-engage Koori youth aged 8–24 years old, as well as their families, with the aim of preventing or reducing negative contact with the criminal justice system. The Koorie Youth Council provided clear advice regarding the needs of Koori youth in Victoria, which informed the design of the Koori Youth Crime Prevention Grants (KYCPG). This advice recommended the provision of: ongoing opportunities for local youth to gather; youth focused cultural strengthening programs; family focused programs; and regional youth gatherings.

The KYCPG were designed to support Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to provide early intervention activities that target at-risk youth and provide a pre-charge diversion option for police and courts. Each of DJCS's nine Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees (RAJACs) invited, reviewed and endorsed applications from local community organisations, which were then reviewed by KJU and CCPU. Across Victoria, 25 community-based partnership projects were funded with an average grant amount of around \$56,400 (not including one project that was funded \$147,900).

1.2 Evaluation methodology

The KYCPG evaluation, conducted over a two-year period, sought to understand how well this grant program worked for Aboriginal young people and what lessons could be learned around how to better design and deliver crime prevention projects for Aboriginal young people in future. The following objectives were therefore developed to guide the evaluation:

- Understand the ways in which the KYCPG has strengthened the capacity of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to provide effective crime prevention initiatives for young people at risk of offending;
- Determine the extent to which the design and delivery of the projects align with the evidence base of 'what works' as identified in past research and evaluations of Indigenous-specific crime prevention initiatives;
- Determine whether there has been an increase in protective factors for Aboriginal young people involved in the initiatives;
- Formulate recommendations and provide advice about future design and delivery of crime prevention initiatives to best meet the needs of Aboriginal young people.

The evaluation used a mixed methods approach consisting of stakeholder interviews, a review of project-related information, and a literature review. It was conducted with consideration of the limitations inherent in evaluating projects funded through the KYCPG, which were comparatively small in scale and often built on existing initiatives. The KYCPG activities were primarily non-intensive interventions that focused on increasing protective factors of youth. These activities were not targeted to specific individual needs and did not include individualised risk assessment or service programming. For these reasons, project outcomes could not be evaluated in the same way as for the directed and competitive streams under the YCPG program.

Careful consideration was given to ensure the evaluation activities are consistent with accepted guidelines for conducting ethical research and respectful of Aboriginal cultural values. An ethics application outlining the evaluation methodology was approved by the Justice Human Research Ethics Committee. While the evaluation was covered by ethics to interview Aboriginal young people, the KJU expressly chose not to pursue this option. Given there was concurrent work occurring across government during the evaluation period that involved significant consultation with Aboriginal young people, the KJU was cognisant of the increased risks of over-research and consultation fatigue for this cohort.

1.3 Evaluation findings

1.3.1 Project design and delivery

The literature review identified a number of 'best practice' characteristics that, if put in place, would likely enhance the effectiveness of crime prevention strategies for Aboriginal young people:

- ✓ Community ownership over project design and delivery
- ✓ Adequate and stable funding
- ✓ High quality staff and mentors
- ✓ Frequent and ongoing contact with young people
- ✓ A focus on high-risk young people
- ✓ A focus on young people at an early age
- ✓ Addressing multiple protective factors in a single program
- ✓ Embedding culture in programs in a way that builds positive identity and self-esteem

This section provides a summary of the existing evidence (that is, what past research and evaluations have found to be effective for Aboriginal crime prevention programs) and discusses the extent to which the design and delivery of the projects included in this evaluation reflects each of these 'best practice' characteristics.

Community ownership over project design and delivery

What past research has found to be effective

Past research and evaluations emphasised the importance of Aboriginal involvement in the design and delivery of programs to foster genuine community ownership.^{1 2} Programs that had not been developed in conjunction with Aboriginal communities were, overall, found to be less successful.^{3 4}

True community ownership ensures that programs are more culturally appropriate and fine-tuned to local priorities. Ensuring sufficient flexibility for project timeframes to fit with community needs and the contextual realities on the ground was consistently found to determine the effectiveness and sustainability of projects.^{5 6}

Findings from this evaluation: projects are granted adequate design flexibility except for timeframes

Overall, project workers felt there was a high level of flexibility within the funding agreements for organisations to design their own projects. However, there was mixed awareness among project workers of the ability to make variations to project activities throughout the delivery phase, so long as these changes are communicated back to the KJU.

Where there was awareness, this flexibility had enabled organisations to shape their responses to fit the realities of the local community and meet the evolving needs and interests of the young people participating in the project, who were often encouraged to play an active role in deciding what activities to run. However, some workers who were unaware of the flexibility available to them and would have sought variations in order to improve project outcomes, had they known this was an option.

"KJU gets it. They have a cultural understanding that different communities have different issues and that one size will not fit all community needs. The KJU trusts us and gives us ownership over the projects, which is wonderful." (Community organisation)

"The great thing about KJU funding is that, while there are some parameters, there is flexibility for the community to shape its own projects around community needs." (Community organisation)

Nonetheless, there is scope within the funding arrangements to further enhance community ownership. Organisations consistently discussed the need for longer and more flexible project timeframes:

- A two-year funding period was considered too short for a project to make a meaningful change within the community in relation to crime prevention.
- Timeframes for grant application processes often demand a quick turnaround. The short period of time between the opening date of a funding round and the submission deadline means that organisations are often rushed to undertake research, design projects, estimate costs, reach out to potential partnerships, leverage additional resources, and write up their proposals.
- Slow project application approval processes and subsequent delays in the release of payments can be difficult for community organisations to manage, as the expected deliverables remain the same but there is less time to achieve them. For a two-year project, the impacts of these delays can be significant.
- More time is required for the project establishment phase – that is, between the time in which an organisation is notified its application is successful and the time when project delivery commences. Most organisations experienced some challenges in getting their project ‘off the ground’ and discussed the need for an additional establishment period to allow time to recruit staff, secure venues, develop partnerships, establish governance structures, engage project participants and gain traction in the community.
- The amount of money organisations applied for was sometimes different to the size of the grant they later received. This was challenging for organisations as they were expected to start implementation immediately and had to quickly scale up or cut back on their planned activities.

“Workers on the ground have great ideas that don’t surface because everybody is in a rush.” (Community organisation)

“Two years is not enough. By the time the project is up and running maybe there is no funding in future. You need time to learn and fine-tune it. It’s really great that you can bring the project to the community and then it just suddenly stops and that can be really hard.” (Community Organisation)

“Building partnerships and relationships takes a long time. It didn’t make sense to spend time developing this relationship until funding was actually secured. It also takes time to recruit the right people to the roles or to rearrange workplans and make time in the calendars of existing staff in the organisation. Again, you don’t know if you will get the funding so you need time for this.” (Community organisation)

Recommendation 1:

There should be increased flexibility in project timeframes to fit with community needs and ensure organisations are aware of the flexible options available to them:

- Where possible, extend project timeframes to a minimum of three years.
- For new initiatives, consider a standard minimum timeframe of three months for project design and preparation of a grant application, and a further three months for project planning and establishment.
- Improve communication with funded organisations around flexible arrangements in the funding agreements.

Adequate and stable funding

What past research has found to be effective

A major issue identified in the implementation of programs for Aboriginal people is that they rarely proceed beyond the ‘pilot’ stage and are expected to produce results in unrealistically short timeframes and with a shortage of staff.^{5 8 7} Sustainable programs are crucial to maximise long-term crime prevention outcomes in Aboriginal communities and require adequate and stable funding commitments.



Findings from this evaluation: grant funding is often not adequate or stable enough to achieve desired outcomes

Many organisations were extremely resourceful in using the small amount of funding they received through the grant to leverage additional resources from other organisations, such as venues or staff, and/or have made significant in-kind contributions. There are numerous examples where organisations, which were previously coordinating activities on a shoe-string budget prior to receiving a grant, were then able to run more structured activities or recruit a paid worker to deliver them. Despite this, in the vast majority of cases, the total resourcing was not sufficient to cover staff salaries, day-to-day running expenses, nor costs for transportation.

Furthermore, there appears to have been challenges for organisations in appropriately budgeting for project delivery given the small amount of funding. Not setting aside adequate funding to cover transportation (such as a bus) or appropriate facilities were repeatedly raised as major barriers to project delivery. Many young people come from low-income families who cannot afford to travel to project activities by car or public transport, may have lost their drivers licence, or live in regional areas not adequately serviced by public transport. Several organisations were forced to use temporary and unsuitable facilities for project activities, or to put young people on waiting lists.

All the organisations spoke about difficulties they faced with securing ongoing funding and the strain of constantly pursuing further funding to support the continued delivery of existing projects. In the absence of a funding model that builds in longer-term sustainability, projects were concerned that progress they had made would be reversed: namely, the time and effort it takes to engage young people and build their trust, the loss of and damage to these relationships when the funding stops, and the loss of momentum and groundwork that has gone into getting to the point of consistent project delivery.

“Our project provides a backbone of learning for our young people. But then when the money is gone, the children’s journey is chopped. Their attachments are gone, their sense of security. The anchoring and foundations need to be kept engaged over their life journey.” (Community organisation)

“Currently, there is such a great need to secure recurring funding that staff spend so much time and energy applying for grants to create a steady income stream that this cuts down on the time they can spend on project delivery.” (Community organisation)

Recommendation 2:

Additional guidance should be provided to organisations around budgeting for project delivery.

High quality staff and mentors

What past research has found to be effective

In general, programs that were more successful recruited locally knowledgeable, well-trained staff and mentors with an ongoing commitment to the program. The competence and motivation of staff and mentors, in addition to training and supervision, were found to be essential for the delivery of successful projects. The quality and depth of the relationships between staff or mentors and young people highly influences the effectiveness of programs, as strong positive relationships are more likely to contribute to regular attendance, low dropout and a higher level of satisfaction.^{8 9}

In the Aboriginal context, mentoring appears to be a particularly promising initiative as it fits well with Indigenous teaching and learning styles and can help to build strong collective ties within the community.^{10 11 12} Research has found that mentoring can have positive effects for young people in a number of indirect ways, for example by improving their self-esteem and sense of hope for the future, through to increasing their engagement with school, family and community.¹³

Findings from this evaluation: quality staff/mentors are key to project success but are difficult to recruit and retain

During interviews, the perceived success of the projects was frequently attributed to the strengths of individual project workers who are highly motivated and work tirelessly to engage young people, creatively leverage resources, and build relationships. Organisations highlighted the importance of recruiting project workers who are connected into and respected by the local community, have strong cultural knowledge, and are experienced community service workers.

While some organisations sought external volunteer mentors to be involved in the project, mentoring was commonly viewed as being embedded within the roles of project workers. Some felt that the responsibilities attached to a mentor role are beyond what can be expected of an unpaid volunteer or that there can be a lack of oversight when using external mentors around the quality of their interactions with young people. Embedding mentoring within the role of project workers provides young people with consistent and reliable support, with a worker being better placed to link young people with the services they may require.

It was emphasised that project workers often go 'above and beyond' their paid role by being available to provide support and mentoring outside of designated hours, using their own car to transport young people, addressing the needs of participants by covering multiple small costs (such as food and transport) or taking young people and their families to services in their own time. Community organisations felt this unpaid labour, which stems from a worker's deep sense of responsibility and care for their community, was crucial in supporting young people but often unrecognised by funding agencies as a significant input.

"The key to a successful crime prevention project is having a facilitator and role model who believes in a young person. Having a caring and supportive relationship is essential for the young person to build their resilience." (Community organisation)

"Project staff have to make time to speak to kids after hours, as you can't say to a kid "no, I can't help you right now". It's your own community you are looking after. When you work in community, the hours aren't nine to five. You have deeper cultural responsibilities." (Community organisation)

"Workers put in unpaid overtime all the time and do so much off their own back because they care, but there's no financial compensation for this. If government put a dollar figure on all the in-kind, they'd be out of pocket." (Community organisation)

However, the evaluation also identified a series of challenges in relation to staff resourcing and capacity:

- Many projects reported being impacted by serious constraints on staffing resources and high staff turnover, which was found to limit the capacity of the projects to run their activities.
- Difficulties in recruiting to project worker roles has resulted in delays and disruptions in the delivery of activities. Many project workers are employed on part-time and short-term contracts. According to several organisations, it was hard to compete with mainstream services that offer higher salaries. In this highly competitive environment, it is crucial to invest in workforce development to increase the pool of qualified talent and to strengthen employment pathways within the Aboriginal community-controlled sector.
- To fill recruitment gaps, there is a heavy reliance on unpaid volunteers who are hard to recruit and retain.
- To fill recruitment gaps, in some cases, administrative staff with no previous project management experience were transferred across from other parts of the organisation to coordinate and run the project activities. In other cases, projects 'borrowed' workers from other services in the local area. This was not, however, a reliable arrangement since these external workers were often overstretched, as they had competing responsibilities and priorities.
- Projects emphasised the importance of having two or more project staff in attendance at any given time to ensure the smooth implementation of project activities, as well as the safety of participants:

- After a series of incidents that posed a threat to staff safety, several projects realised they were not appropriately equipped to work with young people with behavioural issues as they require additional staff and training.
- While one project worker sets up, runs and packs up the activities, there often needs to be a second project worker to drive young people to and from the venue.
- Having at least one male and one female worker is important to ensure that the young people attending the project activities receive culturally appropriate support.
- Several organisations also raised staff ‘burn out’ as a serious risk for their project workers, particularly given the personal commitment that many workers bring to the role as outlined above, but often did not have a formalised strategy for managing this risk.
- Some organisations needed to ‘hire in’ Elders or Respected Persons with appropriate local cultural knowledge due to being unable to source this within community through volunteering, which was often not accounted for in initial budgeting.

“Staffing has been the biggest issue for us. There really needs to be someone full-time to coordinate and run the activities. The project delivery was a bit quiet for a while without a dedicated role attached to the project to keep it going.” (Community organisation)

“It’s especially necessary to have additional staff for young people who have been in residential care or come through the courts and muck up a lot. They have serious behavioural issues as they are not used to socialising, which can make it difficult for the other kids and detracts from staff time. They need intensive one-on-one support.” (Community organisation)

Recommendation 3:

Additional guidance should be provided to organisations around suggested human resources requirements to successfully implement potential projects, based on lessons learnt to date.

Frequent, consistent and ongoing interactions with young people

What past research has found to be effective

The literature highlights the importance of engaging young people in projects through frequent and sustained interactions, particularly where the goal is to reduce delinquency.^{12 13} Regular and ongoing participation in program activities means the young person has time to develop close interpersonal relationships and consolidate the new skills they have learned. For instance, evidence suggests that recreation activities have greater benefits when run for 10-20 weeks minimum and projects with mentoring components require a minimum of 12-18 months.^{14 14 15}

Findings from this evaluation: consistency when interacting with young people is key to project success

Most project workers emphasised the importance of running activities on a frequent and ongoing basis, as it takes time to build relationships and gain the trust of disengaged young people. Building a sense of continuity through holding activities in the same time, place and with the same staff each week was seen as an important part of maintaining engagement with young people who may otherwise ‘fall off the radar’. The KYCPG projects offered young people support in varied manners:

- Most of the projects offered weekly activities, for the same group of young people, over the full duration of the funding period with some offering additional one-off events or camps as well.
- Some projects offered activities that were structured around set timeframes (e.g. school terms or sporting timetables), for the same group of young people, over the full duration of the funding period.
- Some projects ran a series of short-term activities, events or camps during the funding period that did not appear to link in with more consistent, ongoing programs.

It was seen as particularly important to maintain consistency in the project staff running the activities given the mentoring relationships they form with the young people. Many of the young people engaging in project activities may not have had the opportunity to form supportive, stable and ongoing relationships with adult role models in their lives. Challenges with recruitment and staff turnover can reinforce the sense of abandonment that young people may have previously experienced many times before in their relationships with adults.

Some projects reported that funding constraints prevented them from running consistent activities for young people despite the desire to do so, as they could not afford to run both a youth group and camp simultaneously or to employ enough staff to run activities. Others struggled to provide consistent support due to issues such as staff absences or having to turn away young people due to waiting lists, lack of transport, or venue capacity constraints.

"It's really important to give young people consistent and reliable support. These kids have had a lot of instability in their lives. They need ongoing reassurance, motivation and contact, so we're working on creating greater stability across the activities. All our workers keep in regular contact with the kids and if they don't show up someone will call them up and ask "How are you? What's going on? You coming next week?" (Community organisation)

"One-off camps and things like that only work if they build on a more stable, ongoing program" (Community organisation)

Recommendation 4:

Community organisations should be encouraged to design projects that engage young people through frequent and ongoing interactions, with the aim of ensuring:

- Short-term activities, events and camps build upon or link to consistent, ongoing programs.
- Projects are run for a minimum of 12-18 months to mitigate the potentially harmful psychological impacts that can arise from short-term mentoring relationships.

A focus on high-risk young people

What past research has found to be effective

Previous research demonstrates that programs which target their approach towards specific groups of young people who are most at-risk, or in greatest need of services and support, tend to be more effective than programs which are generalised to a broader population.^{12 13 16}

While concentrating efforts primarily on engaging young people at greatest risk, in some cases programs may benefit from a mix of high-risk and low-risk young people to provide opportunities for pro-social peer role modelling. However, careful management of these mixed programs is required to ensure that the young people considered to be low-risk are not negatively influenced by antisocial peer role modelling.^{18 19}

Findings from this evaluation: there is a lack of clarity around who crime prevention should target

There appeared to be a lack of clarity among community organisations as to who should be the target cohort for their project. This could potentially stem from the general consensus across stakeholder groups that prevention (universal) and early intervention (targeted) activities are equally important and cannot be easily separated:

- Young people who are at risk of contact with the justice system do not like to be singled out as the 'bad kids' and therefore it is important to adopt a gentle and inclusive approach in which all young people in the community are invited to participate.
- Engaging all young people in the community to attend crime prevention projects was seen to create opportunities for prosocial peer-to-peer role-modelling, whereby young people who are in a more vulnerable state spend time with and are influenced by young people who are doing well.

- Young people who are at risk of contact with the justice system often show up to project activities along with their friends or younger siblings. These other young people may not yet be at-risk but are often in a vulnerable space and would benefit from support.
- It is important to invest in projects for all young people to ensure that those who are doing well continue to do well. If projects are taken away from young people who are doing comparatively better, justice indicators in these locations may worsen.
- Projects need to be careful not to reward only young people who engage in antisocial behaviour as this might encourage young people who well-behaved to 'act up' so they are able to participate in activities.

Most projects were therefore open to all young people in the community within the project's specified age range, and reportedly did not actively target 'at-risk' young people. However, the young people engaging with projects were often still disconnected from their culture, family and community, and had limited engagement with school or employment. Most had not yet become involved in the criminal justice system but some displayed behaviours that project workers felt put them at risk of coming to police attention.

"Currently because of limited resources, we are using a deficit approach, not enough of a strengths-based approach. Only the squeaky wheel gets the oil. Our project already recognises the importance of increasing the strengths of all young people, but the lack of money means the hard kids get it all." (Community organisation)

"We need to provide support at all levels, that is, from prevention to early intervention. Low level kids may move to middle tier and then move up to top tier" (Community organisation)

While it was seen to be important for all young people to have access to support, interviewees were concerned that higher risk young people, who have already been involved with the criminal justice system, are potentially 'slipping through the cracks':

- Several projects tried to establish formal referral pathways through the police and courts as a cautioning or pre-diversion option but found this challenging in terms of gaining 'buy-in' from external stakeholders.
- Some projects were working together with local Koori Youth Justice Workers (KYJWs) or Koori Education Support Officers (KESOs) to identify higher risk young people who would benefit from the project activities, however this was successful to varying degrees. There is an opportunity for organisations to work more closely with existing Aboriginal-specific funded positions in the regions to support high risk young people.
- Project workers noted that higher risk young people are the hardest to engage in prevention and early intervention activities given the complexity and compounding nature of risk factors in their lives. They often require a much more intensive intervention than can be provided through broad-based activities.
- Projects who had engaged high risk young people in their activities found it challenging to manage their behavioural issues without appropriately trained staff. In some instances, projects were able to recruit additional support but, in other cases, being unable to adequately support the young person meant they disengaged from the project.
- None of the projects were able to provide intensive case-management or wraparound support to high risk young people due to financial and staffing constraints, although many project workers made effort above and beyond their role to link these young people and/or their carers into other appropriate supports.

Recommendation 5:

Community organisations should be encouraged to design projects that engage young people across the prevention and early intervention spectrum, with a greater focus on engaging high-risk young people. For example:

- Work closely with KYJWs in the region to identify and support at-risk and high-risk young people.
- Include links with police cautioning and/or court diversion processes where appropriate.
- Develop partnerships that can enhance an organisation's capability in working with young people who have complex needs.

A focus on young people at an early age

What past research has found to be effective

Providing programs for at-risk infants, young children and their families has been found to be a particularly effective crime prevention strategy.^{17 18 19} There is considerable evidence to demonstrate that parenting skills and preschool programs for high-risk families can reduce the likelihood of criminal behaviour later in life.

Additionally, the evidence suggests that there should be more programs targeting children of primary school age before the onset of negative peer influences and antisocial behaviour.^{14 20 21} Attempting to deliver an intervention once young people have already disengaged from school or have become part of a problematic peer group during adolescence is likely to be more difficult.⁵

Focussing on Aboriginal young people at an early age is especially important considering that, on average, Aboriginal young people in Victoria come into contact with the juvenile justice system at a younger age than non-Aboriginal young people.²²

Findings from this evaluation: there needs to be greater tailoring of project activities to age groups

Most projects spoke about the difficulties they faced in recruiting young people, of all ages, to attend project activities. Many projects relied solely on word of mouth to promote the project in the local community, with some also using local media (e.g. radio and newsletters). This meant that, for many projects, the majority of young people attending project activities were already engaged with the funded organisations in some way. Organisations reflected that, in future, they would dedicate more effort towards recruitment and promotion to ensure they reach a wider audience of potential participants.

The majority of projects selected for this evaluation reported predominantly engaging adolescents aged between 10 and 16 years in project activities, while a small number of projects focused on a younger cohort of children aged under 10 years. However, even where the focus has not been on engaging a younger cohort of children (aged 0 – 9 years), it appears some projects are having unintended benefits for this cohort who often attend project activities with their older siblings, cousins or friends.

Based on discussion with interviewees, it appears the projects that had the most impact on increasing protective factors and/or reducing risk factors for the younger cohort of children (aged 0 – 10 years) were those which engaged children in successive activities across their childhood and adolescent life. A handful of organisations delivered several projects each aimed at a different age group, with some offering structured progression between these activities from early childhood through to adulthood.

Only a few projects reported having engaged an older cohort of people aged 17 and over (with one project expanding their age range to include people aged 18 to 65 years due to demand in the community). Young people aged 17 to 25 years were considered a particularly difficult cohort to engage in project activities as they feel 'too cool' to hang around with the younger children or require more intensive intervention given their level of disengagement. This was considered a significant gap as this age group is more likely to be 'mucking up' in a way that could result in criminal justice system involvement.

A key learning for many organisations on this front has been the need to tailor prevention and early intervention activities to specific age groups, rather than have a broad-based program aimed at young people aged 8 to 24 years. The three key age groups (under 10 years, 10 to 16 years, and 17 to 24 years) need information and activities delivered to them in an age appropriate format to promote continued engagement and ensure the greatest potential for positive impact.

Recommendation 6:

Community organisations should be supported to consider the target age group/s for their project and how they will appropriately tailor project activities to, and recruit participants from, these age group/s.

Addressing multiple protective factors in a single project

What past research has found to be effective

Protective factors mitigate against or decrease the likelihood of young people engaging in criminal activities or anti-social behaviours. The research suggests that having or being exposed to multiple protective factors is generally better than having or being exposed to a few.²³ In particular, previous research and evaluations highlight the importance of enhancing the protective factors for Aboriginal young people that relate to:

1. close and supportive social relationships^{24 25 26 27}
2. continuous engagement with school/education and employment^{15 28 29 30 31}
3. accessing appropriate support services^{13 18 19 32 33}

While the introduction of sports, arts or recreation activities alone is unlikely to achieve a reduction in antisocial behaviour and crime, these types of activities can be used as a powerful 'hook' or incentive for engaging at-risk young people and linking them into a range of other programs and support services that address underlying causes of offending behaviour.³⁴ There are numerous examples of projects which have successfully linked sports, arts and recreation activities with education and employment activities.^{8 14 18 20 38 35} The benefits of linking these types of activities with ongoing intensive mentoring programs has also been widely documented.^{14 15 19}

Findings from this evaluation: projects are designed to increase protective factors although there could be greater emphasis on education and/or employment

All projects included in the evaluation supported young people to develop close and supportive relationships with each other, their families, mentors, and Elders and Respected Persons in community:

- Many of the projects connected young people with adult role models in the community through structured mentoring, community events, or inviting them to participate in project activities. Most frequently, project staff themselves provide young people with these close, supportive and ongoing relationships.
- Several projects sought to involve the broader family and/or caregiver network of participants in activities, either as active participants themselves or volunteer helpers, to strengthen family relationships. For some young people, project activities provided an informal way for them to socialise with siblings or other family members who they may no longer live with.
- Several projects had formal or informal opportunities for older participants to 'step up' and become mentors to the younger participants.

Most projects acted as a 'gateway' through which young people were linked with appropriate support services:

- Many project workers talked about the importance of pro-social activities as a platform for 'getting young people through the front door' to connect them to other programs and services. In light of this approach, they had established or strengthened their existing relationships with a wide range of services that address issues such as drug and alcohol, mental health, and family violence. Service representatives were invited to casually 'drop in' to youth groups or events to hang out and chat with young people attending on the day.
- While some projects had built relationships and referral pathways with mainstream services, many preferred to refer their participants to internal services within the organisation or to other Aboriginal-specific services, as they felt the mainstream services were not culturally safe or competent.
- In a small number of cases, projects did not aim to connect young people to services. These projects were designed with the intention of alleviating boredom by 'giving young people something positive to do'.

Only a few projects focused on actively supporting young people to engage with education and/or employment, with there being an opportunity for projects to strengthen this as a protective factor:

- A small number of projects sought to re-engage young people in some form of education, provide additional tutoring support, or enhance their employment prospects through job skills training. For

example, one project worked with KESOs and local schools to identify disengaged Aboriginal young people and run a group session with them once per week to support their continued engagement with school.

- There was a concern that actively pushing an education or employment agenda would result in young people disengaging from the project. Therefore, many projects instead included fun activities to build 'life skills' that could assist young people with their education or employment, such as barista courses.
- Some projects sought to show participants a variety of employment options in life to help them develop future aspirations. This included inviting a range of different people to project activities to talk about their job or developing partnerships with local businesses to showcase potential employment opportunities.
- As education and employment are significant protective factors, there are opportunities to increase the focus on education and/or employment across the programs.

"I touch on how important education is and so on but there's no point telling kids "go to school" because they won't listen and they think they know everything. You have to take them on that learning journey to build an internal appreciation for the opportunities they have." (Community organisation)

"We try to create a safe space that's holistic in the approach to getting people into education or employment... It's about building up the resilience and the self-confidence to say to people 'Open up that door. Don't be afraid to open a door. You've got it all going on.'" (Community organisation)

Recommendation 7:

Community organisations should be encouraged to include a focus on one or more of the following protective factors when designing a project: (i) close and supportive social relationships with mentors, (ii) engagement with education and/or employment, or (iii) access to appropriate support services.

Embedding culture in projects in a way that builds positive identity and self-esteem

What past research has found to be effective

The literature highlights the importance of embedding cultural strengthening elements within program activities in a way that builds positive cultural identity, promotes Aboriginal pride and acceptance, improves self-esteem, and strengthens relationships within the community so that the young person feels safe and supported.⁵

A strong Aboriginal cultural identity had been associated with better outcomes on a range of indicators of wellbeing, including education, employment, health, substance abuse and the incidence of arrest.^{7 36 37} A positive cultural identity can help a young person understand their place in the world, through a sense of belonging and membership within a group of people, and a sense of moral responsibility to others.³⁸

Findings from this evaluation: embedding culture is seen as key to project success but could be strengthened for young women

All the projects included in the evaluation embedded cultural strengthening elements in their activities with the aim of developing a young person's positive cultural identity and building their connections to family, community and country. Project workers consistently emphasised the importance of cultural strengthening, particularly given many of the young people attending activities are highly disconnected from their culture prior to entering the project.

Embedding the philosophies of Aboriginal lore into project activities was commonly described as being foundational to effective crime prevention as it teaches young people about cultural responsibility, accountability and respect for others. Accordingly, many projects have developed 'rules of engagement' or a 'code of conduct' in partnership with participants which they must then abide by when attending project activities. If a young person does not abide by these rules of the project, and instead engages in antisocial behaviours, they may be told, for example, to think about their actions and make some changes or they'll have to 'take a week or two off'.

It was also frequently explained in the interviews that when a young person ‘feels good about themselves’, they are less likely to engage in antisocial behaviour and end up in contact with the justice system. This strong sense of self and higher self-esteem was seen to stem from learning about their shared cultural history and identity, which instils a sense of belonging and pride in their culture and community. Developing these personal traits in turn places young people in a better position to make positive life choices, reinforced through project activities that show them opportunities and positive pathways in life and support them to develop aspirations for the future.

One challenge consistently raised across projects was ensuring there are appropriate and adequate cultural activities for young women. Several projects reported that it was more difficult to engage young women in activities than young men and this may be due to the limited nature of cultural activities on offer for them. Activities for young men included traditional dance, making and playing didgeridoos, spear throwing, making boomerangs, shields and clap sticks. Young women on the other hand were often restricted to a few offerings such as basket weaving and jewellery making.

“It’s about building kids’ protective factors to help them make better decisions by building their cultural identity, their connections, their place within society, knowing their worth. The more they are involved with and engage with community, the more they know about their culture and identity, the more they know about leadership and all that, the more long-lasting and sustainable the results and outcomes are going to be.” (RAJAC EO)

“The kids have an insatiable thirst for cultural knowledge. They just love it.” (Community organisation)

“The youth are aware of and developed ‘the rules’ for the [project] and if there are any breaches of their ‘rules’ they are accepting of the consequences e.g. being sent home from camp/not being able to attend...for a week. All of the youth who have been delivered a consequence have been accepting of the consequence and have re-engaged again.” (Community organisation)

1.3.2 Impacts of funded projects

Impacts for Aboriginal young people

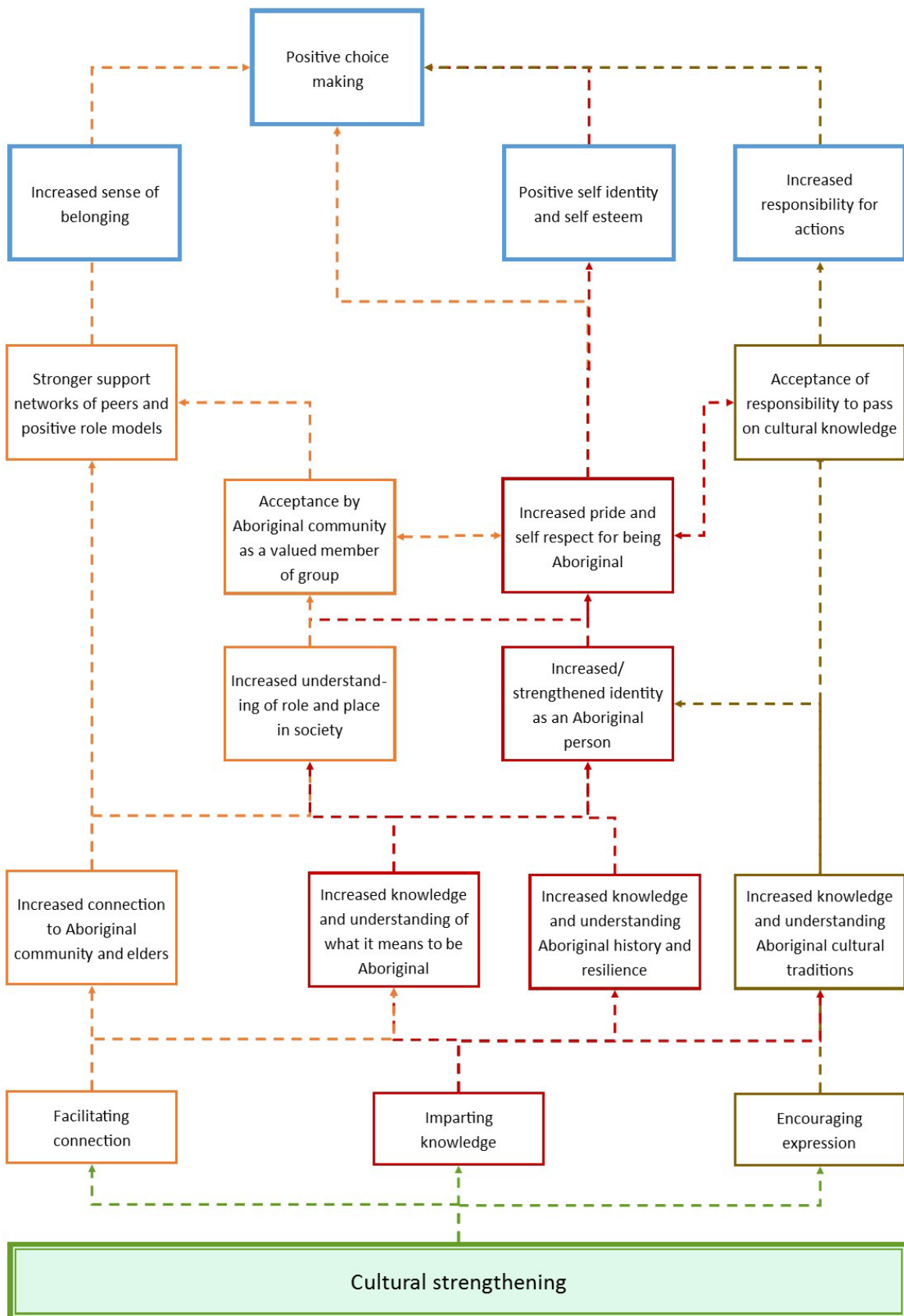
As discussed in Section 1.2, this evaluation has not sought to evaluate the impact of individual projects funded under the KYCPG for Aboriginal young people. Instead, it examines high-level evidence about whether and how project activities are contributing to short-term outcomes (positive changes in attitudes and behaviours) by increasing young peoples’ protective factors. An increase in protective factors was chosen based on previous literature, which found that this is a key contributor in reducing negative contact with the criminal justice system.

Research has shown that cultural strength can act as an important protective factor that is closely linked to the social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of Aboriginal people. The literature suggests there is a pathway between strengthening culture and positive changes in a person’s decision making, which the KJU has sought to document through the outcomes hierarchy outlined in Figure 1 (over page).

As such, this evaluation has sought to understand whether there has been an increase in protective factors for Aboriginal young people involved in the funded projects in the following key domains of cultural strengthening:

- **Facilitating connection** – connecting or reconnecting people to culture, land, and community is critically important for redressing the disconnection caused by colonial policies and practices of the past.
- **Imparting knowledge** – the imparting of traditional and contemporary knowledge is expected to build peoples understanding of the distinctive Aboriginal community and culture and how they fit into it.
- **Encouraging expression** – active participation in traditional cultural activities and ways of life, as well contemporary cultural activities, is seen as an important method of cultural expression

FIGURE 1. OUTCOMES HIERARCHY FOR CULTURAL STRENGTHENING





Project workers noted that many of the young people who engaged with their project were initially disconnected from culture, and often from family and community as well. They highlighted how government systems have fractured Aboriginal communities, both historically and in the present, with young people often having their connection severed through involvement in the Child Protection and Youth Justice systems. These young people often could not identify their mob, understood very little about their culture and history, were no longer residing where they were born, or were living in out of home care arrangements where their carers were non-Aboriginal and/or they were separated from siblings and cousins.

The behaviours project workers observed when young people first started attending project activities often reflected the impacts of this disconnection from culture, family and community. This included being disrespectful and disruptive, having no regard for authority or rules, and being unable to communicate their emotions without resorting to conflict or aggressive behaviours. Many participants were also disengaged from education, employment and general life goals. A key concern for project workers was that, in lieu of any other form of connection, 'the easiest way to fit in is through the criminal justice way'.

As such, all organisations had seen it as crucial that their project activities include cultural strengthening (as explored in Table 1 below) in order to address the issues stemming from disconnection.

TABLE 1. EVIDENCE OF FUNDED PROJECTS STRENGTHENING CULTURE OF PARTICIPANTS

Element of cultural strengthening	Evidence
Facilitating connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Formed connections with prosocial role models, mentors, and peers who they can draw on for support ○ Connected with Elders and Respected Persons through mentoring, cultural activities, or knowledge exchange activities ○ Strengthened connection to country by going out on and learning about country ○ Connected to other services that will support their health and wellbeing (e.g. mental health or family violence services) ○ Feel connected to a safe community space (usually hosted by an organisation) where they can casually drop in or hang out
Imparting knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Learned about their shared history, community, and personal identity ○ Developed pride in their culture ○ Created a sense of belonging, particularly for young people who did not know their mob or felt they did not 'fit' anywhere ○ Learned the importance of respecting and caring for others, particularly for Elders ○ Linked in to other cultural programs or activities through initial engagement ○ Provided opportunities to start becoming cultural leaders in their community through teaching others
Encouraging expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Participated in traditional cultural activities such as dance, arts, playing didgeridoo, making clap sticks and shields ○ Participated in contemporary cultural activities such as camps or other outdoor activities, sports, making hip hop music videos ○ Involved in helping out with and attending community cultural events such as NAIDOC week activities, community days ○ Took pride in making and/or wearing traditional and contemporary Aboriginal clothing

Project workers felt that the changes they saw over time in the behaviour of participants, as a result of cultural strengthening, reflected the penultimate outcomes that inform positive decision-making (as seen in Figure 1):

- **Increased sense of belonging** – participants forged strong connections with peers and older roles models, which has provided them with a larger network to draw on as a source of strength and support during challenging times. They showed greater care and respect for others, including a willingness to share their experiences in solidarity with others facing similar challenges.
- **Positive self-identity and self-esteem** – participants displayed increased confidence, self-esteem, and resilience that in turn led to greater independence, particularly in being away from family. They were better able to communicate their emotions and needs in a socially acceptable way and had learned appropriate methods for overcoming fear and managing anxiety.
- **Increased responsibility for actions** – participants showed improved understanding of consequences for their actions, both in terms of reward and punishment, and held each other to account against agreed codes of conduct. They were motivated to take greater responsibility in helping out at home, at community events, or with project activities.

Projects workers reflected that some young people, particularly those who had been engaged with the organisation prior to the evaluated funding period, already showed signs of improved decision-making. This was evidenced through re-engagement with school (including flexible or alternative education options), enrolling in TAFE courses and university studies in employable areas (e.g. food handling, makeup artistry, horticulture), and seeking out work experience opportunities. While many young people had not quite reached the point of committed decision-making yet, project workers emphasised that they were increasingly considering their life goals and had a greater awareness and appreciation of the different education and employment opportunities available to them.

“It’s about building kids’ protective factors to help them make better decisions by building their cultural identity, their connections, their place within society, knowing their worth. The more they are involved with and engage with community, the more they know about their culture and identity, the more they know about leadership and all that, the more long-lasting and sustainable the results and outcomes are going to be.”
(RAJAC EO)


“We don’t know if maybe these kids would’ve ended up in the justice system but what we do know if we’ve kept them safe for this period of time and empowered them with good ideas, good people to talk to, they know this service now...it’s all about options.” (Community organisation)

Case studies

There were many stories that project workers shared about the positive journey of particular individuals throughout their engagement with the project. A few case studies, drawn from interviews and monitoring reports, have been selected to illustrate how projects have changed young people’s lives on an individual level. Please note that specific project, location, and other sensitive details have been redacted to preserve confidentiality.

“A 15 year old female student had been disengaged from school for over two years. Presented to [the project] as homeless and in crisis. Student was supported to secure housing with family member followed by continued support provided to manage positive living arrangement. Student was attending [project] on a daily basis and receiving intensive literacy support, Cultural support and Drug and Alcohol counselling. Student eventually transitioned into FLO Connect as a full-time student and decided to pursue her aspirations to becoming a beautician.

Due to ongoing family pressures, the young person returned to...live with her Grandmother. The [project] team maintained contact with the student while she was [there] and were shocked to hear that she had been using ICE. The team continued to encourage the student to return...and reengage with [the project]. After a few months the student returned. On her return, the [project] team supported her with housing and referred her to Drug and Alcohol Counselling. Eventually she was able to reengage with FLO Connect as a full-time student. This young person...is quoted as saying that [the project] ‘changed her life’.” (Community organisation)



“One of our [participants] had been absent for school for more than 20 months due to the loss of his father in late 2016. Initially he did not attend school due to mourning and the grief that he was experiencing, but over a period of time his anxiety had become a social phobia where he could not attend school. We tried with the school and other services, several ideas to help him return to school with little success. After completing a year at the [project] and having support around him, the young man decided to return to school in the 2019 year.

In the last session of the year I was queried to find out what was the catalyst that made him reconsider returning to school. The response was that he now understood how important education is, and that he also felt out of place, when all the other group members attended [the project] were in their school uniforms and it made him feel out of place. This young man is attending secondary school this year and with the help of the school and the program he will continue to be supported in completing his studies.

Another participant, who was a concern, as he was wavering in terms of future direction, and not engaging in any study and/or employment since finishing school. I have been working with him, and with vocational guidance, encouragement and support, he is now happily undertaking a course in Certificate 2 Tourism...where he is gaining skills and knowledge that will lead to either further training and or employment. He also has taken up the option of acting as a mentor to the younger boy in [the project]. This is a great outcome for this young man as he now can see options for his future as opposed to languishing with no direction.” (Community organisation)

Had a 16-year-old boy who was very disengaged from school, “going off the rails”, and got suspended for fighting with others. He had no regard or respect for authority and, when he joined the project, was very obviously the dominant one. The project worker found this young man was really interested in and proud of his culture, so used that as the hook for engaging him in the project. After attending for 10 weeks, this young person has learnt so much more about his culture and really changed his attitude. He’s stepping up to help facilitate project activities and learning about his culture in his own time, which he then brings back to the group.

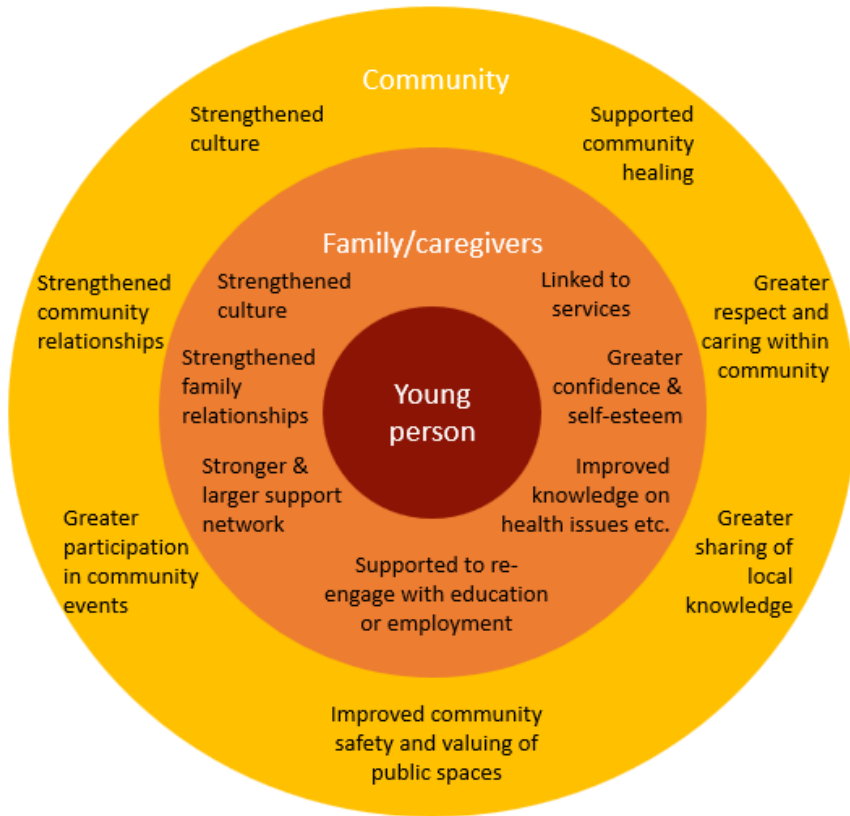
There was a recent situation where two younger boys were fighting and this young man took it upon himself to step in, settle them down, and have a talk about how this is not part of their culture, that their culture is about respect and looking after each other and that the project is a safe space. The project worker was so impressed with him taking on that leadership role and handling it so well. This young person is also now back in school and has decided he wants to be a mechanic, so has taken on an after-school job one day a week at a mechanic shop. (Community organisation, paraphrased from interview)

The ‘ripple effect’ impacts of projects

Project workers discussed the ‘ripple effect’ impacts of their projects, emphasising that evaluators need to consider the value of projects to families/caregivers and the broader community. Most projects took a holistic approach to working with young people, meaning that they sought to involve families/caregivers and community members in a range of ways, such as being involved as mentors, volunteering with project activities, or simply coming along for a cup of tea and chat. Even when families/caregivers and community members were not actively involved in the project, workers highlighted the flow on effects to these parties from the changes in behaviour of young people involved (as discussed above). Figure 2 seeks to capture the impacts of the broader ‘ripple effect’, flowing from young people outwards to families/caregivers and community.



FIGURE 2. IMPACTS OF THE 'RIPPLE EFFECT' AS OUTLINED BY FUNDED PROJECTS



The involvement of families/caregivers in projects was used as an opportunity for project workers to build rapport and to understand more about participants' home life, including any issues that the family may be facing. Project workers often went above and beyond to provide support to families as a whole:

- Organising and attending appointments with parents/caregivers in order to help break down the barriers and stigma associated with accessing support services.
- Supporting parents/caregivers to access employment or education opportunities.
- Building the confidence of parents/caregivers through providing advice, information, and opportunities to develop skills (e.g. time keeping as part of basketball).

The projects also presented the opportunity to strengthen relationships and knowledge sharing at both the family and community levels. Parents/caregivers attending project activities formed relationships and shared stories with other parents/caregivers, as well as with involved community members and respected Elders. The topics that young people were learning about through projects, particularly around culture and history, opened up conversations with parents, grandparents and Elders that may not have happened before. This provided a gateway for young people to build stronger relationships with these people, as well as for the adults to share knowledge or learn more about their culture from young people. This was viewed as crucial to strengthening the community as a whole, as well as the young people and families who are part of it.

The changes in behaviour of the young people involved in project activities was also seen to contribute to a stronger family and community. Project workers highlighted that there is great potential of young people, particularly when several siblings or cousins are involved in a project, to change the dynamic of their household through upholding and modelling prosocial behaviours to their parents/caregivers. They also suggested that young people are less likely to vandalise, steal and antagonise, and instead contribute to a safer and happier community, when they have been taught to respect country and community.

Impact of ceasing funding for crime prevention

When discussing how projects have increased protective factors for young people involved, project workers inevitably expressed their concerns about the increase in risk factors that was likely to occur for these same young people when project funding ceased. While some projects had plans in place to continue running project activities beyond the funding period, many were unsure how they would secure the necessary funds to do this and were in the process of exploring different avenues at the time of the final evaluation.

Several workers highlighted how their project was the only available local and culturally appropriate option for young people in that area. As such, if the project ceased, it was likely these young people would be back out on the street after school, on weekends, or on school holidays with no activities to keep them entertained and engaged with prosocial role models. There was a concern that the resulting boredom and disconnection would increase the likelihood of young people engaging in antisocial activities and behaviours, which would then bring them to the attention of police. This concern was shared by parents/caregivers, as evidenced by one project which asked them to reflect on what their children would be otherwise doing if the project did not exist. Many of their answers, recorded in feedback forms, were along the same themes:

- 'Getting into trouble'
- 'Nothing except drinking and smoking'
- 'Sit at home on games or getting in trouble in town'
- 'They would be bored, and they muck up'

1.4 Summary and recommendations

What has worked well

The following points summarise what the evaluation found to working well about the KYCPG in supporting community organisations to design and deliver crime prevention initiatives for Aboriginal young people:

- The **flexibility** afforded to community organisations to design projects, and adapt these during delivery, that are appropriately tailored to the local community's needs.
- Where community organisations have been able to **recruit the right people** to run project activities, this has contributed strongly to the project's overall success.
- Projects that have created **consistency** through holding activities in the same time, place and with the same staff each week have been more successful in engaging young people and their families/caregivers.
- Projects that have appropriately **tailored activities to specific age groups** have been more successful in engaging young people.
- **Embedding culture strengthening** as a protective factor in project activities has successfully created behaviour and knowledge change in young people that appears to lead to improved decision-making.
- Projects that have actively sought to involve or support families/caregivers and the broader community have had greater impacts through **the 'ripple effect'**.

What could be improved

There have been many lessons learned through the evaluation of the KYCPG around how to better design and deliver early intervention and crime prevention projects for Aboriginal young people in future:

Recommendation 1:

There should be increased flexibility in project timeframes to fit with community needs and ensure organisations are aware of the flexible options available to them:

- Where possible, extend project timeframes to a minimum of three years.

- For new initiatives, consider a standard minimum timeframe of three months for project design and preparation of a grant application, and a further three months for project planning and establishment.
- Improve communication with funded organisations around flexible arrangements in the funding agreements.

Recommendation 2:

Additional guidance should be provided to organisations around budgeting for project delivery.

Recommendation 3:

Additional guidance should be provided to organisations around suggested human resources requirements to successfully implement potential projects, based on lessons learnt to date.

Recommendation 4:

Community organisations should be encouraged to design projects that engage young people through frequent and ongoing interactions, with the aim of ensuring:

- Short-term activities, events and camps build upon or link to consistent, ongoing programs.
- Projects are run for a minimum of 12-18 months to mitigate the potentially harmful psychological impacts that can arise from short-term mentoring relationships.

Recommendation 5:

Community organisations should be encouraged to design projects that engage young people across the prevention and early intervention spectrum, with a greater focus on engaging high-risk young people. For example:

- Work closely with KYJWs in the region to identify and support at-risk and high-risk young people.
- Include links with police cautioning and/or court diversion processes where appropriate.
- Develop partnerships that can enhance an organisation's capability in working with young people who have complex needs.

Recommendation 6:

Community organisations should be supported to consider the target age group/s for their project and how they will appropriately tailor project activities to, and recruit participants from, these age group/s.

Recommendation 7:

Community organisations should be encouraged to include a focus on one or more of the following protective factors when designing a project: (i) close and supportive social relationships with mentors, (ii) engagement with education and/or employment, or (iii) access to appropriate support services.

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Mid-term Evaluation Report

Youth Crime Prevention Grants Program

March 2020





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Acronyms

CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CCPU	Community Crime Prevention Unit
CSA	Crime Statistics Agency
DJCS	Department of Justice and Community Services
KEQ	Key Evaluation Question
KJU	Koori Justice Unit
KYCPG	Koori Youth Crime Prevention Grant Program
LEAP	Law Enforcement Assistance Program
LEP	Local Engagement Officer
LGA	Local Government Area
RCPO	Regional Crime Prevention Officer
YCO	Youth Control Order
YCPG	Youth Crime Prevention Grant Program
YJ	Youth Justice
YJCSS	Youth Justice Community Services Support
YLP	Youth Learning Pathways

Executive Summary

1. Background

1.1 The Youth Crime Prevention Grants Program (YCPG)

The Youth Crime Prevention Grants program (YCPG) is part of the Victorian Government's response to youth offending, particularly among young recidivist offenders. The YCPG aims to address this issue by strengthening the ability of communities to intervene early and reduce the likelihood of young people engaging in criminal behaviour.

Projects funded through the YCPG are expected to achieve a reduction in offending behaviour and recidivism among project participants by:

- Decreasing known crime-related risk factors and increasing protective factors.
- Achieving sustained improvement in engagement in school, training and/or employment.
- Increasing connectedness with the community.

The projects are also expected to develop or consolidate strong, effective partnerships among community organisations and across government initiatives.

As part of the YCPG, funding was provided through:

1. A **direct** stream of \$5.6 million across eight priority LGAs which have higher crime rates and higher proportions of recidivist youth offenders. These LGAs are Ballarat, Casey-Dandenong, Frankston, Geelong, Hume, Latrobe and Wyndham.
2. A **competitive** grant stream of \$2 million to ten additional high priority LGAs outside of the direct investment stream and identified as experiencing significant socioeconomic disadvantage and higher levels of crime. These LGAs are Bendigo, Brimbank, Cardinia, Darebin, East Gippsland, Horsham, Melton, Mildura, Shepparton and Wodonga.
3. Dedicated funding of \$1.5 million for Koori Youth Crime Prevention Grants (KYCPG). This funding was allocated to 25 Koori Youth crime prevention activities and acknowledges that Koori young people have disproportionately high rates of disadvantage and are significantly over-represented in the criminal justice system.

3.2 Evaluation of the YCPG

The Crime Statistics Agency (CSA) was engaged by CCPU to evaluate the YCPG Program. An interim evaluation report, focussing on early implementation and program processes was delivered in December 2018. This is the mid-term report and focuses on progress towards program outcomes. A separate evaluation of the KYCPG Was undertaken by the Koori Justice Unit (KJU) within DJCS. Their report is attached as Appendix 6 and briefly summarised in Section 6 of this report. The rest of this mid-term report relates to projects funded through the direct and competitive streams only.

The mid-term evaluation report aims to answer six Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs):

1. How effective was the program in achieving the expected program outcomes?
2. What have the outcomes been across the LGA projects?
3. How efficient was the delivery of the program?
4. How efficient was the delivery of the LGA projects?
5. What, if any, were the facilitators and barriers to implementation?
6. What factors contributed to the program and projects being effective in achieving the outcomes?

2. Methodology

The evaluation utilised a mixed-methods approach that included:

- **Interviews and focus groups** with program staff, including 139 individuals representing 61 organisations.
- A **participant survey** designed to measure changes in risk and protective factors amongst young people participating in projects. Forty-one participants completed both an entry and exit survey, meaning the sample size of surveys available for analysis was very small.
- **Activity monitoring data**, which is recorded by project staff and submitted quarterly. This includes individual risks and needs identified, program entry and exit dates, and program attendances.
- **Analysis of Victoria Police recorded offending data** recorded in the Law Enforcement Assistance Program (LEAP database), to identify pre- and post- program offending behaviour amongst participants.

The mid-term evaluation considered outcomes for the 568 young people who had exited the program as at 30 June 2019. The analysis of offending data included the 438 who had exited the program by 31 March 2019, in order to enable a minimum three-month post-program follow-up period for analysing offending outcomes.

It was difficult to determine measures of project 'completion' amongst participants as diverse activities were delivered across projects and individuals. Program duration tended to be based on individual needs and the risk and protective factors to be addressed. Nevertheless, some participants left the projects before project workers considered their engagement with the project to be complete. In order to compare outcomes based on program completion, young people were therefore classified as having a 'planned exit', an 'unplanned exit' or an exit due to entering into a custodial service¹ or transferring to another intensive support service.

3. Findings

3.1 Project design

Project design varied across sites and projects differed in their specific target cohorts, and in the number and types of activities they engaged in with young people. For example, some projects only delivered a single activity (such as mentoring), while others included numerous approaches (such as varied group activities and one to one counselling sessions).

Projects were categorised according to the broad type of program they delivered to enable analysis across sites. This categorisation was based on a typology outlined in the *What works in reducing young people's involvement in crime?* review of youth crime prevention programs (Sallybanks, 2003). The following categories were identified across project sites:

- Wyndham, Casey-Dandenong, Frankston, Geelong, the Hume intensive stream, Latrobe, Mildura and Shepparton were categorised as comprehensive programs with social competence training.
- Bendigo was a comprehensive program with an employment program.
- Melton, Brimbank and the Hume managed and guided streams were categorised as social competence training programs.
- East Gippsland and Horsham delivered mentoring programs.
- Darebin delivered a program that targeted a specific group (and included a case management

¹ Entries into custodial services may have been related to offending that occurred prior to entering the YCPG program.

approach with some outreach and delivery of parent workshops).

- Cardinia and Wodonga were categorised as recreation programs.
- The Ballarat project could not be categorised according to the existing program typology, but involved taking on a coordinating role for young people engaged in multiple existing services, identifying gaps, and where required, acting as a case manager for the young person.

3.2 Profile of participants

Amongst the 568 young people who had exited the program by 30 June 2019, most participants were male, with females representing just a quarter of all participants. Just over half were aged 15-19 (55%), 23% were aged 20 to 24, and 18% were aged 10 to 14. The vast majority of young people were born in Australia, and 10% identified as Aboriginal.

Project workers identified that participants had more complex issues than had been anticipated when designing the projects. Fifty-three per cent were identified by project workers as having a physical or mental health issue, 12% were identified as a victim of violence, and 43% known to have a substance use issue.

Amongst the 438 participants included in the offending analysis (who exited the YCPG by 31 March 2019), 59% had previously been recorded by police as alleged offenders (classified as the *young offenders* cohort), while the remaining 41% were classified as the *at-risk* cohort. The young offenders cohort were particularly complex with high levels of prior offending and victimisation.

The evaluation identified that a quarter of young offenders were very high frequency offenders. These young people had 6 or more offences recorded in the 12 months prior to entering the YCPG, and on average, each of them had 21 offences recorded over the 12-month period. Over half of the young offenders had at least one offence classified as a *high seriousness* offence in the 12 months prior to YCPG entry, and almost half had previously been recorded by police as family violence perpetrators compared with just 5% of the at-risk cohort. Further, 53% of the young offenders had previously been recorded as victims of criminal offences and 31% as victims of family violence, compared with 14% and 9% of the at-risk cohort, respectively.

Fifty-four per cent of participants had a planned exit from the program, 40% had an unplanned exit, and 6% exited because they received a custodial sentence or commenced a different intensive program outside of the YCPG.

3.3 Key evaluation questions (KEQs)

KEQ 1: How effective was the program in achieving the expected program outcomes?

Overall, there is evidence that young people involved in the YCPG had lower rates of offending after exiting the program compared with prior to entering the program. However, the evaluation was not able to determine the extent to which these decreases could be directly attributed to program participation, as opposed to other interventions or custodial periods. There were also emerging signs that a proportion of participants achieved improvements in their levels of risk and protective factors, and project workers saw this as a positive sign given the extremely complex presenting issues amongst the target cohort.

Analysis of LEAP data identified that:

- When equal pre-program and post-program periods were compared for young offenders, 79% offended in their pre-program period, compared with 53% who offended in their post-program period.
- The frequency of offending for young offenders decreased from an average rate of 4.2 incidents in the pre-program period to 2.9 incidents in the post-program period.
- Fifty-two per cent of participants were recorded for a high seriousness crime in their pre-program

period, dropping to 32% in the post-program period.

- Of the at-risk cohort who had never been recorded by police prior to entering the YCPG, 12% offended after entering the program.

Overall, project workers observed positive changes for 86% of people with a planned exit for the program. Specifically, they identified that:

- almost half had reduced or stopped offending,
- 10% had decreased their substance use,
- 22% had increased community connectedness,
- 21% had improved relationships with their families or positive peers,
- 22% had improved engagement in school or education,
- 16% had improved engagement with training or TAFE courses,
- 18% had improved employment situations.

Project workers also identified positive signs of behaviour change during engagement with the program amongst 37 per cent of young people with an unplanned exit.

Amongst the small number of participants who completed both entry and exit surveys, 73% reported overall positive changes in their levels of risk/protective factors, with an average positive change across 4.5 factors. It should be acknowledged though, that young people who engaged with the survey may have been more likely to have a positive experience with the program.

KEQ2: What have the outcomes been across the LGA projects?

Decreases in average offending rates for young offenders were observed across all project sites with the exception of Horsham, and very small decreases were observed in Cardinia, East Gippsland and Hume.

Improvements in risk and protective factors were different across sites and programs. When workers at project sites were asked to reflect on other outcomes for participants:

- Frankston and Casey-Dandenong identified decreased substance use for more than 20% of their participants.
- Cardinia and Hume identified increased community connectedness for 25% and 53% of their participants respectively.
- Casey-Dandenong, Cardinia, Melton and Wodonga identified improved relationships with families or peers for more than 20% of their participants, with Hume identifying improvements in this area for 42% of participants.
- Improved engagement with school was identified for more than 30% of participants in Ballarat, Hume, Cardinia, Darebin and Melton.
- Improved engagement in training was identified for around 20% of participants in Hume, Bendigo, Cardinia and Melton.
- Increased engagement in employment was identified for more than 20% of participants in Frankston, Hume and Melton.

KEQ3: How efficient was the delivery of the program?

The program and project design approach, support from partners in local areas, and flexible contracting model supported the efficient delivery of the YCPG. Projects were able to adapt to meet emerging needs identified for young people due to the flexible approach taken by CCPU which enabled changes to project and budget lines. However, projects indicated that the partnership model and supporting governance structures required significant time to manage and administer, and the level of in-kind support provided by project partners was unsustainable longer term. Areas identified for improvement in program delivery included:

- Increasing consistency in interpretation of program eligibility criteria.
- Clear determination and consistent communication about the scope for negotiable aspects of contracts.
- Clear lines of communication between project sites, regional representatives and central contract management.

The short-term funding cycles associated with government projects, and the expectations about the achievement of project objectives relative to the project budgets, were considered problematic by some projects, and some also considered the reporting requirements onerous.

KEQ4: How efficient was the delivery of the LGA projects?

Overall, projects were evaluated as being efficiently delivered. However, the following aspects decreased the efficiency of delivery:

- There were differences between projects' initial assumptions about who their projects should target and who was identified as suitable for or in need of the program post-implementation, which meant the target cohort needed to change throughout implementation.
- High rates of staff turnover among projects and partners, including staff taking promotional opportunities or full-time, ongoing work.
- An initial lack of understanding of the project in the local area, leading to an early lack of referrals.
- Other similar, established programs and services being available for young people in the local area, which impacted on the time taken to identify suitable young people not already receiving similar services for referral into projects.

Receiving referrals and reaching target numbers of participants were seen by projects as key to ensuring efficient delivery. Darebin and Cardinia both reported that, due to their initial eligibility criteria, identifying enough young people for referrals and engagement was an issue early in project implementation. Brimbank, Bendigo, East Gippsland and Horsham far exceeded their target numbers. Both Brimbank and Bendigo had strong links with local courts and these projects provided one of the only referral options for young people in their areas. East Gippsland and Horsham both built on established mentoring programs with strong and established connections within their local communities.

Participant disengagement was also viewed as impacting project efficiency. Overall, 26% of young people that left the YCPG disengaged during their participation. The highest rates of disengagement were in Frankston and Casey-Dandenong, both of which experienced high staff turnover. It was difficult to identify the causes for young peoples' disengagement for the majority of unplanned exits as project workers did not have an opportunity to discuss this after the young person had disengaged. However, it may be the case that staff turnover at these sites impacted on participant disengagement because young people had formed relationships with project workers who then left the project.

For those with a planned exit, the average amount of time spent with young people as part of the YCPG was 44.1 hours compared with 30.5 hours for those with an unplanned exit. In addition, on average for planned and unplanned exits respectively:

- 4.3 hours compared with 2.4 hours was spent engaging with families
- 8.6 hours compared with 7.7 hours was spent engaging with other service providers
- 3.6 hours compared with 2.9 hours was spent on administrative tasks.

Program absences seemed to be related to early, unplanned exits from the YCPG, with higher rates of absenteeism amongst those with unplanned exits. Almost half of those with an unplanned exit were absent from at least one planned activity throughout their engagement with YCPG, and on average this group was absent from 27% of confirmed activities or sessions. Thirty-five percent of those with a planned exit were absent at least once, and on average they were absent from 22% of their sessions.

The most common amount of grant funding provided to a directed project over the first two years of implementation was \$700,000 and the standard cost of a competitive project was \$200,000 (not including in-kind or additional financial contributions amongst lead and partner organisations). While return on investment was not a focus of the evaluation, it was identified that based on the estimated costs of custodial and community orders², a directed project would need to support one young person to remain out of juvenile detention for less than eighteen months to achieve a return on investment. A competitive project would need to support one young person to remain out of juvenile detention for less than six months. Though it is too early to assess whether this has been achieved, there were early indicators that the YCPG had capacity to deliver such outcomes. For example, in Bendigo project workers advised that a sentencing judge remarked that they would have given one young person a two and a half year jail sentence, but due to their work with the program instead sentenced them to a community corrections order and community work.

KEQ5: What, if any, were the facilitators and barriers to implementation?

The table below outlines the facilitators and barriers to YCPG implementation that were identified during the evaluation.

Facilitators	Barriers
Partnerships	
Strong partnerships between organisations were developed through projects and were instrumental to the success of projects. Partnerships enabled risk and decision-making to be dispersed across projects and created a shared accountability. Projects also leveraged partnerships to support young people's entry into other programs and services relevant to their needs.	A lack of clarity about the roles and expectations of partners existed in some projects and impacted the delivery of agreed services. This was related to changes in structure or personnel in lead agencies. The resolution of tensions between partners led to resources and time being diverted from project delivery during early implementation.
Governance structures	
Eight projects used their governance structures to discuss gaps in services and requirements, to identify opportunities to streamline delivery of services and to identify how existing services could be leveraged.	Five projects believed their projects were over-governed. This was primarily related to project workers working across multiple organisations and therefore having to attend a significant number of meetings, in addition to project requirements.

² ² Productivity Commission (2019). *Report on Government Services, Chapter 17, Youth Justice Services.*

Facilitators	Barriers
	Nine projects felt there could be more upfront sharing of information prior to governance meetings to increase the productivity of these meetings.
Referrals and referral pathways	
Where projects were integrated with local court systems this facilitated referrals into projects.	Five projects identified issues with receiving referrals. Reasons for this included: the referral pathway limited the number of young people that could be referred, a lack of awareness of the project amongst potential referring agencies and 'competition' for the same young people with other projects being delivered in the same areas. Long timeframes between initial referral of potential participants and attempts to engage them were found to negatively impact young people's willingness to engage.
Cohort targeted	
Flexibility in the YCPG program meant that the target cohort criteria could be changed during project implementation to meet emerging needs identified in local areas.	Some projects stated that the level of complexity of issues amongst the target cohort had been underestimated. This meant that in some cases, young people were more difficult to engage in the YCPG than expected. There was an identified gap in services for the eight to ten-year old age group who formed part of the target cohort in some areas.
Engagement of young people and families	
Engagement attempts were more successful where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time was available to develop relationships with young people. • There was continuity and consistency in project workers. • Have flexible brokerage funding available to meet a young person's specific needs. • Group activities were provided to create stronger peer networks. 	Factors were identified that impacted negatively on the likelihood of engagement, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous negative experiences with services. • The age of the young person relative to the intervention offered – some interventions more easily engaged older or younger participants, depending on the type of intervention. • Low levels of parental engagement as a support to young people's participation, due to family pressures (for example in single parent households). • Changes in allocated project workers.
Cultural and community considerations	
Using embedded cross-cultural approaches supported improved working practices across partners.	Seven projects said there was a need for greater awareness of cultural requirements across the service sector to reduce reliance on individuals with specific cultural knowledge.
Services (government, co-location and integration)	
Projects with a focus on integration of services and programs found this helped to highlight gaps and local service delivery challenges. The flexible nature of the YCPG supported sites to develop new activities and approaches to address identified gaps. The North West developed a shared calendar that enabled services to work collaboratively across the region. This identified where there were gaps in service provision, and showed what	The following challenges were identified in relation to services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited opportunities to engage young people in locations away from their usual environments. • Duplication of activities where conditions of one government service overlap with conditions of another. • Obtaining exemption letters from school to support engagement in other training opportunities.

Facilitators	Barriers
<p>services were available to young people at particular times of year (such as over Christmas).</p> <p>Co-location of services provided a range of benefits including the ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conduct warm referrals of young people into other services. • remain updated and informed about a young person's situation through direct and regular communication across services. • keep informed about programs and services provided by other organisations. <p>Youth hubs were developed by four projects and were perceived to have even greater value for projects than co-location of services as they provide a space where young people can go without having to interact with services, and support pro-social engagement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people's criminal records precluding them from accessing support services such as housing and employment. • The complexity of requirements and conditions imposed by justice system orders (e.g. bail conditions, Youth Justice orders). • Potentially rigid criteria of other services/programs identified to meet a young person's needs. • Limited types of services available to meet needs, or long waiting lists. • Similarities between YCPG and Youth Justice Community Support Services (YJCSS) created confusion for referring agencies and uncertainty about which program to refer to.
Project staff	
<p>Six sites focussed on providing continual training and skill development for project workers to ensure that they had the skills required to address the complex needs of the cohort.</p>	<p>Finding the right project workers was pivotal to the success of the YCPG and in six sites implementation was delayed due to difficulties with recruitment. This was particularly an issue in regional areas and was also related to competition for workers between programs in areas that have had a high level of government investment in similar programs.</p> <p>High staff turnover impacted program implementation, continuity and clarity of roles and responsibilities across partners.</p> <p>Managing staff leave and absences was difficult for some projects where there was low FTE and staff back-fill arrangements were not considered.</p>

KEQ6: What factors contributed to the program and projects being effective in achieving the outcomes?

There was some emerging evidence that the type of approach(es) delivered by projects was associated with different levels of change in participants' offending behaviour. In line with the existing evidence base, social competence training and comprehensive emerged as most promising in having an impact on offending levels of offending behaviour. The largest decreases in average offending rates were identified for programs incorporating both comprehensive approaches and social competence training, followed by social competence training alone, and then comprehensive approaches incorporating employment programs. Recreation programs showed only a very small decrease in average offending rates. Young people participating in projects that primarily offered mentoring support showed an increase in average offending rates between pre- and post- YCPG periods indicating the importance of supporting such engagement with comprehensive approaches or social competence training..

Project workers emphasised the importance of addressing basic needs such as access to housing and food prior to addressing other needs, noting that if a young person does not have access to stable

accommodation, they are unlikely to engage in the YCPG and it will not be possible to address their more complex social needs.

Other factors contributing to achievement of outcomes were different for younger and older cohorts. For those older than 15, the following factors appeared to contribute to program effectiveness:

- where young people had intrinsic motivation, an increased sense of self-worth associated with income or positive affirmation, and where they were beginning to recognise the consequences of their actions on their future or on others.
- positive relationships existed between the young person and their family, increased family attachment was occurring, or there was a family history of employment.
- Where support and encouragement was received from members of the community, the young person had a wider social group of prosocial peers, positive feedback was received from Magistrates who saw them on a regular basis, and/or the young person had an active lead worker who was able to access brokerage and pull levers to support the young person.
- the young person had stable accommodation, consistent food and no drugs were used within their households.
- where there were higher levels of education in the family and higher socioeconomic status, the young person had interests or hobbies that facilitated prosocial engagement in their community.

For those aged 15 or younger, the follow factors were seen to contribute to the effectiveness of the program:

- the young person is at a stage of being ready to voluntarily engage with a service.
- strong family involvement that may support boundary setting and where parental hierarchies are still in place.
- where families increased their support for young people's engagement in education through the program, and where support was provided for parents' mental health issues.
- where the young person had not previously had experiences of being let down, and where they were still engaged in the school system.
- engaging in group activities and recreational programs that do not have a negative stigma associated with them.
- the provision of activities that lead to opportunities such as getting a driver's license.

4. Recommendations

Project establishment and governance

A number of recommendations have been identified that relate to project establishment and governance. These should be considered in the development of new programs to support efficient project implementation and delivery, particularly for programs that are intended to operate using partnership models across organisations. It is recommended that:

1. Upfront investment be made in logistical support and development prior to implementation, particularly for projects that employ workers across different organisations, and/or for projects involving a range of partners such as community organisations and government agencies. This could include:
 - Supporting access to a shared information sharing platform for all project partners/workers.

- Development of standard terms of reference, guidelines, policies and procedures to ensure policy and procedural consistency across partner organisations.
 - The provision of guidance on appropriate governance structures and on how to review governance structures and terms of reference during implementation to maximise their effectiveness and ensure efficient governance. (*Recommendation 1, page 74*)
2. Funding agencies should support lead agencies to ensure that information sharing is facilitated between government and community organisations where required, particularly where government agencies form part of projects' referral panels, and should encourage appropriate agency representation and engagement in the project. (*Recommendation 2, page 75*)
 3. Responsibility for project continuity, clarity and purpose of organisational roles should sit at the governance level rather than with the lead agency for organisations adopting partnership approaches. This would support consistency in communication and understanding across partner organisations. (*Recommendation 13, page 89*)
 4. Design and funding guidelines should support the hiring and retention of appropriate staff to ensure continuity. Provision of sufficient funding is key to this and might include:
 - Supporting a minimum of one FTE per project (for each partner organisation hiring project workers).
 - Supporting engagement of more than one worker in any project (to cover leave, resignation etc.)
 - Ensuring agencies can provide access to logistical support for project workers, (e.g., cars, brokerage) where applicable. (*Recommendation 11, page 89*)

Flexibility

The flexibility of the YCPG program was consistently referred to very positively by projects. In particular, the evaluation identified that the ability to adapt to emerging local issues and needs, and to potential service overlaps, was valuable in supporting the efficient and effective delivery of projects. It is recommended that future programs incorporate such flexibility and that any opportunities to maximise flexibility in the second phase of the YCPG be supported. Specifically:

5. Enable adaptations to project design and contracts through the implementation phase to support project effectiveness and ensure differentiation between the YCPG and other programs and services in the local area. This should enable changes to be made to:
 - project eligibility criteria and target cohorts
 - referral pathways (including identification of additional referral pathways)
 - project activities as particular activities emerge that are beneficial in engaging the target cohort. (*Recommendation 3, page 78*)
6. Where overlap with existing services and programs emerge after implementation has begun, ensure there are in-built contract mechanisms to enable consideration of merging, ceasing or adapting programs. (*Recommendation 4, page 78*)

Project components

The evaluation identified a number of project components which supported the achievement of outcomes. It is recommended that scope for these components be incorporated into youth crime prevention programs going forward, and that the next phase of the YCPG continues to incorporate these elements wherever possible. Specifically:

7. Preference should be given to projects incorporating social competence training and/or comprehensive approaches, as projects involving either or both of these elements achieved the greatest reductions in offending. This is also in line with the existing evidence base about effective programs for young offenders. *(Recommendation 14, page 90)*
8. Projects engaging with at-risk young people, or with young offenders through assertive outreach or case management should prioritise inclusion of the following elements:
 - Provision of support to a young person's family, outside of engagement with the young person
 - Access to flexible brokerage funding to better respond to the needs of individuals. *(Recommendation 5, page 82)*
9. Support the establishment of Youth Hubs, spaces where young people may go to entertain themselves or interact with peers without having to engage with services that might also be available. These should particularly be considered in lower socioeconomic areas. Where possible, these should be established through a co-design process with young people. *(Recommendation 10, page 87)*
10. To support sustainability of project outcomes in local areas, project design should include consideration of capacity building components for community and/or staff and partner organisations, especially in cultural awareness. *(Recommendation 6, page 83)*

Service integration

Several projects identified overlaps and duplication with other local programs and services, which has the potential to negatively impact on: the number of referrals received; the ability to engage participants who may already be receiving similar services from other organisations, and the ability to recruit and retain skilled project workers (particularly in regional areas). From a client perspective, the service system for young people and their families can also seem complex, frequently changing and difficult to navigate. It is recommended that opportunities to integrate and/or embed programs into existing services be considered by government in the design of future programs. This could be accomplished by:

11. Designing programs in consultation across government (as occurred in the design phase of the YCPG), but also considering what mechanisms could be developed to fund, deliver, monitor and evaluate crime prevention and early intervention programs collaboratively across departments particularly across DJCS, the Department of Education and Training, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Courts system and/or Victoria Police. If this is not possible, service offerings should be locally coordinated. *(Recommendation 8, page 87)*
12. Considering whether there is value in merging YCPG funding with Youth Justice Community Support Service (YJCSS) in some LGAs to create a single program, or alternatively ensuring clear differentiation

between the service offerings of the two programs, such as YCPG establishing key referral pathways outside of youth justice, or by targeting different age cohorts. (*Recommendation 7, page 87*)

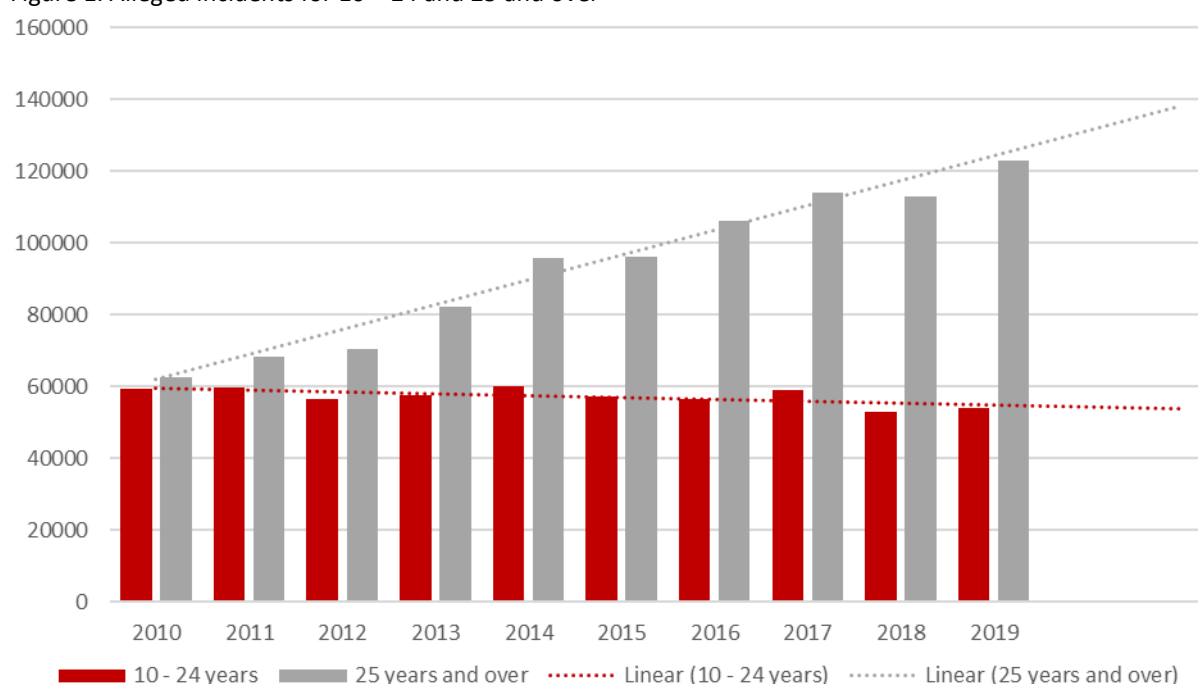
13. Provision of longer-term funding to projects (e.g., four to five years), to support them to become better integrated within communities and achieve longer-term outcomes, and to support the retention of skilled staff. Flexibility to provide longer-term support to young people based on their needs can also prevent them having to cycle between programs as they exhaust the level of support available in particular programs, and result in more successful and sustained outcomes. (*Recommendation 9, page 87*)
14. Considering how to effectively provide incentives for potential employees to work on projects or support programs to ensure there are sufficient human resources to meet the demand for service delivery in the local area, particularly in regional areas. (*Recommendation 12, page 89*)

1. Background

1.1 Youth crime in Victoria

The proportion of crime accounted for by youth offenders in Victoria has been steadily decreasing over the past ten years. In 2015-2016 offences committed by 10 to 24 year-olds represented a smaller proportion of all Victorian crime compared to 2005-2006 and 2011-2012 (Millsteed & Sutherland, 2016)³. The proportion of offences recorded for those under 24 continued to decline over the past two years, from 40 per cent in 2015-16 to 31% in 2017-18 and 31% in 2018-19.

Figure 1. Alleged incidents for 10 – 24 and 25 and over



Despite the fact that young people account for a declining proportion of crime, there has been an increase in the number of individual offenders aged 24 or under committing multiple incidents (Sutherland & Millsteed, 2016). The CSA Spotlight, *Youth Offending in Victoria, examined* alleged offenders aged 10-17 years⁴. It found that for the year ending March 2019 while the overall proportion of young people offending has decreased, the proportion recorded for crimes against the person⁵ has increased⁶. It also found that the number of alleged incidents recorded for female young offenders has increased.

1.2 Youth Crime Prevention Grants program

The Youth Crime Prevention Grants program (YCPG) is part of the Victorian Government's response to youth offending, particularly among young recidivist offenders. The YCPG aims to address this issue by strengthening

³See: <https://www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/research-and-evaluationpublicationsyouth-crime/how-has-youth-crime-in-victoria-changed-over-the>

⁴ See: <https://www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/crime-statistics/historical-crime-data/year-ending-31-march-2019/spotlight-youth-offending-in>

⁵ Principle offence groups driving the increase were Common assault, aggravated robbery and threatening behaviour

⁶Crime Statistics Agency [online] Melbourne, website Latest crime data, Youth alleged offending spotlight, retrieved August 2019

the ability of communities to intervene early and reduce the likelihood of young people engaging in criminal behaviour. In 2016-17 the Victorian Government invested \$10 million over two years for the YCPG, including \$9.1 million for community-led initiatives through three streams of funding:

1. A **direct** stream of \$5.6 million across eight priority LGAs which have higher crime rates and higher proportions of recidivist youth offenders. These LGAs are Ballarat, Casey-Dandenong⁷, Frankston, Geelong, Hume, Latrobe and Wyndham⁸.
2. A **competitive** grant stream of \$2 million to ten additional high priority LGAs outside of the direct investment stream and identified as experiencing significant socioeconomic disadvantage and higher levels of crime. These LGAs are Bendigo, Brimbank, Cardinia, Darebin, East Gippsland, Horsham, Melton, Mildura, Shepparton and Wodonga⁹.
3. Dedicated funding of \$1.5 million for Koori Youth Crime Prevention Grants (KYCPG). This funding was allocated to 25 Koori Youth crime prevention activities and acknowledges that Koori young people have disproportionately high rates of disadvantage and are significantly over-represented in the criminal justice system¹⁰.

Project objectives

Projects funded through the YCPG are expected to achieve a reduction in offending behaviour and recidivism among project participants by:

- Decreasing known crime-related risk factors and increasing protective factors
- Achieving sustained improvement in engagement in school, training and/or employment.
- Increasing connectedness with the community.

The projects are also expected to develop or consolidate strong, effective partnerships among community organisations and across government initiatives in acknowledgement that service provision should be coordinated to best support young people's needs.

The YCPG projects aim to reduce participants' risk factors and develop their protective factors to decrease their likelihood of interacting with the criminal justice system. Risk factors are aspects of a young person's life or environment that make them more vulnerable to involvement in offending behaviours. Protective factors are characteristics of a young person or their environment that can reduce the impact of relevant risk factors and may prevent vulnerable young people from becoming involved in the justice system¹¹.

Target groups

Each of the YCPG projects developed their own: selection criteria for participants; approach for identifying suitable participants; and referral and acceptance pathways into their project. The YCPG's definition of 'young people' is anyone aged 10–24 years, and projects can include young people in any of four cohorts: highly vulnerable, at risk, offenders and recidivist offenders. **Highly vulnerable** young people are those who may be heavily involved with substance use, not achieving academically or identified as 'high mental health risk' adolescents. Peers of these youth are likely to be engaging in similar behaviours, but these youth may still be attached to their family and engaged in prosocial activities. **At risk** young people are likely to engage in excessive substance use, they might have mental health issues or diagnoses and some may have attempted suicide or have histories of repeated self-harm. Most will have left school early or be significantly behind in their

⁷ Casey and Greater Dandenong were identified as two LGAs for the directed stream, while separate project applications were submitted the projects use the same governance structure and project workers and as such are considered one project for the purpose of the mid-term evaluation.

⁸ Refer to Appendix 1 for details of directed grants

⁹ Refer to Appendix 2 for details of competitive grants

¹⁰ Refer to Appendix 3 for details for the Koori grants

¹¹ Community Crime Prevention Unit, December 2016, Guidelines Youth Crime Prevention Grants retrieved on 24th July 2018, from <https://www.crimeprevention.vic.gov.au/grants/youth-crime-prevention/guidelines-youth-crime-prevention-grants>.

academic attainment. At risk young people are more likely to be disengaged from their family and may be homeless or in transient accommodation¹². **Offenders** are young people who have had contact with the criminal system as an alleged offender and **recidivist offenders** are defined as those who have been recorded by police for six or more alleged incidents within a 12 month period.

Community based design

The YCPG focused on community-led initiatives. CCPU worked with the directed project areas over a six-month period to support a community-based project design for the grant funds. This included two community-based workshops in each area, facilitated by an external party. Workshop participants included community organisations, representatives and government agencies (such as Victoria Police and Department of Education and Training). The aims of the workshops were to:

- work with local stakeholders to identify key issues in their area,
- agree on a target cohort,
- agree on a design approach for project implementation, and
- Identify a lead agency for the project.

The lead agency was required to develop and submit the final application and would be the contracting party for funding agreements. For projects in the competitive stream, priority was given to applications that were delivering projects through a local consortium, made up of a broad coalition of partners.

Project design approach

The interaction of a wide range of factors influences the likelihood of crime occurring and makes some communities more vulnerable to crime and victimisation than others. These factors can relate to individuals within the community and to the broader social and environmental context in which they live. Communities are usually aware of existing local crime problems and generally have some strategies in place to address them. Significant positive change is most likely when communities work together to devise and implement well-considered local solutions and interventions to their particular issues.

YCPG projects were designed using a place-based approach. A place-based approach to crime prevention acknowledges that the risk and protective factors for crime extend beyond the justice system. It encourages local organisations to use evidence, community knowledge and partnerships to develop strategies and activities to influence the factors which contribute to crime in local communities. It also creates an opportunity to use a mix of crime prevention approaches that are most likely to be effective in targeting particular local issues.

The initial design process for YCPG projects included facilitated workshops for projects within the directed stream. These workshops aimed to involve local communities to support a collaborative partnership model of project delivery. As a result, all of the projects target different groups of young people and use different approaches to engage with them. However, during the interim evaluation, commonalities across multiple projects were identified. These included:

- Use of assertive outreach¹³ by project workers to engage with young people.
- Use of mentoring or role-modelling by project workers and other adults.
- Use of a flexible and responsive approach to the needs of individuals.
- Use of a wraparound case management approach where applicable.
- Low caseloads for project workers to enable a flexible engagement approach.

¹² Vulnerable Youth Framework" (DHHS 2016)

¹³ "Assertive outreach" in this context describes where support is provided in places where young people are comfortable. It recognises that young people may face multiple barriers when accessing or attending services and challenges the idea the client is always responsible for engaging with services and supports. It aims to remove barriers faced by young people in engaging or attending services, in particular court-designated services.

- Flexible lengths of time for young people to be engaged in the program based on the young person's individual needs.

As well as using therapeutic techniques (such as cognitive based therapy or narrative therapy), the interim evaluation identified that project workers may support young people in a range of areas. This includes providing:

- Support and advocacy with court and police matters and at care team meetings.¹⁴
- Support in identifying and attending education opportunities, upskilling or training for employment opportunities and attaining employment.
- Access and support to engage in group and community activities.
- Access and support in navigating and managing access to government and community services such as Centrelink, Housing, and Alcohol and Drug Counselling.
- Oversight of service scheduling and attendance (including court mandated services).

Projects are also working with partners in other organisations (both within government and with non-government service providers), and some projects are working with participants' families and peers to better support them, improve their engagement or interactions with others and ensure access to required services is possible.

Community crime prevention support

The YCPG program contracts are managed under a unique funding model, with Regional Crime Prevention Officers (RCPOs) funded specifically to support the program across four regions. The RCPOs are responsible for managing the direct liaison with projects, and a centralised contact manager within CCPU is responsible for oversight of the program. RCPOs were funded in regions based on the number of YCPG projects being delivered in the area, and particularly where there were directed projects. In other regions this local oversight role was taken on by the Local Engagement Officer (LEO) or the Regional General Manager of Community Services. Table 1 outlines the arrangements for each region.

Table 1. Regional DJCS support to YCPG projects

DJSC Region	DJCS Liaison Position	Projects
Barwon South West	RCPO (part time)	Geelong
Gippsland	RCPO	Latrobe, East Gippsland
Grampians	Regional General Manager	Ballarat, Horsham
Hume	Regional General Manager	Shepparton, Wodonga
Loddon Mallee	RCPO (Year 1) LEO (Year 2)	Bendigo, Mildura
North West Metropolitan	RCPO	Hume, Wyndham, Melton, Brimbank, Darebin
South East Metropolitan	RCPO	Casey-Dandenong, Frankston, Cardinia

Funding extension

In 2018 CCPU extended the funding for projects in the direct stream in the YCPG for an additional two years, with an additional \$700,000 allocated to each project. Projects in the competitive stream were invited to submit an expression of interest for a funding extension in January 2019. Of the ten projects, seven¹⁵ submitted successful proposals to continue for another two years, with additional funding allocations of

¹⁴ Care team meetings are meetings of the core and extended service providers to discuss the care and needs of a young person, both the young person and their family are invited to attend these discussions.

¹⁵ Horsham, East Gippsland, Shepparton, Melton, Brimbank, Mildura, and Bendigo.

\$200,000 each. This funding extension meant that the projects did not have to exit young people by 30 June 2019 and could continue to work with them through to the second phase of funding.

2. Mid-term Evaluation

The Crime Statistics Agency (CSA) was engaged by CCPU to evaluate the YCPG Program. This is the mid-term report on the YCPG and focuses on progress towards program outcomes achieved from the commencement of the YCPG to the end of June 2019. Offending outcomes are considered for a slightly shorter timeframe, to the end of March 2019.

This mid-term evaluation report aims to answer six **Key Evaluation Questions** (KEQs):

1. How effective was the program in achieving the expected program outcomes?
2. What have the outcomes been across the LGA projects?
3. How efficient was the delivery of the program?
4. How efficient was the delivery of the LGA projects?
5. What, if any, were the facilitators and barriers to implementation?
6. What factors contributed to the program and projects being effective in achieving the outcomes?

CSA has not evaluated stream three. The Koori Justice Unit (KJU) within DJCS conducted an evaluation of this stream. A summary of their findings is incorporated in Section 6 of this report and their evaluation report is provided in Appendix 6.

In 2018-2019 the funding for the YCPG was extended for an additional two years for the eight **directed** stream projects, and for seven of the **competitive** grant stream projects. Due to the funding extension this evaluation is a **mid-term** evaluation and focuses on participants that had exited the YCPG as at 30 June 2019, with offending outcomes considered for those who had exited by 31 March 2019. A **final** evaluation report will be produced at the end of 2021. Outcomes for young people that were engaged prior to 30 Jun 2019 but remained in the projects as at 1 July 2019 will be included in the **final** evaluation.

Due to the similarity of approaches taken by projects in both streams, and the higher than expected level of complexity of young people engaged in some of the competitive projects this mid-term evaluation considers projects in both streams together and outcomes are not analysed separately by project stream.

2.1 Methodology

The mid-term evaluation incorporates both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods and analysis.

Data collection and analysis

Interviews and focus groups with program staff

Semi-structured qualitative interviews or focus group discussions were conducted with staff involved in the delivery of one or more of the projects within the YCPG. The interviews were designed to capture information about issues and challenges that may impact a project's ability to achieve its outcomes, and project sustainability. They also captured information about partnerships with other organisations and anecdotal evidence around observed attitudinal and behavioural changes amongst participants. Interviews and focus group discussions were held with lead agencies¹⁶, partners and DJCS representatives. One hundred and thirty-nine people participated, representing 61 organisations¹⁷.

¹⁶Lead agency refers to the organisation that has the signed contract with DJCS for the implementation of a project under the YCPG

¹⁷Where an organisation is involved in more than one project, they have been counted for each of the projects

Participant survey

Young people involved in projects in the YCPG program are invited to voluntarily participate in a survey based on existing and psychometrically validated survey measures to assess their risk and protective factors¹⁸. Participants are invited to participate in the survey three times: when they first commence in a project; complete a project; and three months or more following their completion in a project. The survey is intended to enable an assessment of changes in dynamic risk and protective factors as a result of participation in a project.

Activity monitoring data

Projects are asked to record data on a number of measures for individual participants, including targeted risk and protective factors, program attendance, reasons for early withdrawal from a project, project completion and date of exit. This information is used to assess a project's suitability for the young people targeted (as indicated by participants returning voluntarily) and the dosage (or exposure) of the project delivered to each participant. Activity monitoring data is submitted quarterly by projects. Information has been captured over the duration of the YCPG from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2019.

Analysis of LEAP data

The Crime Statistics Agency (CSA) holds crime data recorded by Victoria Police in their Law Enforcement Assistance Program (LEAP) database. For the purpose of this report, the CSA used information about participants provided by YCPG projects to match these participants to individuals recorded within the LEAP database where possible. To support this data linkage process, projects were asked to provide either a linkage key or the names and dates of birth of referred participants. These were used to match project participants to the LEAP database, with the resultant dataset de-identified for analysis purposes.

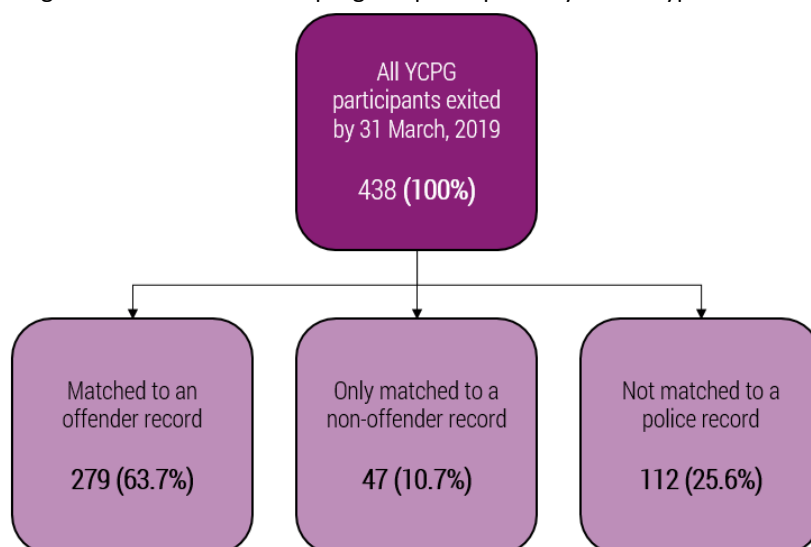
Matching participants to Victoria Police data

A data matching process was undertaken to identify YCPG program participants' contacts with police within the LEAP database. This involved matching the participant's name, date of birth and sex, as provided by each project, to the LEAP database. One YCPG project did not provide participants' personal identifying information due to their concerns that this would negatively affect their ability to engage young people in their project, so matching was instead undertaken using a Statistical Linkage Key (SLK) for each participant provided by that project. An SLK is a unique code that is generated for each individual by applying an algorithm to their name and date of birth details. Once the SLK has been applied to a dataset, names and dates of birth can be removed from the dataset and the linkage key can be used to match individual records across separate datasets.

Of the 438 individuals that had exited the YCPG program prior to 31 March 2019, 64% were able to be linked to at least one record as an offender within LEAP (Figure 2). A further 11% of participants were not matched to any offending record within LEAP, but were matched to another kind of LEAP record, for example as a victim of crime or a family violence incident. Finally, 26% of participants were not matched to any police records within LEAP. Throughout the remainder of this report participants that were not matched to any records within LEAP are considered to have not had contact with police, although there is a very small possibility that a participant may have had contact with police that was not identified by the CSA's matching process.

¹⁸ Refer to Appendix 5 for list of factors measured through the survey.

Figure 2. Flow diagram of number of YCPG program participants by match type in Victoria Police data



Planned versus unplanned project exits

For the purpose of comparing program outcomes in terms of level of program completion, young people were categorised as having either a planned or an unplanned exit. However, when a young person left a project as they were imprisoned or remanded, this is considered as a separate exit type that is not included in the planned or unplanned category¹⁹. Planned exits are generally considered to be a more positive program outcome than unplanned exits, and are used to indicate that the young person successfully completed their time with the YCPG project.

Planned exits were those where young people exited following discussions with their project workers which confirmed that they should exit the project. For most young people this followed the achievement of agreed goals or outcomes. Other planned exit paths identified included: favourable court determinations (including the completion of orders) and the determination that a young person has sufficient services in place (e.g. Targeted Care Package (TCP) or referral to a different service for ongoing support). Unplanned exits included young people who disengaged from the project without notice, those that moved out of the area, and those that were deemed unsuitable for various reasons after entering the program.

2.2 Limitations

- The YCPG funding was extended for an additional two years until 30 June 2021. This is a positive outcome for projects within the YCPG, but has meant that 285 young people have continued in the YCPG beyond 30 June 2019. In turn, this has impacted on the number of exit surveys available for analysis, as well as the number of young people whose participant data will be analysed through the mid-term report. This data will, however, be included in the final evaluation in 2021.

¹⁹ Some projects continue to work with young people when in remand, dependent on the length of their sentence, other project immediately exit a young person if they receive a custodial sentence.

- The number of young people who completed the entry and exit surveys has been lower than anticipated, with 277 entry surveys (from a possible 852 young people) and 60 exit surveys received (from a possible 340 young people). This is due to a number of factors, including:
 - the high disengagement rate of young people from projects (meaning exit surveys could not be administered by project workers), the length of the survey²⁰
 - the extension of funding highlighted above
 - some project sites not contributing any surveys, because, due to the nature of their target cohort, they felt that the survey may disengage young people
 - some participants literacy and language issues which meant that completion of surveys was exceptionally challenging.
- The LEAP data analysed in the evaluation relates to alleged offending among young people, not proven offences. Given the focus of some projects there is a strong possibility that young people identified in the LEAP data will have spent a portion of their time while in a project within a correctional facility. This is not observable within the LEAP data, so there is a possibility that some reduction in offending post-project involvement could potentially be the result of the young person being in a correctional facility, rather than related to the effectiveness of the project itself.
- Where a young person is no longer represented in quarterly reporting and it is unclear what has occurred with them, these young people have been allocated to an 'unplanned exit' with the last date of contact as the exit date. This was particularly an issue where there was high turnover of staff and potentially where unplanned exits were occurring between project workers and these were not being captured by sites or reported to the CSA.
- The evaluation design was not able to incorporate formal methods to capture data on YCPG outcomes for all participants around engagement in education, employment, family attachment, and community connection. This information was sourced through the participant survey and, due to low survey response rates, is not known for all participants. While this has been provided by some projects as part of the participant data they collect, it was not possible to develop a complete representation of these outcomes for all participants.
- While results on re-offending are generally positive there are other possible factors that might be contributing to these outcomes, including other programs or services that young people might be engaged with at the same time as the YCPG. Additionally, a control group could not be identified of young people with similar characteristics to program participants because the number of young offenders captured within projects was high and there are a limited number of other comparable young offenders outside the YCPG. Further, information about which young offenders were on other programs was not available. This limits the ability to identify whether a young person's behaviour might have changed without YCPG intervention.

²⁰ The length of the survey has been revised on two occasions with the aim of increasing survey uptake, whether this has occurred will not be known until the final evaluation.

3. Findings

3.1 Project design

The place-based approach of the YCPG meant each project was tailored by project partners to respond to local situations and priorities. The funding guidelines for project sites stipulated that evidence-based approaches should form the basis of the projects, and guidance about approaches that have already been proven to be effective is provided by CCPU on their website. Nevertheless, the place-based, locally driven approach meant that different project designs were developed across projects, which inevitably impacted on the demographic characteristics and offending histories (if any) of those referred to the YCPG. This in turn likely impacted on outcomes achieved across projects. This should be considered when interpreting findings of the mid-term evaluation. While some comparison may be useful to consider across projects, care should be taken in comparing project outcomes directly.

For the purpose of the evaluation, programs have been categorised according to broad types of programs identified by Sallybanks (2003) in her review, *What works in reducing young people's involvement in crime?* According to this review, the extent to which these program types have been proven to be effective varies. The broad program types and likely effectiveness levels of these are as follows:

- The largest effect in reducing offending and changing behaviours is expected in projects using **social competence training**. Social competence training is akin to cognitive behavioural approaches and involves teaching new thinking and behavioural skills, such as self-control, perspective-taking, moral reasoning and problem-solving.
- A reduction in offending is expected in projects using a **comprehensive approach**. Comprehensive programs use a range of techniques, and can combine aspects of other program types to address risk factors. For example, they can include social competence training, mentoring, counselling, and education and training.
- Limited effectiveness is expected for projects using an **employment program** (in isolation), however as the Bendigo program combines this with a comprehensive approach it is anticipated that the program should show signs of being effective.
- Positive effects (at least in the short term) are expected for **mentoring programs**, such as a reduction in risk factors like alcohol and drug use, and an increase in protective factors including school engagement. Mentoring programs involve extensive adult-youth contact, with the objective of building a trust-based relationship with a positive role model.
- Small effects in reducing offending are expected in projects using **recreation programs**, which are designed to provide activity-based group programs and opportunities for pro-social interaction.
- The level of effectiveness of **programs targeting specific groups** is dependent on the group targeted and the methods used to address their needs.

Table 2 shows which YCPG projects were categorised according into these broad program types. It describes YCPG project similarities and provides an indication of how comparable projects are. It also indicates projects that are unique in their approach. Given the diversity of projects, young people have different experiences within the YCPG and may be engaged using a variety of activities and approaches. Some projects focused on the use of one or two types of activities such as mentoring, while others have adopted numerous approaches, from group activities to counselling sessions.

Table 2. Project types and approaches

LGA Project ²¹	Approach
Program types - comprehensive program and social competence training	
Wyndham, Casey-Dandenong, Frankston, Geelong and Hume (intensive)	Primarily an assertive outreach, case management approach, with low caseloads. Greater family support has been identified as a need across projects throughout implementation, with the exception of Frankston where it was included in the original design. To address this, Geelong engaged a dedicated part-time family service worker from December 2018. Only the Hume intensive stream ²² is using the same approach. The organisation responsible for the delivery of the Youth Justice Community Support Service is involved in the delivery of each of these projects.
Latrobe	Uses a similar approach to Wyndham, Casey-Dandenong, Frankston and Hume but targets a younger cohort and engages using a coaching rather than case management approach. They are also targeting young people who have not entered the justice system, or have had limited contact.
Mildura	Assertive outreach and case management approach focusing on education. The project has a strong emphasis on working with families, and will where identified engage with a young person's parent in a narrative therapy approach for additional support.
Shepparton	Assertive outreach and case management through a dual project worker approach, with a teacher and social worker both being available to engage with the young person. The project provides a strong focus on education pathways.
Program types - comprehensive program and employment program	
Bendigo	Initially designed to support offenders through providing access and support to training and employment opportunities. Bendigo has delivered an assertive outreach, case management approach supported by training and employment opportunities.
Program type – social competence training	
Melton, Brimbank and Hume (managed & guided)	Use a case management and outreach approach with higher caseload numbers of young people. Case management is integrated with the use of group activities, co-located services and a dedicated youth space. All three projects are located close to shopping precincts which supports the use of a lower level of outreach activities.
Program type – mentoring programs	
East Gippsland and Horsham	Deliver mentoring services through close coordination with local schools and have been developed based on established mentoring programs. Horsham has a greater focus on assertive outreach and support where required, with a part-time outreach worker who provides case management. Not all Horsham participants will be identified as suitable for mentorship.
Program type – program targeting specific group	
Darebin	Delivers a case management approach with some outreach through service co-location. Delivers family and parent workshops and community events.
Program type – recreation program	
Cardinia	Initially designed to deliver case management, supported through the use of group wilderness activities. Adapted eighteen months after commencement to deliver group wilderness activities without case management through a school partner.

²¹ Through the report projects will be referred to be the LGA in which they are being delivered

²² Hume has three streams including an intensive stream for recidivist offenders, requiring assertive outreach and case management, and guided and managed streams which provide case management for at risk young people to low level offenders

LGA Project ²¹	Approach
Wodonga	Small focused group activities conducted over a school term, including outdoor and community activities. Some case management conducted where required.
Program type – not categorised	
Ballarat	Works with existing support agencies and services connected to young people to provide an overarching co-ordination role. The project completes a comprehensive analysis and synthesis of existing information and plans prior to engagement. The project then provides an avenue to address gaps identified for young people, provides an opportunity for capacity and capability building and technical support for case managers. If needed the lead agency may step in as a case manager.

3.2 Profile of participants

The majority of YCPG participants were males who were born in Australia. Aboriginal people were over-represented in the YCPG, which is likely reflective of their overall over-representation in offending populations. YCPG. The cohort presented with multiple complex issues: over half had a mental or physical health issue, over 40% had a known substance abuse issue, and 12% were identified as victims of violence. Around 40% of the cohort had an unplanned exit, indicating that their needs had not necessarily been addressed at the time of exit.

Nine hundred and two young people had been referred into the YCPG by 30 June 2019. Of these 51 (5.6 per cent) never engaged. **Five hundred and sixty-eight (66.7 per cent)** had exited by 30 June 2019. **Two hundred and twenty-eight (40.1 per cent)** had an **unplanned exit** from the project, primarily due to the young person disengaging (193 or 84.7 per cent). **Three hundred and seven (54.0 per cent)** had a **planned exit**, and 33 (5.8 per cent) were exited because of a custodial sentence or into a different intensive program (this is represented in Figure 3).

Tables 3-6 provide demographic information on the young people who had exited from the project as at 30 June 2019. Where numbers are three or less these are represented as such and are counted as a two for the purpose of calculating totals.

Table 3. Sex of young people by age group

Age	Female		Male		Other / Unknown		Total	
10 - 14	23	23%	75	75%	≤3	2%	100	18%
15 - 19	73	23%	233	75%	5	2%	311	55%
20 - 24	38	29%	94	71%			132	23%
Unknown	8	31%	16	62%	≤3	8%	26	5%
Total	142	25%	418	73%	9	2%	568	

Table 4 shows the majority of young people in the program were born in Australia (for those where country of birth is known). This is expected and reflects the high number of Australian born alleged offenders in the Victorian Justice system.

Table 4. Country or Region of birth where known by age group and gender

	Age	10 - 14		15 - 19		20 - 24		Unknown		Total
Australia	Female	21	21%	48	47%	27	26%	6	6%	102
	Male	64	21%	149	49%	76	25%	14	5%	303
Pacific	Female			7	78%	≤3	22%			9
	Male	≤3	11%	12	63%	5	26%			19
Africa	Female			12	71%	5	29%			17
	Male	4	6%	45	69%	16	25%			65
Other	Female			≤3	33%	≤3	33%	≤3	33%	6
	Male	≤3	12%	13	76%	≤3	12%			17

Table 5 shows the representation of Aboriginal young people across projects, though they were not a target cohort for any of the projects. Young people who identify as Aboriginal accounted for 9.9 percent of young people that had exited the YCPG. In 2016-17 Aboriginal young people accounted for 16.9 per cent of all young people in youth detention²³.

Table 5. Young people who identify as Aboriginal by gender and age group

Age	Female		Male		Total	
10 - 14	≤3	17%	10	83%	12	21%
15 - 19	4	20%	16	80%	20	36%
20 - 24	6	33%	12	67%	18	32%
Unknown	≤3	50%	≤3	50%	4	7%
Total	14	25%	41	73%	56	

Table 6 shows the number of young people who were identified as: having either a physical or mental health issue; been a victim of or witnessed violence; and/or, previously or currently using a substance. As shown, more than half had a physical or mental health issue and 43% had current or prior substance use.

Table 6. Young people that have been identified as having mental or physical health issues, have been a victim or witness of violence, and/or have been known to use substances by age group

Age	Physical and or mental health issue		Victim of violence		Known substance use	
10 - 14	55	55.0%	21	21%	23	23.0%
15 - 19	141	45.8%	37	12%	123	39.9%
20 - 24	88	67.2%	10	8%	84	64.1%
Unknown or ≥25	17	60.7%	2	8%	12	42.9%
Total	301	53.3%	70	12%	242	42.8%

Figure 3 shows the exit paths taken by all young people through the YCPG. Tables 7 and 8 show the breakdown of young people by age group and gender for each exit type. Through the rest of the report exits resulting from a young person receiving a custodial sentence or being serviced through another intensive program are grouped separately to planned and unplanned exits.

²³ The majority of Aboriginal young people were in the Hume, Bendigo, Wodonga, Brimbank and East Gippsland projects

Figure 3. Diagram of paths young people have taken through the YCPG

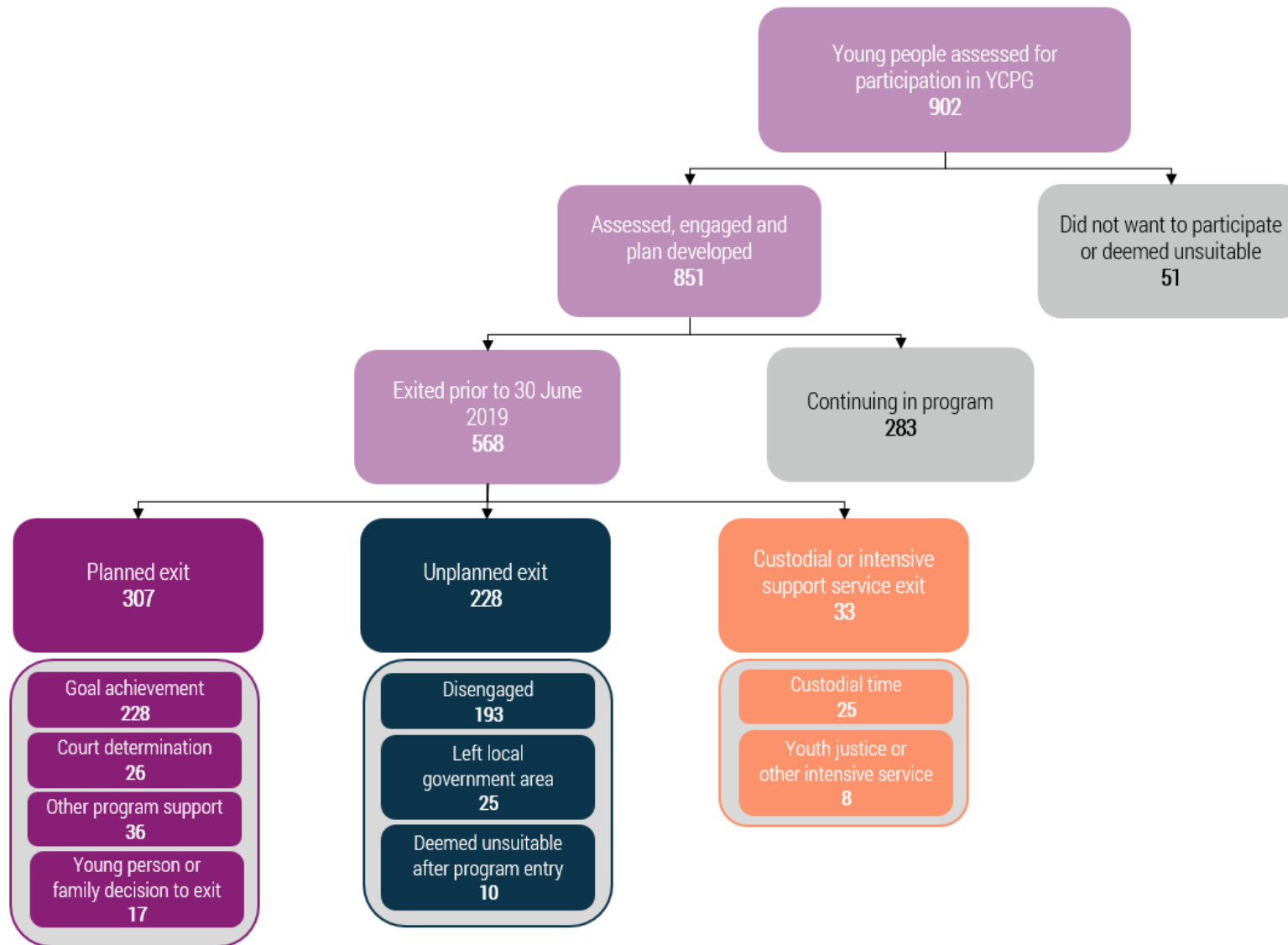


Table 7 shows that the highest percentage of unplanned exits occurred in the 20–24 age group and the highest percentage of exits due to a custodial sentence or transfer to another intensive service was in the 15–19 age group. It is difficult to develop a good understanding of the reasons for unplanned exits, as it is not possible to ask the young person about the reasons for their disengagement when contact with them is unexpectedly lost.

Table 7. Exit type by age group

Age Groups	Planned exit		Unplanned exit		Other exit	
10 - 14	58	59%	38	39%	≤3	2%
15 - 19	171	55%	116	37%	24	8%
20 - 24	64	48%	63	48%	5	4%
Unknown	14	52%	11	41%	≤3	7%

Table 8 shows that a higher proportion of females had a planned exit compared to males and that males made up the majority of young people exited due to a custody sentence or because of referral into another intensive service.

Table 8. Exit type by sex

Age Groups	Planned exit		Unplanned exit		Other exit	
Male	215	51%	173	41%	30	7%
Female	86	61%	53	38%	≤3	1%
Other			≤3	100%		
Unknown			4	67%	≤3	33%

Survey Responses

Forty-one participants' entry and exit surveys²⁴ were analysed. As noted in the methodology section above, the survey response rate was very low and responses should be interpreted with caution. This accounts for 13.4 per cent of participants with a planned exit²⁵. Table 9 indicates the gender and age group of respondents at the time of completion of the entry survey and the project stream they were involved in. The gender split is similar to the YCPG, but with higher response rates from females.

Table 9. Survey respondents by age group, gender and project stream

Age Groups	Total		Male		Female		Directed Projects	Competitive Projects
	Participants							
10 - 14	12	12	100%				3	9
15 - 19	19	11	58%	8	42%	5	5	14
20 - 24	10	5	50%	5	50%	2	2	8
Totals	41	29	69%	13	31%	10	10	31

Twenty-eight (68 per cent) of survey responses came from the competitive projects Brimbank, Melton and Wodonga. While the number of entry and exit surveys do not provide a representative sample size²⁶ responses have been analysed for trends.

²⁴ Surveys were omitted from the final analysis that could not be identified to a participant or had high levels of blank responses.

²⁵ Twenty-four respondents completed the longer version of the survey and seventeen completed the shorter version

²⁶ For the planned exited population of 339 a representative sample size around 180 is required

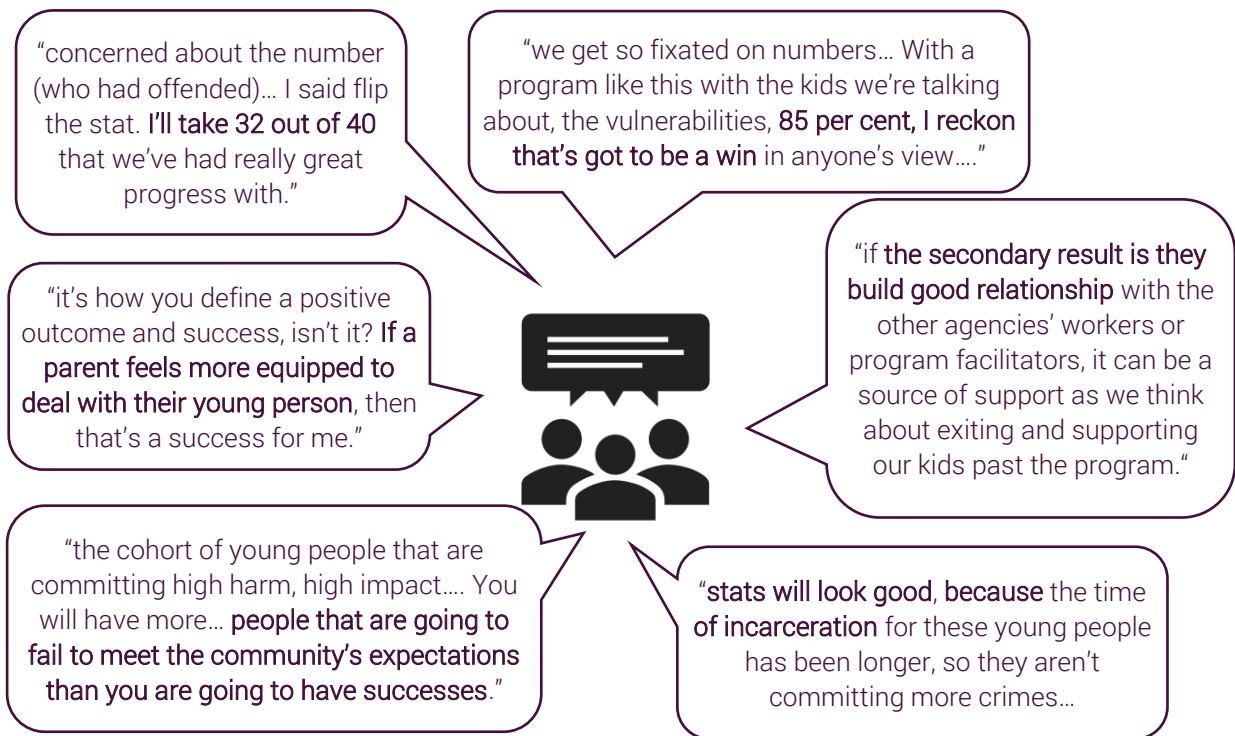
3.3 Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs):

1. How effective was the program in achieving the expected program outcomes?

The YCPG program has two overarching objectives to reduce the re-offending risk of existing young offenders, and to prevent those deemed at risk (i.e., those who have identified risk factors present and/or protective factors absent) from engaging in the justice system. Other expected outcomes are to:

- Decrease known crime-related risk factors and increase protective factors
- Achieve sustained improvement in engagement in school, training and/or employment.
- Increase connectedness with the community.

The YCPG also aims to develop or consolidate strong, effective partnerships among community organisations and government agencies. Partners continue to have conversations around what success means for their project, both within the scope of the program objectives and more broadly. Projects acknowledged how complex the target cohort is, how difficult they are to engage and how this impacted on project success. Nevertheless, conversations about success focussed on the number of young people offending and reoffending. Interviews provided the following insights into partners' views.



3.3.1 YCPG program participants' contact with Victoria Police

This section provides an overview of the analysis undertaken using LEAP data to identify offending outcomes amongst YCPG participants. Note that, in order to allow for at least a three-month post-program follow-up period for all participants included in the analysis, only those who had exited the program as at 31 March 2019 are included. This meant that 438 young people were included in the analysis. The section begins with an overview of the characteristics of these 438 participants as recorded by Victoria Police.

Characteristics of YCPG program participants exited by 31 March 2019

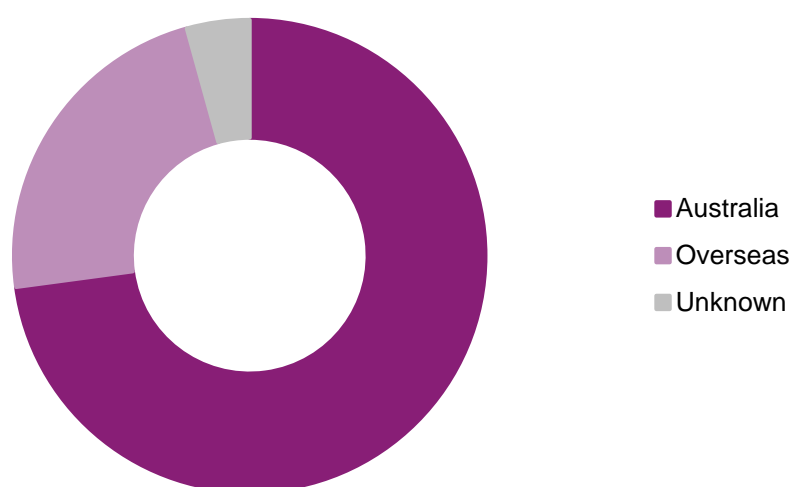
When police come into contact with an alleged offender or victim, they record demographic information about the individual and details of the offence(s) that allegedly occurred. Of the 438 individuals that had exited the YCPG program prior to 31 March 2019, 72% were male (n=315), 27% were female (n=119) and 1% had an unknown sex (n=4). Slightly more than half of participants were aged 15-19 years old when they entered the program (Table 10). Almost one-third of participants were 20-25 years old when they entered the program, while 14% were aged 10-14 and 2% were of an unknown age.

Table 10. Age group of participants when they entered the YCPG program

Age group	Number	%
10-14	60	13.7
15-19	227	51.8
20-25	142	32.4
Unknown	9	2.1
Total	438	100.0

Almost three quarters of participants (73%; n=319) were born in Australia (Figure 4). Twenty-three per cent of participants were born overseas (n=100), while 4% did not have a recorded country of birth (n=19). Of those born overseas, the most commonly recorded country of birth was New Zealand (n=24; 5%), followed by Sudan (n=23; 5%) and South Sudan (n=19; 4%).

Figure 4. Proportion of YCPG program participants by country of birth



Ten per cent of participants identified as Aboriginal, while 62% of participants did not (Table 11). However, these results should be interpreted with caution as the Aboriginal status of 27% of participants was unknown.

Table 11. Number and proportion of YCPG program participants by Aboriginal status

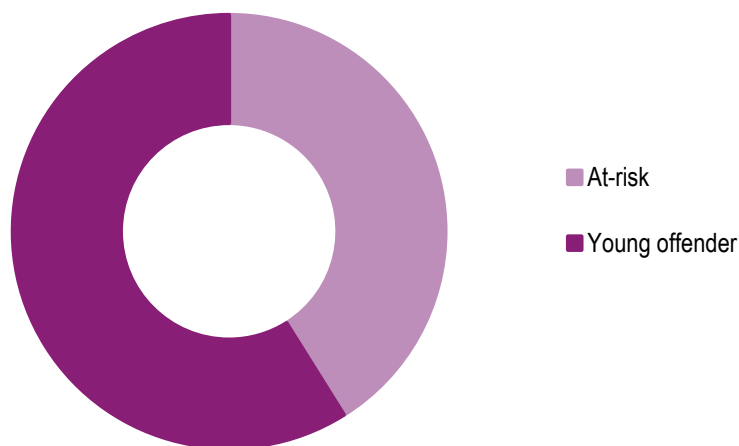
Aboriginal status	Number	%
Aboriginal	45	10.3
Non-Aboriginal	273	62.3
Unknown	120	27.4
Total	438	100.0

At-risk participants and existing young offenders

As outlined earlier in this report, the YCPG has two overarching objectives: to reduce the re-offending risk of existing young offenders, and to prevent those deemed at risk from engaging in the justice system. To examine whether participants were 'At-risk' or an existing 'Young offender', their complete offending history prior to entering the YCPG was examined. It should be noted that as the CSA only holds data dating back to July 2004, it is possible that a small number of offences may have been recorded for older participants prior to this date that could not be captured by this analysis.

Fifty-nine per cent of participants had been recorded by Victoria Police as an alleged offender at least once prior to entering the YCPG program (n=258), while 41% had never been recorded as an alleged offender prior to entering the program (n=180) (Figure 5). These participants will be referred to as the *Young offender* and *At-risk* cohorts respectively for the remainder of the report, in line with the two overarching objectives of the YCPG.

Figure 5. Proportion of participants ever recorded as an offender prior to entering YCPG program



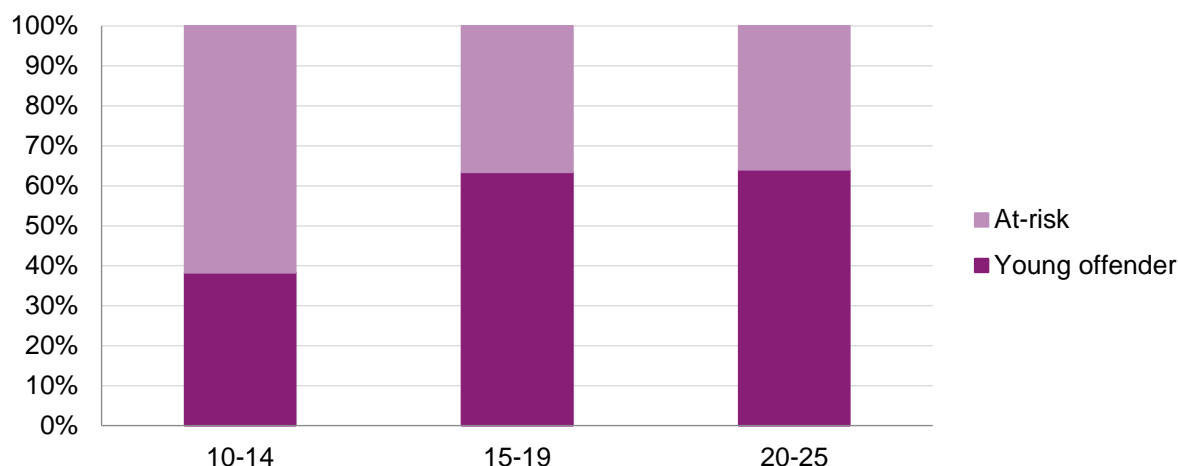
A greater proportion of participants who were *Young offenders* were male (78%) compared with participants who were *At-risk* (65%) (Table 12). Conversely, a greater proportion of *At-risk* participants were female (35%) compared with *Young offenders* (22%).

Table 12. Sex of participants who were At-risk or Young offenders prior to entering the YCPG program

Sex	At-risk		Young offender	
	N	%	N	%
Male	116	65.2	199	77.7
Female	62	34.8	57	22.3

The proportion of 15-19 year olds and 20-25 year olds who were a *Young offender* was similar at 63% and 64% respectively (Figure 6). However, the proportion of 10-14 year olds who were a *Young offender* prior to entering the YCPG was lower at 38%, with the majority of this age group therefore considered *At-risk* of entering the justice system (62%).

Figure 6. Age group of participants who were At-risk or Young offenders prior to entering the YCPG



In addition to their previously outlined contacts as an alleged offender, all participant's contacts with Victoria Police as a victim of a criminal offence or as the perpetrator or victim of a family violence incident prior to entering the YCPG program were examined. Overall, a large proportion of YCPG participants had previously been recorded as victims of criminal offences and/or family violence incidents. *Young offender* participants had a much higher rate of contact with Victoria Police for all types of police contact than *At-risk* participants (Table 13). More than half of *Young offender* participants were recorded as the victim of at least one criminal offence prior to entering the YCPG program (53%), while this was the case for 14% of *At-risk* participants. Forty-eight per cent of *Young offender* participants were recorded as the alleged perpetrator of at least one family violence incident²⁷, while 31% were recorded as the victim of a family violence incident. Five per cent of *At-risk* participants had been recorded as the perpetrator of family violence, while 9% were recorded as the victim of family violence.

Table 13. Participant's contact with police prior to entering the YCPG

Type of police contact	At-risk		Young offender		Grand total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<i>Criminal offences</i>						
Victim	26	14.4	136	52.7	162	37.0
<i>Family violence</i>						
Other party (Perpetrator)	9	5.0	124	48.1	133	30.4
Affected family member (Victim)	16	8.9	79	30.6	95	21.7

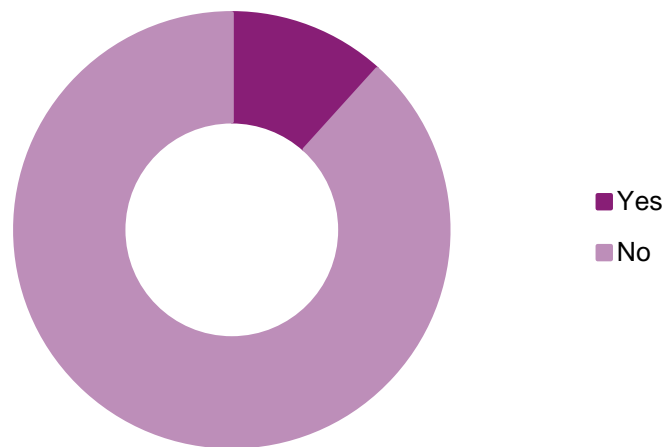
Offending after entering the YCPG program

At-risk participants

Of the 180 participants who had never been recorded by Victoria Police as an offender prior to entering the YCPG program, only 21 participants (12%) were recorded as an offender at any point after entering the program, while 159 participants (88%) never engaged with the criminal justice system (Figure 7). This means that to 30 June 2019, 159 (36%) of YCPG program participants had never been recorded as an offender by Victoria Police.

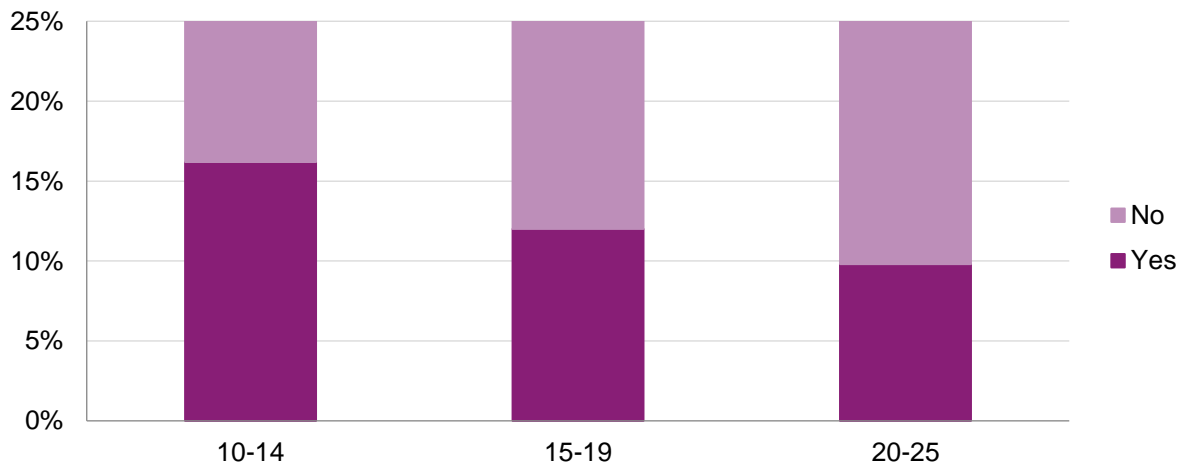
²⁷ Note that family violence as recorded by Victoria Police does not necessarily involve any criminal offences

Figure 7. Proportion of At-risk participants who ever offended after entering the YCPG program



As shown in Figure 8, a greater proportion of 10-14 year-olds were recorded for their first offence after entering the YCPG program than those belonging to older age groups. Sixteen per cent of 10-14 year-olds (n=6) began offending after entering the YCPG program, compared with 12% of 15-19 year-olds (n=10) and 10% of 20-25 year-olds (n=5).

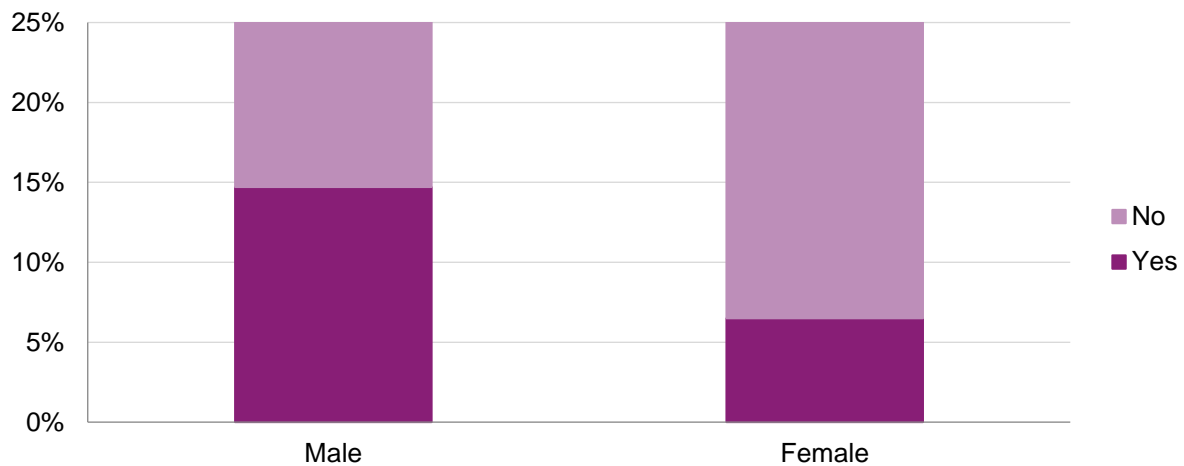
Figure 8. Proportion of At-risk participants recorded for their first offence after entering the YCPG program, by age group when entering the program



* Graph excludes those with an unknown age

A greater proportion of male participants were recorded for their first offence after entering the YCPG compared with female participants, as shown in Figure 9. Fifteen per cent of *At-risk* male participants were recorded for at least one offence after entering the YCPG (n=17), while this was the case for 6% of *At-risk* female participants (n=4).

Figure 9. Proportion of At-risk participants recorded for their first offence after entering the YCPG program, by participant sex



* Graph excludes those with an unknown sex

The most common type of offence recorded for *At-risk* YCPG participants that offended after entering the program belonged to the CSA Offence Subdivision *Assault and related offences* (number of participants = 9). The next most commonly recorded types of offences were *Disorderly and offensive conduct* (n=6), followed by *Property damage* (n=5).

The majority of *At-risk* participants who did offend were only recorded for one incident. Seventeen participants were only recorded for one incident (81% of those who offended), while four participants were recorded for more than one incident after they entered the program (19%).

Existing young offenders

Offending in the 12 months prior to entering YCPG

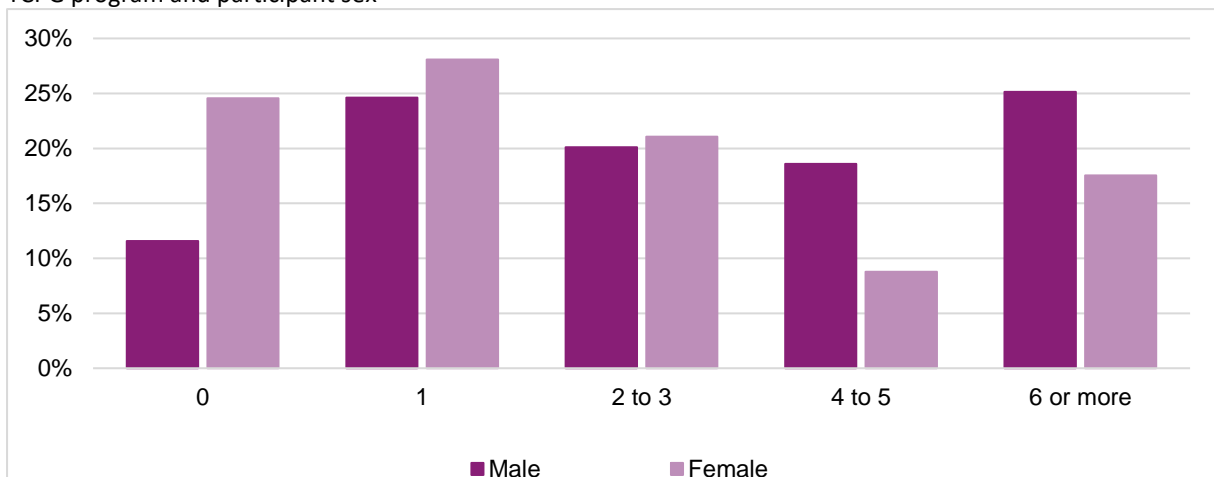
The number of incidents recorded for each of the young people in the *Young offenders* group in the 12 months prior to entering the YCPG is shown in Table 14. The majority of participants were recorded for at least one offending incident in the 12 months prior to entering the program (86%; n=221). Fourteen per cent of participants were not recorded for any incidents in the 12 months prior to entering the YCPG program, meaning these participants had been recorded by police for at least one incident prior to entering the program, but not in the 12 months immediately prior. One-quarter of participants were recorded for one incident, while 21% were recorded for 2-3 incidents and 16% were recorded for 4-5 incidents. There were 61 participants (24%) who were recorded for six or more incidents in the twelve months prior to entering the program, meeting the criteria in this report to be defined as a high frequency offender. These 61 participants were recorded for 649 incidents in the year prior to entering the program, with these incidents involving 1,251 offences in total, an average of 21 offences per participant in this offending frequency group. In other words, a quarter of the YCPG participants could be considered to have entrenched offending behaviour with a very high frequency of offending.

Table 14. Participants by number of incidents and offences recorded by police in the 12 months prior to entering the YCPG

Number incidents group	Unique participants		Total incidents	Total offences
	N	%	N	N
0	37	14.3	0	0
1	65	25.2	65	119
2-3	53	20.5	135	269
4-5	42	16.3	185	364
High frequency (6 or more)	61	23.6	649	1,251
Total	258	100.0	1,034	2,003

Female participants were less likely to have offences recorded in the 12 months prior to entering the YCPG, with a greater proportion of female participants than male participants recorded for zero incidents in the 12 months prior to entering the program. One-quarter of female participants did not offend in the year prior to entering YCOG, compared to 12% of males (Figure 10). There was also a greater proportion of female participants than male participants recorded for one or 2-3 incidents in the year prior. On the other hand, males were more likely to be high-frequency offenders: One-quarter of male participants were recorded for 6 or more incidents (n=50) compared with 18% of female participants (n=10)²⁸.

Figure 10. Proportion of participants by number of incidents recorded in the 12 months prior to entering the YCPG program and participant sex

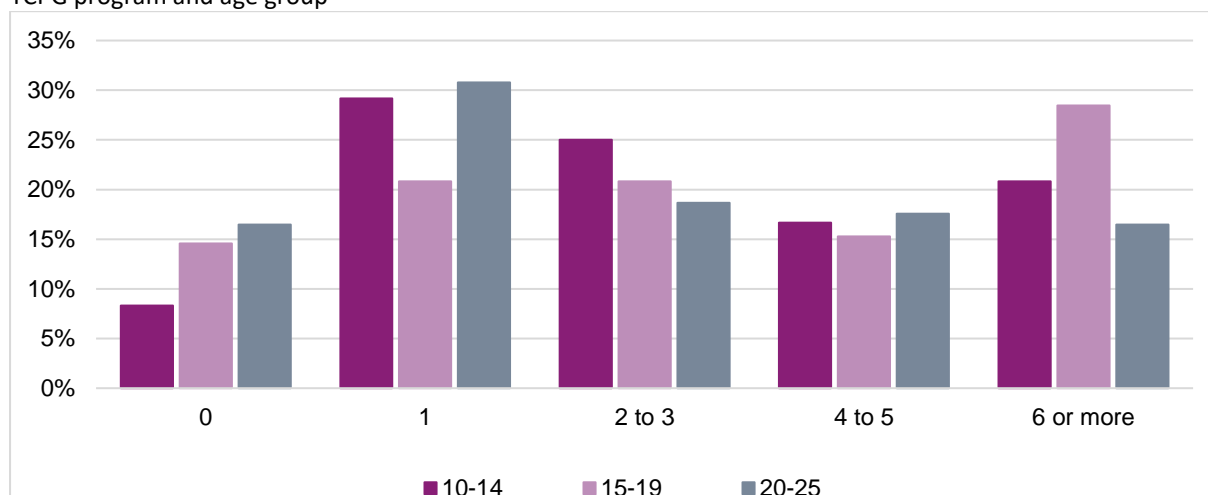


* Graph excludes those with an unknown sex

In terms of age, younger participants were slightly more likely to offend in the 12 months prior to program entry, with only 8% of 10-14 year-olds recorded for zero offences in that period, compared with 15% of 15-19 year-olds and 16% of 20-25 year-olds) (Figure 11). However, more of those aged 15-19 had six or more offences recorded in that time, with 28% of 15-19 year-olds classified as high frequency offenders, compared with 21% of 10-14 year-olds and 16% of 20-25 year-olds.

²⁸ Note that Figure 10 excludes participants with an unknown sex.

Figure 11. Proportion of participants by number of incidents recorded in the 12 months prior to entering the YCPG program and age group



To further explore the nature of the group's offending behaviour, the type of offences recorded for young people in the 12 months prior to program entry were also examined, across the different levels of offending frequency. The most common offence types differed according to how many offences the young people had been recorded for, although *Criminal damage* and *Serious assault* were in the top five most common offence types for every group (Table 15). *Criminal damage* was the most common offence type committed by participants only recorded for one incident. *Other theft* was the most common offence type recorded for offenders in the six or more incidents group, with 59% of participants in the group recorded for this offence type.

Table 15. Top five most common offence types, by offending frequency group in year prior to entering YCPG

Offence group +	Number of participants	% of participants in group
1 incident	<i>Total of 65 participants in group</i>	
1. Criminal damage	14	21.5
2. Serious assault	13	20.0
3. Common assault	8	12.3
4. Steal from a retail store	8	12.3
5. Aggravated robbery	6	9.2
2-3 incidents	<i>Total of 53 participants in group</i>	
1. Serious assault	16	30.2
2. Common assault	16	30.2
3. Criminal damage	16	30.2
4. Steal from a retail store	16	30.2
5. Drug possession	13	24.5
4-5 incidents	<i>Total of 42 participants in group</i>	
1. Common assault	22	52.4
2. Serious assault	19	45.2
3. Aggravated robbery	14	33.3
4. Criminal damage	14	33.3
5. Steal from a retail store	12	28.6
6 or more incidents	<i>Total of 61 participants in group</i>	
1. Other theft	36	59.0
2. Serious assault	31	50.8
3. Criminal damage	31	50.8
4. Motor vehicle theft	30	49.2
5. Aggravated robbery	29	47.5

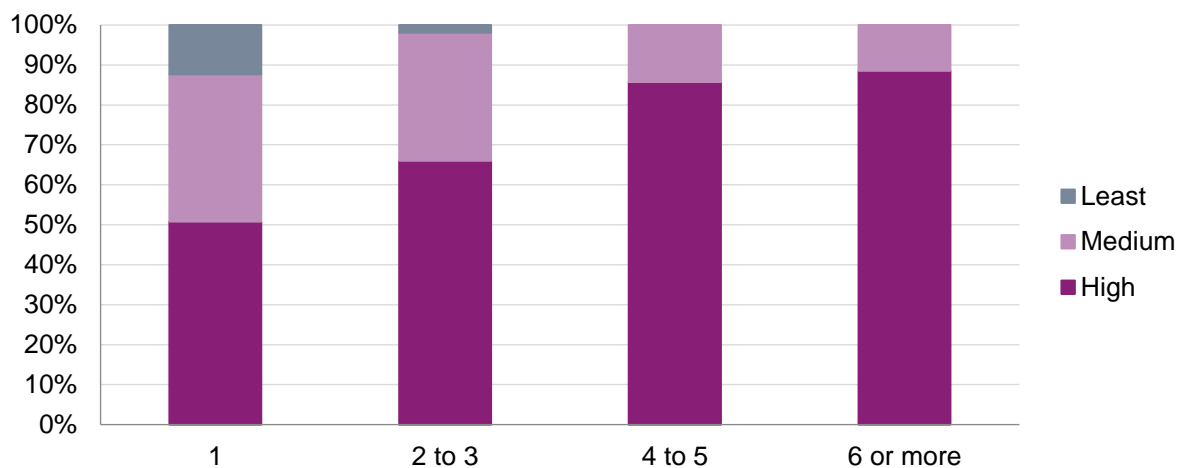
+ Participants may be recorded for more than one offence type

Offences recorded for participants were assigned a seriousness category of *High*, *Medium* or *Low* using the CSA's Offence Index, which ranks offences according to their seriousness. The total 112 offence ranks were divided into three equal categories: *High* seriousness (including offences such as murder, assault, or robbery), *Medium* seriousness, (for example, stealing from a retail store, or criminal damage), and *Low* seriousness (for example, drug possession, or trespass). Participants that committed multiple types of offences were assigned to one of the seriousness categories based on the most serious offence type they committed during the period. A list of all offences included in each of the seriousness categories is provided in Appendix A.

Of the 221 participants that had offended at least once in the year prior to entering the YCPG, 71% (n=158) committed an offence belonging to the *High* seriousness category. Twenty-four per cent committed an offence belonging to the *Medium* seriousness category, while 4% only committed an offence(s) belonging to the *Low* seriousness category.

As shown in Figure 12, the proportion of participants with a *High* seriousness offence recorded in the 12 months prior to entry into the program was greatest for those with the highest total number of incidents recorded. Fifty-one per cent of offenders who were only recorded for one incident had committed at least one *High* seriousness offence, while this was the case for 89% of high frequency offenders who had committed six or more incidents. This means that, even amongst those who did not offend frequently, at least half of the YCPG participants had recently been recorded for a *High* seriousness offence.

Figure 12. Proportion of participants by number of incidents recorded in the 12 months prior to entering the YCPG program and seriousness of offending



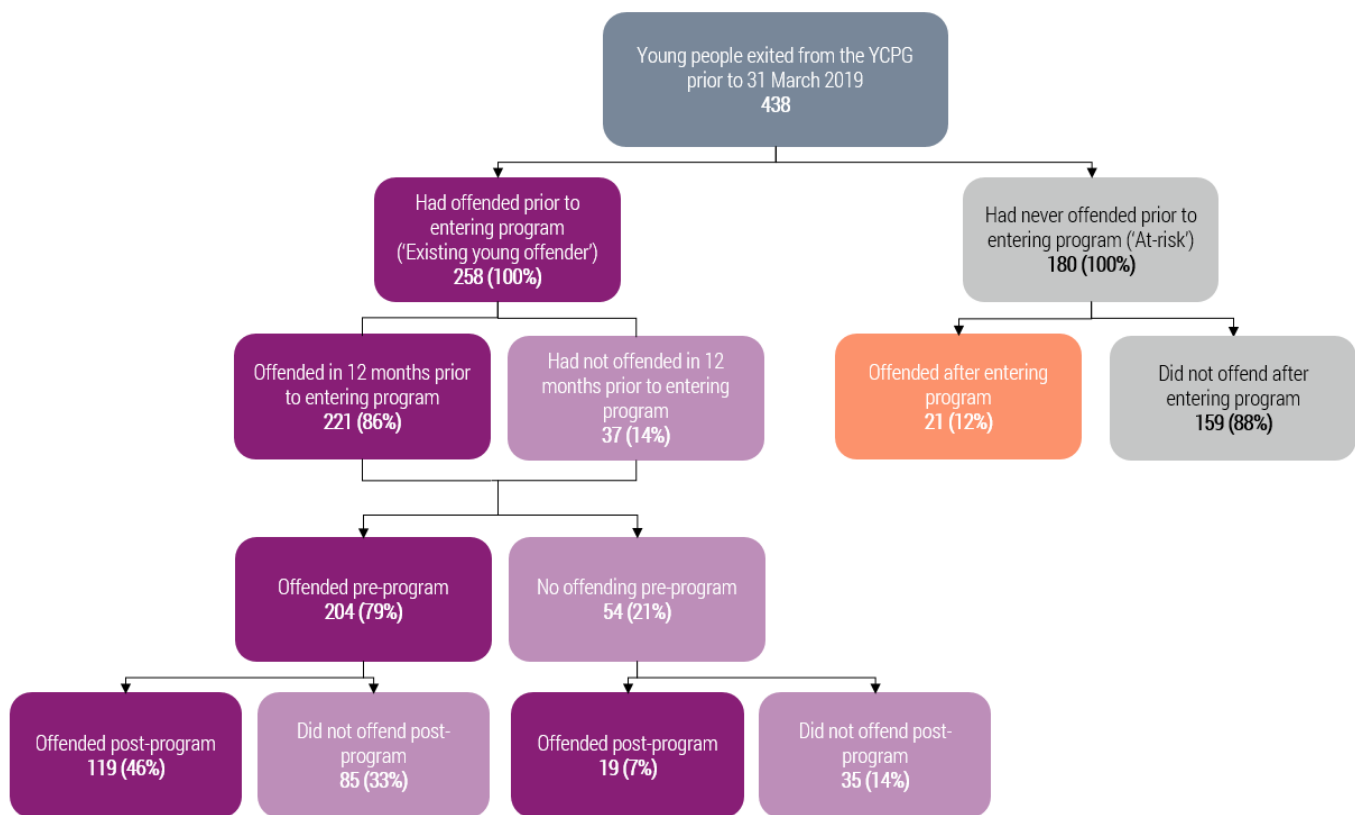
Offending behaviour of *Young offenders* after entering the YCPG program

Of the 258 participants recorded by Victoria Police as an alleged offender at least once prior to entering the YCPG program, two-thirds were also recorded for at least one offence after entering the YCPG program (n=172). Fifty-three per cent were recorded for at least one offence after exiting the YCPG program (n=138), with 13% therefore only offending during the period they were engaged with the program, but not after (n=34).

The following analysis focuses on the offending behaviour of participants prior to entry, and after exit from, the YCPG program, in line with the over-arching objective of the program to reduce the offending of those exiting the program. The length of time between exiting the YCPG program and 30 June 2019 was used to calculate the number of days post-program, and an equal amount of time prior to entry into the YCPG was used as the pre-program period. It should be noted that some YCPG participants have a post program period as short as 91 days, and therefore some participants who offended in the year prior to entering the program may not have been recorded as offending during their 'Pre-program' period.

Figure 13 below summarises the number of all YCPG participants that offended at each key time point of interest in relation to entry and exit from the program. Fifty-three per cent of *Young offenders* offended at least once after exiting the YCPG program (n=138). In comparison, 79% of *Young offenders* offended in their pre-program period (n=204). One-third of participants in the YCPG offended during their pre-program period, but did not offend after exiting the YCPG (n=85). Conversely, 7% of participants did not offend during their pre-program period, but offended after exiting the YCPG (n=19). Fourteen per cent of participants were not recorded as offending during either their pre- or post-program periods, while 46% of participants were recorded as offending during both their pre- and post-program periods. This means that overall, 58.9% of participants were ever recorded as alleged offenders by police prior to commencing on the YCPG, and 36.3% were recorded as alleged offenders post-YCPG.

Figure 13. Flow of YCPG participants' offending at key time points of interest²⁹



When considered as an average rate of offending per 365 days, the *Young offenders* cohort offended less frequently in the post-program period compared with the pre-program period, with an average of 4.2 incidents recorded during the pre-program period compared with 2.9 incidents recorded during the post-program period.

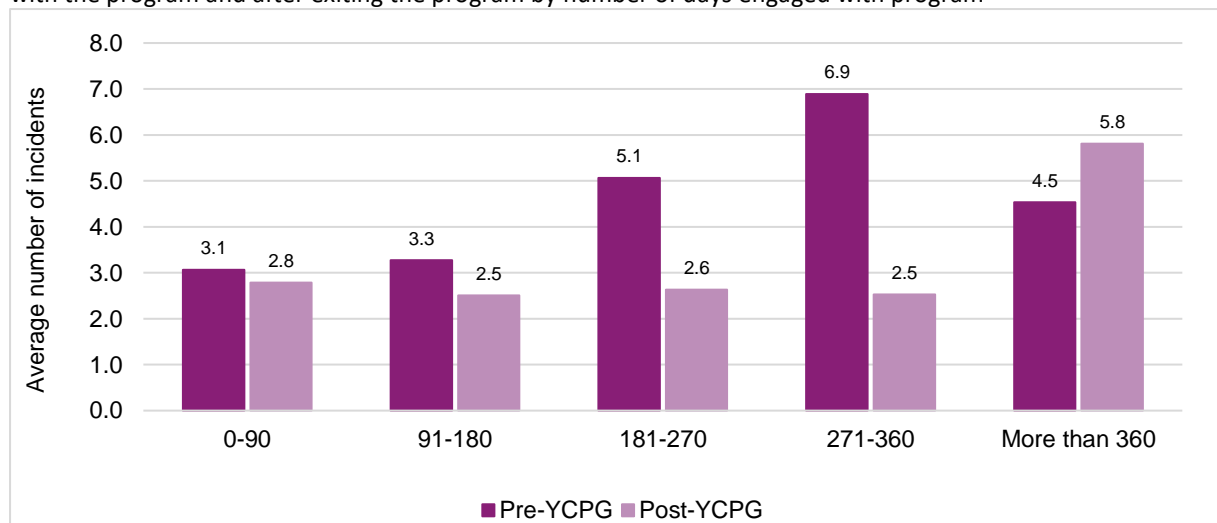
As shown in Figure 14, the rate of offending was greater during the pre-program period than the post-program period for participants that spent between 0 and 360 days engaged with the program, with the largest pre-post difference recorded for those that spent 271-360 days on the program. However, the rate of offending was greater after exiting the program for those that spent more than 360 days on the program, with an average rate

²⁹ Note that the 21% who had 'no offending pre-program' are those who did not offend in their calculated 'pre-program' offending period, but had at least one offence recorded in LEAP prior to their pre-program offending period and are therefore still classified as existing young offenders.

of 4.5 incidents per 365 days prior to entering the program compared with 5.8 incidents after entering the program. It may be the case that those who had the most entrenched offending behaviour of higher levels of risk factors required more time on the project for these to be addressed, and that this group also had higher rates of offending pre-project, and/or more challenges in changing their behaviour through the project.

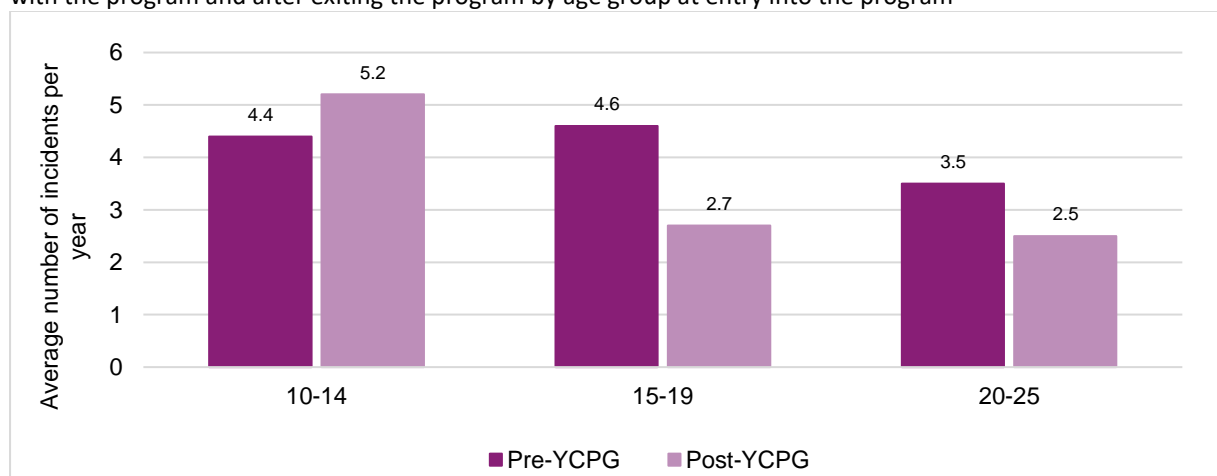
Young people with higher pre-program offending rates spent longer on the YCPG, suggesting that projects were making use of the flexibility built into their design in order to engage young people with more entrenched offending behaviour for longer periods of time. Participants who were offending at an average rate of approximately three incidents per year were engaged for between 0 and 180 days, while those who were offending at an average of approximately five incidents per year were engaged with the program for 181-270 days, and those averaging approximately seven incidents per year were engaged with the program for 271-360 days.

Figure 14. Average number of incidents recorded per 365 days for YCPG program participants prior to engaging with the program and after exiting the program by number of days engaged with program



There was a relationship between age at program entry and differences in pre-post offending rates, with young participants aged 10-14 the only age group to be recorded for a higher rate of offending in the post-program period, compared with the pre-program period. Those aged 15-19 years old at entry into the program showed the greatest reduction in offending rate, with an average of 4.6 incidents recorded per person per year in the pre-program period, compared with 2.7 incidents post-program.

Figure 15. Average number of incidents recorded per 365 days for YCPG program participants prior to engaging with the program and after exiting the program by age group at entry into the program



Male participants had higher offending rates than female participants in both the pre- and post-program periods. Figure 16 shows the offending rate pre- and post-program for participants by their sex. Male participants decreased their average offending rate from 4.4 incidents per 365 days in the pre-program period to 2.9 incidents per 365 days post-program. The offending rate of female participants also decreased from 3.3 incidents during the pre-program period to 2.8 incidents post-program.

Figure 16. Average number of incidents recorded per 365 days for YCPG program participants prior to engaging with the program and after exiting the program by participant sex

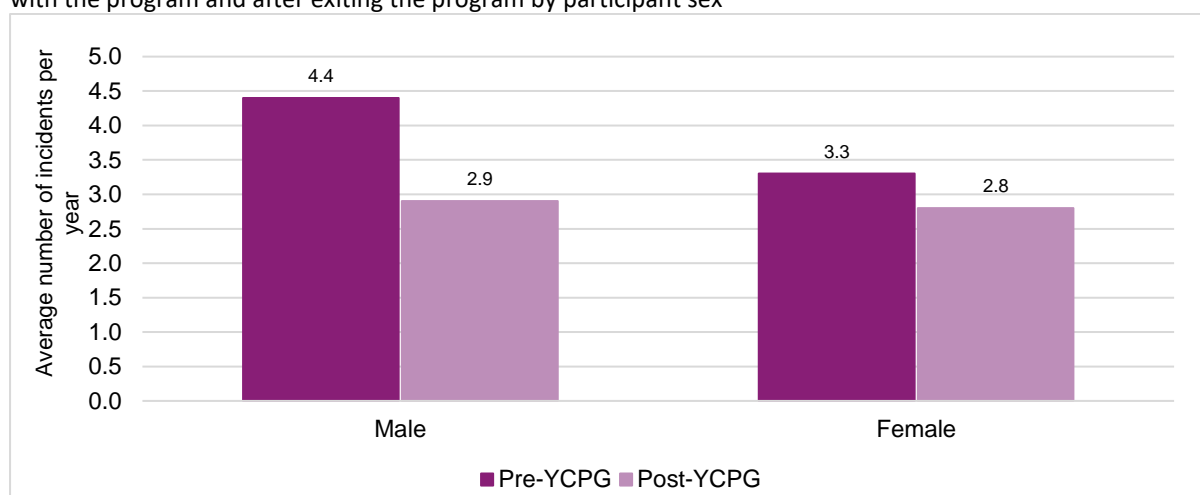
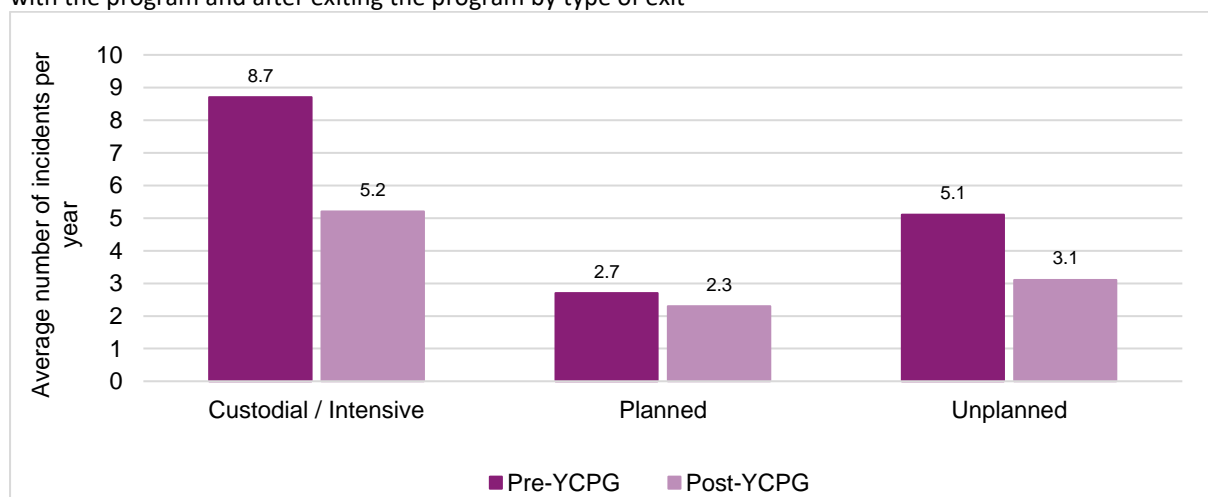


Figure 17 shows the average incident rate per 365 days for YCPG program participants by their type of exit from the program. Perhaps unsurprisingly, those with an exit reason of custodial time or youth justice or other intensive services had the highest rate of offending, both in their pre- and post-program periods. Conversely, those with a planned exit from the program had the lowest rate of offending both pre- and post-program, while those with unplanned exits had offending rate in between the two.

Figure 17. Average number of incidents recorded per 365 days for YCPG program participants prior to engaging with the program and after exiting the program by type of exit



A more detailed look at offending rates and the participant's exit reason shows that those who exited the program due to custodial time had the highest rate of offending pre-program (9.7 incidents), followed by those who exited due to Youth Justice or other intensive services (6.5 incidents) and those who disengaged from the program (5.5 incidents). All exit types showed a reduction in the participants' offending rate except for: those who left YCPG due to other program support, those where the young person or their family made the decision to exit the program, and those who were deemed unsuitable after initially being engaged with the YCPG.

Figure 18. Average number of incidents recorded per 365 days for YCPG program participants prior to engaging with the program and after exiting the program by detailed exit type

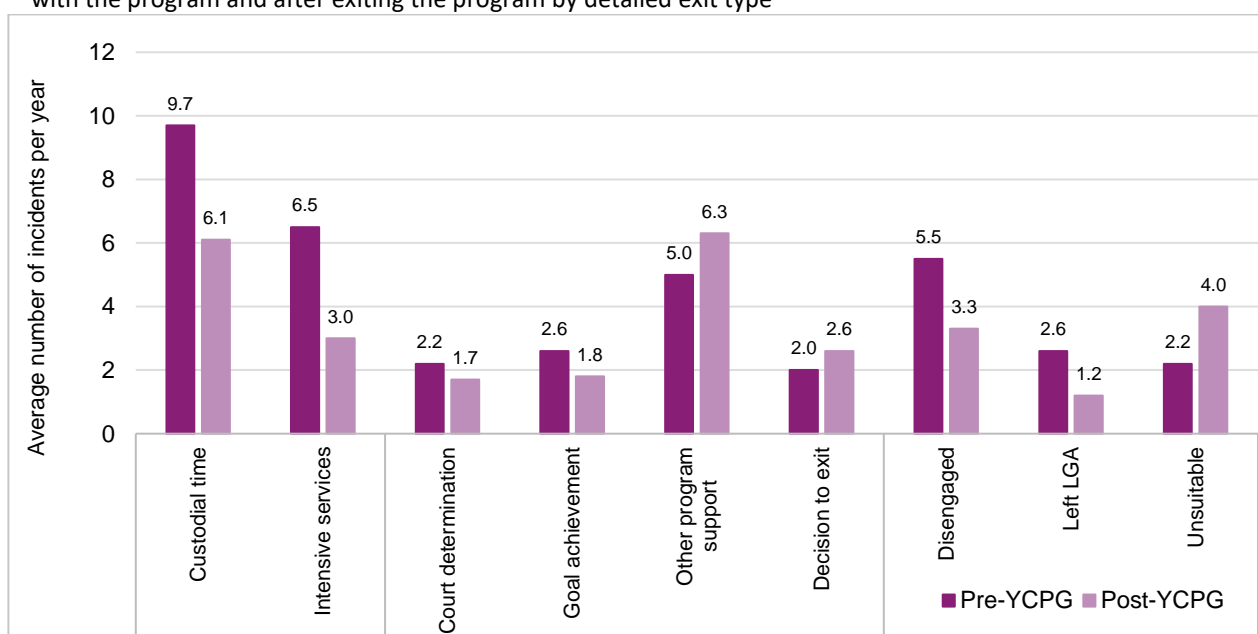
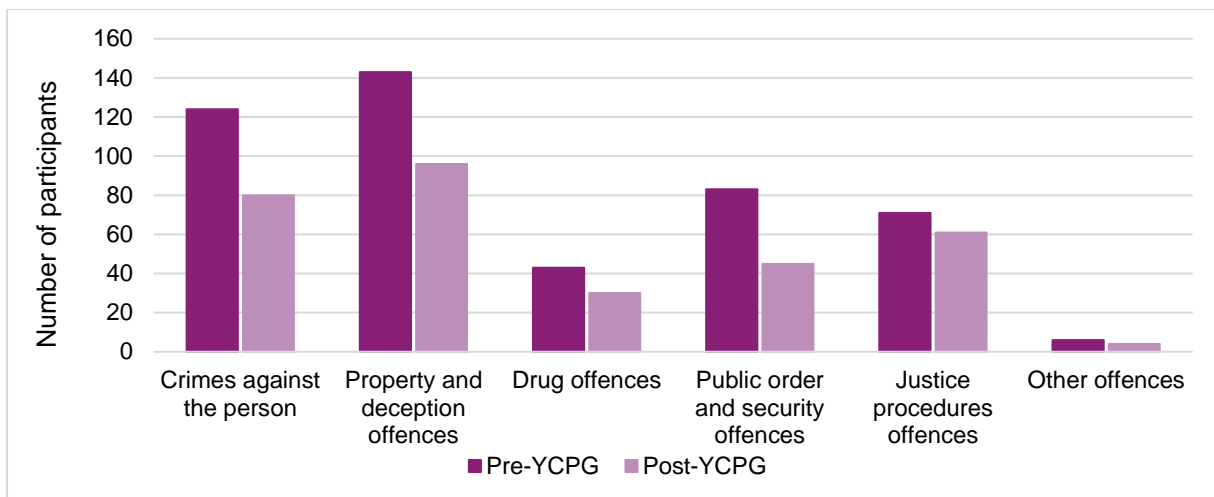


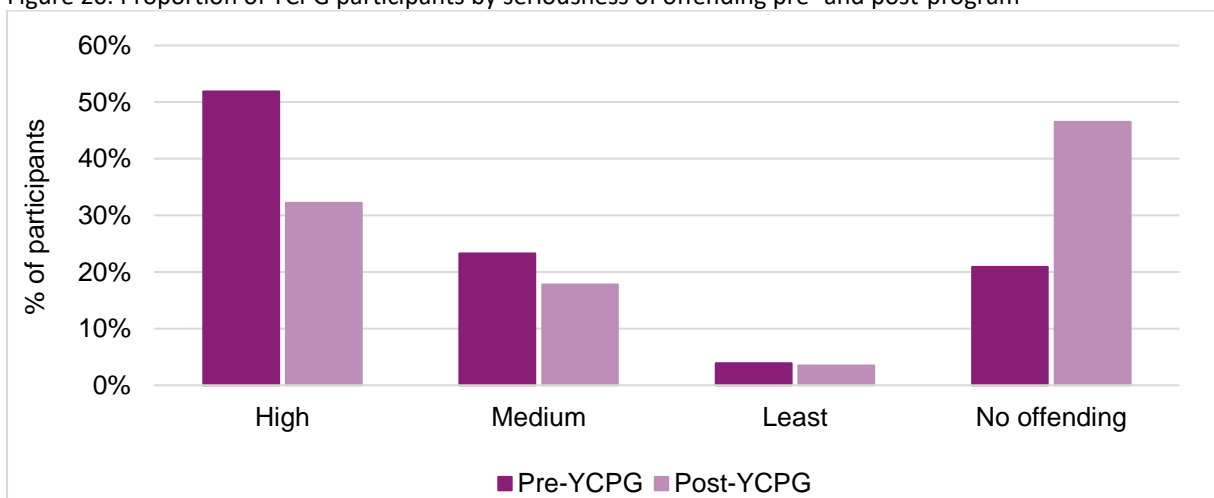
Figure 19 shows the number of participants who were recorded for at least one offence belonging to each of the CSA's high level *Offence Division* categories. Note that each participant can be recorded for more than one type of offence and may therefore appear in more than one category of offending. The category of offending that showed the largest decrease was *Property and deception offences*, with 143 participants recorded for this type of offence in the pre-program period, but only 96 participants in the post-program period. The category of offending to show the second biggest decrease was *Crimes against the person*, with 124 participants recorded for this type of offence in the pre-program period and 80 participants recorded in the post-program period.

Figure 19. Number of YCPG participants recorded for at least one offence under each CSA Offence Division pre- and post-program



The proportion of participants recorded for *High* and *Medium* seriousness offences decreased in the post-program period. Figure 20 shows the proportion of participants by the most serious type of offence they were recorded for pre- and post-program³⁰. Fifty-two per cent of participants were recorded for a *High seriousness* offence in their pre-program period, dropping to 32% in the post-program period. Similarly, the proportion whose most serious offence belonged to the *Medium seriousness* category decreased from 23% in the pre-program period to 18% in the post-program period. These trends were driven by the higher proportion of participants that did not offend during their post-program period (47%) compared with their pre-program period (21%).

Figure 20. Proportion of YCPG participants by seriousness of offending pre- and post-program



3.3.2 Project worker outcome observations






Project workers shared changes they had observed in young people that had participated in the YCPG. Table 16 provides a summary of these changes for young people exited by 30 June 2019. As this is based on observational data, it is likely to reflect positive outcomes, while behaviours the young person might not want others to be aware of, such as offending and substance use may not be reflected.

Positive changes were observed for 86 per cent of the young people that had a planned exit from the program. Positive signs of behaviour change during engagement with the program prior to exit were seen amongst 37 per cent of young people with an unplanned exit.

³⁰ For a complete list of offence types included in the seriousness categories, see Appendix A.

Positive signs were also observed for 33 per cent of young people exited because of custodial time or because they were transferred to another youth justice service. Seventy-six per cent of them, however, were known by projects to have committed further offences.

Table 16. Outcomes observed by project workers among young people who have exited from the YCPG

	Planned Exits	Unplanned Exits
 Reduced or stopped offending	145 (47.2%)	46 (20.2%)
Continued or increased offending	11 (3.6%)	45 (19.7%)
 Decreased substance use	29 (9.5%)	13 (5.3%)
Continued or increased substance use		9 (4.0%)
 Increased community connectedness	68 (22.2 %)	12 (5.3 %)
Improved relationships within the family unit or with positive peers	65 (21.2%)	15 (6.6%)
 Improved engagement in school or education	67 (21.8%)	13 (5.7%)
Improved engagement with training or TAFE courses	48 (15.6%)	12 (5.3%)
 Improved employment	56 (18.2%)	13 (5.7%)

3.3.3 Project Participant Survey responses

The survey was designed to elicit **self-reported changes** in risk and protective factors amongst the young people who participated in the various projects. The majority of respondents (n=30 or 73 per cent) reported an overall positive change in their levels of risk and/or protective factors, with an average³¹ positive change in 4.5 factors. However, a potential limitation of the survey data is that young people who were more engaged in the YCPG and who achieved successful outcomes may have been more likely to complete the pre- and post- participation surveys. The nine respondents with an overall negative change in risk and protective factors had an average negative change in 2.5 factors. Two young people had no overall change. Table 17 shows the changes in risk factors across the young people.

All respondents had a **positive change** in at least **one factor** between the entry and exit survey. However **all respondents** also showed a **negative change** in at least **one factor**. While the survey response rates were low, the survey findings reflect the data provided by projects, which suggests that young people are changing their attitudes and behaviours during their participation in the YCPG.

Of the 41 survey respondents, 22 were identified as having an alleged offending record in LEAP data (54% of survey respondents). Of these 22 respondents, 18 had offended at least once prior to entering the YCPG (82 per cent), while four were recorded for their first offence after entering the YCPG (19%). Nine respondents that

³¹ The average is calculated by taking the summed total and dividing by the total number of responses

had offended prior to entering the program did not offend after their entry, while nine offended both prior to their entry into the program and after their entry.

Overall, noting the small sample size for the survey, it appears that the responses provided by young people in their surveys aligns with their actions and behaviours occurring in the community based on alleged offending. Survey responses, data reported by projects and LEAP data were compared and these comparisons are presented in Table 17.

Table 17. Observational data compared to survey responses and LEAP data





	Project Observation	LEAP / Survey
	<p>17 have no known offending since program</p> <p>2 have committed further offences</p>	<p>22 survey respondents identified in LEAP data as an offender</p> <p>Alleged offending ceased for 9 and increased for 4, while the remaining 9 offended both before and after entering the program</p>
	<p>Six improved substance use</p>	<p>Survey responses indicated positive changes for 2 respondents for alcohol use, and 2 for other substances.</p> <p>However, four of these respondents indicated an increased use in other substances.</p>
	<p>Four improved community connectedness</p>	<p>3 respondents indicated positive changes around community prosocial rewards, opportunities and attachment.</p>
	<p>Twelve improved attachment or engagement with family or peers</p>	<p>4 respondents indicated a positive change in their attachment with their father. Five indicated a positive change in family management. However a negative change was seen in family conflict for three respondents</p>

Table 18 shows the factors in each domain with the highest number of respondents showing a change (positive or negative)³². Due to low response rates for questions in the education and employment domain³³ these are not included in the table.

³² A positive change is identified when the participant no longer has a risk factor present or a protective factor absent. Where there has been no change to the presence or absence of a risk or protective factor these are identified as neutral, although there may have been a shift in the overall score associated with these risk and protective factors.

³³ Given the cohort this low response is potentially a result of the young people engaged in the YCPG not being engaged in either education or employment

Table 18. Risk and protective factors with greatest changes observed through survey responses

Individual and peer domains	Family and community domains
15 respondents had moved to a lower ranking on Kessler's psychological distress scale, however 12 respondents had moved to a higher ranking.	The largest proportion of young people who had a positive change in a factor was for personal transition and mobility , with 30 respondents (of an initial 37) no longer had this as a risk factor at the time of the exit survey. Nine respondents no longer had community disorganisation as a risk factor.
Adaptive coping skills became present as a protective factor for 7 respondents but were no longer present for 9 respondents.	19 respondents had improved attachment to at least one parental figure, however, 12 respondents decreased their attachment to a parental figure. 4 respondents indicated improved attachment with a maternal figure at the same time as a decreased attachment to a paternal figure and 4 respondents indicated the reverse.
Risky behaviour and impulsivity was no longer present as a risk factor for 11 respondents.	Family management and / or family conflict was no longer a risk factor for 21 respondents
Decreased substance use was noted by 18 respondents, however 9 indicated an increase in the use of tobacco, alcohol or cannabis.	12 respondents indicated that the risk factor parental attitudes were favourable to drug use was present on the exit survey but not on the entry survey
10 respondents had a reduced level of self-serving cognitive distortions that were likely to relate to anti-social behaviours.	Community attachment had become a risk factor for 13 respondents, while community rewards for prosocial involvement became present as a protective factor for 11 respondents

An increase in protective factors and/or a decrease in risk factors was seen for survey respondents in the Ballarat, Geelong, Casey-Dandenong, Wodonga, Melton, Brimbank, East Gippsland and Cardinia projects. Entry and exit surveys were not received from the other projects and so there is no way to demonstrate self-reported changes in risk and protective factors for these projects.

3.3.4 Unanticipated outcomes in some projects

Three projects provided insights into unanticipated project outcomes . These were:

- The Darebin project has resulted in a higher level of community integration and awareness raising than anticipated.
- The information sharing portal created in Horsham has supported faster access to information and meant that resources are better able to be directed where needed.
- Magistrates explicitly stated that positive reports about participants in the Second Chance programs (Bendigo) have influenced their sentencing decisions towards a reduction in sentence or they have bailed young people directly to the program.
- Relationships with family members improved while the young person was in custody but on release back into the same environment, incidents can occur and the relationship is damaged again, despite family work having been conducted.
- Young people who had gone through the program were showing strong leadership skills and were engaging as role models and mentors with other young people in the project, supporting them to change behaviours.







- Family, young person and projects developing a shared understanding of the conditions imposed by the justice system so that the family could support the young person to avoid breaching these conditions became a focus within the approach of some projects.

2. What have the outcomes been across the LGA projects?

All projects have provided anecdotal feedback about positive outcomes occurring for YCPG participants. Table 19 indicates the proportion of young people that have exited the YCPG with improved outcomes³⁴. This includes young people that disengaged prior to a planned exit. While these may be considered across projects there are limitations to the data including:

- The initial evaluation design did not include project reporting on outcomes. This has provided useful contextual information and has been incorporated into the continuing evaluation in a more systematic way, but only limited data has been captured using this method to date.
- Projects have different targeted cohorts, timeframes and intervention approaches which influence outcomes for individual projects.

Table 19. Outcomes observed by projects for young people who have exited the YCPG³⁵

	 Decreased substance use	 Increased community connectedness	 Improved relationships with family or peers	 Improved engagement in school	 Improved engagement in training	 Engaged in employment
Ballarat	1 (17%)		1 (17%)	2 (33%)		
Casey-Dandenong	6 (22%)	5 (19%)	7 (26%)	5 (15%)	3 (11%)	5 (19%)
Frankston	5 (28%)	3 (17%)	3 (17%)	3 (17%)	2 (11%)	5 (28%)
Hume		47 (53%)	38 (42%)	30 (33%)	18 (20%)	22 (24%)
Bendigo	9 (18%)		1 (2%)		10 (20%)	9 (18%)
Brimbank	4 (3%)	6 (5%)	3 (3%)		12 (10%)	4 (3%)
Cardinia	2 (8%)	6 (25%)	5 (21%)	11 (46%)	5 (21%)	4 (17%)
Darebin		2 (11%)	2 (11%)	6 (33%)		2 (11%)
East Gippsland		6 (18%)	5 (15%)	2 (6%)	2 (6%)	6 (18%)
Horsham		1 (7%)	1 (7%)		1 (7%)	2 (14%)
Melton	2 (6%)	1 (3%)	9 (26%)	16 (45%)	7 (20%)	10 (29%)
Wodonga		2 (13%)	4 (25%)	1 (6%)		

Projects also shared other observed outcomes for young people with the evaluation team during interviews and group discussions. Note that some of these outcomes may have been observed in young people who had not exited as at 30 June 2019. Outcomes discussed included:

- decreased contact with police
- improved outcomes at court, such as receiving a good behaviour bond, or not receiving a custodial sentence
- increased self-esteem, confidence and accountability
- strong engagement with the project.

³⁴ These do not represent all of the outcomes for all young people in these projects that may have been achieved but had been determined based on the data provided through the participant template reports.

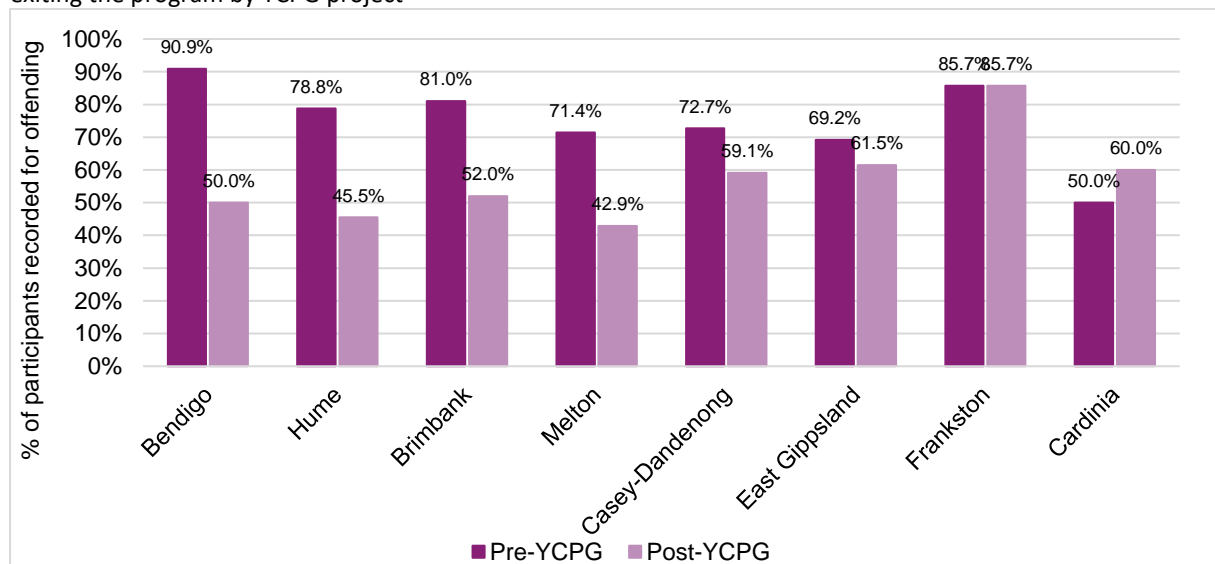
³⁵ Geelong, Wyndham, Latrobe, Mildura and Shepparton are not included in any comparison between projects, as they have had five or less exits from the YCPG.

Some projects observed there were young people on the program that reoffended and/or for whom engagement with education has decreased rather than increased.

Projects targeted different cohorts and this needs to be considered when interpreting the different outcomes across project sites. Nevertheless, changes in the rate of offending for the existing *Young offenders* cohort who had exited the program by 31 March 2019, were examined across project sites.

The proportion of offenders who offended in their pre- and post-program periods was calculated for each YCPG project (Figure 21). Note that this analysis excludes projects with six or fewer participants to maintain participant confidentiality in line with the CSA's confidentiality policy. The project with the greatest proportion of participants who offended in their pre-program period was Bendigo (91%), followed by Frankston (86%) and Brimbank (81%). Bendigo showed the greatest reduction in the number of its participants who offended after exiting the program, which reduced from 91% pre-program to 50% post-program. The project that showed the next greatest reduction was Hume (79% compared with 46%), followed by Brimbank (81% compared with 52%).

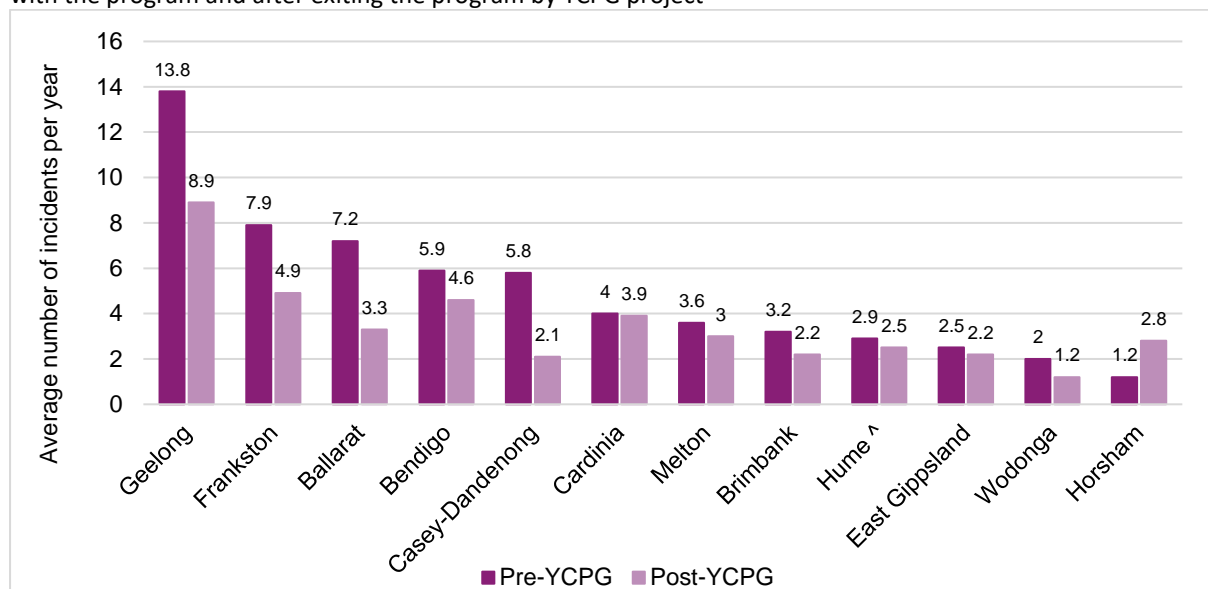
Figure 21. Proportion of YCPG participants recorded for offending prior to engaging with the program and after exiting the program by YCPG project



[^] Graph excludes project types with three or fewer participants in line with the CSA's confidentiality policy

Figure 22 shows the average number of incidents recorded per 365 days for YCPG program participants prior to engaging with the program and after exiting the program by their YCPG project. Participants in Geelong had the highest average number of incidents in their pre-program period of any of the YCPG projects, with an average of 13.8 incidents per year, per participant. The project with the second highest average number of incidents per participant in their pre-program period was Frankston (7.9), followed by Ballarat (7.2). The project whose participants had the greatest reduction in their average offending rate was Geelong, with its participants' rate of offending decreasing from 13.8 incidents per 365 days to 8.9 incidents per 365 days. The project whose participants had the second greatest reduction in their average offending rate was Ballarat (7.2 compared with 3.3) followed by Casey-Dandenong (5.8 compared with 2.1). Horsham was the only project whose participants had a higher average offending rate in their post-program period than in their pre-program period, though it should be noted there were only four participants that had exited this project prior to 31 March 2019.

Figure 22. Average number of incidents recorded per 365 days for YCPG program participants prior to engaging with the program and after exiting the program by YCPG project

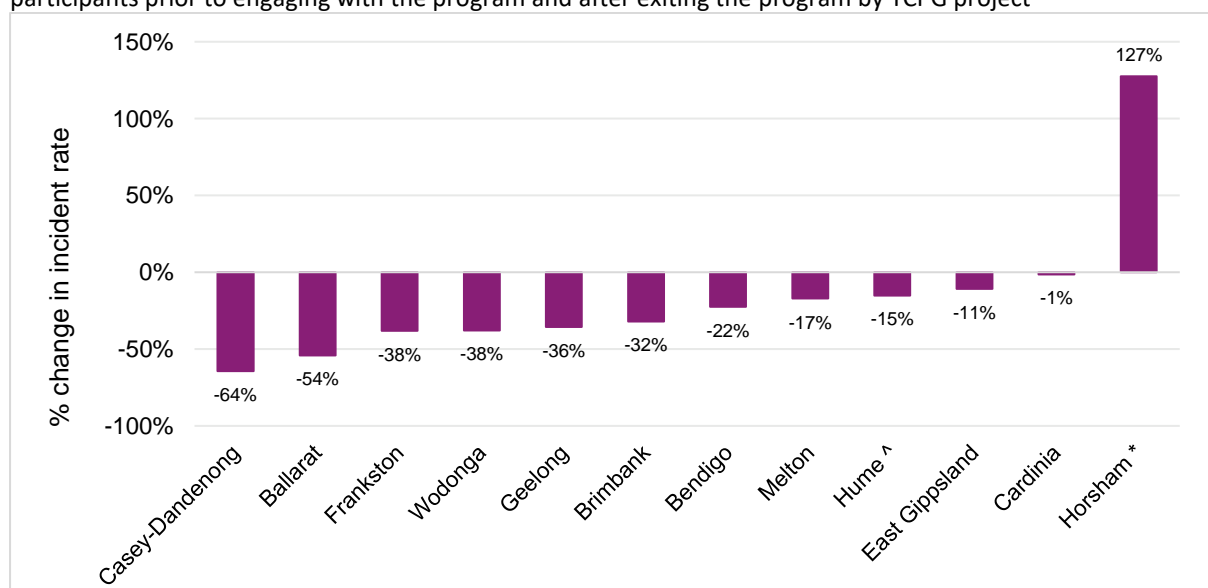


^ Hume guided and managed project only (not Hume intensive stream)

* Graph excludes projects with three or fewer participants in line with the CSA's confidentiality policy.

The percentage change in the average number of incidents recorded per 365 days for participants prior to engaging with the program and after exiting the program was calculated for each YCPG project (Figure 23). The project that shows the largest percentage decrease in the offending rate of its participants was Casey-Dandenong, which showed a 64% reduction in the offending rate of its participants after exiting the program. The project that showed the next largest decrease was Ballarat, which showed a 54% reduction, while Wodonga participants were recorded for the next largest decrease of 40%. Horsham was the only project whose participants had a percentage increase in their average offending rate (133%), though it should be noted there were only four participants that had exited this project prior to 31 March 2019.

Figure 23. Percent change in average number of incidents recorded per 365 days for YCPG program participants prior to engaging with the program and after exiting the program by YCPG project



^ Hume guided and managed project only (not Hume intensive stream)

* Only four participants were engaged with this project and exited prior to 31 March 2019

** Graph excludes projects with three or fewer participants in line with the CSA's confidentiality policy

3. How efficient was the delivery of the program?

The design approach, partnership support and flexible contract model used have supported the efficient delivery of the YCPG. The YCPG interim evaluation report found strong support existed for the design and application process and the contractual model used. This was reiterated through the consultations for the mid-term evaluation. Overall projects reported that the contract and governance model supported strong relationships with regional DJCS representatives that enabled open and honest conversations about project delivery. The place-based design approach was well received by projects, particularly among those in regional LGAs.

Projects found **CCPU has been flexible on adjustments to projects and budget lines** required to **address the emerging needs** being **identified for young people**: *“That was really valuable because we needed to make those changes as seamlessly as possible. So some of that funding was reduced and moved across to pay for things that were becoming more useful and valuable to us.”*

Areas identified where improvements could be considered are:

- Interpretation of criteria. Some discrepancies in interpretation of contractual obligations were noted between projects. This included the determination of LGA boundaries. Some projects were able to refer in young people with a **strong connection** to the LGA while others could only refer young people who **resided** within the LGA.
- Clearer determination of the scope and expectations around what is negotiable within contracts (including in the funding extension negotiations) from the central contract management team to the regions, which would support consistent and clear messages to projects.
- Clearer communication between projects, regional representatives and the central contract management with over half of the projects indicating there had been instances of miscommunication which in some instances impacted contract negotiations.

To support communication, reporting lines of accountability from central contract management to regional representatives could be further clarified. Based on feedback received through interviews, this would include:

- ensuring that there are consistent and clear decision making and accountability approaches across regions,
- central coordination of all contracts managed by CCPU to ensure elements, definitions and understandings are consistent across projects (as exists under the current model).

This would support consistency of communication with projects, scope, clarity and expectations around key areas of the YCPG.

Projects views on contract requirements within a partnership approach indicated:

- The partnership model and supporting governance structures required significant time to manage and administer (in some instances this was supported or delivered by the CCPU regional representative, however this was not consistent across projects).
- The partnership model meant that considerable time was required to negotiate reports from all partner agencies for milestone reporting.
- The level of in-kind support, including additional budgetary support for project implementation (especially from project partners), was unsustainable long term.

More broadly than the YCPG, the short-term funding cycles of government were seen as problematic in relation to project delivery, as were expectations from government on the achievement of outcomes relative to the level of funding received. Directed grant stream projects indicated a longer timeframe between being advised of the funding extension and contract agreement would have been beneficial to ensure partners had time for a review of achievements, approach, scope, criteria and partnerships for the project.

The support provided through the role of regional representatives in managing project contracts was well regarded across all projects³⁶. During the first year of implementation one region did not have an RCPO and their DJCS representative was on leave and subsequently resigned. As a result, projects in this region had more direct contact with CCPU. Where there was no RCPO or LEO and the contract management was handled by the Regional General Manager, discussions with the lead agency and at governance meetings focused more on strategic and partnership aspects rather than day-to-day contract management.

"there is a tension there and the saving grace.. is that we have a great relationship with the RCPO... it is managed through a person centred relationship"

The level of reporting in the interim report was discussed as being onerous. *"We are being overlaid with more and more and more reporting and requirements and accountabilities that really were not upfront and clear. And so for me it really just feels like you don't trust us."* These views were not reflected through the interviews for the mid-term report. This could be an indication that the reporting process is no longer a high concern for projects and that collaboration with DJCS representatives to support reporting has been beneficial.

"really good to work with.. very enthusiastic and supportive about this particular project... I could trust (them)... (They're) responsive, not hard to get hold of."

"There's not many contract managers who would come in and be part of a steering committee to really get an understanding and engage in the process."

"found that locally.. have been fantastically supportive, they've been really engaged at all levels, always understanding where we're at, what our challenges are, offering support."

DJCS representatives were valued across projects, however stronger relationships were observed across projects in regional areas. Interviews did not indicate any differences in interactions with DJCS representatives whether they were an RCPO, LEO or Regional General Managers.

4. How efficient was the delivery of the LGA projects?

The efficiency of project delivery is influenced by the ability of projects to refer and engage appropriate young people. Engagement to build rapport and trust is essential to support the assessment of risk and protective factors, and to understand the needs and drivers of participants. This assessment in turn informs the identification of a young person's requirements, including services and activities to be provided. Overall the YCPG projects have been efficient in their delivery, although this was negatively impacted by:

- Initial assumptions about the cohort that a project should target, based on information available during the design period, which may not have provided a complete picture. The target cohort has also been impacted in some instances by changes to community profiles during implementation.
- High rates of staff turnover among projects and partners. Reasons for turnover varied but included staff taking promotion opportunities or ongoing, full-time work.
- An initial lack of profile or understanding of the project within the LGA, which resulted in a low number of referrals.
- Other programs and services available for the young person being referred in that LGA which may have provided a similar service or been viewed as a preferred alternative for the young person.

³⁶ YCPG Interim Evaluation Report, Oct 2018, Crime Statistics Agency

Tables 20 and 21 shows the number of young people projects aimed to work with during the project and the number they actually worked with. Recruitment of young people differed across projects, but most reached or exceeded their target numbers by 30 June 2019. Young people that were identified for referral but did not accept the opportunity to work with projects in the YCPG are represented in the “not engaged”³⁷ column.

Table 20. Number of young people engaged in the YCPG in the direct project stream

Project	Target Number	Participants (Jun '17 – Jun '19)	Not engaged	Unplanned Exit	Planned Exited	Custodial or YJ exit			
Ballarat	40	44	4	2	18%	4	36%	5	45%
Casey-Dandenong	40	59	3	17	49%	10	29%	8	23%
Frankston	20	31	2	15	79%	3	16%	1	5%
Geelong	18	25		3	50%	3	50%		
Hume (intensive)	18	14	1	1	13%	5	63%	2	25%
Hume (guided & managed)	120	119	3	16	20%	62	77%	3	4%
Latrobe	<30	20	6	2	50%	2	50%		
Wyndham	15	18				3	60%	2	40%

Table 21. Number of young people engaged in the YCPG in the competitive project stream

Project	Target Number	Participants (Jun '17 – Jun '19)	Not engaged	Unplanned Exit	Planned Exit	Custodial or YJ exit			
Bendigo	40	82	6	42	84%	8	16%		
Brimbank	120	211	11	64	34%	118	62%	9	5%
Cardinia	20	26	1	9	36%	15	60%	1	4%
Darebin	30	23	5	5	28%	13	72%		
East Gippsland	50	78	6	19	56%	15	44%		
Horsham	40 ³⁸	53	1	10	71%	4	29%		
Melton	40	43	1	11	30%	24	65%	2	5%
Mildura	10	14		2	50%	2	50%		
Shepparton	20	17		2	100%				
Wodonga	40	25 ³⁹	1	8	33%	16 ⁴⁰	67%		

Young people who were exited because of a custodial sentence or into another Youth Justice or wraparound service occurred primarily in Ballarat and Casey-Dandenong. Planned exits in Ballarat primarily occurred because young people became associated with a TCP. Planned exits in Casey-Dandenong mostly occurred because young people transferred to another intensive management service.

³⁷ young people where numerous engagement attempts were made but they were not able to be located or once contact had been made declined the opportunity to engage in the YCPG

³⁸ Horsham had identified engaging 65 young people over the first two years of the program this was revised after a year of project implementation.

³⁹ Includes 11 young people who have participated in multiple term activities, so the total number of young people in program activities is 36. A contract extension was approved to hold a final session in Term 3, this is not accounted for in the report, but includes an additional 5 young people.

⁴⁰ One young person had a planned exit from one session and an unplanned exit from another session

Darebin and Cardinia both reported difficulty identifying young people for referrals and engagement in the project, due to a requirement in Darebin that young people had to reside in the LGA, and young people in Cardinia not meeting the criteria of the initially planned target cohort. Cardinia addressed the issue by changing the target cohort through a contract variation halfway through implementation to include a group where service provision was lacking. As a result, almost half of the young people engaged in the project engaged during the last three months of the project.

Darebin did not reach its target case management numbers as the project identified that the young people targeted did not appear to be living in the LGA. This was identified as a risk early in implementation in late 2017. A contract variation was requested to engage young people with a strong attachment to the LGA (not just those living there), but was not supported as the application clearly stated the project could be delivered to young people residing in the Darebin LGA. The RCPO worked with the project to identify and support introductions to other potential referral partners and a marked increase in numbers was seen between February 2018 (4 appropriate referrals) and June 2018 (14 appropriate referrals). It is not clear why the increased number of referrals did not continue after June.

The issue was raised again in late 2018, at which time the region determined there was little value in changing the criteria given the project had only six months before it finished, and that it was better being raised as a change through the EOI process. Partners thought that if the requirement to live in the LGA had been expanded to include those who had close contact or ties with the LGA the referrals issue would likely have been rectified. If the request had been raised at a different time (for example around June 2018), the response to the variation request may have been different.

Brimbank and Bendigo far exceeded their target numbers. Both of these projects are strongly linked into the local courts and are viewed as one of the only programs available for young people in their respective areas. East Gippsland and Horsham also exceeded targets. Both projects were based on mentoring of young people, and noted the recruitment of mentors was often the limiting factor on the number of young people they were able to engage in the project.

Overall, 26 per cent of young people that have left the YCPG, disengaged during participation. Rates of disengagement varied across projects. The highest rates of disengagement from the directed projects were in Frankston and Casey-Dandenong. These projects experienced high staff turnover, which may have contributed to these disengagement rates. Bendigo, Horsham and East Gippsland had the highest disengagement rates of the competitive projects but there appeared to be specific reasons for these high rates.

Horsham and East Gippsland primarily use a mentoring approach, which means that young people are not exited until they decide that they no longer want the support of a mentor. As such, their exit is not planned by the service and they may stop engaging without a reason for disengagement being recorded. As a result these projects appear to have a high number of unplanned exits instead of planned exits. Bendigo engaged a cohort that was much more complex than initially anticipated. Given the program was not designed for individuals with this level of complexity this may have contributed to the disengagement rate.

For the purpose of the evaluation, planned exits were considered to be a measure of YCPG completion, and should theoretically be associated with more positive outcomes for young people than unplanned exits. Nevertheless, the types of planned and unplanned exits varied by project. Figure 24 shows the type of planned exits among young people by project and Figure 25 shows the type of unplanned exits of young people by project.

Figure 24 shows that:

- Planned exits in Wodonga, Melton and Brimbank are high for young people that have met their goals. This includes those young people who have engaged with the project over the duration of an activity. For example in Wodonga group activities run for a school term, while young people may be invited back for another term most have a planned exit at the end of these activities. In Brimbank activities often align with timeframes associated with court requirements and planned exits occurred once a court determination was made.
- Planned exits in Hume through the guided and managed streams were for young people that have met their goals or that have had a favourable court outcome.

Figure 24. Planned exits from YCPG by project by percentage and numbers of young people

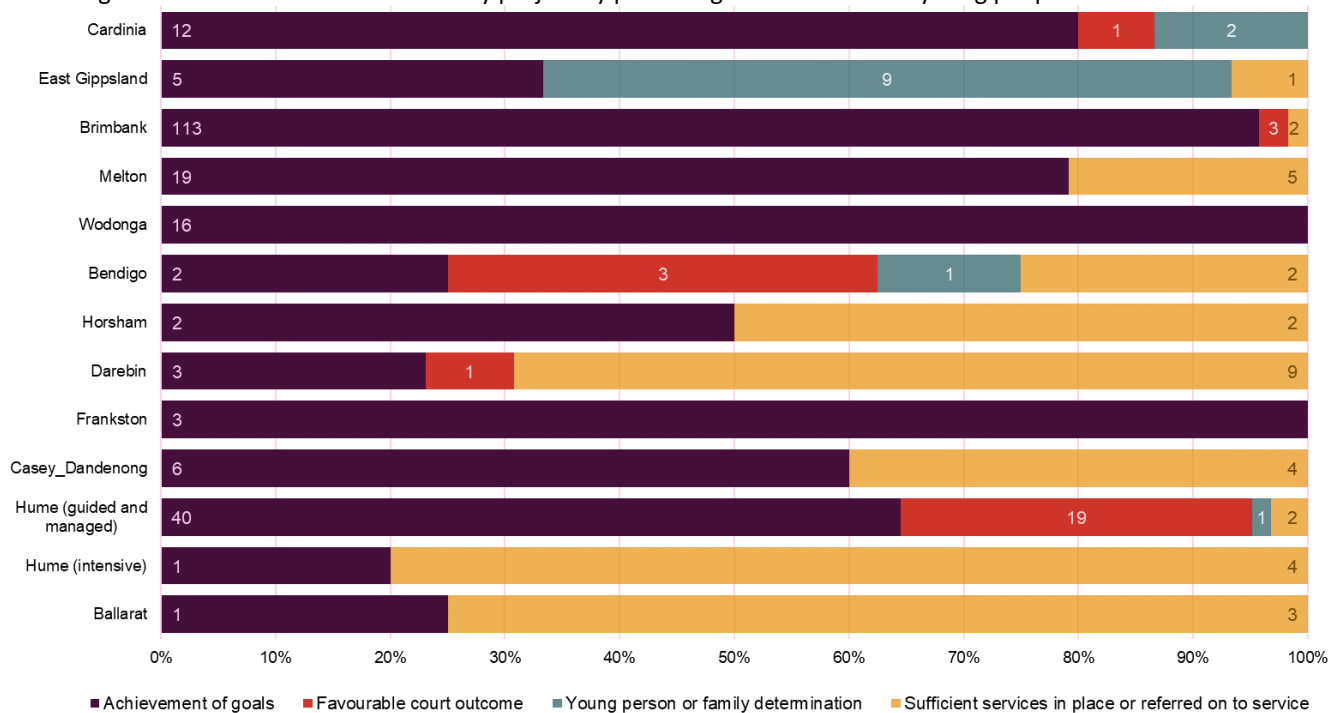


Figure 25 shows that unplanned exits associated with young people leaving their local government areas occur mostly in regional projects or projects implemented on the fringe of metropolitan and regional areas. Where young people were determined to be unsuitable following acceptance into the YCPG, this was due to incidents that occurred during the program or a diagnosis or assessment that occurred as a result of the program.

Figure 25. Unplanned exits from YCPG by project by percentage and numbers of young people

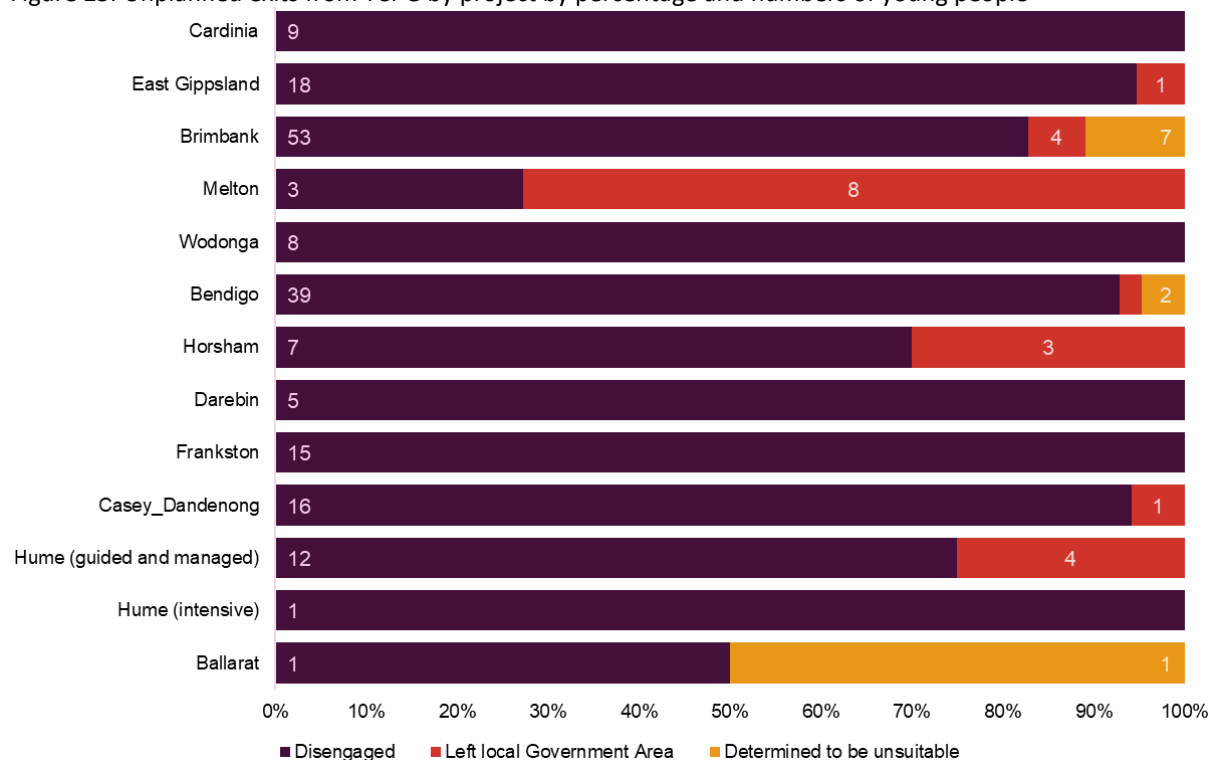


Table 22 shows the sex breakdown across planned, unplanned and custodial or alternative intensive service management exits.

Table 22. YCPG exits by sex

	♂	♀	Total
Planned exit	215 71%	86 29%	301 54%
Unplanned exit	173 77%	53 23%	226 40%
Custodial or intensive service exit	30 91%	3 9%	33 6%

Figures 26 and 27 show the percentage of young people with planned and unplanned exits by age group. They show that, except for East Gippsland and Cardinia, projects have a higher proportion of females with unplanned exits compared with planned exits.

Figure 26. Planned exits by project and sex

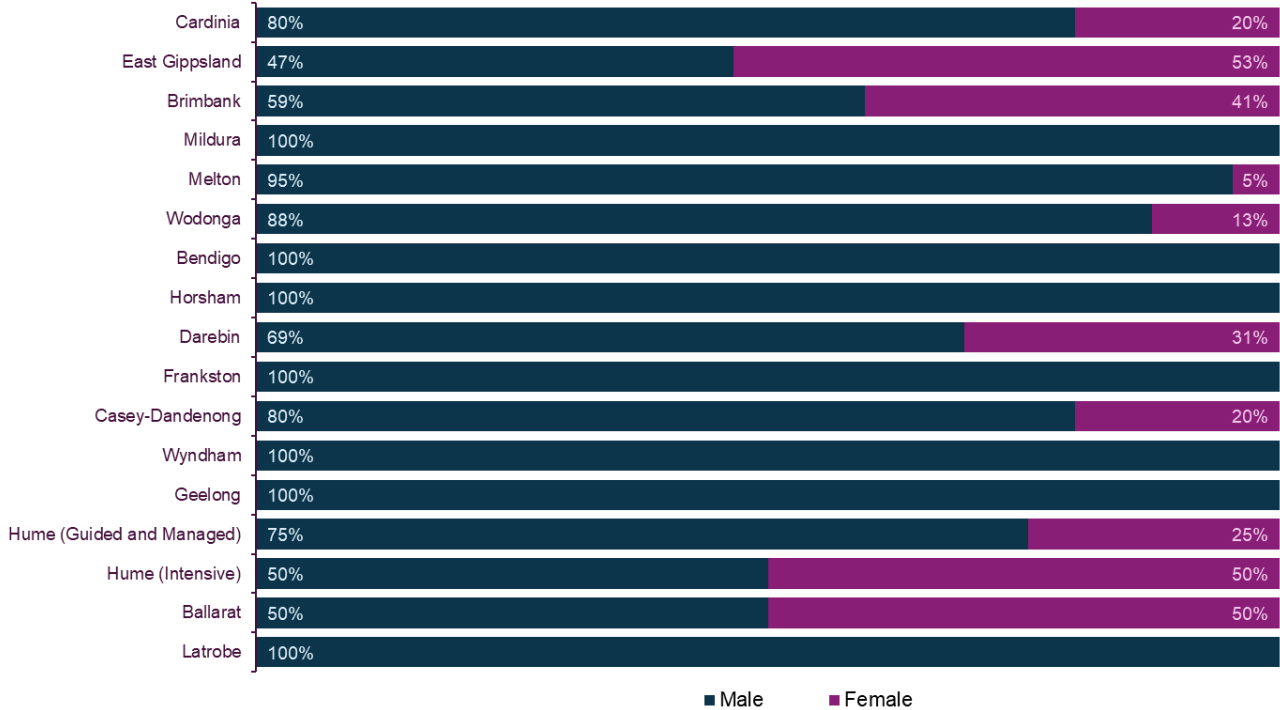


Figure 27. Unplanned exits by project and sex

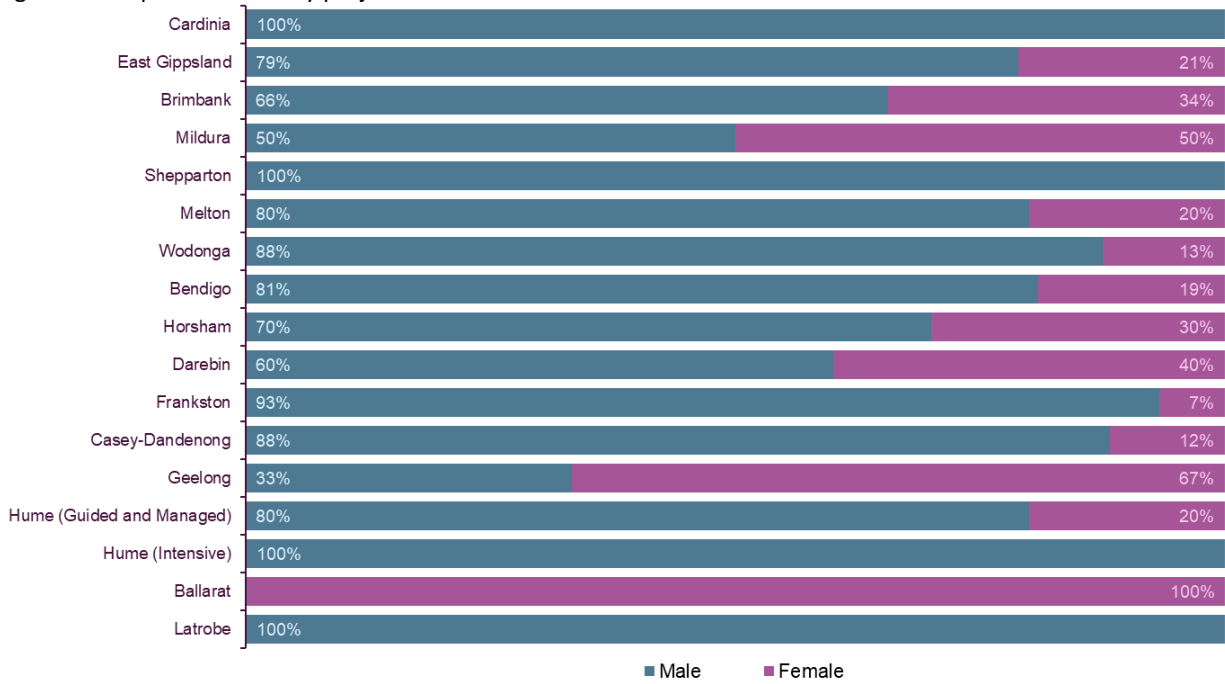


Table 23 shows the age breakdown across planned, unplanned and custodial or alternative intensive service management exits. It shows a higher proportion in the 15-19 age bracket had a custodial or other intensive service management than a planned and unplanned exit.

Table 23. YCPG exits by age group

	10-14		15-19		20-24		Total	
Planned exit	59	20%	170	59%	61	21%	290	54%
Unplanned exit	37	17%	116	53%	64	29%	217	40%
Custodial or intensive service exit	3	10%	23	74%	5	16%	31	6%

Figures 28 and 29 show the percentage of young people with planned and unplanned exits across projects by age group.

- Cardinia, Bendigo, Darebin and Casey-Dandenong all had higher proportions of young people aged 20–24 with unplanned exits. In Darebin this corresponds with the project’s observation that the older age group was harder to engage. There were also no unplanned exits from Darebin for the 10–14 age group.
- While the proportion of unplanned exits in Frankston for the 10-14 age group is lower than the proportion of planned exits for this age group, the actual number of young people is the same for both planned and unplanned exits in this age group.

Figure 28. Planned exits by project and age group

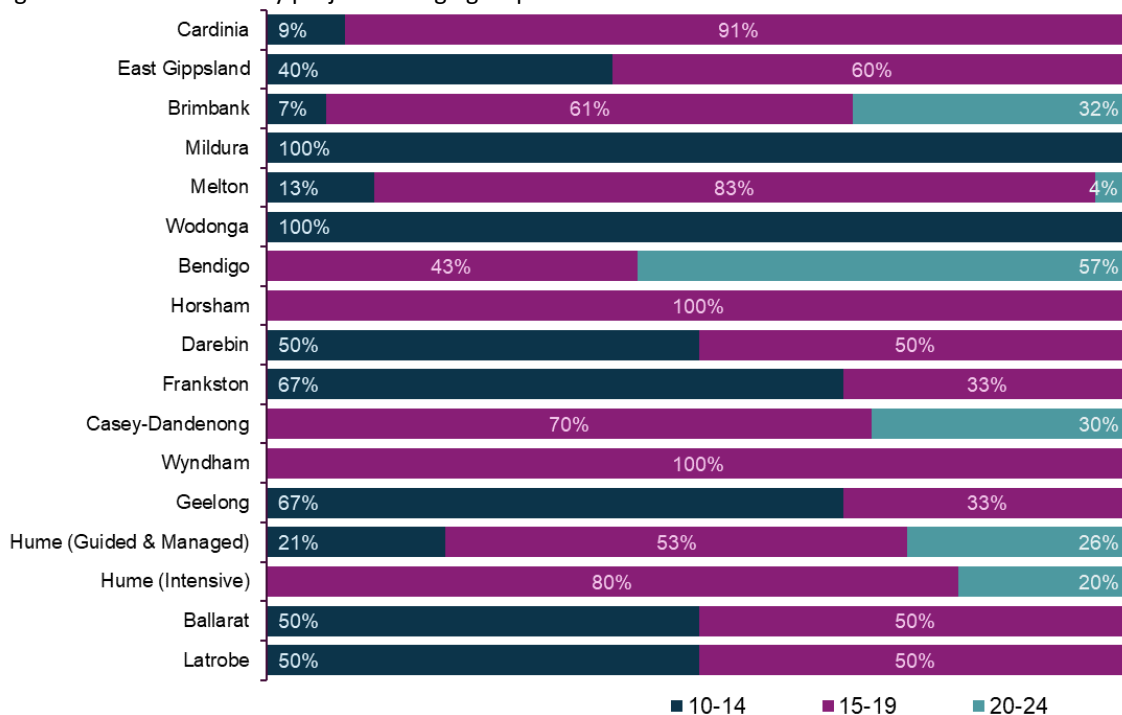
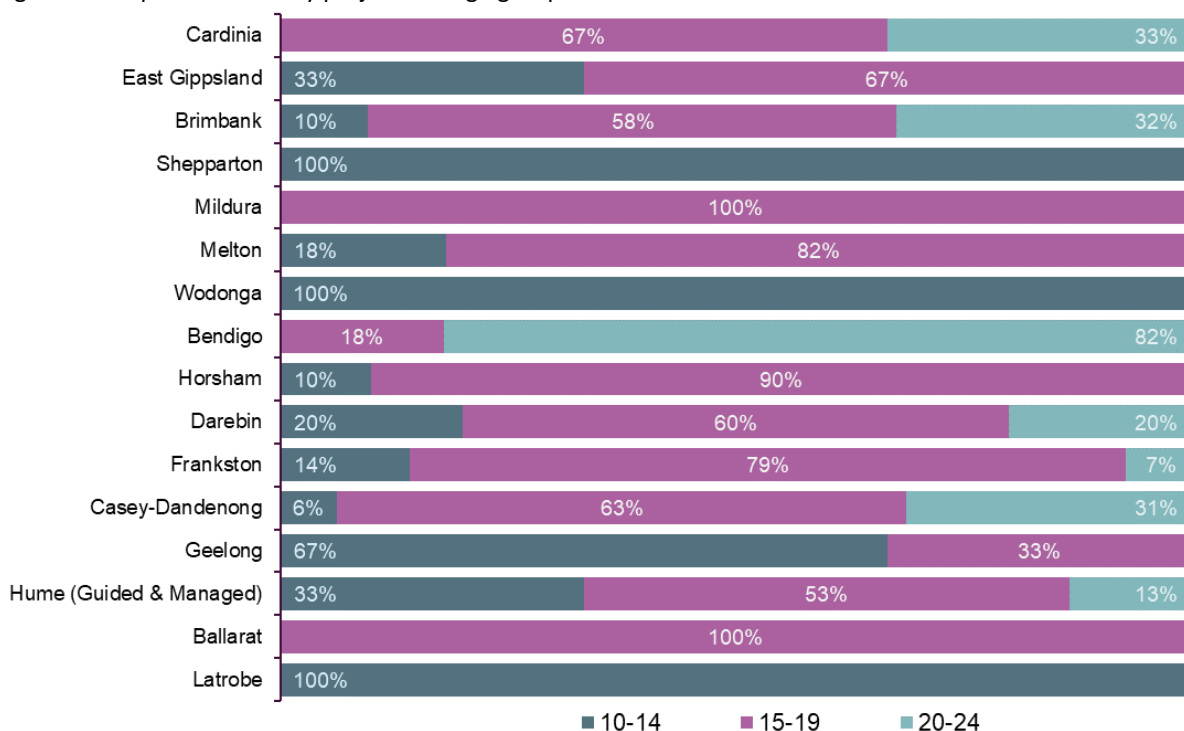


Figure 29. Unplanned exits by project and age group



Risk and Protective factors

Analysis of participants' presenting risk and protective factors identified that basic needs must be addressed before other complex behaviours can be addressed. This aligns with the concept of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs⁴¹. For example, young people need access to stable accommodation and financial security to ensure they can acquire food and other necessities before their social and other needs can be addressed.

Where young people did not have access to stable accommodation or financial security, in particular where there was **instability in living environment**, rates of disengagement were higher. Finding and providing suitable housing and accommodation options for young people was mentioned by eight projects as one of their greatest challenges. When young people did not have access to secure housing it impacted their ability to apply for Centrelink assistance. In some instances it impacted their ability to meet justice service reporting requirements such as being able to provide a residential location to be included on a bail order.

Risk and protective factors addressed for young people with a planned exit were compared to those with an unplanned exit to identify whether program 'completion' was more successful for young people with particular risk profiles. An average of five risk and protective factors were targeted for each young person in both of these groups, with the number targeted ranging between one and twenty per person. For both planned and unplanned exits the most frequent number of factors targeted was three. Table 24 shows the full list of risk and protective factors along with the proportion of young people for whom they were targeted.

⁴¹ Maslow, A.H (1943), A Theory of Human Motivation

Risk and protective factors most frequently addressed for those with a planned exit were:

1. Mental and physical health issues (38 per cent)
2. Low academic achievement (37 per cent)
3. Community opportunities for prosocial involvement (36 per cent)
4. Prosocial involvement (35 per cent), and
5. Adaptive Coping Skills (34 per cent)

Risk and protective factors most frequently addressed for those with an unplanned exit were:

1. Mental and physical health issues (44 per cent)
2. Substance use (42 per cent)
3. Low academic achievement (36 per cent)
4. Interaction with antisocial peers (32 per cent)
5. Prosocial involvement (31 per cent)

Mental and physical health issues, low academic achievement and prosocial involvement were frequently addressed among young people with both planned and unplanned exits. **Substance use** was targeted more frequently in unplanned exits (42 per cent compared to 25 per cent) as was **instability in the environment** (23 per cent compared to 14 per cent). The protective factor of **family attachment** was targeted more frequently for young people with a planned exit (32 per cent compared to 19 per cent), as was the risk factor of unemployment (33 per cent compared to 23 per cent).

Table 24. Risk and protective factors targeted with young people in planned and unplanned exits

Risk or protective factor targeted	Planned	Unplanned
Access to services (e.g. Centrelink)	16%	11%
Adaptive coping skills	34%	23%
Community opportunities for prosocial involvement	36%	27%
Court / police matters	14%	8%
Family attachment	32%	19%
Family conflict or separation	20%	25%
Favourable attitudes to antisocial behaviour	23%	19%
Instability in living environment	14%	23%
Interaction with antisocial peers	30%	32%
Low academic achievement	37%	36%
Low commitment to school/work	20%	18%
Low community attachment	20%	20%
Low salary / income	18%	21%
Mental and/or physical health issues	38%	44%
Poor emotional control	20%	23%
Poor family management	13%	13%
Prosocial involvement	35%	31%
Risky behaviour and impulsivity	23%	19%
School/work opportunities for prosocial involvement	14%	7%
Substance use	25%	42%
Unemployment	33%	23%

"I've had kids actually stay in for three, four months, because they've had nowhere to go... They get out and three days later, the girlfriend's friend who put them up, kicks them out. But they're bailed there. They've got to get another address."

Sixty per cent of young people (115) with unplanned exits due to disengaging from a project had a mental or physical health issue and 53 per cent (103) were currently using a substance or had a history of substance use. Of these young people, 36 per cent (69) had both a mental or physical health issue and substance use risk factors present. The higher proportion of young people disengaging with substance use issues and/or mental or physical health issues indicates that where possible these risk factors need to be addressed as a priority. Projects in regional areas, in particular, noted there is a high demand for alcohol and drug services and mental health services, through the public system, resulting in long wait times for young people who are ready to engage with these services.

"I find that the drugs and alcohol with the mental health come hand in hand, and some young people, their mental health needs a lot more intensive support than others..."

For the 33 young people exited because they were required to serve custodial time or were referred into another intensive service, the average number of factors being addressed was higher at 6.9. The risk and protective factors most commonly addressed were similar to other planned exits, but these were being addressed for a higher proportion of this cohort. The most frequently addressed factors included:

- Substance use (64 per cent)
- Interaction with antisocial peers (58 per cent)
- Family attachment (52 per cent)
- Low academic achievement (52 per cent), and
- Mental and physical health issues (52 per cent)

Table 25 compares the rates at which risk and protective factors were addressed with young people across projects. Factors being addressed by fewer than nine projects are not included. Projects that addressed a factor with more than 50 per cent of all young people exited are shaded in green, and those addressed with over 75 per cent are shaded a darker green. Hume has been separated into intensive and other (managed and guided) to reflect the three project streams implemented there and the differences between them. The intensive stream is similar in approach to other directed projects, including Casey-Dandenong and Frankston, while the other streams are more similar to projects like Melton and Brimbank.

Table 25. Risk and protective factors frequency of being addressed with young people across projects

	Ballarat	Hume (Intensive)	Hume (Other)	Casey - Dandenong	Frankston	Darebin	Horsham	Bendigo	Wodonga	Melton	Brimbank	East Gippsland	Cardinia
Number of young people exited from project	11	8	81	35	19	18	14	48	24	37	191	33	25
Pro-Social Involvement	55%	38%	52%	23%	11%	28%	64%	2%	100%	76%	10%	61%	28%
Mental and Physical Health Issues	91%	50%	38%	66%	68%	28%	21%	54%	63%	27%	29%	58%	48%
Low Community Attachment	18%	63%	22%	20%	11%	78%	64%	13%	54%	8%	1%	42%	36%
Adaptive Coping Skills	64%		62%	37%	26%	72%	7%	8%	50%	95%	1%	9%	56%
Risky Behaviour & Impulsivity	64%		44%	46%	68%					59%		24%	84%
Poor Emotional Control	18%		36%	6%	11%	11%		13%	54%	62%	10%	24%	24%
Favourable attitudes to antisocial behaviour	45%		30%	26%	47%	33%		2%	75%	43%	3%	36%	44%
Substance Use	64%	50%	32%	69%	68%		29%	67%		27%	24%	27%	52%
Interaction with Anti-Social Peers	55%		38%	69%	89%		64%			68%	18%	27%	76%
Family Attachment	73%	13%	41%	37%	47%	78%				32%	19%	42%	40%
Poor Family Management	73%	13%	30%	34%	37%	78%		2%			2%		8%
Family Conflict or separation	73%	13%	37%	34%	58%	28%	43%	23%		41%	3%	36%	32%
Community opportunities for prosocial involvement	45%		59%	20%	32%	6%	21%	10%	96%		29%	36%	16%
Instability in Living environment	36%	50%	26%	31%	32%	6%	29%	21%		8%	9%	55%	16%
Low academic achievement	64%	38%	17%	54%	47%	44%	50%	29%	4%	16%	43%	33%	76%
Low commitment to school / work	36%	50%	22%	40%	26%	28%	64%		50%	43%	5%	24%	16%
Low salary / income	27%	38%	28%	34%	42%	6%		4%		3%	20%	27%	40%
Unemployment	9%	38%	43%	3%	5%	11%		6%		27%	50%	12%	8%
Access to Services (e.g. Identification, Centrelink)	9%	63%	43%	20%	11%	6%		4%		24%	2%	42%	8%
Number of factors targeted	9.5	5.1	8.5	7.2	7.6	5.6	4.6	2.9	5.6	6.8	2.8	6.4	7.5

All projects addressed education, mental and physical health issues, community attachment and prosocial involvement, with mental and physical health issues again the most frequently addressed risk factor amongst young people. On average, directed stream projects addressed more factors with young people than competitive stream projects (7.7 compared to 5.3). This is expected given that competitive projects are generally more focused on using particular approaches or addressing specific risk or protective factors, compared to the more intensive wraparound approaches used by directed projects. Projects that have focused on addressing particular factors for young people exited are:

- Ballarat focused on family relationships, in particular, attachment, conflict and family management factors.
- Frankston focused on interactions with antisocial peers, mental and physical health issues and risky behaviour and impulsivity.
- Darebin focused on family attachment and management, as well as community attachment and adaptive coping skills.
- Wodonga focused on individuals' prosocial involvement, including in the community and on improving attitudes around antisocial behaviour.
- Melton focused on supporting individuals' development of adaptive coping skills and prosocial involvement.
- Cardinia focused on addressing risky behaviour and impulsivity, improving academic achievements and reducing interactions with antisocial peers.

Delivery modes and program duration

Projects used various methods to engage and work with young people and recorded the engagement method used and duration of activities conducted for each young person. Activities identified by projects were reviewed by the evaluation team and assigned to a type of engagement⁴² category that was the most relevant. Where possible projects included the number of hours that young people had been engaged with partner agencies. However, projects observed this was difficult to track as there was no obligation on partner agencies to provide this information to projects, and occurred only when the project worker knew of services being provided. As a result while this data provides some overview of hours spent working with a young person, it is unlikely, that it represents all of the time spent by services and programs working with the young person. This is especially the case for directed projects.

As expected, more time was spent on average across all projects with young people that had a planned exit from the program compared to those with an unplanned exit. On average 44.1 hours or 5.8 days was spent with young people that had a planned exit and 30.5 hours or 3.9 days was spent with young people that had an unplanned exit. The average time spent with or supporting young people that had a planned exit from a direct project was higher than for those with a planned exit from a competitive project. This may be related to the low caseloads and greater flexibility in engaging and working with young people associated with directed projects.

Table 26. Average duration of time within projects by planned and unplanned exit

Project	Planned		Unplanned	
	Average hours	Average days	Average hours	Average days
Directed stream	57.2	7.3	48.6	6.2
Competitive stream	32.5	4.4	19.6	2.6

⁴² A description of delivery modes can be found in Attachment 6.

Projects were also asked where possible to record the number of hours spent: engaging with family members without the young people present; on administrative tasks for the young person; and, engaging and co-ordinating with other service providers and agencies engaged with the young person. Time engaging with family members, without the young person present was higher for young people with planned exits (4.3 hours on average) compared to unplanned exits (2.4 hours on average). Time engaging with other service providers and organisations was also higher on average: 8.6 hours for young people with a planned exit compared to 7.7 hours for young people with an unplanned exit. Time spent on administrative tasks was also higher for planned (3.6 hours on average) to unplanned exits (2.9 hours).

The time young people spent engaged in the YCPG varied across the projects. This was often based on the project design. Wodonga engaged young people over one school term (although they might invite them back for a second term). Casey-Dandenong spent twelve months with each young person, with flexibility of time based on an assessment of the young person's progress and other supports that might be in place. As expected, directed projects tended to engage young people for longer durations.

Hume has three streams: an intensive, guided and managed stream. The intensive stream works with recidivist offenders, the guided stream is available to young people with less complex needs and the managed stream works with young people who are highly vulnerable or at high risk, but who are not recidivist offenders. The managed and guided streams in Hume had shorter durations than other directed projects and are more closely aligned with competitive projects such as Brimbank. The Melton and Bendigo projects are similar in design to the directed projects (although both engage higher numbers of young people, and Melton uses group activities to engage), the durations of these projects was aligned to other directed projects.

Where possible, rates of absenteeism from planned project activities were determined. Unsurprisingly rates were higher among those with an unplanned exit, with 49 per cent of young people having a record of being absent at least once. Within this group there was an average absenteeism rate of 27.1 per cent for confirmed activities or service sessions. Rates for young people with a planned exit were lower with 35 per cent absent at least once, and they were absent for an average of 21.7 per cent of their sessions. For those with a planned exit as a result of a custodial sentence or being transferred to another intensive service, 45 per cent were absent at least once, but the average rate of absenteeism was lower at 18.7 per cent.

Return on program funding

Return on investment was not a focus of this evaluation. However, the potential savings for the justice system resulting from the program, and in turn for the community at a high level are important considerations. By understanding how many days a project potentially needs to support a young person to remain out of a correctional facility, and costs associated with adult and youth community and detention-based supervision, an estimate can be produced. It should reflect that some young people in the YCPG may be in the adult system. The Report on Government Services 2019 determined that in Victoria the cost of young people in detention-based supervision per day was \$1,694.77 and the cost of community-based supervision per day was \$181.32.

For adults it was determined that the real net operating expenditure per prisoner per day in Victoria in 2017–18 was \$323.82, and the net operating expenditure per offender on a community corrections order per day in 2017–18 was \$32.40. Tables 27 and 28 show how these costs differ based on the length of time someone is in prison or on a community corrections order.

Table 27. Estimated cost of young person in juvenile detention or community-based supervision order

Time in prison / remand	Juvenile detention cost	Community based supervision cost	Difference between detention & community supervision
6 months	\$ 305,058.60	\$ 32,637.60	\$ 272,421.00
1 year	\$ 610,117.20	\$ 65,275.20	\$ 544,842.00
18 months	\$ 915,175.80	\$ 97,912.80	\$ 817,263.00
2 years	\$ 1,220,234.40	\$ 130,550.40	\$ 1,089,684.00
3 years	\$ 1,830,351.60	\$ 195,825.60	\$ 1,634,526.00

Table 28. Estimated cost of an adult (young person) in prison or community corrections order

Time in prison / remand	Prison Cost	Community Corrections Cost	Difference between remand & corrections
6 months	\$ 59,097.15	\$ 5,913.00	\$ 53,184.15
1 year	\$118,194.30	\$ 11,826.00	\$ 106,368.30
18 months	\$177,291.45	\$ 17,739.00	\$ 159,552.45
2 years	\$ 236,388.60	\$ 23,652.00	\$ 212,736.60
3 years	\$ 354,582.90	\$ 35,478.00	\$ 319,104.90

Based on these figures and the average cost of a direct project over the first two years of implementation (\$700,000), a project would need to support one young person to remain out of juvenile detention for less than eighteen months, or out of adult prison for six and a half to seven years. A competitive project (\$200,000) would need to support one young person to remain out of juvenile detention for less than six months or out of adult prison for two years⁴³, to achieve a return on investment.

Bendigo provided an example where a sentencing judge remarked that they would have given one young person **a two and a half year jail sentence** but after their work with the program determined that the young person would receive a **community corrections order and three hundred hours of community work**. Provided that the young person remains out of the **adult** justice system for this period, this outcome alone would provide return on the initial two-year investment in Bendigo.

Brimbank take referrals and visit young people in police cells prior to them being remanded to support immediate assessment into the YCPG. This can keep **young people out of remand (juvenile detention)** for up to **two weeks**. If the project had supported nineteen young people in this way over the two years that would support the initial investment in Brimbank.

“a lawyer at Sunshine ... (said) that it’s two weeks in custody at Parkville or they get out on YUP and they can be assessed within two days. It’s generally how quickly we can turn the system over.”

5. What, if any, were the facilitators and barriers to implementation?

During interviews and focus groups conducted for the evaluation, partners discussed the facilitators and barriers to implementation of their projects. Key themes that emerged through these discussions related to:

⁴³ This is a rough measure and does not consider a range of other factors such as impact on victims and community which should where possible be incorporated into a value for money calculation.

- Partnerships
- Governance structures
- Referrals and referral pathways
- Cohort targeted
- Engagement of young people and families
- Cultural and community considerations
- Services (government, co-location and integration)
- Project staff

Each of these is discussed in detail in the following sections.

• Partnerships

Partnerships between local agencies were a key focus of the YCPG and were a requirement of the project design and funding structure for the **directed** stream. Guidelines stated that, "Funded projects will be delivered by a local consortium made up of a broad coalition of partners prepared to work together." **Competitive** stream guidelines stated, "Priority will be given to those applications that will deliver projects by local consortia made up of a broad coalition of partners prepared to work together." All competitive projects used partnership models.

The requirement to work with partners has meant that developing and maintaining strong relationships with partners was critical for project implementation. Across all projects **partnerships remained strong** with the majority of local partners engaged and willing to work together. Project leadership reported that partnerships were instrumental to success of delivery of projects. Partnerships within projects can be categorised as involving:

- Partners that receive direct funding for service delivery.
- Partners that are involved in governance arrangements.
- Partners that refer young people to the project.
- Partners that provide services to young people engaged in the YCPG, but are not funded through the YCPG program.

How a partner was involved in the project influenced the reflections they provided in evaluation interviews⁴⁴. All partners shared positive views on the projects they were involved in and the partnerships developed. Where Youth Justice Community Support Services⁴⁵ (YJCSS) were involved as project partners, a lack of clarity sometimes existed about the role of the project, which lead to tensions and constraints between partners that were not raised by other projects.

Five of the **directed** stream projects (Wyndham, Casey/Dandenong, Frankston, Hume and Latrobe) hired project workers across multiple organisations, with the lead agency supervising all project workers. Partners discussed the strengths and challenges encountered with this delivery model. A number were not convinced of the additional benefits of delivering the project using this model.

"The benefit of a partnership is when the good things of the different organisations can come together and complement each other.... There's absolutely pros and cons to both.... quite often it causes more hassle than it's worth."

⁴⁴ Differences in views were mitigated by interviewing multiple partners or conducting focus group discussions where possible

⁴⁵ YJCSS provides integrated and intensive support and services to young people involved in the youth justice service to complement case management undertaken by youth justice workers.

Figure 30 provides an outline of the general management structure for project workers using this approach and Table 29 outlines the strengths and challenges highlighted by partners. The key strength of this approach is that it creates an environment where project risk and decision making is dispersed across partners. This in turn results in a greater level of accountability across partners.

Figure 30. General management structure for projects employing project workers across organisations

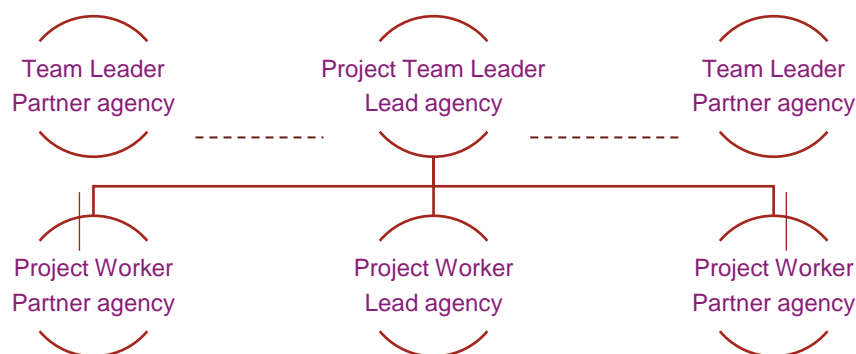


Table 29. Strengths and challenges of a model where workers are hired across multiple organisations

Strengths	Challenges
Awareness across the partner organisations of programs and services available was higher than for other projects. This has created an avenue for maintaining awareness of existing, new and closing services within the partner organisations and has supported referrals into other services, in particular for young people that are being exited from the project.	Greater time requirements for all partners (both team leaders and project workers) for governance and supervision meetings. Most project workers received supervision from both their organisation's team leader and the project team leader.
Partners brought different skills and expertise to the project, both in supervising project workers and in areas of specialisation such as alcohol and drug counselling or housing.	Projects were generally more challenging from a logistical perspective, especially early in implementation. This included aspects such as accessing shared data platforms, cars and brokerage for clients.
Provided a strong networking opportunity between project workers and team leaders across different organisations.	Greater challenges in ensuring that the project worker felt part of an organisation, especially as roles included assertive outreach which required project workers to be out of the office.
Strengthened interactions and communications between the team leaders from the partner organisations. Where these relationships were already established at the outset of the project it was noted that this made the delivery of the approach more effective.	Policies and procedures required review and updates to ensure consistency across partner agencies so that they were in line with project worker organisations' internal policies and procedures.
	Within this structure most project workers were employed part-time with FTE, varying from 0.4 – 0.8 FTE. This created constraints around availability of workers for young people. Some partner agencies supported the salary of project workers from other funding sources to create a full-time FTE position.

The development of partnerships involved in the YCPG led to organisations identifying other opportunities to work together. Brimbank, Melton and Wyndham developed a **cross project partnership** and submitted a **successful application** to the **Department of Education and Training** for the North-West Youth Learning Pathways (NW-YLP). NW-YLP aims to support young people (12-24) in education, employment and training. This program represented a strategic opportunity to refer young people into the YCPG projects or into other programs where they were determined to be unsuitable for YCPG. Ballarat submitted a joint application with the Victorian Legal Board to the Victorian Legal Services Board Grants program, based on findings and learnings from the YCPG project.

"the beauty of that is it is linking in with each of the crime prevention projects in the west...And that was the idea of the partnership was the three western region crime prevention projects....So that all **links in really, really well**. And I **think if the YUP project hadn't been working so well then the YLP wouldn't have been able to come in and wouldn't work either.**"

"(the 2017 young people) majority of them are good now. Some of them have moved out of Melton, but the **majority of them are with YLP**. Some of them are working, some of them have bought their cars, some of them are engaged in something useful for themselves."

Six directed stream projects had **leveraged partnerships to support young people's entry into other programs and services that were relevant to their needs**. Partners prioritised entry into their programs and services for young people in the YCPG. This was seen as particularly beneficial when developing an exit strategy from YCPG for a young person. Nine projects (six direct) commented that the engagement of and support from **Victoria Police** through the project has been a highlight and supports understanding of the dynamics occurring around a young person. Three projects have built strong relationships with the **Courts** and commented that the strength of these relationships meant that Magistrates and lawyers were aware of the YCPG, and subsequently represented a key referral stream into the YCPG.

Five competitive projects **identified and engaged new partners** during the implementation of their projects. This included new relationships with schools for three of these projects. Another three projects (two direct) also strengthened their relationships with schools.

In contrast eight projects (five direct) identified that some **partners** had been **consistently difficult to engage**. These partners were often identified as government agencies and schools. Some **government agencies** were noted as being **on the periphery** of a project even though they were officially involved. They were often absent from governance meetings, although projects acknowledged this could be the result of competing priorities, demands on time, and staff turnover.

"then that person moves on and it, kind of, you can have that happening quite a lot. And before you know it **you've got eight months where you've got no interaction** with an organisation and you're trying to chase them up.... But generally, there's been two, two or three that have kept coming and then they've, sort of, passed the baton on... which has been really great."

Seven projects (four competitive) identified that there is an **opportunity to better articulate the project aims, the targeted cohort, and the roles and responsibilities of partners**. This would assist with maintaining project continuity and increasing shared understandings of projects, particularly where staff turnover is high. Four projects identified that **expectations between partners** were not always clear, and that there was not always agreement on governance terms of reference and other contractual arrangements. This impacted the delivery of services as agreed and caused the need for changes to contract management arrangements between partners.

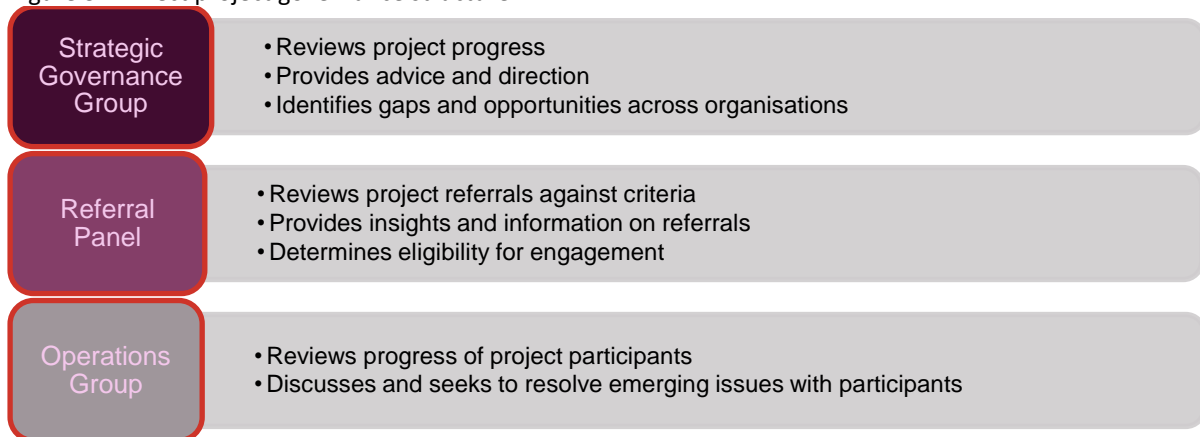
Tensions existed between partners in **four directed projects** throughout project implementation. For three of these, changes within the lead agencies' structure or personnel impacted on partnerships and program delivery. While these tensions have been resolved, their resolution resulted in unanticipated time, resources and energy

being diverted during implementation. It is not surprising that these issues were not experienced by competitive projects, as governance structures were more complex for directed stream projects.

- **Governance**

DJCS required that governance structures be developed for the second Milestone Report. However, there was no stipulation on the required governance structure, so projects determined the most appropriate model for their projects. **Directed projects tended to have a greater level of governance oversight.** Their general structure is outlined in Figure 31. There is crossover between the referral panels and the operations groups for some projects.⁴⁶

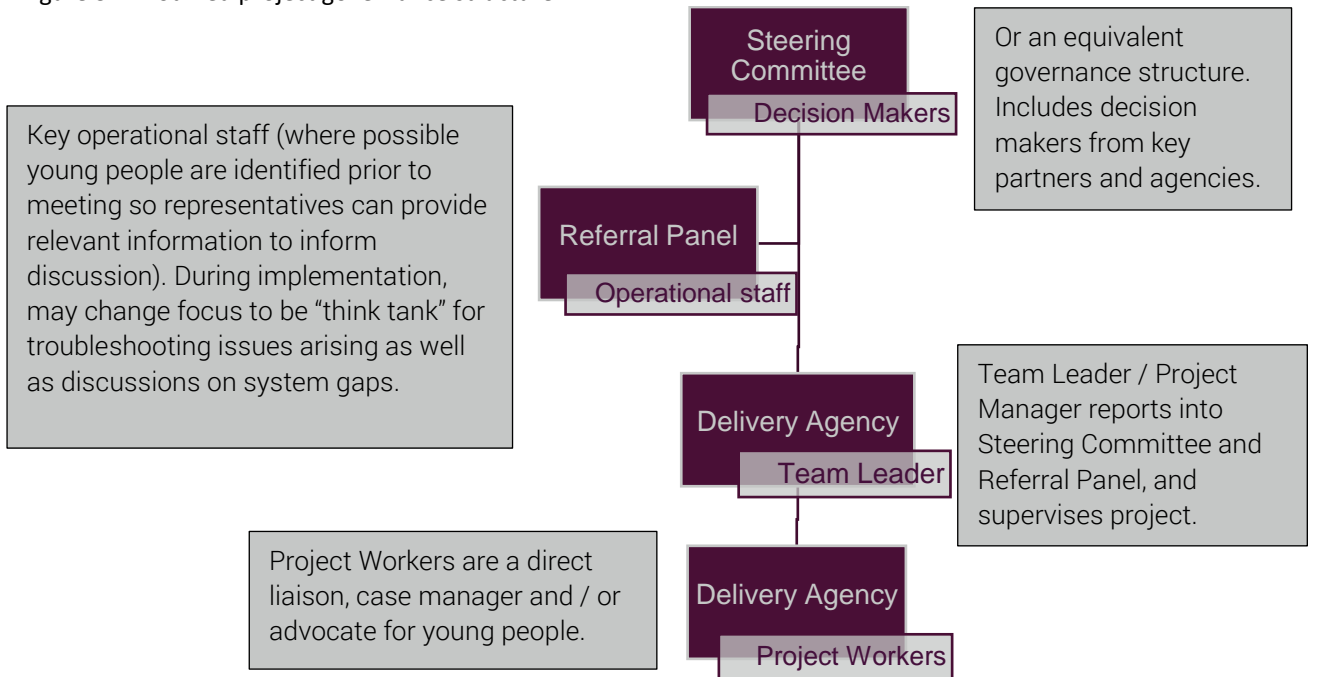
Figure 31. Direct project governance structure



Five directed projects (four metropolitan) believe their projects had too much governance. These views were predominantly in projects where project workers were employed across multiple organisations, creating additional meetings. Figure 32 represents a possible modified governance structure for directed projects which they may find useful in reducing governance burden (noting that this structure may not be perceived as appropriate by all projects). It integrates the operations group with the referral panel. One partner suggested the referral panel would be *"better placed as a monitoring panel. So the referrals come through, and then there's actually time spent reviewing the client's progress through the program, so then a bit of an update on where they're at and then engagement."*

⁴⁶ Projects have different names for these groups, these names provide a general indication of the purpose of the groups.

Figure 32. Modified project governance structure



In contrast, Ballarat (where the design is around strengthening service integration) partners were supportive of the governance structure that was in place.

“work (with) the kids, the family, then you’ve got panel, then you’ve got ops, then you’ve got PAG. So it’s just so many levels that your voice and their voice can be heard... It means you’ve got... seniors of the agencies actually understanding what’s going on for these young people and their families.”

Competitive projects had simpler governance structures with six integrated with existing internal governance structures, and two using existing external governance structures. Only one competitive project has established a project-specific referral panel, and six have established advisory or partnership groups with partners. Across the competitive projects, operational management and decisions primarily sit with the lead agency. Across competitive projects, the strength of partnerships and the operation of the governance meetings varied according to the governance structure in place.

Ten projects (seven competitive) found **conversations with partners** and within governance structures were **open and honest**, which has meant that, when required, challenging conversations about project progress and adaptations were possible. With the exception of Melton and Brimbank, all of these projects were based regionally.

“we’ve really been able to highlight where the gaps are in service... And more, where the system’s actually failing... we’re actually starting to really hone in on those issues and starting to have conversation with organisations that are funded to do things, or starting to have conversations with people, with funding bodies about the things that we do need that aren’t currently funded.”

Eight projects (five competitive) have used the governance structure to discuss where gaps in services or requirements are, to **identify opportunities to streamline delivery** of services and to identify how existing services could be leveraged. Partners observed, however, that where gaps were identified the project may not have the capacity, resources or ability to address them.

Four of the directed projects **ensure decision makers are in the room** at the strategic governance level to support immediate actions. These projects stated that their clear agreements on information sharing have strengthened the delivery of their projects. Partners across nine projects felt there could be **better upfront sharing of information prior to governance meetings** to maximise the use of their time and their ability to provide productive input in these meetings. This could extend to the provision of updates on young people who are not engaging well in the project or where expected behavioural changes are not being seen. Creating an opportunity for discussions on what is or is not working and how partners may provide further support for the young people.

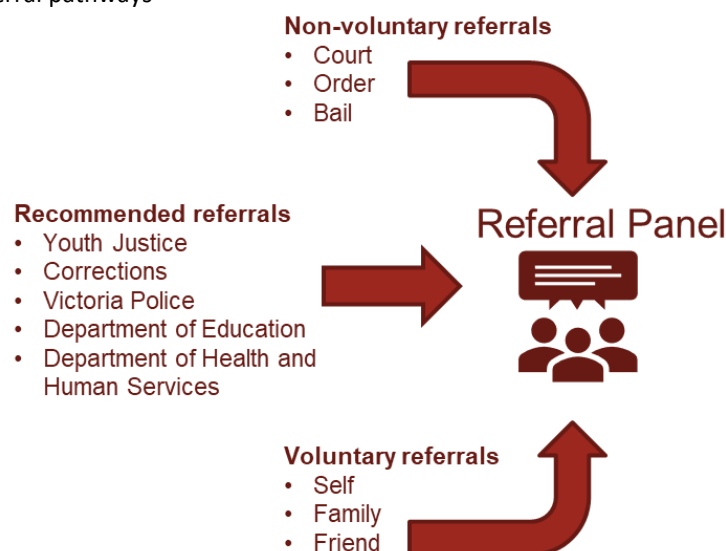
Recommendation 1: Upfront investment should be made in logistical support and development prior to implementation, particularly for projects that employ workers across different organisations, and/or for projects involving a range of partners such as community organisations and government agencies. This could include:

- Supporting access to a shared information sharing platform for all project partners/workers.
- Development of standard terms of reference, guidelines, policies and procedures to ensure policy and procedural consistency across partner organisations.
- The provision of guidance on appropriate governance structures and on how to review governance structures and terms of reference during implementation to maximise their effectiveness and ensure efficient governance.

• Referrals and referral pathways

The ability for projects to engage young people is reliant on appropriate referrals. Each project identified its target cohort and referral pathways prior to implementation. These varied across projects, although strong similarities exist between the directed projects in Geelong, Wyndham, Casey-Dandenong and Frankston. Most projects established a referral panel or similar to review young people's suitability for entry into their project. Figure 33 shows the different ways a young person could be referred into a project.

Figure 33. YCPG referral pathways



Except for Hume, all directed projects used a recommended referral process. A recommended referral is one received from partners who have identified a young person that they believe will benefit from being in the YCPG. The young people are then offered the opportunity to join the YCPG voluntarily. The competitive projects Cardinia, East Gippsland, Mildura, Shepparton and Wodonga also used this approach. Hume and Brimbank

accepted referrals through all three pathways. Bendigo accepted primarily non-voluntary referrals, and some recommended referrals. Darebin and Melton accepted voluntary and recommended referrals.

While all projects stated participation in the project is **voluntary, the justice system** could still **include participation** in a project **on a court order**. For Bendigo, Brimbank and Hume this could occur prior to the project having strong engagement with a young person.

"The magistrate's never said to a young person, you need to do the program, without us already being involved."

For projects such as Casey-Dandenong, Latrobe and Frankston, this generally occurred once the young person has already engaged with the project through a recommended referral and a relationship has therefore already been established.

Five directed projects (Hume, Geelong, Wyndham, Casey-Dandenong and Frankston) indicated that **receiving referrals has been challenging** at different times throughout implementation. Reasons provided for this included: that the referral pathway limited the number of young people that could be referred, a lack of awareness of the project across agencies and "competition" for the same young people with other programs being delivered in the area.

"it did take some time for those referrals to start trickling through. Whether it was clarity of criteria or confusion with the YJCSS program.... And I think to date we still haven't had many referrals come through Corrections... I think there's a whole lot of clients sitting in there that would benefit from the program."

"Corrections, was like, oh, we forgot about your service, we were told about it."

Ten projects (two direct and eight competitive) had no difficulty receiving referrals of young people. **Brimbank and Hume** accepted all young people referred to their projects and assessed and accepted them either into the YCPG or referred them to another program. Both of these projects are **integrated with the local court system** and as a result have received high numbers of referrals through the courts and young people's lawyers.

Four directed projects have **long timeframes** between **the initial referral** of a young person and attempts to engage them into the project. This was identified as a result of the referral process not always providing up to date details of young people or identifying the primary worker already engaged with a young person to liaise with about the opportunity. These delays were noted as **potentially impacting** some of the **young people's interest in engaging** with the project. It has also meant a young person's circumstances may have changed dramatically from the time of referral to the time of engagement. Three projects observed they had accepted referrals to meet reporting targets and that this had impacted on the likelihood all referrals would engage with the project due to delays.

Two directed projects found the referral process designed was restrictive and limited or prevented self-referrals and referrals from other agencies.

"I've taken it back to the team but... I don't have the authority to put you in or out of the program"

"everyone at the care team will say, how do we refer into the program? ... But they can't refer in."

Recommendation 2: Funding agencies should support lead agencies to ensure that information sharing is facilitated between government and community organisations where required, particularly where government agencies form part of projects' referral panels, and should encourage appropriate agency representation and engagement in the project.

- Cohort targeted

The overarching YCPG was targeted at young people (10-24) at risk of becoming engaged with or already engaged with the justice system. Projects determined their specific target cohorts and approach based on identified community needs, resulting in different cohorts being targeted by different projects. Table 30 indicates the target cohort identified in the design process and the cohort actually engaged through delivery of the project. The cohort actually engaged was determined using information provided by projects and through the analysis of LEAP data. All projects except for Geelong, Hume (intensive stream) and Latrobe, engaged young people that were not matched to any records in LEAP. This may mean young people have not been able to be matched through the de-identified process, or that all projects except three have engaged at least some young people who have not engaged in any alleged criminal behaviour.

Table 30. Target cohort and actual cohort engaged by YCPG project

Project	Participants N	Target age bracket	Actual age engaged	Actual average age	Target risk level	At-risk %	Offender %	Recidivist %
Ballarat	11	10 – 17	11 – 17	15.4	Recidivist	18.2	54.5	27.3
Bendigo	50	17 – 24	18 – 25	21.5	Recidivist	20.0	52.0	28.0
Brimbank	191	12 – 24	12 – 25	19.2	At risk to recidivist	42.9	50.8	6.3
Cardinia	25	12 – 21	15 – 25	18.4	Recidivist	28.0	60.0	12.0
Casey-Dandenong	35	14 – 22	15 – 23	18.7	Recidivist	5.7	45.7	48.6
Darebin	18	10 – 14	10 – 24	15.8	At-risk	77.8	16.7	5.6
East Gippsland	34	10 – 24	10 – 19	15.7	At-risk	58.8	35.3	5.9
Frankston	19	12 – 21	14 – 22	16.4	Recidivist	15.8	31.6	52.6
Geelong	6	14 – 18	14 – 17	15.2	Recidivist	0.0	16.7	83.3
Horsham	14	10 – 24	13 – 20	16.4	Highly vulnerable	50.0	50.0	0.0
Hume (guided & managed)	82	10 – 24	11 – 24	17.4	Highly vulnerable	47.6	41.5	11.0
Hume (Intensive)	7	10 – 24	15 – 22	18.1	Recidivist	0.0	42.9	57.1
Latrobe	4	10 – 14	10 – 15	13	At-risk	0.0	50.0	50.0
Melton	37	10 – 24	13 – 22	16.5	At risk to recidivist	43.2	51.4	5.4
Mildura	4	10 – 14	13 – 15	13.8	At-risk	75.0	25.0	0.0
Shepparton	2	10 – 24	16 – 17	16.5	Recidivist	100.0	0.0	0.0
Wodonga	24	10 – 14	11 – 15	13.4	Highly vulnerable	79.2	20.8	0.0

Six projects acknowledged that while it was expected that young people would have complex issues and needs, the **level of complexity was not completely anticipated**. For example, young people had issues such as: intergenerational issues, intellectual disability, and high engagement with Child Protection services. Only two projects (Hume and East Gippsland) had some partners who reflected that their project had not engaged with young people as complex as expected. In Hume, this was particularly the case for young people in the intensive stream.

All projects that had identified that they would work with young people who were highly vulnerable or at risk had also engaged with young people who had contact with the justice system as an alleged offender. Geelong and Casey-Dandenong were the only projects that had primarily engaged with recidivist offenders. However, all projects, with the exception of Horsham, Mildura and Wodonga, engaged participants who had more than ten alleged incidents recorded in the twelve months prior to engagement with the YCPG. Brimbank, Cardinia, Casey-Dandenong, Frankston, Geelong, Hume (Intensive), Shepparton and Wyndham all engaged young people who had over twenty alleged incidents recorded in the twelve months prior to engagement with the YCPG.

"Mainstream society is very challenging so they keep gravitating back to their peer group who are not all at the same developmental stage or level of pre-contemplation or whatever.

So it happens, time and time again, (they) haven't offended for three months and doing really well. Their criminal activity is minimised. They may not be engaged in appropriate day programs but they're trying really hard. But then it's a matter of time before the knock on the door, three boys, if you don't get in the car, we'll beat the shit out of you. That's a concept that gets, yes, all right. Gets in the car and gets done that night. Back to square one."

Eight projects (four direct) indicated that young people's circumstances were further complicated by their limited exposure to interactions outside of their primary environment (family and peers). Where this primary environment was not supporting young people to change, maintaining the momentum of change for a young person was considered difficult and *"three months of good work can be undone in one weekend with mates"*. Five projects remarked that they had taken on young people no one else was able to engage with, potentially as a result of other programs' criteria and limitations. While this has been supported by partners, it has made the engagement of these young people more challenging and made progress more difficult to achieve with them.

Brimbank and Latrobe have both identified that the real **gap in services** in their areas is **for the younger cohort**. Latrobe indicated that this gap was around the eight to ten year old age group and that even earlier engagement and intervention is required than is currently supported by the YCPG. Brimbank expressed a similar view.

"We want to focus the YUP resourcing really on the younger age group because we see huge need and demand. And just real, we've got great concern around low school retention still in Brimbank"

Casey-Dandenong, Frankston and Cardinia all changed their target cohort criteria during implementation, and Darebin attempted to alter their criteria, with Casey-Dandenong and Frankston also extending the LGA boundary criteria for the next two years. Geelong and Wyndham both observed that there were differences in the young people identified for project inclusion in the initial project design phase compared with those actually referred and/or who engaged with the project. However, their project criteria had not restricted these young people from being referred and participating.

Recommendation 3: Enable adaptations to project design and contracts through the implementation phase to support project effectiveness and ensure differentiation between the YCPG and other programs and services in the local area. This should enable changes to be made to:

- project eligibility criteria and target cohorts
- referral pathways (including identification of additional referral pathways)
- project activities as particular activities emerge that are beneficial in engaging the target cohort.

Recommendation 4: Where overlap with existing services and programs emerge after implementation has begun, ensure there are in-built contract mechanisms to enable consideration of merging, ceasing or adapting programs.

The following excerpts are reflections from the projects on young people engaged across the YCPG.

"the young person obviously went into remand, came out into a better environment than the one that he had been living in, and that created the ability to support him to start looking at his behaviours and changing his behaviours.... The accommodation he was initially living in, he would consume drugs and alcohol till early hours in the morning, which would mean he wouldn't wake up for his appointments, which meant trying to reschedule, but it was just an ongoing cycle."

we're still capturing them too late... They've already had involvement with YJ and the police... We know that there's kids out there that could absolutely benefit from the project earlier... if we were to expand the referral pathways to allow schools to refer in.

"nobody knows these kids... until you really see their stories... And even the police, when they go to a group conference, and they hear a little bit more about their actual life, and they see them sitting, not drug affected and not escalated, and it opens their eyes... These kids are a very small group and they're really not known or understood. Not by anybody, not by the public, not by any of the systems. But they do a lot of harm between them, as well as have had a lot of harm done to them. So it does take a very specialised approach. And because they're not a big group, and they've certainly got no advocacy, or ability to speak for themselves at all, they go under the radar, except when they're offending."



"I had a guy last week got rearrested... for stealing a car. I said, you've been so good, why, he said, well, I had to get home because I was under police check. So, he stole a car to get home."

"The difference with corrections kids is that they're not well-known by corrections. So if you're a youth justice kid, you have probably been with youth justice for six, seven, eight years. And they know you really well.... The referrals are much more detailed.... And you can trust what they tell you. Corrections are a little bit different, they don't know these kids like that. They haven't had them forever."

"will not come into Dandenong on their own because they've ended up in fights at the train station.... I had a young person in the car... He was virtually trying to climb under the chair because there was a gang of lads there and they had beaten him up in the past.... They prefer to go back to prison than come in on a train... for that person, it's fight or flight."

- **Engagement of young people and families**

Each project has a different design and approach and targets different cohorts, which has resulted in differences in their capacity to engage young people, and in some projects, their families. Common issues identified with engaging young people across projects included:

- Projects observed previous negative experiences with services can result in young people having a distrust in the system or with young people navigating the system to their advantage.
- A young person's age impacted their engagement with a project. This varied across projects. For example, Darebin found the younger cohort easier to engage where Melton found the older cohort easier to engage. This reflects the fact that different age groups require and engage with different interventions.
- For some projects a young person's cultural background has meant that they initially agreed to engage in the project, because they did not want to say no to a person viewed as authority, but subsequently avoided all contact and appointments.
- Some young people in single parent households or large family households, received less support at home to change attitudes and behaviours due to the pressures and demands on their parents' time.
- Young people that had negative ideas about any aspect of a project were more difficult to engage. For example, the MyVan, which is a mobile educational outreach service used in Shepparton, was found to have a negative impact on engaging young people. This was in part because of the visibility of the van around the community and a lack of suitable places to drive, and an alternative approach was adopted.
- Two directed projects observed that some young people were ultimately more comfortable inside the justice system, in particular within a remand facility than in society.

Seven projects (three direct) stated that engagement with young people had been best supported when time was available to develop relationships with them and there was continuity and consistency in the project workers the young person engaged with. Leveraging off the strength of existing relationships, three direct regional projects allocated young people to project workers they already knew where possible. Three directed projects found changes to a young person's primary worker often led to delays in re-engagement and could result in disengagement.

*"buying a couple of new items, some new towels, bed sheets, for example.... being **flexible in what areas we can support has definitely made a difference to his everyday life.** ... has made such a huge **difference to their mental health and feeling confident leaving the house, feeling confident going to school and even feeling confident meeting up with workers.**"*

Three directed projects stated a mechanism for being able to effectively engage with young people and their families was the flexible funding or brokerage available (eight projects mentioned this during interviews for the interim report).

This was supported by a flexibility inherent in some projects' designs on how project funding could be used. In contrast, another direct project indicated that they *"don't have the funding to access food vouchers and mykis"*

and things like that...we can't even give that to them." These design differences may impact on projects' ability to engage young people.

"We have, on occasion, had to have specific conversations around conflict that might exist within the group given that young people are coming from all different walks of life and community connections. In all cases we've either been able to have a mediation process outside of that to allow them to work in the group or to be able to figure out another opportunity for those young people being involved."

Throughout project implementation, some projects identified that group activities would be an effective way to engage their target cohorts. Nine projects that did not initially have a focus on **group activities** as a strong aspect of their project design have **used** these **to effectively engage young people**, and in some circumstances to create stronger peer networks. Two projects also used group activities to engage families in positive interactions, with the intention of building stronger family connections and positive memories. There was acknowledgement that these needed to be managed for group dynamics but as long as the project was actively managing risks the benefits of the group activity were worth the effort.

Seven projects reported that young people who had gone through the program were showing strong leadership skills and were engaging as role models and mentors with other young people in the project, supporting them to change behaviours.

The importance of engaging young peoples' families

The evaluation identified that working with and support young peoples' families was critical to project success in many cases.

"He just wanted someone, he just wanted his mum to be a parent. And I explained it to her, that's all he's looking for, all he's looking for is mum to say, don't do this, this is not right... And when she started doing that, you saw the change in him. That's a massive thing. And just to be able to sit down and talk and say, look, he's still a child, he's still your responsibility. There's lots of parents, by the time we get them, have washed their hands."

The **role of the family** in working with these young people was **discussed by all projects** except Cardinia. A lower level of family engagement in Cardinia may have been a result of the older cohort engaged, particularly over the first eighteen months of the project. Mildura had the strongest focus on family engagement, working as intensively or more intensively with some parents than with young people. This is in part due to the age of their target cohort (ten to 14 years old) and the important role parents and family have in the lives of this group.

Nine projects (five direct) indicated their **initial project designs had missed an opportunity to focus on family engagement**, or where it had been identified the engagement was not occurring as intended. As a result two directed projects have changed their project designs to include a dedicated family approach. Geelong has engaged a family worker to support integrated service provision. Ballarat has extended family services' role to incorporate capacity building for supporting young peoples' parents among support workers.

"we thought that the types of sub-contractors that we had on board the products that they were offering to the program would all be really relevant... it didn't turn out that way. What we became very aware of was the need to... work with families and siblings a lot more."

Nine projects indicated the **support provided** either **by family members**, or, in some instances the school, to engage young people had been **critical** in working with them and achieving outcomes. Projects that focussed on working with young people from CALD communities (Melton, Darebin, Wyndham) found supporting and educating the families of young people in the Victorian justice system in turn helped them to support the young person to improve their behaviour. In particular, there was a focus on developing a shared understanding of what conditions had been imposed by the justice system so that the family could support the young person to avoid breaching these conditions.

Recommendation 5: Projects engaging with at-risk young people, or with young offenders through assertive outreach or case management should prioritise inclusion of the following elements:

- Provision of support to a young person's family, outside of engagement with the young person
- Access to flexible brokerage funding to better respond to the needs of individuals.

• Culture and community

Melton, Darebin, Brimbank and Wyndham all focused on supporting CALD communities. Partners saw this as a strength of their projects. Seven other projects (three direct) also discussed the **positive aspects of having a considered cultural or community approach**, which was well supported by the place-based design of the program. Strengths discussed included:

- Projects were able to develop culturally sensitive approaches and activities for individuals, groups and the community.
- Using an embedded cross-cultural approach supported improved working practices across partners when engaging young people and families with different cultural backgrounds.

There was also recognition that more could be done in this area, by engaging across communities to create sustained increases in cultural awareness. Seven projects said there was a need for greater awareness and consideration of cultural requirements across the service sector, which could be achieved in part through capability building across organisations to reduce reliance on individuals with specific cultural knowledge and expertise.

Ballarat, Darebin, Horsham and East Gippsland have all built capacity within their local communities. Ballarat has supported capacity building within the service sector and Darebin supported building a greater understanding between the Arabic speaking community and services. Horsham and East Gippsland are providing mentors with trauma-informed training. Brimbank, Darebin, Ballarat and Melton have also supported programs around legal education, delivering these directly to young people, families or to other service organisations. These capacity building activities were all identified as sustainable project outcomes.

*"we've been able to **benefit from our partnership** with the program in the Aboriginal community with three employees from the **organisation taking part in the training**... Even though they work in the Aboriginal health space for Aboriginal organisations, they hadn't received the training that highlighted why barriers were existing. "*

As mentioned in the interim evaluation report, both Horsham and East Gippsland developed their mentor training activities to incorporate trauma-informed training. In Horsham, fifty-four mentors completed trauma-informed training and nine completed Mental Health Youth First Aid training. East Gippsland has provided trauma-informed training to all mentors engaged as part of the YCPG, and extended it to mentors who were already engaged through the previous program and to partner organisations.

Darebin worked extensively within their local community, including working to bring other service agencies into the community for events. This aspect of community capacity building and awareness raising was the strongest element of the project. Seven community workshops (83 participants) were delivered and six community events (557 participants) were held.

*"23 different services come into the mosque for a day.. it was **open to the community** to come in and access all these different services.... And the feedback from the Mosque representatives is they found it to be a **highly successful day**. .. They were surprised as to how many youth actually showed up"*

Recommendation 6: To support sustainability of project outcomes in local areas, project design should include consideration of capacity building components for community and/or staff and partner organisations, especially in cultural awareness.

• Service Integration (government, co-location, integration and YJCSS)

There was a consensus across projects that **opportunities** always exist for **better integration of services and programs delivered across the community**. Fifteen projects found a strength of the YCPG design was that it supported service integration and highlighted gaps and local service delivery challenges. Some projects could address these gaps either directly through their projects or through partnerships developed as part of their projects. Thirteen projects (seven competitive) found the flexibility and adaptability built into the project design⁴⁷ supported the adaptation of existing approaches as well as the development of new activities and approaches, providing opportunities to address gaps identified.

Seven projects reflected that while gaps and challenges were identified, addressing them was beyond the capacity of the project. The gaps and challenges are described below:

- Opportunities to engage young people away from their usual environment, particularly upon immediate release from the justice system were limited.
- Where justice conditions and requirements overlap other government agency requirements (e.g. Centrelink), the same activity may not be assessed as meeting the requirements of more than one agency, which means duplication of activities is required.

⁴⁷ Ballarat, Bendigo, Mildura, Brimbank and Geelong all indicated the project approach had been adapted for the funding extension - 2019 – 2021.

- Some young people aged under seventeen were not willing to return to the school system but were willing to engage with other training opportunities. However, obtaining exemption letters to support this was challenging.
- A young person's criminal record impacted their ability to access a broader range of support services including housing and employment services.

Government services and programs

Projects mentioned other services and programs that may also engage with the young people in the YCPG. In some instances programs referred into the YCPG when their own timeframes to engage with a young person had concluded, to ensure that these young people had ongoing support. Other relevant programs that were mentioned included, but were not limited to: Alcohol and Drug counselling or behaviour change programs, YJCSS, L2P, Youth Learning Pathways, Second Chance, Youth Support Services, ROPES, and Community Service Groups. Participating in these programs and accessing these services may be voluntary, or court ordered.

*"We've had an influx of referrals, I don't know, seven or something from that cohort.... who will **come through YUP** and then **straight onto YLP for education, employment and training** with a little bit of wrap around."*

Challenges associated with effectively integrating services for young people, particularly in regional areas included:

- All services and programs have different criteria, including cohorts, target numbers, timeframes for delivery and capacity, this limits the ability for services to integrate and provide co-ordination across services for a young person. For example, a young person engaged in the YCPG may not meet the criteria for another program even though it has been identified as a need for them. The limited timeframe a young person may be allocated in a program means that they have to be exited before it is determined that they are ready.
- Difficulties finding a service, program or the right support to address an individual's needs, including ensuring appropriate services and supports are available for a young person on exit from the YCPG
- limited services and programs are available, and/or have extensive waitlists

*"she definitely needed something. But she's not on an order anymore and she's not a DHS kid. So **it's kind of hard to find where they fit.**"*

An example of service access challenges arose in relation to mental health services in the Frankston area. Young people involved in the corrections system (not the youth justice system) faced challenges accessing mental health services because they were deemed too high risk for services such as HeadSpace but not acute enough to be able to receive a triage referral. This resulted in project workers having to address the young people's complex issues and be accountable for the resulting risks, while trying to identify and arrange support services around them.

*"the other issue is that we talk about having light touch and over referral for certain kids, are they actually being referred to multiple? We **don't even know or really have a common view of what all the agencies are doing out there.**"*

Projects found it challenging to remain aware of all services and programs available, and of which young people were in which program. They said the service sector was difficult to navigate. In some instances services and programs that were available during the project design phase were no longer available during project implementation.

The North West provided an example of a straightforward approach to working collaboratively across the region through the development of a shared calendar. The calendar indicated the services and programs that would be open to young people over the Christmas holiday and supported YCPG projects in being able to refer young people into programs over this time. Where nothing was scheduled it presented an opportunity to identify and create a program that would be able to engage young people.

Six projects working with young people to access government services and supports (such as personal identification, birth certificates, Centrelink payments, NDIS funding, and housing) all mentioned the complexity of application processes and the timeframes required to effectively navigate these systems. This is not an issue faced only by young people in the YCPG, however the high rates of anxiety among young people within the program can make navigating the system more challenging. These government support services are often required to support young people to return to or enter into education, training or employment. They are often also required to support young people to meet court or justice system requirements.

*"It's good that it's figured out now, but if another young person was to come onto our caseload similar to that, I **couldn't say that there was something that we'd be able to do differently to make it speed up a bit.** That was really frustrating, for me and YJ."*

*"They know what is expected from the magistrate... have to put these things on, **even though we know it's setting them up to fail.** But this is the way the system is... it's the bureaucracy of the system."*

The **complexity of requirements and conditions imposed** on young people through the **justice system** was raised across six projects (including the three projects with the most integration with their local court systems). The view was that the expectations of the judicial system were often too high regarding how much a young person can change their behaviour and circumstances between court appointments, as well as the level of reporting requirements and conditions that a young person is expected to adhere to.

Latrobe and North West projects commented on the high level of justice investment in the regions across a range of programs and services and some of the additional challenges that could be faced as a result of this, including:

"I have never seen the west so heavily invested in by the Department of Justice in terms of community sector, never..."

- competing drivers and outcomes for the different programs being implemented,
- limited resources, in particular skilled staff, available to deliver across the projects,
- lack of knowledge and awareness of the programs and services that can be accessed, who they can be accessed by and when.

Service co-location

Eight projects are co-located with other services. Views on the extent to which this approach effectively supports service delivery were mixed. Benefits of co-location included the ability for project workers to:

- Conduct warm referrals of young people into other services.
- Keep across a young person's situation through communication with co-located services.
- Remain informed on existing, new and closing projects with other organisations

For Darebin, the co-location of the Arabic speaking project worker, assisted in breaking down language barriers between other services and young people of Arabic-speaking background.

"everyone works together, but everyone sits in their own chairs. It doesn't necessarily work any better than if you had to ring up someone. It potentially could and it may well do that in the future, but I just don't think it's working at it's optimum at the moment"

Partners suggested similar outcomes for young people could be achieved through phone calls between services without the requirement for the services to be co-located, and that while services might be co-located young people in the YCPG would not attend appointments regardless of service co-location. This was not representative across all partners with another stating that once they co-located at an "outreach post" with other services young people would engage in appointments more.

Youth Hubs

Four projects with co-location of services also had a Youth Hub, and another three projects are in the process of establishing these. **Youth Hubs** were perceived to have **greater value for projects than co-location of services** as they provided a space that young people could go to where they didn't have to interact with services or attend appointments. These hubs also provide activities to support young people's engagement in prosocial activities, education, training and other opportunities.

Youth Justice Community Support Services (YJCSS)

The similarities between the YCPG and YJCSS projects were highlighted in the interim evaluation report and remained an issue for five directed projects. The different design approach in Ballarat and the young cohort targeted and specific referral pathway for Latrobe may be the reasons overlaps with YJCSS were not mentioned by these projects. Following the interim report CCPU engaged with Youth Justice and there was a general consensus that the programs were complementary and supported greater engagement of young people across the LGAs. As a result of this the YCPG continues with no adaptations. However, the **similarities between the programs has continued to create confusion for referring agencies, and uncertainty around who to refer to.**

"we offer after hours support... But the difference with the YJCSS is, they also do weekends. They have staff that does every single Saturday and Sunday. That's a complete difference. Anytime a client is typically on a YCO or an intensive bail order, it typically won't go to Pivot...primarily just because of the weekend and after-hours support."

The YJCSS model changed in 2018 to incorporate an after-hours service component, in part to service requirements associated with the introduction of Youth Control Orders (YCOs). This has created a situation, particularly in Casey-Dandenong, where young people are referred into YJCSS in preference to the PIVOT program so that they can access the after-hours service. Access to after-hours service has been consistently discussed as a need in the Casey-Dandenong region.

In Geelong, the YJCSS is delivered by the same organisation delivering the YCPG and this has created better integration between the two programs, with young people on the YCPG able to access the after-hours support provided through YJCSS if required. In Wyndham and Hume the similarities between the YCPG and YJCSS were also raised, however there appeared to be sufficient differences in the project designs for referring agencies to be confident about the most appropriate project to refer young people to. In Wyndham this was in part a result

of the project's focus on culturally appropriate responses, and in Hume the three-tiered approach and youth space available provided opportunities additional to those offered by YJCSS.

In Casey-Dandenong and Frankston the differences between the YCPG and YJCSS were reported to be minor. Nevertheless differences included: referrals accepted for young people without Youth Justice contact by YCPG but not YJCSS, and in Frankston the YCPG had a greater emphasis on working with the family. In contrast, seven projects identified that YJCSS or other services (e.g. CISP, YSS) existed in the area but that the YCPG was not a duplication of these programs and that they were complementary to each other.

"the differentiation between different programs is fairly minimal... if we could just redesign the whole system instead of designing a new bit to add on that's slightly different to that... I'm not sure that there is sufficient differentiation between a whole range of programs that, for instance, Youth Justice run, and what we had in ..."

Recommendation 7: Consider whether there is value in merging YCPG funding with Youth Justice Community Support Service (YJCSS) in some LGAs to create a single program, or alternatively ensuring clear differentiation between the service offerings of the two programs, such as YCPG establishing key referral pathways outside of youth justice, or by targeting different age cohorts.

Recommendation 8: Design programs in consultation across government (as occurred in the design phase of the YCPG), but also considering what mechanisms could be developed to fund, deliver, monitor and evaluate crime prevention and early intervention programs collaboratively across departments particularly across DJCS, the Department of Education and Training, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Courts system and/or Victoria Police. If this is not possible, service offerings should be locally coordinated.

Recommendation 9: Provide longer-term funding to projects (e.g., four to five years), to support them to become better integrated within communities and achieve longer-term outcomes, and to support the retention of skilled staff. Flexibility to provide longer-term support to young people based on their needs can also prevent them having to cycle between programs as they exhaust the level of support available in particular programs, and result in more successful and sustained outcomes.

Recommendation 10: Support the establishment of Youth Hubs, spaces where young people may go to entertain themselves or interact with peers without having to engage with services that might also be available. These should particularly be considered in lower socioeconomic areas. Where possible, these should be established through a co-design process with young people.

- **Project Staff**

Project workers engaging with young people are **pivotal to the success of the YCPG**. Six projects took time to recruit the right individual even when this meant delays in project implementation. There was a focus on providing continual training and skill development for project workers to ensure that they had the skills required to address the complex needs of the cohort. Four projects (three direct) acknowledged that it can be difficult for project workers to “walk away” from the young people after providing such intensive support and they ensured project workers were supported to deal with this.

Given the strong reliance on the skills of project workers and their ability to create meaningful engagement with young people, **high staff turnover** across projects (including of project workers, team leaders and staff in partner organisations) **impacted program implementation** across nine projects. A high rate of staff turnover has been a particular issue for projects where project workers work across multiple organisations. Staff turnover impacts negatively on the continuity of the project, as well the clarity of roles and responsibilities of workers and partners across the project. Some projects queried whether, given the partnership approach required, the responsibility for ensuring project continuity and clarity of purpose and roles should sit at the governance level rather than with the lead agency.

In **regional areas the ability to recruit** and maintain staff has been **particularly difficult**. The Latrobe project has experienced successive turnover of key individuals, including both project workers and the project team leader. The project reflected that the recruitment issue seems to be compounded in the area by the high level of government investment currently occurring, resulting in competition for the same skilled workers, short contract durations and the part-time nature of contracts for YCPG project workers.

*“there is just **always jobs** in the community sector.... So **employing good quality staff is a struggle in general**, and then I think the part-time aspect of the roles, the coaches are 0.8. So while that is good for some, there’s also others that want full-time work.”*

*“I **don’t think I’ve ever seen so many programs**. But I’m also just aware that there just isn’t the skill base. And it’s no criticism of anybody, but to staff the programs effectively and to support the frontline workers with senior workers that can provide the support.”*

“if you have a caseload of six young people, three workers, that’s 18 young people. There is scope for the staff that are currently in that space to, I believe, offer the additional service to more than those young people.”

*“I was, like, **give me more kids**, give me more kids”*

Three of the directed projects whose project workers work across multiple organisations indicated there were periods during implementation where project workers were **not working at full capacity**. This could have been a result of a lack of referrals being received, the exiting of multiple young people from the project at the same time, or the number of young people that were engaged in the project who were in remand at particular times. Where this occurs, planning and project design could provide for opportunities to support other young people in the community.

Six projects indicated that the **limited availability of project workers was a challenge** for project delivery. Three of these were directed projects where project workers had not been engaged in a full-time capacity, which meant that the assertive outreach aspect of these projects was difficult to implement. The other three were competitive projects where there was only one project worker employed and two of these workers were also

employed part-time. These projects expressed concern that should their project workers leave, this would significantly limit their ability to continue to deliver their projects.

Recommendation 11: Design and funding guidelines should support the hiring and retention of appropriate staff to ensure continuity. Provision of sufficient funding is key to this and might include:

- Supporting a minimum of one FTE per project (for each partner organisation hiring project workers).
- Supporting engagement of more than one worker in any project (to cover leave, resignation etc.)
- Ensuring agencies can provide access to logistical support for project workers, (e.g., cars, brokerage) where applicable.

Recommendation 12: Consider how to effectively provide incentives for potential employees to work on projects or support programs to ensure there are sufficient human resources to meet the demand for service delivery in the local area, particularly in regional areas.

Recommendation 13: Responsibility for project continuity, clarity and purpose of organisational roles should sit at the governance level rather than with the lead agency for organisations adopting partnership approaches. This would support consistency in communication and understanding across partner organisations.

6. What factors contributed to the program and projects being effective in achieving the outcomes?

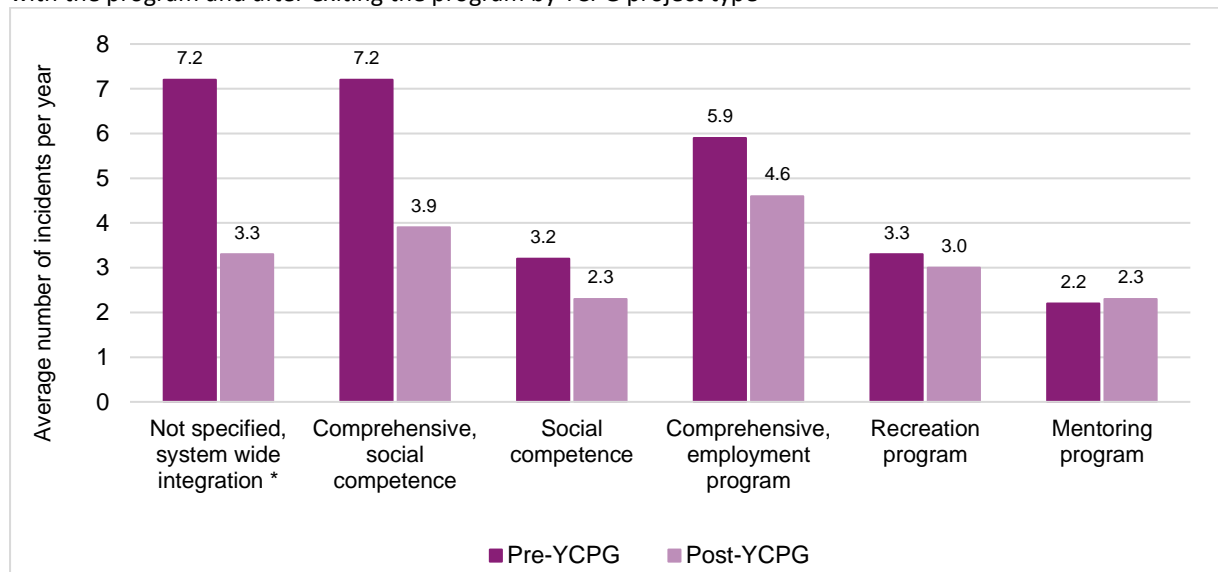
Program types

Figure 34 shows the average rate of incidents per 365 days for YCPG participants pre- and post-program by the type of program that engaged them. A list of project types and the individual project locations that belong to these project types can be found in the program design findings section earlier in this report. It was anticipated that young people engaged with these project types would show a reduction in offending, in order of greatest reduction to smallest reduction, as:

- Social competence training
- Comprehensive approach
- Employment program
- Mentoring program
- Recreation program

As shown in Figure 34, the program type with the greatest reduction in offending rate was the “System wide integration” approach taken by Ballarat. However, it should be noted that there were only four participants engaged with this program who exited the program prior to 31 March 2019 and so this result is not considered reliable. The type of projects to show the next greatest reduction in offending rate were those projects using the “Comprehensive and social competence approach”. This was followed by those projects using the social competence approach alone and those projects using the comprehensive approach, combined with an employment program. Those projects using a mentoring program approach showed an increase in the offending rate of its participants, the only approach to show an increase in offending rate.

Figure 34. Average number of incidents recorded per 365 days for YCPG program participants prior to engaging with the program and after exiting the program by YCPG project type



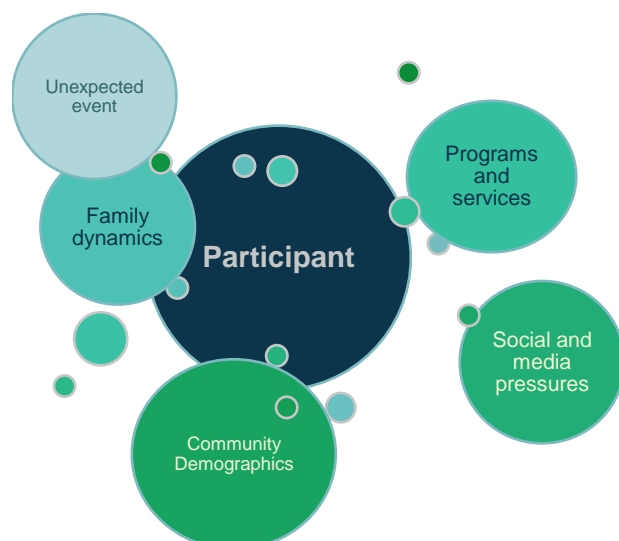
* Only four participants were engaged with this type of program and exited prior to 31 March 2019

^ Graph excludes project types with three or fewer participants in line with the CSA's confidentiality policy

Recommendation 14: Preference should be given to projects incorporating social competence training and/or comprehensive approaches, as projects involving either or both of these elements achieved the greatest reductions in offending. This is also in line with the existing evidence base about effective programs for young offenders.

Other factors

Understanding the various contextual factors relevant to each young person (including family and local factors) is important when trying to determine the extent to which projects contributed to any behaviour change observed in a young person. Life events, concurrently delivered intervention programs and government policies, as well as social circumstances can all impact on a young person's ability to engage with the project and to support



them in making conscious changes to their behaviour.

Interviews with projects included discussions to identify what characteristics of young people and their project engagement might be related to their observed behaviour changes. While not all projects were able to identify common characteristics that lead to positive changes, Tables 31 and 32 outline the common characteristics that were identified. The key difference between the younger and older groups is that families had a greater influence of for the younger cohort. Families also had a big influence for the at risk or highly vulnerable cohorts. For older cohorts, a higher level of intrinsic motivation was required in order to make positive progress towards outcomes. The cohort that sits across these groups (14 to 17 years of age) are likely to have higher rates of dis-engagement or interest in engaging at all as they are less influenced by family but are also less likely to have intrinsic motivators.

Table 31. Common characteristics observed by project workers in young people progressing towards positive outcomes by age cohort

Older Cohort > 15 (generally recidivist offenders)	Younger cohort < 15
<p>Internal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater intrinsic motivation e.g. desire for a job, desire to not return to prison, desire to own a car Increased sense of self-worth associated with income and receiving positive affirmation. 17–18 year olds starting to recognise the consequences of their actions on their future and are developing identity, feelings of self-worth and a better understanding of their actions impacting on others. <p>Family</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> positive relationships with their family improvement in family attachment occurring by breaking the cycle of blame between the parental figure and young person. Family history of employment related to stronger likelihood to want to gain employment <p>External</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and encouragement received from members of the community (outside of the project). Have a wider social group or circle, which provides positive feedback and reinforcement to support making changes, including reducing or stopping substance use. May include living with prosocial peers. Positive feedback and reinforcement received from Magistrates (where applicable) who are seeing them on a regular basis. Where the young person has an active lead that is able to use brokerage and pull the levers to support the young person. <p>Life circumstances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stability and consistency in environment, including stable accommodation, consistent food, no drugs used within the house. 	<p>Internal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At a stage where they want to engage voluntarily with the service <p>Family</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong family involvement that may support placement of boundaries around the young person with parental hierarchies still in place Families who increased their support for young people’s engagement in education throughout the duration of the project. Where support was provided for mental health issues in parental figures this helped to stabilise the home environment. <p>Life circumstances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Had not previously experienced feelings of being let down For those who are at risk and vulnerable it is easier to engage while they are still within the school system. <p>Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging in group activities and recreational programs that do not have a negative stigma attached Providing activities that lead to opportunities such as gaining a driver’s license, which particularly in regional communities opens up opportunities that are otherwise inaccessible.

Older Cohort > 15 (generally recidivist offenders)	Younger cohort < 15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher level of education within the family and higher socio-economic status are generally associated with greater engagement in education and apprenticeships • Have an interest or hobby that makes it easier to engage in activities within the community. • Those who engaged in apprenticeships generally had a higher socio-economic status and had support from parental figures. 	

Table 32. Common characteristics observed by project workers in young people not progressing towards outcomes by age cohort

Older Cohort > 15 (generally recidivist offenders)	Younger cohort < 16
<p>Internal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater concerns with entering the education system, including being intimidated by meeting new people. • Lower levels of self-determination for change, lower levels of intrinsic motivation • Higher levels of impulsivity • Lower Full Scale IQ <p>Family</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intergenerational history of unemployment • Lower levels of support from family, in particular where this became a barrier to being able to contact a young person • Surrounded by less supportive family who are not supportive of behaviour changes. <p>External</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surrounded by fewer peers who are not supportive of behaviour changes. • No stable base and more chaotic living environment • Change in external support service worker leading to young person's behaviour escalating, e.g. stopped coming to school, started using substances and began offending again. • No ability for services to engage in activities that might have supported proactive management. <p>Life circumstances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern around the stigma attached to their current levels of education (e.g. low literacy and numeracy) • Periods where engagement is steady but intervals between engaging with the worker becomes longer and eventually they disengage completely. • experience of a traumatic event in their life (or crisis situation). • low conversational and articulation skills. • Institutionalised with narrowing views, everything starts to become a barrier. 	<p>Internal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher levels of mistrust in society, may be paranoid about the way that individuals and society will respond to them. • Higher levels of anxiety about being in mainstream activities which impacts their ability to change attitudes and behaviours. <p>Life circumstances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Going through a crisis or a significant life event can impact their engagement and subsequent disengagement, and their offending patterns. • Those living independently or away from home were harder to engage for projects using less assertive outreach. <p>Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to engage young people in group activities and mentoring approaches once disengagement from school has occurred • Slips of time of 4-6 weeks without a project worker are potentially enough for disengagement to occur, in particular as these young people are used to people coming in and out of their life, and potentially "letting them down".

5. Summary

The YCPG commenced in July 2017 and involved the delivery of projects to 851 young people across 18 LGA sites. Projects delivered a range of services and activities to young people including assertive outreach, case management, family support, coaching and counselling, mentoring, group activities, and dedicated 'youth hubs'. Projects addressed a range of risk and protective factors with the young people they worked with, most commonly focussing on mental and physical health issues, substance use, low academic achievement, opportunities for prosocial involvement and adaptive coping skills.

Amongst the 568 young people who had exited by 30 June 2019, 40% had an unplanned exit from the program, 54% had a planned exit and the remaining 6% exited the program because they received a custodial sentence or were transferred to another intensive program. Projects in the competitive grant stream spent an average of 7.3 days working with young people who had a planned exit, and 6.2 days working with young people who had an unplanned exit.

Analysis of police-recorded offending data identified that YCPG participants had high levels of offending in the period prior to commencing on the YCPG, with 59% identified as having previously offended, and a quarter of them being recorded for six or more offences in the 12 months prior to program commencement. On average, each of these young people was recorded for 21 offences in the 12-month period.

Indeed, some project workers said they had underestimated the complexity of issues faced by their target cohorts. They assessed that more than half had physical or mental health issues and 43% had substance use issues.

Overall, there were emerging indicators of program effectiveness. Project workers observed that at least some young people reduced or stopped offending, decreased their substance use, increased their connectedness to the community, improved their relationships with their families or positive peers, improved their engagement in school, education or training, and/or improved their employment situations. In group discussions, project workers said that young people who participated in YCPG had decreased contact with police and improved sentencing outcomes at court, and that they had noticed increased self-esteem, confidence and accountability.

Notwithstanding limitations associated with the evaluation, at least some reduction in offending among young people involved in the YCPG was observed across the majority of projects. Among existing young offenders, 79% were recorded for offences pre-YCPG, reducing to 53% post-YCPG engagement. The average offending frequency for this group reduced from 4.2 incidents pre-YCPG to 2.9 incidents post-YCPG. There was also some evidence of reductions in the seriousness of young people's offending following participation in YCPG.

The evaluation identified several factors that supported the achievement of successful outcomes. The greatest reductions in offending were observed for projects that incorporated social competence training and comprehensive approaches, though reductions were observed across all project approaches except for mentoring programs. Project workers commented that it was important to address fundamental needs such

as housing stability before more complex social needs could be addressed. Rates of disengagement with the YCPG were higher where young people had instability in their living environments. Other key factors identified as contributing to successful outcomes for young people included: readiness to change and intrinsic motivation; positive reinforcement from families, prosocial peers and Magistrates; and active project workers who provided high levels of individualised support and accessed brokerage funding to address specific needs.

A key limitation of the evaluation was that it was not possible to determine the extent to which reductions in offending could be attributed to participation in the YCPG, as opposed to other factors such as involvement in other programs and/or time spent in custody. Options for addressing this will be considered in the next phase of the evaluation.

YCPG funding has recently been confirmed for a further two years, providing an opportunity for projects to continue, as well as for continued evaluation of the program. This will enable outcomes to be observed for longer follow-up periods, and for higher numbers of participants. In turn this will strengthen the capacity of the evaluation to make conclusions about the effectiveness and efficiency of the YCPG.

6. Summary of Koori Youth Crime Prevention Grants (KYCPG) Program Evaluation

Background

This section provides a brief overview of the findings of the evaluation undertaken by the Koori Justice Unit (KJU) within DJCS of the Koori Youth Crime Prevention Grants (KYCPG) program. The KYCPG was allocated \$1.5 million in grants for programs that engaged Koori youth aged 8–24 years old, as well as their families, with the aim of preventing or reducing negative contact with the criminal justice system. Nine Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees (RAJACs) invited, reviewed and endorsed applications from local community organisations, which were then reviewed by KJU and CCPU. Across Victoria, 25 community-based partnership projects were funded with an average grant amount of around \$56,400 over two years (not including one project that was funded \$147,900 over two years).

The evaluation utilised a mixed methods approach that included stakeholder interviews, a review of project-related information, and a literature review. It was conducted with consideration of the limitations inherent in evaluating projects funded through the KYCPG, which were comparatively small in scale, primarily non-intensive, and often built on existing initiatives. Project outcomes could therefore not be evaluated in the same way as for projects under the YCPG program. As well as highlighting what worked well about projects under the KYCPG, the evaluation also sought to identify lessons learned around how to better design and deliver crime prevention projects for Aboriginal young people in future.

Findings

Project design and delivery

1. Projects were granted adequate flexibility with regard to the design of their projects and the ability to make variations to project activities throughout delivery, though some workers were not aware that making such changes was an option. However, organisations consistently discussed the need for longer and more flexible project timeframes, with more time required to establish projects, and to make meaningful changes in participants' lives.
2. The grant funding received was not considered adequate or stable enough to achieve longer-term crime prevention outcomes, in line with the funding limitations outlined above. Organisations were resourceful in leveraging additional resources from other organisations, and some made significant in-kind contributions, to support project delivery. Nevertheless, in many cases, the total resourcing was not sufficient to cover costs.
3. High-quality staff and mentors are critical to project success, and project successes were frequently attributed to the strengths of individual project workers. However, organisations experienced significant challenges in recruiting and retaining staff. In part, this was due to the short-term nature of contracts and salaries that were often non-competitive for the sector.
4. Consistency is important in building relationships with young people, and requires activities to be run on a frequent and ongoing basis. Building a sense of continuity by holding activities at the same time, place and with the same staff each week was an important part of maintaining engagement with participants.
5. There was a general consensus among organisations that prevention and early intervention activities were equally important, and most activities were therefore offered to all young people. While concerns were raised that this means young people at high risk of contact with the justice system

may be 'missing out', it was highlighted that greater resourcing and appropriately trained staff are necessary for engaging this cohort of young people.

6. Projects had adapted activities over time to be more targeted based on age groups, after identifying initial difficulties in recruiting young people to participate. Rather than broad-based programs aimed at people aged 8 to 24, projects found information and activities need to be delivered in an age-appropriate format to promote engagement and maximise positive impacts.
7. All projects supported young people to develop close and supportive relationships with their peers, families and communities, and most acted as a 'gateway' through which young people could be linked with support services. However, only a few projects focused on actively supporting engagement with education and/or employment. Projects could focus more on strengthening this protective factor.
8. All projects embedded cultural strengthening elements in their activities, which was considered critical to project success and increasing protective factors. However, organisations identified that there could be greater focus on cultural strengthening activities for young women, which were more restricted than those offered to young men.

Project impacts

The evaluation examined high-level evidence about the extent to which the KYCPG project activities contributed to positive changes in attitudes and behaviours through increasing young peoples' protective factors, in the cultural strengthening domains of: facilitating connection, imparting knowledge and/or encouraging expression.

Numerous project activities were delivered consistent with each of these domains. Project workers observed that these activities contributed to positive outcomes in young people, including:

- an **increased sense of belonging**, evidenced by strong connections with peers and older role models, greater care and respect for others, and a willingness to share experiences with others facing similar challenges.
- the development of **positive self-identity and self-esteem**, with participants demonstrating increased confidence, self-esteem, and resilience, leading to greater independence, and more capacity to communicate emotions and manage anxiety.
- **increased responsibility for actions**, with participants showing improved understanding of the consequences of their actions, both positive and negative. They were motivated to take greater responsibility in helping out at home, at community events, or during project activities.

Finally, most projects sought to involve or support young peoples' families or caregivers and the broader community, and emphasised the importance of considering the impacts of their projects at these levels. Such impacts included, for example, positive changes in household dynamics resulting from several family members being involved in a project.

A detailed summary of the KYCPG evaluation is provided in Appendix 6.

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8. Appendices

Appendix 1: Directed Youth Crime Prevention Grants

LGA	Project	Project description
Geelong	Geelong Reignite Project	<p>The Reignite Geelong Project is a place-based, collaborative community response for a targeted group of 18 high risk taking, recidivist offenders aged 15 to 18 within the Geelong region. The project employs specialist youth and family workers to work intensively with the young people and their families to recognise aspirations and develop prosocial connections including education, economic participation and community connection.</p> <p>Project partners are Barwon Child Youth & Family (lead agency), Victoria Police, Barwon Adolescent Taskforce (BATForce), G21 Region Opportunities for Work (GROW), Jigsaw Health Services, Jobs Victoria Employment Network (JVEN), Reconnect, Whitelion and Youth Plus.</p>
Latrobe	ReBoot	<p>ReBoot is an early intervention program that provides intensive support to 30 young people aged 10–14 who have a demonstrated risk of engaging with the criminal justice system or are currently engaged in low-level offending. Through coaching and mentoring, ReBoot helps the young person and their family access services and actively engage with education and community participation opportunities. Program participants are identified through the Early Identification Tool developed by Victoria Police.</p> <p>Project partners are Anglicare Victoria (lead agency), Victoria Police, Quantum Support Services, Berry Street and Latrobe Valley Flexible Learning Options.</p>
Ballarat	Ballarat Youth Crime Prevention Project	<p>This project provides up to 40 recidivist young people aged 10 to 17 years with intensive support by bringing together case workers who have had involvement with them to review the case history together and develop a holistic plan of action. The plan includes a tailored package of therapeutic interventions, family relationship work and support, connection back into education and individualised support services.</p> <p>Project partners are Ballarat Community Health (lead agency), Victoria Police, Child and Family Services Ballarat, Berry Street (Western), SalvoConnect Ballarat, Centacare Ballarat, Highlands Local Learning and Employment Network (LLEN) and Ballarat City Council.</p>
Hume	Youth Justice Alliance	<p>This project targets 120 highly vulnerable and 18 high-risk recidivist young people aged 10–24 living in or near the Banksia Gardens Public Housing estate. Young people are engaged to participate in meaningful sporting or recreation activities through an Adrenaline Hub and referred to appropriate services co-located at Banksia Gardens if they are assessed as highly vulnerable. This may include drugs and alcohol support, legal assistance, employment or mental health support. Recidivist young people are referred by the courts and will receive intensive support and community conferencing provided by Jesuit Social Services.</p> <p>Project partners are Banksia Gardens Community Services (lead agency), Jesuit Social Services, FMC, Melbourne Victory, Northern Community Legal Centre, Youth Projects, Headspace, Dianella Health, and CVGT.</p>

LGA	Project	Project description
Wyndham	Change It Up	The project provides intensive support services to 15 young people aged 16 to 24 and their families to create a pathway away from offending. The wraparound support model will provide young people with a comprehensive needs assessment, individualised case plan, appropriate referrals, case coordination and brokerage of resources to deliver tailored and flexible support for young recidivist offenders and high victim impact first-time offenders. Project partners are the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) (lead agency), Victoria Police, iEmpower, Jesuit Social Services, Victoria Legal Aid, Whitelion, Wyndham CEC and Wyndham City Council.
Casey and Dandenong	PIVOT - Casey and Dandenong Youth Crime Prevention Project	The Casey and Dandenong Youth Crime Prevention projects provides tailored support for 40 young people aged 14 to 22 years who have been identified as serious or recidivist offenders through a three phase approach (establishing a foundation, providing intensive support and then gradually reducing services). This will primarily be done via assertive outreach through "Guides", who will create an individualised plan for each young person. The Guide will provide care co-ordination, crisis management, individual therapy, as well as participate with the young people in the after-hours prosocial activity space and co-facilitate recreation, adventure oriented and other group work. Project partners are the Youth Support and Advocacy Service (YSAS) (lead agency), Victoria Police, City of Casey/City of Greater Dandenong, Jesuit Social Services, South East Local Learning and Employment Network (LLEN), Victorian Legal Aid, TRY, WAYSS, Salvation Army, Taskforce, Concern Australia, Centre for Multicultural Youth, Carers of Africa and the New Hope Foundation.
Frankston	PIVOT - Frankston Youth Crime Prevention Project	The Frankston Youth Crime Prevention Project provides intensive support to 20 young people aged 12–21 and their families by a dedicated 'Advocate'. The Advocate works with each young person and their family to build their resilience and reduce reliance on antisocial strategies as a path away from offending. They will also facilitate referrals into partner services, such as Navigator and Jobs Victoria Employment Network (JVEN), based on the needs of each young person. Project partners are the Youth Support and Advocacy Service (lead agency), Victoria Police, City of Frankston, Whitelion, SalvoCare, Taskforce, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Mission Australia and the New Hope Foundation.

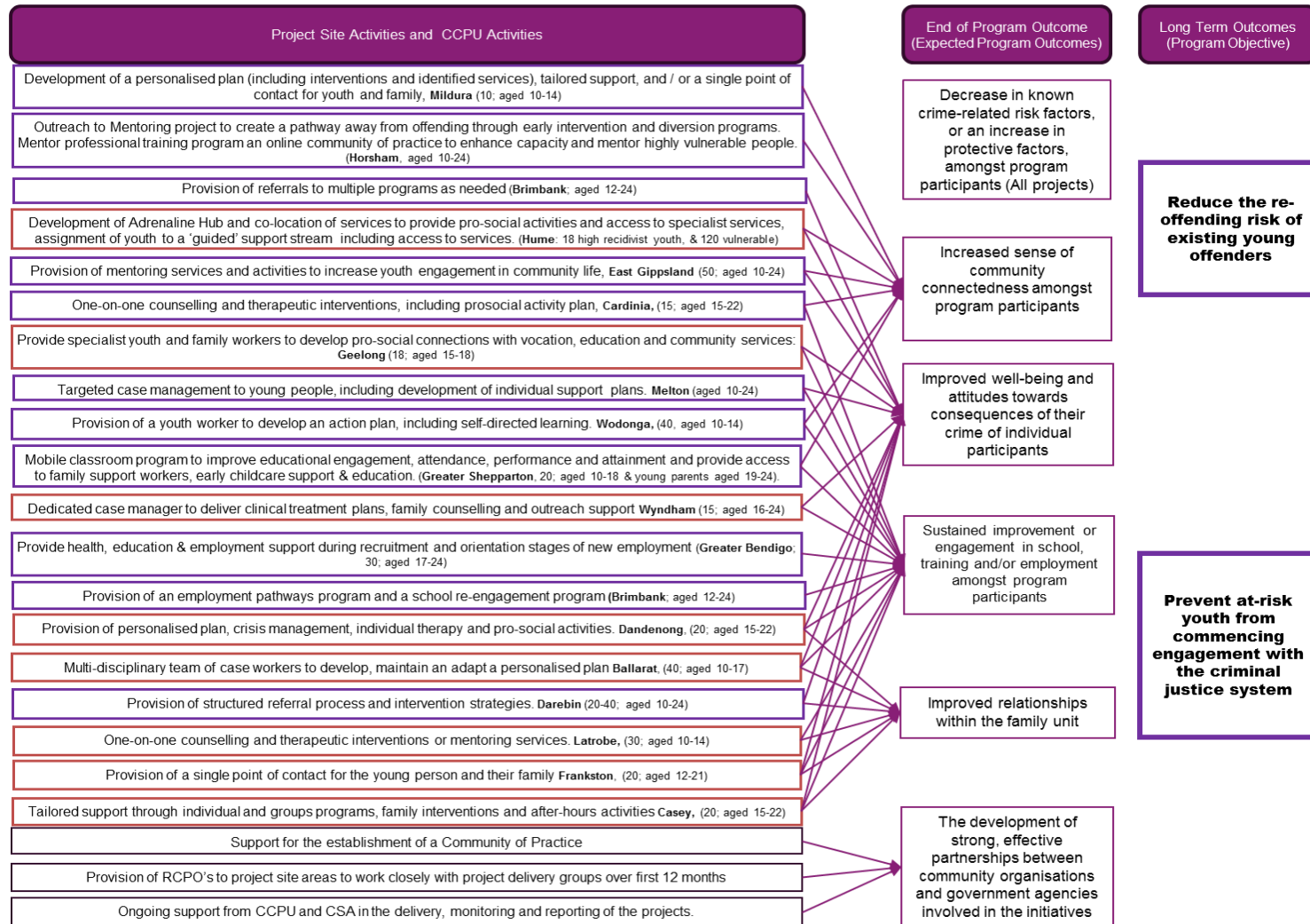
Appendix 2: Competitive Youth Crime Prevention Grants

LGA	Project name	Project description
East Gippsland	Gippsland Engaged Mentoring Service for Crime Prevention	This partnership project, led by Workways Australia, will expand an existing mentoring program to approximately 50 young people aged 10–24 who have had, or are at risk of having, involvement with the criminal justice system in East Gippsland. Youth engagement activities will support reconnection to community life, referrals to service networks, skills and resilience building, and links to education and employment pathways.
Horsham	Connect the service puzzle for youth at risk – outreach to mentoring	Centre for Participation led development of a coordinated framework for identifying, engaging with and providing linked services to highly vulnerable young people aged 10–24, through a collective partnership including Horsham City Council, Grampians Community Health and Wimmera Southern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network, Horsham College and Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Cooperative. The Outreach and youth mentoring program provides flexible case management support and planning.
Shepparton	OutTeach	Save the Children Australia, in partnership with Victoria Police and Youth Justice, provides a youth worker and teacher to work from a mobile classroom with 20 young people aged 10–24 with high levels of recidivist criminal behaviour and risk of further engagement with the criminal justice system in Greater Shepparton.
Wodonga	Building Resilient Adolescents through Community Engagement (BRACE)	Junction Support Services, in partnership with Jesuit Social Services, Victoria Police and Wodonga City Council, is delivering the Building Resilient Adolescents through Community Engagement (BRACE) Program to 40 at-risk young people aged 10–14 and their families in Wodonga. The program engages young people from local schools in activities designed to strengthen their commitment to school, reduce involvement with police and professional services, and foster connection with community. A Youth Worker will support individual activity planning.
Bendigo	Second Chance	Job agency CVGT Australia has been awarded \$200,000 to lead a partnership of a wide range of agencies to provide a diversionary health, education and employment support program in the municipality of Greater Bendigo to reduce custodial sentencing and recidivism of up to 40 young people aged 17–24 who appear before the Bendigo Magistrates' Court. The project will also facilitate education and employment pathways.
Mildura	Mildura Youth Commitment Program	A consortium led by Sunraysia Community Health Services provides intensive, wrap-around case management support to address risk and enhance protective factors for 10 young people aged 10–14 at significant risk of becoming involved with the criminal justice system, and their families. An Inter-Agency Commitment Panel enhances service coordination.

LGA	Project name	Project description
Brimbank	Youth Umbrella Project (Y.U.P)	The Youth Umbrella Project led by The Youth Junction Incorporated provides a range of targeted youth service interventions that reduce risk and increase resilience for 120 disadvantaged CALD young people aged 12–24 in Brimbank over two years, working with a wide range of organisations to create practical, purposeful and sustainable outcomes towards employment, education and training, and preventing isolation and disconnection. Case management and multiple programs support participants.
Darebin	iStart... Engaging Arabic-speaking youth in Darebin	Arabic Welfare Inc works with Victoria Police, Youth Support and Advocacy Service, Headspace Glenroy and referral partners to address factors that increase the vulnerability and risk-taking behaviours of young residents of Darebin who are aged 10 to 24 and from a Diverse Middle Eastern/Arabic Speaking background and have had contact with the criminal justice system. The program provides a structured referral process and intervention strategies that work with young people and their parents through case management, counselling and capacity-building activities that have a culturally responsive approach.
Melton	UTURN 193	Melton City Council and partners including Victoria Police, Sudanese Community of Melton, Odyssey House, Djerriwarrh Health Services and Djerriwarrh Community and Education Services, provide sporting activities, case management and wilderness activities to enhance protective factors and address risk factors for Sudanese young people aged 10–24 years experiencing vulnerabilities and contact with the criminal justice system. Priority is given to young people aged 13 to 18 years.
Cardinia	Ignite Program	The Youth Support and Advocacy Service (YSAS) leads the Ignite Program to engage 20 young people in Cardinia aged 15–22 who are involved in the justice system, in partnership with Cardinia Shire Council and Taskforce. The project utilises an assertive youth outreach approach that includes therapeutic elements and individual action planning, and will engage participants in recreation and adventure activities to connect them more effectively with their peers and services.

Appendix 3: Youth Crime Prevention Program Logic (high level)

The following program logic was developed with the CCPU in August 2017 and shared with projects to identify which outcomes projects had a strong alignment with.



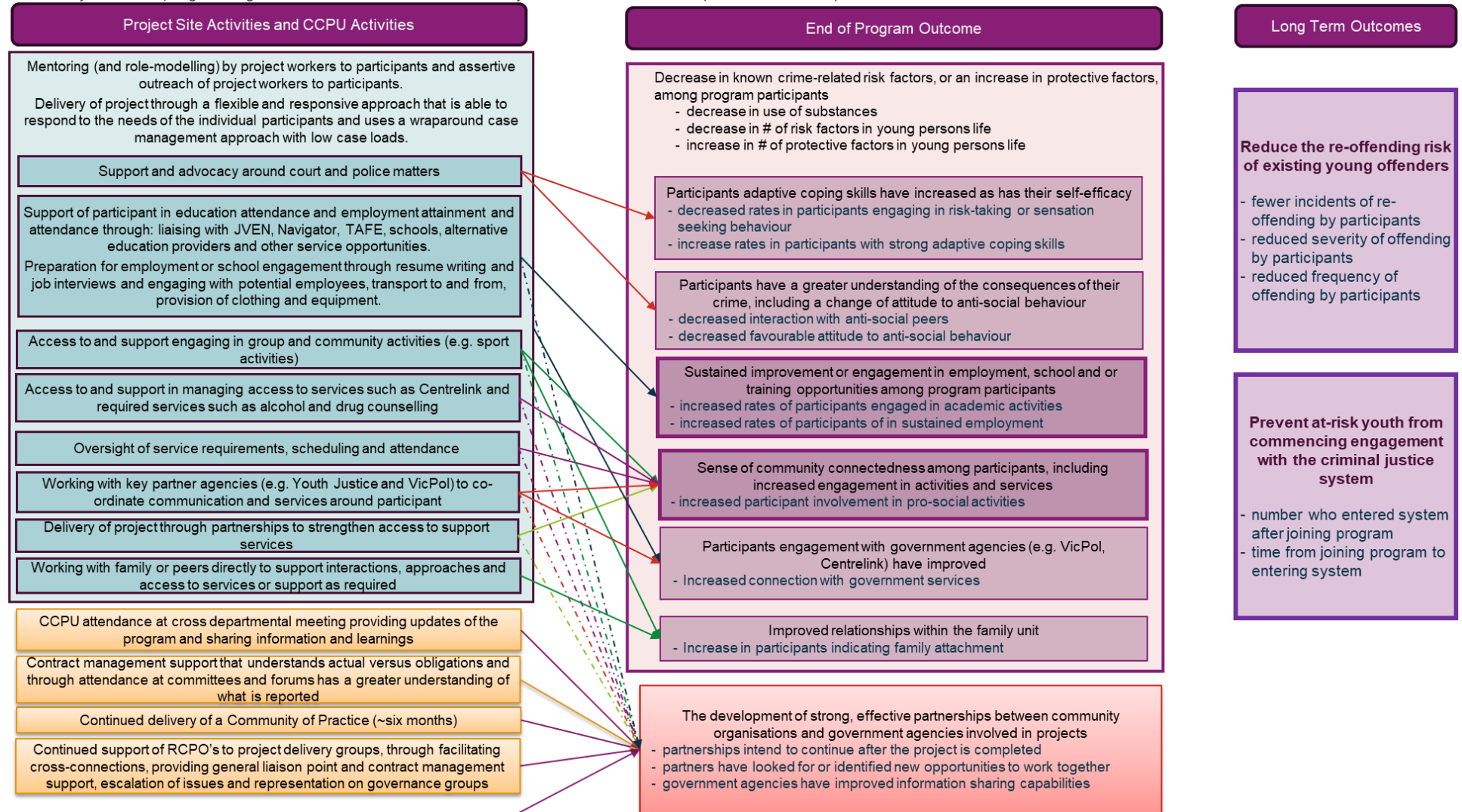
Projects mapped to End of Program Outcomes

The following table indicates which outcomes were identified as a key focus for the project and as such has a higher level of alignment to the their project outcomes

LGA	YCPG Stream	Decrease in known crime-related risk factors, or an increase in protective factors, amongst program participants	Increased sense of community connectedness amongst program participants	Improved well-being and attitudes towards consequences of their crime of individual participants	Sustained improvement or engagement in school, training and/or employment amongst program participants	Improved relationships within the family unit	Development of strong, effective partnerships between community organisations and government agencies
Ballarat	Directed						
Bendigo	Competitive						
Brimbank	Competitive						
Cardinia	Competitive						
Casey	Directed						
Dandenong	Directed						
Darebin	Competitive						
East Gippsland	Competitive						
Frankston	Directed						
Geelong	Directed						
Horsham	Competitive						
Hume	Directed						
Latrobe	Directed						
Melton	Competitive						
Mildura	Competitive						
Shepparton	Competitive						
Wodonga	Competitive						
Wyndham	Directed						

Revised program logic

In January 2019 the program logic was revised with CCPU to identify the activities and outputs that were expected to contribute to the identified outcomes.



Appendix 4: Survey Risk and Protective Factors

The following table presents the risk and protective factors measured in the long version of the survey. Survey responses received often did not provide response to the education and employment domains and as a result these have been left out of the analysis in the mid-term evaluation report.

Individual and Peer factors	Family Factors
Protective Factors	Protective Factors
Belief in a moral order	Family attachment (mum)
Adaptive coping skills	Family attachment (dad)
Religion/spirituality	Opportunities for prosocial involvement
Opportunities for prosocial involvement	Rewards for prosocial involvement
Risk Factors	Risk Factors
Rebelliousness	Poor family management
Mental health (anxiety and depression)	Family conflict
Risk-taking or sensation seeking behaviour	Family Separation
Gang involvement	Family history of substance abuse
Lack of emotional control	Favourable antisocial attitudes of parents
Favourable attitudes to antisocial behaviour	
Self-centred attitudes	
Alcohol and drug use	
Perceived risks of drug use	
Interaction with antisocial peers	
Rewards for antisocial involvement	
Friends use of drugs	
Favourable attitudes towards drugs	
Community factors	Education / Employment Factors
Protective Factors	Protective Factors
Opportunities for prosocial involvement	Opportunities for prosocial involvement
Rewards for prosocial involvement	Rewards for prosocial involvement
Risk Factors	Risk Factors
Low community attachment and community disengagement	School failure or low academic achievement
Community disorganisation	Low commitment to school or work
Personal transition and mobility	Workplace or School bullying (victim of)
Community laws/norms favourable to substance use	Low salary
Perceived availability of drugs	Job insecurity
	Working long hours
	Unemployment

Appendix 5: Engagement Activities

Engagement Activity	
In take session and exit or closure session	
Care team meeting	Generally organised by key worker in young person's life invites all organisations working with the young person, the young person and their family to discuss goals, progress and requirements
Mentoring sessions	Generally a formal mentoring session through a related program such as Horsham or east Gippsland, although other mentoring sessions have been conducted by projects
Counselling sessions	Formal counselling sessions for issues such as mental health and substance use
Behaviour change programs	Generally short term programs focused on specific programs, e.g. P.A.R.T.Y Program – Prevent Alcohol and Risk Related Trauma in Youth - One day injury awareness and prevention program for youth aged 15 and older. These may be court order requirements
Meetings with family where young person is present	Often associated with home visits, meetings and engagement that occurs with one or more family members present with the young person
Group activities	Includes activities such as football and wilderness activities
Individual activities	Includes activities such as attending the gym with a young person
Education and training	Includes literature and numeracy activities
Employment and job ready	Includes activities such as resume writing and interview training
Informal sessions	While these sessions may be informal as young people are engaging with project workers they are practice informed, includes activities such as lunch, transporting a young person to school or between appointments
Informal contact	Contact with the young person through phone calls and text messaging.
Visits in remand	
Addressing or advocating for young person in court or police matters	Includes attending court appearances and visiting in police cells
Service sessions	Attendance at any sessions required by the justice system such as Youth Justice appointments, ROPES course, signing into the police station
Accessing services	Engaging with services (government or other) that are not required by the justice system such as Centrelink, doctors appointments, and drivers license tests
Family engagement without young person	Engagement with family members without the young person, it may be directly related to the young person e.g. arranging transport or discussing concerns, or it might be more broadly related to the family member such as supporting attendance at the doctors or Centrelink or arranging mental health support.
Service co-ordination or liaison	Engagement with other services (already engaged with or potential support providers) to co-ordinate and liaise the young person or identified.
Administration	

Appendix 6: Koori Youth Crime Prevention Grants Program Evaluation
Report

Community-based crime prevention programs for Aboriginal young people

Final evaluation (extract for CCPU)

November 2019





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Acronyms

DJCS	Department of Justice and Community Safety
KESO	Koori Education Support Officer
KJU	Koori Justice Unit
KYCPG	Koori Youth Crime Prevention Grants
KYJW	Koori Youth Justice Worker
RAJAC	Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee

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A note on terminology

The term 'Aboriginal' is used throughout this report to refer to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of Victoria. Where the original data, program title or direct quote refers to this population as 'Indigenous' or 'Koori', these terms have been kept for the sake of consistency.



1. Koori youth crime prevention program

Crime prevention programs for Aboriginal young people in Victoria

The YCPG allocated \$1.5 million in grants to programs that empower and re-engage Koori youth aged 8–24 years old, as well as their families, with the aim of preventing or reducing negative contact with the criminal justice system. The Koorie Youth Council provided clear advice regarding the needs of Koori youth in Victoria, which informed the design of the Koori Youth Crime Prevention Grants (KYCPG). This advice recommended the provision of: ongoing opportunities for local youth to gather; youth focused cultural strengthening programs; family focused programs; and regional youth gatherings.

The KYCPG were designed to support Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to provide early intervention activities that target at-risk youth and provide a pre-charge diversion option for police and courts. Each of DJCS's nine Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees (RAJACs) invited, reviewed and endorsed applications from local community organisations, which were then reviewed by KJU and CCPU. Across Victoria, 25 community-based partnership projects were funded with an average grant amount of around \$56,400 (not including one project that was funded \$147,900).

Evaluation methodology

The KYCPG evaluation, conducted over a two-year period, sought to understand how well this grant program worked for Aboriginal young people and what lessons could be learned around how to better design and deliver crime prevention projects for Aboriginal young people in future. The following objectives were therefore developed to guide the evaluation:

- Understand the ways in which the KYCPG has strengthened the capacity of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to provide effective crime prevention initiatives for young people at risk of offending;
- Determine the extent to which the design and delivery of the projects align with the evidence base of 'what works' as identified in past research and evaluations of Indigenous-specific crime prevention initiatives;
- Determine whether there has been an increase in protective factors for Aboriginal young people involved in the initiatives;
- Formulate recommendations and provide advice about future design and delivery of crime prevention initiatives to best meet the needs of Aboriginal young people.

The evaluation used a mixed methods approach consisting of stakeholder interviews, a review of project-related information, and a literature review. It was conducted with consideration of the limitations inherent in evaluating projects funded through the KYCPG, which were comparatively small in scale and often built on existing initiatives. The KYCPG activities were primarily non-intensive interventions that focused on increasing protective factors of youth. These activities were not targeted to specific individual needs and did not include individualised risk assessment or service programming. For these reasons, project outcomes could not be evaluated in the same way as for the directed and competitive streams under the YCPG program.

Careful consideration was given to ensure the evaluation activities are consistent with accepted guidelines for conducting ethical research and respectful of Aboriginal cultural values. An ethics application outlining the evaluation methodology was approved by the Justice Human Research Ethics Committee. While the evaluation was covered by ethics to interview Aboriginal young people, the KJU expressly chose not to pursue this option. Given there was concurrent work occurring across government during the evaluation period that involved significant consultation with Aboriginal young people, the KJU was cognisant of the increased risks of over-research and consultation fatigue for this cohort.

Evaluation findings

Project design and delivery

The literature review identified a number of ‘best practice’ characteristics that, if put in place, would likely enhance the effectiveness of crime prevention strategies for Aboriginal young people:

- ✓ Community ownership over project design and delivery
- ✓ Adequate and stable funding
- ✓ High quality staff and mentors
- ✓ Frequent and ongoing contact with young people
- ✓ A focus on high-risk young people
- ✓ A focus on young people at an early age
- ✓ Addressing multiple protective factors in a single program
- ✓ Embedding culture in programs in a way that builds positive identity and self-esteem

This section provides a summary of the existing evidence (that is, what past research and evaluations have found to be effective for Aboriginal crime prevention programs) and discusses the extent to which the design and delivery of the projects included in this evaluation reflects each of these ‘best practice’ characteristics.

Community ownership over project design and delivery

What past research has found to be effective

Past research and evaluations emphasised the importance of Aboriginal involvement in the design and delivery of programs to foster genuine community ownership.^{i ii} Programs that had not been developed in conjunction with Aboriginal communities were, overall, found to be less successful.^{iii iv}

True community ownership ensures that programs are more culturally appropriate and fine-tuned to local priorities. Ensuring sufficient flexibility for project timeframes to fit with community needs and the contextual realities on the ground was consistently found to determine the effectiveness and sustainability of projects.^{v vi}


Findings from this evaluation: projects are granted adequate design flexibility except for timeframes

Overall, project workers felt there was a high level of flexibility within the funding agreements for organisations to design their own projects. However, there was mixed awareness among project workers of the ability to make variations to project activities throughout the delivery phase, so long as these changes are communicated back to the KJU.

Where there was awareness, this flexibility had enabled organisations to shape their responses to fit the realities of the local community and meet the evolving needs and interests of the young people participating in the project, who were often encouraged to play an active role in deciding what activities to run. However, some workers who were unaware of the flexibility available to them and would have sought variations in order to improve project outcomes, had they known this was an option.

“KJU gets it. They have a cultural understanding that different communities have different issues and that one size will not fit all community needs. The KJU trusts us and gives us ownership over the projects, which is wonderful.” (Community organisation)

“The great thing about KJU funding is that, while there are some parameters, there is flexibility for the community to shape its own projects around community needs.” (Community organisation)



Nonetheless, there is scope within the funding arrangements to further enhance community ownership. Organisations consistently discussed the need for longer and more flexible project timeframes:

- A two-year funding period was considered too short for a project to make a meaningful change within the community in relation to crime prevention.
- Timeframes for grant application processes often demand a quick turnaround. The short period of time between the opening date of a funding round and the submission deadline means that organisations are often rushed to undertake research, design projects, estimate costs, reach out to potential partnerships, leverage additional resources, and write up their proposals.
- Slow project application approval processes and subsequent delays in the release of payments can be difficult for community organisations to manage, as the expected deliverables remain the same but there is less time to achieve them. For a two-year project, the impacts of these delays can be significant.
- More time is required for the project establishment phase – that is, between the time in which an organisation is notified its application is successful and the time when project delivery commences. Most organisations experienced some challenges in getting their project ‘off the ground’ and discussed the need for an additional establishment period to allow time to recruit staff, secure venues, develop partnerships, establish governance structures, engage project participants and gain traction in the community.
- The amount of money organisations applied for was sometimes different to the size of the grant they later received. This was challenging for organisations as they were expected to start implementation immediately and had to quickly scale up or cut back on their planned activities.

“Workers on the ground have great ideas that don’t surface because everybody is in a rush.” (Community organisation)

“Two years is not enough. By the time the project is up and running maybe there is no funding in future. You need time to learn and fine-tune it. It’s really great that you can bring the project to the community and then it just suddenly stops and that can be really hard.” (Community Organisation)

“Building partnerships and relationships takes a long time. It didn’t make sense to spend time developing this relationship until funding was actually secured. It also takes time to recruit the right people to the roles or to rearrange workplans and make time in the calendars of existing staff in the organisation. Again, you don’t know if you will get the funding so you need time for this.” (Community organisation)

Recommendation 1:

There should be increased flexibility in project timeframes to fit with community needs and ensure organisations are aware of the flexible options available to them:

- Where possible, extend project timeframes to a minimum of three years.
- For new initiatives, consider a standard minimum timeframe of three months for project design and preparation of a grant application, and a further three months for project planning and establishment.
- Improve communication with funded organisations around flexible arrangements in the funding agreements.

Adequate and stable funding

What past research has found to be effective

A major issue identified in the implementation of programs for Aboriginal people is that they rarely proceed beyond the ‘pilot’ stage and are expected to produce results in unrealistically short timeframes and with a shortage of staff.^{5 8 vii} Sustainable programs are crucial to maximise long-term crime prevention outcomes in Aboriginal communities and require adequate and stable funding commitments.

Findings from this evaluation: grant funding is often not adequate or stable enough to achieve desired outcomes

Many organisations were extremely resourceful in using the small amount of funding they received through the grant to leverage additional resources from other organisations, such as venues or staff, and/or have made significant in-kind contributions. There are numerous examples where organisations, which were previously coordinating activities on a shoe-string budget prior to receiving a grant, were then able to run more structured activities or recruit a paid worker to deliver them. Despite this, in the vast majority of cases, the total resourcing was not sufficient to cover staff salaries, day-to-day running expenses, nor costs for transportation.

Furthermore, there appears to have been challenges for organisations in appropriately budgeting for project delivery given the small amount of funding. Not setting aside adequate funding to cover transportation (such as a bus) or appropriate facilities were repeatedly raised as major barriers to project delivery. Many young people come from low-income families who cannot afford to travel to project activities by car or public transport, may have lost their drivers licence, or live in regional areas not adequately serviced by public transport. Several organisations were forced to use temporary and unsuitable facilities for project activities, or to put young people on waiting lists.

All the organisations spoke about difficulties they faced with securing ongoing funding and the strain of constantly pursuing further funding to support the continued delivery of existing projects. In the absence of a funding model that builds in longer-term sustainability, projects were concerned that progress they had made would be reversed: namely, the time and effort it takes to engage young people and build their trust, the loss of and damage to these relationships when the funding stops, and the loss of momentum and groundwork that has gone into getting to the point of consistent project delivery.

“Our project provides a backbone of learning for our young people. But then when the money is gone, the children’s journey is chopped. Their attachments are gone, their sense of security. The anchoring and foundations need to be kept engaged over their life journey.” (Community organisation)

“Currently, there is such a great need to secure recurring funding that staff spend so much time and energy applying for grants to create a steady income stream that this cuts down on the time they can spend on project delivery.” (Community organisation)

Recommendation 2:


Additional guidance should be provided to organisations around budgeting for project delivery.

High quality staff and mentors

What past research has found to be effective

In general, programs that were more successful recruited locally knowledgeable, well-trained staff and mentors with an ongoing commitment to the program. The competence and motivation of staff and mentors, in addition to training and supervision, were found to be essential for the delivery of successful projects. The quality and depth of the relationships between staff or mentors and young people highly influences the effectiveness of programs, as strong positive relationships are more likely to contribute to regular attendance, low dropout and a higher level of satisfaction.^{viii ix}

In the Aboriginal context, mentoring appears to be a particularly promising initiative as it fits well with Indigenous teaching and learning styles and can help to build strong collective ties within the community.^{x xi xii} Research has found that mentoring can have positive effects for young people in a number of indirect



ways, for example by improving their self-esteem and sense of hope for the future, through to increasing their engagement with school, family and community.^{xiii}

Findings from this evaluation: quality staff/mentors are key to project success but are difficult to recruit and retain

During interviews, the perceived success of the projects was frequently attributed to the strengths of individual project workers who are highly motivated and work tirelessly to engage young people, creatively leverage resources, and build relationships. Organisations highlighted the importance of recruiting project workers who are connected into and respected by the local community, have strong cultural knowledge, and are experienced community service workers.

While some organisations sought external volunteer mentors to be involved in the project, mentoring was commonly viewed as being embedded within the roles of project workers. Some felt that the responsibilities attached to a mentor role are beyond what can be expected of an unpaid volunteer or that there can be a lack of oversight when using external mentors around the quality of their interactions with young people. Embedding mentoring within the role of project workers provides young people with consistent and reliable support, with a worker being better placed to link young people with the services they may require.

It was emphasised that project workers often go ‘above and beyond’ their paid role by being available to provide support and mentoring outside of designated hours, using their own car to transport young people, addressing the needs of participants by covering multiple small costs (such as food and transport) or taking young people and their families to services in their own time. Community organisations felt this unpaid labour, which stems from a worker’s deep sense of responsibility and care for their community, was crucial in supporting young people but often unrecognised by funding agencies as a significant input.


“The key to a successful crime prevention project is having a facilitator and role model who believes in a young person. Having a caring and supportive relationship is essential for the young person to build their resilience.” (Community organisation)

“Project staff have to make time to speak to kids after hours, as you can’t say to a kid “no, I can’t help you right now”. It’s your own community you are looking after. When you work in community, the hours aren’t nine to five. You have deeper cultural responsibilities.” (Community organisation)

“Workers put in unpaid overtime all the time and do so much off their own back because they care, but there’s no financial compensation for this. If government put a dollar figure on all the in-kind, they’d be out of pocket.” (Community organisation)

However, the evaluation also identified a series of challenges in relation to staff resourcing and capacity:

- Many projects reported being impacted by serious constraints on staffing resources and high staff turnover, which was found to limit the capacity of the projects to run their activities.
- Difficulties in recruiting to project worker roles has resulted in delays and disruptions in the delivery of activities. Many project workers are employed on part-time and short-term contracts. According to several organisations, it was hard to compete with mainstream services that offer higher salaries. In this highly competitive environment, it is crucial to invest in workforce development to increase the pool of qualified talent and to strengthen employment pathways within the Aboriginal community-controlled sector.
- To fill recruitment gaps, there is a heavy reliance on unpaid volunteers who are hard to recruit and retain.
- To fill recruitment gaps, in some cases, administrative staff with no previous project management experience were transferred across from other parts of the organisation to coordinate and run the project activities. In other cases, projects ‘borrowed’ workers from other services in the local area.



This was not, however, a reliable arrangement since these external workers were often overstretched, as they had competing responsibilities and priorities.

- Projects emphasised the importance of having two or more project staff in attendance at any given time to ensure the smooth implementation of project activities, as well as the safety of participants:
 - After a series of incidents that posed a threat to staff safety, several projects realised they were not appropriately equipped to work with young people with behavioural issues as they require additional staff and training.
 - While one project worker sets up, runs and packs up the activities, there often needs to be a second project worker to drive young people to and from the venue.
 - Having at least one male and one female worker is important to ensure that the young people attending the project activities receive culturally appropriate support.
- Several organisations also raised staff ‘burn out’ as a serious risk for their project workers, particularly given the personal commitment that many workers bring to the role as outlined above, but often did not have a formalised strategy for managing this risk.
- Some organisations needed to ‘hire in’ Elders or Respected Persons with appropriate local cultural knowledge due to being unable to source this within community through volunteering, which was often not accounted for in initial budgeting.

“Staffing has been the biggest issue for us. There really needs to be someone full-time to coordinate and run the activities. The project delivery was a bit quiet for a while without a dedicated role attached to the project to keep it going.” (Community organisation)

“It’s especially necessary to have additional staff for young people who have been in residential care or come through the courts and muck up a lot. They have serious behavioural issues as they are not used to socialising, which can make it difficult for the other kids and detracts from staff time. They need intensive one-on-one support.” (Community organisation)

Recommendation 3:

Additional guidance should be provided to organisations around suggested human resources requirements to successfully implement potential projects, based on lessons learnt to date.

Frequent, consistent and ongoing interactions with young people

What past research has found to be effective

The literature highlights the importance of engaging young people in projects through frequent and sustained interactions, particularly where the goal is to reduce delinquency.^{12 13} Regular and ongoing participation in program activities means the young person has time to develop close interpersonal relationships and consolidate the new skills they have learned. For instance, evidence suggests that recreation activities have greater benefits when run for 10-20 weeks minimum and projects with mentoring components require a minimum of 12-18 months.^{14 xiv xv}

Findings from this evaluation: consistency when interacting with young people is key to project success

Most project workers emphasised the importance of running activities on a frequent and ongoing basis, as it takes time to build relationships and gain the trust of disengaged young people. Building a sense of continuity through holding activities in the same time, place and with the same staff each week was seen as an important part of maintaining engagement with young people who may otherwise ‘fall off the radar’. The KYCPG projects offered young people support in varied manners:

- Most of the projects offered weekly activities, for the same group of young people, over the full duration of the funding period with some offering additional one-off events or camps as well.

- Some projects offered activities that were structured around set timeframes (e.g. school terms or sporting timetables), for the same group of young people, over the full duration of the funding period.
- Some projects ran a series of short-term activities, events or camps during the funding period that did not appear to link in with more consistent, ongoing programs.

It was seen as particularly important to maintain consistency in the project staff running the activities given the mentoring relationships they form with the young people. Many of the young people engaging in project activities may not have had the opportunity to form supportive, stable and ongoing relationships with adult role models in their lives. Challenges with recruitment and staff turnover can reinforce the sense of abandonment that young people may have previously experienced many times before in their relationships with adults.

Some projects reported that funding constraints prevented them from running consistent activities for young people despite the desire to do so, as they could not afford to run both a youth group and camp simultaneously or to employ enough staff to run activities. Others struggled to provide consistent support due to issues such as staff absences or having to turn away young people due to waiting lists, lack of

“It’s really important to give young people consistent and reliable support. These kids have had a lot of instability in their lives. They need ongoing reassurance, motivation and contact, so we’re working on creating greater stability across the activities. All our workers keep in regular contact with the kids and if they don’t show up someone will call them up and ask “How are you? What’s going on? You coming next week?” (Community organisation)

“One-off camps and things like that only work if they build on a more stable, ongoing program” (Community organisation)

transport, or venue capacity constraints.

Recommendation 4:

Community organisations should be encouraged to design projects that engage young people through frequent and ongoing interactions, with the aim of ensuring:

- Short-term activities, events and camps build upon or link to consistent, ongoing programs.
- Projects are run for a minimum of 12-18 months to mitigate the potentially harmful psychological impacts that can arise from short-term mentoring relationships.

A focus on high-risk young people

What past research has found to be effective

Previous research demonstrates that programs which target their approach towards specific groups of young people who are most at-risk, or in greatest need of services and support, tend to be more effective than programs which are generalised to a broader population.^{12 13 xvi}

While concentrating efforts primarily on engaging young people at greatest risk, in some cases programs may benefit from a mix of high-risk and low-risk young people to provide opportunities for pro-social peer role modelling. However, careful management of these mixed programs is required to ensure that the young people considered to be low-risk are not negatively influenced by antisocial peer role modelling.^{18 19}

Findings from this evaluation: there is a lack of clarity around who crime prevention should target

There appeared to be a lack of clarity among community organisations as to who should be the target cohort for their project. This could potentially stem from the general consensus across stakeholder groups that prevention (universal) and early intervention (targeted) activities are equally important and cannot be easily separated:

- Young people who are at risk of contact with the justice system do not like to be singled out as the ‘bad kids’ and therefore it is important to adopt a gentle and inclusive approach in which all young people in the community are invited to participate.
- Engaging all young people in the community to attend crime prevention projects was seen to create opportunities for prosocial peer-to-peer role-modelling, whereby young people who are in a more vulnerable state spend time with and are influenced by young people who are doing well.
- Young people who are at risk of contact with the justice system often show up to project activities along with their friends or younger siblings. These other young people may not yet be at-risk but are often in a vulnerable space and would benefit from support.
- It is important to invest in projects for all young people to ensure that those who are doing well continue to do well. If projects are taken away from young people who are doing comparatively better, justice indicators in these locations may worsen.
- Projects need to be careful not to reward only young people who engage in antisocial behaviour as this might encourage young people who well-behaved to ‘act up’ so they are able to participate in activities.


Most projects were therefore open to all young people in the community within the project’s specified age range, and reportedly did not actively target ‘at-risk’ young people. However, the young people engaging with projects were often still disconnected from their culture, family and community, and had limited engagement with school or employment. Most had not yet become involved in the criminal justice system but some displayed behaviours that project workers felt put them at risk of coming to police attention.

“Currently because of limited resources, we are using a deficit approach, not enough of a strengths-based approach. Only the squeaky wheel gets the oil. Our project already recognises the importance of increasing the strengths of all young people, but the lack of money means the hard kids get it all.” (Community organisation)

“We need to provide support at all levels, that is, from prevention to early intervention. Low level kids may move to middle tier and then move up to top tier” (Community organisation)

While it was seen to be important for all young people to have access to support, interviewees were concerned that higher risk young people, who have already been involved with the criminal justice system, are potentially ‘slipping through the cracks’:

- Several projects tried to establish formal referral pathways through the police and courts as a cautioning or pre-diversion option but found this challenging in terms of gaining ‘buy-in’ from external stakeholders.
- Some projects were working together with local Koori Youth Justice Workers (KYJWs) or Koori Education Support Officers (KESOs) to identify higher risk young people who would benefit from the project activities, however this was successful to varying degrees. There is an opportunity for organisations to work more closely with existing Aboriginal-specific funded positions in the regions to support high risk young people.
- Project workers noted that higher risk young people are the hardest to engage in prevention and early intervention activities given the complexity and compounding nature of risk factors in their lives. They often require a much more intensive intervention than can be provided through broad-based activities.
- Projects who had engaged high risk young people in their activities found it challenging to manage their behavioural issues without appropriately trained staff. In some instances, projects were able to recruit additional support but, in other cases, being unable to adequately support the young person meant they disengaged from the project.
- None of the projects were able to provide intensive case-management or wraparound support to high risk young people due to financial and staffing constraints, although many project workers



made effort above and beyond their role to link these young people and/or their carers into other appropriate supports.

Recommendation 5:

Community organisations should be encouraged to design projects that engage young people across the prevention and early intervention spectrum, with a greater focus on engaging high-risk young people. For example:

- Work closely with KYJWs in the region to identify and support at-risk and high-risk young people.
- Include links with police cautioning and/or court diversion processes where appropriate.
- Develop partnerships that can enhance an organisation's capability in working with young people who have complex needs.

A focus on young people at an early age

What past research has found to be effective

Providing programs for at-risk infants, young children and their families has been found to be a particularly effective crime prevention strategy.^{xvii xviii xix} There is considerable evidence to demonstrate that parenting skills and preschool programs for high-risk families can reduce the likelihood of criminal behaviour later in life.

Additionally, the evidence suggests that there should be more programs targeting children of primary school age before the onset of negative peer influences and antisocial behaviour.^{14 xx xxi} Attempting to deliver an intervention once young people have already disengaged from school or have become part of a problematic peer group during adolescence is likely to be more difficult.⁵

Focussing on Aboriginal young people at an early age is especially important considering that, on average, Aboriginal young people in Victoria come into contact with the juvenile justice system at a younger age than non-Aboriginal young people.^{xxii}


Findings from this evaluation: there needs to be greater tailoring of project activities to age groups

Most projects spoke about the difficulties they faced in recruiting young people, of all ages, to attend project activities. Many projects relied solely on word of mouth to promote the project in the local community, with some also using local media (e.g. radio and newsletters). This meant that, for many projects, the majority of young people attending project activities were already engaged with the funded organisations in some way. Organisations reflected that, in future, they would dedicate more effort towards recruitment and promotion to ensure they reach a wider audience of potential participants.

The majority of projects selected for this evaluation reported predominantly engaging adolescents aged between 10 and 16 years in project activities, while a small number of projects focused on a younger cohort of children aged under 10 years. However, even where the focus has not been on engaging a younger cohort of children (aged 0 – 9 years), it appears some projects are having unintended benefits for this cohort who often attend project activities with their older siblings, cousins or friends.

Based on discussion with interviewees, it appears the projects that had the most impact on increasing protective factors and/or reducing risk factors for the younger cohort of children (aged 0 – 10 years) were those which engaged children in successive activities across their childhood and adolescent life. A handful of organisations delivered several projects each aimed at a different age group, with some offering structured progression between these activities from early childhood through to adulthood.

Only a few projects reported having engaged an older cohort of people aged 17 and over (with one project expanding their age range to include people aged 18 to 65 years due to demand in the community). Young people aged 17 to 25 years were considered a particularly difficult cohort to engage in project activities as they feel 'too cool' to hang around with the younger children or require more intensive intervention given their level of disengagement. This was considered a significant gap as this age group is more likely to be 'mucking up' in a way that could result in criminal justice system involvement.



A key learning for many organisations on this front has been the need to tailor prevention and early intervention activities to specific age groups, rather than have a broad-based program aimed at young people aged 8 to 24 years. The three key age groups (under 10 years, 10 to 16 years, and 17 to 24 years) need information and activities delivered to them in an age appropriate format to promote continued engagement engage and ensure the greatest potential for positive impact.

Recommendation 6:

Community organisations should be supported to consider the target age group/s for their project and how they will appropriately tailor project activities to, and recruit participants from, these age group/s.

Addressing multiple protective factors in a single project

What past research has found to be effective

Protective factors mitigate against or decrease the likelihood of young people engaging in criminal activities or anti-social behaviours. The research suggests that having or being exposed to multiple protective factors is generally better than having or being exposed to a few.^{xxiii} In particular, previous research and evaluations highlight the importance of enhancing the protective factors for Aboriginal young people that relate to:

1. close and supportive social relationships^{xxiv xxv xxvi xxvii}
2. continuous engagement with school/education and employment^{15 xxviii xxix xxx xxxi}
3. accessing appropriate support services^{13 18 19 xxxii xxxiii}

While the introduction of sports, arts or recreation activities alone is unlikely to achieve a reduction in antisocial behaviour and crime, these types of activities can be used as a powerful ‘hook’ or incentive for engaging at-risk young people and linking them into a range of other programs and support services that address underlying causes of offending behaviour.^{xxxiv} There are numerous examples of projects which have successfully linked sports, arts and recreation activities with education and employment activities.⁸
^{14 18 20 38 xxxv} The benefits of linking these types of activities with ongoing intensive mentoring programs has also been widely documented.^{14 15 19}


Findings from this evaluation: projects are designed to increase protective factors although there could be greater emphasis on education and/or employment

All projects included in the evaluation supported young people to develop close and supportive relationships with each other, their families, mentors, and Elders and Respected Persons in community:

- Many of the projects connected young people with adult role models in the community through structured mentoring, community events, or inviting them to participate in project activities. Most frequently, project staff themselves provide young people with these close, supportive and ongoing relationships.
- Several projects sought to involve the broader family and/or caregiver network of participants in activities, either as active participants themselves or volunteer helpers, to strengthen family relationships. For some young people, project activities provided an informal way for them to socialise with siblings or other family members who they may no longer live with.
- Several projects had formal or informal opportunities for older participants to ‘step up’ and become mentors to the younger participants.

Most projects acted as a ‘gateway’ through which young people were linked with appropriate support services:

- Many project workers talked about the importance of pro-social activities as a platform for ‘getting young people through the front door’ to connect them to other programs and services. In light of this approach, they had established or strengthened their existing relationships with a



wide range of services that address issues such as drug and alcohol, mental health, and family violence. Service representatives were invited to casually ‘drop in’ to youth groups or events to hang out and chat with young people attending on the day.

- While some projects had built relationships and referral pathways with mainstream services, many preferred to refer their participants to internal services within the organisation or to other Aboriginal-specific services, as they felt the mainstream services were not culturally safe or competent.
- In a small number of cases, projects did not aim to connect young people to services. These projects were designed with the intention of alleviating boredom by ‘giving young people something positive to do’.

Only a few projects focused on actively supporting young people to engage with education and/or employment, with there being an opportunity for projects to strengthen this as a protective factor:

- A small number of projects sought to re-engage young people in some form of education, provide additional tutoring support, or enhance their employment prospects through job skills training. For example, one project worked with KESOs and local schools to identify disengaged Aboriginal young people and run a group session with them once per week to support their continued engagement with school.
- There was a concern that actively pushing an education or employment agenda would result in young people disengaging from the project. Therefore, many projects instead included fun activities to build ‘life skills’ that could assist young people with their education or employment, such as barista courses.
- Some projects sought to show participants a variety of employment options in life to help them develop future aspirations. This included inviting a range of different people to project activities to talk about their job or developing partnerships with local businesses to showcase potential employment opportunities.
- As education and employment are significant protective factors, there are opportunities to increase the focus on education and/or employment across the programs.

“I touch on how important education is and so on but there’s no point telling kids “go to school” because they won’t listen and they think they know everything. You have to take them on that learning journey to build an internal appreciation for the opportunities they have.” (Community organisation)

“We try to create a safe space that’s holistic in the approach to getting people into education or employment... It’s about building up the resilience and the self-confidence to say to people ‘Open up that door. Don’t be afraid to open a door. You’ve got it all going on.’” (Community organisation)


Recommendation 7:

Community organisations should be encouraged to include a focus on one or more of the following protective factors when designing a project: (i) close and supportive social relationships with mentors, (ii) engagement with education and/or employment, or (iii) access to appropriate support services.

Embedding culture in projects in a way that builds positive identity and self-esteem

What past research has found to be effective

The literature highlights the importance of embedding cultural strengthening elements within program activities in a way that builds positive cultural identity, promotes Aboriginal pride and acceptance, improves self-esteem, and strengthens relationships within the community so that the young person feels safe and supported.⁵



A strong Aboriginal cultural identity had been associated with better outcomes on a range of indicators of wellbeing, including education, employment, health, substance abuse and the incidence of arrest.^{7 xxxvi xxxvii}
A positive cultural identity can help a young person understand their place in the world, through a sense of belonging and membership within a group of people, and a sense of moral responsibility to others.^{xxxviii}

Findings from this evaluation: embedding culture is seen as key to project success but could be strengthened for young women

All the projects included in the evaluation embedded cultural strengthening elements in their activities with the aim of developing a young person's positive cultural identity and building their connections to family, community and country. Project workers consistently emphasised the importance of cultural strengthening, particularly given many of the young people attending activities are highly disconnected from their culture prior to entering the project.

Embedding the philosophies of Aboriginal lore into project activities was commonly described as being foundational to effective crime prevention as it teaches young people about cultural responsibility, accountability and respect for others. Accordingly, many projects have developed 'rules of engagement' or a 'code of conduct' in partnership with participants which they must then abide by when attending project activities. If a young person does not abide by these rules of the project, and instead engages in antisocial behaviours, they may be told, for example, to think about their actions and make some changes or they'll have to 'take a week or two off'.

It was also frequently explained in the interviews that when a young person 'feels good about themselves', they are less likely to engage in antisocial behaviour and end up in contact with the justice system. This strong sense of self and higher self-esteem was seen to stem from learning about their shared cultural history and identity, which instils a sense of belonging and pride in their culture and community. Developing these personal traits in turn places young people in a better position to make positive life choices, reinforced through project activities that show them opportunities and positive pathways in life and support them to develop aspirations for the future.

One challenge consistently raised across projects was ensuring there are appropriate and adequate cultural activities for young women. Several projects reported that it was more difficult to engage young women in activities than young men and this may be due to the limited nature of cultural activities on offer for them. Activities for young men included traditional dance, making and playing didgeridoos, spear throwing, making boomerangs, shields and clap sticks. Young women on the other hand were often restricted to a few offerings such as basket weaving and jewellery making.


"It's about building kids' protective factors to help them make better decisions by building their cultural identity, their connections, their place within society, knowing their worth. The more they are involved with and engage with community, the more they know about their culture and identity, the more they know about leadership and all that, the more long-lasting and sustainable the results and outcomes are going to be." (RAJAC EO)

"The kids have an insatiable thirst for cultural knowledge. They just love it." (Community organisation)

"The youth are aware of and developed 'the rules' for the [project] and if there are any breaches of their 'rules' they are accepting of the consequences e.g. being sent home from camp/not being able to attend...for a week. All of the youth who have been delivered a consequence have been accepting of the consequence and have re-engaged again." (Community organisation)

Impacts of funded projects

Impacts for Aboriginal young people



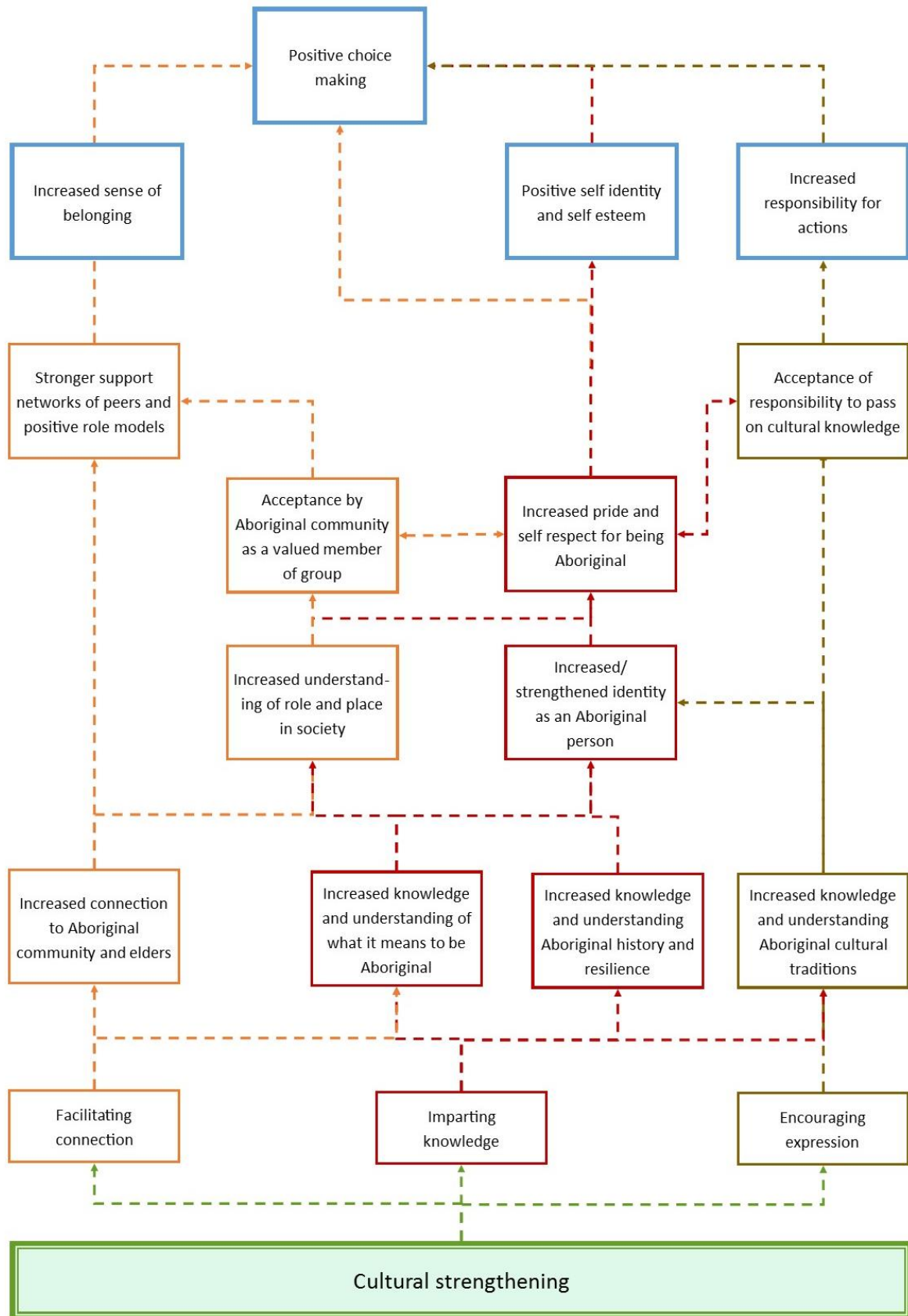
As discussed in Section 1.2, this evaluation has not sought to evaluate the impact of individual projects funded under the KYCPG for Aboriginal young people. Instead, it examines high-level evidence about whether and how project activities are contributing to short-term outcomes (positive changes in attitudes and behaviours) by increasing young peoples' protective factors. An increase in protective factors was chosen based on previous literature, which found that this is a key contributor in reducing negative contact with the criminal justice system.

Research has shown that cultural strength can act as an important protective factor that is closely linked to the social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of Aboriginal people. The literature suggests there is a pathway between strengthening culture and positive changes in a person's decision making, which the KJU has sought to document through the outcomes hierarchy outlined in **Error! Reference source not found.** (over page).

As such, this evaluation has sought to understand whether there has been an increase in protective factors for Aboriginal young people involved in the funded projects in the following key domains of cultural strengthening:

- **Facilitating connection** – connecting or reconnecting people to culture, land, and community is critically important for redressing the disconnection caused by colonial policies and practices of the past.
- **Imparting knowledge** – the imparting of traditional and contemporary knowledge is expected to build peoples understanding of the distinctive Aboriginal community and culture and how they fit into it.
- **Encouraging expression** – active participation in traditional cultural activities and ways of life, as well contemporary cultural activities, is seen as an important method of cultural expression

FIGURE 35. OUTCOMES HIERARCHY FOR CULTURAL STRENGTHENING



Project workers noted that many of the young people who engaged with their project were initially disconnected from culture, and often from family and community as well. They highlighted how

government systems have fractured Aboriginal communities, both historically and in the present, with young people often having their connection severed through involvement in the Child Protection and Youth Justice systems. These young people often could not identify their mob, understood very little about their culture and history, were no longer residing where they were born, or were living in out of home care arrangements where their carers were non-Aboriginal and/or they were separated from siblings and cousins.

The behaviours project workers observed when young people first started attending project activities often reflected the impacts of this disconnection from culture, family and community. This included being disrespectful and disruptive, having no regard for authority or rules, and being unable to communicate their emotions without resorting to conflict or aggressive behaviours. Many participants were also disengaged from education, employment and general life goals. A key concern for project workers was that, in lieu of any other form of connection, 'the easiest way to fit in is through the criminal justice way'.

As such, all organisations had seen it as crucial that their project activities include cultural strengthening (as explored in **Error! Reference source not found.** below) in order to address the issues stemming from disconnection.

TABLE 33. EVIDENCE OF FUNDED PROJECTS STRENGTHENING CULTURE OF PARTICIPANTS

Element of cultural strengthening	Evidence
Facilitating connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Formed connections with prosocial role models, mentors, and peers who they can draw on for support ○ Connected with Elders and Respected Persons through mentoring, cultural activities, or knowledge exchange activities ○ Strengthened connection to country by going out on and learning about country ○ Connected to other services that will support their health and wellbeing (e.g. mental health or family violence services) ○ Feel connected to a safe community space (usually hosted by an organisation) where they can casually drop in or hang out
Imparting knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Learned about their shared history, community, and personal identity ○ Developed pride in their culture ○ Created a sense of belonging, particularly for young people who did not know their mob or felt they did not 'fit' anywhere ○ Learned the importance of respecting and caring for others, particularly for Elders ○ Linked in to other cultural programs or activities through initial engagement ○ Provided opportunities to start becoming cultural leaders in their community through teaching others
Encouraging expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Participated in traditional cultural activities such as dance, arts, playing didgeridoo, making clap sticks and shields ○ Participated in contemporary cultural activities such as camps or other outdoor activities, sports, making hip hop music videos ○ Involved in helping out with and attending community cultural events such as NAIDOC week activities, community days ○ Took pride in making and/or wearing traditional and contemporary Aboriginal clothing

Project workers felt that the changes they saw over time in the behaviour of participants, as a result of cultural strengthening, reflected the penultimate outcomes that inform positive decision-making (as seen in **Error! Reference source not found.**):

- **Increased sense of belonging** – participants forged strong connections with peers and older roles models, which has provided them with a larger network to draw on as a source of strength and support during challenging times. They showed greater care and respect for others, including a willingness to share their experiences in solidarity with others facing similar challenges.
- **Positive self-identity and self-esteem** – participants displayed increased confidence, self-esteem, and resilience that in turn led to greater independence, particularly in being away from family. They were better able to communicate their emotions and needs in a socially acceptable way and had learned appropriate methods for overcoming fear and managing anxiety.
- **Increased responsibility for actions** – participants showed improved understanding of consequences for their actions, both in terms of reward and punishment, and held each other to account against agreed codes of conduct. They were motivated to take greater responsibility in helping out at home, at community events, or with project activities.

Project workers reflected that some young people, particularly those who had been engaged with the organisation prior to the evaluated funding period, already showed signs of improved decision-making. This was evidenced through re-engagement with school (including flexible or alternative education options), enrolling in TAFE courses and university studies in employable areas (e.g. food handling, makeup artistry, horticulture), and seeking out work experience opportunities. While many young people had not quite reached the point of committed decision-making yet, project workers emphasised that they were increasingly considering their life goals and had a greater awareness and appreciation of the different education and employment opportunities available to them.

“It’s about building kids’ protective factors to help them make better decisions by building their cultural identity, their connections, their place within society, knowing their worth. The more they are involved with and engage with community, the more they know about their culture and identity, the more they know about leadership and all that, the more long-lasting and sustainable the results and outcomes are going to be.” (RAJAC EO)

“We don’t know if maybe these kids would’ve ended up in the justice system but what we do know if we’ve kept them safe for this period of time and empowered them with good ideas, good people to talk to, they know this service now...it’s all about options.” (Community organisation)


Case studies

There were many stories that project workers shared about the positive journey of particular individuals throughout their engagement with the project. A few case studies, drawn from interviews and monitoring reports, have been selected to illustrate how projects have changed young people’s lives on an individual level. Please note that specific project, location, and other sensitive details have been redacted to preserve

“A 15 year old female student had been disengaged from school for over two years. Presented to [the project] as homeless and in crisis. Student was supported to secure housing with family member followed by continued support provided to manage positive living arrangement. Student was attending [project] on a daily basis and receiving intensive literacy support, Cultural support and Drug and Alcohol counselling. Student eventually transitioned into FLO Connect as a full-time student and decided to pursue her aspirations to becoming a beautician.

Due to ongoing family pressures, the young person returned to...live with her Grandmother. The [project] team maintained contact with the student while she was [there] and were shocked to hear that she had been using ICE. The team continued to encourage the student to return...and reengage with [the project]. After a few months the student returned. On her return, the [project] team supported her with housing and referred her to Drug and Alcohol Counselling. Eventually she was able to reengage with FLO Connect as a full-time student. This young person...is quoted as saying that [the project] ‘changed her life’.” (Community organisation)

confidentiality.



“One of our [participants] had been absent for school for more than 20 months due to the loss of his father in late 2016. Initially he did not attend school due to mourning and the grief that he was experiencing, but over a period of time his anxiety had become a social phobia where he could not attend school. We tried with the school and other services, several ideas to help him return to school with little success. After completing a year at the [project] and having support around him, the young man decided to return to school in the 2019 year.

In the last session of the year I was queried to find out what was the catalyst that made him reconsider returning to school. The response was that he now understood how important education is, and that he also felt out of place, when all the other group members attended [the project] were in their school uniforms and it made him feel out of place. This young man is attending secondary school this year and with the help of the school and the program he will continue to be supported in completing his studies.

Another participant, who was a concern, as he was wavering in terms of future direction, and not engaging in any study and/or employment since finishing school. I have been working with him, and with vocational guidance, encouragement and support, he is now happily undertaking a course in Certificate 2 Tourism...where he is gaining skills and knowledge that will lead to either further training and or employment. He also has taken up the option of acting as a mentor to the younger boy in [the project]. This is a great outcome for this young man as he now can see options for his future as opposed to languishing with no direction.” (Community organisation)

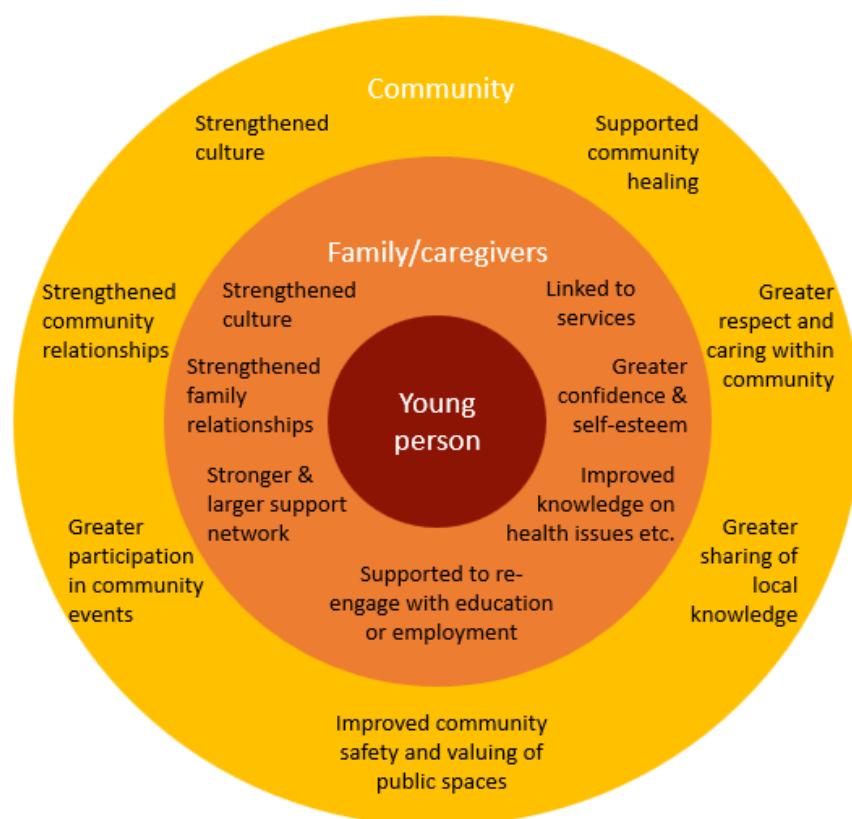
Had a 16-year-old boy who was very disengaged from school, “going off the rails”, and got suspended for fighting with others. He had no regard or respect for authority and, when he joined the project, was very obviously the dominant one. The project worker found this young man was really interested in and proud of his culture, so used that as the hook for engaging him in the project. After attending for 10 weeks, this young person has learnt so much more about his culture and really changed his attitude. He’s stepping up to help facilitate project activities and learning about his culture in his own time, which he then brings back to the group.

There was a recent situation where two younger boys were fighting and this young man took it upon himself to step in, settle them down, and have a talk about how this is not part of their culture, that their culture is about respect and looking after each other and that the project is a safe space. The project worker was so impressed with him taking on that leadership role and handling it so well. This young person is also now back in school and has decided he wants to be a mechanic, so has taken on an after-school job one day a week at a mechanic shop. (Community organisation, paraphrased from interview)

The ‘ripple effect’ impacts of projects

Project workers discussed the ‘ripple effect’ impacts of their projects, emphasising that evaluators need to consider the value of projects to families/caregivers and the broader community. Most projects took a holistic approach to working with young people, meaning that they sought to involve families/caregivers and community members in a range of ways, such as being involved as mentors, volunteering with project activities, or simply coming along for a cup of tea and chat. Even when families/caregivers and community members were not actively involved in the project, workers highlighted the flow on effects to these parties from the changes in behaviour of young people involved (as discussed above). **Error! Reference source not found.** seeks to capture the impacts of the broader ‘ripple effect’, flowing from young people outwards to families/caregivers and community.

FIGURE 36. IMPACTS OF THE 'RIPPLE EFFECT' AS OUTLINED BY FUNDED PROJECTS



The involvement of families/caregivers in projects was used as an opportunity for project workers to build rapport and to understand more about participants' home life, including any issues that the family may be facing. Project workers often went above and beyond to provide support to families as a whole:

- Organising and attending appointments with parents/caregivers in order to help break down the barriers and stigma associated with accessing support services.
- Supporting parents/caregivers to access employment or education opportunities.
- Building the confidence of parents/caregivers through providing advice, information, and opportunities to develop skills (e.g. time keeping as part of basketball).

The projects also presented the opportunity to strengthen relationships and knowledge sharing at both the family and community levels. Parents/caregivers attending project activities formed relationships and shared stories with other parents/caregivers, as well as with involved community members and respected Elders. The topics that young people were learning about through projects, particularly around culture and history, opened up conversations with parents, grandparents and Elders that may not have happened before. This provided a gateway for young people to build stronger relationships with these people, as well as for the adults to share knowledge or learn more about their culture from young people. This was viewed as crucial to strengthening the community as a whole, as well as the young people and families who are part of it.

The changes in behaviour of the young people involved in project activities was also seen to contribute to a stronger family and community. Project workers highlighted that there is great potential of young people, particularly when several siblings or cousins are involved in a project, to change the dynamic of their household through upholding and modelling prosocial behaviours to their parents/caregivers. They also suggested that young people are less likely to vandalise, steal and antagonise, and instead contribute to a safer and happier community, when they have been taught to respect country and community.



Impact of ceasing funding for crime prevention

When discussing how projects have increased protective factors for young people involved, project workers inevitably expressed their concerns about the increase in risk factors that was likely to occur for these same young people when project funding ceased. While some projects had plans in place to continue running project activities beyond the funding period, many were unsure how they would secure the necessary funds to do this and were in the process of exploring different avenues at the time of the final evaluation.

Several workers highlighted how their project was the only available local and culturally appropriate option for young people in that area. As such, if the project ceased, it was likely these young people would be back out on the street after school, on weekends, or on school holidays with no activities to keep them entertained and engaged with prosocial role models. There was a concern that the resulting boredom and disconnection would increase the likelihood of young people engaging in antisocial activities and behaviours, which would then bring them to the attention of police. This concern was shared by parents/caregivers, as evidenced by one project which asked them to reflect on what their children would be otherwise doing if the project did not exist. Many of their answers, recorded in feedback forms, were along the same themes:

- 'Getting into trouble'
- 'Nothing except drinking and smoking'
- 'Sit at home on games or getting in trouble in town'
- 'They would be bored, and they muck up'

Summary and recommendations

What has worked well


The following points summarise what the evaluation found to working well about the KYCPG in supporting community organisations to design and deliver crime prevention initiatives for Aboriginal young people:

- The **flexibility** afforded to community organisations to design projects, and adapt these during delivery, that are appropriately tailored to the local community's needs.
- Where community organisations have been able to **recruit the right people** to run project activities, this has contributed strongly to the project's overall success.
- Projects that have created **consistency** through holding activities in the same time, place and with the same staff each week have been more successful in engaging young people and their families/caregivers.
- Projects that have appropriately **tailored activities to specific age groups** have been more successful in engaging young people.
- **Embedding culture strengthening** as a protective factor in project activities has successfully created behaviour and knowledge change in young people that appears to lead to improved decision-making.
- Projects that have actively sought to involve or support families/caregivers and the broader community have had greater impacts through **the 'ripple effect'**.

What could be improved

There have been many lessons learned through the evaluation of the KYCPG around how to better design and deliver early intervention and crime prevention projects for Aboriginal young people in future:

Recommendation 1:



There should be increased flexibility in project timeframes to fit with community needs and ensure organisations are aware of the flexible options available to them:

- Where possible, extend project timeframes to a minimum of three years.
- For new initiatives, consider a standard minimum timeframe of three months for project design and preparation of a grant application, and a further three months for project planning and establishment.
- Improve communication with funded organisations around flexible arrangements in the funding agreements.

Recommendation 2:

Additional guidance should be provided to organisations around budgeting for project delivery.

Recommendation 3:

Additional guidance should be provided to organisations around suggested human resources requirements to successfully implement potential projects, based on lessons learnt to date.

Recommendation 4:

Community organisations should be encouraged to design projects that engage young people through frequent and ongoing interactions, with the aim of ensuring:

- Short-term activities, events and camps build upon or link to consistent, ongoing programs.
- Projects are run for a minimum of 12-18 months to mitigate the potentially harmful psychological impacts that can arise from short-term mentoring relationships.

Recommendation 5:

Community organisations should be encouraged to design projects that engage young people across the prevention and early intervention spectrum, with a greater focus on engaging high-risk young people. For example:


- Work closely with KYJWs in the region to identify and support at-risk and high-risk young people.
- Include links with police cautioning and/or court diversion processes where appropriate.
- Develop partnerships that can enhance an organisation's capability in working with young people who have complex needs.

Recommendation 6:

Community organisations should be supported to consider the target age group/s for their project and how they will appropriately tailor project activities to, and recruit participants from, these age group/s.

Recommendation 7:

Community organisations should be encouraged to include a focus on one or more of the following protective factors when designing a project: (i) close and supportive social relationships with mentors, (ii) engagement with education and/or employment, or (iii) access to appropriate support services.



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Youth Justice Community Support Service (YJCSS) Internal Review

Draft Final Report October 2019

Youth Justice

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Executive Summary

Preface

It is ten years since the Youth Justice Community Support Service (YJCSS) was rolled out across Victoria, and since that time the Youth Justice (YJ) system, the YJ population and the YJ operating environment have all changed considerably. Machinery of Government changes, significant change resulting from the 2017 Armytage and Ogloff comprehensive review of the YJ system, and the government's increased emphasis on community safety mean that system reform is well advanced, and will continue for a number of years. A state-wide review to examine how YJCSS now fits within that contemporary YJ context is therefore timely, and can help re-cast the service – where required – for the next decade.

This review began with plenty of questions to answer about the YJCSS operating model, service providers, outcomes, transitional housing model, governance, investment and future design. But in examining current activity and options for future service delivery it *raised* plenty of questions as well. What became clear through the extensive consultations with YJ staff, service providers, young people within the YJ system and experts in the field, as well as a scan of what the literature says about effective intensive support services for young people involved with YJ, is that there are three key threshold questions for YJ in Victoria to address:

- What is the role of a community-based YJ support service system in a reformed YJ context?
- What does the YJ system in Victoria want it to be?
- Why?

While this review did not have these three questions explicit in the review design, undertaking the review during the first half of 2019 certainly brought them to the fore. In recommending how the current YJCSS can be enhanced, and what shape the future service could take, this document provides the rationale for integrated YJ services ranging from early intervention to intensive support delivered by community partners who are the well-trained, well-managed and adequately resourced 'third arm' of the YJ system strategically and effectively supporting custodial and community YJ structures.

Part One – the Review and its Context

YJCSS provides intensive support to two main Youth Justice (YJ) groups:

- young people who need a high or intensive level of intervention who are on community-based court orders – including those on bail or deferred sentences (pre-sentence) – and young people leaving custody on remissions or parole who require post-release support, and

- young people aged 17 and over released from Youth Justice centres on parole orders who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and have the potential to live independently.

This internal review was designed to create a solid evidence base on which to base decisions about the service's future by examining current YJCSS operation, performance and outcomes within the current YJ reform context. The review outcomes will help determine optimal future service design, delivery and distribution, and inform new service specifications and guidelines.

Review Scope

The scope of the review was the YJCSS program delivered in all seven YJ regions by the eight funded service providers operating in eleven locations across Victoria. It included analysis of six years of program data (including current data), and consultations with all YJ regions, service providers and service users. It also synthesised research evidence of what works in YJCSS-type intensive support to young people involved with the criminal justice system as well as advice from key people with particular expertise in the YJ field.

Youth Justice System Reform

Victoria's YJ system is undergoing significant reform as a result of the Armytage and Ogloff Review. That Review provided the strategic framework for reforming the system, and outlined how Victoria can create an evidence-based response to youth offending that addresses the risks and needs of young people, and also meets community safety expectations.

In implementing the broad sweep of Armytage and Ogloff Review recommendations, Victoria's YJ system now functions within an integrated Case Management Framework, a Custodial Operating Philosophy, and a new Youth Justice Strategy and the Koori Youth Justice Strategy. The broader context for these YJ reforms also includes Crime Prevention Victoria initiatives, the small-scale YJ trial of Functional Family Therapy (FFT) and Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST), and the Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS) vision, policy and delivery priorities for a safer, fairer and stronger Victoria set out in the Department's Statement of Direction.

These contextual factors recognise that interventions for young people under Youth Justice care and supervision need to be based on what is known to work in addressing young people's offending behaviour, and reflect young people's need for stability and security in their lives. YJCSS can play an important part on both these counts: by supporting effective YJ strategies to address offending-related behaviour, and by helping to establish the types of engagement, activity and patterns in young people's lives that will increase their stability and security. The comprehensive, integrated intervention that YJCSS

should represent can enable young people involved with YJ to envisage better lives, can foster desistance from crime and can also lead to increased community safety.

Project overview and methodology

This state-wide YJCSS review used a range of methods to gather and synthesise information. These methods centred on consultations with YJ regional General Managers and staff, custodial staff, and YJCSS service providers; focus groups with young people in Parkville and Malmsbury Youth Justice Centres; interviews with key luminaries in the YJ field; and analysis of YJCSS data from 2013–2014 to 2018–2019. Other state-government agencies funding intensive support services for young people involved with the criminal justice system were consulted to compare costs, and contemporary literature was scanned to identify current evidence-based intensive support, transition and reintegration practices for young people in custodial and community youth justice settings

Using this range of sources meant the reviewers could explore the current YJCSS operating model; relationships – between YJ staff and YJCSS providers, with other agencies, and with funded Crime Prevention Victoria projects; the target population; Transitional Housing Model (THM) – operation and balance between YJCSS case management/referral support, and housing support; and program governance, investment and outcomes. Using this range of sources also provided the opportunity to envision future service delivery to provide an effective and efficient community sector to support the statutory YJ system.

While information from all the consultations is extensive and provides a rich picture of YJCSS operation, program data from 2013 to 2019 is based on unique new referrals to the service each financial year, not throughput, and so represents approximately half of all service activity. However the YJ System Coordination, Practice Leadership and Workforce data for 2018–2019 summarises all YJCSS provider activity for that reporting period, and the reporting against targets includes all new referrals, active and closed cases.

YJCSS overview

YJCSS is Victoria's integrated approach to providing voluntary, community-based intensive support and services to young people involved with YJ. YJCSS is a key post-sentence component on the YJ continuum and with its ancillary component, the Transitional Housing Management-Youth Justice Housing Pathways Initiative (THM-YJHPI) complements the YJ statutory case management. The THM-YJHPI provides houses and housing support and outreach for eligible young people.

'Intensive' support is defined in the YJCSS Guidelines as intensive casework support to assist young people to lead non-offending lives to connect to family, education, training, employment and community. It involves assertive engagement and outreach support; after-hours supervision and structured day activities on weekends, weeknights and during school holidays; after-hours crisis work through to long-term support and custodial visits to enable engagement prior to post-release support for young people exiting custody.

Intensive support also includes service referrals to community support services and assistance to stay engaged with those services, particularly after statutory YJ involvement. In working this way, YJCSS is designed to:

- reduce the severity, frequency and rates of re-offending, and minimise young people's progression into the criminal justice system
- provide a service for young people in their local community and enable their transition from Youth Justice centres or supervision into that community
- prepare young people for adulthood by developing their independence, resilience and prosocial connections to family and community
- develop young people's capacity for meaningful education and economic participation.¹

YJ regional staff refer young people to YJCSS providers according to the young person's assessed risk and need, and based on knowing the young person's history.

Current service delivery

The eight organisations² currently delivering YJCSS were commissioned in 2008 and 2009 to deliver the service based on Department of Human Services (as it was then) specifications, and program guidelines. Under those YJCSS guidelines (updated in 2018), YJCSS and its related housing activity are modelled as intensive support and funded agencies notionally operate with a one-full-time staff member to eight-young-people (1:8) ratio for the duration of a young person's involvement with the service.

The Transitional Housing Management-Youth Justice Housing Pathways Initiative (THM-YJHPI) was introduced in 2002 as a post-release accommodation and support service for young people leaving YJ centres and for other YJ-involved young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Youth

¹ Guidelines for the Youth Justice Community Support Service (YJCSS) Updated 2018 pp. 7–8.

² Anglicare; Barwon Child, Youth and Family; Brophy Youth and Family Services; Centacare; Jesuit Social Services; MASP; Quantum and Salvocare

Justice has dedicated access – direct referral or nomination rights – to 55 transitional houses across Victoria. DHHS (as it is now) owns and maintains these properties and Transitional Housing Management (THM) providers manage the houses as ‘landlords’ according to the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* and *Homelessness Services Guidelines and Conditions of Funding 2014*.

In June 2018, new YJ Youth Control Orders (YCOs) and the Intensive Monitoring and Control Bail Supervision Scheme (IB) were introduced. To support young people subject to these new orders, additional YJCSS funding was provided to extend YJCSS coverage after-hours. This means young people who are particularly vulnerable to reoffending such as those making the transition from custody to the community, or those who are living alone or socially isolated have weeknight and weekend support from YJCSS staff.

YJCSS funding and targets

The 2019-20 annual recurrent funding for YJCSS (from YJ base funding) is \$5.9M (including GST). The non-recurrent after-hours component is just under \$3.7M (including GST) annually. This means the total YJCSS investment for 2019-20 is \$9.6M (including GST) for 515 YJCSS places. In 2017–2018, a total of 467 young people were assisted by YJCSS; in 2018–2019, 512 young people were assisted.³ The total number of young people assisted in each of those years represents just under one-fifth (18.8 per cent) and just over one-fifth (21.3 per cent) of the total number of unique young people flowing through the YJ system⁴ in each of those years respectively (2488 and 2403).

The evidence base – what the literature, experts in the field and young people tell us

The literature scan conducted for this review (rather than in-depth literature review) highlighted that key areas for effective intensive support intervention for young people involved with YJ systems are stable housing, engagement in education, employment and training, health and mental health, behavioural health, AOD – often in combination (such as mental health and alcohol and/or drug dependency), positive peer influences and independent living skills. The key mechanism to guide that intervention is effective case management. Victoria’s Youth Justice Case Management Framework document (2019) and the Youth Justice Case Management Evidence Base document (2019) are consistent with those findings.

³ Please note these numbers represent the full YJCSS cohort for 2017–2018 and 2018–2019 whereas the data provided for the period from 2013 to 2019 is for unique service commencements in each year and does not include all existing and/or closed cases in each of those years.

⁴ In custody and in the community, sentenced, remanded or not under sentence. Source YJ Business Services data.

In achieving stability in those areas, what was distilled from the literature scan was that designing and delivering effective similar services to the intensive support intended by YJCSS, including the transition phases from custody to the community, and from community supervision to unsupervised reintegration into the community, requires:

- a fundamental commitment to collaboration and communication between service partners
- an integrated, over-arching case management approach
- trusting relationships with young people
- preparing for reintegration back into the community at the point the young person enters the system
- effective continuity of care, using 'in-reach' services
- capable, skilled workforce in both justice/statutory entities and community support partners
- ensuring program and service designers hear the voice of young people and their families
- data sharing
- small caseloads (up to 12)
- after hours and emergency support
- support from and for the family unit
- a trauma-informed approach
- cognitive behavioural interventions and other evidence-based therapeutic techniques and tools
- specialised intervention for very young people, as well as those aged 18 and over
- 'cultural humility', cultural competence and sensitivity
- peer support initiatives
- customised, targeted community support and engagement for young people with disabilities
- gender-segmented services for girls and young women
- mentoring
- eliminating tension and lack of communication between custodial and community staff
- clearly established and articulated goals.

The reviewers also consulted a small sample of people known to have expertise in the YJ field to obtain both theoretical and practical insights into community-based support services for young people. Their expertise ranges across many areas, particularly youth justice systems locally, nationally and internationally. Consistent with the evidence base, they highlighted the value of trauma-informed

approaches, working constructively with families, the importance of developing trusting relationships with young people and their families, the need for wrap-around support for young people who have complex needs arising from a (short) lifetime of disadvantage and possibly neglect, the value of team approaches in those cases and the importance of engagement – or re-engagement – in education, training and employment to establish pathways to better futures.

Specific insights provided included:

- there is considerable value in having a vibrant, non-government sector to increase the 'net impact' of the YJ system
- advocacy that is independent of YJ, and has a user-friendly, non-technical case plan that the young person and other significant people in their life can understand, can provide an important 'backstop' and safety net for that young person and their family.
- there is a 'golden fortnight', the 14-day period immediately following release, when support for young people should be most direct and intense to establish stability and deter young people from slipping back into offending behaviour patterns
- the YJ system should not focus on what the young person has done, rather, should ask 'What has happened to this young person?'
- innovative, experimental approaches will sometimes be required to test approaches and identify new ways of working with young people
- AOD issues can mask other psychological or psychiatric issues and drug use becomes normalised as part of a group culture
- offending behaviour can stem from a young person's 'faulty belief systems' internalised and developed over time
- family disconnection within CALD communities can manifest itself as an inter-generational disunity between first and second generations, particularly with African groups
- for young people from CALD backgrounds, disengagement from school can be because of behavioural issues or learning difficulties that have gone unnoticed and/or communication between their parents and teachers is not effective or occurring at all
- young people from CALD backgrounds can congregate into particular groups due to being similarly or equally disaffected
- finding ways to get young people back into mainstream society, whether it is through educational or work is very important, combined with some level of (depending on what their needs are) cognitive behavioural therapy or ways of re-orientating their thinking

- employment assistance for young people involved with YJ needs to have a vocational focus. Education and training without vocational pathways – that do not lead to real work opportunities – are not useful
- risk assessment is required to identify high-risk individuals who need intensive and heavily supervised, structured monitoring and treatment (as opposed to lower-risk individuals who can be involved in offending behaviour due to peer pressure)
- young people leaving custody need a combination of education, employment, income, pro-social friends, family connections and cultural connections, and somewhere safe and stable to live
- for some young people, the structured, organised nature of life in custody will be preferable – feel safer – than the chaos of their life in the community
- youth workers who are creative, emotionally intelligent and who are well connected to a broad range of community support services they strategically link young people into are those who most effectively support young people involved with YJ.

Focus groups

Seventeen young people (both young women and young men) took part in four structured focus group discussions at Parkville and Malmsbury YJ centres. This provided the opportunity for them to discuss their experiences of transition planning and post-release support (if they had been linked to a YJCSS-type program in the past) and to obtain their views on effective post-release assistance when they make the transition back to the community.

While a number of specific supports were mentioned, the clear theme emerging from the discussions was the desire for what might be seen as a 'normal' life for these children and young people: to live with their family and/or have meaningful family connections; be involved with sport or have other community ties; to 'hang out' with their friends; have a job or be linked in to education or training; and have somewhere to live. To 'have something to do, and somewhere to go'.

Focus group participants did not seem to understand the statutory role of the YJ worker compared to YJCSS agencies, and saw YJ staff as the ones who 'would cover our backs', 'not breach us', because 'they're supposed to be on our side, right?'

With only one exception all young people thought planning for release should begin as soon as they entered custody. The young women thought that remandees, because their time spent in custody is often

indeterminate, should also be assisted with release planning from the beginning of their time until they are released.

When asked about accommodation plans post-release, most said they would be returning to live with their parents, or mother, although there was the sense this was an assumption, not an agreed plan. One young person noted his parents would need support to take him back into the family home, to accept him as a member of the family again. Another noted that unless they live in Melbourne (or will post-release) a transitional housing property (under the THM-YJHI program) was unlikely. One had experienced parole being denied due to lack of accommodation.

The young men had a number of employment ideas (apprenticeships trades, internships, landscape gardening or hospitality), and saw value in getting help with resumes prior to release, however the young women appeared to have low career aspirations or expectations. The question about what kind of work they might seek upon release was a difficult one for them to answer: one wanted a part-time retail job, another wanted an 'easy job' to enable the transition back into the community. It appeared that they did not envisage themselves as having a working future, or understand the need or potential for, and value of, economic independence.

The young women did have a range of ideas about other program interventions that would be useful though: AOD programs, services to help them navigate Centrelink, income support or financial management, sport-related activity, offending behaviour programs, or activities to develop creative or craft avenues. Programs, they said, needed to be engaging to keep them interested.

Both the young men and the young women noted that assistance to meet order conditions would be useful because meeting conditions had been problematic in the past due to the number of appointments they needed to keep, and difficulty actually getting to the appointments. The most detailed responses provided during the focus groups related to the type of worker, or agency that would be most helpful to them. Community-based agency staff, they said, need to be supportive, trustworthy, respectful, good listeners, honest, consistent, flexible and available after hours.

The focus groups highlighted the value of engaging with the service users. Not only did the young people put forward very useful suggestions about what skills and experience community agency staff need to apply to working with young people, they provided insights that were consistent with the 'what works'

evidence, and the perspectives of the experts in the field. This triangulated evidence can help inform the design of the next YJCSS iteration.

Part Two – Review Findings

Current YJCSS operation reflects the complexity of the YJ system and diversity of the young people the service assists. The community-based providers delivering the service broadly function within the YJCSS guidelines and governance structures; operate in regional and metropolitan areas that each have demographic and location-specific characteristics; are supporting young people with multiple needs at varying stages of their involvement with the criminal justice system; and aim to connect those young people with services that can help stabilise their lives, and to maintain those connections.

Current YJCSS activity also reflects a YJ system in transition from a system where YJ staff undertake statutory supervision while also being involved (to greater or lesser extents) in addressing the practical problems from which a young person's offending behaviour may originate (school exclusion, social disadvantage, homelessness, addiction and mental health issues for example), to a justice-focussed, evidence-based system based on validated risk and need assessments, and a structured case management framework.

In a well-structured YJ and community agency partnership the two need not be mutually exclusive, but a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities, and commitment to transparent, collaborative and consistent practices is required. Tensions exist in some areas, and these appear to be based on default patterns of behaviour or tensions that have developed over a number of years. The review attributes this to blurred lines of responsibility and accountability, evolving methodologies and probably the complexity of the task.

The review raised further key questions for current and future YJCSS operation:

- How do the YJ system and YJCSS providers intersect in achieving YJ goals? Where do they diverge?
- Are YJ and YJCSS partners as envisaged under the YJ Case Management Framework?
- If there is a partnership, what will it take to ensure it is an effective, efficient one?

YJCSS providers and YJ General Managers and staff noted factors limiting the effective integration of YJ and YJCSS activity as envisaged by the CMF. Effective integration hinges on sharing information derived from assessments and other CMF activity, however this does not appear to be occurring consistently across the regions. What information can be shared needs to be considered in view of privacy

requirements, but some providers noted they receive very little information about young people and what is required to assist them.

Without this information, tensions can develop, local, disparate operating arrangements can evolve, and opportunities for program strengthening can be missed. As described by YJCSS providers and by YJ GMs and staff, what is requested, and the response provided by the YJCSS agency, are not as well integrated as they could be. There are clear opportunities to streamline referrals and information sharing to facilitate support plans; ensure providers know the content and intent of Youth Offending Programs and can have access to young people in custody; clarify the extent to which YJCSS providers should and can engage with young people beyond order expiry or transport young people to appointments or YJ-related activity.

Care Teams

Care teams vary in composition and operation. While all YJ staff and General Managers noted the importance of care teams, a number of providers noted that their contribution to care teams could be enhanced by more consistent involvement of young people and their families, and by better governance, including designated chair arrangements, minutes and clearly assigned responsibilities and adherence to those responsibilities. There is an opportunity to strengthen care team performance and outcomes having the young person to be 'at the centre' of the care team deliberations.

YJCSS focus – what the service providers do

YJCSS providers are involved in many activities with the young people they assist, use a range of methods, and scale their involvement according to perceived or actual needs. YJCSS providers cover all of the 'central eight' criminogenic needs informing YJ risk-need-responsivity assessments, particularly substance abuse, problematic family circumstances, antisocial peers and problems with school or work. Addressing unstable housing and accommodation also featured in all discussions with providers.

What was clear from all the consultations – particularly with YJCSS providers and the young people consulted – was the breadth and depth of assistance required and the significant needs of YJCSS participants. Some YJ staff noted that because of the complexity of a young person's situation, YJCSS agency staff can burn out, or in one case, develop negative attitudes and behaviour to young people. In another region however, the YJCSS provider consistently operates above their allocated target to try to meet the needs of young people and their families in their local area.

All providers noted the need to develop trust and build rapport with the young people, and noted the need to carve out a place in the YJCSS participants' lives that differentiates them from others (often many) in the young person's life. Providers noted that without this, young people will not engage properly, or at all, and that the first days and weeks of contact is critical to building and consolidating a relationship with the young person. Three providers use a trauma-informed approach in their work with young people and have trained their staff in how to apply it.

In describing how they assist the young people referred to them, YJCSS providers discussed activity that ranges from the most basic, fundamental needs, to complex family and social disadvantage issues. They work with young people with physical disabilities, FASD, other congenital and cognitive disorders, medical and medication needs, and a wide range of education, housing and AOD problems. YJCSS staff noted that their work incorporates reinforcing the need to meet YJ order conditions; helping young people get identity and formal documents; assisting young people to engage in living and life skills development; dealing with anxiety, loneliness and social isolation; navigating access to education, training and employment; tackling homelessness; intersecting with Child Protection staff; addressing broken family relationships or impoverished family circumstances; supporting young people into sport and recreation activities; helping build resistance to destructive peer connections; teaching young people to drive and/or accessing public transport; and transporting young people to programs (such as YOP, AOD or living skills), medical, psychologist or dental appointments, parole hearings, court or MAP appearances. And more.

In all regions, it is clear YJCSS staff are acting as mentors to the young people. They are modelling what a crime-free life can be like, and endeavouring to promote desistance. There was a clear sense of YJCSS involvement 'normalising' existence for some young people, presenting an alternative to their otherwise chaotic lives and taking steps towards stability and security. While attributing outcomes from YJCSS alone is not possible, positive outcomes are apparent in the YJCSS data analysis.

All the activity described and outcomes analysed provide useful guidance on how to specify what YJCSS providers to support young people in future program guidelines. They can also help YJ consider what type of agency, or agencies, are best placed to figure in an integrated YJ and YJCSS model which reflects what the CMF intends, and can obtain the best outcomes for young people.

Work with families

All YJCSS providers work with the families of YJCSS participants. They noted that this is an increasing aspect of their work and that family involvement occurs in approximately one-third to half (sometimes

more) of their caseload. The work they do demonstrates the range and depth of family support needs, and warrants attention because of the recognised protective factor effective family support can provide. Providers also noted that having a positive connection to parents, can, in some cases, facilitate the young person's engagement; that the parent/s can be a bridge to the young person, a 'softer entry point' and help achieve positive outcomes for young people involved with the YJ system.

Brokerage funding

YJCSS brokerage funding – either through an allocation made by each YJ region against which the YJCSS providers draw, or after-hours expansion funding – is being used for tuition or education courses; transport; transitional and other housing-related costs; counselling programs; food and clothing; sport and gym fees. Brokerage funding is clearly an important adjunct to YJCSS staff activity with young people. Although it may be viewed that some of these expenses should be funded from other sources, the YJCSS providers noted that other sources had been tried unsuccessfully, and YJCSS brokerage was the only real option.

After-hours expansion

The additional funding allocated to expand YJCSS support after hours (\$3.7M) has made a substantial difference to YJCSS staff availability and support provided to young people – particularly for young people on supervised bail which was prioritised through the after-hours expansion. Being able to transport young people after hours (to detox programs for example), to call on them or telephone them to check if they have returned home after daily activities was noted by YJCSS providers and YJ staff in all regions as part of the value that the expansion allows.

While it took time to appoint staff suitable for evening and weekend work (or to adjust their existing staffing configuration through staggered shifts), all agencies have now appointed staff and ensure staff availability consistent with what the expansion allows for.

The most significant change after-hours engagement has provided is supporting young people at known high-risk times; those times at night or during weekends when young people, through boredom, loneliness or social isolation, could be at risk of re-offending. This concurred with what one expert consulted called increasing the 'net impact' of YJCSS by program staff being readily accessible when needed most, and when YJ staff are not available.

The reviewers noted that this evening and weekend engagement also broadens the YJCSS 'safety net' by enabling young people to participate in activities and events that other young people are involved in; and by developing stable routines and building pro-social connections and relationships.

YJCSS providers' connections to the broader service system

YJCSS providers connect with many other service providers. They know their local service systems, access many supports for each young person, and advocate on their behalf. While the quality of service providers' interactions with young people was not evaluated during this review, the reviewers perceived that some providers may perform better than others, and may have greater insight into how YJCSS participants can best be assisted. Notwithstanding that observation, across the state, YJCSS providers interact with education and employment services, health and mental services, Aboriginal organisations, AOD services, family support and/or family violence services, housing and homeless services, courts, Child Protection, local government youth services and NDIS services. YJCSS providers are relying on, or getting leverage from, the available broader service system agencies where possible.

There was a strong sense that without the YJCSS provider advocacy, the extent to which young people involved with the YJ system and their families would be *able* to access the broader service system would be reduced or non-existent because of perceived challenges presented by YJ clients or because young people may have 'burnt bridges' with local agencies and need advocacy by YJCSS staff to access services.

YJCSS providers also tap into private sector avenues to support young people with, for example, accessing the private rental market, private training providers for courses and certificate courses, private clinicians (psychologists for example), or gymnasium memberships.

Service gaps and challenges

A key current YJCSS issue is that in metropolitan Melbourne (where over half YJCSS places are allocated), young people go on a YJCSS waiting list, or receive interim short-term support until the provider has the capacity to accept a new referral. In a tight budgetary environment, it may be difficult to fund additional YJCSS places, however there is a demonstrated need for service expansion. This could be helped by increasing YJCSS staff caseloads from the current 1:8 ratio to 1:12 which would be consistent with the evidence base examined for this review.

Other challenges or service gaps mentioned during the consultations were the need for targeted, specialist assistance for girls and young women; culturally-appropriate intensive support for Aboriginal

girls and young women; more detox and AOD programs; young-person-friendly mental health services; translators and other culturally-specific support (such as translated materials); access to literacy programs; and hands-on employment and transitional employment programs.

Streamlined early intervention and in-reach

Young people in custody and under community supervision need help with essential documents and formal system supports – proof of identity, Medicare, Centrelink (both while in the community and maintained while in custody), medication and accommodation for example – and these could be assembled into standard checklists that all providers complete as a progress milestone. Alternatively, and probably more efficiently, all these items could be gathered and assembled while young people are in custody.

For young people in custody there is a clear opportunity to confirm the point at which referral should occur. Some providers noted that referrals are sometimes made days before release and this is not consistent with what the evidence says enables effective relationships to be established. Given the need for effective support immediately after release to facilitate effective transition, it is recommended that the goal of planning for release upon entering custody has an increased focus within YJ, and that YJCSS providers are able to start establishing a connection with a young person three months before release.

It may be worth YJ examining the feasibility for a central YJCSS referral agency or system to be established so that all YJCSS referrals can be funnelled through one point or YJCSS hub. This will require effective system and case overview, and could be a YJ function or the responsibility of one funded agency. Alternatively, YJ could explore whether a YJCSS presence in one of the YJ Centres could serve this purpose. In considering these options, however, YJ will need to weigh up the comparative benefits of a centralised system versus local, regional knowledge being applied to YJCSS referrals and assistance.

Dual clients

In 2018–2019, 93 (18 per cent) of the 513 YJCSS participants were also involved with Child Protection, 27 participants were also involved with Disability Services, and eight young people were involved with Child Protection and Disability Services.⁵ Anecdotal evidence from YJCSS providers and YJ staff suggested the proportion of dual YJCSS and Child Protection clients is currently higher than those figures – possibly as high as 50 per cent in some regions.

⁵ Sourced from YJCSS provider data submitted through quarterly reports

The review found that although young people involved with Child Protection are eligible for YJCSS support, relationships between YJCSS providers and the Child Protection system is not consistent across Victoria. In at least three regions YJCSS providers noted that Child Protection staff tend to withdraw their assistance once they become aware that the YJCSS provider is involved, and in other cases the YJCSS provider needs to 'push back' to ensure Child Protection makes suitable transition or step-down arrangements for young people leaving residential care.

This resistance and inconsistency seems to lie in confusion about what the YJCSS Guidelines require, and how case management of dual clients should be managed – that is, that case planning for dual clients is a joint YJ/DHHS responsibility, with each government-funded agency responsible for different but complementary elements of care, protection and security of young people. Some regional YJ staff also noted that there is an opportunity for YJ to gain more leverage from Targeted Care Packages (TCPs). Closer connections between YJ and YJCSS providers, if there is collaborative case planning and shared involvement in care team meetings, could facilitate this.

It was also noted during the review that interventions to support some young people will originate in a number of government departments, and that community-based agencies will receive funding from multiple sources to assist specific multiple-needs young people and their families. Determining the extent to which this occurs, mapping any overlap between YJ, Child Protection, Multiple and Complex Needs Initiative (MACNI) intervention, targeted Crime Prevention, and intensive education and employment interventions (for example), and assessing the value of the overall government investment was not possible within this review's timeline, however it would be a worthwhile research project for YJ to initiate in the short term.

Transitional Housing model

All YJ staff and YJCSS providers consulted noted problems with the current Transitional Housing model. A key issue highlighted was that young people invariably do not *transition* from the houses as there are few housing pathways for them – in the public or private housing market. In all regions there is a shortage of accessible public housing or private, affordable rental properties. One region stated outright that they have 'never had a good outcome' from transitional housing. A key reason for this, echoed in most regions, is that young YJ people have high levels of anxiety and do not have the life skills, maturity, resilience or capability to live alone and cope with the boredom, loneliness and isolation of sole occupancy; that it is too much of a leap for young people to move from a custodial environment to living alone.

A number of YJCSS providers noted that a number of the existing houses are not suitable for young YJ people because they are too large, 'not a home', fitted out with minimal furnishings and limited utensils. A common issue is neighbourhood fatigue where other residents resent having a THM property and YJ residents living nearby. Alternative houses need to be found in these cases and this can remove properties from circulation for months.

YJ staff and YJCSS providers did suggest, and are exploring, solutions that could work in their local areas. They identified 'lead tenant' models; designated 'bail houses'; flexible three-month or month-by-month (for example) tenancies; therapeutic residential models; a cluster of units arrangement; and enabling other family members to share houses with young people could all be suitable alternative options. YJCSS providers noted that more effective local liaison with housing managers – in addition to central departmental oversight of transitional housing arrangements – could enhance opportunities to make better use of a scarce resource.

Optimal period of engagement

YJCSS providers and YJ staff all had views on when to engage potential YJCSS participants, and the period over which support should be provided. Among both YJ staff and YJCSS providers, when, how and for how long to engage was linked to discussion about intensive support and what it means in practice. YJCSS providers and YJ staff emphasised that the period of engagement must be linked to individual needs, that cases can only be closed when the young person has established stable, secure accommodation, has reengaged in some kind of purposeful activity (education, training or work), has some positive connections (with family, friends and/or community), and has stable health and mental health. A possible way to conceptualise length of engagement, therefore, is through a series of outcome measure achievements rather than temporal measures.

YJCSS funding model

The review compared the average unit price for YJCSS activity with other services delivering intensive support to young people, and while no other service is directly comparable because the services are not identical, YJCSS appears to be good value for money in comparison with the initiatives in other states, employment services and Crime Prevention Victoria projects. As part of a future YJCSS evaluation exercise it would be worth using some proxy measures to assess value for money, and cost/benefit ratios.

Recording and reporting on YJCSS activity – CRISSP

Without exception, all YJCSS providers noted how difficult it is to enter and extract data from CRISSP. Providers noted that the system is convoluted and time-consuming, and that the drop-down options do

not match their YJCSS activity, therefore skewing reporting information and probably compromising the information that could be examined during a formal YJCSS evaluation.

Some providers are using their own data and case management system – that is, running parallel systems to hold YJCSS records. This doubles their administration load, raises a data security question, and highlights inherent problems using a system designed primarily for the Child Protection system and now owned and managed by another government department.

Governance – alternatives to current arrangements

A commonly expressed view during consultations with YJCSS providers was that the Statewide Reference Group meetings are time-consuming and of limited value because they do not provide the opportunity for in-depth discussion about practice – especially practice challenges. They presented alternatives such as executive and management tiers of governance, and practice-focussed forums and networks to share ideas, workshop challenges and test strategies.

The YJCSS workforce

The review provided the opportunity to consider the skills, experience and qualifications required to provide the intensive support the program is designed to deliver. YJCSS staff share a commitment to assisting young people and their families, and a desire to see them achieve stability in their lives. The reviewers noted a level of sophistication among providers where there is an understanding of theoretical frameworks that underpin child development, that contribute to patterns of offending behaviour among the adolescent population, and that guide effective interventions to address the causes of offending and prevent future offending.

In any system that procures community sector involvement program delivery, there will be varying levels of capability to undertake the work, and there will be variation in the availability of skilled staff to fill positions. It may be that in procuring future YJCSS delivery, minimum qualifications for front-line staff can be specified and audited. Providers mentioned diploma or degree level qualifications as a minimum requirement as a possible threshold for recruitment to YJCSS positions. However the risk to this approach is that accrued life experience which equips people with the ability to undertake this type of work with young people could be overlooked in favour of formal qualifications.

It is also possible that the YJ Workforce project in progress within the System Coordination, Practice Leadership and Workforce team will identify skills and experience that apply to the YJ workforce that

could apply to the YJCSS workforce. It could also be worth considering the scope for practice exchange – temporary role swapping – between YJ staff and community-based agencies as a professional development and mutually-beneficial exercise whereby their respective roles, responsibilities – and challenges – become better understood by all parties.

Providers noted a range of areas where joint training would ‘bring a critical lens to compliance support’, with the YJ CMF training an essential starting point. Other areas mentioned were case planning and care teams; Youth Offending Programs – design, content and delivery; family violence; cultural awareness; trauma-informed and therapeutic approaches to case work; motivational interviewing and other psychological interventions; YLS tools and other validated tools now administered by YJ staff, and working with specific cohorts – age groups, girls and young women, young people with disabilities.

Summary of YJ and YJCSS population and activity 2013 to 2019

A total of 15,910 unique young people have had some form of engagement with YJ system – sentenced, on remand, or not under sentence (including bail) – from 2013–2014 to 2018–2019. In 2017–2018, a total of 467 young people were assisted by YJCSS; in 2018–2019, 512 young people were assisted.⁶ These numbers represent just under one-fifth (18.8 per cent) and just over one-fifth (21.3 per cent) of the total number of unique young people flowing through the YJ system⁷ in each of those years respectively (2488 and 2403).

YJCSS ‘share’ (percentage proportion) by region, year-on-year together with the six-year average profile, show that those from the NW metro region are underrepresented (six-year average of 26 per cent) and those from Barwon are possibly overrepresented (six-year average of 12 per cent) because their six-year average total YJ population are 32.3 per cent and 8.3 per cent respectively.

Across the six-year period analysed, a total of 2376 females have been involved with the YJ system – that is, they account for 15 per cent of the total YJ population. However females account for a total of 11.5 per cent of the YJCSS population over that six-year period. Further investigation is required to determine the reasons for this. There are also slightly different patterns of activity for males and females. While proportionally, males appear to engage with YJCSS at a comparable age to when their order starts, females appear to be engaging in YJCSS at a later age than when the majority of young females start an

⁶ Please note these numbers represent the full YJCSS cohort for 2017–2018 and 2018–2019 whereas the data provided for the period from 2013 to 2019 is for unique service commencements in each year and does not include all existing and/or closed cases in each of those years.

⁷ In custody and in the community, sentenced, remanded or not under sentence. Source YJ Business Services data.

order, and when young males engage with YJCSS. While further analysis will confirm this, it suggests an opportunity for more age-related YJCSS targeting for young females.

Cultural background

The proportion of the total YJ population who identify as Aboriginal has been between 13 and 16 per cent over the six-year period from 2013 and 2019. Young people with Aboriginal status accounted for 16.9 per cent of the YJCSS population in 2013–2014 and 12.3 per cent in 2018–2019 – a six-year average of 13.4 per cent which is lower than the proportion of young Aboriginal people in the overall YJ population over the same period (15.2%). This suggests the need for more specific targeting of young people, however the possibility of an Aboriginal-specific YJCSS program arising from the Armytage and Ogloff Review could address this need.

The percentage of the total YJ population that reports African background has increased progressively over the six-year period from 135 (or five per cent of the total) in 2013–2014 to 377 (or 16 per cent in 2018–2019), noting that ‘other’ and ‘not known’ account for 11 per cent of the overall population. The ‘share’ of involvement in YJCSS by young people who have Africa as their country of birth as a proportion of all YJCSS commencements has remained fairly constant at between six and nine per cent over the six years from 2013 to 2019, suggesting their proportional representation has declined over that period.

This picture of program activity highlights the need for program monitoring to identify the reasons for fluctuations in participation and representation activity such as the drop in Aboriginal young people’s participation in YJCSS in 2018-2019 after a consistent increase relative to the proportional increase in the Aboriginal population.

YJCSS outcomes

There are three sources of information about the outcomes of YJCSS intervention. The first is the CRISP data from 2013 to 2019 for the 1153 young people who commenced their YJCSS involvement during that period. That data shows a dramatic decrease in the number of young people receiving court orders during and after YJCSS involvement (compared to court orders upon entry). While it is possible that the picture about young people before YJCSS is skewed because there is no standard point in time in a young person's YJ profile where they are referred to YJCSS, that decrease is a possible indicator of significant change in reoffending and court-related activity as a result of YJCSS support.

The order intensity and the offence severity after YJCSS engagement is another possible measure of YJCSS effectiveness. Those that re-offend after YJCSS are mostly issued probation without conviction orders

instead of a more serious order like a Youth Supervision Order. And for those involved with YJCSS, far fewer are re-offending through robbery after YJCSS.

The other measure of effectiveness is the YJCSS providers' anecdotal evidence of post-program outcomes. YJ staff and YJCSS providers noted that desistance is a process over time, and that interim measures, while perhaps subjective and based on self-reporting, can be useful. A significant measure of effectiveness reported by YJCSS providers was increased order completion rates measured by the providers over time (a 45 per cent improvement in metropolitan Melbourne). Other measures noted were a reduction in police encounters and court involvement; re-engagement in education and pathways to qualifications and work; improvements in family relationships and housing stability; improvements in health and mental health; and increased social and community connections in pro-social contexts. While attributing outcomes to YJCSS alone is not possible at this stage, a formal longitudinal evaluation study will enable YJ to assess and quantify these outcomes over time, and confirm any shift in reoffending patterns.

Part Three – Opportunities for improvement: YJCSS re-cast for the decade ahead

Even though the size of the YJ population is declining overall, the complexity of the young people the service assists has increased over time. The needs of young people and their families are reflected in the range of activities YJCSS provides, and the breadth and intensity of assistance required. During this review, a cumulative picture has formed about possible new directions and enhancements – from a set of design principles that could underpin future YJCSS activity, to options for future program type and design. They envisage YJCSS as the 'third arm' of YJ, underpinning the statutory YJ custodial and community functions with strong community-based foundations that increase the net impact of the YJ system in Victoria.

There appear to be opportunities to achieve economies of scale through, firstly, program redesign that introduces a tiered service approach ranging from early intervention to intensive support, and secondly, investing in sector development to ensure they have the capacity and capability to properly support young people to achieve stable and secure lives, reduce reoffending and improve community safety.

The suggested design principles are:

1. A shared commitment to collaboration and communication that is consistent with the evidence about what it takes to achieve strategic and effective over-arching case management across the

- statutory arm of the YJ system and its community partners, to reduce reoffending and the rate at which young people return to sentenced supervision, and to improve community safety.
2. Community-based agencies are genuine partners with government in achieving shared goals in a partnership that is collaborative, advocates on behalf of young people involved in the YJ system, and is forward-looking rather than adversarial.
 3. YJ custodial and community statutory roles, and community-based programs, are effectively integrated as envisaged by the YJ Case Management Framework so that community-based programs can play a central role in addressing risk- and need-related responsivity issues.
 4. Effective intervention with young people involved with the Youth Justice system relies on an evidence-based approach centred on validated assessments, where the intensity of the intervention reflects the assessed level of risk and need, and the intervention is implemented as it was designed to be. This information is then transferred to program providers within the identified parameters that reflect privacy and privileged information.
 5. Early intervention and in-reach by community providers enables them to establish effective relationships with young people prior to release to ensure continuity of care and successful reintegration to the community.
 6. Community-based agencies commissioned to deliver YJ community services/programs have demonstrated and strategic partnerships with all the key agencies and organisations contributing to effective intervention – Victoria Police, courts, schools and training providers, employers, health and mental health services, AOD service providers, housing agencies, family services, Aboriginal and other cultural-specific community-controlled agencies within their catchment – and therefore can provide a multi-modal intervention that benefits young people, their families and their communities.
 7. Service delivery is culturally sensitive and appropriate, is relevant and compatible with the norms and values of varying cultural groups, and effectively engages the elders and leaders of the respective cultural backgrounds of program participants.
 8. Intervention is gender appropriate and inclusive, and recognises the range of gender identity and preferences of young people.
 9. Program outcomes are transparent and provide the scope to attribute changed trajectories of the young people involved to the program/service intervention.
 10. The monitoring, reporting and evaluation framework that supports YJ community programs/services contributes to building the evidence base about what works, for whom, and why in interventions designed to assist young people involved with the Youth Justice system.

11. The voice of young people and their family is an important contributor to program design and delivery, and needs to be incorporated at each stage of program development, review and evaluation wherever possible.

Program/service options

The possible program directions that could be explored, and that will benefit from workshoping within YJ are:

1. A structured, tiered approach to all YJ interventions ranging from the earliest engagement with offending behaviour (currently addressed through the Youth Support Service/Aboriginal Youth Supports) to the intensive support provided by YJCSS. Economies of scale could be achieved by aggregating the budget allocations for each program (an annual total of approximately \$16.9m excl. GST based on 2019-2020 outlays for YJCSS, YSS/AYSS and YJGC) for a combined YJ community support service structure. In these times of fiscal constraint, it is important to preserve program budgets as far as possible, while also demonstrating restraint and cost efficiencies. There are many potential benefits of this approach: the service provider base could be rationalised and program support could be streamlined; access to the YSS/AYSS (not currently state-wide) could be broadened; and the administrative burden could be reduced.

This type of rationalisation may also better equip the YJ system to meet potential demand by achieving an economy of scale that ultimately reduces the current unit price and perhaps increases worker/participant ratios because based on current population numbers and RNR assessments, demand will not match supply.

2. Greater integration of inter-government department effort through co-designed budget bids along the lines of a departmental consortium model. What could be explored are co-design opportunities with key players directly involved in the youth justice sphere (like CPV) or those not previously involved in joint bids – Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (for targeted employment services), DET (for tailored education initiatives such as the Out Teach program in Shepparton run by Save the Children, or dedicated training initiatives) or the Department of Transport (to help address persistent transport issues in regional Victoria).
3. Quarantining part of the aggregated budget to establish an innovation fund. This could enable creative, innovative, evidence-based solutions to intractable issues within the YJ system to be identified. Segments of the potential YJ service provider market could research and trial approaches

to build the evidence base and assess replicability in other areas. Solutions could be place-based, targeted by cohorts, or focus on an area that YJ identifies it wants to be targeted for innovative interventions.

4. Exploring the potential for social impact bonds⁸ to be implemented to help address critical housing needs for young people involved with the YJ system. Under this arrangement, government would seek private sector and/or philanthropic investment to build accommodation options of the types identified by this review, with government repaying that investment (with interest) at an agreed future time.
5. Strategic partnerships with local government. This appears to be an under-utilised area for collaboration. All councils offer youth and family services that range from sport and recreation, to more formal support projects.

Many other possibilities emerged during the literature scan to support this review. Strategies such as Family Focused Parole (FFT); Family Advocates (Families Inspiring Families); incentives for service providers tied to outcomes; specially-designed justice-related employment programs that recruit and train people in the community to act as role models and mentors for families and young people; mentoring programs that rely on graduate students to mentor young people or act as literacy tutors; or transition specialists who manage pre-release planning but are also community resource specialists, could be considered as possible enhancements to the YJ suite of programs.

Effective integrating YJ and community support services as envisaged by the CMF and addressing risk- and need-related responsivity

Whatever the configuration of YJ community support services, there is an opportunity to redefine the future iterations of community programs relative to the newly reformed YJ system. One way to cast this, consistent with the YJ Case Management Framework, is to view the community programs role as addressing risk- and need-related *responsivity* factors – the elements that can impede a young person’s ability to engage in or benefit from case management interventions designed to reduce their risk of reoffending.⁹ These include, and are consistent with the ‘central eight’ criminogenic risk factors and key activity areas described by YJCSS providers as the focus of their work with young people.

⁸ The Urban Institute discusses this ‘Pay for Success’ model in its 2019 Research Report titled *Promoting a New Direction for Youth Justice*.

⁹ Youth Justice Case Management Framework pp. 20-21

If program support is specified in this way, then identifying who should be referred to the service, when they are referred, and for what type/s of assistance is streamlined as it aligns with YJ Risk-Needs-Responsivity (RNR) assessments based on validated tools. It could also enable YJ and community providers to develop a joint plan of action for working with each young person based on shared information and practice directions. Within the total possible referral numbers, however, there will be also other cohorts that could be prioritised for access. These include 10- to 14-year-olds, young Aboriginal people, young girls and other priority groups who are the focus of other specific projects within YJ – LGBTI and young people with disabilities.

Outcome measures

Future YJ programs should include performance-based outcome measures that demonstrate progress – positive change, measurable differences – in the young person’s situation, and contribute to a reduced likelihood that the young person will engage in offending behaviour over time. The types of outcome measures need to be linked to the known areas requiring attention in young people in the YJ system, based on valid assessment and include achieving, for example, stable housing and accommodation; education or training engagement; employment or established pathways to employment; positive family relationships and community connections; stable health and mental health; AOD treatment and harm minimisation; a shift in offending frequency and/or severity; and the ability to safely and effectively live independently.

Review and evaluation

Monitoring, reviewing and evaluating all YJ-funded initiatives should be embedded in their design and delivery, and quarterly reports provide a good deal of information about provider and program activity, and could be monitored more strategically. Monitoring and evaluation provide the opportunity to learn about what is being delivered, to share practice-based knowledge, and to contribute to the body of evidence about what works in YJ. Embedding evaluation activity helps ensure that data collection is consistent and accurate, and is available for assessing the *outcomes* of initiatives, and ultimately assessing their *value*.

YJ needs high-quality evaluation evidence about the impact of its programs to make sound decisions about the most effective investment of government resources, and to develop sound policy. The YJ Evaluation Policy notes that evidence generated from evaluation ‘plays a key role in supporting the department and the division’s outcomes-focused approach, and the delivery of an evidence-based youth justice system.

Assessing the extent to which positive change has occurred can be based on both subjective and objective measures of YJCSS activity and outcomes, and will be validated by independent, external evaluation.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation 1 – that Youth Justice, as a high priority, undertake a strategic exercise within the executive team and in conjunction with YJ General Managers, to address the key threshold questions:

- **What is the role of a community-based YJ support service system in a reformed YJ context?**
- **What does the YJ system in Victoria want it to be?**
- **Why?**

Recommendation 2 – that Youth Justice:

- **improve the YJ and YJCSS interface by clearly delineating respective roles and responsibilities and streamlining information sharing and access arrangements to ensure regional staff and their YJCSS providers understand their roles in addressing young people’s offending-related issues and meeting each young person’s needs**
- **in the spirit of partnership, provide information and regular updates about the YJ CMF and the YJCSS agencies’ role as key partners in an integrated approach to case management**
- **develop and implement an effective and efficient process to share information (acknowledging privacy requirements) about the young people referred from YJ to YJCSS to obviate the need for YJCSS providers to develop their own intake and assessment processes**
- **streamline arrangements for YJCSS providers to have in-reach access to young people in custody, and**
- **ensure YJCSS providers have information about Youth Offending Programs (YOP) and their role in supporting young people’s engagement in these programs.**

Recommendation 3 – that Youth Justice address current disparate referral and eligibility arrangements by allocating time firstly, at a YJ GMs meeting and secondly, at a YJCSS Statewide Reference Group meeting to discuss and confirm referral arrangements including eligibility, priority, timing and required information to accompany the referral. This confirmed approach can then be incorporated into new YJCSS guidelines for implementation in July 2020.

Recommendation 4 – That care teams’ operations be enhanced by:

- reiterating the current requirements for care teams, as specified in all YJ documents, during regular meetings with YJCSS providers
- ensuring an overview of care team roles and responsibilities is included in YJ staff induction
- requiring all YJ regions and YJCSS providers to confirm their commitment to including the young person in care team meetings wherever possible
- having clear and decisive chairing arrangements, minutes and assigned responsibilities
- ensuring timely information sharing, including case plans and expectations of service providers.

Recommendation 5 – that in specifying future YJCSS activity, providers be required to identify their strategy for managing a waiting list including providing immediate interim assistance in cases where the YJ General Manager determines it is required.

Recommendation 6 – that in new YJCSS guidelines, the case load ratio be increased from 1: 8 to 1: 12 as consistent with the evidence base examined under this review.

Recommendation 7 – that, as part of the current YJ custodial and community program reviews underway, YJ examine how the identified program gaps can be addressed through strategic partnerships with other government agencies and program providers to ensure appropriate targeting, a focus on outcomes, and value for money.

Recommendation 8 – that planning for release begins as a young person enters custody, that pre-release planning beginning at that time features as a key requirement in the YJ Reintegration Framework, and that YJCSS providers are able to start establishing a connection with a young person three months before release through streamlined access to young people in custody.

Recommendation 9 – that the current YJ and Child Protection interface be confirmed across all regions and with all YJCSS providers by:

- issuing the current YJCSS Guidelines requirements for dual clients to all YJCSS providers as a practice update
- discussing these requirements at review meetings between YJ General Managers, YJ staff and their YJCSS provider as soon as possible

- including the revised protocols between Youth Justice and Child Protection, and Youth Justice and Disability Services on the General Managers meeting agenda and the YJCSS/YJGC Governance meeting agenda to ensure all providers are briefed on and understand current requirements, and
- all regions exploring how TCPs could be more effectively and efficiently accessed in their region.

Recommendation 10 – that YJ initiate a short-term collaborative project with other arms of government to map government overlap in intensive assistance to common clients, chart the assistance provided, and quantify the funding allocated to non-government agencies commissioned to provide that assistance so there is a government-wide, consolidated view of what is being invested, for what return and whether any reform of current arrangements is required. The Service Reform initiatives occurring across government could be a mechanism by which this information can be gathered.

Recommendation 11 – that, as a priority, YJ establish a high-level joint YJ and DHHS working group to further investigate current CRISSP data input, extraction and reporting issues to resolve current user interface problems and streamline future reporting and analysis.

Recommendation 12 – that the YJ System Coordination, Practice Leadership and Workforce team review current governance arrangements and examine the feasibility of a revised governance structure as outlined in collaboration with YJCSS providers through the existing Statewide Reference Group avenue prior to introducing any new arrangements.

Recommendation 13 – that YJ explore:

- opportunities for joint YJ and YJCSS training to bring together regional YJ and YJCSS practitioners to develop, through a cumulative knowledge-building process, the required knowledge and understanding that can inform effective practice across the board
- opportunities for practice exchange to provide YJ and YJCSS agency staff with the opportunity for short-term role exchange to build their mutual understanding of their respective roles and pressures, and
- developing a training calendar for joint YJ and YJCSS staff training for 2020.

Recommendation 14 – that Youth Justice review program monitoring and reporting to ensure that as quarterly reports are submitted, and over time, trends are assessed and remedial action is taken to ensure equitable access to the program, and consistent targeting to meet policy imperatives and fluctuations in the YJ population profile.

DRAFT

Part One – The Review and its Context

1. Introduction to the Review

The Youth Justice Community Support Service (YJCSS) was established in metropolitan Melbourne in 2008, and in regional Victoria in 2009. YJCSS provides intensive support to two main Youth Justice (YJ) groups:

- young people who need a high or intensive level of intervention who are on community-based court orders – including those on bail or deferred sentences (pre-sentence) – and young people leaving custody on remissions or parole who require post-release support, and
- young people aged 17 and over released from Youth Justice centres on parole orders who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and have the potential to live independently.

The Transitional Housing Management-Youth Justice Housing Pathways Initiative (THM-YJHPI) is an important complementary component of YJCSS, and provides housing properties and housing support and outreach for eligible young people.

YJCSS was independently evaluated by Synergistiq in 2013 and was also examined by an internal YJ Community Services (now System Coordination, Practice Leadership and Workforce) Current State Assessment (CSA) in 2018. The evaluation and the CSA both highlighted areas for further inquiry or review, including monitoring and reporting, governance, and connecting YJCSS to the broader service system ([Appendix 1](#)). The 2017 Armytage and Ogloff Review (*Youth Justice Review and Strategy: Meeting needs and reducing offending*) also made seven recommendations about YJCSS enhancements and expansion, focusing on service integration, transition and support, and a YJCSS program for Aboriginal young people ([Appendix 2](#)).

This current internal review of YJCSS builds on the previous review and evaluation activity, as well as the Armytage and Ogloff recommendations, to:

- examine current YJCSS operation, performance and outcomes within the current YJ reform context
- determine optimal service design, delivery and distribution
- inform new service guidelines
- create a solid evidence base on which to base decisions about the service's future, and
- provide advice and recommendations about procuring future service delivery.

1.1 YJCSS Review Report Scope

This report includes discussion about, and analysis of, the YJCSS program delivered in all seven YJ regions by the eight funded service providers operating in eleven locations across Victoria. It includes analysis of six years of program data (including current data), and consultations with all YJ regions, service providers and service users. It also includes synthesised research evidence of what works in YJCSS-type intensive support to young people involved with the criminal justice system as well as advice from key people with particular expertise in the YJ field.

Other YJ-funded programs are not in scope, except for limited discussion about two programs/activities funded from the YJCSS budget – the HandBrake Turn program, and a culturally-specific service for young Afghani people delivered by Diversitat (previously Geelong Ethnic Communities Council).

1.2 The YJCSS Review Context

Victoria's YJ system is undergoing significant reform as a result of the Armytage and Ogloff Review. That Review provided the strategic framework for recalibrating and refocusing the system, and outlined how Victoria can create an evidence-based response to youth offending that addresses the risks and needs of young people, and also meets community safety expectations.

In implementing the broad sweep of Armytage and Ogloff Review recommendations, Victoria's YJ system now functions within an integrated Case Management Framework and a new Custodial Operating Philosophy, and will shortly be guided by an all-encompassing Youth Justice Strategy that includes new agreed plan commitments between YJ and the Department of Education and Training (DET), and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The Koori Youth Justice Strategy will also guide future YJ activity for young Aboriginal people.

The broader context for these YJ reforms also includes the Crime Prevention Victoria initiatives funded under its targeted and community grants programs ([Appendix 3](#)), the small-scale YJ trial of Functional Family Therapy (FFT) and Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) ([Appendix 4](#)), and the Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS) vision, policy and delivery priorities for a safer, fairer and stronger Victoria set out in the Department's Statement of Direction ([Appendix 5](#)).

These contextual factors recognise that interventions for young people under Youth Justice care and supervision need to be based on what is known to work in addressing young people's offending behaviour, and reflect young people's need for stability and security in their lives. YJCSS can play an important part on both these counts: by supporting effective YJ strategies to address offending-related

behaviour, and by helping to establish the types of engagement, activity and patterns in young people's lives that will increase their stability and security. The comprehensive, integrated intervention that YJCSS should represent can enable young people involved with YJ to envisage better lives, can foster desistance from crime and can also lead to increased community safety.

1.3 Other Armytage/Ogloff Review commentary relevant to the YJCSS internal review

As well as specific YJCSS-related recommendations, the Armytage and Ogloff Review commented that Victoria's YJ system '...does not currently invest in the necessary level of step-down and transition support required to prevent reoffending'.¹⁰ The Review highlighted the period immediately after release from custody as requiring significant adjustment, as 'the risk of the re-emergence of criminogenic drivers is heightened'.¹¹

The Review also noted that post-sentence accommodation is critical: 'Unstable housing, homelessness and family violence severely limit the capacity for meaningful offence interventions to take place.' The Reviewers noted that in '...such an environment, young people are less likely to remain engaged in education and employment and risk breaching the requirements of their orders'.¹² Armytage and Ogloff highlighted education and employment as '...key to preventing future offending. Education and employment provide necessary daily structure and exposure to prosocial environments and peers'.¹³

Other Review findings such as that Victoria's youth justice system has not benefited from developing close associations with experts; that it has not relied on contemporary evidence, and that there is '...very low investment in community-based early intervention and support, representing a missed opportunity to intervene'¹⁴ are relevant to YJCSS, and this YJCSS review.

Each of those areas – transition, housing, engagement in education and employment, the contemporary evidence base and the ways in which community-based intervention can support young people involved with the YJ system – figure in current YJCSS design and delivery. They are fundamental to the range of intensive support intended under YJCSS and were woven into the design and conduct of this review, and featured during review consultations.

¹⁰ A & O Executive Summary p. 17

¹¹ *ibid*

¹² *ibid*

¹³ *ibid*

¹⁴ A & O Executive Summary, p. 22

1.4 Project overview and methodology

This state-wide YJCSS review used a mixed methods approach to gather and synthesise information from a range of primary and secondary sources. From February to July 2019 the review team (Senior Program Manager assisted by a Project Officer):

- consulted all YJ regional General Managers and staff in their respective regional and metropolitan locations
- interviewed selected YJ custodial staff
- consulted all eight YJCSS service providers (visited six of them for face-to-face meetings and interviewed two by telephone)
- held four focus groups with young people in Parkville and Malmsbury Youth Justice Centres
- interviewed key luminaries in the YJ field
- met with other state-government agencies funding intensive support services for young people involved with the criminal justice system to compare costs
- scanned contemporary literature to explore current evidence-based intensive support, transition and reintegration practices for young people in custodial and community youth justice settings
- analysed YJCSS data over the six-year period from 2013–2014 to 2018–2019.

This approach to the review was endorsed by the YJ Deputy Secretary in December 2018, and the interview schedules/questions are included as [Appendix 6](#). These questions were derived from the set of 49 questions ([Appendix 7](#)) the review needed to address.

Using this range of sources and approaching the review in this way enabled the review team to explore the YJCSS:

- *operating model* – in custody and community, referral processes and patterns, consistency with guidelines, period of engagement, caseloads, brokerage, reporting and relationship to the Case Management Framework (CMF)
- *funded service providers* – delivery model, staffing, exemplars of good practice
- *relationships* – between YJ staff and YJCSS providers, with other agencies, and with funded Crime Prevention Victoria projects
- *outcomes* – as far as possible, what they are, how they are achieved and for whom, and what enhancements could strengthen outcomes

- *target population* – the relationship between the potential demand for the service (based on YJ population) and service activity (supply), and cultural or other gaps
- *Transitional Housing Model (THM)* – operation and balance between YJCSS case management/referral support, and housing support
- *broader YJ policy context* – trends or shifts that need to be taken into account, legislative changes affecting YJCSS funding and/or operation
- *investment* – whether YJCSS represents value for money and is a sound investment
- *YJCSS governance* – current arrangements and their effectiveness
- *future service delivery* – how to shape the future design and delivery of YJCSS.

The review data analysis was based on service information entered into the DHHS-designed and operated Client Relationship and Information System for Service Providers (CRISSP – derived from CRIS) and from provider reports sent directly to the YJ System Coordination, Practice Leadership and Workforce team.

1.4.1 Data limitations

While information from all the consultations is extensive and provides a rich picture of YJCSS operation, the CRISSP data from 2014 to 2019 (apart from the 2018 data compiled by YJ System Coordination, Practice Leadership and Workforce direct from service providers' reports) is based on unique new referrals to the service each financial year, not throughput, and so represents approximately half of all service activity. The YJ System Coordination, Practice Leadership and Workforce data for 2018–2019 summarises all YJCSS provider activity for that reporting period, and the reporting against targets includes all new referrals, active and closed cases.

2. The Youth Justice Community Support Service (YJCSS)

2.1 YJCSS overview – the role of YJCSS in Victoria’s Youth Justice system

YJCSS is designed to be Victoria’s integrated approach to providing voluntary, community-based intensive support and services to young people involved with YJ. YJCSS is a key post-sentence component on the YJ continuum ([Appendix 8](#)).

YJCSS – and the ancillary THM-YJHPI – can complement the statutory case management led by YJ staff in metropolitan and regional offices across Victoria, and in custodial settings. The THM-YJHPI provides access to 55 YJ-dedicated transitional housing properties (statewide) and housing outreach support for eligible young people.

Young people involved with YJCSS are generally those assessed as needing high to intensive levels of assistance, and can be on the full range of community-based orders (probation, youth supervision or youth attendance or youth control orders) and those leaving custody (on straight release, parole or remissions, or after a period of remand). In some cases young people at the pre-sentencing stage (such as supervised bail or deferred sentence) may be referred to YJCSS because of their unique needs or lack of alternative support options. Young people subject to the Intensive Monitoring and Control Bail Supervision Scheme (IB) can also be referred to YJCSS.

Under the current YJCSS guidelines (updated in 2018), YJCSS and its related housing activity are modelled as intensive support and funded agencies notionally operate with a one-full-time staff member to eight-young-people (1:8) ratio for the duration of a young person’s involvement with the service. The length of their involvement varies according to the young person’s needs and complexity; is tied to the goals set with and for each young person and their YJ worker; and can range from a few months to a number of years in some (few) cases, lasting well beyond the YJ order. The intensity and length of YJCSS engagement is discussed during review meetings between YJ staff and the YJCSS provider, with the end goal being that every YJCSS participant can make the transition to the general community services network, and has the ability to access the support they need and not engage in further criminal activity.

In broad terms, YJCSS is designed to:

- reduce the severity, frequency and rates of re-offending, and minimise young people’s progression into the criminal justice system

- provide a service for young people in their local community and enable their transition from Youth Justice centres or supervision into that community
- prepare young people for adulthood by developing their independence, resilience and prosocial connections to family and community
- develop young people's capacity for meaningful education and economic participation.¹⁵

Young people involved with the YJ system are referred to YJCSS providers by YJ regional staff who decide, based on risk and need assessments and knowing the young person's history, who needs to be referred for intensive community-based support. Referrals are discussed at intake meetings and/or during supervision sessions, and in larger regions there may be a YJ worker who holds portfolio responsibility for YJCSS and 'gatekeeps' referrals according to the regional target allocation.

Because the service is voluntary, young people must consent to being referred. Regional staff consulted for the review noted that it is very rare (or does not occur at all) for a young person to refuse referral to YJCSS.

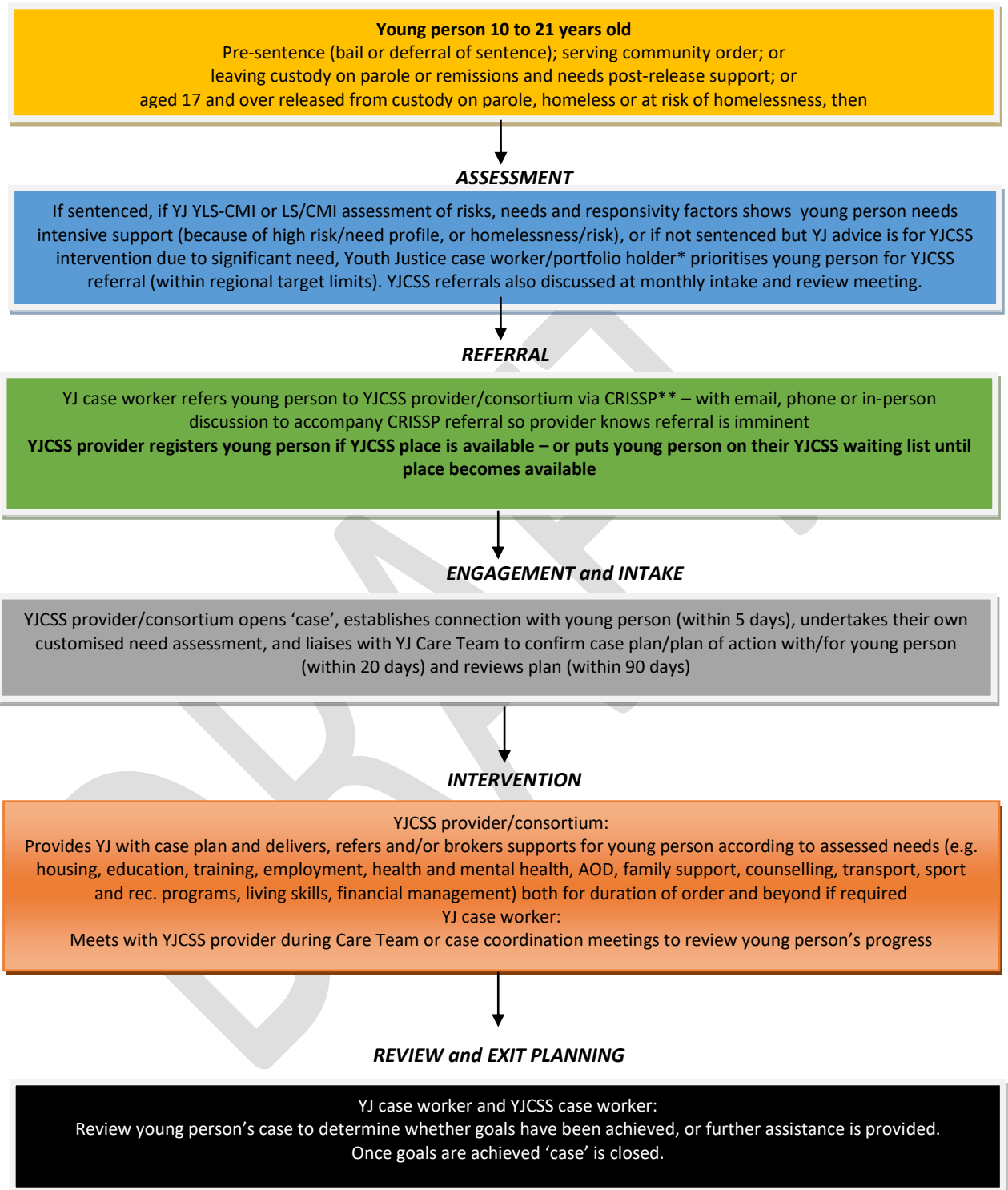
Based on each young person's specific needs, and in tandem with YJ staff, each YJCSS provider aims to achieve the service outcomes through intensive case work and access and/or referrals to, for example, employment, education, training, health and mental health, drug and alcohol and housing services in an effort to address the areas de-stabilising the young person's life.

Young people referred to YJCSS may also be involved with Child Protection and/or Disability Client Services. Case planning and care team arrangements (outlined in detail in the YJCSS Guidelines) apply to all YJCSS participants, however when Child Protection or Disability Client Services are involved, joint case planning is required and this occurs through the care teams in each region.

YJCSS in action flows as follows:

¹⁵ Guidelines for the Youth Justice Community Support Service (YJCSS) Updated 2018 pp. 7–8.

Figure 1: An overview of YJCSS operation



* In some large regions, designated YJ staff have YJCSS 'portfolio' role to 'gate keep' and oversee YJCSS throughput, especially where a young person's order has expired but YJCSS remains involved after YJ involvement ends.

**CRISSP referral form is available in CRIS and gives YJCSS provider referral, client, legal status, risk and support requirement information. Referral sent to YJCSS provider needs to include signed consent form, court documents, Pre-Sentence Report (PSR) and assessment summary from YJAS.

2.1.1 YJCSS specifications (2008)

Agency consortia (the consortium was the preferred model when the service was commissioned) submitting proposals to deliver YJCSS in 2008 ([Appendix 9](#)) based their submissions on a DHS specification that described the YJ context and YJ profile (including demographics and risk status) in each region, the YJ Service Delivery Model (YJSDM), and YJCSS service requirements. The specification outlined three key components:

- **A focus on client¹⁶ outcomes** – the YJSDM was designed to fund access to services focussed on client outcomes.
- **Integrated service delivery and access** – funded organisations needed to deliver and provide access to services in integrated and coordinated ways, and provide intensive support and access to services both within the consortium and the broader service system. These services were to be tailored to each individual in line with their risk/ needs assessment and subsequent case plan.
- **Consortium/partnership arrangements** – the YJSDM required that organisations partner in each region to provide the range of services.

Organisations proposing to deliver the service needed to demonstrate their capacity to:

- provide a suite of services to young people involved with YJ (10-21 years of age)
- work with specific YJ populations including Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD), young women and clients with mental health, disability and drug and alcohol issues
- provide intensive housing support and advice to young people in the Transitional Housing Management for the region–YJ Pathways Program and meet the specific targets required for the region
- partner with existing regionally-based YJ Indigenous initiatives, and
- establish connections with the broader youth service system such as mental health, education and training, employment and housing.

Each regional specification included the amount of funding available for the service. For example, in the NWM region, the available budget was \$862, 631 which included \$188,487 for YJ-THM support. No targets were specified (except for 36 housing placements based on having 18 dedicated properties in the

¹⁶ Note that the 2008 document refers to 'client' throughout.

region), however organisations were provided with a regional breakdown of the proportion of young people assessed as having low, moderate, high or intensive needs. Submitting organisations needed to focus on young people with high and intensive need levels in their proposal and planned service delivery. The specification noted three monitoring measures (response time, documented plan and plan review schedule), and stated that key performance indicators (KPIs) would be developed. The specification listed a three-tier set of outcome requirements. For young people assisted under the YJSDM service providers needed to ensure:

- independent living skills were developed as appropriate for their age and developmental level
- connections to education, training or employment services
- support to access stable and safe accommodation
- support to connect to family, significant others, community and culture
- developmental and emotional/mental health needs were addressed
- support to develop social skills
- support to reduce the likelihood of reoffending.

The service delivery system outcomes required were that services needed to be:

- competent and professional
- sensitive to CALD and Indigenous needs
- accessible
- safe, appropriate and welcoming
- responsive to client needs in an integrated and holistic manner.

And the partnering outcomes sought through the YJSDM were:

- improved cooperation and planning between organisations delivering services to YJ young people
- improved integration with the full range of relevant services at a local level to enable young people access to services where and when they need them, and
- improved capacity building within the youth services sector at the individual, community and organisational levels.

Few consortium arrangements remain in 2019, apart from partnerships in the North, West and East metropolitan areas. Over time, other consortium partners have withdrawn. Reasons for this vary, however the review consultations highlighted agency mergers, shift in agency focus and in one case, an agency deciding that it could not cover the distances required to assist young people in regional Gippsland.

2.1.2 Intensive support

The YJCSS definition of intensive support used in the YJCSS Guidelines¹⁷ is derived from the YJ assessment tool – the Victorian Offending Needs Indicator for Youth (VONIY)¹⁸ – and describes intensive support as including, but not limited to:

- intensive casework support which is complementary to the statutory case management undertaken by the youth justice worker, to assist young people to lead non-offending lives to connect to family, education, training, employment and community
- assertive engagement and outreach support
- after-hours supervision and structured day activities on weekends, weeknights and during school holidays
- after-hours crisis work through to long-term support
- custodial visits to facilitate engagement prior to the commencement of post release support (for young people exiting custody).

Intensive support also includes service referrals including (but not limited to):

- referrals to a broad range of community support services available within the YJCSS agencies' wider programs and the broader service system
- support to ensure young people can access and are engaged with the services to which they have been referred
- assistance to maintain engagement with identified services, particularly after statutory YJ involvement.

Housing assistance is also covered by the intensive support description and includes (but is not limited to):

- dedicated transitional housing properties with housing and outreach support attached
- housing exit plans, which include long-term housing pathways.

2.2 Guidelines and practice standards

The YJCSS Guidelines ([Appendix 10](#)) are very detailed and provide guidance on how YJCSS providers need to manage and deliver their YJCSS allocations. Divided into three main parts, the Guidelines cover:

¹⁷ Guidelines for the Youth Justice Community Support Service (YJCSS) Updated 2018 p. 37.

¹⁸ Note that The VONIY was replaced by the YLS/LS assessments and other tools introduced as part of the Case Management Framework.

- the YJ policy context and applicable legislation
- specific information about the YJCSS target group, referral and eligibility, information management, the YJCSS model, roles and responsibilities, dispute resolution, reporting and contacts for further information
- transitional housing management, tenancy and exit arrangements.

Templates for referrals and consent are also included.

In addition to the detailed YJCSS Guidelines, many of the YJ Practice Guidelines are relevant to YJCSS:

- YJCSS Practice Guideline
- Care Teams
- Case Noting and Record Keeping
- Case Planning
- Family Violence and Child Information Sharing Schemes
- Planning for Youth Parole
- Risk and Needs Assessment
- Pre-sentence reports in the Children's and Adult Courts
- Bail Services
- Youth Control Orders
- Working as One System
- Prioritising and sequencing interventions
- Exiting custody transition and reintegration
- Planning for high risk situations
- Community intervention
- Managing youth parole orders
- Writing a report for the Youth parole Board.

These guides are for YJ staff use, and not distributed to YJCSS providers.

2.3 Transitional Housing Model incorporated with YJCSS

The Transitional Housing Management-Youth Justice Housing Pathways Initiative (THM-YJHPI) was introduced in 2002 as a post-release accommodation and support service for young people leaving YJ centres and for other YJ-involved young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The initiative has two elements and two target groups:

- the *Housing and Support* component is for young people aged 17 and over who are leaving custody on parole orders. These young people must have a history of homelessness and/or be at risk of homelessness, and have the capacity to live independently. This is to help ensure that lack of accommodation does not factor in parole deferral and release from custody.
- the *Youth Justice Homelessness Assistance Service* (YJHA) is for young people aged 15 and over who are leaving Youth Justice centres, have a history of homelessness and cannot access dedicated THM-YJHPI properties and support. The YJHA is managed by VincentCare (a THM) and DHHS funds 1.5 EFT positions at VincentCare for this role.

YJHA workers provide specialist housing assistance to young people, and secondary consultation to YJ centres and regional teams to explore and develop housing pathways for YJ young people.

Youth Justice has dedicated access – direct referral or nomination rights – to 55 transitional houses across Victoria. DHHS owns and maintains these properties and Transitional Housing Management (THM) providers manage the houses as ‘landlords’ according to the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* and *Homelessness Services Guidelines and Conditions of Funding 2014*. A 26-week stay and period of support is the notional average for transitional housing, however most young people will stay in these houses for longer periods due to limited access to other public or private housing options.

The transitional housing component of YJCSS aims to provide pathways out of homelessness through stable accommodation while young people and the workers assisting them find longer-term housing, and the ‘tenants’ have the opportunity to experience tenancy and rental conditions in a supported environment.

Please note that significant planning is underway within YJ as part of the Justice Housing Strategy which includes housing arrangements for young people under YJ care and supervision.

2.4 YJCSS service providers, targets and funding

Eight community service organisations (and in some metropolitan regions, consortium partners of those organisations) are contracted to deliver YJCSS. All regionally-based agencies service large geographical areas surrounding the regional centres where they are based, including many regional towns, to provide a state-wide service. In addition, two organisations – Concern Australia (CA) and Diversitat (previously known as the Geelong Ethnic Communities Council (GECC)) – are funded from the YJCSS budget to deliver employment services (CA) and a culturally-specific service (Diversitat) to young people under YJ supervision.

2.4.1 Extended after-hours services

In June 2018, new YJ Youth Control Orders (YCOs) and the Intensive Monitoring and Control Bail Supervision Scheme (IB) were introduced. To support young people subject to these new orders, additional YJCSS funding was provided to current YJCSS providers (except for Brophy Youth and Family Services in Warrnambool, and the specific service programs) to extend YJCSS coverage after-hours. This means young people who are particularly vulnerable to reoffending such as those making the transition from custody to the community, or those who are living alone or socially isolated have weeknight and weekend support from YJCSS staff. After-hours support also provides the opportunity to engage young people in pro-social activities at times when they might be at risk of offending and therefore ultimately to reduce that risk. Originally funded to the end of June 2019, the after-hours funding was allocated funding for a further two years in the 2019-20 State Budget.

2.4.2 Current YJCSS funding

The 2019-20 annual recurrent funding for YJCSS (from YJ base funding) is \$5.9M (including GST). The non-recurrent after-hours component is just under \$3.7M (including GST) annually. This means the total YJCSS investment for 2019-20 is \$9.6M (including GST) for 515 YJCSS places (this figure includes the 10 Diversitat and 24 CA targets). Discussion of YJCSS average unit price and comparison with other services is included in Section 4.12.

In 2017–2018, a total of 467 young people were assisted by YJCSS; in 2018–2019, 512 young people were assisted.¹⁹ The total number of young people assisted in each of those years represents just under one-fifth (18.8 per cent) and just over one-fifth (21.3 per cent) of the total number of unique young people flowing through the YJ system²⁰ in each of those years respectively (2488 and 2403).

The YJCSS targets and utilisation rate for 2018–2019, and funding (including after-hours allocation where applicable) for each YJCSS provider in 2019–2020 is shown in Table 1:

¹⁹ Please note these numbers represent the full YJCSS cohort for 2017–2018 and 2018–2019 whereas the data provided for the period from 2013 to 2019 is for unique service commencements in each year and does not include all existing and/or closed cases in each of those years.

²⁰ In custody and in the community, sentenced, remanded or not under sentence. Source YJ Business Services data.

Table 1: YJCSS targets and utilisation rate for 2018–2019 and funding allocation for 2019–2020

Organisation (and region)	Target 2018–2019	Actual performance relative to target	Utilisation rate 2018–2019	2019–2020 Funding (incl. GST)
Anglicare (Loddon)	27	30	111%	████████
Barwon Child, Youth and Family (Barwon – Geelong)	41	29	71%	████████
Brophy Youth and Family Services (Barwon – Warrnambool)	10	20	200%	████████
Centacare (Grampians)	35	37	106%	████████
Concern Australia*	24	24 (TBC)	100%	████████
Diversitat**	10	10 (TBC)	100%	████████
Jesuit Social Services (North, West, South and East metropolitan Melbourne)	275	306	114%	██████████
Mallee Accommodation and Support Program (Mallee)	14	13	93%	████████
Quantum (Gippsland)	47	37	79%	████████
Salvation Army (Salvocare) (Hume)	32	40	125%	████████
Total	515	546	110%	██████████

* funded for employment-related services

** funded for culturally-specific service

In regions where there is under-performance, YJ central office staff, and regional staff have met with the providers to review performance. Issues with the rate and timing of referrals, and counting rules (when cases are closed, and when new cases are opened for example) were the reasons for apparent under-

performance figures and are being addressed. It is expected that all targets will be met (or exceeded) in 2019–2020.

Among the providers exceeding their target, the review noted a very high level of commitment to assisting young people. This was particularly the case in the Hume region (Salvocare) and western Victoria (Brophy). At Brophy, staff engaged to work on YJCSS and YJ Group Conferencing are working across both programs to meet demand. That is, when the Group Conferencing staff member has capacity, they assist with the YJCSS caseload. Brophy was the only YJCSS provider not to be funded for after-hours expansion (on the basis of the cost of their proposal and expected demand) however this review noted that there remains a need for after-hours support for young people in the areas Brophy covers – particularly small regional towns where other services are limited (such as Terang).

2.5 YJCSS contract management and reporting

Contract management (based on the funding and service agreement between the State of Victoria – previously DHHS now DJCS – and each YJCSS provider) occurs centrally through YJ Business Services and the System Coordination, Practice Leadership and Workforce team (previously Community Services), with overall practice guidance and direction also provided by that team.

Under the machinery-of-government changes negotiated during the 2017 transition to DJCS, responsibilities are as follows:

- YJ Business Services is responsible for contract planning and service provider selection, contract management, data collation and monitoring performance reporting
- YJ System Coordination, Practice Leadership and Workforce oversees state-wide performance and convenes quarterly state-wide service provider reference group meetings, develops operational policy and service improvements (including guidelines) and facilitates service review and evaluation, and
- YJ General Managers manage effective working relationships with service providers, address performance concerns and support community sector networks.²¹

Until 30 June 2019, the DHHS Funding and Service Agreement (FASA) applied to YJCSS providers. Those agreements stipulated a target (number) and requirement for quarterly data (quarterly achievement

²¹ Sourced from Memorandum to Executive Directors, RSN, from YJ Business Services Director dated 8 September 2017 TRIM ID: DB/17/5911

number relative to annual target) reports. No outcome-based performance measures were in the agreements, however providers are required to initiate contact with each young person referred within five days, develop a support plan within 20 days, and review that plan within 90 days (for currency and progress).

The Deed of Variation which is the agreement between YJCSS and DJCS for 2019–2020 includes new provisions for MARAM alignment and FVISS and CIS-related insurance requirements. Reporting requirements have not changed, however YJCSS providers submit quarterly reports that contain some demographic information, and list case commencements and closures to the System Coordination, Practice Leadership and Workforce team.

An example of a report is included at [Appendix 11](#). The reports provide information about each young person assisted by the service and are collated into the combined YJ Quarterly Report (QR) prepared by Business Services that summarises progress towards annual targets. Each quarter the YJ General Managers are invited to comment on service providers' performance and any issues arising, and these comments are included in the QR.

Regional arrangements whereby General Managers or senior YJ staff regularly meet with their YJCSS providers to discuss targets, troubleshoot issues or negotiate housing arrangements, for example, vary across each location. When YJCSS was managed by DHHS, central oversight was supported by regionally-based Local Engagement Officer (LEO)-type roles which meant that managing local contract-related and target-achievement issues was not (in most cases) the responsibility of YJ General Managers. Some regions are keen for an arrangement of this type to be reinstated given other workload pressures.

2.6 Governance

YJCSS governance within YJ takes two main forms: through the local, regional arrangements whereby YJ General Managers and staff meet monthly, every two months or quarterly with their YJCSS provider to discuss YJCSS activity and to review individual cases, and through the YJCSS State-wide Reference Group (which is combined with the YJ Group Conferencing Reference Group). The Terms of Reference for this Reference Group are at [Appendix 12](#). In some cases there can be local reference groups as well.

The State-wide Reference Group meets quarterly and includes representatives from the YJ System Coordination, Practice Leadership and Workforce team, Business Services, Custodial Services, a regional YJ General Manager, and YJCSS providers. Representatives from other departmental areas and government agencies are consulted or invited to contribute as required.

All YJCSS providers also have their own internal governance structures and are accountable to a board of management or other management arrangements depending on their organisational structure.

2.7 Legislative and broad policy context

As well as YJ-specific policy and reform frameworks guiding YJCSS activity, there are broader legislative and policy directions shaping how young people under YJ care and supervision – and by extension YJCSS provider care – need to operate. These are the:

- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 and the Children and Justice Legislation Amendment (Youth Justice Reform) Act 2017*
- Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities
- Information Privacy principles covered by the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005, Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* and the *Health Records Act 2001*
- *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*
- *Housing Act 1983*, incorporating the *Housing Act (Housing Agencies) 2004*
- Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS)
- Child Information Sharing (CIS) Scheme
- Multi Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM)
- Homelessness Service Guidelines and Conditions of Funding 2014
- Transition to Independent Living Allowance
- Youth Justice Information Collection Notices
- Youth Justice Housing Protocol Fact Sheet, and
- YJ CRIS to CRISP Electronic Referral Guide.

YJCSS providers therefore operate within a complex legislative and policy framework, function under prescriptive guidelines and practice frameworks, engage with multiple layers of YJ management, and assist some of the most vulnerable and complex young people in the state. Recently they have also adjusted from a DHHS operating environment to the Justice-focused environment, and are experiencing the dynamic and shifting work of the Department as it restructures and refocusses its strategic directions.

3. The evidence base – what the literature tells us

Rather than an in-depth literature review, the YJCSS reviewers scanned contemporary literature to distil key themes, principles and program/service design elements to inform the review. A number of other literature reviews are underway in Youth Justice (Girls, Early Intervention, Reintegration, for example), and those reviews, and this project's literature scan combined, provide a substantial evidence base to guide future program design and delivery.

This literature scan (summary included as [Appendix 13](#)) examined YJ service and program information from other jurisdictions in Australia, the US, the UK, Europe and Scandinavia to produce a summary document for reference throughout the review, and noted key requirements for effective intensive interventions for young people involved with youth justice systems (in custody and the community) and the challenges in delivering effective reintegration and support services. Where possible, information about potential outcome measures that could be incorporated into future programs was also sourced. Across all the jurisdictions, there was considerable consistency in what was highlighted as what it takes to deliver effective interventions, and what the challenges are in achieving positive outcomes for young people, their families and their communities.

3.1 Key requirements – effective intensive support interventions

The key areas for effective intensive support intervention are stable housing, engagement in education, employment and training, health and mental health, behavioural health, AOD – often in combination (such as mental health and alcohol and/or drug dependency), positive peer influences and independent living skills. The key mechanism to guide that intervention is effective case management. What it takes to achieve effective case management in Victoria's YJ system is set out in the Youth Justice Case Management Framework document (2019) and the Youth Justice Case Management Evidence Base document (2019).

What was distilled from the literature scan was that designing and delivering effective similar services to the intensive support intended by YJCSS, including the transition phases from custody to the community, and from community supervision to unsupervised reintegration into the community, requires:

- A fundamental commitment to **collaboration and communication between service partners**. This includes justice agencies with a compliance and statutory supervision role, law enforcers and courts, other government departments with an interest in, or responsibility for, the young people being assisted (agencies such as health, human services or education), and community-based partners. Effective collaboration and communication ensure all parties understand their roles and responsibilities. Relationships between all key players are critical and need to be fostered. This was particularly highlighted in programs and services implemented under the Second Chance Act in the US, and in the Netherlands.

Victoria’s Youth Parole Board noted this need for partnerships in 2017:

‘An effective Youth Justice system can only succeed in its aims of reducing offending by young people, thus improving community safety, by ensuring that a case management approach incorporates the establishment and maintenance of strong partnerships, agreements and understandings with a broad range of government and community agencies and service providers at a number of levels.’²²
- An **integrated, over-arching case management approach** where all agencies involved know what the case management requirements are and can fulfil their roles in case managing each young person is required. This integrated case management requires government departments to be linked up; to provide integrated support to the same young person. A practical example of this is a program where the justice agency does multidisciplinary risk, need and strengths assessments (using validated tools) and develops the action plan; the health agency provides medical care and referral to all required health agencies; and the education agency oversees education credits obtained in custody and ensures the young person’s education status is shared with the relevant school or education setting before release. The justice-focussed community partner links the young person into all other required services – such as family support services, independent living skills development and prosocial recreation activity available in the community.
- Building trusting relationships with young people**. Trust is a critical success factor in positive and enduring relationships between young people and those with responsibility for assisting them, and this concept figured prominently in literature highlighting ‘what works’ in YJ. The YJ

²² Cited in the Youth Justice Evidence Base, 2019, p. 47

Case Management Evidence Base document notes that ‘offenders are most influenced to change (and not to change) by those whose advice they respect and whose support they value’,²³ and highlights the importance of positive and trusting relationships between YJ staff, funded agencies, young people, and their families. Without trust, it is not possible to effectively engage or motivate young people to make progress towards desistance from offending behaviour.

- **Understanding that preparing for reintegration back into the community begins at the point the young person enters the system.** This pre-release support needs to extend seamlessly back into the community, and where required, extend beyond the period of formal supervision – in some cases for up to one year afterwards. Among younger cohorts, the extended length of participation in re-entry services decreases the likelihood of new convictions in the youth system (but not in the adult system due to overall lower education levels, unemployment and being older when trying to establish a crime-free life).²⁴
- **Effective continuity of care, using ‘in-reach’ services** by the agencies that will be assisting the young person post-release. Collaboration, communication and case management are premised on bridging institutional and community services and enhancing continuity of care. This is a real feature of the Norwegian model where the public/mainstream education and health services are responsible for delivering those services in custodial settings (rather than private providers), and any community-based services (such as housing or counselling services) also deliver services in the facilities, build a relationship with the person being assisted, and continue those services post-release. No-one leaves custody in Norway without somewhere to live, somewhere to learn (if required) and/or somewhere to work. Effective case management underpins this approach.
- **Capable, skilled workforce in both justice/statutory entities and community support partners** who can engage young people, build trusting relationships with them, encourage and motivate them to become and remain involved in services and programs to assist them. Workforce capability spans many domains, and shared or cross-over training among key players is optimal to ensure a common knowledge and capability base.

²³ Youth Justice Case Management Evidence Base, 2019 p. 36

²⁴ Abrams et al. (2011)

- **Ensuring program and service designers hear the voice of young people and their families.** Families' and young people's involvement is crucial in case planning and treatment from the initial assessment to delivery. Young people, their families and their communities are primary stakeholders in YJ strategies, so it is essential they are given opportunities to inform those strategies by sharing their expertise, perspectives and experiences. Those most directly affected by the system should play a key role in shaping policy and programs.²⁵
- **Data sharing** to ensure assessment information is shared and contributes to coordinated case planning and management. Privacy implications need to be identified and respected, but should not undermine collaborative effort.
- **Small caseloads** (up to 12) to enable more time to be spent with each young person (often multiple times per week), to build stronger relationships, to target brokerage for specific service supports, and to better monitor the young person's status and progress.
- **After hours and emergency support** so young people can be assisted at times when they could be most at risk of reoffending (due to boredom or loneliness and re-engaging with negative peers for example).
- **Support from and for the family unit.** As a key source of support and protective factors (except where family relationships are dominated by violence and abuse) the presence of caring adults is invaluable in supporting what government and community agencies endeavour to provide with and for young people. Custodial centres enabling and supporting families to see their children while in custody can help maintain the young person's fundamental connections.
- **A trauma-informed approach.** This is necessary for both custodial and community-based staff when working with young people in the criminal justice system. Staff need to be trained in this approach and know how to apply trauma-informed principles consistently.
- **Cognitive behavioural interventions** that develop pro-social patterns of reasoning in the young person by focusing on anger management, taking responsibility, developing empathy, problem solving, setting goals and developing life skills. These interventions build on

²⁵ Harvell et al. (2019)

adolescent brain development knowledge and help prepare young people to manage behaviour through self-regulation and improved decision making.²⁶

- **Evidence-based therapeutic techniques and tools** such as motivational interviewing and Aggression Replacement Therapy (ART) that can lead to reductions in rearrests for violent offending, and re-entry to custody.
- **Specialised intervention for very young people, as well as those aged 18 and over.** Among the older cohort of YJ offenders, services need to focus on older offenders' transition to adulthood, and recognise the interruption to normal developmental stages as a result of being in custody (and therefore missed opportunities to develop personal mastery, self-determination and stable romantic partnerships). Specific intervention is needed to develop connections with prosocial adults and peers, and a sense of belonging to a positive community.
- **'Cultural humility', cultural competence and sensitivity.** Services designed and delivered with and by cultural entities that reflect the cultural background and experiences of the client group are more likely to produce better engagement and outcomes. The *YJ Self-Determination and the Aboriginal Youth Justice Strategy* literature review explores this in detail, and the work of Stephane Shepherd and others throws important light on working effectively with young Sudanese Australians.
- **Peer support initiatives.** These show promise in the adult corrections system and can increase positive self-identity, self-confidence and employability for the peer worker, and positive impact on attitudes, engagement and behaviour for the recipients. Custodial settings also experience benefits. (Note that one young participant in the focus groups at Malmsbury showed real potential as a peer support worker).
- **Customised, targeted community support and engagement for young people with disabilities.** This is required to address their unique combination of risks and needs – particularly mental health and special education services.
- **Gender-segmented services for girls and young women.** The YJ literature review on young women and girls highlights that gender-responsive services acknowledge the unique pathways,

²⁶ Altschuler et al (2014)

causes and correlates of offending among females in the YJ system. For girls who have gender-sensitive risk factors such as trauma, depression/anxiety, AOD problems, anger/irritability and physical (somatic) problems, gender-sensitive program can significantly lower the risk of recidivism.

- **Mentoring** that provides sustained relationships over time. Note that mentoring schemes require resourcing and robust training and professional development for mentors.
- **Eliminating tension and lack of communication between custodial and community staff.** This needs to be addressed and eliminated in a properly collaborative and integrated system. That tension and poor communication was the largest gap in reintegration program implementation fidelity in the US under the Second Chance Act initiatives, and was found to be the most significant pre-release preparation barrier.²⁷
- **Clearly established and articulated goals for any YJ intervention.** Reducing recidivism is often the main goal, however other performance measures (such as stable re-engagement in education or employment/training, and stable housing and family relationships) are described in the literature as elements contributing to the main goal, and that achieving that goal might only be possible through successfully addressing those elements.

4. Consultations with experts in the field

The reviewers consulted a small sample of people known to have expertise in the YJ field to obtain both theoretical and practical insights into community-based support services for young people. Their expertise ranges across many areas, particularly youth justice systems locally, nationally and internationally and includes:

- child and adolescent development and behaviour
- community- and custody-based YJ interventions in a number of jurisdictions
- functional families work
- CALD young people, their families and communities
- pre-release preparation and post-release supervision (including parole)
- transition from YJ supervision or custody and integration into the community

²⁷ Urban Institute study by Hussemann et al. (2017)

- identity formation, social contexts and desistance, and
- community-based services and advocacy.

Across that range of expertise and backgrounds, there were common themes covered in discussion about how the Victorian YJ system could be enhanced to better meet the needs of young people. Consistent with the evidence base, they highlighted the importance of trauma-informed approaches, working constructively with families, the importance of developing trusting relationships with young people and their families, the value of wrap-around support for young people who have complex needs arising from a (short) lifetime of disadvantage and possibly neglect, the value of team approaches in those cases and the importance of engagement – or re-engagement – in education, training and employment to establish pathways to better futures.

Specific insights provided are worth highlighting:

- One key informant noted the value of having a **vibrant, non-government sector to increase the ‘net impact’ of the YJ system**. The sector brings their social capital, their intangible assets that ‘find where the light gets in’ to access services and supports young people involved with the YJ system may not otherwise have access to, and to work across domains that YJ staff cannot access – particularly the family as community agencies can be seen as a ‘trusted agency’ compared to government. Community agencies that connect with young people after hours and do not have statutory responsibilities or obligations can connect with young people in ways that provide an authentic, ‘boundary riding’, value-adding support structure for them. In fulfilling their community-based role, government can leverage intensive support from the agencies’ investment of time and effort – much of it uncoded.
- There is a **‘golden fortnight’**, the 14-day period immediately following release, when support for young people should be most direct and intense to establish stability and deter young people from slipping back into offending behaviour patterns. Planning for this period needs to begin as soon as a young person enters custody, and transitional pre-release activities (such as day and overnight leaves) should ramp up at 30-60 days prior to release.
- The YJ system should not focus on what the young person has done, rather, should ask **‘What has happened to this young person?’** This was expanded upon in describing two cases studies where standard YJ responses (isolation in one case) were not producing the desired effects,

but alternative responses (based on therapeutic intervention), over time, led to rehabilitation and successful transition to a crime-free life.

- **Innovative, experimental approaches** will sometimes be required to test approaches and identify new ways of working with young people. For example, incorporating psychiatry into an MST program is being trialled in Geelong. This program is being run in partnership with an Aboriginal peak body and local ACCO, and is providing wrap-around support on a 24/7 model.
- **AOD issues** can mask other psychological or psychiatric issues and drug use becomes normalised as part of a group culture. Effectively tackling this issue requires disaggregating this group dynamic to establish pro-social trajectories for each young person involved.
- Offending behaviour can stem from a young person's '**faulty belief systems**' internalised and developed over time. Behaviour change is feasible if these are addressed through structured, validated approaches such as offending behaviour programs and individualised, therapeutic practice delivered by trained, trusted staff.
- **Family disconnection within CALD communities** can manifest itself as an inter-generational disunity between first and second generations, particularly with African groups. This is not connected to parental criminality or social attitudes that have been socially learned within their environment, rather, it is due to the inability of parents struggling with their own integration and stresses to provide the necessary encouragement, guidance and support to young people wanting to become part of their mainstream community. In some cases, parents struggle to navigate the multitude of social services and systems, and this can be exacerbated by young people having difficulties at school and their parents being confused by or disconnected from the young person's reality.
- For young people from CALD backgrounds, **disengagement from school** can be because of behavioural issues or learning difficulties that have gone unnoticed and/or communication between their parents and teachers is not effective or occurring at all.
- **Young CALD individuals have congregated into particular groups** due to being similarly or equally disaffected. They find like-minded peers, regardless of whether they are the same cultural group (if they are of the same cultural group, this is a more convenient assemblage).

- **Finding ways to get young people back into mainstream society**, whether it is through educational or work is very important, combined with some level of (depending on what their needs are) cognitive behavioural therapy or ways of re-orientating their thinking. Whatever the pathway, it has to supplant that need for belonging which they are getting from their delinquent peer group, combined with clinical intervention to address impulsivity, and to control distorted thinking and negative thinking styles.
- **Risk assessment** is required to identify high-risk individuals who need intensive and heavily supervised, structured monitoring and treatment (as opposed to lower-risk individuals who can be involved in offending behaviour due to peer pressure). When the low- and moderate-risk young people have protective factors in their life and are connected to education and supportive structures, they tend to desist from crime, as opposed to the higher risk who will continue to offend. High-risk young people need sustained treatment such as cognitive behavioural therapy and ongoing clinical treatment with trained workers who focus on desistance as the end goal. Smaller units with a clinical or therapeutic focus are necessary in order to change pro-criminal attitudes and behaviour.
- **Young people leaving custody** need a combination of education, employment, income, pro-social friends, family connections and cultural connections, and somewhere safe and stable to live. Depending on their specific needs, intensive therapeutic treatment (such as AOD) may also be required. Income – and the skills and means to live independently – are particularly important. Without the capacity to manage boredom and loneliness – and without meaningful engagement in some form of productive activity – offending behaviour is a likely pathway. Young people also need a sense of self – agency, some capacity to take responsibility, self-determination – to be able to make the transition from custody to community effectively and safely.
- For some young people, **the structured, organised nature of life in custody** will be preferable – feel safer – than the chaos of their life in the community and they will be drawn back to offending behaviour patterns to retain that structure in their life. Replacing that with a stable, safe lifestyle in the community requires intensive intervention and collaboration across agency types that have a formal (case management) role, or that provide community-based support.

- **Advocacy** that is independent of YJ, and is guided by a user-friendly, non-technical case plan focussed on structured, pro-social activity, that the young person and other significant people in their life can understand, can provide an important ‘backstop’ and safety net for that young person and their family. This advocacy role (as demonstrated, for example during parole hearings and post-release) can make a key difference to the young person being able to successfully integrate into the community after a custodial sentence.
- **Employment assistance** for young people involved with YJ needs to have a vocational focus. Education and training without vocational pathways – that do not lead to real work opportunities – are not useful.
- **Youth workers who are creative, emotionally intelligent and who are well connected to a broad range of community support services** they strategically link young people into are those who most effectively support young people involved with YJ. They need to motivate and inspire young people, be friendly without being friends, know the boundaries and have cultural insight and respect.

5. Focus Group participants’ views

Seventeen young people (both young women and young men) took part in four structured focus group discussions at Parkville and Malmsbury YJ centres. At Malmsbury, the focus groups were tied in with the regular Youth Leadership Council meeting with time allocated for the reviewers to probe the participants’ experiences of transition planning and post-release support (if they had been linked to a YJCSS-type program in the past) and to obtain their views on what would characterise effective post-release assistance when they make the transition back to the community.

While a number of specific supports were mentioned, the clear theme emerging from the discussions was the desire for what might be seen as a ‘normal’ life for these children and young people – and to live with their family and/or have meaningful family connections; be involved with sport (football, cricket, rugby, tennis, badminton, basketball and boxing were all mentioned) or have other community ties; to ‘hang out’ with their friends; have a job (an apprenticeship, work in hospitality or retail) or be linked in to education or training; and have somewhere to live. To ‘have something to do, and somewhere to go’.

The other general observation was that there seemed to be a lack of understanding about the statutory role of the YJ worker compared to YJCSS agencies or other providers in the community. YJ workers were seen as the ones who 'would cover our backs', 'not breach us', 'be there for us'. The young men saw the YJ worker as the first line of contact, their social workers and advocates, their 'agents' – 'they're supposed to be on our side, right?' While some young people had previously been helped by community agencies (such as White Lion or Orygen) none mentioned having been involved with current YJCSS agencies in the past apart from VincentCare (for housing, as part of the JSS consortium).

With only one exception (and without prompting), all young people thought planning for release should begin as soon as they entered custody, and that time should be allocated each week to discuss post-release plans with intensive activity occurring in weeks before release. The young women thought that remandees, because their time spent in custody is often indeterminate, should also be assisted from the beginning of their time until they are released.

When asked about accommodation plans post-release, most said they would be returning to live with their parents, or mother, although there was the sense this was an assumption, not an agreed plan. One young person noted his parents would need support to take him back into the family home, to accept him as a member of the family again. Another noted that unless they live in Melbourne (or will post-release) a transitional housing property (under the THM-YJHI program) was unlikely. One had experienced parole being denied due to lack of accommodation.

The reviewers noted that while the young men had a number of employment ideas (apprenticeships, trades, internships, landscape gardening or hospitality), and saw value in getting help with resumes prior to release, the young women appeared to have low career aspirations or expectations. The question about what kind of work they might seek upon release was a difficult one for them to answer: one wanted a part-time retail job, another wanted an 'easy job' to enable the transition back into the community. A third suggested that TAFE, VCAL, and VCE options could be explored. It appeared that they did not envisage themselves as having a working future, or understand the need or potential for, and value of, economic independence. The reviewers reflected later that career horizon-broadening opportunities, and role models from a range of professions to engage and motivate the young women could be a good strategy while the girls are in custody. Targeted, employment-related activity delivered through a specialised employment program prior to release would be a useful intervention.

The young women did have a range of ideas about other program interventions that would be useful: AOD programs, services to help them navigate Centrelink, income support or financial management, sport-related activity, offending behaviour programs, or activities to develop creative or craft avenues. Programs, they said, needed to be engaging to retain their interest. Programs were often ‘boring’ in their experience.

Both the young men and the young women noted that assistance to meet order conditions would be useful because meeting conditions had been problematic in the past due to the number of appointments they needed to keep, and difficulty actually getting to the appointments. One young woman noted that she lived in Epping and found it difficult to get to regular YJ appointments in Sunshine on public transport.

The most detailed responses provided during the focus groups related to the type of worker, or agency that would be most helpful to them. They noted that community-based agency staff need to be:

- supportive, be interested in what the young person wants, and care about them
- trustworthy and be someone who takes the time to establish and build rapport between themselves and the young person
- calm and respectful
- a good listener who is non-judgmental and doesn’t have preconceived notions about them
- honest and who will have hard/tough conversations without ‘beating around the bush’
- able to establish a real connection with the young person through consistent contact, phone calls and home visits
- able to place importance on the relationship so the young person feels they are supported in the community
- flexible and take into account the experiences and schedules of the young person
- able to be contacted and/or available after hours.

One young man who had been in custody five times presented a compelling case for why he would ‘not be coming back’ again. He described a community-based AOD worker who had been working with him and had managed to get past his tendency ‘not to let anyone in’. He said he’d ‘never had anyone who cared for me’ but that this worker was ‘calm, respectful, persistent, gave her all and didn’t judge me’. The AOD worker had ‘stuck with him’ (as opposed to having had four different YJ workers in six months), and he trusted her. He noted that ‘she didn’t tell me what to do’, but suggested options ‘based on my ideas about what I wanted to do’. He described having a clear pathway and determination to follow it this time.

In summary, the focus groups highlighted the value of engaging with the service users. Not only did the young people put forward very useful suggestions about what skills and experience community agency staff need to apply to working with young people, they provided insights that were consistent with the 'what works' evidence, and the perspectives of the experts in the field. This triangulated evidence can help inform the design of the next YJCSS iteration.

DRAFT

Part Two – Review Findings

6. YJCSS operation

Current YJCSS operation reflects the complexity of the YJ system and diversity of the young people the service is designed to assist. YJCSS is delivered by a range of community-based providers broadly functioning within the YJCSS guidelines and governance structures; operates in regional and metropolitan areas that each have demographic and location-specific characteristics; is supporting young people with multiple needs at varying stages of their involvement with the criminal justice system; and is aiming to connect those young people with services that can help stabilise their lives, and to maintain those connections.

Consultations for this review have highlighted that current YJCSS activity reflects a YJ system in transition from a welfare-focussed system where YJ staff undertake statutory supervision while also being involved (to greater or lesser extents) in addressing the practical problems from which a young person's offending behaviour may originate (school exclusion, social disadvantage, homelessness, addiction and mental health issues for example), to a justice-focussed, evidence-based system based on validated risk and need assessments, and a structured case management framework.

In a well-structured YJ and community agency partnership the two need not be mutually exclusive, but a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities, and commitment to transparent, collaborative and consistent practices is required. For example, within the current operating environment, this review has found that in some cases, decisions about who to refer, when to refer them, what YJ information about them is shared with service providers, and what should be the focus of YJCSS support, are not consistent, with state-wide service similarities but many regional variations.

Acknowledging this however, regular communication between YJ staff and YJCSS providers occurs in all regions. There are monthly, bi-monthly or quarterly meetings to discuss referrals, caseloads, waiting lists and access to local services – housing, education, health and mental health services and AOD programs for example – or to review individual cases, and review progress towards case plan goals. There is also regular phone contact between YJ team leaders and their YJCSS counterparts. All those consulted noted the importance of this communication.

6.1 Threshold questions emerging from the review

In examining current activity and options for future service delivery this review has raised key questions for YJ in Victoria to address:

- What is the role of a community-based YJ support service system in a reformed YJ context?
- What does the YJ system in Victoria want it to be?
- Why?

While this review did not have these three questions explicit in the review design, undertaking the review during the first half of 2019 within a YJ reform context certainly brought them into focus. In recommending how the current YJCSS can be enhanced, and what shape the future service could take, this review has identified a rationale for integrated YJ services ranging from early intervention to intensive support delivered by community partners who are the well-trained, well-managed and adequately resourced ‘third arm’ of the YJ system strategically and effectively supporting custodial and community YJ structures.

Recommendation 1 – that Youth Justice, as a high priority, undertake a strategic exercise within the executive team and in conjunction with YJ General Managers, to address the key threshold questions:

- **What is the role of a community-based YJ support service system in a reformed YJ context?**
- **What does the YJ system in Victoria want it to be?**
- **Why?**

6.2 Youth Justice and YJCSS service provider interface

It is important to note that consultations for this review demonstrated significant goodwill, sound intentions, and an across-the-board desire for collaborative effort between YJ regional staff and YJCSS providers to assist young people and achieve positive outcomes for them, their families, and their communities. The review provided plenty of evidence that relationships between YJ staff and YJCSS providers are well intended and collaborative – in some cases, exemplary.

There are also tensions, however, and these appear to be based on default patterns of behaviour or tensions that have developed over a number of years. This was identified by the review as not occurring through deliberate obfuscation, but through blurred lines of responsibility and accountability, evolving methodologies and probably the complexity of the task.

The consultations raised other key questions for current and future YJCSS operation:

- How do the YJ system and YJCSS providers intersect in achieving YJ goals? Where do they diverge?
- Are YJ and YJCSS partners as envisaged under the YJ Case Management Framework?
- If there is a partnership, what will it take to ensure it is an effective, efficient one?

Some of these questions are addressed, in theory, by the YJ CMF where it defines case management as a: *'collaborative, structured process of assessment, planning, intervention and review that determines and responds to a young person's individual risks and criminogenic needs in order to reduce reoffending and improve community safety. Multi-agency collaboration is vital to coordinating key statutory and non-statutory agencies' service delivery to meet the young person's needs*'.²⁸ (emphasis added by review).

The CMF also notes that case management 'is most effective when a case manager collaborates with YJ service partners, teachers, treatment providers, AOD counsellors, mental health practitioners and other professionals (such as YJCSS providers)'.²⁹ The CMF highlights that *integrated* service delivery 'is a foundation premise for successfully reducing reoffending and also promoting desistance from crime'.³⁰ The CMF adds that effective integration requires clear delineation of roles and responsibilities between four key groups:

- YJ custody staff
- YJ Classification and Placement Unit
- YJ Community Staff
- Contracted providers in the community and in custody.³¹

In practice, however, YJCSS providers and YJ General Managers and staff noted factors limiting the effective integration of YJ and YJCSS activity as envisaged by the CMF. A key example of this is that mechanisms to ensure YJCSS agencies have adequate information about the CMF lag behind current operational arrangements. In some regions, providers have been briefed on the CMF; in others, providers have little or no information, and do not understand the significant shift that has occurred in YJ as a result of the CMF implementation.

²⁸ Youth Justice Case Management Framework, DJCS, 2018, p. 10

²⁹ Ibid. p. 28

³⁰ Op cit. p. 39

³¹ Op cit. p.39

Effective integration also hinges on sharing information derived from assessments and other CMF activity. For example, review consultations highlighted the need for consistent, standardised referral and intake information that provides clear advice about the young person and circumstances to advise providers on where YJCSS assistance should be focussed based on assessment outcomes. What information can be shared (obviously) needs to be considered in view of privacy requirements, but some providers noted they receive very little information about young people (including their consent) and what is required.

Without this information, tensions can develop and opportunities for program strengthening can be missed. As described by YJCSS providers and by YJ GMs and staff, what is requested, and the response provided by the YJCSS agency, are not as well integrated as they could be. For example:

- If the signed consent form, PSR and court information are not provided to the agency, the YJCSS provider cannot create a support plan (that complements the YJ case management and as required under the service agreement) and an important opportunity to swiftly address immediate issues can be lost.
- YJCSS providers have very little information about the content and intent of Youth Offending Programs (YOP). Not all YJ regions have provided information, and YJ central requests to provide this information to YJCSS providers on a number of occasions have not been approved.
- a couple of providers stated 'we are not a taxi service' and resent the increasing demand for transporting young people to appointments or programs. YJ staff experience this as 'push back' from YJCSS providers when they need to get young people to programs (in particular). While this is a seemingly minor issue, it is significant when it figures in whether or not young people can meet order conditions.
- YJCSS providers reported having difficulty getting access to young people in custody due to security/lock-down issues to meet the young people referred to them. On the other hand, YJ custodial staff noted that YJCSS providers often request visits without sufficient notice and appear to have limited awareness of custodial operating arrangements (including security and structured day requirements) when arranging visits.
- although YJCSS Guidelines state that young people involved with the Child Protection (CP) system are eligible for YJCSS, YJ staff have experienced at least two providers not accepting referrals in cases where CP or Intensive Case Management Services (ICMS) are involved.
- in a couple of regions, there can be tension between YJ staff wanting to refer young people to YJCSS and their provider continuing to work with other young people long after their YJ order

has ended. This creates waiting list pressure and tension between the need to open and close cases as young people move through the YJ system. YJ staff noted a perceived risk of mutual dependence rather than the independence and ability to access the broader service system as intended by the YJCSS Guidelines. YJCSS providers noted the risk of ending their involvement and the possibility that young people would re-offend.

- some YJ staff expressed frustration about inadequate, and in some cases, untimely referral to the broader service system (such as housing services) resulting in young people not being able to transition to public or private housing options. YJCSS staff commented on the broader service system being unwilling or unable accept young people with a YJ history.
- in other cases YJCSS providers can receive referrals only a few days before the order ends and this means there is little overlap between YJ and YJCSS to assist the young person; little opportunity for integrated support.

Some of the outcomes of these examples are that providers are using their own, customised intake and assessment arrangements (see [Appendix 14](#) for the Brophy Assessment Tool), action plans (see [Appendix 15](#) for the BCYF Outcomes Star documentation), practice frameworks (see [Appendix 16](#) for the Jesuit Social Services Practice Framework description) or in one case, service methodology (see [Appendix 17](#) for the Quantum Advantaged Thinking Approach). All these approaches have merit in their own right. However their use means there is no state-wide consistency in YJCSS operation and practice, and this will hamper reliable evaluation of YJCSS activity and outcomes. It is worth noting that the NSW Joint Support Program³² requires a consistent intake and assessment approach (that is, the NSW YJ staff do the assessments) across their 32 program locations in metropolitan Sydney and regional NSW.

The key questions arising for future YJCSS design and delivery that therefore need to be addressed prior to procuring future services are:

- to what extent can and should the YJCSS model be prescriptive to ensure consistent delivery that is evidence based and enables all young people under YJ care and supervision eligible for YJCSS assistance to receive the same types of support?
- does the YJ duty of care to YJCSS providers require that information about security risks and offence history be shared (at least in part) with YJCSS providers?

³² A twelve-week program delivered by non-government agencies that, in conjunction with YJ staff, provides young people with casework support (YJ provides the case management), mentoring and short-term crisis accommodation support.

- if YJ does require YJCSS providers to support young people who may present with a significant risk or security profile, are YJCSS providers equipped to deal with these young people? Is an alternative community-based model required for them?
- would prescribing all aspects of YJCSS activity limit innovation and diversity? And would a prescriptive approach be at odds with the other services delivered by current YJCSS agencies? (For example, one provider reported that the Advantaged Thinking Approach is being rolled out across all agencies delivering DHHS Child Protection services).
- do any of the current models used by providers offer an approach that could underpin a new YJCSS model?

While this review has considered these questions, they cannot be answered by the review alone, and need to be addressed within YJ for broader discussion and analysis in view of contemporary evidence. In the short term however, the following set of recommendations provide a possible way forward.

Recommendation 2 – that Youth Justice:

- **improve the YJ and YJCSS interface by clearly delineating respective roles and responsibilities and streamlining information sharing and access arrangements to ensure regional staff and their YJCSS providers understand their roles in addressing young people’s offending-related issues and meeting each young person’s needs**
- **in the spirit of partnership, provide information and regular updates about the YJ CMF and the YJCSS agencies’ role as key partners in an integrated approach to case management**
- **develop and implement an effective and efficient process to share information (acknowledging privacy requirements) about the young people referred from YJ to YJCSS to obviate the need for YJCSS providers to develop their own intake and assessment processes**
- **streamline arrangements for YJCSS providers to have in-reach access to young people in custody, and**
- **ensure YJCSS providers have information about Youth Offending Programs (YOP) and their role in supporting young people’s engagement in these programs.**

6.3 Current YJCSS operating model – referral and eligibility

The YJCSS Guidelines specify that each regional YJ team is responsible for determining eligibility and priority for referring young people to their YJCSS provider. YJ regional staff consulted noted that they discuss possible referrals among the YJ team (such as during intake meetings or under advice from the

YJCSS portfolio holder) to decide who will benefit most from YJCSS assistance and/or be most suitable for referral and use a triage approach to determine who is referred.

Referrals can be generated electronically through CRISP, forwarded by the community YJ team via email, or YJ staff will telephone their provider to alert them to a new referral. In one region, there will be a joint YJ and YJCSS staff member meeting with the young person to introduce the service and explain roles; in others there will be weekly conversations about upcoming referrals. Acknowledging that the YJ system is dynamic and there is a steady flow of young people in and out of the system, review consultations noted that this variety of arrangements means there is little consistency in referral timing and methods.

The Guidelines note that the region determining YJCSS eligibility and priority provides 'flexibility and responsiveness to the individual needs of the young person and local area demands'.³³ The Guidelines also note that evidence-based assessments should inform priority for YJCSS assistance, and that the type of service provision required for each young person should be specified given the need to target resources appropriately. In practice, this review noted that these can be opposing forces – evidence of risk and need obtained from objective, validated assessments triggering referrals, versus flexibility (perhaps subjectivity) in deciding who is referred, when they are referred, and why. This was demonstrated during the consultations in a number of ways:

- information gaps when referrals are made so that YJCSS providers receive referrals knowing little about the young person or their support needs. This appears to be partly based on concerns about privacy and partly due to information derived from YJ assessments not being communicated to providers, and is leading providers to do their own need assessments at intake
- in at least one region, young people being referred for intensive support only a few days before release from custody or the expiry of their community supervision order, when assistance could have been initiated many weeks earlier
- even if young people are referred well in advance of their release from custody, some providers finding it difficult to travel the distance to begin working with young people due to other caseload demands (in one case the reviewers perceived unwillingness to do this)
- one provider 'considering the appropriateness of referrals' and deciding whether or not to accept young people based on Child Protection, disability, other case management engagement, or perceived risk status, and

³³ YJCSS Guidelines, p. 26.

- YJ regional staff and YJCSS providers overlapping in providing the practical (non-statutory) support when that support could most effectively be provided by staff with non-statutory responsibilities.

Recommendation 3 – that Youth Justice address current disparate referral and eligibility arrangements by allocating time firstly, at a YJ GMs meeting and secondly, at a YJCSS Statewide Reference Group meeting to discuss and confirm referral arrangements including eligibility, priority, timing and required information to accompany the referral. This confirmed approach can then be incorporated into new YJCSS guidelines for implementation in July 2020.

6.4 Care Teams

The YJCSS Guidelines note that care teams address the practical need for regular communication between workers, monitor the young person’s safety, and enable service delivery decisions to be activated. The Guidelines state that: ‘Forming a care team assists with the planning of purposeful, coordinated interventions, promoting change and responding effectively and immediately to concerns.’³⁴ The Guidelines list a range of care team functions/purposes – such as monitoring and reviewing goals or responding to crises and changing circumstances – and detail what makes a good care team.

The YJ Case Management Evidence Base document highlights the benefits of a care team³⁵ and the YJ Care Team Practice Guideline³⁶ lists care teams’ functions. All care team documentation cites involving the young person and their family wherever possible so they contribute and gain ownership of outcomes. In practice, care teams vary in composition and operation. While all YJ staff and General Managers noted the importance of care teams, a number of providers noted that their contribution to care teams could be enhanced by more consistent involvement of young people and their families, and by better governance, including designated chair arrangements, minutes and clearly assigned responsibilities and adherence to those responsibilities.

Current arrangements are partly driven by the complexity of the young person and their circumstances. For example, a small care team comprising YJ and YJCSS staff, the young person and a parent/guardian

³⁴ YJCSS Guidelines p. 40

³⁵ Youth Justice Case Management Evidence Base p. 48

³⁶ Add reference

might meet monthly during YJ and YJCSS engagement to establish goals and implement a case plan. In more complex cases, a larger, more formal care team comprising YJ and YJCSS representatives, Child Protection, residential care/r, other service providers, counsellors and police representatives will meet fortnightly to manage a young person's case. Regardless of the level of complexity, there is a need to have the young person to be 'at the centre' of the care team deliberations.

Recommendation 4 – That care teams' operations be enhanced by:

- **reiterating the current requirements for care teams, as specified in all YJ documents, during regular meetings with YJCSS providers**
- **ensuring an overview of care team roles and responsibilities is included in YJ staff induction**
- **requiring all YJ regions and YJCSS providers to confirm their commitment to including the young person in care team meetings wherever possible**
- **having clear and decisive chairing arrangements, minutes and assigned responsibilities**
- **ensuring timely information sharing, including case plans and expectations of service providers.**

6.5 YJCSS activity focus – what the service providers do

YJCSS providers are involved in many activities with the young people they assist, use a range of methods, and scale their involvement according to perceived or actual needs. Without using the specific YLS-type terminology, the reviewers noted that in describing their activity, YJCSS providers covered all of the 'central eight' criminogenic needs informing YJ risk-need-responsivity assessments, particularly substance abuse, problematic family circumstances, antisocial peers and problems with school or work. In addition, addressing unstable housing and accommodation featured in all discussions with providers.

What was clear from all the consultations – particularly with YJCSS providers and the young people consulted – was the breadth and depth of assistance required and the significant needs of YJCSS participants. The reviewers heard of cases where young people aged seven were chomping, where young males were being sexually exploited for cash to feed drug addiction, and where methamphetamine use (by young people and their parents) made assisting young people to break the cycle of offending was very difficult.

Some YJ staff noted that because of the complexity of a young person's situation, YJCSS agency staff can burn out, or in one case, develop negative attitudes and behaviour to young people. That is, become

resistant to assisting the young people they are funded to support. At the same time, in another region, the YJCSS provider consistently operates above their allocated target to try to meet the needs of young people and their families in their local area.

All providers noted the need to develop trust and build rapport with the young people, and noted the need to carve out a place in the YJCSS participants' lives that differentiates them from others (often many) in the young person's life. Providers noted that without this, young people will not engage properly, or at all, and that the first days and weeks of contact is critical to building and consolidating a relationship with the young person. Three providers use a trauma-informed approach in their work with young people and have trained their staff in how to apply it.

In describing how they assist the young people referred to them, YJCSS providers discussed activity that ranges from the most basic, fundamental needs, to complex family and social disadvantage issues. They work with young people with physical disabilities, FASD, other congenital and cognitive disorders, medical and medication needs, and a wide range of education, housing and AOD problems. YJCSS staff discussed their work as incorporating:

- in a number of regions, reinforcing the need to meet YJ order conditions and helping young people maintain the required relationship with the local YJ team
- needing to help young people get identity and formal documents – birth certificates, Medicare and Centrelink access, MYKI cards, bank accounts and tax file numbers
- encouraging and assisting young people to engage in living and life skills development – food shopping, budgeting, planning meals and cooking
- helping young people deal with anxiety, loneliness and social isolation – this was frequently mentioned as a post-release need, but appears to be the case for many YJ young people. One provider noted that a number of young people express the futility of their lives
- helping young transgender people navigate their lives and manage their perceptions of systemic prejudice
- navigating access to education. This ranges from tutoring, literacy programs, student support groups, flexible or alternative education streams to mainstream education – although there was frequent mention of the challenges getting young people back to school because of previous school experience, fear of failure, being ostracised, racism or bullying. One provider noted that it can be difficult for young people to be 'confronted by what they don't know' when they return to school

- linking young people to pre-vocational or other training opportunities in Learn Local organisations, private training providers or TAFE
- helping young people to be job ready by accessing transition to work programs, building employability skills, preparing resumes, canvassing employers/door-knocking or arranging work experience
- tackling homelessness, helping young people find somewhere – anywhere – to live, supporting young people in transitional housing, and where applicable, navigating public and private rental markets, including caravan parks (in two regions)
- intersecting, where required, with Child Protection staff where the young person lives in residential care or has ICMS support or a DHHS Targeted Care Package (TCP)
- addressing broken family relationships or impoverished family circumstances (in the young person's immediate family) and in some cases, providing parenting support to young people who have children of their own
- supporting young people into sport and recreation activities and through them, establishing friendships that help young people separate from negative peer relationships
- helping build resistance to destructive peer connections – particularly through after-hours support and providing positive experiences such as going to the cinema or organising a family BBQ
- teaching young people to drive (through L2P programs) and/or accessing public transport. Having a driver's licence is often a pathway to work opportunities, especially in rural or regional areas where public transport is limited or does not align with work schedules, and
- transporting them to programs (such as YOP, AOD or living skills), medical, psychologist or dental appointments, parole hearings, court or MAP appearances, often travelling long distances to meet program or reporting requirements. In regional Victoria a day can be spent collecting a young person from home, getting them to a program and then taking them home afterwards (to Echuca for example).

Although the need to transport young people emerged as a point of tension between YJCSS and YJ staff, YJCSS providers noted the value of spending time in the car with a young person as it enabled discussion that doesn't always occur in face-to-face meetings. In one region, the provider commented that the car can be a 'safe place' for the young person, a 'respite' from other pressures where they have time out with a supportive adult. In one region, it was clear that YJ staff would prefer to have the time to do more of this as previously it had been a large part of their work with young people.

There were also cases where purpose-designed programs have been implemented or tapped into to help meet young people's needs, and providers noted the value (for some young people) of group programs to get them involved (in something) and help build communication skills and networks. A positive development is the puppy program in Shepparton where YJ young people are involved in training puppies to be court support dogs. The YJCSS provider in Shepparton noted the value of the young people taking responsibility (for training the dog) and experiencing the success of their involvement.

In Ballarat, the YJCSS provider has designed a four-week Living and Life Skills program (part funded by a philanthropic organisation) to provide cooking, budgeting, tenancy, mental health and sexual health information. YJCSS participants and other local young people will be able to access the program. And Jesuit Social Services have designed an eight-week outdoor camping and challenge program for 14 to 18 year-olds in the eastern metropolitan area. They also engage young people in a budgeting program to help them live within a budget, compare prices and avoid schemes such as pay-day loans.

There were many examples of innovative approaches YJCSS staff use to engage and motivate individual young people highlighted during the review. In another Shepparton case, the YJCSS worker built rapport with a difficult-to-engage young person by taking him fishing and enabling him (the young person) to teach her (the worker) about fishing. This kind of strengths-based approach was also mentioned in a number of regions as a way of developing, for example, latent art skills that could be a pathway to employment, encouraging sporting ability that can lead to positive involvement in team sports, and meal preparation that can build or help mend relationships with the young person's parent/s (particularly the mother).

In all regions, it is clear YJCSS staff are acting as mentors to the young people. They are modelling what a crime-free life can be like, and endeavouring to promote desistance. There was a clear sense of YJCSS involvement 'normalising' existence for some young people, presenting an alternative to their otherwise chaotic lives and taking steps towards stability and security. While attributing outcomes from YJCSS alone is not possible, positive outcomes are apparent in the YJCSS data analysis in 6.

All the areas described provide useful guidance on how to specify what YJCSS providers to support young people in future program guidelines. They can also help YJ consider what type of agency, or agencies, are best placed to figure in an integrated YJ and YJCSS model which reflects what the CMF intends, and can

obtain the best outcomes for young people. For example, the review noted that where an agency has a multi-function focus (such as Salvocare, Anglicare or Brophy Youth and Family) and provides housing, health and mental health, youth and family, material aid and other family services, referrals to other external agencies which may not have the capacity or capability to assist YJ clients is not required or is reduced, and therefore providing a holistic/wrap-around service to young people who need intensive assistance is streamlined. Different arms of the one agency can be activated to assist young people and their families and fast-track assistance.

6.5.1 Working with families

All YJCSS providers work with the families of YJCSS participants. They noted during consultations that this is an increasing aspect of their work and that family involvement occurs in approximately one-third to half (sometimes more) of their caseload. This reflects the increased focus on integrated intensive family support models such as MST and FFT. While not possible to quantify YJCSS work with families through the review, the work they do demonstrates the range and depth of family support needs, and warrants attention because of the recognised protective factor effective family support can provide. Providers also noted that having a positive connection to parents, can, in some cases, facilitate the young person's engagement; that the parent/s can be a bridge to the young person, a 'softer entry point' and help achieve positive outcomes for young people involved with the YJ system. They also noted that where the young person is a victim or perpetrator of family violence however, connecting with the family is more difficult and often not possible.

YJCSS providers noted that participants' basic need for life and living skills partly stems from entrenched family dysfunction and disadvantage that does not provide positive role modelling in household budgeting, nutrition, children's and adolescents' development, or education and employment engagement for example. YJCSS providers' examples of the types of family-related engagement include:

- helping young people rebuild relationships with their parent/s and extended family so they can return home (after living rough or being in custody for example)
- transporting family members to Parkville or Malmsbury to see their children/young people and maintain a relationship with them
- helping parents navigate government systems – local (e.g. fines), state (police/justice, education, human services and housing for example) and commonwealth (Centrelink and Medicare for example) agencies – and as well as trying to address families' resistance to government involvement developed from previous negative experiences

- encouraging parents to see the value of their children engaging with education and helping ensure the younger siblings of YJCSS participants remain engaged with education and attend school
- helping parents who are in debt, are struggling to pay rent and keep their house, facing eviction or need to access emergency relief to reach out for support from community support agencies
- in some cases, acting as a go-between where the young person cannot or will not have a relationship with their family
- providing practical support and mediation in areas such as behaviour management (with children/young people), conflict resolution, anger management (parents and/or young people), other emotional regulation or parent effectiveness
- where YJCSS staff have the language skills, engaging with parents in their own language/language spoken at home other than English, and
- mitigating child neglect (noted in Mildura in particular).

6.6 Brokerage funding

YJCSS brokerage funding – either through an allocation made by each YJ region against which the YJCSS providers draw, or after-hours expansion funding – is being applied in many ways. It is being used for:

- tuition or education course costs where other potential sources have been exhausted
- transport costs – MYKI cards for bus, train or tram fares – to ensure young people can attend YJ or YJ-related appointments, or purchasing bikes
- transitional housing-related costs – a number of YJ staff and YJCSS providers highlighted the inadequacy of transitional housing fit-outs and difficulty getting local THM property managers to address the inadequacies
- counselling program participation costs
- food
- work-based clothing to improve education, training and employment access
- sports registration costs and gym fees, and
- in one case, sharing the cost (with Child Protection) of a caravan to relocate a repeat offender to an alternative location. The young person has established stable patterns and has not reoffended.

Brokerage funding is clearly an important adjunct to YJCSS staff activity with young people. Although it may be viewed that some of these expenses should be funded from other sources, the YJCSS providers noted that other sources had been tried unsuccessfully, and YJCSS brokerage was the only real option.

6.7 After-hours expansion

The additional funding allocated to expand YJCSS support after hours (\$3.7M) has made a substantial difference to YJCSS staff availability and support provided to young people – particularly for young people on supervised bail which was prioritised through the after-hours expansion. Being able to transport young people after hours (to detox programs for example), to call on them or telephone them to check if they had returned home after daily activities was noted by YJCSS providers and YJ staff in all regions as part of the value that the expansion allows.

While it took months in some cases for agencies to identify and appoint staff suitable for evening and weekend work (or to adjust their existing staffing configuration through staggered shifts), all agencies have now appointed staff and ensure staff availability consistent with what the expansion allows for. Providers and YJ staff in some regions noted that concerns about worker safety featured in identifying suitable staff, and at least one provider has established a two-worker model for after-hours support so staff do not work alone.

The most significant change after-hours engagement has provided is supporting young people at known high-risk times; those times at night or during weekends when young people, through boredom, loneliness or social isolation, could be at risk of re-offending. This concurred with what one expert consulted called increasing the 'net impact' of YJCSS by program staff being readily accessible when needed most, and when YJ staff are not available.

The reviewers noted that this evening and weekend engagement also broadens the YJCSS 'safety net' by enabling young people to participate in activities and events that other young people are involved in; and by developing stable routines and building pro-social connections and relationships. YJCSS providers described now being able to:

- spend more time planning and cooking evening meals with young people, particularly those in transitional housing when other after-hours assistance is not available

- take young people to evening and weekend sporting and recreational events – events the young people might otherwise be excluded from because of social isolation or not having the money to participate. Combined with YJ brokerage funding, this has had a compounding benefit
- engage with young people and their families when all family members are available/can be present. This is relevant to the work YJCSS providers do in helping mediate family tensions as noted in section 4.1.1, and
- in the case of Jesuit Social Services activity, being able to devote more time to pre-release work with young people due to the overall increase in staffing.

One example of what the after-hours expansion allowed was a situation where a YJCSS worker responded to a situation where a young person was threatening violence towards his new employer. The worker was able to talk the young person through the ramifications of the threatened behaviour (including return to custody) and the young person desisted. The worker's view was that had she not been available at that precise time, the young person would certainly have re-offended.

The longer-term outcomes from the after-hours expansion will need to be tested through more in-depth evaluation over time.

6.8 YJCSS providers' connections to the broader service system

Through the work they do in assisting young people, YJCSS providers connect with many other service providers, and there was a clear sense that YJCSS providers know their local service systems, access many supports for each young person, and advocate on their behalf. This could reflect what was observed as the service system maturing (Section 5.1.5), and deepening relationships with other social support structures to strengthen YJCSS activity and outcomes. While the quality of service providers' interactions with young people was not evaluated during this review, the reviewers perceived that some providers may perform better than others; may have greater insight into how YJCSS participants can best be assisted. Notwithstanding that observation, across the state, YJCSS providers interact with:

- **education services** – alternative and flexible education providers (such as Out Teach in Shepparton or WAVE in Warrnambool), student support programs, mainstream schools, Berry St school, or the Navigator program
- **health and mental health services** – Headspace (in many locations), general practitioners, psychologists and community health services

- **Aboriginal organisations** – peak bodies, local Community Controlled Organisations including health services and Gathering Places
- **AOD services and programs** such as YSAS
- **employment services** including group training companies
- **family support services** including Child First agencies
- **family violence services** such as the Orange Door or Emma House in Warrnambool
- **programs run by Victoria Police** (ROPES for example) or build relationships with Vic Pol Youth Resource Officers
- **housing and homelessness services** such as youth refuges, Wombat Housing or Vincentcare
- **court services** – particularly Education Justice Initiative staff
- **Child Protection** services including kinship care and other out-of-home care services such as foster care
- **local government youth services** or programs (in many locations), and
- **NDIS providers** (although not mentioned by all providers).

The conclusion that can be drawn from the diversity of avenues found for supporting young people involved with YJCSS is that providers appear to be relying on, or getting leverage from, the available broader service system agencies where possible. This was certainly the case in regional Victoria, where the service system provider networks are strong and YJCSS providers capitalise on those connections.

There was a strong sense that without the YJCSS provider advocacy, the extent to which young people involved with the YJ system and their families would be *able* to access the broader service system would be reduced or non-existent. The evidence for this included Youth Foyers, for example, not accepting YJ young people because of the ratio of program coordinators to young people (1:20) and the perceived challenges presented by YJ clients to group functioning, or housing services, where YJ young people may have ‘burnt bridges’ with local agencies and need advocacy by YJCSS staff to access a property.

6.8.1 Private sector

YJCSS providers also tap into private sector avenues to support young people. The sources of assistance mentioned during the review included securing head leasing arrangement in the private rental market (on behalf of young people), accessing private training providers for courses and certificate courses (such as First Aid or Traffic Control), or paying for private clinicians (psychologists for example), or gymnasium memberships.

6.8.2 Service gaps and challenges

A key current YJCSS issue is that in metropolitan Melbourne (where over half YJCSS places are allocated), young people with the need for intensive support go on a YJCSS waiting list, or receive interim short-term support until the provider has the capacity to accept a new referral. One YJ General Manager noted that in her region, while a young person remains on a wait list, YJCSS does not provide any assistance, and the young person simply waits on the list and their case is discussed at the monthly allocations meeting until they are allocated a YJCSS worker. If intervention is required urgently however, the YJ case manager increases their engagement with and supervision of the young person, and YJ has to explore other referral pathways. The YJ case manager having to increase their intervention often has a flow-on effect to the other young people they are case managing – that is, it decreases their availability. The GM noted that YJCSS support remains targeted at the young people who require the most intensive level of support, including those leaving custody, and given that there are very few young people leaving custody who require little intervention, this definitely broadens YJCSS intervention beyond parolees.

In a tight budgetary environment, it may be difficult to fund additional YJCSS places, however there is a demonstrated need for service expansion. This could be helped by increasing YJCSS staff caseloads from the current 1:8 ratio to 1:12 which would be consistent with the evidence base examined for this review. Making a case for broadening the YJCSS reach also will be helped by demonstrated positive outcomes, and this is covered further in Section 7.

Although YJCSS providers are well connected to local services, other challenges or service gaps mentioned during the consultations were the need for:

- **targeted, specialist assistance for girls and young women**, especially in areas like sexual health, family violence, sexual exploitation and countering violent offending
- **culturally-appropriate intensive support for Aboriginal girls and young women**. This need was highlighted in the Loddon Mallee and Hume regions where there are concentrations of young Aboriginal people. The Koori YJ Strategy will help address this.
- **more detox and AOD programs**, including drug counselling, especially in regional Victoria. Waiting times to get a place in these programs means the young person's desire to participate can dissipate and drug use can escalate.
- **young-person-friendly mental health services**. One large provider noted that a traditional clinical environment is not conducive to engaging young people, and that specialist culturally-competent mental health services are required in, for example, cases involving young people

of African cultural background because of the stigma associated with mental health in those cultural groups.

- **translators and other culturally-specific support** (such as translated materials). This was specifically noted in parole and court matters. One provider has multilingual YJCSS staff who assist Pasifika young people and their families, however their experience has been that the YJ system needs to try to ensure that the parents of young people do not rely on younger siblings of those young people to translate when attending parole hearings. In her experience, parole or court conditions can be lost in translation when this occurs.
- **access to literacy programs** and other basic education or bridging courses. Many young people accessing YJCSS are early school leavers, have had negative school experiences and need to extend their education before pathways to work can be realised. The reviewers noted the opportunity to explore more partnerships with the community education sector – Learn Local providers – to address this gap.
- **hands-on employment and transitional employment programs**. This includes pre-vocational training that has genuine employment pathways. The DJCS Employment Broker model was mentioned as a successful option and could be replicated in all regions, and through a partnership with Jobs Victoria.

Recommendation 5 – that in specifying future YJCSS activity, providers be required to identify their strategy for managing a waiting list including providing immediate interim assistance in cases where the YJ General Manager determines it is required.

Recommendation 6 – that in new YJCSS guidelines, the case load ratio be increased from 1: 8 to 1: 12 as consistent with the evidence base examined under this review.

Recommendation 7 – that, as part of the current YJ custodial and community program reviews underway, YJ examine how the identified program gaps can be addressed through strategic partnerships with other government agencies and program providers to ensure appropriate targeting, a focus on outcomes, and value for money.

6.9 Streamlined early intervention and in-reach

Young people in custody and under community supervision need help with essential documents and formal system supports – proof of identity, Medicare, Centrelink (both while in the community and

maintained while in custody), medication and accommodation for example – and these could be assembled into standard checklists that all providers complete as a progress milestone. Alternatively, and probably more efficiently, all these items could be gathered and assembled while young people are in custody. Some regions noted that this was a practice in the past (with Centrelink staff attending the YJ centres) but that this arrangement had petered out.

For young people in custody there is a clear opportunity to confirm the point at which referral should occur. Some providers noted that referrals are sometimes made days before release and this is not consistent with what the evidence says enables effective relationships to be established. Given the need for effective support immediately after release to facilitate effective transition, it is recommended that the goal of planning for release upon entering custody has an increased focus within YJ, and that YJCSS providers are able to start establishing a connection with a young person three months before release.

The review has highlighted possible ways of achieving this – and these require further deliberation.

Recommendation 8 – that planning for release begins as a young person enters custody, that pre-release planning beginning at that time features as a key requirement in the YJ Reintegration Framework, and that YJCSS providers are able to start establishing a connection with a young person three months before release through streamlined access to young people in custody.

The review noted that it may also be worth YJ examining the feasibility for a central YJCSS referral agency or system to be established so that all YJCSS referrals can be funnelled through one point or YJCSS hub. This will require effective system and case overview, and could be a YJ function or the responsibility of one funded agency. Alternatively, YJ could explore whether a YJCSS presence in one of the YJ Centres could serve this purpose. In considering these options, however, YJ will need to weigh up the comparative benefits of a centralised system versus local, regional knowledge being applied to YJCSS referrals and assistance.

(Note that what was reported during the review is that in some cases, YJ community staff, and YJCSS providers, withdraw from supporting a young person or even maintaining contact with them once the young person enters custody. This practice compromises continuity in the relationship but is possibly partly attributable to challenges getting access to custodial centres (for security or timetabling reasons)).

6.10 The Child Protection system

In 2018–2019, 93 YJCSS participants (18 per cent of the total of 513 young people) were also involved with Child Protection, 27 participants (five per cent) were also involved with Disability Services, and eight young people were involved with Child Protection and Disability Services.³⁷ Anecdotal evidence from YJCSS providers and YJ staff suggested the proportion of dual YJCSS and Child Protection clients is currently higher than those figures – possibly as high as 50 per cent in some regions.

The review found that although young people involved with Child Protection are eligible for YJCSS support, relationships between YJCSS providers and the Child Protection system is not consistent across Victoria. As already noted, one region is not accepting referrals for young people involved with Child Protection and in another, YJ staff experience resistance from their YJCSS provider because they do not want to work with young people receiving intensive case management through the ICMS system. In at least three regions YJCSS providers noted that Child Protection staff tend to withdraw their assistance once they become aware that the YJCSS provider is involved, and in other cases the YJCSS provider needs to ‘push back’ to ensure Child Protection makes suitable transition or step-down arrangements for young people leaving residential care.

This resistance and inconsistency seems to lie in confusion about what the YJCSS Guidelines require, and how case management of dual clients should be managed – that is, that case planning for dual clients is a joint YJ/DHHS responsibility, with each government-funded agency responsible for different but complementary elements of care, protection and security of young people. YJCSS Guidelines require YJ workers to discuss YJCSS referrals with workers from other relevant program areas as part of collaborative case planning processes, and all workers to participate in care team meetings. The YJCSS Guidelines specify that Child Protection case plans and YJ client service plans should be developed collaboratively for young people on dual orders, with both services involved in decision making.

Some regional YJ staff also noted that there is an opportunity for YJ to gain more leverage from Targeted Care Packages (TCPs). Closer connections between YJ and YJCSS providers, if there is collaborative case planning and shared involvement in care team meetings, could facilitate this.

³⁷ Sourced from YJCSS provider data submitted through quarterly reports

Recommendation 9 – that the current YJ and Child Protection interface be confirmed across all regions and with all YJCSS providers by:

- **issuing the current YJCSS Guidelines requirements for dual clients to all YJCSS providers as a practice update**
- **discussing these requirements at review meetings between YJ General Managers, YJ staff and their YJCSS provider as soon as possible**
- **including the revised protocols between Youth Justice and Child Protection, and Youth Justice and Disability Services on the General Managers meeting agenda and the YJCSS/YJGC Governance meeting agenda to ensure all providers are briefed on and understand current requirements, and**
- **all regions exploring how TCPs could be more effectively and efficiently accessed in their region.**

It was also noted during the review that interventions to support some young people will originate in a number of government departments, and that community-based agencies will receive funding from multiple sources to assist specific multiple-needs young people and their families. Determining the extent to which this occurs, mapping any overlap between YJ, Child Protection, Multiple and Complex Needs Initiative (MACNI) intervention, targeted Crime Prevention, and intensive education and employment interventions (for example), and assessing the value of the overall government investment was not possible within this review's timeline, however it would be a worthwhile research project for YJ to initiate in the short term.

Recommendation 10 – that YJ initiate a short-term collaborative project with other arms of government to map government overlap in intensive assistance to common clients, chart the assistance provided, and quantify the funding allocated to non-government agencies commissioned to provide that assistance so there is a government-wide, consolidated view of what is being invested, for what return and whether any reform of current arrangements is required. The Service Reform initiatives occurring across government could be a mechanism by which this information can be gathered.

6.11 Transitional Housing model

All YJ staff and YJCSS providers consulted noted problems with the current Transitional Housing model.

Meeting the housing needs of young people involved with YJ is the focus of a separate YJ project, so is not

discussed in detail here. However it is useful to summarise what YJ staff and YJCSS providers noted about the current model.

All those consulted highlighted that it is essential to maintain nomination rights over the current 55 properties as that right provides some local control over who is prioritised for access. However there were many key challenges highlighted such as that:

- young people invariably do not *transition* from the houses as there are few housing pathways for them – in the public or private housing market. In all regions there is a shortage of accessible public housing or private, affordable rental properties. This makes it difficult to balance Youth Parole Board expectations about access to transitional housing (as a parole requirement/condition) and housing availability when it is required as the demand for transitional housing means properties cannot be left vacant for a period of time to wait for a parolee to take up residency. Two regions noted that if houses are left vacant squatters will move in.
- some young people therefore stay in transitional housing for years – three to five years in some cases. This means that YJCSS targets for transitional housing and support cannot be met as they are set on a six-month time limit and tenancy turnover in six months is unrealistic.
- one region stated outright that they have ‘never had a good outcome’ from transitional housing. A key reason for this, echoed in most regions, is that young YJ people have high levels of anxiety and do not have the life skills, maturity, resilience or capability to live alone and cope with the boredom, loneliness and isolation of sole occupancy; that it is too much of a leap for young people to move from a custodial environment to living alone. This often leads to young people breaching their lease arrangements because other young people stay over or move in with them. This aligns with what YJCSS providers noted about young people needing to develop independent living skills.
- a number of YJCSS providers noted that a number of the existing houses are not suitable for young YJ people because they are too large, ‘not a home’, fitted out with minimal furnishings and limited utensils. One region successfully swapped a large three-bedroom house for a two-bedroom unit and this was more suitable for a young person.
- the property maintenance system is complex and when properties are damaged by young people (as they often are) waiting for maintenance work to be done delays another young person being able to move in, and

- a common issue is neighbourhood fatigue where other residents resent having a THM property and YJ residents living nearby. Alternative houses need to be found in these cases and this can remove properties from circulation for months.

In spite of these issues, YJ staff and YJCSS providers did suggest, and are exploring, solutions that could work in their local areas. They identified that:

- a 'lead tenant' model could work with YJ young people so they are not living alone and more have more in-house practical support
- designated 'bail houses' where wrap-around support is provided as part of the after-hours model are worth exploring
- three-month (for example) tenancies where YJCSS staff and housing support workers provide intensive intervention to a small number of young people could provide a 'safe space' for short-term, stabilising assistance that becomes a pathway to longer-term, independent living
- a therapeutic model where a team of trained residential care staff support a group of up to four young people would be a better transitional model. One YJCSS provider has secured joint DHHS and philanthropic funding for two such properties in Ballarat
- more flexible leasing arrangements (such as month-by-month leases) would provide greater flexibility in using existing properties and enable young people to take advantage of other housing options if they became available during a longer lease period. Currently some young people refuse other options in favour of remaining in their existing house until their lease ends
- a cluster arrangement where a group of units is supervised and supported by someone having a concierge-type role could be suitable, and
- enabling other family members to share the house has proven successful in at least three regions. In one case a sibling was also housed, in another, the young person's mother (previously homeless) was also accommodated, and in a third example, the pregnant partner also moved in with the young person.

YJCSS providers noted that more effective local liaison with housing managers – in addition to central departmental oversight of transitional housing arrangements – could enhance opportunities to make better use of a scarce resource.

6.12 Optimal period of engagement

YJCSS providers and YJ staff all had views on when to engage potential YJCSS participants, and the period over which support should be provided. Among both YJ staff and YJCSS providers, when, how and for how long to engage was linked to discussion about intensive support and what it means in practice. As already noted, the YJCSS Guidelines specify a 1:8 ratio of staff to young people when providing intensive support, and it is recommended that this be increased to a ratio of 1:12 to try to meet unmet and future demand. Views of what 'intensive' can mean did vary across those consulted: for some young people, YJCSS providers reported that early in the relationship with young people who are particularly vulnerable, highly anxious or present some form of risk to themselves or others, daily contact is required. For others, intensive support can mean meeting the young person two or three times a week until the young person stabilises.

YJCSS providers and YJ staff emphasised that the period of engagement must be linked to individual needs, that cases can only be closed when the young person has established stable, secure accommodation, has reengaged in some kind of purposeful activity (education, training or work), has some positive connections (with family, friends and/or community), and has stable health and mental health. Therefore a possible way to conceptualise length of engagement is through a series of outcome measure achievements rather than temporal measures.

6.13 YJCSS funding model

It is interesting to compare the average unit price for YJCSS activity with other services delivering intensive support to young people. No other service is directly comparable because the services are not identical, however the other services used for comparison here are similar in their focus on young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who face a range of barriers to achieving stable patterns including engaging in education, employment or the range of activities that could be seen as normal or everyday pursuits for young people of a similar age.

The measure used for unit price (not cost) comparisons is a crude one – it is the overall payment providers receive from government sources for each target (noting that there may be in-kind contributions from other sources), and also noting that the Jobs Victoria payment is partially made up-front (25 per cent) with further payments upon placement and 26-week placement retention outcomes and the evidence providers must submit of outcomes achieved. Current YJCSS payments occur monthly

with, to date, no payments withheld if targets are not met. The Crime Prevention Victoria targeted grant payments are made in instalments.

Table 2 compares the YJCSS, a Crime Prevention Victoria (CPV) Youth Crime Prevention Grant³⁸ example, the NSW Youth on Track early intervention program and Joint Support Program (JSP)³⁹ and Jobs Victoria payments based on an approximate average price per unit or outcome:

Table 2: YJCSS, Jobs Victoria, Youth on Track and CPV Price Comparison – 2019

Program	Approximate Average Unit Price
YSS/AYSS	\$4,617
NSW Joint Support Program	\$7,180
YJCSS – excluding after-hours extension funding	\$12,364
YJCSS – including after-hours extension funding	\$20,057
NSW Youth on Track program	\$13,500 – \$14,000
Jobs Victoria – employment service targeting young offenders	\$15,000
Crime Prevention Victoria (CPV) targeted grants	\$35,000

On average, based on the budgets submitted with the after-hours expansion proposals, the administrative/corporate management costs for YJCSS delivery account for 31 per cent of the total price, within a range of 19 per cent to 46 per cent of the total budget. The after-hours expansion significantly increased the unit price of each YJCSS target. However this is not recurrent funding and therefore the unit price without that additional funding is included for comparison. Note that the level of funding provided for an employment-specific service does not include the range of support services provided by YJCSS.

³⁸ The Crime Prevention Victoria targeted grants program is a government initiative to help local communities tackle the underlying causes of youth crime. Eight priority local government areas/communities – Ballarat, Casey, Frankston, Geelong, Greater Dandenong, Hume, La Trobe and Wyndham have received \$700,000 grants over a four-year period to provide intensive, highly targeted assistance to a small number of young people and reduce their established reoffending patterns.

³⁹ A 12-week support program that provides casework support, mentoring and crisis accommodation support.

The CPV intervention is similar to YJCSS, targets high-needs complex young people with repeat offence histories. It aims to provide a wrap-around, holistic support structure and is being evaluated by the DJCS Crime Statistics Agency. YJ are monitoring the evaluation and its findings. On average, based on the budgets submitted to CPV, the administrative/corporate management costs for targeted grants account for 32 per cent of the total price, within a range of 22 per cent to 40 per cent of the total budget.

On the face of it, YJCSS appears to be good value for money in comparison with the CPV projects, however without some kind of established outcomes measures by which to compare value for money, a reliable, defensible assessment is not feasible. As part of a future YJCSS evaluation exercise however, it would be worth using some proxy measures to assess value for money, and cost/benefit ratios as well.

6.14 Recording and reporting on YJCSS activity – CRISSP

Without exception, all YJCSS providers noted how difficult it is to enter and extract data from CRISSP. One provider has prepared a two-page instruction sheet for staff just to help them register a new YJCSS referral. Providers noted that the system is convoluted and time-consuming, and that the drop-down options do not match their YJCSS activity, therefore skewing reporting information and probably compromising the information that could be examined during a formal YJCSS evaluation.

Although providers (and YJ staff) have met with the CRISSP team in DHHS, enduring problems – such as data that has been entered not showing on reports – have not been resolved. Some providers are using their own data and case management system – that is, running parallel systems to hold YJCSS records. This doubles their administration load, raises a data security question, and highlights inherent problems using a system designed primarily for the Child Protection system and now owned and managed by another government department.

Recommendation 11 – that, as a priority, YJ establish a high-level joint YJ and DHHS working group to further investigate current CRISSP data input, extraction and reporting issues to resolve current user interface problems and streamline future reporting and analysis.

6.15 Governance – alternatives to current arrangements

A commonly expressed view during consultations with YJCSS providers was that the Statewide Reference Group meetings are time-consuming and of limited value because they do not provide the opportunity for

in-depth discussion about practice – especially practice challenges. What they presented as alternatives were:

- executive-level governance where YJCSS provider senior representatives engage with senior YJ management to discuss overall program directions and YJ strategic directions
- management-level governance that brings together YJCSS agency management and YJ program managers to focus on contract management and program delivery-related obligations
- problem-solving focussed, full-day state-wide forums for practitioners to share ideas and practical strategies for working with complex young people
- a community of practice which feeds into the full-day forum events but also maintains connections between all providers through electronic means.

Recommendation 12 – that the YJ System Coordination, Practice Leadership and Workforce team review current governance arrangements and examine the feasibility of a revised governance structure as outlined in collaboration with YJCSS providers through the existing Statewide Reference Group avenue prior to introducing any new arrangements.

6.16 The YJCSS workforce

While the scope of this review did not entail examining the profile of the YJCSS workforce in detail, the review provided the opportunity to consider the skills, experience and qualifications required to provide the intensive support the program is designed to deliver. YJCSS staff come from various backgrounds, but what they have in common is commitment to assisting young people and their families, and a desire to see them achieve stability in their lives. While not all staff discussed their formal qualifications, the reviewers noted a level of sophistication among providers where there is an understanding of theoretical frameworks that underpin child development, that contribute to patterns of offending behaviour among the adolescent population, and that guide effective interventions to address the causes of offending and prevent future offending.

In any system that procures community sector involvement program delivery, there will be varying levels of capability to undertake the work, and there will be variation in the availability of skilled staff to fill positions. This was demonstrated when YJCSS providers sought staff to cover the extended after-hours service. It may be that in procuring future YJCSS delivery, minimum qualifications for front-line staff can

be specified and audited. Providers mentioned diploma or degree level qualifications as a minimum requirement as a possible threshold for recruitment to YJCSS positions. However the risk to this approach is that accrued life experience which equips people with the ability to undertake this type of work with young people could be overlooked in favour of formal qualifications.

It is also possible that the YJ Workforce project in progress within the System Coordination, Practice Leadership and Workforce team will identify skills and experience that apply to the YJ workforce that could apply to the YJCSS workforce. It will be useful to discuss this internally.

Providers noted a range of areas where joint training would ‘bring a critical lens to compliance support’, with the YJ CMF training an essential starting point. The other areas mentioned were:

- case planning and care teams
- Youth Offending Programs – design, content and delivery
- family violence – especially and it relates to girls and young women, and for victims as well as perpetrators
- cultural awareness, and opportunities for sharing practice experience particularly with Aboriginal young people and those from CALD groups
- trauma-informed and therapeutic approaches to case work
- motivational interviewing and other psychological interventions
- YLS tools and other validated tools now administered by YJ staff, and
- working with specific cohorts – age groups, girls and young women, young people with disabilities.

It is also worthwhile considering the scope for practice exchange – temporary role swapping – between YJ staff and community-based agencies as a professional development and mutually-beneficial exercise whereby their respective roles, responsibilities – and challenges – become better understood by all parties.

Recommendation 13 – that YJ explore:

- **opportunities for joint YJ and YJCSS training to bring together regional YJ and YJCSS practitioners to develop, through a cumulative knowledge-building process, the required knowledge and understanding that can inform effective practice across the board**

- opportunities for practice exchange to provide YJ and YJCSS agency staff with the opportunity for short-term role exchange to build their mutual understanding of their respective roles and pressures, and
- developing a training calendar for joint YJ and YJCSS staff training for 2020.

DRAFT

7. Summary of YJ and YJCSS population and activity 2013 to 2019

7.1.1 Total population

As noted in section 1.4.1, the YJCSS data extracted from CRISSP relates to unique referrals for each financial year – young people who commenced with YJCSS in each year – and so does not include all service activity (such as active ongoing and cases closed during that time). Nevertheless it provides a useful overview of service activity, and profile of the YJCSS population, but will benefit from further, closer analysis as a discrete project.

A summary of 2017–2018 and 2018–2019 activity is also included here to provide a more complete picture of activity and the YJCSS population across those financial years.

Table 3 shows the number of young people involved with the YJ system – sentenced, on remand, or not under sentence (including bail) – from 2013–2014 to 2018–2019. A total of 15,910 unique young people have had some form of engagement with YJ during that time. The number of young people sentenced and supervised in the community shows a downward trend across those years, while the number of young people sentenced and in custody indicates movement of no more than 10 per cent either upward or downward. The increase in remand numbers is the focus of a current YJ project.

Please note that all comparative tables for this section of the report are included as [Appendix 17](#).

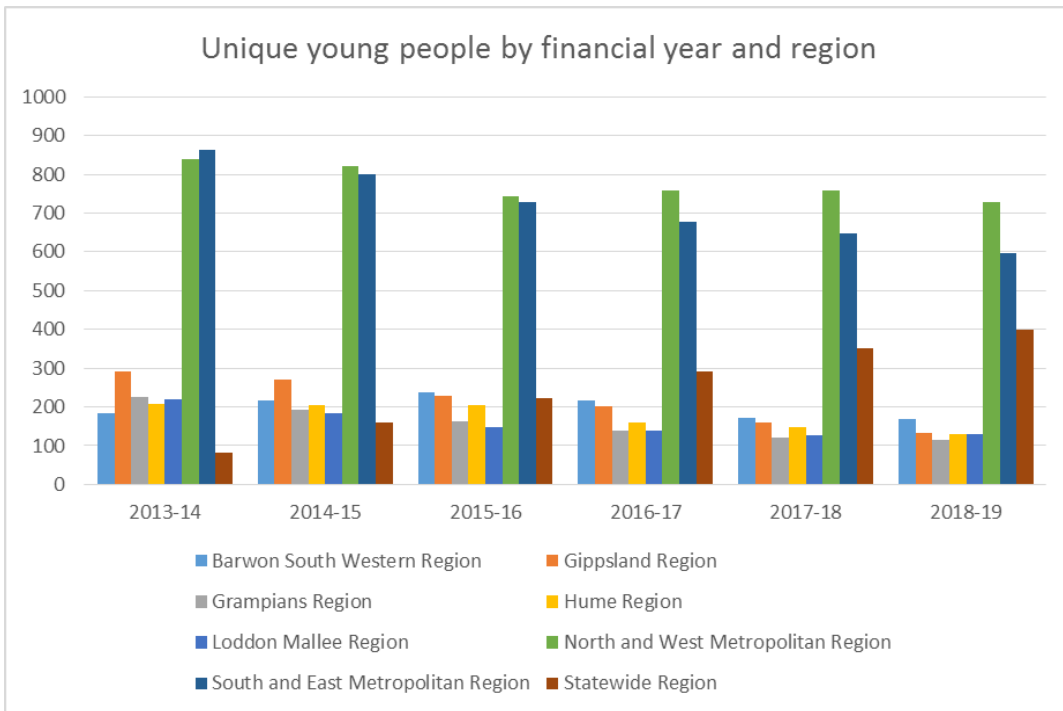
Table 3: Number of young people in YJ Community and Custody 2013 to 2019

Community/Custody	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	Grand Total
Community	2251	2167	1996	1869	1770	1660	11713
Not under sentence	837	851	770	807	765	718	4748
Under sentence	1414	1316	1226	1062	1005	942	6965
Custodial	661	682	681	712	718	743	4197
Remand	334	389	387	400	356	454	2320
Sentenced	327	293	294	312	362	289	1877
Grand Total	2912	2849	2677	2581	2488	2403	15910

7.1.2 Regional breakdown

Figure 2 shows the distribution of unique young people flowing through the YJ system across each of the YJ regions. Please note that 'statewide region' relates to young people for whom no community case worker had been allocated so a region could not be defined. These young people had a custodial worker, CAHABPS or YJCAS worker assigned to them.

Figure 2: Unique young people involved with Youth Justice by financial year and region



This regional distribution allows comparison of YJCSS activity across the regions (excluding statewide region) relative to the total YJ population for each region. Figure 3 shows the number of unique young people referred to YJCSS in each region:

Figure 3: Unique referrals to YJCSS by financial year and region

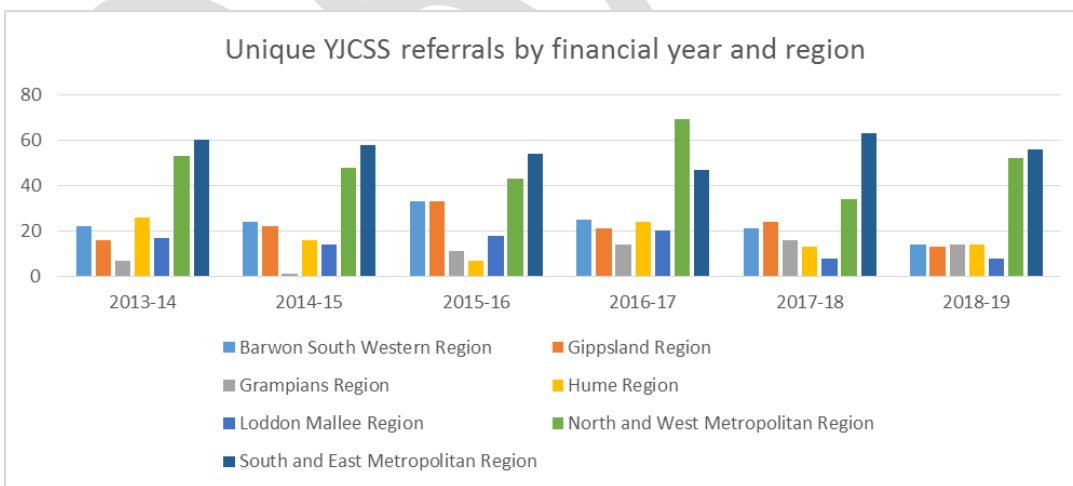


Table 4 and Figures 4 and 4.1 represent YJCSS ‘share’ (percentage proportion) by region year-on-year together with the six-year average profile. When that YJCSS distribution by region is contrasted with the

overall YJ population by region (after excluding the number classified as statewide region) those from the NW metro region are underrepresented (six-year average of 26 per cent) and those from Barwon are possibly overrepresented (six-year average of 12 per cent) because their six-year average total YJ population are 32.3 per cent and 8.3 per cent respectively.

Table 4: YJCSS allocation proportion by region by financial year from 2013-2014 to 2018-2019

Location (region) of offenders who commenced using the YJCSS in a given year	Share of YJCSS use					
	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Barwon South West	11%	13%	17%	11%	12%	8%
Gippsland	8%	12%	17%	10%	13%	8%
Grampians	3%	1%	6%	6%	9%	8%
Hume	13%	9%	4%	11%	7%	8%
Loddon Mallee	8%	8%	9%	9%	4%	5%
North and West Metropolitan	26%	26%	22%	31%	19%	30%
South and East Metropolitan	30%	32%	27%	21%	35%	33%

Figure 4: YJCSS distribution across Youth Justice regions

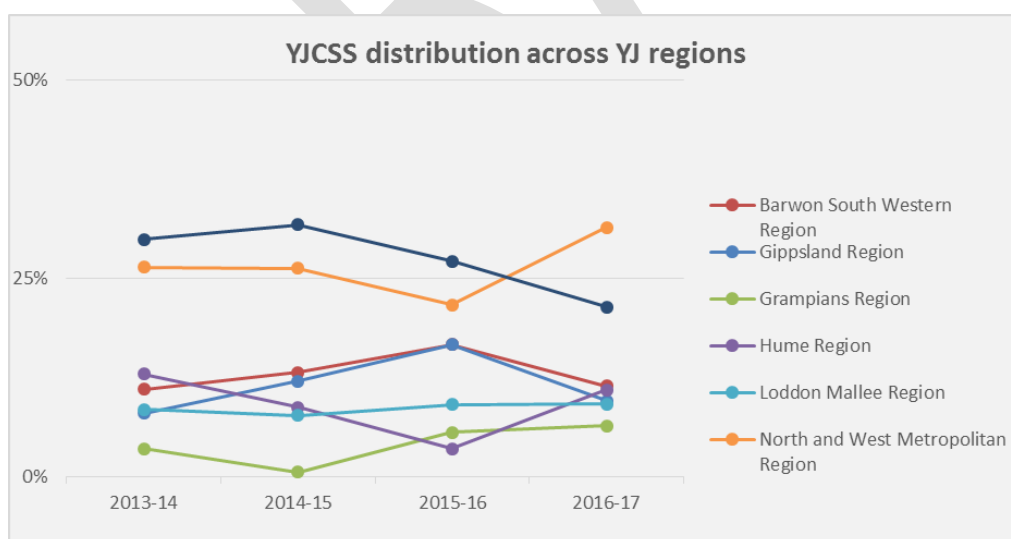
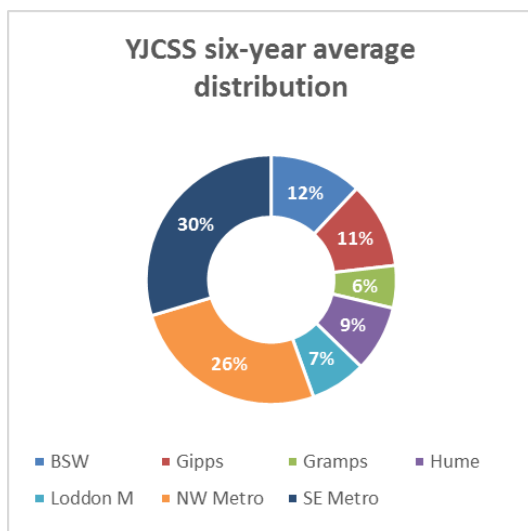


Figure 4.1 YJCSS six-year average distribution across YJ regions

7.1.3 Gender and age breakdown

Across the six-year period being analysed, a total of 2376 females have been involved with the YJ system – that is, they account for 15 per cent of the total YJ population. However females account for a total of 11.5 per cent of the YJCSS population over that six-year period. This requires further investigation to determine the reasons for this. Table 5 shows the female YJ population in each region from 2013 to 2019, and Table 6 shows the numbers of females referred to YJCSS in each region during the same period:

Table 5: Unique young females involved with Youth Justice by financial year and region

Region	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	Grand Total & (%)
Barwon South West	29	29	43	40	40	36	217 (9)
Gippsland	45	52	46	40	25	24	232 (9.7)
Grampians	44	44	38	25	28	26	205 (8.6)
Hume	24	24	30	17	14	14	123 (5)
Loddon Mallee	15	18	20	14	20	19	106 (4.4)
North and West Metro.	101	112	107	113	99	125	657 (27)
South and East Metro.	141	111	102	117	102	119	692 (29)
Statewide Region	6	23	31	15	25	44	144 (6)
Grand Total	405	413	417	381	353	407	2376 (100)

Table 6: Unique young females referred to YJCSS by financial year and region

Region	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	Grand Total & (%)
Barwon South West	2	5	6	4	5	3	25 (18)
Gippsland	2	1	3	3	1	3	13 (9.7)
Grampians			1	1	4	2	8 (6)
Hume	1			2		2	5 (3.7)
Loddon Mallee			3	1	2	2	8 (6)
North and West Metropolitan	5	5	7	7	6	4	34 (25)
South and East Metropolitan	6	6	9	7	9	3	40 (30)
Grand Total	16	17	29	25	27	19	133 (100)

Table 7 and Figure 5 show the age of young people at the start of an order across the total YJ population each financial year from 2013 to 2019. Across the whole population, involvement appears to peak at the age of 17 – particularly for males (Figure 6) – while peak female involvement occurs at a younger age – between 15 and 17 (Figure 7).

Table 7: Unique young people involved with Youth Justice by financial year and age at order commencement

Age	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	Grand Total	Percentage of total
10		1	1	3			5	
11	2	5	2	1	2	2	14	
12	13	23	30	22	14	10	112	
13	85	101	93	90	61	72	502	
14	253	251	229	208	224	203	1368	12.5
15	415	407	397	395	380	380	2374	
16	576	565	529	534	515	515	3234	
17	592	636	682	616	607	584	3717	58.6
18	427	360	308	338	340	308	2081	
19	279	250	178	182	176	177	1242	
20	194	194	176	153	139	121	977	
21	58	47	47	32	26	25	235	
22	15	7	4	6	2	4	38	
23	3	2	1	1	1	1	9	
24					1	1	2	28.8
Grand Total	2912	2849	2677	2581	2488	2403	15910	100

Figure 5: Unique young people involved with Youth Justice by financial year and age at order commencement

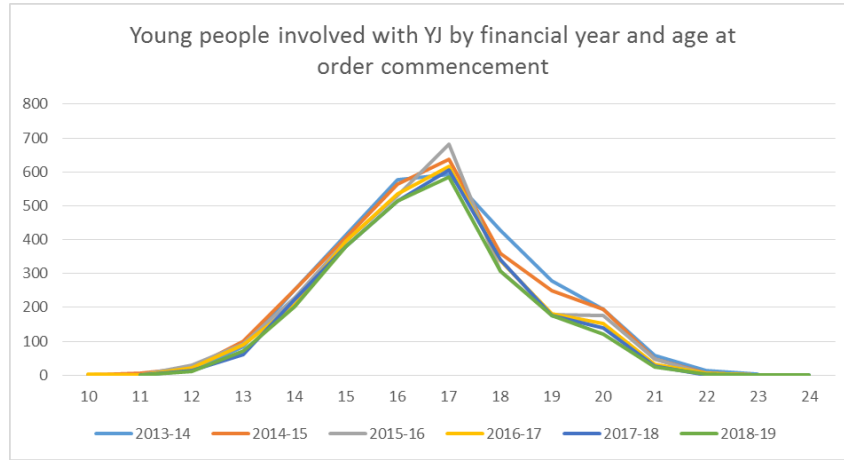


Figure 6: Unique young males involved with Youth Justice by financial year and age at order commencement

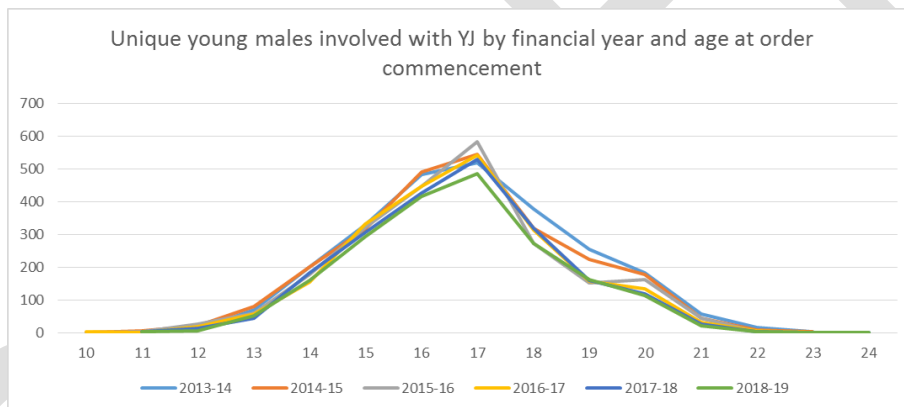
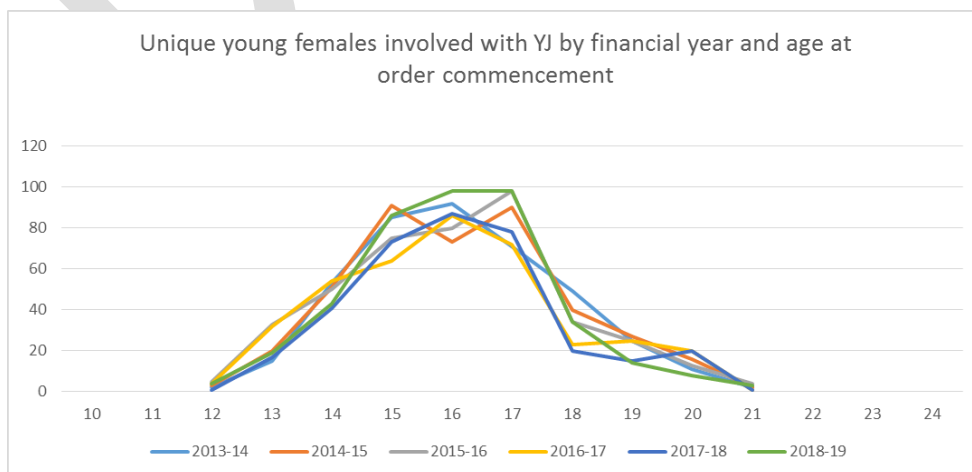


Figure 7: Unique young females involved with Youth Justice by financial year and age at order commencement



YJCSS involvement during the same period shows a similar concentration of activity across the whole population (Figure 8), but slightly different patterns of activity for males and females. While proportionally, males appear to engage with YJCSS at a comparable age to when their order starts (Figure 9), females appear to be engaging in YJCSS at a later age (Figure 10) than when the majority of young females start an order, and when young males engage with YJCSS. While further analysis will confirm this, it suggests an opportunity for more age-related YJCSS targeting for young females.

Figure 8: Unique young people commencing with YJCSS by financial year and age at referral

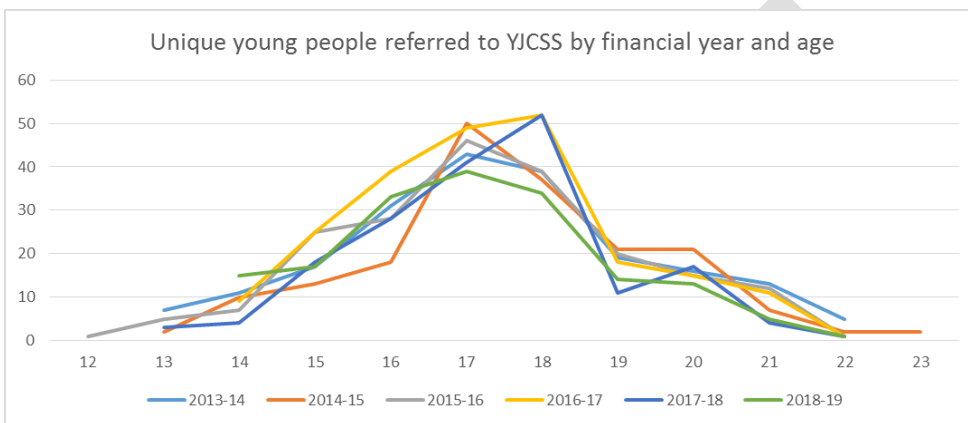


Figure 9: Unique young males commencing with YJCSS by financial year and age at referral

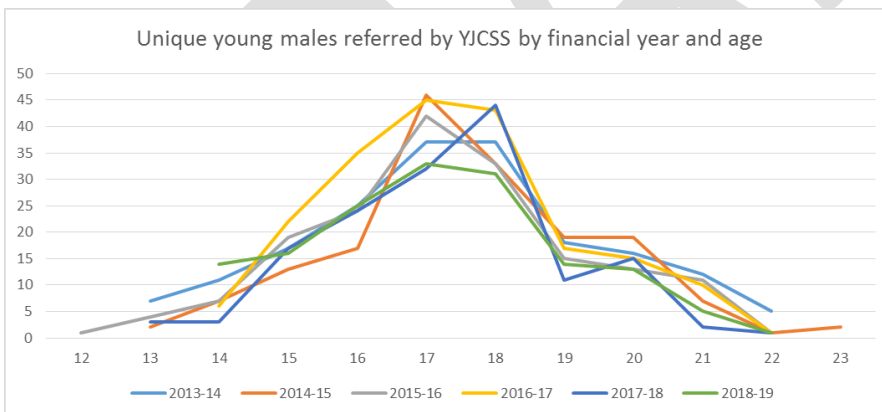
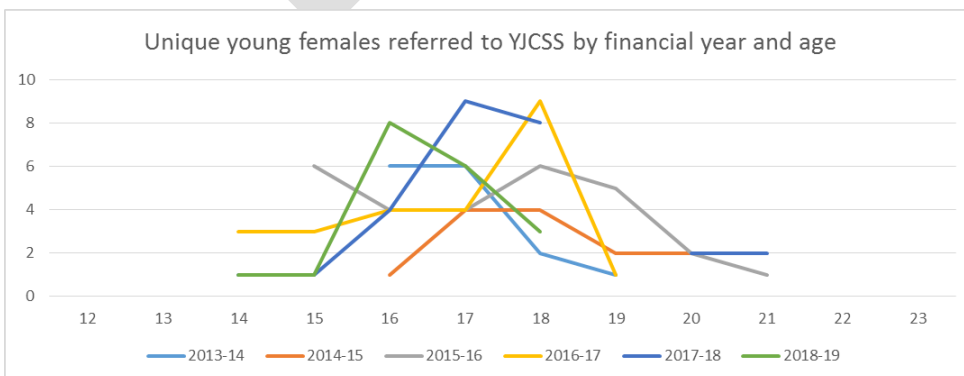


Figure 10: Unique young females commencing with YJCSS by financial year and age at referral



7.1.4 Cultural background breakdown

The extent to which young Aboriginal people, and young people of African cultural background engage with YJCSS is also worth examining. The proportion of the total YJ population who identify as Aboriginal has been between 13 and 16 per cent over the six-year period from 2013 and 2019.

Young people with Aboriginal status accounted for 16.9 per cent of the YJCSS population in 2013–2014 and 12.3 per cent in 2018–2019 – a six-year average of 13.4 per cent which is lower than the proportion of young Aboriginal people in the overall YJ population over the same period (15.2%). This suggests the need for more specific targeting of young people, however the possibility of an Aboriginal-specific YJCSS program arising from the Armytage and Ogloff Review could address this need.

Table 8: YJCSS demand distribution 2013 to 2019 – Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal young people

Aboriginal status of young people who commenced YJCSS in a given year	YJCSS commencements 2013 to 2019					
	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Aboriginal	16.9%	11.5%	11.1%	11.8%	16.8%	12.3%
Non-Aboriginal	83.1%	88.5%	88.9%	88.2%	83.2%	87.7%
Total number of occasions	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

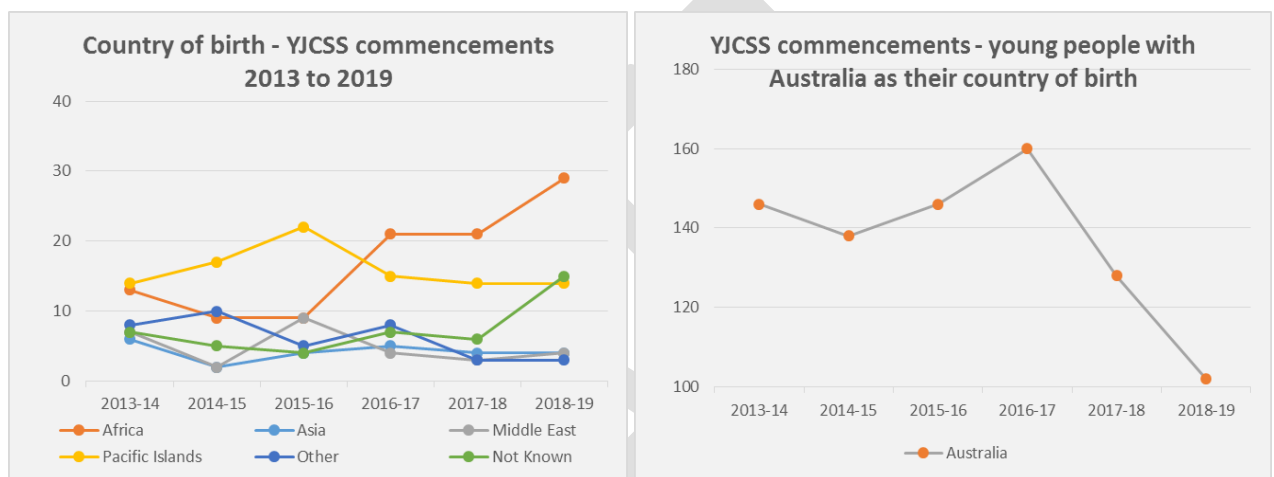
The percentage of the total YJ population that reports African background has increased progressively over the six-year period from 135 (or five per cent of the total) in 2013–2014 to 377 (or 16 per cent in 2018–2019), noting that ‘other’ and ‘not known’ account for 11 per cent of the overall population. The ethnic identification of all YJ young people from 2013 to 2019 is shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Youth Justice population by ethnic grouping from 2013 to 2019

Ethnic grouping	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	Grand Total
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	373	406	414	395	366	327	2281
African	135	132	161	225	305	377	1335
Asian	87	81	72	76	88	87	491
Australian (Non Aboriginal)	1639	1517	1356	1235	1155	1000	7902
Middle Eastern	128	138	139	159	125	117	806
Not Known	155	145	125	109	91	145	770
Other	161	174	150	134	127	165	911
Pacific Islander	234	256	260	248	231	185	1414
Grand Total	2912	2849	2677	2581	2488	2403	15910

However the ‘share’ of involvement in YJCSS by young people who have Africa as their country of birth as a proportion of all YJCSS commencements has remained fairly constant at between six and nine per cent over the six years from 2013 to 2019, suggesting their proportional representation has declined over that period. It is interesting to note however, that compared to other young people, there has been a relative increase in YJCSS participation. Figures 11 and 11a compare commencements patterns across the range of countries of birth reported among YJCSS participants.

Figures 11 and 11a 10: Country of birth – YJCSS participants from 2013 to 2019



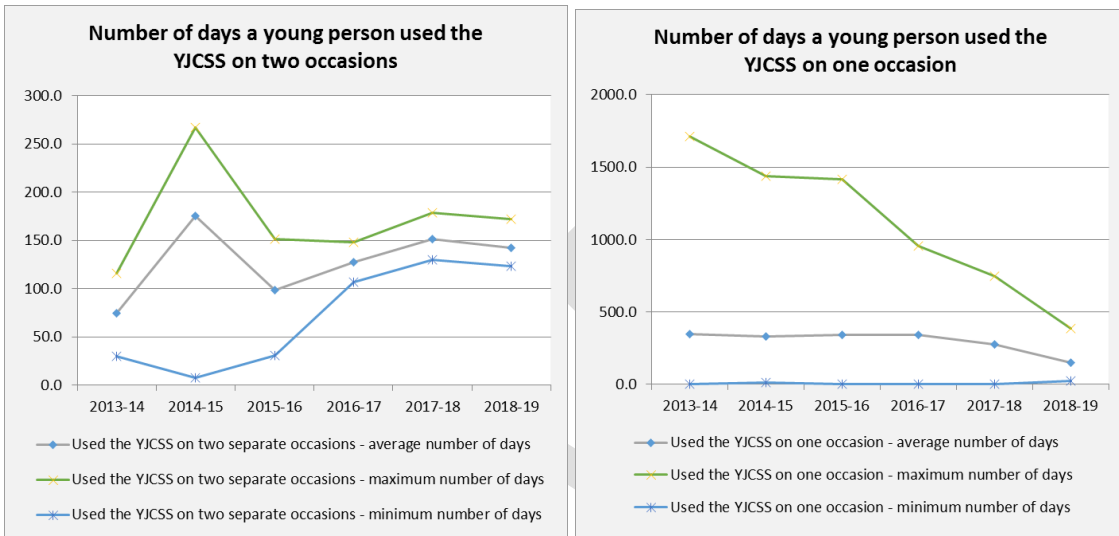
This picture of program activity highlights the need for program monitoring to identify the reasons for fluctuations in participation and representation activity such as the drop in Aboriginal young people’s participation in YJCSS in 2018-2019 after a consistent increase relative to the proportional increase in the Aboriginal population. This monitoring should occur as quarterly reports are submitted, and over time, to assess trends and stimulate remedial action to ensure equitable access to the program, and to ensure targeting is consistent with policy imperatives.

7.1.5 Length of involvement with YJCSS

The period of time that a young person stays involved with YJCSS may be a useful performance measure for the program. The data here shows time (as minimum, maximum and average) number of days for young people involved in the program once, or more than once. Those involved more than once are a relatively small group (less than two per cent) and have spent proportionally more days in the program over the six years from 2013 to 2019 with average number of days increasing from less than 100 days in 2013–2014 to 142 days in 2018–2019.

In contrast, the majority – those involved with the program only once – have spent proportionally less time involved, with the average number of days decreasing from 330 days in 2013–2014 to 151 days in 2018–2019. These two observations may indicate a maturing of the program over that time and suggest increasing proficiency of the YJCSS providers in assisting young people involved with the YJ system.

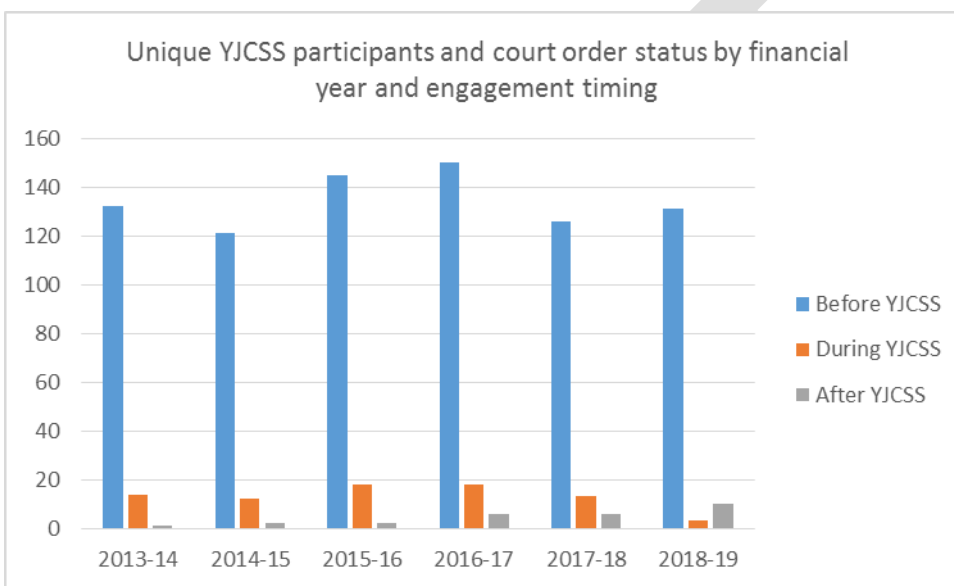
Figures 12 and 12a: Length of YJCSS engagement (in days) for those engaging once or twice from 2013 to 2019



8. YJCSS outcomes

There are three sources of information about the outcomes of YJCSS intervention. The first is the CRISP data from 2013 to 2019 for the 1153 young people who commenced their YJCSS involvement during that period (as described in Section 1.4.1). Figure 13 shows the number for whom court orders were issued upon entry to YJCSS, during and after YJCSS involvement:

Figure 13: Unique YJCSS participants and court order status by financial year and engagement timing



Tables 10 and 11 show the distribution of custodial and community orders before during and after YJCSS involvement:

Table 10: Number of community-based orders issued to a unique young person by financial year and YJCSS engagement timing

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	Grand Total
Community-based orders	147	135	165	174	145	144	910
Before YJCSS	132	121	145	150	126	131	805
During YJCSS	14	12	18	18	13	3	78
After YJCSS	1	2	2	6	6	10	27
Grand Total	147	135	165	174	145	144	910

Table 11: Number of custodial orders issued to a unique young person by financial year and YJCSS engagement timing

Custodial order timing	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	Grand Total
Custody	54	48	34	46	34	27	243
Before YJCSS	54	46	32	41	33	24	230
During YJCSS			2	4	1		7
After YJCSS		2		1		3	6
Grand Total	54	48	34	46	34	27	243

Of note here is the dramatic decrease in the number of young people receiving new orders during and after YJCSS. However it is possible that the picture about young people before YJCSS is skewed because there is no standard point in time in a young person's YJ profile where they are referred to YJCSS. A young person could have received any number of orders before their case manager decides that YJCSS referral is required. Nevertheless, it is a possible indicator of significant change in reoffending and court-related activity as a result of YJCSS support.

It is also useful to look at the order intensity and the offence severity after YJCSS engagement as another possible measure of YJCSS effectiveness. For example, those that re-offend after YJCSS are mostly issued probation without conviction orders instead of a more serious order like a Youth Supervision Order – though a higher number were sentenced to custody in 2018-19 than in previous years. Similarly for offence types, there has been an increase in the number of young people committing robbery across the years, but for those involved with YJCSS, far fewer are re-offending through robbery after YJCSS (see Table 12).

Table 12: Robbery and other offences and YJCSS involvement

Offence type	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Robbery, extortion and related offences	465	449	441	496	581	552
Involved with YJCSS						
Yes	126	153	155	170	152	119
No	339	296	286	326	429	433
Grand Total	465	449	441	496	581	552

The other measure of effectiveness is the YJCSS providers' anecdotal evidence of post-program outcomes. YJ staff and YJCSS providers noted that desistance is a process over time, and that interim measures, while perhaps subjective and based on self-reporting, can be useful. A significant measure of effectiveness

reported by YJCSS providers was increased order completion rates measured by the providers over time (a 45 per cent improvement in metropolitan Melbourne). Other measures noted included:

- a reduction in police encounters and court involvement
- re-engagement in education and pathways to qualifications and work
- improvements in family relationships and housing stability
- improvements in health and mental health
- improvements in independent living skills and the capability to manage a budget and organise their domestic lives
- increased social and community connections in pro-social contexts
- the ability to use public transport and get to YJ-related appointments independently
- successful applications for learner's permit and driving licences
- more engagement in physical fitness and sports, and
- effective engagement with Centrelink and therefore avoiding cuts to benefits.

A number of providers expressed an interest in receiving information about longer-term outcomes for the young people they assist. While attributing outcomes to YJCSS alone is not possible at this stage, a formal longitudinal evaluation study will enable YJ to assess and quantify these outcomes over time, and confirm any shift in reoffending patterns. This evaluation could be the opportunity to track individual outcomes (through the Crime Statistics Agency) and report back (if feasible and ethical) to YJCSS providers. It is therefore recommended that YJCSS be included in the 2020 YJ timetable for independent, external evaluation and the scope to track individual outcomes be considered in the evaluation design.

Part Three – Opportunities for improvement: YJCSS re-cast for the decade ahead

9. Addressing complex needs in the Youth Justice population

Even though the size of the YJ population is declining overall, YJ staff and YJCSS providers observed that the complexity of the young people the service assists has increased over time. The needs of young people and their families are reflected in the range of activities YJCSS provides, and the breadth and intensity of assistance required.

In a review of this type, a cumulative picture forms about possible new directions and enhancements. These enhancements range from a set of design principles that could underpin future YJCSS activity, to options for future program type and design based on an agreed, shared vision for YJ in Victoria. Suggested outcome measures that can be monitored and reported on over time, and by which program achievements can be evaluated, have also taken shape. These are presented here as options for discussion within YJ. They envisage YJCSS as the ‘third arm’ of YJ, underpinning the statutory YJ custodial and community functions with strong community-based foundations.

The options for redirecting and reshaping YJCSS – and other YJ interventions – are also presented as options derived from the review consultations, by examining the evidence base to determine what works elsewhere, and what might work in Victoria, and in view of the YJ and DJCS fiscal environment. There could be an opportunity to achieve economies of scale through, firstly, program redesign that introduces a tiered service approach ranging from early intervention to intensive support, and secondly, investing in sector development to ensure they have the capacity and capability to properly support young people to achieve stable and secure lives, reduce reoffending and improve community safety.

9.1 Design principles

These are the suggested design principles:

1. There is a shared commitment to collaboration and communication that is consistent with the evidence about what it takes to achieve strategic and effective over-arching case management across the statutory arm of the YJ system and its community partners, to reduce reoffending and

the rate at which young people return to sentenced supervision, and to improve community safety. These objectives are tied to the vision for the YJ system.

2. Community-based agencies see themselves, and are seen, as genuine partners with government in achieving shared goals in a partnership that is collaborative and forward-looking rather than adversarial.
3. YJ custodial and community statutory roles, and community-based programs, are effectively integrated as envisaged by the YJ Case Management Framework so that community-based programs can play a central role in addressing risk- and need-related responsivity issues.
4. Effective intervention with young people involved with the Youth Justice system relies on an evidence-based approach centred on validated assessments, where the intensity of the intervention reflects the assessed level of risk and need, and the intervention is implemented as it was designed to be. This information is then transferred to program providers within the identified parameters that reflect privacy and privileged information.
5. Early intervention and in-reach by community providers enables them to establish effective relationships with young people prior to release to ensure continuity of care and successful reintegration to the community.
6. Community-based agencies commissioned to deliver YJ community services/programs have demonstrated and strategic partnerships with all the key agencies and organisations contributing to effective – Victoria Police, courts, schools and training providers, employers, health and mental health services, AOD service providers, housing agencies, family services, Aboriginal and other cultural-specific community-controlled agencies within their catchment – and therefore can provide a multi-modal intervention that benefits young people, their families and their communities.
7. Service delivery is culturally sensitive and appropriate, is relevant and compatible with the norms and values of varying cultural groups, and effectively engages the elders and leaders of the respective cultural backgrounds of program participants.
8. Intervention is gender appropriate and inclusive, and recognises the range of gender identity and preferences of young people.
9. Program outcomes are transparent and provide the scope to attribute changed trajectories of the young people involved to the program/service intervention.
10. The monitoring, reporting and evaluation framework that supports YJ community programs/services contributes to building the evidence base about what works, for whom, and why in interventions designed to assist young people involved with the Youth Justice system.

11. The voice of young people and their family is an important contributor to program design and delivery, and needs to be incorporated at each stage of program development, review and evaluation wherever possible.

9.2 Program/service options

The possible program directions that could be explored, and that will benefit from workshopping within YJ are:

1. A structured, tiered approach to all YJ interventions ranging from the earliest engagement with offending behaviour (currently addressed through the Youth Support Service/Aboriginal Youth Supports) to the intensive support provided by YJCSS. The price/cost level for each tier would need to be determined through consultation within the YJ sector, but also allow for competition and probity principles.

At whatever point young people engage with police or the YJ system – through YSS/AYSS, YJCSS or Children’s Court Youth Diversion (CCYD) service (and potentially, YJGC) – they have needs stemming from the same key indicators:

- socioeconomic disadvantage
- intergenerational grief and trauma
- parents, siblings or peers involved with crime
- disrupted education and early school leaving
- disability, cognitive impairment, language and communication delays
- mental health concerns, drug and alcohol disorders and foetal alcohol syndrome disorder
- family conflict, unstable housing and homelessness.

Where they differ, is the level or intensity of support they require, and the range of support service types/interventions required.

Economies of scale could be achieved by aggregating the budget allocations for each program (an annual total of approximately \$16.9m excl. GST based on 2019-2020 outlays for YJCSS, YSS/AYSS and YJGC) for a combined YJ community support service structure. In these times of fiscal constraint, it is important to preserve program budgets as far as possible, while also demonstrating restraint and cost efficiencies. Potential benefits of this approach could include:

- YJ currently has 16 organisations delivering the three programs. Some deliver all three, some one or two. The range of service providers could possibly be rationalised through a public

tender process, and while certain levels of capability would be a threshold requirement, the capability of those who successfully tender could be systematically and strategically built to ensure consistent, standardised responses ranging from early intervention to longer-term, more intensive support services, and to ensure alignment with program/service principles. This could be facilitated by having a smaller pool of providers rather than 16 different organisations. Monitoring the quality of service provision, and evaluating outcomes, would be streamlined.

- It may be possible to broaden access to the YSS/AYSS (not currently statewide) through this approach as providers would be engaged to service YJ regions rather than regional towns as occurs currently.
- The administrative burden – for YJ and for the organisations themselves – could be reduced. Service agreements, payment schedules, insurance arrangements, monitoring, reporting and reviewing could be streamlined and simplified.
- Ensuring YJ and program/service providers meet the commitments to collaboration, communication and continuity of care, integrated and cross-over training would be more feasible and likely to be more cost-effective.

This type of rationalisation may also better equip the YJ system to meet potential demand by achieving an economy of scale that ultimately reduces the current unit price and perhaps increases worker/participant ratios. There is a need for this as in June 2019, 201 young people were in custody and 669 were being supervised in the community (a total of 970 young people). Of those, 292 young people aged under 18 had been assessed as having a moderate, medium, high or very high risk of reoffending (73 in custody and 219 supervised in the community). Among those aged over 18, 218 (69 in custody and 149 in the community) had those same risk and need levels. That's a total of a 510 potential YJCSS participants – more than half the current YJ population – and it is a point-in-time figure and the total annual flow figure will be much higher than that based on previous years. If YJCSS eligibility is considered in this way, demand will not match supply.

2. Greater integration of inter-government department effort through co-designed budget bids along the lines of a departmental consortium model. The joint Justice-Housing Housing pilot initiative (for example) produced good outcomes in the adult corrections system. What could be explored are co-design opportunities with key players directly involved in the youth justice sphere (like CPV) or those not previously involved in joint bids – Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (for

targeted employment services), DET (for tailored education initiatives such as the Out Teach program in Shepparton run by Save the Children, or dedicated training initiatives) or the Department of Transport (to help address persistent transport issues in regional Victoria which can sometimes prevent young people from meeting order conditions or taking up employment opportunities).

3. Quarantining part of the aggregated budget to establish an innovation fund. This could enable creative, innovative, evidence-based solutions to intractable issues within the YJ system to be identified. Segments of the YJ service provider market could research and trial approaches to build the evidence base and assess replicability in other areas. Solutions could be place-based, targeted by cohorts, or focus on an area that YJ identifies it wants to be targeted for innovative interventions.
4. Exploring the potential for social impact bonds⁴⁰ to be implemented to help address critical housing needs for young people involved with the YJ system. Under this arrangement, government would seek private sector and/or philanthropic investment to build accommodation options of the types identified by this review, with government repaying that investment (with interest) at an agreed future time based on demonstrable improvements in a range of measures – such as improvements in community safety, reductions in offending, changed life trajectories for young people and their families. Clearly this requires a lot more investigation.
5. Strategic partnerships with local government. This appears to be an under-utilised area for collaboration. All councils offer youth and family services that range from sport and recreation, to more formal support projects. It could be worth YJ meeting with the local government peak agency (the Municipal Association of Victoria), and to engage the Minister for Youth Justice in discussion about this idea with his Local Government counterpart as a starting point to examine possibilities.

Many other possibilities emerged during the literature scan to support this review. Strategies such as Family Focused Parole (FFT); Family Advocates (Families Inspiring Families); incentives for service providers tied to outcomes; specially-designed justice-related employment programs that recruit and train 'senior' people in the community to act as role models and mentors for families and young people; mentoring programs that rely on graduate students to mentor young people or act

⁴⁰ The Urban Institute discusses this 'Pay for Success' model in its 2019 Research Report titled *Promoting a New Direction for Youth Justice*.

as literacy tutors; or transition specialists who manage pre-release planning but are also community resource specialists, could be considered as possible enhancements to the YJ suite of programs.

9.3 Effective integration of YJ and community support services as envisaged by the CMF and addressing responsivity

Whatever the configuration of YJ community support services, there is an opportunity to redefine the future iterations of community programs relative to the newly reformed YJ system to ensure clear delineation of YJ and community provider roles and responsibilities, and to ensure effective integration of the YJ focus on assessing and managing risks and needs, and the related community-based program intervention. One possible way to cast this, consistent with the YJ Case Management Framework, is to view the community programs role as addressing *responsivity* factors – the elements that can impede a young person’s ability to engage in or benefit from case management interventions designed to reduce their risk of reoffending.⁴¹ These include, and are consistent with the ‘central eight’ criminogenic risk factors and key activity areas described by YJCSS providers as the focus of their work with young people:

- significant mental health, medical or alcohol and other drug (AOD) issues
- problematic family circumstances
- antisocial peers
- problems engaging in, or finding pathways to school or work
- disabilities (e.g. intellectual disability, acquired brain injury, cognitive impairment, visual impairment, physical disability, learning disability)
- trauma
- family violence
- cultural needs of young Aboriginal people
- factors linked to Cultural and Linguistic Background (CALD)
- particular needs of girls and young women
- anxiety, loneliness and boredom, and
- housing and stable accommodation issues.

If program support is specified in this way, then identifying who should be referred to the service, when they are referred, and for what type/s of assistance is streamlined as it aligns with YJ Risk-Needs-

⁴¹ Youth Justice Case Management Framework pp. 20-21

Responsivity (RNR) assessments based on validated tools. It could also enable YJ and community providers to develop a joint plan of action for working with each young person based on shared information and practice directions. This could reduce the inconsistent referral arrangements identified during the review, as long as the availability of places matches demand. It could also enable flexible responses to the dynamic, unpredictable nature of the YJ system and offending behaviour patterns. However a preferred referral hierarchy needs to keep ahead of potential demand and the supply of, for example, current YJCSS places.

Within the total possible referral numbers, however, there will be also other cohorts that could be prioritised for access. These include 10- to 14-year-olds, young Aboriginal people, young girls and other priority groups who are the focus of other specific projects within YJ – LGBTI and young people with disabilities.

For those not yet entrenched in the YJ system, an alternative screening and assessment tool such as the Child and Adolescent Functioning Assessment Scale (CAFAS – Appendix 18) would be applicable. This tool comes from the same stable as the YLS tools, and has been endorsed with in YJ as a suitable early intervention mechanism. CAFAS also has a built-in web-based case management and reporting function.

9.4 Outcome measures

Future YJ programs should include performance-based outcome measures that demonstrate progress – positive change, measurable differences – in the young person’s situation, and contribute to a reduced likelihood that the young person will engage in offending behaviour over time. The types of outcome measures that indicate the desired progress need to be linked to the known areas requiring attention in young people in the YJ system, based on valid assessment and include achieving:

- stable housing and accommodation
- education or training engagement
- employment or established pathways to employment
- independent living skills
- family relationships
- positive social and community connections (perhaps including mentoring)
- stable health and mental health
- AOD treatment and harm minimisation
- reduced risk of offending indications

- a change in the nature or frequency of any subsequent offending
- positive leisure and sporting engagement
- independent access to transport and other required government and/or community services.

Assessing the extent to which positive change has occurred can be based on both subjective and objective measures, and will be validated by independent evaluation.

10. Review and evaluation

Monitoring, reviewing and evaluating all YJ-funded initiatives should be embedded in their design and delivery, and quarterly reports provide a good deal of information about provider and program activity, and could be monitored more strategically. Monitoring and evaluation provide the opportunity to learn about what is being delivered, to share practice-based knowledge, and to contribute to the body of evidence about what works in YJ. Embedding evaluation activity helps ensure that data collection is consistent and accurate, and is available for assessing the *outcomes* of initiatives, and ultimately assessing their *value*.

Evaluation activity (in real time) is most useful to monitor whether initiatives are implemented as planned, and to address any barriers to implementation. Real-time evaluation can also help ensure consistency across different regions/providers. If all regions are implementing the same program model, then embedded real-time evaluation enables the assessment of individual interventions, as well as outcomes for the program overall. This means the efficacy of interventions can be assessed.

YJ needs high-quality evaluation evidence about the impact of its programs to make sound decisions about the most effective investment of government resources, and to develop sound policy. The YJ Evaluation Policy notes that evidence generated from evaluation 'plays a key role in supporting the department and the division's outcomes-focused approach, and the delivery of an evidence-based youth justice system that:

- reduces offending by young people in Victoria
- rehabilitates young people in the criminal justice system
- contributes to community safety.

The YJCSS after-hours expansion is funded until 30 June 2021, and evaluating that expansion is scheduled for 2020. The final evaluation report is required by the end of October 2020 to inform a budget bid for continued funding.

Recommendation 14 – that Youth Justice review program monitoring and reporting to ensure that as quarterly reports are submitted, and over time, trends are assessed and remedial action is taken to ensure equitable access to the program, and consistent targeting to meet policy imperatives and fluctuations in the YJ population profile.

11. Summary of recommendations

Recommendation 1 – that Youth Justice, as a high priority, undertake a strategic exercise within the executive team and in conjunction with YJ General Managers, to address the key threshold questions:

- What is the role of a community-based YJ support service system in a reformed YJ context?
- What does the YJ system in Victoria want it to be?
- Why?

Recommendation 2 – that Youth Justice:

- improve the YJ and YJCSS interface by clearly delineating respective roles and responsibilities and streamlining information sharing and access arrangements to ensure regional staff and their YJCSS providers understand their roles in addressing young people’s offending-related issues and meeting each young person’s needs
- in the spirit of partnership, provide information and regular updates about the YJ CMF and the YJCSS agencies’ role as key partners in an integrated approach to case management
- develop and implement an effective and efficient process to share information (acknowledging privacy requirements) about the young people referred from YJ to YJCSS to obviate the need for YJCSS providers to develop their own intake and assessment processes
- streamline arrangements for YJCSS providers to have in-reach access to young people in custody, and
- ensure YJCSS providers have information about Youth Offending Programs (YOP) and their role in supporting young people’s engagement in these programs.

Recommendation 3 – that Youth Justice address current disparate referral and eligibility arrangements by allocating time firstly, at a YJ GMs meeting and secondly, at a YJCSS Statewide

Reference Group meeting to discuss and confirm referral arrangements including eligibility, priority, timing and required information to accompany the referral. This confirmed approach can then be incorporated into new YJCSS guidelines for implementation in July 2020.

Recommendation 4 – That care teams’ operations be enhanced by:

- reiterating the current requirements for care teams, as specified in all YJ documents, during regular meetings with YJCSS providers
- ensuring an overview of care team roles and responsibilities is included in YJ staff induction
- requiring all YJ regions and YJCSS providers to confirm their commitment to including the young person in care team meetings wherever possible
- having clear and decisive chairing arrangements, minutes and assigned responsibilities
- ensuring timely information sharing, including case plans and expectations of service providers.

Recommendation 5 – that in specifying future YJCSS activity, providers be required to identify their strategy for managing a waiting list including providing immediate interim assistance in cases where the YJ General Manager determines it is required.

Recommendation 6 – that in new YJCSS guidelines, the case load ratio be increased from 1: 8 to 1: 12 as consistent with the evidence base examined under this review.

Recommendation 7 – that, as part of the current YJ custodial and community program reviews underway, YJ examine how the identified program gaps can be addressed through strategic partnerships with other government agencies and program providers to ensure appropriate targeting, a focus on outcomes, and value for money.

Recommendation 8 – that planning for release begins as a young person enters custody, that pre-release planning beginning at that time features as a key requirement in the YJ Reintegration Framework, and that YJCSS providers are able to start establishing a connection with a young person three months before release through streamlined access to young people in custody.

Recommendation 9 – that the current YJ and Child Protection interface be confirmed across all regions and with all YJCSS providers by:

- issuing the current YJCSS Guidelines requirements for dual clients to all YJCSS providers as a practice update
- discussing these requirements at review meetings between YJ General Managers, YJ staff and their YJCSS provider as soon as possible
- including the revised protocols between Youth Justice and Child Protection, and Youth Justice and Disability Services on the General Managers meeting agenda and the YJCSS/YJGC Governance meeting agenda to ensure all providers are briefed on and understand current requirements, and
- all regions exploring how TCPs could be more effectively and efficiently accessed in their region.

Recommendation 10 – that YJ initiate a short-term collaborative project with other arms of government to map government overlap in intensive assistance to common clients, chart the assistance provided, and quantify the funding allocated to non-government agencies commissioned to provide that assistance so there is a government-wide, consolidated view of what is being invested, for what return and whether any reform of current arrangements is required. The Service Reform initiatives occurring across government could be a mechanism by which this information can be gathered.

Recommendation 11 – that, as a priority, YJ establish a high-level joint YJ and DHHS working group to further investigate current CRISSP data input, extraction and reporting issues to resolve current user interface problems and streamline future reporting and analysis.

Recommendation 12 – that the YJ System Coordination, Practice Leadership and Workforce team review current governance arrangements and examine the feasibility of a revised governance structure as outlined in collaboration with YJCSS providers through the existing Statewide Reference Group avenue prior to introducing any new arrangements.

Recommendation 13 – that YJ explore:

- opportunities for joint YJ and YJCSS training to bring together regional YJ and YJCSS practitioners to develop, through a cumulative knowledge-building process, the required knowledge and understanding that can inform effective practice across the board

- opportunities for practice exchange to provide YJ and YJCSS agency staff with the opportunity for short-term role exchange to build their mutual understanding of their respective roles and pressures, and
- developing a training calendar for joint YJ and YJCSS staff training for 2020.

Recommendation 14 – that Youth Justice review program monitoring and reporting to ensure that as quarterly reports are submitted, and over time, trends are assessed and remedial action is taken to ensure equitable access to the program, and consistent targeting to meet policy imperatives and fluctuations in the YJ population profile.

Appendices

List of tables and figures

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We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.



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Part A: Literature Review

1. Introduction

This review seeks to establish what is currently known about effective early intervention and diversionary approaches to youth offending. There is a significant body of literature addressing the issue of youth offending and a wide range of programs have been implemented with varying degrees of evaluation, yet significantly less literature exists specifically regarding early intervention and diversion among this cohort. Broadly speaking, however, the extant literature suggests there are several points at which it is possible to intervene in the offending trajectories of young people. Early intervention and diversion programs typically aim to reduce offending behaviours by targeting known risk and protective factors associated with offending. Generally, programs focused on preventing involvement with the youth justice system address key outcomes, including: engaging young people with education and/or employment, developing skills, providing positive role modelling and improving familial and/or social connection, thereby providing young people with alternative options to antisocial behaviour.

Before proceeding with the review, it is important to differentiate between prevention and early intervention programs, diversion programs and tertiary intervention programs. Prevention and early intervention programs aim to prevent offending before it begins, particularly among young people considered to be 'at risk' of offending. Diversion programs offer an alternative to usual legal proceedings and court processes, giving offenders the opportunity to avoid a criminal record or receive a reduced sentence upon completion of the program. Finally, tertiary intervention programs aim to reduce recidivism among young people with offending histories. Following a review of broad principles for effective interventions for young offenders, this review will outline approaches and interventions that have been shown to be effective in each of these areas, including specific interventions and programming for priority groups.

1.1. Background

The 2011–12 the Victorian Budget included \$22 million for the development and implementation of the Youth Crime Initiative (YCI), in response to community concerns regarding youth crime and the escalating pressure on the Youth Justice System (YJS). The YCI focused on building community safety by enhancing the capacity of the YJS and providing diversion and early intervention services prior to young people

becoming involved in statutory services. The YCI included two independent, though related, components: (1) the funding of 20 full-time equivalent (FTE) additional YJS workers; and (2) the establishment of the Youth Support Service (YSS) and provision of 35 FTE youth workers allocated to the service. Since then, ongoing funding for the program was granted for 35 FTE in the 2014–15 Victorian Budget following the

KPMG (2014) review.

The YSS was expanded to include the AYSS in 2016 and became operational in February 2017, across two Victorian locations, Mildura and the North West Metro Region. The AYSS was formed to utilise the same objectives, outcomes, eligibility and processes as the YSS, but recognised the need for a culturally informed approach for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth.

In 2017, the YJS was transferred from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to the Department of Justice and Regulation (now the Department of Justice and Community Safety), as part of the Machinery of Government changes.

1.2. YSS/AYSS service design and delivery

The YSS/AYSS is designed as an early intervention support service for at-risk young people who have already come in contact with police but are not yet statutory clients of either Child Protection or Youth Justice. Young people are required to meet the following criteria in order to be eligible for YSS services:

- from 10 to 17 years of age
- initial contact with Victoria Police occurring within the last three months
- not subject to Supervised Bail or Deferral of Sentence
- not a statutory client of either Youth Justice or Child Protection
- willing to receive support from YSS
- reside in the metropolitan Melbourne area, Ballarat, Geelong, Latrobe Valley, Shepparton or Mildura.

The primary aim of the service is to prevent further offending by identifying and mitigating

criminogenic risk factors. The service takes a developmental pathway and proactive approach and operates independently of the legal process, providing a cost-effective way to address antisocial behaviour, link the young person in with supports and services, and help the young person develop positive life goals. Services that the young person may be linked in with through their YSS worker include but are not limited to alcohol and other drug (AOD) support, housing support, counselling, mentoring, vocational and/or educational support, mental health and primary healthcare services, and family mediation and conflict resolution.

Service provision by the YSS is based on the following key components, which are consistent across all YSS agencies:

- assessment
- case management
- application of evidence-based interventions

- two-month post-closure interview

These components provide the young person with a comprehensive service directed at engaging them therapeutically, while ensuring they remain accountable for their actions and minimise their chances of reoffending. The YSS

was designed as a short-term service, providing intervention for approximately one to four months, with the maximum service delivery being six to nine months. It is unclear whether these service period guidelines are followed due to unavailable data.

1.3. Evaluations

Two key evaluations of the YSS/AYSS have been conducted, one by KPMG in 2014 and another by the Department of Justice and Regulation in 2017. The KPMG review, titled Evaluation of the Youth Support Service, provided a detailed independent program evaluation of the YSS's efficacy between April 2011 and June 2013. The second review, produced in 2017 and titled Current State Assessment: Youth Support Services/Aboriginal Youth Support Services, examines both the YSS and the AYSS.

1.3.1. KPMG review (2014): Evaluation of the Youth Support Service

The Department of Human Services (the Department) engaged KPMG to conduct an independent program evaluation of the YSS, prior to the lapse in funding that would occur on 30 June 2014. Since this review was commissioned, the Department has undergone a restructuring, with Youth Justice Services, and consequently the YSS, now being overseen by the Department of Justice and Community Safety. However, at the time of the KPMG review, the statutory supervision of young offenders was the responsibility of the Department of Human Services.

The key findings of the review were that:

- The YSS is one of several programs and initiatives that contributes to the early intervention and diversion of young people from the youth justice system.
- Critical to the success of the YSS was the referral of young people following their first contact with police. These supports provided the young person with means of reducing their offending behaviour and associated risk factors.
- Feedback from stakeholders, including YSS agencies, magistrates and Victoria Police suggest that the YSS contributes to reducing youth offending and associated risk factors, where there is not already chronically entrenched disadvantage.
- Service design and delivery was broadly consistent across all YSS agencies with regards to the service's key components of assessment, case management, application of evidence-based interventions and conducting two-month post-closure follow-up interviews.

Limitations of the YSS service delivery and design

were noted by KPMG (2014), including:

- The level of detail reported to the Department by YSS agencies varied considerably, resulting in difficulty providing a comprehensive service evaluation. It was recommended a robust reporting framework be implemented, allowing for monitoring of a young person's wellbeing and progress over time. This will allow for more comprehensive evaluation of the YSS, including ways in which service provision can be improved.
- Incomplete or imprecise data regarding case closures meant it was difficult to conclusively determine the number of young people who achieved their goals.
- No young people could be interviewed for the evaluation of the service conducted by KPMG due to ethical concerns.
- The restructure of the Department in 2012 resulted in uncertainty regarding governance of the YSS.

Future considerations pertaining to service design and delivery that were outlined in the KPMG (2014) review include:

- Expand referral and intake processes to ensure an appropriate cohort is targeted and able to access the YSS.
- Consider the development of new engagement strategies and services provided by the YSS.
- Improve reporting and feedback mechanisms, including data collection and monitoring by Victoria Police.

- Expand the operation of the YSS to more locations across Victoria. This is based on the evidence for service demand and value-for-money.
- Facilitate ongoing data collection and the development of a strong evidence base supporting the ongoing operation of the YSS to young people at risk of entering the youth justice system.

1.3.2. Current State Assessment (2017): Youth Support Services/Aboriginal Youth Support Services

The Department of Justice and Community Safety conducted an internal Current State Assessment (CSA) of the YSS/AYSS to describe the intent and processes and any operational issues of the program. The CSA involved a desktop analysis of available documentation and data, as well as limited external consultation with stakeholders.

Operational issues identified by the analysis include:

- There was ambiguity surrounding the guidelines for delivery of the YSS/AYSS by service providers, as well as a lack of clarity pertaining to service provider responsibility for data collection, monitoring and reporting.
- This ambiguity has resulted in minimal data pertaining to the capacity and demand for the YSS/AYSS being collected, leading to limited knowledge in these areas.
- Additional referral pathways to the YSS/AYSS were identified, highlighting the localised way in which service providers have been

delivering the program, with little adherence to guidelines and policy.

- There were issues regarding the Victorian Police Electronic Referral System (VPeR), which is the primary referral source for the YSS/AYSS, including police not using the system (making it difficult to track referrals), variable local police practices impacting how referrals proceed, and technical limitations with the system.
- Guidelines surrounding the reporting and monitoring of the YSS/AYSS required improvement, with concerns raised regarding the quality of data being collected and the need to standardise data integrity and monitoring compliance.
- Some service providers have developed positive relationships between the YSS/AYSS service and the Children's Court Youth Diversion (CCYD) program; however, in some areas there is no capacity for the YSS/AYSS to take referrals

The CSA review concluded that the YSS/AYSS had diverged from the guidelines and that a comprehensive review or audit of the service was required. Consideration was also given to the need to develop a comprehensive evaluation framework for the YSS/AYSS, which would aid in clarifying the scope and purpose of the service.

1.3.3. Recommendations provided by KPMG (2014) and the Current State Analysis (2017)

The KPMG (2014) review and the Current State Analysis (2017) were conducted to assess the service design and efficacy of the YSS/AYSS. These reviews identified a number of key

recommendations to be made to ensure optimal service delivery, which are reiterated here. Where there is overlap in recommendations, these have been identified and tabulated separately.

Table 1: Key recommendations identified by both the KPMG (2014) review and the Current State Analysis (2017)

Key recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider program expansion throughout Victoria based on robust evidence and cost-benefit analysis, including emerging trends regarding number of young offenders and complexity in specific regions. • Improve data collection and monitoring mechanisms for the YSS to allow for ongoing data analysis and provision of evidence-based intervention. This includes the development of clear data-reporting guidelines. • Develop a method to collect longer-term outcome data regarding the YSS to demonstrate progress towards achievement of Service objectives. • Identify the optimal length of service provision and involvement for YSS clients based on robust evidence. • Strengthen and clarify referral pathways. • YSS/AYSS to work closely with Victoria Police and improve the referral process.

Table 2: Further recommendations made by the KPMG (2014) review and the Current State Analysis (2017)

KPMG review (2014)	Current State Analysis (2017)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify optimal ranges for YJ and YSS worker case loads which are reflective of service demands and the level of service intensity required. • Consider the facilitation of referrals from magistrates and lawyers during the pre-plea and pre-sentence phases. • Develop standardised process for the reporting of the two-month post-closure report data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Justice to take a lead role in the coordination and management of the YSS/AYSS. • Adopt a stronger contract management approach, ensuring: clear communication between regions and central divisions; clarification of the role of the Youth Justice General Manager regarding tasks, including required resources to undertake functions. • Undertake further assessment to determine

KPMG review (2014)	Current State Analysis (2017)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the collection of longitudinal outcome data regarding the YSS. • Develop a standard reporting template to be completed by YSS service agencies on an annual basis, including agreed expenditure categories, thereby allowing for transparent oversight. • Consider opportunities to expand referral pathways to personnel and service providers which may encounter young people displaying antisocial or problematic behaviour prior to their involvement with Victoria Police. • Consider opportunities to improve assertive outreach and proactive engagement with young people through specific programs/ initiatives for identified subgroups and improved relationships with Victoria Police, schools, local councils etc. • Consider introducing a 'feedback loop' whereby the referring Victoria Police member is advised whether the young person has engaged with YSS. This may be introduced as an additional function within the SupportLink database. • Consider options to co-locate the YSS with other youth services to provide a central location for youth support. • Consider the possibility of co-locating a YSS worker within a local police station to assist in strengthening YSS relationships with Victoria Police and improve referrals. • Provide opportunities for consistent and professional training of YSS workers regarding family dynamics and interpersonal interaction to improve service delivery. 	<p>whether Local Reference Groups are operating.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify the purpose and function of the broader YSS/AYSS governance and develop terms of reference. • Clarify definition of the YSS/AYSS intervention regarding case management and set counting protocols to better understand the level of intervention. • Urgently confirm that Dardi Munwurro only accept male referrals and determine the degree to which female Aboriginal youth are receiving services. • Determine whether CCYD is a preferred referral pathway for YSS/AYSS and what the implications would be if there were increased referrals to YSS/AYSS from CCYD. If CCYD is established to be a preferred referral pathway, then create a formalised referral process and communicate this to all stakeholders. • Youth Justice is recommended to establish strong connections with Child FIRST and DHHS to ensure any significant changes to either the VPeR or broader family and YJS that impact YSS/AYSS are addressed. Determine whether this referral pathway is appropriate. • Development of an evaluation framework for YSS/AYSS be developed once program and management issues have been addressed.

1.3.4. Scope

This review has involved desktop evaluation of available data and documentation and external consultation with key stakeholders, including focus groups and meetings with management. The objective of this review is to provide high-level evidence-based practice advice and recommendations to improve the early intervention and diversion of young people from the youth justice system. This review includes exploration of:

- key principles for effective interventions
- prevention and early intervention programs
- diversion programs

- specific intervention and programming considerations for priority youth
- distinction between case management and youth work
- tertiary interventions

The review has been conducted in accordance with the AJA4 (Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 4) standards, which allows for the production of information that can help strengthen and improve Aboriginal justice initiatives.

1.3. Evaluations

Victoria's Youth Justice System is currently undergoing significant reform as a result of the 2017 Youth Justice Review and Strategy: Meeting Needs and Reducing Offending (Armytage & Ogloff, 2017). The review emphasised the importance of effective early intervention strategies for young people at risk of entering the justice system, with particular focus on addressing the reasons as to why young people offend, thereby preventing escalation of criminal involvement. As a result, the Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science was engaged by the Department of Justice and Community Safety to conduct an independent evaluation of the YSS/AYSS. The evaluation is designed to:

- determine the performance, value and impact of YSS/AYSS
- identify key service gaps

- provide strategic advice on the future design, delivery and distribution of Youth Justice early intervention initiatives.

The scope of this review pertains to the YSS/AYSS, including previous and current service achievements, as well as looking forward to help Victoria's Youth Justice System tailor effective early intervention initiatives for young people at risk of entering that system.

2. Principles for effective interventions

2.1. Understand that young offenders are unique

Offending by young people differs from adult offending in two important ways. First, young offenders are in the midst of a rapid period of brain development, coupled with complex psychological and social change (Richards, 2011a) that they must grapple with as they develop into young adults. Changes are occurring in areas of the brain associated with response inhibition, the calibration of risks and rewards, and emotion regulation. Developmentally and neurobiologically, young adults have been shown to be more behaviourally impulsive in emotionally charged situations; more susceptible to peer influence; less future-oriented; and greater risk takers, especially in the presence of peers. (M. Baldwin et al., 2018). Thus, young people are particularly vulnerable to psychosocial problems, victimisation, stigmatisation by the criminal justice system, and peer influence (Richards, 2011a).

Second, most young offenders commit low-level offences and will naturally desist from offending over time (Payne & Weatherburn, 2015). Thus, although young people have some of the highest rates of offending, most young people will cease offending as they grow older (Fagan & Western, 2005; Richards, 2011a), often without any form of agency intervention (McAra & McVie, 2014). As young offenders mature developmentally and gain improved self-control they may be naturally less likely to engage in offending behaviour (Centre for Justice Innovation, 2018). Although most young offenders follow an adolescent-limited trajectory of offending, where offending occurs only within adolescence, some offenders will follow a life-course persistent trajectory, where offending begins early and continues into

adulthood (T. E. Moffitt, 1993). People who come into contact with the criminal justice system at a very young age are most likely to fall into the latter category (G. Ward, 2019).

These unique characteristics of youth offending mean that approaches to adult offending will not easily translate to young offenders. Young offenders typically present with multiple, complex needs, and there is a greater chance that interventions will have negative effects, particularly if they interfere with natural desistance processes by creating stigma, reducing prosocial opportunities or exposing young people to antisocial peers (Fortune, 2018). Interventions that have been shown to be effective among adult offenders require comprehensive adaptation and evaluation in order to determine whether they are effective with a younger population. Preferably, interventions should be developed specifically for young offenders.

2.2. Adhere to Risk-Need-Responsivity principles

The Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR; Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Andrews, Bonta, & Hoge, 1990b) model draws from general personality and cognitive social learning perspectives, and comprises three core principles – risk, needs and responsivity. The RNR model has received considerable empirical attention in adult populations and has been widely accepted in adult correctional practice (Looman & Abracen, 2013). While there has been less consideration of the RNR model in the context of youth offending, a meta-analysis of youth offender rehabilitation programs in Europe by Koehler, Lösel, Akoensi, and Humphreys (2013) found that programs conducted in accordance with RNR principles revealed the strongest mean effect with regards to recidivism. The relevance of RNR principles to young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders has not been empirically examined in detail, although it has received some theoretical consideration (Day, Howells, & Casey, 2003).

Evidence for the needs and responsivity principles appears to be stronger than for that of the risk principle among young offenders. While a meta-analysis by Lipsey (2009a) did find that the greatest reductions in recidivism occurred when interventions were delivered to young people with higher levels of delinquency risk, two other meta-analyses did not find support for this relationship. Dowden and Andrews (2003) conducted a meta-analysis of studies examining family intervention programs for young offenders. They found that, while there were stronger treatment effects associated with programs that adhered to the RNR principles, this association was only significant for the needs and responsivity principles. In a later study, Singh et

al. (2014) evaluated the implementation of RNR principles during the assessment and treatment of young people in secure correctional facilities. While increased adherence to the need and responsivity principles resulted in decreased externalising behaviour for young men, there was no significant association between these areas for young women. Consistent with the abovementioned study, there was no association between adherence to the risk principle (measured by matching the number of identified vulnerabilities and the number of problem-based interventions) and externalising behaviour. However, it is possible that this reflects greater difficulty in accurately assessing risk in young offenders, rather than decreased validity of the risk principle.

Despite strong empirical support for the principles of RNR, they tend to be applied inconsistently in youth justice services and it appears it is only recently that rehabilitation practices within Victoria have sought to fully coordinate services around the RNR framework. For example, in one study of young offenders Singh et al. (2014) found that criminogenic needs were addressed in service plans only about half the time. This is consistent with general correctional practice, where the use of intervention programs tends to lag behind the established evidence base (Small, Reynolds, O'Connor, & Cooney, 2005).

2.2.1. Risk

According to the *risk* principle, treatment is best reserved for offenders who are considered to have a moderate to high risk of reoffending.

While high-risk offenders stand to benefit most from intensive intervention, low-risk offenders benefit most from less intensive intervention (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). There is evidence that providing intensive intervention to low-risk offenders may increase their risk of recidivism, potentially by increasing their association with higher-risk offenders or disrupting protective factors such as employment and prosocial relationships (Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2004). Given that intervention programs achieve greater reductions in recidivism when they target medium/high-risk offenders rather than low-risk offenders, ensuring that intervention intensity is matched to risk level will also ensure that programs are cost-effective (Lipsey, Howell, Kelly, Chapman, & Carver, 2010a). The risk principle therefore requires that offenders are properly assessed to determine their level of risk and are then matched to an appropriate level of service or treatment.

Day, Howells, and Rickwood (2004) examined the application of the RNR principles to programs for young offenders. They noted that the high base rate of youth offending limits the ability of risk assessment measures to accurately group young offenders according to risk of reoffending. They argue that juvenile justice settings should therefore aim to identify those who will go on to offend *seriously* or *persistently*. Further, they highlight the possible detrimental effects of labelling young offenders as high-risk at an early age and emphasise the need for caution, particularly given that many young people will naturally desist from offending over time.

A number of risk assessment tools have been validated in young offender populations. The

most notable of these is the Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI; Hoge & Andrews, 2011), which has received empirical support and has been adapted for an Australian environment (McGrath, Thompson, & Goodman-Delahunty, 2018). The YLS/CMI also assesses criminogenic needs and therefore assists in rehabilitation planning. However, there is little research exploring the YLS/CMI in Australia and some concerns exist that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people tend to score higher on risk assessment tools such as the Structured Assessment of Violent Risk in Youth (SAVRY) and the YLS/CMI (McGrath et al., 2018; Shepherd, Luebbers, Ferguson, Ogloff, & Dolan, 2014; Thompson & McGrath, 2012). As such, there is a risk that using these tools may lead to disproportionate or inappropriate service allocation within this population. There is a pressing need for more research to be conducted into culturally specific measures that take into account the specific risk factors underlying recidivism by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (Day et al., 2003).

2.2.2. Needs

The *needs* principle states that interventions must focus on criminogenic needs – dynamic (changeable) risk factors that have been empirically linked to recidivism. When appropriately addressed, criminogenic needs are associated with a reduced likelihood of reoffending and are therefore considered treatment needs. Theoretical and empirical evidence prioritises eight criminogenic needs (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). The four major criminogenic needs are a history of *antisocial behaviour*, *antisocial personality pattern*, *antisocial*

cognition and *antisocial associates*. A further four factors have been identified as moderate criminogenic needs: *family/marital circumstances*, *school/work*, *leisure/recreation*, and *substance abuse*. Criminogenic needs differ from those needs that are not associated with criminal behaviour; these needs, such as *self-esteem* and *psychological distress*, are considered non-criminogenic (Looman & Abracen, 2013). It may still be appropriate to address non-criminogenic needs within interventions as part of the responsivity principle, but doing so is unlikely to reduce the likelihood of further offending in any significant way and non-criminogenic needs should therefore not be considered a priority if the key goal is to reduce a person's propensity for offending (Andrews & Bonta, 2010).

There is a recognition in the extant literature that young people coming to the attention of the justice system tend to have multiple problems and high levels of need in a broad range of areas, beyond the traditional criminogenic needs considered for adult offenders (Brogan, Haney-Caron, NeMoyer, & DeMatteo, 2015; Day et al., 2004). Cottle, Lee, and Heilbrun (2001) conducted a meta-analysis to identify the risk factors that best predict recidivism among young people. They identified offence history, family problems, ineffective use of leisure time, delinquent peers, conduct problems and non-severe pathology (such as stress and anxiety). Risk factors for young people include those at the individual, social, family, and community level (Fortune, 2018). Thus, programs addressing a range of risk factors have a greater effect than those programs that address only one risk factor (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2002).

Effective programs for young people have been shown to target needs in a range of settings, including school, family, friends, workplace and neighbourhood (Small et al., 2005). Against a background of young offenders having multiple and complex needs, there is a potentially detrimental tendency for staff working with young offenders to over-identify criminogenic needs – such as mandating substance abuse treatment based on a single criminal charge of possession, rather than the presence of habitual or impairing substance abuse (Brogan et al., 2015). This again speaks to the importance of utilising validated assessment measures to identify relevant criminogenic needs.

The specific criminogenic needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young offenders, and the degree to which the needs principle applies to this population, has received very little attention. A Canadian study of Indigenous young people found that, among those who went on to reoffend, the match between identified needs and services provided predicted how many days before the young person reoffended (Lockwood, Peterson-Badali, & Schmidt, 2018). However, no similar studies have been undertaken with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. Several authors have commented on the high level of non-criminogenic needs among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders and Day et al. (2003) suggest that, based on this, it would seem inappropriate to focus only on criminogenic needs.

2.2.3. Responsivity

The *responsivity* principle considers factors that affect the efficacy of intervention. The

general responsivity principle holds that those interventions based on cognitive-behavioural and cognitive social learning theories will be the most effective with regards to reducing recidivism (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). Specific responsivity considers the impact of certain offender characteristics (such as anxiety, verbal intelligence and cognitive maturity) and external factors (such as staff characteristics and environmental support) on an offender's experience of intervention. This principle emphasises the importance of matching treatment to each individual offender and sensitises rehabilitation services to aspects of the individual and the setting that might affect the individual's response to rehabilitation efforts.

Despite receiving little empirical attention, it is thought that the responsivity principle may be particularly applicable to young offenders (Brogan et al., 2015). There is an inherent difficulty in engaging young people in programs. Young people frequently reject services, fail to attend regularly, or are not motivated to engage positively in program sessions (M. Baldwin et al., 2018). Day et al. (2004) suggest engaging young people in a range of practical or physically based activities – methods that rely less on literacy or concentration.

With regards to responsivity factors for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young offenders, it is important to note that traditional intervention methods are often based on implicit and explicit assumptions that are inconsistent with the cultural beliefs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (Day et al., 2003). Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders remain sceptical of non-Aboriginal programs.

Responsivity considerations may include adapting content for low levels of literacy and numeracy, and increasing the use of videos, role-plays, storytelling or other arts projects.

2.2.4. Prioritise therapeutic philosophies

There is relatively convincing evidence that interventions that take a therapeutic approach are more likely to be effective than those that focus on administrative supervision or discipline. In a meta-analysis of interventions for young offenders, Lipsey (2009a) determined that one of three characteristics that distinguished more effective from less effective interventions was the underlying philosophy. Therapeutic interventions such as counselling and skills training were more effective than those based on control or coercion (such as surveillance, deterrence or discipline). This finding was supported by a meta-analysis of European studies by Koehler et al. (2013), which found that deterrence- and supervision-based interventions resulted in slightly (but not significantly) increased rates of recidivism. Accordingly, the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (2019), which maintains a register of evidence-based programs for juvenile offending, has designated boot camps, scared straight programs and intensive supervision as having null or poor outcomes.

2.2.5. Utilise participant strengths

Strength-based approaches to youth offender rehabilitation focus on the positive attributes and under-developed capabilities of young people and their families and communities. These approaches do not aim to ignore risks, but, rather, recognise and utilise strengths in

young people in order to build competencies and effectively address concerns (NSW Department of Justice, 2018). In the context of youth offending, strength-based approaches are thought to have the potential to be particularly engaging for young people, enabling them to work towards personally meaningful goals, generating feelings of hope, and enhancing existing positive capacity (Fortune, 2018; Pieper, Jones, & Galton, 2018). One study of justice-involved young people examined the associations between identified strengths, interventions, and outcomes (Singh et al., 2014). Results showed that externalising behaviour decreased as the match between identified strengths and strength-based interventions increased, suggesting that there is a benefit to considering strengths in the development of treatment plans for young offenders. Strengths that have been found to be protective against offending include appropriate language development and good academic performance, supportive parents, social skills and problem-solving skills (NSW Juvenile Justice, 2016).

The Good Lives Model (GLM) is a strength-based approach to offender rehabilitation that aims to help offenders develop more fulfilling lives, in addition to managing risk of reoffending (T. Ward & Brown, 2004; P. R. Whitehead, Ward, & Collie, 2007). It posits that offenders, like all humans, value primary goods – states of mind, personal characteristics or experiences that are likely to increase psychological wellbeing if achieved. Eleven primary goods are included in the current model (Chu & Ward, 2015): life (including healthy living and functioning); knowledge (how well informed one feels about things that are

important to them); excellence in play (hobbies and recreational pursuits); excellence in work (including mastery experiences); excellence in agency (autonomy, power and self-directedness); inner peace (freedom from emotional turmoil and stress); relatedness (including intimate, romantic, and familial relationships); community (connection to wider social groups); spirituality (in the broad sense of finding meaning and purpose in life); pleasure (feeling good in the here and now) and creativity (expressing oneself through alternative forms) (Chu & Ward, 2015). The GLM hypothesises that offending occurs when an individual tries to obtain primary goods in socially unacceptable ways (P. R. Whitehead et al., 2007). Treatment for offenders under the GLM involves understanding what primary goods offenders value, identifying the obstacles preventing offenders from achieving these primary goods, and working to equip them with the skills, values and supports needed to do so. The GLM was developed in the context of adult sex offending, although it has also been applied to general adult offending. Fortune (2018) argues that the GLM is theoretically applicable to young offenders as it accommodates both the risk factors and needs for growth that youth present with. However, empirical studies examining the application of the GLM to youth offending are required.

2.3. Provide Aboriginal culturally sensitive programs

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are overrepresented at all stages of the juvenile and criminal justice systems in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2019b). In Victoria in 2017–18, young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were 12 times more likely to be in detention and 13 times more likely to be under community-based supervision than non-Aboriginal young people (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders tend to be younger than non-Aboriginal offenders; they also tend to have their first contact with the criminal justice system at a younger age and to receive higher tariff dispositions (Allard, 2010; Papalia, et al. 2019). This is particularly concerning given that early entry into the criminal justice system has been shown to be associated with persistence of offending and enmeshment in the criminal justice system (Blagg, Morgan, Cunneen, & Ferrante, 2005). Despite this evidence conceding that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system (and that a similar situation exists in Indigenous communities around the world), there is a relative paucity of western literature attempting to understand and ameliorate the reasons underlying this (Pfeifer et al., 2018).

Several Australian studies have found that risk factors for offending by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are largely similar to those for the wider population, including low socioeconomic status, drug and alcohol use, mental health problems, poor education and unemployment (see reviews by Allard, 2010; Pfeifer et al., 2018). Significant social and economic disadvantage in Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander communities has meant that many of these risk factors are more prevalent among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (Shepherd et al., 2014). Of course, the increased prevalence of general risk factors does not fully explain the overrepresentation of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the criminal justice system. In addition to the differential treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people by police, the courts and other areas of the justice system (Blagg et al., 2005; Pfeifer et al., 2018), other factors specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have also been found to increase the risk of offending. A history of dispossession, colonisation and forced removal has meant that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities continue to experience alienation, trauma and loss, including the loss of cultural values, norms and knowledge (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2012). A Western Australian survey assessing the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children found that carers who had been forcibly separated from their natural family were two and a half times more likely to have been arrested or charged with an offence (Zubrick et al., 2005). Children of carers who had been forcibly separated were twice as likely to be at high risk of clinically significant emotional or behavioural difficulties. This is consistent with Dodson and Hunter's (2006) examination of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey. Respondents who were taken from their natural family and had a relative who was taken reported a higher rate of being arrested (27.8%) or incarcerated (17.2%) in the previous five years than those who were not taken (14.1% and 5.5% respectively).

It is clear, then, that in many cases Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people will benefit from unique interventions and require tailored strategies to address unique risk in order to effectively reduce reoffending and improve psychosocial outcomes (Murphy, McGinness, & McDermott, 2010). This is important to ensure that fewer Aboriginal people enter the criminal justice system (*Burra Lotjpa Dunguludga: Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement – Phase 4*, 2018). Cultural engagement among imprisoned Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults in Victoria has been associated with a reduced likelihood of recidivism, particularly for those offenders with a strong cultural identity (Shepard, Delgado, Sherwood, & Paradies, 2018). There may, therefore, be a place for programs that reconnect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to culture, identity and country (Allard, 2010) and it is important that these programs are led by Aboriginal people in Victoria (*Burra Lotjpa Dunguludga*, 2018). Such programs may build on existing strengths in Aboriginal communities, such as kinship systems, cultural identity and spirituality, and community knowledge (Richards, Rosevear, & Gilbert, 2011). At the very least, it is likely to be useful to emphasise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, culture and lore (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2012), while recognising that young people may have varying levels of engagement with their traditional culture (Richards et al., 2011).

Interventions to prevent and reduce offending among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are more likely to be effective when they are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led. That is, when they are developed,

managed, delivered and evaluated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander personnel (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2012). Such programs may be more effectively attuned to local needs and priorities, and are more likely to be accepted by the community (Richards et al., 2011). They are also more likely to promote empowerment and self-determination in historically disenfranchised communities. Effective collaboration across organisations and between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal individuals and communities is required at all stages of intervention development and implementation (Higgins & Davis, 2014; Richards et al., 2011). At a minimum, however, it is crucial that interventions are culturally sensitive – that they are perceived as being consistent with cultural beliefs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities – at all levels of program design and delivery (Day et al., 2003; Higgins & Davis, 2014). Staff delivering programs must also be able to deliver interventions in a culturally competent manner.

2.4. Involve families and communities

Young offenders present with a broader range of needs than their adult counterparts. In particular, risk factors related to families (e.g. inappropriate parental discipline, problematic caregiver relationships, family stress, parental discord) and communities (e.g. social and financial disadvantage) have a significant impact on the offending behaviour of young people (Fortune, 2018; Henggeler, Schoenwald, Borduin, Rowland, & Cunningham, 2009). Regardless of the interventions received by young people involved with the juvenile and criminal justice systems, offending behaviour is likely to continue if they are part of families and communities with a high number of risk factors.

Thus, it is important to utilise interventions that aim to address family- and community-level risk factors. There is a wealth of literature supporting the use of interventions which also target family members' attitudes and behaviours, and these are discussed below (see section 7.2). However, there is also an increasing recognition of the importance of addressing community-level risk factors. The National Crime Prevention Framework identifies that strengthening communities by addressing social exclusion and promoting community cohesiveness is a requirement for effective crime prevention (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2012). There is also general agreement in the available literature that in order to tackle the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the criminal justice system, underlying causes must be addressed at a community level (Blagg et al., 2005).

Involving communities is also likely to increase

the effectiveness of an intervention, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Promoting community involvement in the implementation of interventions for young offenders ensures that these interventions address relevant needs and are culturally appropriate, as well as increasing the likelihood that they will be accepted by young people from those communities (Richards et al., 2011). This process is thought to be particularly successful when communities are involved at all stages of the intervention, including consulting on program design and general decision-making.

3. Prevention and early intervention programs

There are several prevention and/or early intervention programs that have been shown to effectively reduce offending by young people. These programs may be incorporated into a justice reinvestment model or may be provided as stand-alone interventions.

3.1. Early childhood interventions

Early childhood interventions are those that attempt to improve child health and development from conception to six years of age, with the understanding that experiences during this period have sustained effects on brain development (Wise, da Silva, Webster, & Sanson, 2005). The review by Wise et al. found that early childhood interventions had enduring effects on crime, with lower incidences of crime among people who had participated in interventions. This is consistent with a review by Karoly, Kilburn, and Cannon (2005), who identified several studies reporting a statistically significant reduction in offending-related outcomes for early childhood intervention participants. According to a review by Mihalic, Fagan, Irwin, Ballard, and Elliot (2004), successful early childhood interventions tend to be intensive, multicomponent programs that address the various influences affecting a child's development. They provide parenting skills training and support, information about child development, emotional and social support, an early education component and referrals to outside agencies. They often involve home visitation but may also be delivered in a childcare setting. Three examples of early childhood interventions are described here briefly.

3.1.1. Nurse-Family Partnership

The Nurse-Family Partnership is a program involving a series of nurse home visits for young,

poor, first-time mothers. These start in early pregnancy and continue over the first two years of the child's life. Visits focus on encouraging good health habits, teaching childcare skills and improving the women's own personal development. This program has been found to have long-term positive outcomes for the children and their mothers. Adolescents whose mothers received these visits were 60% less likely to have run away, 56% less likely to have been arrested and 80% less likely to have been convicted of a crime than peers whose mothers did not receive visits (Olds et al., 1998, in Mihalic et al., 2004).

3.1.2. Perry Preschool Project

The Perry Preschool Project is the longest-running longitudinal study in early education. From 1962 to 1967, three- and four-year-old African-American children living in poverty and assessed to be at high risk of school failure were allocated to preschool and no-preschool groups (HighScope, 2019). The program consisted of 2.5-hour sessions on weekday mornings taught by public school teachers, for either one or two years, as well as a weekly 1.5-hour home visit session. In adolescence, participants who attended preschool had fewer fights, criminal justice contacts and arrests, compared with those who had not attended preschool (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1980). When participants were followed

up at age 27, those who attended preschool were 46% less likely to have served time in jail or prison and had a 33% lower arrest rate for violent crimes than those who did not attend preschool (Schweinhart, Barnes, & Weikart, 1993).

3.1.3. Pathways to Prevention

The Pathways to Prevention program was a demonstration project established in 1999 in Inala, Queensland (Homel, Freiberg, Lamb, Leech, Carr, et al., 2006). It consisted of two parts. First, the Preschool Intervention Program (PIP) targeted children aged four to six years old, with the aim of enhancing their communication and social skills to provide a foundation for school success. Language development and social skills activities were conducted during regular preschool sessions by specialist staff. Second, the Family Independence Program (FIP) assisted

caregivers and families to create a stimulating home environment that was conducive to child development. This was done through individual support and counselling, behaviour management programs and family support group programs. An evaluation of the project found that children involved in PIP demonstrated a greater improvement in language skills than those who did not receive the program (Homel, Freiberg, Lamb, Leech, Batchelor, et al., 2006). For boys, but not for girls, PIP produced an improvement in teacher-rated behaviour difficulties. Involvement in either PIP or FIP resulted in boys, but not girls, being rated by teachers as more ready for formal schooling. Families who participated in FIP also reported strengthened family relationships, improved communication, increased self-esteem and an increased sense of efficacy.

3.2. School engagement programs

There is increasing evidence that keeping young people in school can prevent the onset of offending and reduce antisocial behaviour (Sallybanks, 2003). Low school achievement has been shown to be predictive of involvement in juvenile crime, while positive attitudes towards academic performance have been shown to be protective against violence (Joliffe, Farrington, Loeber, & Pardini, 2016). Strategies that aim to improve school performance and retention have been identified as necessary to prevent crime among young people, particularly in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2012). There are three approaches to addressing disengagement from education (Hancock &

Zubrick, 2015). First, programs that promote and facilitate engagement in the early years, such as those discussed above. Second, programs for 'disengaging students', those who are still at school but at risk of leaving early. Third, programs that help disengaged students re-engage with school or complete their schooling through an alternative pathway. There are many initiatives in place around Australia to improve school engagement in regional, rural and remote communities, run by organisations such as the Australian Literacy & Numeracy Foundation and the Smith Family (Hampshire, 2017). One such initiative that is currently running in five states across Australia and has a small amount of evaluation data will be reviewed here.

3.2.1. Remote School Attendance Strategy

The Remote School Attendance Strategy (RSAS) is a scheme that employs local School Attendance Supervisors and School Attendance Officers who work with schools, families and children to ensure that children have what they need to attend school every day (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2015). RSAS commenced in 77 schools from remote communities across NT, Qld, WA, NSW and SA in 2014. The scheme acknowledges that every community is different, with their own programs, government policies, schools and services all influencing education outcomes. As such, RSAS is a flexible strategy that can be tailored to each community's needs, with a strong focus on using local knowledge and expertise to support families (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2018a). Activities vary depending on the local context, but may include: nutrition programs, follow-ups with non-attending students and their families, advice and information, rewards and recognition programs, locally developed strategies to support better education outcomes for more transient students and their families, and classroom support. An interim report found that RSAS has had a positive impact on school attendance in the NT and Qld, with 72.5% of RSAS schools significantly improving their attendance rate compared to schools without RSAS (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2015). There was no discernible impact of RSAS in schools from WA, NSW or SA, with attendance rising in some schools and falling in others. Around the same time, six case studies were conducted in the NT, Qld, WA and SA, utilising interviews with a total of 92 participants, including RSAS coordinators,

team members, school principals and RSAS providers. A synthesis of these case studies found that there were five factors driving the success of RSAS (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2016). The crucial success factor was identified as an ability to adapt RSAS to local conditions. Additional factors included: an effective and relatively stable RSAS team that has credibility in the community and broad family representation; a skilled coordinator with strong communication, organisational and mentoring skills; the creation of supportive relationships with the community; and the RSAS team and the school working together, sharing their unique information, knowledge and skills. However, the interim report also noted that difficulties recruiting and retaining RSAS staff, as well as concerns with attendance of RSAS staff, appeared to impact on program effectiveness (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2015). A later report found that, while RSAS resulted in an initial increase in school attendance, attendance plateaued the following year and is no longer increasing at the same rate (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2018b). It was acknowledged that a better understanding of how certain elements of the scheme may be added or improved is required. Interviews with parents, carers and local community members sought to understand families' experience of RSAS and how the scheme could be better targeted to meet the needs of different families. The report identified four types of families and outlined how RSAS resources could be utilised with these family types.

Committed families recognised the importance

of education and supporting long-term goals for their children. They occasionally need practical support to help them get their children to school. These families are motivated by: setting clear expectations about the purpose and delivery of RSAS services and asking the family which types of support they wish to utilise; building positive relationships with the whole family, even if there are no attendance issues identified; providing friendly occasional updates or reminders about the value of regular attendance; and developing close working relationships between the school, RSAS, and other services.

Protective families spoke about the importance of keeping their children safe from harm. These families often worried that school might be unsafe. These families want their children to attend school, but require assurances that their children will be safe at school and when travelling to and from school. These families are motivated by: listening to their concerns and making sure these concerns are addressed; helping parents to address and reduce their fears; offering fun activities for children, and inviting parents to see their children having fun; and encouraging the school and community to adopt anti-bullying strategies.

Unsure families spoke about the importance of a traditional way of life and did not think school would teach or value their culture. Unsure families need role models to show the importance of education. These families also highlight the importance of having schools that employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and respect and promote culture at school. These families are motivated by: demonstrating

that children can have both a strong cultural education and formal schooling, and families do not have to choose between one or the other; employing RSAS and school staff who have a good cultural or social 'fit'; linking them with role models from the community, who can demonstrate the benefits of education; and using positive engagement skills to build respect, trust and rapport with families.

Disconnected families reported feeling isolated and alone. They kept to themselves for fear of causing conflict or bothering others. These families wanted their children to go to school, but were often not sure how to do so. Disconnected families may need more social support and other services to support school attendance. These families are best motivated by: offering a service that considers their needs, which may differ from others in the community; assisting in reducing physical barriers, particularly if they are isolated and live out of town; talking about what services are available and how they can be accessed; introducing them to teachers, service providers and other people in the community; and being open, friendly and answering any questions they may have.

3.3. School-based social and emotional learning programs

Many young people at risk of offending have come across negative environments and experiences that inhibit their social and emotional development. Young people who are, or have been, involved with the justice system face additional barriers to social and emotional development (Beyer, 2017). A range of programs designed to promote students' social and emotional learning (SEL) have been introduced in schools in Australia in recent years (Collie, Martin, & Frydenberg, 2017). These programs typically aim to develop students' ability to recognise and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, appreciate the perspectives of others, establish and maintain positive relationships, make responsible decisions and handle interpersonal situations constructively (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). In doing so, SEL programs foster the development of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making (Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning, 2019). SEL programs also aim to create respectful school environments, changing the emotional climate of the school such that it is less negative and more supportive (Yeager, 2017).

SEL programs may be particularly valuable for young people who have been, or are at risk of being, involved with the justice system. The Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development project, conducted by the University of Colorado Boulder, provides a comprehensive register of evidence-based interventions for young people and communities (Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development, 2019). SEL programs have been identified as having been proven effective for

addressing offending behaviour among young people aged 12 to 19. A meta-analysis by Durlak et al. (2011) examined studies of 213 school-based SEL programs. They found that these programs resulted in a significant increase in social-emotional competencies and attitudes, as well as academic performance. Of particular interest for the current review, SEL programs were found to significantly enhance students' behavioural adjustment, in that they increased prosocial behaviours and reduced conduct problems for a minimum of six months following completion of the program. The results of this meta-analysis indicated that classroom teachers were able to run SEL programs, and that outside personnel are not necessarily required for the effective delivery of these programs. SEL programs were found to be effective at all education levels and in rural as well as urban and suburban schools. A later meta-analysis by the same research group examined the follow-up effects of SEL programs and found that their positive benefits were maintained for several years following the program's completion (Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2017). Further, positive effects of SEL programs were found for student populations from different racial groups and socioeconomic statuses, although it was noted that SEL programs should still be adopted in culturally competent ways. The findings of these meta-analysis are supported by a recent Cochrane review by MacArthur et al. (2018), which also found that school-based interventions that target multiple risk behaviours may be effective in preventing engagement in antisocial behaviour.

Dobia and Roffey (2017) examined the use of

SEL programs with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. They described limited success in engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in these programs, but noted several strategies that increased the likelihood of engagement. These included a cooperative learning approach, program flexibility, the active involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander facilitators, and taking a proactive stance against racism. The 'right to pass', which allows students to determine if and when they wish to contribute to group discussion, was considered particularly valuable for engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in SEL programs, as it helped to overcome 'shame' and promoted inclusion. The authors concluded that promoting cultural responsiveness in SEL programs involves using a two-way approach that encourages community involvement and incorporates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural knowledge.

Although several Australian SEL programs have been found to be effective, few have been developed specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. An 'Aboriginal adaptation' of an SEL program (KidsMatter) was trialled at eight pilot schools with a population of 20% or more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. An evaluation of the implementation of this program reported mixed results with regards to engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and found that engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents was particularly difficult (Dobia & O'Rourke, 2012). The report identified several school-based strategies that were considered to be effective at engaging families: a 'big breakfast' to which

the whole community is invited at the start of each term, regular newsletters emphasising commitment to educating all children and incorporating Aboriginal language translation, an after-school program where parents come to cook and children learn circus skills, Aboriginal kindy with children collected and returned home by Aboriginal Education Workers, community health workers providing on-site clinics, the principal personally greeting parents at the school gate mornings and afternoons, Welcome to Country performed at each school assembly, ongoing engagement with local Aboriginal community associations, a community garden, and playgroup/mothers groups for Aboriginal parents. In addition to suggestions regarding the adaptation of existing materials to be more inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, the report also recommended the development of an audit tool to assist schools to understand who is in their community and what their needs are.

3.4. Mentoring programs

Mentoring consists of a one-on-one relationship between a mentor and a mentee for the potential benefit of the mentee (Tolan, Henry, Schoeny, Lovegrove, & Nichols, 2014). The term 'mentor' has traditionally been used to describe a process by which an older person *volunteers* to engage in a relationship with a younger person that serves to assist in their personal development. The mentor can work as a role model, as a teacher of social skills and values, and as a counsellor. Often mentors also act as advocates for the young person's concerns. In the majority of mentor programs, mentors do not hold a position of authority over mentees. As such, mentorship provided directly by criminal justice professionals is still rare, with the majority of programs studied incorporating volunteers or entry-level work experience roles.

One of the most well-known mentor programs is the Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) of America, which focuses on six- to eighteen-year-old youths who are at-risk. The BBBS is a community mentoring program which aims to develop a caring and supportive relationship between an adult volunteer mentor and a young person for at least one year. The mentor is supported by program staff and is expected to meet with the child for at least three to five hours per week, so a strong trusting relationship can be formed. Early research on the BBBS found reductions in the following: delinquency, substance misuse, school truancy and crime (Grossman & Tierney, 1998); Tierney, Grossman & Resch, 1995). Similarly, positive effects were seen in relationship quality between young people and their parents, and a marginal improvement in peer emotional support was also observed

(Grossman & Tierney, 1998). However, later research has found that BBBS and other mentoring schemes could have a negative effect if poorly implemented (Gladstone, Kessler & Stevens 2006).

There is significant heterogeneity in mentoring programs, which have become prolific across the United States and the United Kingdom (Busse, Campbell, & Kipping, 2018). However, the broader evaluation literature provides mixed support for mentorship programs due, in part, to the varying quality of program implementation, the lack of rigorous evaluation and the fact that the range of services often differs substantially among programs (Tolan et al. 2014). For example, Jolliffe and Farrington (2007) found that, in 11 of 18 studies, mentorship did not result in a statistically significant reduction in recidivism. It is worth noting that in the seven studies Jolliffe and Farrington (2007) found effective, the reduction ranges are only from 4% to 11%. Unfortunately, these studies (Hall, 2003; Booker, 2011, in Hancock & Zubrick, 2015) are of lower methodological quality as compared with the 11 studies that find mentoring ineffective. Moreover, two large-scale evaluations of mentorship programs targeting young people in the United Kingdom indicate that this intervention has nil or even negative effects on offending (St James-Roberts et al. 2005; Tarling, Davison & Clarke 2004).

In contrast, a recent meta-analysis by Lipsey (2009) averaged the effect of mentoring programs and shows a recidivism reduction of as much as 22%. Likewise, a large-scale program review by Greenwood and Turner (2009) found

mentorship programs to be very successful at lowering involvement in delinquency. Finally, in a meta-analysis of the effects on problem behaviour of 55 mentorship programs, DuBois et al. (2002) found small effects overall but observe that the use of 'best practices' such as training, structure and expectations that are clearly communicated to mentors improve program impact. They also found that strong relationships between mentors and mentees improve program efficacy.

As part of a Campbell Collaboration review, Tolan et al. (2014) attempted to examine implementation features and unpack some of the reasons why mentorship may or may not be effective. The authors found only 46 studies out of 163 (fewer than DuBois et al., 2002) that were of sufficient methodological rigour for their grouping. In these studies, while reductions were modest, decreases were observed in drug use, aggression and delinquency, and academic achievement improved. People who became mentors because they wanted professional development (often students) tended to be more effective. Other elements that increased effect sizes include: monitoring program implementation, screening prospective mentors, ongoing training and supervision of mentors, greater mentor use of advocacy, structured activities for mentors and mentees, parental support and involvement, and provision of emotional support.

Because of heterogeneity in reported effects, Tolan et al. (2014) recommended providing more detailed descriptions of mentoring programs in studies, to help identify optimal conditions for

program efficacy. Tolan et al.'s (2014) findings on motivation questioned the common wisdom that mentorship is best carried out by volunteers (DuBois et al. 2002), not self-interested or paid individuals. Three program evaluations of professional mentors specifically have been conducted and lend support to this conclusion:

- The Re-entry Services Project in Minnesota (United States): This provides professional mentoring to youth transitioning from custody back into the community. The staff (also known as transitional coordinators) serve a mentoring function, while also case-managing the young person during their transition into the community. Outcomes include reduced drug use, reduced offending and reduced time to reoffence, as well as a reduction in overall risk (Bouffard & Bergseth, 2008).
- In an Oregon study of youth with disabilities released from detention, Unruh, Gau & Waintrup (2009) found the 'transition coordinator' (performing a role analogous to a mentor) to be a key player in a re-entry program that produced reductions in recidivism.
- The Spotlight Serious Offender Services Unit (Canada) utilises paid 'street mentors' working as an adjunct to intensive youth justice supervision. Outcomes include reductions in the following: recidivism, gang involvement and drug use; and improved school engagement, even after controlling for other elements (Weinrath, 2016). The program is particularly innovative, as

the youth were primarily gang-involved Aboriginal youth, with mentors being from the same communities.

While mentor programs differ significantly, emerging evidence supports the effectiveness of professional mentor programs with a high degree of structure and supervision. When implemented this way, mentoring programs can result in improvements in young people's academic performance, risk behaviour and psychosocial development (Gladstone, Kessler & Stevens 2006; Tolan et al. 2014; Weinrath, Donatelli & Murchison 2016).

Given the high level of professional involvement with a young person and the required mentor training and support, mentoring programs can be expensive to implement. Moodie and Fisher (2009) explored the potential positive benefit of the BBBS program in Melbourne, conducting a threshold analysis to determine the economic benefit of the intervention. They modelled the program for children aged 10 to 14 years in 2004, with potential cost savings based on estimates of lifetime costs for high-risk youth in the United States. According to their economic modelling, if the program serviced 2,208 of the most vulnerable young people in Melbourne, it would cost \$39.5 million, compared to the \$3.3 billion costs of their adult criminality, representing a significant economic return on investment, not to mention the prevention of human misery.

4. Diversion programs

4.1. Principles and evidence

Diversion programs are designed to prevent young people from progressing further through the justice system, providing a broad range of supports and interventions that serve to decrease the likelihood of further offending (Ray & Childs, 2015), offering an alternative to a formal charge, court adjudication or juvenile detention. In addition to reducing recidivism, diversion programs aim to improve psychosocial outcomes (Day et al., 2004), reduce the effects of stigma/labelling associated with contact with the justice system (Department of Justice, 2012), lower expenditure (Sutton, Gardner, & Beugenhagen, 2008), and loosen unnecessary restrictions on young offenders (Models of Change Juvenile Diversion Workgroup, 2011), all while providing punishment and accountability (Ray & Childs, 2015). The term diversion may refer to diversion from a formal charge, diversion from formal court adjudication, or diversion from punitive sentences such as juvenile detention (Department of Justice, 2012).

Much of the initial support for diversion came from arguments that involvement in the criminal justice system is detrimental to young people, drawing largely on labelling theory and social learning theory. Involvement in the juvenile justice system is thought to increase offending through several mechanisms. First, when a young person becomes involved with the juvenile justice system, they become associated with a negative label. The young person may then continue to engage in behaviours consistent with the label, either because they have internalised the label or because they have been marginalised by the label and placed in circumstances that

make it harder to avoid offending (Becker, 1963; Madden & Marshall, 2009). Second, a young person who becomes involved with the criminal justice system is exposed to other, high-risk offenders who exhibit antisocial attitudes and/or behaviours. Through this exposure, the young person may adopt attitudes supportive of crime, or learn new antisocial behaviours (Dodge, Dishion, & Lansford, 2006). Empirical research has supported the view that involvement in the juvenile justice system (including being stopped by police or arrested) is associated with an amplification of antisocial attitudes and an increased likelihood of offending behaviour (McAra & McVie, 2007; J. Ward, Krohn, & Gibson, 2014; Wiley & Ebensen, 2016; Wiley, Slocum, & Ebensen, 2013). One meta-analysis of 29 studies of young offenders over a 35-year period found that involvement in the justice system almost always increased both the prevalence and severity of offending behaviour (Petrosino, Turpin-Petrosino, & Guckenberger, 2010). A longitudinal study by McAra and McVie (2010) found that the deeper a young person penetrated the juvenile justice system, the less likely they were to desist from further offending, compared with matched controls.

There is currently substantial heterogeneity with regards to diversion programs, both with respect to their content and their implementation (Schwalbe, Gearing, MacKenzie, Brewer, & Ibrahim, 2012). Diversion programs can encompass a range of interventions or sanctions that may be either voluntary or mandated. They may be general in nature, such as those targeting first-time, low-level offenders, or specific, such

as those that focus on specific risk factors like substance use, anger-related issues or mental illness. They also vary on the criteria used to determine whether a young person is eligible for diversion (Ray & Childs, 2015). For example, diversion may be implemented following initial contact with police (with no formal charges laid) or after the young person has appeared in court (before or after a plea is entered), in which case successful completion of the diversion program usually results in the dismissal of charges (H. A. Wilson & Hoge, 2013). Finally, the decision to divert the young person may fall to a range of officials, including the apprehending police officer, an intake worker, prosecutor or judge (J. T. Whitehead & Lab, 2001).

While there has been a significant amount of research into diversion programs for young offenders, the degree to which this research can be interpreted or synthesised is somewhat hampered by the broad and diverse nature of these programs (Ray & Childs, 2015). Diversion programs vary with regards to the nature of the interventions or sanctions, the degree to which they are mandated, the specificity of their content, their eligibility criteria, and referral processes (Schwalbe et al., 2012). Early research into diversion programs suggested that they were not effective at reducing offending when compared to formal court processing (Gensheimer, Mayer, Gottschalk, & Davidson II, 1986). Two recent meta-analyses of diversion programs for young offenders found only modest evidence in support of diversion programs, which was (at least partly) attributed to diversity among the diversion programs studied. Schwalbe et al. (2012) completed a meta-analysis of 28

experimental studies examining diversion programs for young offenders from 1980 to 2011. They found that, overall, diversion programs did not have a significant effect on recidivism rates in young offenders. Five program types were studied. Family treatment was the only program type that was associated with a statistically significant reduction in recidivism. The effect of case management, individual treatment, youth court and restorative justice was non-significant. The second meta-analysis, by Wilson and Hoge (2013), encompassed 45 studies from 1972 to 2010 reporting on 73 diversion programs. They found that both caution and intervention programs were significantly more effective in reducing recidivism than formal court processing. However, when only studies with a strong research design were considered, there was no significant difference in recidivism rates between young people in diversion programs and those processed as usual. Again, this was attributed to the significant heterogeneity within the diversion programs, with regards to both intervention type and target group. Wong, Bouchard, Gravel, Bouchard, and Morselli (2016) attempted to remedy this by conducting a meta-analysis of only restorative justice diversion programs, where the focus is on attempting to address the wrongs caused by offending behaviour. They found significant heterogeneity in the results of 21 studies from 1990 to 2013, but they concluded that restorative justice diversion programs are generally effective at reducing recidivism among young offenders. Again, however, there was no significant difference in recidivism when only studies with a strong research design were included. Thus, the empirical evidence for existing diversion programs is mixed at best,

and there is no general agreement on which specific diversion models and strategies are most effective at reducing recidivism for young offenders (Centre for Justice Innovation, 2018).

Should diversion be implemented as an initiative, the decision to divert, process more formally, or take no further action requires clear and consistent guidelines (Small et al., 2005). Without these guidelines, appropriate opportunities to engage a young offender in a diversion program will likely be missed. In Victoria, police officers are able to exercise a great deal of discretion with regards to considering diversion options for young people (B. Wilson, 2012). According to Martakis (2016), reliance on police discretion significantly affects the successful implementation of diversion programs in Victoria, as diversion depends on the officer's awareness, opinion and experience of diversion options, as well as their interaction with the young person. It is concerning, then, that Victoria Police has acknowledged 'a general lack of knowledge ... within the operational environment regarding the long-term benefits of effective diversion processes' (in Jordan & Farrell, 2013, p. 425).

Alternatively, there may also be instances in which a young person is referred to a diversion program when they might otherwise have been released with a warning, should no diversion options have existed. Net-widening refers to the potential for diversion programs actually resulting in a greater number of young people coming into contact with the justice system (McCord, Widom, & Crowell, 2001), and is often raised as a concern when considering diversion programs for young people (Australian Law Reform Commission, 1997). There is some

evidence that this has happened, particularly in the early stages of diversion programs, where young people who would not otherwise have been processed by the justice system have participated in diversion programs (Blomberg, 1983), or where young people in diversion programs received longer, more intensive intervention than those who were not diverted (Frazier & Cochran, 1986). This is particularly concerning in instances where diversion-related sanctions are determined outside of a court setting where due process is guaranteed (Small et al., 2005). To ensure that referrals to diversion schemes are appropriate, the use of standardised, validated screening and assessment tools should guide the decision to divert (Ray & Childs, 2015). This will ensure that differential treatment based on personal characteristics unrelated to risk is minimised (Small et al., 2005), and that only those offenders likely to proceed to formal processing are referred to the diversion program.

In many jurisdictions in Australia various diversion options are available, commensurate with the seriousness of the offence and/or the degree to which the young person has previously had contact with the criminal justice system (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, 2005). However, there is no single gold-standard program, with many diversion programs containing a different range of elements, implemented to varying standards. These options include police cautioning, youth justice conferencing, specialised courts (youth courts, Aboriginal courts such as the Children's Koori Court of Victoria, problem-oriented courts such as drug courts or mental health courts,

bail support programs and supervision and intervention programs). Given the parameters of this consultancy, only police-cautioning and supervision and intervention programs will be reviewed, along with diversion programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

4.1.1. Police cautioning

Police cautioning is an established practice in all jurisdictions within Australia (Polk, 2003). Police tend to have two options when choosing to caution a young offender: informal and formal cautions. Informal cautioning occurs when a police officer warns and releases a young offender on the spot. In some (but not all) cases, informal cautions are recorded and a letter is sent to a parent/guardian (Australian Law Reform Commission, 1997), but police are instructed not to take this into account when responding to subsequent antisocial behaviour (Wundersitz, 1997). By contrast, formal cautioning is a recorded process that aims to explain to the offender the impact of the offence and possible consequences of engaging in future offending behaviours (Jordan & Farrell, 2013). It requires an admission of guilt from the young person and usually consists of a meeting involving the young person, a parent/guardian and a police officer. No formal charges are laid, although in some cases police may require the young person to enter into a formal undertaking in order to avoid progressing through the criminal justice system (Wundersitz, 1997). In some jurisdictions, there are provisions for a charge against a young person to be dismissed if the court is satisfied they should have been cautioned (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, 2005). Victoria Police also

operates a specific program for young offenders apprehended for use or possession of illicit substances, where the young person may receive a caution provided they attend drug assessment and treatment (Jordan & Farrell, 2013).

Of course, it is not possible to assess the effectiveness of informal cautions due to their very nature. With regards to formal cautioning, however, an Australian longitudinal study reported by Payne and Weatherburn (2015) found that, controlling for a range of factors (including offence type), young people whose first contact with the criminal justice system was a caution were less likely to be reconvicted within a ten-year period than those whose first contact was a court appearance (see also Vignaendra & Fitzgerald, 2006).

In 2007, the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) commenced a Police Cautioning and Youth Diversion Program in Mildura and the Latrobe Valley, which involves cautioning and follow-up elements (Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, 2008). This program requires accountability from police, as police officers who do not caution a young person must complete a report which outlines why no caution was given. These reports are reviewed to determine whether the reasons provided are appropriate. The service has reported that 94% of the young people involved in this program did not reoffend.

4.1.2. Supervision and intervention programs

Young people can be diverted to participate in structured programs that are either supervisory or therapeutic in nature. These programs

may serve as an alternative to more punitive sanctions, or may be completed in an effort to address relevant risk factors prior to sentencing, in conjunction with the diversion options previously considered. Participation in these programs may be voluntary or mandated. For example, a psychosocial intervention program may be written into a formal undertaking that a youth is required to complete following a

youth justice conference. In Victoria, the YSS is designed to support young people who have had recent contact with the police, by addressing the underlying causes of their offending behaviour in order to divert them away from the youth justice system (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2016).

4.2. Diversion programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Lack of access to, and/or ineffective, diversionary programs for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is thought to contribute to their overrepresentation in the juvenile justice system (Allard, 2010). In Australia, young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are less likely to be diverted from the juvenile justice system than non-Aboriginal young people (Australian Law Reform Commission, 1997; Polk, 2003; Snowball, 2008). This is consistent with international research, which shows that white young people are more likely to be diverted than those from ethnic minorities (Cochran & Mears, 2015; May, Gyateng, & Hough, 2010; Snyder & Sickmund, 1999). This is thought to be due to systemic racial bias, lack of access to diversion programs in rural or remote areas, and a tendency for Aboriginal young people to be less likely to plead guilty, making them ineligible for diversion programs (Allard et al., 2010). Further, there is little empirical evidence to determine whether diversion programs are effective for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young offenders. One meta-analysis of restorative justice diversion programs found that programs serving predominantly ethnic minorities did not have

a significant impact on recidivism, while those serving predominantly Caucasian offenders did (Wong et al., 2016).

Very few diversion programs in Australia are led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations. An Amnesty International (2016) report identified that, in Queensland, only two of sixteen services contracted out by the Department of Justice and the Attorney-General were run by an Aboriginal-led organisation. It was noted that Aboriginal-led organisations are affected by a lack of funding, resources, training and support, with many programs facilitated by volunteers. This report recommended that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations should be funded and supported, through preferential tendering and capacity-building, to develop Aboriginal-designed and led programs.

One example of a diversion program running for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young offenders is the Tiwi Islands Youth Diversion and Development Unit (TIYDDU). TIYDDU engages Tiwi young people who are (typically) first-time offenders (Stewart, Hedwards, Richards, Willis, & Higgins, 2014). Young people agree

to conditions, such as participating in a youth justice conference, agreeing to apologise to the victim(s) or undertaking community service. Case plans are created following a comprehensive assessment process to ensure participants are supported by services designed to address factors contributing to offending behaviour, such as substance misuse, boredom and disengagement from work or education. They are typically implemented over a three-month period. The medium- to long-term aim of the program is to prevent recidivism, while short-term aims include promoting regular school attendance and increasing awareness of how to 'stay out of trouble'.

While little data was available for review, individual reoffence data showed that only 20%

of program participants had contact with police for alleged offences in the following 12 months. This was less than the reoffence rates calculated in other jurisdictions and was thought to be a positive indication of the program's impacts (Stewart et al., 2014). The program was seen to be culturally competent by program staff, as it reinforced Tiwi social and cultural authority, and employed staff with strong cultural knowledge. Challenges for the program include minimal staff, which affects the delivery of this program at all main communities, as well as the willingness of Tiwi young people to volunteer in areas such as substance use, education and training (Tiwi Islands Shire Council, 2013).

4.3. Best practice principles for diversion

In 1997, the Australian Law Reform Commission recommended the development of national standards that would aid in governing the use of diversion options within Australia. However, at the current time there remains no established set of best-practice principles with regards to juvenile diversion programs, leading to continuing questioning around how best to design and implement a successful diversion program for young offenders (Payne, 2007). Despite this, a number of themes emerge from the extant theoretical and empirical literature.

4.3.1. Match risk level to diversion option

According to the risk principle of the RNR model, program intensity should be matched to the risk level of the offender, with the most intensive

rehabilitation programs provided to young people most likely to offend seriously and/or persistently (Andrews, Bonta, & Hoge, 1990a; Day et al., 2004). From a practical point of view, this is also an effective way to ensure that justice systems are as cost-effective as possible (Lipsey, Howell, Kelly, Chapman, & Carver, 2010b). Diversion schemes, then, require multiple options and flexibility within them, to allow for the inclusion of a range of offenders at varying risk levels.

Diversion programs appear to be differently effective for low- and high-risk young offenders. For example, Wilson and Hoge (2013) found that for low-risk young offenders, caution-only diversion programs were significantly more effective than intervention-based programs.

Similarly, for this group of offenders, programs that were implemented pre-charge were more effective than those implemented post-charge. However, a similar effect was not found for offenders rated as medium- or high-risk. Additionally, diversion is not a suitable response to all offences, particularly those of a more serious nature (Department of Justice, 2012). Consequently, many researchers recommend clear guidelines for determining when young offenders should be diverted or processed more formally (Small et al., 2005). The use of evidence-based, standardised, validated screening and assessment tools to guide the initial assessment and decision to divert, as well as the selection of appropriate diversion options, is a centrally important component of any diversion scheme (Ray & Childs, 2015).

Proper screening and assessment at all stages of processing decreases the possibility of net-widening, as the decision to refer to a diversion program should only be made if the young person is likely to proceed to formal processing (Ray & Childs, 2015). Further, validated assessment processes ensure fairness by reducing differential treatment based on personal characteristics that the evidence suggests are unrelated to risk (Small et al., 2005).

4.3.2. Use evidence-based frameworks and protocols

With the exception of some programs in Canada (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 2014), few diversion programs are explicitly based on RNR principles or reference the theoretical framework on which they are based. Additionally, when Schwalbe and colleagues completed their

previously mentioned meta-analysis, they noted that few of the diversion programs studied included evidence-based interventions in their programs (Schwalbe et al., 2012). Similarly, Small and colleagues (2005) note that the everyday use of evidence-based programs in correctional practice lags far behind what is known in academic spheres.

A crucial component of any diversion program should be developing a strong theoretical basis and using assessment and treatment principles that have been shown through scientific research to be effective. As previously discussed, there are a number of therapeutic frameworks that have been shown to be effective with young offenders. Of course, in addition to implementing evidence-based assessment and treatment protocols, fidelity to these protocols is also important. The program must be well implemented and delivered by appropriately trained staff (Day et al., 2004). Unsurprisingly, Lipsey's (2009b) meta-analysis of interventions for young offenders found that interventions that were implemented with 'high quality' were found to be more effective.

4.3.3. Address multiple needs

It is widely recognised that young people who offend often have multiple and complex needs, both criminogenic and non-criminogenic (Richards, 2011b). As discussed above, therapeutic programs that target young people's criminogenic needs show larger effects than interventions that are based on control or deterrence (e.g. prison visitation or boot camps; Lipsey, 2014). However, according to the Australian Institute of Criminology (2002),

programs addressing a range of risk factors have a greater effect than those programs that address only one risk factor. Further, effective programs for young people have been shown to target needs in a range of settings, including school, family, friends, workplace and neighbourhood (Small et al., 2005).

4.3.4. Tailor interventions to the individual and the population

The responsivity principle of the RNR model highlights the importance of matching the style and mode of intervention to the learning style of the offender which, for young people, may include more physically based diversion programs or programs that rely less on concentration and literacy (Andrews et al., 1990a; Day et al., 2004). In their meta-analysis, Wilson and Hoge (2013) identified that diversion programs tailored to the specific learning style of the young offender more effectively reduced reoffending.

However, when selecting appropriate diversion programs it is also important to consider populations other than white male young offenders. Aboriginal young people, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups and young women are often underrepresented in research on diversion programs and, consequently, in the formation and implementation of these programs. In many cases, these populations benefit from vastly different interventions and require tailored strategies addressing the unique risk factors associated with the specific population in order to effectively reduce reoffending and improve psychosocial outcomes (Murphy et al., 2010).

4.3.5. Include the family

Many researchers identify the importance of including family in any treatment aimed at helping young people (Small et al., 2005). There is evidence that young people who experience problematic relationships with their caregivers are more likely to engage in antisocial behaviours (e.g., McPhail and Wiest, 1997). As reviewed above, many of the therapeutic interventions shown to reduce recidivism in young people include elements involving family members. For example, when Schwalbe and colleagues (2012) analysed diversion programs according to intervention type, they found programs utilising *family-based treatment* were associated with statistically significant reductions in recidivism, while the remaining interventions (*case management, individual treatment, youth court* and *restorative justice*) were not. In addition, there is evidence that the effectiveness of other diversion options are increased when the family of the young person involved is also remorseful and participates effectively in the program (Polk, 2003).

4.3.6. Use highly qualified and well-trained staff

According to a brief review by Sutton and colleagues (2008), many juvenile diversion programs do not have an accepted set of best practice principles governing the hiring or performance of staff. In many cases, programs run within the correctional sphere lack qualified, professionally trained staff (Priday, 2006). A lack of well-trained staff can negatively impact the ability for evidence-based assessment and treatment protocols to be effectively

implemented, as studies that provide evidence for certain protocols do so using well-qualified staff (Polk, 2003). For example, in an evaluation of a bail support scheme in the United Kingdom, Thomas (2005) found that problems in recruiting and retaining staff, as well as the use of 'unsupported lone workers', hindered the ability of the scheme to become established. A recent Australian study by Trotter (2012) identified a range of skills that were thought to be important when working with young offenders, including role clarification, needs analysis, problem-solving, developing strategies, prosocial modelling and reinforcement, empathy and confrontation. The author found that, when controlling for offender risk level, clients of workers who exhibited fewer of these skills reoffended at a higher rate than clients of workers who displayed more of these identified skills. In particular, the rewards and a non-blaming approach by staff appeared to have the strongest associations with the reoffending rates of clients.

4.3.7. Incorporate ongoing evaluation

A consistent theme of the literature considered in this review was the lack of formalised evaluation and stringent research designs used to determine the effective components of successful diversion programs (Polk, 2003). Many authors highlighted the need for consistent, rigorous approaches to evaluating diversion programs and, in particular, specific elements of those programs which contribute to these outcomes (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2002; H. A. Wilson & Hoge, 2013).

There are a range of considerations for future research. First, the efficacy of diversion programs should be evaluated against a range

of objectives in addition to reduced reoffending, such as improved prosocial attitudes, increased engagement with school and employment opportunities, improved mental health, reduced stigmatisation and other psychosocial markers (Priday, 2006). In doing so, research that considers these other objectives may provide evidence on the influence of mediating factors in the overall reduction of reoffending. Second, research should aim to compare diversion programs to the full range of system responses, including no response, other diversion options, and formal court adjudication. Third, research should consider individual elements of diversion programs, including both content and process elements (Ray & Childs, 2015). Ultimately, evaluation processes should monitor the delivery of program elements to ensure that they are delivered as intended and required (Lipsey et al., 2010b).

4.4. Children's Court Youth Diversion service

The Children's Court Youth Diversion (CCYD) program is a pre-plea diversion option for young offenders established under Division 3A of the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic.) (CYFA). The CCYD operates separately to Youth Justice and was established to provide an organised statewide response to the diversion of young offenders, aimed at:

- diverting young people away from further involvement with the criminal justice system
- reducing the stigma associated with a criminal record by discharging criminal charges upon successful completion of the program
- encouraging the young person to accept responsibility for their actions
- responding to the young person's offending behaviour by acknowledging their needs and providing opportunities to strengthen family and community relationships
- improving connection with educational and vocational pathways

The CCYD is primarily aimed at servicing young people with limited or no criminal history who would otherwise have been sentenced to Youth Justice supervision (Department of Justice and Community Safety, 2019a). Young people are considered suitable for the program if they meet the following:

- The young person has limited or no prior contact with the Youth Justice System.
- The offence/s committed by the young

person do not involve a mandatory minimum or fixed penalty (e.g. driving under the influence, exceeding the speed limit by 25 kilometres per hour or more).

- The young person has accepted responsibility for their unlawful behaviour and intends to complete the diversion plan.

Although the legislation does not limit the number of times a young person can participate in diversion, consideration must be given to the reasons a young person may not have actively participated in previous diversions, with an indication of behavioural and/or personal change suggesting renewed commitment to the program. Further, outstanding support needs and offending behaviours, including sustained and unchanged offending post-diversion, may indicate further involvement in the CCYD to be inappropriate (Department of Justice and Community Safety, 2019a).

Involvement with the CCYD involves collaboration between the young person, their family or carer, legal representatives and Victoria Police prosecutors. The magistrate may adjourn the matter pre-plea to allow the young person to participate in diversion if the prosecutor consents to diversion being granted and the young person has accepted responsibility for their unlawful behaviour. The matter may be adjourned for up to 16 weeks initially (section 356D of the CYFA), then for periods of two months, provided the total period does not exceed six months (section 356H of the CYFA). Diversion may be initiated in the criminal division of the Children's Court, as well as by the Koori Court, with the latter also able to refer a young person if they have

breached their sentence by reoffending.

Following the prosecution consenting to diversion and the magistrate's referral, the CCYD diversion coordinator conducts assessments and develops a diversion plan with the young person, which is designed to strengthen and build upon protective factors, promote reparation of the harm caused by the offence/s, and be proportionate to the offence/s before the court. The diversion coordinator is responsible for reporting back to the court regarding the young person's compliance, as well as providing recommendations. However, it is important to note that the role of diversion coordinator does not replicate that of a Youth Justice case manager. Case coordination differs from case management in that it focuses on providing the young person with information, referrals, and links to support services, thereby giving the young person a high degree of autonomy in completing the goals of the plan. Case coordinators encourage the family and support network to help the young person in completing the program, with case coordinators providing extra support for those with more complex needs, such as younger youth aged 10 to 14 years and those with support networks who do not have the skills to facilitate completion of the diversion plan.

Upon completion of diversion, section 365I of the CYFA compels the court to discharge the young person's criminal matters without a finding of guilt, reducing the stigma and lifelong ramifications of a criminal record. Failure to complete the program to the satisfaction of the court may result in the young person being found guilty of the offence; however, the court

is required to consider the degree to which diversion was completed and not apply a more punitive punishment for failing to complete the program (Department of Justice and Community Safety, 2019a).

According to the Victorian Sentencing Advisory Council (2019), 34.4% of cases brought before the Children's Court between 2017 and 2018 were referred for youth diversion, increasing by 33.8% since 2014–15. Initially only available at a limited number of metropolitan and regional sites, diversion has been extended to all Children's Court locations following the government-funded statewide youth diversion initiative (Sentencing Advisory Council, 2019).

5. Specific intervention and programming consideration for priority groups

5.1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are substantially overrepresented within the youth justice system (*Burra Lotjpa Dunguludga*, 2018). This overrepresentation is observable across all Australian states and territories (AIHW, 2019) and is widely acknowledged as a highly complex and systemic issue. The literature identifies a broad range of causes for this overrepresentation including the effects of colonisation; intergenerational trauma; broken connection to country and community; over-policing; poor health, education and employment outcomes; and the intersectional disadvantage and marginalisation experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (Armytage & Ogloff, 2017; Grover, 2017). In the June quarter of 2018, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people accounted for over half (54%) of all young people in Australian detention settings on an average day (AIHW, 2018). This is despite comprising 5% of the general population of young Australians (AIHW, 2018). This detention rate makes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people 26 times more likely to be detained than non-Aboriginal young people (AIHW, 2019). In the Northern Territory, recent statistics estimate that between 95 and 100% of minors in detention are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (AIHW 2019; Northern Territory Government 2019; Vita 2015).

Community-based supervision rates are also highly disproportionate, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people more than 16 times as likely to be under supervision

than their non-Aboriginal counterparts (AIHW, 2019). Victorian data from 2017–18 revealed that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people were 13 times more likely to be under community supervision and 12 times more likely to be in detention than non-Aboriginal young Victorians (AIHW, 2019). To compound this issue of overrepresentation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people under supervision continue to be younger on average than non-Aboriginal young people also under supervision (AIHW, 2019).

Despite the continued presence of substantial overrepresentation, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people aged 10–17 under supervision on an average day fell from 199 to 187 per 10,000 between 2013–14 and 2017–18 (AIHW, 2019). This reduction, however, should be viewed within the larger context of falling numbers of young people under supervision. When considered in relation to the decline observed in non-Aboriginal young people under supervision, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people remain overrepresented, and the rate of decline in numbers is disproportionately smaller than for non-Aboriginal young people (AIHW, 2019).

This disproportionately high number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people connected to the youth justice system represents a major challenge facing the youth justice sector, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and the broader Australian society (Standing Committee on Aboriginal and

Torres Islander Affairs, 2011). Furthermore, these statistics demonstrate the critical need for effective preventative strategies and early intervention to reduce the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people becoming connected to the youth justice system (Pfeifer et al., 2018).

Despite the increase in availability of early intervention and preventative programs designed to reduce the engagement of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with the criminal justice system, there is little empirical evidence to support the effectiveness of such programs (Koori Justice Unit, 2018). While published program evaluations of some of these initiatives are available within the literature, many lack robust methodologies and a high level of scientific rigour (McCausland, 2019). What can be seen within the current state of well-evaluated programs and academic literature is a trend in critical practices that may be considered to better improve the existing and future development of programs aimed at diverting young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from offending and connection with the criminal justice system.

A comprehensive review of the associated literature was conducted by the Koori Justice Unit of the then Department of Justice and Regulation in December 2017. The review published by the Koori Justice Unit (2018) remains highly relevant and a key resource for those interested in gaining an understanding of crime prevention and early intervention for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. This review aims to summarise the findings of the Koori Justice Unit review and extend upon its findings by reviewing the limited literature that has emerged since its

publication.

Statistics reveal that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people differ from their non-Aboriginal counterparts in several ways. On an average day in 2017–18, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people under supervision were more likely than non-Aboriginal young people to live in outer regional areas (23% compared with 7%), and remote/very remote areas (20% compared with less than 1%) (AIHW, 2019). Similar patterns are observable in relation to community-based supervision and detention (AIHW, 2019). This geographical remoteness creates additional servicing issues as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are more likely to live in areas that may struggle to provide the breadth or depth of services that may be available in metropolitan areas.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are more likely to have repeated connection with the youth justice system and be younger than non-Aboriginal young people connected to the youth justice system. They are more likely to be received into detention more than once (50% compared to 42%) and for those under supervision, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are more likely to have multiple orders (72%) as compared to their non-Aboriginal counterparts (62%) (AIHW, 2019).

5.1.1. Risk and protective factors

Risk factors increase the likelihood of young people engaging in offending behaviour. Research indicates that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are vulnerable to the same risk factors that are observed within

non-Aboriginal cohorts (Homel et al., 1999). This includes but is not limited to abuse, educational disengagement, unemployment and substance abuse (Koori Justice Unit, 2017). In a literature review exploring risk factors related to Aboriginal offending, Weatherburn (2014) found that poor parenting, educational disengagement, unemployment and substance use were all highly prominent factors. Furthermore, Weatherburn reported that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people were more likely to experience these risk factors than their non-Aboriginal counterparts, placing them at a higher risk of coming into contact with the criminal justice system (Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Islander Affairs, 2011; Weatherburn, 2014).

In addition to these generalised risk factors, research has also identified several risk factors specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. These include disconnection from community and culture, the removal of children from their families, and the effects of institutionalised and systemic racism (Dockery,

2011; Homel et al. 1999, Zubrick et al., 2010). The risk factors most commonly identified within the literature relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people can be seen in Table 3.

The most commonly identified protective factor for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth is the presence of close and supportive relationships (Koori Justice Unit, 2018; Fleming & Ledogar, 2008). 'Cultural resilience' can be viewed as an important and Aboriginal-specific protective factor (Zubrick et al., 2010). Cultural resilience refers to how cultural identity (i.e., an individual's culture, cultural values, language, customs and cultural norms) helps individuals and communities overcome adversity (Clauss-Ehlers, 2015). School attendance and achievement have also been identified as important protective factors for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Islander Affairs, 2011; Vivian & Schnierer, 2010; Weatherburn, 2014).

Table 3: Identified risk factors for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people

Societal factors
- Institutionalised racism and discrimination
- Lack of self-determination
- Forced removal of children from families
- Communities with high crime rates and violence
- Socioeconomic disadvantage
- Social norms that violence and crime is acceptable
- Lack of or poor access to culturally appropriate support services

Education and peer group factors

- Negative school environment – bullying, teaching style not conducive with Aboriginal learning styles
- Poor performance and attendance at school
- Antisocial or criminal peers

Family system factors

- Negative home environment – family violence, poverty, inadequate housing, safety concerns
- Parenting – criminal involvement, substance abuse
- Parenting style – permissive or inconsistent parenting, child abuse, neglect

Individual factors

- Low education, early school leaving, suspension and expulsion
- Unemployment
- Boredom
- Substance abuse
- Low self-esteem, poor interpersonal skills
- Out-of-home care
- Intellectual disability or impairment
- Mental health issues
- Cultural disconnection/negative associations with cultural identity

Review of the existing literature relating to diversion programs indicates positive outcomes including reduced drug and substance use, and improved social functioning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders. There is some evidence that diversion programs reduce

reoffending, but the evidence is not strong (AIHW, 2013). Diversion programs of between 12 and 18 months tend to demonstrate better outcomes than those of short or extended lengths. Work experience and other forms of support (e.g. professional mentoring) can help

reduce reoffending and promote reintegration into the community. However, using culturally appropriate treatment programs increases engagement and completion of diversionary programs. Furthermore, programs that address the concerns of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by involving Elders or community facilitators in delivery tend to be more effective (AIHW, 2013).

5.1.2. Characteristics of successful programs

Several key program characteristics have been identified within the literature as likely to enhance the effectiveness of crime prevention strategies in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. Programs not developed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander involvement have been generally found to be less successful (Ware, 2014; Higgins & Davis, 2014). In contrast, Aboriginal community involvement in design and delivery can facilitate community ownership and accountability (Delfabbro & Day, 2003; Richards, Rosevear & Gilbert, 2011). Programs that target their approach towards high-risk cohorts also tend to be more effective than generalised programs with a broader scope (Singh & White, 2000; Farrington et al., 2016). Targeting young people at an early age (e.g., at-risk infants, young children and families) through programs that focus on parenting and preschool family support for high-risk children can be effective crime prevention strategies (Allard, Ogievie & Steward, 2007; Price, Waterhouse Coopers, 2017; Watson et al., 2005).

Programs that target multiple risk or protective factors also are likely to be more effective

(Richards, Rosevear & Gilbert, 2011) –particularly, targeting risk factors relating to parenting, education/unemployment and the deterioration to positive social/community connections. Ensuring frequent, sustained and structured contact can also be viewed as a key characteristic of successful programs (Ware & Meredith, 2013; Ware, 2014). Effective programs also often involve family and caregivers (Higgins & Davis, 2014; Richards, Rosevear & Gilbert, 2011) and embed culture into the program to assist in building participants' cultural identity and sense of self-esteem (Delfabbro & Day, 2003). It should be noted that the attainment and retention of high-quality program staff and access to stable funding sources were also identified in the literature as highly important factors relating to the effectiveness of successful programs (Delfabbro & Day, 2003; Farrington et al., 2016; Higgins & Davis, 2014; Singh & White, 2000).

Programs and services designed to redirect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people from engaging with the youth justice system take many different forms and approaches. Across Australia, each state and territory has the jurisdiction to implement its own youth justice legislation, policies and practices (Pfeifer et al., 2018). This includes the diversionary practices, programs and services which each state and territory endorses. Richards, Rosevear and Gilbert (2011) outline a range of promising interventions for reducing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young peoples' offending. Further, the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people with cognitive impairments and chronic health disadvantages

within the youth justice system suggests the need for targeted interventions specific to this cohort. The increased likelihood of engagement with the juvenile criminal justice system for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with cognitive impairments is related to several interconnecting factors (Shepherd et al., 2017). Shepherd et al. present risk factors that include difficulty regulating behaviour, impaired decision-making, problems communicating and a poor understanding of criminal justice procedures. Early identification of cognitive disability, cognitive impairment (MacGillivray & Baldry, 2012), learning difficulties (Blair, Zubrick, & Cox, 2005) and other physical health conditions common in this cohort – such as hearing impairment (Boswell & Nienhuys, 1995) – is necessary to ensure that preventative and early intervention strategies are appropriate and effective (Blagg & Tulich, 2018; McCausland, 2019).

Recently, the Victorian Government has

5.2. Culturally and linguistically diverse youth

Australia is an increasingly culturally diverse society. Almost half the population are first or second generation Australians, one-fifth speaking a language other than English at home (ABS, 2017a). The state of Victoria is particularly diverse, comprising numerous multicultural populations, of which 31% were born overseas (ABS, 2019a). Over the past few years, Victoria recorded the largest increase in migrant arrivals across all Australian states and territories (ABS, 2019). Moreover, the fastest growing migrant groups are from non-English-speaking

committed to addressing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in the criminal justice system through the formation of an Aboriginal Youth Justice Taskforce (i.e., Taskforce 250). According to the Victorian Government, it will be led by the independent Commission for Children and Young People and will examine the current care of Aboriginal young people within youth justice and identify issues that impact on their development and cultural connectedness (Mikakos, 2019). Aboriginal communities and young people will be involved in the taskforce, with the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People to co-chair the steering committee. It is hoped that this initiative will assist in illuminating the issues facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people connected to the criminal justice system and facilitate the development of new avenues to support them to reduce or cease their connection with the youth justice sector.

backgrounds (Simon-Davies, 2018), often referred to as CALD populations. Australia has also received significant numbers of CALD arrivals through humanitarian intake programs, including refugees from Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and Myanmar over the past 15 years (ABS, 2018a), many resettling in Victoria.

CALD communities are heterogeneous; they comprise people with diverse cultural norms, practices and traditions, languages, religions, family structures and life experiences. Equally,

pre-migration, post-migration and resettlement experiences differ widely. The pre- and post-migration challenges encountered by migrants to Australia are well documented. Adjustment experiences may be complicated by financial hardship, cultural differences, labour market access, limited social supports, barriers to services, English language proficiency, assimilation stress, discrimination and previous adversity (Australian Parliament, 2017; Bartels, 2011; Centre for Multicultural Youth [CMY], 2014a; Murray, Davidson, & Schweitzer, 2008; Office of Multicultural Interests [OMI], 2009; Shepherd, 2016). For humanitarian entrants this is often compounded by untreated traumas, instability, family fragmentation and psychological distress (Australian Domestic & Family Violence Clearinghouse [ADFVC], 2013; CMY, 2014a, 2014b; Saunders, Roche, McArthur, Arney, & Ziaian, 2015; Shepherd, 2016; Shepherd, Newton, & Farquharson, 2017; State of Victoria, 2011; Tempny, 2009). While not all migrants experience integration difficulties, the above obstacles can induce disenfranchisement, community disengagement, isolation, frustration and family disharmony (CMY, 2014a, 2014b; Shepherd, 2016; Shepherd & Ilalio, 2015). Moreover, the potential for justice involvement can escalate if these post-migratory challenges remain unaddressed.

5.2.1. CALD involvement in the criminal justice system

Australian offender demographics indicate that Australian-born individuals comprise the majority of prisoners (81%; ABS, 2018b). They also reveal that offenders born in countries such as Sudan, New Zealand, Vietnam, Samoa, Afghanistan

and Lebanon are overrepresented in the prison population (ABS, 2018b). Victoria possesses the highest proportion (25%) of overseas-born prisoners, nationwide (ABS, 2018b). At the youth justice level, almost one-quarter of the Victorian youth custodial population are non-native English speakers (State of Victoria, 2018) and approximately more than one-third self-identify as CALD (Shepherd, 2015). CALD youth contact with the justice system is often underreported as Victorian police data collection services do not record an alleged offender's ethnocultural group beyond the 'country-of-birth' descriptor (Joint Standing Committee on Migration, 2017). However, estimates from other sources (i.e., Youth Parole Board) indicate that young people from African (19%, predominantly South Sudanese) and Maori and Pasifika backgrounds (15%) are overrepresented in custody (State of Victoria, 2018), an increase from prior years.

5.2.2. Pathways to offending

Several decades of research have identified a concert of risk items that have been statistically shown, if present, to increase the likelihood of an individual committing future violence or other offending behaviours (Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Douglas, Cox, & Webster, 1999; Farrington & Loeber, 2000). Key risk items include static historical factors (past histories of violence, child maltreatment, early exposure to crime, criminal caregivers), dynamic environmental factors (antisocial peers, education/employment disengagement, community disorganisation), and personal behaviours and attitudes (anger problems, views favourable towards crime, impulsivity, remorselessness, substance use) (Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Borum, 2000).

It is likely that migrant offending patterns are similarly underpinned by such dynamics. Generally, individuals possessing greater numbers of the above risk factors are at a higher risk for offending. Justice-involved CALD young people in Australia typically possess risk profiles that approximate those of justice-involved Anglo-Australian young people (Shepherd, Singh, & Fullam, 2015). CALD offenders, like their majority-culture counterparts, typically come from environments of dysfunction and social strain, exhibit antisocial attitudes, use illicit substances, have disengaged from school, and associate with delinquent peers. However, collectively, CALD youth obtain less severe risk profiles and present with less significant histories of offending, parental criminality and disinterest in educational pursuits compared to justice-involved Anglo-Australian and Aboriginal Australian young people (Shepherd, Luebbers, Ferguson, Ogloff, & Dolan, 2014; Thompson & McGrath, 2012). Recent trends in youth offending have noted increases in group-based, calculated offending and violence, coordinated on social media (Armytage & Ogloff, 2017). Late-onset group-based violence has also been linked with particular CALD groups (Joint Standing Committee on Migration, 2017; Liddell, Black & Singh, 2016; Williams, 2019). Nonetheless any findings attributed to the CALD 'umbrella' designation should be approached with caution given the vastly differing cultures and ethnicities represented within CALD cohorts (Adusei-Asante & Adibi, 2018). With little uniformity among CALD groups other than the shared experiences of recent migration and resettlement in Australia, aggregate estimates may not reflect the unique composition of risk factors for specific cultural groups, which vary within (between CALD groups)

and without (extent of overlap with majority or mainstream profiles). While there is robust evidence for the universality of risk factors, their manifestation among CALD groups in Australia warrants further articulation (Shepherd, 2014). Moreover, additional challenges facing CALD groups in Australia necessitate exploration to better understand the broader contexts surrounding CALD justice involvement. The list below summarises a range of risk factors and broader sociocultural factors impacting CALD young people.

Acculturation/culture shock

Acculturation refers to the process of adapting to a new or majority culture and is often an experience characterised by high levels of stress (Berry, 1997). The speed of acculturation is shaped by the levels of social interaction, community connectivity and compatibility with the host culture (Copolov, Knowles & Meyer, 2017; Francis & Cornfoot, 2017a; Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010). The impact of acculturation is particularly profound when there are marked cultural dissimilarities between the former and adopted countries (CMY, 2014a). While maintaining traditional cultural practices can engender a positive identity (Gorman, Brough, & Ramirez, 2003), the same practices may be perceived negatively, or run counter to societal norms and legal principles of the dominant culture (Renzaho, Dhingra, & Georgeou, 2017). This can give rise to potential demonisation and social exclusion. Reports underline the emotional distress of recently arrived CALD migrants when 'trying to fit in' with a new culture (CMY, 2014b; Francis & Cornfoot, 2007a). For some migrant groups, relocating

to Australia is the second wave of migration in the space of one or two generations, having previously migrated to a temporary settlement area from their country of origin (Shepherd & Ilalio, 2015). For refugees, acculturation difficulties may be compounded by pre-migration trauma, family separation and post-migration housing and financial uncertainty (CMY, 2010; Murray et al., 2008; OMI, 2009; Queensland Government, 2010; Schweitzer, Melville, Steel, & Lacherez, 2006). Language and communication barriers can further inhibit integration, enhancing acculturation stress (Brewer, 2009; Khawaja, McCarthy, Braddock, & Dunne, 2014; OMI, 2009).

Intergenerational discord/family breakdown

Evidence suggests that young migrants acculturate more quickly than their parents and older relatives and will often take on support roles in the family, which can alter the family's traditional dynamics and prompt a loss of confidence in parental authority (CMY, 2014b; Francis & Cornfoot, 2007a; Saunders et al., 2015). Moreover, older migrants may attempt to uphold cultural customs while younger migrants may favour mainstream values and attitudes. Competing cultural obligations and expectations can be a challenging experience for many young CALD people (CMY, 2014b). A number of reports suggest that familial tension is sometimes prompted by the Australian 'sense of freedom' (with its focus on independence) which conflicts with collectivist principles of obedience to elders and communal roles and responsibilities (Deng, 2017; Francis & Cornfoot, 2007a; Omar, Kuay, Tuncer, Wriedt, & Minas, 2015; Renzaho et al., 2017; Saunders et al., 2015). Moreover, traditional disciplinary practices may

be rendered less effective or even criminalised in Australian settings, which in turn erodes traditional roles and parental relationships with their children (Renzaho et al., 2017; Saunders et al., 2015). The resulting intergenerational cultural tension can destabilise the family environment already bereft of the broader social support that was traditionally experienced pre-migration. Furthermore, caregivers who are often coping with family separation and their own integration stressors are sometimes unable to provide the support and monitoring for younger relatives, some of whom have complex needs and are susceptible to negative influences.

Financial and housing challenges

Designated refugee resettlement regions are often concentrated in lower-income areas (Davern et al., 2016). Financial hardship, initial reliance on government payments, temporary housing or 'secondary homelessness' and residing in low-income jurisdictions, can produce unstable and discouraging environmental contexts with limited opportunities for upward mobility and can delay the development of legitimate social capital (CMY, 2014b). These issues are perhaps heightened when migration patterns consign disproportionate numbers of young males to such settings, which can be fertile grounds for boredom, frustration, alienation and law-breaking activity.

The unemployment rate for migrants with a non-English-speaking background is double that of migrants from an English-speaking country (ABS, 2012). Moreover, the likelihood of finding a job is doubled for humanitarian arrivals with stronger English language skills than humanitarian

arrivals with poorer English-speaking skills (ABS, 2017b). Limited English language proficiency, literacy and numeracy skills, and a lack of local work experience and formal (or recognised) qualifications can affect prospects for immediate employment. These challenges are often enhanced for resettled refugees, who may have experienced interrupted education, long periods of instability and previous inaccessibility to schooling (Fraine & McDade, 2009; Murray et al., 2008; OMI, 2009). Only 17% of humanitarian entrants are in paid work after 18 months in Australia (Centre for Policy Development, 2017). For those who do find employment, many are in low-paid, unskilled sessional jobs (ABS, 2018a), which can negatively impact family cohesion and stability. The demand for such occupations is also waning due to technological change (Centre for Policy Development, 2017). An inability to find regular employment increases financial strain and decreases the capacity to develop further social networks, hindering effective integration. Moreover, many CALD families send regular remittances to family members overseas which can further depress available resources (Amato, 2012; Brown, Leeves, & Prayaga, 2012).

Access to services

Many CALD families migrate to Australia with limited familial and structural support networks. As such, they are often reliant on specific services and resources to assist in successful community integration. Yet research indicates that migrants underutilise community health services and programs (ABS, 2016; Davern et al., 2016; Francis & Cornfoot, 2007b; Riley, Cassaniti, Piperoglou, & Garan, 2017), and sometimes report negative experiences when they do use them (Colucci,

Szwarc, Minas, Paxton, & Guerra, 2014b; Gorman et al., 2003; Renzaho, 2008). There are several obstacles that can impede the accessibility and delivery of services to migrants in need of social assistance. These include a limited awareness of available services (Australian Domestic & Family Violence Clearinghouse [ADFVC], 2013; Australian Human Rights Commission [AHRC], 2010; Brewer, 2009; Davern et al., 2016; Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia [FECCA], 2011; Gorman et al., 2003; Kljajic, 2009; Saunders et al., 2015), low English language proficiency (ADFVC, 2013; AHRC, 2010; Davern et al., 2016; FECCA, 2011; Francis & Cornfoot, 2007b; Kljajic, 2009; State of Victoria, 2011), unfamiliarity with health and legal systems (AHRC, 2010; FECCA, 2011; Kljajic, 2009; Taylor & Putt, 2007) inaccessibility of bilingual professionals and culturally incompetent service provision (Davern et al., 2016; FECCA, 2011; Renzaho, 2008). In the community, this can inhibit participation in educational programs, sustain unfamiliarity with one's legal rights and entitlements, and impede effective interaction with health workers and the criminal justice system (ADFVC, 2013; Australian Government, 2009; Bartels, 2011; Community Relations Commission, 2006; FECCA, 2011; Francis & Cornfoot, 2007a; Judicial Commission of New South Wales, 2006; Renzaho, 2008). A limited knowledge of the legal system and its processes – from interacting with police to accessing legal representation – has been documented for particular CALD groups (Bartels, 2011; Springvale Monash Legal Service [SMLS], 2007). For example, Victorian justice officials note that some young CALD offenders often lack family support when being processed through the system (Amato, 2012; SMLS, 2007). For some groups, problems

are preferably handled 'in-house', with notions of stigma and shame impeding individuals from seeking outside assistance. In a correctional environment, language barriers can prevent access to treatment, participation in vocational and pre-release programs, a misunderstanding of the sentencing process and an increased likelihood of violating institutional rules (Armstrong, Chartrand, & Baldry, 2005; Centre for the Human Rights of Imprisoned People, 2010; Victorian Government, 2010; Women's Health Victoria, 2008). Furthermore, CALD clients may exhibit a level of resistance or hostility in medical or legal settings because of mistrust, fear and/or perceived discrimination, perhaps stemming from past injustices experienced pre or during migration. (CMY, 2014a) These issues may engender a lack of disclosure and higher levels of underreporting by minority groups. A breakdown in the therapeutic alliance can also occur through unintentional or unconscious prejudices expressed by service professionals (Shepherd & Lewis-Fernandez, 2016).

Mental health

Rates of mental health concerns are higher for subsections of CALD communities, in particular refugees and asylum seekers. Many refugees have been exposed to traumatic events and are at an increased risk for posttraumatic stress disorder and depression (CMY, 2014a; Fazel, Wheeler, & Danesh, 2005; Murray et al., 2008; Schweitzer, Melville, Steel, & Lacherez, 2006; Tempny, 2009). CALD communities can experience additional barriers accessing mental health support, including language difficulties, low mental health literacy, and a lack of awareness of available services (Colucci, Minas,

Szwarc, Paxton, & Guerra, 2014a; Khawaja et al., 2014; Murray et al., 2008; Saunders et al., 2015). Moreover, cultural viewpoints on mental ill health and associated problem behaviours may prevent help-seeking and medical intervention. Evidence suggests that there is a high level of prevailing stigma attached to mental illness in some migrant communities (Colucci et al., 2014a, 2014b; Deng, 2017; Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria [ECCV], 2011; FECCA, 2011; Gary, 2005; Mellor, Carne, Shen, McCabe, & Wang, 2012; Omar et al., 2015; Ravulo, 2015; Victorian Government, 2010). Mental disorders are sometimes equated with 'madness' or 'craziness', denoting weakness and generating shame for the individual and their family (Colucci et al., 2014a, 2014b; ECCV, 2009; Kljajic, 2009; Omar et al., 2015; Victorian Government, 2010). In some circumstances, mental illness is thought to be attributed to an external locus of control (e.g. malicious supernatural spirits) (ECCV, 2011). In any case, stigmatisation and community distancing can preclude appropriate therapeutic care for individuals and potentially increase their risk level for challenging behaviours. Conceptualisations of mental health may also differ cross-culturally (Durie, 2004; Kirmayer & Sartorius, 2007; Puloto-Endemann, 2001). Health frameworks may include more ecological or holistic phenomena, including the centrality of family, religiosity/spirituality, community wellbeing, gender role expectations, and culturally stoic responses to adversity (Lewis-Fernandez et al., 2014; Markowitz et al., 2009). Particular groups may also present with unique symptom reporting styles (e.g. somatisation, idiomatic metaphors) or exhibit culturally normative behaviours (e.g. religious fervour, bereavement-specific self-

harm) that may be difficult to discern from mental health symptoms (Kirmayer et al., 2011; Lewis-Fernandez et al., 2014; Shepherd & Lewis-Fernandez, 2016). Moreover, in justice settings, young CALD offenders are found to be more likely to minimise psychopathology compared to non-CALD young offenders (Kenny & Lennings, 2007; Kenny, Lennings, & Nelson, 2008). These findings are of concern in light of research highlighting CALD underutilisation of mental health services. Combined with resettlement stressors, untreated mental ill health can have deleterious consequences for CALD migrants, including susceptibility to problem behaviours and community disengagement.

Education

Evidence indicates that, broadly, migrant communities place an emphasis on education and have higher rates of schooling enrolment, and a stronger interest in schooling compared to Australian-born youth (CMY, 2014c). However, experiences differ by country of birth. Victorian data shows that youth born in Burma, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Iraq, Lebanon, Sudan and Cambodia are more likely to leave school earlier than Australian-born youth (City of Greater Dandenong, n.d.a). Moreover, several reports point to low high school completion rates among Maori and Pacific Islander residents (Chenoweth, 2014; Kukutai, & Pawar, 2013). For some families, there is a diminished capacity to actively supervise and support children in their educational pursuits due to acculturation challenges, household disadvantage, family members working irregular hours and/or a limited parental understanding of the education system, having not completed school themselves

(CMY, 2014a; Shepherd & Ilalio, 2015; Shepherd et al., 2017). Without household encouragement, financial support, a safe environment to study, or same-culture educated role models to emulate, some CALD children become psychologically and emotionally ill-prepared for the demands and rigours of independent learning. Moreover, some CALD young people may experience bullying or peer rejection at school, prompting conflict with other students and teachers and regular truancy (Baak, 2018; CMY, 2014b; Liddell et al., 2016; Saunders et al., 2015; Shepherd et al., 2017). Early disengagement from school has long been a key risk factor for criminal activity in the literature and is a commonly observed life event befalling young offenders in custody (Borum, 2000; Indig et al., 2011). Young people who prematurely disengage from school are at an increased risk of socialising with like-minded disaffected peers, which increases the chances of antisocial behaviour and contact with the criminal justice system.

Cultural factors

Subgroups within CALD communities may possess cultural attitudes and behaviours that do not align with wider Australian societal norms. These beliefs may in fact contravene Australian laws and can prevent help-seeking and medical intervention. For example, reports on family violence in some CALD communities have pointed to trends of non-disclosure (Allimant & Ostapiej-Piatkowski, 2011; Chung, Fisher, Zufferey, & Thiara, 2018; Queensland Government, 2010; Taylor & Putt, 2007), and in some cases indifference and/or endorsement (Brewer, 2009; El-Murr, 2018; Migliorino, 2010; Taylor & Mouzos, 2006; Webster et al., 2019).

Family violence, or attitudes that validate family violence, may be viewed as culturally acceptable (or not actively disendorsed) in some circumstances, thereby justifying its continuation and preventing community intervention (Central Australian Women's Legal Service, 2014; Migliorino, 2010; Rees & Pease, 2006; Webster et al., 2019). For example, female CALD survey respondents have deemed rape to mean 'stranger rape' only, and therefore rape or sexual assault within a relationship to be notionally impossible (Allimant, 2005; Chung et al., 2018; El-Murr, 2018; Taylor & Putt, 2007). This is despite reporting experiences that are consistent with sexual violence occurring in their own relationships (Chung et al., 2018). Moreover, there can be a reluctance for victims to seek official and/or community support for incidences of family and sexual violence due to the topic being highly taboo, and for fear of being shunned or shamed by their community (Chung et al., 2018; Vaughan et al., 2016). Women from CALD communities reportedly experience similar types of family violence as other Australians; however, they are more likely to experience multiperpetrator family violence which includes behaviours intended to dishonour, shame or ostracise (El-Murr, 2018; Kaur and Atkin, 2018; Vaughan et al., 2016). Traditional gender roles, responsibilities and behavioural expectations are common among new arrivals, particular those from patriarchal societies who may have lower levels of appreciation for gender equality (Omar et al., 2015; Webster et al., 2019). Men from CALD backgrounds have noted that Australian laws and values can disempower them, undermining their traditional roles in their families and

communities (Fisher, 2013; Omar et al., 2015; Rees & Pease, 2006; Vaughan et al., 2016). Additionally, women and girls from some CALD backgrounds have reportedly experienced forced marriage, dowry abuse and, in rare cases, female genital mutilation (Royal Commission into Family Violence, 2016).

Further, the use of physical punishment when disciplining children is commonplace within some CALD communities. Conventionally, this has occurred in communal settings in the country of origin, where traditional discipline is contextually managed (Shepherd & Ilalio, 2015; Shepherd et al., 2017). However, such practices may be inappropriately and/or excessively administered in Australian settings, particularly if families reside in disadvantaged culturally isolated environments (SMLS, 2007). Young people from particular CALD backgrounds have reported enduring strict disciplinarian and sometimes physically punitive parenting styles (Shepherd et al., 2017). On the flipside, CALD parents have reported that their traditional parenting styles have been rendered ineffective in Australian settings and lament government interference inhibiting such practices (Abur, 2018; Deng, 2017). In fact some CALD parents attribute their children's justice involvement to societal constraints on their parenting (Deng, 2017; Hebbani, Obijiofor, & Bristed, 2012; Omar et al., 2015). Surveys with CALD females note gender imbalances in the freedoms afforded to children. In some cultural groups, boys are allowed to assert more authority within family structures, receiving more behavioural latitude and less monitoring from family members compared to girls (Chung et al., 2018).

Experiences of discrimination/racism

Religious and racial discrimination has been associated with poor health outcomes, psychological distress, anger, frustration, anxiety, social and emotional isolation, community alienation, joblessness, and a reluctance to seek health and legal assistance (Abdelkerim & Grace, 2012; Booth, Leigh, & Varganova, 2009; Brewer, 2009; CHRIP, 2010; Mansouri, Jenkins, Morgan, & Taouk, 2009; OMI, 2009; Paradies, 2006; Paradies et al., 2009; Priest et al., 2013; Queensland Government, 2010; Taylor & Putt, 2007). CALD Australians are more likely to be the victims of racist behaviour compared to Anglo-Australians (Boese & Scutella, 2006; Mansouri et al., 2009). For example, two-thirds of a large Victorian survey of CALD individuals reported that they had experienced racism in the previous 12 months (Ferdinand, Kelaher, & Paradies, 2013). These experiences impacted the participants' feelings of safety and induced the self-imposed avoidance of specific locations (Ferdinand et al., 2013). Moreover, community surveys indicate that one-fifth of Australians annually report experiencing discrimination on the basis of race or religion (Markus, 2018). The Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission reported an 88% increase in the number of complaints about race in 2018 (Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission [VEOHRC], 2018). Furthermore, one-fifth of Australians reportedly possess negative sentiments towards Australians with Muslim backgrounds (Markus, 2018). Experiences of discrimination differ by CALD group. Migrants of African origin, in particular South Sudanese, report the highest levels of discrimination compared to those of other CALD heritages (Markus, 2016). Many Sudanese-Australians report experiences of

discrimination in the job market, while studying at educational institutions, interpersonally within the community, and during encounters with law enforcement (Abur, 2012; CMY, 2014b; Coventry et al., 2015; Dawes, 2013; FECCA, 2014, 2015; Horyniak, Higgs, Cogger, & Dietze, 2017; Khawaja, White, Schweitzer, & Greenslade, 2008; Lejukole, Rainbird, Blewett, Every, & Clarkson, 2012; Markus, 2016; Reiner, 2010; Run, 2013; VEOHRC, 2008). This can contribute to feelings of social rejection, frustration and fear, which can be compounded during periods of sustained negative media attention (Baak, 2011; CMY, 2014b; Collins & Reid, 2009; Coventry et al., 2015; Dawes, 2013; Hebbani et al., 2012; Run, 2013). Sudanese-born Australians have been overrepresented across selected offending categories (i.e. aggravated robbery, aggravated burglary, assault, riot/affray) in Victoria over the past three years (Crime Statistics Agency, 2018; Shepherd et al., 2018). Although the offending varied in its severity and was ostensibly unconnected, the activity was persistently and often sensationally covered by media outlets (Watkins & Sood, 2017). Young Sudanese-Australians have reported a heightened sense of exclusion, frustration and racial profiling as a result of the ongoing media coverage (Benier, Blaustein, Johns, & Maher, 2018).

Recent evidence points to the unequal treatment of CALD individuals by Australian law enforcement authorities. For example, African-Australian males have been found to be over-policed in specific Australian localities (Haile-Michael & ors v Nick Konstantinidis & ORS [2012]). The media reporting of crime can perpetuate negative stereotypes, resulting

in an overestimation of migrant criminality (Benier et al., 2018; Chingaipe, 2017; Centre for Multicultural Youth, 2014b; Collins, 2005). These phenomena affect the lives of the CALD population, cultivating feelings of ostracism and increasing the likelihood of community disengagement. Furthermore the perception of racism is a key factor for migrant underutilisation of health services (Burgess, Ding, Hargreaves, van Ryn, & Phelan, 2008) and willingness to interact with and report crime to the police (Centre for Multicultural Youth, 2014a; Cherney & Chui, 2008; Dixon & Maher, 2002; Meredyth, McKernan, & Evans, 2010; Taylor & Putt, 2007). Ongoing discrimination can impact on an individual's quality of life, feelings of safety, and ability to positively contribute to society.

5.2.3. Programming adaptations

The above factors outline broader resettlement, cultural and environmental challenges that may impact on the behaviours and lifestyles of CALD Australians. However, it is important to delineate whether such social challenges are criminogenic. Resettlement strain, lack of English language proficiency, family fragmentation, perceived discrimination, acculturation difficulties, and culture shock (for example) are genuine issues faced by many migrants, and in particular, humanitarian arrivals. Yet whether these factors are directly linked to offending is unknown. We do know, however, that a suite of risk factors that have been identified in the literature over several decades (i.e. low educational attainment, substance use, peer delinquency, antisocial attitudes, unemployment, prior offending) tend to generalise regardless of cultural background. This is a useful starting point when developing

programs across cultures as it is likely that the core concert of established criminogenic risk factors underpin most offending. The unique broader social-cultural concerns are nonetheless worthy of acknowledgment and are useful to grapple with when considering the experiential reality and sometimes unique sociocultural contexts that CALD youth inhabit and navigate – it is plausible that the integration-related social challenges listed above amplify or provide fertile ground for the established criminogenic risk factors. However, it is prudent and parsimonious to assume that common risk factors for youth crime extend to CALD youth and as such should be the primary focus of any rehabilitation strategy. Cultural-specific values, practices, worldviews and experiences (if relevant to the individual), however, may be useful complimentary considerations and/or components to a program (or help facilitate interest in a program), yet their unique impact on recidivism (beyond the core criminogenic factors) has not been comprehensively evaluated. In other words, CALD sociological experiences and beliefs/practices are not (or have not yet been shown to be) verified direct risk factors at this time. This does not preclude their inclusion in programming; however, some caution (with regard to their risk-reducing qualities) is naturally advised.

The unique sociological-environmental experiences described above may still need to be considered when working with CALD young people, particularly by caseworkers and practitioners, in order to enhance effective client-provider communication – with specific regard to:

- culturally specific manifestations of illness and cultural idioms of distress, differing explanatory models of health, social meanings of sickness and traditional remedies that may require accommodation in conventional health care settings
- precarious migration experiences and how they underpin contemporary social circumstances
- a cultural group's family structures, social hierarchies and religious/spiritual conventions and how these may shape community/familial expectations and responsibilities
- partnering with community/faith leaders – who is valued in the community, who are the respected persons and the significance of elders for that community
- resistance or hostility in therapeutic or justice settings because of mistrust, fear and perceived discrimination as a result of historical injustices committed in similar settings
- experiences of racism that may affect self-esteem, distress levels, cooperation with authority, adherence to clinical recommendations, threat perception, feelings of safety, access to services and vulnerability to antisocial peer group membership
- a need for interpreters or bilingual staff – even if a young person speaks English well enough to function on an everyday level, they may not possess the language skills to convey the emotional nuances necessary to communicate complex problems.
- the cultural context of behaviour – is the person functional, with no obvious symptoms when they are in their community context? Is placing them in a foreign environment by itself leading to symptoms, more distress, agitation, 'shame' manifesting as depression? This involves taking into account diverse cultural backgrounds and practices while recognising their experiences of living in Australia.

It is well documented that CALD communities are heterogeneous with varying levels of acculturation, bi-culturalism and identity. While ethnocultural considerations may be of importance to some individuals, they may bear little relevance to others. Moreover, differences in offending patterns occur among migrant groups due to various pre-migration and resettlement exposures, and this variation is often concealed when the groups are combined under the CALD descriptor. As such, it is prudent to avoid having preconceived notions of an individual based on their supposed cultural background, particularly as an individual's culture comprises numerous components such as peer group culture, neighbourhood culture, personal interest/hobby culture, political/religious culture – all of which may interact with, or perhaps trump, their ethnoculture (which may only be superficially held). Young people are often influenced by their peer group and so their friendship group 'culture' will likely be favoured. Brokering a 'connection' to their parent's ethnoculture as a treatment option may not be enticing to every young person. CALD young people have noted a disconnect between their parents' culture and their own bi-culturalism in prior research, describing their parents as

failing to understand the issues they face in Australian society (Omar et al., 2015). This does not mean that facilitating an interest in one's cultural background may not be appreciated, but again some caution is urged, given the varying levels of cultural interest and if such initiatives supplant or overshadow a focus on addressing evidenced-based criminogenic needs.

There is a dearth of 'what works' evidence in reducing reoffending by youth from CALD cohorts. While there is some acknowledgement in the literature that culturally responsive interventions and frameworks may be more effective compared to generic interventions (Bartels, 2011) there is no robust evidence of their efficacy in reducing recidivism, compared to mainstream or universal interventions. Moreover, programs designed for CALD offenders in custodial and community settings often receive short-term funding, precluding appropriate evaluation. Existing programs targeting justice-involved CALD young people (for example, African Visitation and Mentoring Program – Jesuit Social Services; Black Rhinos – Afri-Auscare; Mana Toa Pasifika Youth Justice Program) require empirical evaluation, as do offerings from other agencies that encompass a suite of services for multicultural youth in the community including those who are justice-involved (i.e., Youth Activating Youth; iEmpower; Le Mana Pasifika Project – Centre for Multicultural Youth). Cultural support/liaison workers for various CALD groups are already operating in Victoria's youth justice facilities.

Research indicates that programs should target the changeable characteristics of young offenders that are linked to offending, such as

substance use, antisocial attitudes and anger management (Andrews & Bonta, 2007; Armytage & Ogloff, 2017). Initiatives with strong research support include cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) approaches, individual/group counselling, Functional Family Therapy /Multisystemic Therapy (MST) and interpersonal skills training (Lipsey, Landenberger, & Wilson, 2007). CBT uses clinical psychological techniques to alter distorted thinking, increase empathy, improve social problem-solving, manage conflict, and allow a better interpretation of social cues (Abt & Winship, 2017). MST works with the (extended) family and other involved adults (teachers/mentors) to interact with the young person to improve relationships and reduce problem behaviours. Justice-involved youth (particularly those in custody) may benefit from intensive intervention and supervision – special treatment units for higher-risk youth, the purpose of which is remedial and which emphasise a commitment to sustained behavioural change may be helpful (Lipsey, 2009; McCarthy, Schiraldi, & Shark, 2016). Although psychological concerns are not necessarily causing young people to offend, they do render correctional management difficult and they may prevent young people from benefiting from other interventions (i.e., drug treatment, vocational/educational programs). Moreover, such interventions are most effective when they (i) are part of a risk/needs/responsivity framework, (ii) are delivered by clinically-trained staff and (iii) have longevity beyond six months (Abt & Winship, 2016; Armytage & Ogloff, 2017; Fagan & Catalano, 2012; Lipsey, 2009).

Some cultural issues (if relevant) should still be considered when rolling out interventions to

engender legitimacy among clientele – that is, same-culture clinical/program staff, re-naming programs to avoid cultural stigmas and negative connotations associated with ‘treatment’ or ‘mental illness’, employing culturally relevant forms of clinical interaction (e.g. discussing symptoms/feelings rather than explicit references to mental illness; understanding that many CALD individuals attribute an external locus of control to their behaviours which has ramifications for treatments focused on individually motivated behaviour modification), including family members where possible and if safe to do so, and including cultural activities (or activities of interest) as complementary rapport-building exercises. As such, certain aspects of the interventions may need to be ‘culturally fine-tuned’ to accommodate the above, but this should not deviate the program from the core components of the intervention. And of course, not every CALD youth will require (or necessarily respond better to) a culturally modified version of a particular intervention.

Visits to CALD youth in custody from same-culture community organisations may help facilitate connections with (and back to) the community and extended family. This is occasionally arranged through sporting/music/cooking/religious activities with additional counselling, mentoring and personal support. For at-risk youth in the community, initiatives like the following can all assist with skills development, networking, community integration and employment preparation: school mentoring, homework clubs, volunteer tutoring services, cross-cultural parenting/family support initiatives, migrant/refugee youth leadership

programs, peer support programs delivered with community service groups and schools, free legal assistance and opportunities to improve legal literacy through community legal centres, sports/recreational clubs and migrant specific labour market intermediaries. The effectiveness of many of these programs, however, is unknown, given their short-termism (they are often reliant on small council and philanthropic funding mechanisms), recent adoption and lack of formalisation. Perhaps some combination of these programs with evidence-based approaches (CBT, individual/family-based therapy) may be worthy of consideration. Again, some CALD youth may prefer generic, non-culturally-specific programs of a similar variety to a culturally responsive iteration.

Confidentiality may need to be explicitly assured for some CALD clients who may be concerned that members of their community will discover their involvement in the justice system or discreet utilisation of legal, mental health or health services. In fact, family or community concerns may be the reason why the client is seeking assistance. Practitioners must be clear about the information they will keep on record and under what circumstances they will be expected to break confidentiality. Such caution should also be undertaken when enlisting a translator, who may be a member of the client’s community (Colucci et al., 2014a).

The outcome of any program needs to be appealing to the young people who undertake it. Therefore, some collaboration with the young people and their communities when designing programs will be necessary to create relevant/appropriate initiatives. Intrinsic motivation is

essential (treatment readiness/desire to change) – and so identifying a young person’s desired prosocial goals/aspirations/skillsets helps create a personally meaningful treatment plan.

It is also important to note that in some cases with CALD youth, their justice involvement may engender ostracism from their own families and communities resulting in diminished support networks, greater levels of distress and susceptibility to negative peer influence and problem behaviours. The extent to which reconnection is possible depends on the community context. However, for many at-risk youth, family (or extended family) reconnection specifically may not be a viable option. Community services therefore must become adaptable to meet the health, legal and social needs – and gain the trust – of young CALD Australians who have broken ties with their communities.

Trauma-informed practice refers to services (i.e. child/family welfare, educational, mental health services, prisons) that are able to respond to the needs of individuals who have been exposed to trauma (Branson, Baetz, Horwitz, & Hoagwood, 2017). Here, staff are aware of how the client’s needs and behaviours are shaped by prior experiences as well as how service delivery approaches might aggravate the impacts of trauma. Adopting a trauma-informed framework requires an intimate understanding of the unique stressors that some CALD families endure in an Australian context. It is important to underscore, however, that although many CALD Australians have endured previous trauma, only a small percentage will have contact with the justice system (Armytage & Ogloff, 2017).

Peer groups are influential in offending behaviours and, naturally, creating some distance from these peer groups would aid criminal desistance. A key part of the desistance process involves disassociating with delinquent acquaintances and establishing prosocial relationships (Maruna & Roy, 2007). As such, engaging in routine structured prosocial activities in combination with therapeutic programs may offer an alternative to regular delinquent peer group congregation (Sampson & Laub, 1993; Wooditch, Tang, & Taxman, 2014). At-risk CALD youth require ongoing support through structured programming and mentorship to offset relapses. There may be generative roles for older adolescent CALD youth (peer-to-peer networks) to offer support and guidance to younger at-risk peers which in turn can be therapeutic for both parties (Maruna, 2001).

5.3. Younger youth (aged 10–14 years)

There is considerable literature pertaining to the link between the age of first offence and the trajectory of offending. The Sentencing Advisory Council (2016) published a report exploring recidivism among children and young people in Victoria. The findings suggested offenders who were sentenced at an earlier age not only had higher rates of reoffending six years later, but also were more likely to reoffend generally, reoffend violently and continue reoffending into adulthood. Further, those who first entered the system between the ages of 10 and 15 years were more likely to reoffend with offences against the person (e.g. assault, recklessly causing injury, etc.) and theft/deception offences (e.g. theft, burglary), whereas those who first entered the system at 16–20 years reoffended more commonly with road safety offences (Sentencing Advisory Council, 2016). Such information is representative of the wider literature, which suggests those who enter the system at a younger age frequently commit more offences, and offences of a more serious nature, than their older counterparts (T. Moffitt, 1993; Mulder, Brand, Bullens, & van Marle, 2011; Piquero & Chung, 2001). As such, according to the RNR framework, the high-risk nature of this cohort often calls for intensive early intervention.

Younger youth are a particularly vulnerable group, as they have often experienced a significant level of trauma prior to entering the justice system. For example, a report published by the Sentencing Advisory Council (2019) found, of the 438 children who were first sentenced between the ages of 10 and 13 years, more than one in two were the subject of a child protection report, 33% had been in out-of-home care, and

26% had experienced residential care. Younger youth entering the justice system tend to have higher rates of childhood maltreatment, leading to an increased likelihood of endorsing criminal behaviour. Research shows that crossover and dually involved youth engage in antisocial behaviour at an earlier age and are significantly more likely to reoffend than their non-maltreated peers (Lee & Villagrana, 2015). For example, recidivistic outcomes were explored among a sample of 1,148 dually involved youth who were followed over six years (Huang, Ryan, & Herz, 2012). The rate of reoffending among this sample was 56% over five years, with 32% of the total sample experiencing new reports of maltreatment referrals to child protection services subsequent to their arrest. Such results indicate not only the high level of recidivism among these youth, but also the ongoing nature of maltreatment in their lives and the significant impact it has on their prospects of rehabilitation.

Simons and Burt (2011) suggest those exposed to adverse social conditions in childhood develop three key schemas, which combine to form a criminogenic knowledge structure (CKS) and may help explain the relative persistence of offending in younger youth with a history of maltreatment. The CKS allows an individual to interpret situations as legitimating criminal behaviour based on their view of people and social relationships being inherently hostile, their inherent preference for immediate over delayed rewards, and a cynicism of conventional norms (Simons & Burt, 2011). The hostile view of people and relationships is rooted in the belief that most people are untrustworthy and will cheat or exploit others if given the chance,

resulting in the individual believing that they must use dishonest methods to obtain what they need. Similarly, this hostile view sensitises the individual to disrespect and reduces their empathy for others, as they see those around them as different from themselves. Therefore, the individual is able to rationalise aggressive and exploitative behaviour towards others. This hostile view feeds into the second schema, which relates to the preference for immediate gratification. Those exposed to adverse, unstable social experiences in childhood have learned that the world is unpredictable, and one should take what they can while they can. The third schema that makes up the CKS is the cynical view of conventional norms, which is based on a disrespect for authority and the belief that the social construct is inherently unfair (Simons & Burt, 2011). Further research was conducted on the CKS, with a study by Baron (2017) exploring the validity of the structure among 400 homeless Canadian youth. Results showed that the CKS was associated with higher levels of criminality, and that the CKS mediates the relationship between emotional neglect, association with deviant peers and offending. This development of a pro-criminal mindset may help explain some of the underlying reasons for younger youth with a history of maltreatment persisting with offending into adulthood. Therefore, there is a need for interventions to focus on therapeutically addressing trauma history, prioritising stability of the young person's placement and/or home life, and uncovering possible cognitive patterns and schemas pertaining to crime.

5.3.1. Intervention strategies and service engagement

There are very few specific interventions targeted

at the 10–14 youth offender age group. However, one such program is Barreng Moorop in Victoria. Barreng Moorop is a diversionary program funded by the Commonwealth Government and delivered by Jesuit Social Services in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) and the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency. Barreng Moorop supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth offenders aged 10–14 years living in the North and West Metropolitan regions of Melbourne. The program provides a wrap-around trauma-informed response with a focus on using family, community and culture as protective mechanisms to divert the young person away from the justice system and address the deleterious impacts of intergenerational trauma. The program has assisted 35 families since its inception in 2015, with results indicating 76% of participants had improved connection with family and 65% of participants improved their involvement with education. No data pertaining to reoffending rates of young people who engaged in Barreng Moorop could be found. However, the development and relative success related to improved familial connection and educational engagement is promising. The consideration of further early intervention and diversionary programs for younger youth offenders is important, particularly given the relative persistence and increasing severity of their offending as they age (T. Moffitt, 1993; Mulder et al., 2011; Piquero & Chung, 2001).

Many young offenders have poor engagement with the education system. Due to the protective role of education and the young age of this cohort, it is imperative that services focus on re-engagement with education. Young offenders may benefit from being linked in with youth

workers who specialise in, or prioritise, re-engagement with the educational community for at-risk youth. One such program addressing educational engagement is the Achievement Mentoring Program (AMP), also known as the Behavioural Monitoring and Reinforcement Program, operating in the United States (Centre for Supportive Schools, 2015). The AMP is a school-based early intervention program focusing on high-risk students from Grades 4 through to 11. The program utilises cognitive-behavioural training and individualised incentive-based strategies to improve academic performance, decrease delinquency and truancy and minimise substance use. Students meet with a professionally trained staff member (teacher, social worker, counsellor, etc.) for a weekly 40-minute small-group session and/or weekly 20-minute individual sessions. Students receive weekly feedback regarding attendance, classroom behaviour and academic achievement, with positive behaviour being awarded points on a weekly basis. These points then allow students to attend a full-day excursion away from school, towards the end of the academic year. This intervention ideally lasts for two years, with staff communicating with teachers and caregivers on a weekly basis to provide updates on the student's engagement. Shorter interventions have also been shown to have some benefit (Holt, Bry, & Johnson, 2008). The program can be easily integrated into a standard school setting or offered as an after-school program and has shown promising results. Outcomes pertaining to children aged 12–14 years of age showed significantly lower rates of illegal drug use, higher school attendance and decreased criminal activity at the one-year follow-up (Centre for Supportive Schools, 2015). Similarly, young

people participating in this program were 66% less likely to have a juvenile criminal record after five years. A cost-benefit analysis conducted by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy showed the program costs per individual were US\$1,342, compared with the program benefits per individual of US\$9,441. Therefore, significant individual and economic benefits have been derived from this school-based early intervention program for high-risk younger youth.

A further possibility for early intervention with this cohort is to focus on teaching younger individuals with behavioural problems, and their parents, strategies pertaining to emotional regulation, self-control and problem-solving. The Stop Now and Plan (SNAP) program is one such evidence-based program. SNAP was developed in Canada in 1985 for boys aged under 12 years who were in trouble with the law (Augimeri, Walsh, & Slater, 2011). The primary aim of SNAP is to improve the child's capacity to stop and think before they act, thereby increasing the likelihood they will stay out of trouble and in school. The program uses a cognitive-behavioural model that provides the framework for facilitating educational interventions to both children and their parents. Evaluation of the SNAP program for young boys aged 6–11 years at risk for violence and delinquency demonstrated positive results (Burke & Loeber, 2015). The children in the SNAP program showed a significant decrease in aggression, conduct issues and overall externalising behaviour, as well as a reduction in oppositional defiant disorder traits and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) symptoms. SNAP did not significantly reduce overall juvenile justice involvement; however, youth engaged in this program received significantly fewer

criminal charges compared to those engaged with standard services. Further, youth engaged with SNAP showed more clinically meaningful and targeted reductions in problem behaviour than those receiving standard services (Burke & Loeber, 2015).

Further interventions addressing the specific needs of this group may focus on improving the quality and stability of the young person's familial/social connection and trauma history.

5.4. Female youth

Females enter the justice system less frequently than males; however, research has suggested those who do enter the justice system have higher rates of mental health issues, socioeconomic disadvantage and trauma than their male counterparts (Kerig & Schindler, 2013; King et al., 2011; Roe-Sepowitz, 2009). Further, the association between age at first offence and likelihood of reoffending was more significant for female offenders than for male offenders (Sentencing Advisory Council, 2016). Females who first entered the criminal justice system aged 10–12 years were four times more likely to reoffend than those who entered the system aged 19–20 years. Similarly, while the prevalence of male youth offenders is 6.5 times that of their female counterparts, the two cohorts are seen to reoffend at similar rates (49% for males compared to 44% for females) (Armytage & Ogloff, 2017). The paucity of research for female offenders means the majority of early intervention, diversionary and other justice-based programs are centred upon the risks

MST and Functional Family Therapy (FFT) (both explored in section 6.1, Family-based interventions) are two therapeutic models shown to be effective early intervention strategies for at-risk youth, as well as effective at reducing recidivism (J. F. a. H. B. W. Alexander, Michael S. Robbins, Andrea A. Neeb., 2013; Schaeffer, McCart, W. Henggeler, & Cunningham, 2010).

and needs of male offenders. Although these risks and needs are similar for both male and female youth, there are inherent differences and responsivity issues present among the female youth offender population.

Gender differences have been found to exist regarding rates of poor mental health, trauma and familial discord (King et al., 2011; Roe-Sepowitz, 2009). For example, in one study comparing male and female juvenile detainees charged with homicide, females were found to have significantly higher rates of depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety and suicidal ideation than males (Roe-Sepowitz, 2009). These mental health problems coincided with female detainees experiencing a more chaotic lifestyle than their male counterparts, characterised by high rates of childhood maltreatment, substance use and familial conflict. King et al. (2011) reported that, among females, sexual abuse was associated with every type of psychiatric disorder. The study found that 41% of females and 11% of males had experienced sexual abuse; however,

this differed significantly with official reported rates obtained from child protection services, which indicated only 1% of females and 0.1% of males had experienced this form of abuse (King et al., 2011). Among participants who reported sexual abuse, 90% suffered from a psychiatric disorder. This is a significant factor to consider when developing diversion and early intervention programs for young female offenders, as abuse – particularly sexual abuse – is rarely disclosed to its full extent and can increase the prevalence of other criminogenic factors, such as substance use. The link between childhood abuse, offending and substance use is significant. Papalia, Ogloff, Cutajar, and Mullen (2018) explored the impact of child sexual abuse on criminal offending among an Australian sample of 2,759 documented cases of sexual abuse and 2,677 community controls, with a follow-up period of 13–44 years. This large longitudinal study found substance use disorder was a particularly prevalent phenomenon among female victims, and one which increased the odds of later offending by up to 14 times than that experienced by those not using substances (Papalia et al., 2018). Substance use disorders were further found to be strongly associated with all types of offending, except for sexual offending, among both male and female victims of childhood sexual abuse (Papalia et al., 2018).

In order to elucidate the needs of female youth offenders, Garcia and Lane (2013) conducted a gender-specific focus group study with at-risk females residing in state care, detention and shelter care. Researchers found the girls self-identified their key pathways to getting into trouble as drugs, sex and pregnancy, boyfriends, and fighting (not with parents). A relatively high proportion of girls (approximately 45%)

viewed pregnancy as a means to gain legal independence and escape from adverse family situations. Similarly, boyfriends influencing and pressuring the girls into making poor decisions was a common theme, as was physical fighting and relational aggression with other females. Specific to offending, the girls cited drug/alcohol use and possession, assault (often on parents) and running away as being key factors leading to arrest. Regarding programming for female youth, the girls in state facilities identified grief and loss and sexual abuse counselling to be particularly helpful (Garcia & Lane, 2013).

5.4.1. Intervention strategies and service engagement

Regarding specific early intervention and diversionary programs targeted at female youth, there is minimal research or even development of such programs, particularly within Australia. The majority of the available diversionary and early intervention programs are gender non-specific, with the general target group being male. Early intervention and diversionary programs for female youth offenders may be similar to those of male offenders; however, mental health, trauma history, substance use and interpersonal connection need to be prioritised. One gender-specific early intervention program targeted at female youth is the KEEP SAFE program, developed and trialled in the United States. The KEEP SAFE program is a six-session group-based intervention targeted towards female youth in foster care. The girls and their carers each attend separate group-based programs twice weekly for three weeks. The program aims to prevent behaviours that could lead to deleterious long-term outcomes such as substance use, high-risk

sexual behaviours and delinquency. The young people are taught about goal-setting, establishing positive relationships, decision-making, problem-solving and self-confidence. In parallel, foster parents are encouraged to maintain stability for the young people, providing positive behavioural reinforcement, setting realistic expectations and preparing the girls for upcoming educational progression. Follow-up sessions are provided once per week for two hours to both the foster parents and the young people for one year as the girls progress from primary school through to early high school. Outcomes from the KEEP SAFE program demonstrated a reduction in internalising and externalising behavioural issues at six months, increased placement stability at twelve months, decreased substance use at two years post-intervention, and decreased likelihood of engaging in risky sexual behaviour at two years post-intervention (Kim & Leve, 2011).

One further early intervention program targeted specifically for young females is the Stop Now and Plan Girls Connection program (SNAP® GC; Child Development Institute, 2007). This program is based on the SNAP program previously mentioned for intervention with younger youth. The SNAP-GC program is targeted at preadolescent girls aged 6–12 years who show high levels of aggression and are at risk of delinquency. Similar to the original SNAP program for children and younger youth, the SNAP-GC program utilised cognitive-behavioural methods to teach self-control, strategies to manage anger, and social skills and interpersonal problem-solving skills to both the girls and their caregivers. Evaluation of SNAP-GC showed significant improvements in the girls' behavioural, social and emotional issues

one year post-intervention. Similarly, significant improvement in parenting skills, particularly relating to parental consistency, effectiveness and appropriate discipline were noted (Rubin-Vaughan, Pepler, Walsh, Levene, & Yuile, 2012).

Further research pertaining to young female offenders suggests assessment of the individual's trauma history, as well as the resultant impact upon her psychological state and self-medication through substance use, needs to be considered prior to the commencement of any intervention (Kerig & Schindler, 2013). These factors will lay the foundation to determine whether the individual is capable of engaging and developing a sense of trust with treatment facilitators. Further, consideration to the presence of interpersonal problems and familial conflict are important factors to consider when developing interventions for young female offenders, as are strategies to improve emotion regulation and interpersonal problem-solving (Kerig & Schindler, 2013). Due to female offenders being more likely to commit offences against intimate partners or other people closest to them, the interpersonal dynamic is an important consideration, not only for therapeutic intervention, but also in future risk assessment (Armytage & Ogloff, 2017). Early intervention and diversionary programs targeted specifically at young female offenders should consider focusing on safety, strengths-building and addressing the individual's trauma history therapeutically. Specifically, appropriate interventions may include female-only groups and/or individualised therapy, as well as the modelling of healthy relationships by facilitators (Andrews, Bonta, & Wormith, 2006; Armytage & Ogloff, 2017).

5.5. Youth with disabilities and neurocognitive differences

Cognitive and intellectual impairments are key responsivity issues for young people engaged in the youth justice system. Academic literature and government statistics show a significant overrepresentation of those with learning disorders, acquired brain injuries, low intelligence, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD), ADHD and other neurocognitive issues within the justice system (Belcher, 2014; Bower et al., 2018; Commission, 2014; Stenhjem, 2005). For example, according to a report released by the Youth Parole Board in 2018, 41% of young offenders involved with youth justice presented with cognitive impairments significant enough to affect daily functioning. However, only 16% had a diagnosed intellectual disability, while 3% were assessed to have autism spectrum disorder (ASD) (Youth Parole Board, 2018). Further, 14.2% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–14 years were identified as having a disability, compared to 6.6% of their non-Aboriginal counterparts. Therefore, due to the fact that many young people with cognitive impairments enter the youth justice system having never received a formal diagnosis, the implementation and use of a short screening measure for possible cognitive impairment would be beneficial.

The Australian Human Rights Commission released a report into Disability Justice Strategies in 2014. The report suggested diversionary measures for disabled offenders are underutilised, not available or ineffective due to lack of appropriate resources. Similarly, people with disabilities are significantly less likely to be granted bail, are more likely to breach the conditions of their bail due to lack

of understanding and are less likely to have secure accommodation. The risks are magnified for young offenders with such impairments, as there are also the added challenges associated with the developing adolescent brain, including poor response inhibition, reduced emotional regulation capacity and greater susceptibility to peer influence (M. Baldwin, Chablani-Medley, A., Marques, L., Schiraldi, V., Valentine, S. E., & Zeira, Y., 2018). These factors all leave the disabled individual at a higher risk of reoffending and victimisation, as there is currently a paucity of adequate supports and services for these individuals. Similarly, of the services that are available, the report shows there is chronic underutilisation of such services, leaving young people increasingly vulnerable before the law.

5.5.1. Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) is a pervasive neurodevelopmental impairment resulting from prenatal alcohol exposure. Although not officially recognised as a disability in Australia, individuals with the condition experience permanent impairments in executive functioning, memory, language, attention and learning (Policy & Affairs, 2012). FASD is currently an underrecognised condition and it is infrequently diagnosed. Bower et al. (2018) conducted a prevalence study among young people aged 10–17 years sentenced to detention in Western Australia. The study involved participants undergoing a multidisciplinary assessment, with the primary outcome to determine a diagnosis of FASD, according to the *Australian Guide to the Diagnosis of FASD*. The sample included 99 young people, with findings suggesting 89% (n = 88) had at least

one domain of severe neurodevelopmental impairment, and 36% (n = 36) met diagnostic criteria for FASD. Premji, Benzies, Serrett, and Hayden (2007) conducted a review into the literature surrounding interventions for high-risk young people identified as having FASD. The review considered a total of 40 peer-reviewed and 23 grey literature databases, with a total of 10 intervention studies being identified and included in the analysis. Overall, interventions considered in the studies included the use of psychostimulant medication and Cognitive Control Therapy. Researchers concluded there to be limited scientific evidence regarding efficacious interventions for young people with FASD (Premji et al., 2007). This lack of targeted intervention becomes even more significant for affected young people involved with the criminal justice system, due to their overrepresentation and increased vulnerability. Therefore, screening for FASD and other neurocognitive impairments within the community and prior to adjudication is imperative if interventions are to be effective. The Alexis FASD Justice Program, operating out of a rural Canadian town, is doing just this (Flannigan, Pei, Rasmussen, Potts, & O’Riordan, 2018). The program utilises a multidisciplinary approach, employing information from neurocognitive assessments of individuals suspected of having FASD to inform court decisions (Flannigan et al., 2018). Although this program is designed exclusively for adult offenders, the program has the potential to be integrated into existing youth justice approaches.

5.5.2. Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and learning disorders

Other neurodevelopmental disorders are also

frequently seen in youth entering the justice system. Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) affects one in twenty Australians and is characterised by inattention, distractibility, hyperactivity and impulsivity. Young people with ADHD are at significantly greater risk of entering the criminal justice system. This is because the symptoms that characterise the disorder are added onto the pre-existing difficulties that typify adolescence, including poor response inhibition, reduced emotion regulation and susceptibility to peer influence. Despite the overrepresentation of young offenders with ADHD, and the fact that affected individuals tend to offend at a younger age and have higher rates of recidivism, there are no specialised early intervention or diversionary programs targeting this issue. General interventions relating to ADHD frequently utilise psychotropic medications, behavioural modification and educational and parenting strategies. When considering early intervention and diversion strategies for youth with ADHD, it is imperative to include a prosocial component. Psychosocial treatments for non-offending individuals with ADHD aim to improve executive functioning (e.g. time management, problem-solving, organisation, etc.) and manage impulsivity (Harpin & Young, 2012). Although these strategies are also important for those with ADHD who offend, the acquisition of such skills may improve antisocial capability by improving executive functioning and attentional capacity in relation to their offending behaviour (Harpin & Young, 2012). Therefore, interventions with ADHD individuals need to implement prosocial components, such as helping and cooperating with others, volunteering and engaging in empathy-building exercises. One such

intervention is the Reasoning and Rehabilitation (R&R2) program for youths and adults with ADHD who offend (Ross, 2015). The program for youth is a brief, manualised 12-session program for youths aged 13–16, targeting antisocial behaviour of those who are currently under youth justice supervision, as well as those who have not yet been adjudicated. Tong and Farrington (2006) conducted a meta-analysis regarding the effectiveness of the R&R program across four countries, finding it to be effective in both institutional and community settings, and for both high- and low-risk offenders. Overall, there was a 14% reduction in recidivism for those who engaged with the program compared to controls (Tong & Farrington, 2006).

Learning disorders have also been shown to be highly prevalent among young offenders (Larson & Turner, 2002; Morris & Morris, 2006). One study examining the link between criminal offending and learning disabilities among male New Zealand youth offenders found 91.67% of the offenders showed significant difficulties in at least one area of achievement, with the average reading comprehension score falling at the 4th percentile (Rucklidge, McLean, & Bateup, 2013). Reading comprehension was shown to have some predictive capacity regarding rate, seriousness and persistence of reoffending, even after controlling for delinquency and estimated intelligence (Rucklidge et al., 2013). Grigorenko (2006) similarly found a strong relationship between learning disorders and juvenile delinquency, showing that young people with learning disorders and lower academic ability demonstrated higher levels of defiance, impulsivity, disruptiveness, antisocial behaviour and delinquency.

5.5.3. Autism spectrum disorder

The prevalence of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) among incarcerated youth is still largely unknown. The review by Mouridsen (2012) suggests individuals with ASD are not necessarily more likely to commit offences; however, it is noted that no comprehensive studies of individuals with ASD are available. Similarly, the majority of research exploring ASD in the context of offending and the justice system focuses on adult populations, leaving little to no research directed specifically at young offenders with ASD, specifically in relation to early intervention and diversion programs. Therefore, development and implementation of future programs should consider the following the specific risks and needs identified for this group, such as those outlined by Pearce and Berney (2016):

- Poor emotion regulation, exacerbated by likely sensory sensitivity and impulsivity, leads to emotional arousal which has the potential to be violent. Besides skill-building exercises to reduce stress, adapted dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT) may be useful to aid emotion regulation.
- Difficulty judging the responses of others, reading social cues, interpreting social rules and difficulty with intuitive empathy can affect a young person with ASD's perception of what is socially acceptable, which people are friends and which are not, showing and feeling remorse and empathy for antisocial behaviour, and understanding social nuances. Therefore, it is important to explicitly teach young people with ASD the basic social rules, as well as conscious

empathy. These skills should be taught to individuals with ASD in a similar manner to the way in which neurotypical children are taught reading and writing.

- Individuals with ASD frequently find it difficult to think beyond the immediate consequences and divert their attention away from a focal interest. This can result in an individual with ASD failing to consider societal rules and social cues, potentially leading to behaviours such as the stalking of a lover, theft of items they desperately want, and accumulating pornography. Therefore, skills-based interventions requiring the individual with ASD to consciously consider the consequences of their actions are imperative.
- Social isolation is common among individuals with ASD and can be a particular risk factor for those already at risk of offending. Individuals with ASD may seek social acceptance by being overly compliant or excessively controlling, both of which may result in offending behaviour. Therefore, the individual once again needs to be educated around social relationships, particularly about what is and is not acceptable behaviour.

Youth with disabilities and other neurocognitive difficulties identified as being at-risk require a comprehensive and collaborative approach to intervention and diversion. Larson and Turner (2002) identified evidence-based approaches for early intervention and diversion among at-risk youth with disabilities. Approaches include assessing the specific skills and needs of the young person and their support network, developing a plan involving clear goals pertaining

to multiple facets of the young person's life, changing goals as the youth progresses or fails to progress, providing opportunities to improve academic and vocational skills, and providing social skills training to improve prosocial relationship development. Further, this cohort may also need to be connected with drug treatment programs and receive regular medical and/or psychological reviews. Family participation in this process is integral, as is education of the family around the risks and needs of the young person (Larson & Turner, 2002). Further focuses of intervention and diversion for young people with disabilities include comprehensive transition planning and the implementation of a wrap-around service model to ensure the young person and their family is appropriately supported, thereby reducing the potential for ongoing antisocial behaviour (Stenhjem, 2005).

Due to the highly varied nature of disabilities and neurocognitive issues presenting to community and correctional services, there cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach. The chronic overrepresentation of young offenders with neurocognitive impairments in custody suggests the need for targeted intervention focusing on simple, concrete and age-appropriate activities. Similarly, some individuals may benefit more from behavioural-based (rather than cognitive) strategies, with a focus on repetition of basic concepts, learning new skills and a move away from the use of abstract ideas (Armytage & Ogloff, 2017). Therefore, due to the complex and varying nature of many cognitive impairments, it is imperative that early intervention and diversionary programs undertake comprehensive cognitive assessments as part of their risk-needs formulation process, and tailor interventions accordingly.

5.6. LGBTIQ youth

Many young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer or questioning (LGBTIQ) experience discrimination, social stigma and abuse from their peers, family and community members (Morandini, Blaszczyński, Dar-Nimrod & Ross, 2015). This can lead to an array of negative outcomes for some LGBTIQ young people, including family conflict, homelessness, school dropout, educational difficulties and criminal behaviour (Garnette, Irvine, Reyes & Wilber, 2011). International studies have consistently indicated increasing rates of imprisonment of young LGBTIQ people (Belknap et al., 2013). In Australia, where increasing numbers of young people are being detained (Australian Institute of Health and Wellness [AIHW], 2015), and increasing numbers of young people are identifying as LGBTIQ (Hillier et al., 2010; Robinson, Bansel, Denson, Ovenden & Davies, 2014), there is a need to understand young LGBTIQ people's offending trajectory and how to best keep at-risk young LGBTIQ people from entering the Youth Justice (YJ) system.

There appears to be a paucity of research investigating the offending behaviours and criminal trajectories of LGBTIQ young people in Australia (Asquith, Dwyer & Simpson, 2018). Consequently, there are very few insights into crime prevention and early intervention strategies designed to keep at-risk young LGBTIQ people from entering the YJ system. In this case, it may be useful to identify the common or unique issues faced by young LGBTIQ Australians, and any established relationships between these issues and offending behaviour. Furthermore, it is important to identify the factors that may assist in establishing meaningful service

engagement and an effective working alliance with this population. This information may help to inform the development and implementation of early intervention strategies aimed to keep at-risk young LGBTIQ people from entering the YJ system.

5.6.1. Common issues faced by young LGBTIQ people

Homelessness and family rejection

Homelessness is a commonly identified issue among LGBTIQ young people both in Australia and internationally, with research indicating an overrepresentation of sexually diverse young people among populations with recent or current experiences of homelessness (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014; Corliss, Goodenow, Nicholis & Austin, 2011; Gaetz, O'Grady, Kidd & Schwan, 2016; McNair, Andrews, Parkinson & Dempsey, 2017). In Canada and the United States, it has been suggested that between 20% and 40% of the homeless youth population consists of young LGBTIQ people (Corliss et al., 2011; Durso & Gates, 2012; Gaetz et al., 2016). In Australia, a recent study (McNair et al., 2017) indicated that LGBTIQ participants were twice as likely as those who identified as heterosexual to experience homelessness, and were more likely to experience homelessness at a younger age. It has been suggested that this overrepresentation is an outcome of a range of factors, such as homophobia and transphobia in communities, families and schools, making it difficult for young LGBTIQ people to remain at home (Gaetz et al., 2016).

The pathway to homelessness for LGBTIQ

young people is complex, often arising from a combination of individual vulnerabilities and societal inequalities (McNair et al., 2017). Family rejection, conflict and relationship breakdowns as a result of gender identity or sexual orientation have been identified as key contributors to LGBTIQ youth homelessness in Australia (Asquith, Dwyer & Simpson, 2018; McNair et al., 2017). Other reported factors include substance abuse, unemployment, family violence and mental health issues (McNair et al., 2017).

To date, the link between homelessness and offending behaviour among LGBTIQ young people remains ill-explored. Existing studies have proposed that among LGBTIQ young people who are homeless, there may be an absence of factors that protect against the onset of criminal behaviour, such as a supportive family network and stable housing (Asquith et al., 2018; Garnette et al., 2011). Specifically, it has been suggested that high rates of homelessness in LGBTIQ young people may lead to participation in 'survival crimes' such as drug dealing and abuse, property theft (Asquith et al., 2018), violence (Ferguson, Bender & Thompson, 2016) and, in some cases, prostitution (Irvine, 2010). Richards and Dwyer (2017) further suggested that while homeless, these young people spend more time on the streets and within public spaces, and are thus subject to high levels of policing and subsequent involvement with Youth Justice agencies.

In Victoria, there are a selection of services aimed at addressing youth homelessness, but little provide focused assistance to LGBTIQ young people, nor address offending behaviour specifically. One study (McNair et al., 2017) explored the LGBTIQ-specific needs and

experiences within services aimed at addressing homelessness in Victoria. The major barriers reported as preventing LGBT participants from accessing homelessness services included fears of and actual prior negative experiences within such services. Many participants highlighted the need to be acknowledged by services and recognised as LGBTIQ, and the expectation to feel safe and secure within these settings. Researchers suggested that to improve the level of access and overall experience for LGBTIQ people within homelessness and housing services, there is a need for services to demonstrate their commitment to inclusive practice, be aware of the complex needs of LGBTIQ people and place clients in facilities appropriate to their self-identified gender (McNair et al., 2017). It may be suggested that addressing accessibility to safe services for homeless LGBTIQ young people could provide some protective factors against criminal behaviour (i.e., housing, supportive social networks) and assist in removing these young people from circumstances commonly associated with offending behaviour.

Mental health and substance abuse

It is well established that compared to heterosexual young people, LGBTIQ youth experience higher rates of mental health problems (Robinson et al., 2014). Past meta-analytic studies have revealed that in comparison to heterosexual participants, LGBTIQ young people reported significantly elevated levels of depressive symptomology, suicidal ideations, suicide attempts and substance abuse (Marshal, Dietz, Friedman, Stall & Smith, 2011; Marshal et al., 2008). Specifically, an Australian study

revealed that more than two in five sexually diverse young people had had suicidal thoughts or thoughts of self-harm, with 33% reporting they had self-harmed previously, and 16% reporting instances of attempted suicide (Robinson et al., 2014). Risk factors – such as family conflict or maltreatment, stigma and discrimination, bullying and violence – have been commonly identified as important reasons for the mental health disparities observed in the LGBTIQ youth population (Hillier et al., 2010).

Australian and international research has also suggested that LGBTIQ young people engage in higher than average rates of substance abuse than their sexual-majority peers, including alcohol, tobacco and illicit substances (Kelly, Davis & Schlesinger, 2015). In a recent report published by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW, 2016), researchers revealed that homosexual and bisexual Australians were more likely than heterosexual people to use illicit drugs, misuse pharmaceuticals and consume alcohol at risky quantities. Some researchers have identified drug use and other drug-related offences within LGBTIQ populations as an attempt to cope with mental health problems associated with strains such as trauma, victimisation and family exile related to an individual's sexual and/or gender identity (Hillier et al., 2010; Kelly et al., 2015).

5.6.2. Intervention strategies and service engagement

In 2016, Queensland Youth Justice collaborated with leading LGBTIQ organisations and Youth Justice Services to establish an overarching Youth Justice LGBTIQ Inclusion Framework (AIHW, 2016). The Framework was aimed to address

the observed gap regarding the way in which services were informed, safe and responsive to the specific needs and risks faced by LGBTIQ young Australians. The Framework aimed to support Youth Justice staff to work effectively and responsively with young people identifying as LGBTIQ. Within detention facilities, this included allowing those who identify as transgender or intersex to request the gender of the staff member that they would feel most comfortable being searched by. It is also mandatory for all Queensland Youth Justice staff to undertake training regarding LGBTIQ awareness and working with LGBTIQ young people in a respectful and supportive way (AIHW, 2016). To date, however, there has been no empirical investigation into the impact of the Framework in regards to the experience of LGBTIQ young people within the YJ system, or any association with offending behaviours within this population.

Additionally, there appears to be little investigation into the development and effectiveness of early intervention strategies specifically aimed at minimising the risk of young LGBTIQ individuals entering the Australian youth justice system. Drawing on previous research of LGBTIQ youth experiences within the justice system, some researchers (Garnette et al., 2011; McNair et al., 2017; Wilber et al., 2006) have provided common recommendations for juvenile justice and service personnel surrounding effective service development and engagement with young LGBTIQ people:

- To allow these young people to feel comfortable in seeking services, researchers describe a need to create a safe and inclusive

culture within schools, housing services, detention facilities and treatment programs that accepts and nurtures all young people of different race, ability, language, sexuality and gender identity. Researchers also note the importance of appropriate intervention when staff members violate these principles (Garnette et al., 2011; McNair et al., 2017).

- Juvenile justice agencies should develop and implement policies that prohibit discrimination based on sexual and/or gender identity against LGBTIQ young people in the system, and provide young people with a copy of the policy (Garnette et al., 2011).
- Training should be provided to all relevant staff (service providers, court staff, detention staff, etc.) to ensure they are informed of appropriate vocabulary and definitions relevant to LGBTIQ youth. They should also be informed of the myths, stigma, stereotypes and common issues faced by this population (i.e. homelessness, victimisation, mental health issues), and how these factors may have contributed to their offending trajectory, and community services available to LGBTIQ young people and their families (Garnette et al., 2011; Wilber et al., 2006).
- Given the lack of family support received by many young people identifying as LGBTIQ, it may be beneficial for services to assist young people to create positive networks that could provide the support not offered by families (Garnette et al., 2011).
- The service should be visibly welcoming and accepting of young people who are LGBTIQ. This includes webpages, signage and posters

that signify the service is a safe place for LGBTIQ individuals (Byron et al., 2017).

While it is important that services are informed and responsive to the unique risk factors that present themselves to young people identifying as LGBTIQ, it is also important to consider the specific needs and experiences reported by LGBTIQ young people themselves when accessing support services. Some commonly identified barriers preventing LGBTIQ young people in Australia from accessing health care, housing and other services include: experiences of lack of safety in these settings (harassment, violence and inappropriate gender placement), failure of services to enquire or identify LGBTIQ status, a fear of confidentiality breaches, and a lack of staff awareness surrounding the specific needs of LGBTIQ young people (McNair et al., 2017; Byron et al., 2017). One study (Byron et al., 2017) investigated the experiences of young LGBTIQ people when accessing mental health support services in Australia. Participant's accounts of positive experiences in these settings typically involved a non-judgemental, open-minded, client-centred and attentive health professional. Participants also noted they were more likely to feel safe and comfortable with a professional who had an understanding of the unique challenges faced by this population and experience in working with LGBTIQ young people. Furthermore, many participants felt that young people themselves should set the agenda as to how and when their gender, sexual identity and intersex status should feature in service consultations (Byron et al., 2017). Consideration of these needs and experiences when developing early intervention programs may assist in

engaging young LGBTIQ people in such services.

Currently, very little research exists in Australia regarding the unique issues faced by LGBTIQ young people, their offending trajectories and the effectiveness of services aimed to reduce the risk of these young people entering the Youth Justice System. As such, it may be valuable to consider the factors that have been associated with offending behaviour in young LGBTIQ Australians (such as homelessness, family conflict and substance abuse), and how these factors may be addressed within early intervention programs. Additionally, consideration of the barriers, needs and experiences expressed by LGBTIQ young people when accessing services may be helpful in establishing programs that are accessible, safe, inclusive and encourage an effective working alliance within this population.

A summary of recommendations for working with priority groups is presented in Appendix 1.

6. Case management

6.1. Effective case management

The role of case management in youth justice has typically been poorly defined, and there is wide variation in the interpretation and application of the term throughout the literature and in practice (Turner, 2012). Generally speaking, correctional case management consists of two equally important functions: supervising offenders and facilitating behavioural/psychological change (Turner, 2010, in Purvis, Ward, & Shaw, 2013), with the overall aim of reducing the risks posed by offenders and ensuring community safety. In practical terms, case management typically includes a comprehensive assessment of an offender's risk factors and psychological needs, leading to the formulation and coordination of an intervention plan. Thus, case management may include tasks such as assessment, planning, coordination, monitoring, reviewing and evaluation.

There is currently little empirical evidence regarding the impact of different elements of case management and/or supervision on recidivism, particularly for young offenders (Trotter, Baidawi, & Evans, 2015). It does seem, however, that while community supervision on its own does little to reduce recidivism (Bonta, Rugge, Scott, Bourgon, & Yessine, 2008; Lipsey & Cullen, 2007), when supervision is combined with rehabilitative approaches (such as social casework or criminogenic treatment), there is a significant reduction in recidivism (Aos, Miller, & Drake, 2006; Pappozzi & Gendreau, 2005).

Much of the literature in this area has focused on the skills required for case managers to

work effectively with offenders. Five dimensions of effective correctional practice, known as Core Correctional Practices, are thought to be particularly relevant to the case management of adult offenders (Dowden & Andrews, 2004). These are outlined below.

Effective use of authority: The first dimension refers to a 'firm but fair' approach when interacting with offenders. In a case management setting, this involves clearly and respectfully setting out the relevant rules and restrictions on the offender, seeking compliance while avoiding any abuse of power.

Prosocial modelling: The second dimension involves appropriate modelling and reinforcement of prosocial attitudes and behaviours, as well as effectively communicating disapproval of antisocial behaviours.

Problem-solving strategies: The third dimension involves teaching concrete problem-solving skills to the offender, such as identifying problems, implementing plans, clarifying goals and generating alternative solutions. Problem-solving strategies are used to address interpersonal and emotional problems as well as more practical problems such as those involving work and accommodation.

Effective use of community resources: The fourth dimension refers to advocacy and/or brokerage on the part of the case manager through active involvement in arranging community services for the offender. This, of course, necessarily involves the availability of sufficient resources to utilise. It

is also thought that caseworkers in organisations that are well integrated with community service providers are more likely to engage with their clients in a service-oriented manner.

Interpersonal relationship factors: Finally, the fifth dimension refers to the importance of the case manager maintaining a relationship with the offender that is positive; warm; respectful; and characterised by directive, solution-focused communication.

A meta-analysis by Chadwick, Dewolf, and Serin (2015) examined these practices in a community supervision context. Having reviewed ten studies that examined outcomes of training, they found that offenders who were supervised by officers trained in these five practices were significantly less likely to reoffend than those supervised by officers who had not received this training. The difference in recidivism rates was found to be approximately 13%.

An Australian study by Trotter (2012) examined the relationship between the use of effective practice skills by juvenile justice caseworkers and the reoffence rates of their clients. The practice skills consisted of 16 groups of skills including set-up of the interview, structure of the interview, role clarification, needs analysis, problem-solving, developing strategies, relapse prevention, cognitive-behavioural techniques, prosocial modelling and reinforcement, nature of the relationship, empathy, confrontation, termination, use of referral and community resources, nonverbal cues and incidental conversations. The study found that, when controlling for offender risk level, clients of workers who exhibited few of these skills

reoffended at a higher rate than clients of workers who displayed more skills. In particular, the use of rewards and a non-blaming approach appeared to have the strongest associations with the reoffending rates of clients.

Trotter et al. (2015) conducted several focus groups with members of the Juvenile Justice Aboriginal Strategic Advisory Committee in NSW with the aim of determining principles for effective supervision with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. Five themes were identified and are outlined below.

Culturally informed communication: The importance of using culturally informed communication was the predominant theme arising from focus groups. This involves using respectful, clear, simple language to facilitate effective supervision, avoiding the use of jargon or complex theoretical terms. It was considered good practice to seek feedback from clients in relation to complex ideas. It was also considered important to be aware that certain language and words may have different meanings for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Finally, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are more comfortable using 'side by side' body language in place of direct eye contact.

Valuing Aboriginal knowledge: An Aboriginal-informed approach to supervision involves learning from Aboriginal staff about good practice.

The importance of a working relationship: The relationship between the worker and the young person requires attention, particularly with

regards to building trust and respect. This is inherently difficult in the context of youth justice work, where time limitations and the general nature of the work can hinder the development of trusting relationships.

The significance of family: The role and significance of family in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities was a key theme in the focus groups, as in previous research. Any family-based interventions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth justice clients should be developed and implemented alongside the relevant communities.

Highlighting strengths and achievements: These focus groups also identified the importance of using a strengths-based approach with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This is consistent with an approach that values self-determination and empowerment, as well as one that utilises prosocial modelling.

Given that these themes were generated by focus groups with a sample of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders working in one particular area, they may not be generalisable to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. However, they do provide a starting point for understanding approaches to building relationships within case management that may be useful.

Several Australian jurisdictions have implemented case management schemes over the past few years in communities with high levels of youth offending. Two of these schemes, which have been implemented in communities with relatively high numbers of Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander young offenders, will be reviewed here.

6.1.1. Youth on Track (NSW)

Youth on Track (YOT) is a voluntary early intervention scheme that began in NSW in 2013 (NSW Department of Justice, 2016). YOT provides a system of case management for young people over 10 years of age who have been identified as at risk of long-term offending, or who have already offended (NSW Attorney General & Justice, 2012). The scheme separates legal outcomes from intervention and allows young people and their families to receive case management and other services from an earlier point than would otherwise be the case. It aims to: reduce further contact with the police and the justice system; offer support in a timely manner; address the young person's criminogenic needs and risks through coordinated evidence-based and offence-focused interventions; increase access to and awareness of support services, education, employment, health and other community services; enhance engagement in learning, social and community activities; and strengthen positive relationships between young people and their parent/carer and/or supportive community members (Cultural & Indigenous Research Centre Australia, 2017). YOT has six key stages (NSW Department of Justice, 2016):

- 1. Referral and screening** – Young people are eligible for YOT if they are 10–17 years of age, offend or go to school in one of the YOT sites, and have never received a supervised court order. Young people may be referred on a discretionary basis by NSW Police Youth Liaison Officers or local schools if they have

had at least one formal contact with the police and a number of offending risk factors. However, they may also be automatically referred using the police database if they have at least two formal contacts with police and are at 60% or greater change of reoffending.

- 2. Engagement** – The YOT caseworker works with NSW police, local schools, community groups and other stakeholders to locate and engage young people and their families. YOT provides comprehensive guidelines for caseworkers on barriers and strategies to engaging clients (NSW Department of Justice, 2018).
- 3. Assessment** – The YOT caseworker uses the Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory Australian Adaptation (YLS/CMI-AA) to identify criminogenic needs and inform the young person's case management plan. The Child and Adolescent Intellectual Disability Screening Questionnaire (CAIDS-Q) is also used to indicate whether the young person requires referral to an appropriate service for further assessment.
- 4. Case management** – YOT provides individual case management to each young person in the program. A individualised case plan is developed for each young person and their family, addressing their individual risks and needs as identified during the assessment stage. Caseworkers coordinate service delivery, facilitate access to supports and deliver offence-focused interventions.
- 5. Interventions** – The young person is provided access to a range of evidence-

informed interventions, including family-based interventions, behavioural interventions, engagement with education and referrals to additional programs and services as appropriate.

- 6. Exit planning** – Exit planning is provided for young people when their caseworker identifies through the YLS/CMI-AA that they have completed the scheme. Together, the caseworker, young person and their family identify ongoing issues or concerns, and the caseworker helps to facilitate access to ongoing community supports where required.

When YOT commenced in 2013 it was run across three sites. In 2016 this was expanded to include three additional sites, with a seventh site due to roll out the scheme in mid-2019 (G. Ward, 2019). The scheme is currently run by Mission Australia in four of these sites, with Social Futures and Centacare each running a site.

A snapshot of data collected by the NSW Department of Justice (2017) from 2013 to 2016 shows that of the 749 young people referred to YOT, less than half (n = 344, 46%) consented to participate in YOT. Of those who participated the majority were male (75%; n = 562) and identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (56%; n = 419). Of the 344 young people who commenced the YOT program less than one-third completed the program (n = 100), representing 13% of the young people referred to YOT. The remaining 244 young people were either: were exited to another service provider (n = 45), current participants (n = 52), or disengaged after participating for anywhere between one week to ten months (n = 165).

Taking a subsample of young people who consented to participate in YOT between January 2015 and December 2016 (n = 195, from 520 or 37% of referrals during the period), close to 90% were assessed as being of medium risk using the YLS/CMI-AA. Of the 195 young people engaged approximately 70% (n = 136, representing 26% of total referrals) of participants stabilised or reduced their offending risk score following three to six months of intervention.

Similar findings were reported in the 2018 snapshot although referral rates increased dramatically, with 916 referrals made to YOT over the year, a number larger than the previous 5 years combined. Of those referred 43% (n = 393) consented to participate (NSW Department of Justice, 2019). Again, the majority of participants were male (77%; n = 302) and identified

as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (57%; n = 224). Of those who participated, 49% (n = 192, representing 21% of referrals) completed YOT. In 2018, again the vast majority (92%) of participating young people were assessed as medium risk of reoffending using the YLS/CMI-AA (n = 361). A subsample of young people who completed the YOT between December 2016 and November 2017 where reported to have shown a relative decrease of almost 40% in average offending rate, following a 4.5 time increase in their average offending rate in the 6-months prior to YOT involvement. The pattern of pre- and post-YOT rate of reoffending is similarly for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and non-Aboriginal young people. Unfortunately, this reduction has not been compared to a match control group receiving

treatment as usual, nor has variation in offending rate reduction by level of risk and/or degree of risk reduction been reported.

The NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research is currently completing a randomised controlled trial for YOT and this evaluation is due to be completed in 2020. The Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia (2017) completed a social evaluation using qualitative interviews, satisfaction surveys and data from YLS/CMI-AA assessments from January 2015 to September 2016. They concluded that YOT contributed to enhanced social outcomes for many participants, particularly due to the scheme's targeting of criminogenic needs. There was a significant improvement in participants' total risk assessment scores at three months and six months, driven largely by improvements in scores in the education/employment and leisure/recreation domains. Results from the satisfaction survey also showed that participants were overwhelmingly positive about their involvement with YOT, particularly with regards to the tailored support provided by caseworkers. Several elements of the scheme were considered to be particularly successful, including: early intervention focus addressing a service gap, capacity to provide holistic and tailored responses, performance of trained and skilled caseworkers and family therapists, capacity to work with families and around family relationships, and collaboration with other services. It was noted, however, that YOT faced some challenges in obtaining referrals (particularly from local schools) and engaging clients in the early stages of the scheme.

6.1.2. Integrated case management (Townsville)

In 2017 the Townsville North Youth Justice Service Centre introduced integrated case management (ICM) as part of a wider 'Community Youth Response' to a perceived increase in youth offending in Townsville (Qld Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women, 2019). The scheme aims to address individual and family risk factors by engaging and providing intervention to high-risk offenders that are subject to supervised court orders, as well as to their families (Pieper et al., 2018). ICM purportedly combines an adaptation of MST (discussed in section 7.1.1), GLM, Collaborative Family Work, RNR principles and offence profiling. Nine principles of ICM are identified (Pieper et al., 2018): finding the fit, focusing on the positives and strengths; increasing responsibility; present-focused, action oriented and well-defined; targeting sequences; developmentally appropriate; continuous effort; evaluation and accountability; and generalisation.

ICM is delivered over a six- to twelve-month period, at which point participants transition to a general case management framework (Pieper et al., 2018). Following an intensive assessment phase utilising the YLS/CMI risk assessment tool, a comprehensive, individually designed intervention plan is developed, with the aim of reducing risk of reoffending and enhancing a young person's capacity for prosocial engagement. Plans address risk factors such as education/employment, recreation and leisure, substance misuse, health, attitudes, behaviours and family support. A caseworker and psychologist assist young people to set goals and use strategies to nurture and promote

strengths to overcome identified obstacles. Caseworkers maintain a small case load of five young offenders and their families, to allow for integrated and intensive case management to be provided. Services are typically delivered via one to two family work sessions per week, in addition to two to three individual sessions with the young offender per week.

ICM recognises cultural connectedness as an important protective factor for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and commits to engaging with services that are culturally respectful, accessible and promote empowerment and self-determination. All ICM staff reportedly possess a detailed knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and sensitivity to the issues experienced by these young people. The overall cultural lens of the program is provided by the Townsville Youth Justice Indigenous Reference Group, Midtha Yallorin Binbi-Wadja.

ICM is currently undergoing a formal evaluation process using Standardised Program Evaluation Protocol, the results of which were expected to be released in early 2019. Pieper et al. (2018) report informal recognised outcomes of the program as including: increased motivation by young people to engage in interventions; increased re-engagement in educational and vocational-based interventions; improved stakeholder relationships, collaboration and coordination; improved engagement with Youth Justice; greater ownership of intervention plans; and increased family functioning.

6.2. Case management within Victoria's Youth Justice System

The Victorian Youth Justice System case-manages young offenders in both custodial and community contexts, with particular focus on promoting community safety, facilitating effective rehabilitation and promoting desistance from crime (Department of Justice and Community Safety, 2019b). Following the independent Youth Justice Review and Strategy: Meeting Needs and Reducing Offending review (Armytage & Ogloff, 2017), \$11.5 million was provided for the Youth Justice System to develop a new case management framework that could be implemented across custodial and community sites. The development of the Youth Justice Case Management Framework (the Framework) allows for consistent case management practice across Youth Justice, ensuring reliable and evidence-based service delivery to young people and the community.

Youth Justice defines case management as 'a collaborative, structured process of assessment, planning, intervention and review that determines and responds to a young person's individual risks and criminogenic needs in order to reduce offending and improve community safety' (Department of Justice and Community Safety, 2019b). Including the broader Youth Justice principles, six principles specifically relate to Youth Justice case management:

- engaging young people
- managing risk
- working with families and community
- reducing offending and promoting desistance
- promoting cultural safety

- collaborating with service partners.

The Youth Justice System recognises case management occurs within a complex, dynamic environment, and that the key components of case management – intake, assessment, planning, intervention, review or closure – do not necessarily occur in a linear fashion. For example, assessment and planning may change as new information is received, while interventions may require modifications depending upon the changing risks and needs of the young person. Youth Justice case managers are required to develop a comprehensive case plan, which provides a clear framework to facilitate behavioural change through evidence-based interventions with the young person. Interventions are based on four core practice approaches, including the utilisation of:

- cognitive-behavioural approaches
- prosocial modelling
- problem-solving strategies
- systematic strategies involving the young person's social system.

The Framework allows for, and promotes, regular review of the case management components, including the particular interventions identified in the case plan, while working towards the goal of closing involvement and promoting desistance from crime. These dynamic factors and goals are addressed within the primary objectives of the Framework:

- ensuring service delivery is targeted and

interventions are evidence-based

- operating in the best interests of the young person while improving community safety
- facilitating service provision in a complex environment, reducing fragmentation, enhancing continuity and aiding in role definition
- enhancing accountability while preventing practice drift
- achieving standardisation while also allowing for differentiated and individualised responses to young people's risks and needs
- providing a clear framework for staff, building confidence, capability and support, while also encouraging structured professional judgement
- removing the need for downstream monitoring and procedurally driven work
- providing a training and mentoring platform directed towards new staff, as well as succession planning
- ensuring collaboration and coordination with service providers
- supporting young people to complete their order.

The Framework emphasises the importance of assessment and planning in the provision of evidence-based interventions for young offenders. The Youth Justice System utilises an integrated assessment model comprising two tiers focusing on risk screening and assessment. The model is applied according to the young

person's age and is integrated with a number of tools designed to assess mental health, cognitive ability and family violence risk. Assessment is based upon the RNR model (Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Andrews, Bonta & Hoge, 1990), whereby young people are differentiated according to their level of risk, with interventions tailored accordingly.

The Framework allows for a comprehensive, evidence-based approach to be implemented by case managers and the broader Youth Justice System. Continual review and development of the Framework will ensure the case management approach remains current, thereby upholding the primary goals of promoting desistance and reducing offending (Department of Justice and Community Safety, 2019b).

6.3. Distinction between case management and youth work

The Department of Justice and Community Safety's youth justice case managers are primarily responsible for the statutory supervision and coordination of services for young people who have entered the youth justice system. Case managers are required to effectively coordinate the delivery of rehabilitative services to reduce recidivism and divert people from further involvement with the criminal justice system. Following the review conducted by Armytage and Ogloff (2017), the Victorian Government announced an initial investment of \$50 million over four years to respond to the prescribed recommendations. This included \$11.5 million to develop and implement a new risk and needs assessment approach, which would inform a new case management framework, aimed at strengthening decision-making and ensuring the provision of appropriate services intended to reduce future offending (Parliament of Victoria, 2018). However, due to case management being a poorly defined concept (Turner, 2012), and the potential for confusion regarding the difference between youth justice case managers and youth workers, it is pertinent to clarify and make distinct these two roles.

As previously mentioned, the role of case managers within correctional settings is typically composed of two primary functions: supervising offenders and facilitating positive change (Turner, 2012), with the reduction of offending and associated criminogenic risk factors always being the primary aim. Further, correctional case managers are required to conduct comprehensive assessment, formulate and review case/intervention plans, coordinate service delivery and monitor the offender or

young person. Case management can be viewed as a multifaceted approach to linking treatment and service delivery with the role of the criminal justice system in ensuring community safety (Turner, 2012).

This role is distinct from youth work which, once again, is poorly defined. One definition, provided by the Irish Youth Work Act 2001 (s.3), is that youth work is:

a planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young persons through their voluntary participation, and which is: (a) complementary to their formal, academic or vocational education and training; and (b) provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations.

This definition identifies youth work as a complementary approach to existing programs and services operating within the young person's sphere of influence. Youth workers and youth justice system staff frequently develop a working relationship when involved with high-risk youth, such as the Integrated Youth Support Service (IYSS) model, as described by Davies and Wood (2010). The IYSS model can allow for strengthening of service provision and the movement of the youth justice system approach closer to one of prevention, resulting in a range of new opportunities and challenges. The presence of youth workers within the service allowed for the development of voluntary and trusting relationships to emerge between the at-risk young person and their youth worker, while the presence of youth justice system staff ensured statutory conditions were being met. However, concerns inevitably arose regarding

the potential for collusion, as the youth workers sometimes advised YJS staff if a young person breached their curfew, potentially resulting in significant breaches of trust and the breakdown of the relationship between youth worker and young person.

Moving away from the cohesive IYSS model to focus on the specific role of youth workers, Davies (2010) identified 10 key elements underpinning youth work, including: voluntary involvement, starting from where young people are at, developing trusting relationships, tipping the balance of power, working with diversity and responding equally, promoting equality of opportunity and diversity, working through friendship groups, youth work as process, reflective practice and disciplined improvisation. Perhaps the most significant element, and the one which inherently separates the role of youth worker from that of a youth justice case manager, is the element of voluntary involvement. Youth justice clients are under the statutory supervision and management of youth justice case managers, indicating that their involvement is not voluntary, but mandated by law for a set period of time. Further, developing a trusting relationship and tipping the balance of power into the favour of the young person, as suggested by Davies (2010), is next to impossible for youth justice case managers, due to the inherent statutory requirements of the role. Although trusting relationships can be, and often are, developed within the context of client and youth justice worker, there are inherent limitations and boundaries that must be adhered to. For example, youth justice workers are required to conduct comprehensive risk assessments, make

recommendations to the court, and ensure any orders imposed by the criminal division of the relevant Children's Court are upheld, resulting in inherent limitations to the trust that can be developed. Similarly, although youth justice case managers attempt to help the young person foster a sense of agency and prosocial attitude, there is a fundamental power differential present, as the young person is a statutory client who is required to abide by certain rules, which the youth justice worker enforces.

Therefore, although youth justice case managers may attempt to incorporate elements and principles of youth work practice into their roles, including developing a sense of trust and engaging in disciplined improvisation when working with young people, the two roles are inherently different. The statutory nature of youth work encourages the development of a relationship based on mutual respect and positive regard; however, it also requires the youth justice case manager to adopt an approach conducive to supervision, service coordination and risk management – fundamentally separating it from youth work.

7. Tertiary interventions

A significant amount of research has examined effective tertiary interventions for youth offending, with an abundance of meta-analyses having been conducted in this area (Brogan et al., 2015; Dopp, Borduin, White li, & Kuppens, 2017; Dowden & Andrews, 2003; Farrington & Welsh, 2003; Koehler et al., 2013; Landenberger & Lipsey, 2005; Lipsey, 2009a; Woolfenden, Williams, & Peat, 2002). A broad range of interventions have been found to be effective in reducing recidivism. The Washington State Institute for Public Policy (2019) classified several interventions for young people in the juvenile justice system as evidence-based¹, including: cognitive-behavioural therapy, diversion (with and without services), FFT, other family-based therapies, mentoring and wilderness experience programs. Additional interventions were classified as research-based², including: aggression replacement training, DBT, education and employment training, Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC) and MST. Consistent with these classifications, Lipsey et al. (2010a) found that restorative interventions, skill-building interventions, counselling, and interventions with multiple coordinated services (such as case management and service brokering) all demonstrated significant treatment effects with regards to reducing recidivism in young offenders (see also Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development, 2019). A meta-analysis by Lipsey (2009a) found that treatment effects remained relatively similar whether the young person received treatment in the community, after

diversion, while on probation or parole, or while incarcerated.

There is an increasing acknowledgement of the importance of maintaining treatment integrity in order to achieve desired treatment effects when delivering interventions. A meta-analysis by Goense, Assink, Stams, Boendermaker, and Hoeve (2016) reviewed 17 studies of evidence-based interventions for young people with antisocial behaviour. They found that when treatment integrity was high, evidence-based interventions tended to have a medium-to-large effect on reducing client antisocial behaviour. Conversely, when treatments were not delivered as intended, they were not significantly effective. This is consistent with previous research, which has emphasised the importance of high-quality implementation of interventions and adherence to research-based principles (Koehler et al., 2013; Ugwudike & Morgan, 2019). In fact, in a meta-analysis of effective interventions for juvenile offenders Lipsey (2009a) found that quality of implementation was one of only three major correlates of program effectiveness. It is, of course, exceedingly difficult to implement interventions with high levels of treatment integrity in real-world settings. However, the implementation of programs does not need to be perfect – Durlak and DuPre (2008) found that implementation levels around 60% were often sufficient to achieve positive program outcomes. There are several methods by which organisations can improve the treatment integrity

¹ 'A program or practice that has had multiple site random controlled trials across heterogenous populations demonstrating that the program or practice is effective for the population.' (p. 4)

² 'A program or practice that has some research demonstrating effectiveness but does not yet meet the standard of evidence-based practices.' (p. 4)

of their programs. Having program developers and/or researchers involved in the development and implementation of specific interventions may improve the degree to which staff adhere to

the plan and will seek assistance when problems arise (Feindler & Byers, 2014).

7.1. Cognitive-behavioural interventions

Interventions based on cognitive-behavioural theory (CBT) are among the most well-supported and frequently adopted programs within the criminal justice system (Lipsey, Landenberger, & Wilson, 2007). CBT-based interventions emphasise the interconnectedness of emotions, thoughts and behaviours. They offer specific skills and strategies that participants can use to develop more balanced thinking patterns, foster healthier emotional responses, and engage in more effective and prosocial behaviours (M. Baldwin et al., 2018). CBT-based interventions tend to cover skills such as general thinking and decision-making, cognitive restructuring, interpersonal problem-solving, social skills, anger control and moral reasoning (Feindler & Byers, 2014). In particular, the inclusion of anger control and interpersonal problem-solving components has been shown to produce larger treatment effects (Lipsey et al., 2007).

Several meta-analyses have supported the efficacy of CBT-based interventions for reducing offending behaviour (Pearson, Lipton, Cleland, & Lee, 2002; D. B. Wilson, Bouffard, & Mackenzie, 2005). CBT-based interventions are thought to be particularly suitable for young offenders (Cameron & Telfer, 2004). Landenberger and Lipsey (2005) conducted a meta-analysis of 58 studies on CBT-based programs with offenders,

17 of which were conducted with juveniles. They found no relationship between effect size and whether the treated offenders were juveniles or adults, suggesting that these programs are as effective for young offenders as they are for adults. A Cochrane review by Armelius and Andreassen (2010) found that CBT-based interventions resulted in an average 10% reduction in recidivism among young people aged 12–22 in residential treatment.

While there are a wide range of CBT-based interventions available, there is also value in developing a tailored program in order to best address the relevant criminogenic needs of a specific cohort. Roca, a community organisation in the United States serving high-risk, young male offenders, found that existing CBT-based interventions were unsuitable for their clients, who had been repeatedly involved in the criminal justice system, had dropped out of school, had little or no employment history, were using or dealing drugs, and were involved in gangs. They adopted a new CBT curriculum following a literature review, needs assessment, and model review (M. Baldwin et al., 2018). While this new curriculum is still in the process of being evaluated, five major lessons emerged. First, simple is better. While a wide-ranging set of skills have been shown to benefit young offenders, it

may be useful to include only a limited number of these skills, delivered in short sessions. Doing so may allow participants to stay focused and reduce the perceived burden of program participation. Second, start with frontline staff and participants when piloting and gathering feedback. Third, partner with organisations that have different skill sets, to build on the

experience and skill of each organisation. Fourth, develop interventions that can be delivered by frontline staff, even when they do not have formal mental health training. Fifth, ensure that the intervention becomes part of the organisational routine and culture.

7.2. Family-based interventions

Arguably the most empirically supported interventions for young offenders are family-based interventions, such as MST, FFT, Brief Strategic Family Therapy and MTFC. Family-based interventions recognise the multidetermined nature of offending in young people and are designed to address key socioecological risk factors, including those related to the individual, family, peers, school and neighbourhood (Dopp et al., 2017). They aim to reduce behavioural and emotional problems in the young person, as well as improving parenting practices, reducing family stress, increasing social support and addressing negative peer influences (Carr, 2016). Family-based interventions are delivered in a range of settings, including at the young person's home or school and in other community settings.

While at least one meta-analysis raised concerns as to the effectiveness of these treatments (Latimer, 2001), the vast majority of meta-analyses have provided support for family-based interventions in reducing reoffending (S. A. Baldwin, Christian, Berkeljon, & Shadish, 2012; Brogan et al., 2015; Dopp et al., 2017; Farrington & Welsh, 2003; Schwalbe et al., 2012; Woolfenden et al., 2002), particularly when criminogenic

familial needs are targeted, consistent with RNR (Dowden & Andrews, 2003). A recent multilevel meta-analysis by Dopp et al. (2017) examining 28 studies of family-based treatments confirmed that family-based interventions produce modest, long-lasting treatment effects on antisocial behaviour relative to usual services (mean $d = 0.25$, evident an average of 2.5 years after the completion of treatment). These interventions were also found to produce positive treatment effects for substance abuse (mean $d = 0.41$), psychological functioning (mean $d = 0.30$) and school performance (mean $d = 0.29$). There was no significant difference in treatment effects between the three studied interventions (MST, FFT and MTFC). The study found that these interventions had a greater positive effect in studies where participants had a higher average number of pre-treatment offences, suggesting that these interventions are best suited to high-risk offenders.

Three family-based interventions receiving significant empirical attention and support are MST, FFT and MTFC. While MTFC is inappropriate for the current context, given its incorporation of foster care placement, MST and FFT will be

reviewed briefly below.

7.2.1. Multisystemic therapy

MST is a short-term program designed for young people aged 12 to 17 with social, emotional or behavioural problems, and those who are at risk of out-of-home placement (Mihalic et al., 2004). MST views young people as surrounded by a network of systems including family, peers, school, and neighbourhood, and aims to address the many different factors that lead to antisocial behaviour by working with the entire network (MST Services, 2019b). The program is delivered in the natural environment of the young person, including their home, school and wider community, with therapists available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. It is specifically tailored to each individual young person, with network members helping to design and implement the treatment plan. The goals of MST include: improving how the caregiver disciplines; enhancing family relationships; decreasing a young person's association with negative peers and increasing their association with positive peers; improving a young person's school or vocational performance; engaging in the young person in positive recreational outlets; and developing a natural support network of extended family, neighbours and friends. Intervention plans include structural family therapy, behavioural parent training and cognitive behaviour therapies.

MST has been subject to a great deal of evaluation, and results have been favourable across the United States and Europe (Henggeler, 2012). MST Services (2019a) suggest that MST has the largest body of evidence for successful

interventions for high-risk youth, citing 54% fewer arrests for program participants over 14 years and 33% fewer days incarcerated over 22 years. However, the results of a multilevel meta-analysis of 22 studies were more modest (van der Stouwe, Asscher, Stams, Dekovic, & van der Laan, 2014). Small but significant treatment effects were found for delinquency, psychopathology, substance use, family factors, out-of-home placement and peer factors. MST was found to be most effective with young people under the age of 15 and young people who were not from ethnic minorities. The results of this meta-analysis are similar, albeit smaller, to those reported in a previous meta-analysis of seven studies (Curtis, Ronan, & Borduin, 2004), which found that MST showed moderate treatment effects for reducing offending ($d = 0.50$). This meta-analysis also concluded that MST was relatively effective with regards to reducing emotional and behavioural problems among young people, improving family relationships, improving peer relationships and improving school attendance.

MST has reportedly been established in 15 countries (MST Services, 2019b). However, the abovementioned meta-analysis by van der Stouwe et al. (2014) found that effect sizes were larger for studies carried out in the United States, suggesting that transporting MST to an Australian context may result in smaller treatment gains. Porter and Nuntavisit (2016) evaluated the use of MST in a Western Australian mental health setting and found that MST significantly reduced behavioural and emotional problems. These gains were sustained for at least 12 months post-intervention. This is consistent with an earlier

New Zealand study, which found that MST led to significant reductions in offending frequency and severity among juvenile offenders (Curtis, Ronan, Heiblum, & Crellin, 2009). It is important to note that both of these studies were undertaken with predominantly Caucasian samples. MST has yet to be evaluated among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and it will be important to establish the efficacy of MST in this context, particularly given the abovementioned finding that MST seems less effective with people from ethnic minorities.

7.2.2. Functional Family Therapy

FFT is a strengths-based program for young people aged 11 to 18 experiencing behavioural or emotional problems (J. A. Alexander, Waldron, Robbins, & Neeb, 2013). The program is designed to improve within-family attributions, family communication and supportiveness, while decreasing negative and dysfunctional patterns of behaviour. It is a short-term program that consists of an average of 12 to 14 sessions over three to five months, with five major components. During *engagement*, therapists seek to enhance family members' perceptions of therapist responsiveness and credibility. During the *motivation* phase, a positive motivational context is created by decreasing family hostility, conflict and blame, while increasing hope and building balanced alliances with family members. *Rational assessment* consists of understanding the relational functions of individual family members' behaviours and identifying patterns of interaction. The aims of the *behaviour change* component are to improve family functioning and individual skills, and to address clinical issues such as depression, truancy or substance

use. Change plans are culturally appropriate, context sensitive and responsive to individual family members. *Generalisation* extends the improvements made during the previous stage into multiple areas and plans for future challenges. FFT is used widely across the United States and internationally.

FFT has received a substantial amount of empirical attention, the majority of which reflects positive outcomes (see J. A. Alexander et al., 2013 for a summary). A recent meta-analysis of 14 studies provided support for the effectiveness of FFT for adolescent behavioural and substance misuse problems (Hartnett, Carr, Hamilton, & O'Reilly, 2017). They found that in randomised studies, FFT was significantly more effective than no treatment or alternative well-defined treatments (such as CBT, parenting education groups and other models of family therapy). These results were consistent with a previous meta-analysis, which found that FFT is a cost-effective approach to reducing offending by young people (Aos et al., 2011). To the authors' knowledge, there have been no published evaluations of FFT in an Australian youth justice context.

8. Conclusion

Reducing offending among young people represents a significant challenge. The complex neurobiological, psychological, and social changes that occur during adolescence mean that young people are more likely to be behaviourally impulsive, susceptible to peer influence, less future-oriented, and greater risk-takers. A great number of young offenders have also experienced socioeconomic disadvantage, intergenerational trauma and grief, childhood abuse, family conflict, exposure to parental offending, disrupted education and unstable accommodation (Armytage & Ogloff, 2017). While many young offenders will naturally desist from offending as they mature, there is also convincing evidence that interventions can produce significant reductions in offending, particularly among young people whose offending is persistent and severe. There is a significant amount of literature seeking to determine the most effective interventions for reducing recidivism among young offenders. Several themes emerge from the literature, related to effective practices for working with young offenders.

- High-intensity interventions should only be provided to young offenders assessed to be at risk of serious or persistent offending.
- Criminogenic needs should be addressed as a priority, but young offenders and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young offenders are likely to have multiple, complex needs and will likely benefit from interventions that also address non-criminogenic needs.
- Interventions should be individualised and take into account specific and general

responsivity issues for each young offender.

- Therapeutic intervention philosophies, such as counselling or cognitive-behavioural programs, should be prioritised over strategies based on discipline, coercion or surveillance.
- The existing strengths and capabilities of young offenders should be acknowledged and utilised.
- Families and communities should be involved at all stages of intervention development, implementation and facilitation.
- Interventions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young offenders should be developed and implemented by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led organisations.

There is also evidence to support a wide range of interventions for young offenders at a range of points along the offending trajectory. While there is a substantial variation in the quality of individual evaluations for specific programs, several broad conclusions can be made:

- A wide variety of early childhood intervention programs have been shown to improve long-term outcomes related directly and indirectly to offending by young people, including home visits during pregnancy and early childhood, preschool programs and programs that target parenting practices.
- Keeping children engaged in school has been identified as a strategy that can reduce the likelihood of offending by young people. The RSAS has been rolled out across four states

and one territory in Australia and, while the scheme has had mixed results, evaluations have provided further recommendations to improve this strategy moving forward.

- School-based SEL programs have been associated with a decrease in behavioural problems, as well as an increase in social-emotional competencies and academic performance. At least one of these programs has been adapted for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, with mixed results.
- Mentoring programs have received a moderate amount of empirical support with regards to improving problem behaviours and educational outcomes.
- Diversion programs for young offenders have received a significant amount of empirical attention, but the degree to which this research can be synthesised is limited due to heterogenous nature of diversion programs. It is crucial that diversion programs have clear referral guidelines and that validated assessment tools are used to ensure that referrals to diversion programs are appropriate. There is a very small amount of preliminary evidence that diversion programs led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations may reduce reoffending.
- Case management may be effective for young offenders when it is combined with rehabilitative approaches, such as social casework or criminogenic treatment. YOT is an intensive case management scheme that has seen positive early results with participants who are predominantly Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

- Interventions based on CBT have been found to consistently result in reductions in reoffending among young offenders. Many of the other interventions addressed in this review incorporate cognitive-behavioural principles.
- Family-based interventions are some of the most empirically supported interventions for young offenders. MST has a significant amount of empirical support, although it is yet to be evaluated with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young offenders. FFT has also been shown to be particularly effective but, again, has not been evaluated in an Australian context.

There are, therefore, many points in a young person's life at which intervention may effectively reduce the likelihood that they will begin offending or continue to offend. Although there are many points in a young person's life when intervention may be successful and a range of interventions exist to address each need, it is critically important, given the multiple and complex needs of young high-risk offenders, that service provision is coordinated so that the young person sees a coherent and stable face to the multiple services that might be required to address their problems. Without collaborative and coordinated case management there is a risk of young offender being 'disaggregated' as they are referred to different service providers each addressing a single issue. Proper resourcing, interagency collaboration and ongoing processes to monitor the implementation of services and evaluate outcomes are critical.

Part B: Qualitative Analysis

9. Introduction

The qualitative analysis component of this review consisted of eight focus groups. One focus group was conducted with Youth Justice regional general managers and another was held with representatives of Victoria Police. The remaining six focus groups were conducted with the following AYSS/YSS service providers:

- YSAS (metropolitan service)
- Les Twentyman Foundation
- Anglicare Victoria (Bendigo)
- Mallee District Aboriginal Services (MDAS)
- Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative
- Barwon Child, Youth & Family.

In total, 39 workers occupying various roles (including YSS/AYSS general managers, police members, program managers, team leaders, caseworkers) participated in these focus groups.

10. Data analysis

A total of six YSS and AYSS across Victoria provided de-identified data on all clients engaged with the service between January and June 2019. Datasets were maintained independently by each participating service. As such, the type and quality of information collected varied across each service.

A descriptive analysis was conducted on all young people engaged with a YSS/AYSS service during the first half of 2019. The analysis focused on client characteristics and referral pathways, as well as a comparison across services. A separate analysis was also conducted on each participating service. The level of detail of the service-specific analysis varied depending on the range of information provided.

Data limitations

1. Inconsistent codes used between services
2. Modification to the reporting template i.e. Abbreviated - large amounts of missing information
3. Concerns over data quality i.e. Inaccuracies in dates recorded
4. Inconsistent protocol for counting client numbers

Figure 1: Limitations of the YSS/AYSS data

11. Results

11.1. Overall analysis

11.1.1. Participant profile

A total of 717 young people were engaged with a YSS/AYSS service between January and June 2019. Nearly three-quarters of the clients were engaged with YSAS (n = 528, 73.6%), with the South Metropolitan Region reporting the highest number of cases across all services assessed (n = 221). The majority of the clients engaged with a service were male (n = 433, 60.4%) and over half were born in Australia or identified as Australian (n = 391, 54.5%). A total of 54 clients also identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (7.5%). The average age at the time of referral was 15 years (SD = 1.5). Eleven young people were aged outside the specified age range for YSS/AYSS. One was younger and 10 were older

Table 4: Breakdown of clients across service

Service	n (%)
Les Tewntyman Foundation	43 (6.0)
Anglicare	59 (8.2)
Barwon	44 (6.1)
MDAS	25 (3.5)
Rumbalara	18 (2.5)
YSAS	
East Metropolitan Region	115 (16.0)
North Metropolitan Region	107 (14.9)
South Metropolitan Region	221 (30.8)
West Metropolitan Region	85 (11.9)
Total	717

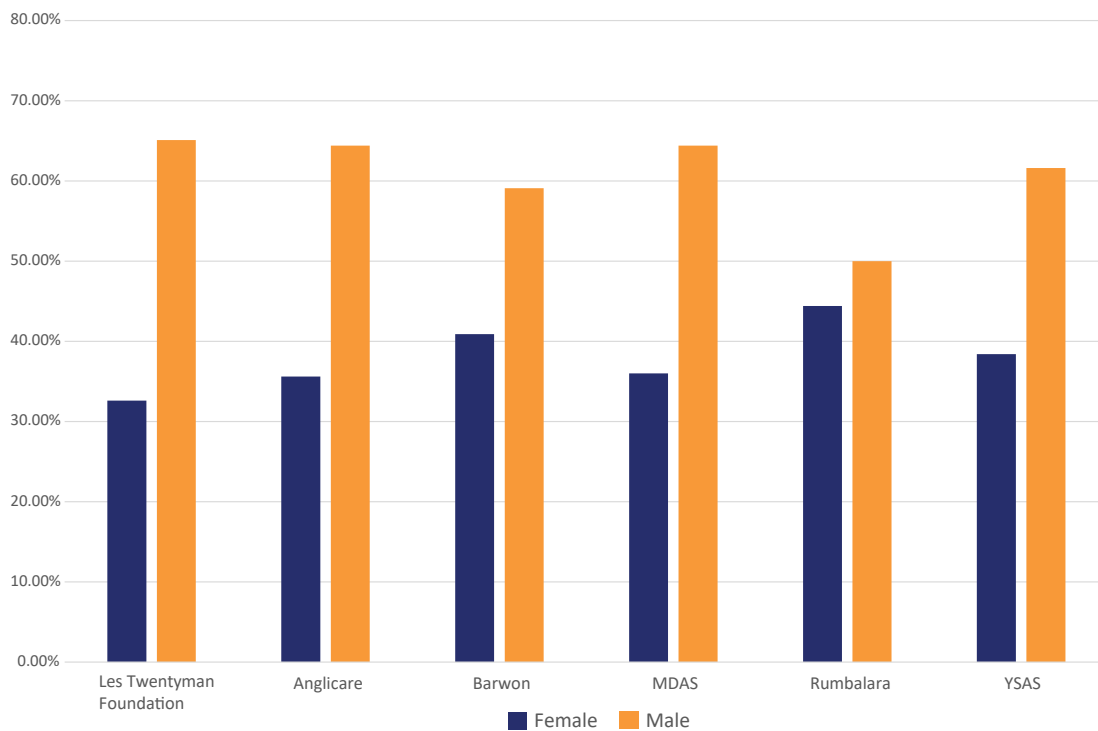


Figure 2: Gender breakdown across services

Most young people engaged with the service were living at home with either one or two parents (n = 568, 79.2%). As shown in Figure 4, MDAS reported the highest percentage of clients reporting unstable housing accommodation (i.e. couch surfing, out-of-home care etc.).

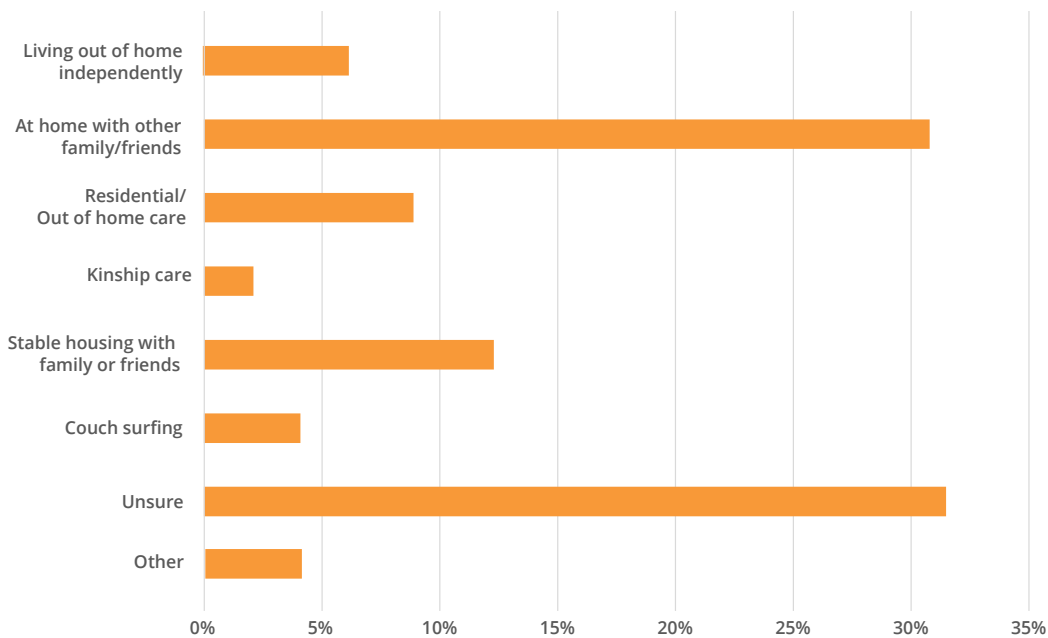


Figure 3: Living circumstances of young people not in the care of parents

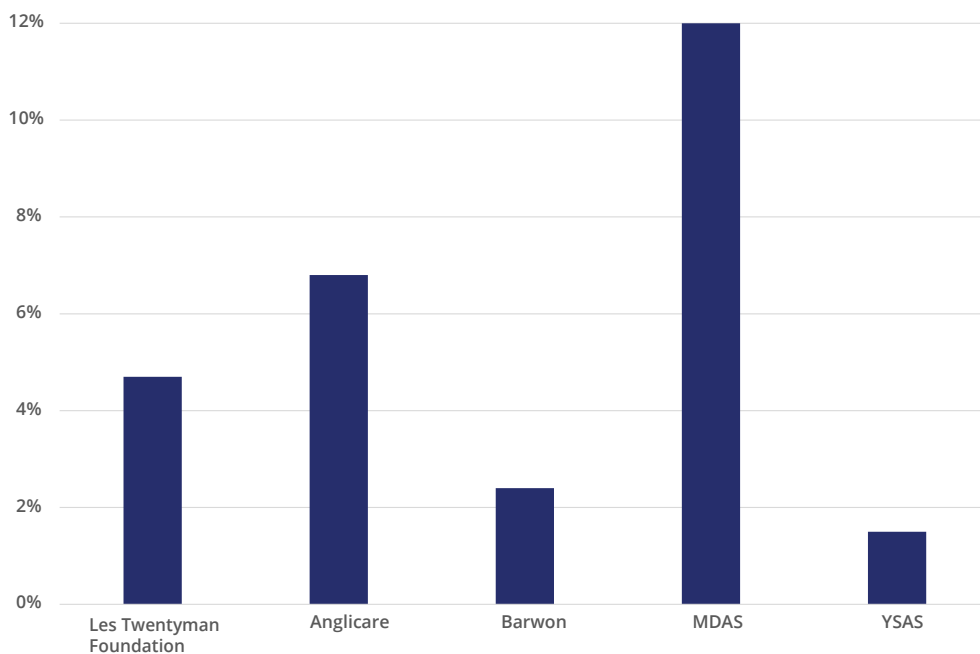


Figure 4: Percentage of clients with unstable housing across service

11.1.2. Referral and service provision

Most young people engaged with YSS/AYSS during the evaluation period were new referrals (n=603, 84.1%). The remaining 114 clients had been engaged with the service prior to January 2019, with 65.8% of these cases closed by the end of June 2019 (n=75).

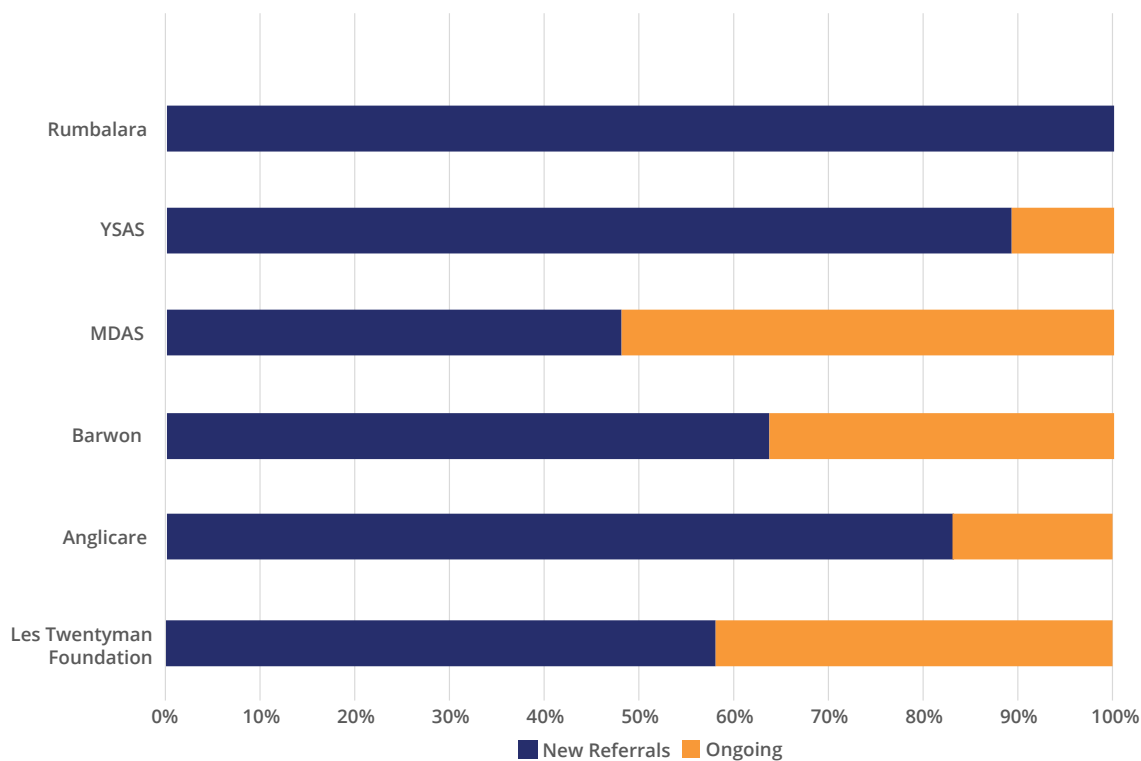


Figure 5: Breakdown of new and ongoing referrals across YSS and AYSS

Most referrals made to a YSS/AYSS during the evaluation period were made to a YSAS service (n = 471, 78.1%). YSAS South Metropolitan Region received the most referrals (n = 193, 32.0%), followed by YSAS East Metropolitan Region (n = 105, 17.4%). Over half of new clients were referred from Victoria Police (n = 355, 58.9%). 'Other' referral sources specified included Victoria legal aid, other YSS services and diversion programs.

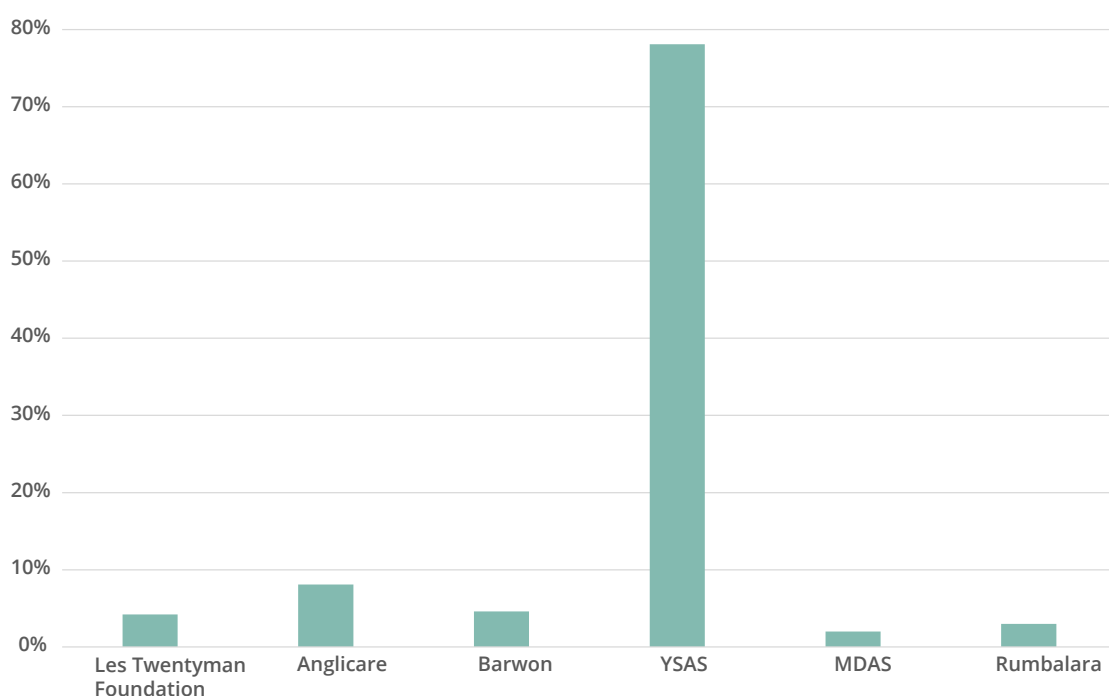


Figure 6: Referrals received by each service

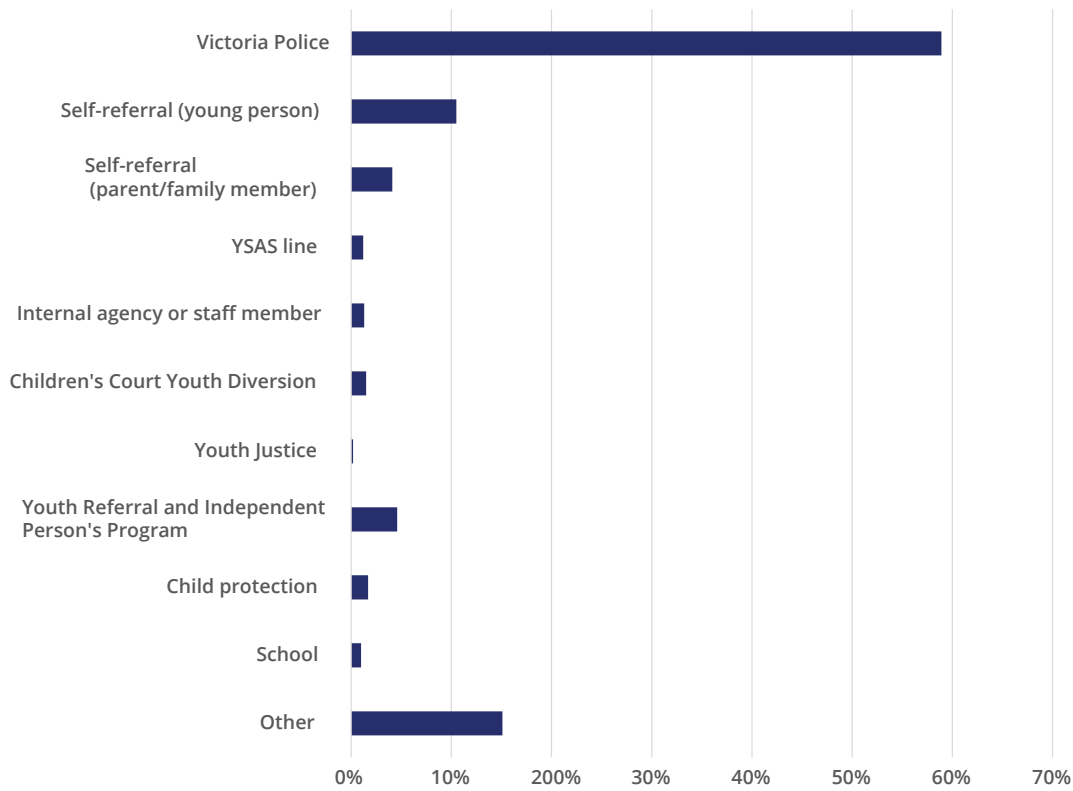


Figure 7: Referral source

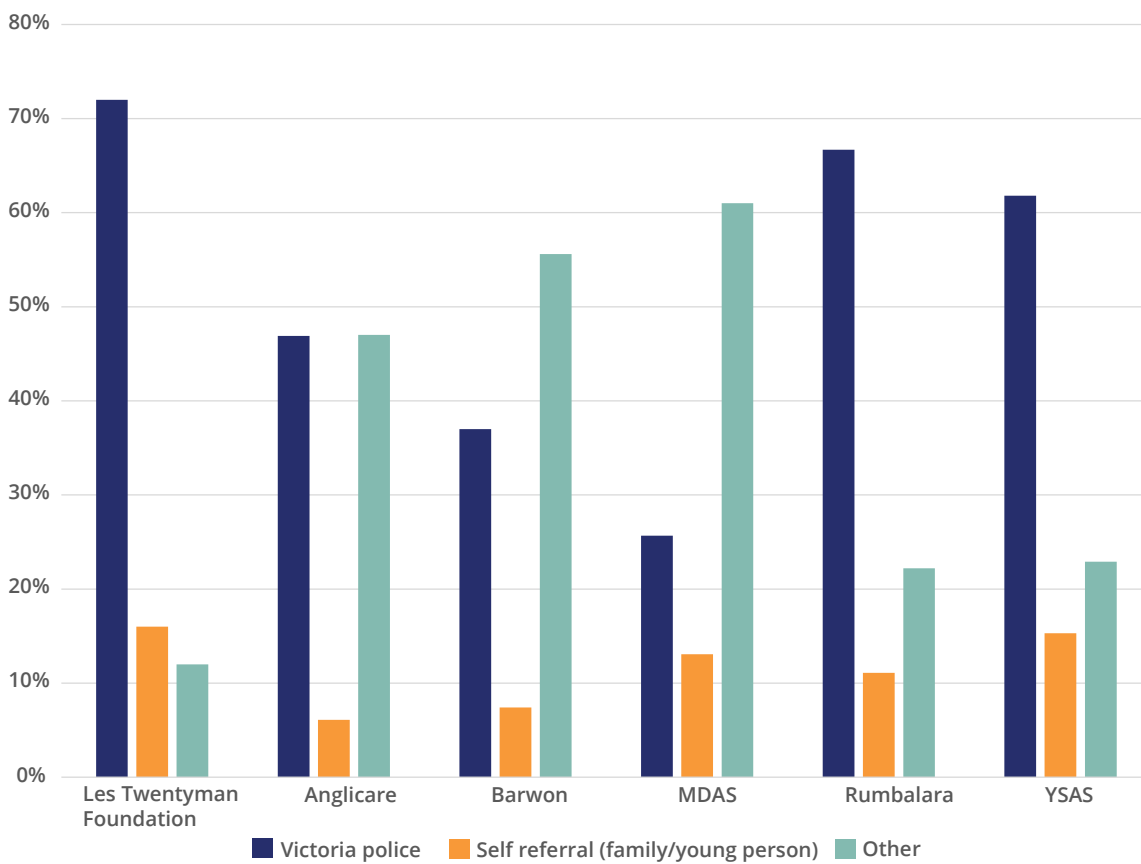


Figure 8: Breakdown of referral sources by service

The most frequently reported reason for referral was a *criminal offence*, either alleged or proven (n = 176, 30.8%), followed by concerning *problematic or concerning behaviour* such and *risk taking or anti-social behaviour*. 'Other' reasons for referral specified included challenging behaviour, being at-risk of offending and homelessness.

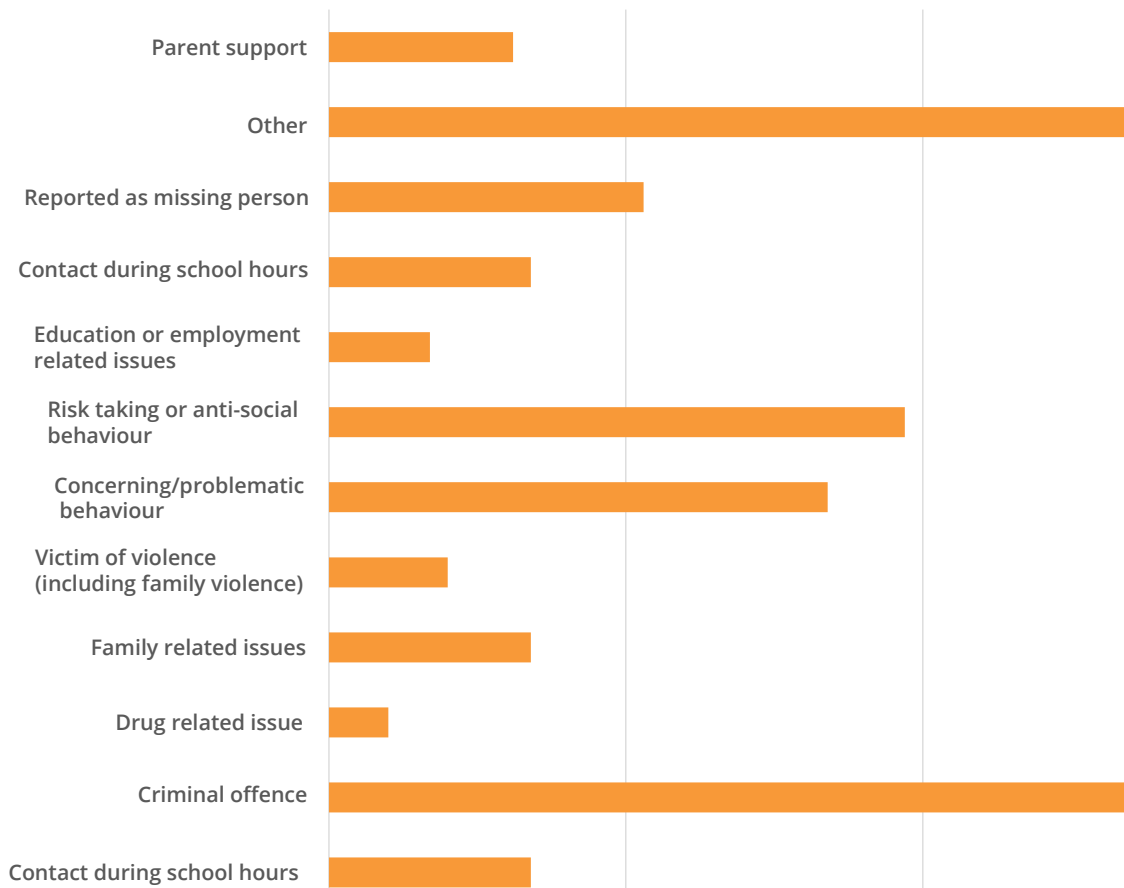


Figure 9: Reason for referral to YSS/AYSS

Just over half of the total active clients engaged by YSS/AYSS (n = 379, 52.9%) exited the service during the evaluation period. Figure 10 outlines the number of days spent in a YSS/AYSS program for all clients with a case closed. On average, young people spent 40 days with the service (range 0–814 days). The most commonly provided reason for a case closure was 'Goals outlined in case plan were achieved' (n = 139, 38.0%) followed by 'Young person declined the service' (n = 67, 18.2%).

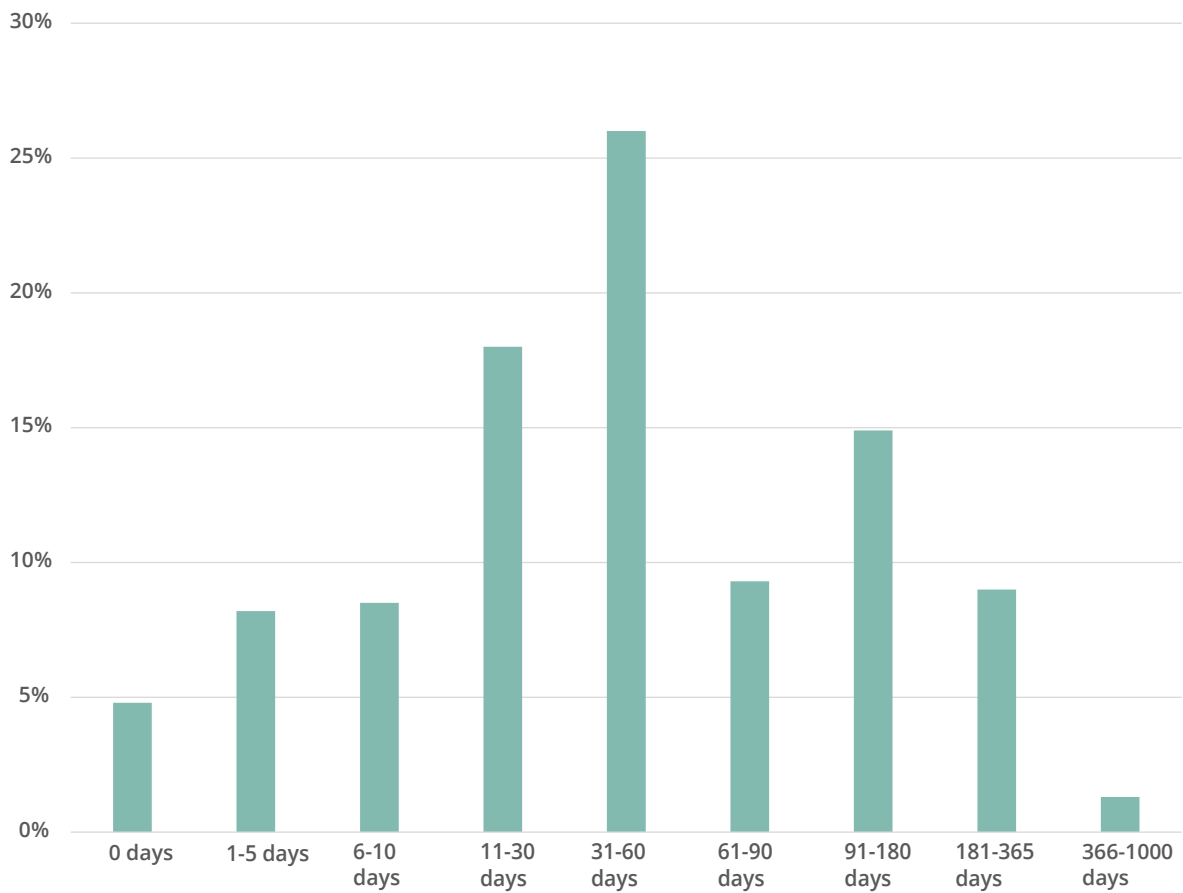


Figure 10: Days in the program (referral – case closure)

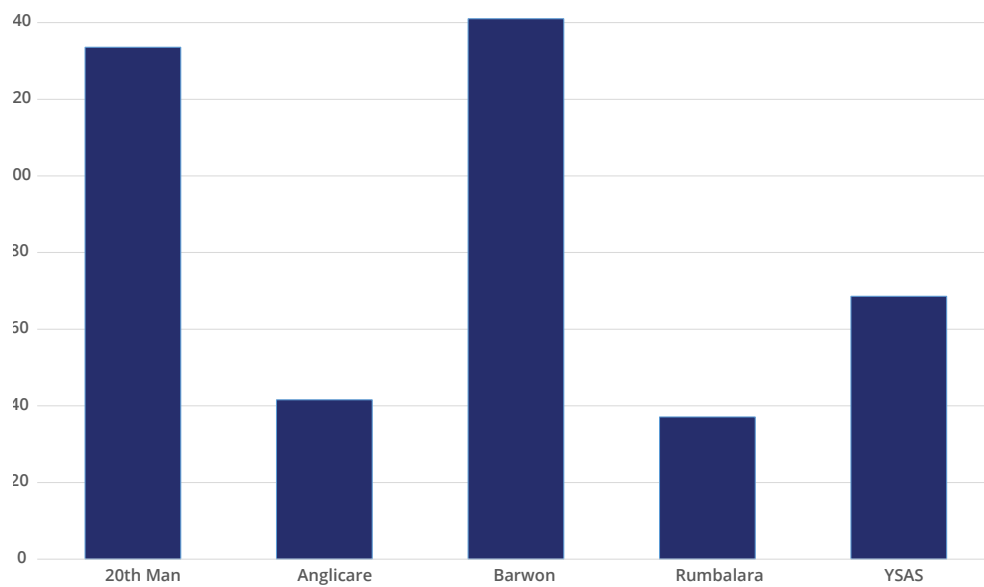


Figure 11: Average days in the program across each service

11.2. Individual service results

11.2.1. Les Twentyman Foundation

A total of 43 young people were engaged with Les Twentyman Foundation from January to June 2019. Over half of these clients were male (n = 28, 65.1%) and on average, 14 years of age on referral (range: 8–20 years). Most of the clients identified as Australian (n = 35, 81.4%), of whom 35% (n = 16) identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Over half of the clients were referred to the service between January and June 2019 (n = 25, 58.1%), while the remainder were ongoing cases. Most referrals to the service were made by Victoria Police (n = 34, 79.1%) and an additional 14% (n = 6) were self-referrals made

by either the young person or a member of their family. Most of the clients referred had no previous contact with Les Twentyman Foundation (n = 34, 79.1%) nor Victoria Police (n = 28, 65.1%). The most frequently reported reasons for referral were *significant behaviours of concern* (n = 12, 27.9%), *education or employment related issues* (n=9, 20.9%) and *family-related issues* (n = 9, 20.9%). Upon accessing the service, clients were commonly referred to community recreational activities (n = 18, 41.9%) or legal services (n = 9, 20.9%).

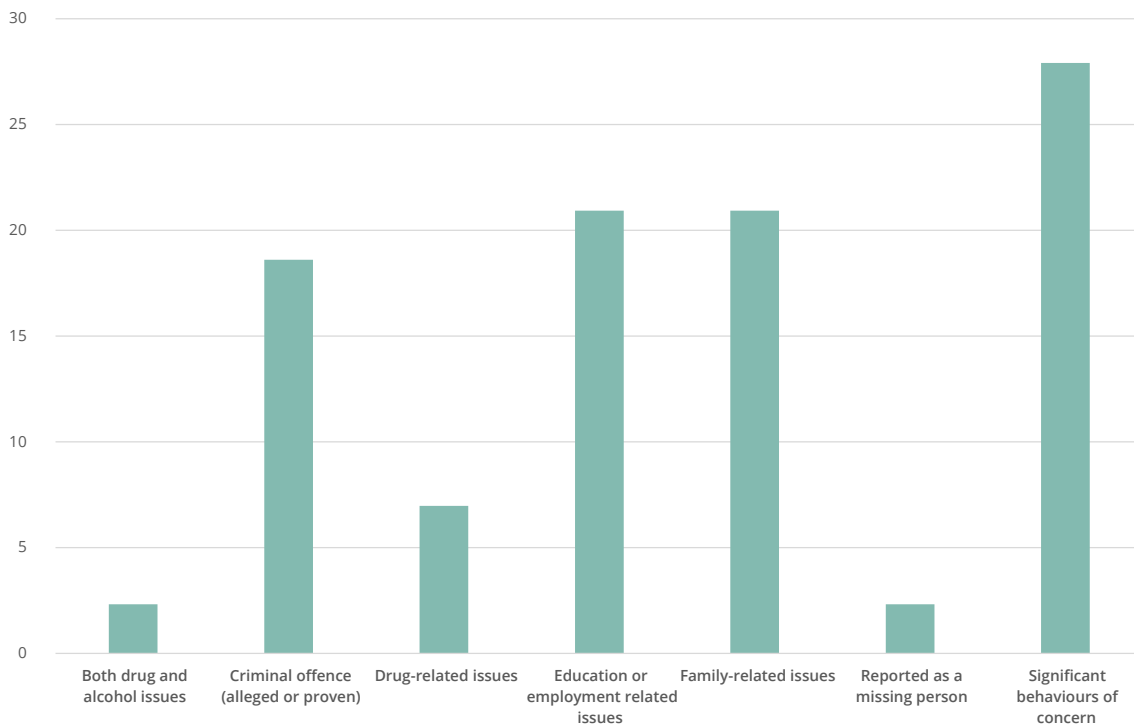


Figure 12: Reason for referrals, Les Twentyman Foundation

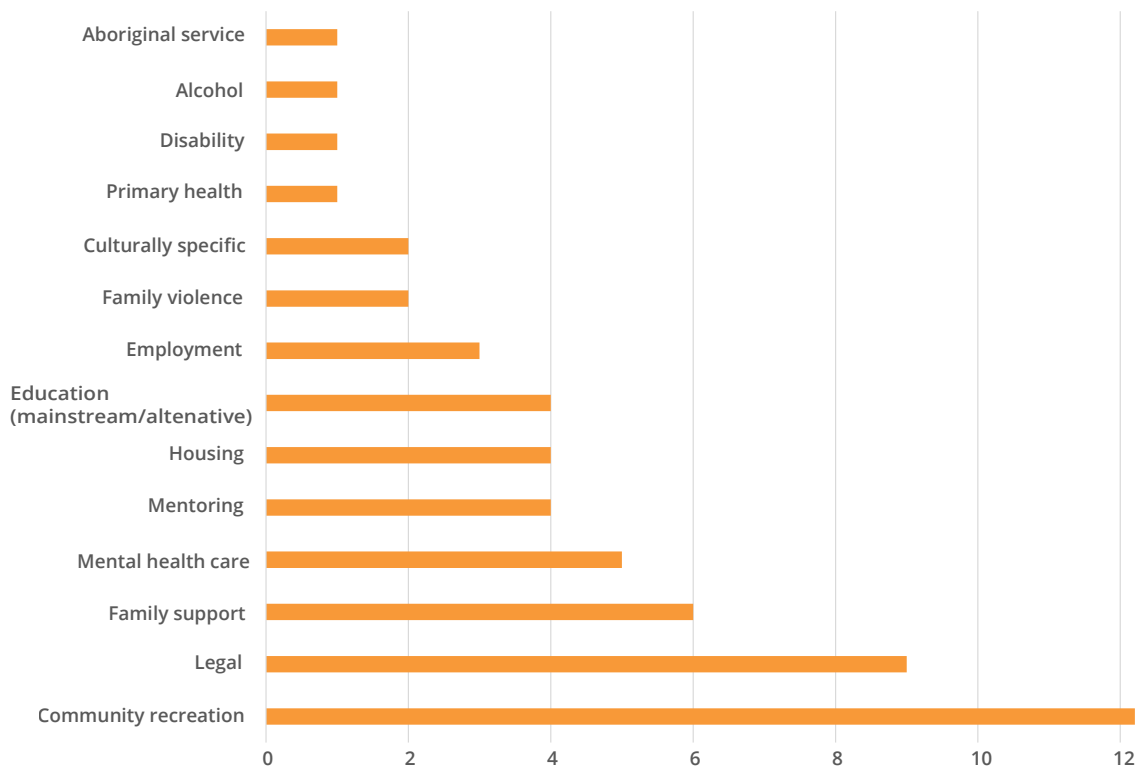


Figure 13: Type and number of referrals made through service, Les Twentyman Foundation

Half of the clients exited the service during the evaluation period (n = 22, 51.2%). On average, clients remained in the program for approximately four months (M = 134 days, range: 1–255 days). The mostly frequently reported reason for closing a case was that the young person had *declined the service or disengaged* (n = 11, 26.6%). One-quarter of closed cases reported that all goals outlined in the young person’s case plan had been achieved (n = 6, 27.3%)

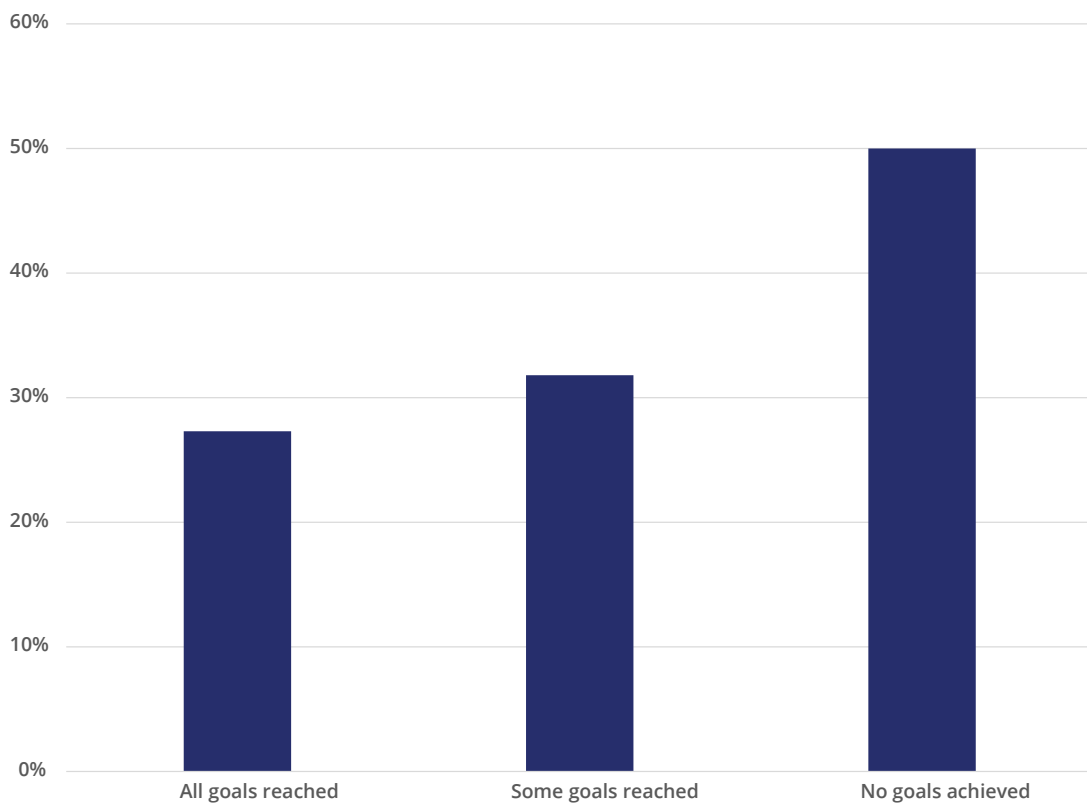


Figure 14: Percentage of goals achieved from case plan (n = 22, cases closed), Les Twentyman Foundation

11.2.2. YSAS

A total of 528 young people were engaged with YSAS from January to June 2019. Over half of these clients were male (n = 325, 61.6%) and on average, 15 years of age on referral (range: 10–19 years). Most clients reported stable housing with either their parents (n = 427, 80.7%) or other family members (n = 37, 7.0%). A minority of clients were already known to the service through disability or mental health services (2.1%) and three clients had previously engaged with Youth Justice. In over a third of clients (n = 211, 40%) the cultural identity of clients was either not known or was undocumented. Of the remaining clients, most identified as Australian, of which 35% (n

= 16) identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Most clients at the service (n = 471, 89.2%) were new referrals (received January–June 2019). Over half of referrals received were from Victoria Police (n = 315, 59.7%), followed by self-referrals from the young person (n = 75, 14.2%) and the referrals from the Youth Referral and Independent Person’s Program (n = 27, 5.1%). The primary reasons reported for referrals are shown in Figure 15. No specific reasons were provided for ‘Other’.

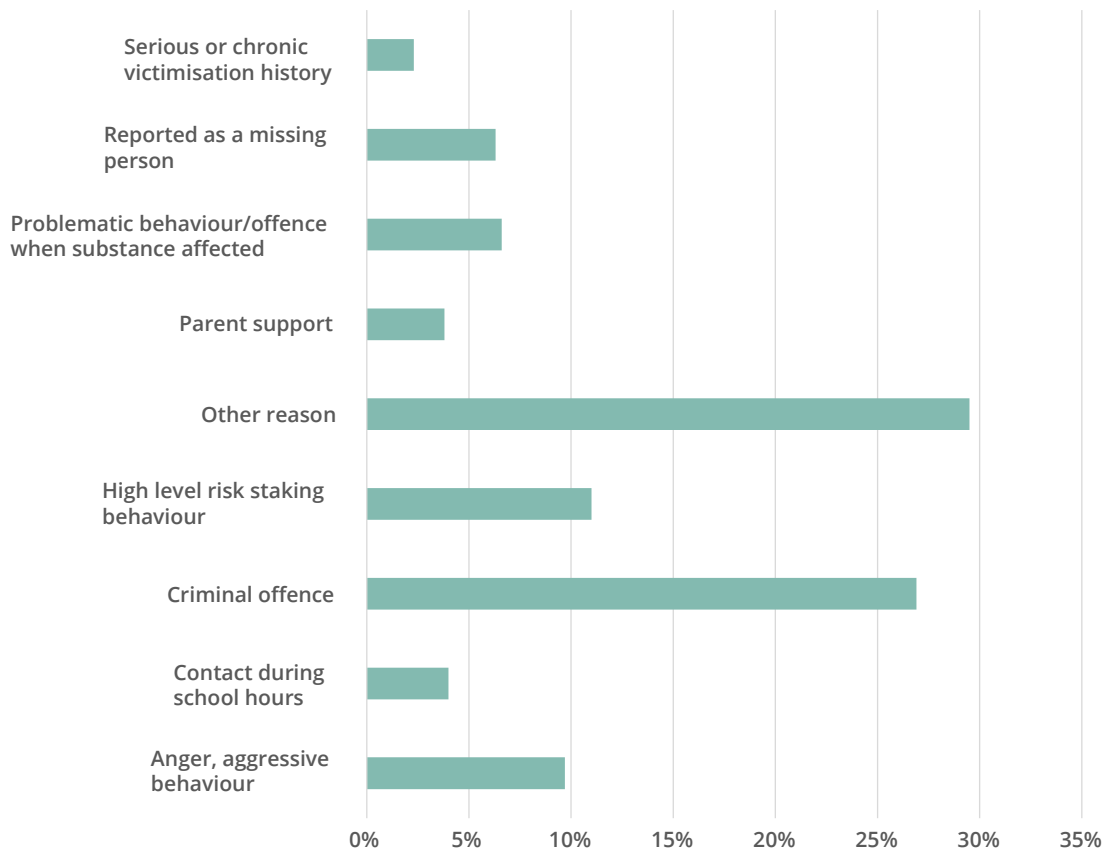


Figure 15: Reason for referral, YSAS

Just over half of cases were closed during the evaluation period (n = 284, 53.8%). On average, clients remained engaged with YSAS for 69 days (range: 0–814 days), with YSAS western region reporting the lowest average number of days (see Figure 16). In most cases, clients who exited

the program achieved the goals outline in their case plan (n = 139, 62.1%), while one in ten young people who exited the program had disengaged with the service (n = 53).

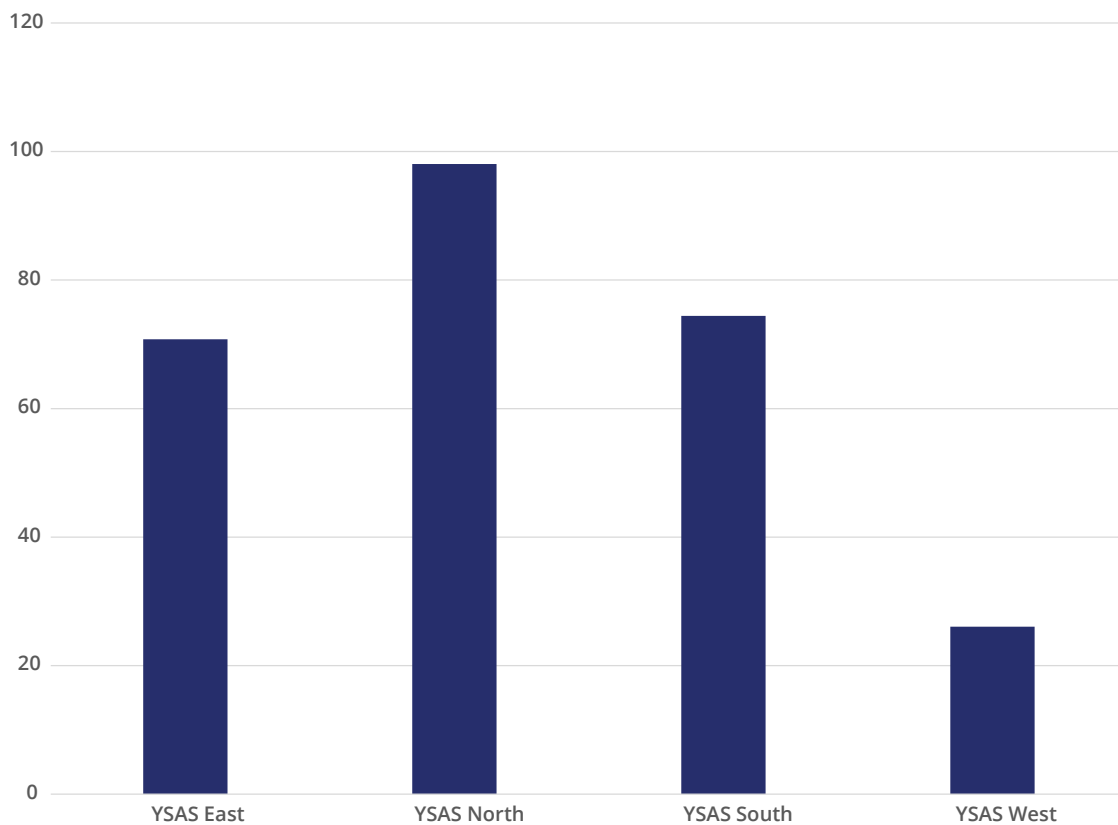


Figure 16: Average days in the program across regions, YSAS

11.2.3. Anglicare

A total of 59 young people were engaged with Anglicare from January to June 2019. Over half of these clients were male (n = 38, 64.4%), and on average, 14 years of age at referral (range: 4–17 years). The majority of clients reported stable housing with either their parents (n = 44, 74.6%) or other family members (n = 6, 10.2%). Most clients identified as Australian (n = 45, 76.3%), of whom four (6.8%) identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. One-quarter of clients had been in contact with the police prior to the referral to Anglicare (n = 15, 25.4%) and one had been engaged with Youth Justice.

Most clients were new referrals to the service received from January to June 2019 (n = 49, 83.1%). Over a third of referrals were from Victoria Police (n = 24, 40.7%). In over half of the referrals received, the primary reason provided *criminal offence* (alleged or proven), followed by *family-related issues* (n = 9, 15.3%) and being a *victim of crime* (n = 4, 6.8%). The most common services organised by Anglicare for clients were for educational needs (n = 12, 20.4%).

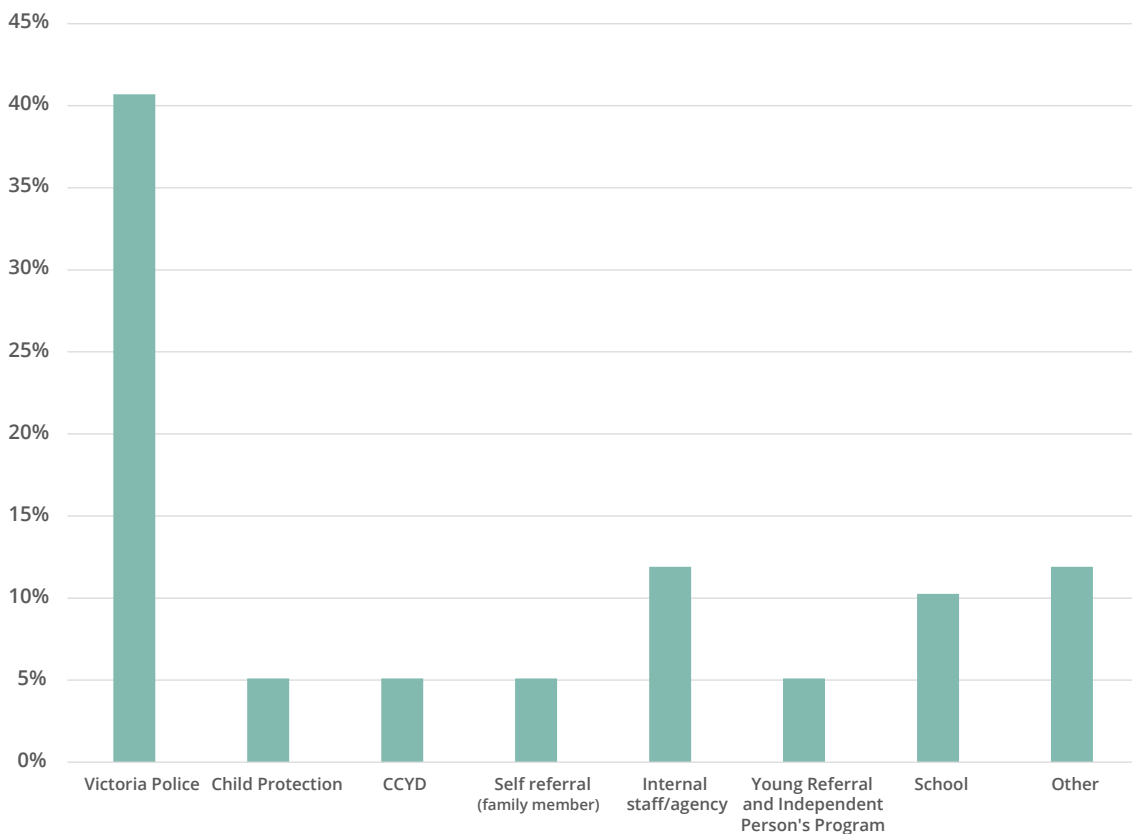


Figure 17: Source of referral, Anglicare

On average clients remained in the program for 41 days (range 0–175). The most common services organised by Anglicare for clients were for educational needs (n = 12, 20.4%).

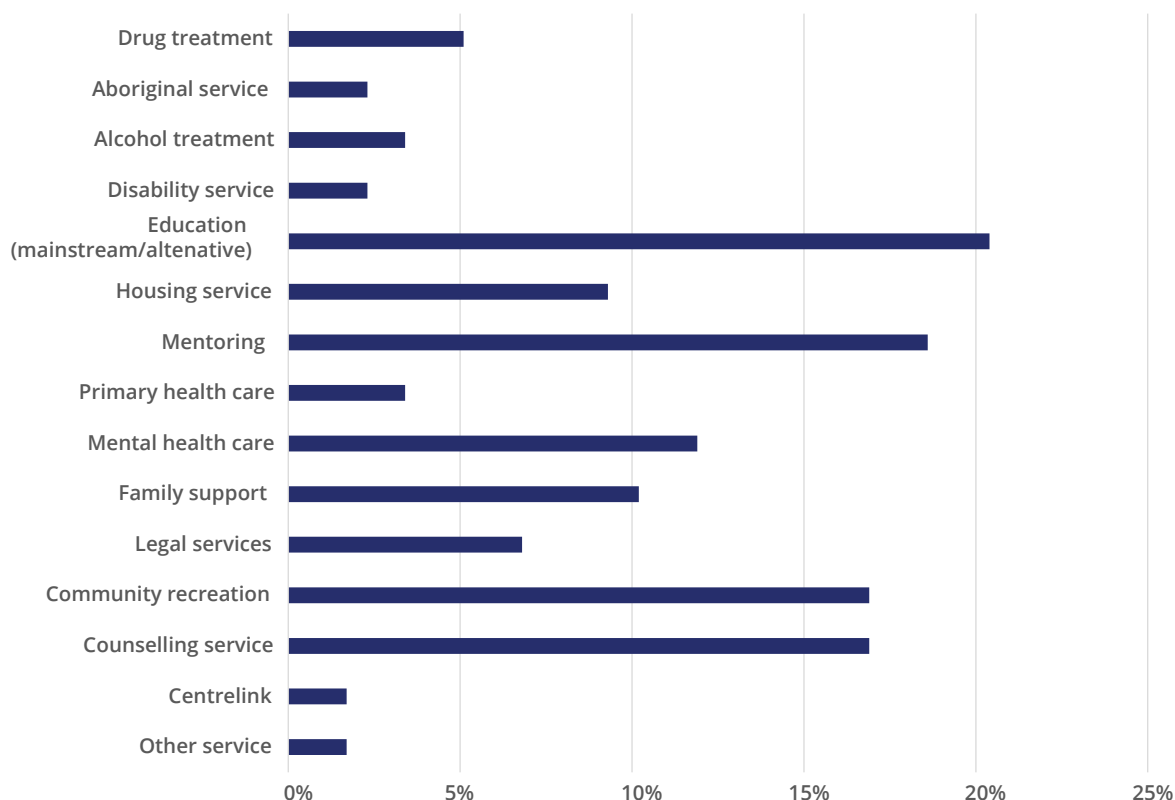


Figure 18: Type of referrals made by Anglicare on behalf of client

A total of 41 cases were closed during the evaluation period (69.5%). The most frequently reported reason provided for case closures was that the young person had declined the service (n = 15, 25.4%) followed by that the young person has achieved all the goals in the case plan (n=8, 13.6%).

11.2.4. Barwon

A total of 44 young people were engaged with Barwon from January to June 2019. Over half of these clients were male (n = 26, 59.1%) and on average, 14 years of age at referral (range: 11–18 years). The majority of clients reported stable housing with either one or two parents (n = 35, 83.3%). All clients identified as Australian (100%), of whom three (6.8%) identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. One-quarter of clients had been in contact with the police prior to the referral to Barwon and (n = 12, 27.3%).

received from January to June 2019 (n = 28, 63.6%). The most common source of referrals received were from Victoria Police (n = 13, 29.5%), followed by Schools (n = 10, 22.7%) and Child Protection (n = 6, 13.6%). A *criminal offence* (either alleged or proven) was the most frequently reported reason for a referral (n = 13, 29.5%). On average clients remained in the program for 141 days (range 6–364). Mental health and counselling were the most commonly reported services organised during the evaluation period.

Most clients were new referrals to the service,

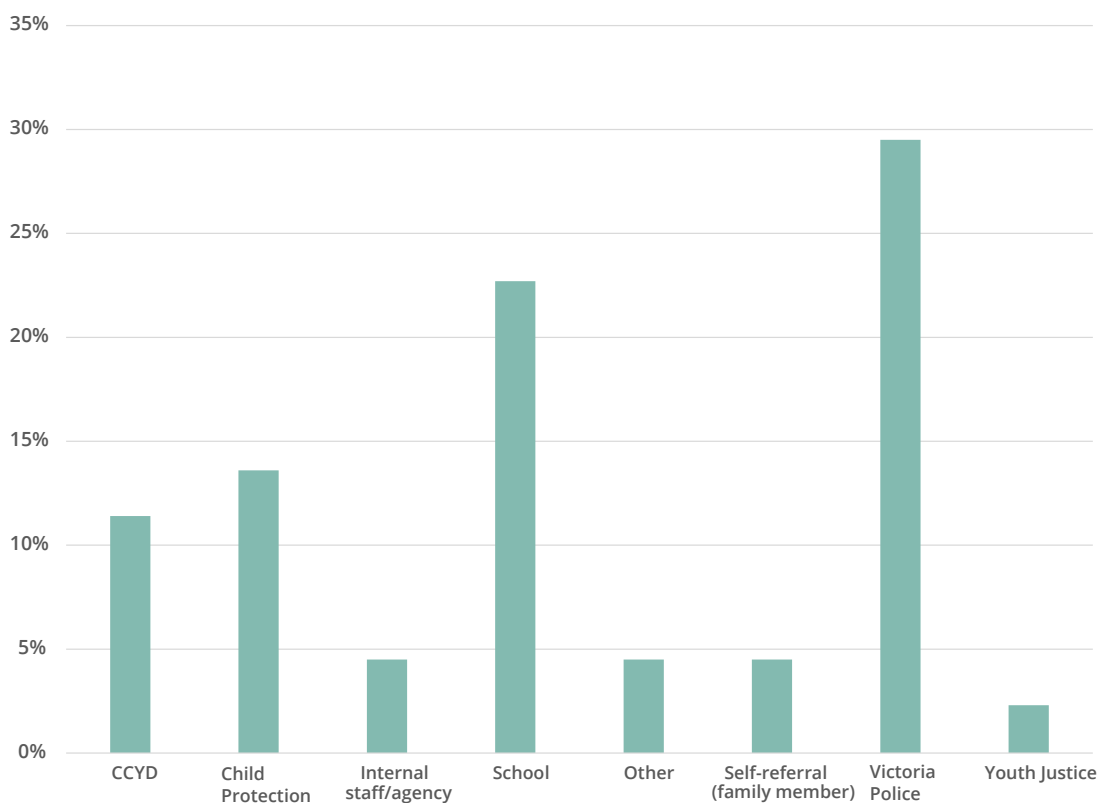


Figure 19: Source of referral, Barwon

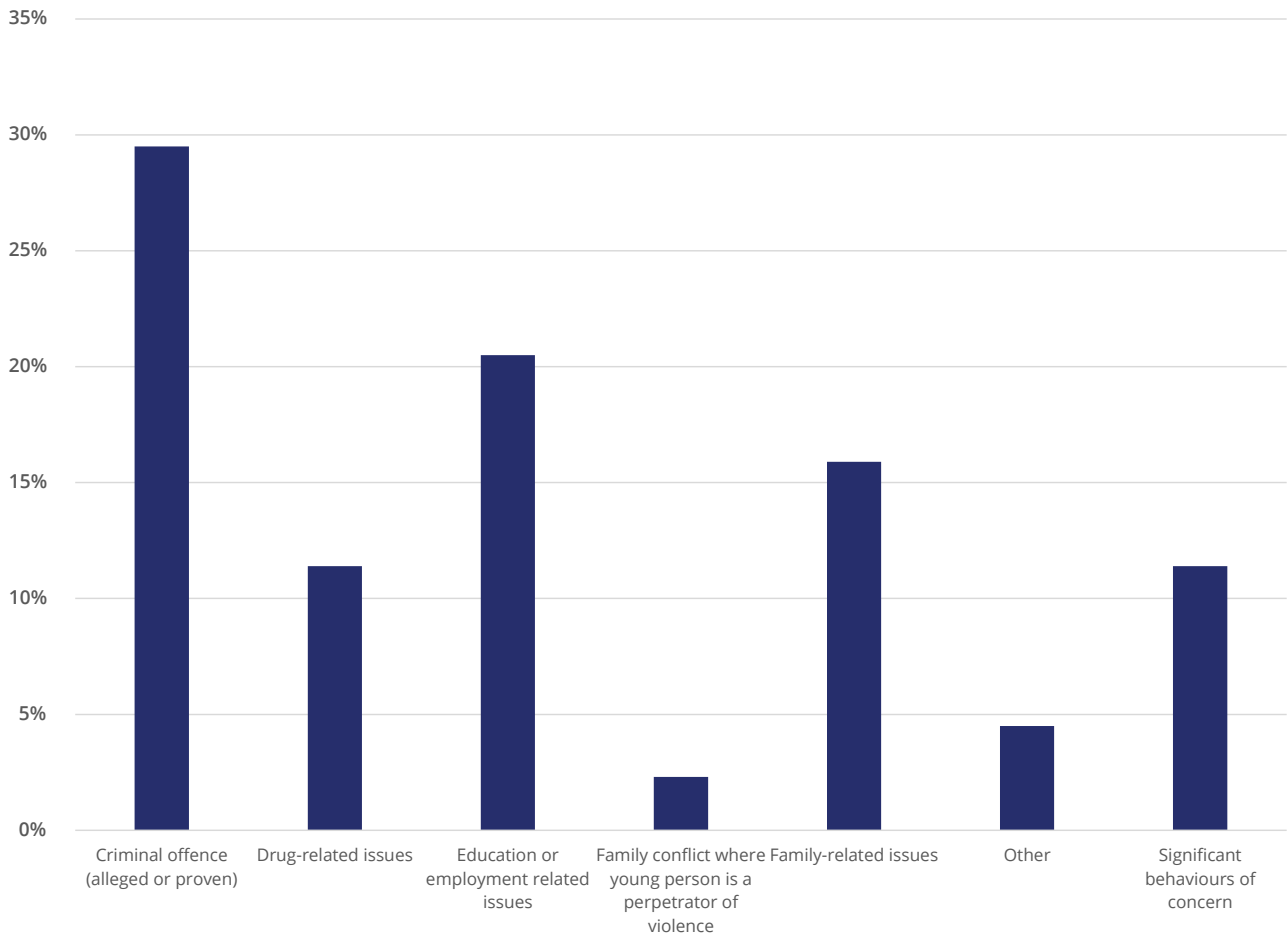


Figure 20: Reason for referrals, Barwon

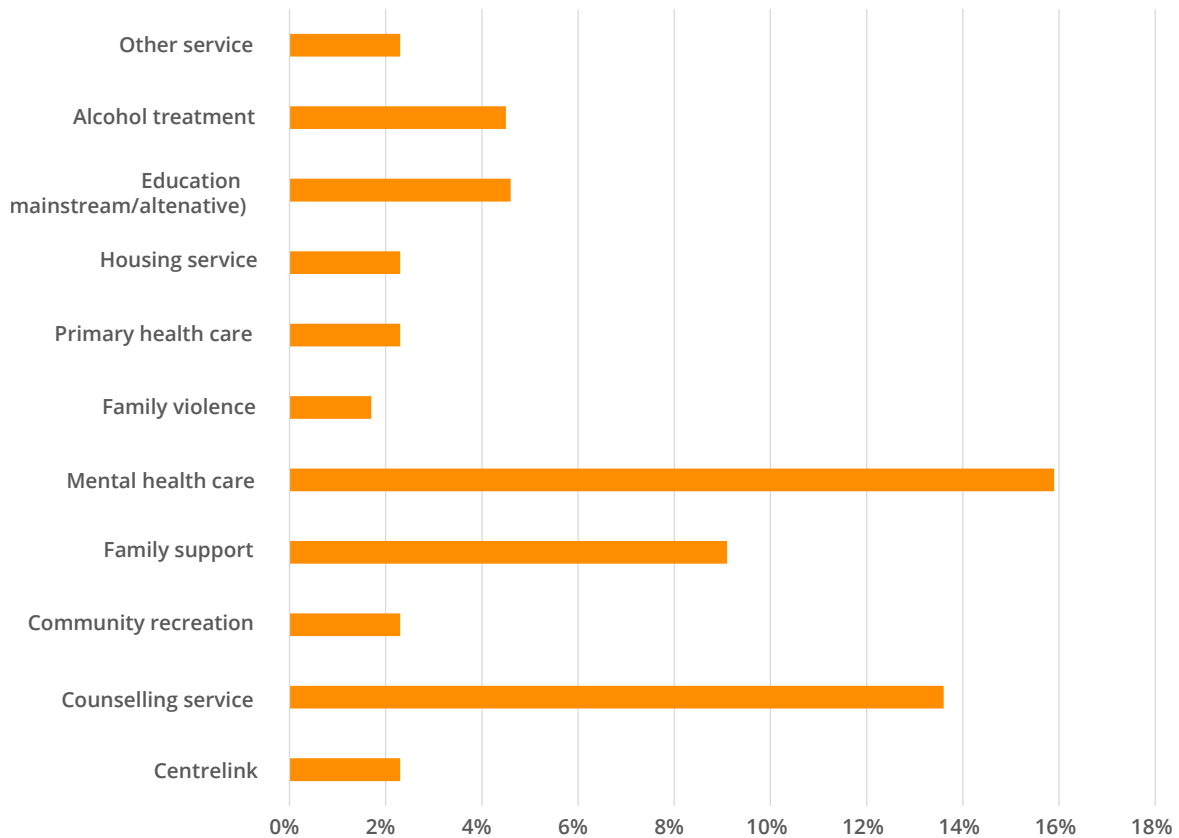


Figure 21: Referrals made by Barwon on behalf of clients

Nearly half of all clients exited the Barwon service between January and June 2019 (n = 21, 47.7%). The most frequently reported reason for case closure was 'Young person has achieved all goals in their case plan' (n = 7, 15.9%), while a total of eight young people had disengaged from the service entirely (18%).

11.2.5. MDAS

A total of 25 young people were engaged with MDAS between January and June 2019, of which nearly half were new referrals (n = 12, 48.0%). The majority of these clients were male (n = 16, 64.0%) and on average, 13 years of age at referral (range: 10–17 years). Most clients reported stable housing with either one or two parents (n = 20, 80.0%). All clients identified as Australian (100%) and most identified as Aboriginal (n = 24, 96.0%).

Twenty (26.0%) young people were referred to MDAS by Victoria Police. In the few cases that

a reason for referral was documented (n = 7) '*significant behavioural issues*' or '*aggression*' were most frequently cited (n = 5, 72.4%).

Overall, a total of five clients exited the program during the evaluation period (20%). Reasons provided for case closure included '*lack of engagement with the service*' and '*transfer out of the service*'

11.2.6. Rumbalara

A total of 18 new referrals to Rumbalara were reported between January and June 2019. Half of the young people referred were male (n = 9, 50.0%) and one did not report their gender. On average, clients were 13 years of age (range 11–17) on the date of referral. Nearly all clients identified as Australian (n = 17, 94.4%), of which two identified as Aboriginal (n = 2). The majority lived at home with either one or two parents (n = 13, 76.5%). Half of the clients had been in contact with the service prior to the referral, and most had been in contact with the police previously (n = 11, 61.1%).

Most referrals to the service were from Victoria Police (n = 12, 66.7%). The main reason reported for referral to the service were *significant behavioural issues* (n = 5, 27.8%). While at the service, referrals were made on behalf of clients for mental health care organisations (n = 2, 11.1%), counselling (n = 1, 5.1%) and alcohol treatment (n = 1, 5.1%). On average clients remained at the service for 37 days (range: 0–164). The most frequently reported reason for case closures were ‘*disengagement*’ (n = 4, 22.2%) or ‘*declined service*’ (n = 4, 22.2%).

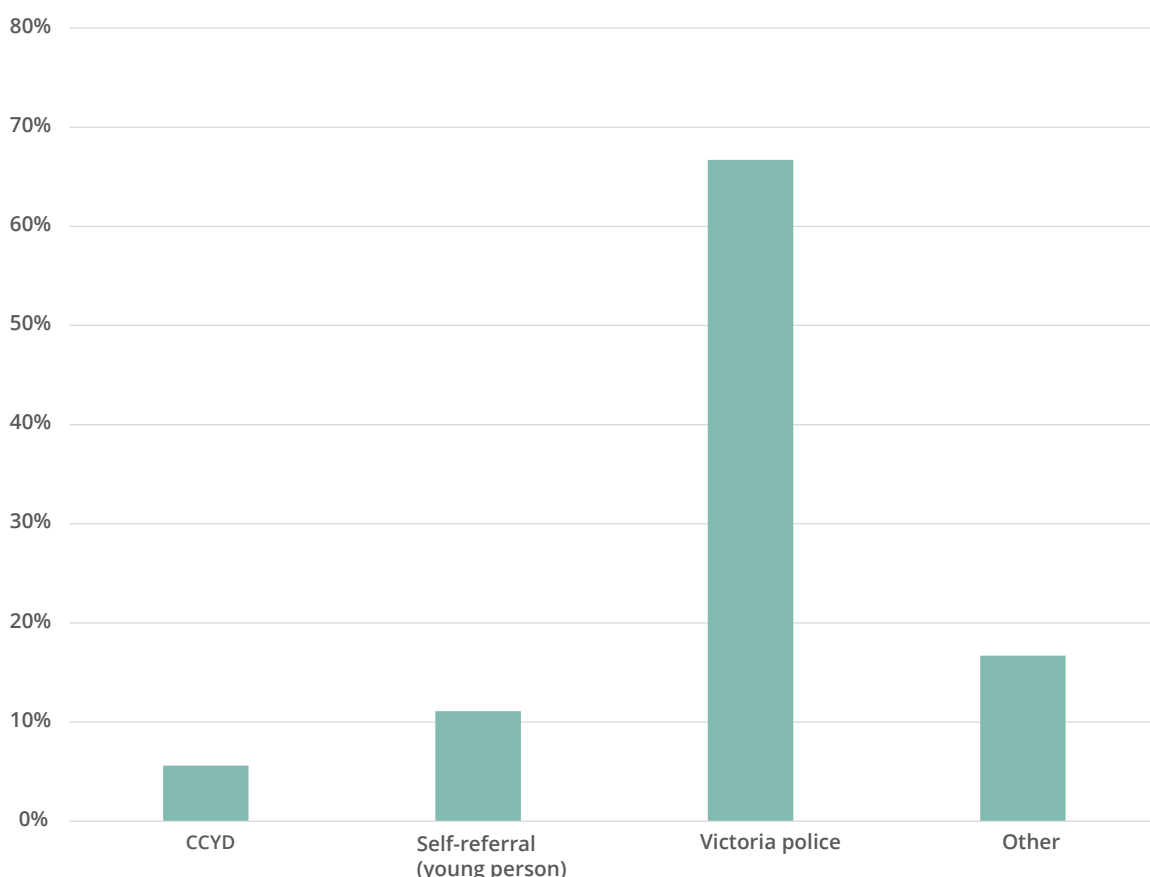


Figure 22: Source of referrals, Rumbalara

Part C: Qualitative Analysis

12. Current YSS/AYSS practices in relation to referrals, assessments, interventions and review processes

12.1. Introduction

The following section of this evaluation report is informed by qualitative analysis of the content of the focus groups. It covers three key areas:

1. Describes current YSS/AYSS practices in relation to referrals, assessments, interventions and review processes
2. Describes specific issues and practice approaches used with young people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, CALD backgrounds and other specific cohorts such as female youth, young people who identify as LGBTIQ, young people with disabilities, and 10- 14-year-olds
3. Identifies service gaps and challenges in the delivery of YSS/AYSS.
4. Focus groups were held with six providers at their premises – YSAS, Les Twentyman Foundation, Anglicare Victoria (Bendigo), Mallee District Aboriginal Services, Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative, and Barwon Child, Youth & Family. Consultation also occurred by telephone with Victoria Police and at the department of Justice and Community Safety with Youth Justice Regional General Managers. At least two members of the project team were present for each focus group.

12.2. Eligibility criteria and referral pathways

The YSS/AYSS is a short-term community-based early intervention service for ‘at risk’ young people aged between 10 and 18 years, following contact with police. There are two primary service aims. One is to intervene early to address emerging issues of young people at risk of entering the youth justice system and divert these young people away from further involvement. The second aim is to prevent further progression of young people who are at the early stages of involvement with youth justice by addressing the underlying reasons for their offending behaviour.

The aims of the YSS are to be achieved by working collaboratively with the young person to assess their needs and support them to

develop and achieve healthy prosocial goals and to facilitate their access to other supports and services that can assist them. Specifically, the eligibility criteria are that the young person:

- is above the age of 10 years and under the age of 18 years
- has had their first contact with Victoria Police (in the last three months)
- is not on a deferral of sentence disposition or on supervised bail
- is not on a Youth Justice Order
- is not on a Child Protection Order
- consents to participate and voluntary

engagement with YSS/AYSS

- resides in YSS /AYSS catchment areas (Melbourne metropolitan areas or one of the local government areas of Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Latrobe Valley, Shepparton and Mildura).

The rationale for excluding young people on either a Youth Justice Order or Child Protection (CP) Order was because these young people have a case plan in place as well as an assigned statutory case manager (2017-YSS-service guidelines p. 6). We note a recent trial to lift the Child Protection exclusion from the YSS/AYSS. This trial commenced in January 2019, and will run until the end of December 2019. YSS/AYSS providers, and Vic Pol were advised to include cases where a young person may have an open CP investigation (which could be closed without intervention for the young person) or when the young person may be receiving a low level of service and/or oversight. It could be appropriate for YSS/AYSS involvement in those cases because the young person is at an early stage of involvement with offending behaviour and YSS intervention could be effective and timely. In those cases it would complement rather than duplicate CP activity. However in circumstances where young people are well supported by CP and/or other services, YSS involvement as well would not be appropriate.

The YSS/AYSS was designed to receive referrals primarily through Victoria Police via the VPeR system. It was also envisioned that referrals from a few other services may occur:

- self-referral by a young person (post police

contact)

- internal YSS agency referrals for young people meeting the eligibility criteria
- Children's Court Youth Diversion (CCYD) Coordinator (as of January 2017).

The restriction around referral sources was intentional as a way of managing demand and ensuring the eligibility criteria is met in order to provide the YSS/AYSS to a specific cohort of at-risk young people.

It is apparent that YSS/AYSS operates utilising referral pathways outside of the identified referral sources and the prescribed eligibility criteria. This was particularly evident in relation to the requirement that the young person has had contact with police in the preceding three-month period, which is not strictly adhered to. Common alternative referral pathways included local schools, Child Protection, friends of young people who have received YSS/AYSS, siblings of young people already engaged with the service or another program, and Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers. These alternative referral sources are perceived by YSS/AYSS to compensate for the low number of referrals provided by Victoria Police.

From the perspective of YSS/AYSS providers, there are several reasons why Victoria Police referrals are low relative to the number of young people they have contact with who meet the eligibility criteria. These include:

- The referral template that police are required to complete to make a referral is perceived

as too onerous in terms of being complicated and time-consuming.

- Police need to obtain the consent of the young person to make a referral, and they are not always best placed to elicit the young person's consent in terms of knowledge of the program, skills and relationship with the young person.
- Referrals are contingent on the relationship the YSS/AYSS has developed with local police personnel. This is rather than it being a formalised expectation that when police have contact with a first-time and low tariff offender who is a young person, they refer to YSS/AYSS.

Information provided by Victoria Police suggests that the referral process is relatively straightforward, taking no more than five minutes for members to complete. It was noted that the need to return to the station and enter referrals through Ledr MKII was a barrier for many members. However, the introduction and rollout of handheld devices that allow for referrals to be streamlined and submitted in the field is likely to reduce this barrier. The most time-consuming component of the VPeR entry is the referral narrative, with members expressing some frustration with needing to duplicate narratives from other incident-reporting paperwork. Barriers identified as reducing police members completion of referrals to YSS/AYSS included:

- YSS/AYSS is not a statewide program; as such, when police members move between stations and taskings where the program is

not available, their awareness of YSS/AYSS as a program option is subsumed by the information flow of other local programs, broader statewide programs and legislative changes. Furthermore, Victoria Police communication campaigns to improve awareness of YSS/AYSS face challenges due to the program not being universal for the organisation. It was noted that Child FIRST in good faith provides coverage for YSS/AYSS in divisions where there is a service delivery gap.

- Relatedly YSS/AYSS criteria are narrower than other youth referral pathways (e.g., Child FIRST, Family Violence Investigation Unit through L17 forms, Transition to Work, parenting support) resulting in police members using their discretion as to whether a young person is at-risk of entering the criminal justice system. A degree of discretion on the part of members would seem appropriate; however, police are often not aware if a young person is subject to an existing Youth Justice or Child Protection Order. Similarly, the changes to referral criteria over time have led to some confusion for police members who are not completing YSS/AYSS referrals frequently.
- Obtaining dual consent (i.e. young person and parent) has been a challenge for police members. Legal advice has been provided to Victoria Police that only a young person's consent for the referral is required and changes to the VPeR system to remove the parent consent requirement are in the program of works for updating. However, this work is unfunded, leading to delays in the removal of the need for parental consent and

as a result the form is creating confusion. Another issue raised is that there is some confusion relating to the circumstances under which a referral is made to Child FIRST as opposed to YSS/AYSS. Given that parenting issues and impaired family functioning are central factors contributing to both child safety concerns as well as antisocial behaviours of young people, it can be difficult for police to discern whether they should refer a young person to Child FIRST or YSS/AYSS. Under these circumstances referrals from police are more commonly directed to the statewide Child FIRST when in some circumstances YSS/AYSS is the more appropriate service. There was a perception by police that Child FIRST, YSS/AYSS, Youth Justice and Child Protection services would communicate between each service and coordinate the most appropriate service delivery, though confidence in the effectiveness of this interservice communication was equivocal. Reasonably, Child FIRST may not consider YSS/AYSS to be the more appropriate service provider given there are often parenting and family functioning issues relevant to the referred young person.

The impact of low referrals from Victoria Police, and consequently accepting referrals outside of the identified referral sources, has been a diluting of the eligibility criteria. For instance, a number of referrals receive a service because young people are assessed to be 'at risk' for engaging in offending behaviour although may not have actually had any police contact in the preceding three-month period. In these circumstances it is not clear how the 'at risk' assessment for offending behaviour occurs. This raises important questions about whether the intended cohort

of young people is getting access to YSS/AYSS. It also indicates limited awareness of the program guidelines in relation to eligibility by service providers, and a desire for greater clarification and direction. Examples include: appropriateness of bolstering referrals from alternative sources not specified in the service guidelines; the funding of development and delivery of group work; and, the circumstances under which referrals from child protection are appropriate for YSS. A second consequence for those YSS/AYSS accepting referrals outside of the identified referral sources and not strictly adhering to the eligibility criteria is that the demand for services exceeds the ability of the service to respond immediately to the needs of young people, thus creating the necessity for a wait list.

In addition to referral sources and eligibility criteria, there are a number of other noteworthy issues in regard to referrals:

- In areas of high representation of Aboriginal young people and in the absence of an AYSS, YSS expressed the view that referral numbers for Aboriginal young people to YSS are unexpectedly low. Concern was raised about the extent to which referrals for this group are made, when they are made and who they are made to. Victoria Police advised that all VPeR entries for Aboriginal clients (including young people) flowed to the VALS who then pass referrals on to a relevant Aboriginal-led organisation program in the area the young person resides. The extent to which they are referred to programs that address factors to divert the young person from the criminal justice system is not known.

- CCYD is an important referral source. However, referral pathways are not formalised and rely on the relationship and agreements negotiated between local YSS/AYSS and the CCYD Coordinator.
- Child Protection referrals pose a concern. The 2017-YSS-service guidelines eligibility criteria excluded young people from receiving YSS/AYSS if they were involved with Child Protection. The rationale behind this was that Child Protection is a statutory body that provides a case plan and case management. However, page 12 of the document states that referrals from Child Protection when the young person is exiting the Child Protection service and meet the eligibility criteria for YSS/AYSS are acceptable. Two issues were identified in relation to Child Protection referrals:
 - YSS/AYSS are receiving referrals from Child

Protection before the young person is exiting Child Protection and it is perceived that if they accept the referral then there is a strong tendency for Child Protection to close the case with the young person. YSS/AYSS correctly identify that young people's safety is the first priority and is the domain of Child Protection rather than YSS/AYSS.

- Children involved with Child Protection are inherently more complex both in terms of their presenting issues and intervention needs. Given the short-term and focused nature of YSS/AYSS, this level of complexity can present a challenge for service providers to work effectively with the young person.

12.3. Assessment

Most YSS/AYSS agencies articulated clear assessment and case planning processes. These services described their assessment approach as being underpinned by principles shared by all service providers and based on the set of practice principles outlined in the Best Interests Case Practice Model (Department of Human Services 2010). Each young person participates in an assessment that is: conducted in an environment where the young person feels safe, strength-based, collaborative, and designed to support the young person set meaningful goals. Domains that are assessed include:

- client profile and identification information

- history and pattern of offending behaviour
- young person's stability
- young person's development and wellbeing
- parent/carer capacity
- current family composition and dynamics
- family history
- social and economic environment
- community partnerships
- meaningful use of time
- client's likelihood of engagement.

While these domains are stipulated in the *Best Interests Case Practice Model* (Department of Human Services 2010), there is no standardised assessment proforma. The rationale provided for this is that it allows YSS/AYSS the flexibility to tailor the assessment process to the needs of each young person, taking into account particulars such as developmental stage (e.g. approach and language differs from ten-year-olds to seventeen-year-olds), language abilities and verbal skills, and cultural factors. This is particularly important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people who are more likely to engage with culturally appropriate and culturally safe service providers. This tailoring to the young person ensures that the YSS/AYSS remains relevant and engaging for the young person while being consistent across YSS/AYSS. It also ensures that the assessment is informative in relation to who the young person is, the strengths and challenges of that young person and the context in which they live their life – all of which facilitates meaningful treatment planning and goal-setting. What would formalise the assessment process to a greater extent, without undermining the required flexibility to tailor the assessment to each young person, would be to indicate the presence or absence of a problem in each domain area. Where problems in domains are identified, an indication of whether these are targeted in the case plan would assist in the linkage of assessment to case planning, and inform the case review process.

Across the YSS/AYSS a number of common need

areas for young people related to offending and at-risk behaviours were identified as follows:

- disengagement from education
- lack of a positive role model
- antisocial peer groups
- antisocial/high-risk-taking behaviours
- family violence
- trauma histories
- substance use
- mental health problems (including ADHD, ASD, anxiety, depression, intellectual disability, oppositional defiance disorder; FASD)
- problems with constructive use of time/recreation
- problems with community connectedness/belonging
- housing instability
- lack of culturally appropriate services
- lack of service reach to regional/remote areas
- problems with literacy and numeracy.

12.4. Interventions

12.4.1. Length of service engagement

The YSS/AYSS is designed to be a short-term service with the length of service involvement expected to be between four to six months (2017-YSS service guideline). Nonetheless, it is recognised that under exceptional circumstances a young person may require a greater length of service involvement, with the total length of service involvement permitted being a maximum of nine months. The length of service provided to a young person within these parameters is based on the identified needs of the young person.

Understanding of the length of service engagement was found to be variable among YSS/AYSS service providers. The range varied between three and six months, with consistent recognition across YSS/AYSS that nine months was the maximum length of engagement under exceptional circumstances.

12.4.2. Approach to service engagement and delivery

The principles underpinning the approach to service delivery described by YSS/AYSS participating in this evaluation was consistent with best practice service delivery for young offenders. Specifically, services provided were described as being:

- coordinated and integrated
- in collaboration with the young person
- to the extent possible, involving the young person's network (i.e. family, school, community)
- strength-based

- trauma-informed
- assertive outreach.

Interventions aimed to enhance young people's strengths and protective factors and address underlying issues related to their offending. Services had knowledge about the RNR framework and relevance of risk factors/ criminogenic needs in reducing risks of offending. Young people were referred to, or provided access to, a wide range of programs with the aim of supporting them to lead a meaningful and non-offending life. Interventions and programs were aligned with evidence-based practices associated with reducing offending in young people. Interventions and referrals were informed by a young person's assessment, goals and case plan and include:

- Case management – this was provided by all YSS/AYSS who participated in the evaluation, although not necessarily to each young person (as determined by assessment and case plan). The form that case management took depended on the needs of the young person. Case management services included coordination of services, referral and linkages to other programs and supports consistent with the assessment and case plan, advocacy and review of progress;
- Increasing the capacity of the young person to develop trusting relationships through the relationship they develop with the young person

- Increasing the capacity of the young person to solve problems by modelling a problem-solving approach to problems, and supporting the young person to use this framework to solve their problems
- Facilitating a 'warm' referral, that is, preparing the young person for engagement with another service through: providing an understanding of the service to the young person, discussing expectations, motivating the young person to engage with other services, problem-solving/removing barriers to young person engaging with other services, and in some cases attending the initial appointment with the young person and the new service provider
- Identifying services relevant to the young person in accordance with the case plan
- Making referrals to other relevant services in accordance with the case plan
- Teaching and supporting a young person to navigate the service system and access services (e.g. primary health, legal aid)
- Facilitating the young person's access to services such as Centrelink and accommodation through helping the young person obtain identification documents, complete forms etc.
- Advocacy to access services
- Mentoring
- Teaching parenting skills to people in parenting roles, such as reasonable limit setting and discipline, how to provide

supervision

- Material support (i.e. food, shelter, textbooks, financial assistance)
- In relation to AYSS, reconnection with culture and community.

Common referrals are to programs that provide services in the areas of:

- school re-engagement/attendance and retention programs
- family/parenting support
- vocational training and employment
- mental health
- substance use
- healthy recreation/leisure pursuits
- mentoring programs.

12.4.3. Reviews

A critical requirement of effective case management is the review process. These are needed to ensure systematic and comprehensive consideration of the young person's progress.

- Ongoing case reviews – All YSS/AYSS stated that regular reviews are incorporated into their processes to monitor the progress of the young person in relation to their goal attainment. Reviews are conducted in the following ways: discussion with the young person; discussion of the young person in supervision; and mapping progress against

action plans identified on the case plan, discussing when goals have been achieved or where goals need to change.

- Two-month post closure review – YSS/AYSS confirmed that two-month post closure reviews were routinely conducted. A purpose-driven template has not been developed to standardise the content of this review, but each service noted that they reviewed at least the following areas:
 - how the young person was currently (time of review)
 - the extent to which they were continuing to live in a manner consistent with their goals
 - whether they remained engaged with other service providers as per their case plan.

In services where a wait list exists, the two-month post closure reviews are associated with some degree of anxiety for workers. The difficulties that workers encounter at the two-month post closure review occurs when a young person expresses a desire to re-engage with YAA/AYSS and there is a legitimate need to, either because new issues have arisen or because previous issues have escalated. The difficulty with this circumstance is how to prioritise this young person's needs with the needs of young people who are on the official wait list.

12.4.4. Outcomes of service engagement and delivery

All YSS/AYSS providers expressed the view that the initiative was beneficial to the young people

who engaged with the service. They based their opinion on a range of sources, including feedback from the young person while the young person was engaged with their service, feedback from parents, feedback from schools, feedback from other services and case closure reviews at the two-month mark.

Benefits identified were prevention of further progression into the youth justice system, diversion from further at-risk and offending behaviour, and delaying of further police contact and contact with the youth justice system.

Long-term outcome data was not available. However, YSS/AYSS were able to report on short-term positive outcomes which were achieved through referring young people to relevant supports and programs; facilitating service engagement with those supports and programs (that is, providing 'warm' transitions to other services); and providing brief interventions such as parenting skills, enhancing a young person's problem-solving capacity and advocacy.

Certain important features were identified in the supports and programs young people are referred to that contribute to positive outcomes. These include being well timed, integrating with other service providers, meeting particular needs of the young person as identified in the case plan, supporting the young person in capacity-building, and being sustainable in terms of length of involvement with the young person. More specifically, short-term positive outcomes include referral and engagement of the young person with a mental health service and/or AOD service, re-engagement with school, participation in organised recreational activities, reconnection

with community, reconnection with culture, increased knowledge and skills regarding how to navigate support services, and capacity-building (skills) so the young person better enabled to manage their own life challenges.

It is noted that in general, YSS/AYSS services associated better outcomes with two factors: young people where prior police contact was minimal, and young people with fewer significant need areas and more protective factors.

13. Issues and practice approaches in relation to specific cohort of young people

13.1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people

A service that recognises the importance of providing a culturally specific program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people that recognises heritage, culture and lore is considered best practice. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients are more likely to engage effectively when services are provided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The availability of both male and female YSS/AYSS workers within a given region is highly important to the success of the service due to the existence of important cultural gender-based differences (i.e., Men's business and Women's business). High prevalence rates of hearing loss (e.g. otitis media) and neurodevelopmental disorders (e.g. FASD, intellectual disability and a range of learning difficulties/disorders) combine with a general lack of culturally appropriate services and a lack of trained Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support workers, resulting in an increase in the case complexity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people referred to the YSS/AYSS and increased challenges to providing appropriate support services. It is noted that, at a minimum, interventions must be culturally sensitive; that is, consistent with beliefs of Aboriginal communities at all levels of program design, delivery and evaluation.

For other YSS where referral to AYSS is not possible, it was noted by YSS/AYSS that numbers of Aboriginal young people referred to the service is low. It is thought that local Aboriginal-led organisations may receive these referrals instead, although this had never been confirmed. In those cases where young Aboriginal people

were receiving a YSS, workers were aware that culture considerations are very important in how they worked with the young person. They did not identify practice guidelines or how their practice differed in relation to this, but noted that these culturally specific considerations are taken into account when developing the case plan. This process of developing the case plan is as per usual: assessment, identification of need areas and goals, and a plan regarding how to achieve desired outcomes.

AYSS staff reported the need for the following services and support:

- access to culturally appropriate mental health support for young people
- access to culturally appropriate AOD support for young people
- more well trained and skilled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers are currently over-stretched)
- more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff of both genders within each region
- more non-Indigenous workers to be trained to be culturally appropriate when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people
- lower case loads to allow for additional time to build relationships with clients and provide more 1:1 support (Number of clients on the case load was not specified, rather

staff perceived a need for additional time to engage Aboriginal youth).

- more culturally appropriate assertive outreach services
- literacy and numeracy support for young people
- better communication and transferring

of information between services and stakeholders.

13.2. Young people from CALD backgrounds

YSS recognise that young people from CALD backgrounds may face particular challenges, and identified these as:

- culture shock – adapting to the Australian culture
- culture clash – parents holding traditional cultural values (including parenting) and young people wanting to adopt Australian values
- access to services – not knowing what services are available and how to navigate the service system
- education – difficulties transitioning from education programs aimed to increase English language skills to mainstream school, and disengaging from school as a result
- experiences of racism
- trauma histories
- suspiciousness/distrust of services.

need to take into account cultural differences in working with young people from CALD backgrounds. Formalised guidelines and approaches to practice are not developed, and would be difficult to do so given the heterogeneity of CALD backgrounds of young people who engage with YSS. Working with young people from CALD backgrounds is described as following the same process that would be followed for any young person (i.e. developing an understanding of the young person in the context of their own life, which inherently requires an individual case plan approach) but being attuned to the impact of being from a different cultural background. Specific interventions were not identified.

There is recognition of the importance of the

13.3. Female youth

The YSS/AYSS, with one exception, report that female young people engage with their service at lower rates than male young people, perhaps reflecting the broader pattern of offending. Gender differences are observed to exist in rates of: trauma history, mental health problems, substance use and familial discord. Two YSS in particular articulated a higher level of awareness of unique features of the challenges of young females. One YSS noted that young females are more vulnerable to sexual exploitation than their male counterparts, including being encouraged by males (particularly older males) to share sexual photos via mobile devices and to engage in sexual activities, often in exchange for illicit substances.

All YSS/AYSS case plans are developed in the

standard manner for the female youth group, but one YSS identified the need (informed by assessment) to help many young females make goals around education, sexual health and safe sex practices and to facilitate linkages with family violence services. Consideration is given to whether the young female has a preference for a female or male support worker. The availability of female Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support workers was identified as particularly important due to cultural barriers that exist that can impact the effectiveness of male Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support workers when supporting female clients.

13.4. Young people who identify as LGBTIQ

YSS/AYSS report few young people identifying as LGBTIQ engaging with their service, both currently and historically. Issues that YSS/AYSS associated with this group of young people were experiences of bullying, being disconnected from family and community, identity issues, anxiety about service engagement and acceptance. It is understood by YSS/AYSS that this group of young people are more likely to be referred to Headspace or access other types of supports. The identified approach to this group of young people remained the same as it is to each of these cohorts of young people, specifically, developing a case plan based on the assessment of the needs of the young person.

13.5. Young people with disabilities

YSS/AYSS identified that a significant number of young people accessing their service had diagnosed or undiagnosed neurodevelopmental disorders or cognitive impairments. The association of these types of disorders with emotional regulation and behavioural problems is noted by YSS/AYSS, as is an association between these conditions and school disengagement. AYSS representatives reported nearly all referrals to be experiencing either a diagnosed or undiagnosed disability. This included a mix of both cognitive (e.g. FASD, intellectual disability, ABI, learning disorders) and physical disabilities (e.g. hearing loss) but also included several additional common factors that can substantially impede an individual, such

as extremely low literacy and numeracy skills and extremely poor communication skills. Case plans for young people living with a disability are informed by individual assessments and often contain a goal around school re-engagement as school disengagement is identified as a common need area. Smaller steps identified typically include liaison with the school wellbeing team, paediatrician, literacy and numeracy support programs. In cases where a neurodevelopmental disorder or cognitive impairment is suspected but has not been diagnosed, a referral to a paediatrician or neuropsychologist is likely.

13.6. 10–14 year old age group

YSS/AYSS noted that taking into account the developmental age of a young person is an important consideration in terms of engagement strategies and use of language. There is agreement that young people aged between 10 and 14 years face two particular challenges:

- Referral options for this age group are minimal.
- Obtaining identification documents can be difficult.

Case plans are developed in the standard manner for this age group (case plans are based on the assessment, identification of need areas and goals, and a plan regarding how to achieve desired outcomes), but ways of engaging and communicating with the young person are noted

to be different from older adolescence. It was also noted that family/parenting is more likely to be a need of the young person in this age group.

13.7. Summary

The major theme of working with particular cohorts of young people is that YSS/AYSS use an inclusive, strength-based, collaborative approach, as they do with more mainstream young people. The case plan is based on the assessment of the young person and their needs, within the context of their lives, as it is with mainstream young people. This process is informed through the awareness of issues that may be relevant to the particular cohorts, which informs the assessment and case plan, and in this manner incorporates the needs of the young person regardless of whether they are from a particular cohort.

14. Service gaps and challenges in the delivery of YSS/AYSS

During the focus group discussions, YSS/AYSS identified several service gaps and challenges. These are as follows.

14.1. Service gaps

- Lack of programs specifically developed for adolescent boys who perpetrate family violence;
- Lack of group work. It is noted that group work can be an extremely beneficial way of engaging and working with young people who have a common need;
- The need for an Aboriginal worker in the Western region. This area in particular has a high population of Aboriginal youth involved with Victoria Police and YSS are unable to refer to a culturally specific service;
- AYSS services should be available in all regions, particularly in areas where there is a high number of Aboriginal youth in contact with Victoria Police, and where there is the presence of a Koori Court;
- Skilled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers (of both genders) should be available in all regions;
- YSS/AYSS should be available in all locations. Other catchment areas where there is a high proportion of young people in contact with Victoria Police and where there are few other services provided, may benefit from having access to YSS/AYSS. This is particularly important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people who are proportionately more likely to live in areas that are remote or reside outside of current service reach;
- There should be a variety of education pathways to and services to suit all young people;
- There should be guidelines in regard to prioritising the wait list;
- Similar services for young adults need development. Occasionally there are 18-year-olds who committed their first low tariff offence as a juvenile and so are engaged with the youth system. Due to just being over the age eligibility criteria at the time they are attempting to access YSS/AYSS, they are not entitled to a service and there is not an equivalent service in the adult system. The Youth Crime Prevention Grant projects (in 15 locations) may be able to offer services to some young adults as eligibility for this service is up to age 24.
- More services for young first-time offenders. There is a paucity of services to refer to who work with the 10 to 14 age group;
- Greater capacity for After Hours service provision. Many young people have contact with police outside of regular hours, and access to other programs such as leisure and recreation may occur in evenings and on weekends.

14.2. Challenges

- Wait lists, particularly in relation to specialist services such as mental health. Wait lists can range in length from six to twelve weeks. It can be the case that a young person is initially motivated to access a service such as mental health, but by the time they have access to the service their motivation level for service engagement is low.
- There is an lack of culturally appropriate mental health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people;
- It can be difficult contacting the young person, because of mobile phones getting lost or confiscated or because of changes in their housing situation;
- There is an increase in the complexity of young people accessing the service, and the YSS/AYSS brief service intervention model is not always compatible with the needs of this group of young people. For example, it can take longer to establish trust with the young person and elicit information relevant to case planning;
- Challenges with getting police to make referrals to YSS/AYSS;
- Young people are mobile and many do not remain in the YSS/AYSS catchment area and without service flexibility in these situations, become ineligible for receiving a YSS/AYSS service following initial engagement;
- It can be difficult achieving the aims of addressing specific issues underlying offending behaviour when offending behaviour is still alleged;
- Challenges associated with young people who move from YSS/AYSS to being placed on a Youth Justice Order. These include:
 - There is no formal process for transfer from YSS/AYSS to Youth Justice.
 - The young person may not communicate to YSS/AYSS that they have received a Youth Justice Order, and the Youth Justice workers do not always inform YSS/AYSS. On these occasions a transition process is unlikely to occur, which may disadvantage the young person.
 - Some young people find the transition from YSS/AYSS to Youth Justice difficult as the service delivery model is very different (e.g. fixed, structured appointments at Youth Justice locations compared with a flexible and assertive outreach services). While YSS/AYSS endeavour to support the young person to make this transition, the adjustment is often still a challenge for the young person.
- Maintaining awareness of, and connection with, other relevant service providers in the local region. The challenge is that relevant services come and go, and it requires an investment of time to keep abreast of service sector changes and foster interagency relationships. The time invested in pursuing this activity is at the expense of time spent in other ways, such as direct client contact and support work;
- Facilitating referrals and access to services depending on service location and characteristics of the young person. For

example, accessing a service might require catching two buses. A young person may have limited finances, or limited ability to meet travel requirements (e.g. poor budgeting, loses Miki card) and high levels of anxiety. Despite good intentions, it may be extremely difficult for a young person to continue to engage with a service that does not provide outreach.

Part D: Recommendations

15. Current YSS/AYSS practices in relation to referrals, assessments, interventions and review processes

15.1. Eligibility criteria and referral pathways

The YSS/AYSS is a short-term community-based early intervention service for young people 'at risk' of becoming engaged with the Youth Justice system. There are strict eligibility criteria (as stipulated in the 2017-YSS Service Guidelines). While most of these eligibility criteria are consistently adhered to, the criteria that requires contact with police in the last three-month period is not. The consequence of this is a broadening of the scope of the service so that it is no longer certain that YSS/AYSS is working exclusively with young people at risk of further engagement with the Youth Justice system. It is likely that the young people the services are working with have multiple and complex needs that benefit from YSS/AYSS. It is also likely that a number of these young people may have come into contact with the Youth Justice system in the absence of involvement from YSS/AYSS. However, it is not clear that the needs of all these young people would necessarily have resulted in contact with Victoria Police and the Youth Justice system, as is the intention of YSS/AYSS. In regard to this issue, the following recommendations are made:

- If the intention of YSS/AYSS is to remain as it is currently designed (i.e. to target those at high risk of entering the Youth Justice system as identified by recent contact with police), then it is important that the eligibility criteria is adhered to. This means that:
 - The Department needs to inform YSS/AYSS that this criteria exists and needs to be adhered to.
 - The Department needs to monitor that this criteria is adhered to.
- If it is deemed acceptable that the scope of the service is broadened and YSS/AYSS are to provide short-term services to young people with needs that may place them in contact with the Youth Justice system (as is currently occurring), then:
 - The service eligibility criteria should be altered to reflect this, specifically, the requirement for recent police contact (last three months) should be removed.
 - Service providers should then be informed by the Department of this change.

15.2. Referral pathways

Two issues with referral pathways were identified.

1. YSS/AYSS referral pathways are currently operating outside of what is intended as reflected in the 2017-Service Guidelines. On account of low and/or fluctuating numbers of referrals from police, YSS/AYSS accept referrals from a range of other sources, including schools, Child Protection, friends of young people who have received YSS/AYSS, and siblings of young people already engaged with the service or another program. The effect of this is to broaden the scope of the service in that not all these referrals have had recent contact with police. If the intention is for the YSS/AYSS to remain as it was initially designed, then police contact is required. The recommendations that follow from this in regard to referral pathways are:
 - Referral numbers from Victoria Police via VPeR need to increase. This may be achieved through a number of means:
 - Victoria Police members are flagged to complete the YSS/AYSS intranet training each time they rotate to a station or division with an operating YSS/AYSS.
 - Victoria Police are required to make referrals to a youth service when they come into contact with a young person and issue a caution (formal or informal), or when a young person is charged with a low tariff offence.
 - The number of police referrals to YSS/AYSS are monitored to ensure relevant referrals are made.
 - YSS/AYSS provide the referrer with feedback in relation to the engagement of the young person referred to services (this allows the referrer to understand that their referral is meaningful and important to the outcomes of the young person, keeps awareness of YSS/AYSS and fosters collaborative working relationships).
 - YSS/AYSS allocate a portion of their worker's time per week to spend at local police stations to work with police to strengthen the referral pathways and support police to work with young people.
 - Monitor the impact of the introduction of handheld devices on the volume of VPeR referrals, to determine if the entry method and content are barriers to police making referrals, and if so, seek solutions to this.
 - Given that parenting issues and impaired family functioning are problems common to both offending and child safety, providing further clarification to police about the circumstances under which they should refer a young person to YSS/AYSS as opposed to Child FIRST is likely to be beneficial.
- Currently, referrals from CCYD programs are localised, informal and influenced by the relationship between the CCYD coordinator and YSS/AYSS. It is recommended that referral pathways from CCYD programs are formalised.
- Other referral pathways that meet the criteria for police contact that are in line

with early intervention to prevent further involvement with the Youth Justice system should be considered. These may include:

- referrals from lawyers and magistrates pre-plea and pre-sentence
- referrals from Embedded Youth Outreach Project Policing Unit
- referrals from Youth Referral and Independent Person Program

2. Another referral pathway issue that requires further consideration is in relation to Child Protection. While the eligibility criteria stipulated in the 2017-YSS Guidelines state 'Not on a Child Protection Order' and Child Protection is not stipulated in the referral sources, page 12 of the same document states young people on Child Protection Orders who are exiting Child Protection and who meet eligibility criteria are acceptable referrals. Concern noted by YSS/AYSS about Child Protection referrals are threefold: it is perceived that referrals are often made when child safety issues remain; these young people present with particularly complex issues; Child Protection are a statutory body that do case planning and coordination and have resources to work with young people on a range of issues, and hence referrals to YSS/AYSS run the risk of service duplication. In light of these issues and in relation to Child Protection referral pathways, the following is recommended:

- YSS/AYSS do not accept referrals when a young person is on a Child Protection Order. When behavioural concerns are identified by Child Protection, they should refer to Child Protection Youth

Support services (for example, Leaving Care Mentoring Initiatives, High Risk Youth Mentoring Programs, Sexually Abusive Behaviour Treatment Services). This enhances accountability, streamlines service delivery, reduces the risks of service duplication and reduces the risk of client fatigue as a result of contact with too many services.

- If referral numbers are low and it is decided that the scope of the program is broadened to include at-risk young people with and without recent police contact, then it is recommended that:
 - Direct referrals from schools are included in the referral source pathways and reflected in the Service Guidelines. Criteria need to ensure that young people with *significant antisocial/offending* behaviour are those referred by schools. For example, young people who have been suspended on two or more occasions due to antisocial behaviour (such as fighting, bullying, property damage, aggressive behaviour), who are on the cusp of being expelled, or who have been expelled for antisocial behaviour.

15.3. Assessment

The assessment process is informed by the Best Interests Case Practice Model, and the domains associated with this model inform the assessment and case plan. This assessment requires a degree of flexibility in regard to how the domains are assessed to ensure they are able to be tailored to the young person. However, the assessment could be strengthened if the process was formalised to a greater extent without undermining the required flexibility to tailor the assessment to each young person. It is therefore recommended that:

- Workers indicate the presence or absence of a problem in each domain area.
- Where problems in domains are identified, it is important that there is an indication as

to whether these are targeted in the case plan. This would assist in the linkage of assessment to case planning and inform the case review process.

The majority of service providers indicated a systematic assessment and case planning process. However, this was not the case in every service. Hence, it is recommended that:

- There is greater oversight and monitoring to ensure that all YSS/AYSS are conducting a comprehensive and systematic assessment and that the case planning process is informed by the Best Interests Case Practice Model (Department of Human Services 2010).

15.4. Intervention

Length of service engagement

There was variable understanding of the length of service engagement, with some services believing the time ranged between three and six months, and others between four and six months. There was consistency in understanding that under exceptional circumstances services could be provided for up to nine months. Given the variability in understanding of length of service involvement, it is recommended that:

- Clarification is provided to services so that each service has an understanding that length of service provision is expected to be between four and six months (although earlier completion is acceptable).

Reviews

While it is noted that case reviews occur on a regular basis, and post-closure reviews (two months following the closure of a case) are also occurring on a regular basis, there is scope to increase the rigour of post-closure reviews. Currently, there is no formalised format for conducting post-closure reviews.

- To standardise this within and between YSS/AYSS, it is recommended that a post-closure review should consist of a standard set of review questions, for example:
 - Have you had contact with police after your contact with YSS/AYSS finished?

- Did you achieve your main goal?
- Have you remained engaged with the services and supports that YSS/AYSS referred you to?
- Are you involved in education, training or employment of some form?
- Are you involved in a sporting, recreational or community-based activity?
- Has the quality of your family life improved if this was an issue before YSS/AYSS involvement?
- Have you developed more connections with others who do not have police involvement?
- Was your involvement with YSS/AYSS helpful? If so, how?

15.5. Issues and practice approaches in relation to specific cohort of young people

Concerns were raised about where referrals for Aboriginal young people go in the absence of an AYSS service available in the area, given that YSS receive few referrals for Aboriginal young people. It is recommended that:

- Referral pathways for Aboriginal young people who meet the eligibility criteria for AYSS are clarified when an AYSS service is not available.

YSS/AYSS were able to identify a number of challenges specific to particular cohorts of young people. They also identified that their service delivery needed to be individually tailored to meet the needs of all young people, and this was achieved by taking into account in the assessment and case planning phase issues and challenges associated with particular cohorts of young people. To strengthen this and ensure that best practice occurs in relation to specific cohorts of young people, it is recommended that:

- YSS/AYSS be provided with further professional development training to enhance their understanding of issues relevant to specific cohorts of young people, and to develop practice principles to be considered when working with these cohorts of young people.

15.6. Service gaps and challenges in the delivery of YSS/AYSS

15.6.1. Young males who perpetrate family violence

A service gap that was commonly noted by service providers was intervention services for young males who perpetrate family violence. While it is recognised that meeting this particular service need might be beyond the scope of YSS/AYSS, it is important to acknowledge this service gap with the aim of raising it as a service system issue. It is important that the service system consider how to meet these needs.

15.6.2. Aboriginal worker in the Western Region

It is important that services have linkages to ensure that young Aboriginal people can access services and that services can be delivered in culturally appropriate and safe ways. This may mean the appointment of Aboriginal caseworkers or stronger links with Aboriginal services. Both male and female workers are required. Increasing the personnel within the AYSS may also positively impact the effectiveness and reach of current services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

15.6.3. YSS/AYSS expansion into other geographical locations

The consistent view of YSS/AYSS is that this service plays an important role in reducing further contact of at-risk young people with the Youth Justice system. It is recommended that:

- Quantitative outcome data is captured to evaluate the accuracy of this view.

If this view is supported and the services

assessed as cost-effective, then YSS/AYSS should be expanded and made available to young people in other geographical areas.

15.6.4. YSS/AYSS flexibility in service delivery

Two challenges were identified by services regarding their ability to respond to the needs of young people. The first was in regard to having the flexibility to follow young people who they are providing a service to if the young person moves out of the catchment area. The second was a greater capacity for After Hours service provision. Examples of this need are (i) when police have contact with a young person after regular business hours and a more immediate response to the young person would facilitate engagement with YSS/AYSS and (ii) to support young people accessing recreational activities where training/games/rehearsals may occur after hours during the week or on weekends. Hence, recommendations for greater flexibility in service delivery are twofold:

- provisions to enable YSS/AYSS to continue to work with a young person if the young person moves out of the catchment area
- provisions to enable more After Hours service delivery.

15.6.5. Transition from YSS/AYSS to Youth Justice

Challenges were identified in relation to young

people transitioning from YSS/AYSS to Youth Justice. One challenge is relevant to improving the service provided by YSS/AYSS during this transition time. As it currently stands, transition processes from YSS/AYSS to Youth Justice are not formalised and there are benefits to formalising this process: YSS/AYSS are consistent within and across providers in regards to transition practices; individual workers are clear in regards to how to support the young person as they make this transition and what needs to occur; the young person is clear in regards to what they can expect from the transition process. Therefore, it is recommended that:

- A transition process from YSS/AYSS to Youth Justice is developed and formalised.

15.6.6. Data collection and management

There is a strong need for better data collection and management

The KPMG (2014) review suggested the following:

- Consider the collection of longitudinal outcome data regarding the YSS.
- Develop a standard reporting template to be completed by YSS service agencies on an annual basis, including agreed expenditure categories, thereby allowing for transparent oversight.

The Current State Analysis (2017) recommended the following:

- Development of an evaluation framework for

YSS/AYSS once program and management issues have been addressed.

Quantitative data analysis was limited in this evaluation by various problems related to obtaining and aggregating data. This included inconsistent codes used between services, modification to the reporting template, large amounts of missing data, inconsistent data and an inconsistent protocol for counting client numbers. These problems led to difficulties with data analysis.

It is important that data collection practice improve and an evaluation plan is developed.

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Part F: Appendix

15.7. Summary of recommendations for working with priority groups

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth

1. Facilitate the presence of supportive familial and community relationships.
2. Re-engage the young person with school by using specialist education programs and youth workers whose primary focus is on school re-engagement.
3. Use culturally appropriate treatment programs, as these will increase engagement and completion of diversionary programs.
4. Involve Elders or community facilitators in the delivery of programs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth.
5. Increase Aboriginal community involvement in design and delivery, as this can facilitate community ownership and accountability.
6. Target programs to high-risk groups, rather than making the programs generalised. This is underpinned by the RNR tenet of ensuring the appropriate service intensity is matched with the young person's risk and needs.
7. Target young people at an early age (e.g., at-risk infants, young children and families) through programs that focus on parenting and preschool family support for high-risk children and communities.
8. Ensure programs target multiple risk and/or protective factors simultaneously, particularly those targeting parenting, education/unemployment, and the deterioration of social/community connections.
9. Ensure frequent, sustained and structured contact between facilitators and youth, as these are key characteristics of effective programs. Effective programs also often involve family and caregivers and embed culture into the program to assist in building participants' cultural identity and sense of self-esteem.
10. Ensure the retention of high-quality staff and access to stable funding sources, as this will provide stability and continuity of the program.
11. Consistent with Burra Lotjpa Dunguludga: Aboriginal Justice Agreement –Phase 4 (p.13) it is important that programs have the following characteristics:
 - a. community control over design, process and preferred outcomes
 - b. cultural leadership and authority

- c. systems, services and programs reflecting community values
- d. a holistic approach to wellbeing and healing
- e. jurisdictional influence
- f. focusing on outcomes rather than outputs
- g. flexibility in resourcing and time to grow and evolve
- h. high levels of competence and capacity
- i. realistic targets and control over parameters of evaluation processes

CALD youth

1. Provide training to workers in youth justice organisations and support services regarding CALD-specific experiences, including:
 - a. culturally specific manifestations of illness and cultural idioms of distress
 - b. a cultural group's family structures, social hierarchies and religious/spiritual conventions and how these may shape community/familial expectations and responsibilities
 - c. resistance or hostility in therapeutic or justice settings because of mistrust, fear and perceived discrimination as a result of historical injustices committed in similar settings
 - d. experiences of racism which may affect self-esteem, distress levels, cooperation with authority, adherence to clinical recommendations, threat perception, feelings of safety, access to services and vulnerability to antisocial peer group membership
 - e. a need for interpreters or having bilingual staff.
 - f. the cultural context of behaviour. Partner with community/faith leaders and elders of the community.
2. Provide clear instructions to interpreters about needing to translate the exact words and phrases to the young person, rather than interpreting based on cultural understandings and expectations.
3. Wherever possible, ensure that interventions utilise facilitators who are of the same cultural background as the young person. It can also be useful to have one facilitator be of the same culture and another facilitator be of a different culture, so the young people can see appropriate and respectful interactions demonstrated by facilitators.
4. Re-name programs and interventions to avoid cultural stigmas and negative connotations associated with 'treatment' or 'mental illness'.

5. Include family members in the intervention where possible and if safe to do so.
6. Recognise that not every CALD youth will require (or necessarily respond better to) a culturally modified version of a particular intervention.
7. Facilitate visits to CALD youth in custody from same-culture community organisations.
8. Explicitly assure the young person of confidentiality and limits to confidentiality when working with them, including what may or may not be disclosed to their community and/or family.
9. Recognise that involvement with the youth justice system may ostracise the young person. Community services therefore must become adaptable to meet the health, legal and social needs, and gain the trust, of young CALD Australians who have broken ties with their communities.

Younger youth (aged 10–14 years)

1. Ground interventions with younger youth in therapeutic principles, as this group has typically experienced a high level of trauma and attachment issues.
2. Address the pro-criminal mindset that has usually developed as a result of early exposure to criminal activity and abuse, leading the young person to view the world as hostile and prefer immediate gratification over delayed rewards.
3. Engage family and positive social support to facilitate re-engagement with family and community.
4. Ensure the young person's home life is safe and stable. Screen for current and previous experiences of family violence, sexual abuse, physical abuse, drug use, criminal involvement, etc.
5. Focus on re-engagement with education, including the provision of youth workers who conduct regular outreach and engagement work to the young person.
6. Focus on teaching young people and their parent's strategies regarding emotional regulation, self-control and problem-solving.

Female youth

1. Ground interventions with younger youth in therapeutic principles, as this group has typically experienced a high level of trauma and interpersonal conflict. Counselling regarding grief and loss, as well as sexual and physical assault are key areas that may be targeted.
2. Conduct a thorough assessment of the young person's trauma history, as well as the resultant

impact on her psychological state and the need to self-medicate. These need to be considered and screened for prior to the provision of any intervention, as they will significantly impact her ability to engage with and trust facilitators.

3. Provide counselling for substance use and recognition of the link between substance use and self-medication for emotional dysregulation, and substance use and offending.
4. Early intervention and diversionary programs for female youth offenders may be similar to those of male offenders; however, mental health, trauma history, substance use and interpersonal connection need to be prioritised.
5. Include skills-based components in any interventions, whereby the young people can be taught about goal-setting, establishing positive relationships, decision-making, problem-solving and self-confidence.
6. Encourage parents, caseworkers and other staff to provide positive behavioural reinforcement to the young person, set realistic expectations and prepare the young person for major upcoming events which may increase the risk of emotional dysregulation (e.g. court appearance, seeing an abusive family member, etc.)
7. Utilise cognitive-behavioural methods to teach both the girls and their caregivers self-control, strategies to manage anger, social skills and interpersonal problem-solving skills.
8. Give consideration to the presence of interpersonal problems and familial conflict in the lives of young female offenders, including strategies for emotion regulation and interpersonal problem-solving.
9. Consider focusing early intervention and diversionary programs targeted specifically at young female offenders on safety, strengths-building and addressing the individual's trauma history.
10. Consider appropriate interventions, which may include female-only groups and/or individualised therapy, as well as the modelling of healthy relationships by facilitators.

Youth with disabilities and neurocognitive differences

1. Increase the use of disability-specific services.
2. Increase the prevalence of screening for common disabilities and neurocognitive difficulties prior to adjudication or contact with police, including FASD, ADHD, ASD, etc.
3. For interventions with youth identified as having ADHD, include a prosocial component to

prevent them acquiring new and improved antisocial skills.

4. Adopt a multidisciplinary approach for the assessment and management of individuals with disabilities and neurocognitive difficulties. Workers may be required to work with individuals from a range of disciplines and backgrounds, including doctors, NDIS staff, occupational therapists etc.
5. Provide reading comprehension and literacy programs for young offenders in order to improve vocational and educational outcomes.
6. Provide emotional regulation and hypersensitivity interventions to individuals with ASD and other individuals who experience hyperarousal. Besides skill-building exercises to reduce stress, adapted DBT may be useful to aid emotion regulation.
7. Provide basic interpersonal skills training, including how to read basic social cues, explicitly teaching key social rules, and explaining aspects of empathy. These skills should be taught to individuals with ASD in a similar manner to the way in which neurotypical children are taught reading and writing.
8. Teach individuals with ASD concrete, skills-based interventions requiring them to consciously consider the consequences of their actions, thereby increasing their capacity to consider the ramifications of antisocial actions.
9. Provide training for staff working with young people identified as having a disability or neurocognitive difficulty.
10. Incorporate the following key aspects of working with a young person with a disability:
 - a. Assess the specific skills and needs of the young person and their support network.
 - b. Develop a plan involving clear goals pertaining to multiple facets of the young person's life.
 - c. Change and adapt goals as the youth progresses or fails to progress.
 - d. Provide opportunities to improve academic and vocational skills.
 - e. Provide social skills training to improve prosocial relationship development.
11. Screen for drug use and connect the young person with appropriate drug treatment programs.
12. Ensure family/caregiver participation in any program, as this is imperative to the consistent use of appropriate strategies and the uptake of positive behaviours by the young person.
13. Consider whether comprehensive transition planning and the implementation of a wrap-around service model are needed to ensure the young person and their family is appropriately supported, thereby reducing the potential for ongoing antisocial behaviour.

14. Provide targeted intervention focusing on simple, concrete and age-appropriate activities.
15. For early intervention and diversionary programs, undertake comprehensive cognitive assessments as part of their risk-needs formulation process, and tailor interventions accordingly.

LGBTIQ youth

1. Fund further research identifying common and unique issues faced by young LGBTIQ Australians in relation to youth offending.
2. Services should ensure they are visibly welcoming and accepting of young people who are LGBTIQ. This includes webpages, signage and posters that signify the service is a safe place for LGBTIQ individuals.
3. Services need to demonstrate their commitment to inclusive practice, be aware of the complex needs of LGBTIQ people and place clients in facilities appropriate to their self-identified gender.
4. Recognise that homelessness and mental health concerns are key issues faced by LGBTIQ young people. Therefore, LGBTIQ-friendly housing and mental health support should be recommended and provided to this cohort.
5. Develop and implement policies that prohibit discrimination based on sexual and/or gender identity against LGBTIQ young people, and provide young people with a copy of the policy.
6. Provide training to all staff to ensure they are informed about appropriate vocabulary and definitions relevant to LGBTIQ youth, including dispelling any myths and educating workers on unique difficulties faced by LGBTIQ youth.
7. Provide information to LGBTIQ young people about other safe services they may be able to access for support, including safe faith-based and spiritual practices.

Functional Family Therapy – Youth Justice

Evaluation Report

Evidence and Insights

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1. Executive Summary

The evaluation report of the Functional Family Therapy Youth Justice (FFT-YJ) program provides evidence and findings in relation to the program's implementation and operation in the North West Metropolitan Area of Melbourne and progress towards short term outcomes. These findings highlight areas of successes and challenges for the program delivered by Anglicare Victoria.

Overall, the FFT-YJ is operating as intended, providing a family focused intervention for young people and their families in the North West Metropolitan Area. The arrival of COVID-19 in early 2020 saw the program pivot its delivery to a predominately online format and there was a subsequent decrease in the number of referrals and engagement. However, Anglicare Victoria was able to maintain delivery of the program and provided an important service to the program's young people and families who were suffering additional hardships due to the health emergency restrictions, including such things as access to food, funds and mobile phones. FFT-YJ Practitioners (practitioners) acknowledged that while the program can be delivered online, it does create challenges such as the limited ability to read nonverbal cues therefore in-person sessions were the preferred mode of delivery. With the easing of restrictions in Victoria, it is hoped that in-person sessions will return soon.

Key findings in relation to program implementation and operation were:

- A total of **109 young people were referred** to the program between April 2019 and October 2020. Sixty-nine commenced the program (attended at least one session) and **39 completed the program**.
- The majority of young people referred to FFT-YJ were male (85 per cent), the **average age was 16 years** and 68 per cent of referrals identified as an ethnicity other than Australian, with the most common being Sudanese and South Sudanese followed by those from Pacific Island regions.
- FFT-YJ was viewed as a **flexible, adaptive program that suited the target cohort and their complex needs** as well as their frequent movement in and out of custody. This flexibility in approach was highly valued by Youth Justice (YJ) staff. They also noted the upfront work undertaken by practitioners to achieve engagement and the **willingness to find solutions to barriers**. In addition, practitioners are **valuable members of the broader Care Team** and work closely with other specialists involved. Youth Justice Case Managers (YJ CM) also noted they had benefited from the program; enhancing their communication skills with young people and families and understanding of family dynamics.
- Practitioners were viewed as **highly qualified with an ability to build rapport with both young people and their family members quickly**. The addition of a Dinka speaking practitioner and two Pasifika practitioners meant the practitioner demographic profile was becoming more reflective of the client group.

The number of Aboriginal young people referred (four) was low. A consultation with an Aboriginal community organisation who had experience of the program, thought it was highly relevant and culturally safe for Aboriginal young people to attend and had lots of potential. However, the low uptake was attributed to the lack of community awareness and trust in the program. It was suggested that much could be done to improve this including working with Elders to foster partnerships within the community.

Due to the program's low completion numbers and the relatively short time it has been operating, evidence of progress towards outcomes is limited.

- Key findings in relation to progress towards short term outcomes were:
- Of the 39 young people who completed the program, 62 per cent reported either a great (18 per cent) or moderate (44 per cent) extent of **improvement to family functioning**. FFT-YJ

Practitioners and YJ CMs also reported seeing signs of positive changes in family functioning, including improved communication and increased family time such as eating dinner together and watching movies as a family.

- Similarly, 62 per cent reported **improvement in overall behaviour and general mental health** and there were **positive shifts in reported decrease in substance abuse**.
- In relation to the improved school attendance outcome there were some early indications of progress made. Overall, **the proportion of young people engaged in education increased after program completion**. Eighteen young people were not engaged in education at the first session of FFT-YJ and this reduced to 11 young people at program completion. There were 11 young people engaged in part time education at the first session of the program and this increased to 21 at completion of the program.

The **reoffending analysis** is limited in its conclusions by the small number of participants who were referred, commenced and completed the program, the short duration of program operation and participants movements in and out of custody during the program, therefore the extent to which outcomes are attributable to FFT-YJ is unknown. The analysis shows that:

- All young people referred to FFT-YJ were on a Youth Justice order, the most common order type was a Remand Order.
- The total volume of offences for all 61 young people who participated in FFT-YJ was 4946 prior to commencing the program. Eighty-four per cent of these young people received new orders during their FFT-YJ treatment (with a total of 2906 new offences recorded). The proportion of young people who received new orders had decreased to 51 per cent after their FFT-YJ treatment was closed (equating to 2041 new offences recorded).
- The category of offending that showed the largest decrease post FFT-YJ was *unlawful entry with intent/burglary break and enter*, down five per cent. The category of offence that showed the largest increase post FFT-YJ was *traffic and vehicle regulatory offences*, up seven per cent.
- There were changes in the severity of offending behaviours committed by young people who participated in the FFT-YJ program. The category of most serious offence that showed the largest decrease was *unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter*, down 10 per cent.
- The category of most serious offence to show the largest increase was *acts intended to cause injury*, with 38 per cent of this type of offence recorded before FFT-YJ treatment compared to 43 per cent after treatment.

Some of the **barriers for the program** identified by the evaluation were:

- **The name of the program.** The word therapy creates a real barrier to engagement, especially for CALD and Aboriginal young people. It was explained that therapy in these cultures was not widely accepted and had negative connotations. Often when the program is being explained to young people and their families the word therapy is deliberately not used.
- **The age limits.** The original upper age limit for the program was 17 years, however referrals are taken for 18-year-olds where appropriate in consultation with FFT-YJ. Some stakeholders think the age limit should be extended further to capture the 19-year-old cohort where they believe there is a need for this type of program, particularly in relation to pre-release engagement to support return to the family home to avoid homelessness. Program data to date shows that an older cohort than anticipated is being referred, however completion rates for these older groups are lower than for younger age groups.

Overall, FFT-YJ has provided an opportunity for Youth Justice to deliver a family focused intervention aimed at addressing fundamental communication and relationship issues experienced by young people and their families. The program has shown positive early signs of progress towards its intended outcomes in relation to improving family functioning and improved behaviour and mental health. The relatively modest changes in behaviour and family dynamics,

such as eating dinner together or a young person phoning their parent, can signal the beginning of a positive shift in the family dynamic. Continued implementation and delivery of the program (in alignment with the certification process) has potential over time to realise the program's outcomes.

The recommendations below in Table 1 should be assessed and considered as appropriate.

Table 1: Recommendations

Recommendations	
1.	It is recommended that Youth Justice consider enhancing the performance monitoring and reporting of the program to align with program deliverables and outcomes.
2.	It is recommended that Youth Justice consider supporting the referral process through a dedicated Youth Justice Program Coordinator in the West Metropolitan Area.
3.	That Youth Justice, in partnership with Anglicare Victoria, explore opportunities to build trust of the program within the CALD and Aboriginal communities.
4.	It is recommended that if the program was to be continued or expanded, Youth Justice consider conducting an impact evaluation to determine the effect of the program on long-term outcomes for young people who completed the program.

2. Introduction

Functional Family Therapy Youth Justice (FFT-YJ) began operating in the North West Metropolitan Area of Melbourne in April 2019. It was introduced, along with another program (Multisystemic Therapy), to provide a family focus intervention that was previously not available through Youth Justice.

Anglicare Victoria is funded to deliver the program to young people and their families to provide an intensive short-term intervention aimed at working to reduce conflict, improve communication and to increase hope and a positive family environment.

Evidence and Insights, Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS) was engaged by Youth Justice to evaluate the program in August 2020 to assess the extent to which the program had been implemented as intended and review progress towards short term outcomes.

3. Scope and Methodology

The evaluation of FFT-YJ is guided by the Evaluation Plan developed in consultation with Youth Justice and Anglicare Victoria. As part of the Evaluation Plan, a program logic model was created to identify (at a high level) the key inputs, outputs, activities and outcomes to guide the evaluation.

The evaluation aims to:

- Understand the extent to which FFT-YJ has been implemented as intended.
- Review progress towards the intended FFT-YJ short term outcomes.

The evaluation used a mixed methods approach, utilising qualitative data via a range of data collection techniques including:

- 12 one on one interviews with key stakeholders

- two focus groups with key stakeholders
- FFT-YJ Exit interview analysis
- FFT-YJ Practitioner fidelity score analysis
- FFT-YJ Monthly Reports analysis
- Review of other relevant documentation.

Quantitative data activities included two separate analyses, described below.

3.1 FFT-YJ data collection tool analysis

The evaluation included an analysis of the FFT-YJ program dataset maintained by Anglicare Victoria. This dataset utilised a Youth Justice program reporting template tool, developed to record progress against program outputs and outcomes in line with monthly contractual reporting periods. Anglicare Victoria has amended some fields in this tool to suit the circumstances of their own data collection and reporting for the FFT-YJ program.

This database included all young people referred to Anglicare Victoria for the FFT-YJ program between April 2019 and October 2020. This data was provided to the evaluation team in a password protected Excel 365 file format. **In total this database contained information pertaining to 109 young people and their families who were referred to Anglicare Victoria for the FFT-YJ program.**

To analyse this data, the following decisions and assumptions were made:

- **Missing data:** Anglicare Victoria adapted the reporting tool to account for multiple rows for the same client (one row per client for each reporting period). As a result of this amendment, the data set contained many blank cells. After consultation with Anglicare Victoria, it was decided that if a cell was left blank then the assumption could be made that no changes had occurred in the young person's circumstances from the previous reporting period for: living arrangements; education status; outcome areas.
- **Commenced FFT-YJ treatment:** for the purposes of reporting, a referral was considered to have commenced FFT-YJ treatment if the database recorded:
 - a commencement date for that young person
 - at least one therapy session held with FFT-YJ practitioner during the reporting period (April 18 to October 2020).
- **Treatment period:** calculated using the recorded date of referral from YJ to Anglicare Victoria, and the recorded date of the first session for each client.
- **Progress towards outcomes:** has been assessed by comparing goal improvement scores recorded for each young person at the first reporting period with the scores recorded at the final reporting period during which the case was active.

The FFT-YJ database provided to the Evaluation Team was analysed in Excel 365 using a range of descriptive statistics, including count, range (the highest and lowest values in a data set), average, median, and percentages (Bryman, 2012).

Reoffending analysis

Data analysis of all orders and offences committed by young people engaged in the FFT-YJ was undertaken to assess reoffending. The data was extracted from the Youth Justice Client Relationship Information System (CRIS) and included all orders and offences committed¹ between 1 September 2018 to 30 September 2020 by young people engaged in FFT-YJ. This

¹ This is for sentenced offences only.

data extract included basic demographic information (e.g., gender and ethnicity), order type, order start and end dates, offence date, most serious offence for each order.

The data extract included records for the 61 young people who commenced FFT-YJ (i.e., attended at least one session) prior to September 2020.

A dataset was developed that included:

- All offences and orders recorded for young people in the six months prior to Anglicare Victoria commencing FFT-YJ service delivery in April 2019.
- All offences and orders recorded for young people during FFT-YJ treatment.
- All offences and orders recorded for young people following FFT -YJ closure. It should be noted that closure does not indicate that treatment was completed. Closure occurred due to several reasons, including disengagement, withdrawal, and ineligibility.

3.2 Data limitations

The findings from this evaluation should be considered alongside the following limitations:

FFT data collection tool analysis

- The evaluation is based on a point-in-time analysis of the FFT-YJ participant data as at October 2020.
- Caution must be applied when interpreting the results as the findings may not be generalisable due to the small number of program participants and the relatively short program period.
- The dataset provided contained some errors (missing or inaccurate data). Errors might have been a result of human inputting errors, dataset compilation errors, and/or program immaturity. Therefore, the accuracy of some of the data captured was unknown.
- Missing data resulted in incomplete reporting for some variables.
- The short timeframe available to receive, clean, analyse and report on the FFT-YJ program data impacted the extent of the quantitative analysis that could be conducted to support this evaluation.

Reoffending analysis

- The CRIS data extract provides some information on the offending histories of young people before, during, and after FFT-YJ treatment. This data however only captures sentenced offences/orders. Therefore, the true nature of re-offending and contact with police is unknown.
- A significant proportion of young people in FFT-YJ were at some point during treatment in custody limiting the ability to offend which may impact rates of offending.
 - There may also be some delay in sentencing of offences, so therefore young people may have committed offences that are not yet sentenced at the time of the program evaluation.

4. Youth Offending in Victoria

Victoria's youth justice system responds to a relatively small number of young people (Armytage and Ogloff, 2017). In 2018-19 there were 953 young people aged ten years and over who were subject to a youth justice supervision in Victoria on an average day. The majority were under supervision in the community (80 per cent, n = 766), with the remaining in detention (19 per cent, n = 191) (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2020).

Young people in the youth justice system have high and very complex needs. Many are in the Child Protection and the Out of Home Care system and have experienced intergenerational

trauma, abuse and neglect, as well as other family breakdown and conflict. They experience high rates of unstable accommodation, homelessness and socioeconomic disadvantage. Young people in Youth Justice have often been exposed to criminal activity by parents or siblings and many disengage from education, training or employment. They are more likely to experience substance use, mental health issues and have a cognitive impairment (Armytage and Ogloff 2017). The Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2020-2030 reported that:

- 53 per cent of young people were a victim of abuse, trauma or neglect as a child
- 41 per cent either have a current child protection case or were previously subject to a child protection order
- 49 per cent present with mental health issues
- 42 per cent have been witness to family violence
- 52 per cent have a history of alcohol and drug use
- 21 per cent live in unsafe or unstable housing
- 31 per cent present with cognitive difficulties that impact on daily functioning
- 4 per cent are NDIS participants.

There is an over-representation of young people from Aboriginal and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds within YJ, particularly from East African and Pasifika backgrounds. On an average day in Youth Justice, 39 per cent of young people identify as CALD Australians, 18 per cent identify as Aboriginal, compared to 44 per cent who identify as non-Aboriginal Australian (Youth Justice Strategic Plan, 2020).

While recent trends indicate that the rate of offending by young people is reducing (Crime Statistics Agency, 2019; Sutherland and Millstead, 2016), there has been an increase in youth reoffending rates. In Victoria, 59.5 per cent of young people aged 10 to 16 years released from sentenced community-based supervision in 2017-18 returned within 12 months. Similarly, 60 per cent of young people released from sentenced detention returned within 12 months. Overall, a national average of 59 per cent of young people who completed a sentence in 2017-18 returned within 12 months to sentenced supervision (AIHW, 2020). The age at which young people are first sentenced for an offence is related to their likelihood of reoffending. The Sentencing Advisory Council (2016) found that the reoffending rate of young people who were first sentenced aged 10 to 12 years (8 per cent) was more than double that of those who were first sentenced aged 19 to 20 years (33 per cent).

The seriousness of the offences committed by young people is also increasing. The number of young people with the most serious offence type of *Crimes against the person* has increased in the past 10 years by 29 per cent (1,406 incidents), from 4,853 alleged offender incidents in the year ending March 2010 to 6,259 in the year ending March 2019 (Crime Statistics Agency, 2019).

There has also been an increase in the number of unsentenced children held on remand in Victoria in recent years. On an average day in 2018–19, 90 unsentenced children were held on remand in Victoria, more than double the number 10 years earlier (N = 42). Similarly, there has been an increase in the proportion of children in custody who are unsentenced. In 2011–12, 22 per cent of children in custody on an average day were unsentenced (37 of 172 children) compared to 47 per cent (90 of 191 children) in 2018–19 (Sentencing Advisory Council, 2020).

5. Family Functional Therapy

5.1 The Functional Family Therapy Model

Functional Family Therapy (FFT) is an Evidenced Based Model (EBM) developed over 30 years ago to provide a short-term high-quality intervention for young people and their families targeting the risk factors and needs of young people. FFT is divided by three phases; Engagement and motivation, Behaviour change and Generalisation and based on five main components, each containing individual goals, focus areas, intervention strategies and techniques. The five main components are:

- Engagement.
- Motivation.
- Relational assessment.
- Behaviour change.
- Generalisation.

Designed to be a short-term strategic intervention, it is based on respect of individuals, families and cultures to motivate individuals and families to become more adaptive and have success in their lives. It combines family systems, behavioural and cognitive behaviour approaches of intervention. Rather than focusing on just a single risk or need, FFT focuses holistically on the young offender as well as family members, highlighting the importance of family functioning.

FFT Model implementation

The FFT model implementation and certification process is undertaken over three phases that support the successful replication of the FFT program, overseen by the model purveyors. These are summarised below:

- **Phase 1 – Clinical Training:** the initial goal of this phase is focused on service delivery context so that the local FFT program develops a lasting infrastructure that supports FFT practitioners to engage fully in FFT training and consultation. The goals for this stage include such things as FFT practitioners demonstrating high competence in the FFT model which is assessed through weekly consultations. The expected duration of Phase 1 is 12 months but no longer than 18 months.
- **Phase 2 – Supervision Training:** the goal of the second phase is to assist the site in creating greater self-sufficiency, while maintaining and developing site adherence/competence in the FFT model. Activities undertaken in this phase include such things as an onsite supervisor being appointed who undertakes additional training and is supported by FFT. There are also regular reviews of the sites FFT CSS database to measure site/therapist adherence, service delivery trends and outcomes. Phase 2 is a yearlong process.
- **Phase 3 – Maintenance Phase:** the goal of the third and final phase of FFT implementation is to move into a partnership relationship between site and model purveyor to support on-going model fidelity and impact issues of staff development, interagency linking and program expansion. Activities include such things as outlined in Phase 2 as well as one day onsite training for continuing education in FFT. Phase 3 is renewed on an annual basis.

Anglicare Victoria advise that FFT YJ is in Phase 1 of the implementation and certification process and has been operating for 19 months as of November 2020.

5.2 FFT-YJ

Anglicare Victoria became a registered provider of FFT in 2018 and currently has five FFT teams who are at various stages of implementation, one of which is the FFT-YJ team funded by YJ.

FFT-YJ is aimed at young people engaged in the youth justice system and delivered in the North West Metropolitan Area. It is available to young people aged between 11 – 18 years of age. Initially it was offered to young people who had at least five months left on their Youth Justice Orders but this requirement was lifted to open referrals.

FFT-YJ Practitioners work with the young person and family members to identify positive and negative functions of family behaviours and develop strategies to address these. It focuses on:

- Building a trusting relationship between the family and practitioner.
- Working to reduce conflict and to increase hope and a positive family environment.
- Identify how family interactions can affect behaviour.
- Working to improve communication and conflict management skills.
- Extending changes to other areas e.g. extended family, teachers, youth justice workers.

The program, which generally runs between three to five months, involves weekly sessions in the home, custodial facility or remotely if required. These sessions can be individual and group and work flexibly to ensure the sessions are held at times when they are most needed and convenient for the family. The sessions occur for as long as required, however the average number of sessions for a family with moderate needs is between 8 to 14 or up to 26 to 30 for families with more complex needs.

5.2.1 Funding and performance measures

Youth Justice engaged Anglicare Victoria in December 2018 to deliver FFT-YJ in the North West Metropolitan Area for an initial 12 months. In December 2019 this funding was extended for an additional 18 months until June 2021.

Funding

The funding provided to Anglicare Victoria for the initial 12-month period was [REDACTED] (incl. GST). Additional funding [REDACTED] 2 (incl. GST) was provided in December 2019 to continue the delivery of FFT-YJ for 18 months until 20 June 2021.

The initial funding provided for 70 FFT-YJ places and an additional 70 places over the next 18 months in the North-West Metropolitan Area. The funding schedule is outlined in Table 2 below.

Table 2: FFT-YJ Program funding to Anglicare Victoria

Contract	Cost	Placements
Original contract December 2018 – December 2019	[REDACTED]	70
Contract variation December 2019 – June 2021	[REDACTED]	70
Total	[REDACTED]	140

Analysis of program throughput shows that from April 2019 to November 2019 there were 52 referrals to the program, and 38 commenced treatment². In the period December 2019 to October 2020 there were 57 referrals, and 31 commenced treatment.

Performance Measures

In the *Agreement for the Provision of Services (Final – Anglicare)* the following Key Results Areas (KRA) are included.

Table 3: Key Results Areas – Anglicare

Measures	Target	Reporting frequency	Variation Report
1. Number and percentage of young people referred by YJ and deemed as suitable for the service intervention that commence the intervention within the timeframes agreed in the young person's case plan.	100%	Monthly	Report on each child who does not commence a service intervention within agreed timeframe, with an explanation for each variation.
2. Number and percentage of young people that successfully complete a service intervention following a referral.	90%	Monthly	Report on each child who does not complete a service intervention, with an explanation for each variation.
3. Participation of the service provider in case planning and/or multi-disciplinary care team meetings for young people (including those on YCOs or Intensive Bail) following requests by YJ, YCO Convenors (court-based positions) or the Courts.	100%	Monthly	Explanation required for each instance in which the service provider does not participate.
4. Provision of timely advice and feedback on the young person's progress following requests by YJ, YCO Convenors (court-based) or the Courts to assist with monitoring of the young person's compliance with their order	100%	Monthly	None required

² Commenced treatment means that the young person or a family member attended at least one session.

Assessment against Key Results Area

Feedback from YJ suggests that all KRA are largely being met. All YJ staff consulted agreed that FFT-YJ respond in a timely proactive way to ensure all referrals are processed efficiently and that young people can access the program at the optimum time.

Both FFT-YJ and YJ agreed that sometimes the young person or family's situation can change causing a delay to engagement or agreement by the case team to pursue at a later point when the program would be deemed to be of most use.

There is no formal reporting provided by Anglicare Victoria that directly reports against the KRA outlined in the Service Level Agreement. The FFT-YJ Monthly Report provides an overview of program throughput data and demographics and a case study. YJ relies on staff in the North West Metropolitan Area to provide any feedback in relation to the KRAs.

Recommendation 1

That Youth Justice consider enhancing the performance monitoring and reporting of the program to align with program deliverables and outcomes.

5.2.2 FFT-YJ data

There are two main data collection mechanisms for FFT-YJ. One is a customised data collection tool, FFT Client Services System (CSS) required as part of the implementation and certification process. The FFT CSS is a portal that tracks and monitors practitioner's adherence to the FFT model fidelity as well as collecting other key data points.

The other data collection mechanism is the YJ developed FFT-YJ Database, an excel based spreadsheet which collects key program data ranging from demographics to ratings on participant key outcomes areas. This is required as part of the SLA with Anglicare Victoria.

It was anticipated that the FFT CSS would be the primary data source for this evaluation. However, Anglicare Victoria advised that the FFT-YJ data base would be the data source provided.

As referenced in Section 3.1 there were a few significant limitations of the data provided. Anglicare Victoria acknowledged that the data collection activities for FFT-YJ were not ideal. This was due to the creation of several data collection tools within Anglicare Victoria for the program, the use of some of their own existing systems and the YJ FFT-YJ Database. This was further impacted by the need to implement and use the FFT CSS as required by the program purveyors, which Anglicare Victoria was unaware of at the start of program implementation.

Therefore, program data is being captured over several different data systems that are not integrated. Anglicare Victoria are working towards improving the data collection performance and have introduced a new data tool; The Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) from July 2020 which will enable reporting against outcomes.

5.3 FFT-YJ program data analysis

Analysis of the FFT YJ data tool extract provided by Anglicare Victoria has provided a snapshot of program participants and program activity over the period April 2019 to October 2020. The main findings of the analysis are described below.

5.3.1 Key demographics of participants

Age profile

The cohort of younger people referred to FFT-YJ tended to be in the older range of the youth justice cohort (73% of those referred to the program were sixteen or older). On average, young people referred to the program were 16 years old. Sixteen was also the average age for those who went on to successfully complete an FFT-YJ intervention (Table 4:). The program is open to young people aged from 11 to 18 years of age. However, to date no children younger than 13 have been referred.

Table 4: YP age at referral to FFT-YJ

Age at referral	All referrals (N=109)		Successfully completed (N=39)	
	Count of age	Average Age	Count of age	Average Age
13	2	16.27	2	15.97
14	13		8	
15	14		2	
16	27		10	
17	31		11	
18	22		6	
Total	109				39

Age range of young person and FFT-YJ completion rates

When looking at the age of the young people who successfully completed an FFT-YJ intervention, younger participants were more likely to progress through the program to successfully complete an intervention than the older cohort (

Table 5). Specifically:

- Two thirds (67 per cent) of participants aged between 13 and 14 successfully completed FFT-YJ; compared to only one third (33 per cent) of those aged 17 to 18, and less than a third (28 per cent) of those aged between 15 and 16.
- Those aged between 15 and 16 were less likely to commence FFT-YJ treatment (35 per cent) when compared with both the younger cohort (7 per cent of those aged 13-14) and the older cohort (28 per cent of those aged 17-18).

Table 5: Young person age range and progression through FFT-YJ

Progression through FFT-YJ	Young person age range at referral					
	13-14		15-16		17-18	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total YP from age group referred	15	100	40	100	54	100
Total YP from age group who did not commence	1	7	14	35	13	28
Total YP from age group currently at intake or actively in treatment	2	13	9	23	15	24
Total YP from age group who withdrew	2	13	6	15	8	15
Total YP from age group who completed	10	67	11	28	18	33

Base: Total young people referred to FFT-YJ (N=109)

Gender profile

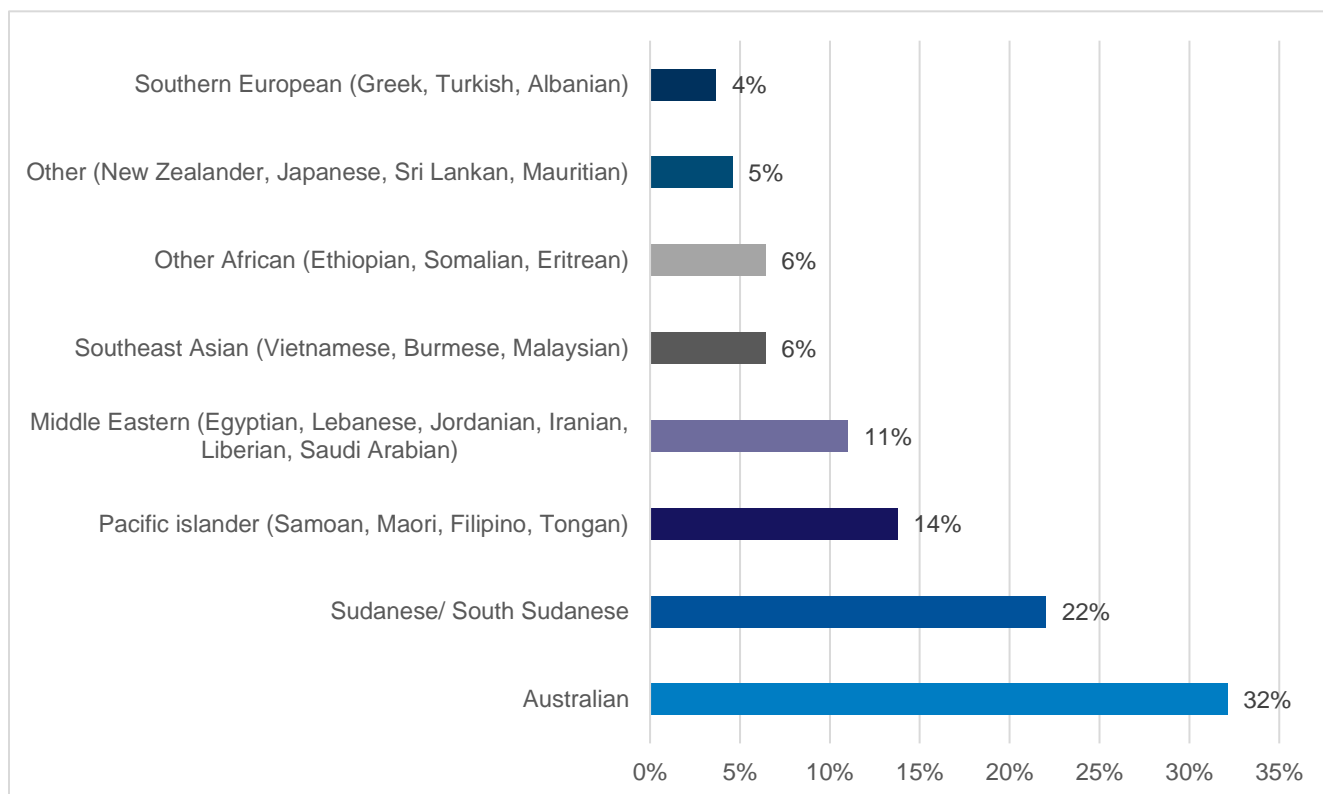
Eighty-five per cent (N = 93) of referrals were males, compared to 15 per cent (N = 16) females. Males accounted for 90 per cent (N = 35) of successful completions, while females only accounted for 10 per cent (N = 4).

Ethnicity profile

The majority of young people referred to the program were from a CALD background (Figure 1). Over two thirds (68 per cent) of all referrals identified as having an ethnicity other than Australian.

Sundanese and South Sundanese young people accounted for two in ten of all referrals to FFT-YJ (22 per cent; second only to young people for who Australian was their primary ethnicity, 32 per cent of all referrals). Pacific Islander young people were the second largest culturally diverse ethnic group referred to the program, accounting for 14 per cent of referrals.

Figure 1: Ethnicity of FFT-YJ participants



Aboriginal young people

Very few young people referred to the FFT-YJ program identified as being Aboriginal (4 cases, or 4 per cent of all referrals - Table 6).

Table 6: Aboriginal young people referred and completed program

Aboriginal status	All referrals (N=109)	Successfully completed (N=39)
Aboriginal	4	2
Non-Aboriginal	105	37
Total	109	39

Living arrangement profile

Nearly half of all young people referred to FFT-YJ were either living in custody or on remand at the time of referral (46 per cent - Table 7). The other half were living in the community, either with their parents (43 per cent), in kinship arrangements (7 per cent), in Out of Home Care (1 per cent) or other arrangements (1 per cent).

Table 7: Living arrangement at referral

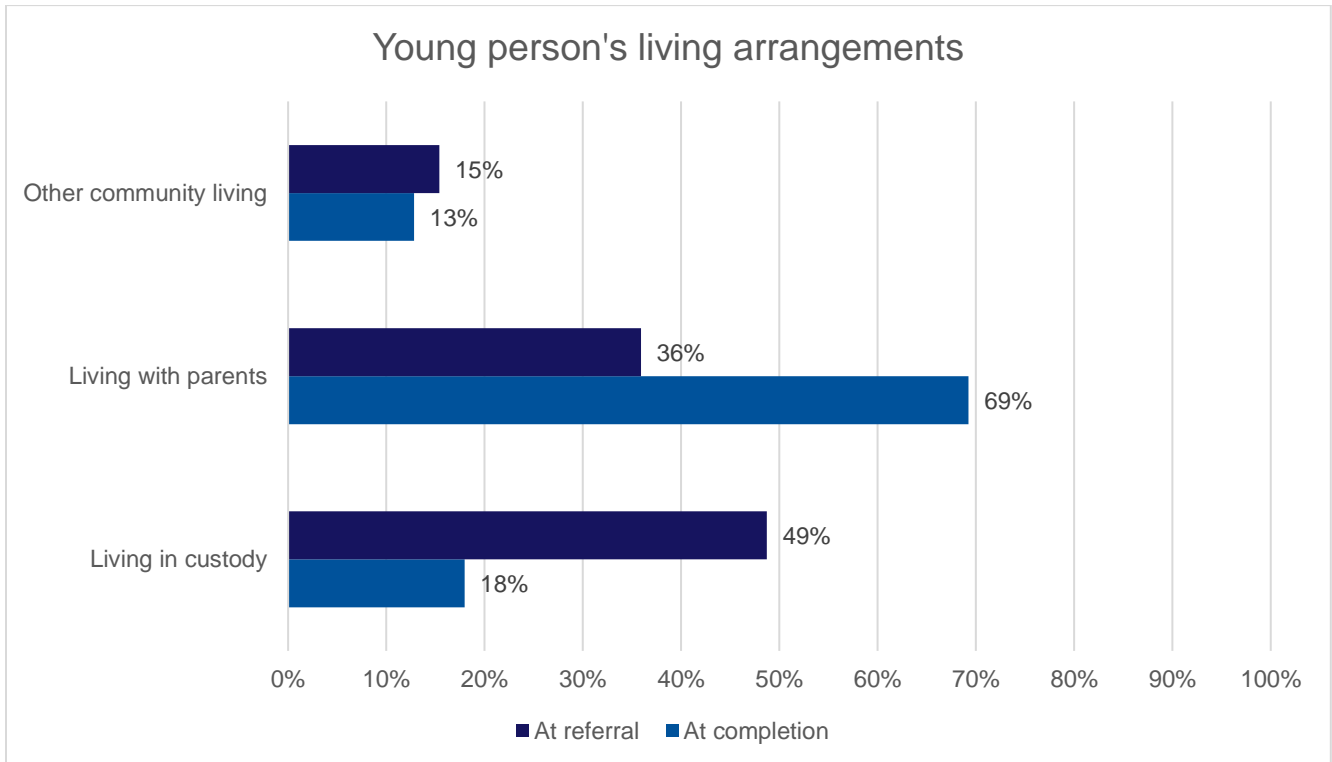
Living arrangement at referral	No.	%*
Remand/Custody	50	46
Living with parents	47	43
Out of home care		
Kinship	8	7
Living with friends	1	1
Other OoHC	1	1
Missing	1	1
Total		99

*Figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Comparing the living arrangements of young people who successfully completed an FFT-YJ intervention (N=39), at referral and at completion (Figure 2):

- Just under half (49 per cent) were in custody or remand at the time of being referred to the program.
- This proportion reduced to only 18 per cent being in custody or remand by program completion, with most of these young people moving out of custody arrangements to living at home with their parents during the course of their engagement with the program.

Figure 2: Living arrangements and progress through FFT-YJ program



Base: Total young people who completed FFT-YJ intervention (N=39)

Education profile

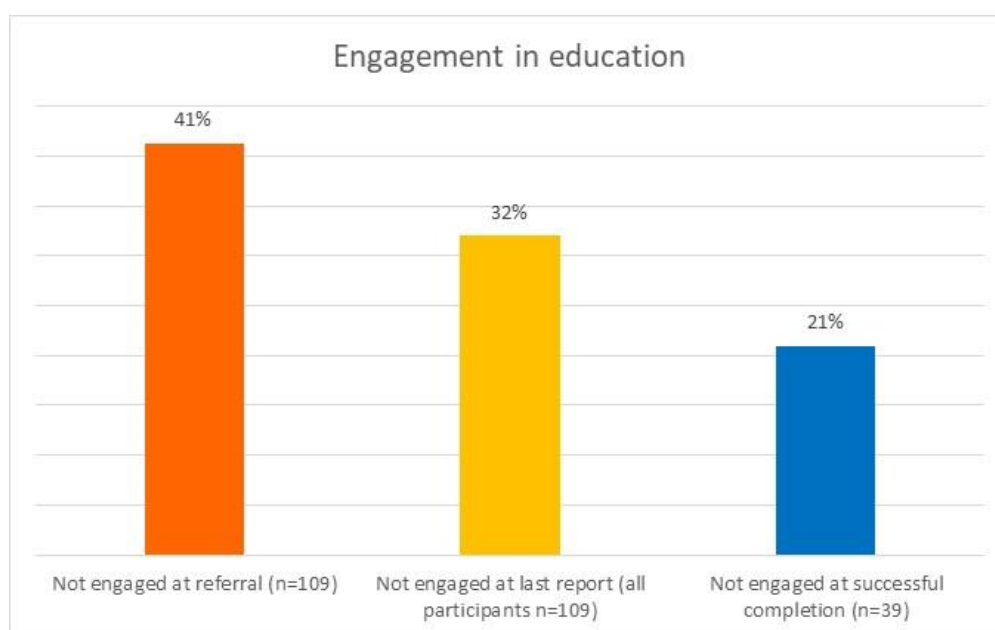
Two fifths (41 per cent) of young people referred to FFT-YJ were not engaged in any education at the time of referral (Table 8). Those who were undertaking some form of education were most likely to be doing so through flexible learning (31 per cent). Only 10 per cent were engaged in mainstream schooling.

Table 8: Young person's engagement in education

Education type	At referral (N=109)		At last report (N=109)		At completion (successfully complete only N=39)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Not engaged	45	41	35	32	8	21
Flexible learning	31	28	40	37	20	51
Mainstream school	16	15	16	15	6	15
Missing	10	9	10	9	1	10
TAFE	6	6	7	6	4	3
Apprenticeship	1	1	1	1	-	-
Totals	109	100	109	100	39	100

The proportion of young people engaged in education increased over the course of the reporting period (Figure 3). Only 21 per cent of young people who successfully completed FFT-YJ remained disengaged from education.

Figure 3: Proportion of young people engaged through FFT-YJ progression



Engagement in employment

The majority (85 per cent) of young people were not employed at the time of referral to FFT-YJ (Table 9). Of the few who were employed, 5 per cent were employed in a casual capacity and 3 per cent were working part time. Employment status information was not recorded for 12 per cent of referrals.

The proportion of young people not in employment remained high over the course of the report period. However:

- The proportion not in employment decreased slightly (from 85 per cent to 78 per cent) at the final recorded status for all referrals (i.e. the combination of those who did not commence, withdrew, were still active or had successfully completed).
- This decreased even further when looking at only those young people who successfully completed the program (from 85 per cent to 72 per cent).

Table 9: Young person's engagement in employment

Employment status	At referral (N=109)		At last report (N=109)		At completion (successfully complete only N=39)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Not employed	92	84	85	78	28	72
Missing	9	8	12	11	4	10
Casual	5	5	7	6	4	10
P/T employment	3	3	4	4	3	8
F/T employment	-	-	1	1	0	-
Total	109	100	109	100	39	100

5.3.2 Overview of referrals

Anglicare Victoria received 109 referrals for the FFT-YJ program over the period April 2019 to October 2020. All referrals were assessed as acceptable to commence to intake. However, only 69 (63 per cent) of young people referred commenced FFT-YJ treatment sessions.

At the time of reporting:

- 12 young people's cases were at the intake stage
- 12 young people and their families were actively engaged in the FFT-YJ program
- 39 young people and their families had successfully completed FFT-YJ
- A further 16 had commenced the FFT-YJ program, however the young person or their family had disengaged prior to completing an intervention.

Number of referrals

The first referral for FFT-YJ was received on 11 April 2019. Over the period April 19 to October 2020, 109 young people were referred to the FFT-YJ program (Table 10). Anglicare Victoria assessed all 109 referrals as acceptable to commence the FFT-YJ intake process.

Table 10: Total number of young people referred to FFT-YJ

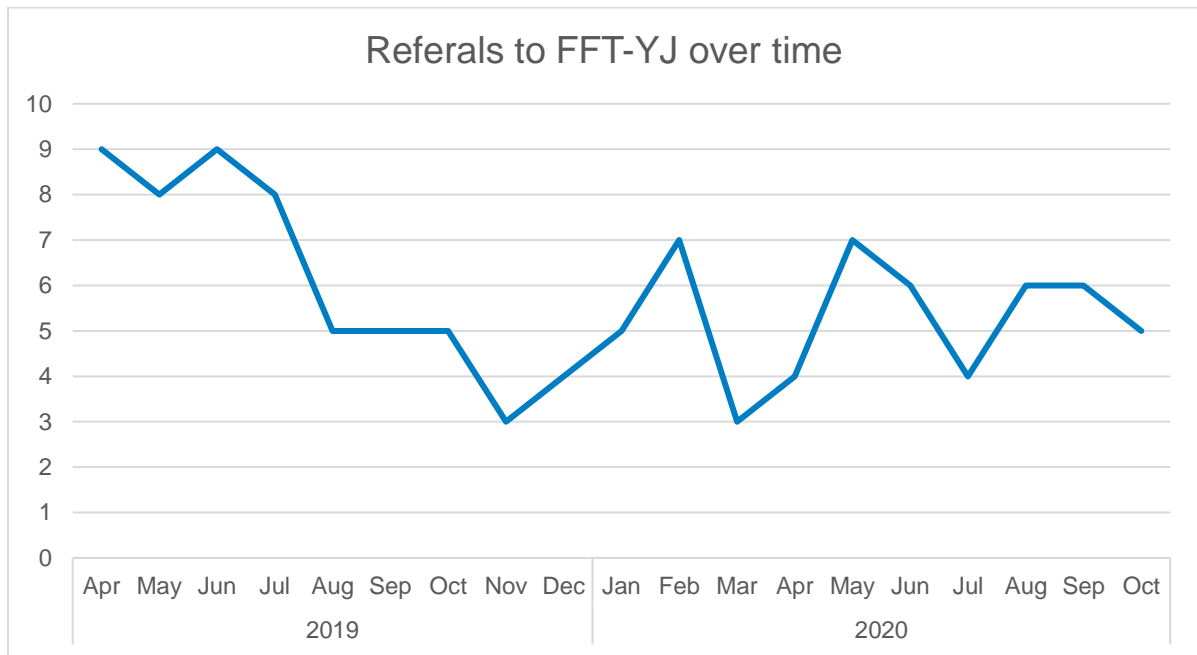
Young people and their families referred to FFT-YJ	Year 1 (Dec 18 - Nov 19)	Year 2 (Dec 19 - Oct 20)
Referrals received per funding period	52	57
Total referrals received	109	

Base: Total cases referred to Anglicare for FFT program (N=109)

Referrals over time

The number of referrals to the program each month are presented in Figure 4 below. This shows that Anglicare Victoria received a higher number of referrals to the program in the early months of operation. The lowest number of referrals received were three in November 2019 and March 2020. The drop in March 2020 is attributable to the impact of COVID-19.

Figure 4: Referrals to FFT-YJ – April 2019 to October 2020



Primary reason for referral

The most common reason for referral into FFT-YJ was a young person displaying significant behaviours of concern due to their offending behaviour (81 per cent of referrals - Table 11). Family related issues (17 per cent) was the second most common reason for referral. Very few young people were referred to FFT-YJ primarily for drug related or peer related behavioural issues (only one case in each category, or 1 per cent of referrals respectively).

Table 11: Primary reasons for referral to FFT-YJ

Primary reasons for referral to FFT-YJ	Primary reason	
	No.	%
Significant behaviours of concern	88	81
Family related issues	19	17
Drug related issues	1	1
Peer related issues	1	1
Not recorded	-	-
Totals	109	100

- Base: Total cases referred to Anglicare for FFT program (N=109)

North West Metropolitan Area referral

Most referrals for FFT-YJ were received from the West Metropolitan Area (58 per cent - Table 12). The North Metropolitan Area accounted for 45 per cent of referrals and there were two cases without a referral region recorded (2 per cent).

Table 12: Referral by location

Referral by location	No.	%
West Metropolitan Area	58	53
North Metropolitan Area	49	45
Missing	2	2
Total	109	100

- Base: Total cases referred to Anglicare for FFT program (N=109)

Progression of referrals

Of the 109 referrals accepted, 63 per cent (69 cases) progressed to FFT-YJ treatment (Table 13). For the purposes of reporting, a case is considered to have commenced treatment if the young person or family member was recorded as undertaking at least one therapy session during the reporting period.

Table 13: Total number of families commencing FFT-YJ (Year 1 and Year 2)

Families progressing to treatment	Year 1 (April 19 -Nov 19)		Year 2 (Dec 19-Oct 20)		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
YP/ family participated in at least one treatment session	38	73	31	54	69	63
Case did not commence treatment	14	27	14	25	28	26
Intake in progress	-		12	21	12	11
Total referrals received	52	100	57	100	109	100

Base: Total cases referred to Anglicare for FFT-YJ program (N=109)

Reasons accepted referrals did not proceed

Just over a quarter (28 per cent) of young people referred to the FFT-YJ program did not commence treatment. The most common reason referrals did not progress to treatment was the family or the young person declining to participate (54 per cent of those who did not commence treatment - Table 14).

Other reasons for referrals not commencing treatment tended to be a variation on this primary reason of 'declined to participate' including:

- Young person engaged and willing to participate, but family members declined (3 cases)
- Family member declined (2 cases)
- Changes to the young person's circumstance (no longer living with the family) (1 case).

For two cases, the circumstances of the young person were too complex to commence FFT-YJ, with practitioners providing case management to support these young people as an interim support option.

No reason was recorded for five of the 28 cases that did not proceed to treatment.

Table 14: Reasons accepted referrals did not proceed to treatment

Reasons why referred families did not progress to treatment	No.	%
Declined before commencement	15	54
No reason recorded by FFT-YJ	5	18
YP engaged but family declined: <i>High number of visits with YP however mother declined</i>	3	11
Family declined to participate: <i>Father not supportive of service</i> <i>No other family member would engage</i>	2	7
Provision of YP case management; no FFT sessions delivered <i>FFT worked with Community Engagement Officer to engage the YP; provision of case management support to YP despite not undertaking 'FFT'; Referral 'closed' after a long period of one on one support to YP</i> <i>Multiple services involved with family, family in chaos, extensive one on one work with YP, not the right timing for family work</i>	2	7
Family no longer eligible due to change in circumstances: <i>Family no longer eligible for the program; YP living independently and requiring immediate AOD and MH support</i>	1	4
Total	28	100

Base: Total cases referred that did not proceed to treatment (N=28)

Time to treatment

Over the reporting period, the average number of days between Anglicare Victoria receiving a referral and the young person participating in their first FFT-YJ session was 26 days (Table 15)³.

The shortest recorded period between a referral being received and FFT-YJ treatment commencing was 0 days. In this instance the young person was in remand and the practitioner was able to meet with the client on the day of referral.

The longest period was 148 days, for a client whose family originally declined to participate, but were re-referred into the program and eventually went on to successfully complete treatment.

³ Note, this time period is calculated using the recorded date of referral and the recorded date of the first session for each client. The first session recorded by FFT-YJ may not have been a family FFT-YJ treatment session; one on one sessions between the practitioner and the young person are also recorded in this field.

Table 15: Average number of days between FFT-YJ referral received to treatment commencing

Time to treatment	Days
Average number of days between referral and treatment	26
Median number of days between referral and treatment	18
Shortest period between referral and treatment	0
Longest period between referral and treatment	148

Base = commenced FFT-YJ treatment (N=69)

Families' progress through program

Of the 69 families who commenced at least one FFT-YJ treatment session during the reporting period:

- 39 young people and families (57 per cent) successfully completed an FFT-YJ intervention
- 16 young people and families (23 per cent) withdrew or disengaged prior to completing a formal FFT-YJ intervention
- 14 young people and their families (20 per cent) were actively engaged in FFT-YJ treatment at the time of reporting.

Reasons for not completing the program

Reasons for the 16 young people and their families who participated in at least one treatment session, but did not go on to complete an FFT-YJ intervention included:

- family disengaged with the program (11 families)
- family no longer being eligible to participate either due to being homeless (2 families) or undertaking therapeutic work with other services (1 family).
- the young person moved away to a regional location and the primary family member involved was incarcerated (1 family).

5.3.3 Overview of engagement

The average number of treatment days for young people and their families who successfully completed an FFT-YJ intervention was 167 days (approximately five and a half months) (Table 16). This was slightly longer than the period for the average when including all cases who commenced at least one treatment session, though withdrew prior to completion (149 days, or just under five months).

The shortest recorded treatment period was 45 days.

The longest period was 420 days. Several factors contributed to this long treatment period, including reported issues with YJ case worker allocations, and the young person absconding and disengaging from the service for long periods of time.

Table 16: Treatment period for families who commenced sessions

Treatment period	Commenced treatment and no longer active (N=55)	Commenced treatment and successfully completed (N=39)
Average days treatment	149	167
Median days treatment	135	154
Shortest treatment period	45	48
Longest treatment period	420	420

Number of treatment sessions

On average, young people and their families who commenced the FFT-YJ treatment program attended eight treatment sessions (Table 17). The briefest treatment period lasted for only one session (two clients); while the longest incorporated 17 sessions (for two clients).

As would be expected, practitioners conducted more sessions with those who successfully completed an intervention (an average of 11 sessions per successful intervention).

The data does not lend itself to a comparative analysis of the number of contact hours vs non-contact hours.

Table 17: Number of FFT-YJ sessions

Number of sessions	Commenced treatment (N=69)	Commenced treatment and successfully completed (N=39)
Average number of sessions treatment	8	11
Lowest of sessions	1	4
Highest number of sessions	17	17

5.3.4 Identified issues and behaviours

Over the reporting period, practitioners were most likely to be working with young people and their families to improve family functioning or to address the significant behaviours underpinning the young person's offending.

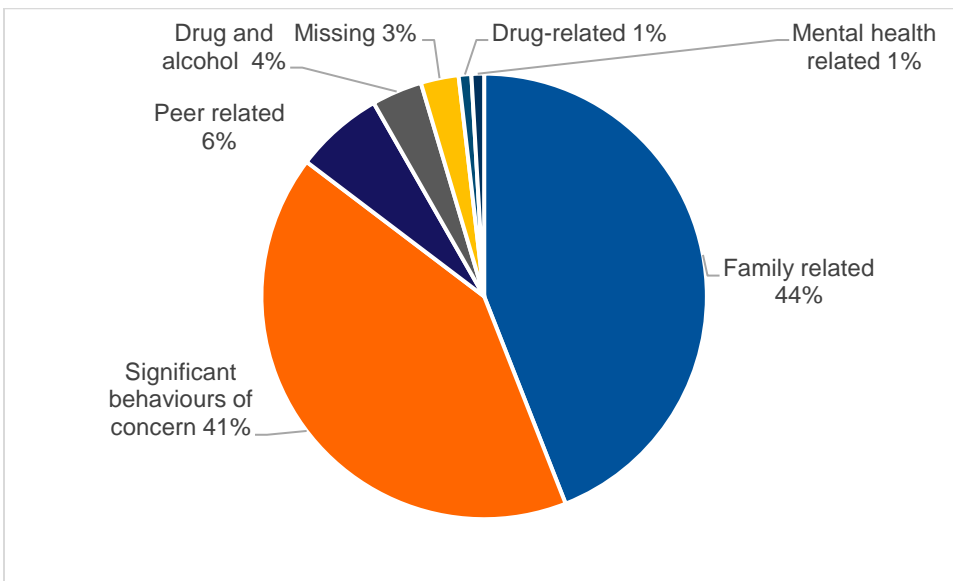
Family related issues were the most common primary behaviours being addressed by practitioners (44 per cent), followed very closely by significant behaviours of concern (41 per cent - Figure 5).

For a small number of participants other primary behaviours had triggered a referral into the program:

- peer related issues (6 per cent)
- issues with both drug and alcohol (4 per cent)
- drug issues (1 per cent)
- mental health related issues (1 per cent).

The primary behaviour to be addressed was not recorded for 3 per cent of the 109 young people referred during the reporting period.

Figure 5: Primary behaviours to be addressed by FFT-YJ



Base: Total cases referred to Anglicare for FFT program (N=109)

Other behaviours being addressed

Nearly all young people referred to FFT-YJ had complex needs, with multiple behavioural areas being addressed by the program. If family related issues were the primary behaviour triggering a referral to the program, significant behaviours of concern were most likely to be the secondary behaviour to be addressed (81 per cent). Likewise, if significant behaviours of concern were the primary behaviour being addressed, the program was also working with the young person to address family related issues (91 per cent).

6. Key findings – Program implementation and operation

This section describes key findings in relation to the implementation and current operation phases. As noted previously, the programs strong evidence base provides a solid foundation from which to operate. Therefore, the evaluation is focused on the successes and challenges of implementing this model in a Victorian context with young people in the youth justice system.

6.1 Implementation

FFT-YJ started operating in April 2019 in the North West Metropolitan Area accepting referrals from YJ of young people aged 11 to 18 years of age.

Initial uptake of the program was considered slow by some stakeholders. From April 2019, when the program started operating, until September 2019, 43 referrals were received.

The *Emerging Themes from FFT Program Provision with Youth Justice – North and West Metro Draft Report* from Anglicare Victoria identified a few factors that impacted implementation including:

- Embedding a new EBM program into existing organisational processes within Anglicare Victoria
- Recruiting and developing the right staff so they have the cultural knowledge and skills to work with a diverse client group.
- Adapting the model into existing practices that required working differently to other programs such as:
 - the engagement phase being a practitioner driven task as opposed to a family driven responsibility
 - adapting to a group supervision model
 - adapting to the ‘after hours work’ flexible working.

In addition, awareness building of the program within YJ also took time to gain traction.

6.1.1 FFT-YJ Practitioners

Central to the success of the FFT model are the practitioners. There are currently seven practitioners overseen by the FFT-YJ Practice Lead. The FFT Practice Lead position was created in response to supporting implementation of all FFT programs in Anglicare Victoria and works alongside the FFT-YJ Program Manager.

Anglicare Victoria stated that the recruitment of the practitioners went well and that there was an encouraging level of interest in the roles. They stressed the need to appoint people who can work effectively with young people. Anglicare Victoria acknowledged that the current FFT-YJ workforce is not culturally, linguistically or gender reflective of the diverse client group and they are actively working on improving their cultural knowledge, skills and confidence. They have also recruited practitioners from Pasifika and South Sudanese backgrounds.

YJ staff were very positive about the impact of having practitioners who reflected the client group and how this can assist in engaging with young people and families. Examples were also provided where practitioners were able to build productive and trusting relationships with young people and families from all backgrounds, demonstrating the quality of practitioners.

Overall, stakeholder feedback in relation to practitioners was positive. They were viewed as professional, responsive and able to quickly establish rapport with both young people and their families.

Practitioners were positive about the program and their role. Overall, they felt supported and empowered to do their jobs and are seeing positive changes in some of the young people and families they work with. Some of the challenges they identified were:

- dealing with the confronting levels of poverty some families are experiencing
- vicarious trauma which is explored further in Section 7.

Fidelity scores

Fidelity scores of practitioners are routinely collected through all phases of the FFT model implementation and operation. Fidelity scores are one mechanism to monitor both individual and team adherence to the model and provide insight into the programs progress towards achieving outcomes.

The fidelity scores are collated from a number of information sources including:

- weekly supervisor checklist
- weekly therapist dissemination score
- weekly therapist fidelity score
- global therapist report
- family self-report
- therapist self-report.

Anglicare Victoria has provided the following fidelity scores for the FFT-YJ team of practitioners. Please note this is aggregated data from the weekly therapist score only.

Table 18: Mean Fidelity rating for FFT-YJ Team

Report	Month/Year	Score
Type Report 1	August 2019	3.73
Type Report 2	December 2019	4.06
Type Report 3	May 2020	4.05
Type Report 4	September 2020	4.95

Table 18 above shows the mean fidelity rating for the FFT-YJ team over the first 12 months of implementation. Scoring of the ratings ranged from a minimum of 0 (low) to a maximum of 6 (high). The benchmark for fidelity is a rating of three out of six. Overall, the FFT-YJ team have displayed high levels of competence in their delivery of the program, indicating the team were reasonably successful in applying therapeutic techniques tailored to the unique needs of each family.

Table 19: Mean Dissemination Adherence for FFT-YJ Team

Report	Month/Year	Score
Type Report 1	August 2019	4.05
Type Report 2	December 2019	4.10
Type Report 3	May 2020	3.89
Type Report 4	September 2020	3.39

Table 19 above shows the mean dissemination adherence for the team over the first 12 months of implementation. Scoring of the ratings ranged from minimum of 0 (low) to a maximum of 6 (high). The benchmark for dissemination adherence is four out of six. Initial ratings were above the benchmark. Anglicare Victoria states that this reflects the team's efforts in familiarising themselves with the clinical model and program requirements. This includes activities such as pacing between sessions, responsiveness to clients, completion of measures used in tracking treatment progress and timely completion of documentation indicating therapy progress.

There was a decrease in dissemination ratings Type Report 3 and Type Report 4. Anglicare Victoria advised that this decrease could be attributed to the local site supervisor assuming responsibility for the ratings from Type Report 3 and taking a more conservative approach. Additionally, other factors to consider are COVID-19, change in staffing structure and recruitment of new staff.

6.2 Program operation

6.2.1 Referral

The referral process starts with the YJ CM identifying young people they believe would benefit from participating in the program. The YJ CM discusses their proposed referrals with either their Team Leader and/or Program Coordinator. The referral paperwork is then sent to the FFT-YJ Program Manager.

Currently in the North Metro Area there is a dedicated Program Coordinator who manages the referrals and liaises with the FFT-YJ Program Manager to discuss the details of the referrals. This process works well and both YJ and Anglicare were positive about the collaborative relationship.

In the West Metro Area there has not been a dedicated Program Coordinator, but in recent months a Program Coordinator for the Multi Agency Panel has been assisting with the FFT-YJ referrals. Prior to this change either YJ Team Leaders or individual YJ CMs contacted the FFT-YJ Program Manager. While this works, it was not ideal and a more streamlined process with a dedicated YJ Program Coordinator was preferred.

YJ reported a very positive relationship with the FFT-YJ Program Manager which made the referral process run smoothly with YJ CMs, YJ GMs and Program Coordinators all noting the benefit of discussing potential referrals with them. This assisted in making sure that the right young people were being referred, that FFT-YJ could match the most appropriate practitioner to them and that enough information and issues were highlighted before referral confirmed. YJ also noted that both North and West teams worked together to ensure that the most in need young person was referred.

Because the program is only operating in a limited area it would be prudent to assess the extent to which the referral process could be replicated on a larger scale if the program expanded in the future and the need for dedicated YJ Program Coordinators to facilitate it.

Recommendation 2

It is recommended that Youth Justice consider supporting the referral process through a dedicated Youth Justice Program Coordinator in the West Metropolitan Area.

6.2.2 The FFT-YJ Cohort

The demographics of FFT-YJ program participants are outlined in Section 5.3. Consultations highlighted several areas where the profile of the FFT-YJ participants differed from expectations of both YJ and FFT-YJ staff. Mostly commonly sighted differences were:

- An older cohort than anticipated.
- A higher than expected CALD population was referred and therefore the need to engage and work with translators was also greater than expected.
- The issues faced by young people were more complex and the level of poverty more significant than expected by practitioners.
- More young people were in custody than expected, with around half in custody at referral.

6.2.3 Consent and engagement

All young people and families referred to FFT-YJ are required to consent to engagement. Pre-COVID-19 this was in written form but moved to verbal consent due to remote engagement.

Ensuring that young people and families understand the program and what is involved is an important step in engagement and was acknowledged to be time consuming due to the need to:

- address any language barriers by engaging an interpreter
- meet with each family member individually to explain the program
- build rapport and trust relatively quickly.

YJ reported how dedicated and hard practitioners work to gain trust and consent, but at the same time are good at judging if the timing of the referral is not right and therefore does not progress. It is often revisited at a later date when it is hoped the situation is more conducive to engagement.

FFT-YJ and YJ staff stated there are sometimes a lot of hours spent in the early engagement phase, which is not reflective of the number of program completions, but a necessity to assess readiness for the program. However, two stakeholders noted that this time spent early on engaging the young person and their family impacts on the time they can spend in the program.

Think intervention needs to be longer as a lot of time is spent building engagement and consent and setting the scene to get families together and then only a short time left to get to the issues.

6.2.4 Working with Youth Justice and as part of care team

YJ staff spoke very highly of the working relationship with FFT-YJ staff. They always felt up to date on the progress of young people and were in regular contact via meetings, emails and calls. The responsiveness of FFT-YJ staff was also noted as being outstanding and their follow up on contact with the young people and families was prompt, despite the difficulties and challenges that this can have. As one stakeholder noted:

They don't give up! Their perseverance is amazing and helps to build trust with the family.

The Care Team that supports a young person on a youth justice order plays an important role in the young person's journey in the youth justice system. The Care Team role is comprised of people such as the YJ CM, Community Engagement Officer (CEO), other specialists engaged with the young person such as psychologists, the practitioner and family members.

Stakeholders felt that the young person and family benefited from the practitioner participating in the Care Team. They provided insight into the work they are undertaking and identify issues that the young person and family were experiencing, which other members of the Care Team may not be aware of.

As part of the Care Team, the practitioners also worked closely with other specialists involved with the young person when necessary, for example liaising with a young person's psychologist. FFT-YJ stated they felt they had an important role to play in advocating for the young person and empowering the family to have a say.

YJ CMs noted that the practitioner had expanded their understanding of family dynamics and challenges and this enhanced knowledge had assisted the YJ CM in working with the young person.

6.2.5 Working with young people in custody

A significant portion of young people in FFT-YJ are, at some point during the treatment, in custody.

Anglicare Victoria reported that they had not anticipated working with young people in custody but felt that their ability to adapt to this highlighted the benefits of the FFT model, which allows flexibility in elements of its response.

In the early phases of implementation there were challenges in facilitating access to young people in custody related to the organisation of appointments and who to contact in the custody centres. These have largely been addressed, although there are still some problems related to late confirmation of meetings with young people which makes it difficult when organising for family to attend as well.

Practitioners said it would be preferable to have earlier referrals for those already in custody so that work can be progressed prior to release but they acknowledged the difficulties in coordinating this.

6.2.6 Program Closure

The FFT-YJ program is considered a short-term intervention and during the program practitioners work towards having a plan in place for when issues arise so that the family have some strategies to assist them. A formal closure report is provided to YJ at the end of engagement and young people and families also have a plan they can refer to when required.

Key findings in relation to this phase of engagement found that:

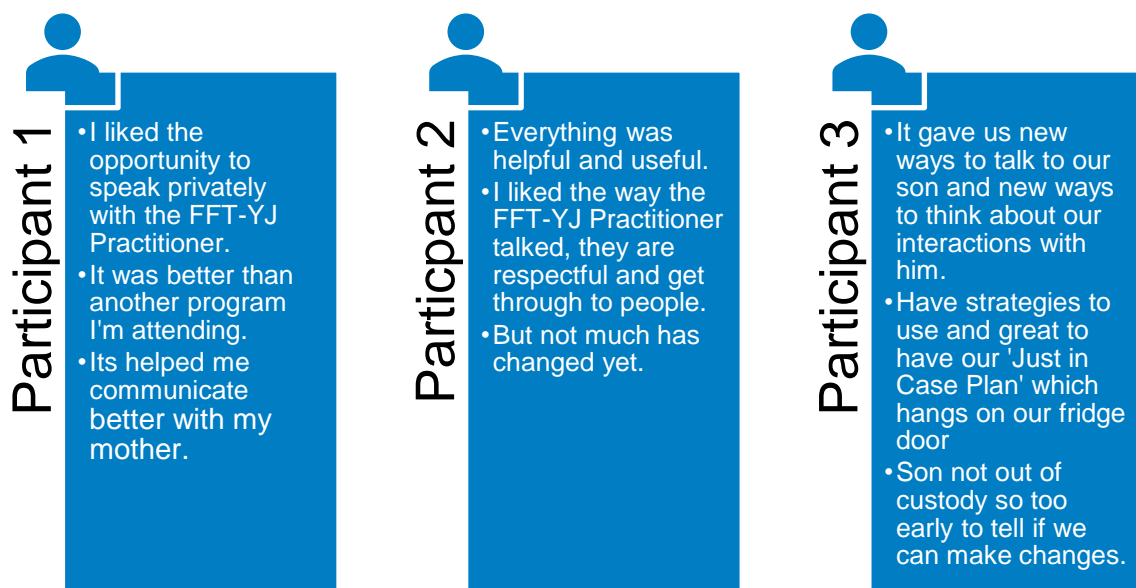
- Youth Justice felt that the closure phase of the program was **well planned and executed**. They felt that practitioners took time to ensure a smooth transition for the young person and family, so they didn't experience an unexpected abrupt end. Some YJ CM noted that this care at program closure was significantly better than they had seen with other programs.
- Youth Justice were also very happy with the **quality and timeliness of closure reports**. They felt these provided clear and actionable descriptions of the work undertaken during the program and plans for any relapse. This provided a useful reference for the YJ CM post program.
- Some YJ CMs noted practitioner's **willingness to ensure a smooth transition** where other services were engaged to take over some elements of support. For example a YJ CM spoke about one young person who had qualified for support from the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and the practitioner had actively assisted the application process for this as well as provide a comprehensive handover to the NDIS worker who would continue working with the young person.

Youth Justice also appreciated the flexibility that FFT-YJ provided if a family required some extra contact post completion.

6.2.7 Experience of young people and families

The timelines for this evaluation did not allow for direct consultation with young people and their families who had participated in FFT-YJ. However, an exit survey was conducted by Anglicare Victoria at the completion of engagement which provided some feedback in relation to FFT-YJ participants experiences. Due to challenges recruiting participants within the timeframe the data set is very small (N=3) and therefore cannot support quantitative analysis nor is it representative of participants experiences, however an overview of the qualitative feedback is outlined in the diagram below.

Figure 6: Qualitative feedback – FFT-YJ Participant Exit Survey



6.3 CALD and Aboriginal young people

The North West Metropolitan area has a significant portion of CALD young people in the youth justice system. As at 8 December 2020, 73.5 per cent of the youth justice population in the North West were CALD while Aboriginal young people account for 7 per cent.

CALD young people involvement in FFT-YJ

As shown in Section 5.3.1, a high percentage of CALD young people have been referred to FFT-YJ, making up the majority of referrals. The CALD young people come from a diverse range of ethnicities, with Sudanese and South Sudanese and Pacifica the main groups.

Practitioners reflected that the level of CALD referrals was much higher than they anticipated and the cultural norms of CALD communities sometimes meant that there was resistance to participating in a therapy program, with some families worried about the shame associated with it and a lack of trust in the 'system'.

They found through working with these young people and families that it was essential to incorporate a number of actions, notably:

- **The use of an interpreter.** There was general agreement by practitioners that interpreters are not always engaged when they should be by YJ and that often the family members did not understand the program or what it involved. Practitioners engaged interpreters to ensure the

family members understood what was being said, what they were consenting to and were able to participate fully in the program. However, the use of interpreters has raised other issues such as their lack of knowledge of the program causing challenges in communication, the lack of consistent interpreters to build a knowledge base, a lack of understanding by practitioners of the nature of any relationship or connection the interpreter may have with the family and the impact this could have. It was also noted that sometimes the family do not want someone from their community sitting in on sessions for fear of information getting out.

- **Engage the Community Engagement Officer (CEO).** Practitioners spoke highly of the CEO and their ability to facilitate and support engagement with the program as a trusted member of the community.
- **One on one time to build trust.** The need to establish one on one relationships with the young person and family members was key to building trust, with many families distrustful of services. This often took time and involved many meetings.
- **Demonstrate empathy.** Practitioners spoke about the importance of them sharing something of themselves to show empathy, build trust and acknowledge the impact of things such as racism on the family.

Aboriginal young people involvement in FFT-YJ

There have been low referral numbers of Aboriginal young people to the FFT-YJ program, only four to date and two completions. This low referral rate was attributed, by some stakeholders, to a number of factors including:

- A lower Aboriginal population in the West Metropolitan Area compared to the North Metropolitan Area.
- Aboriginal young people being referred into other programs and services instead.

A consultation was undertaken with an individual at an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) to understand their experience with the FFT-YJ program and observations on its relevance to Aboriginal young people and their families.

The overall impression of the program was very positive. They noted a good working relationship with Anglicare Victoria and the FFT-YJ program. Some of the strengths of the model highlighted were:

- It's flexibility and willingness to work with the participants timelines. This degree of flexibility was considered critical to work effectively with Elders who have experienced trauma and need to progress at their own pace.
- The practitioners providing a culturally safe space which is seen as critical to building trust with the family and engagement going beyond a first meeting.
- The program offering benefits in relation to improving communication to stop trauma and harm moving through the generations of a family. They had seen it work well in assisting grandparents improve their communication and parenting of grandchildren in their care.

The low number of Aboriginal young people referred to the program to date was also attributed to low awareness of the benefits of the program and a lack of direct experience with it. It was felt that while FFT-YJ had presented the program to the ACCO this was not sufficient for workers to be confident about referring young people and they were more likely to refer to an established program they knew and trusted.

Some suggestions were offered in relation to making the program more accessible including:

- Highlighting the importance of having practitioners who were either Aboriginal (and preferably with local connections) or had established connections and relationships within the local Aboriginal community.

- Ensuring that FFT-YJ had an Aboriginal Elder who they partnered with to assist in fostering relationships and connections within community to build trust and awareness in the ACCOs and community. This was of importance as it was thought that Anglicare Victoria's religious background may impact attitudes due to religious organisations history with the Stolen Generations.
- Supporting more comprehensive Aboriginal cultural training for practitioners.

These actions were considered key to building awareness and acceptance of the program within the Aboriginal community but also within ACCO's to facilitate more referrals to the program.

Another suggestion offered by a YJ CM was the potential to leverage more involvement from the Koori Children's Court and the Elders and Respected Persons who are involved. This could provide an opportunity to refer more Aboriginal young people to the program.

Anglicare Victoria advised that all practitioners undertake Aboriginal cultural training as part of their onboarding and must complete it to conclude their induction. In addition, they have two Aboriginal Cultural Advisors, who provide advice and support to the team in order to support practitioners to engage with families and ensure the model is delivered in a way that is culturally sensitive to individual family's needs. They also noted that the team regularly consults with referral agencies.

Recommendation 3

That Youth Justice, in partnership with Anglicare Victoria, explore opportunities to build trust of the program within the CALD and Aboriginal communities.

7. Impact of COVID

The arrival of COVID-19 in Victoria in early 2020 caused significant impacts on the FFT-YJ program and its delivery. The introduction of restrictions on movement and work required FFT-YJ to change its primary mode of delivery from in person to online. This meant that, aside from a few exceptions, the majority of interactions with young people, their families, Care Teams and YJ were conducted over the phone or via video link from April to October.

Anglicare Victoria reported that the young people in FFT-YJ had decreased access to programs and supports especially educational engagement with programs moving to remote access.

Overall stakeholders were very positive with the rapid adaptation undertaken to ensure the program's ongoing delivery. The willingness of FFT-YJ staff to work hard to maintain engagement with young people and families during this period was commended. Practitioners and Anglicare Victoria noted their role supporting young people and families in the challenges they faced due to COVID. For example, they provided assistance with access to essential services such as food, face masks, mobile phones and rental support. In addition, they worked to address the decreased access to educational programs. And when required, extended the maximum 210 engagement days to ensure the family had support and plans were in place.

Other notable impacts brought about by COVID-19 were:

- **Decrease in engagement.** Data shows some decrease in referrals due to COVID-19 (see Section 5.3.2, Figure 4). This drop in engagement by young people and their families was attributed to the general challenges that COVID-19 placed on people such as job loss or insecurity, adjusting to home schooling and an increase in family stress and anxiety. In

addition, practitioners described the difficulties of engaging young people and their families virtually due to factors such as young people and/or parents not answering their phones and/or attending virtual meetings.

- Practitioners said it was easier when they were **physically attending at the home** or other location and there were less no shows. They also acknowledged that many young people and families found the use of technology challenging, and for some it was a lack of equipment or access to data that were barriers to engagement.
- **Impact of the virtual experience.** Practitioners reflected that while the program can be delivered virtually there were disadvantages especially in the ability to ‘read a room’ and pick up on nonverbal clues. This was considered of importance in relation to being able to identify subtle risk factors in relation to family violence.
- **Challenge of virtual delivery in custody facilities.** The delivery of FFT-YJ for young people in custody was also identified as creating challenges. Initial difficulties in arranging and facilitating virtual engagement for young people in remand/custody have mostly been addressed and operate more efficiently than earlier in the year. However, some practitioners felt the interaction with young people in custody had changed due to the young person being supervised while having the virtual meeting. In contrast, in person sessions are held away from supervisors and other people so not overheard. It was felt that young people were less candid and more conscious of what they said, which negatively impacted on engagement.
- **Vicarious trauma⁴.** Practitioners described the impact of hearing distressing information and stories from young people and their families. They noted that pre COVID-19 they managed the impact of sessions by debriefing in the car ride after a home visit or having a discussion with colleagues in an office environment. The impact of vicarious trauma was felt to be more intense due to hearing these stories via video or phone calls in your own home where the mental separation of work ‘stuff’ from home life had become more challenging to manage. Some practitioners felt the way vicarious trauma was managed within the program were areas for improvements.

The impact of COVID-19 on the rate and nature of youth offending in Victoria is unknown at this stage.

8. Barriers

Only a few barriers for the program were identified during the evaluation, the three of note are described below.

- **“Don’t call it therapy!”.** There was a perception that the **name of the program was problematic**. This issue was identified repeatedly during consultations and viewed to be a real barrier to engagement. It was felt that FFT, in particular the words ‘family therapy’, denotes blame related to parenting and there was a dislike of the word therapy putting families off. Anglicare Victoria did note the need to address the stigma of engaging in a therapy program. This is of importance for the CALD and Aboriginal cohort for whom ‘therapy’ is not widely accepted. In order to overcome this, care is often taken when explaining the program to families to ensure that those words are not used and instead, they focus on things such as communication and relationships.

⁴ The negative transformation in the helper that results (across time) from empathic engagement with trauma survivors and their traumatic material, combined with a commitment or responsibility to help them (Pearlman and Caringi, 2009, pp.202-203).

This is a real barrier for families and puts them off. These families have intense years of trauma and the term 'therapy' program puts them off. I always call it a strength-based communication intervention.

- **“What about the 19-year old’s?”**. Many stakeholders felt that the **age limit** for the program (up to 18 years old) should be increased to include those up to 19 years old. They felt this demographic were missing out and there was a definitive need for this older cohort. In particular, FFT-YJ Practitioners and YJ CM’s noted that young people in this age group were often maturing and at a stage where they could get real benefit from the program. It was also thought that participation in it could assist in keeping these young people in the family home and help reduce the risk of them becoming homeless or in unstable housing, particularly post release from custody. Anglicare Victoria have shown a willingness where practical and appropriate to engage young people who are 18 years plus. However, program completion data to date shows relatively low completion rates for the older age cohorts.
- **Distrust of services.** All stakeholders spoke about the challenges of working with young people and families who, due to previous experiences, have a distrust of services, in particular the CALD and Aboriginal young people and families.

9. Key findings – progress towards short term outcomes

This section reports on both the qualitative and quantitative evidence to date of progress towards short term outcomes. The outcomes discussed below were identified in the FFT Evaluation Plan, developed in consultation with Youth Justice and Anglicare.

FFT, as an established EBM, has demonstrated its efficacy in achieving positive outcomes in relation to addressing youth offending and other related behaviours over numerous evaluations, reviews and studies⁵. As noted previously the implementation and certification of FFT-YJ is overseen by a rigorous accreditation process, supporting FFT-YJ ongoing operation and ultimately its achievement of intended outcomes.

FFT-YJ is still in Phase 1 of the implementation and certification process and therefore evidence towards program outcomes is limited by the relatively small number of program completions, the data limitations outlined in Section 3.1, the complexity of the target cohort and the time required to realise sustained improvements in changed behaviours.

Despite these limitations there are some promising indications that the program is making positive progress in some short-term outcomes and over time more insight will be gained into the program’s efficacy.

This work is difficult, and we see very few positive outcomes in our work but FFT-YJ is different and it’s great to see something positive.

9.1 FFT-YJ short term outcomes

The following sections articulate the evidence to date against short term outcomes. The quantitative data used in this analysis relates to the young people and their families who completed FFT-YJ from April 2019 to October 2020 (N = 39).

⁵ *Better Outcomes in youth justice. The costs and benefits of Anglicare Victoria’s Functional Family Therapy Youth Justice.* Final Report, Anglicare August 2020.

Those families categorised as having commenced and withdrawn (N = 16), still actively receiving treatment (N = 14) or currently in the intake phase (N = 12) are not included in this analysis of reported outcomes achieved.

9.1.1 Improved family functioning

Early signs of improved family functioning were observed by both YJ CMs and FFT-YJ Practitioners and described in Figure 7 below.

Figure 7: Reported early signs of improved family functioning



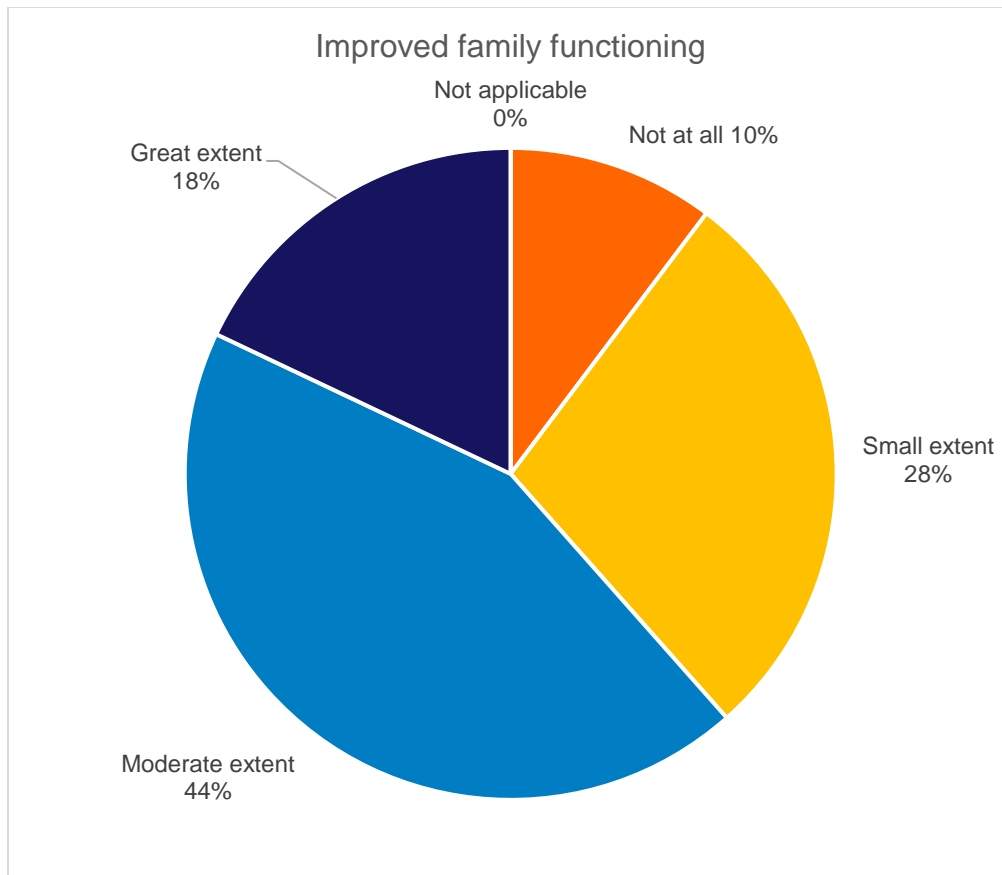
These early signs were positive indications of shifts in dysfunctional family dynamics and communication, with one stakeholder commenting:

I know these things seem like small changes, but they can have a big impact on family life.

Figure 8 below shows that:

- Of the 39 young people and their families who successfully completed an FFT-YJ intervention, 62 per cent demonstrated either a great (18 per cent) or moderate extent (44 per cent) of improvement in family functioning.
- One in 10 (10 per cent) of those who completed the program showed no improvements in their family interactions.

Figure 8: Improved family functioning at completion of FFT-YJ



Base: Total young people who completed FFT-YJ intervention (N=39)

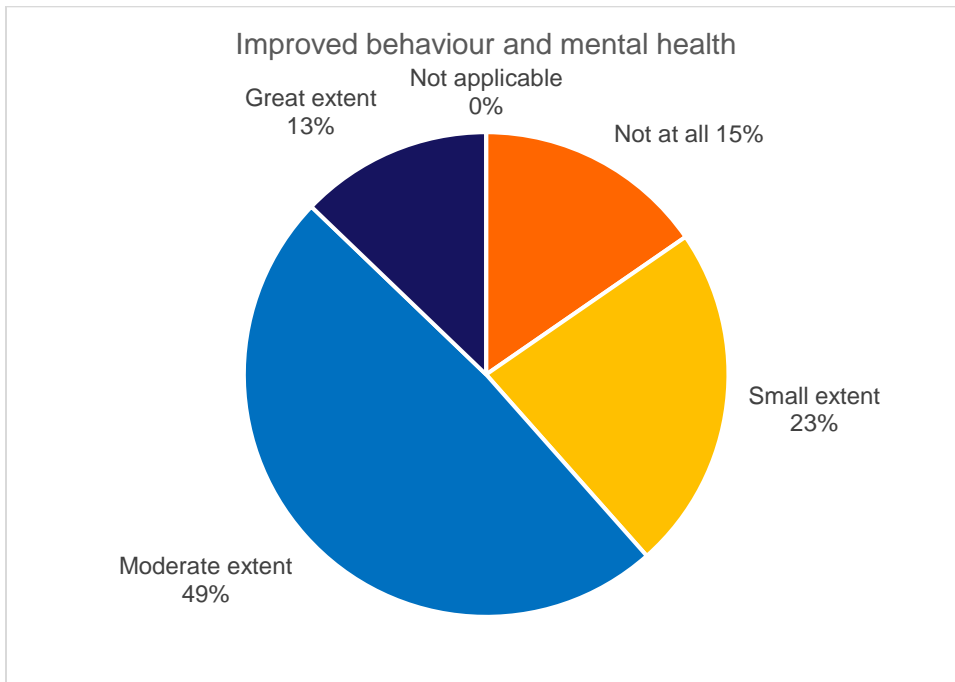
9.1.2 Improved behaviour and mental health

All stakeholders acknowledged the complexity of the behaviour and mental health issues that young people and their families referred to the program experience. A few YJ CMs had seen improvements in some of the young people they referred to the program in the areas of improved behaviour, which was closely linked to the changes seen alongside improved family functioning.

Program data outlined below in Figure 9 shows that:

- Of the 39 young people and their families who successfully completed an FFT-YJ intervention, 62 percent demonstrated either a great (13 per cent) or moderate extent (49 per cent) of improvement in their overall behaviour and general mental health.
- Just under a quarter (24 per cent) demonstrated only a small amount of improvement in their behaviour and mental health, and 15 per cent made no improvement in this area over the course of their treatment.

Figure 9: Improved behaviour and mental health at completion of FFT-YJ



Base: Total young people who completed FFT-YJ intervention (n=39)

Case Study 1

Case Study 1 below highlights a FFT-YJ young person who experienced improved behaviour and mental health.

Case Study 1: Kate		
<p>Kate was 16 years old when referred to FFT-YJ</p> <p>History of substance use, absconding and criminal offending and periods of remand</p> <p>Cared for by family friend known as Aunty Christine</p>	<p>Persistent contact required to get engagement with program</p> <p>Practitioner worked extensively with Kate and Aunty Christine individually before bringing them together</p> <p>Focused on communication and bonding with a shared sense of understanding for one another</p>	<p>Positive changes achieved included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - increased pride in self - improved communication - agreement to both continue engagement in specialist services - post FFT-YJ not reoffended

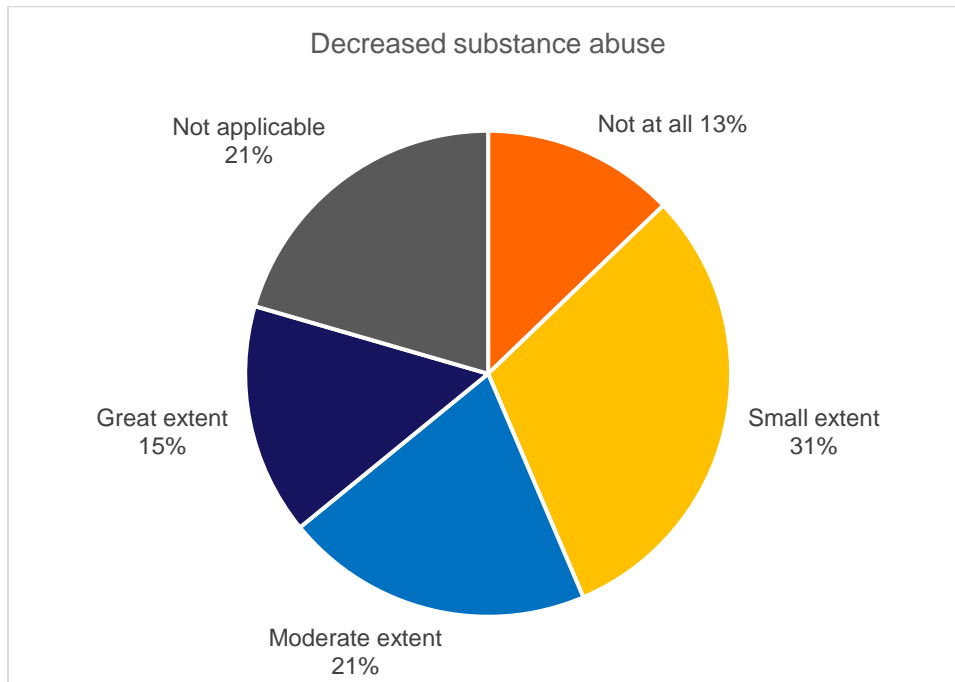
Summarised from FFT-YJ Snapshot Report (July 2019-June 2020)

9.1.3 Decreased substance abuse

Four fifths (79 per cent) of the 39 young people who successfully completed FFT-YJ were working towards substance abuse outcomes (Figure 10 below). For those working with FFT-YJ practitioners to decrease their substance abuse:

- 36 per cent demonstrated either a great (15 per cent) or moderate extent (21 per cent) of a decrease
- 31 per cent demonstrated a small decrease in substance abuse
- 13 per cent made no improvement in this area over the course of their treatment.

Figure 10: Improved substance abuse outcomes at completion of FFT-YJ



Base: Total young people who completed FFT-YJ intervention (N=39)

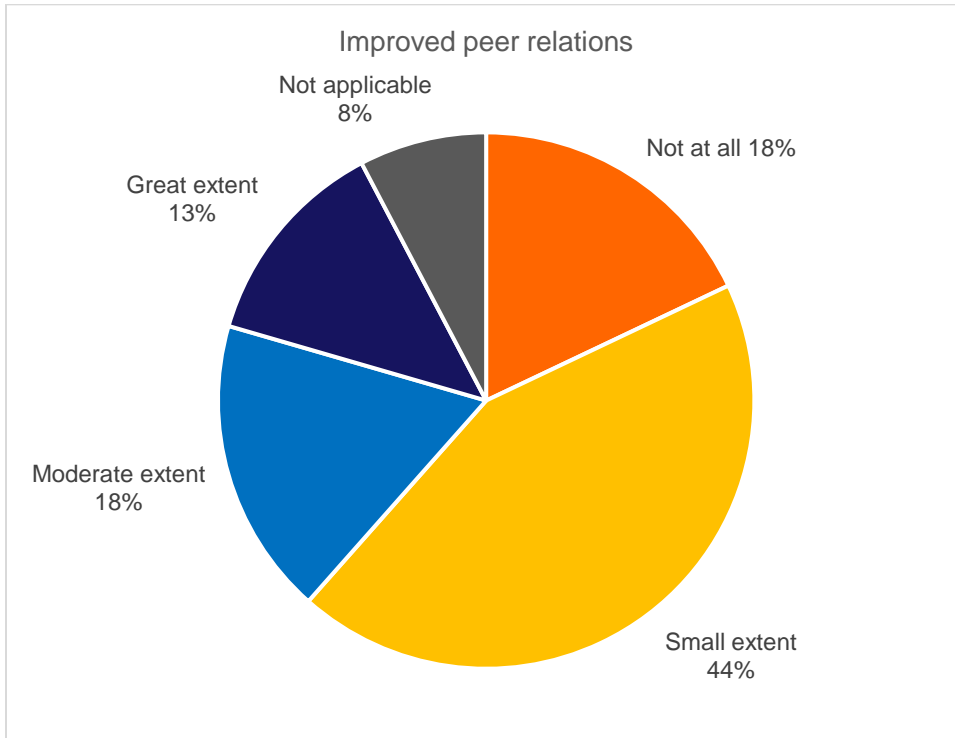
Overall, the data suggests a positive shift towards reported decreased substance abuse. It is unknown what percentage of young people engaged in FFT-YJ were also receiving specialist Alcohol and Drug services.

9.1.4 Improved peer relationships

Young people who successfully completed FFT-YJ were less likely to show improvement in their peer relationships, when compared to the other outcome areas being addressed by the program. Figure 11 shows:

- Only one fifth (21 per cent) demonstrated either a great (13 per cent) or moderate extent (18 per cent) of improvement in their peer relations
- 44 per cent demonstrated only a small extent of improvement in their peer relations
- 18 per cent showed no improvement at all in this area over the course of their treatment.

Figure 11: Improved peer relations at completion of FFT-YJ



Base: Total young people who completed FFT-YJ intervention (N=39)

Case Study 2

Case Study 2 highlights a FFT-YJ young person who experienced a range of positive changes including interactions with peers.

Case Study 2: Kris

<p>Kris was 18 years old when referred to FFT-YJ</p> <p>History of serious and violent offending, significant substance abuse and long periods in custody</p> <p>Parents separated and in conflict</p>	<p>Skeptical of program</p> <p>Practitioner worked extensively one on one Kris and each parent before they agreed to meet as a family</p> <p>Focused on hope, that each was part of the solution and impact of Kri's offending and parental conflict</p>	<p>Most sessions were conducted while Kris was in custody. Post release the following positive changes were observed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - abiding by conditions - making positive choices around his peers and being home by curfew - engaged in casual work - not using substances
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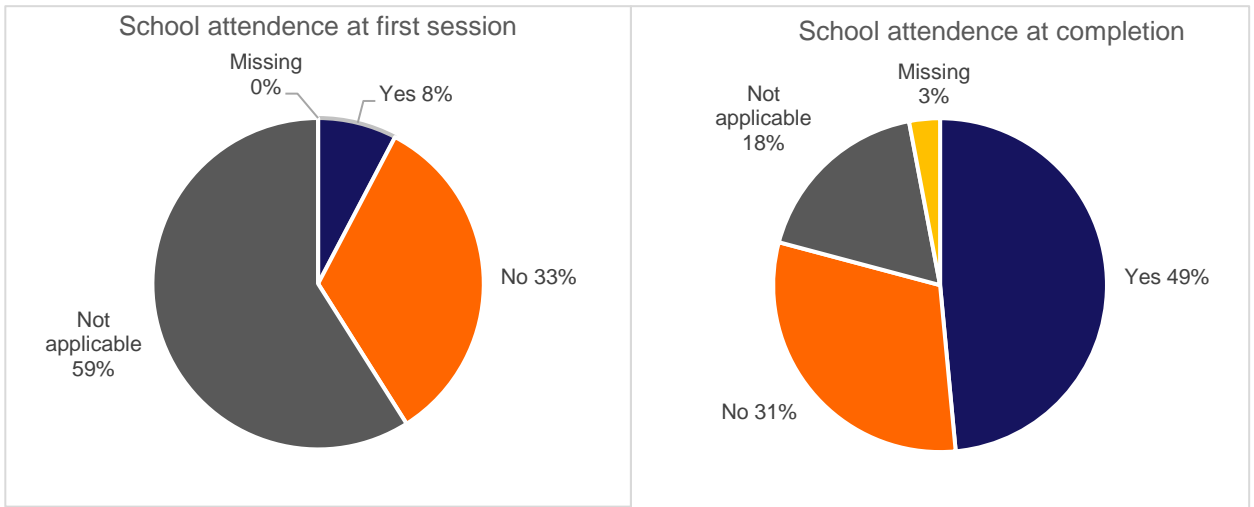
Summarised from FFT-YJ Snapshot Report (January 2020)

During consultations some stakeholders noted that improved peer relationships were often not the immediate focus for change, with the family being at the centre of the program. A few felt it was likely peer relationships would improve over time, but the more pressing concern was often relationships within the family.

9.1.5 Improved school attendance

Improved school attendance is an identified outcome area of the program. Young people who completed the program, generally showed some improvement in their school attendance (49 per cent - Figure 12).

Figure 12: Improved school attendance at completion of FFT-YJ



Base: Total young people who completed FFT-YJ intervention (N=39)

In addition, Table 20 above shows that:

- 18 per cent of the young people who successfully completed the program were not engaged in education at the time of the first session with a practitioner.
- This figure decreased to only 11 per cent being not engaged with any type of education by the time they had completed the program.
- Most of those who had reengaged with education had done so on a part time basis (21 per cent on successful completion).
- FFT-YJ participants were least likely to be engaged in full time education, either at referral (1 per cent) or on completion (3 per cent).

Table 20: Engagement in education at commencement and completion of FFT-YJ

Education status	Status at referral (N=39)		Status on completion (N=39)	
	No.	%	No.	%
Full time	1	3	3	8
Not engaged	18	46	11	28
Part time	11	28	21	54
Missing	9	23	4	10
Total	39	100	39	100

Base: Total young people who completed FFT-YJ intervention (N=39)

Case study 3

Case Study 3 highlights an FFT-YJ young person who experienced a range of positive changes including engagement in education.

Case Study 3: Khalid

Khalid was 18 years old when referred to FFT-YJ

History of serious and extensive offending and time spent in adult prison

Parents experiencing extreme stress from Khalid's behaviour

Practitioner worked extensively with the mother who experienced panic attacks

Focused on exploring family situation to build understanding and ways to seek family bonding as well as positive communication skills

Post program the following positive changes were reported:

- family more connected
- Khalid has not reoffended
- Khalid communicates when he is feeling triggered
- Khalid enrolled and consistently attending a full time motor mechanic course

Summarised from FFT-YJ Snapshot Report (July 2020)

Both YJ and FFT-YJ staff acknowledged that COVID-19 had impacted on the young people's engagement with education due to moving online.

10. Reoffending analysis

The order and offence information detailed in this section was obtained from a CRIS extract between 1 September 2018 and 30 September 2020.

Due to the small number of young people and their families who completed the program (N = 39), the reoffending analyses was conducted on all young people (N = 61) who commenced FFT-YJ (i.e., attended at least one session) prior to September 2020.

It is important to note that FFT-YJ had only been in operation 17 months at the time this report was prepared, therefore there is limited data available to determine impact of the program on future rates of offending. This data, as previously mentioned, refers to sentenced offences only and therefore does not reflect when offences may have occurred, or when charges were laid. Further, the impact of COVID-19 on offending behaviours in young people in the youth justice system is not yet known.

10.1.1 Offending analysis

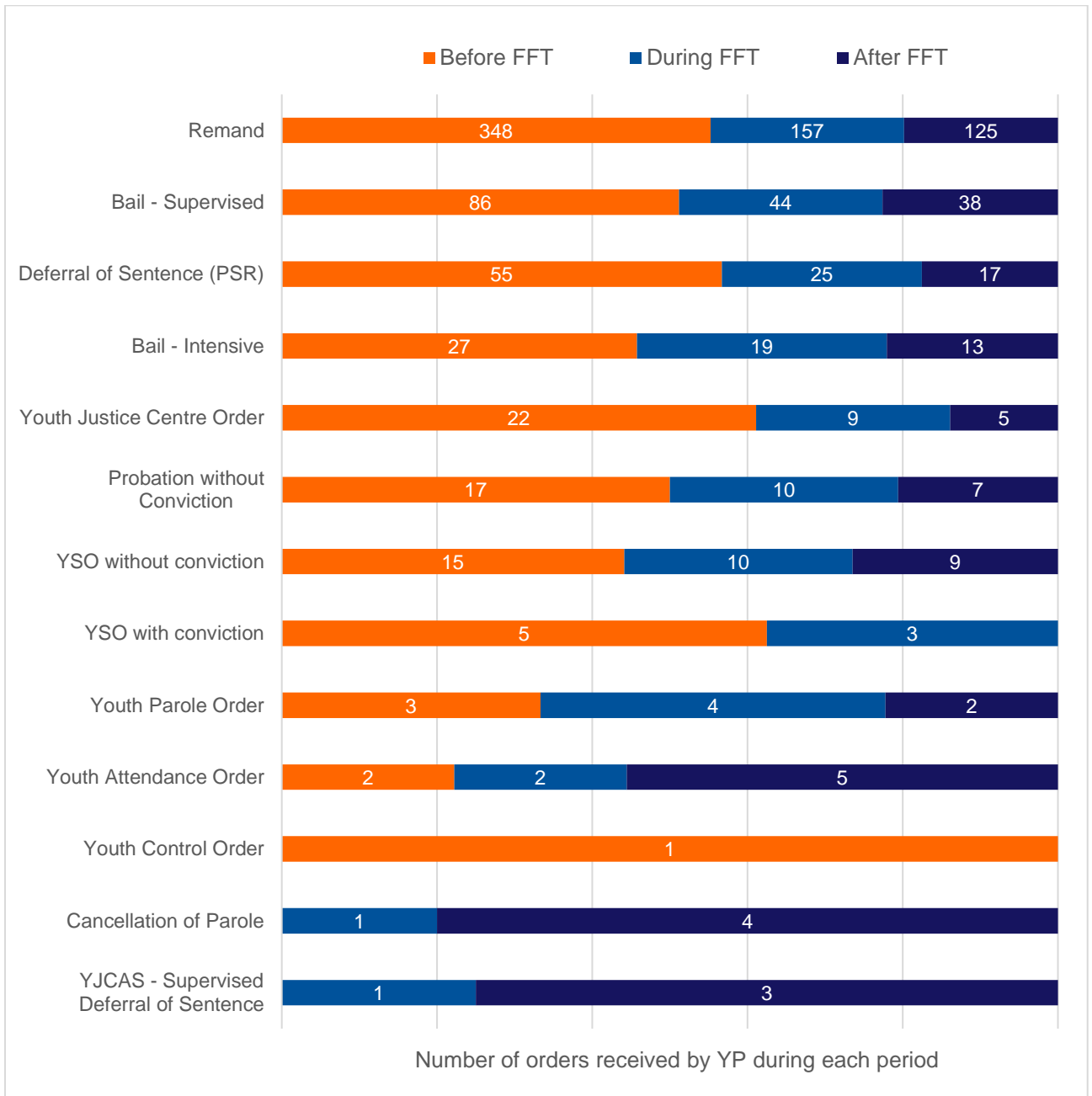
The order and offence information detailed in this section was obtained from a CRIS extract between 1 September 2018 and 30 September 2020. The analyses included all young people (N = 61) who commenced FFT-YJ (i.e., attended at least one session) prior to September 2020. Please note this data set is up to September 2020 whereas the FFT-YJ program data analysis is up to October 2020. This may account for some slight differences in numbers of participants.

Orders

All 61 young people were on an order when they commenced FFT-YJ. Eighty-four per cent (N = 51) of young people received new orders during FFT-YJ treatment, which decreased to 51 per cent (N = 31) of young people after FFT-YJ closed.

Figure 13 shows the number of each order type received by young people before, during and after participating in FFT-YJ. There was a decrease in the total number of orders received before FFT-YJ (N = 581) compared to during (N = 285) and after FFT-YJ (N = 228). As can be seen in Figure 13, the most common orders received before (N = 348), during (N = 285) and after FFT-YJ (N = 228) were remand orders.

Figure 13: Number of each order type received by young people before, during and after FFT-YJ



Offending behaviour

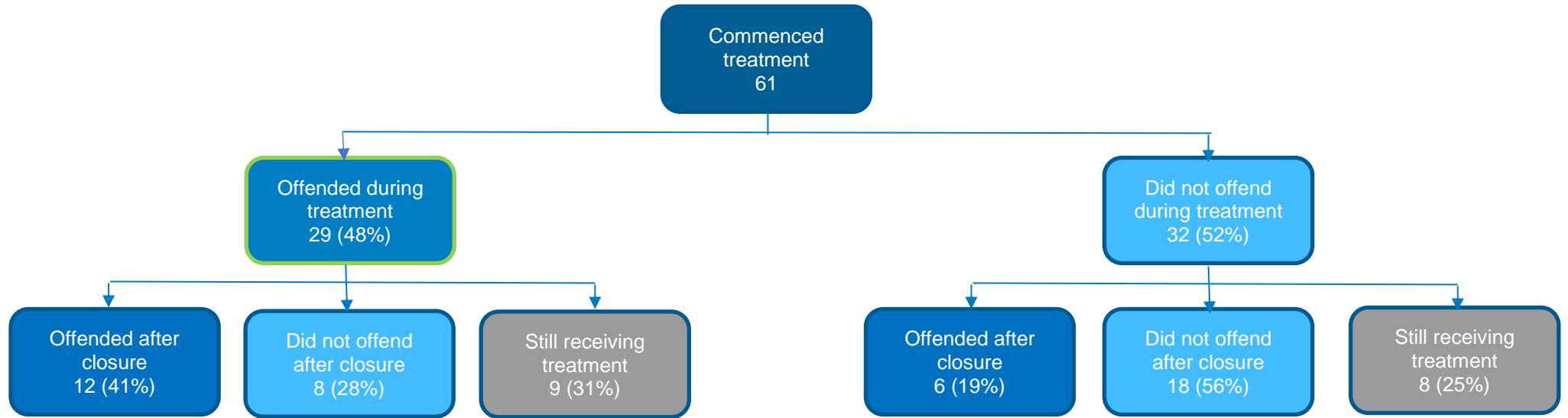
Figure 14 below displays the number of young people who offended during and after receiving FFT-YJ treatment. Forty-eight per cent (N = 29) of young people who commenced FFT-YJ offended at least once during treatment. Of these young people, 41 per cent (N = 12) went on to offend after closure. The majority of young people who offended after closure (N = 10, 83 per cent) had completed treatment, while the remaining young people (N = 2, 17 per cent) had disengaged from treatment. All of the young people (N = 8, 28 per cent) who did not offend after closure had completed treatment.

Of the 52 percent (N = 32) of young people who did not offend while receiving treatment, 19 per cent (N = 6) offended after closure. Two-thirds of these young people (N = 4) had completed

treatment, while one-third (N = 1) disengaged, and the remaining third (N = 1) were no longer eligible due to being homeless.

Of the 56 per cent of young people (N = 18) who were not recorded for an offence after closure, 61 per cent (N = 11) had completed treatment, 28 per cent (N = 5) disengaged, and the remaining 11 per cent (N = 2) were no longer eligible for treatment (one family had moved away from the program area and the other family was homeless).

Figure 14: Flow diagram of young people offending during and after FFT treatment



Frequency of offending behaviour

As shown in Figure 15, the total volume of offences recorded for young people decreased during (N = 2906) and after FFT-YJ closure (N = 2041) compared to before commencing FFT-YJ treatment (N = 4946).

Figure 15: Volume of offences recorded for young people before, during and after FFT-YJ

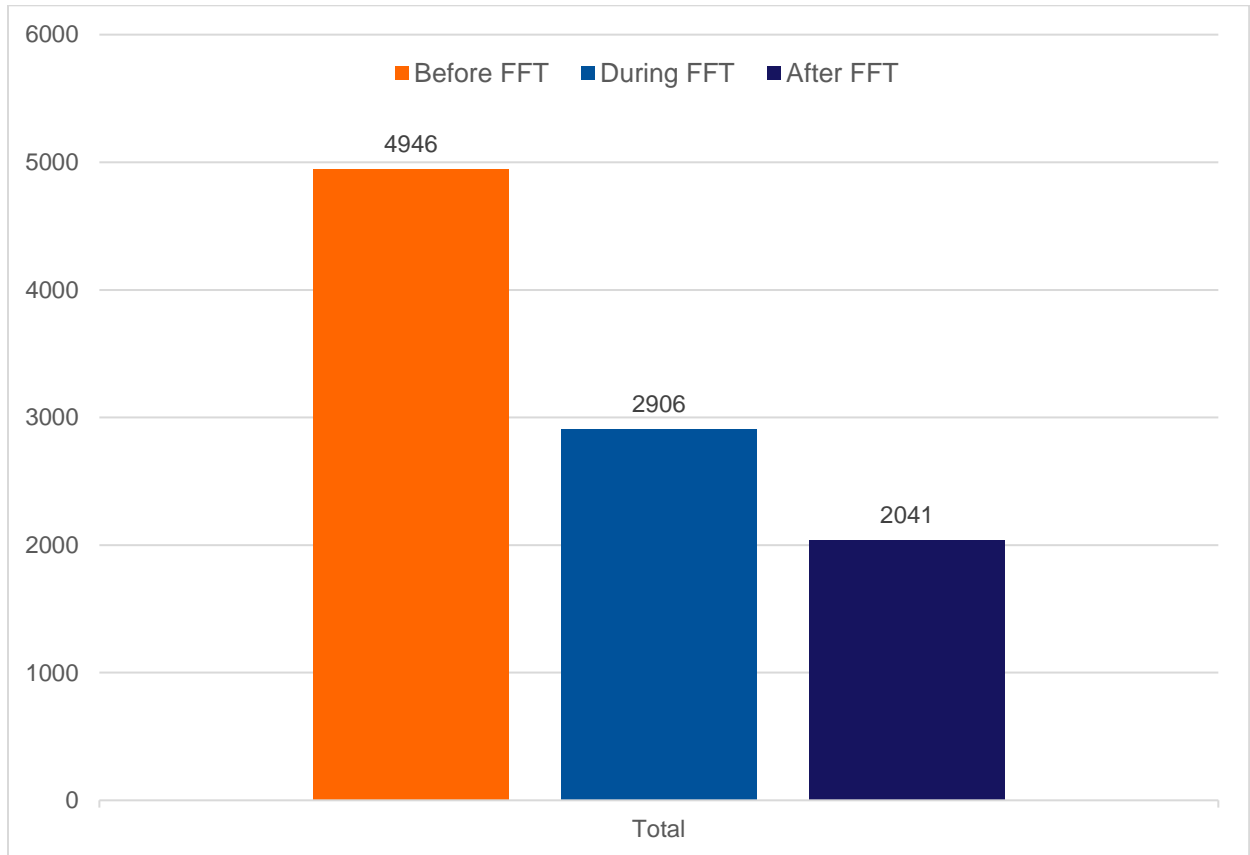
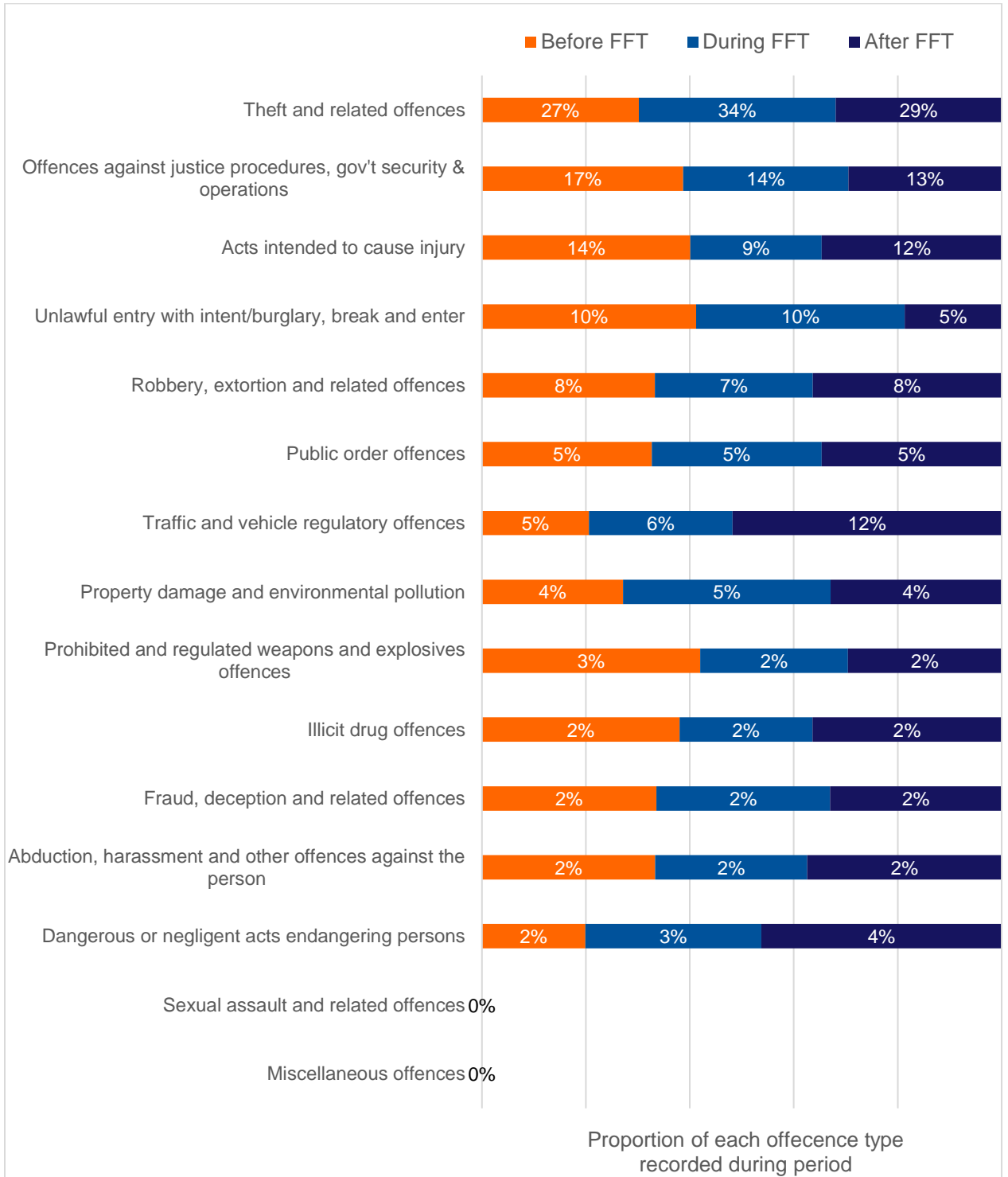


Figure 16 displays the proportion of each offence type recorded before, during and after FFT-YJ. The category of offending that showed the largest decrease was *unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter*, with 10 per cent of this type of offence recorded before FFT-YJ treatment compared to five per cent recorded after FFT-YJ treatment. The category of offending to show the second biggest decrease was *against justice procedures, government security and government operations*, with 17 per cent of this type of offence recorded before FFT-YJ treatment and 13 per cent recorded after FFT-YJ treatment.

The category of offending to show the largest increase was *traffic and vehicle regulatory offences*, with five percent of this type of offence recorded before FFT-YJ treatment compared to 12 per cent after FFT-YJ treatment. There was a large increase in offending during FFT-YJ treatment for *theft and related offences* (from 27 per cent before FFT-YJ to 34 per cent during FFT-YJ), however this type of offending decreased after treatment (29 per cent) to almost pre-treatment levels.

Figure 16: Proportion of each offence type recorded before, during and after FFT



Severity of offending behaviours

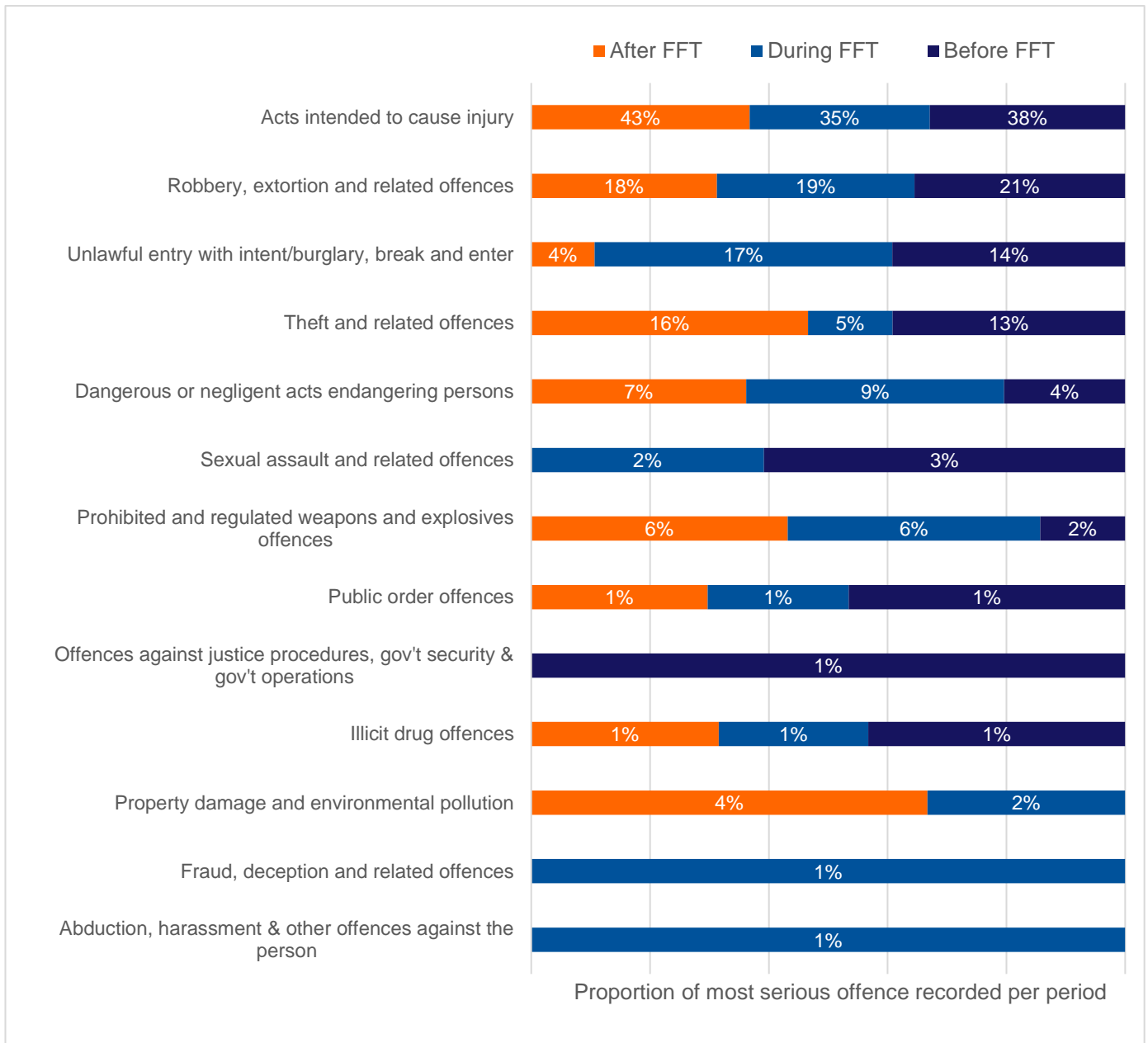
To analyse the severity of offending behaviours, offences were categorised according to the ABS National Offence Index which ranks offences according to their seriousness.

There were changes in the severity of offending behaviours committed by young people who participated in FFT-YJ treatment. Figure 17 shows the proportion of the most serious type of offence recorded per order before, during and after FFT-YJ treatment. The category of most serious offence that showed the largest decrease was *unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter*, with 14 per cent of this type of offence recorded before FFT-YJ treatment compared to four per cent recorded after FFT-YJ treatment. The category of most serious offence to show the second biggest decrease was *robbery, extortion and related offences* with 21 per cent of this type of offence recorded before FFT-YJ treatment and 18 per cent recorded after FFT-YJ treatment.

There was a large decrease in offending during FFT-YJ treatment for *theft and related offences* compared to pre-treatment, from 13 per cent to five per cent respectively, however this type of offending increased after treatment to 16 per cent.

The category of most serious offence to show the largest increase was *acts intended to cause injury*, with 38 per cent of this type of offence recorded before FFT-YJ treatment compared to 43 per cent after treatment. Similarly, the proportion of *prohibited and regulated weapons and explosives* offences increased from two per cent before FFT-YJ treatment to six per cent after FFT-YJ treatment.

Figure 17: Proportion of the most serious offence recorded per order before, during and after FFT-YJ



Recommendation 4

It is recommended that if the program was to be continued or expanded, Youth Justice consider conducting an impact evaluation to determine the effect of the program on long-term outcomes for young people who completed the program.

11. Unintended outcomes

Several positive unintended outcomes from the FFT-YJ program emerged from consultations with key stakeholder groups:

- Some YJ CMs reported that they had benefited from program gaining an enhanced understanding of family relationship dynamics and communication. This was also observed by practitioners.
- It was noted that some of the younger and less experienced YJ CMs had benefited from exposure to the program in relation to their interactions with parents and/or guardians, gaining confidence and skills to establish a productive relationship.
- It had demonstrated the importance of using interpreters.
- Some stakeholders reflected they thought the program had invigorated YJ in its approach to young people by being able to engage the family in a way not possible before.

12. Differences between Multisystemic Therapy and FFT-YJ

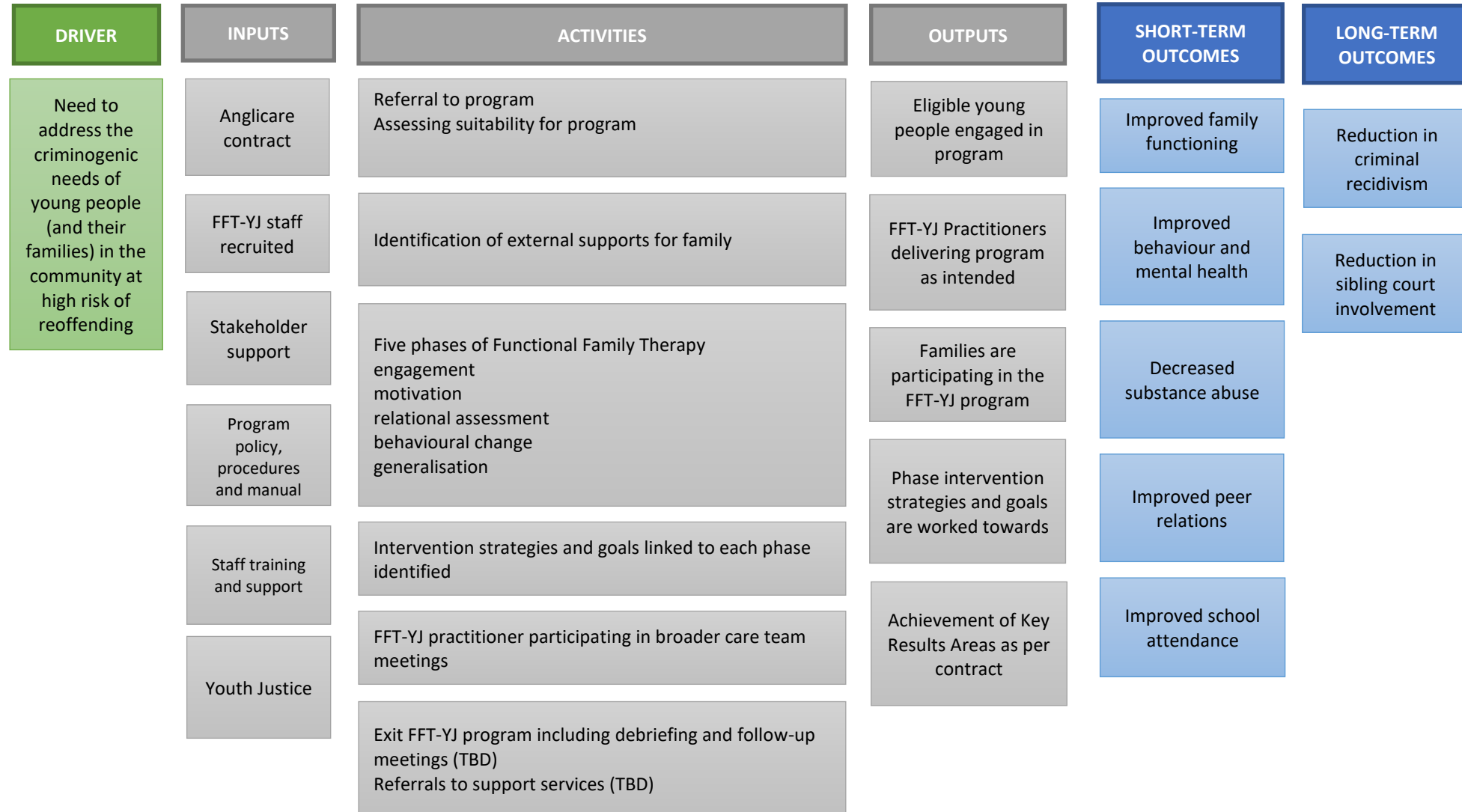
YJ funds both the FFT-YJ and Multisystemic Therapy (MST) programs. They are family focused EBMs which target young people involved in the youth justice system in the North West Metropolitan Area for FFT-YJ and South East Metropolitan Area for MST.

As Evidence and Insights are undertaking evaluations of both programs simultaneously this has provided an opportunity to document some observations.

Please note this is not a comparative analysis but rather a high-level overview of the key differences between the programs highlighted during evaluation consultations. These included:

- **Intensity of support.** Both programs provide a high level of support and frequent contact with the young people and families. However, MST also provides 24/7 access to a clinician.
- **Flexibility.** FFT-YJ is considered a flexible program which will respond to the particular needs of young people and families referred. This includes such things as meeting after work hours and accommodating referrals from young people aged 18 years when appropriate. The degree of flexibility available with FFT-YJ was highly valued by YJ staff.
- **Focus.** FFT-YJ focuses predominately on the family unit, although they do sometimes refer to, or encourage contact with, community organisations. MST actively involves peers, school, neighbourhoods and community.
- **Interface with other specialists.** Both programs work collaboratively with the YJ Care Team. However, MST's preferred approach is to be the lead clinician when working with a young person and their family and limit the number of services involved. FFT-YJ work closely alongside other specialists involved with the young person and family such as a child psychologist or a disability worker.
- **Eligibility criteria.** MST has strict eligibility criteria; young people must be living at home and does not include young people in OoHC or those in custody for long periods (over a month). In contrast, FFT-YJ will work with young people not living at home and those in custody and remand. As noted previously the age criteria is also able to be reassessed for some referrals.

13. Appendix A: FFT-YJ Program Logic Model



14. Document information

Document details

Criteria	Details
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[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]

Audience

The audience for this document is Youth Justice to report on the evaluation of the FFT-YJ program.

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<p>Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) (2020). <i>Youth justice in Australia 2018-19</i>, Cat no. JUV 132. AIHW, Canberra. https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/a5a364b9-fe69-4d02-9c93-1965a69a3d93/aihw-juv-132.pdf.aspx?inline=true</p>
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<p>Sentencing Advisory Council. (2016). <i>Reoffending by Children and Young People in Victoria</i>. https://www.sentencingcouncil.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-08/Reoffending_by_Children_and_Young_People_in_Victoria.pdf</p>

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Acronyms	Description
DJCS	Department of Justice and Community Safety
YJ	Youth Justice
YJ CM	Youth Justice Case Manager
YJ GM	Youth Justice General Manager
FFT-YJ	Functional Family Therapy – Youth Justice
CRIS	Client Relationship Information System
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
FFT CSS	Functional Family Therapy Client Services System

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Multisystemic Therapy

Evaluation

Evidence and Insights

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1. Executive Summary

This evaluation report of the Multisystemic Therapy (MST) treatment program provides evidence and findings in relation to the implementation of the program and progress towards the intended short and medium-term outcomes. OzChild is funded by Youth Justice (YJ) in the Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS), to deliver MST in the South East Metropolitan region.

Overall MST is largely operating as intended. There was clear evidence of strong stakeholder support for the program. All stakeholders considered MST to be a unique program that fills a gap in YJ by providing family-focused therapy.

The evaluation identified the following positive features related to the implementation and operation of the program:

- the **strong relationship between YJ and OzChild** supported the implementation of the program. OzChild were easy to engage, collaborative and willing to listen to feedback, while YJ was committed to ensuring the program was a success.
- the **persistent nature of MST clinicians** assisted in initially engaging families into the program and maintaining their engagement, including Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) families, even during COVID-19.
- **MST clinicians' collaboration with other services** in the Care Team. Clinicians were considered valued members of the Care Team and were appreciated for their expertise and skills, which complemented those of other services.

While there are many positive aspects of MST, a number of challenges were identified. The evaluation noted:

- the **strict eligibility criteria for the MST program**; young people cannot be aged over 17 years, they must be living at home, and they cannot be engaged in the Children's Court Youth Diversion service. Subsequently, young people in Out of Home Care (OoHC), those in custody for long periods and those on diversion orders are excluded from the program.
- the **low referrals of Aboriginal young people**, due in part to the large number of Aboriginal young people in OoHC or aged over 17 years.
- the **low referrals of young people in the East Metropolitan region**, which was attributed to the small number of YJ clients in the region, a high proportion of whom are in OoHC or are older than 17 years of age.
- **difficulties obtaining consent from families to participate in the program**, who were service resistant or felt shame around their young person's behaviour. Concerns were also raised that some families did not fully understand that MST was delivered by a community organisation who was independent of YJ.
- a **lack of appropriate services to refer families to** if they require further support after MST closes. Waitlists for services also resulted in no warm handover being conducted between MST clinicians and new service providers.
- the **impact of COVID-19 on service delivery**, which made it difficult to engage families remotely (especially CALD families), assess and manage risk and led to slower progress through the program.

The evaluation documented progress through the program and found:

- of the **67 families referred** to the program between March 2019 and September 2020, 60 (90 per cent) were accepted to commence treatment.

- only 35 families (58 per cent) commenced treatment (attended at least one session). Of those 35, **10 have completed treatment** (29 per cent).
- the majority of young people referred to MST were male (87 per cent), the **average age was 16 years** and 45 per cent of referrals identified as an ethnicity other than Australian, with the most common being Sudanese and South Sudanese followed by Maori.

The small sample size of young people and families who completed the program makes it difficult to draw conclusions about the impact of MST on short- to medium-term outcomes. The following progress towards outcomes have been identified:

- Young people and their families who completed the MST program were most likely to demonstrate **improvements in family functioning** goals. YJ stakeholders also observed that the greatest improvement in outcomes occurred in family functioning, including improved communication, less conflict in the home and the establishment of routines, such as eating a meal together.
- Similarly, all young people and their families demonstrated an **improvement in overall behaviour and general mental health**.
- Young people also showed a great to moderate extent of **improvement in their interactions with their peers** and there were **positive shifts in reported decrease in substance abuse**.
- While young people who completed the MST program were least likely to demonstrate improved school attendance, there was an **improvement in engagement in education**. Only one of the 10 young people was engaged in education on referral, which increased to five young people at program completion.
- **All young people were living at home** at the completion of the program.

Reoffending analysis was conducted on the 35 young people who commenced MST (attended at least one session). It is limited in its conclusions by the small number of participants who were referred, commenced and completed the program, and the short duration of program operation, therefore the extent to which outcomes are attributable to MST is unknown. The analysis demonstrated:

- All young people were on a YJ order when they commenced MST, the most common order type was a remand order.
- The total volume of offences for all 35 young people who participated in MST was 2754 prior to commencing the program. Sixty-nine per cent of these young people received new orders during their MST treatment (with a total of 371 new offences recorded). **The proportion of young people who received new orders had decreased to 60 per cent after their MST treatment was closed** (equating to 416 new offences recorded).
- The category of offending that showed the largest decrease was *theft and related offences* with 37 per cent of this type of offence recorded before MST treatment compared to 24 per cent after treatment.
- The category of offending to show the largest increase was *offences against justice procedures, government security and government operations*, with 14 per cent of this type of offence recorded before MST treatment compared to 21 per cent after treatment.
- There were changes in the severity of offending behaviours committed by young people who participated in the MST program. The category of most serious offence that showed the largest decrease was *robbery, extortion and related offences*, with 32 per cent of this type of offence recorded before MST treatment compared to 17 per cent after treatment.

- The category of most serious offence to show the largest increase was *dangerous or negligent acts endangering persons*, with three per cent of this type of offence recorded before MST treatment compared to 13 percent after treatment.

Overall, the introduction of MST into the suite of services offered by YJ has provided a much-needed focus on young people within the context of their families. It has provided intensive, wrap-around support to highly complex and challenging families in an effort to address the offending behaviour of young people. The evaluation has highlighted operational challenges which should be addressed to support the continued operation of MST and the realisation of its intended outcomes.

The recommendations below should be assessed and actioned as appropriate.

Table 1: Recommendations

	Recommendations
1.	It is recommended that Youth Justice consider whether the eligibility criteria for MST is too restrictive to address the demand for the program.
2.	It is recommended that Youth Justice works with OzChild to ensure that all families have a clear understanding of the program, and who it is run by, prior to consenting to participate.
3.	It is recommended that Youth Justice, in partnership with OzChild, explore opportunities to collaborate with CALD organisations to increase awareness of the program within CALD communities.
4.	It is recommended that Youth Justice works with OzChild to review the closure process for MST to ensure that families who require further support receive a referral to an appropriate service and that a warm handover occurs between OzChild and the service provider.
5.	It is recommended that if the program was to be continued or expanded, Youth Justice consider conducting an outcome evaluation to consider the long-term outcomes for young people who completed the program.

2. Introduction

The Multisystemic Therapy (MST) program, delivered by OzChild, began operating in March 2019 as part of a suite of interventions funded by Youth Justice (YJ) to address the criminogenic needs of young people in the community at high risk of reoffending.

In August 2020, the Department of Justice and Community Safety's (DJCS) Evidence and Insights (E&I) was contracted by YJ to develop an Evaluation Plan and conduct an evaluation of the MST treatment program focusing on the implementation phase and progress towards short- and medium-term outcomes.

3. Scope and Methodology

The evaluation of MST is guided by the Evaluation Plan developed in consultation with YJ. A Program Logic Model (Appendix 1) developed by OzChild for the delivery of MST in the Victorian context identified the key inputs, outputs, activities and outcomes which guided the evaluation.

The purpose of the evaluation is to address the key evaluation questions:

- To what extent has the MST program been implemented as intended?
- To what extent has MST made progress towards and/or achieved its short-term and medium-term outcomes?

The evaluation also explored the:

- demographic profile of young people
- engagement of Aboriginal and CALD young people and their families.

Economic impact or cost efficiency are not within the scope of the evaluation.

The evaluation used a mixed methods approach, utilising qualitative and quantitative data and a variety of data collection techniques. The methods included:

- two focus groups
- 14 individual interviews (online)
- key document analysis
- **Client feedback responses.** Feedback forms were provided by OzChild for three families who completed the program. One family had two young people complete the program. The forms describe families' perceptions regarding the benefit of the program.
- **Case study reports.** Nine case study reports were provided by OzChild that described reasons for referral and outcomes for young people and their families who completed the program.
- **Therapist Adherence Measure-Revised (TAM-R) scores.** The TAM-R is a 28-item measure administered by OzChild that evaluates a therapist's adherence to the MST model as reported by the primary caregiver of the family each month. Research has demonstrated that a therapist's adherence score is a reliable predictor of outcomes for families.

Quantitative data activities included two separate analysis, an analysis of the MST data collection tool and a reoffending analysis, described below.

3.1 MST data collection tool analysis

The evaluation included an analysis of the MST program dataset maintained by OzChild. This dataset utilised a YJ program reporting template tool, developed to record progress against program outputs and outcomes in line with monthly contractual reporting periods. OzChild have amended some fields in this tool to suit the circumstances of their own data collection and reporting for the MST program.

This database included all young people referred to OzChild for the MST program between March 2019 to September 2020.

This data was provided to the evaluation team in an Excel 365 file format. **In total this database contained information pertaining to 67 young people and their families who were referred to OzChild for the MST program.**

To analyse this data, the following decisions and assumptions were made:

- **Commenced MST treatment:** for the purposes of reporting a referral was considered to have commenced MST treatment if the database recorded:
 - a commencement date for that young person
 - at least one therapy session held with MST practitioner during the reporting period (March 2019 to September 2020)
- **Treatment period:** calculated using the recorded date of referral from YJ to MST, and the recorded date of the first session for each client.
- **Progress towards outcomes:** has been assessed by comparing goal improvement scores recorded for each young person at the first reporting period with the scores recorded at the final reporting period during which the case was active.

The MST database provided to the Evaluation Team was analysed in Excel 365 using a range of descriptive statistics, including count, range (the highest and lowest values in a data set), average, medians, and percentages (Bryman, 2012).

3.2 Reoffending analysis

Data analysis of all orders and sentenced offences committed by young people engaged in the MST was undertaken to assess reoffending.

The data was extracted from the YJ Client Relationship Information System (CRIS) and included all orders and offences committed between 1 September 2018 to 30 September 2020. It included basic demographic information (e.g., gender and ethnicity), order type, order start and end dates, offence date, most serious offence for each order.

The data extract included records for the 35 young people who commenced MST (i.e., attended at least one session) prior to September 2020.

A dataset was developed that included:

- All offences and orders recorded for young people in the 6 months prior to OzChild commencing MST service delivery in March 2019.
- All offences and orders recorded for young people during MST treatment.
- All offences and orders recorded for young people following MST closure. It should be noted that closure does not indicate that treatment was completed. Closure occurred due to a number of reasons, including disengagement, withdrawal, and ineligibility.

3.2.1 Data limitations

The findings from this evaluation should be considered alongside the following limitations:

MST data collection tool analysis

- The evaluation is based on a point-in-time analysis of the MST participant data as at September 2020.
- Caution must be applied when interpreting the results as the findings may not be generalisable due to the very small number of program participants and the relatively short program period.
- The dataset provided contained some errors (missing or inaccurate data). Errors might have been a result of human inputting errors, dataset compilation errors, and/or program immaturity. Therefore, the accuracy of some of the data captured was unknown.
- The short timeframe available to receive, clean, analyse and report on the MST program data impacted the extent of the quantitative analysis that could be conducted to support this evaluation.

Reoffending analysis

- The CRIS extract provides some information on the offending histories of young people, before, during, and after MST treatment. This data however only captures sentenced offences/orders. Therefore, contact with police is unknown. There may also be some delay in sentencing of offences, so therefore young people may have committed offences that are not yet sentenced at the time of program evaluation.

4. Youth Offending in Victoria

Victoria's youth justice system responds to a relatively small number of young people (Armytage and Ogloff, 2017). In 2018-19 there were 953 young people aged ten years and over who were subjected to youth justice supervision in Victoria on an average day. The majority were under supervision in the community (80 per cent, n = 766), with the remaining in detention (19 per cent, n = 191)¹ (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2020).

Young people in the youth justice system have high and very complex needs. Many are in the Child Protection and the OoHC system and have experienced intergenerational trauma, abuse and neglect, as well as other family breakdown and conflict. They experience high rates of unstable accommodation, homelessness and socioeconomic disadvantage. Young people in the youth justice system have often been exposed to criminal activity by parents or siblings and many disengage from education, training or employment. They are more likely to experience substance use, mental health issues and have a cognitive impairment (Armytage and Ogloff 2017). The YJ Strategic Plan 2020-2030 reported that:

- 53 per cent of young people were a victim of abuse, trauma or neglect as a child

¹ Numbers of young people on an average day might not sum to the total due to rounding, and because some young people might have moved between community-based supervision and detention on the same day.

- 41 per cent either have a current child protection case or were previously subject to a child protection order
- 49 per cent present with mental health issues
- 42 per cent have been witness to family violence
- 52 per cent have a history of alcohol and drug use
- 21 per cent live in unsafe or unstable housing
- 31 per cent present with cognitive difficulties that impact on daily functioning
- 4 per cent are NDIS participants.

There is an over-representation of young people from Aboriginal and CALD backgrounds within Youth Justice, particularly from East African and Pasifika backgrounds. On an average day in , 39 per cent of young people identify as CALD Australians, 18 per cent identify as Aboriginal, compared to 44 per cent who identify as non-Aboriginal Australian (YJ Strategic Plan, 2020).

While recent trends indicate that the rate of offending by young people is reducing (Crime Statistics Agency, 2019; Sutherland and Millsted, 2016), there has been an increase in youth reoffending rates. In Victoria, 59.5 per cent of young people aged 10 to 16 years released from sentenced community-based supervision in 2017-18 returned within 12 months. Similarly, 60 per cent of young people released from sentenced detention returned within 12 months. Overall, a national average of 59 per cent of young people who completed a sentence in 2017-18 returned within 12 months to sentenced supervision (AIHW, 2020). The age at which young people are first sentenced for an offence is related to their likelihood of reoffending. The Sentencing Advisory Council (2016) found that the reoffending rate of young people who were first sentenced aged 10 to 12 years (8 per cent) was more than double that of those who were first sentenced aged 19 to 20 years (33 per cent).

The seriousness of the offences committed by young people is also increasing. The number of young people with the most serious offence type of *Crimes against the person* has increased in the past 10 years by 29 per cent (1,406 incidents), from 4,853 alleged offender incidents in the year ending March 2010 to 6,259 in the year ending March 2019 (Crime Statistics Agency, 2019).

There has also been an increase in the number of unsentenced children held on remand in Victoria in recent years. On an average day in 2018–19, 90 unsentenced children were held on remand in Victoria, more than double the number 10 years earlier (n = 42). Similarly, there has been an increase in the proportion of children in custody who are unsentenced. In 2011–12, 22 per cent of children in custody on an average day were unsentenced (37 of 172 children) compared to 47 per cent (90 of 191 children) in 2018–19 (Sentencing Advisory Council, 2020).

5. Multisystemic Therapy

5.1 The program

MST is an evidenced-based, intensive family and home-based treatment program that utilises a ‘multisystemic’ approach addressing all environmental systems that can impact a young person, including family, peers, school, neighbourhood and community. MST recognises that each system plays a critical role in the young person’s life and that each system requires attention to improve the quality of life for the young person and their family (Henggeler et al., 2009).

The theoretical foundation of MST is based on family systems (Minuchin, 1974) and social ecological theories of behaviour (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). MST interventions are evidence-based, utilising a range of empirically validated treatments including cognitive behaviour therapy, parental skills training, and structural family therapy. Interventions are individualised, based on the needs of the young person and their family in order to reduce criminal activity and other types of anti-social behaviour. MST focuses on collaboration with and empowering parents to develop their strengths, skills and strategies that can improve their capacity to function as effective parents and address challenging behaviour (Henggeler et al., 2009).

MST views the youth as embedded within multiple interconnected systems



MST is implemented using the following framework:

- A single clinician works intensively with 4 to 6 families at a time, whom they visit at least twice weekly in the home
- Team of 2 to 4 clinicians plus a Clinical Supervisor (Team Leader)
- Clinicians are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week via an on-call roster system
- The average length of treatment is up to 60 hours of contact during a 3 – 5 month period
- Work is done in the community, home, school, and neighbourhood to remove barriers to service access

Families create primary therapy goals in consultation with the clinician, which typically involve reducing aggression, violence, and non-compliance in the home.

Other common family goals involve improved school attendance and behaviour, decreased substance use, and anti-social peer involvement.

The MST intervention is guided by nine treatment principles that shape the assessment and intervention process (Schoenwald, Brown, and Henggeler, 2000):

1. Finding the fit between the identified problems and their broader systemic context.
2. Positive and strength focused.
3. Increasing responsibility among family members.
4. Present-focused, action-oriented, and targeting specific and well-defined problems.
5. Targeting sequences of behaviour within and between multiple systems.
6. Developmentally appropriate and fit the developmental needs of the youths.
7. Continuous effort by family members.
8. Evaluation and accountability.
9. Promoting treatment generalisation and long-term maintenance of therapeutic change.

MST is an internationally recognised program for at-risk youth and their families. To date, there have been 79 studies and over 150 peer reviewed journal articles, including more than 58,000 families. Research has shown that MST effectively reduces behavioural problems and delinquency, substance abuse, mental health problems, out-of-home placement, involvement with anti-social peers, recidivism, and improves family functioning (Henggeler, 2011).

5.1.1 MST in Youth Justice

MST is being delivered by OzChild, an independent not-for profit organisation who support children and families throughout Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and the ACT. They deliver a suite of Evidence Based Programs, including Treatment Foster Care Oregon, SafeCare, Functional Family Therapy (FFT), Functional Family Therapy – Child Welfare (FFT-CW), KEEP, and MST for Child Abuse and Neglect (MST-CAN).

OzChild is delivering MST to support young people aged between 12 – 17 years who are subject to court-ordered Youth Justice supervision.

Referrals come to the MST Clinical Supervisor via a YJ Case Manager (YJCM) and are considered against the following eligibility criteria (as outlined in the YJ Multisystemic Therapy Practice Guideline):

- Young person is aged 12 – 17 years.
- Young person has been sentenced to a supervised Youth Justice order or Intensive Bail.
- Young person has five months or more left on their order²
- Young people on deferral of sentence can be referred where YJCM and Team Leader are confident that the sentencing outcome is likely to result in

² This criterion was relaxed within the first few months of implementation to increase referral numbers.

the young person being placed on an order subject to YJ supervision; and/or the combined period of deferral and sentence will be five months or more.

- Young person has anti-social behaviour in relation to peer associations, education, alcohol and drug use, criminal activity.

If the following exclusions exist, the young person will be ineligible for a referral to the MST program:

- Young person lives independently, or young person whose primary caregiver cannot be identified despite extensive efforts to locate all extended family, adult friends and other potential surrogate caregivers.
- Young person is engaged in the Children's Court Youth Diversion service.
- Young person's behaviours are primarily related to suicidal, homicidal, or psychotic behaviours.
- Young person has sexually offended where this offending is in the absence of other delinquent or anti-social behaviour.
- Young person's behaviour is primarily the result of biological and ecological factors.

5.1.2 Funding

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Table 2 **Error! Reference source not found.**: MST program funding to OzChild

Contract	Cost	Placements
Original contract December 2018 – December 2019	[REDACTED]	30
Contract variation December 2019 – June 2021	[REDACTED]	18-30
Total	[REDACTED]	48-60

5.1.3 Performance Measures

In the Agreement for the Provision of Services (OzChild) the following Key Result Areas (KRAs) are identified.

Table 3: Key Result Areas – OzChild

Measures	Target	Reporting frequency	Variation Report
Number and percentage of young people referred by YJ and deemed as suitable for the service intervention that commence the intervention within the timeframes agreed in the young person's case plan.	100%	Monthly	Report on each child who does not commence a service intervention within agreed timeframe, with an explanation for each variation.
Number and percentage of young people that successfully complete a service intervention following a referral.	90%	Monthly	Report on each child who does not complete a service intervention, with an explanation for each variation.
Participation of the service provider in case planning and/or multi-disciplinary care team meetings for young people (including those on YCOs or Intensive Bail) following requests by YJ, YCO Convenors (court-based positions) or the Courts.	100%	Monthly	Explanation required for each instance in which the service provider does not participate.
Provision of timely advice and feedback on the young person's progress following requests by YJ, YCO Convenors (court-based) or the Courts to assist with monitoring of the young person's compliance with their order	100%	Monthly	None required

6. MST program data analysis

Analysis of the MST data tool extract provided by OzChild has provided a snapshot of program participants and program activity over the period March 2019 to September 2020. The main findings of the analysis of described below.

6.1 Key demographics of participants

6.1.1 Age

- The average age of young people referred to the program was 16 years old ([Error! Reference source not found.4](#)).
- Sixteen years was the average age for those who went on to successfully complete the MST program.

- Overall, the cohort of young people referred to MST tended to be in the older range of the YJ cohort; 90 per cent of those referred to the program were aged 15 or older.

Table 4: Young person age at referral to MST

Age at referral	All referrals (n=67)		Successfully completed (n=10)	
	Count of age	Average Age	Count of age	Average Age
13	1	15.84	-	15.90
14	6		-	
15	16		-	
16	26		4	
17	16		3	
18	2		3	
Grand Total	67		10	

6.1.2 Gender

Eighty-seven per cent (n = 58) of referrals were males, compared to 13 per cent (n = 9) females. Males accounted for 70 per cent (n = 7) of successful completions, while females only accounted for 30 percent (n = 3).

6.1.3 Ethnicity

- A high number of the young people referred to MST were from CALD backgrounds.
- Just under half (45 per cent) of all referrals identified as having an ethnicity other than Australian.
- African families accounted for one quarter of all referrals to MST (25 per cent; second only to families for whom Australian was their primary ethnicity, 55 per cent of all referrals).
- Pacific Islander families were the second largest culturally diverse ethnic group referred to the program, accounting for 10 per cent of all referrals.
- Looking at the small number of young people who successfully completed MST, most identified Australian as their primary ethnicity (60 per cent), two (20 per cent) were African families, with the remaining identifying as either Pacific Islander (1 per cent) or Southern European (1 per cent).

Table 5: Ethnicity of MST participants

Ethnicity	All referrals (n=67)		Successfully completed (n=10)	
	No.	%	No.	%
Australian	37	55	6	60
African (Sudanese, South Sudanese, Ethiopian)	17	25	2	20
Pacific islander (South Sea Islander, Maori, Filipino)	7	10	1	10
Other (Japanese, Egyptian, Ethiopian, Cambodian)	4	6	0	0
Southern European (Greek, Italian)	2	3	1	10
Grand Total	67	99	10	100

Total % may not add to 100 due to rounding.

6.1.4 Aboriginal status

Very few young people referred to MST identified as being Aboriginal (2 cases, or 3 per cent of all referrals). None of the young people who successfully completed the MST program identified as being Aboriginal. Refer to section 8.2.5 for a discussion regarding the low numbers of Aboriginal young people referred to the program.

6.1.5 Carer arrangements

As seen in Table 6, most of the young people referred to the program were either living under the care of one parent (60 per cent) or two parents (31 per cent) on referral to the program. The remainder were either under the care of a close relative (6 per cent), in kinship care (1 per cent) or in foster care (1 per cent).

Of the 10 young people who successfully completed the MST program:

- half (50 per cent) were living under the care of one parent
- just under half (40 per cent) were living under the care of two parents
- and one young person (1 per cent) was living in kinship care.

Table 6: Carer arrangements on referral to MST

Living arrangements at point of referral	All referrals (n=67)		Successfully completed (n=10)	
	No.	%	No	%
Under care of one parent	40	60	5	50
Under care of two parents	21	31	4	40
Under care of close relative	4	6		
Kinship care	1	1	1	10
Foster care	1	1		
Grand Total	67	100	10	100

6.1.6 Child protection involvement

Two thirds of all young people referred to MST were either currently (61 per cent) or previously (6 per cent) involved with Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection services. The remaining third were not involved with Child Protection (30 per cent), or information about Child Protection was missing from the database (3 per cent).

The ratios of Child Protection involvement were similar when looking only at the 10 young people who completed the MST program: 6 (60 per cent) had current involvement, 3 (30 per cent) had no involvement and 1 (10 per cent) had previous involvement.

Table 7: Young people's involvement with Child Protection at referral to MST

Child protection involvement with YP at point of referral	All referrals (n=67)		Completed (n=10)	
	No.	%	No	%
Yes	41	61	6	60
No	20	30	3	30
Previous	4	6	1	10
Missing	2	3	-	-
	67	100	10	100

6.1.7 Engagement in education

Over half (58 per cent) of young people referred to MST were not engaged in any kind of education at the time of referral ([Error! Reference source not found.8](#)). Those who were engaged in education were most likely to be engaged in flexible learning (18 per cent), followed by mainstream school (15 per cent) or an apprenticeship (6 per cent).

Refer to section 9.2.2 for a discussion regarding engagement in education upon successful completion of the program.

Table 8: Engagement with education at referral to MST

Education type	All referrals (n=67)		At completion (n=10)	
	No.	%		%
Not engaged in education	39	58	4	40
Flexible learning	12	18	5	50
Mainstream school	10	15	1	10
Apprenticeship	4	6	-	-
TAFE	2	3	-	-
Grand Total	67	100	10	100

6.1.8 Engagement in employment

Most (87 per cent) of the young people referred to MST were not in employed at the time of referral (Table 9). Of the few who were employed, four per cent were employed on a casual bases and three per cent were in full time employment.

Refer to section 9.2.3 for a discussion regarding engagement in employment upon successful completion of the program.

Table 9: Engagement with employment at referral to MST

Employment type	All referrals (n=67)		At completion (n=10)	
	No.	%	No.	%
Not employed	58	87	8	80
Information no recorded	4	6	-	-
Casual employment	3	4	1	10
Full time employment	2	3	1	10
Grand Total	67	100	100	100

7. Referral data

7.1 Overview of referrals to MST program

- 67 referrals received over reporting period (March 2019 to September 2020).
- 60 considered acceptable to commence referral.
- Only 35 families were recorded as commencing treatment. The other 25 either declined to participate or experienced a change in circumstances that rendered them no longer eligible for the program.
- Of the 35 families recorded by OzChild as commencing MST treatment:
 - 16 did not progress to formal MST family treatment sessions
 - 10 completed the MST program
 - 4 partially completed
 - 5 remained active at the time of reporting.

7.1.1 Number of referrals

- Over the period March 2019 to September 2020, 67 young people and their families were referred to the MST program ([Error! Reference source not found.10](#)).
- OzChild assessed 90 per cent of young people referred to the MST program (60 cases) were accepted to commence treatment.

Table 10: Total number of young people referred to MST over the period March 2019 to September 2020

Families referred to MST	No.	%
Cases accepted at first referral	60	90
Cases not accepted at first	7	10
Total referrals received	67	100

Base: Total cases referred to OzChild for MST program (n=67)

7.1.2 Primary reason for referral

- The most common reason for referral into MST was the young person displaying significant behaviours of concern (73 per cent of referrals, see Table 11). Family related issues (21 per cent) were the second most common reason for referral.
- Significant behaviours of concern and family related issues were also the most likely secondary reasons for referral (31 per cent and 24 per cent respectively).
- Other behavioural concerns signalled at referral included drug or alcohol issues (12 per cent), education and employment related issues (12 per cent) and peer related issues (7 per cent).

Table 11: Primary behaviours referred to MST over the period March 2019 to September 2020

Reasons for referral to MST	Primary behaviour		Additional behaviours	
	No.	%	No.	%
Significant behaviours of concern	49	73	21	31
Family related issues	14	21	23	34
Drug or alcohol related issues	1	2	8	12
Education or employment related issues	1	2	8	12
Peer related issues	1	2	5	7
Mental health related issues	-	0	1	2
Missing	1	1	1	2
Totals	67	101	67	100

Base: Total cases referred to OzChild for MST program (n=67). Total % may not add to 100 due to rounding.

7.1.3 Rationale for cases not accepted at first referral

OzChild assessed 10 percent of referrals (7 cases) as not being acceptable to commence treatment. These seven young people were considered not eligible for the MST program due to:

- exceeding the eligible age range for the program (2 cases)
- living out of home or in unstable accommodation without a reunification plan in place (2 cases)
- exhibiting exclusionary behaviours (psychosis) (1 case)
- ineligible due to no longer being on Youth Justice order (1 case)
- ineligible with no further justification provided (1 case).

7.1.4 Referral sources

Most referrals were received from the Dandenong region (57 per cent), followed by Frankston (15 per cent) and Ringwood (15 per cent) ([Error! Reference source not found.12](#)).

Table 12: Youth Justice referral sources

YJ Region	No.	%
Dandenong	38	57
Frankston	10	15
Ringwood	10	15
Box Hill	7	10
Bayside	1	1
Missing	1	1
Total	67	100

Base: Total cases referred to OzChild for MST program (n=67)

7.2 Commenced MST program

Of the 60 referrals originally accepted by OzChild, only 35 proceeded to either the young person, or the family, participating in at least one MST treatment session ([Error! Reference source not found.](#)).

Table 13: Total number of families commencing MST over the period March 2019 to September 2020

Families proceeding to treatment	No.	%
Cases commenced at least one treatment session	35	58
Accepted cases that did not commence treatment	25	42
Total	60	100

Base: Total cases accepted at first referral (n=60)

7.2.1 Reasons accepted referrals did not proceed to MST treatment

Recorded reasons why accepted referrals not progressing to MST treatment are included in [Error! Reference source not found.](#)¹⁴ below.

Table 14: Reasons accepted referrals did not proceed to MST treatment

Reason for not proceeding to treatment	No.	%
Client driven reasons		
Family or young person did not engage	6	24
Parental consent removed	5	20
Declined to participate/ other	5	20
Administrative reasons		
Case withdrawn	5	20
Young person or family no longer eligible	4	16
Total	25	100

Base: Total cases accepted at first referral that did not progress to treatment (n=25)

7.2.2 Time to treatment

Over the reporting period, the average number of days between OzChild receiving a referral and the first MST treatment session was 28 days ([Error! Reference source not found.](#)¹⁵). Refer to section 8.3.1 for a discussion regarding the challenges of obtaining consent from families to participate in the program.

The shortest recorded period between a referral being received by OzChild and MST treatment commencing was two days.

The longest period was 159 days, for a client who subsequently withdrew from the MST program early in the treatment cycle.

Table 15: Average number of days between MST referral and treatment commencing

Time to treatment	Days
Average number of days between referral and treatment	28
Median number of days between referral and treatment	19
Shortest period between referral and treatment	2
Longest period between referral and treatment	159

Base: Total cases commenced treatment (n=35)

7.3 Families' progress with MST program

The MST dataset indicates that 35 families commenced the MST program (refer to [Error! Reference source not found.](#)). Further interrogation of the dataset indicates

that, despite efforts by MST clinicians, 16 of these families left the program before formal treatment could commence.

Table 16: Current and completed MST program status

Current and completed program status	No.	%
Families no longer active in program (engagement commenced or initial sessions held with YP or a family member; formal MST sessions not commenced)	16	46
Families who completed MST program	10	29
Families active in MST cases at time of reporting	5	14
Families who partially completed MST program	4	11
Total	35	100

Base: Total cases commenced treatment (n=35)

7.3.1 Reasons families did not progress with MST

Partial completion of MST (four families):

As noted in the table above, four young people and their families were recorded to have only partially completed the MST program. Reasons provided for partial completion primarily related to the circumstances of the young person's family becoming a barrier to continuation with program:

- family disengaged with the program due to loss of paternal grandmother
- MST practitioners experienced ongoing issues with engagement, with the young person's parent not attending scheduled appointments
- the mental health of the young person's parent was a barrier to committing to the MST program
- young person engaged well, however the young person's parent would not engage.

Commenced engagement but did not progress to MST program (16 families):

Sixteen families were recorded by OzChild to have commenced engagement but did not progress through the formal MST program. Reasons provided for disengagement from the program reflect the complex circumstances and needs of the vulnerable young people referred to MST:

- Families or young person disengaged with program clinicians despite indicating willingness to participate when initially contacted (n = 7):
 - MST clinician experienced difficulties securing engagement (after initial consent)
 - Young person originally indicated a desire to engage but subsequently disengaged. MST clinician was unable to engage the family through the provision of alternative treatment options (including offering sessions away from the family home).
 - Young person and parent provided good engagement at the initial assessment stage however disengaged from the program during the intervention.
 - Young person withdrew from program and made no further appointments.

- Young person did not appear motivated to work with MST, despite indicating consent to participate, subsequent actions suggested otherwise.
- MST treatment unable to commence due to changes in the circumstances of the young person, including cancellation of bail, returning to custody or finalisation of the YJ Order resulting in the young person remaining in a remand or custody setting (n = 6).
- Families withdrew consent after having a different understanding about what program would entail or changed mind about wanting to be involved (n = 2).
- Changes in the families' circumstances made it difficult to continue with the intensive nature of MST (n = 1).

7.4 Engagement with MST program

7.4.1 Average treatment period – all who commenced MST

The average treatment period for young people and their families who successfully completed the MST program was 157 days (just over five months - [Error! Reference source not found.](#)).

As would be expected, this was longer than the average treatment period when including all families who commenced treatment but withdrew prior completing (110 days on average).

Overall, the shortest recorded treatment period for those that did not complete the program was eight days. The longest period was 444 days. This extended time period was for a family who partially completed the program on the first attempt, withdrew due to a change in circumstances and had difficulties re-engaging with the program on re-referral.

The longest recorded treatment period for family who successfully completed the MST program was 211 days (or just under seven months).

Table 17: Average days treatment for families who commenced and completed the MST program

Treatment period	Commenced treatment and no longer active (n=29)	Commenced treatment and successfully completed (n=10)
Average days treatment	110	157
Shortest treatment period	8	108
Longest treatment period	444	211

7.5 MST clinicians' adherence to the MST model

Clinicians fidelity to the MST treatment principles is measured using the TAM-R, which is a 28-item measure administered by OzChild to the primary caregivers of referred young people each month.

OzChild has provided the following fidelity scores for the two clinicians who were actively working between 7 January and 30 September 2020.

Table 18: MST clinicians' adherence between January to September 2020

Item Description	Clinician 1	Clinician 2
Average adherence score - Target: .61	0.66	0.69
Lowest adherence score	0.57	0.54
Highest adherence score	0.81	0.89
Percent of youth with average therapist adherence score above threshold (>.61) – Target: 80%	100%	75%

Table 18 above shows that MST clinicians exceeded the average adherence score target of 0.61 (range = 0.54 to 0.89), indicating that the intervention is being delivered with a high degree of model fidelity.

One clinician did not reach the required 80 per cent target for the percent of youth with an average therapist adherence score above the threshold of 0.61.

Note: The following outputs were unable to be determined based on data provided by OzChild:

- average caseloads range for each therapist
- TAM-R collection rate -Target > 70%
- percentage of youth reporting adherence above threshold (>.61) – Target: 80%
- percentage of youth with at least one TAM-R interview – Target: 100%.

8. Key findings – Program implementation and operation

8.1 Implementation

Overall, all YJ and community stakeholders were positive about the MST program and thought that it was a unique program that filled a service gap in YJ by providing family-focused therapy.

“The value of MST for YJ has been a really specialised and intensive program in terms of that family work which has a natural ripple effect in addressing criminogenic needs.”

It was noted that other YJ programs are individualised, providing support for the young person in isolation of the family unit. In comparison, MST was viewed as providing a more holistic approach by working with the young person within the context of their home environment with their parents/caregivers and other family members to address problematic behaviour as a whole.

YJCM's discussed not having the capacity to work with families.

“There's a huge need for the program because in YJ we are really working directly with the young person and the families are often then not our direct client and as much as we would like to work with them, and we absolutely need to, it's not the number one priority and can get pushed to the side.”

Although it was acknowledged that other services in the region provide family support, it was highlighted that this support was more practical in nature (such as providing food hampers, transport to Centrelink) rather than focusing on behaviour change per se.

8.1.1 Enablers to implementation

Relationship between YJ and OzChild

Several stakeholders identified the positive relationship formed between YJ and OzChild as assisting with the implementation of MST. YJ met regularly with OzChild during the early stages of implementation to establish the operational processes and procedures. OzChild were described as easy to engage, collaborative and willing to listen to feedback from YJ. OzChild appreciated YJ's willingness to actively support the implementation of the program and their commitment to ensuring it was a success.

"... There was a level of sort of excitement about what the possibilities were for this program, because it was sort of different to what had been offered previously. There was a sense that you know we'll give this a go and see, which was helpful, because that sort of generating a bit of sense of urgency and a bit of buy-in and excitement around the program is a really strong enabler to you know successful implementation of it..." (OzChild)

Numerous initiatives were employed by OzChild to assist with implementation, including meeting with YJ Team Managers and YJCM to explain the program, presenting at a Multi-Agency Panel (MAP) meeting, hot desking in a YJ office, and conducting meet and greets with new YJ team members.

Implementation support

Implementation support was provided by a consultant from Life Without Barriers based in Sydney. Life Without Barriers hold the licence to support other agencies delivering MST in Australia and New Zealand, through the provision of program start-up services, ongoing MST clinical support, quality assurance activities and organisational assistance. The consultant reviewed paperwork and provided weekly individual supervision with the MST Clinical Supervisor and group supervision with the MST clinicians to ensure they were meeting model fidelity. The MST Clinical Supervisor also provided clinicians with weekly group supervision and individual supervision.

8.1.2 Barriers to implementation

Recruiting the right staff

Recruiting appropriately skilled and qualified clinicians in a short timeframe was cited as a barrier to implementation. The standard MST model had not been delivered in Victoria previously and there was a lack of awareness about the program amongst the workforce. Further, the contract to deliver the program was signed in December, which meant that recruitment was occurring over January when many people were away.

There was also some uncertainty around the type of clinician who would be suitable for the role. OzChild discussed the importance of getting the right people for the job, but the attributes necessary to be successful in the role did not become apparent until the model had been delivered for some time.

"MST requires a very specific skill set in clinicians and works well with clinicians who are persistent and will work through barriers and will often problem solve rather than say, they won't engage, forget about it. They'll actually go, what can I do, what have I tried, what's different..." (OzChild)

The requirement for clinicians to be available 24/7 via an on-call roster system was also viewed as a barrier to recruitment.

One of the three clinicians who was recruited initially left the role after three months, resulting in another clinician having to be recruited during the early stages of implementation. The remaining two clinicians continued in their roles until recently. Two new clinicians had commenced at the time of preparing this report.

Training MST clinicians

Another challenge to the implementation of MST was training the clinicians in time for service delivery to commence in March 2019. Training involved clinicians attending a five-day program in New Zealand run by Life Without Barriers. It was acknowledged that it takes time for staff to learn the model and develop and master the skills required to deliver MST. Since COVID-19, training has been delivered online. Clinicians also receive booster training sessions four times a year.

Short-term funding cycle

A short-term funding cycle was also viewed as a barrier to implementation. OzChild were funded to deliver MST for one year initially and subsequently gave MST clinicians short-term contracts. Towards the end of the first year when funding for the program was due to cease, clinicians became anxious about their roles and whether they were going to continue. Management had to manage this anxiety and try to retain staff along with continuing to deliver the program.

Stakeholders reflected that it took the first year to get the program up and running to the point that the MST team were confident in delivering the program and were moving through referrals and the program more quickly. They felt that a longer funding cycle would allow the program to have a greater impact on the target cohort.

8.2 Referrals

8.2.1 Referral process

YJCM's determine if a young person and their parent/caregiver is suitable for the program and would benefit from a referral to the program. They speak to the family about the program and what it can provide and obtain consent from the young person and their parent/caregiver for a referral to the program. A referral can proceed if the young person refuses to provide consent, provided the parent/caregiver provides consent. The YJCM completes the referral form and gives it to their Team Leader.

The three YJ Team Managers in the South East Metropolitan region have monthly meetings with the MST Clinical Supervisor where they discuss and present referrals. Referrals can be progressed outside of the monthly meetings if necessary. In this case, the YJCM will send the referral directly to the MST Clinical Supervisor who will discuss the referral with the YJCM and allocate accordingly.

Once a referral has been accepted, the MST clinician contacts the family and organises the first home visit, which is also attended by the YJCM.

The YJCM's were positive about the referral process and found it to be easy and straightforward. They considered the MST Clinical Supervisor to be very approachable and helpful when discussing suitable referrals to the program.

8.2.2 Inappropriate referrals

Initially, there was tension between YJ and OzChild in terms of the young people and their families who were being referred into the program. YJ were referring

young people who OzChild deemed inappropriate for the program, including young people aged 17 years and over, young people with entrenched behaviour, and families who were not willing or ready to engage with the program. OzChild believed that the program would be more effective with less complex young people.

“...How do people understand who is the cohort that the model is likely to best kind of fit and have most success with .. bearing in mind there's a tendency to always want to refer the hardest, most complex, you know, young people to any new program to sort of test it and see whether it's all it's cracked up to be, and so there's always those conversations around, you know, moderation of referrals...” (OzChild)

Monthly meetings between the MST Clinical Supervisor and YJ Team Managers to discuss current and potential referrals has assisted with more appropriate referrals being made to MST.

8.2.3 Strict eligibility criteria

All YJ and community stakeholders commented on the strict eligibility criteria for the program and felt that this was a major barrier to referrals to the program. They thought there were many young people and families who would benefit from participating in the program but were precluded from doing so because they were ineligible. The following criteria were highlighted by stakeholders:

1). The young person must be aged 12 – 17 years.

YJ stakeholders highlighted that YJ supervises young people who are up to age 21 years in the community. Many of the young people aged over 17 years are still living at home, are immature and lack the capacity to cope. It was suggested by some YJCM that participation in the program would assist these young people to transition into adulthood.

2). The young person has five months or more left on their YJ order.

Initially, this requirement was included so that MST clinicians could work alongside YJ for the duration of a young person's treatment (i.e. three to five months). It became apparent to OzChild that families were being denied treatment due to a young person having less than five months left on their YJ order. OzChild relaxed the requirement resulting in an increase in the number of referrals.

3). The young person must be living in the home.

This requirement deems young people in OoHC ineligible for the program, unless they are in the process of transitioning back into the home. YJ stakeholders noted that there is a large proportion of young people in the YJ East Metropolitan Region in OoHC, living in residential care, which has resulted in a low number of referrals from this region.

One YJCM also thought that it would be beneficial for young people leaving care due to turning 18 years of age to be eligible to participate in MST. These young people often return to live with their parents who they have not lived with for some time, which can lead to issues arising within the family. However, because they are turning 18 years of age, they are too old to engage in the program.

The requirement for a young person to be living in the home also means that young people who are sentenced to custody for a long period of time are ineligible for MST. OzChild reported that they will work with young people who have been remanded, but they need to be released from remand within a month. MST clinicians have undertaken preparation work with some families two to three weeks

prior to the young person's release date and have visited the young person in custody (in person or via telehealth) to explain the program.

On occasions where the young person has been arrested and remanded during treatment, the MST clinician working with the family has successfully written support letters to assist the YJCM get the young person released on bail. However, if the young person has not been released and must stay in custody for a longer period they have closed. It was reported that this has only occurred a small number of occasions.

The majority of YJ stakeholders believed that it was important to continue supporting the family while the young person was in custody, irrespective of the length of time the young person was remanded for.

It was pointed out by MST clinicians that the young people participating in the program are often on high tariff orders and if they breach their orders, they are quickly returned to custody. MST is a time-limited 20-week program and it is not feasible to achieve outcomes when a young person spends a lengthy period in custody and only a limited time in the home. The MST intervention is designed to be conducted in the young person's natural environment, the home, where parents implement behavioural interventions with the young person.

4). The young person is not engaged in the Children's Court Youth Diversion service.

Many YJ stakeholders thought that young people participating in the Children's Court Youth Diversion service should be eligible for MST. One stakeholder believed that including these young people would support one of the reform directions outlined in the YJ Strategic Plan 2020-2030 that focusses on improving diversion and supporting early intervention and crime prevention. Examples were provided of cases whereby YJCM's had specifically referred young people into the program because they had younger siblings on diversion who were exhibiting concerning behaviours. They hoped that this would provide early intervention for those younger siblings and potentially break the cycle of offending.

Similarly, other YJCM's provided examples of having requested that the MST clinician remain involved with a family when the young person had returned to custody, because there were younger siblings in the home who had not yet entered the criminal justice system but were emulating the behaviours of their older sibling.

Recommendation 1

It is recommended that Youth Justice consider whether the eligibility criteria for MST is too restrictive to address the demand for the program.

8.2.4 Family violence related referrals

Several YJCM's raised concerns that referrals were not accepted for families where there was significant family violence in the home. MST clinicians conduct risk assessments when a young person is referred to the service and if they determine that MST would not be beneficial for the family due to family violence then they will refer the family to a specialist family violence service. One YJCM cited an example of a family who were not accepted into MST but were unwilling to access family violence services and felt there was a gap in service provision for these families. However, case study reports provided by OzChild noted that there was a history of family violence in two families who were accepted into the program.

8.2.5 Low referrals of Aboriginal young people

As outlined in section 6.1.4, only two Aboriginal young people have been referred into the program, although none have commenced the program. One was re-remanded into custody before the program commenced, while parental consent was withdrawn for the other.

OzChild has attempted to engage Aboriginal families in MST. Pre-COVID, the Aboriginal Cultural Liaison Officer from OzChild and the MST Clinical Supervisor were going to the Gathering Place to meet Elders, explain the program and promote awareness of the program. However, as highlighted by YJ stakeholders, many Aboriginal young people are in OoHC or are aged over 17 years and are therefore ineligible for MST. There was also the perception by YJ stakeholders that Aboriginal families were suspicious of evidence-based programs generally.

8.2.6 Low referrals of young people in the East Metropolitan Region

The relatively low number of referrals in the East Metropolitan region (25 per cent) was attributed by YJ stakeholders to the small number of YJ clients in the region, a high proportion of whom are in OoHC or are older than 17 years of age, which deems them ineligible for the program. Stakeholders felt this was unfortunate as they believed the program could benefit young people and families in the region.

8.2.7 YJ staff turnover

Another barrier to referrals identified by OzChild was staff turnover in YJ. YJ has recruited many new YJCM's since the program commenced, resulting in MST clinicians having to explain the program to them as they *'don't know who we are and what we do'*. MST clinicians found it necessary to call individual YJCM's to review caseloads to see if any young person was suitable for the program in an effort to increase referral rates.

8.3 Engagement

8.3.1 Obtaining consent from families

MST clinicians and YJCM's discussed the challenges of obtaining consent from families to participate in the program once the referral had been accepted. Families found it difficult to understand that MST works with the parents and caregivers, rather than just the young person.

"Families are used to services working with the young person. There's been quite a few families that say 'we're not the problem, he is.' Sometimes parents are like 'go and work with the young person'..." (OzChild)

Some families felt shame around the young person's behaviour. MST clinicians were conscious of explaining to families that while they were not to blame for the behaviour, they could influence the behaviour.

Other families were suspicious of services generally due to previous negative experiences and questioned why they should participate in the program. There were concerns raised by two stakeholders that families did not understand that MST was delivered by a community organisation that was independent of YJ, the Court or any part of the criminal justice system. This may have led to families either refusing to consent because they viewed MST as affiliated with the criminal justice system or consenting because they felt obligated to participate in a program that was recommended by YJ.

The first home visit which is attended by both the YJCM and the MST clinician was seen as an important opportunity for the clinician to explain the program and what it involves so that the family could make a fully informed decision about whether to participate in the program. It also enabled a warm handover from the YJCM to the MST clinician and assisted the clinician to build rapport with the family.

Recommendation 2

It is recommended that Youth Justice works with OzChild to ensure that all families have a clear understanding of the program, and who it is run by, prior to consenting to participate.

8.3.2 Persistent nature of MST clinicians

There was an acknowledgement from all stakeholders that MST clinicians would do 'whatever it takes' to engage families. Clinicians were described as 'persistent' and 'relentless' and were perceived as making more of an effort to engage families than other services. For example, clinicians dropped in a pizza to families, and took them to doctor's appointments and to the chemist. It was also acknowledged that clinicians' small caseloads afforded them the time to be able to keep going and trying to engage families.

MST clinicians managed to engage families in treatment who had not engaged with other services previously, even during COVID-19 restrictions. For example, a South Sudanese and a Maori family who were service resistant engaged with MST for six months and successfully completed treatment.

It was thought that the availability of clinicians 24/7 assisted with maintaining families' engagement.

8.3.3 Characteristics of families who engage and complete MST

Stakeholders discussed the characteristics of families who engage with MST and complete the program, compared to those who disengage.

Families who engage with the program from the outset are motivated, ready to change and have other supports and resources in place. These families go on to complete the program.

Other families struggle to engage due to the parents/caregiver's circumstances, such as mental health issues, and intergenerational trauma, which makes it difficult for them to participate in therapeutic work and self-reflection. These families usually disengage but may attempt to re-engage at a later point in time. Similarly, other parents/caregivers may not see it as their role to implement changes, instead blaming the young person for their behaviour. These families may be re-referred later when the parents/caregivers are ready to make changes.

Finally, other families drop out because of changes in the circumstances of the young person, such as returning to custody or finding independent living accommodation.

The majority of YJ stakeholders argued that the disengagement of some families should not be attributed to the program per se, but due to the highly complex nature of the families which made them difficult to work with. They felt that any level of engagement with these families should be viewed as a success.

8.3.4 Engagement of CALD families

MST clinicians felt they had been successful at engaging CALD families in the program. As noted in section 6.1.3, CALD families represented 40 per cent of families who completed the program. This proportion is similar to the broader YJ CALD population in the South East Metropolitan region, which is currently 44 per cent³. Clinicians reflected that their knowledge of CALD cultures, in particular Sudanese and South Sudanese, had increased greatly, but that it had been a steep learning curve.

YJ stakeholders viewed MST clinicians as being culturally responsive and appropriate. They assisted CALD parents build their parenting skills in an Australian context and helped them understand the experiences of young people growing up in a culture different to their own. Clinicians also helped young people to understand that their parents have their own culture which impacts upon their parenting.

MST clinicians have been proactive in seeking assistance from the YJ Community Engagement Officer regarding how to support CALD families and ensuring they are culturally sensitive and appropriate.

“I think they are doing great work. They are open to feedback. They are listening to community voice and seeking community voice. They want to be competent and confident in the work that they do.” (YJ)

However, it was suggested by some YJ stakeholders that OzChild could collaborate to a greater extent with community organisations, such as the Community Support Groups (CSG) in Dandenong/Casey. The CSGs aim to strengthen youth engagement in South Sudanese communities and to ensure that young people and their families are linked into activities and services in their areas. OzChild could run a session with the CSG to inform the community about MST.

Although adaptations were made to program material to ensure that CALD families were able to understand it and could actively participate in the program, OzChild acknowledged that they have not customised the model specifically for Sudanese and South Sudanese communities. They are open to conducting this work in consultation with these communities if a high proportion of Sudanese and South Sudanese young people and their families continue to be referred into the program.

OzChild has recently organised cultural training for MST staff with Dr Santino Atem Deng through the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc – Foundation House.

Recommendation 3

It is recommended that Youth Justice, in partnership with OzChild, explore opportunities to collaborate with CALD organisations to increase awareness of the program within CALD communities.

8.3.5 Collaboration with other services

MST clinicians attended all Care Team Meetings and were considered valued members of the Care Team by stakeholders. Stakeholders appreciated their expertise and skills and believed that they complemented the work of other services. One YJ Team Manager commented:

³ As at 8 December 2020. Internal YJ data

“Having MST clinicians involved in Care Team meetings provides greater insight into parents functioning and how MST can support a case plan for the young person.”

During the meetings, the MST clinician would provide an update on the family’s progress, including the strategies that worked well with the family and those that did not work well.

MST clinicians described some tension between themselves and YJCM’s caused by a lack of understanding of the MST model and the role of MST clinicians. Sometimes YJCM’s would refer young people to other services for issues that the MST clinicians were qualified to deal with. As one clinician explained:

“Our priority is to limit services because we are like a one stop shop. We will handle the education, the AOD, the mental health. We actually advocate, if we’re getting involved, just let us get involved and then if there are some gaps, we’d make referrals to other service to get involved. At the end of treatment, if there’s remaining issues, we’d refer in.”

MST aims to equip families with the skills to be able to self-manage, rather than rely on services. Families often become overwhelmed by too many services, which can lead to a lack of engagement.

Consequently, when MST clinicians become part of a Care Team, they make it a priority to outline roles and responsibilities of each Care Team member to ensure there is no duplication of service provision. In addition, they ensure that all members are working towards the same overarching goals so that there is no confusion for families.

MST clinicians felt that other services had been receptive to the introduction of MST in their area. The following services were named as those that MST routinely collaborates with:

- Youth Justice Community Support Service
- Youth Support + Advocacy Service
- PIVOT
- Navigator
- Transition to Work
- Afri-Aus Care
- Foundation House
- Schools
- Child Protection
- Victoria Police Proactive Policing Unit

One stakeholder suggested that MST clinicians participate in the MAPs when a young person is being monitored by one in order to share information about the young person and work to address system gaps and issues.

8.4 Program closure

MST clinicians make it clear with families from the beginning of the program that they will work with them until their goals are achieved, which is on average between three to five months. Consequently, families understand that MST cannot work with them forever and are prepared for closure.

Upon closure, MST clinicians create a maintenance plan outlining all the strategies that have been worked on with the family throughout the duration of the program which they give to families and Care Team members. Clinicians make a celebration of closure by providing families with a certificate and a gift hamper.

While there is no formal follow-up with families after closure, clinicians described receiving emails and phone calls from families reporting on their progress.

If a family requires further support after closure, MST clinicians will refer them to other providers and conduct hand-over sessions with these providers. YJ stakeholders raised some concerns around handover and referrals to other services. Examples were provided of families having to go on waitlists for services they had been referred to and subsequently no warm handover occurred between the MST clinician and the new service provider.

Further, some stakeholders felt there was a lack of services providing similar support that MST could refer to.

“.. there’s a huge gap when they finish and then where the referral moves on to next because the family obviously still need support, but it’s not always clear, well it hasn’t been for my young people, who would be able to provide that support.” (YJ)

A YJCM discussed a family who completed the program but did not engage with the family service they were referred to after closure. In the last six months, the family has not maintained the plan they were provided with at closure and family life has disintegrated. The CM felt that a monthly check-in by the MST clinician to see how the family was progressing and provide encouragement would have been helpful.

In addition, many YJ stakeholders believed that a 20-week intervention period was not long enough to deal with the entrenched behaviour of families and wished that MST clinicians could work with families for longer.

Recommendation 4

It is recommended that Youth Justice works with OzChild to review the closure process for MST to ensure that families who require further support receive a referral to an appropriate service and that a warm handover occurs between OzChild and the service provider.

8.5 Families’ perceptions of MST

The timelines for this evaluation did not allow for direct consultation with young people and their families who had participated in MST. However, a feedback form was administered by OzChild at the completion of the program which provided some insight into MST participants experiences.

Only three feedback forms were provided by OzChild due to the challenges involved in getting families to complete the forms. One family had two young people complete the program.

Two out of the three families reported that MST had helped their family a lot, while one family said that MST had helped them somewhat/a little.

Before participating in the program, parents/caregivers were struggling with a range of issues with their young person, such as absconding, substance abuse, associating with anti-social peers, disengagement from education, anti-social behaviour and involvement with Child Protection. One parent/caregiver described their life before MST:

“(Young person) lies and I don’t know where he goes. He’s got bad friends but I don’t know who they are. He’s not going to school at all and I don’t know how to get him there.”

Families found that MST helped them in the following ways:

- re-engaged their young person with education
- assisted with remote learning
- provided financial counselling
- provided health information
- advocated on behalf of families with other services, including police and lawyers
- provided transport
- provided activities for the young person to engage in at home, such as a basketball ring.

Families appreciated that the MST clinician worked with the whole family, listened and supported them and was always available.

“MST treated us like the expert in our son, listening and working with us the whole way.” (Parent/caregiver)

Most families found it difficult when the program ended and wished that they could have continued to work with the clinician.

“We could have kept working with her for longer than the timeframe, it was difficult ending services during COVID-19.” (Parent/caregiver)

8.6 Impact of COVID-19

The arrival of COVID-19 to Victoria in early 2020 created significant impacts on MST service delivery. Stage 3 restrictions were introduced in Victoria on 30 March 2020, which resulted in MST having to be delivered remotely.

The impact of this change to remote service delivery is discussed below.

8.6.1 Ensuring families had access to technology

DJCS provided a \$10,000 grant to OzChild to assist with supporting families to stay connected with technology during COVID-19. OzChild ensured that families were able to access the service, by supplying them with equipment (e.g., phones, sim cards, credit for data, and laptops) to receive phone or video calls. They provided additional support in the setting up and use of platforms to facilitate video calls with services.

8.6.2 Difficulties engaging families

MST clinicians found it much more difficult to engage families remotely, especially families from a CALD background whose first language was not English. The use of interpreters over the phone or via telehealth was challenging as it would take much longer to explain concepts of the MST model and often things were ‘missed in translation’. As one clinician noted:

“...we’re talking about skills that they’ve never developed before and we’re trying to develop a new skill over the phone...”

MST clinicians spent more time trying to engage families, because families were difficult to contact and tended to avoid phone calls. Clinicians were unable to use the strategies they would normally use to engage families, such as visiting the family home, and so they sought the support and advice of YJCM's and other Care Team members. For example, the most appropriate days and times to call the family.

Although MST clinicians were unable to conduct sessions in the home during COVID-19, they did conduct emergency welfare checks when it was deemed necessary, and dropped off food parcels, hand sanitiser, and Personal Protective Equipment to families.

8.6.3 Inability to assess and manage risk

One of the major challenges identified by OzChild stakeholders in delivering the program remotely was the inability to accurately assess and manage risk.

"...MST deals with sort of a higher risk threshold as well, so there's always going to be, how do you manage that level of risk virtually? How do you know when you can't see what it is that you need to see in order to inform the work that you're doing with families?" (OzChild)

Clinicians also spoke about missing cues from not being in the room with the family.

"It makes a whole lot more difference. You can read someone's body language, you can read the room, see if there is someone else listening or eavesdropping. Considering the complex family dynamics, physically being there makes a whole lot of difference."

Clinicians were reliant on families to provide information about what was happening in the home. For example, in one case, a clinician only became aware that a young person, who was not a member of the family, had been staying in the home for a period of weeks as a result of information shared by Victoria Police.

8.6.4 Inability to conduct joint appointments

Some of the YJCM's interviewed discussed the inability to conduct joint appointments with MST clinicians due to COVID-19 restrictions. Pre-COVID, YJCM's attended the first home visit with MST clinicians, which as discussed previously (see section 8.3.1), assisted with rapport building. However, during COVID-19, all visits were conducted remotely by the MST clinician, who then reported back to the YJCM. YJCM's reported feeling less involved with the family, while MST clinicians found it difficult to commence the program with families who they had never met in person.

Other impacts of COVID-19 that were discussed during the consultations were:

- **progress through the program was slower** for families when delivered remotely and treatment needed to be extended to account for this.
- **difficulties engaging other family members, including siblings**, remotely.
- **referral numbers decreased** and new referrals were difficult to commence.
- **young people were remanded for longer periods of time** interrupting continuity and efficacy of treatment.

8.6.5 Successes during COVID-19

All stakeholders believed that MST was able to continue to provide a level of service despite the challenges presented by COVID-19 restrictions.

An example was provided of two young people from South Sudanese backgrounds who successfully completed the program remotely over six months. The program was delivered via telehealth and despite language, technology and cultural barriers, engagement was maintained, and all goals were achieved.

It was the view of some OzChild stakeholders that the manualised and prescriptive nature of the program assisted clinicians in the delivery of the program during COVID-19 restrictions. MST provides structured sessions, so clinicians know exactly what goals they are working on during each session, irrespective of the mode of delivery. However, face-to-face delivery of the program was considered the preferred delivery mode.

9. Progress towards short-term and medium-term outcomes

The evaluation focussed on assessing the extent to which MST made progress towards and/or achieved its short-term and medium-term outcomes (as described in the Program Logic Model, Appendix 1).

This section reports on the outcomes achieved for the families who have completed the program only (n = 10). Families categorised as having commenced and withdrawn (n = 16), only partially completed the program (n = 4) or who are still actively receiving treatment (n = 5) are not included in the analysis of reported outcomes achieved.

Overall, there are positive signs that MST has made progress towards the achievement of some of its stated outcomes, particularly in the area of family functioning. However, for other outcomes, such as school attendance, limited progress has been made to date.

9.1 Youth is living at home

The nine case study reports provided by OzChild revealed that on referral to MST, the majority of young people (n = 6) had been absconding from the home most nights per week, while two absconded for weeks at a time. A decrease in absconding was reported for all young people. As one mother noted:

“He’s changed so much, he stays home and out of trouble.”

Living arrangements at completion of the program were not reported in the MST data collection tool. However, OzChild reported during consultations that all young people were living at home at the completion of the program. No young people were placed in OoHC.

9.2 Improved school attendance, employment and education status

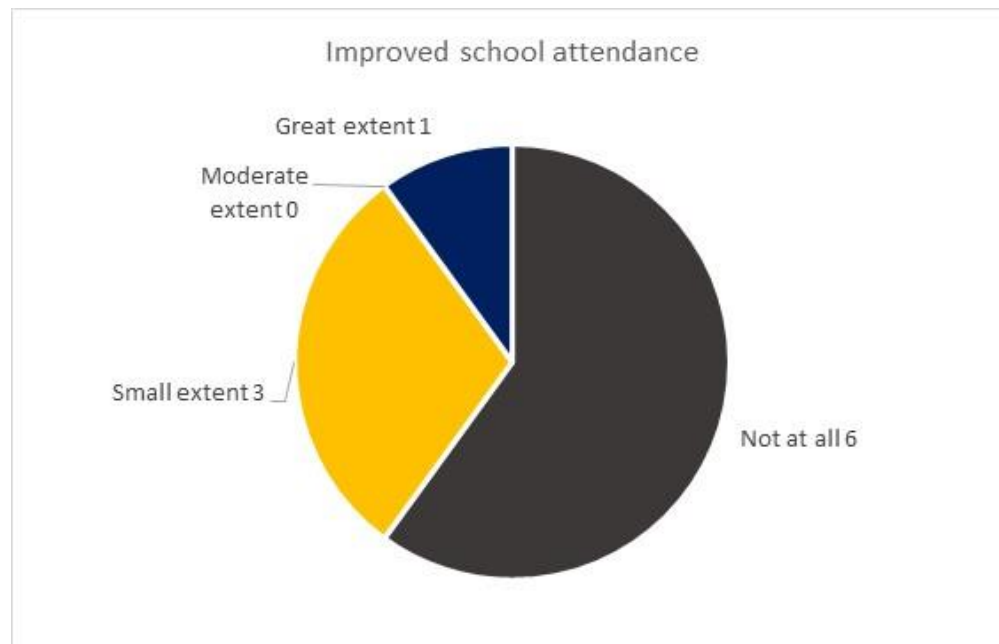
9.2.1 Improved school attendance

Young people who completed the MST program were least likely to demonstrate improved school attendance when compared to the other outcome areas.

Nearly two thirds (6 of 10) who completed the program demonstrated no improvement at all in their school attendance, and just less than a third demonstrating only a small extent of improvement (3 of 10).

One young person who completed the program showed a great extent of improvement in their school attendance.

Figure 1: Improved school attendance at completion of MST intervention



Base = completed treatment during reporting period (n = 10)

Stakeholders discussed the difficulty of achieving an improvement in school attendance due to COVID-19 restrictions. Young people were unable to attend school in person and instead learned remotely at home. For young people who had been disengaged from school for a long period of time, finding a suitable school for them to enrol in was challenging during remote learning.

The MST model purveyor requires young people to have been consistently attending school to be able to achieve this goal. One stakeholder felt that this requirement did not reflect the improvements in school engagement that were achieved during the program.

9.2.2 Engagement in education

Error! Reference source not found.9 below looks at participants' level of engagement in education at the point of initial referral, compared with the young person's level of engagement in education after successful completion of the MST program.

- Nine of the 10 young people who successfully completed the program were not engaged in education on referral.
- On completion five young people remained disengaged from education.
- However, four young people had recommenced part-time education and one young person was engaged in education full time.
- While completion numbers are very small, this data indicates that involvement with MST may have positive influence on young persons' education outcomes.

Table 19: Influence of MST on engagement with education

Education status	At time of referral	On successful completion of MST
Full Time	1	1
Not engaged in education	9	5
Part Time	0	4
Grand Total	10	10

Base = completed treatment during reporting period (n = 10)

9.2.3 Engagement in employment

[Error! Reference source not found.](#) below looks at participants' level of engagement in employment at the point of initial referral, compared with the young person's employment status at successful completion of the MST program:

- Eight of the 10 young people who successfully completed the MST program were not employed at the time of referral. However, one young person was engaged in casual employment and the other young person was employed in a full-time capacity.
- On successful completion of the program, an additional three young people were engaged in employment, taking the total engaged in employment to five (two on a full time basis, two part time and one causally employed).

Table 20: Influence of MST on employment status

Employment status	At time of referral	On successful completion of MST
Casual	1	1
Full time employment	1	2
Part time employment	-	2
Not employed	8	5
Grand Total	10	10

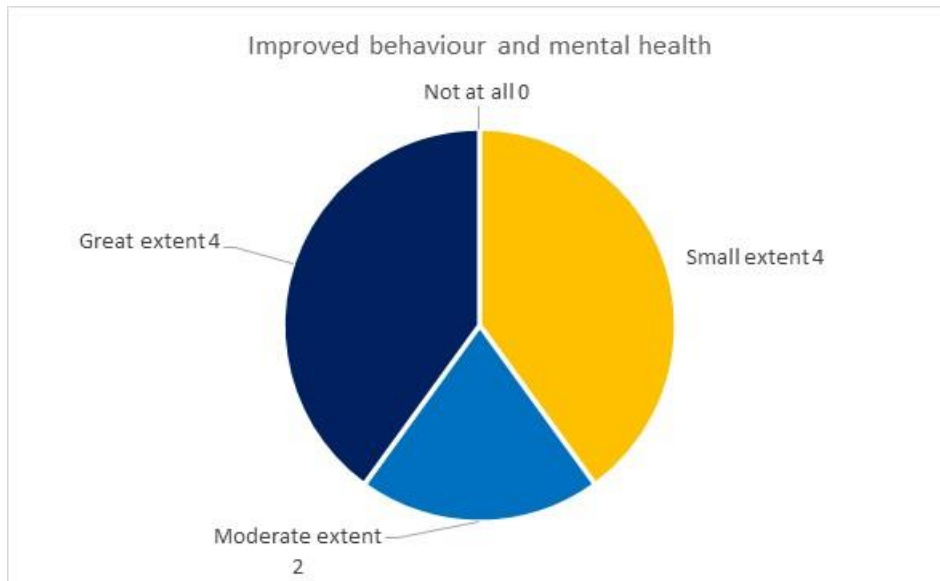
Base = completed treatment during reporting period (n = 10)

9.3 Improved behaviour and mental health

Of the 10 young people and their families who successfully completed the MST program, all demonstrated at least some level of behavioural improvements in this area over the course of their treatment ([Error! Reference source not found.2](#)). Specifically:

- just under half (4 of 10) demonstrated a great extent of improved behaviour and mental health
- just under half (4 of 10) demonstrated only a small extent of improved behaviour in this area
- the remaining two young people (2 of 10) demonstrated a moderate extent of improvement.

Figure 2: Improved behaviour and mental health at completion of MST intervention



Base = completed treatment during reporting period (n = 10)

Similarly, some parents/caregivers reported an improvement in their own and their young person’s mental health. They also observed a decrease in physical aggression and high-risk behaviour in their young person after completing MST.

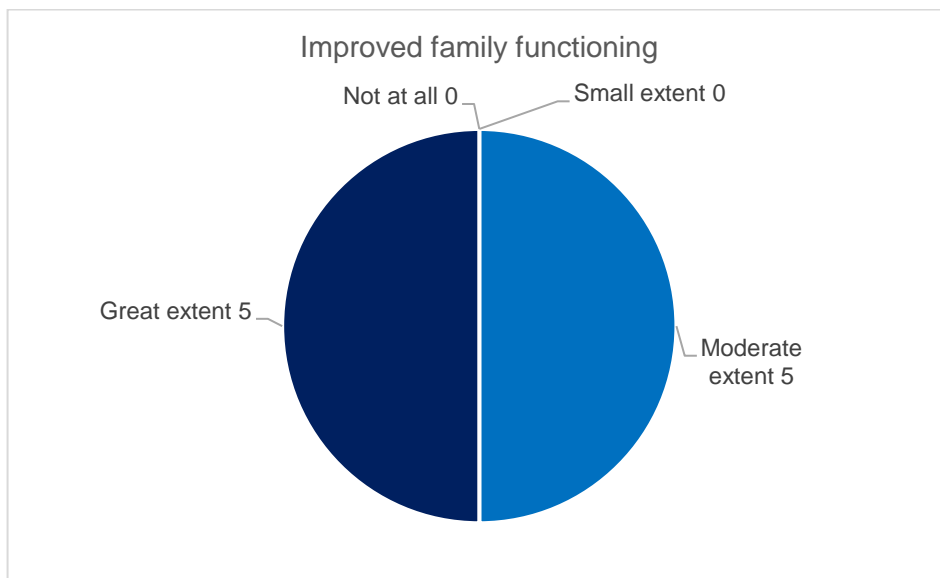
“This year on her birthday, she was laughing and happy – last birthday she was so anxious she smashed windows.”

9.4 Improved family functioning

Of the 10 young people and their families who successfully completed MST, all (10 out of 10) demonstrated behavioural improvements in this area ([Error! Reference source not found.](#)):

- half demonstrated a great extent of improvement in family functioning (n=5) and
- the remaining half demonstrated a moderate extent of improvement (n=5).

Figure 3: Improved family functioning at completion of MST intervention



Base = completed treatment during reporting period (n = 10)

YJ stakeholders observed that the greatest improvement in outcomes occurred in family functioning. This was also a consistent theme in case study reports. Families were communicating better and there was less conflict in the home.

“I learnt to listen to what my son was saying rather than keep losing my temper with him. We are able to communicate much better and I could understand how he was feeling.”

Routines were established, such as eating a meal together, and prosocial fun ‘family ‘time’ was established, such as cooking and playing board games together.

Parents/caregivers reported feeling more confident implementing boundaries with their young person and felt relationships within the family had improved greatly.

As one YJ stakeholder noted:

“The young person is looking for safety and security in their family. MST has helped facilitate the adults in the family being resourced and supported to provide the environment that meets the young person’s needs to desist offending.”

One stakeholder reflected that the improvement in family functioning was due in part to MST giving families a voice and demystifying the service system, which enabled them to participate in the system around the young person, including Care Team meetings. An increase in engagement with other services and the use of informal supports was also reported for some families in the case study reports.

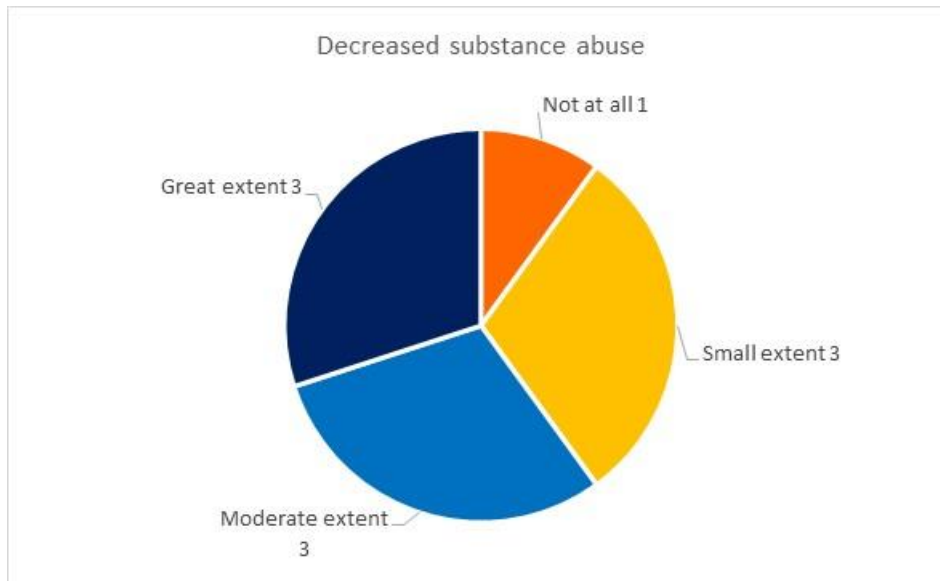
9.5 Decreased substance abuse

Young people who successfully completed the MST program were less likely to show improvements in substance abuse outcomes, when compared to behavioural, mental health and family functioning outcomes ([Error! Reference source not found.](#)).

However, nine out of the 10 did show at least some level of improvement against this outcome area:

- around one third demonstrated either a great, moderate or small extent of decreased substance abuse (3 out of 10 in each category respectively)
- one of the ten young people who completed MST showed no improvement at all in this area.

Figure 4: Decreased substance abuse at completion of MST intervention



Base = completed treatment during reporting period (n = 10)

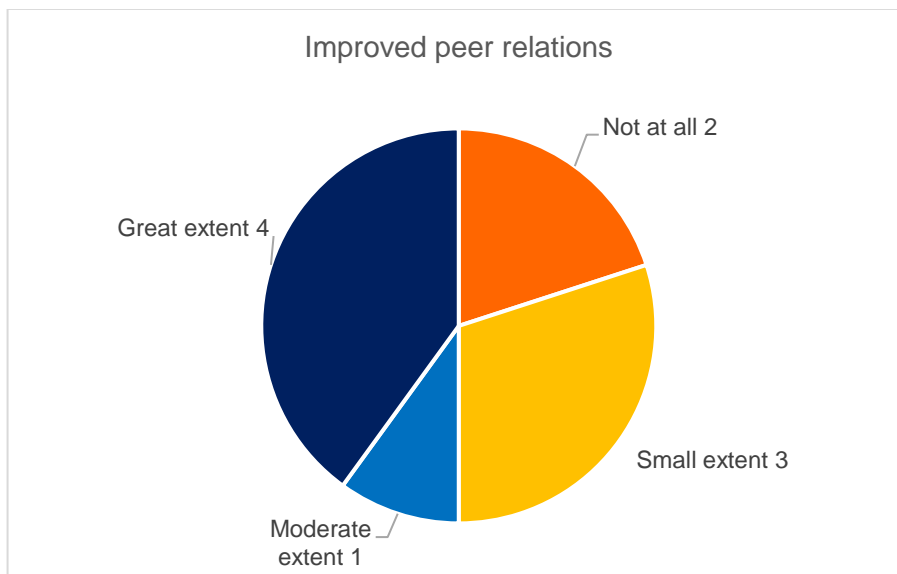
Similarly, limited improvement in substance abuse issues was reported in the case study reports. However, one caregiver described the improvement in the young person’s behaviour when he was no longer misusing substances:

“When he is off the gear, he’s a different person. He has a big heart, he just can’t cope with what he’s been through.”

9.6 Improved peer relations

Four out of the ten young people who completed the MST program showed a great extent of improvement in their interactions with their peers ([Error! Reference source not found.5](#)). Only one young person demonstrated a moderate level of improvement against this outcome area. Three young people showed a small improvement and the remaining two young people showed no improvement in their peer relations at all.

Figure 5: Improved peer relations at completion of MST intervention



Base = completed treatment during reporting period (n=10)

Case studies reported limited improvement in association with anti-social peers. Some stakeholders observed that it was difficult to improve peer relations due to no pro-social activities, such as community sports, being allowed to occur during COVID-19 restrictions.

However, one stakeholder felt that MST were successful in supporting parents to monitor their young person's peer relationships and encouraging them to develop new friendships and spend time with prosocial rather than anti-social peers.

10. Reoffending outcomes

The order and offence information detailed in this section was obtained from a CRIS extract between 1 September 2018 and 30 September 2020.

Due to the small number of young people and their families who completed the program (n = 10), the reoffending analyses was conducted on all young people (n = 35) who commenced MST (i.e., attended at least one session) prior to September 2020.

It is important to note that MST had only been in operation for 18 months at the time this report was prepared, therefore there is limited data available to determine the impact of the program on future rates of reoffending. Further, the impact of COVID-19 on offending behaviours in young people in YJ is not yet known.

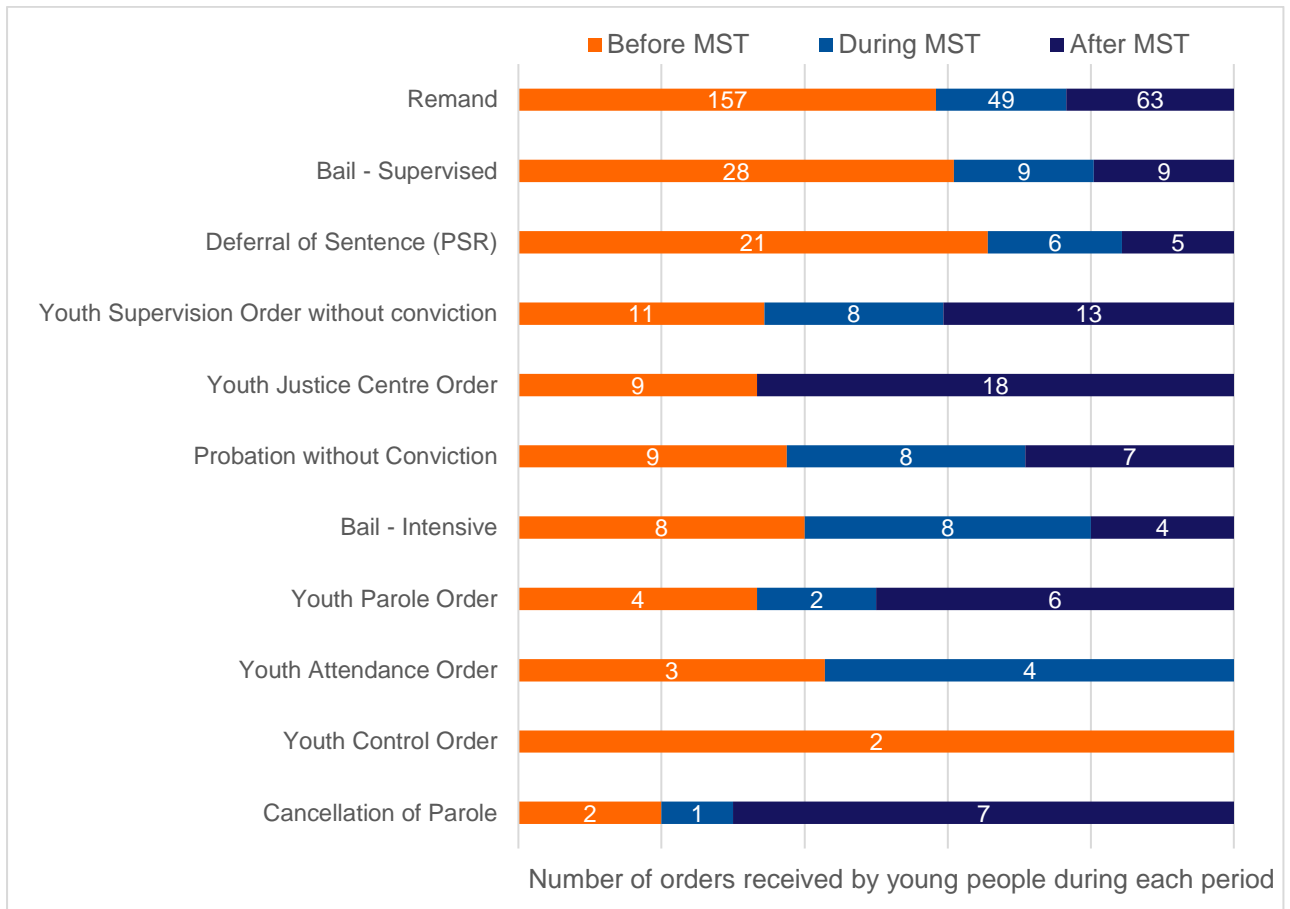
10.1 Reduced the frequency and severity of offending behaviours

10.1.1 Orders

All 35 young people were on an order when they commenced MST. Thirty-one percent (n = 11) of young people did not receive a new order during MST treatment, which increased to 40 per cent (n = 14) of young people after MST closed.

Figure 6 shows the number of each order type received by young people before, during and after participating in MST. There was a decrease in the total number of orders received before MST (n = 254) compared to during (n = 95) and after MST (n = 132). As can be seen in Figure 6, the most common orders received before (n = 157), during (n = 49) and after MST (n = 63) were remand orders.

Figure 6: Number of each order type received by young people



10.1.2 Offending behaviour

Figure 7 displays the number of young people who offended during and after receiving MST treatment. Sixty per cent ($n = 21$) of young people who commenced MST were sentenced for at least one other offence during treatment. Of these young people, 43 per cent ($n = 9$) went on to be sentenced for another offence after closure. More than half of the young people who were sentenced for at least one other offence after closure ($n = 5$, 56 per cent) had completed treatment, while 22 per cent ($n = 2$) had disengaged from treatment, 11 per cent withdrew ($n = 1$) and 11 per cent were no longer eligible for treatment due to being in custody.

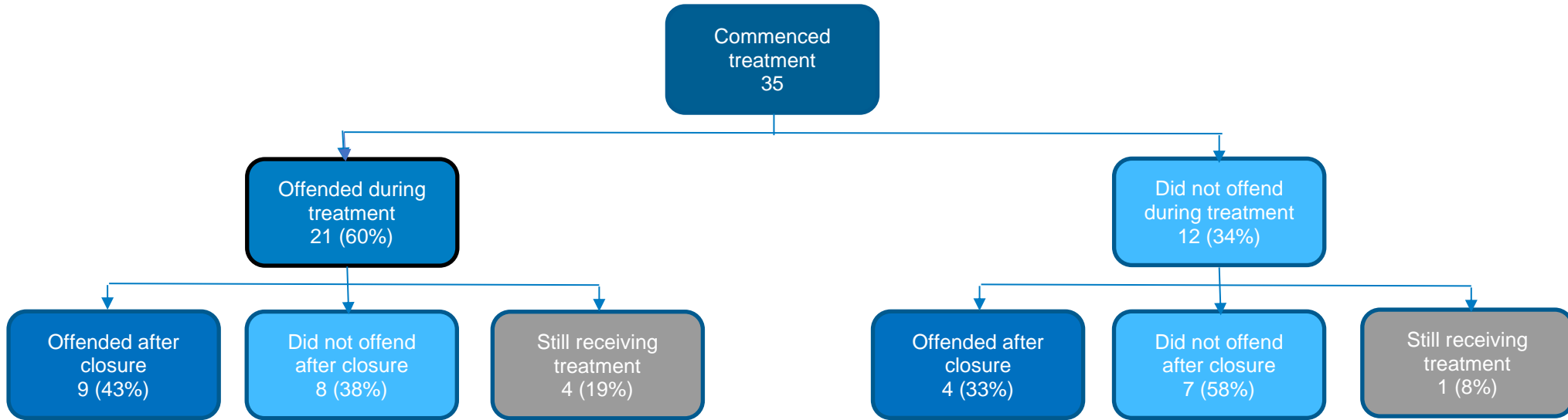
For those young people who were not sentenced for another offence after closure ($n = 8$, 38 per cent), only 13 per cent ($n = 1$) had completed treatment. The majority of young people ($n = 5$, 63 per cent) had disengaged from treatment, while the remaining 25 per cent ($n = 2$) were no longer eligible for treatment due to being in custody and remand.

Of the 34 per cent ($n = 12$) of young people who did not offend while receiving treatment, 33 per cent ($n = 4$) offended after closure. A quarter of these young people ($n = 1$) had completed treatment, half ($n = 2$) were no longer eligible for treatment due to being in custody, and the remaining quarter ($n = 1$) withdrew from treatment.

Of the 58 per cent of young people ($n = 7$) who were not recorded for an offence after closure, 71 per cent ($n = 5$) had completed treatment, while 29 per cent ($n = 2$) withdrew from treatment.



Figure 7: Flow diagram of young people offending during and after MST treatment



Note: Two young people who commenced treatment had offences recorded in CRIS, but the date of the offence was unknown. These young people were removed from analysis because it could not be determined whether the offending occurred during treatment or after closure.

Frequency of offending behaviour

As shown in Figure 8, the total volume of sentenced offences recorded for young people decreased during (n = 371) and after treatment (n = 416) compared to before commencing MST treatment (n = 2754).

Figure 8: Volume of offences recorded for young people before, during and after MST

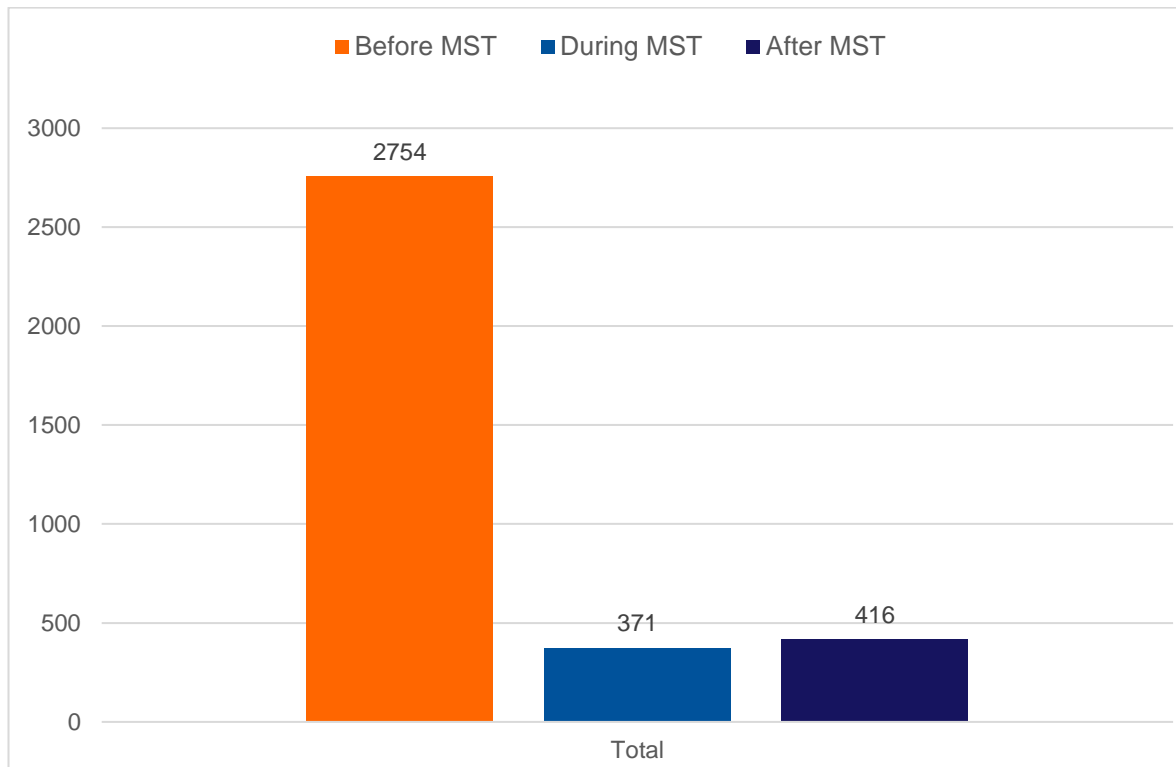


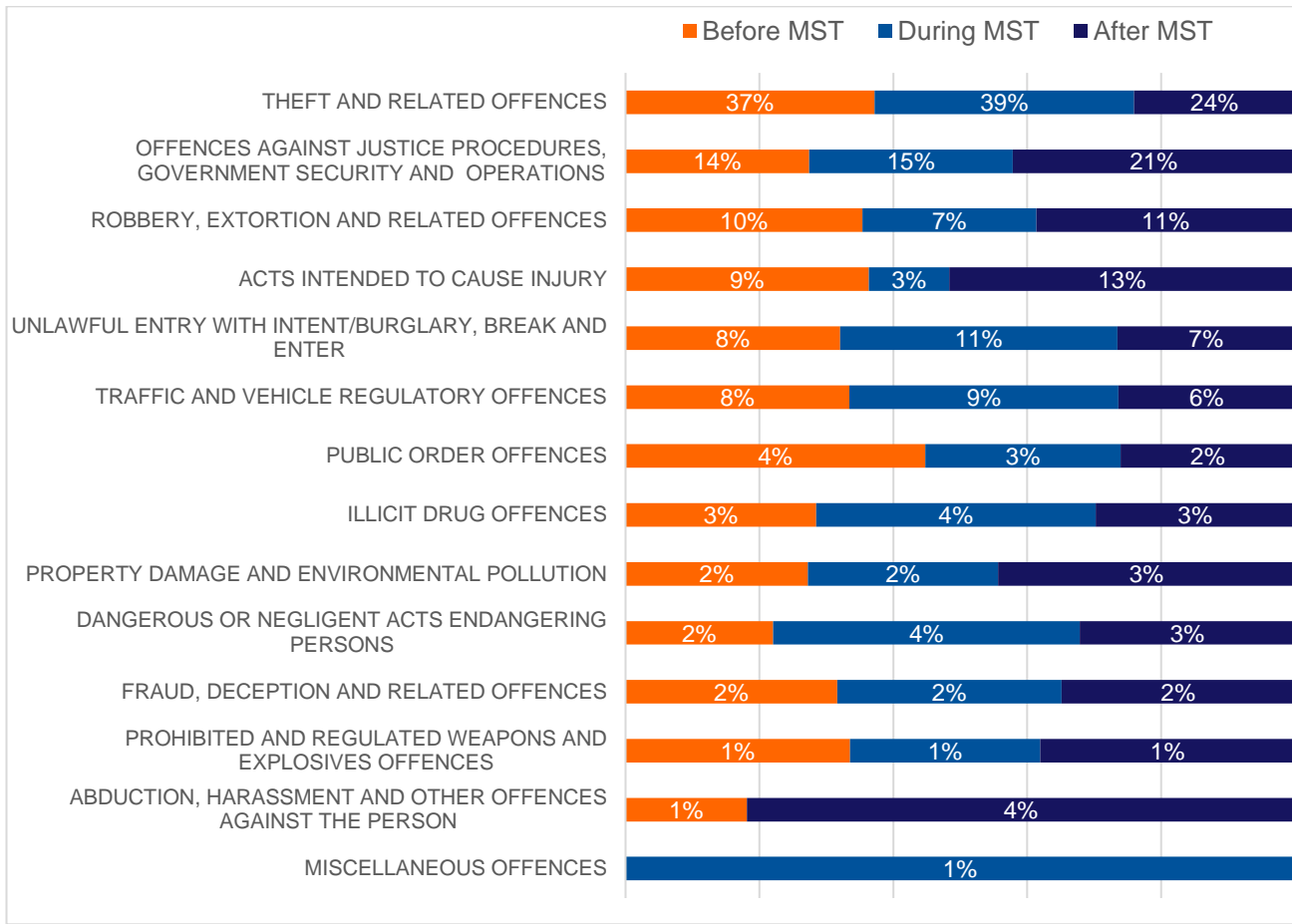
Figure 9 displays the proportion of each offence type recorded before, during and after MST. The category of offending that showed the largest decrease was *theft and related offences* with 37 per cent of this type of offence recorded before MST treatment and 39 per cent during treatment compared to 24 per cent after treatment.

The category of offending to show the largest increase was *offences against justice procedures, government security and government operations* (for example, breaches of orders, resisting or hindering a police officer, justice official or other government official), with 14 per cent of this type of offence recorded before MST treatment compared to 21 per cent recorded after MST treatment.

Acts intended to cause injury offences also increased from before MST treatment (nine per cent) to after treatment (13 per cent). However, this type of offence decreased during treatment to three per cent of recorded offences.

The category of offending to show the largest increase was *dangerous or negligent acts endangering persons*. The greatest increase in this type of offending occurred from before MST treatment (three per cent) to during MST treatment (17 per cent). However, this type of offending decreased to 13 per cent of recorded offences after MST treatment.

Figure 9: Proportion of each offence type recorded before, during and after MST



Severity of offending behaviours

To analyse the severity of offending behaviours, offences were categorised according to the ABS National Offence Index which ranks offences according to their seriousness.

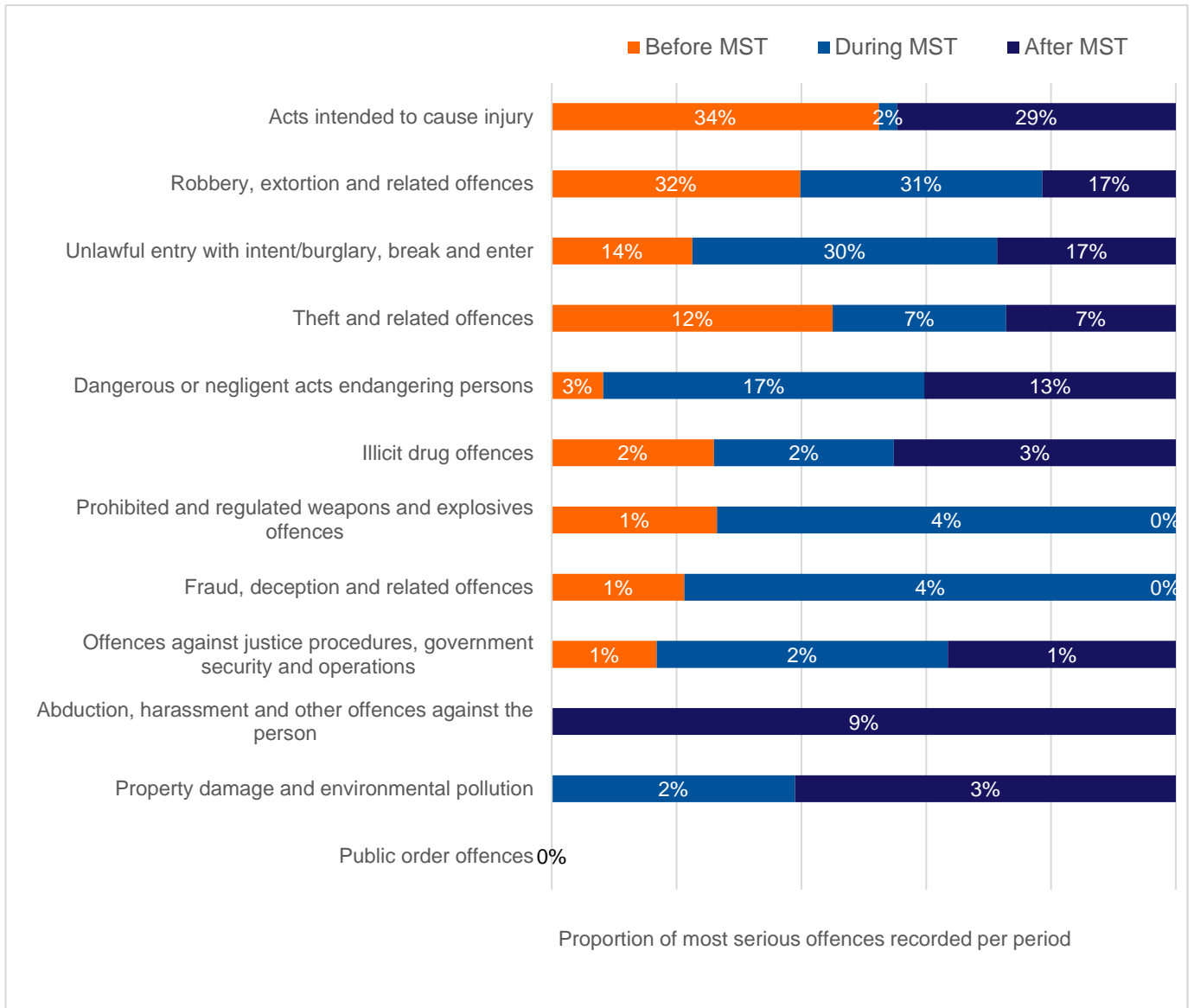
There were changes in the severity of offending behaviours committed by young people who participated in MST treatment. Figure 10 shows the proportion of the most serious type of offence recorded per order before, during and after MST treatment. The category of most serious offence that showed the largest decrease was *robbery, extortion and related offences* with 32 per cent of this type of offence recorded before MST treatment compared to 17 per cent recorded after MST treatment.

Acts intended to cause injury decreased from 34 percent recorded before MST treatment compared to two per cent recorded during MST treatment. However, this type of offending increased to 29 per cent after MST treatment. There was also a decrease in the proportion of *theft and related offences* from before MST treatment (12 per cent) to during (seven per cent) and after treatment (seven per cent).

The category of most serious offence to show the largest increase was *dangerous or negligent acts endangering persons*. The greatest increase in this type of offending occurred from before MST treatment (three per cent) to during MST treatment (17 per cent). However, this type of offending decreased to 13 percent after MST treatment.

Similarly, *unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter* offences increased during MST treatment (30 per cent) compared to before treatment (14 per cent), but dropped to 17 per cent after MST treatment.

Figure 10: Proportion of the most serious offence recorded per order before, during and after MST



11. Unintended outcomes

Several unintended outcomes of the MST program were discussed during consultations, both positive and negative. Namely:

- **Provided a greater understanding of the CALD community** for MST clinicians and the opportunity to tailor the program to other cultures.
- **Improved YJCM's capacity and skills to work with young people and their families** and shifted the priority from exclusively working with the young person to seeing the young person as part of a family.
- **CALD families engaging with the program provided support for one another.** For example, two South Sudanese mothers realised that they were both participating in MST and discussed difficulties they were having with their young person absconding and strategies that they could use to stop this from happening.
- **Child Protection closes when a family commences engagement in the program.** Concern was raised by one YJ stakeholder that MST ends up taking over Child Protection's role and dealing with welfare concerns.

"What I haven't been comfortable with is that MST is filling a gap for Child Protection, which it shouldn't be because we fund it and we're criminal justice" (YJ)

- **Highlighted issues with the service system that supports young people**, such as families feeling targeted by police, intervention orders not being enforced, and Child Protection and mental health services not being as responsive as required.
- **Assisted with families' compliance of orders**, rather than the young person's per se. MST clinicians helped families put plans in place around curfews and absconding, including clear rules, rewards and consequences. They also assisted families to understand the importance of bail conditions, particularly CALD families. Examples were provided of parents calling either the MST clinician or police when the young person had breached their bail conditions. Previously, these parents had colluded with the young person, reporting that they were home when in fact they were out.

Recommendation 5

It is recommended that if the program was to be continued or expanded, Youth Justice consider conducting an outcome evaluation to consider the long-term outcomes for young people who completed the program.

12. Differences between MST and Functional Family Therapy-YJ

YJ funds both the MST programs and Functional Family Therapy-YJ (FFT-YJ). They are family focused Evidence-Based Models which target young people involved in the youth justice system in the South East Metropolitan Area for MST and North West Metropolitan Area for FFT-YJ.

As Evidence and Insights are undertaking evaluations of both programs at the same time this has provided an opportunity to document some observations.

Please note this is not a comparative analysis but rather a high-level overview of the key differences between the programs highlighted during evaluation consultations. These included:

- **Intensity of support.** Both programs provide a high level of support and frequent contact with the young people and families. However, MST also provides 24/7 access to a clinician.
- **Flexibility.** FFT-YJ is considered a flexible program which will respond to the particular needs of young people and families referred. This includes such things as meeting after work hours and accommodating referrals from young people aged 18 years when appropriate. The degree of flexibility available with FFT-YJ was highly valued by YJ staff.
- **Focus.** FFT-YJ focuses predominately on the family unit, although they do sometimes refer to, or encourage contact with, community organisations. MST actively involves peers, school, neighbourhoods and community.
- **Interface with other specialists.** Both programs work collaboratively with the YJ Care Team. However, MST's preferred approach is to be the lead clinician when working with a young person and their family and limit the number of services involved. FFT-YJ work closely alongside other specialists involved with the young person and family such as a child psychologist or a disability worker.
- **Eligibility criteria.** MST has a strict eligibility criterion; young people must be living at home and does not include young people in OoHC or those in custody for long periods (over a month). In contrast, FFT-YJ will work with young people not living at home and those in custody and remand. As noted previously the age criteria is also able to be reassessed for some referrals.

Appendix 1: MST program logic model

Objectives:				
The objectives of Multisystemic Therapy (MST) are to:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> eliminate or significantly reduce the frequency and severity of the youth's referral behaviour(s) empower both youth and their families, with the skills and resources needed to function in their natural settings such as home, school, peer group and community; in ways that promote positive social behaviour while decreasing anti-social behaviours. 				
Problem:				
Youth, 12 to 17 years old, involved with the juvenile justice system and may be at risk of out-of-home placement or custodial sentence, due to continued antisocial behaviour.				
Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
Program Manager MST Supervisor MST Therapists Department of Justice and Community Safety (referrals) Department of Health and Human Services (only if active Child Protection) Department of Justice and Community Safety funding Referrals: Youth Justice Case Manager and Youth Justice Order longer than 5 months Multi-systemic therapy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ecological Systemic Family as agent for change Strengths based 	Therapist: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducts consultative and analytical process to identify and prioritise goals (all stakeholders are interviewed) Conducts comprehensive social ecological assessment Develops and implements Safety management plans Conducts case conceptualisation of target concerns/behaviours Identify drivers of problematic behaviours Develops and implements interventions based on goals that target specific drivers for problem behaviours Evaluates intervention efficacy continuously and if not successful, recursive process invoked and the drivers and strategies are re-examined until the desired outcomes are achieved Case load: 5 families / therapist Referral process: The program notifies referrers of available spaces. Mode of delivery: In home Intensity: 1 -3 sessions per week Availability: Flexible to clients' needs with 24/7 on-call after hours service 	MST Ebase outputs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of referrals received Number of families commenced intervention Number of families completed intervention Average 3-5 months treatment Percent of youth completing treatment - Target: 85% Percent of youth discharged due to lack of engagement – Target: <5% Percent of youth discharged due to placement - Target: <10% Average caseloads range within 4 – 6 per therapist Therapist Adherence Measure (TAM-R) collection rate – Target: > 70% Overall average adherence score - Target: .61 Percent of youth reporting adherence above threshold (>.61) – Target: 80% Percent of youth with at least one TAM-R interview – Target = 100% Youth Justice outputs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% attendance at case plan meetings 100% provision of advice upon request % of referrals that didn't proceed despite being deemed appropriate Date referral was allocated to first session (timeframe) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth is living at home – spreadsheet Improved school attendance, employment and education status – spreadsheet Youth has not been charged with criminal behaviour since the beginning of MST treatment, for an offense committed during MST treatment – spreadsheet Reduced the frequency and severity of offending behaviours – spreadsheet Improved behaviour and mental health – spreadsheet Improved family functioning – spreadsheet Decreased substance abuse – spreadsheet Improved peer relations – spreadsheet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevent further offending and involvement with Youth Justice Prevent and/or reduce the number of out-of-home care placements Promote family self-sufficiency, a reduction in the need for protective services and/or support services Increase or improve the family's capacity to develop social networks and to utilise those networks to support parenting
Assumptions and External Factors:				
Assumptions – If a young person is remanded during the program, and the period of remand is more than 4 weeks, treatment must cease. There must be a permanent caregiver in the home for the MST service to be provided.				
External Factors – Government funding				

13. Document information

Document details

Criteria	Details
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Document owner:	Evidence and Insights, Corporate Governance and Support

Version control

Version	Date	Description	Author
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Document approval

This document requires the following approval:

Name	Title	Organisation
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Audience

The audience for this document is Youth Justice to describe the implementation of MST and progress towards short- to medium-term outcomes.

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<p>Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) (2020). <i>Youth justice in Australia 2018-19</i>, Cat no. JUV 132. AIHW, Canberra. https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/a5a364b9-fe69-4d02-9c93-1965a69a3d93/aihw-juv-132.pdf.aspx?inline=true</p>

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Acronyms	Description
CALD	Cultural and Linguistically Diverse
CRIS	Client Relationship Information System
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services
DJCS	Department of Justice and Community Safety
FFT-YJ	Functional Family Therapy-YJ

Acronyms	Description
MST	Multisystemic Therapy
OoHC	Out of Home Care
YJ	Youth Justice
YJCM	Youth Justice Case Manager

Review of the Remand Program Facilitator pilot

Performance, Innovation and Coordination Branch
Corrections and Justice Services

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1. Executive summary

1.1 Background

Corrections Victoria (CV) is responsible for managing and supervising sentenced and unsentenced (remand) prisoners in Victoria. Over the last decade the remand population has more than tripled, from 815 remandees in June 2009 to 2967 remandees in June 2019. It is well established that remandees may face additional challenges in custody due to uncertainty regarding their sentence, which in turn can cause significant anxiety for them. Unresolved stress can also cause agitation and disruptive behaviour which can lead to prison incidents¹. Unsurprisingly, this has placed a significant strain on CV's Allied Health staff (such as psychologists, social workers and occupational therapists) and heightened the need for CV's programs and services to be responsive to the needs of remandees. The Remand Program Facilitator (RPF) role was created by CV to cater to the needs of the growing population of remandees. The RPF's are primarily responsible for delivering the *Adapt, Take Stock, Look Ahead Suite* (ATLAS), a new suite of transition focused psycho-educational programs for remand prisoners. The aim of this review is to assess the pilot implementation, operation and impact of the RPF role in improving the service offerings to remand prisoners. The outcomes of this review may inform recommendations for future reinvestment in the RPF role.

1.1.1 The Remand Program Facilitator Role

In June 2018, the Commissioner, CV approved to continue the existing three RPFs and established six new RPFs to pilot the Reintegration Pathway's ATLAS remand program suite for a period of two years. The three RPFs were initially supervised by clinical staff, however all RPFs are currently being supervised by Offender Services Managers.

The nine RPF roles operate across the seven public prisons in Victoria which accommodate remand prisoners. The primary responsibility of the RPF role is to deliver the ATLAS program, however, RPF's are also required to undertake other duties, such as the administration of risk and transitional needs assessments, as well as referrals to services both within the prison and the community. Due to the transitory nature of the remand population, performance targets for RPF's delivery of the eight ATLAS modules have not been set, however, this review seeks to provide the Rehabilitation and Reintegration Branch with an improved understanding of the breadth of activities undertaken by these positions across each of the participating prisons, and the associated impact for remandees and the system more broadly.

1.1.2 The ATLAS Program

ATLAS is a voluntary program delivered by the newly created RPF positions. Participants are referred to the ATLAS program through a variety of means including during the intake assessment process, during orientation, through self-referral, at Case Management Risk Committees (CMRC) meetings, or by direct referral through a prison Case Manager. The ATLAS program aligns to the broader seven critical intervention domains identified by the CV Reintegration Pathway², which have been identified as being critical to successful reintegration. The ATLAS program was developed by Relationships Australia Victoria (RAV) and Caraniche. The aim of the ATLAS program are to allow remandees to:

¹ Source: feedback received from prison staff through the interviews for this evaluation.

² The seven critical domains include: housing, employment, education and training, independent living skills, mental health, alcohol and drugs, and family and community connectedness.

- access suitable and pertinent programs
- reduce the pressures associated with their incarceration in a prison environment
- build life skills for contemporary and future use.

The program is made up of eight modules, three core modules and five supplementary modules. Participants must first participate in the core modules before being eligible to participate in the additional modules. All sessions are complementary to one another, however, they can be delivered on their own based on the needs the cohort at each location.

1.1.3 Review of the Remand Program Facilitator Role pilot

The review employed a mixed methods approach to collect and triangulate a range of quantitative and qualitative data on the need for and immediate impact of the RPF roles. The review period was from December 2018 to July 2019. The outcomes of this review may inform funding decisions relating to the extension of the RPF role beyond November 2020.

1.2 Key Findings

Table 1 below outlines the key findings from the review.

Table 1: Key evaluation findings

Key review area: Need for the RPF roles	
Key finding 1	<p>Prison management and program staff felt that there was a strong need for the RPF role, and there would be significant consequences associated should these positions not be extended beyond the current funding period</p> <p>The number of remandees have tripled in the last decade and it is anticipated that the numbers will continue to increase, which means that the need for programs and services for remandees will continue to grow. Interviews with prison staff (Managers) and program staff indicated that there is a strong need for the RPF roles to continue to support remandees <i>and</i> staff (predominantly Assessment Transition Coordinators [ATCs]). Management staff commented that the RPF roles were invaluable and they had concerns over the implications for remandees and staff if the roles were not extended beyond November 2020. This was confirmed through the review, which identified the significant contribution the RPFs made within the first six months of operation (<i>Key Findings 5</i>) and the associated impact of the implementation of these roles across the system (<i>Key Finding 10</i>).</p>
Key finding 2	<p>The ATLAS program responds to a gap in programs and/or services for remandees</p> <p>Staff at Barwon Prison, Marngoneet Precinct, MRC and MAP indicated that prior to the introduction of the RPF roles, there were very few programs and services available to and/or appropriate to remandees. The RPF role and the ATLAS program were found to be a great resource for remandees, especially since remandee numbers are likely to continue to increase.</p>
Jurisdictional analysis	
Key finding 3	<p>Corrections Victoria is tracking well in comparison with other jurisdictions in terms of its service offerings to remandees, which have significantly increased over the last ten years</p>

	<p>The review found that all states or territories (who responded to a request for information) offered some form of programmatic support to remandees, however, only two states offered remandee-specific programs, these being South Australia and New South Wales. In Victoria, RPFs operate within the broader, growing suite of services offered to remand prisoners (including the Remand Release Assistance Program and ReStart). The roles act as a 'catch-all' service for remandees with key responsibilities including conducting needs assessments, making referrals to other programs (including ATLAS) and services (both within the prison and in the community), as well as delivering the remand-specific ATLAS program.</p>
<p>Implementation of the RPF roles</p>	
<p>Key finding 4</p>	<p>Position Descriptions for the RPF roles were modified by each location, which means that the responsibilities of RPFs vary across the sites</p> <p>The review found that the position descriptions for the RPFs varied significantly across the sites in order to accommodate the needs of each location and its respective remand population, meaning the duties of RPFs varied across locations. The review also identified the demand on these roles given the high number of remandees and broad scope of responsibilities, with some locations choosing to focus their efforts on particular responsibilities and activities than others. For example, RPFs at a number of locations did not conduct other CVRP related assessments, and focused their efforts on ATLAS program delivery instead.</p>
<p>Key finding 5</p>	<p>Overall, the RPF roles have been implemented as intended</p> <p>Two of the seven locations experienced some challenges in recruiting to the position, which impacted on service delivery at these locations. However, in total, between December 2018 and May 2019 RPFs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • received a total of 5203 referrals • delivered 552 ATLAS sessions (average number of participants per session ranged between 3 to 9 across the locations) • conducted 658 Reception Transition Triage (RTT) screenings • conducted 846 Case Planning Transition (CPT) reintegration assessments (referred to as CPT reintegration assessments in this report) • made 169 referrals to ReStart • delivered 42 RRAP programs. <p>The high number of referrals indicates that there was awareness among prison staff of the ATLAS program, the RPF roles and their functions. The significant amount of services delivered by the RPF roles indicates that the roles have been implemented as intended.</p>
<p>Key Finding 6</p>	<p>Professional supervision provided by RAV was helpful and should continue to be offered to RPFs on a monthly basis</p> <p>RPFs commented in their monthly reports and in interviews that they found the monthly professional supervision by RAV to be very helpful and useful to their role. The individual and group supervisions allowed for self-reflection, sharing of resources and problem solving with other RPFs. RPFs also found it helpful to have professional supervision through an external agency because it allowed them to speak freely without fear of repercussions for their job.</p>

Key review area: Outcome attributed to the introduction of the RPF roles	
Key finding 7	<p>Remandees are better informed and more likely to participate in other programs and services</p> <p>Before the introduction of the RPFs and the ATLAS program, many remandees at DPFC were reportedly not aware of the programs and/or services that were available to them (either within prison and/or in the community upon release). Interviews with stakeholders indicated that remandees are more aware of the services that are available to them and are more likely to request help and make use of services since the introduction of these roles.</p>
Key finding 8	<p>Reported reduction of prison incidents due to the introduction of the RPF roles and ATLAS program across participating prisons</p> <p>Stakeholders across multiple locations associated the introduction of the RPF roles and the ATLAS program with an improvement in prisoners' behaviour, which was seen to have broader impacts including reduced prison incidents. A review of prison incident data was beyond the scope of the review.</p>
Key finding 9	<p>The ATLAS program was found to assist remandees with program readiness</p> <p>Prison management and program staff noted that the ATLAS program is often prisoner's first experience of group-based learning or group-based support since attending school, which many prisoners associated with negative experiences. Positive experiences in the ATLAS program sessions was seen to assist remandees with program readiness and subsequent engagement with other services. This is a significant finding as many remandees will go on to receive a custodial or community sentence and the ATLAS program may improve their willingness to participate in other programs and services, which seek to address their offending behaviour and improve their reintegration outcomes.</p>
Key review area: Responsivity of the roles and ATLAS program to the needs of remand prisoners	
Key finding 10	<p>RPFs were found to be responsive to the needs of remandees</p> <p>RPF's were found to be an invaluable resource in assisting remandees in settling into prison and informing them of how the prison operated. As noted in <i>Key Finding 7</i>, prior to the introduction of the RPF role, many remandees were unaware of the programs and/or services available to them both within the prison and in their community upon release, and the RPFs were responsible for achieving a number of positive outcomes for remandees. For example, one prisoner had a \$12,000 debt removed after speaking with Consumer Affairs after a referral from an RPF.</p>
Key Finding 11	<p>ATLAS program participants felt that RPFs created a respectful learning environment and that the program was useful</p> <p>The RAV quarterly report highlighted that ATLAS program participants (via feedback forms, n=246 respondents) overwhelmingly reported that RPFs were creating a respectful environment in the ATLAS sessions. This indicates a high level of satisfaction among program participants, and RAV felt that this feedback was extremely important as a positive group environment is essential for positive learning engagement. Respondents also reported that they felt the ATLAS program was relevant and meaningful to them (94 per cent), and that they learnt new skills and strategies that would help them in the future (90 per cent).</p>

Key review area: Impact of RPFs on other staff workload	
Key finding 12	<p>The introduction of RPFs has significantly reduced the workload of other prison staff</p> <p>The introduction of RPFs was associated with a reported reduction in the demand on other prison staff. The review identified that the introduction of these roles had the most significant impact on the workload of Assessment Transition Coordinators (ATCs) and staff who would previously have conducted RTT screenings and CPT reintegration assessments. Interviews with Management staff found that RPFs also relieved pressure on Prison Officers through reduced prison incidents (see, <i>Key Finding 8</i>). This is a particularly significant finding as the workload pressure on ATCs specifically, is well established.</p>
Key review area: Challenges experienced	
Key finding 13	<p>Administrative burden associated with undertaking assessments and the associated record keeping was seen to impact program delivery</p> <p>RPFs have a broad range of responsibilities and the most significant challenge that RPFs reported to face was the administrative burden associated with conducting and uploading assessments (RTT screenings and CPT reintegration assessments) and ATLAS program attendance data to multiple internal databases. This administrative work was found to impact on program delivery. For example, RPFs record ATLAS program attendance data into an excel file for their monthly reporting as well as onto the Corrections Victoria Information Management System (CVIMS), and the Reintegration Pathway System (RPS). Reintegration assessment-related information generated from RTT and CPT Assessments is uploaded onto RPS, which can also take a significant amount of time if the prisoner has complex needs. An RPF at one location indicated that there were 300 remandees waiting for reintegration assessments, and that catching up with these was an unattainable goal. The review found that locations where the RPF was less focused on the assessment component of their role (as evidenced through the lower number of assessments undertaken), they were able to focus efforts on other activities such as enhancing and/or delivering the ATLAS program (for example, organising guest speakers from support organisations such as Odyssey House to present as part of the ATLAS program at their location).</p>
Key Finding 14	<p>The ATLAS manual requires modification to be more responsive to the needs of for prisoners (particularly women remandees)</p> <p>The feedback from RPFs was that the program manual in its current state is not responsive to the literacy needs of prisoners (too much focus on reading and writing). There were also a number of modules which were perceived to not be relevant to the DPFC women's cohort because there were other programs or services that already provided specialised assistance to remandees in areas such as housing, careers/education and relationships. RPFs at this location opted to invite staff from these internal services to co-facilitate sessions in order to reduce duplication and provide a more specialised approach.</p> <p>RPFs at other locations reportedly invested time and energy into modifying the content but not all of them had capacity to do this (due to high administrative workload). There is also a concern in tasking RPFs with modifying a program which was designed by an external provider to be evidence-based. As such, it is recommended that CV engage RAV and Caraniche to discuss whether</p>

	modifications are required to further strengthen the modules in light of the findings and recommendations of this review.
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Overall, the review found evidence of the continued need for and effectiveness of the RPF roles in supporting the growing population of remandees in Victoria. The RPFs' duties were varied across the locations (as evidenced through each location's Position Description documents, RPF monthly reports and interviews with stakeholders), which meant that the RPF could be responsive to the specific needs of the remandees and staff at each prison location. For example, MRC only delivered the three core modules of the ATLAS program because of the transient nature of the remandees at this location, which did not allow for completion of all eight modules. The RPF focused their efforts on the immediate needs of the remandees.

The consultations indicated that overall, prison staff and ATLAS program participants (who provided feedback surveys) were satisfied with the support provided by these roles, which prison staff attributed to a number of benefits for remandees and the prison as a whole. Reported benefits included improved service offering to remandees and reduced burden on prison programs staff, particularly ATCs who are known to have a significant workload. The findings of the review supports the continued need for and demand on these services.

The review also identified the demand on the RPFs, particularly the administrative burden associated with undertaking RTT screenings and CPT reintegration assessments which, while important, was seen to limit the extent to which the RPFs could undertake the primary responsibility of their role, which is delivering the ATLAS program. It is important to note that this review was conducted approximately six months after the RPF roles were introduced, and it is likely that with time, RPFs may become more efficient with assessment work.

The review also identified that the ATLAS manual needs to be reviewed by CV in consultation with RAV and Caraniche to ensure it is appropriate and responsive to the literacy levels and needs of remand prisoners. This would also reduce the (perceived) need for program modification by RPFs, which may risk the integrity of the program and allow RPFs to focus on their other duties.

Drawing on the key findings of the review, the report identified the following opportunities to further strengthen the RPF role and the ATLAS program:

Table 2: List of recommendations

Recommendations
<p>1. CV to consider extending the contracts of RPFs beyond the pilot period in recognition of the continued need and demand for these services</p> <p>Justification: As highlighted in <i>Key Findings 1, 2, 5, and 7 to 12</i>, overall the RPFs have been implemented and are operating as intended. The positions are seen to be meeting the needs of remandees, who represent a growing population with complex needs. The roles were seen to assist remandees with adjusting to the prison environment, managing stress, addressing immediate legal concerns, finances and concerns about family. The introduction of the roles have also been associated with reduced prison incidents and improved program readiness amongst the remand population. The work of RPFs was also found to reduce the high work demand of other staff, including ATCs, Prison Officers and program staff.</p>
<p>2. CV to communicate to Offender Services Managers that the primary focus of the RPFs is on program delivery, with assessment-related work being a secondary function</p> <p>This review identified that the most common challenge that RPFs experienced was balancing the workload associated with conducting assessments and delivering the program (and other services). RPFs at on location indicated that they had a waitlist of approximately 300 remandees</p>

(three months behind on assessments) for conducting CPT reintegration assessments, meaning that remandees are potentially missing out on services at this location. Assessment-related work (including uploading results onto internal databases) was found to significantly impact on program delivery at a number of locations.

3. CV to review the ATLAS manual in consultation with RAV and Caraniche to ensure that any modifications are evidence-based and responsive to the needs of remandees (especially women)

Justification: As highlighted in *Key Finding 10*, the ATLAS manual was seen to require significant modifications to better suit the needs of remandees, which the RPFs took responsibility for. However, this required significant effort and raises concerns regarding program integrity, as the program was developed to be delivered in a consistent format and is aligned with the evidence base. It is therefore recommended that CV consult with RAV and Caraniche to review the program to determine whether any changes are required based on the feedback from RPFs and program staff across participating locations.

4. Continue to provide professional supervision through RAV on a monthly basis

Justification: RPFs reported that they found the monthly professional supervisions by RAV to be very helpful and useful to their role. The individual and group supervisions allowed for self-reflection, sharing of resources and problem solving with other RPFs through an external agency. Should the RPF role be extended, it is recommended that professional supervision through RAV continue on a monthly basis.

5. CV to consider creating an additional casual floating RPF position who can assist when RPFs need leave to ensure positive impacts associated with the introduction of these roles can be sustained over time

Justification: A number of RPFs indicated that they experienced significant stress about taking personal or sick leave because there were no other staff at their location who could continue their work while they were on leave. This resulted in programs being cancelled and/or the number of assessments on a waitlist increasing. It is recommended that CV consider recruiting a floating RPF position(s) whose role(s) would be to fill-in for staff who require leave and/or to assist locations where there are significant waitlists for assessments and/or programs. This may assist in retaining the staff who have been recruited to these positions (and the associated benefits) by reducing staff burn-out and fatigue.

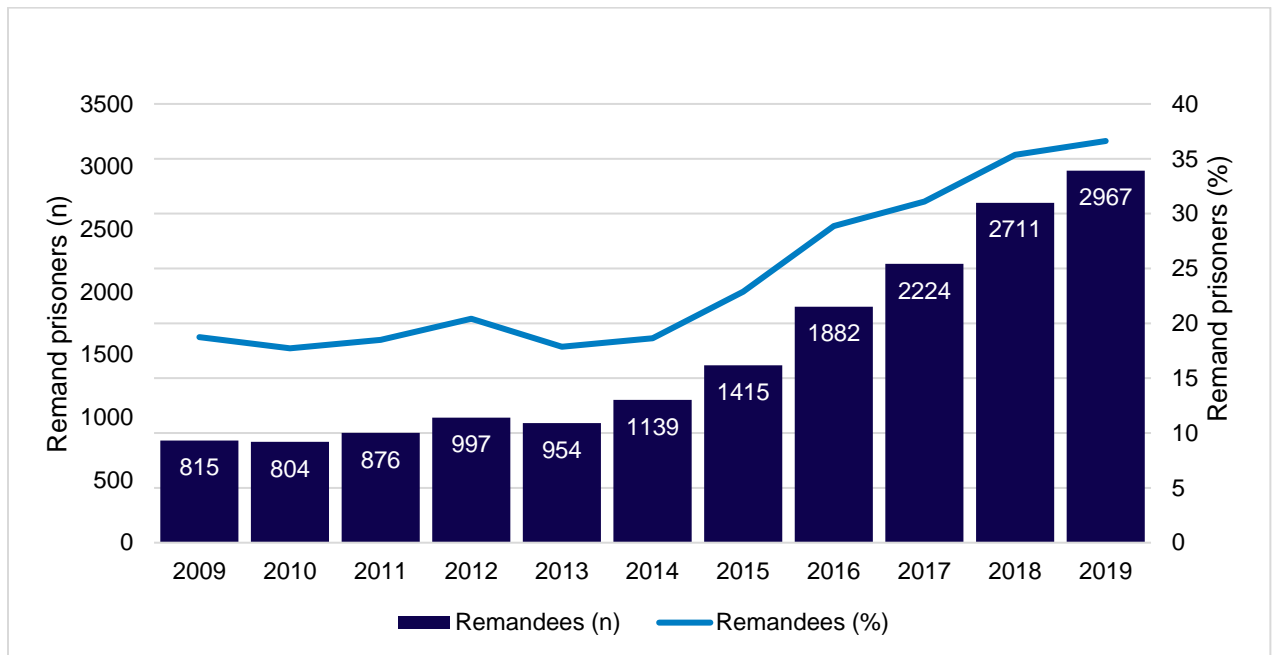
6. Rehabilitation and Reintegration Branch investigate and consider how to improve reporting functionality via RPS and/or CVIMS to allow improved program analysis and individual level participant data to be captured.

Justification: Due to the lack of individual level data collected, it was not possible for this review to report on the unique number and characteristics of participants that were referred, participated and/or completed the ATLAS program. It is recommended that individual-level referral and attendance data on all participants be collected. Where possible, this should be incorporated in existing data systems as RPFs are already required to use multiple data systems for reporting purposes. Accurate referral and attendance data will allow for monitoring of waitlists at locations and provide an understanding of the need for the service, uptake of the services, and allow for meaningful ongoing performance monitoring and evaluation.

2. Introduction and background

Corrections Victoria (CV) has experienced a significant increase in the number and proportion of remand prisoners (un-sentenced prisoners) over the last ten years. According to CV data³, the number and proportion of remandees has increased from 815 prisoners (19 per cent of the total prison population) in June 2009, to 2967 prisoners (37 per cent of the total prison population) in June 2019 (see Figure 1). This increase has caused significant pressure on CV’s workforce, and created a growing need to ensure CV’s programs and services are responsive to the needs of remand prisoners.

Figure 1: Number of proportion of remandees across all prisons (2009-2019)



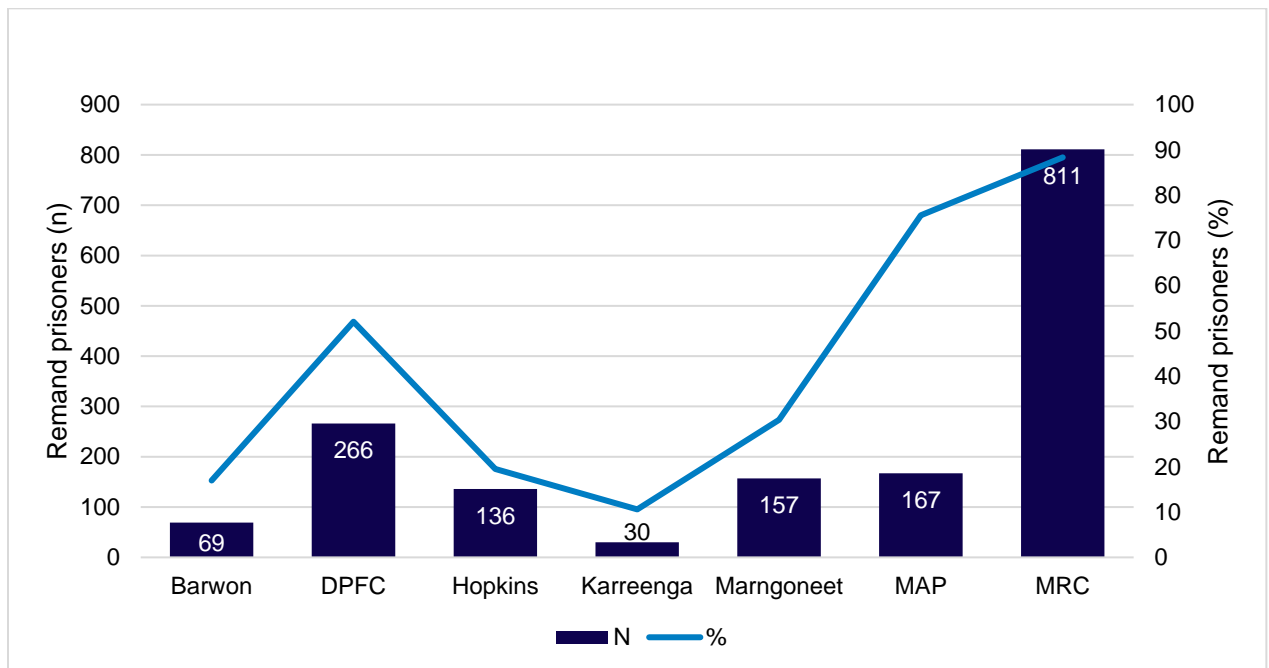
In response to the growing population of remand prisoners and associated demand pressures (particularly on CV Allied Health staff), in June 2018, the Commissioner, CV approved to continue the existing three RPFs and established six new RPFs to pilot the Reintegration Pathway’s ATLAS remand program suite for a period of two years. These nine RPFs were allocated to the seven public Victorian prisons which hold remandee prisoners:

- Melbourne Assessment Prison (MAP)
- Metropolitan Remand Centre (MRC)
- Dame Phillis Frost Centre (DPFC)
- Barwon Prison
- Marngoneet Correctional Centre (including Karreenga) (MCC)
- Hopkins Correctional Centre (HCC).

Figure 2 shows the number and proportion of remandee prisoners across these prisons on 30 June 2019. MRC and DPFC had the highest number of remandees representing 81 and 52 per cent of each location’s total prisoner population. These two locations were allocated two RPFs due to this high demand. All other five locations were allocated one RPF.

³ Source: Corrections Victoria public website: <https://www.corrections.vic.gov.au/prison/prisoner-and-offender-statistics>

Figure 2: Number and proportion of remandees by location (June 2019)



Remand Program Facilitators (RPFs) have been funded for a period of two years (October 2018 to November 2020) to deliver the pilot of the *Adapt, Take Stock, Look Ahead Suite* (ATLAS) program, a new suite of transition focused psycho-educational remand program. The fixed term funding was made available through the Serious Offenders Reform budget in acknowledgement that these roles will alleviate pressure on CV's Allied Health staff to deliver programs to remandees.

Following approval to fund these RPF positions, these roles were recruited across October and November 2018 and therefore have varying contract expiry dates. The nine RPFs are supervised by Offender Services Managers⁴.

The purpose of this review is to assess the implementation, operation and immediate impact associated with the introduction of these RPF roles for remandees and the prison system. The outcomes of this review may inform recommendations for future reinvestment of the RPF roles beyond November 2020.

2.1 Remand Program Facilitators' key responsibilities

The RPFs' predominant responsibility is the delivery of the ATLAS program. RPFs are also required to undertake other duties related to the provision of support to remand prisoners, including:

- the delivery of Remand Release Assistance Programs⁵ (RRAPs) at HCC and Barwon prison
- administration of transitional needs assessments (Reception Transition Triage screenings and Case Planning Transition assessments)
- referral to services in prison and in the community upon release
- promoting the ATLAS programs to prisoners and prison staff

⁴ During the initial pilot of the three RPF roles, RPFs were supervised by clinical staff. They are now being supervised by Offender Services Managers.

⁵ RRAPs are brief information sessions that provide remandees with essential information in the event that they are released from Court. These programs are approximately 15 minutes in duration.

- recording data on referrals, scheduling, program attendance, program attrition and completion into applications such as Reintegration Pathway System (RPS) and Corrections Victoria Information Management System (CVIMS)
- managing referrals into the program and ensuring rooms are available for sessions (including managing the regular booking roster)
- understanding the demand for ATLAS at their location and considering how they would imbed these programs within the broader program suite at each location
- RPFs at HCC, MCC and Barwon also assist in conducting risk and needs assessment, namely the Level of Service/Risk, Needs, Responsivity (LS/RNR) risk assessment.

The review found that the Position Descriptions for the RPFs were modified by each location, which meant that the responsibilities of RPFs varied slightly across the sites. Table 3 summarises the key functions of the RPFs by location, as documented in the monthly reports.

Table 3: Summary of the key functions of RPFs across prison locations

Key functions	MRC	MCC (and Kareenga)	MAP	Barwon Prison	DPFC	HCC
Deliver ATLAS program	Deliver the three core modules only	Deliver all eight modules of the program	Deliver first five modules of the program	Deliver all eight modules of the program	Deliver all eight modules of the program	Deliver all eight modules of the program
Conduct RTTs	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Conduct CPT reintegration assessments	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
Make referrals to ReStart	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗
Deliver RRAP	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
Conduct LS/RNR assessments	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓
Other activities	✗	Referrals to other services. Assistance with other programs.	✗	ReGroup	✗	Check Remand/Trial/Unsentenced Required list ⁶

⁶This administrative task requires that each week, the RPF prints off a list of remandees and manually type each individual's CRN into PIMS to check if they have been sentenced that week. If they have been sentenced, then their names are removed from the remandee list and sentenced prisoners' details are sent to ATCs. This task takes approximately 30 minutes per week.

Performance targets for the RPFs to deliver ATLAS modules have not been proposed due to the transient nature of the remand cohort, variance in remand prison profiles and responsibilities of the role across locations, and paucity of literature that clearly identifies the transitional needs of remandees that may aid in the setting of such targets. However, the review seeks to build the understanding of the key activities and services provided by these roles and therefore may be used to inform the development of future service delivery targets.

2.1.1 Remand Release Assistance Program

The Remand Release Assistance Program (RRAP) is available to remand prisoners who may be discharged directly from court. The program aims to provide remandees with relevant support services that may be able to help them in the event of a discharge directly from court, including information on the following:

- Centrelink payments and services, including the crisis payment
- crisis accommodation
- health services, including accessing medication
- drug and alcohol harm minimisation
- processes for collecting personal property and money from the prison
- information about the Court Integrated Services Program (CISP) and bail support programs.

The program is approximately 15 minutes in duration and is delivered by RPFs at HCC and Barwon prison only.

2.1.2 Reception Transition Triage screening

Reception Transition Triage screenings are conducted upon a prisoner's entry into prison to consider the practical support needs which can be addressed immediately. The RTT screening considers three immediate practical matters, including:

- Housing support: the assessment considers the steps that can be taken to support the prisoner to relinquish or maintain stable housing in the community during their imprisonment.
- Debt reduction: the assessment considers the steps which can be taken to reduce the accrual of debt during imprisonment. For example, the disconnection of utilities, notifications to the Child Support Agency and State Trustees Limited, where relevant. The assessment also considers where the prisoner has any outstanding Centrelink benefits owing to them at the time of imprisonment.
- Remand Transitional Support: the assessment also considers whether the remandee may be discharged from Court at any time (eligibility for RRAPs).

RTTs were conducted on a bi-monthly basis at DPFC and were not conducted by RPFs at MCC or at MAP.

2.1.3 Case Planning Transition assessments

The Reintegration Assessment Interview Guide – Case Planning Transition Phase (CPT Reintegration Assessment) are also conducted by RPFs. For the sake of brevity, this assessment will be referred to in this report as CPT reintegration assessments. This assessment builds on the remandee's transitional needs which were identified during the RTT screening. The assessment supports the remandee's case planning by the CMRC, which occurs within three months of a prisoner's arrival at the prison location. The assessment tool is designed to:

- assess which reintegration needs are relevant to the prisoner
- identify areas of need relevant to the prisoner to guide case planning
- prioritise eligible prisoners for the ReStart program.

The transitional needs identified through the completion of the assessment then guide the referrals which are made to support each prisoner's unique needs. Referrals may be initiated to services available within the prison as well as to incoming services from external agencies. CPT reintegration assessments were not conducted at MCC or at MAP, given the transient nature of these locations.

2.1.4 The ATLAS program

Participants will typically be identified and referred to the ATLAS program during their RTT screening or through the reintegration assessment process, however, referral can also be made during orientation, through self-referral, at CMRC meetings, or by a prison Case Manager.

All remandees are able to participate in ATLAS, however, remandees who have current family violence concerns (including pending charges), pending or recent history of stalking or sex offences are not permitted to participate in the Family, Friends and Community session. If a remandee is sentenced during their participation in the program, they can continue to complete the ATLAS sessions, provided that it does not interfere with their participation in ReLink (if eligible).

The ATLAS program aligns with the seven critical intervention domains outlined in the CV Reintegration Pathway, which include: housing, employment, education and training, independent living skills, mental health, alcohol and drugs, and family and community connectedness.

The program was developed by Relationships Australia Victoria (RAV) in consortium with Caraniche. The suite was to be responsive to the transitional needs of remandees, support remandees' adjustment into prison, and facilitate skill development to support transition and reintegration into the community upon release.

The expected outcomes of the modular suite was to enable remandees to:

- access appropriate and relevant programs
- reduce the stress and pressure of their prison situation
- build life skills for current and future use.

The ATLAS program contains eight program modules targeted to specific needs of remandee prisoners. Table 4 provides an outline of the eight modules. All sessions are delivered in a group setting, however, activities can be completed individually where participants are in management units.

The first three modules of the program (*Adapt*, *Take Stock A* and *Take Stock B*) are the program's core modules (participants must participate in these three modules in order to be eligible for the additional five modules). The additional five modules are delivered as the need is identified by the RPF through discussions with remandees⁷. All sessions are two hours in duration.

All sessions are complementary to one another however, they can be delivered on their own based on the needs of the cohort at each location. The full suite of modules are intended to be delivered within the first eight weeks of remand.

⁷ Source: interviews with RPFs revealed that RPFs gauge the needs of remandees and then they conduct the module which best addresses the needs of the majority of participants.

Table 4: ATLAS session description

Stage/Session	Details
Adapt (core module)	This session deals with immediate needs of adjusting to the remand environment including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-care strategies e.g. sleep and stress management • Navigating the environment to access supports • Managing conflict • Staying connected with family and friends
Take Stock <i>Part A and Part B</i> (core module)	These modules build on the Adapt module and have a personal strengths focus and aim to build participant's capacity including helping them to identify their own: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengths, values and priorities in a practical way • Pro social goals & how to achieve them • Immediate and longer term supports
<i>Look Ahead</i>	This stage builds on the previous two stages and contains five optional sessions (based on individual need) that focus on a specific critical intervention domain to help build knowledge and confidence required for a pro-social lifestyle.
<i>Learning for Life</i>	Provides practical activities and information to remandees on accessing education both in prison and in the community
<i>Jobs and Careers</i>	Provides practical information and activities on how participants can increase their job readiness in prison and in the community
<i>Healthy Living</i>	Provides practical information and activities focused on building each participant's independent living skills as well as strategies to help manage their own health and wellbeing
<i>Houses and Homes</i>	Provides practical information and activities to remandees on identifying possible housing options and includes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing their rights and responsibilities as a tenant • Managing shared living arrangements • How to access housing support both in prison and in the community
<i>Family, Friends and Community</i>	Provides practical information and activities to assist participants to stay connected with family and friends including strategies on building healthy and respectful relationships.

Monthly reporting by RPFs showed that RPFs do not deliver all of the ATLAS modules at every location. For example, MRC only deliver the three core modules of the program, while MAP only delivered the three core modules and two additional modules (*Learning for Life* and *Jobs and Careers*). The other locations deliver the whole suite of eight modules (see Table 5)

Table 5: ATLAS program module delivery by location

ATLAS modules	MRC	MCC (and Kareenga)	MAP	Barwon Prison	DPFC	HCC
Adapt	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Take Stock 1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Take Stock 2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

ATLAS modules	MRC	MCC (and Kareenga)	MAP	Barwon Prison	DPFC	HCC
Learning for Life	✘	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Jobs and Careers	✘	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Healthy Living	✘	✔	✘	✔	✔	✔
Houses and Homes	✘	✔	✘	✔	✔	✔
Family Friends and Community	✘	✔	✘	✔	✔	✔

2.1.5 Referrals to the ReStart program

ReStart is a post release support program available for remandees and prisoners with a sentence of three months or less, who have been identified as having High Reintegration Needs through the administration of the CPT reintegration assessments or ReGroup phases.

ReStart provides eligible prisoners three months post-release intensive, assertive outreach support to promote sustainable links and reintegration back into the community, by engaging pre-release and developing individualised transition plans.

The following prisoners are eligible for ReStart:

- remandees with High Reintegration Needs as determined by the CPT reintegration assessment
- sentenced to three months or less with High Reintegration Needs as determined by the ReGroup Reintegration Assessment
- located at a prison that offers ReStart.

Once referred, prioritisation will be made for the following prisoner cohort (in no particular order):

- women prisoners
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners
- prisoners with a cognitive impairment (intellectual disability, low functioning and acquired brain injury)
- young prisoners (aged between 18 and 24 years of age).

Where a prisoner presents with transitional needs that require further assistance that, if left unaddressed, would pose a potential risk to themselves or the community, and do not meet the ReStart eligibility criteria, an exceptional referral may be made. Referrals to ReStart may also be considered where there is reasonable evidence to suggest that a Drug Treatment Order (DTO) will be cancelled, either activating the incarceration period of the DTO or re-sentencing on the original matters.

2.1.6 Professional supervision provided to RPFs

RAV was contracted by CV to provide group and individual supervision to RPFs for the two-year pilot period, beginning 2 February 2019 and finishing 30 November 2020. For the months of March and April 2019, individual supervision sessions were conducted fortnightly, after which supervision was scheduled monthly. Group Supervision was also conducted monthly.

According to RAV documentation, professional supervision is provided onsite to enable support for RPF's professional practice in the ATLAS program, including:

- a learning culture through reflective practice
- professional development for RPFs
- identification of knowledge, skill acquisition and gaps
- establishment of accountability processes with RPFs to support and refine practices to ensure high quality programs for prisoners.

As part of their professional development, RPFs are asked to complete self-reflective feedback forms for two sessions of each module post program delivery during the first quarter. The feedback forms were developed by RAV and require RPFs to:

- rate on a scale of one to 10 "how would you rate today's sessions overall?"⁸
- write about what they felt worked well
- write about what they felt did not work well and whether they could identify any areas of improvement
- whether they experienced any issues or incidents and whether these were reported according to CV guidelines (open text response)
- whether there were any participant feedback to note (open text response).

RPFs are also encouraged to seek feedback from program participants via feedback forms that were produced by RAV. The feedback forms were intended to capture program progress and RPF development needs to enable reflective practice and inform continuous improvement of training delivery.

RPFs were asked to collect feedback forms from participants for two sessions of each module post-program delivery (from the same sessions as the facilitator forms above) during the first quarter. These forms were designed to assess the achievement of participant learning outcomes in order to assess program effectiveness during program implementation. The results of these were summarised in RAV's first quarterly report (March 2019).

RAV quarterly reports report on the following:

- the number of supervision sessions delivered (including a breakdown of group and individual supervision sessions)
- a general summary of any issues raised and outcomes reported by RPFs (including a breakdown of group and individual supervision sessions)
- summary of the outcomes from the self-reflective feedback forms and participant feedback forms that RPFs provide to facilitators (quarter one only).

3. Document purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline the methodology, findings and recommendations of the internal review of the RPF role, recently introduced across seven prison locations in Victoria. The key audience for the report is the Reintegration and Rehabilitation Branch. The findings of

⁸ 1="Very poor" and 10="Excellent"

this review may be used to inform recommendations about future investment of the RFP roles beyond 2020.

4. Scope

This review will explore the implementation, operation and immediate impact of introducing the RPF roles, including the extent to which the introduction of these roles has been associated with an improved service response to remand prisoners. A secondary aim of the review was to explore that impact of the introduction of the RPF role on the workload demand of prison and program staff. The review will use a mixed-methods approach, and will include:

- desktop review of policy or program operating documents related to the RPF roles
- jurisdictional analysis of services and support for remandees in other states and territories
- analysis of monthly reporting data submitted by RPFs and CV administrative data on the number, proportion and profile of remandees across the system
- thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with RPFs, Offender Services Managers and program facilitators at participating locations.
- analysis of RAV quarterly report (quarter one, March 2019)⁹.

A review of the ATLAS program¹⁰ is beyond the scope of this review and would be dependent on improved data capture (see Recommendation 5).

5. Methods

This section of the report describes the approach taken to review the RPF positions, including the key review questions, data collection methods, and limitations of this review.

5.1 Key review questions

The review seeks to determine:

- to what extent is there an identified need for the roles (at participating and other prison locations)?
- what outcomes (positive or otherwise) can be attributed to the introduction of the roles?
- to what extent is the ATLAS program and other support delivered through to the RPF responsive to the needs of remand prisoners?
- to what extent has the introduction of the RPF roles reduced the demand on program staff at participating locations?
- what are the barriers or challenges associated with performing the key responsibilities of the role and providing support to remand prisoners?
- what changes (if any) are required to better support the RPFs and/or to ensure we are responsive to the needs of remand prisoners?

⁹ At the time of writing this review, the review team were only provided with RAV's quarter one report.

¹⁰ There is insufficient data to support an evaluation of the ATLAS program. Should the RPF roles be extended, it is recommended that the reporting requirements of the role be reviewed to ensure there is sufficient data to support an evaluation.

5.2 Approach to the review

The review employed a mixed methods approach to collect and triangulate a range of quantitative and qualitative data on the need for and immediate impact of the RPF roles across participating locations, including:

- jurisdictional analysis of similar roles in other Australian states, territories and New Zealand
- review of policy documents related to the creation and implementation of the RPF role
- analysis of RPF and CV administrative data about remandees
- review of RPF monthly reporting documents
- review of RAV quarterly report (Quarter 1: Ending 31 March 2019)
- thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with stakeholders, including: RPFs, Offender Services Managers and program staff.

5.2.1 Jurisdictional analysis

The review team conducted a brief desk-top analysis of similar programs and services offered to remandees in other Australian and international (New Zealand) jurisdictions. The analysis sought to explore whether other jurisdictions had similar dedicated roles such as the RPFs and/or programs such as ATLAS and if so, determine:

- to what extent does the service or program align with programs and services offered to remandee prisoners in other jurisdictions
- key inputs and activities considered necessary for other like programs and services
- outcomes achieved by other like programs and services
- key lessons learned with respect to the effective design of other similar programs and services.

5.2.2 Corrections Victoria administrative data

CV administrative data was used to determine the number and proportion of remandees between June 2009 and June 2019. This analysis provides an indication of the need for this role across the system.

This review does not include an analysis of the demographic characteristics of ATLAS program participants, as this data was not collected. Specifically, the number of participants per session was captured but individual data (such as full name, date of birth and Corrections Reference Number [CRN]) was not, thus it was not clear how many individual participants progressed through the program.

5.2.3 Remand Program Facilitators monthly reporting documents

Quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted of the monthly reports (December 2018 to May 2019, inclusive) which RPFs are required to submit. The monthly reports report on the following:

- total number of referrals made
- total number of modules delivered
- total number of participants per module
- total number of assessments conducted
- barriers or challenges experienced in delivering the program and/or performing duties
- successes experienced in delivering the program and/or performing duties.

5.2.4 Review of RAV quarterly report

Qualitative analyses were conducted of the RAV quarterly report (quarter one, March 2019), which reported on the following:

- individual and group supervision outcomes
- summary of RPF self-reflective feedback
- summary of ATLAS program participants' feedback from 246 respondents
- service challenges experienced by RAV.

5.2.5 Semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders

Between June and July 2019 (approximately six to seven months post implementation), interviews were conducted with 16 staff across seven prison locations to provide depth and context for the implementation and operation of the role, the impact this role is having on remandees and program staff, and lessons learnt. At the time of the interviews, DPFC were in the process of recruiting a RPF at DPFC, therefore only one RPF was interviewed at that location. In total, interviews were conducted with:

- Acting Services Manager (HCC)
- Acting Integration Services Supervisor (HCC)
- Programs Manager (Marngoneet Correctional Centre and Karreenga)
- Services Manager (MAP)
- Offender Services Supervisor (MAP)
- Diversity Supervisor (DPFC)
- Programs Co-ordinator (Barwon Prison)
- eight RPFs across participating locations¹¹.

5.3 Limitations

Some methodological limitations that need to be recognised when considering the findings of the review include:

- *Selection bias* - Stakeholders expressed concerns that the role will not be continued beyond the two year contract period. Therefore, respondents may have been overly positive about the role and the outcomes achieved as they have a vested interest in the continuation of these positions.
- *Sample size limitations* – the data obtained for this review contained very small sample sizes. The interviews were conducted with a small number of program staff who could speak to the impact that the RPF roles had on the workload of other staff. Such small samples limit the conclusions which can be drawn from the review.
- *Short implementation period* – this review was conducted six to seven months after the RPF roles were implemented. It is likely that some of the issues raised in this review will not be relevant once these roles and the ATLAS program have been operating for longer and become embedded in the day-to-day operations of the prisons.

¹¹ At the time of the review, DPFC were in the process of recruiting the ninth RPF.

6. Key findings

This section of the report will report on the key findings of the review. Please note, key findings from each section of the report are highlighted in **bold**.

6.1 Jurisdiction analysis

All but two jurisdictions (Australian Capital Territory and New Zealand) responded to the request for information. The review found that all states or territories that responded offered some form of programmatic support to remandees, however only two states offered remandee-specific programs, these being South Australia (SA) and New South Wales. Overall, this suggests that **CV is tracking well in comparison with other jurisdictions in terms of its service offerings to remandees**. See Table 6 for a summary of the jurisdictional analyses.

Table 6: Summary of outcomes of jurisdictional analysis

Jurisdiction	Specific programs for remandees	Programs for sentenced prisoners are available to remandees	Certain mainstream programs available to remandees (e.g. counselling and AOD)	No programs available to remandees
New South Wales	✓			
Queensland			✓	
South Australia	✓	✓		
Western Australia		✓		
Tasmania			✓	
Northern Territory		✓		
Australian Capital Territory	No response received			
New Zealand	No response received			

6.1.1 New South Wales

NSW Corrective Services currently offers two programs aimed at addressing issues surrounding family violence and alcohol and other drug (AOD) issues for prisoners on remand, these are the *Remand domestic abuse program (six sessions in duration)*, and the *Remand addictions program (20 sessions in duration)*. Both programs are voluntary and remandees are identified and referred via pre-program suitability interviews. However, remandees can also self-refer or simply attend a session without a referral.

The *Remand domestic abuse program* is a voluntary six session program aimed at assisting remandees to understand their legal circumstances specific to domestic violence and provides

them with knowledge and skills to recognise and manage their behaviours that may have contributed to domestic violence.

The *Remand addictions program* is a rolling program, however, each module is constructed to be standalone and delivered in a group setting. The program uses the EQUIPS² (Explore, Question, Understand, Investigate, Practice and Succeed) model. This program is aimed at addressing the AOD needs of medium to high risk offenders and to provide participants with a pathway to support services for addictive behaviours² NSW Corrections offers the full EQUIPS *Addictions* program, comprising of twenty sessions that run for 2 hours each. The program aims to help offenders understand the factors associated with their addiction which may have contributed to their offending, and develop the skills they need to reduce their risk of reoffending. The program focuses on:

- motivation to abstain
- urges and coping skills
- problem solving skills
- lifestyle balance
- self-management
- planning for the future.

6.1.2 Queensland

Queensland Corrective Services do not currently offer any programs designed specifically for remandees. However, they do support remandees participating in AOD programs and services, psychological wellbeing programs, and education and re-entry programs. The extent to which these programs are accessible to the remand cohort was not able to be explored as no information was provided around program length and nature (rolling or closed program) and/or eligibility criteria for these programs.

6.1.3 South Australia

The SA Department of Correctional Services provide one program aimed specifically at remandees. The *Inside Out* program is a positive psychology initiative aimed at building resilience and other positive mindsets in order to assist remandees to cope with the challenges of imprisonment. The majority of the SA Department of Correctional Services programs are available to remandees, but only those remanded for longer than six to eight weeks. These programs predominantly focus on family violence.

6.1.4 Western Australia

The Western Australian Department of Justice (WADOJ) do not provide any specific programs designed for remandees. Until 2019, WADOJ's model of care focussed on individual assessment and interventions. The focus of this was on prisoners at risk of self-harm and suicide, those experiencing distress or having difficulty adjusting to being in custody. Currently WADOJ are developing a new model of care that focusses on assisting sentenced and remand prisoners with adjusting into custody, improve health, wellbeing and coping, and reintegration back into the community. They also provide a counselling service to remandees.

WADOJ also provide psychoeducation programs aimed at:

- improving sleep
- relaxation and coping
- adjusting to being in prison, and
- returning to community.

These programs are also available to both sentenced and remand prisoners.

6.1.5 Tasmania

Remandees serviced by Tasmanian Corrective Services are ineligible for most criminogenic programs, however, they are eligible for AOD interventions through councillors and non-government organisations. Again, it was unclear whether this jurisdiction offered shorter and/or rolling programs and services and information on which programs are more likely to be accessed by this cohort.

6.1.6 Northern Territory

The Northern Territory (NT) Correctional Services offer the psycho-educational program called *Safe Sober Strong* (SSS) to both male and female, sentenced and remand prisoners. This program has 15 modules, with each being a stand-alone module. The SSS is run as a pre-treatment program, as it gives remandees (who then go on to be sentenced prisoners requiring offence specific programs) an understanding of what a group program is like.

The 15 modules of the SSS includes:

- AOD
- stress management
- anger management
- relationships
- problem solving and
- family violence.

In the Darwin Correctional Centre (DCC), the Health Department conduct individual sessions with remandees in relation to AOD and for female prisoners, group AOD programs. In the Alice Springs Correctional Centre (ASCC) external providers conduct some information sessions about AOD issues.

6.1.7 Australian Capital Territory

The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Corrective Services did not respond to requests for information. A review of their public website indicated that they did not have any programs that specifically cater to remandees. Additionally, it was unclear whether remandees were eligible for the programs offered by ACT Corrective Services. However, this was based on a review of the available information only and is not conclusive.

6.1.8 New Zealand

New Zealand Department of Corrections (NZDC) did not respond to any requests for information. A review of their public website indicated that they provide a variety of supports to remandees such as learning plans that offer support around parenting, managing finances and basic living skills. Remandees may also receive assistance with AOD issues and finding employment.

6.2 Implementation of the RPF roles

This section of the report will explore how the RPF positions were implemented across the seven prison locations. Overall, the review found that **the Position Descriptions (PDs) for the RPF roles were modified by each location, which meant that the responsibilities of RPFs varied across the sites**. For example, RPFs at HCC, MCC and Barwon Prison conducted LS/RNR assessments, while this was not the case at other locations. Further, RPFs at HCC and Barwon Prison delivered brief RRAP programs, but these programs were not conducted at other locations. Table 3 in Section 2.1 of this review, summarised the key functions of the RPFs by location, as documented in the monthly reports.

6.2.1 Assessments, referrals and program delivery

As part of their role, some RPFs are required to undertake prisoner assessments including RTT screenings and CPT reintegration assessments, as well as make referrals to ReStart. HCC (n=36) and Barwon Prison (n=6) were the only locations to deliver RRAP programs. **In total, between December 2018 and May 2019, RPFs conducted 658 RTTs, 846 CPT reintegration assessments, 169 ReStart referrals and delivered 42 RRAP programs.**

The review found that the assessment process allowed RPFs to build rapport with remandees and refer them to the ATLAS program as intended. Interviews with Management and program staff indicated how positive it was for remandees to have a point of contact or reference throughout their remand period. This, in turn, meant that **RPFs were able to identify any immediate issues and refer remandees to appropriate services**, which remandees may not have been aware of and/or willing to refer themselves to. Management staff also indicated that **the RPFs played a key role in getting prisoners treatment ready, particularly those who become sentenced prisoners and will need to then participate in offender behaviour programs.**

Assessments conducted by RPFs

Figure 3 shows the total number of RTTs that RPFs conducted between December 2018 and May 2019. The number of RTTs conducted fluctuated greatly across time, which was a result of DPFC conducting RTTs on a bimonthly basis¹². The figure shows that the RPFs at DPFC conducted 62 per cent of RTTs (n=408) and 25 per cent (n=207) of the CPT reintegration assessments (see Figure 4), which indicates that the RPFs at this location are spending a lot of their time on assessment-related work. Commentary in monthly reports and the interview with the RPF confirmed this, with the RPF indicating that approximately 80 per cent¹³ of their time was taken up by assessment work, which in turn means that they are not able to conduct as many programs as needed at this location. This was also raised in interviews with prison management staff, who indicated that there was a significant waitlist for programs at this location. However, it is important to note that at the time of the interviews (June/July 2019), there was only one RPF at this location and recruitment was underway for a second RPF. It may be the case that once the second RPF joined the team, the burden of assessment-related work could be shared between the two staff members and there would be more time for program delivery.

¹² RPFs at DPFC shared the responsibility of conducting RTT screenings with the Remand Coordinator (RC) and the Orientation Coordinator (OC), whereby RPFs conduct the assessments one month and the RC and OC conducting them the following month.

¹³ This figure is based on the feedback from RPFs that four out of 5 days were devoted to assessment and administrative work.

Figure 3: Number of RTTs conducted between December 2018 and May 2019, by month and location

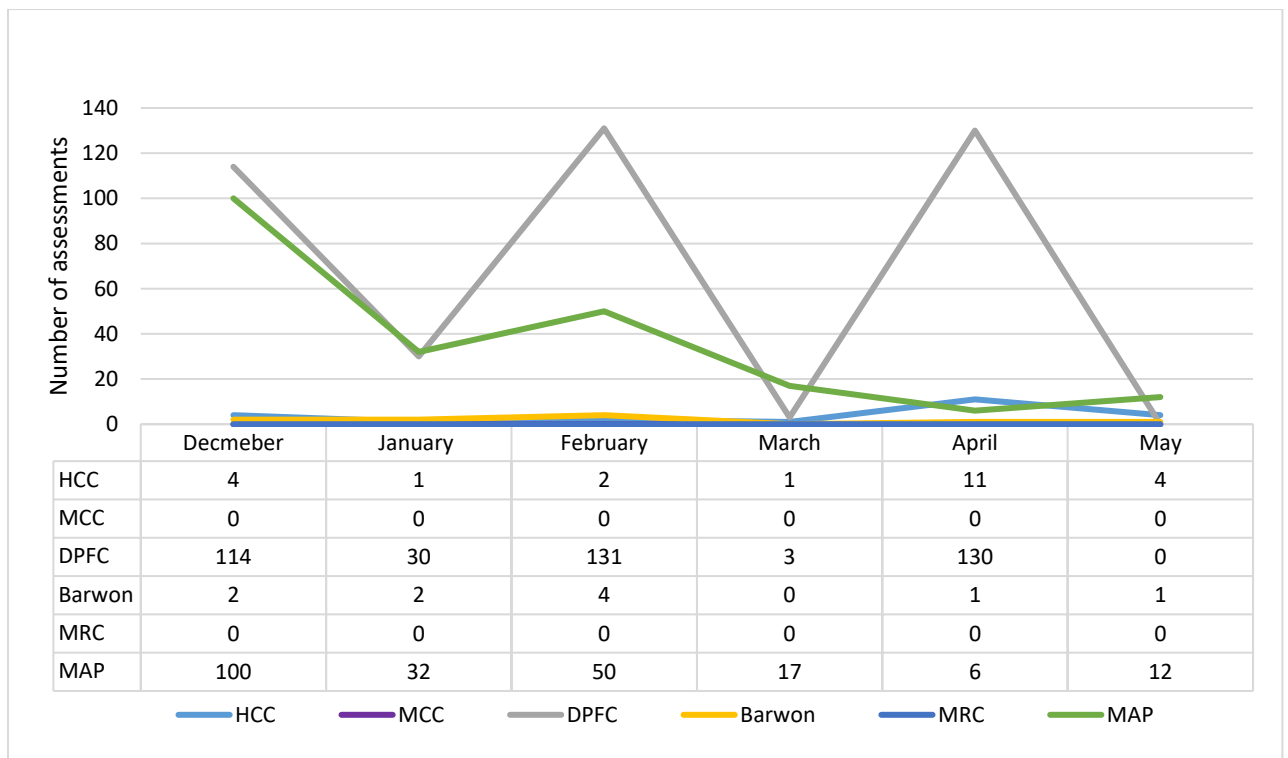
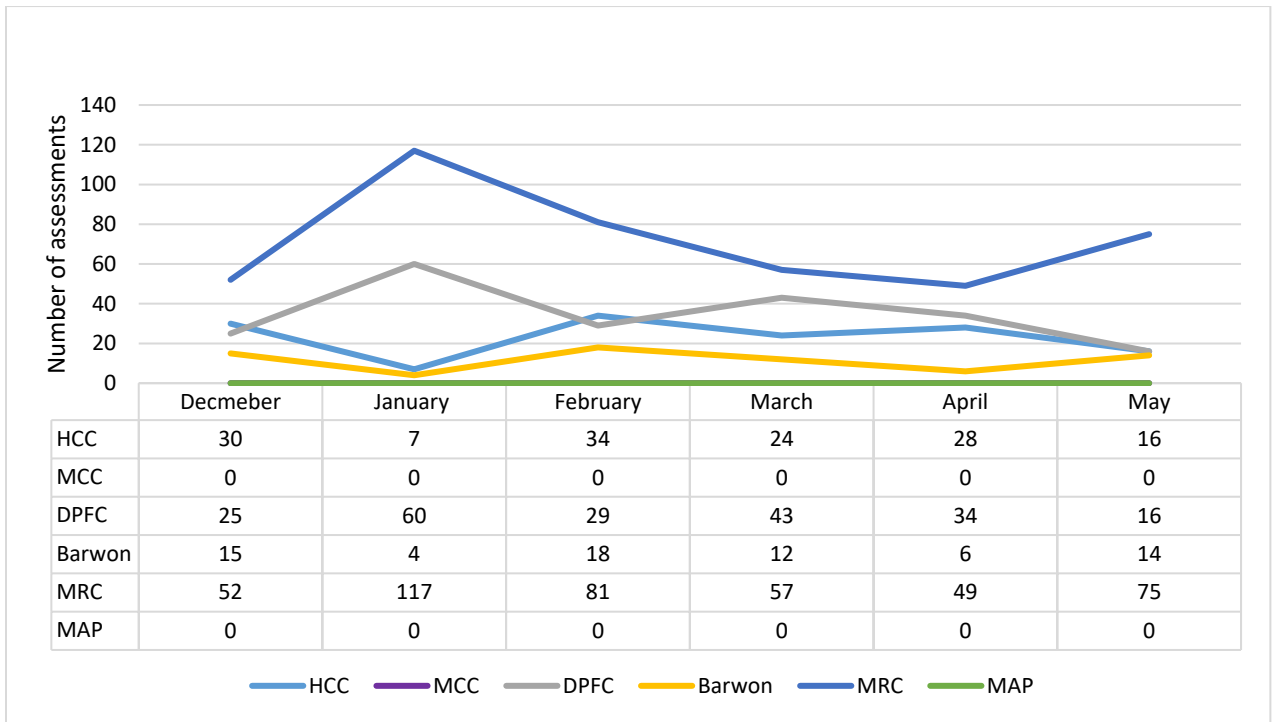


Figure 4 shows the number of CPT reintegration assessments conducted between December 2018 and May 2019. This figure shows that RPFs at MRC conducted 51 per cent (n=431) of the CPT reintegration assessments. The high number of assessments at MRC is unsurprising, as this location has the highest number of remandees across the state. Interviews with RPFs revealed that CPT reintegration assessments can be time consuming (taking up to 45 minutes per assessment) to conduct particularly if the prisoner has complex needs. Assessment data also needs to be uploaded to both RPS, which increases the administrative burden associated with assessments.

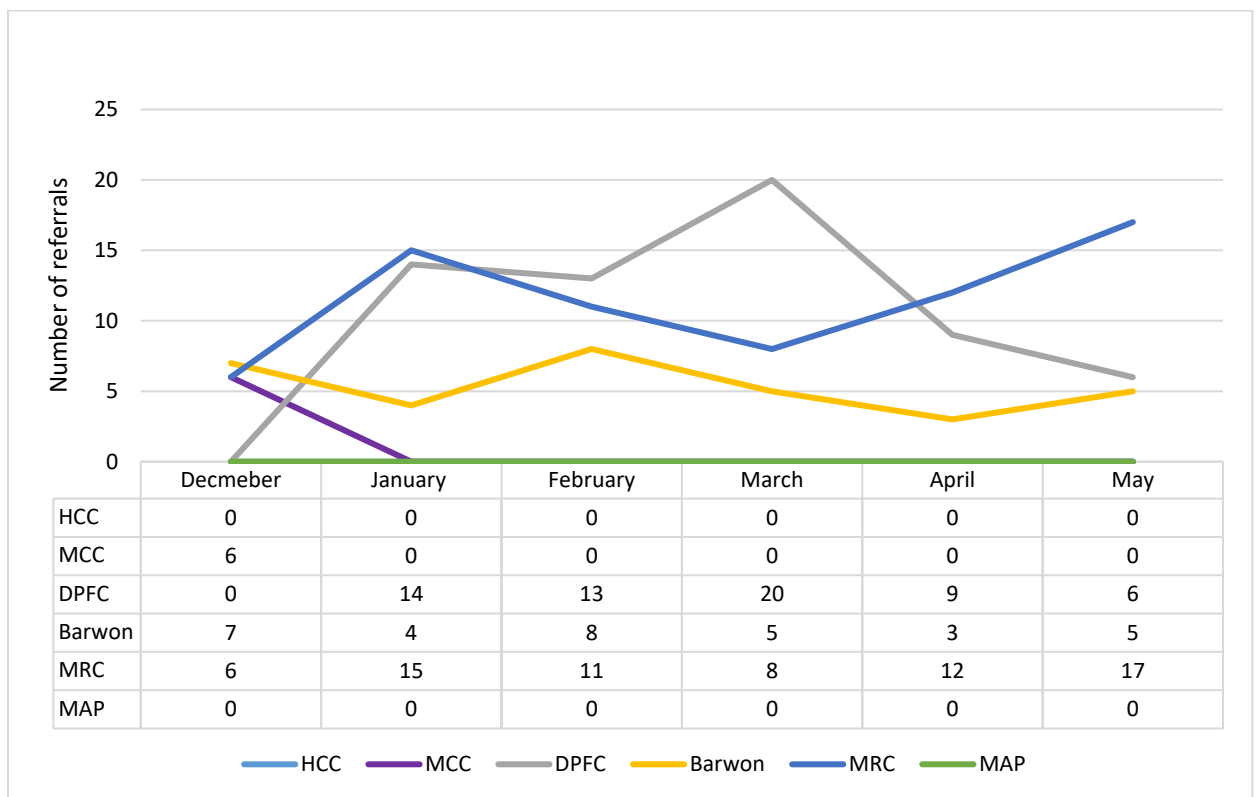
Figure 4: Number of CPT reintegration assessments conducted between December 2018 and May 2019, by month and location



Referrals to the ReStart program

The review found that between December 2018 and May 2019, RPFs at HCC and MAP did not make any referrals to ReStart, and that there were only six referrals made at MCC (see Figure 5). The lack of referrals at HCC is due to the fact that ReStart is not offered at this location and the lack of referrals at MAP is likely due to the transient nature of this location, with MAP staff indicating that it is not uncommon for men to pass through this location within 48 hours to one week. This would not allow sufficient time for participants to participate in this service. The staff¹⁴ at this location indicated that remandees at MAP are also often dealing with a number of issues (drug withdrawals, legal issues, and potential distress from being in prison) and are not ready to be participating in programs¹⁵.

Figure 5: Number of ReStart referrals between December 2018 and May 2019, by month and location



6.2.2 ATLAS program delivery

RPFs delivered a total of 552 ATLAS sessions between December 2018 and June 2019.

Figure 6 shows the number of ATLAS sessions conducted by month and location, between December 2018 and June 2019. MRC had the second lowest number of ATLAS sessions delivered (n=67). However, this location is also the most transient, with a large flow of remand prisoners coming through each day, which may make delivering programs and/or services difficult. Interviews with all staff interviewed at this location indicated that there are significant challenges in finding program rooms at this location. In order to solve this problem, RPFs

¹⁴ Source: interview data with RPF and management staff

¹⁵ Source: interview data with RPF and prison staff member

delivered fewer programs but with a larger cohort of participants (co-facilitation allowed for up to 15 participants per session compared to an average of 6 at other locations).

Figure 6: Total number of ATLAS sessions delivered, by month and location.

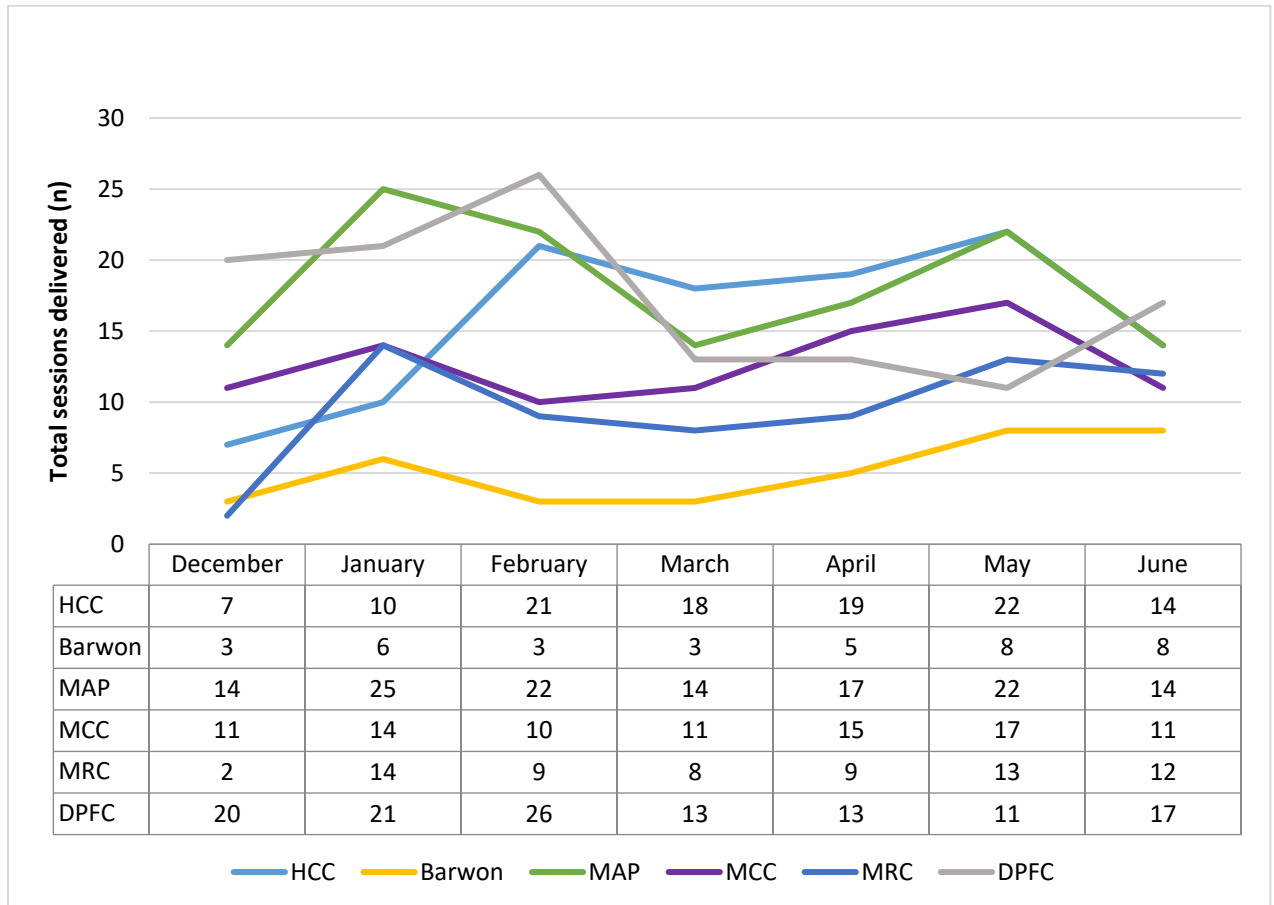


Table 7 highlights the total number of participants who participated in each ATLAS module, by location (between December 2018 and June 2019). This table also shows the average number of participants per session. This table does not reflect the unique number of participants, but rather the total number of participants who attended each session. Interviews with RPFs revealed that participants had the option to attend the program multiple times, therefore these individuals would have been counted multiple times. As noted earlier in the report, individual level data was not captured, therefore this review cannot comment on the unique number of participants who participated or completed the program (and/or any associated outcomes).

Recommendation: RPFs to record individual level participant data to allow for improved oversight and program evaluation

The table demonstrates that the average number of participants per session ranged from three to nine participants across the locations. Marngoneet Precinct consistently had the highest average number of participants per session (m=9). Overall, the *Adapt* module was the most highly attended module, followed by *Take stock 1 and 2*. This is not surprising as these are the core modules and they are delivered sequentially. The delivery of other modules varied. For example, the table shows that **MRC only delivered the first three modules. Interviews with the RPFs at this location indicated that conducting CPT reintegration assessments and the associated**

administrative work of uploading the data is what took up most of their time¹⁶. They felt that catching up with the waitlist of assessments was an unattainable goal. This was a common theme that was identified in the interviews with RPFs from other locations as well. When asked how the ATLAS program was going, **RPFs consistently identified that their ability to deliver the ATLAS programs as intended, was impacted by their other responsibilities. Conducting assessments was believed to take up the most time thereby limiting how many programs they could deliver.**

Table 7: Total number of participants per program module and the average number of participants per module, by location (December 2018 and June 2019)

Program modules	Hopkins	Barwon	MAP	Margoneet Precinct	MRC	DPFC
Adapt						
Total (n)	124	12	470	286	279	237
Average (m)	6	3	5	11	7	6
Take Stock 1						
Total (n)	99	16	60	205	128	184
Average (m)	6	3	5	9	7	6
Take Stock 2						
Total (n)	78	10	140	152	73	162
Average (m)	6	2	6	11	8	6
Learning for Life						
Total (n)	78	8	7	79	0	32
Average (m)	4	3	3	8	0	8
Jobs and Careers						
Total (n)	67	11	31	29	0	57
Average (m)	6	2	8	15	0	8
Healthy Living						
Total (n)	57	17	0	16	0	89
Average (m)	7	3	0	4	0	10
Houses and Homes						
Total (n)	53	9	0	50	0	18
Average (m)	5	5	0	8	0	6

¹⁶ The RPFs at MRC conducted 51 per cent (n=431) of all the CPT reintegration assessments between December 2018 and May 2019.

Program modules	Hopkins	Barwon	MAP	Marngoneet Precinct	MRC	DPFC
Family, Friends and Community						
Total (n)	45	11	0	22	0	9
Average (m)	5	2	0	9	7	7
Average (m) number of participants per location	6	3	6	9	7	7

6.2.3 Flexibility in program delivery

Interviews with RPFs and monthly reporting by RPFs indicated that **all RPFs modified the ATLAS program to some extent at each location. Modifications were made in order to respond to the needs raised by program participants and to make the sessions more interactive.** For example, one location reported including information about condition reports and tenancy agreements from Consumer Affairs as part of the discussions around housing, as this was raised an issue by remandees and recognised as a key area that prisoners struggle with upon release. Another location reported using YouTube videos to assist in the meditation activity as part of the *Healthy Living* module. This change in the mode of delivery was seen to assist in maintaining the attention of prisoners, however, using YouTube videos would not be possible at some locations as is reliant on a room with video facilities.

One of the key successes of modifying the ATLAS program was where RPFs invited staff from other areas within the prison to co-facilitate sessions¹⁷ as well as guest speakers from external organisations such as Odyssey House, Salvation Army, Consumer Affairs, and Deakin University (regarding a peer mentoring program). Reported examples of internal staff included: staff from the jobs and careers area presenting information about a new program through Jobs Victoria during the *Jobs and Careers* module; staff from housing presenting information about crisis housing during the *Houses and Homes* module; and staff from the health and recreation area presenting information about healthy eating and exercise during the *Healthy Living* modules. This raised awareness of the ATLAS program among other prison staff, formed connections with other programs and services and meant information being provided to prisoners was came from specialised staff and was tailored to the support available at that location. Co-facilitation also meant that programs could accept a larger number of participants per session.

While the RPFs felt that it was positive that they had a chance to modify the program, there is an inherent risk when program content is modified by unqualified individuals. Evidence-based programs are designed using research on what is known to be effective, therefore any modifications made to the ATLAS program should be made by or in consultation with those who are qualified to write programs. **It is therefore recommended that the ATLAS manual be reviewed by RAV and Caraniche (the original program developers) to be more responsive to the needs of prisoners.** Any decisions around further strengthening the program should consider the modifications outlined in this review. This would also ensure greater consistency and integrity of the program across locations.

¹⁷ This type of program modification was reported by four of the seven locations.

Recommendation: CV to review the ATLAS manual in consultation with RAV and Caraniche to ensure that any modifications are evidence-based and responsive to the needs of remandees (especially women)

6.3 Need for the RPF roles

This section of the report will review the evidence for the need for the RPF roles. Overall, the increasing number of remandees and the high number of referrals to the ATLAS program indicate that there is an operational need for the RPF roles. **Interviews with prison staff (Managers) and program staff indicated that there is a very strong need for the RPF roles to support remandees and other staff** (namely ATCs and Prison Officers who may have conducted assessments in the past). There was notable concerns from two locations in particular regarding the consequences for remandees should the RPF roles not be extended beyond the current contract period:

“Some key challenges for the role is to continue it past the two-year parole pilot program. It is crucial that the support from the RPF provides the remandees, but also ATCs in the broad transition space as it is critically needed. The RPF is the conduit through the reception, remand and sentence process, and allows a supportive pathway from remand to sentence, to the ATC team...” (Manager)

“We lose the capacity to provide a seamless, sort of pathway if we were to lose this suite of programs. There would be significant detrimental impact from that.” (Manager)

6.3.1 Referrals to the ATLAS program

Table 8 shows the total number of referrals that were received for the ATLAS program at each location (between December 2018 and June 2019). **In total, RPFs received a total of 5203 referrals¹⁸**. These values demonstrate the high number of remandees that the RPFs service, and indicate that these newly introduced resources have been implemented and are being well utilised as intended.

Table 8: Total number referrals received, by month and location

Location	Dec 2019	Jan 2019	Feb 2019	March 2019	Apr 2019	May 2019	June 2019	Total
HCC	32	15	30	20	26	8	4	135 (3%)
Barwon	18	2	11	10	14	8	5	68 (1%)
MAP	241	386	486	256	369	402	308	2448 (47%)
MCC	120	89	120	92	128	176	176	901 (17%)
MRC	141	201	189	92	68	243	174	1108 (21%)
DPFC	106	79	76	60	80	78	64	543 (10%)
Total	658	772	912	530	685	915	731	5203

¹⁸ Source: RPF monthly reporting. Referral numbers include the total number of new referrals received (per session). Some prisoners may have been referred multiple times and would have been recorded as a referral each time, therefore these values do not reflect unique number of individuals, but rather, the total number of referrals received.

6.3.2 Challenges faced by remandees

As part of the consultations, staff were asked to comment on the key challenges and needs specific to remand prisoners. **The review identified that remandees who enter prison are faced with a lot of uncertainty over their sentence, which in turn causes significant anxiety for them**¹⁹. Other stressors include unresolved financial issues, unattended pets, housing issues, legal issues, and concerns over family. Anxiety can often lead to remandees not seeking support²⁰, and isolating themselves from others which can make them targets for bullying by other prisoners²¹. Interviews with all staff indicated that **first time prisoners are usually the most stressed and require help to manage stress and lack of sleep. First time prisoners - and even those who have returned to prison - are often unaware of the services that are available to them within prison and outside of prison post-release**. Because remandees have not been charged with offences, there is little on offer to them in terms of reintegration and programs, as most programs are centred on addressing offending behaviour. Management staff indicated that many remandees have mental health issues but are often released without having received much support, and as a result many of them return to prison²². The RPF roles and the ATLAS program aim to address these concerns by providing support and services to remand prisoners.

6.3.3 RPFs assist remandees from the point of reception and throughout their time on remand in prison

The review found that RPFs seek to meet the needs of remandees throughout their incarceration period and through multiple means including: assistance with filling out appropriate forms, ensuring that remandees had people on their phone lists (including lawyers) and assisting remandees to engage with internal and external services. RPFs at two locations talked in detail about the distress that some prisoners face when they have unattended pets alone at home. RPFs then organise someone to pick up the pets and feed them, which can be very time consuming but it reduces a lot of anxiety for prisoners.

RPFs work closely with remandees to make sure that they are aware of how the prison works and that they are settled in²³. RPFs emphasised that a lack of information often made prisoners feel very scared and anxious. Some of the men who had been in prison before the RPF roles were introduced, reportedly commented²⁴ on how useful it would have been to have this service available to them during their first experience in prison. RPFs also help to create linkages to community organisations while prisoners are in prison, so when they transition back into the community then they already have established links to services and are more likely to start attending the support services when they are needed²⁵.

Another key theme that emerged from the interviews with all staff²⁶ was that **before the introduction of the RPFs and the ATLAS program, many remandees were unaware of the programs and/or services that were available to them (either within prison and/or in the community upon release)**. Management and program staff observed that men who participate in the ATLAS program were notably more likely to seek out services in their community upon

¹⁹ Source: interviews with RPFs, prison and program staff.

²⁰ Source: interview with program staff

²¹ Source: interview with RPF.

²² Source: interview with Manager

²³ Source: Interview with an RPF.

²⁴ Source: Interview with an RPF.

²⁵ Source: Interview data from multiple RPFs.

²⁶ Source: Interview data from RPFs, Management staff and program staff.

release so that they can continue to address their issues once they are released. Program participants have reportedly asked to be referred to other services to address their AOD issues, and issues regarding housing and family.

Management staff at locations where RPFs worked closely with ATCs (either through assisting them directly or by working in close proximity to them) allowed the RPFs to share information about prisoners with ATCs, and together, they were able to better support prisoners with housing. A Manager from one location commented that the RPF and ATCs at that location were working on creating a referral pathway for the remandees to go into AOD rehabilitation units.

6.3.4 Impact of RPFs on prisoner behaviour

Overall, the RAV quarterly report²⁷ and interviews with all staff indicated that they had received positive feedback from program participants about the support that RPFs provided. For example, **the RAV quarterly report summarised the feedback surveys of 246 ATLAS program participants²⁸, which found that 98 per cent of respondents felt that the facilitator created a respectful environment in the sessions.** The quarterly report also stated that “... participants have overwhelmingly reported that RPFs are creating a respectful environment in the ATLAS sessions. This is extremely important with a positive group environment being essential for positive learning engagement.”

There was also positive feedback about the ATLAS program in the summary of the feedback forms:

- 94 per cent of respondents felt that the **program sessions were relevant and meaningful** for them
- 90 per cent of respondents felt that they **learnt new information and strategies to help them manage being in prison**
- 91 per cent of respondents felt that they **learnt new information and life skills that will help them now or in the future.**

Management staff also commented that there was a notable difference in men’s behaviour and demeanour when they came from a meditation and/or mindfulness session. MAP staff in particular, highlighted that men are notably more confident and settled after attending the ATLAS program. Staff at this location have also noted a reduction in the number of incidents²⁹, particularly over the Christmas period, which they attributed directly to the RPFs delivering more programs than they normally would. Management at a separate location highlighted the positive impact of the support that RPFs deliver:

“I think reception units can definitely attest to the fact that there has been a lot less calls happening. Whether that’s to do with just a mental aspect of a prisoner coming in and getting the help that they require, takes the pressure off the prisoner themselves and they’re not getting agitated...and just fighting at a drop of a hat because they’re angry all the time....they’re getting the help they require just to settle in at the start” (Manager)

²⁷ See Appendices for detailed feedback/comments received from program participants, as reported in the RAV quarter one report.

²⁸ It is important to note here that according to the RAV quarterly report, RPFs sought feedback from program participants through feedback forms/surveys produced by RAV. It is unknown whether these surveys were anonymous or whether participants were required to identify themselves. There is a risk of biased responding when the program facilitator is providing and collecting feedback forms from participants. Participants may feel coerced into providing socially desirable responses in order to not disappoint the RPFs, therefore caution should be taken when interpreting the outcomes of this feedback.

²⁹ Incident data was not available to the review team, therefore this could not be validated as part of the review

The ATLAS program is often prisoners' first experience of group-based learning or group-based support since attending school, positive experiences in ATLAS sessions set prisoners up for future program participation³⁰ and referral to services:

"It is usually the first time that they have sat in a group. And they've had terrible experiences in school. Like they've never liked school. They've never liked teachers. They don't like people in blue. And it's the first time that they go into a room and sit with other people. And it's not uncommon for some to go, 'I'm just so stressed. I can't sleep'. And then all of a sudden, like, 'I can't either'. And then everyone's shared experience starts them on the path to treatment and opening up." (Manager).

Other positive feedback included the **removal of a \$12,000 debt for one prisoner who spoke to Consumer Affairs after a referral from an RPF**. An RPF from another location highlighted how *Jobs and Careers* module assisted men with writing their first ever cover letter and resume.

6.3.5 Impact of RPFs on the workload of other staff

Monthly reports from RPFs indicated that between December 2018 and May 2019, RPFs conducted 658 RTTs, 846 CPT reintegration assessments. Assessments can take approximately 15 to 30 minutes per prisoner, and longer if the prisoner has complex needs³¹. RPFs then also need to upload the information from the assessments and program attendance onto multiple platforms (e.g. CVIMS, and RPS) and make appropriate referrals, which can also take up to 40 minutes³² per prisoner (depending on the complexity of the prisoner). If the RPF roles did not exist then this work would be placed on ATCs, custodial staff and other program staff³³.

Management staff across all locations commented on the positive impact that the role has had at their location, in terms of reducing the workload of other prison staff. Interviews revealed that the administrative workload of ATCs was the most significantly impacted. There were also unintended positive consequences of the introduction of the RPF roles. For example, Management staff across multiple locations commented on the **notable reduction in incidents in the yard from remandees, which then reduced stress and workload of Prison Officers in having to monitor conflicts in community**. The staff felt that this was a result of remandees being more settled, and because they were kept busy with program attendance. Management staff at one location noted that because the RPFs are able to build rapport with remandees, it also has an untinted positive impact on the attitudes of remandees towards other custodial staff.

6.4 Challenges experienced and recommendations

This section of the report reviews the barriers and challenges associated with delivering activities outlined the RPF position description. As noted earlier, the position description for each location was modified so that the roles could best support the needs of remandees and staff at each location. The review found that despite the differences in roles across the locations, there were some common challenges raised by RPFs. **The most commonly cited challenge to program delivery was the administrative burden associated with assessments (RTT screenings and CPT reintegration assessments)**. The extent to which this was an issue varied across locations with one location reporting having an extensive waitlists for assessments. Other challenges included: lack of appropriate space to conduct programs; challenges associated with the remand

³⁰ Source: Interviews with Managers and an RPF.

³¹ Source: Interviews with RPFs

³² Source: *ibid*

³³ Source: interviews with Management staff

cohort (transient, stressed, managing drug withdrawals, busy with appointments and court visits); and difficulty with working with family violence perpetrators.

6.4.1 Challenge: administrative burden associated with assessments

Interviews with RPFs revealed that, overall, the greatest barrier to program delivery was the administrative burden associated with conducting assessments (including 658 RTT screenings and 846 CPT reintegration assessments). Specifically, RPFs are responsible for conducting the assessments (which can reportedly take up to 45 minutes, if they have a complex prisoner) and then uploading this information onto RPS, which can also take up to 40 minutes if they have a complex prisoner. This was raised by all RPFs but the estimated proportion of time spent on administrative work varied between sites from 40 to 80 per cent of their time³⁴. RPFs at one location highlighted that they had at least 300 remandees waiting for CPT reintegration assessments, and that they were three months behind on these assessments, which is quite concerning as remandees are potentially missing out on services that are attached to these assessments. **The review found that at locations where the administrative workload was lower, RPFs were able to spend more time on developing and delivering the ATLAS programs.** For example, Management staff at MAP indicated in the interview that it was decided early on that the RPF at this location would conduct the RTTs, but the ATCs would be responsible for uploading that information into the various databases. This was intended to free up the time of the RPF to focus on program delivery. Figure 6 showed that MAP delivered the highest number (n=128) of ATLAS program sessions, of all the locations. **RPFs at locations where administrative workload ratio was lower (40 per cent), spoke about how they were able to develop the program content by adding additional resources and activities (that were not in the ATLAS manual), and organising guest speakers or co-facilitators.** Guest speakers included representatives from external organisations as well as prison staff from internal services such as health, education and housing areas.

6.4.2 Other challenges

There were a number of other challenges raised by RPFs. For example RPFs at two locations highlighted the lack of space that they had to deliver programs, which is a commonly reported operational challenge particularly at some prison locations. Other challenges included the difficulties in working with a remand population, such as remandees struggling with drug withdrawals (this was a common issue at reception prisons such as DPFC and MAP) and issues with engaging remandees from some CALD groups³⁵. Management staff and an RPF at one location highlighted the difficulty they experienced in working with family violence perpetrators. The RPF felt that remandees with a family violence history would often derail conversations during programs to talk about how they were the victims, and that their partners were the ones who needed help to manage their behaviour. Management staff at this location also noted that family violence perpetrators often voiced negative attitudes towards women and were often combative towards female program staff (including the RPF).

6.5 Changes required to strengthen the RPF roles

This section of the report will review the extent to which changes are required to strengthen or support the RPFs.

³⁴ Source: interviews with RPFs. RPFs provided rough estimates of the proportion of time that they spent on administrative tasks.

³⁵ Engaging prisoners from CALD backgrounds has been reported as a challenge across multiple program evaluations, it is unlikely that challenges with engaging people of CALD backgrounds is unique to remandees.

6.5.1 Recommendation: The primary focus of the RPFs should be on program delivery with assessment-related work being a secondary function of the role

While the position descriptions for the RPF role clearly state that undertaking assessments is a key component of the role in order to meet the needs of remandees, the primary focus of the role should be on program delivery³⁶. This review identified that the most common challenge that RPFs experienced was balancing the workload associated with conducting assessments and delivering the program and other services. For example, RPFs at MRC indicated that they had a waitlist of approximately 300 remandees (three months behind on assessments) for conducting CPT reintegration assessments, meaning that remandees are potentially missing out on services at this location. It is important to note here that interviews were conducted approximately six months after the introduction of these roles and there were a number of RPFs who had been in the role for only a couple of months. Therefore, this may improve over time as RPFs may need more time to settle into their roles and learn to balance their assessment work with their program delivery work. **However, it is recommended that CV communicate to Offender Services Managers (who oversee the RPFs) that the primary focus of the RPFs must be on program delivery and that assessment-related work is a secondary function of the role.** It is also critical that CV monitor the waitlists of assessments at each location, which could be incorporated into existing reporting systems (to improve oversight of waitlists).

6.5.2 Recommendation: review of the ATLAS manual

The review found that there is a need to modify the ATLAS program manual, with all locations indicating the changes were required to better suit the needs of remandees, and many locations introducing their own modifications to address this issue³⁷. The feedback was that the manual in its current state is too focused on reading and writing, which is not appropriate given the low literacy levels of many prisoners. Delivering a program where participants are required to read and write may exclude those who have significant literacy issues, intellectual disabilities or an acquired brain injury.

A Manager from one location described the manual as “sketchy” and that it required significant changes. This Manager noted that they were fortunate to have an RPF with a background in adult education who was able to significantly modify the program. This indicates a lack of confidence in the program content, which was reported across majority of locations with many making adaptations to the program manual/delivery. Further, **the RPF and Management staff at DPFC felt that the program manual was not appropriate to the needs of the women at DPFC.** They noted that this location already offers services to remandees that are contained in modules five to eight. To reduce duplication of services, the RPFs modified the program by inviting other services to co-facilitate some sessions:

“maybe have a look at the manuals for women versus men because they’re certainly quite different. I’d like to keep the role and think it’s valuable, but just to be able to change it for our location a little bit and look at the programmes and what works and what doesn’t work in our location.... But to make more practical help than sitting in a classroom, reading-from-a-booklet help. So, she [RPF] started from the start in delivering it as the book’s been laid out. And she’s found the materials and the women’s attention span hasn’t stayed with it.. So, she’s been able to change the programme a bit, so it’s a bit more interactive. And they complete the workbooks together rather than the workbooks are there for the women to fill out.” (Staff).

³⁶ Source: Departmental Brief from Rehabilitation Reintegration Branch to the Offender Management Division TRIM ID: DB/18/9607.

³⁷ Source: interview with management staff, program staff, and RPFs raised this issue. This issue was also raised in the RAV quarterly report which summarised the reflections of the RPFs during supervision.

The recommendations from the interviews was that the program needed to be more interactive and discussion based (and less reliant on written outputs such as filling out the workbook). For example, three RPFs talked about adding YouTube videos to sustain the attention of participants and to further enhance the program content. Examples of YouTube videos included guided mediation/mindfulness exercise and information from Consumer Affairs about tenancy rights (which was raised as a need by remandees). Importantly, this would only be feasible for locations which had facilities to support this. Other changes to program delivery could include bringing in guest speakers who could then answer any questions that prisoners may have and provide them with information on the supports that are available to them in their community, and potentially creating early links to these services.

6.5.3 Recommendation: continue to provide professional supervision through RAV on a monthly basis

The review found that the general consensus among RPFs was that **the group and individual professional supervision provided by RAV was helpful and should continue to be offered to RPFs on a monthly basis**³⁸. RPFs commented in their monthly reports and in interviews that they found the monthly professional supervision by RAV to be very helpful and useful to their role. The individual and group supervisions allowed for self-reflection, sharing of resources and problem solving with other RPFs. RPFs also commented in their interviews that it was helpful to have professional supervision through an external agency because it allowed them to speak freely without fear of repercussions for their job. Two RPFs felt that the initial fortnightly supervision was too much or unnecessary, but once supervision was conducted monthly then it was more in line with what they needed. It is recommended that individual and group supervision by RAV continue to be offered to RPFs on a monthly basis – particularly given the high workload of these positions as evidenced through this review.

6.5.4 Recommendation: CV to consider an additional casual floating RPF position

Two RPFs talked about the stress that they felt in taking sick leave or annual leave because they were no staff members who could perform their roles in their absence. They noted that if they took leave then programs would get cancelled and the number of assessments would build up, which caused significant anxiety about taking leave when they needed it. **One suggestion by a Manager was to have a casual pool of floating RPFs who can work across sites to fill-in for annual leave, sick leave or to assist RPFs in catching up with workload.** It is recommended that CV consider creating an additional RPF role, one whom can travel to the locations which need staff to fill in for staff who are on leave or to provide additional assistance, for example, to catch up on the waitlist of assessments and/or program delivery. This may assist in retaining staff in these roles and ensuring the benefits associated with the introduction of these roles can be maintained.

6.5.5 Recommendation: RPFs to collect individual participant data

Due to the lack of individual level data collected, it was not possible for this evaluation to report on characteristics of ATLAS program participants. It is therefore recommended that RPFs record basic information on participants, such as first name, surname, CRN, date of referral, date of program participation (of each module), and assessments conducted. Accurate data provide an understanding of the need for the service, uptake of the services, tracking waitlists for programs and assessments, and allow for meaningful ongoing performance monitoring and evaluation.

³⁸ RAV are contracted to provide monthly professional supervision to RPFs until November 2020 (when the RPF role contract is due to expire).

7. Conclusion

The remandee population in Victoria has tripled over the past decade and this rate of growth is predicted to continue, which means CV needs to ensure programs and services are responsive to the complex needs of this cohort. In June 2018, CV introduced nine RPF roles to provide programs and support to the growing population of remand prisoners, which also allowed program staff to focus on delivering clinical interventions to sentenced prisoners.

This review sought to explore the pilot implementation, operation and immediate impact of introducing the RPF roles, including the extent to which the introduction of these roles has been associated with an improved service response to remand prisoners. A secondary aim of the review was to explore the impact of the introduction of the RPF roles on the associated workload of prison and program staff.

Overall, the review found evidence of the continued need for and effectiveness of the RPF roles in supporting remandees. The review found that the RPF roles act as a ‘catch-all’ service whereby they provide continuity of care to remandees from reception and throughout their time on remand. RPFs were found to provide a range of support to remand prisoners, including undertaking needs assessments, making referrals to programs (including ATLAS) and services, and delivering the remand-specific ATLAS program. Without the RPF roles, assessments and referrals would need to be conducted by other staff (Prison Officers and ATCs), and the ATLAS program would need to be delivered by clinical staff, all of whom have limited capacity. **The review also found that the introduction of the RPF roles reduced the workload of other staff, particularly ATCs,** who have conducted assessments in the past. The review also found that there was an **indirect positive impact of the RPF roles on prison incidents** (reportedly at multiple locations), which reduced the work of prison staff who have to manage conflicts in the prison community. Management and program staff felt that the decrease in prisoner incidents was a direct result of remandees being less agitated and anxious, due to having their needs met by the RPFs. It is important to note here that these were the observation of staff, a review of prison incident numbers was beyond the scope of this review.

A number of other positive outcomes were attributed to the introduction of these roles, including remandees being better informed about the programs and services available to them, an increase in the uptake of services by remandees, as well as improved program readiness. ATLAS program participants (as reported in the RAV quarter one service delivery report) also provided positive feedback about the ATLAS program and the RPFs. Specifically, **survey respondents (n=246) indicated that they felt the ATLAS program was relevant and meaningful to them (94 per cent), and that they learnt new skills and strategies that would help them in the future (90 per cent).** RAV also commented that respondents overwhelmingly reported that RPFs created a respectful environment in the ATLAS sessions, which RAV felt was essential for positive learning and engagement. **Overall, all stakeholders reported that the RPFs were a valuable resource and there would be significant consequences should these positions not be extended beyond the current funding period.**

However, the review also found that the assessment-related work impacted on some RPFs’ ability to deliver the ATLAS program, which should be the primary function of the role. The review also found that there was a need to modify the ATLAS manual. The manual in its current state was not found to be responsive to the literacy needs of prisoners, in that it was too reliant on reading and writing which many prisoners struggle with. The RPFs indicated in their interviews that they needed to modify the program in order to retain attention, enhance the applicability of discussions and learnings around the key content.

The report identified the following recommendations and opportunities for further strengthening the RPF role and the ATLAS program:

Table 9: Recommendations

Recommendations
1. CV to consider extending the contracts of RPFs beyond the pilot period in recognition of the continued need and demand for these services
2. CV to communicate to Offender Services Managers that the primary focus of the RPFs is on program delivery, with assessment-related work being a secondary function
3. CV to review the ATLAS manual in consultation with RAV and Caraniche to ensure that any modifications are evidence-based and responsive to the needs of remandees (especially women)
4. Continue to provide professional supervision through RAV on a monthly basis
5. CV to consider creating an additional casual floating RPF position who can assist when RPFs need leave to ensure positive impacts associated with the introduction of these roles can be sustained over time
6. Rehabilitation and Reintegration Branch investigate and consider how to improve reporting functionality via RPS and/or CVIMS to allow improved program analysis and individual level participant data to be captured

8. Document information

Document details

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Audience

The audience for this document is the Rehabilitation and Reintegration Branch with the purpose of providing information on how the RPF roles and the ATLAS program are operating at DPFC, MAP, MRC, Barwon Prison, MCC (including Kareenga) and HCC.

Reference material

Acronyms	Description
AOD	Alcohol and Other Drug
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
ATC	Assessment Transition Coordinators
ATLAS	Adapt, Take Stock, Look Ahead Suite
CISP	Court Integrated Services Program
CJS	Corrections and Justice Services
CMRC	Case Management Risk Committees

Acronyms	Description
CPT	Case Planning Transition (CPT) assessments
CRN	Corrections Reference Number
CV	Corrections Victoria
CVIMS	Corrections Victoria Information Management System
DJCS	Department of Justice and Community Safety
DPFC	Dame Phyllis Frost Centre
DTO	Drug Treatment Order
EQUIPS	Explore, Question, Understand, Investigate, Practice and Succeed
HCC	Hopkins Correctional Centre
LS/RNR	Level of Service/Risk, Needs, Responsivity
MAP	Melbourne Assessment Prison
MCC	Marrngoneet Correctional Centre
MRC	Metropolitan Remand Centre
NSW	New South Wales
PIC	Performance, Innovation and Coordination Branch
RAV	Relationships Australia Victoria
RRAP	Remand Release Assistance Programs
RPF	Remand Program Facilitator
RPS	Reintegration Pathway System
RTT	Reception Transition and Triage assessments
SA	South Australia

9. Appendices

9.1 Appendix A: RAV quarterly report: participant feedback about ATLAS program

The RAV quarter one report revealed the following remandee feedback:

Table 10: Feedback comments from program participants

What's the most important thing you got out of today?
How to set new goals
Get to talk about things on my mind
Respect
Self-awareness in some struggles
My good and bad points
How my thoughts work
Good feedback by all here
Info about prison life and other sessions
More knowledge about adapting to emotional change
Other peoples stories
How and where to get assistance
Free to talk about things and problems
De-stress
New ways of coping whilst on remand and leading into the future
New coping skills
To set goals
Settings goals
Learning about stress
No matter what, don't give up
There's a lot of new ways to find help
To make a plan for everything to do in my life
Support and learning about programs I wasn't aware of
Info to find places to get more help
I got to understand my emotions
I start to think more
Getting to know other people

Time went quickly and I forgot I hate myself for 1.15min
Supportiveness
Breaking goals down
Outlook on life when I get out
Mindful thinking
Positivity
Self reflection
Positive attitude training
Positive thinking strategies
Sleep / Breathing
Time management and planning
Relaxation
Sleeping
Coping with stress
Knowledge and tips
Confidence / Strategies
My chest finally eased up

Table 11: Further feedback comments from program participants

What do you think you will do differently after today's workshop?
Step back and be more positive about my life
My attitude and the way I will look at myself
Talk to someone and vent a bit more
Relax a bit more
Stay positive
It was good
Learn to understand more about others
Eat better / learnt new ways and help on the outside
Cook
The sessions are too long should be cut to an hour
I am going to education to see what I can do
Look harder for the help I need
Everything

Look into finding more help outside my comfort zone
Breathing strategies
I will be able to calm myself and be more realistic while I'm in prison. I will try to get in touch with my children back home in Malaysia. Ms Corinne was a very helpful with information that we need to know while in prison and very approachable. Thankyou
Learn to manage my life in a more effective way
How to manage healthy living
Make realistic goals
Look after my family
Work on my routine
I don't know
Keep up with studies
Think about my goals and how to break it down
Put these strategies in place
Stay positive
Positivity
Many things but keep working on me
Try to be positive
Staying positive, new strategies
Stress relief
Focus on mindfulness
Sleeping & eating
Exercise
Try new techniques
Stay on track to stay off drugs
Live one day at a time

Review of Transition 24

Information Management and Evaluation Branch

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Background

Victoria's older prisoner and offender population has been steadily increasing over the past 10 years, with the number of older prisoners more than doubling from 479 prisoners in 2007 to 1,027 in 2017. Similar increases in the number and proportion of older offenders has also been found in other jurisdictions across Australia. According to 2007 and 2017 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data, with the exception of Tasmania, all Australian jurisdictions experienced an increase in the number and proportion of older prisoners aged 50 years and over from 2007 to 2017.

Older prisoners and offenders are a diverse cohort with complex health needs and vulnerabilities. Corrections systems have traditionally been designed for younger prisoners and offenders and can struggle to meet the needs of those who are older. Many states (including Victoria) now direct their attention to ensuring programs and services are responsive to the specific needs of this cohort. Corrections Victoria has demonstrated this by producing the *Ageing in Corrections: Older Persons Policy for the Victorian Corrections System 2019-2024*, which is designed to guide the Victorian corrections system to respond to the needs of older prisoners and offenders. The Transition 24 program is one program CV delivers to the older prisoner population, and represents the focus of this report.

1.2 Prison Fellowship Victoria

The Transition 24 Project is a voluntary, specialist pre- and post-release transitional support program coordinated by Prison Fellowship Victoria and delivered in conjunction with Friends of Dismas (FOD).

The Transition 24 program focuses on mature-aged prisoners (aged 50 years and older), and is designed to assist with their re-integration back into the community through the provision of pre- and post-release support, predominantly for prisoners who do not qualify for ReConnect services¹. Pre-release support includes volunteer mentors meeting with prisoners (usually via video-link) to discuss their support needs prior to release. Two volunteer mentors then meet the prisoner on the day of their release 'at the gate' and provide immediate assistance to prisoners in their first 24 hours following their release. Community based post-release services are provided by FOD and includes continued support (up to 12 months post-release) through weekly support meetings, regular one-to-one mentoring sessions, and Life Skills workshops in the community (which focus on skills such as cooking/food preparation, financial budgeting, and computer/mobile phone basics).

1.3 Review of Transition 24

This review used a mixed-methods approach to collect and triangulate evidence of the need for and effectiveness of Transition 24. This included a brief jurisdictional analysis of similar programs available in other criminal justice jurisdictions across Australia, quantitative analysis of CV administrative data and Transition 24 program data, and qualitative analysis of interviews with key stakeholders involved in the implementation or delivery of the programs. This report presents the findings and the recommendations of the review. The findings of the review may be used to inform future funding decisions and to consider need for the service across the system.

¹ Those who qualify for ReConnect may still choose to participate in Transition 24, however, Transition 24 predominantly caters to those who do not meet the criteria for ReConnect and are then left without an appropriate service. For a list of the ReConnect eligibility criteria, see Appendices.

1.4 Key findings and recommendations

Prison Fellowship Victoria had four key deliverables for Transition 24 and successfully delivered on all of them:

Table 1: Key findings of the review against the service delivery targets

Service type	Annual target rate	Delivered	Achieved
Eligible referrals accepted	100%	92 referrals all accepted	✓
Mentoring relationships	35 prisoners / offenders	36 referrals 41 prisoners supported	✓
Group work / Creative workshop	2	Four Life Skills workshops (November, February, May and June 2018)	✓
Engagement level	Fortnightly or monthly	Weekly	✓

This review sought to determine the extent to which there is a continued need for the Transition 24 service across Victorian Prisons, which provides pre- and post-release transitional support services for aging prisoners who represent 14 per cent of all prisoners in Victoria. The challenges of transitioning into the community upon release are well established and these challenges may be compounded for older prisoners. For example, older offenders may struggle with isolation and loneliness if they have lost contact with family and friends over the course of a long sentence (particularly if they have a history of sex offences)², which highlights the need for the post-release mentoring support that Transition 24 is intended to offer.

Overall, **the review found that the service provider has delivered on all of their key contract deliverables.** They accepted all referrals (n=92) and offered services to all eligible prisoners, **however, the uptake of the service was low and the type and duration of the services provided differed to that which was initially intended. A service was delivered to only 48 (52 per cent) of the 92 referrals received during the 2017-18 financial year.**

Service delivery reports and interviews with staff indicated that **participants were predominantly interested in the day of release support, after which they exited the service** (i.e., they do not wish to receive mentoring post-release). The intention of the service was to provide participants with support for up to 12 months post-release, however, the minority of prisoners (n=18) who remained in contact with the service, exited within four weeks.

Prison Fellowship Victoria felt that referrals to the service were made too close to prisoners' release date (40 per cent were referred less than one month before release), which impacted on the number of pre-release sessions that they were able to provide. This was also believed to directly impact the lack of service uptake post-release as providers felt they had insufficient time to establish a trusting relationships with prisoners prior to their release.

Overall, the review found support for the need for the day of release support that Transition 24 offers, particularly for those elderly prisoners who were released from remote

² Source: *Aging in Corrections: Older Persons Policy for the Victoria Corrections System 2019-2024*

locations or had elderly family members who could not pick them up. The value of the day of release support was highlighted in interviews with prison staff, who indicated that **Transition 24 volunteers often serviced prisoners who were initially eligible for other post-release services but the service provider was not able to assist them on the day of release.**

Transition 24 volunteers have been relied upon to provide assistance on day of release at very short notice.

There was a low uptake of post-release mentoring support or workshops offered by FOD.

The reasons for the lack of engagement in post-release services and/or the extent to which the service provider attempted to reengage participants is unclear based on the data available. Consultations with prison staff indicate that the lack of service uptake may be due to participants not wanting support that is religious-based or that prisoners have too much “on their plate” once they are released from prison and participating in the program is not a priority for them. The challenges in engaging prisoners in programs and services once they are released in the community are well established. However, given the low uptake, it is recommended that CV review the need for the post-release mentoring and workshops in the community before making any decisions about future funding.

Consultations with prison staff highlighted concerns about the program and/or service provider, namely that Prison Fellowship Victoria is delivering a chaplaincy service when that is not what they are contracted to deliver. Prison staff also raised significant concerns over the safety of the volunteers, given they transport prisoners upon day of release, and queried whether the training they receive is adequate.

In summary, there appears to be a need and interest for the day of release support, particularly for those who are released from a rural location where there is a lack of public transport.

However, **the low uptake of Transition 24’s post-release services and concerns regarding the service may be cause to reconsider whether older prisoners may be better serviced through existing pre-and post-release services, such as ReConnect.**

Should the service be extended, it is recommended that CV review whether there is a continued need for the post-release support offered through the service given the low uptake and high disengagement rate of the post-release support component. It is also recommended that CV review the concerns that prison staff have raised regarding the religious nature of the service and come to an agreement with Prison Fellowship Victoria regarding the expected nature of the service that they have been contracted to provide.

Should a decision be made to extend the service beyond the current funding period, the report concludes with the following recommendations:

1. Strengthening ongoing data collection:
 - a) CV and service providers to consider collecting feedback from program participants to capture their experiences with pre- and post-release support.
 - b) Future data collection to include data on the method of delivery of pre-release support (face-to-face or video conferencing).
 - c) Future data collection to include number of referrals by location to improve understanding of the need for the service and uptake of service across prison locations.
 - d) CV to introduce formal data collection procedures from Friends of Dismas regarding post-release contact/engagement to improve the oversight of the service.
2. CV to review service delivery locations to ensure they continue to reflect the current profile and need for the program across the system.
3. CV to review whether there is a continued need for the post-release support offered through the service, given the low uptake and high disengagement rate of the post-release support.

4. Prison Fellowship Victoria to ensure they provide support to Transition 24 participants that is free from religion (in accordance with their contract agreement).
5. CV to review the training around safety protocols that are in place for Transition 24 volunteers.
6. CV to promote Transition 24 among ATCs and other Offender Services staff at participating prisons to ensure staff are aware of the service and referring prisoners as appropriate.

2. Introduction and background

Corrections Victoria (CV) is responsible for managing and supervising adult prisoners and offenders in Victoria. CV delivers a range of programs and services in order to assist offenders to address issues related to their offending behaviour and improve their likelihood of reintegration post-release. The aims of offender management as outlined in CV's Offender Management Framework 2015 are to:

- maintain a safe and secure community
- motivate offenders' to engage in and continue with programs and services
- identify and monitor offenders' risks and needs
- coordinate and prioritise offenders' access to appropriate programs, services and activities based on offenders' individual risk and/or needs.

The Pip Wisdom Community Corrections Grants (PWCCG) are an important component of CV work in addressing the reintegration needs of prisoners, offenders and their families in Victoria. In 2018, the CV Rehabilitation and Reintegration Branch engaged the Information Management and Evaluation (IME) Branch to evaluate PWCCG programs nearing the end of their funding cycle. The Transition 24 program is one of seven programs funded by the PWCCG. This review aligns with the overarching program logic model and evaluation framework for the PWCCG (CD/17/332590).

2.1 The Transition 24 (T24) program

The Transition 24 Project is a voluntary specialist pre- and post-release transitional support program coordinated by volunteers from Prison Fellowship Victoria and delivered in conjunction with Friends of Dismas (FOD)³. Prison Fellowship Victoria is a Christian not-for-profit organisation that has a specific focus on pre- and post-release support of older prisoners across all 14 Victorian prison locations⁴.

The Transition 24 program focuses on older prisoners, and is designed to assist with their reintegration back into the community. The service is available to all prisoners aged 50 years and over, however, the service provider notes that this age eligibility criteria is somewhat flexible. The service is intended to fill the gap for those prisoners who do not meet the eligibility criteria for ReConnect services⁵. However, interviews with prison staff indicated that Transition 24 volunteers often service prisoners who were initially eligible for other post-release services but the service provider was not able to assist them on the day of release. Transition 24 volunteers have been relied upon to provide assistance on day of release at very short notice.

The Transition 24 Program consists of trained volunteer mentors assisting prisoners in the weeks/months prior to release and then 'at the gate' on the day of their release. Two mentors provide assistance to the released prisoner in their first 24 hours 'on the outside' including transportation to appointments (Community Corrections, Centrelink, medical appointments, etc), lunch, and ensuring that they arrive at their pre-arranged accommodation for their first night.

Post-transitional support include weekly support meetings and regular one-to-one friendship/mentor 'catch-ups' (mentoring sessions) and Life Skills workshops providing skills in cooking/food preparation, financial budgeting, computer/mobile phone basics for example.

³ FOD was formed in 2012 by Prison Fellowship Victoria, Baptist Union Victoria and Churches of Christ Vic/Tas with the aim of providing personal and empathic support to prisoners upon release and an empathic avenue for those of Christian faith who may have found it challenging to connect with a church (initial Grant Proposal p.7).

⁴ Initial Grant Proposal.

⁵ See Appendices for ReConnect eligibility criteria

The objectives of the Transition 24 Project as outlined in their initial grant proposal are as follows:

- to better equip participants to live-crime free lives, therefore reducing the recidivism rate
- to make the first 24 hours post-release a positive experience and the first 24 months a positive reintegration into the community
- to provide a better quality of life for aging ex-offenders upon release
- to provide ongoing mentoring and friendship support (on a highly personalised basis) to project participants (and families where possible) particularly in the early stages of release
- to provide practical support wherever possible to assist ex-offenders in accessing various services and also advocating with them where appropriate, e.g. housing, Centrelink, etc.
- to provide opportunity to pursue and grow in Christian faith where sought. Spiritual well-being is an integral part of a person's overall wellbeing.
- to provide some essential training in life skills such as food preparation, budgeting, establishing bank and mobile phone accounts, computer skills, etc.
- to demonstrate a caring and accepting community that supports and empathises with a group (ex-inmates) whom all too frequently encounter prejudice, rejection and indifference upon release from incarceration
- to encourage interdependence, where help is offered in the context of a caring community, but not mandated or forced. Transition 24 Project participants will be offered assistance and friendship support, however it will be their choice to engage or not.
- to encourage ex-offenders to contribute positively to their community through actively participating in community groups and/or volunteering.

2.1.1 Current funding and contract deliverables

The program was funded \$264,000 over a three year period under the PWCCG. The program is in its second funding cycle and is nearing its completion date with the contract set to end in June 2019. Therefore a review of the service was warranted. The key deliverables for the Transition 24 program as outlined in the contract agreement, include:

- all eligible referrals will be accepted and provided with a minimum of 24 hours initial support
- mentors will meet participants in the weeks/months prior to release, and then on the day of release providing intensive supports for the first 24 hours following release
- support will continue up to 12 months post release through weekly support meetings and one-to-one sessions
- provision of life skills sessions (in the community).

Targets for the Transition 24 program are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Transition 24 program delivery against key contract deliverables for the 2018 financial year

Service type	Annual target rate	Delivered
Eligible referrals accepted	100%	92 referrals all accepted
Mentoring relationships	35 prisoners / offenders	36 referrals 41 prisoners supported
Group work / Creative workshop	2	Four Life Skills workshops (November, February, May and June)
Engagement level	Fortnightly or monthly	Weekly

2.2 Scope

The findings of the review may be used to inform future resourcing decisions about the service, however, explicit recommendations regarding any funding decisions about the service are beyond the scope of this review. Interviews with prisoners who actively engaged in the program post-release were also beyond the scope of this review. This review forms part of the broader evaluation of the PWCCG.

3. Methods

This section of the report describes the approach taken to review the Transition 24 Program, including key questions, methods, and limitations of the review.

3.1 Review questions

This review sought to determine the extent to which:

- the Transition 24 program has been implemented as intended (implementation fidelity)
- priority areas originally identified are well aligned with actual demand
- the service meets the needs of older prisoners and offenders
- the service meets the target performance indicators outlined in their operational requirements
- any changes are required to allow the service to function more effectively.

3.2 Methodology

The review employed mixed methods to collect and triangulate evidence on the need for and effectiveness of the service. The key stages were:

- jurisdictional analysis of similar programs targeting older prisoner populations offered in other Australian states/territories and New Zealand
- a review of CV policy, research, and program documents relating to mature-aged prisoners
- a review of CV and Prison Fellowship Victoria administrative data
- consultations with key stakeholders involved (either directly or indirectly) in the implementation or delivery of the service.

The data collected for this review was analysed using thematic analysis (for qualitative data) and descriptive statistics (for quantitative data).

3.2.1 Jurisdictional analysis and review of relevant research

The IME branch conducted a brief analysis of similar programs offered for mature-aged prisoners in other Australian and international (New Zealand) jurisdictions. The analysis also included a brief desktop review of each department's website. The review of other jurisdictions was dependent on a response from other jurisdictions when they were contacted for information. The analysis sought to explore whether other jurisdictions have similar programs as Transition 24, and if so, determine the:

- key inputs and activities considered necessary for other programs and services
- outcomes achieved by other programs and services
- key lessons learned with respect to the effective design, delivery mechanism(s), management and implementation of mature-aged offender specific programs and/or support services.

There were no jurisdictions that offered programs similar to that of Transition 24. The findings of the jurisdictional analysis are presented in Section 4.1

3.2.2 Quantitative analysis of prison and program administrative data

A quantitative analysis of prison and program data collected by the service providers was also undertaken. The primary source of data was the biannual performance reports submitted by Prison Fellowship Victoria to CV for the period 1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018 (referred to in this report as the 'reporting period'). The progress reports provide a detailed description of the major areas of work and activities completed, the service activity against the target objectives, and any barriers or challenges experienced by the service providers for the preceding six month period. The analysis of administrative data presented in the progress reports provided information on:

- nature and scope of activities delivered as part of the Transition 24 program participation rates and perceived effectiveness of these activities
- barriers and challenges experienced by service providers and project staff while attempting to implement and/or deliver these activities
- extent to which the service meets the target performance indicators outlined in the operational reporting requirements
- extent to which the service meets the needs of the mature-aged prisoner population in Victoria.

The report also includes an analysis of CV prison administrative data to determine the number and proportion of mature-aged prisoners (see Section 4.1.1 Victoria – Analysis of CV administrative data). This analysis provides an indication of the need for the service across the system.

3.2.3 Semi-structured interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders

The review also included semi-structured group interviews with six key stakeholders involved in the implementation and/or delivery of the service across Victorian prisons. In total, the review interviewed a range of stakeholders, including:

- Senior Program Coordinator at Tarrengower Prison who oversees all the services at this location
- Assessment and Transition Coordinator from Hopkins Correctional Centre
- Assessment and Transition Coordinator from Langi Kal Kal Prison
- Programs Manager from Marngoneet and Karreenga Prison

- Programs Manager from Beechworth Correctional Centre
- State Manager of Prison Fellowship in Victoria.

All stakeholders worked on average five years in the Victorian Criminal Justice system in operational roles (range ten months to nine years). This suggests that the stakeholders had wide range of experience and knowledge. Interviews were electronically recorded and transcribed using an external accredited transcription agency, and the transcripts were analysed using thematic and content analysis techniques.

The purpose of the interviews was to elicit stakeholder views regarding:

- nature and scope of activities delivered as part of Transition 24
- participation rates and perceived effectiveness of Transition 24
- barriers and challenges experienced by service providers while attempting to implement or deliver these activities
- extent to which the service meets the needs of mature-aged prisoners in Victoria
- recommendations around how the service could be strengthened to better meet the needs of this cohort.

3.3 Limitations

Some methodological limitations that need to be recognised when considering the findings of this review are:

- *Data limitations* – The data captured in Excel provided by Prison Fellowship Victoria did not always match what was reported in their performance reports. Prison Fellowship Victoria may benefit from further guidance on what type of data would be beneficial to capture across both data repositories.
- *Selection bias* – Interviews were conducted with key stakeholders involved in the implementation and/or delivery of the Transition 24 program across five of Victoria's prisons. Selection bias is a potential limitation as interview respondents are likely to be overly positive about the service as they have a vested interest in the service being extended. These staff, however, by virtue of their role and experience were identified as potential interview participants as they could speak to the need, impact and experiences with Prison Fellowship Victoria's service.
- *Sample bias* – The review team spoke to a small number of stakeholders (n=6) and did not receive feedback from prisoners as part of the review. Thus, the extent to which the findings can be generalised to the broader prisoner population are limited.

4. Results

This section outlines the key findings from the review, and is structured as follows:

- jurisdictional analysis
- analysis of Prison Network’s performance reports
- interviews with key prison staff and service provider.

4.1 Jurisdictional Analysis

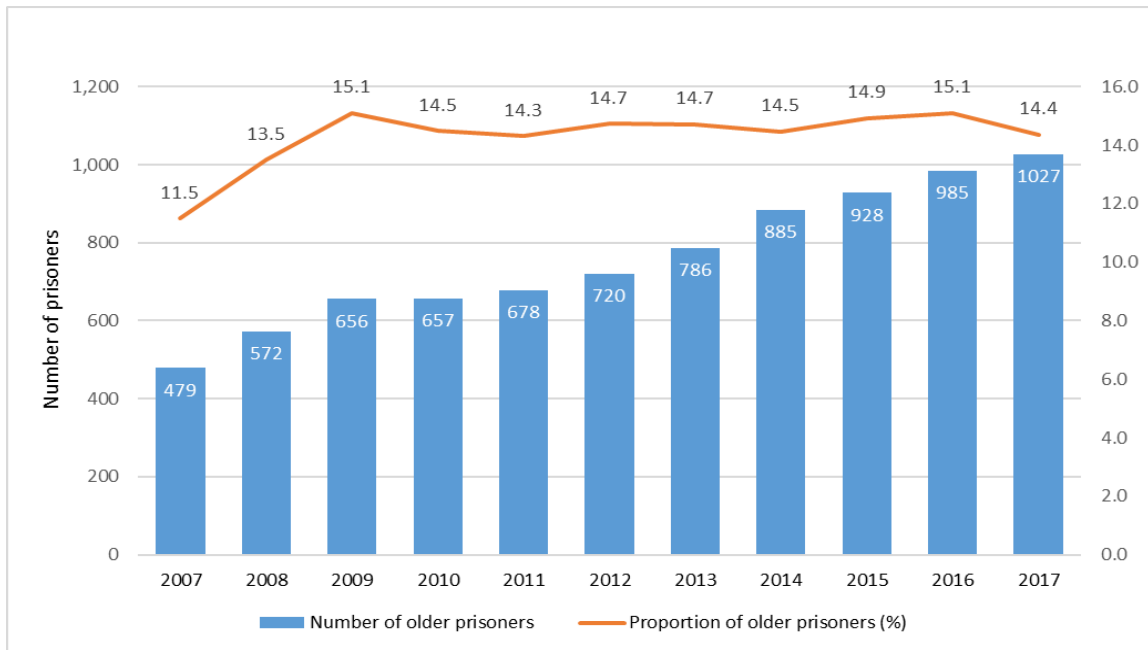
4.1.1 Older prisoners in Australia

Note: Any data referring to a particular financial year in this section of the report represents a ‘daily average’ across that financial year rather than a ‘snapshot’ figure for a particular date.

Victoria’s cohort of older prisoners and offenders⁶ has been steadily increasing over the past 10 years. The number of Victorian older prisoners has more than doubled from 479 prisoners in 2007 to 1,027 in 2017⁷. However, this growth has generally been in proportion with the overall growth in the number of prisoners in Victoria, particularly after 2010 (See Figure 1).

A part of this growth can be attributed to an ageing population in the broader community as well as custodial sentences being handed down to older offenders for historical crimes including sex offences, and changes to sentencing laws that contribute to longer periods of imprisonment⁸.

Figure 1: Number and proportion of older prisoners in Victoria from 2007 to 2017 financial year



Similar increases in the number and proportion of older offenders has also been found in other jurisdictions across Australia. According to 2007 and 2017 ABS data, with the exception of

⁶ ‘older prisoners’ refers to prisoners aged 50 years and above.

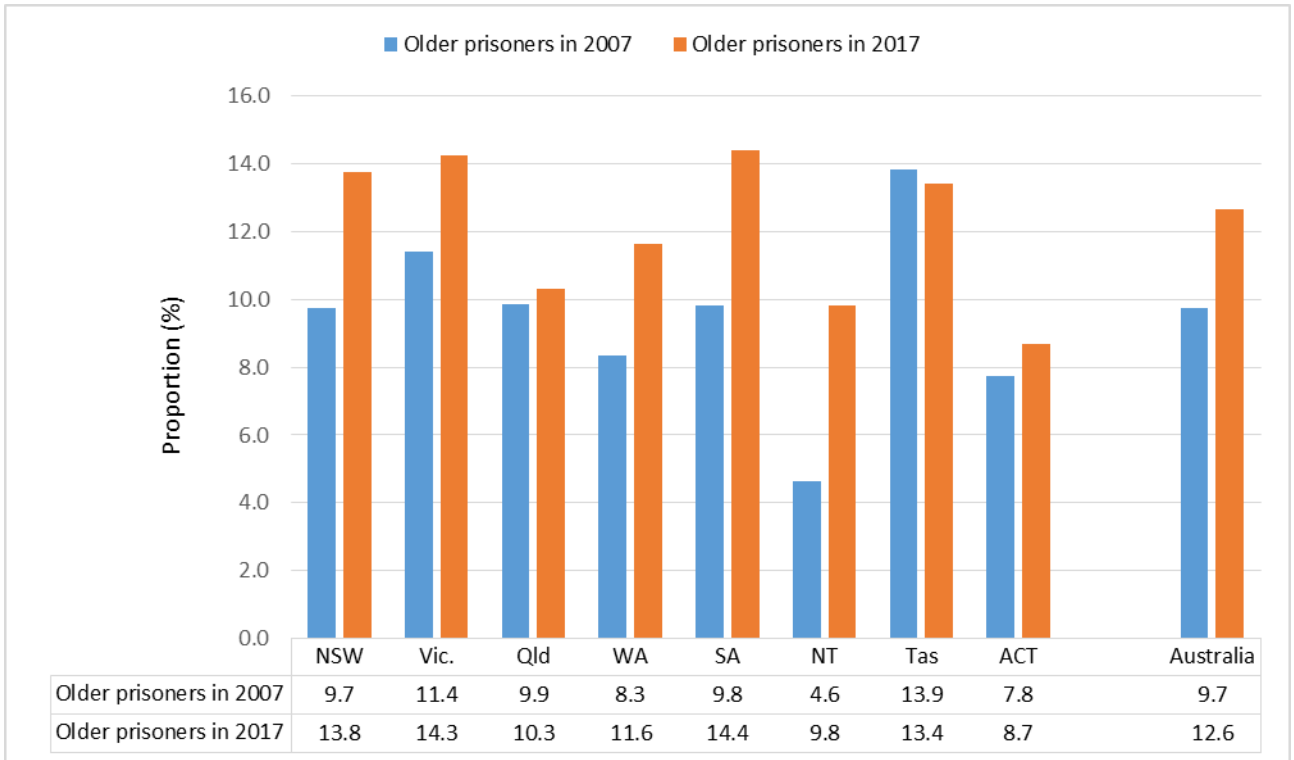
⁷ Corrections Victoria data on prisoner populations by financial year.

⁸ Source: *Aging in Corrections: Older Persons Policy for the Victoria Corrections System 2019-2024*

Tasmania, all states experienced an increase in the number and proportion of older prisoners from 2007 to 2017⁹.

Figure 2 shows the proportion of older prisoners in 2007 and in 2017 for each Australian jurisdiction. As demonstrated in Figure 2, Northern Territory experienced the highest proportional increase of older offenders (from 4.6 per cent in 2007 to 9.8 per cent in 2017), followed by South Australia and New South Wales (see Figure 2 for values).

Figure 2: Proportion of older prisoners in 2007 and 2017, by state



4.1.2 Older prisoners in Victoria

Note: Any data referring to a particular financial year in this section represents a ‘daily average’ across that financial year rather than a ‘snapshot’ figure for a particular date.

Despite older prisoners representing a smaller proportion of the whole prisoner population, they often have multiple and complex needs which can place pressure on all parts of the corrections system. Needs vary according to individual health status, offending history, adjustment to prison life and prospects for successful rehabilitation and reintegration (including any supports in the community upon release).

The key issues faced by mature-aged prisoners that are identified in the literature, include¹⁰:

- older prisoners often experience declining functional ability (with older female prisoners experiencing greater levels of functional decline, compared to their male counterparts), which can affect their ability to effectively engage with the corrections system and/or other programs and services upon release

⁹ Proportion of older prisoners was calculated for each state using the number of offenders over the age of 50, as a proportion of all offenders in their respective states.

¹⁰ Source: *Aging in Corrections: Older Persons Policy for the Victoria Corrections System 2019-2024*

- older prisoners often have difficulty residing and navigating in prison facilities and offenders often struggle to secure housing in the community (some older prisoners may also require assisted living e.g. nursing home or specialist care)
- older prisoners require access to a range of services and programs that specifically target their needs, and may require more support in identifying and/or accessing these services than the general prisoner population
- older prisoners may struggle to comply with standard prison management practices due to their declining functional ability and may require extra protection from victimisation by other prisoners and offenders due to their vulnerability.

Prisoner profile

Nearly six per cent of older prisoners identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. At 30 June 2017, there were 58 older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander older prisoners (56 were men and two were women).

The older prisoner population is also culturally diverse. In 2016–17 26 per cent of older prisoners were born in countries where English is not a first language. Of this 26 per cent, prisoners were most commonly born in Vietnam. Comparatively, the proportion of prisoners aged under 50 who were born in these countries was only 19 per cent. Prisoners from CALD backgrounds may experience more barriers and challenges in participating in programs and/or services and reintegrating into the community upon release than the general prisoner population.

Sentencing profile

Older prisoners are less likely to be on remand (un-sentenced) than prisoners aged under 50 years. In 2016–17, 12 per cent of older prisoners (110 men and 11 women) were on remand, and this proportion has remained stable since 2012–13. In contrast, the proportion of younger prisoners who are on remand has increased from 21 per cent in 2012–13 to 35 per cent in 2016–17. The proportion of older male Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander prisoners on remand also grew from 10 per cent in 2012–13 to 25 per cent in 2016–17. All of the five older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in prison in 2016–17 were sentenced.

Most serious offences and time in prison

Older prisoners tend to have a more serious offence profile than their younger counterparts, although there are significant gender differences. Since 2012–13 the three most common most serious offences (MSOs) among older male prisoners have consistently been sex offences, homicide and drug offences. In 2016–17, 42 per cent of all older male prisoners had a sex offence as their MSO. Prisoners with a sexual offence history may experience more challenges in reintegrating into the community and securing housing upon release. Older females, on the other hand, are most likely to be in prison for homicide, property offences or drug offences. These offending histories need to be considered in the context of the key issues for women, as identified in *Strengthening Connections: Women's Policy for the Victorian Corrections System*. Key considerations for women include histories of victimisation and trauma and the stronger connection between relationships and offending.

Older men spend more time in custody than prisoners aged under 50 years. In 2016-17 the most common sentence length for older men was five to 10 years, while men aged under 50 years were commonly serving one to two year sentences. Proportionally, older men made up 48 and 41 per cent of all men sentenced to 20-30 years and 10-15 years respectively. There is research to suggest that prisoners who serve longer sentences may experience more challenges in reintegrating into the community upon release as social disadvantage and the criminogenic effect of imprisonment may be exacerbated by the longer prison experience. Longer periods of incarceration are also likely to create challenges in maintaining connection with family and the

community, which is a known protective factor for reoffending. This indicates that older male prisoners, by virtue of their MSO and sentence length, may experience more challenges in reintegrating into the community upon release.

Recidivism

Older prisoners are less likely to reoffend than younger prisoners. Of prisoners released in 2014–15, 32 per cent of older males and 18 per cent of older females had reoffended by 30 June 2017. This compares with 60 per cent of younger male prisoners and 59 per cent of younger females prisoners. This is consistent with the age crime curve research, which indicates that a large proportion of offenders will desist from crime in their later years.

Recidivism rates for older prisoners have, however, been increasing over time, and at a greater rate than that for younger prisoners. For example, older male recidivism has increased by 65 per cent since 2012–13 and younger male recidivism has increased by 56 per cent. The reasons for this are unclear. Recidivism rates for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men are significantly higher, with half of all older men released in 2014–15 reoffending by 30 June 2017.

4.1.3 Programs for older prisoners in Australia

A brief jurisdictional review was conducted to examine whether services for older prisoners, such as Transition 24, were offered in other jurisdictions. New South Wales (NSW) was the only jurisdiction which indicated that they had a transition program for older prisoners, however, it was specific to older sex offenders. NSW Correctional Services were contacted for further information on this program but no further information was provided. Thus, we were unable to uncover the key lessons learned with respect to the effective design, delivery mechanism(s), management and implementation of the program.

Other states and territories indicated that they did not have any post-release programs for older prisoners/offenders at the time that they were contacted for information (November 2017). There was no response from Northern Territory Correctional Services regarding a request for information, therefore it is unknown if they offer programs for older prisoners or offenders.

4.2 Analysis of performance reports and interviews

Prison Fellowship Victoria are required to supply Corrections Victoria with bi-annual performance reports which measure Transition 24 progress against key deliverables. The following reports were available for this review:

- 1 July 2017 – 31 December 2017
- 1 January 2018 – 30 June 2018.

Each service delivery report is also accompanied by an Excel file which details participant program engagement at an individual level. Thus, data at an aggregate level is provided through a service delivery report, which should act as a summary of the information provided in the Excel file. The Excel data provided by Prison Fellowship Victoria did not always match what was reported in their performance reports. Prison Fellowship Victoria may benefit from further guidance on what type of data would be beneficial to capture and how to report. A summary of the service provider's performance for both periods is outlined in the next section.

4.2.1 Performance against contract deliverables 2017-18

Overall, the Transition 24 program has met all the contract deliverables for the 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018 contract period. As demonstrated in Table 3, Prison Fellowship Victoria met the acceptance of referral deliverable and exceeded the group work/creative workshop deliverable. They also exceeded the mentoring relationships deliverable and engagement level deliverable.

All of the 92 referrals for the Transition 24 Program were accepted by be Prison Fellowship Victoria for the period of 1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018, meeting their target of 100 per cent of accepted referrals. This is a positive finding as it indicates that the program is delivering their service as intended.

Table 3: Performance for 1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018

Service type	Annual target rate	Delivered	Achieved
Eligible referrals accepted	100%	92 referrals all accepted	✓
Mentoring relationships	35 prisoners / offenders	36 referrals 41 prisoners supported	✓
Group work / Creative workshop	2	Four Life Skills workshops (November, February, May and June)	✓
Engagement level	Fortnightly or monthly	Weekly	✓

4.2.2 Characteristics of service participants

As noted above, the quarterly reports indicated that there were 92 referrals accepted during the 2017-18 financial year. However, according to the Service Delivery Reporting by Participant (Excel file), there were 62 unique individuals who received some level of support through the service during the 2017-18 financial year. Furthermore, 14 of these individuals (23 per cent) did not receive any service pre- or post-release (during the reporting period). The reason for the discrepancy between the quarterly reports and the individual level data that was provided in the excel spreadsheet is unclear. The quarterly reports highlight that not all prisoners were eligible for release and thus, the service- during the reporting period. Another explanation for the discrepancy may be that participants withdrew from the service after they were. Interviews with ATC indicated that a notable number of participants withdrew from the service after the initial pre-release meeting they had with the service provider. The reasons for withdrawing from the service was not captured clearly in the service delivery reports and/or stakeholder consultations. Should the service be extended, it is recommended that Prison Fellowship Victoria may benefit from further guidance on how to capture and how to report data to increase the integrity of the data.

The data presented in this section of the report will be for the (n=48) individuals who received at least one recorded contact or visit from Prison Fellowship Victoria during the 2017-18 financial year (reporting period for this report).

Of the 48 participants who received at least one contact from Prison Fellowship Victoria, 92 per cent were men (n=44). The average age of participants was 57 years (age range 37 to 83 years). Despite the service targeting those over the age of 50 years, six participants (12 per cent) were under the age of 50, with the two youngest participants aged 37 and 44 years. This aligns with the information elicited from the stakeholder consultations, which identified that service providers were flexible in considering the program eligibility criteria. Of the 48 participants, 90 per cent (n=43) partly completed secondary education. The employment status and the security rating of the prison location from where participants were released from are displayed. The data indicates that 71 per cent of participants were either pensioners or unemployed at the time that they were incarcerated.

Figure 3. The data indicates that 71 per cent of participants were either pensioners or unemployed at the time that they were incarcerated

Figure 3: Participant's employment status

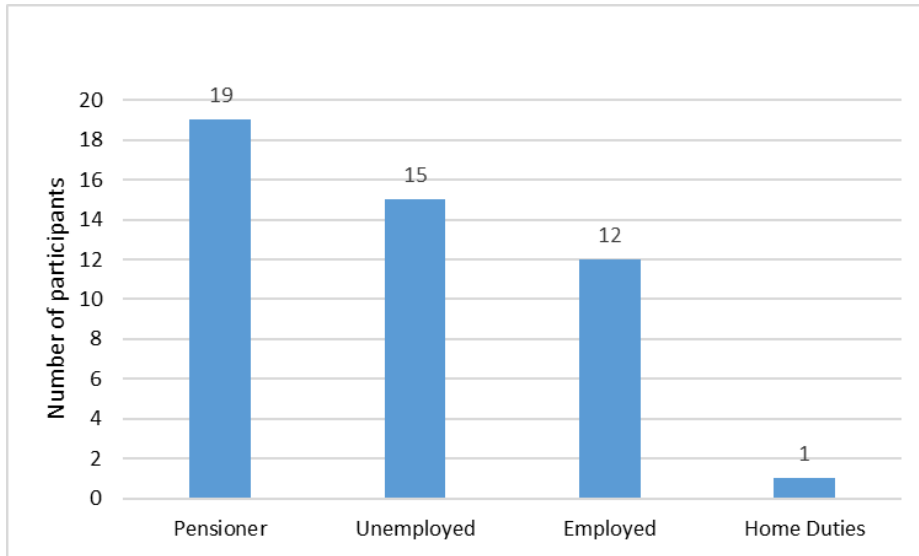
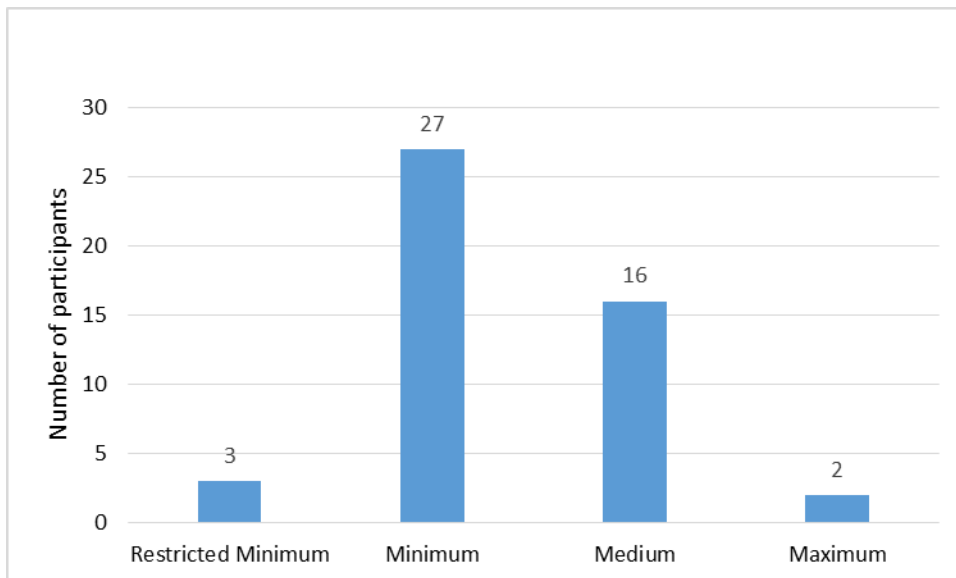


Figure 4 shows that majority of the program participants came from a minimum or medium security prison location.

Interviews with program staff indicated that the prisoners whom were most likely to access the service were those who were released from remote locations, which lacked public transport. The service was also useful for those who had elderly parents or family members who could not pick up the prisoners on the day of their release. These program staff indicated that without the Day of release service, there would be a number of people leaving prison without means of transport or staff would have to spend considerable time chasing other service providers.

Figure 4: Participant's security rating



4.2.3 Pre-release mentoring support

All referrals to the program were made by ATCs. Transition 24 offers pre-release support to prisoners via face-to-face visits and video conferencing. The aim of the pre-release service is to provide support to prisoners in the weeks and months before they are released and to build

rapport between the prisoner and the mentor. This also provides an opportunity for mentors to get to know the offender and their needs in order to better assist them post-release. According to the service delivery reports, the majority of pre-release support is delivered less than one month pre-release (see Table 4). The report states that the most common reason for the short pre-release support time period is mostly due to the short notice that Prison Fellowship Victoria received from prisons. For example, the January to June 2018 service delivery report indicated that 40 per cent of referrals were received less than one month before the day of release.

The feedback from Prison Fellowship Victoria states that this is a significant challenge to service delivery and may limit the potential for best outcomes for participant engagement. The service provider also found it challenging to find volunteers who were able to travel the long distances to the rural locations (especially Beechworth) for pre-release support, citing that volunteers would have to travel on average 426km to provide this support. Video conferencing has been used as an alternative to face-to-face meetings.

Table 4: Transition 24 pre-release service delivery information – timing of participant commencement

	Timing of prisoner commencement		
	6 months – 4 months pre-release	3 months – 2 months pre-release	1 month pre-release
Total number of prisoners who were provided with pre-release support	2	4	35

The service delivery reports did not quantify what proportion of the pre-release meetings were conducted by video conferencing, but they did indicate that these meetings were conducted “primarily” through this method. The initial grant proposal that Prison Fellowship Victoria provided to CV indicated that pre-release support will be delivered face-to-face by volunteers who hold “existing green passes for that location”. It is not known how meeting through video conferencing may impact on mentors’ ability to build rapport with potential program participants and, therefore the likelihood that prisoners will engage with the service post-release. Should the service be extended, future reporting may wish to capture data on the method by which pre-release support is provided and consider collecting feedback from participants around the impact this has on their choice to engage with the service provider.

Recommendation 1:

- a) CV and service providers to consider collecting feedback from program participants to capture their experiences with pre- and post-release support.
- b) Future data collection to include data on the method of delivery of pre-release support (face-to-face or video conferencing).

Transition 24 provided 57 pre-release contacts to 41 prisoners across the 2017-18 financial year. This was not consistent with the data provided in the Excel file, which indicated that there were 51 pre-release visits to 37 prisoners. The majority of contacts were provided to prisoners at Beechworth Prison (n=16), followed by Hopkins Correctional Centre (n=12) and Marngoneet Correctional Centre (n=12). Figure 5 shows that there were no pre-release contacts made to

prisoners at Tarrengower Prison and Metropolitan Remand Centre (MRC). The reasons for the lack of pre-release contact at these locations is unknown from the data that is being captured. The number of referrals by location are also not captured. It may be that there is too much prisoner movement at MRC (as this is a remand centre), which may explain the lack of referrals made at this location. The interview with an ATC at Tarrengower indicated that there is not a high need for the service at this location as most of the women chose to access ReConnect¹¹ or they have other support systems that they can rely on post-release. This is reflected through the program data which indicates a low uptake among female prisoners.

Recommendation 1c: Future data collection to include number of referrals by location to improve understanding of the need for the service and uptake of service across prison locations.

Recommendation 2: CV to review service delivery locations to ensure they continue to reflect the current profile and need for the program across the system.

Figure 5: Number of pre-release contacts made by prison location

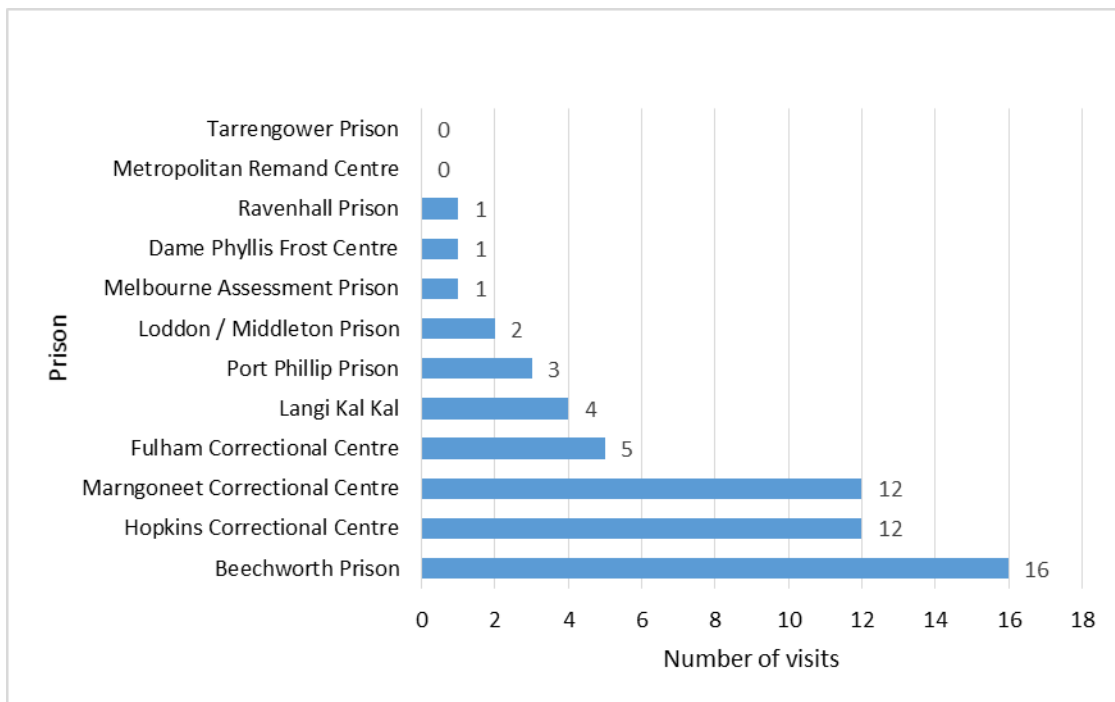


Table 5 shows the key types of support provided through the service and indicates that Transition 24 acts as a ‘catch all’ service, providing support across a range of domains. The most common type of support provided to prisoners prior to release was information provision, followed by spiritual and social network support, and informal counselling. The service delivery report did not provide any more detail about the type of “information” that is provided to prisoners nor the topics that they provided counselling on. Future reporting could request more detail around the types of

¹¹ All women are automatically eligible for ReConnect

information to better understand the pre-release needs of aging prisoners and the support which is provided through Transition 24.

Table 5: Transition 24 post-release service delivery information – support provided

Type of support provided	Total
Information provision	60
Spiritual and social networks	41
Informal counselling	27
Material aid provision	0
Referral – accommodation service	0
Referral – drug and alcohol service	0
Referral – health service	0
Referral – mental health service	0
Referral – employment service	0
Referral - social support service	0
Referral – family support service	0
Referral – material support service	0
Referral – spiritual and social networks	0
Referral – other (please specify below)	0
Advocacy – court support	0
Advocacy – accommodation	0
Advocacy - other (please specify below)	1
Crisis support	0
Family support	0
Practical assistance (please specify below)	0

4.2.4 Day of release support

All 92 referrals in the table below were made by Assessment and Transition Coordinators (ATC) at each of the prisons. There were 92 referrals made during the 2017-18 financial year (all of which were accepted) but only 48 per cent (n=44) of accepted referrals were provided with a service.

Table 6: Transition 24 service delivery information – engagement

Referrals	Total (n)
Total (n) of new referrals received	92
Total (n) of new referrals deemed as not eligible	0
Total (n) of new referrals accepted ¹²	92
Total (n) of prisoners who were provided service ¹³	44

Not all who were referred during the reporting period were eligible for release during the reporting period. For example, during the July – December 2017 reporting period, of the 43 referrals, only 25 offenders were eligible to be released. Of the 49 referrals in the January – June 2018 reporting period, only 31 offenders were eligible for release.

Thus, of the 56 eligible offenders:

- 30 (54 per cent) referrals were provided with day of release support.
- 15 (29 per cent) referrals opted out of the day of release support services. These referrals were serviced with pick up's on the day of release by:
 - ReConnect/VACRO (seven)
 - Self/Family/friend (six)
 - Muslim Connect (one)
 - ACSO (one)
 - other (no reason provided) (one)
- seven (13 per cent) referrals Transition 24 volunteers were not available to provide support (reasons include short lead time and/or distance to travel required)
- one (two per cent) referral was cancelled due to prevarication about destination address
- one (two per cent) referral was extradited.

Table 7 below indicates that a wide group of ethnicities were represented in the number of referrals made to Transition 24. This is consistent with prisoner population data (as discussed in sub Section 4.1.1), which indicates that the older prisoner population, like the broader prisoner population, is culturally diverse. However, the service was taken up mostly by those whom identified as Australian and/or those whose ethnicity was unknown. The reasons for this is unknown, and future evaluations may wish to seek the feedback of those prisoners whom do not take up the service, with a particular focus on those from ethnic backgrounds, and reasons why.

Recommendation 1a: CV and service providers to consider collecting feedback from program participants to capture their experiences with pre- and post-release support.

¹² Annual target for accepting referrals is 100% of those deemed eligible

¹³ Annual target for providing service is to 100% of accepted referrals

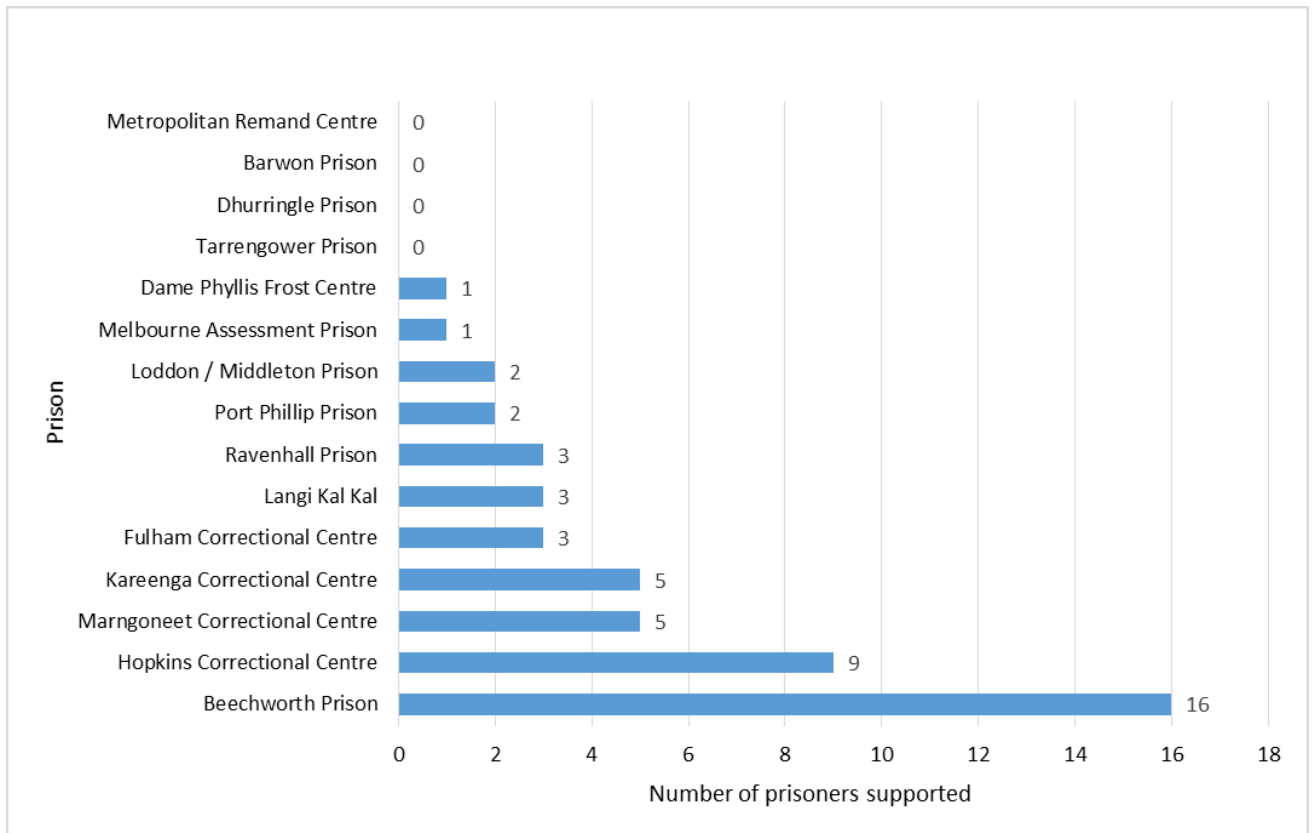
Table 7: Gender and ethnicity of referrals made and those who were provided with services

	Referrals accepted (n=92)	Provided services to (n=44)
Of which (n) were female	4	4
Of which (n) were ATSI	4	2
Of which (n) were:		
Australian	57	29
Arabic	1	0
English	2	1
Fijian	1	0
Greek	2	2
Indian	1	0
Polish	1	0
Romanian	1	0
Sudanese	1	0
Turkish	1	1
Vietnamese	1	0
Undesignated	19	10

There were no prisoners provided with day of release support at Dhurringle Prison, Tarrengower Prison, Barwon Prison or at the MRC during the 12 month reporting period. Figure 6 shows the number of prisoners per location whom did receive this service. It is not surprising that there were no prisoners from MRC who received support, as this is reception prison and prisoners tend to move out of this location quickly. As noted earlier, it is unclear whether there were any referrals made from these locations. Future data capture may wish to include the location of each of the referrals in order to better understand the relationship between where referrals are made and where the services are being delivered particularly given the low uptake of the service at the female prison locations and the lack of reported interest in the service (as indicated by the ATC who was interviewed for this review).

Recommendation 2: CV to review service delivery locations to ensure they continue to reflect the current profile and need for the program across the system.

Figure 6: Number of prisoners provided with day of release service by prison location



4.2.5 Post-release mentoring relationships

The January – June 2018 service delivery report indicated that post-release mentoring support comprised phone meetings and/or face-to-face meetings. According to the bi-annual service delivery reports, each day of release pick-up allows three hours of engagement between the prisoner and two Transition 24 mentors, therefore day of release support is counted as “mentoring support” by the service provider and is reflected in Table 8. It is not clear from the reports as to which types of support were provided on the day of release and which were provided at other times.

The service delivery reports indicated that the majority of post-release mentoring support was delivered to ex-prisoners from Beechworth Prison (n=11), Hopkins Correctional Centre (n=6) and Marngoneet Correctional Centre (n=6). There were no mentoring relationships established between Prison Fellowship Victoria volunteers and ex-prisoners from Port Phillip Prison, Melbourne Assessment Prison and Kareenga Correctional Centre (See Figure 7). Without feedback from program participants, it is difficult to know why participants are not engaging with the day of release support at these locations beyond what has already been mentioned in this report. Interviews with ATCs may shed some light on the reasons (discussed in more detail in Section 4.2.3) but without participant feedback, it is unknown why there is such a discrepancy between the number of referrals accepted and the number of people who receive the services.

Figure 7: Number of ex-prisoners provided with post-release mentoring by prison location

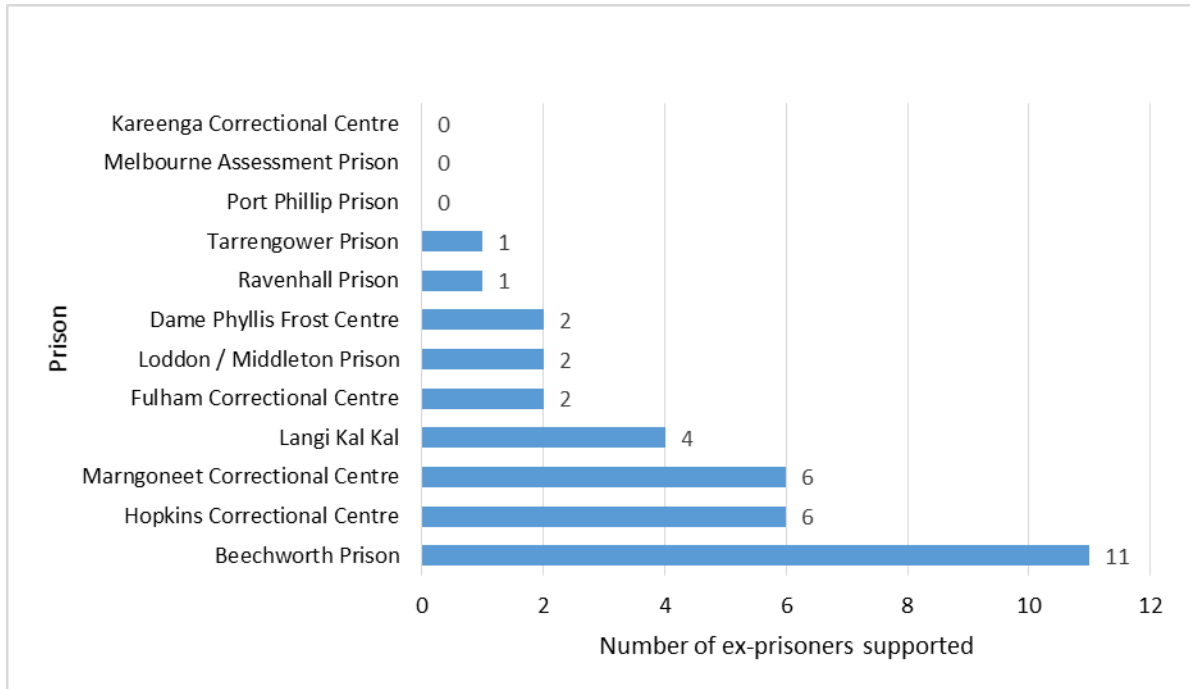


Table 8 shows that the most common type of support was spiritual and social networks support, followed by information provision, and informal counselling. The service provider indicated that they found it challenging to retain on-going involvement with ex-prisoners beyond the day of release support, due to the “fickle nature of the clients once released from prison”. It was evident from the qualitative interviews with prison staff that prisoners were mostly interested in day of release support, rather than ongoing mentoring support. ATCs who were interviewed for this review, acknowledged that prisoners mainly used Transition 24 for the day of release support and that they were not interested in support beyond this (qualitative data will be discussed in more detail in Section 4.2.4). This is a challenge for all post-release programs and services, and highlights the complexities of working with prisoners and offenders in the community. It is unclear what efforts the service providers made to try reengage these clients. The challenges prisoners face in transitioning back into the community upon released are well established and may affect ex-prisoners ability to engage with community and welfare programs¹⁴.

Table 8: Transition 24 post-release service delivery information – support provided

Support provided	Total (n)
Spiritual and social networks	36
Information provision	34
Informal counselling	14
Practical assistance	5
Material aid provision	6
Referral – accommodation service	1

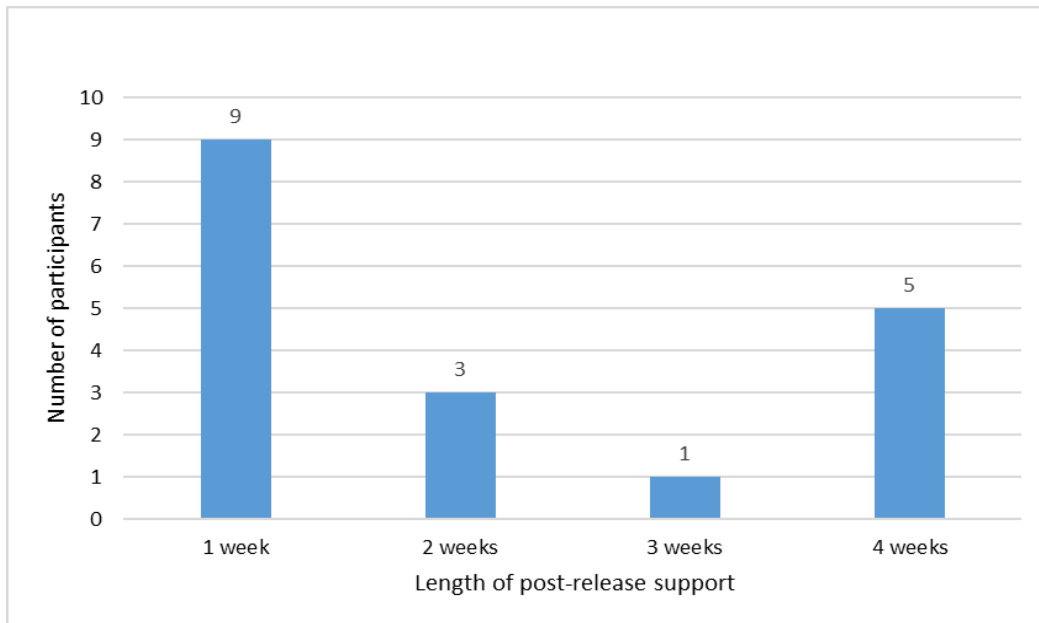
¹⁴ Criminology Research Grants (2001). *Post release: the current predicament and the potential strategies*

Referral – drug and alcohol service	0
Referral – health service	0
Referral – mental health service	0
Referral – employment service	0
Referral - social support service	2
Referral – family support service	1
Referral – material support service	4
Referral – spiritual and social networks	7
Referral – other (please specify below)	1
Advocacy – court support	0
Advocacy – accommodation	1
Advocacy - other (please specify below)*	10
Crisis support	0
Family support	0

*Quarterly reports indicated that Advocacy (other) referred to communication with other caseworkers to “ensure everything was in order and in some cases to inform them of how their first day out of prison went”.

Figure 8 shows that there were no participants in the reporting period (2017-18 financial year) who received support beyond four weeks, despite the service offering support for up to 12 months. Without feedback from program participants, the reasons for participants declining ongoing support from Transition 24 are difficult to ascertain. Possible explanation for the lack of engagement offered through the interviews with ATCs was that prisoners were put-off by the religious nature of the service. Staff indicated that prisoners were concerned that they would be in the car for a number of hours with volunteers who tried to talk to them about religion. These concerns are discussed further in Section 4.2.3 of this report. Another possible explanation for the lack of engagement offered by the service provider was that participants do not engage with the service because they have not had a chance to build rapport with the volunteers pre-release. Coupled with this, they felt that participants have a lot on their minds and a “lot on their plate” post-release and they are not likely to engage in a service with someone that they do not know. This will also be discussed in more detail in Section 4.2.3.

Figure 8: Length of time of post-release support



Consideration should be given to the length of time and type of support provided through the service, should the service be extended, to ensure that it meets the needs of this cohort. Furthermore, future reporting could collect participant feedback about the service to understand why ex-prisoners do not wish to have further contact with Prison Fellowship Victoria, despite being assessed and found to meet the needs criteria for this type of support.

Recommendation 1a: CV and service providers to consider collecting feedback from program participants to capture their experiences with pre- and post-release support.

Recommendation 3: CV to review whether there is a continued need for the post-release support offered through the service, given the low uptake and high disengagement rate of the post-release support.

4.2.6 Group life-skills classes

Group life-skills classes are provided in the community by FOD. These group classes are open to the community so anyone can attend. While the groups are intended to offer practical skills, they are also a way for people to gather and receive social support. Interview data also indicated that these group sessions provide opportunities for referrals to other programs and/or services (e.g., counselling).

There were four life-skills classes delivered by FOD for the reporting period. According to the January- June 2018 service delivery report, there were three Life-skills classes, which had “on average” five Transition 24 participants per workshop. The interview with the state manager of Prison Fellowship Victoria, indicated that life skills classes are conducted regularly in the community but FOD are not always aware of which participants are Transition 24 participants. It was also indicated that Prison Fellowship Victoria are working with FOD to improve documentation and reporting.

Life Skills classes included:

- 29th November 2017: a presenter from Hepatitis Victoria spoke about new treatments that are available for Hepatitis (n=11 Transition 24 participants)
- 28th February 2018: An ACOS caseworker presented on the programs and services they offer (“on average”¹⁵ five Transition 24 participants)
- 20th May 2018: A professional pastry chef presented information about buying food on a budget and provided participants with a seasonal food guide (“on average”¹⁶ five Transition 24 participants)
- 27th June 2018: A T24 participant (real estate agent, released on 14th May 2018) gave a presentation on the rights and obligations of a renter (“on average”¹⁷ five Transition 24 participants).

If the contract was to be extended, given the low uptake of the post-release service, consideration should be given to the key contract deliverables and whether there is sufficient need for this type of support during post-release.

Recommendation 1d: CV to introduce formal data collection procedures from Friends of Dismas regarding post-release contact/engagement to improve the oversight of the service.

4.2.7 Feedback from Prison Fellowship Victoria

Challenges and barriers

The service delivery reports and the interview with the service provider indicated that there were a number of challenges and barriers to running Transition 24 as intended, these included:

Short referral period: Referrals to Transition 24 often occur less than a month before the prisoner is due to be released (in 40 per cent of cases)¹⁸, and in some cases, less than a week. This makes it difficult for volunteers to get to know the prisoners and build rapport before they are released. The service provider felt that this was the strongest contributor to participants not staying with the program beyond the day of release support and felt that three to six months would be more beneficial:

“I believe the better the pre-release engagement, the better the post-release engagement... they’ve got a lot on their mind and a lot on their plate [post-release], so why would they want to go to some group or meet with somebody that they don’t know? It’s almost 0% chance of happening. But if it’s someone they’ve already built a bit of a kind of a relationship with, trust with in prison, that is much more effective. Especially if it’s the same person they see on the day of release, it’s less daunting and they’re much more likely to want to continue contact further down the path” (Service Provider)

Limited number of regional volunteers: As a safety measure, day of release support is intended to be provided by two volunteers¹⁹, but this can be difficult to arrange when volunteers have a long way to drive and are often required at short notice. Pre-release face-to-face visits are often difficult to organise because volunteers have to drive considerable distances for a short visit.

¹⁵ Direct quote from January- June 2018 service delivery report

¹⁶ ibid

¹⁷ ibid

¹⁸ Prison Fellowship – T24 January 2018 to June 2018 Service Delivery Report

¹⁹ Day of release support is intended to be provided by two mentors. There is however, no data in the service delivery reporting about whether this occurs. When the service provider was questioned about this component, he indicated that the two driver policy can be an issue logistically, especially when there is a lot of driving required. Future reporting should capture this data to ensure that this component of the service is being delivered as intended.

During the 2017 to December 2017 reporting period, a total of 8,529kms was travelled for Transition 24, with an average trip being 426kms. In such cases, Video conferencing is the preferred method of contact. The service provider indicated that they are currently recruiting more volunteers in regional areas.

Areas for further improvement

Areas for improvement that the service provider identified included improved information sharing with ATCs and prisoners about what the service offers. The service provider found that communication with prison staff can be difficult, especially when there is high staff turn-over. Staff turn-over has also caused issues with processes at some locations, which are highlighted in the following quote:

"There's a new programme manager and [unclear] just going through every single thing we do... To be honest, they're not doing any wrong, but the result is our volunteers there are so discouraged. They've been going for like 10, 15 years doing things and it's suddenly like they're just devalued. And, to be honest, they're saying to me they don't even want to go there anymore... And yet on the other side, we understand, there's [unclear] protocols and that type of thing... There's nothing wrong with what they're doing, just going through and trying to do things right and everything. But the result is just - a lot of things have been in place for years and then someone says, where's the paperwork? Or where's the thing?"

This was also highlighted in the interviews with ATCs. All interviewees noted that they were not aware of what Transition 24 offers beyond day of release. Communication between the ATCs and the service provider will need to improve as the service is entirely reliant on ATC referrals. Prison Fellowship Victoria did indicate that they are working on providing more information sessions to prisons to increase awareness of the service among staff and prisoners.

Further improvements could also be made to data capture from FOD regarding post-release contact/engagement. As noted earlier, FOD were not collecting data around the number of Transition 24 participants who attended life-skills sessions, and were only reporting approximate numbers. Prison Fellowship Victoria and FOD are currently working on improving data collection and reporting.

Recommendation 1d: CV to introduce formal data collection procedures from Friends of Dismas regarding post-release contact/engagement to improve the oversight of the service.

What is working well?

The interview with the service provider indicated that overall they have had a positive working relationship with CV. The aspects of the service that were reported to be working well included:

- volunteers flexibility to provide support to prisoners and ex-prisoners at short notice²⁰
- good communication between prison staff and volunteers about any risks or concerns with each prisoner
- some program participants have indicated wanting to "give back" and become volunteers themselves. The service provider indicated that they would like to explore this opportunity further with CV.

The service provider also reported the positive impact the service has by sending the message to participants that they are not alone:

²⁰ Although volunteer flexibility to provide support at short notice was seen as a positive aspect of service delivery, the service provider noted that not receiving adequate notice meant that volunteers missed out on the opportunity to build rapport with prisoners before their day of release.

"I think it is just the, somebody cares...the volunteer impact. Because there's the mindset of like, 'I'm coming out of prison, everybody hates me. I'm in here because of what I've done'. So everything's against them in that sense. And even in a lot of cases their family are as well... We want to change that mindset, and so there can be someone there... At least they can't say: 'everybody out here hates me or they're against me'. It's taken that away from them. We'll say, well, no, that's not true. You know, these volunteers, these people here, these Friends of Dismas, these support groups, it's there if you want it. "

The service provider also indicated that they are implementing a number of improvements to the program, including: more volunteers in regional areas; more information sessions in prisons for staff and prisoners about what the service offers; and a new book titled, *Out!: You'll get through – I've been there*, which includes stories from ex-prisoners who successfully transitioned into the community, and what they found to be helpful.

The service provider also indicated that some participants are provided with a 'Welcome Back' backpack, which may contain "a notepad, pen, water bottle, and...a little bit of food if they need it²¹". The plain backpack (no logos) is intended for those whom are in temporary accommodation, and the contents are dependent on the needs identified at the pre-release interview. The decision about which participants receive a backpack is up to the volunteers and team leaders. This tangible support is likely to be well received by ex-prisoners as the initial period following imprisonment is known to be incredibly overwhelming.

4.2.8 Feedback about Transition 24 from Corrections Victoria prison staff

A number of prison staff identified that they generally do not receive feedback from prisoners regarding the post-release service and, given their role, were unable to comment on longer-term outcomes (in the community). This is understandable given their role. Only one prison staff member indicated that they have received some feedback from ex-prisoners about the day of release service.

Overall, the consultations revealed that prison staff had mixed feelings about the Transition 24 program. Staff highlighted that there were a number of positive aspects to the program but they also highlighted some concerns. These are discussed in more detail in this section of the report. It is important to note that all of the positive feedback about Transition 24 were for the day of release support service. Staff could not provide feedback about the mentoring or workshop component of the service because as noted already, they do not know what happens once prisoners are released. Future data may wish to collect feedback from prisoners to get an understanding of how they perceive the usefulness of the service and what challenges they face post-release.

Benefit: Accommodating and reliable service

Prison staff felt that Transition 24 was very accommodating and provided a reliable and consistent service, where the volunteers turn up when they have been booked in:

"When we have booked in with T24, they've always turned up, they've always picked up."
(Marngoneet)

"They are more than accommodating, they're more than happy to wait, they've never just scrapped it because we can't give them the correct information. There has probably been one where I've sent them the actual address two days before possibly and, yes, they're more than accommodating which is really great." (Hopkins)

²¹ Source: interview with service provider

This is a positive finding as there are often challenges in recruiting and retaining volunteers for programs of this kind. The review did identify challenges in organising volunteers to drive to prison locations to deliver the service, however, this indicates that, overall, the service was reliable in fulfilling commitments.

Benefit: Day of release support reduces anxiety

The most commonly cited benefit of the day of release support has been the reduction of anxiety for prisoners, their families, as well as prison staff.

"...knowing that they've got someone to help them, that's coming to get them, they'll be more settled because the anxiety leading up to release can be really high for some guys and having this will relieve that, and they'll be more settled and have less issues while they're here and things like that." (Hopkins)

"It relieves prisoner anxiety, but also relieves the family's anxiety...If you've got someone in here that's quite elderly, and they're going back to live with their partner or parent, who would actually also be really elderly. Taking off the pressure of being at a location, which can quite often be hours' drive away... You know if they're coming from Mildura or somewhere like that, it's a long way to come. I think to have that pressure removed of someone's going to collect them, and someone's going to care for them, and make sure they get home okay." (Marngoneet)

"Takes a little bit of pressure off us as well...we will know a prisoner is not getting picked up. So we make arrangements for staff here to drive them to a train station. We make arrangements for them to have a myki card, and then we leave them at the train station." (Marngoneet)

The service was believed to support those who are most vulnerable:

"The guy who they picked up last week, he's on a walker so for him to go on public transport without assistance is almost impossible...he doesn't have anyone on the outside." (Langi Kal Kal)

Benefit: Day of release support is most useful in rural locations

The interviews indicated that the service is most needed in rural locations where there is a lack of public transport and family members may be older and live too far away to be able to pick up ex-prisoners on the day of their release.

Benefit: The day of release support fills the gap when prisoners are not eligible for ReConnect

Transition 24 fills the gap for those who do not qualify for the services of ReConnect.

"The straight release guys not involved in ReConnect...on one occasion the last couple of years I've had to organise a SWAG. We've had to ring around local agencies to find some emergency accommodation...all of a sudden, last minute, and it happens really frequently, the family who have said 'yes, yes, yes, he can stay with us. Yes, we'll come and collect you'. Call up the day before to say, 'oh you can come and stay with us, but we can't get down to get you'. Just stuff like that. It happens really regularly...So if we had somewhere like T24, it's a nice net to catch some of those kind guys." (Marngoneet)

Concerns raised by prison staff about Transition 24

There were some significant concerns raised by staff at all locations about the day of release support. These included: concerns over the safety of volunteers; safety of the families of the released prisoners; questions over the training that Transition 24 volunteers receive; the lack of

prison staff understanding of what Transition 24 offers (beyond day of release support); concerns over which services volunteers refer ex-prisoners to, and the religious nature of the service. There were also questions raised over the need for the service, which are highlighted in the quotes below:

"I've never heard the guys talk about the quality of friendship they've had with Prison Fellowship. Barely any of them go to that seminar. They want money or a lift. It's an enabling tool. I really wish I could say something else." (Beechworth)

"Many or very few prisoners actually use this service for the mentoring and friendship. They use it for pick-up from the prison which I think it's not intended to... that's not the aim of T24, but because that's part of the service, that's the one that they grab and unfortunately, they don't make use of what the bigger aim... Some of them don't really have the need of the other services, or some of the guys have said that if they were in the regional areas, they would definitely have used that because they're much more isolated there." (Langi Kal Kal)

"...staff will see it as if they've got a prisoner who's over 50, and has got no one to pick them up on the day, and need a bit of assistance. That's what they see the program as." (Tarrengower)

Challenge: Religiosity

Religious support was cited in the service delivery reports as one of the most common types of support that Transition 24 volunteers provided during pre-release, during day of release and at post-release. The religious nature of the service is a concern because the program was not designed or contracted to be a chaplaincy support program. During the interview with the service provider, the interviewee indicated that they will be providing each new participant with their new book, titled *Out! : You'll get through – I've been there*. The book is a collection of stories from ex-prisoners describing their journey in "staying out of prison". A closer look the stories found that the majority of the stories in this book credited their faith in God as being important to them staying out of prison.

The service delivery reports indicated that spiritual and social networks are encouraged but that care was taken to ensure that prisoners were not pressured and that all engagement was voluntary. However, four out of the five prison staff who were interviewed raised the religious nature of the service as either a barrier to prisoners engaging with the service or as a significant concern.

It appears from the service delivery reports as well as from the feedback provided by prison staff, that Transition 24 is very spiritual focused in the support that they provide. Staff did not appear to be aware that this was the case until they were receiving feedback from returning prisoners or until a representative from FOD was brought in by Prison Fellowship Victoria to talk to a group of men about the service. One staff member recommended that if the support is intended to be chaplaincy, then there needs to be clarity and transparency around this so that prisoners can make an informed decision about taking up the service and ATC can better provide referrals to those who may be interested in spiritual support.

"If it was something like social support, social contact, that is great. If it's about, 'hey, come along to church with me'... That's not so great... I guess I've I have heard some anecdotal reports that it is quite church-y in other prisons. And that's something that I've always been just a little bit aware of... I would hate to think that I was setting a woman up, thinking it was going to be great social support, and there was a bit of a catch to it" (Tarrengower)

"So I think it's just for prisoner knowledge. So if they're joining T24, the T24 are only referring them to groups based from a religious background. So they're not independent. I think the prisoners need to know that." (Marngoneet)

An interviewee indicated that they have questioned a Prison Fellowship Victoria representative about whether the service was faith-based but the representative denied that it was:

"...At one of the ATC meetings,... I did ask on that day, 'Is this church-y?' And he said, 'no, it's not'. I said, 'cool'" (Tarrengower)

Other concerns around the religious-nature of the service are highlighted in the quotes below:

"I wouldn't put a volunteer in a car for four hours with some of these guys while they're trying to torment them to join a faith. That is a very dangerous move with some of them...And, I must admit, I detect a degree of frustration and anger [from ex-prisoners]". (Beechworth)

"with the recent Royal Commission into Institutional Child Sexual Abuse, we have a lot of victims of religious based organisations here. So could that be quite traumatic, someone here not aware that that's actually where their counselling and mentoring is coming from. So they get out, and all of a sudden they're referred to a Catholic support group, and they were in a Catholic orphanage, and that's where they experienced their abuse... the prisoners need to be aware that that's what it is. So they can make an informed choice... We also have perpetrators here as well, and would that be seeing that as appropriate that they're going back into support groups, a perpetrator of abuse being put into a support counselling group with victims of abuse." (Mangoneet)

The religious nature of the service is a concern because the program was not designed or contracted to be a chaplaincy support program. A concern about providing a government funded program, which is clearly religion focused, is that prisoners who are not religious (or specifically, Christian) may feel alienated by the resources and/or services provided. A closer look at CV data on prisoners' reported religion found that half of older prisoners were not religious (47.8% in 2016, and 49.6% in 2017)²², which indicates that a very religious-focused service will not be relevant to a significant proportion of prisoners, or to those of different faiths such as Judaism, Buddhism, Muslim, Hinduism.

The Commissioner Requirements for religion and spirituality require that in order to maintain independence from the prison system, chaplains are to be employees of their communities of faith, not the prison provider²³. Because CV is funding Transition 24, Prison Fellowship Victoria needs to ensure that they are not providing a chaplaincy service.

Recommendation 4: Prison Fellowship Victoria to ensure they provide support to Transition 24 participants that is free from religion (in accordance with their contract agreement).

Challenge: Concerns over the lack of training of volunteers

Four out of the five prison staff interviewed raised questions/concerns regarding the training, qualifications or skills of the volunteers, and how this would impact on safety or delivery of a service. For example, prison staff indicated concerns over what happens when ex-prisoners call the volunteers after they have taken drugs and are seeking help. These are highlighted in the quotes below:

"... prisoners phoning these mentors. They'd gone off the rails, they'd had more drugs or something like that. And this mentor would be saying, 'You really need to get off the wagon and get some more help. Can I take you to a place where you can get help?'...Again, nice

²² Corrections Victoria administrative data on prisoner characteristics extracted on 30 June 2016 and 30 June 2017

²³ Commissioners Requirements on Religion and Spirituality in Prisons, Section 4.4.1

people. But what happens if this person was at serious risk of reoffending or there needed to be some serious intervention?...They're just unqualified" (Beechworth)

"There's actually a lot more issues for a prisoner than 'I just didn't have someone to pick me up on that day'. I'm not sure of the training that these volunteers for T24 have... so volunteer sort of takes them into a shopping centre. And this person's been in for a little while, and actually they're totally overwhelmed by it. So what do they do? All of a sudden I've got two very stressed out people trying to do the right thing." (Marngoneet)

A review of the training provided to volunteers was beyond the scope of this review.

Challenge: Safety concerns

Safety concerns were raised by prison staff for both the volunteers as well as for victims of family violence. The concern is that volunteers who do not know much about the prisoners they are transporting could be 'tricked' into driving prisoners to family member's houses where there may be a history of family violence and an existing restraining order.

"an over-zealous volunteer might take it upon themselves to try and bring a relationship back, not even knowing how hurt a victim may have been. Because a prisoner was sorry, crying and wanted a relationship back." (Beechworth)

"Are they're then getting out, and say 'Well, listen can you also take me here, I need to see my kids'. And actually there's a restraining order still current.... And the volunteer says, 'yes, happy to help you connecting', there's actually, there's an IVO out, you can't go there. So it's quite often about protecting the volunteer as well." (Marngoneet)

A prison staff member raised safety concerns for Transition 24 volunteers. The concern was that volunteers do not fully understand the risk that offenders can pose. The interviewee described a situation where a prisoner did not provide an address, which then raised concerns for the prisoner's case manager as well as the transition co-ordinator. Prison Fellowship Victoria, however, was still happy to accommodate them even when they were told that it was not safe, which indicates that they do not understand the safety risk and are putting their volunteers in potential danger.

"I ended up making the decision to cancel the referral because it wasn't safe for the volunteers. T24 sent back a response, 'yes, that's okay, don't worry. Are you sure you don't want us to wait and see what happens?'. It's not an ideal situation to put the volunteers in...It was a concern for somebody's safety that I didn't want them going...Eventually I put it out in detail and let them know exactly what information I'd found out, how I'd found it out, why I wanted to cancel the referral...And they still come back with, 'Are you sure you don't want us to wait?' And my reply was 'no, I don't. It's not safe, it's not okay, it's not happening'... I don't feel that they really took on board or understood where I was coming from." (Hopkins)

Given the vulnerable position Transition 24 staff may be placed in through their role in transporting prisoners upon release, a review of the training and safety protocols is warranted.

Recommendation 5: CV to review the training around safety protocols that are in place for Transition 24 volunteers.

Challenge: Lack of prison staff knowledge of T24

All five prison staff who were interviewed expressed that there was a lack of information about what the service offers beyond the day of release service. This is consistent with the feedback provided by the service provider. Prison Fellowship Victoria indicated that they were planning on providing more regular information sessions about the service to prisoners as well as to ATCs to try mitigate this issue.

Recommendation 6: CV to promote Transition 24 among ATCs and other Offender Services staff at participating prisons to ensure staff are aware of the service and referring prisoners as appropriate.

5. Conclusion

This review sought to determine the extent to which there is a continued need for the Transition 24 service across Victorian Prisons, which provides pre- and post-release transitional support services for aging prisoners who represent 14 per cent of all prisoners in Victoria.

Overall, **the service provider has delivered on all of their key contract deliverables, however, the type and duration of services provided differ to that which was initially intended** (with majority of prisoners only remaining in contact with the service for three to four weeks, when the service is designed to provide support for up to 12 months post-release). The service provider accepted all referrals (n=92) and *offered* services to all eligible prisoners, but the uptake of the service has been low.

A service was delivered to only 48 (52 per cent) of the 92 referrals received during the 2017-18 financial year. Prison Fellowship Victoria felt that referrals to the service were made too close to prisoners' release date (40 per cent were referred less than one month before release) which impacted on the number of pre-release sessions that they were able to provide. They felt that this directly impacted on the lack of service uptake post-release.

Overall, **the review found support for the need for the day of release support that Transition 24 offers**, particularly for those elderly prisoners who are released from remote locations or have elderly family members who cannot pick them up. However, **there was a low uptake of post-release mentoring support and workshops** offered by FOD. Interviews with prison staff and the service delivery reports confirmed that prisoners are mostly interested in the day of release support. It appears that the majority of offenders exit the service after their day of release support (i.e., they do not wish to receive mentoring post-release). The reasons for the lack of engagement in post-release services is not clear.

The review also found that **there was very little interest in the service from women** (n=4). The reason provided by the ATC was that women opted to receive services from ReConnect (all women are automatically eligible for ReConnect services) rather than Transition 24, or had other support available to them. Interviews with prison staff also indicated that prisoners and prison staff may prioritise access to pre- and post-release transitional support provided through ReLink and ReConnect, despite Transition 24 being focused on aging prisoners. It is thus recommended that CV review the service delivery locations to ensure they continue to reflect the current need for the program across the system.

The review found that the majority of participants whom do stay with the service beyond day of release, tend to exit within four weeks post-release despite this support being available for up to 12 months post-release. The difficulties with engaging offenders in the community are well established, however, the precise reasons for disengagement and/or the extent to which the provider attempted to reengage participants is unclear based on the data that is available. Consultations with prison staff indicate that the lack of service uptake may be due to participants not wanting support that is religious-based. However, there was no other data available to validate this claim. Consultation with the service provider indicated that prisoners have too much "on their plate" once they are released from prison and participating in the program is not a priority for them. It is recommended that CV review the need for the mentoring and the workshops components of the service before making any decisions about future funding.

Interviews with prison staff also indicated a number of concerns about the program and the service provider, namely that Prison Fellowship Victoria is delivering a chaplaincy service when that is not what they are contracted to deliver. This would need to be reviewed as a priority if the service was to continue beyond the current funding period to ensure that the service provider is delivering a service free of religion (as outlined in their funding contract) and that the service is not alienating those who need the type of support that Transition 24 is intended to offer.

Prison staff also raised concerns over the safety of the volunteers and enquired about whether the level of training that they receive is adequate. Staff also indicated that they would like to know more about what the service offers, particularly the support available through the post-release component, so that they can appropriately refer prisoners. The interview with the service provider indicated that they were planning to provide information sessions to prisoners and staff regarding Transition 24, which may help address this issue and/or increase the uptake of the service at participating locations, should the contract be extended.

In summary, there appears to be a need and interest for the day of release support, particularly for those who are released from a rural location where there is a lack of public transport. However, the low uptake of Transition 24's post-release services and concerns regarding the service may be cause to reconsider whether these older prisoners may be better serviced through existing pre-and post-release services, such as ReConnect.

Should the service be extended, it is recommended that CV review whether there is a continued need for the post-release support offered through the service given the low uptake and high disengagement rate of the post-release support component. The contract deliverables could be adjusted to focus on the day of release support offered to prisoners in the initial period upon release, which were more likely to be associated as strengths of the service. It is also recommended that CV review the concerns that prison staff have raised regarding the religious nature of the service and come to an agreement with Prison Fellowship Victoria regarding the expected nature of the service that they have been contracted to provide.

5.1 Recommendations

Drawing on the key findings of the review, the report identified the following opportunities for strengthening program impact and for better understanding the need for the service:

1. Strengthening ongoing data collection:
 - a) CV and service providers to consider collecting feedback from program participants to capture their experiences with pre- and post-release support.
 - b) Future data collection to include data on the method of delivery of pre-release support (face-to-face or video conferencing).
 - c) Future data collection to include number of referrals by location to improve understanding of the need for the service and uptake of service across prison locations.
 - d) CV to introduce formal data collection procedures from Friends of Dismas regarding post-release contact/engagement to improve the oversight of the service.
2. CV to review service delivery locations to ensure they continue to reflect the current profile and need for the program across the system.
3. CV to review whether there is a continued need for the post-release support offered through the service, given the low uptake and high disengagement rate of the post-release support.
4. Prison Fellowship Victoria to ensure they provide support to Transition 24 participants that is free from religion (in accordance with their contract agreement).
5. CV to review the training around safety protocols that are in place for Transition 24 volunteers.
6. CV to promote Transition 24 among ATCs and other Offender Services staff at participating prisons to ensure staff are aware of the service and referring prisoners as appropriate.

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The audience for this document is the Rehabilitation and Reintegration Branch with the purpose of providing information on how the Prison Fellowship Victoria service is operating across the Victorian prison system.

Acronyms

Acronyms	Description
DJCS	Department of Justice and Community Safety
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ATC	Assessment and Transition Co-ordinator
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

Acronyms	Description
CV	Corrections Victoria
DPFC	Dame Phyllis Frost Centre
DJR	Department of Justice and Regulation
FOD	Friends of Dismas
IVO	Intervention Order
MRC	Metropolitan Remand Centre
PWCCG	Pip Wisdom Community Corrections Grants
T24	Transition 24

6. Appendix A: The four key stages of the CVRP

The CVRP targets the seven key intervention domains from the time a person enters prison, right through to the time they are released. The four stages and associated activities are summarised in the table below:

Key Stages, Programs and Activity Descriptions for the CVRP

Key Stage	Program and Activity Description
Reception	<p>Reception Transition Triage (RTT) - Takes place at reception and aims to identify and address immediate transitional needs that, without intervention, would escalate or compound. Transitional needs identified at this stage focus on housing support, debt reduction, remand transitional support and child support payments. The RTT is delivered internally by the ATC or relevant prison staff, and is available to all prisoners (sentenced and unsentenced prisoners) and is typically delivered at each of the reception prisons (MAP, MRC and DPFC) but can be delivered to prisoners at other locations by exception.</p> <p>Delivery: Internal (ATCs or prison staff) at prisoner reception</p> <p>Eligibility: 100% sentenced and unsentenced prisoners (once per correctional episode).</p>
Case Planning	<p>Case Planning Triage (CPT) - Builds on the transitional needs identified through the RTT and identifies further transitional needs for sentenced prisoners who are serving a sentence of more than 18 months. The Case Management Review Committees (CMRCs) are chaired by Prison Operations Managers and aim to identify transitional needs to be targeted through intervention. Information from the CMRCs, coupled with the outcomes of the individual risk assessments (e.g. LS/RNR), assists in the identification of a range of transitional needs including legal issues, living skills, social connectedness, and education and training. Provision of support for needs identified through the CPT is largely facilitated through referrals to services within the prisons or incoming services from external agencies.</p> <p>Delivery: Internal (ATC or prison staff) delivery at each of the prisons, needs identified at CMRC for sentenced prisoners and at the remand classification panel for unsentenced prisoners</p> <p>Eligibility criteria:</p> <p>100% of all unsentenced prisoners (once per correctional episode)</p> <p>100% of all sentenced prisoners (once per correctional episode) who have greater than 18 months until Earliest Eligibility Date (EED), or Earliest Discharge Date (EDD) where there is no EED (<i>all others progress directly to ReGroup</i>).</p>
Pre-Release	<p>The Pre-Release stage provides a range of transitional support services and referrals that aim to address individually determined needs prior to release. The Pre-Release Stage incorporates three tiers of service combining group based and one-on-one support depending on the complexity of each prisoner's transitional needs.</p>

ReGroup – Available to all prisoners up to 18 months pre-release, or immediately on entry for prisoners serving shorter sentences. ReGroup commences with a one-on-one transition assessment by the ATC. Service delivery can involve information sessions and referral to other services, where required. Prisoners may remain involved with ReGroup throughout their sentence and prioritisation and engagement of services may be informed by individual transition needs or parole processes. Prisoners with more significant transitional needs may be referred to ReLink and ReConnect at this stage.

Delivery: Internal delivery at each of the prisons, with initial one-on-one needs identification delivered by ATC, and referral to external services (e.g. Centrelink, Department of Health and Human Services Housing, Legal Aid etc.)

Eligibility criteria:

100% of all sentenced prisoners up to 18 months pre-release, or immediately on entry for those serving shorter sentences (prisoners undertake one assessment for ReGroup for each episode of imprisonment)

A Prioritisation Assessment is undertaken by the ATC, at the time of referring to either ReLink or ReConnect (see below), to assist the contracted providers to manage the service delivery and program waitlists.

ReLink Level 1 (Group Program) – Provision of targeted and tailored facilitated group sessions that focus on practical strategies to address the identified transitional needs of participating prisoners. Up to eight hours of group session participation is available at this stage, covering areas such as community and family connectedness, independent living skills, and other intervention domains. For prisoners eligible for parole, participation is triggered by the outcome of their parole application process. For all other prisoners, the service commences 12 months from their discharge date. Group sessions are sometimes tailored to ensure the service is responsive to specific needs of vulnerable cohorts, e.g., ATSI prisoners or women.

Delivery: External delivery, VACRO, with **up to eight hours group session participation**. Available at every prison

Eligibility criteria:

100% sentenced prisoners with sentences of 12 months or more

100% parolees

100% high needs straight-release Serious Violent or Sex Offenders (SVoSOS)

100% female prisoners

100% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) prisoners.

All referrals are made through the ATC and the external provider prioritises and manages waitlists as required.

ReLink Level 2 (Individual Program) – Prisoners identified as having significant and complex transitional needs and requiring further support can access **up to four hours of one-on-one intensive transitional support**, with a focus on:

Intensive planning around key goals and associated actions identified in the Transition Plan

Accessing all relevant assessments to inform more detailed planning

Liaison and engagement with relevant prison staff as required

Coordination and collation of relevant documents and applications, including medical assessments, Office of Housing application, referrals to post-release support agencies in preparation for release

Case conferencing with the relevant ATC, the Reconnect case worker, and the Community Corrections Officer (CCO) where relevant to support seamless transition into the community.

Delivery: Combination of internal (ATC, CCO) and external (VACRO) service delivery. Available at every prison

Eligibility criteria: Referral from ReLink 1 (Group Program) to ReLink 2 is a recommendation by the service provider, which is approved by the ATC.

Service Provider – Relink is delivered by the Victorian Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (VACRO)

Post-Release

ReConnect – Post-release reintegration services are delivered as part of the ReConnect program. This is provided by four different contracted service providers, servicing different regions. ReConnect is designed to provide responsive, tailored and flexible assertive outreach support through the provision of two service streams. These are:

Targeted Reintegration Stream – up to four weeks of support. Post-release support for eligible prisoners with more immediate post-release transitional needs that can be largely addressed through targeted and brief intervention

Extended Reintegration Stream – up to 12 months of support. The extended reintegration stream focuses on prisoners with more entrenched and complex needs, who are typically at higher risk of returning to prison.

Delivery: External, with four contracted services delivering ReConnect in the community based on offenders geographical location. The Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) is a state-wide supplementary support service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) people

Eligibility criteria: Referrals to ReConnect are made via ReLink (VACRO). Prisoners in the Relink Level 2 stream (Individual Program) are automatically eligible for ReConnect. Other eligible prisoners include:

100% high needs parolees – SVoSOs on parole

100% of high needs straight-release SVoSO prisoners

100% sentenced ATSI prisoners

100% female sentenced prisoners.

Service providers – Reconnect is delivered by four providers – Jesuit Social Services (JSS), Australian Community Support Organisation, (ACSO), VACRO, and the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS).

Evaluation of Tuning into Respectful Relationships

Information Management and Evaluation Branch
Corrections Victoria

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Background

The number of women in Victoria's prison system has increased significantly over the last five years (49 per cent increase). This is largely due to the rising number of women remanded into custody for short periods of time, many of whom are subsequently released on bail or to a non-custodial sentence. A range of factors have been responsible for the growth in the women's prison population, including: population growth, changes in policing strategies, and policy and practice changes across the criminal justice system. Vietnamese women have represented the largest, single culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) cohort in the women's corrections system since 2012.

Women who enter prison often have multiple and complex needs, many of which are unique to women. Personal relationships, victimisation (including family violence as a child and adult), trauma and substance abuse have all been linked to women's offending. Many jurisdictions (including Victoria) have directed efforts to ensuring that programs and services are responsive to the specific needs of this cohort. Corrections Victoria (CV) has responded to this need by producing the *Strengthening Connections women's policy for the Victorian Corrections system*, which is an evidence-based framework for addressing the offending pathways for women. The policy recognises that relationship problems are more likely to underpin women's offending than men, and therefore CV needs to ensure that there are programs and services which seek to address the relational context of offending for women.

In recognition of the significant issue of family violence victimisation and perpetration among prisoners, CV launched its first *Family Violence Reform Strategy* in September 2015. The Strategy details CV's response to family violence within the corrections system, including a strategy to identify family violence perpetrators to deliver targeted family violence programs and services, as well as supporting prisoners and offenders who are victims of family violence. In 2016, CV developed and piloted a Respectful Relationships (RR) program as part of its specialist response to family violence to raise awareness of what constitutes family violence. Two versions of the program were trialled: a full Building Better Relationships (BBR) program of six two-hour sessions, and an abridged Tuning into Respectful Relationships (TiRR) program of two three-hour sessions¹. Both versions of the program have the same program aims, objectives and goals. Tuning into Respectful Relationships (TiRR) is delivered to remand and sentenced women prisoners, and represents the focus of this report.

1.2 Tuning into Respectful Relationships

TiRR is a six hour psychoeducational program, contracted to be delivered by Anglicare Victoria at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (DPFC) and Metropolitan Remand Centre (MRC). The program was designed to raise awareness of the elements of respectful relationships, impart practical knowledge and skills to help participants form and improve relationships, and contribute to self-development in general. The program seeks to "play a role in" reducing family violence; but it is not a violence prevention program specifically. The program was designed to be relevant to all prisoners, regardless of their offence history, sentence type or length, culture, gender, sexuality, or any other demographic variable(s).

In 2017, CV adapted the TiRR program so that it could be trialled with CALD prisoners. Since 2017, the program has been delivered to mainstream men, Vietnamese men and men born in the Greater Horn of Africa at MRC, and mainstream and Vietnamese women at DPFC. The adapted

¹ While BBR and TiRR were developed by Anglicare Victoria, the program is owned by CV.

program has not been evaluated, therefore, an evaluation of the CALD and mainstream program delivery is warranted.

The Data, Research, Evaluation and Analysis (DREA) team from the Community Operations and Victim Support Agency (COVSA)² undertook the evaluation of the TiRR program at MRC, while the IME Branch undertook the evaluation of TiRR at DPFC. The approach to the evaluation was determined in consultation between the two branches. This document presents the key findings of the evaluation of the program at DPFC, which was conducted by CV’s Information Management and Evaluation Branch.

The evaluation employed a mixed methods approach to collect and triangulate a range of quantitative and qualitative data on the need for, and effectiveness, of the service. The evaluation period was from 1 October 2018 to 31 July 2019.

The purpose of the evaluation was to evaluate the implementation, operation and effectiveness of the TiRR program for the Vietnamese and broader prisoner population at DPFC. The findings of the evaluation may be used to inform decisions regarding the future funding arrangements beyond the pilot period.

1.3 Key findings and recommendations

Table 1 below outlines the key findings from the evaluation, along with a rationale for the recommendations that came from these key findings.

Table 1: Key evaluation findings

Key evaluation area: the extent to which the program is aligned with what is offered in other jurisdictions	
Key finding 1	<p>Victoria is the only jurisdiction in Australia or New Zealand to offer a program to men or women prisoners which specifically targets building healthy relationships and/or healthy communication</p> <p>The only other correctional agencies that offered programs specifically targeted at strengthening relationships were programs targeted at male prisoners only – and the majority of these were specifically targeted at family violence. There were no programs similar to TiRR which were delivered in another language such as Vietnamese, however, this is perhaps unsurprising as Victoria has the largest proportion of Vietnamese prisoners out of all the states and territories as well as New Zealand. The jurisdictional analysis indicates that CV is tracking well in comparison with other jurisdictions in terms of its service offerings of programs such as TiRR.</p>
Key evaluation area: the extent to which the service meets the key objectives and target performance indicators outlined in the service level agreement	
Key finding 2	<p>The service provider has delivered on their minimum contract deliverables</p> <p>Anglicare Victoria is currently partway through its contract which is due to expire on 31 December 2019. It has delivered 31 programs in English at DPFC (the minimum target is 25) and three programs in Vietnamese (minimum target is three).</p> <p>137 English-speaking women and 41 Vietnamese-speaking women participated in the program between 1 October 2018 and 30 April 2019. The high uptake of the</p>

² At the time of report publication, COVSA underwent a name change and as at August 2019 is known as Victims Support Innovation and Justice Operations

	program among both Vietnamese and English speaking cohorts confirm that there is a strong need and interest in the program.
Key evaluation area: the extent to which the program has been implemented as intended (implementation fidelity)	
Key finding 3	<p>The majority of the content (as per the facilitator manual) was delivered as intended (implementation fidelity)</p> <p>The consultations indicated that the facilitators chose to exclude the ‘Abuse Profile’ module, which was the only module added to the women’s version of the program. The module was removed due to past experience in delivering this content to women prisoners, which indicated that the women struggled to identify with the abuser profiles included in the exercise. This was thought to be particularly problematic for the Vietnamese cohort, which suggests that the program content may need to be reviewed (should the program be extended beyond the current funding period).</p>
Key evaluation area: The extent to which the program meets the needs of female prisoners (including both English-speaking and Vietnamese-speaking prisoners)	
Key finding 4	<p>The program was found to be effective in achieving the program objectives</p> <p>Participant survey respondents and focus group participants reported an increased insight into their own behaviours and a shift in understanding of concepts and strategies to enhance respectful relationships as a result of participating in the program. Participants also reported having a high level of confidence in their ability to use the skills learned from the program. Furthermore, prison staff, program facilitators and focus group participants reported that women were using the skills they had learned in the program when interacting with family members and other prisoners, which are indicators of program effectiveness.</p> <p>Participant surveys and focus groups also demonstrated that women showed a very strong interest in participating in future programs (one of the four aims of the program), particularly a follow-up program that could explore some of the topics raised by TiRR.</p>
Key finding 5	<p>The program was responsive to the needs of women</p> <p>The evaluation found that TiRR responds to a gap in service delivery in that it is offered and open to all women, including those on remand; the program is also short in duration (ideal for remandees and women on short sentences); and addresses relationship issues, which are known to be connected to women’s offending.</p> <p>TiRR was well regarded among DPFC staff and considered to respond to a gap in service delivery at DPFC – with no other programs currently on offer, which focus specifically on relationships or healthy communication.</p> <p>There are also very few programs delivered in Vietnamese and the program was well received by this cohort, who represent the largest CALD women prisoner population.</p>
Key finding 6	<p>The program was very well received by participants and there was an appetite for participating in future programs</p> <p>The program was well received by participants, as evidenced by the attendance records, which showed that some women chose to complete the program multiple times. While the short duration of the program was attractive to women (and found to be of benefit by facilitators and prison staff), the feedback from participants</p>

	indicates that there is a desire among women prisoners for more programs which seek to address respectful relationships and/or a longer version of the program.
Key Finding 7	<p>The referral pathway into the program differed for the CALD and English speaking cohorts</p> <p>The option to attend the program on the day without a referral (for English-speaking participants only) was considered a key strength of the referral pathway. It was estimated by program facilitators that a third of participants were women who turned up on the day without prior referral. This option was not available to the Vietnamese-speaking women whom could only attend if they were referred by the Multicultural Liaison Officer.</p>
<p>Key evaluation area: the extent to which changes are required to further strengthen the program</p>	
Key finding 8	<p>Modifications to the facilitator manual are needed</p> <p>In addition to the removal of the Abuse Profile module from the facilitator manual (Key Finding 3), interviews with program facilitators indicated that there is a need to include additional modules on shame and anger management as these issues have a significant impact on self-esteem and relationships. While the facilitators felt that this would be relevant to all women, these topics were thought to be particularly relevant for the Vietnamese women.</p>
Key finding 9	<p>Knowledge of the TiRR program could be improved among Prison Officers</p> <p>While the program was well regarded by the staff consulted, there was also a view that broader knowledge and awareness of the program was lacking, particularly among prison officers. This is, perhaps, unsurprising given the program has only been operating for six months (at the time of interview).</p>
Key finding 10	<p>The Vietnamese program should be delivered across two days</p> <p>In its current format, TiRR is delivered across two days in English and one full day in Vietnamese. Program facilitators and English-speaking participants (survey respondents and focus group participants) highlighted that delivering the program across two days was a key strength of the program. Conversely, the Vietnamese-speaking focus group participants felt that conducting the group in one day was too overwhelming and the content was rushed.</p>

Overall, the evaluation found evidence of the continued need for and effectiveness of the TiRR program at DPFC. The program was well attended and received by both the English-speaking and Vietnamese-speaking prisoner cohorts, who reported that the program had increased their understanding of healthy communication strategies and the importance of respect in relationships. The program was also found to respond to a gap in service delivery, in that it is available to all prisoners, including the growing population of women on remand and/or serving short sentences, and has been translated into Vietnamese for Vietnamese prisoners. As such, it is recommended that the program be extended beyond the current funding agreement. It is also recommended that CV consider expanding the TiRR program to Tarrengower Prison. Program participants indicated a desire to participate in other programs that seek to promote respectful relationships and communication, it is therefore recommended that CV consider delivering the longer version of the program (Building Better Relationships) and/or other similar programs and services.

Drawing on the key findings of the evaluation, the report identified the following opportunities for further strengthening the program should the program be extended beyond the current funding period:

Table 2: Recommendations

Recommendations
<p>1. Review the facilitator manual to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) replace the Abuse Profile module with a more appropriate module to better suit the general female prisoner and CALD cohorts. Ensure that suggested activities and content are aligned with the overall objectives of the program and identified best practice principles, and there are sufficient alternatives to video related activities, since few prison facilities have video streaming available. b) review the evidence-base for the card sorting activity on communication styles, which was introduced by the program facilitators and consider including it in the program operating manual c) consider the inclusion of a module on shame and a module on anger management in recognition of the need identified by the service provider. <p>Justification: The evaluation identified that facilitators made a number of adaptations to the program content to ensure that it was appropriate for women prisoners. It is recommended that the evidence-base be reviewed for the efficacy of any additional activities which have been added to the program, and the program operating manual be adjusted accordingly should the program be extended beyond the current funding period.</p>
<p>2. Service provider to collect all referral and attendance data and report on this on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>Justification: Data regarding referrals and attendance was not captured in a reliable manner. It is recommended that the service provider collect all referral and attendance data and report on this on a quarterly basis. Accurate referral and attendance data provide an understanding of the need for the service and uptake of the services, and allow for meaningful ongoing performance monitoring and evaluation.</p>
<p>3. Promote TiRR among Offender Services staff (including Remand Program Facilitators) at participating prisons to ensure that all staff are aware of the service and referring prisoners as intended.</p> <p>Justification: As highlighted in Key Finding 8, broader knowledge and awareness of the program was lacking, particularly among prison officers. A key benefit of the program is that it responds to a gap in service delivery, in that it is available to all prisoners (including remand and short sentence). As such, it is recommended that, should the program be extended beyond the pilot period, TiRR be promoted among Offender Services staff to ensure staff are aware of the service and referring prisoners as intended. By the nature of their roles, Prison Officers and Remand Program Facilitators are in a position to promote the program to prisoners (sentenced and unsentenced) and refer them to programs, particularly during case management.</p>
<p>4. Consider delivering the Vietnamese program over two days to allow for full delivery of the program, and to ensure sufficient time for participants to reflect and process program learnings. The referral pathway into the CALD program</p>

should be consistent with the referral pathway into the English-speaking program (women should be allowed to self-refer and/or attend without a referral)

Justification: As highlighted in Key Finding 9, program facilitators and English-speaking participants (survey respondents and focus group participants) highlighted that delivering the program across two days was a key strength of the program. The Vietnamese-speaking focus group participants felt that conducting the group in one day was too overwhelming and the content was rushed. It is recommended that the program be delivered across two days in Vietnamese.

5. CV to consider the delivery of BBR (in addition to TiRR) at DPFC

Justification: As highlighted in Key Finding 6, women were attending the program multiple times and the feedback from participants indicated there is a desire among women prisoners for more programs which seek to address respectful relationships and/or a longer version of the program. Therefore, it is recommended that BBR and TiRR both be offered at DPFC. The longer version of the program would be suitable for women who are likely to be in prison for long enough to benefit from the longer version of the program.

2. Introduction

Corrections Victoria (CV) is responsible for managing and supervising adult prisoners and offenders in Victoria. CV delivers a range of programs and services in order to assist offenders to address issues related to their offending behaviour and improve their likelihood of reintegration post-release. The aims of offender management as outlined in CV's Offender Management Framework 2015 are to:

- maintain a safe and secure community
- motivate offenders to engage in and continue with programs and services
- identify and monitor offenders' risk and needs
- coordinate and prioritise offenders' access to appropriate programs, services and activities based on offenders' individual risk and/or needs.

The number of women in the Victorian Correctional system has increased from 338 in June 2008 to 566 in June 2018, which is largely due to the rising number of women being remanded (often for short periods of time), many of whom are subsequently released on bail or to a non-custodial sentence³. Female prisoners present with a complex and unique profile and set of needs, compared to men. In November 2017, CV developed *Strengthening Connections*, a new women's policy, which provides an evidence-based framework for addressing the issues and offending pathways for women in the corrections system. The policy highlighted the specific challenges which female prisoners face, including the role that personal relationships, victimisation and trauma play in contributing to women's offending.

The increased number of remand female prisoners, coupled with the high proportion of women who have a past experience of family violence and/or link between their interpersonal relationships and offending, means there is a need for short programs for women that address healthy relationships.

2.1 Corrections Victoria's response to family violence

CV has made significant progress in its response to, and management of family violence victims and perpetrators in recent years. In 2014, the Department of Justice and Community Safety's (then, Department of Justice and Regulation) Senior Executive Group identified family violence as a priority area for the Department. In September 2015, CV launched its first *Family Violence Service Reform Strategy*. The Strategy details CV's response to family violence within the corrections system, which aims to:

- identify family violence perpetrators
- deliver targeted family violence programs and services to perpetrators
- support prisoners and offenders who are victim survivors of family violence
- create an environment for cultural change
- work with other service systems.

In March 2016, the Royal Commission into Family Violence (RCFV) (the Commission) handed down 227 recommendations, which proposed a series of system improvements across the health, justice and education sectors. The Commission identified that Victoria has an opportunity to transform the way in which family violence is addressed. A number of gaps were identified for interventions for perpetrators of family violence. The Minister for Corrections has sole lead responsibility for three recommendations, and is a co-lead on a further eight recommendations.

³ *Women in the Victorian Prison System* - a report by Corrections Victoria (January 2019)

The Royal Commission recommended the development of a suite of interventions and programs that are implemented according to the latest knowledge and evidence about their efficacy in managing risk, achieving behaviour and attitude change, reducing reoffending and meeting the needs of victims. Recommendation 87 states: The Victorian Government, subject to advice from the recommended expert advisory committee and relevant Australia's National Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) research, trial and evaluate interventions for perpetrators [within three years] that:

- provide individual case management where required
- deliver programs to perpetrators from diverse communities and to those with complex needs
- focus on helping perpetrators understand the effects of violence on their children and to become better fathers
- adopt practice models that build coordinated interventions, including cross-sector workforce development between the men's behaviour change, mental health, drug and alcohol and forensic sectors.

As part of CV's response to family violence, Anglicare Victoria was commissioned to develop and pilot the Respectful Relationships (RR) program in 2015-16. Two versions of the program were trialled: a full Building Better Relationships (BBR) program of six two-hour sessions, and an abridged Tuning into Respectful Relationships (TiRR) program of two three-hour sessions. Both versions of the program had the same program aims, objectives and goals. TiRR consisted of two sessions, which focused on participant education and reflection. BBR focused on education, reflection and aimed to equip participants with practical tools and resources to put their learning into practice. The contact hours and level of detail covered through the program were the only elements of difference between the two versions.

The program was intended to be adaptable to the specific needs of participants but did not specifically address cultural differences. The initial pilot was not formally evaluated. In 2017, CV decided to pilot TiRR with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) participants at the Metropolitan Remand Centre (MRC) and Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (DPFC).

2.2 Tuning into Respectful Relationships program

TiRR is delivered by Anglicare Victoria⁴. It is a psychoeducational program which is designed to raise awareness of the elements of respectful relationships, impart practical knowledge and skills to help participants form and improve relationships, and contribute to the self-development of participants in general. While the program seeks to "play a role in" reducing family violence, it is not a violence prevention program⁵. The program is much broader in its aims and designed to be offence-agnostic. It is not targeted at violent offenders, or necessarily at prisoners who have a history of intimate partner violence or related offences. The program has been designed to be relevant to all prisoners, regardless of their offence history, sentence, culture, gender, sexuality, and regardless of any other demographic variables⁶.

The program is modularised and constructed to be delivered in six contact hours by a pair of facilitators working together (one facilitator of each gender). The program is delivered in an interactive manner, with elements of: informational content (where information is presented by the facilitators); practical group activities, discussions among participants; short periods of reflection; videos (facilities permitting); brainstorming activities; and role-play activities.

⁴ While Anglicare designed and developed the BBR and TiRR programs, the program suite is owned by CV

⁵ Respectful Relationships Theory Manual (2017)

⁶ Respectful Relationships Theory Manual (2017)

TiRR has also been adapted for women. The women's version of TiRR includes the addition of a module titled 'Abuse Profiles'. This module is intended to introduce women to a suite of common abuser profiles and ask them to reflect on their own relationships with the particular profiles.

The aims of the program are to⁷:

- introduce participants to the concept of respectful relationships
- develop strategies to enhance respectful relationships
- facilitate awareness of behaviours that constitute family violence
- facilitate further engagement with offence specific and offence related offending behaviour programs.

The goals of the program are to:

- help participants better understand the role of respect in their relationships
- equip participants with tools to create and improve respectful relationships
- enable participants to identify and pursue personal development needs in relation to their own attitudes or behaviours
- provide a positive experience which encourages participants to seek and engage in further opportunities and programs for self-development.

At DPFC, the program is delivered in English and Vietnamese. The English program is delivered weekly across two days/sessions (three hours on a Wednesday and three hours on a Friday), while the Vietnamese program is delivered monthly in one six hour block on a Tuesday. Both programs are co-facilitated by a male and a female facilitator. The Vietnamese program is delivered by a Vietnamese-speaking female facilitator and an English-speaking male facilitator (who does not speak Vietnamese).

Program participation is voluntary. Referrals to the program for the mainstream prison population occur through a number of channels: women can self-refer by filling out a referral form; women may be invited by program staff; or they may choose to attend on the day without prior referral. Women may also participate in the program multiple times. Vietnamese-speaking women may only attend through an invitation from the Multicultural Liaison Officer and may only complete the program once⁸.

The program has been delivered in English and in Vietnamese to women at DPFC since October 2018. At MRC, the program has been delivered in Vietnamese and in English to a mainstream cohort and to Horn of Africa men, since October 2018. The program is open to both sentenced and remand prisoners at DPFC but only to prisoners on remand at MRC.

2.2.1 Current funding and contract deliverables

The program was funded \$297,819 by the CV's Rehabilitation and Reintegration Branch over a 12 month period, which was then extended to 18 months (ending 31 December 2019) due to a number of program cancellations. The extension provided an opportunity for Anglicare Victoria to finish delivering the number of programs under the deliverables in the common funding agreement. The key deliverables outlined in the common funding agreement include:

- program delivered in English: 52 to 104 programs evenly divided across MRC and DPFC (up to 14 participants per group)
- programs delivered in Vietnamese: up to seven programs (up to three for women, up to four for men)

⁷ Respectful Relationships: Program Guide & Facilitator Manual (2017)

⁸ Source: Interview with Vietnamese-speaking program facilitator

- programs delivered to prisoners from the Greater Horn of Africa: up to three programs for men only (up to 14 participants per program).

The findings of this evaluation may be used to inform decisions regarding future funding arrangements.

2.3 Scope

The Data, Research, Evaluation and Analysis (DREA) team from the Community Operations and Victim Support Agency (COVSA) undertook the evaluation of the TiRR program at MRC, while the IME Branch undertook the evaluation of TiRR at DPFC. The key findings of this evaluation are presented in this report.

In scope:

- TiRR women's pilot program
- program process evaluation
- measurement of short-term change in participants' understanding about and attitudes towards respect in relationships.

Out of scope:

- measurement of longer-term change in participants' understanding about and attitudes towards respect in relationships.
- comparison of participants and non-participants
- evaluation of the TiRR program delivered at the men's prison (as this was done by COVSA).

3. Methods

This section of the report describes the approach taken to evaluate the TiRR program, including key questions and methods, which guided the evaluation.

3.1 Evaluation questions

This evaluation sought to determine the extent to which:

- the program has been implemented as intended (implementation fidelity)
- the program is aligned with that which is offered in other jurisdictions
- the service meets the key objectives and target performance indicators outlined in the service level agreement
- the program meets the needs of female prisoners (including both English and Vietnamese prisoners)
- changes are required to further strengthen the program.

3.2 Approach to the evaluation

The evaluation employed a mixed methods approach to collect and triangulate a range of quantitative and qualitative data on the need for and effectiveness of the service, including:

- jurisdictional analysis of similar programs targeting female prisoner populations offered in other Australian states, territories and New Zealand
- review of CV policy, research, and program documents relating to female prisoners
- review of Anglicare program administrative data
- review of CV administrative data
- data elicited from consultations with key stakeholders involved (either directly or indirectly) in the implementation or delivery of the program
- data elicited through surveys and consultations (focus groups) with program participants.

The data collected for this evaluation was analysed using thematic analyses (for qualitative data) and descriptive statistics (for quantitative data).

3.2.1 Jurisdiction analysis and review of relevant research

The IME branch conducted a brief desk-top analysis of similar programs offered to prisoners (particularly women) in other Australian and international (New Zealand) jurisdictions. The analysis sought to explore whether other jurisdictions had similar programs as TiRR and if so, determine:

- to what extent does the program align with programs and services offered to women prisoners in other jurisdictions
- key inputs and activities considered necessary for other like programs and services
- outcomes achieved by other like programs and services
- key lessons learned with respect to the effective design of other similar programs and services.

3.2.2 Review of administrative data

The evaluation included a review of the data from the quarterly reports prepared by Anglicare Victoria for the CV Rehabilitation and Reintegration Branch. Three quarterly reports (from July 2018 to March 2019) were included in the evaluation. The quarterly reports provide insights about:

- delivery and uptake of the program among the English-speaking and Vietnamese-speaking cohort (which provides an indication of the need and uptake of the program)
- delivery of CALD programs
- challenges encountered and the strategies employed to respond to challenges (by location)

- participant feedback
- facility feedback (by location)
- recommendations for future delivery.

Other administrative data included:

- referral and attendance data from prison program staff
- content delivery records provided by Anglicare Victoria (English and Vietnamese programs presented separately).

3.2.3 Consultations with key stakeholders

The evaluation included semi-structured interviews with four key stakeholders involved in the implementation and/or delivery of the service at DPFC. The following individuals were interviewed:

- Offender Services Supervisor
- Anglicare program facilitators (two English-speaking program facilitators and a Vietnamese-speaking program facilitator).

The purpose of the interviews was to elicit stakeholder views regarding:

- nature and objectives of the program
- awareness of the program among prison staff and prisoners
- delivery, uptake and perceived effectiveness of TiRR
- barriers and challenges in delivering the program at DPFC
- extent to which the program meets the needs of female prisoners (English-speaking and Vietnamese-speaking) at DPFC
- recommendations for how the program could be strengthened to better meet the needs of this cohort.

Interviews were electronically recorded and transcribed using an external accredited transcription agency, and the transcriptions were analysed using thematic and content analysis techniques.

3.2.4 Consultations with program participants

Program participants were consulted through post-program focus groups and post-program feedback surveys.

Participant focus groups

Focus groups with participants were conducted by external researchers from Monash University, including a Vietnamese-speaking researcher for the Vietnamese women's group. The English-speaking focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim, which made it possible to include relevant quotes from participants. The Vietnamese focus groups were also audio recorded but their responses were transliterated to English, and thus, direct quotes for this cohort are not used in this report.

There were two focus groups held for Vietnamese-speaking participants (total n=22) and three focus groups for the English-speaking participants (total n=9).

The focus group questions sought to understand how well the program met its intended aims, as well as exploring any opportunities for program improvement. The following topics were discussed:

- how participants found out about the program and what attracted them to the program
- what worked well and what aspect of the program they would change
- their overall experience
- their thoughts on the discussions and the activities

- what they learnt about respectful relationships
- participants’ interest in participating in other similar programs in the future.

Post-program participant surveys

For the purposes of this evaluation, IME and COVSA (the evaluation team) produced a post-program participant survey, which was provided to participants at the conclusion of programs delivered during February, March and April 2019. Prior to February 2019, Anglicare was conducting its own post-program feedback surveys with participants. Data from both of these surveys was used in the current evaluation (see Table 3 below for number of surveys returned).

Table 3: Post-program participant surveys

Survey	Time frame	Mode of delivery and collection	Number filled out
Anglicare survey	July 2018 to January 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided to all participants at end of session • Filled out in session and surveys handed back to facilitators 	93
IME and COVSA survey	February 2019 to April 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided to all participants at end of session • Filled out after session and completed surveys handed to prison program staff • English and Vietnamese version 	Total = 32 (English n= 13 Vietnamese n= 19)

The surveys produced by Anglicare required participants to place their names on their surveys and hand them back to the facilitators, which may have biased the responses. The surveys produced by the evaluation team were anonymous and were handed out by program facilitators to participants. Participants were asked not to include any identifiable information, and then provide the completed surveys back to prison program staff at DPFC. Completed surveys were mailed to IME Branch. The outcomes of both surveys will be discussed in this report.

The survey produced by Anglicare captured information on the following:

- age of participant
- parental status (and number of children)
- confidence in using knowledge gained from program
- most helpful component of program
- comprehension of the activities and information
- extent to which participants found the facilitators easy to talk to and ask questions of
- confidence in attending groups in prison
- understanding of respectful behaviour
- understanding of the value of respect in relationships and what damages relationships
- understanding of self and behaviour in relationships (participant’s).

The survey produced by the evaluation team captured information on the following:

- what participants were hoping to gain from the program
- whether participants were in a committed relationship with a partner

- parental status
- previous program participation
- most helpful component of the program
- changes in thoughts about relationships (admitting mistakes, use of violence during conflicts, honesty, respecting other's right to change their minds, accepting difference of opinion in others, trust)
- skills learned
- comprehension of discussions, activities and information
- whether participants found the facilitators easy to talk to and ask questions of
- most useful or helpful component of the program
- interest in attending groups on better relationships
- what would encourage participants to engage in other programs.

The surveys produced by the evaluation team were available in Vietnamese. Responses were translated to English by an external researcher from Monash University.

3.3 Limitations

Some methodological limitations should be recognised when considering the findings of this evaluation:

- *Attendance and referral data limitations:* referral and attendance was not formally captured by Anglicare or DPFC prior to January 2019. After January 2019, prison program staff began recording referrals and program participation through multiple means (list of referred women or participant sign-up sheets). Attendance and referral data were not submitted with quarterly reporting documentation by Anglicare Victoria. These inconsistencies impact the extent to which this data was reliable and/or available for the review.
- *Data limitations:* CV administrative data presented in this report includes data collected from prisoners upon reception, which is heavily reliant on self-reporting. The limitation with this method is that prisoners may choose not to accurately disclose information.
- *Selection bias:* Interviews were conducted with key stakeholders involved in the implementation and/or delivery of the TiRR program. Selection bias is a potential limitation as interview respondents are likely to be overly positive about the service as they have a vested interest in the service being extended beyond the current funding period. These staff, however, by virtue of their role and experience were identified as potential interview participants as they could speak to the need, impact and experiences with Anglicare services.
- *Sample bias:* The evaluation team spoke to a small number of stakeholders involved in the design and/or delivery of the program (n=4). Therefore, the extent to which the findings can be generalised to the broader prisoner population, including men, is limited.
- *Responder bias:* Post-program participant surveys produced and administered by Anglicare Victoria were not anonymous and could have led to participants responding in a socially desirable manner.
- *Skewed data:* participants provided pre- and post-program feedback at the end of participating in the program. There is a possibility that the pre-program responses may be skewed as participants had received the intervention at the time of providing this feedback.

4. Results

This section of the report will address each evaluation question in turn, beginning with a section on the demographic profile and sentencing of women in Australian prisons, and more specifically, women in Victorian prisons.

4.1 Female prisoners in Australia

Note: The data presented in this section of the report is taken from the Australian Bureau of Statistics website.

While the proportion of female prisoners (compared to male prisoners) was relatively stable between 2008 and 2018 (ranging from 7.1 per cent to 8.4 per cent), the number of female prisoners in Australia has increased significantly from 1,959 prisoners in 2008, to 3,625 prisoners in 2018 (see Figure 1)⁹. The incarceration proportion of women in Victoria (7.3 per cent) was slightly lower than the national average of 8.4 per cent (

Figure 2 shows that all jurisdictions had a high proportion of female prisoners who were unsentenced (range of 32 to 44 per cent). The Northern Territory, Victoria and South Australia had the highest proportion of unsentenced female prisoners in Australia.

Figure 2).

Figure 1. Number and proportion of female prisoners¹⁰ in Australia between 2008 and 2018

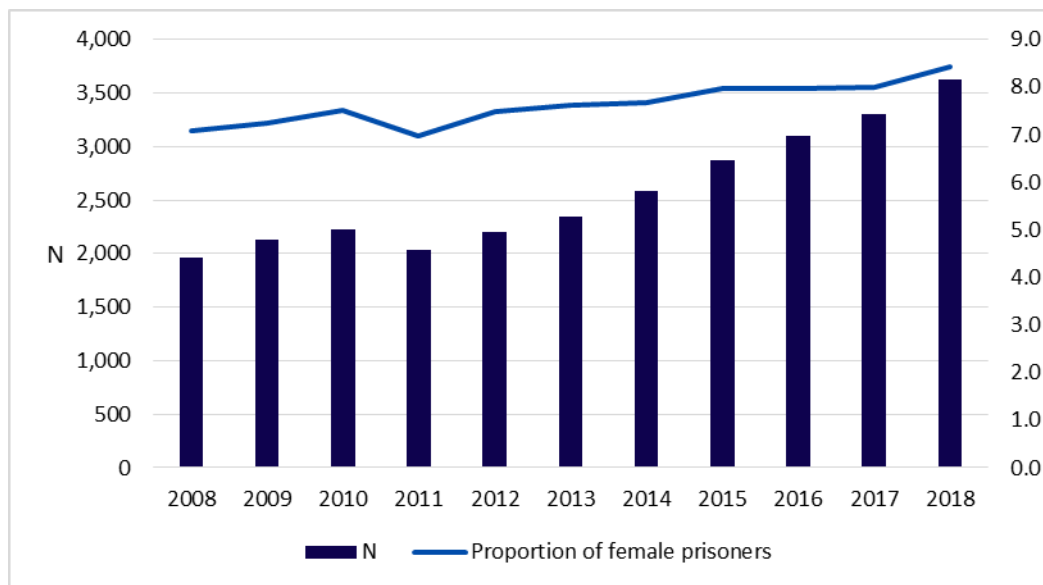
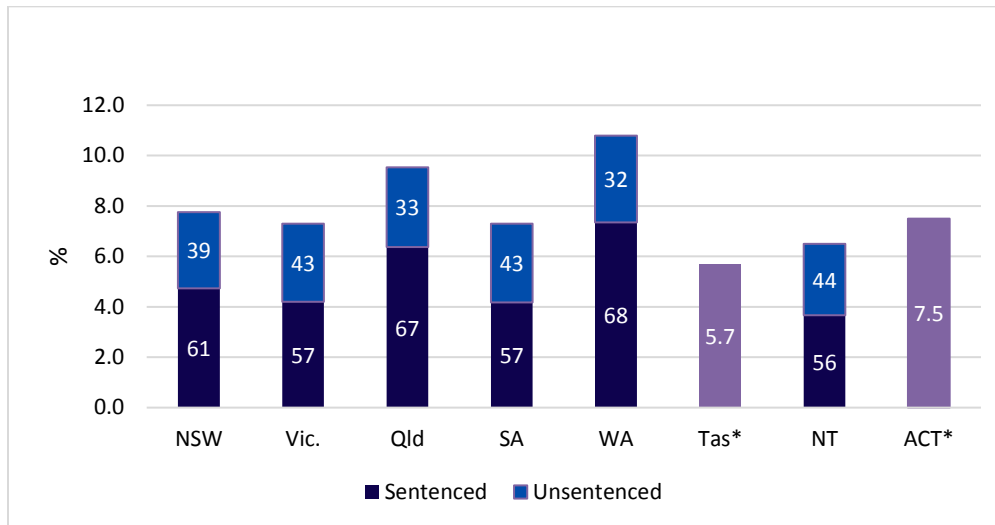


Figure 2 shows that all jurisdictions had a high proportion of female prisoners who were unsentenced (range of 32 to 44 per cent). The Northern Territory, Victoria and South Australia had the highest proportion of unsentenced female prisoners in Australia.

⁹ ABS (2018) data

¹⁰ Compared to male prisoners

Figure 2. Proportion of female prisoners (sentenced and unsentenced) by jurisdiction in 2018



*There was no published data on sentence type for Tasmania and the ACT. The figure here represent the proportion of female prisoners (in these states) only.

4.2 Female prisoners in Victoria

Note: any data presented in this section of the report represents a ‘snapshot figure’ using CV administrative data as of 30 January 2019.

This section of the report will closely examine the Victorian female prisoner population, including the Vietnamese female prisoner population, which has consistently been the largest single culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) population in the women’s corrections system since 2012¹¹. The issues and offending pathways for Vietnamese women are shared to some degree with non-Vietnamese women, however there are a number of significant differences, which will be explored in this section of the report.

4.2.1 Prisoner profile

As at 30 January 2019, the average age of female prisoners in Victoria (n=594) was 36 years. Vietnamese women (n=51) were nearly ten years older, with a mean age of 43 years. Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander prisoners made up 13 per cent of the female prison population, which is higher than the male prisoner population proportion of 9 per cent.

4.2.2 Relationships and parenting

In November 2017, CV produced the *Women’s Policy for the Victorian Corrections system*, which included a review of the profile of the women in the corrections system and explored the complex issues that lead to women’s offending. This document highlighted that women’s offending often arises and is cultivated through their relationships. Specifically, with members of their family, including partners or spouses, their friends and any person deemed to be a ‘significant other’, such as a support-person. As relationship issues are more likely to underpin women’s offending than men, addressing the relational context of offending for women is important¹².

CV administrative data extracted on 30 January 2019, revealed that at the time of reception:

- 72 per cent of the women reported *not* being in a relationship (compared to 65 per cent of men). Vietnamese women were more likely to report being a relationship (42 per cent) than the overall female prison population (26 per cent)

¹¹ Source: *Strengthening Connections: Women’s Policy for the Victorian Corrections system* (2017)

¹² Source: *Strengthening Connections: Women’s Policy for the Victorian Corrections system* (2017)

- 68 per cent of women reported having children (compared to 51 per cent of men). This was higher for Vietnamese women (80 per cent)
- of the women who had children, 27 per cent had legal custody of their children (compared to 18 per cent of men). This was substantially higher for Vietnamese women (56 per cent)¹³
- of the women who had children, 25 per cent were also the primary care givers to their children (compared to 16 per cent of men). This was, again, higher for the Vietnamese women (56 per cent).

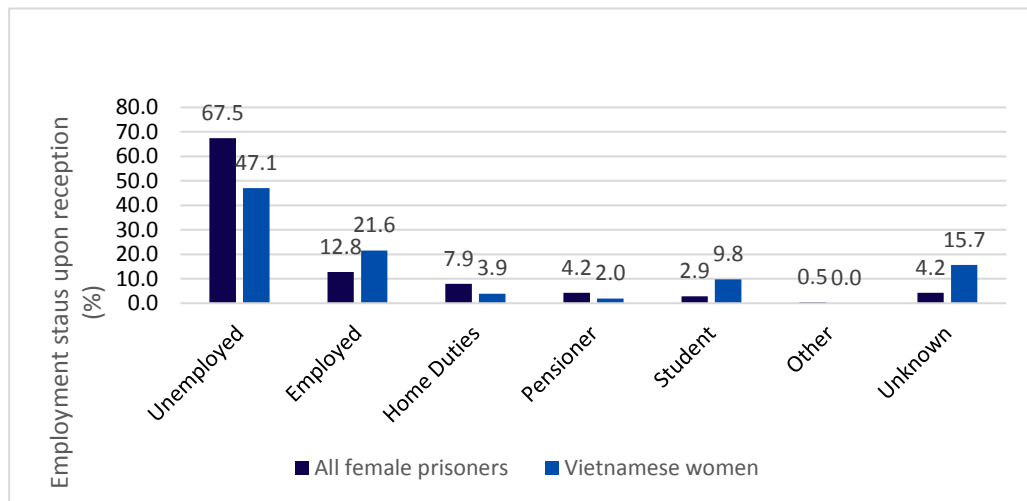
The above data demonstrates that female prisoners (particularly Vietnamese women) are more likely to have children than men, and more likely to have legal custody of their children and be the primary caregivers. Women prisoners who are mothers report that being away from their children is the hardest part of being in prison and that being back with their children is their main motivation for desistance¹⁴. The difficulty of being away from their children in prison is further complicated if the prisoner normally has the role of primary caregiver.

4.2.3 Education and employment

Women in prison are further disadvantaged by their low educational attainment, which is more pronounced for Vietnamese women than for the broader female prisoner population. The vast majority of women in prison (76 per cent of all female prisoners and 84 per cent of Vietnamese female prisoners) did not complete secondary education. Low education attainment is not unique to the female prisoner population, since 85 per cent of men also did not complete secondary education.

Further, unemployment at the time of reception was very high among female prisoners. 82 per cent of the overall female prisoner population were unemployed, compared to 63 per cent of Vietnamese female prisoners¹⁵ (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Employment status overall for female prisoners and Vietnamese female prisoners



4.2.4 Sentencing profile

Approximately half of all female prisoners at the time of data extraction were unsentenced, which is substantially higher than the proportion of men (36 per cent of men were unsentenced).

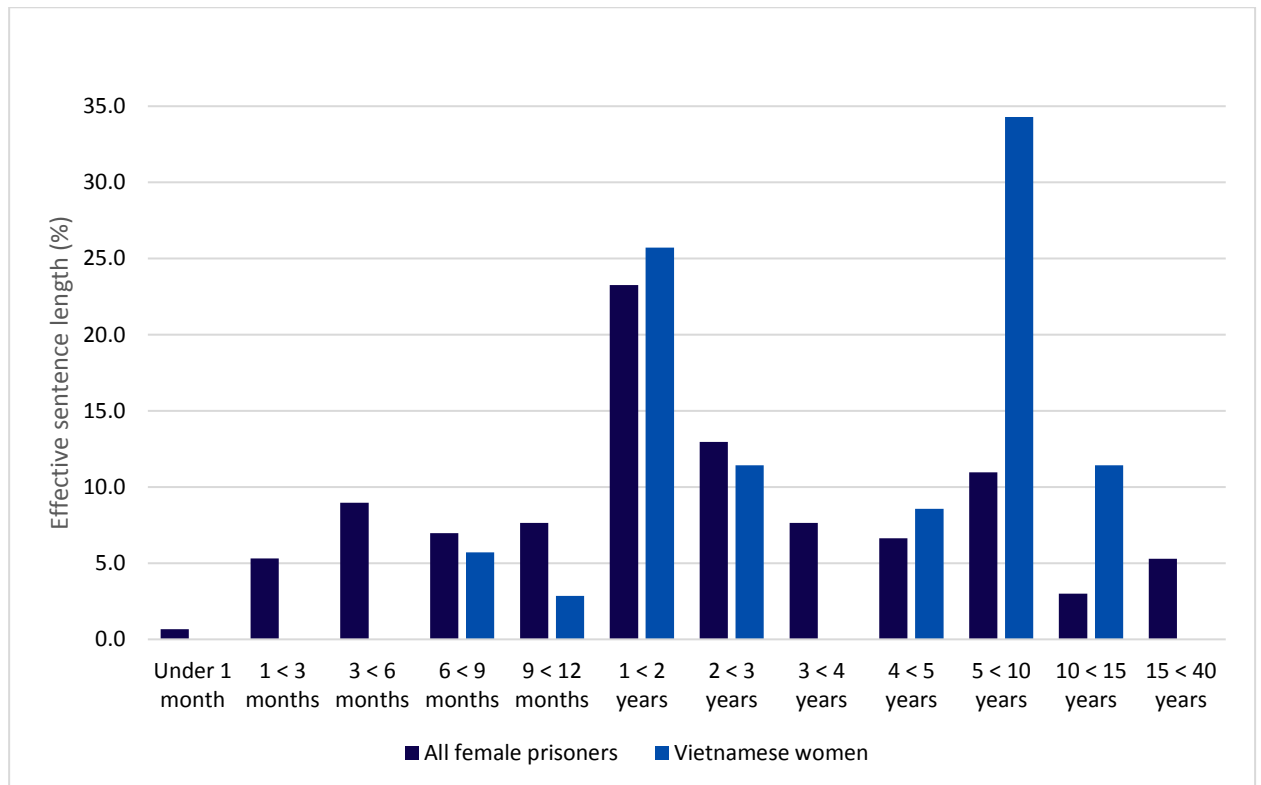
¹³ Important to note that for the data relating to legal custody of children, 17.8 per cent of the data was missing for the overall female prisoner population and 14.6 per cent for the Vietnamese female population. This information needs to be interpreted with caution.

¹⁴ Source: *Strengthening Connections: Women’s Policy for the Victorian Corrections system* (2017)

¹⁵ 16 per cent of the data regarding employment for Vietnamese women was unknown, which may have caused an over-representation of the ‘employed’ proportion.

Vietnamese women were more likely to be sentenced (31 per cent were unsentenced) than the overall female prisoner population. Figure 4 shows that 29 per cent of female prisoners received a sentence of one year or less (compared to 14 per cent of men). Vietnamese women were more likely to be on longer sentences, with two-thirds of women receiving sentences that were three years or more. The higher levels of remand (unsentenced) and shorter sentences among the female prisoner population indicate the growing need to have programs and services in prison which are available and responsive to the needs of these cohorts (short in duration and open to remand prisoners).

Figure 4: Effective sentence length for overall female prisoners and Vietnamese female prisoners



4.2.5 Most serious offences and time in prison

The most serious offences for which the overall female prisoners were charged with were drug related offences (24 per cent), followed by assault (15 per cent) and property offences (14 per cent). A high proportion of Vietnamese women had serious drug related offences as their most serious offence. These offences relate mainly to drug importation, possession, dealing, distribution and manufacture, with personal levels of substance abuse being comparatively low for this cohort¹⁶.

It is important to note here that interpreting data regarding offences committed by women should be done with caution. Consideration should be given that a high proportion of women entering prison have experienced previous trauma, including family violence. It is estimated that more than 70 per cent of female prisoners receiving psychological services were exposed to family violence either as a child or as an adult. Women’s greater experience of trauma has been linked to offending behaviours such as assault, homicide, attempted homicide, defensive homicide and

¹⁶ Source: *Strengthening Connections: Women’s Policy for the Victorian Corrections system* (2017)

manslaughter. While not all violent offences are linked to current or previous trauma, it is important to note that the female prisoner cohort are complex.

4.3 Evaluation area 1: Jurisdiction analysis

Evaluation area: The extent to which the program is aligned to what is offered in other jurisdictions

Key finding: No other jurisdictions offered a program(s) with a specific focus on relationships or healthy communication strategies for female or male prisoners. However, a number of jurisdictions offered programs which included module(s) that sought to improve relationships or provide strategies on healthy communication. This indicates that CV is tracking well in comparison with other jurisdictions in terms of its service offerings of programs such as TiRR.

A brief jurisdictional review was conducted to examine what programs similar to TiRR are offered to women in other jurisdictions. Each jurisdiction was asked what programs they offered to female prisoners which focus on relationships and/or healthy communication strategies. A response was received from every jurisdiction, with the exception of Northern Territory Correctional Services. The level of detailed received from each jurisdiction varied, which is reflected in the summaries below.

Table 4: Jurisdiction analysis summary

Jurisdiction	Program offered to women?	Comment
Queensland	✘	No programs offered
Western Australia	✘	Programs with healthy relationships modules offered to men only
South Australia	✘	Programs with healthy relationships modules offered to men only
New South Wales	✔	Programs with modules on interpersonal skills offered to women
Australian Capital Territory	✔	Programs on family violence and anger management offered to women (no relationship-specific programs)
Tasmania	✘	Programs with modules on interpersonal skills offered to men only
Northern Territory	No response	
New Zealand	✔	Programs with modules on interpersonal skills offered to women

4.3.1 Queensland

Queensland Corrective Services indicated that they do not have any programs focussing on healthy relationships or relationships in general at this point in time for either women or men.

4.3.2 Western Australia

Western Australia Corrective Services offers a number of criminogenic programs that have modules which address healthy relationship skills, but currently none of these are offered to women. They offer three key prison-based family violence programs to men only:

- Stopping Family Violence (SFV) Program: 70 hour closed group program
- Not Our Way (NOW) Aboriginal Family Violence Program: closed group 82.5 hour program
- Connect and Respect Program: facilitated by Anglicare WA and Communicare in partnership.

4.3.3 South Australia

The Department for Correctional Services, South Australia does not offer programs (or programs with modules) to women about healthy relationships, however they indicated that they are currently in the process of re-writing their women's program, and the new program will include a module on relationships.

They do offer programs for men which include modules on relationships, including:

- Domestic and Family Violence Intervention Program
- Violence Prevention Program
- Sexual Behaviour Clinic
- Making Changes (general offending / substance abuse) Program.

The modules focus on building three evidence-based skills in healthy relationships, comprising insights (into self and partner), mutuality (equality in relationships) and emotion regulation (regulate emotions in response to relationship-relevant experiences). The programs focuses on responsibility and accountability, the dynamics of power and control, and the gendered nature of family violence.

4.3.4 New South Wales

Corrective Services New South Wales indicated that they do not offer programs that directly address relationships or healthy communication, however they do offer programs which have modules that address healthy communication. The following programs are offered to women:

- 'Out of the Dark': a program for women who have experienced domestic and family abuse as victims. The program is designed to help participants identify issues around family violence and to identify options and support available.
- 'Explore, Question, Understand, Investigate, practice to Succeed' (EQUIPS) Foundation: 40-hour general therapeutic program offered to all medium to high-risk of reoffending offenders. The description of this program indicates that it seeks to address emotional impulsivity and reactivity associated with offending behaviour.
- 'Criminal Conduct and Substance Abuse' – Pathways: aims to address alcohol and drug issues, along with enhancing participants' responsibility to self and others.
- 'Yallul Kaliarna' (Intensive Drug and Alcohol Treatment Program - Women): is also an alcohol and drug program (offered to sentenced and unsentenced women). This program has elements that address behaviour towards others.
- 'EQUIPS Aggression': designed to increase a participant's ability to manage difficult life events to minimise aggressive behaviour. The program has a module which addresses interpersonal relationships.

- ‘EQUIPS Domestic Abuse’: 40 hour program based on a psycho-behavioural framework aimed at perpetrators. The program invites offenders to take responsibility for their behaviour. Modules include identifying abuse, managing emotions, beliefs and attitudes, offence mapping, victim impact, and relationships skills.
- ‘Young Adult Perpetration Program’: a three-day readiness and/or behaviour modifier program designed to motivate young people (18 to 25 year olds) into entering programs. The program includes modules which aim to address healthy communication skills.
- ‘Adventure Based Challenge – Women’: a youth program which aims to address a variety of dynamic risk factors, including social and personal responsibility.
- ‘Young Adult Satellite Program’: addressing a variety of needs, the program includes modules about learning to take social and personal responsibility, and dealing with peer pressure and bullying.
- ‘Mothering at a Distance’: an education program aimed at enhancing the delivery of family and community services to improve the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people. The program aims to enhance mother-and-child relationships by increasing participants’ maternal sensitivity and reducing trauma during separation caused by incarceration.
- ‘Real Understanding of Self-Help’: a skills-based treatment program which includes modules that address poor self-control, impulsivity and interpersonal skills (among other things).

4.3.5 Australian Capital Territory

Australian Capital Territory Correctional Services (ACTCS) offer several programs specific to building or maintaining healthy relationships for prisoners. These include programs specific to family relationships and/or general interactions. These are outlined below:

- ‘Circles of Security’: a parenting program which teaches parents about the emotional needs of children. This program is designed to assist in fostering a healthy relationship between the parent and the child. This program is offered to sentenced and unsentenced men and women.
- ‘Out of the Dark’: a program is offered to women in the community as well as sentenced and unsentenced women who have experienced family violence as victims. It assists participants to identify issues around family violence and identifies the options and support available. Participants must not have any family violence convictions. The program has been delivered sporadically since 2014 in prison and community settings, as several groups were cancelled due to no/low numbers of participants.
- ‘Anger Management’: is available to male and female, sentenced and unsentenced prisoners. This is a Cognitive Behaviour Therapy based program that employs behavioural and cognitive skills interventions. It targets the emotional and physiological components of anger and conflict resolution skills. The program presents participants with options that draw on these interventions and develops individualised ‘anger control plans’ using the techniques learned through the program.
- ‘Being a Man and a Dad’: a program designed for men only in custody (sentenced and unsentenced) with parenting roles. The focus is on managing strong emotions such as frustration and anger and developing parenting skills. This is a group for fathers wanting to use their strong emotions in a positive manner to build resilient and healthy relationships with their partners and children.

4.3.6 Tasmania

Corrective Services Tasmania (CST) indicated that they do not have any programs that focus solely on healthy relationships, nor do they offer family violence-related programs to women. However, women do have access to the family engagement worker in the prison (who may explore conversations with family around healthy relationships).

CST delivers three group-based interventions for family violence male perpetrators:

- ‘Family Violence Offender Intervention Program’ (FVOIP) for high risk prisoners. FVOIP includes a module (four sessions) around building strong relationships.
- ‘EQUIPS Domestic Abuse Program’: delivered to medium risk prisoners. This program includes a module (four sessions) around sexual respect, relationship skills and self-management strategies.
- ‘EQUIPS Aggression Program’: violent and aggressive behaviour outside of family violence, which includes a module (four sessions) around communication, relationships and values.

4.3.7 New Zealand

Corrections New Zealand provided a program compendium which indicated that there were a number of programs for women. There were no programs specific to healthy relationships, but there were a number of programs which included module(s) that addressed these issues – many of which were culturally specific programs/services. The following programs for women included module(s) which addressed interpersonal relationships or communication:

- ‘Kimihiā’: a cultural-specific violence prevention program for high risk/high need women (women who are serving a sentence for imprisonment for index violence offending and/or have a history of persistent violent behaviour).
- ‘Short Rehabilitation Programme for Women’: a cultural-specific program offered to women who identify as Maori. The program is based on the principles of cognitive-behaviour and relapse-prevention therapy, focusing on violence propensity, relationship difficulties, anti-social attitudes, offence related/problem thinking and feeling, criminal associates, self-control and impulsivity, self-management and problem solving, alcohol, drugs and rehabilitation needs.
- ‘Kowhiritaga Women’s Rehabilitation Programme’: contains eight modules (56 sessions) designed to be responsive to the needs of Maori women, however it is also offered to all women who are eligible and suitable to attend. This program includes a ‘relationship difficulties’ module.
- ‘Kia Rite Information and Skills Training Programme’: a low-intensity information and skills training programme designed for delivery to Wahine who are in the early stages of their incarceration. It includes 11 sessions (2.5 hrs per session) and offers a module called Relationship Skills: Te Taha Whanau – the ability to communicate, to care and share.

4.4 Evaluation area 2: Program implementation

Evaluation area: The extent to which the program has been implemented as intended (implementation fidelity)

This section of the report presents the data elicited through the stakeholder consultations with program participants and staff involved in the design and/or delivery of the program. A review of content delivery records and analyses of program documentation was carried out to understand how the program was delivered at DPFC and which modules were delivered (and not delivered).

Key finding: Overall, the evaluation found that the majority of the content was delivered as intended (in accordance with the facilitator manual). Facilitators did make slight amendments to the program, including the removal of modules which they did not find to be appropriate, and substituted content with activities which they felt would be more useful.

4.4.1 Content delivery records

Program facilitators were asked to estimate, on average, which program content was delivered, not completed (partially delivered), skipped or adapted (see Content delivery record in

Appendices). A summary of the content delivery is presented separately for the English program and for the Vietnamese program (see Table 5).

Table 5: Summary of content delivery records

Content item	Delivered in full	Adapted	Skipped or not completed
Module 1 — Introducing respectful relationships			
Meeting the participants ice-breaker			
English	✓		
Vietnamese	✓		
Respectful Relationships goals			
English	✓		
Vietnamese	✓		
Group agreement			
English	✓		
Vietnamese	✓		
Thinking about respect, including small group activity			
English	✓		
Vietnamese	✓		
Respectful communication			
English	✓		
Vietnamese	✓		
Thinking about relationships			
English	✓		
Vietnamese			✓
Different kinds of relationships, including small group activity			
English		✓	
Vietnamese	✓		
Module 2 — Crossing the line			
Welcome, including reconstructing wheel small group activity			
English		✓	
Vietnamese			

Content item	Delivered in full	Adapted	Skipped or not completed
	N/A ¹⁷		
Respect and relationships English Vietnamese		✓ ✓	
Violence English Vietnamese	✓		✓
Abuse Profiles (women only) English Vietnamese			✓ ✓
Choice to change English Vietnamese			✓ ✓
Violence — gender and respect English Vietnamese		✓ ✓	
Communication, including brainstorm English Vietnamese	✓ ✓		
Reflection English Vietnamese	✓ ✓		
Close English Vietnamese	✓ ✓		
Total content items English Vietnamese	9 (56%) 10 (66%)	4 (25%) 2 (14%)	3 (19%) 3 (20%)

¹⁷ Not applicable because the session was conducted on the same day

Analysis of the content delivery records indicates that the majority (on average, 83 per cent) of the content was either delivered in full or delivered in an adapted form among both the English and Vietnamese cohorts.

It is important to note that the 'Abuse Profiles' module was excluded from both the English and Vietnamese programs. This module was unique to the women's program and it was included with the intent to respond to the specific needs of female prisoners. The focus of this module is to provide a deeper understanding of the role of respect in positive relationships and how to evaluate the relationships in which participants are involved. The primary purpose of the module was to provide education to better enable women to recognise danger signs of impending abuse¹⁸.

Interviews with the program facilitators revealed that they intentionally excluded this module as they felt it would not be well received by the women in the program. One reason was that many women participate in the *Out of The Dark* program¹⁹, which covers this topic. One of the program facilitators also indicated that he had delivered this module in the past and it was not well received because many of the women could not identify with the various abuser profiles. The partners in their relationships tended to have characteristics from the different profiles rather than fit into a discrete profile. Furthermore, the feedback from the Vietnamese group facilitator was that the Abuse Profiles module was not culturally accurate or appropriate (e.g. use of Rambo terrorist, which is dated and awkward to deliver) (see appendices for full profiles). The translation in the participant workbook was deemed to be too long and too dense to generate discussion. Discussing gas-lighting behaviour was a topic that many women identified with in both language groups, this component was discussed in more detail. The review team note that the removal of this module was a decision of the facilitator and not necessarily reflective of the intended delivery of the program by Anglicare management.

Recommendation: Consider replacing the Abuse Profile module with a more appropriate module to suit the general female prisoner and CALD cohorts

Focus groups with program participants also revealed that there were no role play activities or videos shown despite the manual providing instruction that they should be undertaken, and some groups did not receive a workbook. Reasons for why some groups did not receive a workbook is not known and this was not reflected in the service reporting documents, or in the interviews with facilitators.

Reasons provided by facilitators as to why content was not delivered in accordance with the facilitator manual, to the English-speaking groups included:

- not being able to break up the large group into smaller groups for discussions because participants get distracted, lose focus and conversations go off topic. This can then lead to splits within the group and reduce group cohesion. In these cases the decision was made to have discussions or conduct activities as a whole group
- the size of the room did not allow for creating smaller groups or, if the room was big, then there was a very large table which filled the room

¹⁸ Respectful Relationships: Program Guide and Facilitator Manual (2017)

¹⁹ Out of The Dark is a psycho-educational group program for women prisoners who have experienced family violence prior to entering prison. It aims to raise awareness about family violence issues by providing information about risks associated with family violence and the options and support services available within the community. It also assists participants to identify family violence and the impact it can, or has had, on their life. The participants gain insight into how they can make informed decisions about creating change in their relationships and make positive and constructive decisions for future relationships.

- some of the content was already covered in previous programs and they did not want to repeat information, instead, they expanded on other modules (such as communication and body language)
- facilitators skipped content which they felt was dated (e.g, videos)
- facilities did not allow for the use of videos, and as such, these activities were adapted or omitted.

Reasons as to why content was not delivered in accordance with the facilitator manual to the Vietnamese-speaking groups included:

- women did not want to break up into smaller groups or the room sizes did not allow for it
- if an activity was deemed to not be appropriate to discuss in a group setting, it was done individually
- some content may have already been addressed in previous modules or would be covered later on, so the order in which content was delivered was modified for better flow of discussion
- lack of time to deliver all activities.

Recommendation: Review the facilitator manual to ensure that suggested activities and content are aligned with the overall objectives of the program and identified best practice principles, and ensure there are sufficient alternative activities available when a video is the suggested activity (few prison facilities have video streaming available).

4.5 Evaluation area 3: Program uptake

Evaluation area: The extent to which the service meets the key objectives and target performance indicators outlined in the service level agreement

This section of the report will discuss the extent to which the service provider met their key objectives and target performance indicators outlined in the service level agreement, with an analysis of attendance and referral data – taking into account the capacity of the program (no more than 14 participants per session). Reasons for attendance will also be explored through participants' feedback (surveys and focus groups), as well as through the observations of program facilitators. CV administrative data will be used to understand the demographics of program participants compared to those who are referred to the program but then do not attend or complete the program, to assist in understanding who the program is servicing.

Key findings: the evaluation found that:

Anglicare Victoria delivered on their *minimum contract deliverables*: The evaluation found that the service provider delivered 26 sessions in English and three sessions in Vietnamese, which meets the minimum contractual obligations. The service provider will continue to deliver programs at DPFC on a weekly basis until 31 December 2019.

The program was well attended by participants: Attendance records and consultations with participants indicated that uptake of the program was high.

Reasons for attendance: Post-program participant surveys and focus groups revealed that the most commonly cited reasons for attendance in the program included wanting to learn something new and women wanting help with their relationships with a partner and/or family. Program facilitators felt that women came to the program because they were attending with a friend or because they had heard positive feedback about the program and it raised their interest.

Program completers were representative of the overall female prisoner population:

Analyses of demographics data revealed that program completers were generally representative of the overall female prisoner population. There were, however, a number of differences in demographic variables between women who completed the program and those who did not attend or complete the program (see Table 10).

The program was flexible with attendance: The program was flexible in working with those who attended on the day with no prior notice (within reason), which is a clear benefit of a program such as this (of short duration with little to no eligibility criteria).

4.5.1 Performance against contract deliverables

The contract deliverables outlined in the Common Funding Agreement included the delivery of a minimum of 52 and a maximum of 104 programs delivered in English, divided evenly between DPFC and MRC. A further two (one for women, one for men) to seven (up to three for women, up to four for men) programs were to be delivered in Vietnamese. Anglicare also contracted to deliver one to three programs for participants from the Greater Horn of Africa at MRC. For the purposes of this report, Table 6 outlines the contract deliverables for DPFC and the service provider’s performance against these deliverables. While programs will continue to be delivered at both locations until 31 December 2019, it is evident that the service provider has already delivered on their minimum contracted deliverables.

Table 6: Performance against contract deliverables

Service type	Annual target rate	Delivered ²⁰	Achieved
Programs delivered in English	26 to 52 programs (up to 14 participants per group) at DPFC	31 programs at DPFC	✓
Programs delivered in Vietnamese	1 to 3 at DPFC	3 programs	✓

4.5.2 Referral and attendance data

There was no formal documenting of referrals and program attendance at DPFC prior to January 2019. Anglicare reported on the aggregate number of people who completed the program as part of their quarterly reporting, but it did not report on referrals (nor was this captured in a manner available for analysis). This was identified by the evaluation team shortly after the commencement of the evaluation. After January 2019, DPFC program staff began collecting referral and attendance data in multiple forms, such as hard-copy participant sign-in sheets or lists of referred women. More specifically, women who signed up for the program through referral forms were recorded on a list. That list would then be provided to Anglicare on day one of the program as an indication of who to expect at the program. Attendees’ names were ticked off by program facilitators and the list was provided back to program staff at DPFC. These were not entered into an electronic database. Sometimes women attended on the day without referral; their names may have been added to the list but this may not always be the case. It is also important to note that there were program sessions for which referral data was not provided, but attendance was

²⁰ This data was accurate on 25/06/19, the service provider will continue to deliver programs until December 2019. Source: email from Rhia Mikkor on 25/06/19.

captured through participant sign-in sheets. Therefore, referral and attendance data is not reliable for DPFC and the following data should be interpreted with caution. Despite the data limitations, the available referral data is a good indication of the broader knowledge and interest in the program, but it should not be interpreted together with attendance data due to the issues outlined above.

Table 7 summarises the average number of participants who attended each program session between 1 October 2018 and 30 April 2019 (representing the total period for which this data was collected and available for analysis). The number of programs and sessions delivered in English varied across each month. For example, in October 2018, the program was delivered four times, however, it was only delivered twice during the month of December 2018. Each session was intended to have up to 14 participants, and as Table 7 demonstrates there were, on average, nine participants per program/session (representing 64 per cent of the maximum capacity of each

Recommendation: Service provider to collect all referral and attendance data and report on this on a quarterly basis. Accurate referral and attendance data provide an understanding of the need for the service and uptake of the services.

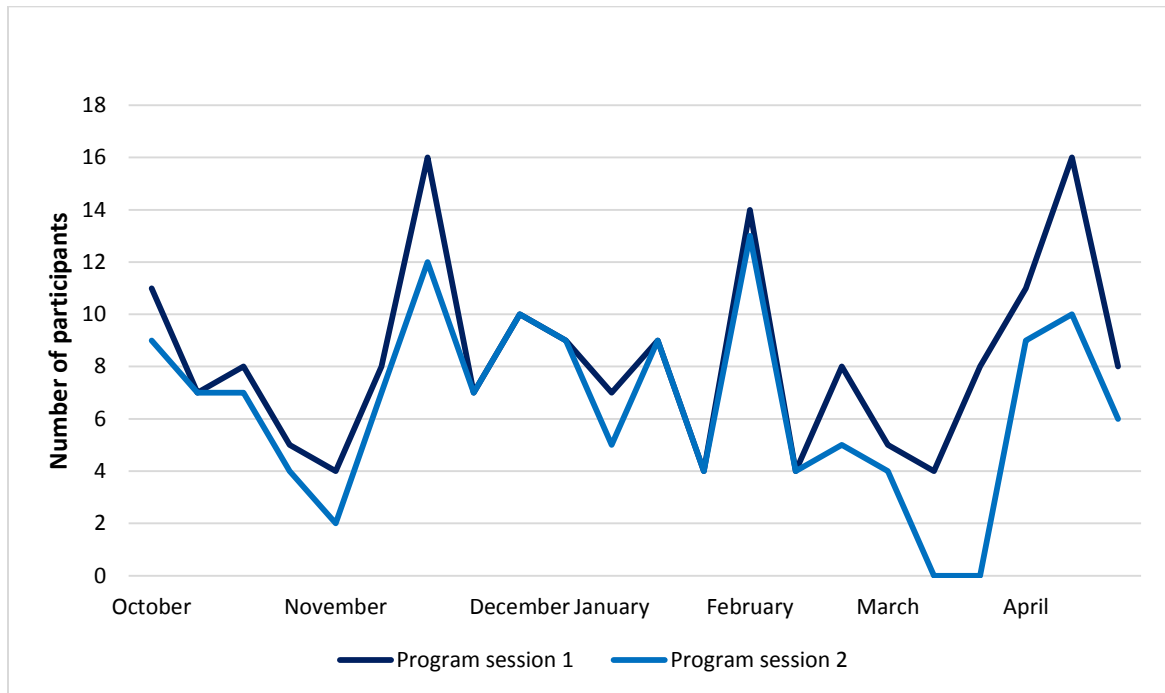
session). However, facilitators felt that the optimal number of participants to allow for equal sharing of stories and responses was eight. This may indicate, should the program be extended, that there would be value in reconsidering the number of participants scheduled for each session.

Table 7: Number of sessions that attendance data was available for between 1 October 2018 and 30 April 2019

	Number of times program was delivered	Average number of participants per session	Range of participant numbers
English-speaking groups			
Session 1	22	9	4 to 16 participants
Session 2	20	7	4 to 13 participants
Vietnamese-speaking groups	3	14	9 to 19 participants

The number of participants per session (for English-speaking participants only) is presented in Figure 5. This figure demonstrates that participation in the programs was sporadic. The program was delivered three times to the Vietnamese women and attendance varied for each session (12, 9 and 19). The consistently high uptake of the program with the Vietnamese prisoners indicates that there is a demand for programs of this kind with this cohort.

Figure 5: Program attendance (English-speaking participants) by session



Analyses of referral and attendance data indicate that there were 187 individuals referred to the program. Of those, 48 women were referred multiple times (ranging between two to six times) (see Table 8).

Table 8: Summary of referral data (January to April 2019)

Referrals	N	% who completed the program
Total number of referrals		
English	185	
Vietnamese	85	
Number of unique people referred		
English	137	46% (n=63)
Vietnamese	50	82% (n=41)
Number of people who were referred multiple times		
English	40	
Vietnamese	8	

54 per cent (n=74) of those who were referred to the program either did not attend the program or only attended one session (did not complete the program). Reasons for non-attendance as cited

on the attendance list²¹ included illness, needing to be in court, participation in other programs, being placed into separation, having a visitor or being released from prison. Table 10 provides a summary of the program attendance data. There were 178 individuals who completed the program (at least once). 91 per cent of English-speaking women completed the program (attended both sessions) on their first attempt. Four women completed the program multiple times and eight women (six per cent of those who completed the program) attended multiple sessions before completing the program (see Table 9).

Table 9: Summary of attendance data

Attendance	N	% from those who completed the program
Unique number of participants who completed the program at least once		
English	137	
Vietnamese	41	
Total	178	
Number of people who completed the program on first attempt		
English	125	91%
Vietnamese	41	100%
Total	166	93%
Number of people who completed the program multiple times		
English	4	3%
Vietnamese	0	
Total	4	
Number of people who attended multiple times before completing the program		
English	8	6%
Vietnamese	N/A ²²	
Total	8	
Number of people who only attended one of the two sessions (therefore did not “complete”)		
English	20	
Vietnamese	N/A	
Total	20	

²¹ The attendance list was a list of women who were referred to the program on the day. If women did not attend, there was a column on the list that asked for a reason for non-attendance (if known).

²² Vietnamese women’s program is delivered in a six hour session on a single day.

Note: To “complete” the program, participants must attend both sessions for English-speaking groups. Vietnamese-speaking groups were conducted over one session, thus participants were considered to “complete” if they were marked as having attended the single session.

Reasons for attendance

Participation in the program was voluntary, and is promoted using posters and flyers, as well as by programming staff through direct invitations by the Offender Services Manager or through case management by custodial staff. Reasons for attendance were captured through consultations with program staff and participants (surveys and focus groups). It was clear from the consultations that, while some women chose to attend the program to relieve boredom or receive a certificate of participation for court, the vast majority of participants indicated that they wanted to learn about healthy relationships to understand why their past relationships were volatile. They indicated that they wanted to make better choices in the future, for themselves and, for some women, their children. The reasons for participation were similar for both English-speaking women and the Vietnamese-speaking women, therefore they are presented together.

The most commonly cited reason for attendance by participants via feedback surveys, included:

- wanting to learn something new (endorsed by 76 per cent)
- help with their relationships with a partner and/or family (endorsed by 70 per cent)
- help with other relationships (current or future) (endorsed by 52 per cent)
- something useful for their court case (endorsed by 35 per cent).

In order of frequency, the reasons for attendance provided by participants via focus groups, included:

- wanting to gain insight into why their relationships were so violent in the past and to make better choices with relationships in the future
- wanting to make better choices with romantic relationships because of the impact they have on their children
- wanting to learn about respectful relationships to improve their relationships with family, friends and other prisoners
- feeling like they should go because they received an invitation to participate in the program
- wanting to learn something new
- saw the program on the referral form or the bulletin board and thought that it looked interesting
- turned up with a friend or wanted “*to make time pass*”
- program participation was “*good for parole*”

The service provider indicated that participants typically arrive without knowing much about the program content. According to interviews with program facilitators, some women who showed up on the day without a referral, often did so because they were accompanying a friend who was attending the program that day. Others indicated they had heard positive feedback about the program from other participants and wanted to see what the program had to offer.

4.5.3 Characteristics of program participants

This section of the report will examine the demographic characteristics of program participants and non-participants (those who were referred to the program but did not attend). This will assist in understanding who the program is servicing and who showed interest in attending, but did not attend or complete the program. Demographic data was also compared with that of the general female prisoner population²³, to understand if program participants were representative of the overall female prisoner population.

²³ CV administrative data extracted 30 January 2019

Demographic data was available for 178 program completers and 70 individuals who were referred to the program, but never completed the program (attended one session) or did not attend any of the sessions (non-attendees) (see Table 10).

Characteristics of program completers versus non-completers

When comparing the program completers to the general female prison population, program completers were fairly representative of the overall female prisoner population. There were no meaningful differences in age, parental status, marital status, education or prior terms of imprisonment. However, program completers were less likely to identify as Aboriginal (8 per cent versus 13 per cent) and more likely to be sentenced (58 per cent versus 51 per cent) and on a shorter term of imprisonment, than the general female prisoner population (see Table 10).

When comparing the demographics of those who completed the program to those who did not (non-completers), program completers differed on a number of demographic characteristics. There were no meaningful differences in parental status between the two groups. When compared to non-completers, program completers were:

- slightly older (35 years versus 32 years)
- less likely to identify as Aboriginal (8 per cent versus 17 per cent)
- more likely to have been divorced or separated (indicating history of relationship turmoil). They were also more likely to be married, while non-completers were more likely to be single or never married. This may indicate that program completers were more likely to need the program, having experienced relationships breakdown and currently being in a relationship (increasing motivation to maintain the relationship)
- more likely to have a higher education attainment (more likely to have completed secondary and further education)
- more likely to be sentenced²⁴ (58 per cent versus 41 per cent) and to be on longer sentences. For example, 52 per cent of program completers had sentences of one year or greater, compared to 17 per cent of non-attendees. 63 per cent of non-attendees had sentences of less than three months.

Table 10: Demographics of program attendees and non-attendees

Demographics	Female prisoners ²⁵ (n=594)	Program completers (n=178)	Non-completers (n=70)
Average age	36 years	35 years	32 years
Indigenous status			
Aboriginal	13%	8%	17%
Non-Aboriginal	88%	91%	81%
No data	0%	1%	1%
Have children?			
Yes	68%	67%	64%

²⁴ At MRC, TIRR is only offered to male prisoners who are on remand. As program completion is higher among sentenced prisoners at DPFC, it is recommended that the program be offered to sentenced and unsentenced prisoners, if the program is rolled out across other locations.

²⁵ This data was extracted on all female prisoners who were in prison on January 30 2019 and was presented earlier in this report.

No	31%	31%	31%
No data	<1%	2%	4%
Marital status			
Never married/single	60%	60%	71%
Separated	3%	6%	0%
Defacto	18%	15%	17%
Divorced	7%	8%	3%
Married	8%	7%	4%
Widowed	2%	1%	1%
No data	2%	3%	3%
Education			
Completed primary	2%	2%	4%
Completed secondary	8%	7%	4%
Part secondary	76%	77%	84%
Technical and Trade	2%	<1%	0%
Tertiary/other post-secondary	3%	3%	0%
No data	9%	0%	7%
Warrant status			
Sentenced	51%	58%	41%
Unsentenced	49%	42%	57%
No data	0%	1%	1%
Effective sentence length			
Under 1 month	<1%	2%	27%
1 < 3 months	5%	16%	36%
3 < 6 months	9%	15%	14%
6 < 9 months	7%	7%	2%
9 < 12 months	8%	7%	3%
1 or more years	70%	52%	17%
No data	<1%	0%	2%

4.6 Evaluation area 4: Program effectiveness

Evaluation area: The extent to which the program meets the needs of female prisoners (with a particular focus on Vietnamese prisoners)

This section of the report will review stakeholder interview data, performance reporting data, post-program participants' feedback surveys, and the participant focus group data. The findings for the English-speaking and Vietnamese-speaking women will be considered separately where feedback was specific to the cohort.

In order to understand program effectiveness, we looked at what the program aimed to achieve and to what extent the service provider achieved in delivering on these aims. It is important to note here that TiRR is a very short program and often the sessions were not able to be conducted for the entire six hours due to disruptions, which are not uncommon in a prison environment. It is also important to note that shifting attitudes and behaviours from such a short program were not within the scope of the program's objectives.

Key findings:

Participants reported a shift in understanding of concepts and strategies to enhance respectful relationships: The evaluation found (evidenced via surveys and focus groups) that both cohorts of women gained significant insights into their own behaviour; reported an increased understanding of the concepts underlying healthy relationships; and reported a high level of confidence in using the skills which they learned. Furthermore, prison staff, program facilitators and focus group participants reported examples of women using their skills with family members and the other prisoners, which are indicative of the effectiveness of the program.

The program was responsive to the needs of women: The program was appropriate and responsive to the needs of the women at DPFC. As highlighted in Section 4.2.1, almost half of all female prisoners in Victoria are currently on remand. There are currently no other programs on offer at DPFC which address healthy relationships and very few programs of any kind available to the remand population. TiRR is unique in that it is offered to women on remand (and sentenced women); short in duration making it suitable for remandees and women on short sentences; and addresses relationship issues, which are known to be connected to women's offending. The high program completion rate indicates that participants saw value in attending the program. The high rate of prisoners who completed the program multiple times (as highlighted in the key findings for Evaluation area 3: Program uptake) demonstrates that the women are interested in improving their relationships and that it was effective in teaching them the skills that they needed.

4.6.1 Outcomes reported by prison staff

The consultations revealed that the program was well regarded by prison staff and considered to respond to a gap in service delivery – in that the program is unique in terms of its content and objectives, and that the program was available to short sentence and remand prisoners was considered a key benefit of the program. The prison staff member felt that there was a need for a program such as TiRR at DPFC, particularly because there are no other similar programs for remandees, who represent a growing cohort of prisoners at that location.

The program was also perceived to have achieved a number of positive outcomes. The prison staff member felt that participants were often surprised that their relationships were not as

positive or healthy as they initially thought (indicative of a lack of insight into healthy relationships). They may have lived in unhealthy relationships without realising that they were being treated with disrespect and/or that they were also treating others with disrespect. Vietnamese-speaking participants were often more emotionally affected by the insights that they gained from the program, which was evident when they approached the staff member to provide feedback (by those who could speak English). These women also expressed an interest in participating in a longer version of the program.

The prison staff member felt that the program provides women with language to use to communicate more effectively with family. They also observed that participants discuss the program and share their learning outside in the prison yard, indicating that the program may be a catalyst for broader conversations around respectful relationships. The program had a positive impact on the relationships between the women who were in a group together. They become close after the program and continue to support one another.

4.6.2 Outcomes reported by program facilitators

The evaluation found that the program facilitators reported different outcomes for the two participant cohorts, therefore they will be discussed separately here.

English-speaking groups

Program facilitators²⁶ indicated that generally speaking, women were keen to use the program as an opportunity to discuss relationships with a focus on learning how to avoid being attracted to the same type of partner (violent and abusive). Facilitators observed that participants showed insights about their relationships in sessions, which indicates that participants understood the content. For example, participants reportedly remarked that many of their relationships have been abusive or disrespectful for many years, which they did not realise, as abuse was often emotional or mental, in the form of gas-lighting rather than physical. Participants reportedly felt empowered by the communication based activities that taught them how to be assertive, rather than aggressive or passive-aggressive. Participants reportedly applied their new skills outside of the sessions with family members and other prisoners.

Vietnamese-speaking groups

The interview with the Vietnamese-speaking facilitator regarding outcomes for program participants indicated that participants found it an 'eye-opening' experience to learn about gender equality and the understanding of respect in Australia. The facilitator spoke about how in Vietnamese culture, men are to be feared (as a form of respect) because the father is the head of the family and women and children are lower in the hierarchy and communication is therefore, one way. This demonstrates the need for culturally-specific programs among female Vietnamese prisoners.

Participants also responded strongly to the topic on violence. The facilitator felt that women had very little knowledge of what constitutes violence. She observed that beatings in Vietnamese families in Vietnam were a not uncommon form of communication, and that this form of abuse often continued on in Australia. She also noted that many people from the Vietnamese community were very surprised when they became involved with the criminal justice system in Australia because of family violence. Because of the cultural normalisation of violence, few women report to the police.

Overall, while the above observations by program facilitators may be biased, many of these observations regarding outcomes were supported by the feedback provided by participants. The

²⁶ Source: Interviews with program facilitators and commentary in performance reports

observations by program facilitators indicate that the program is meeting its aims and delivering on positive outcomes that are beyond the objectives of the program.

Post-program participant surveys (designed by Anglicare)

The surveys produced by Anglicare Victoria were not delivered to Vietnamese-speaking women because there were no Vietnamese programs at that time. The data presented here are for respondents who provided feedback between October 2018 and February 2019. There were 93 surveys returned. Not all questions on the survey were answered by all respondents, thus the data (total number of responses) for each question on the survey will vary.

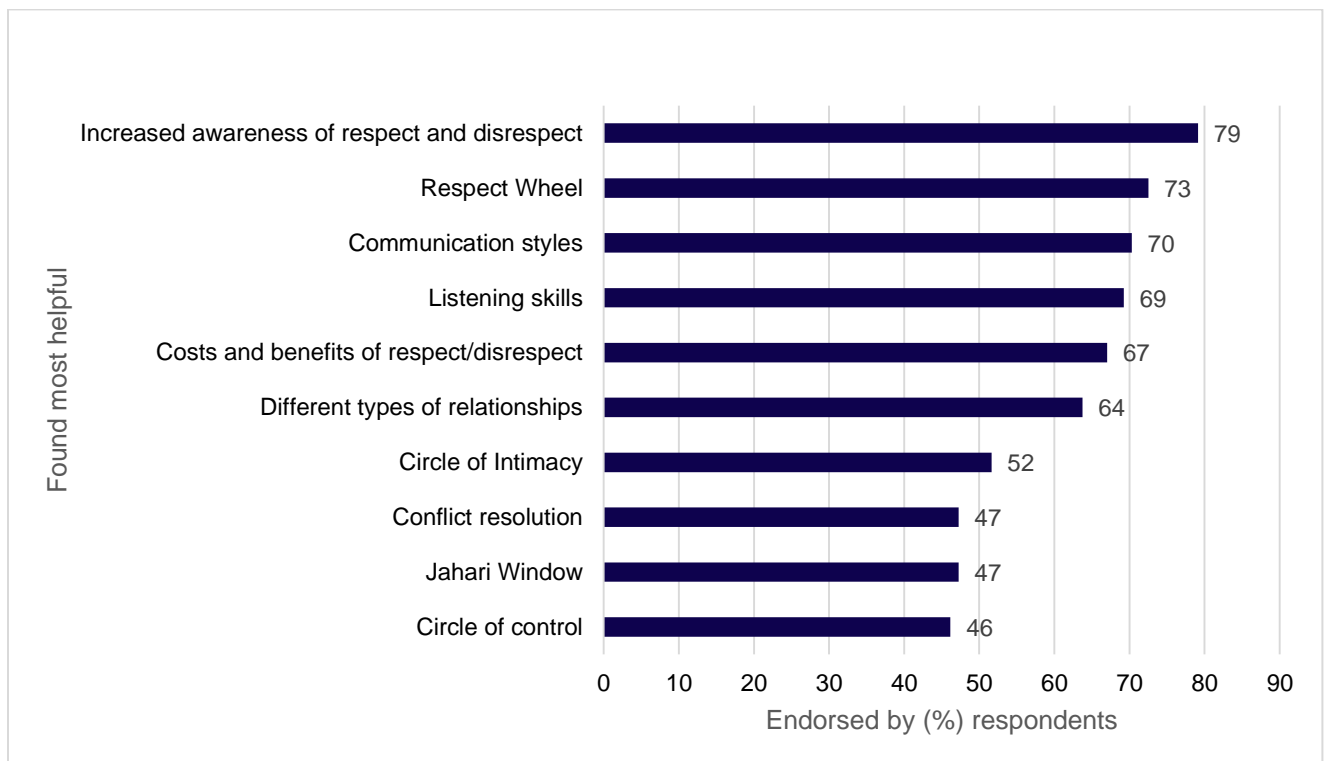
Analyses of the survey data indicated that:

- 99 per cent (n=92) of respondents indicated that they would suggest doing the course to other people.
- 98 per cent (n=91) of respondents indicated that they learned something new.
- 99 per cent (n=92) of respondents indicated that the facilitators clearly explained the activities and information.
- 99 per cent (n=92) of respondents indicated that the facilitators were easy to talk to and ask questions of.
- 91 per cent (n=85) of respondents felt confident that they could use what they learned in the program.

What did you find most helpful?

Respondents were asked which component of the ‘course’ they found most helpful. They had the option to select multiple components of the program (see Figure 6). The most commonly endorsed item was *having an increased awareness of respect and disrespect* (79 per cent).

Figure 6: What respondents found to be most helpful (n=91)



How confident do you feel?

Respondents were asked a series of questions assessing their confidence²⁷ in their understanding of the content and ability to apply lessons learned. Analyses of the survey data indicate that:

- 74 per cent (n=69) felt very confident in attending group programs in prison. 23 per cent (n=21) were a little confident, and 3 per cent (n=3) were not very confident
- 85 per cent (n=78) felt very confident in their understanding of respectful behaviours. 15 per cent (n=14) felt a little confident
- 89 per cent (n=83) felt very confident in their understanding of the value of respect in relationships. 11 per cent (n=11) felt a little confident
- 89 per cent (n=83) felt very confident in their ability to think in different ways about respect in their relationships. 11 per cent (n=11) felt a little confident
- 87 per cent (n=81) felt very confident in their understanding of what damages relationships. 13 per cent (n=12) were a little confident
- 86 per cent (n=80) felt very confident in their understanding of how they behave in a relationship. 14 per cent (n=13) were a little confident

Post-program surveys designed by the evaluation team

The post-program participant survey was delivered in English and in Vietnamese during the months of February, March and April 2019. Completed surveys were sent to the evaluation team by internal mail. 32 surveys were received (14 English and 18 Vietnamese). The low response rate may have been because the survey was voluntary and the lack of time provided in the session to fill out the surveys. Again, not all of the questions on the survey were filled out, thus the number of responses will vary for each question.

Of the English surveys:

- 93 per cent (n=13) indicated that they understood the discussion in the group.
- 100 per cent (n=14) of respondents indicated that the facilitators clearly explained the activities and information
- 100 per cent (n=14) of respondents indicated that the facilitators were easy to talk to and ask questions of.

Of the Vietnamese surveys:

- 100 per cent (n=16) indicated that they understood the discussion in the group
- 75 per cent (n=12) of respondents indicated that the facilitators clearly explained the activities and information. 25 per cent (n=4) indicated that they 'sort of' explained the activities and activities clearly
- 81 per cent (n=13) of respondents indicated that the facilitators were easy to talk to and ask questions of. 19 per cent (n=3) indicated that they were 'sort of' easy to talk to and ask questions of.

Previous program participation and interest in future programs

Of those who filled out the English survey, 64 per cent (n=9) had participated in programs in the past. This was higher than for those who filled out the Vietnamese survey (83 per cent, n=15). A summary of the types of programs that they participated in is set out in Table 11.

²⁷ Confidence was measured on a 10-point-Likert scale. These were categorised as: 1 to 3 'not very confident', 4 to 7 'a little confident', 8 to 10 'very confident'

Table 11: Previous program participation

Program type	English (n=9)	Vietnamese (n=15)
Parenting program	44% (n=4)	33% (n=5)
Drug and alcohol program	89% (n=8)	60% (n=9)
Gambling	0	47% (n=7)
Family violence program	22% (n=2)	7% (n=1)
Violence and anger management	44% (n=4)	27% (n=4)
Education	89% (n=8)	40% (n=6)
Other	22% (n=2) Responses included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk it Out • Beyond Violence • Offending behaviour programs 	20% (n=3) Response included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's health

Respondents were asked if they were interested in attending more groups on better relationships in prison or in the community upon release.

- 86 per cent (n=12) (English survey), indicated that they were interested or very interested.
- 89 per cent (n=16) (Vietnamese survey), indicated that they were interested or very interested.

Respondents were asked what would encourage them to attend more programs 'like this' after release. Responses were open text. There were 23 written responses (English n=10²⁸, Vietnamese n=13). A summary of the written responses on the English surveys included:

- knowing that the programs existed and where they needed to go to access them (n=4)
- programs that offer a wide variety of self-improvement topics (n=2)
- motivation of wanting to be a better mother (n=1)
- seeing changes and success when implementing skills learned (n=1).

A summary of the written responses in the Vietnamese surveys included:

- programs that offer understanding about the value/significance of respect, more knowledge of respectful relationships, how to listen and to be more connected to people (n=8)
- programs that offer an understanding of life and how to be "more decisive in the future" (n=2)
- more "learning programs" and opportunities to learn (n=2)
- programs that offer information about safety and responsibility (n=1).

²⁸ One respondent indicated that she was interested in programs, but did not indicate what would encourage her to participate. Another respondent indicated that TiRR was very useful. Because these responses did not answer the question, they were not included in the summary of responses.

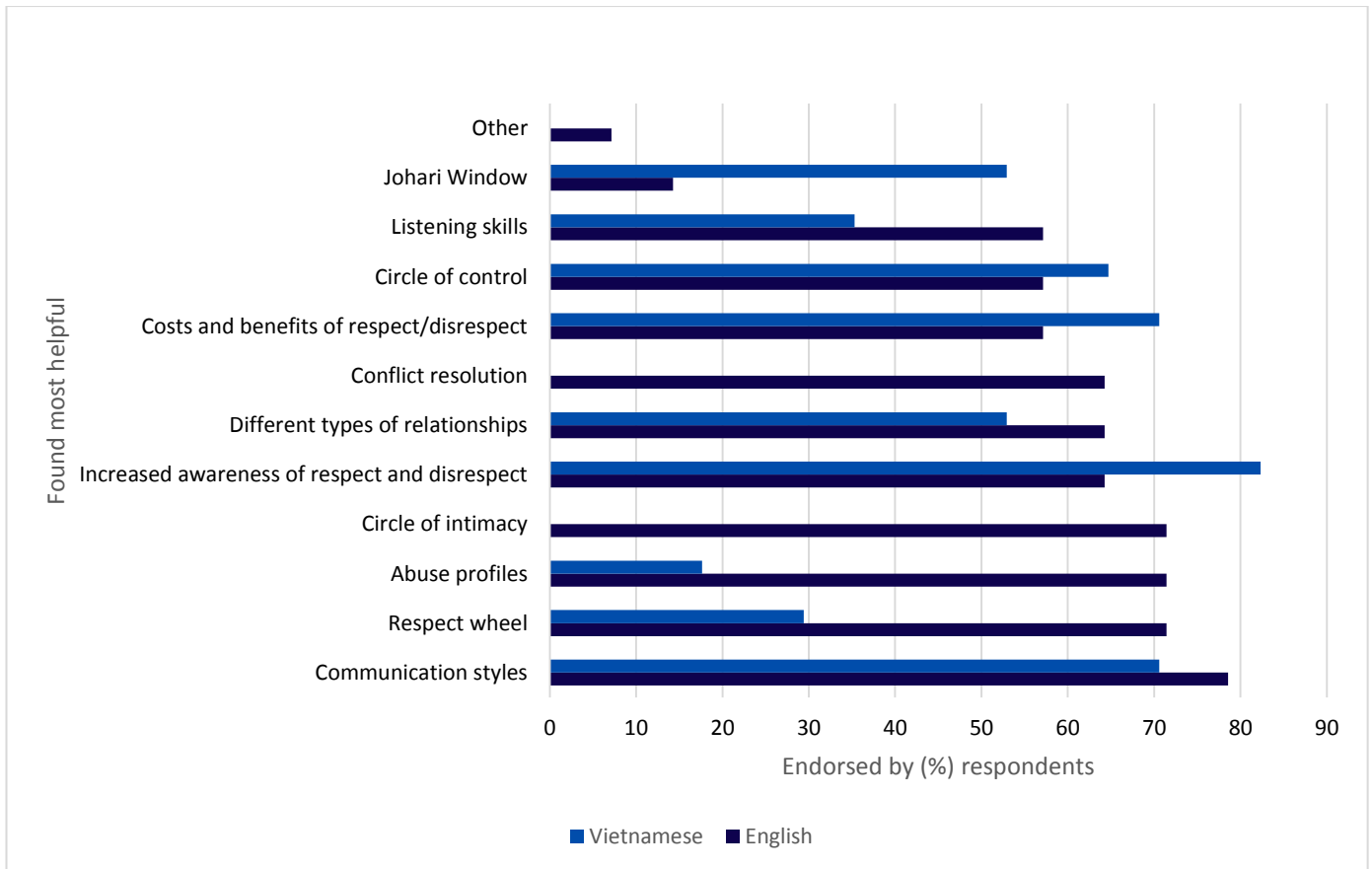
Given the high program attendance and the significant interest in participating in future programs, it is recommended that CV consider delivering the BBR program to women alongside TiRR. BBR would be suitable for women who are likely to be in prison for long enough to complete the program, while TiRR may be more suitable for women who are likely to be due for release.

What respondents found most helpful

Recommendation: CV to consider the delivery of BBR (in addition to TiRR) at DPFC.

Respondents were asked which component of the ‘course’ they found most helpful. They had the option to select multiple components of the program (see Figure 7). The most commonly selected response in the English surveys was communication styles (79 per cent), while the most commonly endorsed response in the Vietnamese surveys was *increased awareness of respect and disrespect* (82 per cent).

Figure 7: What respondents found to be the most helpful (n=31)



Changes in thinking about relationships

Respondents were asked to rate their perceptions of their relationships with their families before they commenced the program and then how they felt about these issues after the program (for the questions, see the Appendices). Respondents needed to consider how they felt about their relationships before they completed the program and provide these scores retrospectively.

When interpreting these results, it is important to note that this approach is limited by respondents’ self-awareness and insight into their own behaviour. Responses are also subject to bias, particularly socially desirable responding if the participants felt a positive connection with the facilitators and wanted to show their gratitude by providing responses that indicate positive

behavioural change (the desired outcomes of the program). Nevertheless, these results provide an estimate of the changes that the respondents felt that they experienced. For a summary of the results, see Figure 8 and Figure 9.

The data indicated that respondents scored themselves highly at baseline (thus creating a ceiling effect), which meant that there was little room for improvement on these factors from the program. This was particularly true for the Vietnamese-speaking respondents. Respondents felt that they improved on all of the domains as a result of the program. The most significant shift for the English-speaking respondents was in *admitting my mistakes when I am wrong*. English-speaking respondents scored themselves as ‘neutral’ on this question before the program, and then ‘very important’ after the program.

Figure 8: Change in thinking about relationships for English-speaking respondents



The most significant shift for the Vietnamese-speaking women was, *ask for others' opinion when I make a decision that affects them*. The scores indicated that respondents felt slightly more than ‘neutral’ (score of 3.7 out of 5) on the importance of this skill, which then increased to ‘very important’ (score of 4.9 out of 5) after the program.

Figure 9: Change in thinking about relationships for Vietnamese-speaking participants



Most useful discussions and activities

Respondents were asked which ideas in the group discussions they found most useful when considering their own relationships and communication styles. The responses to these questions were open text. There were 25 written responses (English n=10, Vietnamese n=15). Respondents were also asked to name the activities that they found to be useful and helpful. There were 26 responses (English n=14, Vietnamese n=12). While these two questions were intended to capture two separate concepts (useful topics of discussions and useful activities), an analysis of the qualitative responses indicated that there was overlap in the responses and therefore they are summarised together here. Some participants provided multiple responses.

A summary of the English responses is as follows:

- effective communication (to be assertive and use “I” statements) and to communicate more effectively with their children were useful skills and activities to learn (n=9)
- whole group discussions were useful for learning (n=2)
- learning to listen and to practice self-control was considered useful (n=2)
- ‘Respect Wheel’ activity was useful (n=1)
- ‘Circle of Intimacy’ activity was useful (n=1)
- understanding abuse in relationships and breaking the cycle of abuse (n=1)
- importance of valuing oneself (n=1).

A summary of the Vietnamese responses is as follows:

- whole group discussions were useful (sharing of personal stories and listening to different opinions) (n=7)
- being respectful (n=5) and the “Respect Wheel’ activity specifically was considered useful (n=5)
- program was considered helpful in teaching participants to communicate with their families (n=5)
- listening attentively and with empathy (n=4), the importance of trust, responsibility, sincerity and honesty in relationships with friends, family and children were considered useful (n=3)

- one participant highlighted reacting appropriately in order to protect right and benefits (n=1).

4.6.3 Outcomes reported by participants: focus groups

There were two focus groups held for Vietnamese-speaking participants (total n=22) and three focus groups for the English-speaking women (total n=9). Discussion with prison staff regarding the low focus group attendance rate from the English-speaking participants indicated that women at DPFC were feeling 'over-evaluated' at the time of the focus groups. There were a number of evaluation and research projects occurring at this location which is believed to led to a sense of 'evaluation fatigue' by the women.

Focus group participants were asked about what they learned from the group and what they found to be helpful. These outcomes are summarised here, separately for the English-speaking groups and for the Vietnamese-speaking groups.

English focus groups

Participants indicated that the program had helped them gain insights about their own behaviour, particularly around not behaving in a passive-aggressive manner towards their children, partners and others. Some of these insights are reflected in the following quotes:

"I looked at that sheet and I was like, wow. That is really me...when I get hurt, I do this or I lash out...It was really helpful for me to realise that what I'm doing is because I've been hurt myself."

"Being assertive but not aggressive... that bit was really helpful...sometimes you don't think about how you're coming across. You might think that you're being polite but you're actually not, you're being passive aggressive and this knowledge was pretty helpful...a lot of things that you don't pay attention to that you do or say which are quite rude..."

*"I'm passive. I'm a very passive person and I've got to learn not to be. I'm all about helping everyone else, making everybody else happy. And I usually don't give a f*** about myself...I didn't know I was passive until I learnt what passive is. I always felt I was optimistic... But I need to learn to become more assertive not passive."*

Participants also highlighted the importance of negotiation and the need for respect from both people in a relationship. Other key concepts learned included forgiveness, openly explaining why they are unhappy and apologising if they made a mistake. One participant highlighted a new communication style that she would try with her husband:

"Please make sure you do it if that's okay. If you're not comfortable then you tell me, where can we meet halfway"

These behavioural and attitude changes indicate that the program is successfully achieving its intended aims.

Vietnamese focus groups

The Vietnamese-speaking participants also reported a number of benefits of participating in the program, however, they highlighted different insights from the English-speaking women. Vietnamese women reported an increased understanding of the negative consequences of disrespect and anger in relationships and an appreciation for listening attentively, without interrupting and with empathy. Women also acknowledged how their own behaviour will need to change before they can expect partners to change.

Overall, a common theme that emerged from the comments was that many women - from both cohorts - did not have a healthy understanding of respect (consistent with the observations of facilitators), with many women associating respect with fear. Women were provided with new language to use to define behaviours, such as aggressive, passive, passive-aggressive and assertive that they could then use as a tool in understanding their own behaviours and those of

others. Activities such as the “I statements” provided women with the tools (or words) to use in healthy communication.

4.7 Evaluation area 5: Program strengths and recommendations

Evaluation area: The extent to which changes are required to strengthen the program.

This section of the report will explore, in detail, the observations of the prison staff member on what worked well and what the challenges were for program delivery at DPFC. It will explore what has worked well for the service provider in delivering the program (through quarterly reports and interviews) so that these aspects can be strengthened and applied across other locations, if the program was to be rolled out more broadly. It will also present some of the challenges that the service provider has experienced so that these can be addressed. Finally, this section of the report will then summarise what the program participants felt worked well for them (based on feedback from surveys and focus groups), suggestions for improvements and their interest in future programs.

Key findings:

What worked well

The evaluation identified a number of key successes of the program, which are summarised below:

- The most effective modules²⁹ were reported to be ones that focused on understanding respect and communicating effectively (assertively)
- Delivering the program to culturally-specific groups (Aboriginal women, African women and Vietnamese women) was considered to be a key success of the program³⁰
- Other successes included³¹: the short duration of the program; delivering the program across two days; the ability to attend the program without referral/with little notice; and the option to complete the program multiple times.

Challenges experienced

Program facilitators highlighted a number of challenges, most of which are commonly experienced by service providers during program delivery in prisons and are not likely to change. There were however a number of challenges raised which could be addressed, including:

- A review of the facilitator manual is needed for it to be in line with best practice and to better meet the needs of prisoners (particularly women). Facilitators have already made some of these changes, but it is recommended that the evidence base for these additions be reviewed and then these changes should be reflected in the manual (should another facilitator need to deliver the program).
- There was a view³² that broader knowledge and awareness of the program was lacking, particularly among Prison Officers. This is, perhaps, not surprising given that the program has been running for less than two years. However, it is recommended that the program be

²⁹ Source: data from interviews with program facilitators, participants focus groups and post-program participant surveys

³⁰ Source: data from interviews with prison staff, program facilitators and focus group respondents

³¹ Source: data from interviews with prison staff, program facilitators and focus group respondents

³² Source: data from interview with prison staff and quarterly reports from the service provider

promoted among Offender Services staff, particularly among Prison Officers and Remand Program Facilitators, as these staff are in a position to identify and refer prisoners (sentenced and unsentenced) to programs (particularly during case management meetings).

- The Vietnamese-speaking participants reported³³ that doing the program in one day was asking too much because they did not have enough time to rest throughout the day and felt overloaded with information. Further, one of the key benefits of the program, as identified by the English-speaking participants, was having the opportunity to think through the learnings of the first session (after day one) and then processing some of the feelings and emotions with facilitators and other participants when they returned on the second day. It is thus recommended that the program for Vietnamese women also be conducted across two days.

4.7.1 Interview with prison staff

What worked well?

The prison staff member felt that the passion of the facilitators was a strength and that interest in the program is growing as the positive feedback from program participants spreads across the prison. She also observed that, generally speaking, African and Aboriginal women often do not engage well in programs or in one-on-one sessions, and that they feel safer and less vulnerable when they are together as a group. Delivering cultural-specific sessions to these women was considered to work well, particularly given the observation that women prisoners who only speak Vietnamese are generally very interested in participating in programs but there is very little that caters specifically to this cohort.

What were the challenges?

The prison staff member highlighted a number of challenges for program delivery at DPFC. A number of these challenges represent operational challenges commonly faced by service providers in delivering programs in prison. Challenges included women prioritising canteen visits over program participation, which affected program attendance and/or prompt arrival to the program. However, another challenge included a perceived lack of awareness of the program among Prison Officers who, by virtue of their role, are in a position to engage and refer women to the program. As such, it is recommended that TiRR be promoted among Offender Services staff in order to ensure that staff are aware of the program and are referring women appropriately.

Recommendation: Promote TiRR among Offender Services staff (including Remand Program Facilitators) at participating prisons to ensure that staff are aware of the service and referring prisoners as intended

4.7.2 Consultations with program facilitators and program participants

What worked well?

There were three focus groups conducted for English-speaking participants and two focus groups for the Vietnamese-speaking participants. Each program facilitator was also interviewed individually. This section of the report highlights the key benefits of the program which were mentioned by both participants³⁴ and facilitators.

³³ Source: data from focus groups and via post-program surveys

³⁴ Source: data from participant focus groups, post-program surveys and interviews with program facilitators

Most effective program modules

Overall, participants and facilitators felt that the most effective modules were ones that focused on understanding respect and communicating effectively (assertively). The English-speaking participants were more likely to highlight the communication-based activities as being the most useful, while the Vietnamese women reported that the discussions around the definitions of respect were the most useful and insightful for them. Many Vietnamese-speaking participants thought that physical violence was the only form of abuse (i.e., they were not aware of different types of abuse, such as spiritual, emotional and financial abuse). Participants were able to define these during the focus group which demonstrates their increased understanding of the content following program participation.

Respectful facilitators

Facilitators felt that delivering the program with respect was one of the most important considerations, as this leads to authentic and meaningful discussions. As a show of respect, facilitators were willing to appropriately disclose some of their lived experiences within their own relationships, where they felt it was useful. An appreciation for the level of respect provided by the facilitators was also highlighted through the following participant comments³⁵:

"They didn't judge us. A lot of facilitators do...they treat us like we're in jail...With these two, it wasn't nothing like that. It was like, 'you're welcome. Come in. Make yourself comfortable. Make coffee'...It's just you enter into a comfort zone straightaway, and it's not slowly building up over the tension wall sort of thing."

"They're fantastic ... they're not like teachers...they treat us like normal people. They don't treat us like we're institutionalised. They don't look at us and go I'll treat you differently. And especially with me, she [facilitator] got me into rescue housing, quick housing. Yes, because I sat aside and spoke to her and she helped me a lot. So I give my hats off to her."

The review indicates that overall, prisoners were satisfied with the program facilitators as evidenced through the findings elicited through the consultations and the high uptake of the program, with some prisoners participating multiple times.

Conducting the program over two days and program length

Conducting the program over two days was seen as a key benefit by English-speaking participants and facilitators. It meant that facilitators could check-in with participants on day two to ensure that they were not distressed. Day one (session one) was often very confronting for many women, so following up with them two days later allowed the facilitators to ensure that they were referred to further services, if needed. The benefit of conducting the program over two days was highlighted in the following quote by a program participant:

"Sometimes people don't take in the full acknowledgement of what they're actually trying to teach you. So, I feel like splitting that up was really helpful. It's not just a 15 minutes break, you've got three hours to learn something, go back, revise it, come back in another day or two and do it again. So, it's not just bombarding you."³⁶

The program length being "short and sharp"³⁷ was initially attractive to women, particularly those whom have participated in longer programs in the past. Program participants indicated a strong interest in a longer version program which looks at the issues that were covered in TiRR in more detail in order to learn more about relationships, communication and self-development. An

³⁵ Source: Quotes by two English-speaking participants

³⁶ Source: Quote from an English-speaking focus group participant

³⁷ Source: Quote by program facilitator

increased interest in future program participation is one of four program aims, which evidently is being met through this program.

Only the English speaking program was delivered over two days. The Vietnamese program was delivered in one day, with Vietnamese respondents indicating that this was too much and that it would be best delivered across multiple days.

Flexibility in program attendance

Facilitators and English-speaking participants felt that the option to 'show up' on the day of the program, without referral, was a key benefit of the program. It was estimated by facilitators that approximately a third of participants were women who turn up on the day without a referral. English-speaking participants were also 'allowed' to complete the program multiple times, which was seen to be a key benefit by facilitators and participants. The facilitator for the Vietnamese-speaking group stated that Vietnamese-speaking women could only complete the program once and only attend if they were directly invited by the Multicultural Liaison Officer. The attendance list appeared to support this as Vietnamese women did not participate in the program more than once. It is recommended that attending multiple times be reviewed and the same rules be applied to both cohorts.

Delivering the program to CALD-specific groups

Delivering the program to culturally-specific groups was perceived to be particularly helpful for women who strongly identified with their culture. Facilitators reported that a group was conducted for African women (in English) and it was very well received. The women did not know each other before the program, but were able to create a safe space because of their shared cultural background. Similar feedback was provided about the Vietnamese women's groups. The Vietnamese women enjoyed sharing their experiences about growing up with their cultural background, which created culturally specific discussions about relationships and respect. The facilitators did note, however, that mixing cultures also worked well because it promoted an appreciation of other cultures among the women, which is particularly important in an environment in which women are forced to be in close proximity.

According to the Vietnamese program facilitator, delivering the program in a large group for the Vietnamese women worked well. The facilitator felt that, culturally, Vietnamese women do not like to talk about themselves in a group setting so when there was a large number of participants (up to 19), the women felt more confident and supported because at least a couple of participants were brave enough to speak, which then encouraged others to do so. This, however, also meant that some content needed to be skipped (usually the ice-breaker exercise). Up to 15 participants was considered to work well, as any more than that meant content needed to be rushed through or skipped.

What were the challenges for facilitators?

Some of the challenges which were highlighted by program facilitators were operational challenges that are to be expected when delivering programs in a correctional setting, rather than being specific to DPFC or the female prisoner cohort. For example, prison lockdowns, program cancellations at short notice and communication issues between Anglicare Victoria and the prison about late cancellations were seen as challenges to program delivery. Other disruptions included: participants being called away because a prison officer needed to talk to them; unexpected visitors or unexpected lawyer appointments; and delays in getting through the gatehouse (up to 35 minute wait due to other visitors).

Working with a remand population was also highlighted as a challenge through the consultations. As noted by facilitators, this cohort can be quite transient and many remand prisoners were considered not ready to engage in programs when they are detoxing from drugs and/or struggling

to adjust to their new environment. Importantly, this was also seen to be one of the key benefits of the program among prison staff.

Challenges that were found to be unique to DPFC, or with working with women specifically, included the disruptions caused by women prioritising the canteen over program participation. This issue was also highlighted by the prison staff member. Specifically, on days when the canteen was open (particularly on hot days), women often prioritised visiting the canteen for chocolates, confectionaries and ice cream. This often meant that women were late to the program, which caused disruptions, or they did not attend at all.

Group dynamics between the women (cliques) was also challenging for the facilitators, who were often unaware of underlying issues or pre-existing relationship issues between women in the group. For example, a group may have had three or four women who were close and would make in-jokes which, by their nature, excluded others from conversation. The facilitators felt that this was a unique issue to the women’s cohort:

“... some of the women's groups are harder to manage because they're like high school girls...just super excited or hypo...It's weird. I don't know how to describe it other than that ... there's a lot going on between them and occasionally we'll get the odd one who'll go: "I'm not feeling real well I'm going to go back to my unit" or something. And really it's not that they're not feeling well it's because they're either not liking the other women or they're feeling uncomfortable or whatever, but they're not bold enough to say that at the time...Yes so high school girls like "you're my friend", you know, "come sit next to me". "No you're not my friend, go away"...”³⁸

Program improvement suggestions by program participants

Both participant cohorts indicated in the consultations that the program should be longer. They felt that the program touched on a number of important topics but they did not have enough time to delve into issues in detail. Other suggestions for program improvements varied across the two participant cohorts. For example, the English-speaking participants felt that group sizes should be kept small in order for the group discussions to stay on topic and for people to have time to share their personal stories (group sizes were not mentioned by Vietnamese-speaking women as an issue). This sentiment was summarised through the following quotes³⁹:

“I’m one that doesn’t cope well in group activities. But we had a very small group and I felt like I got so much out of it...So, one day we had four...We were able to vent about a lot of stuff and it was really good...”

“I’ve done it [program] twice, the first one was around about eight girls. The second one was a lot bigger. And I just had done half the day on that one because it was too many girls... there was too much talking, too much laughter, too much. You need to have a group in between five to eight girls, no more...I did the smaller group first and I found that so much better.... The bigger group got heightened really easily.”

Vietnamese-speaking participants felt that doing the program in one day was too much. Women did not have enough time to rest throughout the day and they felt overloaded with information. It is recommended that the program be delivered across two days for Vietnamese women to allow for full delivery of the program.

Recommendation: Consider delivering the Vietnamese program over two days to allow for full delivery of the program.

³⁸ Quote by English-speaking facilitator

³⁹ Quotes by two English-speaking focus group participants

Program facilitator manual

The program facilitators reviewed the manual prior to delivering the program. They felt that the manual was very ambitious with what the program could achieve within the time frame and environment in which it was delivered. The program was thus modified using professional opinion on what would and would not work for the intended cohort. Content was further modified during delivery based on group dynamics and the needs of participants. The facilitators felt that this flexibility was crucial to the success of the program, and that such a program must be conducted by an experienced clinician in order for it to be effective.

The program was modified to be more discussion based, rather than teaching based. This meant there were some further amendments based on how each activity was received by the group. The inclusion of activities such as a card sorting activity on communication styles meant that, according to facilitators, participants were more actively engaged in discussions and less likely to get bored and disengage. This activity included the use of butcher's paper on the tables with four communication style headings: Aggressive, Passive Aggressive, Passive, or Assertive. Participants were then provided with prompt cards that covered different types of behaviours (e.g. using sarcasm) which, as a team, they then needed to place under the appropriate communication style headings. This activity was very well received by participants (as evidenced in their feedback forms and focus groups, which will be discussed later in this report). It is recommended that the evidence-base for this activity be reviewed and considered for inclusion into the facilitator manual and program.

Recommendation: Review the evidence-base for the card sorting activity on communication styles, which was introduced by the program facilitators and consider including it in the program operating manual

Program facilitators strongly suggested that an additional module on anger management and dealing with shame be added to the manual/program (if it were to be reviewed or modified). Facilitators felt that prisoners (particularly those from CALD backgrounds) struggle to deal with feelings of shame about being labelled as a criminal, including bringing shame to their families. Some prisoners have not let their families know that they were in prison, due to shame. The facilitators felt that this greatly affects prisoner's self-esteem and self-respect, which the program seeks to address. Managing feelings of anger (e.g., how to recognise anger, walk away from it, breathing techniques) and how to effectively respond to others who are angry, was also raised as an option for additional content, particularly for Vietnamese women.

The interview with the Vietnamese-speaking program facilitator emphasised that there is a great need and desire for more self-development programs among Vietnamese prisoners. The program facilitator observed that anger management is a significant issue for Vietnamese men and women because many of them come to Australia with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and there may be a lot of anger and resentment due to family conflict. If the contract for the program was to be renewed, it is recommended that the manual be revised to include a module to address anger management and dealing with shame.

Recommendation: Review the facilitator manual to consider the inclusion of a module on shame and a module on anger management in recognition of a need identified by the service provider.

Facilitator suggestions to enhance program uptake

Suggestions for changes were also made by Anglicare Victoria through its quarterly service delivery reports. Some achievable suggestions for changes to enhance program uptake

included⁴⁰ program facilitators and/or the CV, Rehabilitation and Reintegration Branch promoting the program among Offender Services staff at each location to increase the broader knowledge and awareness of the program, and to ensure that all programs staff are aware of, and referring prisoners to, the program as intended.

Program facilitators also suggested that CALD facilitators' biographies could be made available on program posters and invitations, so that prisoners are able to identify who is running the group, and what connection and authority they have to be training their communities. Another suggestion including promoting the program in both Vietnamese and English over the prison loud speaker system.

⁴⁰ Source: Q3 Tuning into Respectful Relationships CALD Addendum

5. Conclusion

The evaluation sought to determine the extent to which the program has been delivered and is operating as intended, and is responsive to the needs of women prisoners (including Vietnamese prisoners).

The findings for each of the key evaluation areas are summarised below:

Evaluation area one: the extent to which the program is aligned what is offered in other jurisdictions

Overall, the evaluation found that Victoria is the only jurisdiction in Australia and New Zealand to offer a program to men and women prisoners which specifically targets building healthy relationships and/or healthy communication skills. Some jurisdictions did, however, offer programs which included modules that addressed healthy communication styles or interpersonal skills. These programs were often offence-specific programs (such as family violence perpetrator programs or alcohol and drug programs), which meant that a large number of prisoners who may benefit from this module would be excluded due to program eligibility criteria. The jurisdictional analysis indicates that CV is tracking well in comparison with other jurisdictions in terms of its service offerings of programs such as TiRR, which recognise the past histories of trauma among female prisoners (trauma informed delivery) and the role that relationships play in contributing to women's offending.

Evaluation area two: the extent to which the program has been implemented as intended (implementation fidelity)

Overall, the program has been implemented and is operating as intended at DPFC. The facilitators made slight adjustments to the program based on the knowledge and needs of the women. The content delivery records indicate that, on average, 83 per cent of the content was delivered in accordance with the facilitator manual. The facilitators chose to exclude the Abuse Profile module, which was the only module added to the women's version of the program. This module was removed because women prisoners, particularly Vietnamese women, struggled to identify with the abuser profiles included in the exercise. The program facilitators also added a number of activities, which were seen to enhance the learning about respect and communication styles. It is recommended that the facilitator manual be reviewed to ensure that it aligns with best practice, should the program be extended beyond the current funding period. Further consideration should also be given to the length and timing of program delivery, with the review recommending that the program be delivered over two days for both cohorts.

Evaluation area three: the extent to which the service meets the key objectives and target performance indicators outlined in the service level agreement

Anglicare Victoria has delivered on its minimum contract deliverables. The service provider has delivered 31 programs in English at DPFC (with a minimum target of 25) and three programs in Vietnamese (minimum target of three). Programs will continue to be delivered weekly at DPFC until 31 December 2019 (contract expiry date), unless the contract is extended, which means that the provider will have well exceeded their contract deliverables.

Evaluation area four: the program meets the needs of female prisoners (including both English and Vietnamese prisoners)

The evaluation found that TiRR was responsive to the needs of female prisoners. The program responds to a gap in service delivery, in that it is: open to all women including those on remand; short in duration making it ideal for remandees and women on short sentences; and addresses relationship issues, which are known to be connected to women's offending. Furthermore, there are no other programs currently on offer, which focus on relationships or healthy communication.

There are also very few programs delivered in Vietnamese who represent the largest CALD women prisoner population.

The option to attend the program on the day without a referral (for English-speaking participants only) was a key strength of the referral pathway. It was estimated by program facilitators that a third of participants were women who turned up on the day without prior referral. This option was not available to the Vietnamese-speaking women whom could only attend if they were referred by the Multicultural Liaison Officer and they could not self-refer. The referral pathway into the Vietnamese-speaking program should be consistent with the referral pathway to the English-speaking program.

TiRR was well regarded among DPFC staff and was well received by participants as evidenced by the attendance records, which showed a consistently high program uptake and some women chose to complete the program multiple times. While the short duration of the program was attractive to women (and found to be of benefit by facilitators and the prison staff member), there was interest in a longer version of the program as evidenced through the consultations with prisoners. Desire for more programs in the area of relationships demonstrates that women saw value in this service and are keen to learn more about this topic.

Participant surveys and focus group respondents reported that women indicated having gained insight into their own behaviours as a result of participating in the program. Respondents reported an increased understanding of concepts and strategies to enhance respectful relationships, as well as a higher level of confidence in their ability to use the skills learned from the program. Furthermore, prison staff, program facilitators and focus group participants provided examples of women using the skills when interacting with family members and other prisoners, which are indicators of program effectiveness. Based on the findings of Evaluation area four, it is recommended that the longer version of the program, BBR also be offered to female prisoners.

Evaluation area five: the extent to which changes are required to further strengthen the program.

The evaluation found a number of changes that can be made to strengthen the program and its delivery. These recommendations are summarised below and in Table 12.

Modifications to the facilitator manual are needed

The evaluation found that facilitators made significant modifications to program content, based on the perceived needs of the female prisoner cohort. In addition, interviews with program facilitators indicated that there is a need to include additional modules on shame and anger management, as these issues have a significant impact on self-esteem and relationships. While the facilitators felt that this would be relevant to all women, these topics were thought to be particularly relevant for the Vietnamese women as these are issues with which they struggle. The need to review the facilitator manual is thus reflected in recommendation 1 in Table 12.

Service provider to collect and report on referral and attendance data

Early on in the evaluation period, it was discovered that neither the service provider nor the prison program staff were keeping accurate records about the number of referrals made and the number of participants who went on to complete (or not complete) the program. This information is important in understanding the need for and uptake of the program. The quarterly reports that the service provider is contracted to provide included reporting of this information, however, the evaluation team found that this was not occurring as intended. It is recommended that, should the contract with Anglicare Victoria be extended, the ongoing reporting requirements be reviewed (reflected in recommendation 2, Table 12).

Knowledge of the TiRR program could be improved among Prison Officers

While the program was well regarded by the staff consulted, some believed that broader knowledge and awareness of the program was lacking, particularly among Prison Officers. This is, perhaps, unsurprising given that the program has only been operating for six months (at the time of the interview). It is recommended (recommendation 4) that the program be further promoted among Offender Services staff (including Prison Officers and Remand Program Facilitators), as these staff are in a position to identify and refer prisoners to programs.

Vietnamese program should be delivered across two days

TiRR is delivered across two days in English and in one full day in Vietnamese for the Vietnamese speaking cohort. The review found a number of benefits in delivering the program across two days, and consultations with Vietnamese participants indicated that future program delivery should ensure that it is delivered across two days for all cohorts (recommendation 5 in Table 13). Vietnamese women should also be provided the opportunity to attend the program through self-referral or attending on the day without a referral (to be consistent with the referral pathway of the English-speaking participants).

Overall, the evaluation found evidence of the continued need for and effectiveness of the TiRR program at DPFC among both the Vietnamese and English-speaking cohorts. The program was well attended and well received by both cohorts, who reported that the program had increased their understanding of healthy communication strategies and the importance of respect in relationships. The program was also found to respond to a gap, in that, it is offered and open to all prisoners including remandees who represent a growing population of women prisoners. As such, it is recommended that the program be extended beyond the current funding agreement. It is also recommended that CV consider expanding the TiRR program to Tarrengower Prison. Program participants indicated a desire to participate in other programs, which seek to promote respectful relationships and effective communication, and it is therefore recommended that CV consider delivering the longer version of the program BBR and/or other like programs and services to women.

Drawing on the key findings of the evaluation, the report identified the following opportunities for further strengthening the program, should the program be extended beyond the current funding period:

Table 12: List of recommendations

Recommendations
<p>1. Review the facilitator manual to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) modify the Abuse Profile module to better suit the female prisoner cohort b) ensure that suggested activities and content are aligned with the overall objectives of the program and identified best practice principles, and ensure there are sufficient alternatives to video related activities (few prison facilities have video streaming available). c) review the evidence-base for the card sorting activity on communication styles, which was introduced by the program facilitators and consider including it in the program operating manual d) consider the inclusion of a module on shame and a module on anger management in recognition of a need identified by the service provider
<p>2. Service provider to collect all referral and attendance data and report on this on a quarterly basis.</p>

4. Promote TiRR among Offender Services staff (including Remand Program Facilitators) at participating prisons to ensure that all staff are aware of the service and referring prisoners as intended.

5. Consider delivering the Vietnamese program over two days to allow for full delivery of the program, and to ensure sufficient time for participants to reflect and process program learnings. The referral pathway into the CALD program should be consistent with the referral pathway into the English-speaking program (women should be allowed to self-refer and/or attend without a referral)

6. CV to consider the delivery of BBR (in addition to TiRR) at DPFC.

6. Document information

Document details

Criteria	Details
TRIM ID:	CD/19/536294
Document title:	Evaluation of Tuning into Respectful Relationships

Version control

Version	Date	Description	Author

Document approval

This document requires the following approval:

Name	Title	Organisation

Audience

The audience for this document is the Rehabilitation and Reintegration Branch with the purpose of providing information on how the Anglicare Victoria, Tuning into Respectful Relationships program is operating at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre.

Reference material

Attached references	TRIM ID/Location
Respectful Relationships: Theory Manual	CD/19/33438
Respectful Relationships: Program Guide & Facilitator Manual	CD/19/33445
Respectful Relationships Quarterly Report: Quarter 1 and 2 (July 2018 to December 2018)	CD/19/194542
Respectful Relationships Quarterly Report: Quarter 3 (Jan-March 2019)	CD/19/322069

Acronyms	Description
ANROWS	Australia's National Organisation for Women's Safety
BBR	Building Better Relationships
CV	Corrections Victoria
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
COVSA	Community Operations and Victim Support Agency
DJCS	Department of Justice and Community Safety
DPFC	Dame Phyllis Frost Centre
DREA	Data, Research, Evaluation and Analysis
IME	Information Management and Evaluation
MRC	Metropolitan Remand Centre
TiRR	Tuning into Respectful Relationships
RCFV	Royal Commission into Family Violence
RR	Respectful Relationships

7. Appendices

7.1 Appendix 1: Content delivery record

MODULE 1 — INTRODUCING RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS			
Content item	Delivery	Reasons for omission or adaptation	What worked well, or didn't work well
Meeting the participants ice-breaker	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		
Respectful Relationships goals	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		
Group agreement	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		
Pre-group questionnaires	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		
Thinking about respect including small group activity	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		
Respectful communication	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		
Thinking about relationships	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		
Different kinds of relationships including small group activity	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		

MODULE 2 — CROSSING THE LINE			
Content item	Delivery	Reasons for omission or adaptation	What worked well, or didn't work well
Welcome including reconstructing wheel small group activity	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		
Respect and relationships including group activity	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		
Violence	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		
Abuse Profiles (this was specific to women's program)	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		
Choice to change	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		
Violence — gender and respect	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		
Communication including brainstorm	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		
Reflection	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		

Close	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		
Post-group questionnaire	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		
Certificates	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		

What barriers or challenges did you experience in delivering the program and specified modules as intended? *Please detail (including an estimate or how often or likely this was to occur and the impact)*

Did any of the program content or delivery style not work as well with this cohort? *Please detail what didn't work well and why, and how you sought to overcome this*

7.2 Appendix 2: Abuse Profiles

Abuser profiles presented to participants for this module activity

Always right

The central attitudes driving Always Right are:

- you should be in awe of my intelligence and should look up to me intellectually. I know better than you do, even about what's good for you
- your opinions aren't worth listening to carefully or taking seriously
- the fact that you sometimes disagree with me shows how sloppy your thinking is
- if you would just accept that I know what's right, our relationship would go much better. Your own life would go better, too
- when you disagree with me about something, no matter how respectfully or meekly, that's mistreatment of me
- if I put you down for long enough, some day you'll see.

So sensitive

The central attitudes driving So Sensitive are:

- I'm against the macho men, so I couldn't be abusive
- as long as I use a lot of psychobabble, no one is going to believe that I am mistreating you
- I can control you by analysing how your mind and emotions work, and what your issues are from childhood
- I can get inside your head whether you want me there or not
- nothing in the world is more important than my feelings
- women should be grateful to me for not being like those other men.

Rambo

The central attitudes driving Rambo are:

- strength and aggressiveness are good; compassion and conflict resolution are bad

- anything that could be even remotely associated with homosexuality, including walking away from possible violence or showing any fear or grief, has to be avoided at any cost
- femaleness and femininity are inferior. Women are here to serve men and be protected by them
- men should never hit women, because it is unmanly to do so. However, exceptions to this rule can be made for my own partner if her behaviour is bad enough. Men need to keep their women in line
- you are a thing that belongs to me, akin to a trophy.

The water torturer

The central attitudes driving the Water Torturer are:

- you are crazy. You fly off the handle over nothing
- I can easily convince other people that you're the one who is messed up
- as long as I'm calm, you can't call anything I do abusive, no matter how cruel
- I know exactly how to get under your skin.

The victim

The central attitudes driving the Victim are:

- everybody has done me wrong, especially the women I've been involved with. Poor me
- when you accuse me of being abusive, you are joining the parade of people who have been cruel and unfair to me. It proves you're just like the rest
- it's justifiable for me to do to you whatever I feel you are doing to me, and even to make it quite a bit worse to make sure you get the message
- women who complain of mistreatment by men, such as relationship abuse or sexual harassment, are anti-male and out for blood
- I've had it so hard that I'm not responsible for my actions.

The terrorist

The central attitudes driving the Terrorist are:

- you have no right to defy me or leave me. Your life is in my hands
- women are evil and have to be kept terrorized to prevent that evil from coming forth
- I would rather die than accept your right to independence
- the children are one of the best tools I can use to make you fearful
- seeing you terrified is exciting and satisfying.

The demander

The central attitudes driving the Demander are:

- it's your job to do things for me, including taking care of my responsibilities if I drop the ball on them. If I'm unhappy about any aspect of my life, whether it has to do with our relationship or not, it's your fault
- you should not place demands on me at all. You should be grateful for whatever I choose to give
- I am above criticism
- I am a very loving and giving partner. You're lucky to have me.

The drill sergeant

The central attitudes driving the Drill Sergeant are:

- I need to control your every move or you will do it wrong
- I know the exact way that everything should be done
- you shouldn't have anyone else—or anything else—in your life besides me
- I am going to watch you like a hawk to keep you from developing strength or independence
- I love you more than anyone in the world, but you disgust me

The player

The central attitudes driving the Player are:

- women were put on this earth to have sex with men—especially me
- women who want sex are too loose, and women who refuse sex are too uptight
- it’s not my fault that women find me irresistible. It’s not fair to expect me to refuse temptation when it’s all around me; women seduce me sometimes, and I can’t help it
- if you act like you need anything from me, I am going to ignore you. I’m in this relationship when it’s convenient for me and when I feel like it
- women who want the nonsexual aspects of themselves appreciated are bitches
- if you could meet my sexual needs, I wouldn’t have to turn to other women.

The mentally ill or addicted abuser

The central attitudes driving the Mentally Ill or Addicted Abuser are:

- I am not responsible for my actions because of my psychological or substance problems
- if you challenge me about my abusiveness, you are being mean to me, considering these other problems I have. It also shows that you don’t understand my other problems
- I’m not abusive, I’m just——(alcoholic, drug addicted, manic-depressive, an adult child of alcoholics, or whatever his condition may be)
- if you challenge me, it will trigger my addiction or mental illness, and you’ll be responsible for what I do.

7.3 Appendix 3: Measure of change in thoughts about relationships

The table below was the measure of change in thinking about relationships used in post-program participant survey

What you thought before the program					Questions	What you think now				
Not important at all	Neutral			Very important		Not important at all	Neutral			Very important
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	Admit my mistakes or when I’m wrong	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	Not use violence during conflicts	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	Be honest	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	Accept if someone wants to change their mind or do something differently	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	Ask for others’ opinion when I make a decision that affects them	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	Trust others	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

Evaluation of Tuning into Respectful Relationships

Information Management and Evaluation Branch
Corrections Victoria

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Background

The number of women in Victoria's prison system has increased significantly over the last five years (49 per cent increase). This is largely due to the rising number of women remanded into custody for short periods of time, many of whom are subsequently released on bail or to a non-custodial sentence. A range of factors have been responsible for the growth in the women's prison population, including: population growth, changes in policing strategies, and policy and practice changes across the criminal justice system. Vietnamese women have represented the largest, single culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) cohort in the women's corrections system since 2012.

Women who enter prison often have multiple and complex needs, many of which are unique to women. Personal relationships, victimisation (including family violence as a child and adult), trauma and substance abuse have all been linked to women's offending. Many jurisdictions (including Victoria) have directed efforts to ensuring that programs and services are responsive to the specific needs of this cohort. Corrections Victoria (CV) has responded to this need by producing the *Strengthening Connections women's policy for the Victorian Corrections system*, which is an evidence-based framework for addressing the offending pathways for women. The policy recognises that relationship problems are more likely to underpin women's offending than men, and therefore CV needs to ensure that there are programs and services which seek to address the relational context of offending for women.

In recognition of the significant issue of family violence victimisation and perpetration among prisoners, CV launched its first *Family Violence Reform Strategy* in September 2015. The Strategy details CV's response to family violence within the corrections system, including a strategy to identify family violence perpetrators to deliver targeted family violence programs and services, as well as supporting prisoners and offenders who are victims of family violence. In 2016, CV developed and piloted a Respectful Relationships (RR) program as part of its specialist response to family violence to raise awareness of what constitutes family violence. Two versions of the program were trialled: a full Building Better Relationships (BBR) program of six two-hour sessions, and an abridged Tuning into Respectful Relationships (TiRR) program of two three-hour sessions¹. Both versions of the program have the same program aims, objectives and goals. Tuning into Respectful Relationships (TiRR) is delivered to remand and sentenced women prisoners, and represents the focus of this report.

1.2 Tuning into Respectful Relationships

TiRR is a six hour psychoeducational program, contracted to be delivered by Anglicare Victoria at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (DPFC) and Metropolitan Remand Centre (MRC). The program was designed to raise awareness of the elements of respectful relationships, impart practical knowledge and skills to help participants form and improve relationships, and contribute to self-development in general. The program seeks to "play a role in" reducing family violence; but it is not a violence prevention program specifically. The program was designed to be relevant to all prisoners, regardless of their offence history, sentence type or length, culture, gender, sexuality, or any other demographic variable(s).

In 2017, CV adapted the TiRR program so that it could be trialled with CALD prisoners. Since 2017, the program has been delivered to mainstream men, Vietnamese men and men born in the Greater Horn of Africa at MRC, and mainstream and Vietnamese women at DPFC. The adapted

¹ While BBR and TiRR were developed by Anglicare Victoria, the program is owned by CV.

program has not been evaluated, therefore, an evaluation of the CALD and mainstream program delivery is warranted.

The Data, Research, Evaluation and Analysis (DREA) team from the Community Operations and Victim Support Agency (COVSA)² undertook the evaluation of the TiRR program at MRC, while the IME Branch undertook the evaluation of TiRR at DPFC. The approach to the evaluation was determined in consultation between the two branches. This document presents the key findings of the evaluation of the program at DPFC, which was conducted by CV’s Information Management and Evaluation Branch.

The evaluation employed a mixed methods approach to collect and triangulate a range of quantitative and qualitative data on the need for, and effectiveness, of the service. The evaluation period was from 1 October 2018 to 31 July 2019.

The purpose of the evaluation was to evaluate the implementation, operation and effectiveness of the TiRR program for the Vietnamese and broader prisoner population at DPFC. The findings of the evaluation may be used to inform decisions regarding the future funding arrangements beyond the pilot period.

1.3 Key findings and recommendations

Table 1 below outlines the key findings from the evaluation, along with a rationale for the recommendations that came from these key findings.

Table 1: Key evaluation findings

Key evaluation area: the extent to which the program is aligned with what is offered in other jurisdictions	
Key finding 1	<p>Victoria is the only jurisdiction in Australia or New Zealand to offer a program to men or women prisoners which specifically targets building healthy relationships and/or healthy communication</p> <p>The only other correctional agencies that offered programs specifically targeted at strengthening relationships were programs targeted at male prisoners only – and the majority of these were specifically targeted at family violence. There were no programs similar to TiRR which were delivered in another language such as Vietnamese, however, this is perhaps unsurprising as Victoria has the largest proportion of Vietnamese prisoners out of all the states and territories as well as New Zealand. The jurisdictional analysis indicates that CV is tracking well in comparison with other jurisdictions in terms of its service offerings of programs such as TiRR.</p>
Key evaluation area: the extent to which the service meets the key objectives and target performance indicators outlined in the service level agreement	
Key finding 2	<p>The service provider has delivered on their minimum contract deliverables</p> <p>Anglicare Victoria is currently partway through its contract which is due to expire on 31 December 2019. It has delivered 31 programs in English at DPFC (the minimum target is 25) and three programs in Vietnamese (minimum target is three).</p> <p>137 English-speaking women and 41 Vietnamese-speaking women participated in the program between 1 October 2018 and 30 April 2019. The high uptake of the</p>

² At the time of report publication, COVSA underwent a name change and as at August 2019 is known as Victims Support Innovation and Justice Operations

	program among both Vietnamese and English speaking cohorts confirm that there is a strong need and interest in the program.
Key evaluation area: the extent to which the program has been implemented as intended (implementation fidelity)	
Key finding 3	<p>The majority of the content (as per the facilitator manual) was delivered as intended (implementation fidelity)</p> <p>The consultations indicated that the facilitators chose to exclude the ‘Abuse Profile’ module, which was the only module added to the women’s version of the program. The module was removed due to past experience in delivering this content to women prisoners, which indicated that the women struggled to identify with the abuser profiles included in the exercise. This was thought to be particularly problematic for the Vietnamese cohort, which suggests that the program content may need to be reviewed (should the program be extended beyond the current funding period).</p>
Key evaluation area: The extent to which the program meets the needs of female prisoners (including both English-speaking and Vietnamese-speaking prisoners)	
Key finding 4	<p>The program was found to be effective in achieving the program objectives</p> <p>Participant survey respondents and focus group participants reported an increased insight into their own behaviours and a shift in understanding of concepts and strategies to enhance respectful relationships as a result of participating in the program. Participants also reported having a high level of confidence in their ability to use the skills learned from the program. Furthermore, prison staff, program facilitators and focus group participants reported that women were using the skills they had learned in the program when interacting with family members and other prisoners, which are indicators of program effectiveness.</p> <p>Participant surveys and focus groups also demonstrated that women showed a very strong interest in participating in future programs (one of the four aims of the program), particularly a follow-up program that could explore some of the topics raised by TiRR.</p>
Key finding 5	<p>The program was responsive to the needs of women</p> <p>The evaluation found that TiRR responds to a gap in service delivery in that it is offered and open to all women, including those on remand; the program is also short in duration (ideal for remandees and women on short sentences); and addresses relationship issues, which are known to be connected to women’s offending.</p> <p>TiRR was well regarded among DPFC staff and considered to respond to a gap in service delivery at DPFC – with no other programs currently on offer, which focus specifically on relationships or healthy communication.</p> <p>There are also very few programs delivered in Vietnamese and the program was well received by this cohort, who represent the largest CALD women prisoner population.</p>
Key finding 6	<p>The program was very well received by participants and there was an appetite for participating in future programs</p> <p>The program was well received by participants, as evidenced by the attendance records, which showed that some women chose to complete the program multiple times. While the short duration of the program was attractive to women (and found to be of benefit by facilitators and prison staff), the feedback from participants</p>

	indicates that there is a desire among women prisoners for more programs which seek to address respectful relationships and/or a longer version of the program.
Key Finding 7	<p>The referral pathway into the program differed for the CALD and English speaking cohorts</p> <p>The option to attend the program on the day without a referral (for English-speaking participants only) was considered a key strength of the referral pathway. It was estimated by program facilitators that a third of participants were women who turned up on the day without prior referral. This option was not available to the Vietnamese-speaking women whom could only attend if they were referred by the Multicultural Liaison Officer.</p>
<p>Key evaluation area: the extent to which changes are required to further strengthen the program</p>	
Key finding 8	<p>Modifications to the facilitator manual are needed</p> <p>In addition to the removal of the Abuse Profile module from the facilitator manual (Key Finding 3), interviews with program facilitators indicated that there is a need to include additional modules on shame and anger management as these issues have a significant impact on self-esteem and relationships. While the facilitators felt that this would be relevant to all women, these topics were thought to be particularly relevant for the Vietnamese women.</p>
Key finding 9	<p>Knowledge of the TiRR program could be improved among Prison Officers</p> <p>While the program was well regarded by the staff consulted, there was also a view that broader knowledge and awareness of the program was lacking, particularly among prison officers. This is, perhaps, unsurprising given the program has only been operating for six months (at the time of interview).</p>
Key finding 10	<p>The Vietnamese program should be delivered across two days</p> <p>In its current format, TiRR is delivered across two days in English and one full day in Vietnamese. Program facilitators and English-speaking participants (survey respondents and focus group participants) highlighted that delivering the program across two days was a key strength of the program. Conversely, the Vietnamese-speaking focus group participants felt that conducting the group in one day was too overwhelming and the content was rushed.</p>

Overall, the evaluation found evidence of the continued need for and effectiveness of the TiRR program at DPFC. The program was well attended and received by both the English-speaking and Vietnamese-speaking prisoner cohorts, who reported that the program had increased their understanding of healthy communication strategies and the importance of respect in relationships. The program was also found to respond to a gap in service delivery, in that it is available to all prisoners, including the growing population of women on remand and/or serving short sentences, and has been translated into Vietnamese for Vietnamese prisoners. As such, it is recommended that the program be extended beyond the current funding agreement. It is also recommended that CV consider expanding the TiRR program to Tarrengower Prison. Program participants indicated a desire to participate in other programs that seek to promote respectful relationships and communication, it is therefore recommended that CV consider delivering the longer version of the program (Building Better Relationships) and/or other similar programs and services.

Drawing on the key findings of the evaluation, the report identified the following opportunities for further strengthening the program should the program be extended beyond the current funding period:

Table 2: Recommendations

Recommendations
<p>1. Review the facilitator manual to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) replace the Abuse Profile module with a more appropriate module to better suit the general female prisoner and CALD cohorts. Ensure that suggested activities and content are aligned with the overall objectives of the program and identified best practice principles, and there are sufficient alternatives to video related activities, since few prison facilities have video streaming available. b) review the evidence-base for the card sorting activity on communication styles, which was introduced by the program facilitators and consider including it in the program operating manual c) consider the inclusion of a module on shame and a module on anger management in recognition of the need identified by the service provider. <p>Justification: The evaluation identified that facilitators made a number of adaptations to the program content to ensure that it was appropriate for women prisoners. It is recommended that the evidence-base be reviewed for the efficacy of any additional activities which have been added to the program, and the program operating manual be adjusted accordingly should the program be extended beyond the current funding period.</p>
<p>2. Service provider to collect all referral and attendance data and report on this on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>Justification: Data regarding referrals and attendance was not captured in a reliable manner. It is recommended that the service provider collect all referral and attendance data and report on this on a quarterly basis. Accurate referral and attendance data provide an understanding of the need for the service and uptake of the services, and allow for meaningful ongoing performance monitoring and evaluation.</p>
<p>3. Promote TiRR among Offender Services staff (including Remand Program Facilitators) at participating prisons to ensure that all staff are aware of the service and referring prisoners as intended.</p> <p>Justification: As highlighted in Key Finding 8, broader knowledge and awareness of the program was lacking, particularly among prison officers. A key benefit of the program is that it responds to a gap in service delivery, in that it is available to all prisoners (including remand and short sentence). As such, it is recommended that, should the program be extended beyond the pilot period, TiRR be promoted among Offender Services staff to ensure staff are aware of the service and referring prisoners as intended. By the nature of their roles, Prison Officers and Remand Program Facilitators are in a position to promote the program to prisoners (sentenced and unsentenced) and refer them to programs, particularly during case management.</p>
<p>4. Consider delivering the Vietnamese program over two days to allow for full delivery of the program, and to ensure sufficient time for participants to reflect and process program learnings. The referral pathway into the CALD program</p>

should be consistent with the referral pathway into the English-speaking program (women should be allowed to self-refer and/or attend without a referral)

Justification: As highlighted in Key Finding 9, program facilitators and English-speaking participants (survey respondents and focus group participants) highlighted that delivering the program across two days was a key strength of the program. The Vietnamese-speaking focus group participants felt that conducting the group in one day was too overwhelming and the content was rushed. It is recommended that the program be delivered across two days in Vietnamese.

5. CV to consider the delivery of BBR (in addition to TiRR) at DPFC

Justification: As highlighted in Key Finding 6, women were attending the program multiple times and the feedback from participants indicated there is a desire among women prisoners for more programs which seek to address respectful relationships and/or a longer version of the program. Therefore, it is recommended that BBR and TiRR both be offered at DPFC. The longer version of the program would be suitable for women who are likely to be in prison for long enough to benefit from the longer version of the program.

2. Introduction

Corrections Victoria (CV) is responsible for managing and supervising adult prisoners and offenders in Victoria. CV delivers a range of programs and services in order to assist offenders to address issues related to their offending behaviour and improve their likelihood of reintegration post-release. The aims of offender management as outlined in CV's Offender Management Framework 2015 are to:

- maintain a safe and secure community
- motivate offenders to engage in and continue with programs and services
- identify and monitor offenders' risk and needs
- coordinate and prioritise offenders' access to appropriate programs, services and activities based on offenders' individual risk and/or needs.

The number of women in the Victorian Correctional system has increased from 338 in June 2008 to 566 in June 2018, which is largely due to the rising number of women being remanded (often for short periods of time), many of whom are subsequently released on bail or to a non-custodial sentence³. Female prisoners present with a complex and unique profile and set of needs, compared to men. In November 2017, CV developed *Strengthening Connections*, a new women's policy, which provides an evidence-based framework for addressing the issues and offending pathways for women in the corrections system. The policy highlighted the specific challenges which female prisoners face, including the role that personal relationships, victimisation and trauma play in contributing to women's offending.

The increased number of remand female prisoners, coupled with the high proportion of women who have a past experience of family violence and/or link between their interpersonal relationships and offending, means there is a need for short programs for women that address healthy relationships.

2.1 Corrections Victoria's response to family violence

CV has made significant progress in its response to, and management of family violence victims and perpetrators in recent years. In 2014, the Department of Justice and Community Safety's (then, Department of Justice and Regulation) Senior Executive Group identified family violence as a priority area for the Department. In September 2015, CV launched its first *Family Violence Service Reform Strategy*. The Strategy details CV's response to family violence within the corrections system, which aims to:

- identify family violence perpetrators
- deliver targeted family violence programs and services to perpetrators
- support prisoners and offenders who are victim survivors of family violence
- create an environment for cultural change
- work with other service systems.

In March 2016, the Royal Commission into Family Violence (RCFV) (the Commission) handed down 227 recommendations, which proposed a series of system improvements across the health, justice and education sectors. The Commission identified that Victoria has an opportunity to transform the way in which family violence is addressed. A number of gaps were identified for interventions for perpetrators of family violence. The Minister for Corrections has sole lead responsibility for three recommendations, and is a co-lead on a further eight recommendations.

³ *Women in the Victorian Prison System* - a report by Corrections Victoria (January 2019)

The Royal Commission recommended the development of a suite of interventions and programs that are implemented according to the latest knowledge and evidence about their efficacy in managing risk, achieving behaviour and attitude change, reducing reoffending and meeting the needs of victims. Recommendation 87 states: The Victorian Government, subject to advice from the recommended expert advisory committee and relevant Australia's National Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) research, trial and evaluate interventions for perpetrators [within three years] that:

- provide individual case management where required
- deliver programs to perpetrators from diverse communities and to those with complex needs
- focus on helping perpetrators understand the effects of violence on their children and to become better fathers
- adopt practice models that build coordinated interventions, including cross-sector workforce development between the men's behaviour change, mental health, drug and alcohol and forensic sectors.

As part of CV's response to family violence, Anglicare Victoria was commissioned to develop and pilot the Respectful Relationships (RR) program in 2015-16. Two versions of the program were trialled: a full Building Better Relationships (BBR) program of six two-hour sessions, and an abridged Tuning into Respectful Relationships (TiRR) program of two three-hour sessions. Both versions of the program had the same program aims, objectives and goals. TiRR consisted of two sessions, which focused on participant education and reflection. BBR focused on education, reflection and aimed to equip participants with practical tools and resources to put their learning into practice. The contact hours and level of detail covered through the program were the only elements of difference between the two versions.

The program was intended to be adaptable to the specific needs of participants but did not specifically address cultural differences. The initial pilot was not formally evaluated. In 2017, CV decided to pilot TiRR with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) participants at the Metropolitan Remand Centre (MRC) and Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (DPFC).

2.2 Tuning into Respectful Relationships program

TiRR is delivered by Anglicare Victoria⁴. It is a psychoeducational program which is designed to raise awareness of the elements of respectful relationships, impart practical knowledge and skills to help participants form and improve relationships, and contribute to the self-development of participants in general. While the program seeks to "play a role in" reducing family violence, it is not a violence prevention program⁵. The program is much broader in its aims and designed to be offence-agnostic. It is not targeted at violent offenders, or necessarily at prisoners who have a history of intimate partner violence or related offences. The program has been designed to be relevant to all prisoners, regardless of their offence history, sentence, culture, gender, sexuality, and regardless of any other demographic variables⁶.

The program is modularised and constructed to be delivered in six contact hours by a pair of facilitators working together (one facilitator of each gender). The program is delivered in an interactive manner, with elements of: informational content (where information is presented by the facilitators); practical group activities, discussions among participants; short periods of reflection; videos (facilities permitting); brainstorming activities; and role-play activities.

⁴ While Anglicare designed and developed the BBR and TiRR programs, the program suite is owned by CV

⁵ Respectful Relationships Theory Manual (2017)

⁶ Respectful Relationships Theory Manual (2017)

TiRR has also been adapted for women. The women's version of TiRR includes the addition of a module titled 'Abuse Profiles'. This module is intended to introduce women to a suite of common abuser profiles and ask them to reflect on their own relationships with the particular profiles.

The aims of the program are to⁷:

- introduce participants to the concept of respectful relationships
- develop strategies to enhance respectful relationships
- facilitate awareness of behaviours that constitute family violence
- facilitate further engagement with offence specific and offence related offending behaviour programs.

The goals of the program are to:

- help participants better understand the role of respect in their relationships
- equip participants with tools to create and improve respectful relationships
- enable participants to identify and pursue personal development needs in relation to their own attitudes or behaviours
- provide a positive experience which encourages participants to seek and engage in further opportunities and programs for self-development.

At DPFC, the program is delivered in English and Vietnamese. The English program is delivered weekly across two days/sessions (three hours on a Wednesday and three hours on a Friday), while the Vietnamese program is delivered monthly in one six hour block on a Tuesday. Both programs are co-facilitated by a male and a female facilitator. The Vietnamese program is delivered by a Vietnamese-speaking female facilitator and an English-speaking male facilitator (who does not speak Vietnamese).

Program participation is voluntary. Referrals to the program for the mainstream prison population occur through a number of channels: women can self-refer by filling out a referral form; women may be invited by program staff; or they may choose to attend on the day without prior referral. Women may also participate in the program multiple times. Vietnamese-speaking women may only attend through an invitation from the Multicultural Liaison Officer and may only complete the program once⁸.

The program has been delivered in English and in Vietnamese to women at DPFC since October 2018. At MRC, the program has been delivered in Vietnamese and in English to a mainstream cohort and to Horn of Africa men, since October 2018. The program is open to both sentenced and remand prisoners at DPFC but only to prisoners on remand at MRC.

2.2.1 Current funding and contract deliverables

The program was funded [REDACTED] by the CV's Rehabilitation and Reintegration Branch over a 12 month period, which was then extended to 18 months (ending 31 December 2019) due to a number of program cancellations. The extension provided an opportunity for Anglicare Victoria to finish delivering the number of programs under the deliverables in the common funding agreement. The key deliverables outlined in the common funding agreement include:

- program delivered in English: 52 to 104 programs evenly divided across MRC and DPFC (up to 14 participants per group)
- programs delivered in Vietnamese: up to seven programs (up to three for women, up to four for men)

⁷ Respectful Relationships: Program Guide & Facilitator Manual (2017)

⁸ Source: Interview with Vietnamese-speaking program facilitator

- programs delivered to prisoners from the Greater Horn of Africa: up to three programs for men only (up to 14 participants per program).

The findings of this evaluation may be used to inform decisions regarding future funding arrangements.

2.3 Scope

The Data, Research, Evaluation and Analysis (DREA) team from the Community Operations and Victim Support Agency (COVSA) undertook the evaluation of the TiRR program at MRC, while the IME Branch undertook the evaluation of TiRR at DPFC. The key findings of this evaluation are presented in this report.

In scope:

- TiRR women's pilot program
- program process evaluation
- measurement of short-term change in participants' understanding about and attitudes towards respect in relationships.

Out of scope:

- measurement of longer-term change in participants' understanding about and attitudes towards respect in relationships.
- comparison of participants and non-participants
- evaluation of the TiRR program delivered at the men's prison (as this was done by COVSA).

3. Methods

This section of the report describes the approach taken to evaluate the TiRR program, including key questions and methods, which guided the evaluation.

3.1 Evaluation questions

This evaluation sought to determine the extent to which:

- the program has been implemented as intended (implementation fidelity)
- the program is aligned with that which is offered in other jurisdictions
- the service meets the key objectives and target performance indicators outlined in the service level agreement
- the program meets the needs of female prisoners (including both English and Vietnamese prisoners)
- changes are required to further strengthen the program.

3.2 Approach to the evaluation

The evaluation employed a mixed methods approach to collect and triangulate a range of quantitative and qualitative data on the need for and effectiveness of the service, including:

- jurisdictional analysis of similar programs targeting female prisoner populations offered in other Australian states, territories and New Zealand
- review of CV policy, research, and program documents relating to female prisoners
- review of Anglicare program administrative data
- review of CV administrative data
- data elicited from consultations with key stakeholders involved (either directly or indirectly) in the implementation or delivery of the program
- data elicited through surveys and consultations (focus groups) with program participants.

The data collected for this evaluation was analysed using thematic analyses (for qualitative data) and descriptive statistics (for quantitative data).

3.2.1 Jurisdiction analysis and review of relevant research

The IME branch conducted a brief desk-top analysis of similar programs offered to prisoners (particularly women) in other Australian and international (New Zealand) jurisdictions. The analysis sought to explore whether other jurisdictions had similar programs as TiRR and if so, determine:

- to what extent does the program align with programs and services offered to women prisoners in other jurisdictions
- key inputs and activities considered necessary for other like programs and services
- outcomes achieved by other like programs and services
- key lessons learned with respect to the effective design of other similar programs and services.

3.2.2 Review of administrative data

The evaluation included a review of the data from the quarterly reports prepared by Anglicare Victoria for the CV Rehabilitation and Reintegration Branch. Three quarterly reports (from July 2018 to March 2019) were included in the evaluation. The quarterly reports provide insights about:

- delivery and uptake of the program among the English-speaking and Vietnamese-speaking cohort (which provides an indication of the need and uptake of the program)
- delivery of CALD programs
- challenges encountered and the strategies employed to respond to challenges (by location)

- participant feedback
- facility feedback (by location)
- recommendations for future delivery.

Other administrative data included:

- referral and attendance data from prison program staff
- content delivery records provided by Anglicare Victoria (English and Vietnamese programs presented separately).

3.2.3 Consultations with key stakeholders

The evaluation included semi-structured interviews with four key stakeholders involved in the implementation and/or delivery of the service at DPFC. The following individuals were interviewed:

- Offender Services Supervisor
- Anglicare program facilitators (two English-speaking program facilitators and a Vietnamese-speaking program facilitator).

The purpose of the interviews was to elicit stakeholder views regarding:

- nature and objectives of the program
- awareness of the program among prison staff and prisoners
- delivery, uptake and perceived effectiveness of TiRR
- barriers and challenges in delivering the program at DPFC
- extent to which the program meets the needs of female prisoners (English-speaking and Vietnamese-speaking) at DPFC
- recommendations for how the program could be strengthened to better meet the needs of this cohort.

Interviews were electronically recorded and transcribed using an external accredited transcription agency, and the transcriptions were analysed using thematic and content analysis techniques.

3.2.4 Consultations with program participants

Program participants were consulted through post-program focus groups and post-program feedback surveys.

Participant focus groups

Focus groups with participants were conducted by external researchers from Monash University, including a Vietnamese-speaking researcher for the Vietnamese women's group. The English-speaking focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim, which made it possible to include relevant quotes from participants. The Vietnamese focus groups were also audio recorded but their responses were transliterated to English, and thus, direct quotes for this cohort are not used in this report.

There were two focus groups held for Vietnamese-speaking participants (total n=22) and three focus groups for the English-speaking participants (total n=9).

The focus group questions sought to understand how well the program met its intended aims, as well as exploring any opportunities for program improvement. The following topics were discussed:

- how participants found out about the program and what attracted them to the program
- what worked well and what aspect of the program they would change
- their overall experience
- their thoughts on the discussions and the activities

- what they learnt about respectful relationships
- participants’ interest in participating in other similar programs in the future.

Post-program participant surveys

For the purposes of this evaluation, IME and COVSA (the evaluation team) produced a post-program participant survey, which was provided to participants at the conclusion of programs delivered during February, March and April 2019. Prior to February 2019, Anglicare was conducting its own post-program feedback surveys with participants. Data from both of these surveys was used in the current evaluation (see Table 3 below for number of surveys returned).

Table 3: Post-program participant surveys

Survey	Time frame	Mode of delivery and collection	Number filled out
Anglicare survey	July 2018 to January 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided to all participants at end of session • Filled out in session and surveys handed back to facilitators 	93
IME and COVSA survey	February 2019 to April 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided to all participants at end of session • Filled out after session and completed surveys handed to prison program staff • English and Vietnamese version 	Total = 32 (English n= 13 Vietnamese n= 19)

The surveys produced by Anglicare required participants to place their names on their surveys and hand them back to the facilitators, which may have biased the responses. The surveys produced by the evaluation team were anonymous and were handed out by program facilitators to participants. Participants were asked not to include any identifiable information, and then provide the completed surveys back to prison program staff at DPFC. Completed surveys were mailed to IME Branch. The outcomes of both surveys will be discussed in this report.

The survey produced by Anglicare captured information on the following:

- age of participant
- parental status (and number of children)
- confidence in using knowledge gained from program
- most helpful component of program
- comprehension of the activities and information
- extent to which participants found the facilitators easy to talk to and ask questions of
- confidence in attending groups in prison
- understanding of respectful behaviour
- understanding of the value of respect in relationships and what damages relationships
- understanding of self and behaviour in relationships (participant’s).

The survey produced by the evaluation team captured information on the following:

- what participants were hoping to gain from the program
- whether participants were in a committed relationship with a partner

- parental status
- previous program participation
- most helpful component of the program
- changes in thoughts about relationships (admitting mistakes, use of violence during conflicts, honesty, respecting other's right to change their minds, accepting difference of opinion in others, trust)
- skills learned
- comprehension of discussions, activities and information
- whether participants found the facilitators easy to talk to and ask questions of
- most useful or helpful component of the program
- interest in attending groups on better relationships
- what would encourage participants to engage in other programs.

The surveys produced by the evaluation team were available in Vietnamese. Responses were translated to English by an external researcher from Monash University.

3.3 Limitations

Some methodological limitations should be recognised when considering the findings of this evaluation:

- *Attendance and referral data limitations:* referral and attendance was not formally captured by Anglicare or DPFC prior to January 2019. After January 2019, prison program staff began recording referrals and program participation through multiple means (list of referred women or participant sign-up sheets). Attendance and referral data were not submitted with quarterly reporting documentation by Anglicare Victoria. These inconsistencies impact the extent to which this data was reliable and/or available for the review.
- *Data limitations:* CV administrative data presented in this report includes data collected from prisoners upon reception, which is heavily reliant on self-reporting. The limitation with this method is that prisoners may choose not to accurately disclose information.
- *Selection bias:* Interviews were conducted with key stakeholders involved in the implementation and/or delivery of the TiRR program. Selection bias is a potential limitation as interview respondents are likely to be overly positive about the service as they have a vested interest in the service being extended beyond the current funding period. These staff, however, by virtue of their role and experience were identified as potential interview participants as they could speak to the need, impact and experiences with Anglicare services.
- *Sample bias:* The evaluation team spoke to a small number of stakeholders involved in the design and/or delivery of the program (n=4). Therefore, the extent to which the findings can be generalised to the broader prisoner population, including men, is limited.
- *Responder bias:* Post-program participant surveys produced and administered by Anglicare Victoria were not anonymous and could have led to participants responding in a socially desirable manner.
- *Skewed data:* participants provided pre- and post-program feedback at the end of participating in the program. There is a possibility that the pre-program responses may be skewed as participants had received the intervention at the time of providing this feedback.

4. Results

This section of the report will address each evaluation question in turn, beginning with a section on the demographic profile and sentencing of women in Australian prisons, and more specifically, women in Victorian prisons.

4.1 Female prisoners in Australia

Note: The data presented in this section of the report is taken from the Australian Bureau of Statistics website.

While the proportion of female prisoners (compared to male prisoners) was relatively stable between 2008 and 2018 (ranging from 7.1 per cent to 8.4 per cent), the number of female prisoners in Australia has increased significantly from 1,959 prisoners in 2008, to 3,625 prisoners in 2018 (see Figure 1)⁹. The incarceration proportion of women in Victoria (7.3 per cent) was slightly lower than the national average of 8.4 per cent (

Figure 2 shows that all jurisdictions had a high proportion of female prisoners who were unsentenced (range of 32 to 44 per cent). The Northern Territory, Victoria and South Australia had the highest proportion of unsentenced female prisoners in Australia.

Figure 2).

Figure 1. Number and proportion of female prisoners¹⁰ in Australia between 2008 and 2018

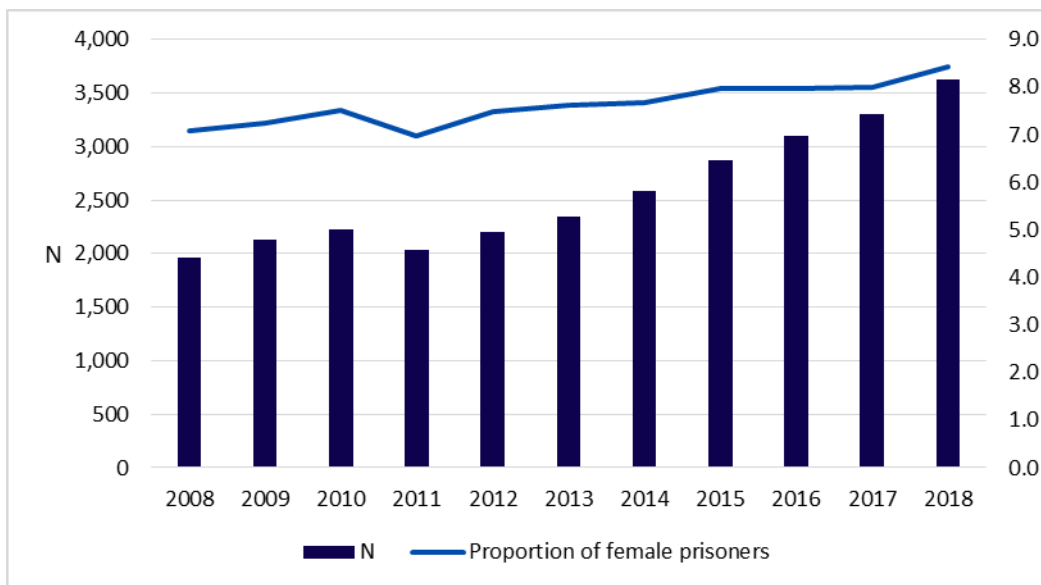
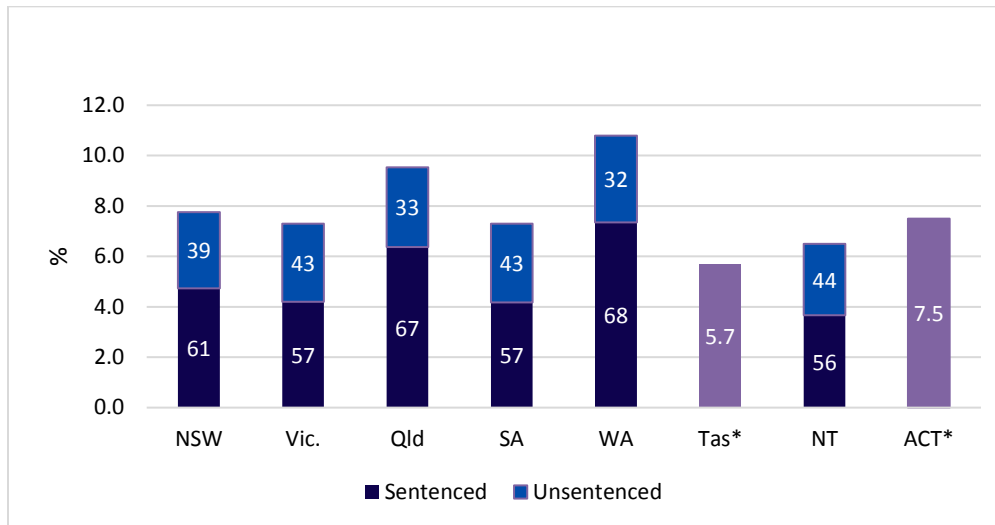


Figure 2 shows that all jurisdictions had a high proportion of female prisoners who were unsentenced (range of 32 to 44 per cent). The Northern Territory, Victoria and South Australia had the highest proportion of unsentenced female prisoners in Australia.

⁹ ABS (2018) data

¹⁰ Compared to male prisoners

Figure 2. Proportion of female prisoners (sentenced and unsentenced) by jurisdiction in 2018



*There was no published data on sentence type for Tasmania and the ACT. The figure here represent the proportion of female prisoners (in these states) only.

4.2 Female prisoners in Victoria

Note: any data presented in this section of the report represents a ‘snapshot figure’ using CV administrative data as of 30 January 2019.

This section of the report will closely examine the Victorian female prisoner population, including the Vietnamese female prisoner population, which has consistently been the largest single culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) population in the women’s corrections system since 2012¹¹. The issues and offending pathways for Vietnamese women are shared to some degree with non-Vietnamese women, however there are a number of significant differences, which will be explored in this section of the report.

4.2.1 Prisoner profile

As at 30 January 2019, the average age of female prisoners in Victoria (n=594) was 36 years. Vietnamese women (n=51) were nearly ten years older, with a mean age of 43 years. Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander prisoners made up 13 per cent of the female prison population, which is higher than the male prisoner population proportion of 9 per cent.

4.2.2 Relationships and parenting

In November 2017, CV produced the *Women’s Policy for the Victorian Corrections system*, which included a review of the profile of the women in the corrections system and explored the complex issues that lead to women’s offending. This document highlighted that women’s offending often arises and is cultivated through their relationships. Specifically, with members of their family, including partners or spouses, their friends and any person deemed to be a ‘significant other’, such as a support-person. As relationship issues are more likely to underpin women’s offending than men, addressing the relational context of offending for women is important¹².

CV administrative data extracted on 30 January 2019, revealed that at the time of reception:

- 72 per cent of the women reported *not* being in a relationship (compared to 65 per cent of men). Vietnamese women were more likely to report being a relationship (42 per cent) than the overall female prison population (26 per cent)

¹¹ Source: *Strengthening Connections: Women’s Policy for the Victorian Corrections system* (2017)

¹² Source: *Strengthening Connections: Women’s Policy for the Victorian Corrections system* (2017)

- 68 per cent of women reported having children (compared to 51 per cent of men). This was higher for Vietnamese women (80 per cent)
- of the women who had children, 27 per cent had legal custody of their children (compared to 18 per cent of men). This was substantially higher for Vietnamese women (56 per cent)¹³
- of the women who had children, 25 per cent were also the primary care givers to their children (compared to 16 per cent of men). This was, again, higher for the Vietnamese women (56 per cent).

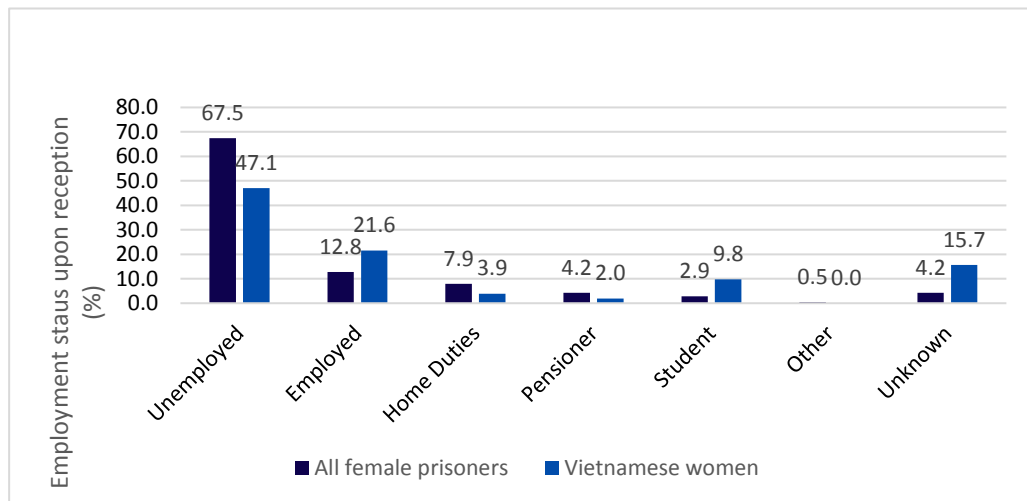
The above data demonstrates that female prisoners (particularly Vietnamese women) are more likely to have children than men, and more likely to have legal custody of their children and be the primary caregivers. Women prisoners who are mothers report that being away from their children is the hardest part of being in prison and that being back with their children is their main motivation for desistance¹⁴. The difficulty of being away from their children in prison is further complicated if the prisoner normally has the role of primary caregiver.

4.2.3 Education and employment

Women in prison are further disadvantaged by their low educational attainment, which is more pronounced for Vietnamese women than for the broader female prisoner population. The vast majority of women in prison (76 per cent of all female prisoners and 84 per cent of Vietnamese female prisoners) did not complete secondary education. Low education attainment is not unique to the female prisoner population, since 85 per cent of men also did not complete secondary education.

Further, unemployment at the time of reception was very high among female prisoners. 82 per cent of the overall female prisoner population were unemployed, compared to 63 per cent of Vietnamese female prisoners¹⁵ (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Employment status overall for female prisoners and Vietnamese female prisoners



4.2.4 Sentencing profile

Approximately half of all female prisoners at the time of data extraction were unsentenced, which is substantially higher than the proportion of men (36 per cent of men were unsentenced).

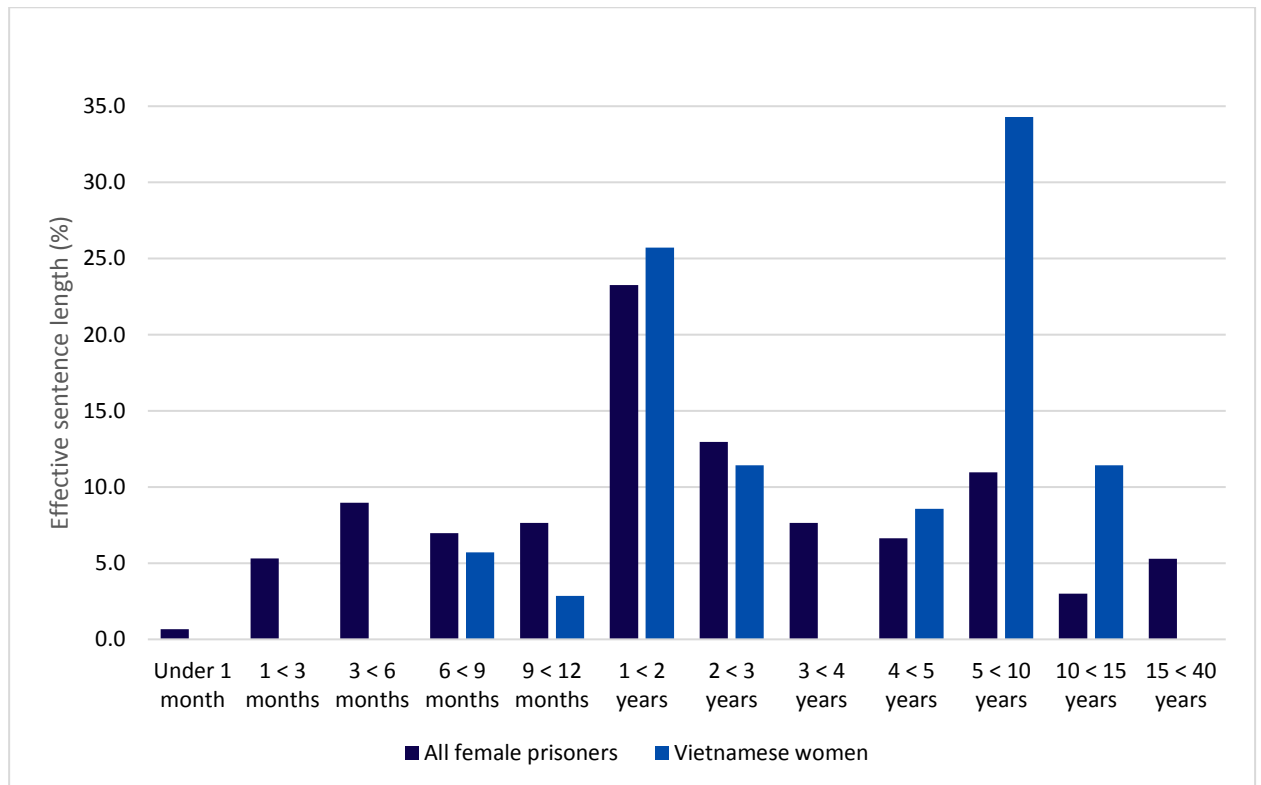
¹³ Important to note that for the data relating to legal custody of children, 17.8 per cent of the data was missing for the overall female prisoner population and 14.6 per cent for the Vietnamese female population. This information needs to be interpreted with caution.

¹⁴ Source: *Strengthening Connections: Women’s Policy for the Victorian Corrections system* (2017)

¹⁵ 16 per cent of the data regarding employment for Vietnamese women was unknown, which may have caused an over-representation of the ‘employed’ proportion.

Vietnamese women were more likely to be sentenced (31 per cent were unsentenced) than the overall female prisoner population. Figure 4 shows that 29 per cent of female prisoners received a sentence of one year or less (compared to 14 per cent of men). Vietnamese women were more likely to be on longer sentences, with two-thirds of women receiving sentences that were three years or more. The higher levels of remand (unsentenced) and shorter sentences among the female prisoner population indicate the growing need to have programs and services in prison which are available and responsive to the needs of these cohorts (short in duration and open to remand prisoners).

Figure 4: Effective sentence length for overall female prisoners and Vietnamese female prisoners



4.2.5 Most serious offences and time in prison

The most serious offences for which the overall female prisoners were charged with were drug related offences (24 per cent), followed by assault (15 per cent) and property offences (14 per cent). A high proportion of Vietnamese women had serious drug related offences as their most serious offence. These offences relate mainly to drug importation, possession, dealing, distribution and manufacture, with personal levels of substance abuse being comparatively low for this cohort¹⁶.

It is important to note here that interpreting data regarding offences committed by women should be done with caution. Consideration should be given that a high proportion of women entering prison have experienced previous trauma, including family violence. It is estimated that more than 70 per cent of female prisoners receiving psychological services were exposed to family violence either as a child or as an adult. Women’s greater experience of trauma has been linked to offending behaviours such as assault, homicide, attempted homicide, defensive homicide and

¹⁶ Source: *Strengthening Connections: Women’s Policy for the Victorian Corrections system* (2017)

manslaughter. While not all violent offences are linked to current or previous trauma, it is important to note that the female prisoner cohort are complex.

4.3 Evaluation area 1: Jurisdiction analysis

Evaluation area: The extent to which the program is aligned to what is offered in other jurisdictions

Key finding: No other jurisdictions offered a program(s) with a specific focus on relationships or healthy communication strategies for female or male prisoners. However, a number of jurisdictions offered programs which included module(s) that sought to improve relationships or provide strategies on healthy communication. This indicates that CV is tracking well in comparison with other jurisdictions in terms of its service offerings of programs such as TiRR.

A brief jurisdictional review was conducted to examine what programs similar to TiRR are offered to women in other jurisdictions. Each jurisdiction was asked what programs they offered to female prisoners which focus on relationships and/or healthy communication strategies. A response was received from every jurisdiction, with the exception of Northern Territory Correctional Services. The level of detailed received from each jurisdiction varied, which is reflected in the summaries below.

Table 4: Jurisdiction analysis summary

Jurisdiction	Program offered to women?	Comment
Queensland	✘	No programs offered
Western Australia	✘	Programs with healthy relationships modules offered to men only
South Australia	✘	Programs with healthy relationships modules offered to men only
New South Wales	✔	Programs with modules on interpersonal skills offered to women
Australian Capital Territory	✔	Programs on family violence and anger management offered to women (no relationship-specific programs)
Tasmania	✘	Programs with modules on interpersonal skills offered to men only
Northern Territory	No response	
New Zealand	✔	Programs with modules on interpersonal skills offered to women

4.3.1 Queensland

Queensland Corrective Services indicated that they do not have any programs focussing on healthy relationships or relationships in general at this point in time for either women or men.

4.3.2 Western Australia

Western Australia Corrective Services offers a number of criminogenic programs that have modules which address healthy relationship skills, but currently none of these are offered to women. They offer three key prison-based family violence programs to men only:

- Stopping Family Violence (SFV) Program: 70 hour closed group program
- Not Our Way (NOW) Aboriginal Family Violence Program: closed group 82.5 hour program
- Connect and Respect Program: facilitated by Anglicare WA and Communicare in partnership.

4.3.3 South Australia

The Department for Correctional Services, South Australia does not offer programs (or programs with modules) to women about healthy relationships, however they indicated that they are currently in the process of re-writing their women's program, and the new program will include a module on relationships.

They do offer programs for men which include modules on relationships, including:

- Domestic and Family Violence Intervention Program
- Violence Prevention Program
- Sexual Behaviour Clinic
- Making Changes (general offending / substance abuse) Program.

The modules focus on building three evidence-based skills in healthy relationships, comprising insights (into self and partner), mutuality (equality in relationships) and emotion regulation (regulate emotions in response to relationship-relevant experiences). The programs focuses on responsibility and accountability, the dynamics of power and control, and the gendered nature of family violence.

4.3.4 New South Wales

Corrective Services New South Wales indicated that they do not offer programs that directly address relationships or healthy communication, however they do offer programs which have modules that address healthy communication. The following programs are offered to women:

- 'Out of the Dark': a program for women who have experienced domestic and family abuse as victims. The program is designed to help participants identify issues around family violence and to identify options and support available.
- 'Explore, Question, Understand, Investigate, practice to Succeed' (EQUIPS) Foundation: 40-hour general therapeutic program offered to all medium to high-risk of reoffending offenders. The description of this program indicates that it seeks to address emotional impulsivity and reactivity associated with offending behaviour.
- 'Criminal Conduct and Substance Abuse' – Pathways: aims to address alcohol and drug issues, along with enhancing participants' responsibility to self and others.
- 'Yallul Kaliarna' (Intensive Drug and Alcohol Treatment Program - Women): is also an alcohol and drug program (offered to sentenced and unsentenced women). This program has elements that address behaviour towards others.
- 'EQUIPS Aggression': designed to increase a participant's ability to manage difficult life events to minimise aggressive behaviour. The program has a module which addresses interpersonal relationships.

- ‘EQUIPS Domestic Abuse’: 40 hour program based on a psycho-behavioural framework aimed at perpetrators. The program invites offenders to take responsibility for their behaviour. Modules include identifying abuse, managing emotions, beliefs and attitudes, offence mapping, victim impact, and relationships skills.
- ‘Young Adult Perpetration Program’: a three-day readiness and/or behaviour modifier program designed to motivate young people (18 to 25 year olds) into entering programs. The program includes modules which aim to address healthy communication skills.
- ‘Adventure Based Challenge – Women’: a youth program which aims to address a variety of dynamic risk factors, including social and personal responsibility.
- ‘Young Adult Satellite Program’: addressing a variety of needs, the program includes modules about learning to take social and personal responsibility, and dealing with peer pressure and bullying.
- ‘Mothering at a Distance’: an education program aimed at enhancing the delivery of family and community services to improve the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people. The program aims to enhance mother-and-child relationships by increasing participants’ maternal sensitivity and reducing trauma during separation caused by incarceration.
- ‘Real Understanding of Self-Help’: a skills-based treatment program which includes modules that address poor self-control, impulsivity and interpersonal skills (among other things).

4.3.5 Australian Capital Territory

Australian Capital Territory Correctional Services (ACTCS) offer several programs specific to building or maintaining healthy relationships for prisoners. These include programs specific to family relationships and/or general interactions. These are outlined below:

- ‘Circles of Security’: a parenting program which teaches parents about the emotional needs of children. This program is designed to assist in fostering a healthy relationship between the parent and the child. This program is offered to sentenced and unsentenced men and women.
- ‘Out of the Dark’: a program is offered to women in the community as well as sentenced and unsentenced women who have experienced family violence as victims. It assists participants to identify issues around family violence and identifies the options and support available. Participants must not have any family violence convictions. The program has been delivered sporadically since 2014 in prison and community settings, as several groups were cancelled due to no/low numbers of participants.
- ‘Anger Management’: is available to male and female, sentenced and unsentenced prisoners. This is a Cognitive Behaviour Therapy based program that employs behavioural and cognitive skills interventions. It targets the emotional and physiological components of anger and conflict resolution skills. The program presents participants with options that draw on these interventions and develops individualised ‘anger control plans’ using the techniques learned through the program.
- ‘Being a Man and a Dad’: a program designed for men only in custody (sentenced and unsentenced) with parenting roles. The focus is on managing strong emotions such as frustration and anger and developing parenting skills. This is a group for fathers wanting to use their strong emotions in a positive manner to build resilient and healthy relationships with their partners and children.

4.3.6 Tasmania

Corrective Services Tasmania (CST) indicated that they do not have any programs that focus solely on healthy relationships, nor do they offer family violence-related programs to women. However, women do have access to the family engagement worker in the prison (who may explore conversations with family around healthy relationships).

CST delivers three group-based interventions for family violence male perpetrators:

- ‘Family Violence Offender Intervention Program’ (FVOIP) for high risk prisoners. FVOIP includes a module (four sessions) around building strong relationships.
- ‘EQUIPS Domestic Abuse Program’: delivered to medium risk prisoners. This program includes a module (four sessions) around sexual respect, relationship skills and self-management strategies.
- ‘EQUIPS Aggression Program’: violent and aggressive behaviour outside of family violence, which includes a module (four sessions) around communication, relationships and values.

4.3.7 New Zealand

Corrections New Zealand provided a program compendium which indicated that there were a number of programs for women. There were no programs specific to healthy relationships, but there were a number of programs which included module(s) that addressed these issues – many of which were culturally specific programs/services. The following programs for women included module(s) which addressed interpersonal relationships or communication:

- ‘Kimihiā’: a cultural-specific violence prevention program for high risk/high need women (women who are serving a sentence for imprisonment for index violence offending and/or have a history of persistent violent behaviour).
- ‘Short Rehabilitation Programme for Women’: a cultural-specific program offered to women who identify as Maori. The program is based on the principles of cognitive-behaviour and relapse-prevention therapy, focusing on violence propensity, relationship difficulties, anti-social attitudes, offence related/problem thinking and feeling, criminal associates, self-control and impulsivity, self-management and problem solving, alcohol, drugs and rehabilitation needs.
- ‘Kowhiritaga Women’s Rehabilitation Programme’: contains eight modules (56 sessions) designed to be responsive to the needs of Maori women, however it is also offered to all women who are eligible and suitable to attend. This program includes a ‘relationship difficulties’ module.
- ‘Kia Rite Information and Skills Training Programme’: a low-intensity information and skills training programme designed for delivery to Wahine who are in the early stages of their incarceration. It includes 11 sessions (2.5 hrs per session) and offers a module called Relationship Skills: Te Taha Whanau – the ability to communicate, to care and share.

4.4 Evaluation area 2: Program implementation

Evaluation area: The extent to which the program has been implemented as intended (implementation fidelity)

This section of the report presents the data elicited through the stakeholder consultations with program participants and staff involved in the design and/or delivery of the program. A review of content delivery records and analyses of program documentation was carried out to understand how the program was delivered at DPFC and which modules were delivered (and not delivered).

Key finding: Overall, the evaluation found that the majority of the content was delivered as intended (in accordance with the facilitator manual). Facilitators did make slight amendments to the program, including the removal of modules which they did not find to be appropriate, and substituted content with activities which they felt would be more useful.

4.4.1 Content delivery records

Program facilitators were asked to estimate, on average, which program content was delivered, not completed (partially delivered), skipped or adapted (see Content delivery record in

Appendices). A summary of the content delivery is presented separately for the English program and for the Vietnamese program (see Table 5).

Table 5: Summary of content delivery records

Content item	Delivered in full	Adapted	Skipped or not completed
Module 1 — Introducing respectful relationships			
Meeting the participants ice-breaker			
English	✓		
Vietnamese	✓		
Respectful Relationships goals			
English	✓		
Vietnamese	✓		
Group agreement			
English	✓		
Vietnamese	✓		
Thinking about respect, including small group activity			
English	✓		
Vietnamese	✓		
Respectful communication			
English	✓		
Vietnamese	✓		
Thinking about relationships			
English	✓		
Vietnamese			✓
Different kinds of relationships, including small group activity			
English		✓	
Vietnamese	✓		
Module 2 — Crossing the line			
Welcome, including reconstructing wheel small group activity			
English		✓	
Vietnamese			

Content item	Delivered in full	Adapted	Skipped or not completed
	N/A ¹⁷		
Respect and relationships English Vietnamese		✓ ✓	
Violence English Vietnamese	✓		✓
Abuse Profiles (women only) English Vietnamese			✓ ✓
Choice to change English Vietnamese			✓ ✓
Violence — gender and respect English Vietnamese		✓ ✓	
Communication, including brainstorm English Vietnamese	✓ ✓		
Reflection English Vietnamese	✓ ✓		
Close English Vietnamese	✓ ✓		
Total content items English Vietnamese	9 (56%) 10 (66%)	4 (25%) 2 (14%)	3 (19%) 3 (20%)

¹⁷ Not applicable because the session was conducted on the same day

Analysis of the content delivery records indicates that the majority (on average, 83 per cent) of the content was either delivered in full or delivered in an adapted form among both the English and Vietnamese cohorts.

It is important to note that the 'Abuse Profiles' module was excluded from both the English and Vietnamese programs. This module was unique to the women's program and it was included with the intent to respond to the specific needs of female prisoners. The focus of this module is to provide a deeper understanding of the role of respect in positive relationships and how to evaluate the relationships in which participants are involved. The primary purpose of the module was to provide education to better enable women to recognise danger signs of impending abuse¹⁸.

Interviews with the program facilitators revealed that they intentionally excluded this module as they felt it would not be well received by the women in the program. One reason was that many women participate in the *Out of The Dark* program¹⁹, which covers this topic. One of the program facilitators also indicated that he had delivered this module in the past and it was not well received because many of the women could not identify with the various abuser profiles. The partners in their relationships tended to have characteristics from the different profiles rather than fit into a discrete profile. Furthermore, the feedback from the Vietnamese group facilitator was that the Abuse Profiles module was not culturally accurate or appropriate (e.g. use of Rambo terrorist, which is dated and awkward to deliver) (see appendices for full profiles). The translation in the participant workbook was deemed to be too long and too dense to generate discussion. Discussing gas-lighting behaviour was a topic that many women identified with in both language groups, this component was discussed in more detail. The review team note that the removal of this module was a decision of the facilitator and not necessarily reflective of the intended delivery of the program by Anglicare management.

Recommendation: Consider replacing the Abuse Profile module with a more appropriate module to suit the general female prisoner and CALD cohorts

Focus groups with program participants also revealed that there were no role play activities or videos shown despite the manual providing instruction that they should be undertaken, and some groups did not receive a workbook. Reasons for why some groups did not receive a workbook is not known and this was not reflected in the service reporting documents, or in the interviews with facilitators.

Reasons provided by facilitators as to why content was not delivered in accordance with the facilitator manual, to the English-speaking groups included:

- not being able to break up the large group into smaller groups for discussions because participants get distracted, lose focus and conversations go off topic. This can then lead to splits within the group and reduce group cohesion. In these cases the decision was made to have discussions or conduct activities as a whole group
- the size of the room did not allow for creating smaller groups or, if the room was big, then there was a very large table which filled the room

¹⁸ Respectful Relationships: Program Guide and Facilitator Manual (2017)

¹⁹ Out of The Dark is a psycho-educational group program for women prisoners who have experienced family violence prior to entering prison. It aims to raise awareness about family violence issues by providing information about risks associated with family violence and the options and support services available within the community. It also assists participants to identify family violence and the impact it can, or has had, on their life. The participants gain insight into how they can make informed decisions about creating change in their relationships and make positive and constructive decisions for future relationships.

- some of the content was already covered in previous programs and they did not want to repeat information, instead, they expanded on other modules (such as communication and body language)
- facilitators skipped content which they felt was dated (e.g, videos)
- facilities did not allow for the use of videos, and as such, these activities were adapted or omitted.

Reasons as to why content was not delivered in accordance with the facilitator manual to the Vietnamese-speaking groups included:

- women did not want to break up into smaller groups or the room sizes did not allow for it
- if an activity was deemed to not be appropriate to discuss in a group setting, it was done individually
- some content may have already been addressed in previous modules or would be covered later on, so the order in which content was delivered was modified for better flow of discussion
- lack of time to deliver all activities.

Recommendation: Review the facilitator manual to ensure that suggested activities and content are aligned with the overall objectives of the program and identified best practice principles, and ensure there are sufficient alternative activities available when a video is the suggested activity (few prison facilities have video streaming available).

4.5 Evaluation area 3: Program uptake

Evaluation area: The extent to which the service meets the key objectives and target performance indicators outlined in the service level agreement

This section of the report will discuss the extent to which the service provider met their key objectives and target performance indicators outlined in the service level agreement, with an analysis of attendance and referral data – taking into account the capacity of the program (no more than 14 participants per session). Reasons for attendance will also be explored through participants' feedback (surveys and focus groups), as well as through the observations of program facilitators. CV administrative data will be used to understand the demographics of program participants compared to those who are referred to the program but then do not attend or complete the program, to assist in understanding who the program is servicing.

Key findings: the evaluation found that:

Anglicare Victoria delivered on their *minimum contract deliverables*: The evaluation found that the service provider delivered 26 sessions in English and three sessions in Vietnamese, which meets the minimum contractual obligations. The service provider will continue to deliver programs at DPFC on a weekly basis until 31 December 2019.

The program was well attended by participants: Attendance records and consultations with participants indicated that uptake of the program was high.

Reasons for attendance: Post-program participant surveys and focus groups revealed that the most commonly cited reasons for attendance in the program included wanting to learn something new and women wanting help with their relationships with a partner and/or family. Program facilitators felt that women came to the program because they were attending with a friend or because they had heard positive feedback about the program and it raised their interest.

Program completers were representative of the overall female prisoner population:

Analyses of demographics data revealed that program completers were generally representative of the overall female prisoner population. There were, however, a number of differences in demographic variables between women who completed the program and those who did not attend or complete the program (see Table 10).

The program was flexible with attendance: The program was flexible in working with those who attended on the day with no prior notice (within reason), which is a clear benefit of a program such as this (of short duration with little to no eligibility criteria).

4.5.1 Performance against contract deliverables

The contract deliverables outlined in the Common Funding Agreement included the delivery of a minimum of 52 and a maximum of 104 programs delivered in English, divided evenly between DPFC and MRC. A further two (one for women, one for men) to seven (up to three for women, up to four for men) programs were to be delivered in Vietnamese. Anglicare also contracted to deliver one to three programs for participants from the Greater Horn of Africa at MRC. For the purposes of this report, Table 6 outlines the contract deliverables for DPFC and the service provider's performance against these deliverables. While programs will continue to be delivered at both locations until 31 December 2019, it is evident that the service provider has already delivered on their minimum contracted deliverables.

Table 6: Performance against contract deliverables

Service type	Annual target rate	Delivered ²⁰	Achieved
Programs delivered in English	26 to 52 programs (up to 14 participants per group) at DPFC	31 programs at DPFC	✓
Programs delivered in Vietnamese	1 to 3 at DPFC	3 programs	✓

4.5.2 Referral and attendance data

There was no formal documenting of referrals and program attendance at DPFC prior to January 2019. Anglicare reported on the aggregate number of people who completed the program as part of their quarterly reporting, but it did not report on referrals (nor was this captured in a manner available for analysis). This was identified by the evaluation team shortly after the commencement of the evaluation. After January 2019, DPFC program staff began collecting referral and attendance data in multiple forms, such as hard-copy participant sign-in sheets or lists of referred women. More specifically, women who signed up for the program through referral forms were recorded on a list. That list would then be provided to Anglicare on day one of the program as an indication of who to expect at the program. Attendees' names were ticked off by program facilitators and the list was provided back to program staff at DPFC. These were not entered into an electronic database. Sometimes women attended on the day without referral; their names may have been added to the list but this may not always be the case. It is also important to note that there were program sessions for which referral data was not provided, but attendance was

²⁰ This data was accurate on 25/06/19, the service provider will continue to deliver programs until December 2019. Source: email from Rhia Mikkor on 25/06/19.

captured through participant sign-in sheets. Therefore, referral and attendance data is not reliable for DPFC and the following data should be interpreted with caution. Despite the data limitations, the available referral data is a good indication of the broader knowledge and interest in the program, but it should not be interpreted together with attendance data due to the issues outlined above.

Table 7 summarises the average number of participants who attended each program session between 1 October 2018 and 30 April 2019 (representing the total period for which this data was collected and available for analysis). The number of programs and sessions delivered in English varied across each month. For example, in October 2018, the program was delivered four times, however, it was only delivered twice during the month of December 2018. Each session was intended to have up to 14 participants, and as Table 7 demonstrates there were, on average, nine participants per program/session (representing 64 per cent of the maximum capacity of each

Recommendation: Service provider to collect all referral and attendance data and report on this on a quarterly basis. Accurate referral and attendance data provide an understanding of the need for the service and uptake of the services.

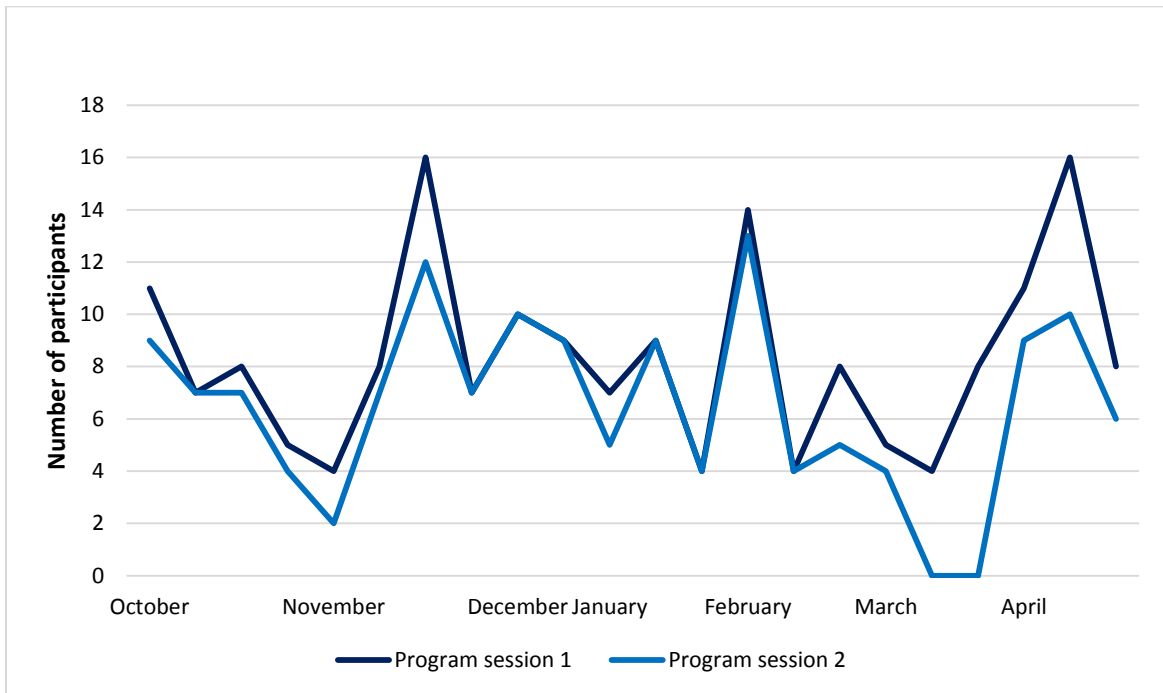
session). However, facilitators felt that the optimal number of participants to allow for equal sharing of stories and responses was eight. This may indicate, should the program be extended, that there would be value in reconsidering the number of participants scheduled for each session.

Table 7: Number of sessions that attendance data was available for between 1 October 2018 and 30 April 2019

	Number of times program was delivered	Average number of participants per session	Range of participant numbers
English-speaking groups			
Session 1	22	9	4 to 16 participants
Session 2	20	7	4 to 13 participants
Vietnamese-speaking groups	3	14	9 to 19 participants

The number of participants per session (for English-speaking participants only) is presented in Figure 5. This figure demonstrates that participation in the programs was sporadic. The program was delivered three times to the Vietnamese women and attendance varied for each session (12, 9 and 19). The consistently high uptake of the program with the Vietnamese prisoners indicates that there is a demand for programs of this kind with this cohort.

Figure 5: Program attendance (English-speaking participants) by session



Analyses of referral and attendance data indicate that there were 187 individuals referred to the program. Of those, 48 women were referred multiple times (ranging between two to six times) (see Table 8).

Table 8: Summary of referral data (January to April 2019)

Referrals	N	% who completed the program
Total number of referrals		
English	185	
Vietnamese	85	
Number of unique people referred		
English	137	46% (n=63)
Vietnamese	50	82% (n=41)
Number of people who were referred multiple times		
English	40	
Vietnamese	8	

54 per cent (n=74) of those who were referred to the program either did not attend the program or only attended one session (did not complete the program). Reasons for non-attendance as cited

on the attendance list²¹ included illness, needing to be in court, participation in other programs, being placed into separation, having a visitor or being released from prison. Table 10 provides a summary of the program attendance data. There were 178 individuals who completed the program (at least once). 91 per cent of English-speaking women completed the program (attended both sessions) on their first attempt. Four women completed the program multiple times and eight women (six per cent of those who completed the program) attended multiple sessions before completing the program (see Table 9).

Table 9: Summary of attendance data

Attendance	N	% from those who completed the program
Unique number of participants who completed the program at least once		
English	137	
Vietnamese	41	
Total	178	
Number of people who completed the program on first attempt		
English	125	91%
Vietnamese	41	100%
Total	166	93%
Number of people who completed the program multiple times		
English	4	3%
Vietnamese	0	
Total	4	
Number of people who attended multiple times before completing the program		
English	8	6%
Vietnamese	N/A ²²	
Total	8	
Number of people who only attended one of the two sessions (therefore did not “complete”)		
English	20	
Vietnamese	N/A	
Total	20	

²¹ The attendance list was a list of women who were referred to the program on the day. If women did not attend, there was a column on the list that asked for a reason for non-attendance (if known).

²² Vietnamese women’s program is delivered in a six hour session on a single day.

Note: To “complete” the program, participants must attend both sessions for English-speaking groups. Vietnamese-speaking groups were conducted over one session, thus participants were considered to “complete” if they were marked as having attended the single session.

Reasons for attendance

Participation in the program was voluntary, and is promoted using posters and flyers, as well as by programming staff through direct invitations by the Offender Services Manager or through case management by custodial staff. Reasons for attendance were captured through consultations with program staff and participants (surveys and focus groups). It was clear from the consultations that, while some women chose to attend the program to relieve boredom or receive a certificate of participation for court, the vast majority of participants indicated that they wanted to learn about healthy relationships to understand why their past relationships were volatile. They indicated that they wanted to make better choices in the future, for themselves and, for some women, their children. The reasons for participation were similar for both English-speaking women and the Vietnamese-speaking women, therefore they are presented together.

The most commonly cited reason for attendance by participants via feedback surveys, included:

- wanting to learn something new (endorsed by 76 per cent)
- help with their relationships with a partner and/or family (endorsed by 70 per cent)
- help with other relationships (current or future) (endorsed by 52 per cent)
- something useful for their court case (endorsed by 35 per cent).

In order of frequency, the reasons for attendance provided by participants via focus groups, included:

- wanting to gain insight into why their relationships were so violent in the past and to make better choices with relationships in the future
- wanting to make better choices with romantic relationships because of the impact they have on their children
- wanting to learn about respectful relationships to improve their relationships with family, friends and other prisoners
- feeling like they should go because they received an invitation to participate in the program
- wanting to learn something new
- saw the program on the referral form or the bulletin board and thought that it looked interesting
- turned up with a friend or wanted “*to make time pass*”
- program participation was “*good for parole*”

The service provider indicated that participants typically arrive without knowing much about the program content. According to interviews with program facilitators, some women who showed up on the day without a referral, often did so because they were accompanying a friend who was attending the program that day. Others indicated they had heard positive feedback about the program from other participants and wanted to see what the program had to offer.

4.5.3 Characteristics of program participants

This section of the report will examine the demographic characteristics of program participants and non-participants (those who were referred to the program but did not attend). This will assist in understanding who the program is servicing and who showed interest in attending, but did not attend or complete the program. Demographic data was also compared with that of the general female prisoner population²³, to understand if program participants were representative of the overall female prisoner population.

²³ CV administrative data extracted 30 January 2019

Demographic data was available for 178 program completers and 70 individuals who were referred to the program, but never completed the program (attended one session) or did not attend any of the sessions (non-attendees) (see Table 10).

Characteristics of program completers versus non-completers

When comparing the program completers to the general female prison population, program completers were fairly representative of the overall female prisoner population. There were no meaningful differences in age, parental status, marital status, education or prior terms of imprisonment. However, program completers were less likely to identify as Aboriginal (8 per cent versus 13 per cent) and more likely to be sentenced (58 per cent versus 51 per cent) and on a shorter term of imprisonment, than the general female prisoner population (see Table 10).

When comparing the demographics of those who completed the program to those who did not (non-completers), program completers differed on a number of demographic characteristics. There were no meaningful differences in parental status between the two groups. When compared to non-completers, program completers were:

- slightly older (35 years versus 32 years)
- less likely to identify as Aboriginal (8 per cent versus 17 per cent)
- more likely to have been divorced or separated (indicating history of relationship turmoil). They were also more likely to be married, while non-completers were more likely to be single or never married. This may indicate that program completers were more likely to need the program, having experienced relationships breakdown and currently being in a relationship (increasing motivation to maintain the relationship)
- more likely to have a higher education attainment (more likely to have completed secondary and further education)
- more likely to be sentenced²⁴ (58 per cent versus 41 per cent) and to be on longer sentences. For example, 52 per cent of program completers had sentences of one year or greater, compared to 17 per cent of non-attendees. 63 per cent of non-attendees had sentences of less than three months.

Table 10: Demographics of program attendees and non-attendees

Demographics	Female prisoners ²⁵ (n=594)	Program completers (n=178)	Non-completers (n=70)
Average age	36 years	35 years	32 years
Indigenous status			
Aboriginal	13%	8%	17%
Non-Aboriginal	88%	91%	81%
No data	0%	1%	1%
Have children?			
Yes	68%	67%	64%

²⁴ At MRC, TIRR is only offered to male prisoners who are on remand. As program completion is higher among sentenced prisoners at DPFC, it is recommended that the program be offered to sentenced and unsentenced prisoners, if the program is rolled out across other locations.

²⁵ This data was extracted on all female prisoners who were in prison on January 30 2019 and was presented earlier in this report.

No	31%	31%	31%
No data	<1%	2%	4%
Marital status			
Never married/single	60%	60%	71%
Separated	3%	6%	0%
Defacto	18%	15%	17%
Divorced	7%	8%	3%
Married	8%	7%	4%
Widowed	2%	1%	1%
No data	2%	3%	3%
Education			
Completed primary	2%	2%	4%
Completed secondary	8%	7%	4%
Part secondary	76%	77%	84%
Technical and Trade	2%	<1%	0%
Tertiary/other post-secondary	3%	3%	0%
No data	9%	0%	7%
Warrant status			
Sentenced	51%	58%	41%
Unsentenced	49%	42%	57%
No data	0%	1%	1%
Effective sentence length			
Under 1 month	<1%	2%	27%
1 < 3 months	5%	16%	36%
3 < 6 months	9%	15%	14%
6 < 9 months	7%	7%	2%
9 < 12 months	8%	7%	3%
1 or more years	70%	52%	17%
No data	<1%	0%	2%

4.6 Evaluation area 4: Program effectiveness

Evaluation area: The extent to which the program meets the needs of female prisoners (with a particular focus on Vietnamese prisoners)

This section of the report will review stakeholder interview data, performance reporting data, post-program participants' feedback surveys, and the participant focus group data. The findings for the English-speaking and Vietnamese-speaking women will be considered separately where feedback was specific to the cohort.

In order to understand program effectiveness, we looked at what the program aimed to achieve and to what extent the service provider achieved in delivering on these aims. It is important to note here that TiRR is a very short program and often the sessions were not able to be conducted for the entire six hours due to disruptions, which are not uncommon in a prison environment. It is also important to note that shifting attitudes and behaviours from such a short program were not within the scope of the program's objectives.

Key findings:

Participants reported a shift in understanding of concepts and strategies to enhance respectful relationships: The evaluation found (evidenced via surveys and focus groups) that both cohorts of women gained significant insights into their own behaviour; reported an increased understanding of the concepts underlying healthy relationships; and reported a high level of confidence in using the skills which they learned. Furthermore, prison staff, program facilitators and focus group participants reported examples of women using their skills with family members and the other prisoners, which are indicative of the effectiveness of the program.

The program was responsive to the needs of women: The program was appropriate and responsive to the needs of the women at DPFC. As highlighted in Section 4.2.1, almost half of all female prisoners in Victoria are currently on remand. There are currently no other programs on offer at DPFC which address healthy relationships and very few programs of any kind available to the remand population. TiRR is unique in that it is offered to women on remand (and sentenced women); short in duration making it suitable for remandees and women on short sentences; and addresses relationship issues, which are known to be connected to women's offending. The high program completion rate indicates that participants saw value in attending the program. The high rate of prisoners who completed the program multiple times (as highlighted in the key findings for Evaluation area 3: Program uptake) demonstrates that the women are interested in improving their relationships and that it was effective in teaching them the skills that they needed.

4.6.1 Outcomes reported by prison staff

The consultations revealed that the program was well regarded by prison staff and considered to respond to a gap in service delivery – in that the program is unique in terms of its content and objectives, and that the program was available to short sentence and remand prisoners was considered a key benefit of the program. The prison staff member felt that there was a need for a program such as TiRR at DPFC, particularly because there are no other similar programs for remandees, who represent a growing cohort of prisoners at that location.

The program was also perceived to have achieved a number of positive outcomes. The prison staff member felt that participants were often surprised that their relationships were not as

positive or healthy as they initially thought (indicative of a lack of insight into healthy relationships). They may have lived in unhealthy relationships without realising that they were being treated with disrespect and/or that they were also treating others with disrespect. Vietnamese-speaking participants were often more emotionally affected by the insights that they gained from the program, which was evident when they approached the staff member to provide feedback (by those who could speak English). These women also expressed an interest in participating in a longer version of the program.

The prison staff member felt that the program provides women with language to use to communicate more effectively with family. They also observed that participants discuss the program and share their learning outside in the prison yard, indicating that the program may be a catalyst for broader conversations around respectful relationships. The program had a positive impact on the relationships between the women who were in a group together. They become close after the program and continue to support one another.

4.6.2 Outcomes reported by program facilitators

The evaluation found that the program facilitators reported different outcomes for the two participant cohorts, therefore they will be discussed separately here.

English-speaking groups

Program facilitators²⁶ indicated that generally speaking, women were keen to use the program as an opportunity to discuss relationships with a focus on learning how to avoid being attracted to the same type of partner (violent and abusive). Facilitators observed that participants showed insights about their relationships in sessions, which indicates that participants understood the content. For example, participants reportedly remarked that many of their relationships have been abusive or disrespectful for many years, which they did not realise, as abuse was often emotional or mental, in the form of gas-lighting rather than physical. Participants reportedly felt empowered by the communication based activities that taught them how to be assertive, rather than aggressive or passive-aggressive. Participants reportedly applied their new skills outside of the sessions with family members and other prisoners.

Vietnamese-speaking groups

The interview with the Vietnamese-speaking facilitator regarding outcomes for program participants indicated that participants found it an 'eye-opening' experience to learn about gender equality and the understanding of respect in Australia. The facilitator spoke about how in Vietnamese culture, men are to be feared (as a form of respect) because the father is the head of the family and women and children are lower in the hierarchy and communication is therefore, one way. This demonstrates the need for culturally-specific programs among female Vietnamese prisoners.

Participants also responded strongly to the topic on violence. The facilitator felt that women had very little knowledge of what constitutes violence. She observed that beatings in Vietnamese families in Vietnam were a not uncommon form of communication, and that this form of abuse often continued on in Australia. She also noted that many people from the Vietnamese community were very surprised when they became involved with the criminal justice system in Australia because of family violence. Because of the cultural normalisation of violence, few women report to the police.

Overall, while the above observations by program facilitators may be biased, many of these observations regarding outcomes were supported by the feedback provided by participants. The

²⁶ Source: Interviews with program facilitators and commentary in performance reports

observations by program facilitators indicate that the program is meeting its aims and delivering on positive outcomes that are beyond the objectives of the program.

Post-program participant surveys (designed by Anglicare)

The surveys produced by Anglicare Victoria were not delivered to Vietnamese-speaking women because there were no Vietnamese programs at that time. The data presented here are for respondents who provided feedback between October 2018 and February 2019. There were 93 surveys returned. Not all questions on the survey were answered by all respondents, thus the data (total number of responses) for each question on the survey will vary.

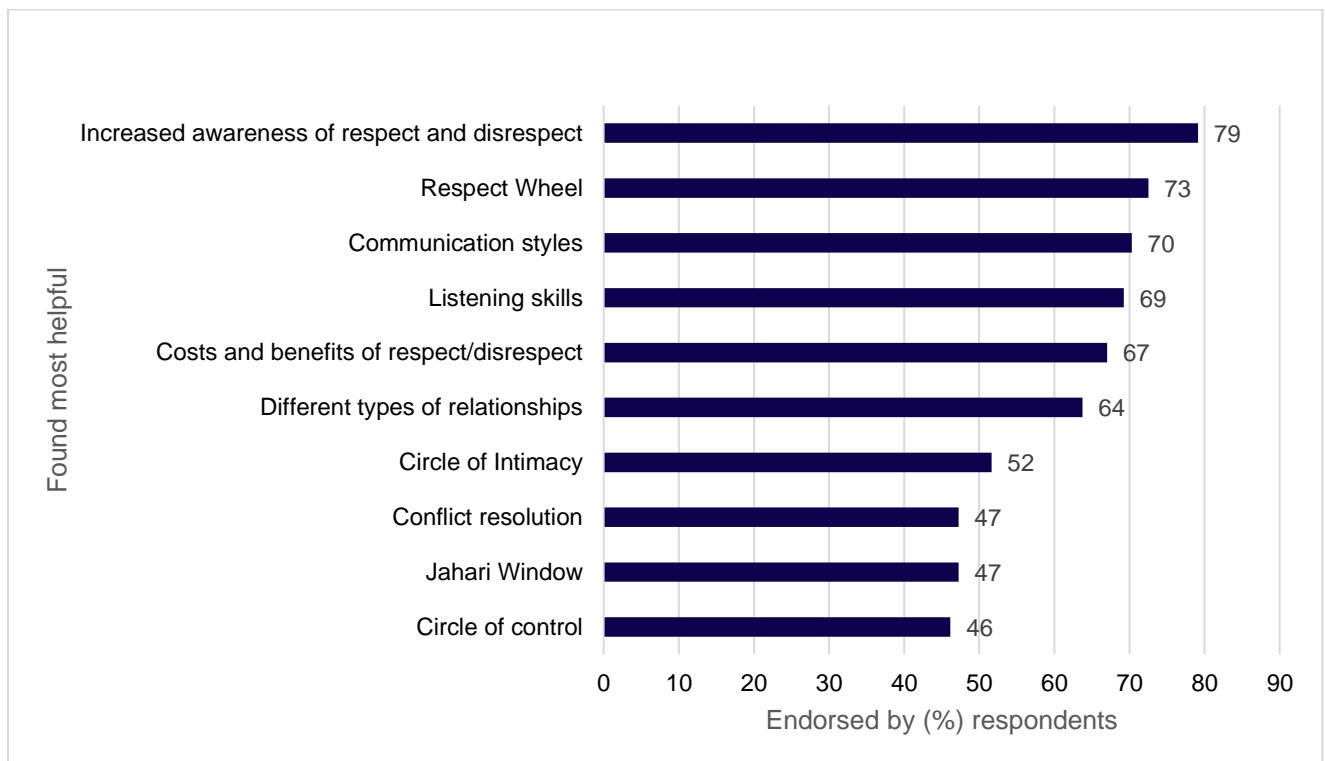
Analyses of the survey data indicated that:

- 99 per cent (n=92) of respondents indicated that they would suggest doing the course to other people.
- 98 per cent (n=91) of respondents indicated that they learned something new.
- 99 per cent (n=92) of respondents indicated that the facilitators clearly explained the activities and information.
- 99 per cent (n=92) of respondents indicated that the facilitators were easy to talk to and ask questions of.
- 91 per cent (n=85) of respondents felt confident that they could use what they learned in the program.

What did you find most helpful?

Respondents were asked which component of the ‘course’ they found most helpful. They had the option to select multiple components of the program (see Figure 6). The most commonly endorsed item was *having an increased awareness of respect and disrespect* (79 per cent).

Figure 6: What respondents found to be most helpful (n=91)



How confident do you feel?

Respondents were asked a series of questions assessing their confidence²⁷ in their understanding of the content and ability to apply lessons learned. Analyses of the survey data indicate that:

- 74 per cent (n=69) felt very confident in attending group programs in prison. 23 per cent (n=21) were a little confident, and 3 per cent (n=3) were not very confident
- 85 per cent (n=78) felt very confident in their understanding of respectful behaviours. 15 per cent (n=14) felt a little confident
- 89 per cent (n=83) felt very confident in their understanding of the value of respect in relationships. 11 per cent (n=11) felt a little confident
- 89 per cent (n=83) felt very confident in their ability to think in different ways about respect in their relationships. 11 per cent (n=11) felt a little confident
- 87 per cent (n=81) felt very confident in their understanding of what damages relationships. 13 per cent (n=12) were a little confident
- 86 per cent (n=80) felt very confident in their understanding of how they behave in a relationship. 14 per cent (n=13) were a little confident

Post-program surveys designed by the evaluation team

The post-program participant survey was delivered in English and in Vietnamese during the months of February, March and April 2019. Completed surveys were sent to the evaluation team by internal mail. 32 surveys were received (14 English and 18 Vietnamese). The low response rate may have been because the survey was voluntary and the lack of time provided in the session to fill out the surveys. Again, not all of the questions on the survey were filled out, thus the number of responses will vary for each question.

Of the English surveys:

- 93 per cent (n=13) indicated that they understood the discussion in the group.
- 100 per cent (n=14) of respondents indicated that the facilitators clearly explained the activities and information
- 100 per cent (n=14) of respondents indicated that the facilitators were easy to talk to and ask questions of.

Of the Vietnamese surveys:

- 100 per cent (n=16) indicated that they understood the discussion in the group
- 75 per cent (n=12) of respondents indicated that the facilitators clearly explained the activities and information. 25 per cent (n=4) indicated that they 'sort of' explained the activities and activities clearly
- 81 per cent (n=13) of respondents indicated that the facilitators were easy to talk to and ask questions of. 19 per cent (n=3) indicated that they were 'sort of' easy to talk to and ask questions of.

Previous program participation and interest in future programs

Of those who filled out the English survey, 64 per cent (n=9) had participated in programs in the past. This was higher than for those who filled out the Vietnamese survey (83 per cent, n=15). A summary of the types of programs that they participated in is set out in Table 11.

²⁷ Confidence was measured on a 10-point-Likert scale. These were categorised as: 1 to 3 'not very confident', 4 to 7 'a little confident', 8 to 10 'very confident'

Table 11: Previous program participation

Program type	English (n=9)	Vietnamese (n=15)
Parenting program	44% (n=4)	33% (n=5)
Drug and alcohol program	89% (n=8)	60% (n=9)
Gambling	0	47% (n=7)
Family violence program	22% (n=2)	7% (n=1)
Violence and anger management	44% (n=4)	27% (n=4)
Education	89% (n=8)	40% (n=6)
Other	22% (n=2) Responses included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk it Out • Beyond Violence • Offending behaviour programs 	20% (n=3) Response included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's health

Respondents were asked if they were interested in attending more groups on better relationships in prison or in the community upon release.

- 86 per cent (n=12) (English survey), indicated that they were interested or very interested.
- 89 per cent (n=16) (Vietnamese survey), indicated that they were interested or very interested.

Respondents were asked what would encourage them to attend more programs 'like this' after release. Responses were open text. There were 23 written responses (English n=10²⁸, Vietnamese n=13). A summary of the written responses on the English surveys included:

- knowing that the programs existed and where they needed to go to access them (n=4)
- programs that offer a wide variety of self-improvement topics (n=2)
- motivation of wanting to be a better mother (n=1)
- seeing changes and success when implementing skills learned (n=1).

A summary of the written responses in the Vietnamese surveys included:

- programs that offer understanding about the value/significance of respect, more knowledge of respectful relationships, how to listen and to be more connected to people (n=8)
- programs that offer an understanding of life and how to be "more decisive in the future" (n=2)
- more "learning programs" and opportunities to learn (n=2)
- programs that offer information about safety and responsibility (n=1).

²⁸ One respondent indicated that she was interested in programs, but did not indicate what would encourage her to participate. Another respondent indicated that TiRR was very useful. Because these responses did not answer the question, they were not included in the summary of responses.

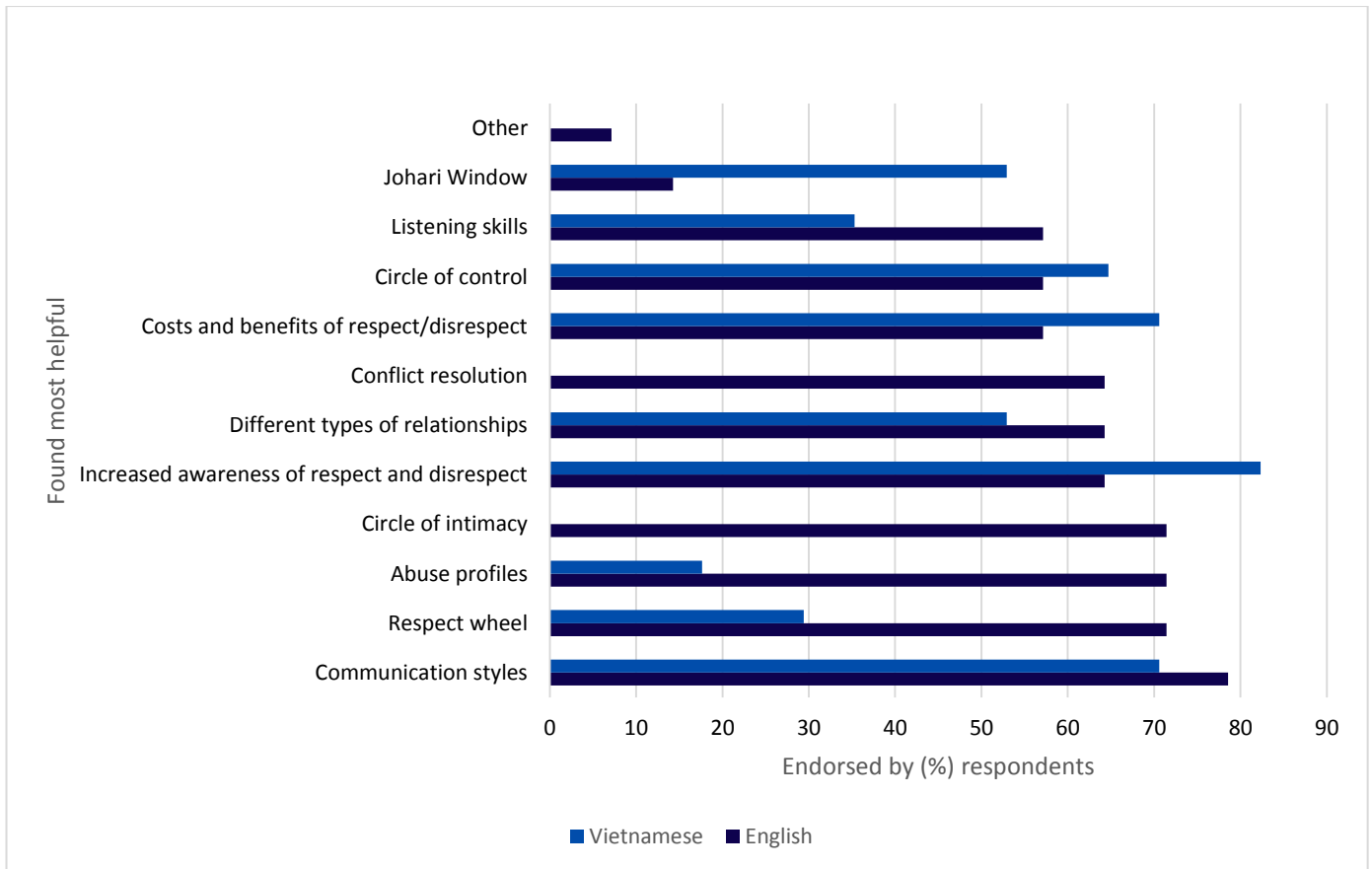
Given the high program attendance and the significant interest in participating in future programs, it is recommended that CV consider delivering the BBR program to women alongside TiRR. BBR would be suitable for women who are likely to be in prison for long enough to complete the program, while TiRR may be more suitable for women who are likely to be due for release.

What respondents found most helpful

Recommendation: CV to consider the delivery of BBR (in addition to TiRR) at DPFC.

Respondents were asked which component of the ‘course’ they found most helpful. They had the option to select multiple components of the program (see Figure 7). The most commonly selected response in the English surveys was communication styles (79 per cent), while the most commonly endorsed response in the Vietnamese surveys was *increased awareness of respect and disrespect* (82 per cent).

Figure 7: What respondents found to be the most helpful (n=31)



Changes in thinking about relationships

Respondents were asked to rate their perceptions of their relationships with their families before they commenced the program and then how they felt about these issues after the program (for the questions, see the Appendices). Respondents needed to consider how they felt about their relationships before they completed the program and provide these scores retrospectively.

When interpreting these results, it is important to note that this approach is limited by respondents’ self-awareness and insight into their own behaviour. Responses are also subject to bias, particularly socially desirable responding if the participants felt a positive connection with the facilitators and wanted to show their gratitude by providing responses that indicate positive

behavioural change (the desired outcomes of the program). Nevertheless, these results provide an estimate of the changes that the respondents felt that they experienced. For a summary of the results, see Figure 8 and Figure 9.

The data indicated that respondents scored themselves highly at baseline (thus creating a ceiling effect), which meant that there was little room for improvement on these factors from the program. This was particularly true for the Vietnamese-speaking respondents. Respondents felt that they improved on all of the domains as a result of the program. The most significant shift for the English-speaking respondents was in *admitting my mistakes when I am wrong*. English-speaking respondents scored themselves as ‘neutral’ on this question before the program, and then ‘very important’ after the program.

Figure 8: Change in thinking about relationships for English-speaking respondents



The most significant shift for the Vietnamese-speaking women was, *ask for others' opinion when I make a decision that affects them*. The scores indicated that respondents felt slightly more than ‘neutral’ (score of 3.7 out of 5) on the importance of this skill, which then increased to ‘very important’ (score of 4.9 out of 5) after the program.

Figure 9: Change in thinking about relationships for Vietnamese-speaking participants



Most useful discussions and activities

Respondents were asked which ideas in the group discussions they found most useful when considering their own relationships and communication styles. The responses to these questions were open text. There were 25 written responses (English n=10, Vietnamese n=15). Respondents were also asked to name the activities that they found to be useful and helpful. There were 26 responses (English n=14, Vietnamese n=12). While these two questions were intended to capture two separate concepts (useful topics of discussions and useful activities), an analysis of the qualitative responses indicated that there was overlap in the responses and therefore they are summarised together here. Some participants provided multiple responses.

A summary of the English responses is as follows:

- effective communication (to be assertive and use “I” statements) and to communicate more effectively with their children were useful skills and activities to learn (n=9)
- whole group discussions were useful for learning (n=2)
- learning to listen and to practice self-control was considered useful (n=2)
- ‘Respect Wheel’ activity was useful (n=1)
- ‘Circle of Intimacy’ activity was useful (n=1)
- understanding abuse in relationships and breaking the cycle of abuse (n=1)
- importance of valuing oneself (n=1).

A summary of the Vietnamese responses is as follows:

- whole group discussions were useful (sharing of personal stories and listening to different opinions) (n=7)
- being respectful (n=5) and the “Respect Wheel’ activity specifically was considered useful (n=5)
- program was considered helpful in teaching participants to communicate with their families (n=5)
- listening attentively and with empathy (n=4), the importance of trust, responsibility, sincerity and honesty in relationships with friends, family and children were considered useful (n=3)

- one participant highlighted reacting appropriately in order to protect right and benefits (n=1).

4.6.3 Outcomes reported by participants: focus groups

There were two focus groups held for Vietnamese-speaking participants (total n=22) and three focus groups for the English-speaking women (total n=9). Discussion with prison staff regarding the low focus group attendance rate from the English-speaking participants indicated that women at DPFC were feeling 'over-evaluated' at the time of the focus groups. There were a number of evaluation and research projects occurring at this location which is believed to led to a sense of 'evaluation fatigue' by the women.

Focus group participants were asked about what they learned from the group and what they found to be helpful. These outcomes are summarised here, separately for the English-speaking groups and for the Vietnamese-speaking groups.

English focus groups

Participants indicated that the program had helped them gain insights about their own behaviour, particularly around not behaving in a passive-aggressive manner towards their children, partners and others. Some of these insights are reflected in the following quotes:

"I looked at that sheet and I was like, wow. That is really me...when I get hurt, I do this or I lash out...It was really helpful for me to realise that what I'm doing is because I've been hurt myself."

"Being assertive but not aggressive... that bit was really helpful...sometimes you don't think about how you're coming across. You might think that you're being polite but you're actually not, you're being passive aggressive and this knowledge was pretty helpful...a lot of things that you don't pay attention to that you do or say which are quite rude..."

*"I'm passive. I'm a very passive person and I've got to learn not to be. I'm all about helping everyone else, making everybody else happy. And I usually don't give a f*** about myself...I didn't know I was passive until I learnt what passive is. I always felt I was optimistic... But I need to learn to become more assertive not passive."*

Participants also highlighted the importance of negotiation and the need for respect from both people in a relationship. Other key concepts learned included forgiveness, openly explaining why they are unhappy and apologising if they made a mistake. One participant highlighted a new communication style that she would try with her husband:

"Please make sure you do it if that's okay. If you're not comfortable then you tell me, where can we meet halfway"

These behavioural and attitude changes indicate that the program is successfully achieving its intended aims.

Vietnamese focus groups

The Vietnamese-speaking participants also reported a number of benefits of participating in the program, however, they highlighted different insights from the English-speaking women. Vietnamese women reported an increased understanding of the negative consequences of disrespect and anger in relationships and an appreciation for listening attentively, without interrupting and with empathy. Women also acknowledged how their own behaviour will need to change before they can expect partners to change.

Overall, a common theme that emerged from the comments was that many women - from both cohorts - did not have a healthy understanding of respect (consistent with the observations of facilitators), with many women associating respect with fear. Women were provided with new language to use to define behaviours, such as aggressive, passive, passive-aggressive and assertive that they could then use as a tool in understanding their own behaviours and those of

others. Activities such as the “I statements” provided women with the tools (or words) to use in healthy communication.

4.7 Evaluation area 5: Program strengths and recommendations

Evaluation area: The extent to which changes are required to strengthen the program.

This section of the report will explore, in detail, the observations of the prison staff member on what worked well and what the challenges were for program delivery at DPFC. It will explore what has worked well for the service provider in delivering the program (through quarterly reports and interviews) so that these aspects can be strengthened and applied across other locations, if the program was to be rolled out more broadly. It will also present some of the challenges that the service provider has experienced so that these can be addressed. Finally, this section of the report will then summarise what the program participants felt worked well for them (based on feedback from surveys and focus groups), suggestions for improvements and their interest in future programs.

Key findings:

What worked well

The evaluation identified a number of key successes of the program, which are summarised below:

- The most effective modules²⁹ were reported to be ones that focused on understanding respect and communicating effectively (assertively)
- Delivering the program to culturally-specific groups (Aboriginal women, African women and Vietnamese women) was considered to be a key success of the program³⁰
- Other successes included³¹: the short duration of the program; delivering the program across two days; the ability to attend the program without referral/with little notice; and the option to complete the program multiple times.

Challenges experienced

Program facilitators highlighted a number of challenges, most of which are commonly experienced by service providers during program delivery in prisons and are not likely to change. There were however a number of challenges raised which could be addressed, including:

- A review of the facilitator manual is needed for it to be in line with best practice and to better meet the needs of prisoners (particularly women). Facilitators have already made some of these changes, but it is recommended that the evidence base for these additions be reviewed and then these changes should be reflected in the manual (should another facilitator need to deliver the program).
- There was a view³² that broader knowledge and awareness of the program was lacking, particularly among Prison Officers. This is, perhaps, not surprising given that the program has been running for less than two years. However, it is recommended that the program be

²⁹ Source: data from interviews with program facilitators, participants focus groups and post-program participant surveys

³⁰ Source: data from interviews with prison staff, program facilitators and focus group respondents

³¹ Source: data from interviews with prison staff, program facilitators and focus group respondents

³² Source: data from interview with prison staff and quarterly reports from the service provider

promoted among Offender Services staff, particularly among Prison Officers and Remand Program Facilitators, as these staff are in a position to identify and refer prisoners (sentenced and unsentenced) to programs (particularly during case management meetings).

- The Vietnamese-speaking participants reported³³ that doing the program in one day was asking too much because they did not have enough time to rest throughout the day and felt overloaded with information. Further, one of the key benefits of the program, as identified by the English-speaking participants, was having the opportunity to think through the learnings of the first session (after day one) and then processing some of the feelings and emotions with facilitators and other participants when they returned on the second day. It is thus recommended that the program for Vietnamese women also be conducted across two days.

4.7.1 Interview with prison staff

What worked well?

The prison staff member felt that the passion of the facilitators was a strength and that interest in the program is growing as the positive feedback from program participants spreads across the prison. She also observed that, generally speaking, African and Aboriginal women often do not engage well in programs or in one-on-one sessions, and that they feel safer and less vulnerable when they are together as a group. Delivering cultural-specific sessions to these women was considered to work well, particularly given the observation that women prisoners who only speak Vietnamese are generally very interested in participating in programs but there is very little that caters specifically to this cohort.

What were the challenges?

The prison staff member highlighted a number of challenges for program delivery at DPFC. A number of these challenges represent operational challenges commonly faced by service providers in delivering programs in prison. Challenges included women prioritising canteen visits over program participation, which affected program attendance and/or prompt arrival to the program. However, another challenge included a perceived lack of awareness of the program among Prison Officers who, by virtue of their role, are in a position to engage and refer women to the program. As such, it is recommended that TiRR be promoted among Offender Services staff in order to ensure that staff are aware of the program and are referring women appropriately.

Recommendation: Promote TiRR among Offender Services staff (including Remand Program Facilitators) at participating prisons to ensure that staff are aware of the service and referring prisoners as intended

4.7.2 Consultations with program facilitators and program participants

What worked well?

There were three focus groups conducted for English-speaking participants and two focus groups for the Vietnamese-speaking participants. Each program facilitator was also interviewed individually. This section of the report highlights the key benefits of the program which were mentioned by both participants³⁴ and facilitators.

³³ Source: data from focus groups and via post-program surveys

³⁴ Source: data from participant focus groups, post-program surveys and interviews with program facilitators

Most effective program modules

Overall, participants and facilitators felt that the most effective modules were ones that focused on understanding respect and communicating effectively (assertively). The English-speaking participants were more likely to highlight the communication-based activities as being the most useful, while the Vietnamese women reported that the discussions around the definitions of respect were the most useful and insightful for them. Many Vietnamese-speaking participants thought that physical violence was the only form of abuse (i.e., they were not aware of different types of abuse, such as spiritual, emotional and financial abuse). Participants were able to define these during the focus group which demonstrates their increased understanding of the content following program participation.

Respectful facilitators

Facilitators felt that delivering the program with respect was one of the most important considerations, as this leads to authentic and meaningful discussions. As a show of respect, facilitators were willing to appropriately disclose some of their lived experiences within their own relationships, where they felt it was useful. An appreciation for the level of respect provided by the facilitators was also highlighted through the following participant comments³⁵:

"They didn't judge us. A lot of facilitators do...they treat us like we're in jail...With these two, it wasn't nothing like that. It was like, 'you're welcome. Come in. Make yourself comfortable. Make coffee'...It's just you enter into a comfort zone straightaway, and it's not slowly building up over the tension wall sort of thing."

"They're fantastic ... they're not like teachers...they treat us like normal people. They don't treat us like we're institutionalised. They don't look at us and go I'll treat you differently. And especially with me, she [facilitator] got me into rescue housing, quick housing. Yes, because I sat aside and spoke to her and she helped me a lot. So I give my hats off to her."

The review indicates that overall, prisoners were satisfied with the program facilitators as evidenced through the findings elicited through the consultations and the high uptake of the program, with some prisoners participating multiple times.

Conducting the program over two days and program length

Conducting the program over two days was seen as a key benefit by English-speaking participants and facilitators. It meant that facilitators could check-in with participants on day two to ensure that they were not distressed. Day one (session one) was often very confronting for many women, so following up with them two days later allowed the facilitators to ensure that they were referred to further services, if needed. The benefit of conducting the program over two days was highlighted in the following quote by a program participant:

"Sometimes people don't take in the full acknowledgement of what they're actually trying to teach you. So, I feel like splitting that up was really helpful. It's not just a 15 minutes break, you've got three hours to learn something, go back, revise it, come back in another day or two and do it again. So, it's not just bombarding you."³⁶

The program length being "short and sharp"³⁷ was initially attractive to women, particularly those whom have participated in longer programs in the past. Program participants indicated a strong interest in a longer version program which looks at the issues that were covered in TiRR in more detail in order to learn more about relationships, communication and self-development. An

³⁵ Source: Quotes by two English-speaking participants

³⁶ Source: Quote from an English-speaking focus group participant

³⁷ Source: Quote by program facilitator

increased interest in future program participation is one of four program aims, which evidently is being met through this program.

Only the English speaking program was delivered over two days. The Vietnamese program was delivered in one day, with Vietnamese respondents indicating that this was too much and that it would be best delivered across multiple days.

Flexibility in program attendance

Facilitators and English-speaking participants felt that the option to 'show up' on the day of the program, without referral, was a key benefit of the program. It was estimated by facilitators that approximately a third of participants were women who turn up on the day without a referral. English-speaking participants were also 'allowed' to complete the program multiple times, which was seen to be a key benefit by facilitators and participants. The facilitator for the Vietnamese-speaking group stated that Vietnamese-speaking women could only complete the program once and only attend if they were directly invited by the Multicultural Liaison Officer. The attendance list appeared to support this as Vietnamese women did not participate in the program more than once. It is recommended that attending multiple times be reviewed and the same rules be applied to both cohorts.

Delivering the program to CALD-specific groups

Delivering the program to culturally-specific groups was perceived to be particularly helpful for women who strongly identified with their culture. Facilitators reported that a group was conducted for African women (in English) and it was very well received. The women did not know each other before the program, but were able to create a safe space because of their shared cultural background. Similar feedback was provided about the Vietnamese women's groups. The Vietnamese women enjoyed sharing their experiences about growing up with their cultural background, which created culturally specific discussions about relationships and respect. The facilitators did note, however, that mixing cultures also worked well because it promoted an appreciation of other cultures among the women, which is particularly important in an environment in which women are forced to be in close proximity.

According to the Vietnamese program facilitator, delivering the program in a large group for the Vietnamese women worked well. The facilitator felt that, culturally, Vietnamese women do not like to talk about themselves in a group setting so when there was a large number of participants (up to 19), the women felt more confident and supported because at least a couple of participants were brave enough to speak, which then encouraged others to do so. This, however, also meant that some content needed to be skipped (usually the ice-breaker exercise). Up to 15 participants was considered to work well, as any more than that meant content needed to be rushed through or skipped.

What were the challenges for facilitators?

Some of the challenges which were highlighted by program facilitators were operational challenges that are to be expected when delivering programs in a correctional setting, rather than being specific to DPFC or the female prisoner cohort. For example, prison lockdowns, program cancellations at short notice and communication issues between Anglicare Victoria and the prison about late cancellations were seen as challenges to program delivery. Other disruptions included: participants being called away because a prison officer needed to talk to them; unexpected visitors or unexpected lawyer appointments; and delays in getting through the gatehouse (up to 35 minute wait due to other visitors).

Working with a remand population was also highlighted as a challenge through the consultations. As noted by facilitators, this cohort can be quite transient and many remand prisoners were considered not ready to engage in programs when they are detoxing from drugs and/or struggling

to adjust to their new environment. Importantly, this was also seen to be one of the key benefits of the program among prison staff.

Challenges that were found to be unique to DPFC, or with working with women specifically, included the disruptions caused by women prioritising the canteen over program participation. This issue was also highlighted by the prison staff member. Specifically, on days when the canteen was open (particularly on hot days), women often prioritised visiting the canteen for chocolates, confectionaries and ice cream. This often meant that women were late to the program, which caused disruptions, or they did not attend at all.

Group dynamics between the women (cliques) was also challenging for the facilitators, who were often unaware of underlying issues or pre-existing relationship issues between women in the group. For example, a group may have had three or four women who were close and would make in-jokes which, by their nature, excluded others from conversation. The facilitators felt that this was a unique issue to the women’s cohort:

“... some of the women's groups are harder to manage because they're like high school girls...just super excited or hypo...It's weird. I don't know how to describe it other than that ... there's a lot going on between them and occasionally we'll get the odd one who'll go: "I'm not feeling real well I'm going to go back to my unit" or something. And really it's not that they're not feeling well it's because they're either not liking the other women or they're feeling uncomfortable or whatever, but they're not bold enough to say that at the time...Yes so high school girls like "you're my friend", you know, "come sit next to me". "No you're not my friend, go away"...”³⁸

Program improvement suggestions by program participants

Both participant cohorts indicated in the consultations that the program should be longer. They felt that the program touched on a number of important topics but they did not have enough time to delve into issues in detail. Other suggestions for program improvements varied across the two participant cohorts. For example, the English-speaking participants felt that group sizes should be kept small in order for the group discussions to stay on topic and for people to have time to share their personal stories (group sizes were not mentioned by Vietnamese-speaking women as an issue). This sentiment was summarised through the following quotes³⁹:

“I’m one that doesn’t cope well in group activities. But we had a very small group and I felt like I got so much out of it...So, one day we had four...We were able to vent about a lot of stuff and it was really good...”

“I’ve done it [program] twice, the first one was around about eight girls. The second one was a lot bigger. And I just had done half the day on that one because it was too many girls... there was too much talking, too much laughter, too much. You need to have a group in between five to eight girls, no more...I did the smaller group first and I found that so much better.... The bigger group got heightened really easily.”

Vietnamese-speaking participants felt that doing the program in one day was too much. Women did not have enough time to rest throughout the day and they felt overloaded with information. It is recommended that the program be delivered across two days for Vietnamese women to allow for full delivery of the program.

Recommendation: Consider delivering the Vietnamese program over two days to allow for full delivery of the program.

³⁸ Quote by English-speaking facilitator

³⁹ Quotes by two English-speaking focus group participants

Program facilitator manual

The program facilitators reviewed the manual prior to delivering the program. They felt that the manual was very ambitious with what the program could achieve within the time frame and environment in which it was delivered. The program was thus modified using professional opinion on what would and would not work for the intended cohort. Content was further modified during delivery based on group dynamics and the needs of participants. The facilitators felt that this flexibility was crucial to the success of the program, and that such a program must be conducted by an experienced clinician in order for it to be effective.

The program was modified to be more discussion based, rather than teaching based. This meant there were some further amendments based on how each activity was received by the group. The inclusion of activities such as a card sorting activity on communication styles meant that, according to facilitators, participants were more actively engaged in discussions and less likely to get bored and disengage. This activity included the use of butcher's paper on the tables with four communication style headings: Aggressive, Passive Aggressive, Passive, or Assertive. Participants were then provided with prompt cards that covered different types of behaviours (e.g. using sarcasm) which, as a team, they then needed to place under the appropriate communication style headings. This activity was very well received by participants (as evidenced in their feedback forms and focus groups, which will be discussed later in this report). It is recommended that the evidence-base for this activity be reviewed and considered for inclusion into the facilitator manual and program.

Recommendation: Review the evidence-base for the card sorting activity on communication styles, which was introduced by the program facilitators and consider including it in the program operating manual

Program facilitators strongly suggested that an additional module on anger management and dealing with shame be added to the manual/program (if it were to be reviewed or modified). Facilitators felt that prisoners (particularly those from CALD backgrounds) struggle to deal with feelings of shame about being labelled as a criminal, including bringing shame to their families. Some prisoners have not let their families know that they were in prison, due to shame. The facilitators felt that this greatly affects prisoner's self-esteem and self-respect, which the program seeks to address. Managing feelings of anger (e.g., how to recognise anger, walk away from it, breathing techniques) and how to effectively respond to others who are angry, was also raised as an option for additional content, particularly for Vietnamese women.

The interview with the Vietnamese-speaking program facilitator emphasised that there is a great need and desire for more self-development programs among Vietnamese prisoners. The program facilitator observed that anger management is a significant issue for Vietnamese men and women because many of them come to Australia with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and there may be a lot of anger and resentment due to family conflict. If the contract for the program was to be renewed, it is recommended that the manual be revised to include a module to address anger management and dealing with shame.

Recommendation: Review the facilitator manual to consider the inclusion of a module on shame and a module on anger management in recognition of a need identified by the service provider.

Facilitator suggestions to enhance program uptake

Suggestions for changes were also made by Anglicare Victoria through its quarterly service delivery reports. Some achievable suggestions for changes to enhance program uptake

included⁴⁰ program facilitators and/or the CV, Rehabilitation and Reintegration Branch promoting the program among Offender Services staff at each location to increase the broader knowledge and awareness of the program, and to ensure that all programs staff are aware of, and referring prisoners to, the program as intended.

Program facilitators also suggested that CALD facilitators' biographies could be made available on program posters and invitations, so that prisoners are able to identify who is running the group, and what connection and authority they have to be training their communities. Another suggestion including promoting the program in both Vietnamese and English over the prison loud speaker system.

⁴⁰ Source: Q3 Tuning into Respectful Relationships CALD Addendum

5. Conclusion

The evaluation sought to determine the extent to which the program has been delivered and is operating as intended, and is responsive to the needs of women prisoners (including Vietnamese prisoners).

The findings for each of the key evaluation areas are summarised below:

Evaluation area one: the extent to which the program is aligned what is offered in other jurisdictions

Overall, the evaluation found that Victoria is the only jurisdiction in Australia and New Zealand to offer a program to men and women prisoners which specifically targets building healthy relationships and/or healthy communication skills. Some jurisdictions did, however, offer programs which included modules that addressed healthy communication styles or interpersonal skills. These programs were often offence-specific programs (such as family violence perpetrator programs or alcohol and drug programs), which meant that a large number of prisoners who may benefit from this module would be excluded due to program eligibility criteria. The jurisdictional analysis indicates that CV is tracking well in comparison with other jurisdictions in terms of its service offerings of programs such as TiRR, which recognise the past histories of trauma among female prisoners (trauma informed delivery) and the role that relationships play in contributing to women's offending.

Evaluation area two: the extent to which the program has been implemented as intended (implementation fidelity)

Overall, the program has been implemented and is operating as intended at DPFC. The facilitators made slight adjustments to the program based on the knowledge and needs of the women. The content delivery records indicate that, on average, 83 per cent of the content was delivered in accordance with the facilitator manual. The facilitators chose to exclude the Abuse Profile module, which was the only module added to the women's version of the program. This module was removed because women prisoners, particularly Vietnamese women, struggled to identify with the abuser profiles included in the exercise. The program facilitators also added a number of activities, which were seen to enhance the learning about respect and communication styles. It is recommended that the facilitator manual be reviewed to ensure that it aligns with best practice, should the program be extended beyond the current funding period. Further consideration should also be given to the length and timing of program delivery, with the review recommending that the program be delivered over two days for both cohorts.

Evaluation area three: the extent to which the service meets the key objectives and target performance indicators outlined in the service level agreement

Anglicare Victoria has delivered on its minimum contract deliverables. The service provider has delivered 31 programs in English at DPFC (with a minimum target of 25) and three programs in Vietnamese (minimum target of three). Programs will continue to be delivered weekly at DPFC until 31 December 2019 (contract expiry date), unless the contract is extended, which means that the provider will have well exceeded their contract deliverables.

Evaluation area four: the program meets the needs of female prisoners (including both English and Vietnamese prisoners)

The evaluation found that TiRR was responsive to the needs of female prisoners. The program responds to a gap in service delivery, in that it is: open to all women including those on remand; short in duration making it ideal for remandees and women on short sentences; and addresses relationship issues, which are known to be connected to women's offending. Furthermore, there are no other programs currently on offer, which focus on relationships or healthy communication.

There are also very few programs delivered in Vietnamese who represent the largest CALD women prisoner population.

The option to attend the program on the day without a referral (for English-speaking participants only) was a key strength of the referral pathway. It was estimated by program facilitators that a third of participants were women who turned up on the day without prior referral. This option was not available to the Vietnamese-speaking women whom could only attend if they were referred by the Multicultural Liaison Officer and they could not self-refer. The referral pathway into the Vietnamese-speaking program should be consistent with the referral pathway to the English-speaking program.

TiRR was well regarded among DPFC staff and was well received by participants as evidenced by the attendance records, which showed a consistently high program uptake and some women chose to complete the program multiple times. While the short duration of the program was attractive to women (and found to be of benefit by facilitators and the prison staff member), there was interest in a longer version of the program as evidenced through the consultations with prisoners. Desire for more programs in the area of relationships demonstrates that women saw value in this service and are keen to learn more about this topic.

Participant surveys and focus group respondents reported that women indicated having gained insight into their own behaviours as a result of participating in the program. Respondents reported an increased understanding of concepts and strategies to enhance respectful relationships, as well as a higher level of confidence in their ability to use the skills learned from the program. Furthermore, prison staff, program facilitators and focus group participants provided examples of women using the skills when interacting with family members and other prisoners, which are indicators of program effectiveness. Based on the findings of Evaluation area four, it is recommended that the longer version of the program, BBR also be offered to female prisoners.

Evaluation area five: the extent to which changes are required to further strengthen the program.

The evaluation found a number of changes that can be made to strengthen the program and its delivery. These recommendations are summarised below and in Table 12.

Modifications to the facilitator manual are needed

The evaluation found that facilitators made significant modifications to program content, based on the perceived needs of the female prisoner cohort. In addition, interviews with program facilitators indicated that there is a need to include additional modules on shame and anger management, as these issues have a significant impact on self-esteem and relationships. While the facilitators felt that this would be relevant to all women, these topics were thought to be particularly relevant for the Vietnamese women as these are issues with which they struggle. The need to review the facilitator manual is thus reflected in recommendation 1 in Table 12.

Service provider to collect and report on referral and attendance data

Early on in the evaluation period, it was discovered that neither the service provider nor the prison program staff were keeping accurate records about the number of referrals made and the number of participants who went on to complete (or not complete) the program. This information is important in understanding the need for and uptake of the program. The quarterly reports that the service provider is contracted to provide included reporting of this information, however, the evaluation team found that this was not occurring as intended. It is recommended that, should the contract with Anglicare Victoria be extended, the ongoing reporting requirements be reviewed (reflected in recommendation 2, Table 12).

Knowledge of the TiRR program could be improved among Prison Officers

While the program was well regarded by the staff consulted, some believed that broader knowledge and awareness of the program was lacking, particularly among Prison Officers. This is, perhaps, unsurprising given that the program has only been operating for six months (at the time of the interview). It is recommended (recommendation 4) that the program be further promoted among Offender Services staff (including Prison Officers and Remand Program Facilitators), as these staff are in a position to identify and refer prisoners to programs.

Vietnamese program should be delivered across two days

TiRR is delivered across two days in English and in one full day in Vietnamese for the Vietnamese speaking cohort. The review found a number of benefits in delivering the program across two days, and consultations with Vietnamese participants indicated that future program delivery should ensure that it is delivered across two days for all cohorts (recommendation 5 in Table 13). Vietnamese women should also be provided the opportunity to attend the program through self-referral or attending on the day without a referral (to be consistent with the referral pathway of the English-speaking participants).

Overall, the evaluation found evidence of the continued need for and effectiveness of the TiRR program at DPFC among both the Vietnamese and English-speaking cohorts. The program was well attended and well received by both cohorts, who reported that the program had increased their understanding of healthy communication strategies and the importance of respect in relationships. The program was also found to respond to a gap, in that, it is offered and open to all prisoners including remandees who represent a growing population of women prisoners. As such, it is recommended that the program be extended beyond the current funding agreement. It is also recommended that CV consider expanding the TiRR program to Tarrengower Prison. Program participants indicated a desire to participate in other programs, which seek to promote respectful relationships and effective communication, and it is therefore recommended that CV consider delivering the longer version of the program BBR and/or other like programs and services to women.

Drawing on the key findings of the evaluation, the report identified the following opportunities for further strengthening the program, should the program be extended beyond the current funding period:

Table 12: List of recommendations

Recommendations
<p>1. Review the facilitator manual to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) modify the Abuse Profile module to better suit the female prisoner cohort b) ensure that suggested activities and content are aligned with the overall objectives of the program and identified best practice principles, and ensure there are sufficient alternatives to video related activities (few prison facilities have video streaming available). c) review the evidence-base for the card sorting activity on communication styles, which was introduced by the program facilitators and consider including it in the program operating manual d) consider the inclusion of a module on shame and a module on anger management in recognition of a need identified by the service provider
<p>2. Service provider to collect all referral and attendance data and report on this on a quarterly basis.</p>

4. Promote TiRR among Offender Services staff (including Remand Program Facilitators) at participating prisons to ensure that all staff are aware of the service and referring prisoners as intended.
5. Consider delivering the Vietnamese program over two days to allow for full delivery of the program, and to ensure sufficient time for participants to reflect and process program learnings. The referral pathway into the CALD program should be consistent with the referral pathway into the English-speaking program (women should be allowed to self-refer and/or attend without a referral)
6. CV to consider the delivery of BBR (in addition to TiRR) at DPFC.

6. Document information

Document details

Criteria	Details
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Version control

Version	Date	Description	Author
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Document approval

This document requires the following approval:

Name	Title	Organisation
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Audience

The audience for this document is the Rehabilitation and Reintegration Branch with the purpose of providing information on how the Anglicare Victoria, Tuning into Respectful Relationships program is operating at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre.

Reference material

Attached references	TRIM ID/Location
Respectful Relationships: Theory Manual	CD/19/33438
Respectful Relationships: Program Guide & Facilitator Manual	CD/19/33445
Respectful Relationships Quarterly Report: Quarter 1 and 2 (July 2018 to December 2018)	CD/19/194542
Respectful Relationships Quarterly Report: Quarter 3 (Jan-March 2019)	CD/19/322069

Acronyms	Description
ANROWS	Australia's National Organisation for Women's Safety
BBR	Building Better Relationships
CV	Corrections Victoria
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
COVSA	Community Operations and Victim Support Agency
DJCS	Department of Justice and Community Safety
DPFC	Dame Phyllis Frost Centre
DREA	Data, Research, Evaluation and Analysis
IME	Information Management and Evaluation
MRC	Metropolitan Remand Centre
TiRR	Tuning into Respectful Relationships
RCFV	Royal Commission into Family Violence
RR	Respectful Relationships

7. Appendices

7.1 Appendix 1: Content delivery record

MODULE 1 — INTRODUCING RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS			
Content item	Delivery	Reasons for omission or adaptation	What worked well, or didn't work well
Meeting the participants ice-breaker	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		
Respectful Relationships goals	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		
Group agreement	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		
Pre-group questionnaires	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		
Thinking about respect including small group activity	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		
Respectful communication	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		
Thinking about relationships	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		
Different kinds of relationships including small group activity	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		

MODULE 2 — CROSSING THE LINE			
Content item	Delivery	Reasons for omission or adaptation	What worked well, or didn't work well
Welcome including reconstructing wheel small group activity	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		
Respect and relationships including group activity	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		
Violence	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		
Abuse Profiles (this was specific to women's program)	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		
Choice to change	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		
Violence — gender and respect	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		
Communication including brainstorm	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		
Reflection	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		

Close	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		
Post-group questionnaire	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		
Certificates	<input type="checkbox"/> Delivered in full <input type="checkbox"/> Not completed <input type="checkbox"/> Skipped <input type="checkbox"/> Adapted		

What barriers or challenges did you experience in delivering the program and specified modules as intended? *Please detail (including an estimate or how often or likely this was to occur and the impact)*

Did any of the program content or delivery style not work as well with this cohort? *Please detail what didn't work well and why, and how you sought to overcome this*

7.2 Appendix 2: Abuse Profiles

Abuser profiles presented to participants for this module activity

Always right

The central attitudes driving Always Right are:

- you should be in awe of my intelligence and should look up to me intellectually. I know better than you do, even about what's good for you
- your opinions aren't worth listening to carefully or taking seriously
- the fact that you sometimes disagree with me shows how sloppy your thinking is
- if you would just accept that I know what's right, our relationship would go much better. Your own life would go better, too
- when you disagree with me about something, no matter how respectfully or meekly, that's mistreatment of me
- if I put you down for long enough, some day you'll see.

So sensitive

The central attitudes driving So Sensitive are:

- I'm against the macho men, so I couldn't be abusive
- as long as I use a lot of psychobabble, no one is going to believe that I am mistreating you
- I can control you by analysing how your mind and emotions work, and what your issues are from childhood
- I can get inside your head whether you want me there or not
- nothing in the world is more important than my feelings
- women should be grateful to me for not being like those other men.

Rambo

The central attitudes driving Rambo are:

- strength and aggressiveness are good; compassion and conflict resolution are bad

- anything that could be even remotely associated with homosexuality, including walking away from possible violence or showing any fear or grief, has to be avoided at any cost
- femaleness and femininity are inferior. Women are here to serve men and be protected by them
- men should never hit women, because it is unmanly to do so. However, exceptions to this rule can be made for my own partner if her behaviour is bad enough. Men need to keep their women in line
- you are a thing that belongs to me, akin to a trophy.

The water torturer

The central attitudes driving the Water Torturer are:

- you are crazy. You fly off the handle over nothing
- I can easily convince other people that you're the one who is messed up
- as long as I'm calm, you can't call anything I do abusive, no matter how cruel
- I know exactly how to get under your skin.

The victim

The central attitudes driving the Victim are:

- everybody has done me wrong, especially the women I've been involved with. Poor me
- when you accuse me of being abusive, you are joining the parade of people who have been cruel and unfair to me. It proves you're just like the rest
- it's justifiable for me to do to you whatever I feel you are doing to me, and even to make it quite a bit worse to make sure you get the message
- women who complain of mistreatment by men, such as relationship abuse or sexual harassment, are anti-male and out for blood
- I've had it so hard that I'm not responsible for my actions.

The terrorist

The central attitudes driving the Terrorist are:

- you have no right to defy me or leave me. Your life is in my hands
- women are evil and have to be kept terrorized to prevent that evil from coming forth
- I would rather die than accept your right to independence
- the children are one of the best tools I can use to make you fearful
- seeing you terrified is exciting and satisfying.

The demander

The central attitudes driving the Demander are:

- it's your job to do things for me, including taking care of my responsibilities if I drop the ball on them. If I'm unhappy about any aspect of my life, whether it has to do with our relationship or not, it's your fault
- you should not place demands on me at all. You should be grateful for whatever I choose to give
- I am above criticism
- I am a very loving and giving partner. You're lucky to have me.

The drill sergeant

The central attitudes driving the Drill Sergeant are:

- I need to control your every move or you will do it wrong
- I know the exact way that everything should be done
- you shouldn't have anyone else—or anything else—in your life besides me
- I am going to watch you like a hawk to keep you from developing strength or independence
- I love you more than anyone in the world, but you disgust me

The player

The central attitudes driving the Player are:

- women were put on this earth to have sex with men—especially me
- women who want sex are too loose, and women who refuse sex are too uptight
- it’s not my fault that women find me irresistible. It’s not fair to expect me to refuse temptation when it’s all around me; women seduce me sometimes, and I can’t help it
- if you act like you need anything from me, I am going to ignore you. I’m in this relationship when it’s convenient for me and when I feel like it
- women who want the nonsexual aspects of themselves appreciated are bitches
- if you could meet my sexual needs, I wouldn’t have to turn to other women.

The mentally ill or addicted abuser

The central attitudes driving the Mentally Ill or Addicted Abuser are:

- I am not responsible for my actions because of my psychological or substance problems
- if you challenge me about my abusiveness, you are being mean to me, considering these other problems I have. It also shows that you don’t understand my other problems
- I’m not abusive, I’m just——(alcoholic, drug addicted, manic-depressive, an adult child of alcoholics, or whatever his condition may be)
- if you challenge me, it will trigger my addiction or mental illness, and you’ll be responsible for what I do.

7.3 Appendix 3: Measure of change in thoughts about relationships

The table below was the measure of change in thinking about relationships used in post-program participant survey

What you thought before the program					Questions	What you think now				
Not important at all	Neutral			Very important		Not important at all	Neutral			Very important
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	Admit my mistakes or when I’m wrong	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	Not use violence during conflicts	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	Be honest	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	Accept if someone wants to change their mind or do something differently	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	Ask for others’ opinion when I make a decision that affects them	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	Trust others	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

**EVALUATION OF THE WADAMBA PRISON TO
WORK PROGRAM**

FINAL REPORT

23 JULY 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We wish to acknowledge and pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters across Victoria, Elders past and present, and emerging young leaders.

We acknowledge the sorrow of the Stolen Generations and the impact of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. We recognise the ongoing pain and trauma inflicted to this day on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

We acknowledge and respect the strength and resilience of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, and the rich and diverse languages, cultures, and histories of Indigenous peoples across Australia.

We acknowledge and value the individuals who generously shared their experience, knowledge, and wisdom to inform this evaluation.

It is important to note that Aboriginal people and communities must be the drivers in recommendations arising from this evaluation, with support from relevant organisations and service providers.



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1. CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY

The following section provides an outline of the Wadamba Prison to Work Program and the approach that was adopted to evaluate its effectiveness.

ABOUT THE WADAMBA PRISON TO WORK PROGRAM

Background

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up 29% of the prison population, but only 3% of Australia's overall population (ABS, 2020).

In 2016, the Council of Australian Governments (**CoAG**) released a national Prison to Work Report in 2016, which identified ways that all governments can ensure Aboriginal people are better supported to transition from prison to employment.

Prime Minister and Cabinet (**PM&C**) have since worked with Australian jurisdictions on the development of Prison to Work Programs.

Victoria's action plan allowed Corrections Victoria (**CV**) the opportunity to apply for funding to develop, procure and deliver a tailored Prison to Work Program that addresses employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people aged 18-25 exiting prison.

The Wadamba Prison to Work Program (**the Program**) was the outcome of this process.

As per CV's commitment to align its work with the **Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase Four (AJA4)**, *Burra Lotjpa Dungulugja*, the Program is aligned with the principles of equity within the justice system and Aboriginal self-determination.

Evaluating the Wadamba Prison to Work Program

The Program is a tailored, pre- and post-release employment program for young Aboriginal adults, aged 18 – 25 years, who are on remand. The Program aims to provide participants with access to employment services, career guidance, and cultural support.

From July 2020 to June 2021, Corrections Victoria (**CV**) contracted Wan-Yaari Aboriginal Consultancy Services (**Wan-Yaari**) to pilot the Program at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (**DPFC**) and the Metropolitan Remand Centre (**MRC**). As part of its contract with CV, an evaluation was a requirement to assess the effectiveness of the Pilot over the 12-month period. For this reason, Wan-Yaari engaged Impact Co., a consultancy firm committed to supporting organisations that work with priority populations to deliver positive impact.

As such, this document outlines the results of the evaluation completed by Impact Co. The approach adopted by Impact Co. to undertake the evaluation is outlined on the following pages, followed by the key insights (*Section 2*) and recommendations (*Section 3*).

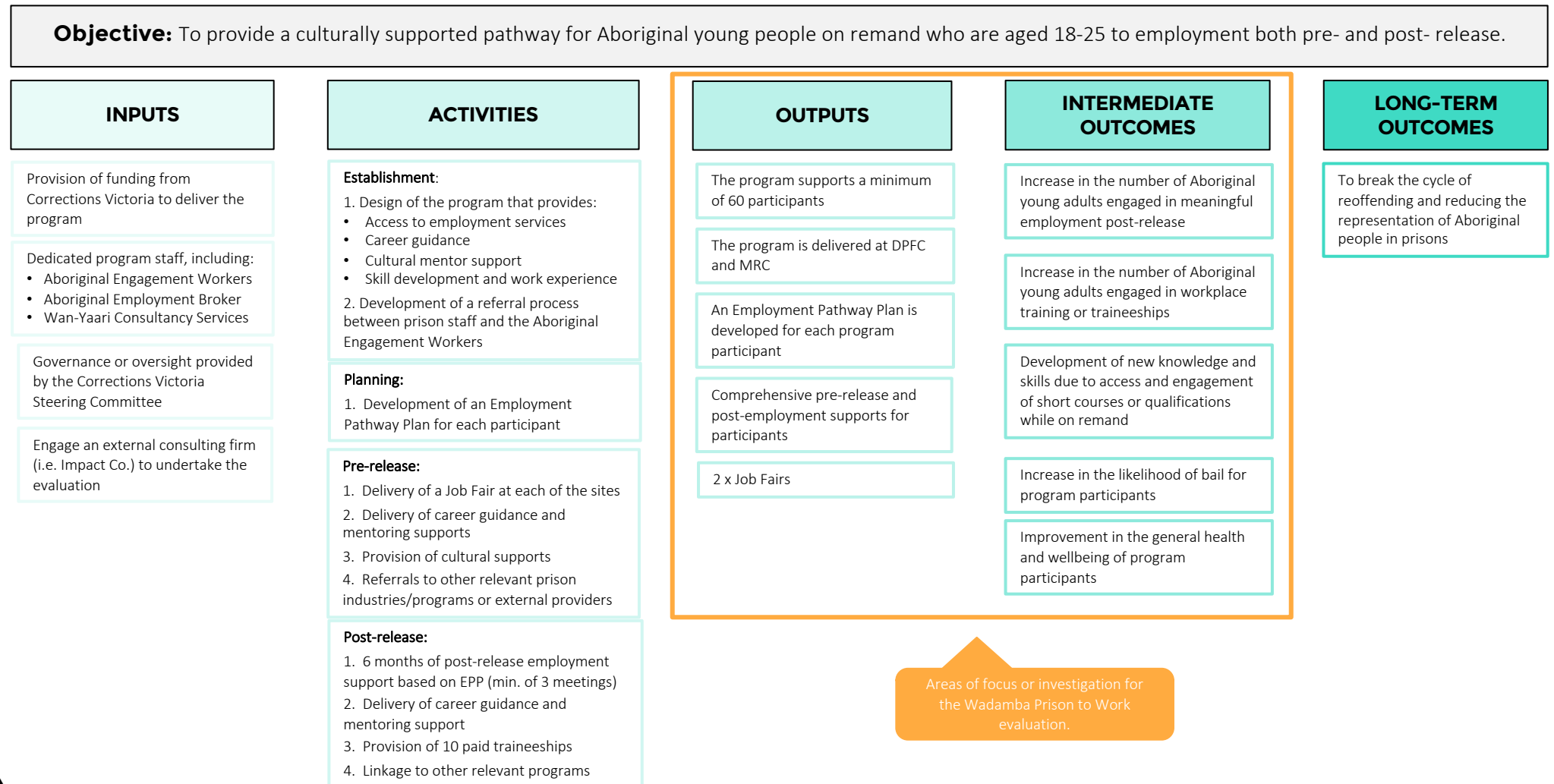
It is worth noting that during the completion of the evaluation, an agreement was made to extend the Program for an additional two years through funding provided by the Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety (**DJCS**). For this reason, the recommendations outlined in *Section 3* have been framed to support the Program's ongoing delivery.



ABOUT THE WADAMBA PRISON TO WORK PROGRAM (CONT.)

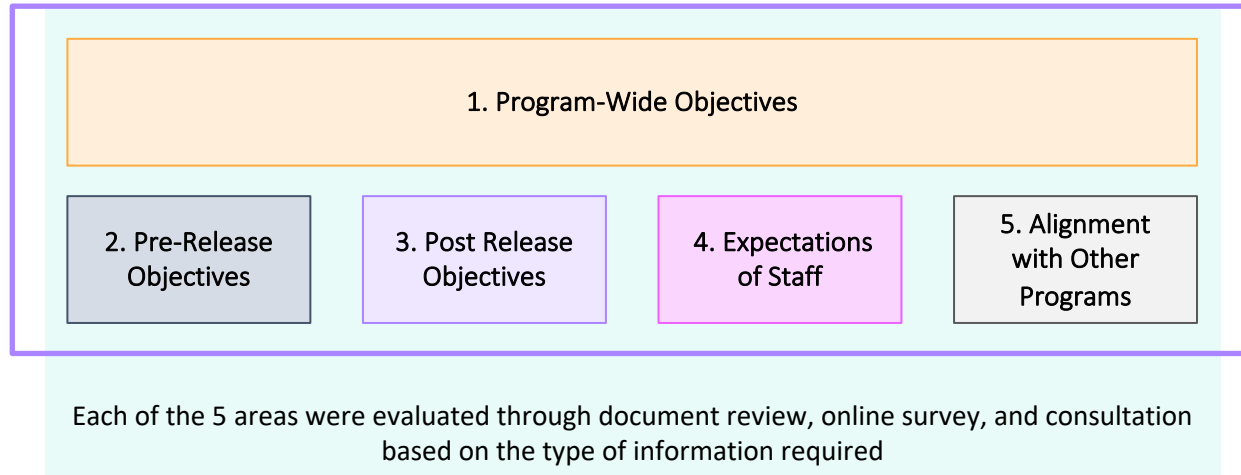
Program Logic

The program logic (displayed below) represents the chain of events leading to the attainment of the intended outcomes of the Program, including the inputs, activities, and outputs required to achieve these outcomes. The objective of this evaluation was to measure the extent to which the Program had achieved the identified 'outputs' and 'intermediate outcomes' (as highlighted with the orange box in the diagram below).



PROJECT METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

This page outlines the 5 key research areas that Impact Co. explored in its evaluation of the Program, which were determined by the Program Guidelines. The identified key insights (*Section 2*) and recommendations (*Section 3*) are organised according to these 5 areas.



1. Program Wide Objectives

- Implemented as intended
- Barriers or enablers
- Uptake
- Employment impact
- Improving knowledge and skills
- Improving wellbeing
- Impact on bail
- Participant eligibility

2. Pre-Release Objectives

- Utility of EPPs
- Effective assessment of participants
- Use of EPPs
- Job Fair – strengths and opportunities for improvement

3. Post-Release Objectives

- Effectiveness of support
- Length of support
- Transitional support
- Mentor support
- Participant-led strategies and interventions
- Traineeships (effectiveness, opportunities etc.)
- Exits (unplanned, completed)
- Brokerage

4. Expectations of Staff

- Culturally effective supports
- Creating partnerships
- Connection into community
- Aboriginal Engagement Workers
- Aboriginal Employment brokers

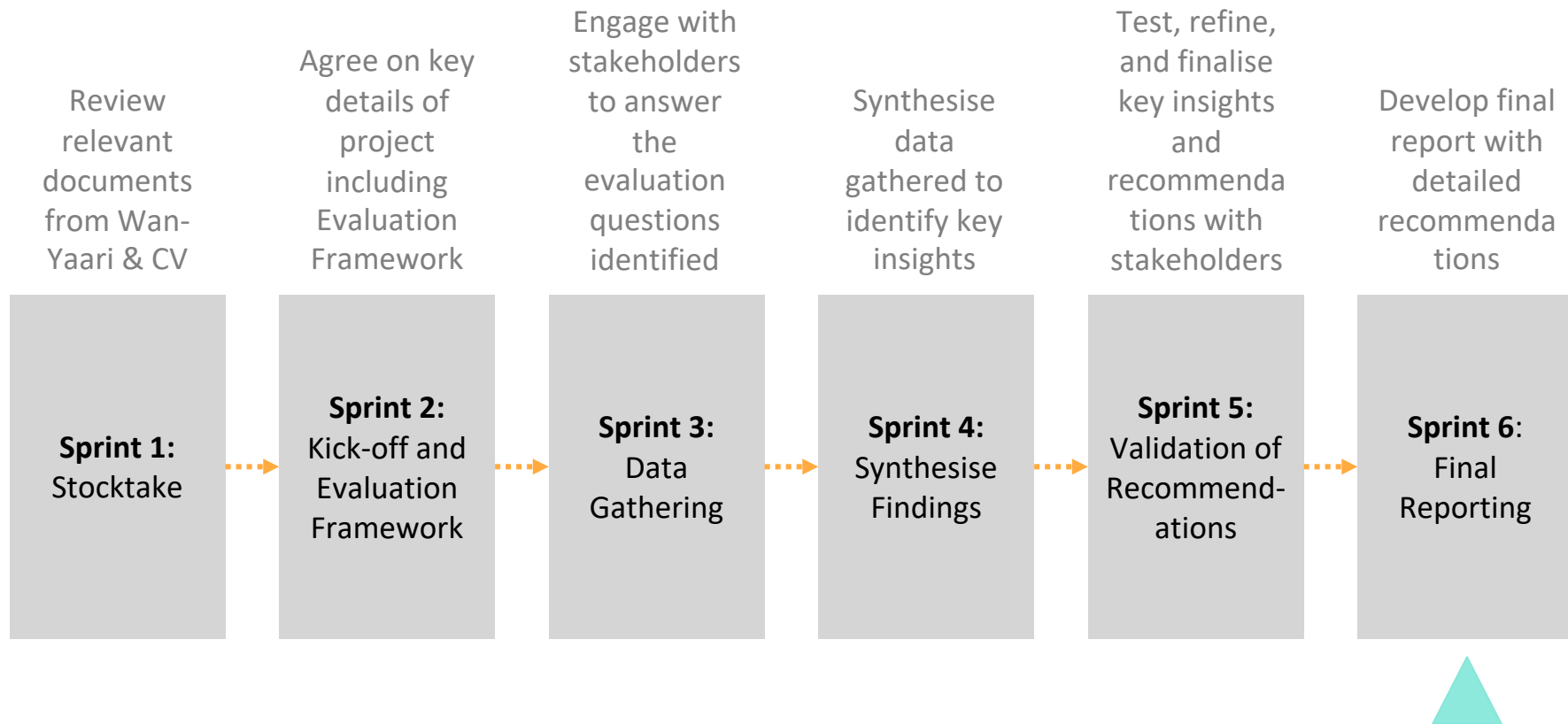
5. Alignment with other Programs

- Strengths or opportunities to improve connection to other CV programs



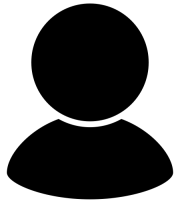
PROJECT METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW (CONT.)

The approach used to evaluate the Program comprised of 6 sprints. The diagram below provides an overview of each of these key sprints. This document represents the completion of *Sprint 6*.



KEY INPUTS INTO THIS REPORT

In *Sprint 3*, Impact Co. undertook 4 key activities as part of the data gathering process. The output from these activities were key inputs that informed the key insights and recommendations identified in this document. The data activities, including the output, are illustrated below.



7

In-depth consultations with identified stakeholders were conducted. This included 4 Wadamba staff and 3 CV staff. The semi-structured interview guide used to facilitate the interviews can be found in ***Attachment 1***.



11

Stakeholders participated in an online survey (including Wadamba staff, CV staff based at DPFC and MRC, as well as other CV staff). A copy of the online survey questions can be found in ***Attachment 1***.



Documents supplied by Wan-Yaari (including service delivery documents, program progress reports, working group minutes, and participant data).



Relevant government reports and guidelines (e.g., the Federal Government's 2016 Prison to Work Report).





2. KEY INSIGHTS

The following section outlines the 12 key insights identified through the evaluation process. As per *page 7*, the 12 key insights have been categorised according to the 5 research areas explored by Impact Co.

**KEY INSIGHTS:
PROGRAM-WIDE OBJECTIVES**



KEY INSIGHT 1 – COVID-19 SIGNIFICANTLY IMPACTED ALL ASPECTS OF THE PROGRAM AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH IT WAS DELIVERED

WHAT WE HEARD/FOUND:

Wan-Yaari and the Commonwealth collaborated on the design of the program following a tender process, which commenced in 2019. Like comparable programs already operating in the Corrections system, the Program was designed to be delivered in-person. In-person delivery is consistent with Aboriginal cultural practice which is largely oral, valuing the connections made in person in culturally relevant contexts (e.g., yarning circles).

However, the arrival of COVID-19 meant that the Program was delivered significantly differently to how it was originally intended. Specifically, COVID-19 impacted the delivery of the Program in 3 ways.

1. Direct changes specified by the Commonwealth and state government

The response of the Commonwealth and the Victorian Government to COVID-19 resulted in a number of changes that directly impacted the Program's ability to be delivered as originally designed. The main changes were:

- **Delayed permissions and new governance requirements** – The Commonwealth's shifting priorities to respond to the pandemic caused a delay in formalising the Pilot (i.e., completing documents required). In addition, unexpected requirements including the drafting of a vulnerable persons framework, and a remote services delivery framework, for the program was required to be completed by Wadamba staff.
- **Reduced physical presence of staff** – As a result of the 112-day lockdown imposed by the Victorian Government in 2020, and a fifth lockdown that occurred towards the end of the evaluation, Wadamba Staff were prevented from entering remand centres for a significant amount of time during the Pilot. As prison populations are especially vulnerable to outbreaks, corrections facilities are often locked down for longer than the generally community. Aboriginal Engagement Workers (**AEWs**) could only communicate with participants via digital teleconferencing for the majority of the Program trial (approximately 9 of 12 months).
- **Cancellation of job fairs** – As a result of restrictions imposed by the Victorian Government, Wadamba staff were not able to run the job fairs designed to encourage participation and engagement by relevant remandees.

2. Impact made by broader, environmental changes to government services and the state economy

As a result of COVID-19, the Commonwealth and Victorian Government also imposed a number of changes on other sectors and more broadly that had a ripple effect on the outcomes of the Program. These indirect changes were:

- **Quarantine requirements** – Remandees would undergo a 14-day quarantine period when first entering a centre, separating them from other remandees and creating a challenging environment for them. It was not uncommon for remandees to exit the remand centres following the conclusion of their quarantine period after a determination of the courts (e.g., sentencing or bail).



KEY INSIGHT 1 – COVID-19 SIGNIFICANTLY IMPACTED ALL ASPECTS OF THE PROGRAM AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH IT WAS DELIVERED (CONT.)

WHAT WE HEARD/FOUND:

2. Impact made by broader, environmental changes to government services and the state economy

- **Changed economic incentives for employers** – The original design of the Program aimed to leverage traineeship funds to entice employers to employ indigenous employees. It also relied on employers being sufficiently motivated to take on potential employees with criminal records through good will and a need for staff. The job-keeper program, other government incentives, and a generally depressed job market (especially in the regions) and economic environment acted to reduce the potential employment opportunities for participants. As of 23 July 2021, the Program had engaged a total of 64 participants, two of whom had obtained post-release employment.
- **Remote delivery of government services** – Government services, such as housing, food vouchers, and Centrelink payments were more difficult to access following changes to remote delivery models.

3. Adapting to a remote service delivery

As a result of COVID-19, the Program was adapted to remote-delivery (i.e., video-conferencing with remandees and other stakeholders) to align with government requirements. However, some aspects of the Program (e.g., Employment Pathway Plans (EPPs)) were not able to be changed, as directed by the Commonwealth. While consulted stakeholders acknowledged the efforts of the Program to adapt to a new model, only a third of responses in the online survey agreed that the Program was adapted well for remote delivery. This indicates that while the Program and Program staff were able to adapt to a remote service-delivery model, it was considered not as effective or culturally relevant as delivering the Program in-person.

However, it is worth noting that despite the challenges and changes outlined above, the Program, as of 23 July 2021, was able to achieve above its specified target of participants ($n = 64$). Furthermore, it has been able to support seven participants to gain employment at prisons, two participants have found employment post-release and another seven participants are currently studying, undertaking training, or being sourced post-exit opportunities. This is further detailed in **Appendix A**. This aligns with the positive perceptions of the Program by key stakeholders who were consulted as part of this evaluation. For example:

- the online survey revealed that 60% of respondents agreed that the Program is likely to contribute to breaking the cycle of offending
- stakeholders also emphasised the Program’s ability to support participants’ social emotional wellbeing and connection to culture, which are likely to contribute to job-readiness



“The ability to engage with other stakeholders was impacted by remote delivery.”

Wadamba Staff



KEY INSIGHT 1 – COVID-19 SIGNIFICANTLY IMPACTED ALL ASPECTS OF THE PROGRAM AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH IT WAS DELIVERED (CONT.)

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR THE PROGRAM:

The original Program design appropriately prioritised culturally relevant in-person delivery and assumed a pre-pandemic operating environment (e.g., demand for staff by employers, normal delivery of government services etc.). However, this was significantly impacted by COVID-19. In fact, the challenges created by COVID-19 caused various barriers or implications to the delivery of the Program, including:

Implications of direct changes to program design and delivery (including remote delivery):

- Following an agreement to deliver the Program, the small team of Wadamba staff were required to redirect significant resources and effort into developing frameworks and other documentation and away from engagement with stakeholders (including potential participants) early in the Program. As further detailed in **Insight 3**, stakeholder engagement was critical in promoting the Program and establishing robust processes across the two remand centres.
- The inability to attend remand centres in-person was a highly significant impediment to building relationships with remandees (participants and potential participants) and other stakeholders (including CV staff). This is further described in **Insight 5** and **Insight 7**.
- Because the job fairs were cancelled, a key opportunity to promote the Program to the participants as well as bring potential participants together was lost.

Implications of broader, indirect environmental changes to government services and the state economy:

- A changing remandee environment, where significant periods of time were spent in quarantine, exacerbated the challenges in building rapport and trust between AEWs and participants through remote delivery. This is further described in **Insight 9**.
- The economic environment meant that employers were less motivated to take on new employees, particularly Program participants
- It is a challenge for any person exiting the corrections system to re-engage with the community at large post-release, this was especially so in a COVID-19 world. The combination of a cohort of participants with complex needs, and the falling away of other services due to COVID-19 restrictions, meant that intensive post-release supports required by participants. In addition to participants facing a range of social, housing, and wellbeing challenges, many also had difficulty obtaining their driver's license and/or police check, which posed additional barriers for accessing employment/traineeships, also contributing to the need for a greater level of support. These factors meant that AEWs were required to (and were willing to) work intensively and holistically to support participants.

Although stakeholders perceived, overall, that the Program had the ability to achieve positive outcomes for participants and the Program achieved its target of 60 participants, this was significantly compromised by COVID-19. The challenges and implications of COVID-19 should be an important consideration in determining the success of the Program and its ongoing delivery.



KEY INSIGHT 2 – THE PROGRAM SUPPORTED PARTICIPANTS’ PERSONAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT, WHICH WAS ESSENTIAL FOR BECOMING ‘JOB-READY’

WHAT WE HEARD/FOUND:

A key component of the AEW role was providing culturally informed mentoring and guidance to participants, which in turn, supported participants’ personal and cultural development and Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB).

This included supporting participants to find purpose and feel empowered to set goals and work towards positive changes in their lives and communities.

Stakeholders reported that this personal and cultural development was necessary for many participants to be able to take steps towards employment and training.

This was supported by results from the online survey in which:

- 88% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Program provided participants with cultural support;
- 75% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Program supported the wellbeing of participants; and
- Over 60% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Program increased the knowledge and/or skills of participants.

Following release, stakeholders reported that Elders and key community members were important for supporting participants’ ongoing cultural and personal development. However, this relied on having connections with the relevant communities and Elders to provide support to participants.



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR THE PROGRAM:

Cultural and personal development are important enablers for participants to become ready to enter employment and traineeships.

The Program should consider how it can measure this as an outcome as well as measure the progress of participants towards becoming job-ready.

It will also be important to ensure that the Program retains/builds connections with key community members and Elders across the state to link in with participants following their release.

“It’s going back from where they are, building Elders around them, and then what they want for their kids. The conversations flow pretty quick with the cultural background and the employment comes from there.”

Wadamba staff



KEY INSIGHT 3 – UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROGRAM CAN BE IMPROVED WITHIN THE CORRECTION SYSTEM

WHAT WE HEARD/FOUND:

Despite information being provided to CV at the outset and regularly throughout the Pilot, the online survey and consultations indicated that the Program, its purpose, and potential benefits, could be better communicated and understood. This was likely in-part due to turnover amongst Aboriginal Liaison Officers (ALOs) and Aboriginal Wellbeing Officers (AWOs) across the remand centres.

As such, there was not always a strong network of advocates within each of the remand centres to share information with potential participants and to encourage their uptake of the Program. These advocates were particularly important in an environment where Wadamba staff were not physically present in centres.

One of the mechanisms that were used to communicate the Program across the remand centres was through the Wadamba Working Group. In the online survey, 78% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Wadamba Working Group functioned effectively (with none disagreeing).

Although the Wadamba Working Group meetings were considered to be a valuable forum, a greater focus on Program outcomes/achievements may have been beneficial. Amongst some stakeholders, it was felt that the Wadamba Working Group meetings had a strong focus on logistics, noting a desire for more information regarding participant progress (particularly post-release).



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR THE PROGRAM:

Participant uptake relies on having a strong network of advocates within the remand centres.

There is a need to increase awareness of the Program amongst staff in remand centres so that ALOs and AWOs are equipped to be advocates for the Program.

The Wadamba Working Group meetings may present an opportunity to strategically promote the Program to remand staff with a focus on how they can then promote the Program to participants.

Other channels and mediums of communication may also need to be considered if information is not reaching its intended audience (e.g., if attendance is limited at Wadamba Working Group meetings).

Tailored communication strategies may need to be considered for different audiences.

“Wadamba needs to keep banging their drum to say we are here...there are 70 other stakeholders [from different programs] wanting in...there’s a lot of competition.”

CV staff

“There needs to be more communication about what the sessions entail, what the plans/goals are and any outcomes that are being achieved so that other stakeholders have an understanding of and are aware of what is happening with participants”

CV staff



KEY INSIGHT 4 – THERE WERE A LIMITED NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO MET THE PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA AND WHO WERE SUITABLE FOR THE PROGRAM

WHAT WE HEARD/FOUND:

There were a limited number of individuals who fit the Program’s eligibility criteria, and many of those who did fit the criteria ‘on paper’ were not necessarily suitable for the Program. This limited the impact of the program and its performance against its objectives.

Snapshot from April 2021 Wadamba WG Meeting:

DPFC – There were a total of 59 Aboriginal women at DPFC with approximately 10 eligible for the program (aged 18-25yrs).

MRC – There were a total of 110 Aboriginal men at MRC with approximately 15 eligible for the Program (aged 25- 30yrs).

Consultations with stakeholders indicated that the eligible cohorts were not always suited to the program. For example:

- Eligible young men were generally less likely to be ready and/or motivated to seek employment and training opportunities compared to men aged 25+.
- Referred participants who were sentenced had to exit the Program (due to sentenced individuals being ineligible, even if the sentence was only for a short period).

Consultations revealed that while participants who faced long-term sentencing were unlikely to be suitable for the Program, those receiving shorter sentences may benefit from continued engagement in the Program.



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR THE PROGRAM:

The eligibility criteria was limiting in providing a large enough pool of potential participants for the Program.

Determining participant suitability for the Program requires the input of an individual who understands the Program and the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young adults in remand (e.g., AEWs). This needs to be considered when developing the referral process.

Impact Co. understands that the eligibility criteria for the program has been expanded to 35 years old (plus discretionary applicants) at the request of the program. This is an appropriate change that will likely improve the impact of the program.

Given the feedback received in the consultations, consideration for expanding the eligibility criteria to include individuals who are serving short sentences in prison (e.g., 1-2 months) may also be appropriate.



KEY INSIGHT 5 – THE REFERRAL PROCESSES DIFFERED BETWEEN THE REMAND CENTRES AND APPEARED TO RELY HEAVILY ON INDIVIDUAL STAFF MEMBERS

WHAT WE HEARD/FOUND:

The referral process was one of many impacted by COVID-19 restrictions. In the original design of the Program, there were essentially two complimentary 'channels' for referral:

1. A formal referral channel - Wadamba staff would be notified by CV staff when an eligible remandee entered a centre
2. An informal channel – Wadamba staff based in centres amongst remandees would identify potential participants not already identified by the formal channel

In this way, any eligible remandees missed by the formal process would be identified by Wadamba staff who will have built a network amongst Aboriginal remandees in the centres.

The formal process was significantly impacted by both the approach of different staff, as well as different rates of staff turnover (both Program and CV staff) at each centre. For example, it was noted that the AEW at DPFC placed a greater emphasis on recruiting Program participants to the Program as they operated in the role throughout the duration of the Pilot and were able to build effective networks. As a consequence, the referral process by CV staff was inconsistent and may have impacted participant uptake.

That said, two thirds of respondents to the online survey, as illustrated in **Figure 1**, agreed or strongly agreed that the referral process developed between the prison staff and Program's AEWs was effective.



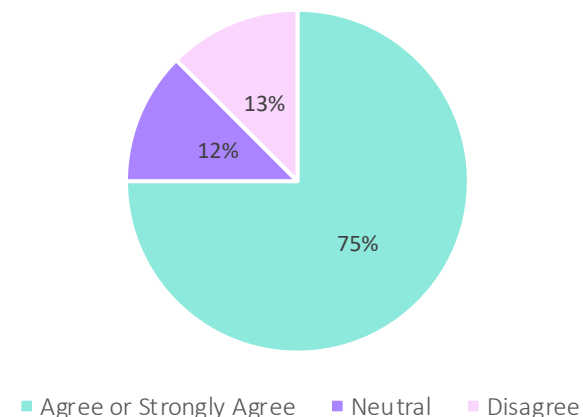
WHAT THIS MEANS FOR THE PROGRAM:

There is a need to establish strong referral processes including clearly documenting roles and responsibilities for Wadamba and CV staff to ensure such processes can withstand staff changeover.

This should be possible with greater resources allocated to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander remandees within CV as well as greater physical presence of Wadamba staff within remand centres.

Together, these changes should support more effective referral processes with reduced reliance on CV staff during the two-year extension.

Figure 1: Online survey results to 'An effective referral process was developed between prison staff and the Program's AEWs' (n = 8)



"[the referral process] was a bit up and down."
Wadamba staff



KEY INSIGHT 6 – THERE IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE DATA COLLECTION AND MONITORING FOR INDIVIDUAL AND PROGRAM-WIDE PROGRESS AND OUTCOMES

WHAT WE HEARD/FOUND:

While key data on participant engagement with AEWs and employment and traineeship outcomes was recorded, data collection and recording lacked consistency. This is partly explained by the nature of a pilot program, where different methods of data collection and analysis are trialed. It is also reflective of the Program being delivered in a different context as originally envisaged. For example, the original design of the program assumed participants and Wadamba staff would meet regularly in person and work together to map out their prison-to-work journey. In a remote environment, Wadamba staff members writing down information as participants spoke through Zoom was unsettling for participants. Consequently, some staff pivoted to creating physical case notes written following conversations with participants.

Impact Co. observed the following during its review of selected documents provided by the Program:

- the type of participant data that was captured and the method of recording data was not consistent across participants at DPFC and MRC; and
- the type of outcome data captured in the participant database was narrow in focus (i.e., limited to engagement, and employment and traineeship outcomes) and did not provide detailed information regarding participant progress and/or pathways.

In consultations with Impact Co., Program staff noted that there was important information regarding participants that was difficult to ascertain as they did not have access to certain CV systems (as envisaged in the original design of the Program).



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR THE PROGRAM:

The tools/documents used to record and monitor data did not allow for easy interpretation of Program outcomes and may not lend themselves to future Program evaluations.

A systematic data and recording system, which includes an agreed Minimum Data set (a set of data points that can be used to support the current and ongoing monitoring of the Program) and is overseen by an Evaluation Reference Group, may be appropriate going forward if there is a commitment to a long-term evaluation and continuous improvement.

“By having access to the [Corrections Victoria] system, we could gain more information.”

Wadamba staff



**KEY INSIGHTS:
PRE-RELEASE OBJECTIVES**



KEY INSIGHT 7 – BUILDING TRUST AND RAPPORT WAS AN ESSENTIAL PRE-REQUISITE FOR PARTICIPANT ENGAGEMENT

WHAT WE HEARD/FOUND:

Stakeholders reported that participants needed to know who the AEWs were, and to be confident that the AEWs had their best interests at heart, in order to engage with the Program.

The participation of AEWs in Yarning Circles was felt to be an effective way for the AEWs to build trust and rapport with potential and current participants.

Amongst some eligible participants at MRC, it was reported that there were concerns that personal information may be shared with family members/friends within the community as a result of participating in the Program. Stakeholders suggested that these concerns stemmed from previous experiences with other Aboriginal service providers who had connections with their communities.



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR THE PROGRAM:

Allaying participant concerns about confidentiality (particularly amongst MRC participants) is important to gain their trust.

Yarning Circles offer a valuable opportunity to build trust and rapport amongst potential and current participants.

Embedding regular Yarning Circles into the Program design may encourage greater Program uptake.

“Having group conversations would be really nice to start off with. You might be able to build that rapport with other [potential participants] who aren’t involved and then might get involved.”

Wadamba staff

Some of them don’t want to work with Aboriginal people...They didn’t want a bar of it because they didn’t believe their confidentiality would be kept.”

CV staff



KEY INSIGHT 8 – THERE WERE CHALLENGES USING THE EMPLOYMENT PATHWAY PLANS AS INTENDED

WHAT WE HEARD/FOUND:

In the original design of the program (created pre-pandemic), EPPs were a central component. They were designed to perform a number of functions:

- Act as a tool to support in-person conversations with participants, empowering them through setting personal, cultural, training, and employment goals
- Guide their progress regardless of exit from the Program (e.g., into the community or into prison)
- Tie-in to other CV programs and systems so that even where the Program was no longer involved, the EPP would support the participant

Following the onset of the pandemic and a transition to remote delivery, EPPs were not integrated into CV systems, and were considered by the Program to be ill-suited for remote delivery. However, as a formal requirement for funding, the Commonwealth encouraged the Program to utilise them as originally drafted.

The online survey suggested that only 50% of stakeholders felt that the EPPs were a useful tool (see **Figure 2**). When explored further, stakeholders indicated that EPPs were considered to be too lengthy and their role in the overall process was not always understood. Although stakeholders reported that the EPPs were useful documents for capturing participant data and for planning, it was felt that the structure and processes around the EPPs could be refined to better meet the needs of more participants.

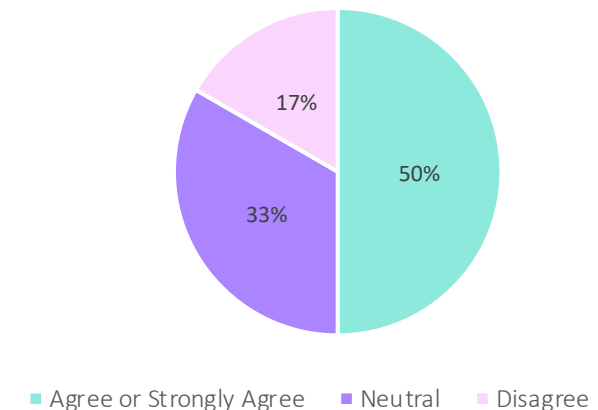


WHAT THIS MEANS FOR THE PROGRAM:

The structure of EPPs could be further refined.

There is an opportunity to work with CV to improve the processes around EPPs. This includes exploring ways to embed EPPs within the remand centres as well as how they can be used by employment services following participants' release.

Figure 2: Online survey results to 'EPPs are a useful tool to document participant goals, needs and opportunities for support' (n = 6)



**KEY INSIGHTS:
POST-RELEASE OBJECTIVES**



KEY INSIGHT 9 – THERE WAS DIFFICULTY MAINTAINING CONTINUITY OF THE PROGRAM FOR PARTICIPANTS WHO TRANSITIONED BETWEEN DIFFERENT SETTINGS

WHAT WE HEARD/FOUND:

The pathway that each participant took after entering remand varied greatly and was difficult to predict and plan for at the Program's design stage.

Changes in participant locations and/or sentencing outcomes meant that engaged Program participants might need to exit the Program quickly or might be more difficult to engage due to their change in settings/circumstances.

This was further complicated by COVID-19, which meant that participants needed to undergo periods of quarantine before entering remand, reducing their time in remand centres, and the amount of time that they could be engaged by the Program and supported by the AEW.



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR THE PROGRAM:

The length and type of support that can be provided to participants is, by nature, variable and unpredictable, which makes service delivery planning challenging.

An opportunity exists to undertake a participant journey mapping process, which would include identifying a full range of journeys a participant may go through, the roles of key stakeholders for each of these journeys, as well as the type of EPP required. When comparing the journeys to the Program's parameters, new opportunities for the Program to engage with participants may be revealed (e.g., transition into the prison system for a short period of time, how quarantine may impact the journey etc.).

Additionally, more planning may be required to help maintain continuity of support for participants when their circumstances change.

"The problem with remand prisoners is that they could be out on bail at any time, they could be sentenced at any time. The kid believes he's only going to get a 3-month sentence and he gets a 5-year sentence and they're no longer eligible....If they came back to MRC, then we'd have to start the whole process again."

CV staff

"The length of the sentence needs to be looked at. If it's a short sentence, they should still be eligible. They should still continue on with the program even if they move locations. That's a long list [of potential participants]."

CV staff



**KEY INSIGHTS:
EXPECTATIONS OF STAFF**



KEY INSIGHT 10 – MOST STAFF HAD A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR ROLE IN DELIVERING OR SUPPORTING THE DELIVERY OF THE PROGRAM

WHAT WE HEARD/FOUND:

Most staff had a clear understanding of their role in delivering or supporting the delivery of the Program. This indicated that despite the many changes in staff and the challenges created by COVID-19, the Program staff effectively communicated what was required of their key stakeholders.

This is reflected in the results of the online survey in **Figure 3**, which showed that:

- 67% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that AEWs worked effectively with other stakeholders
- 71% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Aboriginal Employment Brokers (AEBs) worked effectively with other stakeholders (with the balance providing a neutral response). However, several respondents commented that they did not have visibility over the role of the AEBs
- 78% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had what they needed (direction, resources, tools, information) to carry out their role
- 89% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that all stakeholders worked collaboratively.

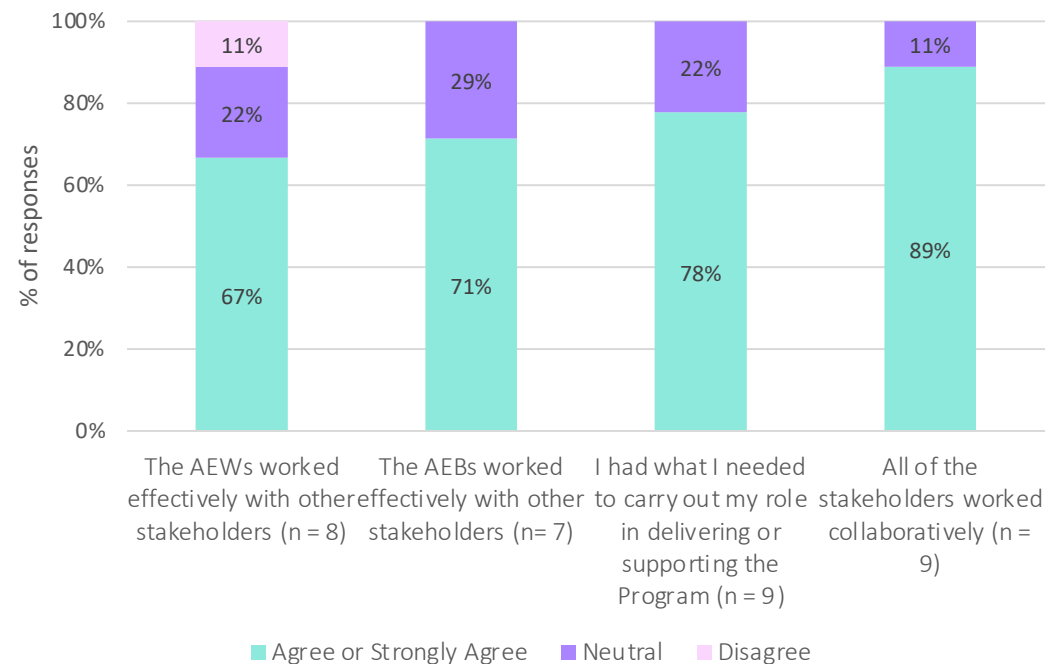


WHAT THIS MEANS FOR THE PROGRAM:

Key stakeholders within the Program and CV were given the tools and information they needed to carry out their role.

The role of AEBs was less well known to stakeholders and may need to be more widely communicated.

Figure 3: Online survey results to questions relating to staff expectations



**KEY INSIGHTS:
ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER PROGRAMS**



KEY INSIGHT 11 – THE PROGRAM FILLED AN IMPORTANT GAP IN SERVICES/SUPPORTS AVAILABLE TO THE TARGET COHORT

WHAT WE HEARD/FOUND:

There was widespread agreement across stakeholders that the Program filled a gap in terms of services available to the target cohort of participants.

Stakeholders reported that there were no other prison to work programs within the CV system that targeted 18–25-year-old Aboriginal adults in remand.

Further, the Program’s ability to provide support from and through a pre-release to post-release setting was seen as a unique and valuable offering.

This was supported by results from the online survey in which 87% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Program filled a gap in services / supports available to eligible participants (with the balance skipping or providing a neutral response). This is demonstrated in **Figure 4**.

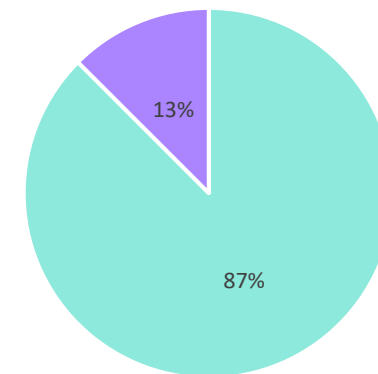


WHAT THIS MEANS FOR THE PROGRAM:

The Program is providing a service to a cohort who may not otherwise be able to access culturally appropriate support services.

Where possible, the Program should maintain a flexible eligibility criteria to ensure more remandees are able to participate where appropriate (i.e., where a remandee doesn’t meet the criteria but may be a good fit for other reasons).

Figure 4: Online survey results to ‘The Program filled a gap in services/support available to eligible participants’ (n = 8)



■ Agree or Strongly Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree

"The fact that they've had those engagement workers to support them once they get outside, it's been really valuable in that sense."

Wadamba staff



KEY INSIGHT 12 – THERE IS MORE OPPORTUNITY TO COLLABORATE WITH EXISTING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES WITHIN THE CV SYSTEM

WHAT WE HEARD/FOUND:

Stakeholders reported that greater collaboration with existing teams, programs, and services within the CV system, may facilitate improved coordination of employment/training pathways and other supports for Program participants.

In particular, it was felt that the Program could benefit from working more closely and collaboratively with the Vocational Services Team and the Education Team within the remand centres.

The results of the online survey, as illustrated in **Figure 5**, showed that:

- Only 50% of respondents believed that the Program established referrals to relevant prison industries/programs or external providers.
- Only 38% of respondents thought that the Program integrated well with/complimented other CV Programs

Multiple barriers to integrating with other teams, programs, and services within the CV system were reported. These included remote delivery and staff changeover, as well as the nature of establishing a new Pilot program over a short timeframe and within the context of a system impacted by the pandemic.

"[There is more] room to collaborate with other services. I'd encourage them to reach out and work together to get those placements. Without information sharing, they are shooting themselves in the foot."

CV staff

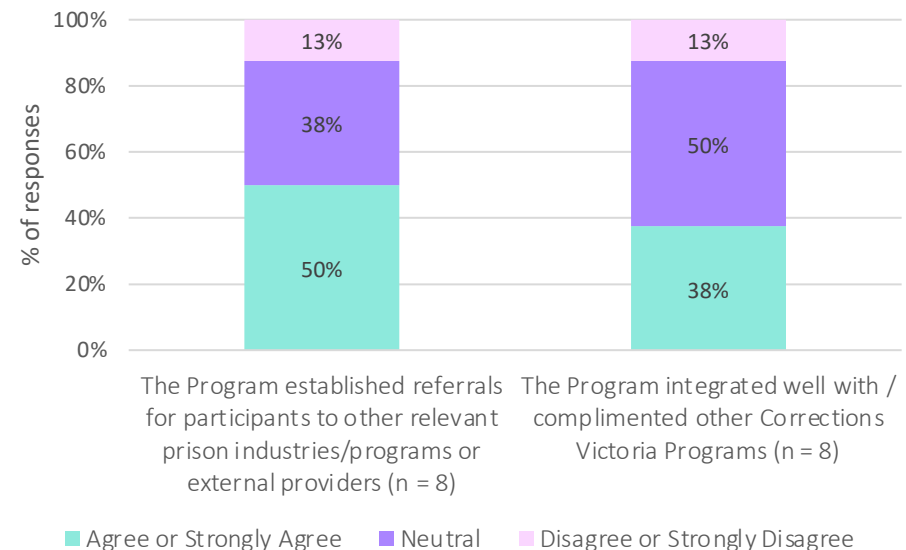


WHAT THIS MEANS FOR THE PROGRAM:

To improve participant outcomes, there is an opportunity for the Program to increase its collaboration (where possible) with other teams, services, and programs within the CV system.

The extension of the Program provides opportunities to establish solid connections with CV staff to increase awareness and promotion of the Program.

Figure 5: Online survey results to questions relating to the alignment of the Program with other programs or services within the CV system





3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following section outlines a set of recommendations to be considered for the ongoing delivery of the Program. Similar to *Section 2*, the identified recommendations are also categorised according to the 5 research areas explored by Impact Co (as illustrated on *page 7*).

This section also includes a suggested roadmap for implementing the recommendations according to its perceived priority.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of the key insights identified in *Section 2*, 10 recommendations have been proposed to enhance the ongoing delivery of the Program. These recommendations are outlined in the table below, including its link to the relevant insight. Each recommendation is further described on the following pages.

No.	Research area	Recommendation	Relevant insight
1	Program-wide objectives	Review the objectives of the Program to ensure they are flexible enough to accommodate changes in the external environment	1,2
2		Improve communication of the Program directly to potential participants and CV staff to ensure they are fully aware of how the Program can benefit participants as well as safeguard their confidentiality	3
3		Review the eligibility criteria to ensure the Program can reach a wider range of suitable participants	4, 11
4		Work with each participating remand centre to design, document, and establish a strong referral process based on learnings from the Pilot phase	5, 12
5		Build the foundations for future evaluations and continuous improvement to prepare for the ongoing delivery and expansion of the Program over the long-term	6
6		Design processes and documentation that enable quick upskilling of new staff involved in the Program	3, 5, 10, 12
7	Pre-release objectives	Continue to evolve EPPs, and associated processes, based on the learnings of the trial and the need to align with a range of participant journeys	8, 9
8	Post-release objectives	Develop a participant journey map to support consistency in the delivery of the Program and ensure continuity for participants and other stakeholders	9
9		Review the scope of the AEW role in the post-release period and consider whether AEWs can be better supported to deliver the intensive level of support required	1, 2, 7,10
10	Expectations of staff	Maximise, wherever possible, the physical presence of Program staff within the remand centres	1, 2, 7, 10
11	Alignment with other programs	Deepen relationships with existing wellbeing, employment, and training programs within the Corrections system	12



RECOMMENDATIONS IN MORE DETAIL: 1.0 PROGRAM-WIDE OBJECTIVES

1

Review the objectives of the Program to ensure they are flexible enough to accommodate changes in the external environment

All elements and objectives of the Program should be flexible enough to adapt to the challenges that the ongoing pandemic may create within the Corrections system and overall state-wide context. For example, should the job market become more competitive (e.g., in a recessionary environment where employers are not hiring), the Program should adapt to prioritising SEWB outcomes. Where there are clear opportunities for employment (e.g., low unemployment rates and / or new incentives offered by government to employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees), greater resources should be directed to employment outcomes. Inflexible / static targets are not appropriate for a program of this type in the current context of the pandemic.

2

Improve communication of the Program directly to potential participants and CV staff to ensure they are fully aware of how the Program can benefit participants as well as safeguard their confidentiality

Although the Program developed communication materials as well as directed resources into building networks (e.g., the Wadamba Working Group) to promote the Program, the turnover of key personnel at the remand centres meant that, at times, staff and, in turn, potential participants lacked awareness regarding the Program, including its purpose and benefits (e.g., employment pathways that it could provide).

The easing of COVID-19 restrictions provides an opportunity for the Program to develop a promotion or engagement strategy that identifies various channels of communication to its three targeted audiences:

1. **Potential participants** – Understanding that building trust and rapport is an important aspect for potential participants to engage in the Program, this could involve embedding, or participating in existing, Yarning Circles.
2. **Staff at the remand centres** - This could include the facilitation of staff information sessions or briefings to communicate the eligibility criteria and referral process.
3. **Other key stakeholders** (e.g., Department of Justice and Community Safety) – Leveraging the monthly Wadamba Working Group meetings to promote the success and achievements of the Program. As one stakeholder suggested, this could involve the presentation of a de-identified case study to highlight their journey through the Program and their outcomes.



RECOMMENDATIONS IN MORE DETAIL: 1.0 PROGRAM-WIDE OBJECTIVES (CONT.)

3

Review the eligibility criteria to ensure the Program can reach a wider range of suitable participants

As identified in **Insight 4**, the specified eligibility criteria in the Program's Guidelines for participants did not necessarily reflect their suitability. In particular, this applied to the age range of participants. While discretion was exercised by CV to approve individuals who fell outside this criteria, the evaluation identified that participants who were over 25 years of age were more engaged with the Program and, in turn, were more likely to achieve positive outcomes.

While an expansion of the age range in the eligibility criteria has been addressed with the Program's funding extension with CV, feedback from the stakeholder consultations suggest that the eligibility criteria can also be extended to include:

- All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (irrespective of age); and/or
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are serving short sentences in prison (e.g., 1-2 months).

4

Work with each participating remand centre to design, document and establish a strong referral process based on learnings from the Pilot phase

As per **Insight 5**, the evaluation identified that the referral process differed across the two remand centres and relied heavily on individual staff members. This meant that the rate of potential participants referred into the Program was impacted when there was changes in staff due to the time spent identifying the appropriate new 'lead' at the remand centre, developing their understanding of the Program, and agreeing on referral processes.

To mitigate this, there is an opportunity for Wan-Yaari to work with each remand centre to document the referral process, so that it can withstand staff changeover. The documented process should clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of each organisation in each step of the referral process. This could also include the mitigation plan that should be employed once a key staff member departs.



RECOMMENDATIONS IN MORE DETAIL: 1.0 PROGRAM-WIDE OBJECTIVES (CONT.)

5

Build the foundations for future evaluations and continuous improvement to prepare for the ongoing delivery and expansion of the Program over the long-term

A limitation of Pilot evaluations is that they are often unable to measure the mid-term and long-term outcomes that have been identified in the Program Logic (as illustrated on *page 6*), as these outcomes generally take longer than 12 months to appear or measure. That said, the 2-year extension of the Program provides a valuable opportunity to collect data that can demonstrate these longer-term outcomes.

As per **Insight 6**, the evaluation identified some inconsistency in participant data collected across the two remand centres, which made it harder to determine or measure the outcomes of the Pilot. With the Program's extension, we suggest the establishment of a systematic data and monitoring process that articulates:

- **Who** will capture Program and participant data and **where** will it be recorded;
- **What** data should be collected (i.e., **quantitative and qualitative information**), and whether there is specific data that should and can be shared by CV.;
- **Who** will have access to participant data (with consideration for balancing staff's need for information with the confidentiality of participants);
- **How** data will be used to support future evaluations (i.e., introducing appropriate pre-Program, mid-point, and post-Program measures (e.g., participant surveys, wellbeing assessments, and/or job-readiness assessments))

This process can be overseen and governed by an Evaluation Reference Group, which could comprise of key stakeholders that meet on quarterly or bi-annual basis.



RECOMMENDATIONS IN MORE DETAIL: 1.0 PROGRAM-WIDE OBJECTIVES (CONT.)

6

Design processes and documentation that enable quick upskilling of new staff involved in the Program

A key challenge identified in this evaluation was the high and unexpected turnover of staff (both Wadamba and CV). Unexpected turnover will always be a risk in programs and is difficult to directly address. However, effective succession planning and established handover processes can help to mitigate this risk.

A number of recommendations in this section highlight a need to better document and communicate key information, including

- **Recommendation 2** – Improving communication of the Program and its benefits
- **Recommendation 4** - Designing, documenting and establishing a strong referral process
- **Recommendation 5** – Improving data recording practices to lay the foundations for future evaluations
- **Recommendation 8** – Developing a participant journey map

The recommendations above can all contribute to better succession planning that will enable any staff member who is required to support the Program through fast upskilling.

Any stakeholder coming on-board to the program should receive support to help them navigate the learning curve, which includes (but is not limited to):

- a description of the daily tasks and processes for their role;
- key day-to-day activities that they may need to do;
- relevant status updates;
- a list of key contacts;
- any ongoing issues affecting the Program; and
- any brochures or other material that is provided generally to potential participants or other stakeholders.

Provision of this information will enable staff to be better advocates for the program and identify potential participants more effectively.



RECOMMENDATIONS IN MORE DETEAIL: 2.0 PRE-RELEASE OBJECTIVES

7

Continue to evolve EPPs, and associated processes, based on the learnings of the trial and the need to align with a range of participant journeys

As per **insight 8**, the onset of the pandemic and transition to remote delivery resulted in challenges implementing the EPPs as intended. Additionally, while the need to adapt EPPs to different participant journeys was recognised, the requirements of the contract with the Commonwealth meant that the original EPP needed to be used for all participants. Moving into the 2-year extension of the Program, there is an opportunity to refine the structure and implementation of the EPPs, based on the learnings of the Pilot, to better align with participant needs across a range of settings.

Key considerations may include:

- Incorporating greater flexibility into the EPP structure to ensure that they can be tailored appropriately for participants who are at different stages of their employment journey and/or who may exit remand for different reasons (e.g., post-release or sentencing).
- Exploring how the EPPs could be further integrated into CV systems to enable more oversight/input from CV staff as well as greater continuity for participants who transition between different Corrections environments.
- Exploring how other stakeholders who work with participants following their release (i.e., Centrelink, employment support service providers, employers, training organisations) could have access and input into the EPPs to support continuity and accountability for participants.

The development of a participant journey map (as described in **Recommendation 8**) should inform the refinement of the EPPs.



RECOMMENDATIONS IN MORE DETAIL: 3.0 POST-RELEASE OBJECTIVES

8

Develop a participant journey map to support consistency in the delivery of the Program and ensure continuity for participants and other stakeholders

As identified in **insight 9**, participants can enter, remain within, and exit the Program in vastly different ways. Much of this is unpredictable due to the temporary and contingent nature of remand. Furthermore, the potential need to undergo periods of quarantine prior to entering remand can also impact upon time spent in remand and, thus, their time supported or engaged in the Program.

An opportunity therefore exists to undertake a participant journey mapping process, which would include identifying the different journeys a participant may follow and the roles of key stakeholders for each of these journeys. This should take into account participants who:

- Need to quarantine
- Exit remand due to sentencing / bail
- Exit and then re-enter remand
- Transition back into the community in a rural / regional setting
- Have obtained differing levels of educational / training / employment experience

By identifying and planning for different participant journeys, in addition to reviewing the Program parameters, new opportunities for the Program to engage with participants in different stages / settings may be revealed.

Additionally, the process may highlight where further planning is needed to ensure continuity of support for participants when their circumstances change.



RECOMMENDATIONS IN MORE DETAIL: 3.0 POST-RELEASE OBJECTIVES (CONT.)

9

Review the scope of the AEW role in the post-release period and consider whether AEWs can be better supported to deliver the intensive level of support required

The original design of the Program envisaged that the AEW would have a key role in providing logistical and interpersonal post-release support to participants. However, the evaluation revealed that the scope of the AEW role is broad and potentially unsustainable for one person in its current form. Should the number of fully engaged participants increase, Wadamba staff may not have the capacity to deliver the kinds of hands-on support that has filled the void of remote-service delivery of government services, and the absence of other programs that the original design of the plan intended to leverage.

The Pilot has enabled the Program to test different ways of supporting participants in different contexts (e.g., how to effectively support a participant to access Centrelink services over the phone). Should the Program take on a higher number of participants, individuals in the AEW role may not have the capacity to deliver this kind of 'hands-on' support. Given this, the Program may want to consider how the support is scalable over the long-term through either changing the level of support provided or increasing staff.



RECOMMENDATIONS IN MORE DETAIL: 4.0 EXPECTATIONS OF STAFF

10

Maximise, wherever possible, the physical presence of Program staff within the remand centres

While remote delivery is possible, the physical presence of Wadamba staff in remand centres and face-to-face service delivery with participants and other stakeholders are important elements of the Program and should be maximised wherever possible. Ideally, Wadamba staff should be given the same access to remandees as BAU corrections staff to mitigate the challenge that prolonged periods of lockdowns and zoom-only interaction creates.



RECOMMENDATIONS IN MORE DETAIL: 5.0 ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER PROGRAMS

11

Deepen relationships with existing wellbeing, employment and training programs within the Corrections system

In this evaluation, a number of key stakeholders indicated that the Program could improve the way that it aligns with other employment and training programs within the Corrections system.

A lack of alignment could be the result of a number of factors including:

- Difficulty connecting with all of the necessary stakeholders in the Corrections System remotely
- The status of a 'trial' program as opposed to a permanent one
- Changeover in CV staff

Now that the Program has been extended for 2 years, there is an opportunity to fully integrate the Program into the full suite of Corrections complimentary programs. Should restrictions ease, in-person meetings with relevant stakeholders in these programs should be held to undertake collaborative planning sessions to maximise the opportunities between the programs.



A ROADMAP FOR IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS



A ROADMAP FOR IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our understanding of the Program, including feedback provided by key stakeholders during the Validation Workshop, this section outlines a proposed roadmap for implementing the recommendations identified in this evaluation. This roadmap is divided into 3 key sections:

- **Urgent priority** – Recommendations that should be implemented within the first 6 months of the Program’s extension
- **Medium priority** – Recommendations that should be implemented within the first 12 months of the Program’s extension
- **Low priority** – Recommendations that should be implemented within the first 18 months of the Program’s extension.

URGENT PRIORITY
To be actioned within first 6 months

The recommendations identified in this category are focused on opportunities to improve access to the Program by potential participants. It also includes creating systems in the Program to support the monitoring of outputs and outcomes to support continuous improvement and future evaluations.

- 1 - Review the objectives of the Program and focus of the Program to take into consideration its holistic and tailored approach
- 2 - Improve communication of the Program directly to potential participants and CV staff to ensure they are fully aware of how the Program can benefit participants as well as safeguard their confidentiality
- 3 - Review the eligibility criteria to ensure the Program can reach a wider range of suitable participants
- 4 - Build the foundations for future evaluations and continuous improvement to prepare for the ongoing delivery and expansion of the Program over the long-term
- 5 - Work with each participating remand centre to design, document and establish a strong referral process based on learnings from the Pilot phase
- 10 - Maximise, wherever possible, the physical presence of Program staff within the remand centres



A ROADMAP FOR IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS

MEDIUM PRIORITY

To be actioned within first 12 months

The recommendations identified in this category are focused on developing appropriate documentation and structures to ensure consistency across the Program.

6 - Design processes and documentation that enable quick upskilling of new staff involved in the Program

7 - Continue to evolve EPPs, and associated processes, based on the learnings of the Pilot and the need to align with a range of participant journeys

8 - Develop a participant journey map to support consistency in the delivery of the Program and ensure continuity for participants and other stakeholders

9 - Review the scope of the AEW role in the post-release period and consider whether AEWs can be better supported to deliver the intensive level of support required

LOW PRIORITY

To be actioned within first 18 months

The recommendation identified in this category is focused on its integration within the broader CV system to support its ongoing sustainability.

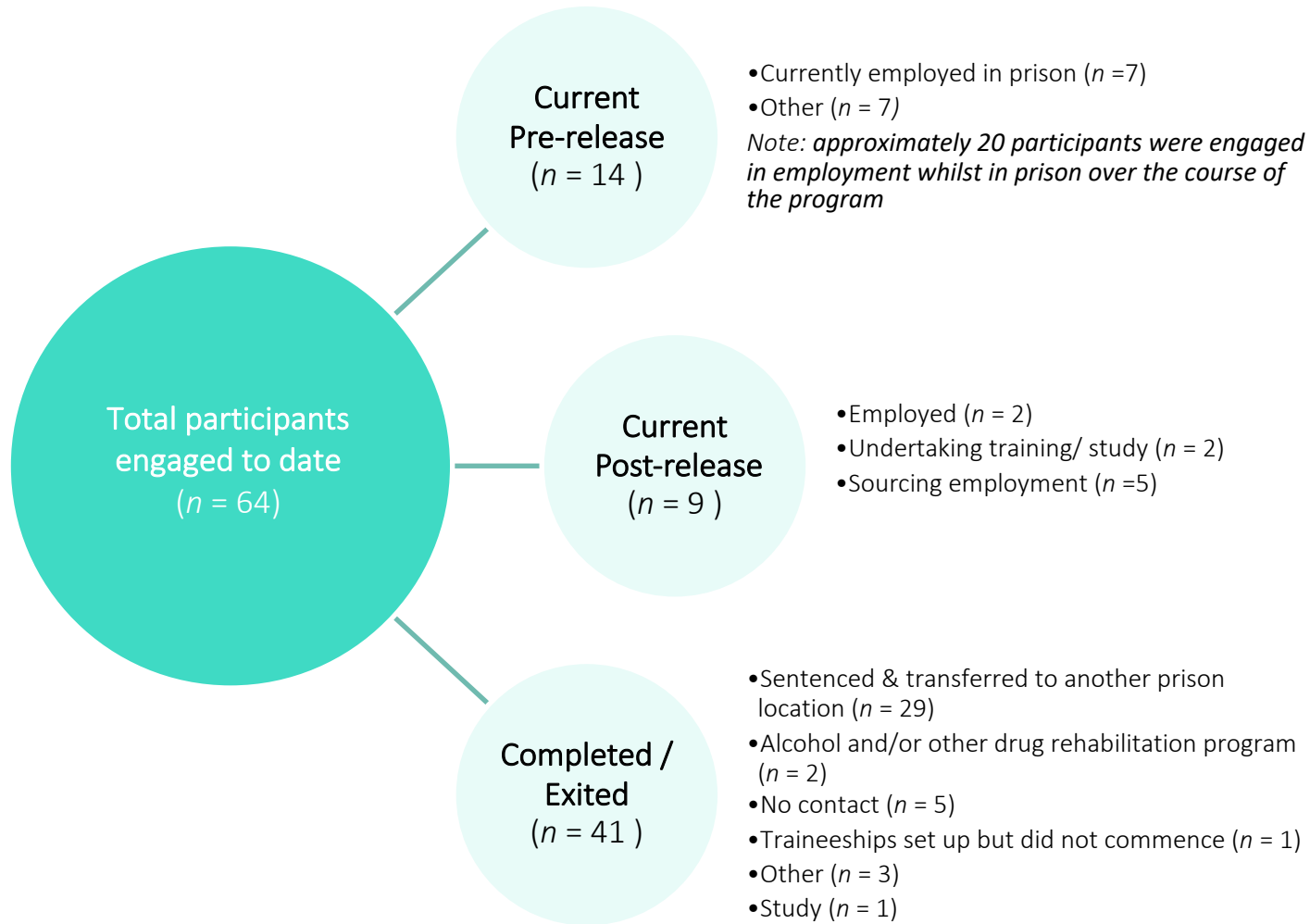
11 - Deepen relationships with existing wellbeing, employment and training programs within the Corrections system





APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – UPDATED PARTICIPANT NUMBERS



Note: numbers accurate as of 23 July 2021 and have been provided by the Program





**Evaluation of The Torch
Indigenous Arts in Prisons & Community
Programs**

Final Report

March 2019



Terminology

In this report the terms Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are used in relation to specific policy and program names. The terms Koorie and Koori in general refer to Aboriginal people from the south-eastern part of Australia. The terms Aboriginal and Indigenous are used more broadly. In this report the range of terms used embrace all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in Australia.

Acknowledgements

The EMS team would like to express our thanks to all of the staff of The Torch, particularly Kent Morris, CEO and Deb Lyon, Finance Manager who gave their support to the overall project, facilitated connection to the evaluation participants and provided critical information to the evaluation process.

This evaluation would of course not have been possible without the participation of all stakeholders who willingly gave us their time to share their stories and views of The Torch program. We especially thank the program participants themselves who generously shared their stories and experiences of being part of this unique program.

The EMS Team

The EMS Team undertaking the evaluation included:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From April to December 2018, EMS Consultants completed a process and outcomes evaluation of the Indigenous Arts in Prisons and Community Program (IAPC) delivered by The Torch.

The IAPC program accords with research highlighting the significant role cultural and arts programs can play in connecting or reconnecting Indigenous prisoners with their culture.

The program supports the development of self-esteem, confidence and resilience to the re-offending cycle through cultural strengthening and artistic expression.

Participant rehabilitation is assisted through the generation of opportunities for Indigenous offenders to reconnect with family and culture, foster new networks and to pursue educational and vocational avenues upon release.

The evaluation was intended to build on the initial evaluation of the program undertaken in 2012 and explore issues including program uptake, marketing and sales of artworks, program strengths and limitations and areas for improvement.

The evaluation process included a mixed method approach to data collection and analysis including a review of program administrative processes, analysis of program data, interviews with In-Prison and In-Community participants, and consultations with a wide range of stakeholders including Torch Board and staff members, Corrections Victoria staff (including prison staff), funding bodies and partners and TAFE Arts Teachers delivering programs in prison settings. Throughout the evaluation 82 stakeholders were interviewed/consulted.

Conclusions

Conclusions from the evaluation include that:

1. The program is clearly effective in providing participants an opportunity and forum for cultural exploration, expression and strengthening.
2. The program is effective in supporting the development and strengthening of participant creative skills.
3. The program is clearly effective in improving the social and emotional wellbeing of participants.
4. The program is effective in increasing the understanding of participants about the arts industry and arts opportunities
5. Participation in the program has the potential to improve the financial stability of participants but not everyone is able to achieve this outcome.
6. More work is needed to enable The Torch to confidently measure the impact of the IAPC on recidivism rates

Evaluation Findings

Program Achievements

There has been significant growth (approximately 30%) in the IAPC Program since 2015. As at 30/6/18, there were a total of 267 participants in The Torch programs. These included 188 participants in The Torch In-Prison program (representing approximately one quarter (27.4%) of all Indigenous prisoners in Victoria's prisons) and 79 participants in the In-Community program.

The annual Confined exhibition, the key public event of the program, has also grown significantly since 2015 in reputation and size (from 147 artworks in 2015 to 192 in 2018) as have artwork sales (from \$16,200 in 2015 to \$262,062 in 2018).

Participant Outcomes

Benefits of participation for both In-Prison and In-Community programs were identified as:

- Improvements in participant social and emotional wellbeing
- Cultural connection and strengthening
- Development of artistic skills
- Creating hope for a different/ positive future away from prison
- Financial gain

The majority of In-Community participants (92%) confirmed that being part of the program has helped them stay out of the justice system. Importantly, data gathered on 2017-18 participants in the In-Community program who had been in the program for over 12 months, indicated only 11% had returned to prison. (In 2016-17, the recidivism rate for Aboriginal prisoners in Victoria was 53.4% compared to 42.8% for their non-Aboriginal counterparts).¹ Other stakeholders also praised the program for providing the support needed to lead participants to a path away from prison and keep them from re-offending.

Strengths and Growth Areas

Strengths of the program identified by evaluation participants included:

- The program being led, designed and delivered by Indigenous artists
- The cultural resources developed and sourced for participants
- The support and encouragement provided to participants by Arts Officers
- Opportunities for participants to exhibit and sell artwork
- The Aboriginal Art Policy Model (developed by Corrections Victoria and The Torch)
- The Confined Exhibition showcasing participant artworks
- The support provided to In-Community participants to settle back into community
- Linking participants into other exhibitions/ art industry opportunities

Areas for growth where limitations were identified included:

- Increasing the number of Arts Officers
- Increasing one on one time available for individual participants in the In-Prison program
- Exploring regional exhibition opportunities
- Formally documenting program guidelines for both programs
- Finding ways to increase consistent engagement with In-Community participants

¹ Corrections Victoria Data Warehouse, ABS 4517.0 Prisoners in Australia, 2017

- Finalising Indigenous representation on the Board
- Continuing to develop organisational capability in relation to data collection, monitoring and reporting
- Increasing formal collaboration/ partnerships with other programs for Indigenous people in the justice system.

Suggestions for Improvement

Prior to the evaluation process, The Torch embarked on activities and initiatives to improve both the IAPC Program and the organisation's capacity to effectively deliver the program, many of which have been captured in The Torch's Strategic Plan 2018-2021.

These have been considered in making suggestions for improvement.

It should also be noted, that the consultations highlighted some issues impacting The Torch programs, which are not the direct responsibility of The Torch, but could be addressed with a broader system response.

Recommendation 1

Program staff, particularly Arts Officers, are provided training in trauma informed practice and the benefit of art in healing trauma.

Recommendation 2

The In-Prison and In-Community program models are formally documented.

Recommendation 3

The Torch develops guidelines / an information kit for program participants so they are clear about the program scope and what they can expect from their participation.

Recommendation 4

In addition to planned marketing and promotion strategies The Torch consider ways to continue building the program brand and showcasing its successes.

Recommendation 5

The Torch develops a staff wellbeing program to ensure the social and emotional wellbeing and mental health of staff is supported.

BACKGROUND

Aboriginal Over-Representation In The Criminal Justice System

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders continue to be over-represented in the justice system. First Nations Australians make up less than 3% of the Australian population yet represent 27% of the national prison population.² In 2017 in Victoria, Aboriginal people made up almost 9% of the Victorian prison population despite accounting for only 0.6% of the Victorian adult population. They are more likely to be on remand and be serving a shorter prison sentence, with many Aboriginal men and women discharged having spent less than a year in prison.

Aboriginal prisoners are also more likely to have had a prior period of imprisonment (65.1% compared to 48.6% of non-Aboriginal prisoners). Re-offending contributes significantly to the rates of Aboriginal over-representation. Lower proportions of Aboriginal offenders on supervised orders successfully complete their orders compared with non-Aboriginal offenders, which is a major contributor to the rate of re-offending. More broadly, socioeconomic factors such as homelessness, financial stress, social and economic exclusion and limited access to culturally-appropriate substance abuse treatment programs and poorer educational outcomes all contribute to failing to complete orders and recidivism.

Victoria's Prison Population

Since 1977 the prison population in Victoria has continually increased from 1488 to 7,668 by June 2018. In 2018, 685 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were imprisoned representing 9% of all prisoners. Not only are Indigenous people over-represented in the prison system, their rate of imprisonment is increasing at a faster rate than non-Indigenous prisoners – 11.6% compared to 6.4%. Table 1 below shows the most recent statistical information about Victoria's prisoners.³

Table 1: Victoria's Prison Population

Prison location	30-Jun-17	30-Jun-18	% change
Barwon Prison	452	415	-8.2%
Beechworth Correctional Centre	200	151	-24.5%
Dhurringile Prison	314	234	-25.5%
Fulham Correctional Centre	858	766	-10.7%
Hopkins Correctional Centre	723	668	-7.6%
Judy Lazarus Transition Centre	17	18	5.9%
Langi Kal Kal Prison	316	258	-18.4%
Loddon Prison	682	648	-5.0%
Margoneet Correctional Centre	835	823	-1.4%
Melbourne Assessment Prison	299	236	-21.1%
Metropolitan Remand Centre	872	878	0.7%
Port Phillip Prison	1,076	1,073	-0.3%
Ravenhall Correctional Centre	0	934	NA
Dame Phyllis Frost Centre	460	494	7.4%
Tarrengower Prison	47	72	53.2%
TOTAL	7,151	7,668	7.2%

² Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Plan, Justice Health and Corrections Victoria, 2015

³ Sentencing Advisory Council – Statistics, Website www.sentencingcouncil.vic.gov.au/statistics/sentencing-statistics/victoria-prison-population cited November 2018

Male prisoners	6,644	7,102	6.9%
Female prisoners	507	566	11.6%
<i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners</i>	<i>612</i>	<i>685</i>	<i>11.9%</i>
<i>Prisoners aged less than 25 years</i>	<i>859</i>	<i>880</i>	<i>2.4%</i>
<i>Unsentenced prisoners</i>	<i>2,224</i>	<i>2,711</i>	<i>21.9%</i>

Source: Corrections Victoria, 2018

Those who have been incarcerated previously are at higher risk of re-offending.⁴ In 2016-17, the recidivism rate for Aboriginal prisoners in Victoria was 53.4% compared to 42.8% for their non-Aboriginal counterparts.⁵

Koorie prisoners also experience higher rates of mental illness, substance abuse and dependence disorders than non-Aboriginal prisoners. These rates of poor mental health have significant post-release implications with Aboriginal prisoners particularly at high risk of both mental health related incidents and criminal activity resulting in re-incarceration in the weeks following release.⁶

The Aboriginal Justice Agreement

The *Aboriginal Justice Agreement* is the formal agreement between the Victorian Government and the Aboriginal community to work together to reduce Aboriginal contact with the criminal justice system and improve justice outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians. Over the last 18 years and through all phases of the Agreement (including the recently released Phase 4 – Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja) there have been clear goals to:

- Reduce the number of Aboriginal people entering the criminal justice system
- Reduce the number of Aboriginal people progressing through the criminal justice system; and
- Reduce the number of Aboriginal people returning to the criminal justice system⁷

Phase three of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA3) specifically identified poor mental health as a key driver of Aboriginal contact with the criminal justice system.

The *Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Plan – Justice Health and Corrections Victoria* was an initiative of AJA3. The Plan recognises the fundamental role of culture, community and spirituality in Aboriginal wellbeing and aims to support such connections.

The Plan involves:

- Investing in programs that strengthen cultural identity, address trauma, build resilience and promote positive social and emotional wellbeing
- Increasing cultural awareness and building the capacity of the prison system to respond to the health and well-being needs of Aboriginal prisoners

⁴ Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja – Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 4, 2018, p17

⁵ Corrections Victoria Data Warehouse, ABS 4517.0 Prisoners in Australia, 2017

⁶ Olgoff, J., Cutajar, M., Adams, K., Thomas, S, and Halacas, C., Koori Prisoner Mental Health and Cognitive Function Study, 2013

⁷ Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja – Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 4, op cit, p10

- Embedding Aboriginal cultural values in policies, programs and services for Aboriginal prisoners
- Strengthening partnerships with Aboriginal community organisations to support and create linkages for effective transition
- Improving the monitoring, reporting and evaluation of mental health and wellbeing services to inform future service delivery

Priority Area 1 of the *Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Plan* focuses on prevention and health promotion and has 3 objectives:

- 1.1 Improve access for Aboriginal prisoners to community support agencies and programs that focus on strengthening connection to culture, building resilience and healing trauma
- 1.2 Increase opportunities for Aboriginal prisoners to connect to Country and strengthen their spirituality
- 1.3 Increase understanding and awareness of mental health through culturally appropriate prevention, promotion and early intervention information

Under this priority the Victorian government specifically acknowledged the contribution to, and the impact of The Torch Program in relation to these objectives and supports the Statewide Indigenous Arts in Prison and Community Program across Victoria's prisons run by The Torch. The program is recognised for its unique contribution to helping Aboriginal offenders connect to culture, ancestry, spirituality, land, family and community through art.

It should also be noted that since this evaluation commenced the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 4 – Burra Lotjpa Dungulundja (2018) has been released. Burra Lotjpa Dungulundja incorporates the Victorian Government's commitment to self-determination, recognising that "self-determination is the only policy approach to produce effective and sustainable outcomes for Indigenous peoples around the world." (p 6). To promote Aboriginal self-determination and provide further support to reduce over-representation the Andrews Labor Government has committed \$40.3m to support initiatives including the continuation and the expansion of The Torch programs with a further \$2.2m investment over the next three years.

The Torch

The Torch has been delivering the Indigenous Arts in Prisons and Community (IAPC) Program for over seven years. Since June 2011 The Torch has been providing art and cultural and arts support to Indigenous offenders and ex-offenders in Victoria.

The IAPC program accords with research highlighting the significant role cultural and arts programs can play in reconnecting Indigenous prisoners with their culture.

The program supports the development of self-esteem, confidence and resilience to the re-offending cycle through cultural strengthening and artistic expression.

The program aims to assist rehabilitation by generating opportunities for Indigenous offenders to reconnect with family and culture, foster new networks and to pursue educational and vocational avenues upon release.

The objectives of The Torch Indigenous Arts in Prisons & Community Program are:

- Through art, cultural and arts vocation support, provide a forum for cultural exploration, expression and strengthening for members of the Indigenous community who are incarcerated; and
- Through supporting creative skills and connection to culture, work with participants to find a new way forward on their return to community and reduce recidivism.

There are three main components of the program:

- 1) The ***In-Prison component*** is run in 15 Victorian correctional facilities. Incarcerated Indigenous men and women are supported to learn more about their language group, culture and country and provided support with art skills development.
- 2) The ***In-Community (Post-release) component*** supports those who have been released from prison and assists in their integration back in to the community. It encourages participants to continue to build their cultural knowledge, confidence and art practice. Support is provided to assist participants to foster new networks, new vocational opportunities and encourage post-release pathways.
- 3) The ***Economic Development component*** includes providing participants with opportunities to earn income through the promotion, licensing and sale of artworks. The Torch curates exhibitions and maintains a physical and on-line gallery. Post-release participants are engaged to install and promote exhibitions which develops arts industry skills and networks. The annual Confined exhibition has been a flagship of The Torch program for several years and is the key visual arts event for the City of Port Phillip's Yalukit Willam Ngargee Festival.

In conjunction with The Torch in 2016, the Victorian government developed the Aboriginal Art Policy Model that allows Indigenous men and women participating in The Torch IAPC program to sell their artworks while still in custody. This policy was developed in response to research released by the Victorian Ombudsman in 2015. This research showed cultural learning, instilled through artistic practices, would be a successful strategy in addressing the high recidivism rates for Indigenous offenders and lead to greater post release reintegration outcomes through improving post-release employment options.

Under the Aboriginal Art Policy Model, a major percentage of the money received for artworks sold is held in Trust by the Department of Corrections until the participant is released from prison. The Torch charges no commission on sales and 100% of the sales proceeds are passed onto the participant.

The sale of artworks, particularly since the launch of the Aboriginal Art Policy Model is making a significant difference to the financial well-being of participants.

EVALUATION OVERVIEW

Why Evaluate?

In 2012 an evaluation of The Torch programs was undertaken. That evaluation focused on whether or not the program was effective in:

- Addressing the needs of Indigenous prisoners
- Supporting a deeper understanding of arts best practice amongst prisoners, their families and prison program staff
- Increasing prisoners and former prisoners' understanding of vocational arts opportunities
- Supporting Indigenous leadership and community wellbeing through the arts
- Supporting a connection/re-connection to culture amongst prisoners and former prisoners
- Strengthening participants' art practice.

During the evaluation 12 program participants – 6 In-Prison and 6 post-release (In-Community) – were interviewed along with 8 Aboriginal Liaison Officers/ Aboriginal Wellbeing Officers in prisons and 4 other stakeholders.

Though there were some challenges/ constraints in undertaking the evaluation the findings of the evaluation provided a solid platform for moving forward. The findings indicated:

Prisoner and former prisoner interviews participating in the program faced four key challenges:

- Systemic trust and anger issues.
- Experiences of disconnection from their cultural identity
- Estrangement from family and community
- Economic insecurity after being released from prison

Those interviewed saw that The Torch program had been effective in responding to these challenges by engendering:

- An increased sense of well-being and confidence
- New levels of trust that many of the artists had not experienced before
- Opportunities for cultural reconnection
- Pre-release skills and exploration of post-release career opportunities
- Improved participation in other prison programs
- Increased awareness of arts and culture among prison staff and the wider community
- A new level of support with its inside/outside approach
- Better relationships with family and the wider community

Other stakeholders involved in the evaluation process, particularly the Corrections Aboriginal Liaison Officers and Aboriginal Wellbeing Officers, noted that participation in the program helped prisoners gain a greater interest and focus on other prison-based programs and activities including educational activities.

Whilst not a specific focus of the evaluation, it was concluded that given the lower levels of recidivism of prisoners participation in the program compared to other prisoners there is potentially significant economic benefits to be gained.

Since the 2012 evaluation The Torch has continued to grow and has demonstrated positive outcomes for Indigenous offenders inside prison and upon their release back into the community.

Anecdotal feedback from many stakeholder groups including program participants continues to indicate that the program is making a tangible difference to the lives of participants, their families and communities including:

- reducing the incidence of re-offending,
- re-connecting participants to culture, families and community,
- connecting participant to education and employment and
- contributing to financial independence.

The number of participants in both the In-Prison (IP) and In-Community (IC) programs has grown and the reach within the prison system has increased. In 2015, the program was running in 12 correctional facilities supporting 156 participants. The In-Community program was supporting 50 participants. In total 206 Indigenous prisoners were participating in both programs. In 2018, this number had increased to 15 correctional facilities with a total of 267 men and women being supported in both In-Prison (188) and In-Community programs (79). Overall, the number of participants in the program has increased by 30%. The number of staff has also increased (from 3.4 EFT positions in 2015 to 4.8 EFT positions in 2018) to support the growing number of participants including increases in the number of Arts Officers, as well as staff to support the administrative, finance, research, curatorial and marketing and promotional functions of the organisation.

Changes to systems and processes have also been implemented to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of program management, delivery, monitoring and reporting.

The Torch is anticipating further growth over the next few years following its recent success in securing further government and philanthropic funding to support the expansion of both the In-Prison and In-Community programs.

To support continued growth and achieve sustainability into the future it is critical that The Torch continues to demonstrate its effectiveness through building a strong evidence base. It is timely, therefore, to review and reflect on The Torch's achievements as well as establish a strong foundation for ongoing evaluation of the contribution The Torch program makes to reducing the over-representation of Indigenous people in the prison system. Recognising this fact, The Torch commissioned EMS Consultants in 2018 to undertake an independent process and impact evaluation of the program to assess the implementation, reach, uptake and impacts of the Program against its aim and objectives and to make suggestions for its continued improvement.

Relevant Evaluation Frameworks

In undertaking the evaluation the consultants acknowledged the existence of both The Torch's own Project Logic as well as the Evaluation Framework of Corrections Victoria. Both of these "frameworks" have been relevant to the design of the evaluation methodology. The Corrections Victoria Evaluation Framework has been included given their significant investment in The Torch. These frameworks are summarised below.

Table 2: The Torch Project Logic

Activities (Process)	Outputs (Process)	Impacts	Outcomes (Impacts)
<p>Liaise with Corrections Victoria Staff</p> <p>Provide arts based activities within Victorian prisons</p> <p>Provide post release support to participants</p> <p>Promote the aims of the program broadly within the sector</p> <p>Conduct art exhibitions</p> <p>Promote the sale of artists' work</p>	<p>Prison-based activities (number of activities, number of participants, characteristics of participants)</p> <p>Post-release activities (number of activities, number of participants, characteristics of participants)</p> <p>Artistic works produced by participants</p> <p>Marketing of the program and art works</p> <p>Sales of artistic works (number and value)</p>	<p>Participants engage with arts based activities</p> <p>Participants develop and improve their artistic skills</p> <p>Participants develop deeper engagement with culture and country</p> <p>Participants develop increased self-confidence and self-identity</p> <p>Participants develop increased understanding of the arts industry and vocational opportunities</p> <p>Participants have a vocational pathway</p> <p>Program/ art works are marketed and community is aware</p> <p>Community members purchase art works</p>	<p>Participants have greater financial security post release</p> <p>Reduced recidivism among program participants</p>

In terms of the Corrections Victoria Evaluation Framework the evaluation design has attempted to address the indicators highlighted in green and yellow below: (green – definitely, yellow – somewhat).

Table 3: Corrections Victoria Evaluation Framework

Short Term		Long Term	
Prisoners' days are filled with meaningful and structured activities	Number of prison incidents decreases and good order is maintained	Improved prisoner outcomes (e.g. receive and comply with parole conditions, security ratings)	The safety of prisoners and prison staff improves
Risk factors associated with reoffending decrease prior to release (knowledge, skills, behaviour and motivations)	Risk factors associated with re-offending decrease post-release (behaviour and conditions)	Reduction in risk factors associated with reoffending is maintained	Reduction in frequency and severity of reoffending post-release
Prisoners are supported to transition from prison into community	Enhanced family/ community connectedness		Community safety increases
Prisoners' motivation and capacity to access community-based service providers post-release increases	Prisoners are more likely to engage with community-based service providers	Prisoners' engagement with community-based service providers is maintained	Savings associated with reduced prison operating cost and improved prisoner outcomes
			Community confidence in the prison system improves
<p>External influences: Attitudes of employers, landlords and the community towards prisoners. Availability of social housing and community-based support services. Other risk factors for future offending (that are outside the influence of Corrections Victoria), participation in other prison programs (not in scope) and the impact of these programs. Factors affecting the Australian economy. Other programs delivered by criminal justice and human services agencies that impact on crime and safety.</p>			

Evaluation Process

The evaluation process has included a mixed method approach to data collection and analysis including a review of program administrative processes, analysis of program data, interviews with In-Prison and In-Community participants, and consultations with a wide range of stakeholders including Torch Board and staff members, Corrections Victoria staff (including prison staff), funding bodies and partners and TAFE Arts Teachers delivering programs in prison settings.

The key questions/ issues addressed were:

Program – Process Evaluation

- Characteristics of Program participants
- Who access the program, who doesn't
- What activities are being provided by the Program in each setting (prison and community), and the extent of participation in these activities
 - Prison-based activities (number of activities, number of participants, characteristics of participants)
 - Post-release activities (number of activities, number of participants, characteristics of participants)
 - Post-release support to participants
- How successfully the Program and art works are promoted and marketed and sales maximized:
 - Promotion and marketing of the program and arts works
 - Art exhibitions (number of activities)
 - Sales of artistic works (number and value)

Program – Impact Evaluation

- The extent to which the Program is supporting the development and strengthening of participant creative skills
- The extent to which the Program provides a forum for cultural exploration, expression and strengthening among participants
- The extent to which the Program increases the understanding of participants about the arts industry and arts opportunities
- The extent to which the Program contributes to self-expression, self-identity and self-confidence, and connection to culture and country
- The extent to which the Program contributes to social and emotional wellbeing and financial stability

Program – Strengths, Limitations, Potential Improvements

- Participant views on the In-Prison and In-Community programs – strengths and limitations
- Stakeholder views on the In-Prison and In-Community programs – strengths and limitations
- How the Program contributes to reductions in recidivism
- How the Program can be improved to increase its reach and impact (prison and/or post release components; promotion and marketing)

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation project has been undertaken in a number of stages.

1. Completion and submission of two Ethics Applications to Corrections Victoria and the Department of Justice and Regulation.
2. Planning and promoting the project to Corrections Victoria to engage their support to facilitate access to In-Prison program participants
3. Working with Torch staff, including ex-program participants employed by The Torch, to develop consultations guides, promotional materials and engage the support and consent of Torch program participants to be involved in the evaluation (participation was voluntary)
4. Interviews with In-Prison program participants conducted by two Indigenous consultants in five prisons – Ravenhall (5), Dame Phyllis Frost (4), Langi Kal Kal (4), Hopkins (6), Kareenga (3)
5. Interviews with In-Community program participants (13) and past program participants (4) by phone and face to face
6. Consultations with a range of other key stakeholders including Aboriginal Wellbeing Officers and Aboriginal Liaison Officers, other Corrections Victoria staff, funding bodies and partners, TAFE Arts Teachers⁸, Torch Board members and Torch staff
7. Entering information from program participant interviews into an on-line survey tool (Survey Monkey) to enable the efficient collating of data
8. Analysing data and developing suggestions for program improvements
9. Report development and presentation to the CEO and Board members

Copies of consent forms, the generic Participant Information Sheets and interview/consultation questions are provided in the appendices to this report.

Stakeholder consultations were undertaken from April to the end of November 2018.

Each In-Community and past-program participant was provided with a \$30 gift card to thank him or her for participating in the evaluation process. In-Prison program participants were informed that at the end of the consultation process the Consultants would provide all In-Prison program participants, regardless of whether they participated in the evaluation process, with fine line brushes. This occurred at the end of October 2018.

Stakeholders consulted are summarised in table 4.

⁸ Five TAFE Arts Teachers delivering Indigenous Arts Programs in Prisons were interviewed. These teachers were delivering programs in Loddon, Middleton, Fulham, Hopkins, Langi Kal Kal, Dame Phyllis Frost, Margoneet, Barwon, Kareenga, Melbourne Remand Centre

Table 4: Stakeholders consulted

No.	Stakeholder Consulted
22	In-Prison Program Participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face interviews
13	Post-Release Program Participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone and face to face interviews
4	Past Program Participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone and face to face interviews
7	The Torch Staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face interviews
5	The Torch Board <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 face to face interview • Board focus group
23	Corrections Staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face interviews, focus groups and meetings with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Naalamba Ganbu and Nerrlinggu Yilam, Rehabilitation and Reintegration Branch ○ Deputy Commissioner Operations and Deputy Commissioner Offender Management ○ Aboriginal Wellbeing Officers and Aboriginal Liaison Officers
3	Funding Bodies and Partners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face interviews with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Gandel Philanthropy ○ City of Port Phillip
5	TAFE Prison Arts Program Teachers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face and phone interviews
82	Total Number of Stakeholders Consulted

Qualifications to the Evaluation

ENGAGING IN-COMMUNITY AND PAST PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

As was the case in the 2012 evaluation of The Torch program, the consultants found it difficult to secure interviews with In-Community and past program participants, despite a well organised and robust process led by Torch staff. This process involved initial phone contact with potential participants by The Torch Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to explain the project and gain their consent to be involved. As a result 20 In-Community and 11 past participants agreed to be part of the evaluation project.

Of the 20 In-Community program participants (2 of whom had participated in the initial evaluation) who gave permission for the consultants to contact them to interview them, 13 were finally contacted and interviewed – a 65% success rate.

Out of 11 past participants who gave permission for the consultants to contact them to arrange an interview only 4 ended up participating - only a 36% success rate.

For the purpose of reporting, and where possible, responses from these two groups have been combined.

CASE STUDIES

In the evaluation design there was an intention to provide three case studies to supplement information gathered through the consultation process. While verbal agreement was secured from three In-Community and past program participants to participate in the case study process, participant circumstances and time constraints eventually made this impossible.

DATA SYSTEMS

For the purpose of this evaluation some of the characteristics of participants that could have been useful in developing an overall participant profile were either not being captured by The Torch or there were restrictions on accessing that information from Corrections Victoria e.g. dates of imprisonment and release. At the time of the evaluation The Torch was embarking on a significant upgrade of its data systems including integration of participant and sales databases. During the evaluation process the consultants worked with the Finance and Operations Manager of The Torch to determine what participant data should be collected to enhance future evaluations and these are being addressed progressively. These include additions/improvements to program enrolment forms and the implementation of new data sharing protocols with Corrections Victoria.

CAPTURING “RECIDIVISM”

The term recidivism originates from the Latin *recidere*, which means to fall back. It is often used interchangeably with others such as repeat offending or reoffending. In the criminological literature it has been variously described as ‘the reversion of an individual to criminal behaviour’ (Maltz 1984: 1), the ‘return of a prisoner to custody’ (SCRGS 2006), the ‘reappearance of a juvenile in court’ (Victorian Department of Human Services 2001) or the, ‘reconviction of a drug court participant’ (Payne 2005). Although the technical elements of each definition may vary, there is one common theme that underpins them – recidivism is generally used for describing repetitious criminal activity, and a recidivist offender is an individual who engages in such activity.⁹

Recidivism as measured by Corrections Victoria refers to re-offending that results in a return to corrective services (either prison or community corrections) with a new

⁹ Payne, J. “Recidivism in Australia – Findings and Future Research, Australian Institute of Criminology, 2007.

correctional sanction within two years of release from prison. Though slightly different, the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2013-2018 includes a headline indicator to "reduce the proportion of Aboriginal people who return to prison within two years of release". "Reducing recidivism" is often cited as an indicator of success in relation to programs such as The Torch but historically has proven difficult to measure.

For the purposes of this evaluation, Corrections Victoria agreed to provide recidivism rates for Torch program participants to allow comparison with recidivism rates to the broader Indigenous prisoner population however, only if individual participants gave express permission for this information to be released to The Torch. Permission was provided by evaluation participants (through the Consent Form) but was not possible to gain for all Torch program participants without the Arts Officers contacting each person individually and obtaining their written permission.

In the case of evaluation participants, a request was made to Corrections Victoria for this information in relation to In-Community and past program participants. Given the total sample size was only 15 and of these 11 had not been out of prison for at least two years it was not possible to provide a meaningful rate of recidivism.

Data available within The Torch data systems is currently limited and, to some extent, the impact of the program on recidivism is still reliant on staff knowledge of participant circumstances. Torch staff were able to provide accurate data on the 2017-18 participants in the In-Community program in relation to "return to prison" and this data has been presented in the report. This is considered a good start to understanding what is needed to update the internal client data systems to allow accurate reporting on recidivism going forward.

Discussions have been held with The Torch staff to assist in determining what data can be gathered from program participants to allow Torch staff to report on re-offending rates going forward. An amendment to program enrolment forms has also been suggested which will require program participants to give permission for Corrections Victoria to use their personal data to provide The Torch with an overall recidivism rate for all Torch program participants. This data would be provided to The Torch as a single overall figure and would not identify individual participant reoffending incidents.

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

This report aims to be true to feedback and views expressed by participants about The Torch program. Initial discussions with The Torch CEO about some of the feedback provided, revealed some issues that need to be taken into account when considering evaluation participant views including:

- Some criticisms/ suggestions for improvement to The Torch In-Prison program were based on participants' overall art program experiences but were issues out of the control of The Torch e.g. provision of art supplies in prisons.
- Some participants specifically gave feedback on the "assessment and selection" processes of artworks for the Confined Exhibition even though the program intention is to include any artwork which participants want to submit. In practice, Arts Officers may select a different work than the one the participant prefers. This can be due to size restrictions and/or quality of work. Choosing works is complex particularly when there are 200 or more in the exhibition. Decisions are always contextualised with the interests of both the individual and the exhibition as a whole taken into account.

These criticisms may indicate there is either a misunderstanding on the part of some participants about the Confined exhibition guidelines and/or the practice of Arts Officers is not always consistent. As a result some participants have formed a view that their work is “judged” before being accepted into the annual Confined Exhibition even though this is not actually what happens.

PROCESS EVALUATION FINDINGS

The Torch Program Participants

As at 30/6/18, there were a total of 267 participants in The Torch programs. These included 188 participants in The Torch In-Prison program (representing approximately one quarter (27.4%) of all Indigenous prisoners in Victoria’s prisons) and 79 participants in the In-Community program.¹⁰

In-Prison program participants were comprised of 164 men (92.6%) and 24 women (7.4%), while In-Community program participants were comprised of 66 men (83.5% and 13 women (16.5%).

Prison Based Activities

The Torch is run in 15 prisons across Victoria. All Arts Officers are Indigenous and attend prisons on average every 3 – 4 weeks. Participants are provided with:

- cultural resources developed and/or sourced by The Torch to enable them to learn about their family, language, country and cultural heritage; and
- conceptual and technical advice and feedback on artistic styles.

In most prisons The Torch Arts Officers work in with TAFE Indigenous Arts Programs which are delivered weekly. These programs are run by TAFE Art Teachers, supply participants with art supplies (managed by each prison) and provide a dedicated arts space. The program offers participants the opportunity to obtain a Certificate II in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Arts.

While there is no formal relationship/ connection between the TAFE Indigenous Arts Program and The Torch In-Prison program, the TAFE teachers and Torch Arts Officers know each other and work together in each prison to schedule times for The Torch Arts Officers to attend the TAFE Indigenous Arts Program. That time is provided to The Torch Arts Officers to work with participants who are interested in being a part of The Torch Program and develop specific cultural artistic skills and participate in the Confined Exhibition.

The Torch Arts Officers work with interested prisoners to sign them up for the program, provides cultural resources, provide advice and feedback on art, assess artwork for the Confined Exhibition and advise participants on pricing, licensing and other arts industry issues.

In between visits the participants can contact The Torch Arts Officers through the Aboriginal Wellbeing Officer.

¹⁰ Final estimates of program participants as at 31/12/18 are 220 In-Prison participants and 80 In-Community participants. (Strategic Plan – 2018-2021).

Community Based Activities

Arts Officers support program participants who have transitioned from the In-Prison program to the In-Community program post-release.

At the time of the evaluation two Arts Officers were supporting In-Community program participants face to face, by phone and through other means. In addition, the CEO was also providing remote support to some participants.

Participants are provided with an art supply kit when they commence to encourage them to continue their art practice. They are provided with support and advice to continue to build their cultural knowledge, confidence and art practice. They are also provided with support to connect to arts industry networks and encouraged to pursue exhibition opportunities. Arts Officers can also support participants to connect into services to help them find accommodation, training and employment opportunities and other services they may need to settle successfully back into community.

Program Achievements

There has been significant growth (approximately 30%) in the IAPC Program since 2015. As at 30/6/18, there were a total of 267 participants in The Torch programs. These included 188 participants in The Torch In-Prison program (representing approximately one quarter (27.4%) of all Indigenous prisoners in Victoria's prisons) and 79 participants in the In-Community program.

Over the same time period the number of participants submitting work to the annual Confined Exhibition has also significantly increased (52%) with the number of artworks displayed increasing by almost a third (31%).

Table 5: Growth of the program 2016-2018

Program Participants	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	Growth %
In-Prison	156	153	188	21%
In Community	50	68	79	58%
Total participants	206	221	267	30%
Confined Exhibition				
Confined Exhibition artworks	147	165	192	31%
Confined Exhibition participants	113	145	172	52%

* Financial year figures provided by The Torch

IN-PRISON PROGRAM COMPONENT

Table 6 depicts prison visits by The Torch Arts Officer in the last 3 years, which overall have increased by 29% from 314 in 2015/16 to 406 in 2017/18. This increase is significant especially given there being no commensurate increase in staffing during this time.

Table 6: Prison Visits by The Torch Arts Officers, 2016 - 2018

Prison	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
Barwon	25	28	35
Dhurringile/ Beechworth	11	16	21
Dame Phyllis Frost	42	79	74
Fulham	41	32	26
Hopkins	36	33	63
Kareenga	0	11	23
Langi Kal Kal	11	17	15
Loddon	34	17	24
Marngoneet	44	10	22
Middleton	21	31	16
Melbourne Remand Centre	12	59	19
Port Phillip	33	46	51
Ravenhall	0	2	12
Other	4	10	5
TOTAL	314	391	406

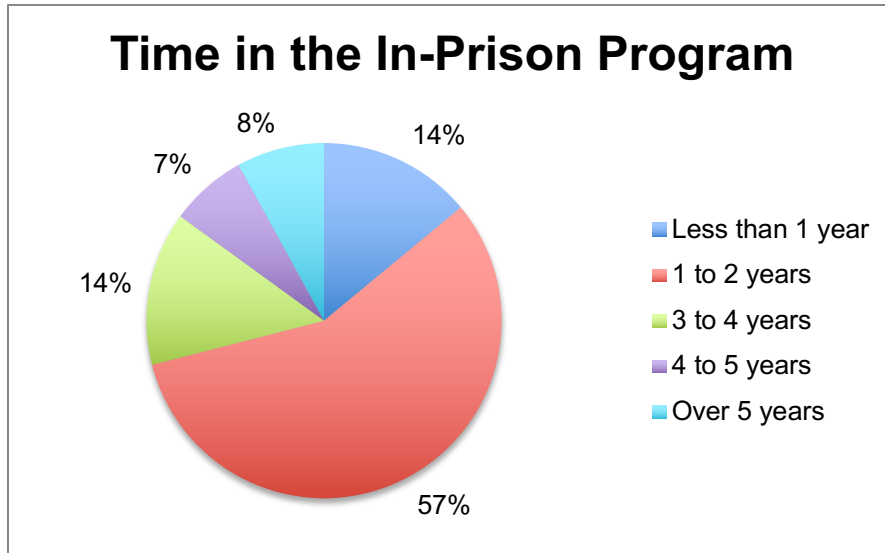
Other includes Correctional Facilities where cell size in 2017-2018 was less than 5

Women currently make up 13% of participants in The Torch In-Prison program with most of them incarcerated in Dame Phyllis Frost. In 2017-18 they received 18% of visits from The Torch Arts Officers.

Table 7: In-Prison participants and prison visits by gender

Gender	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
Number of men visited	143	126	164
Number of visits to male prisons	275	307	332
Number of women visited	13	27	24
Number of visits to women prisons	39	84	74
<i>Total number of participants visited</i>	<i>156</i>	<i>153</i>	<i>188</i>
<i>Total number visits to prison</i>	<i>314</i>	<i>391</i>	<i>406</i>

Typically, In-Prison program participants have been involved in The Torch for between 1-2 years (57%).



IN-COMMUNITY PROGRAM COMPONENT

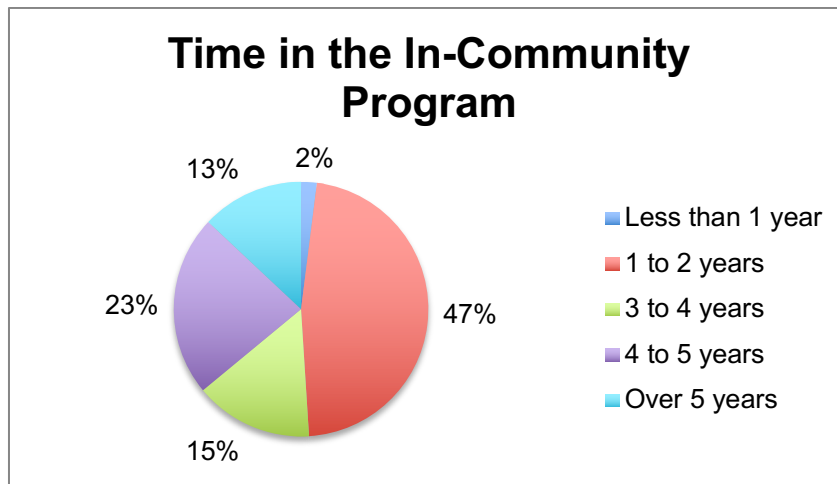
Community contact/visit numbers include physical visits to artists as well as phone calls and emails that are about making art. In reality In-Community program Arts Officers engage more often with each participant through general catch-ups or checking-in chats and/or helping artists link to other community services.

Women made up 18% of In-Community participants in 2017-2018 receiving 17% of the total visits from Arts Officers.

Table 8: In-Community participant visits by gender

Gender	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
Number of men visited	44	59	66
Total number of visits to male participants	115	129	199
Number of women visited	6	9	13
Number of visits to female participants	12	13	40
<i>Total number of participants visited</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>79</i>
<i>Total number of visits to all participants</i>	<i>127</i>	<i>142</i>	<i>239</i>

Typically, In-Community program evaluation participants have been involved in The Torch for between 1-2 years (47%) with a further one in five (23%) having been in the program for 4 to 5 years.



RETURN TO PRISON

To estimate return to prison rates, data was obtained from The Torch’s database for the participants in the In-Community program during 2017-18. Only data for participants who had been in the program for over 12 months was extracted. Using the data available and the knowledge of The Torch staff about participants’ current circumstances, return to prison rates were calculated. A total of 66 participants were in this cohort, 10 of whom were women and 56 men. It was not possible to corroborate this data from Corrections Victoria due to privacy concerns, however there is a high level of confidence from Torch staff and the evaluators that this information accurately reflects the current situation for this cohort of The Torch participants.

Table 9: Return to prison rates, In-Community program participants 2017-18

Time in In-Community Program	Number of participants	Number returning to prison 2017-18	% Returning to jail during 2017/18
1- 2 years	23	3	13%
3-4 years	13	1	8%
4-5 years	15	2	13%
5 years+	15	1	7%
Total	66	7	11 %

These results are very positive with 89% of cohort participants remaining out of prison during this time period with the return to prison rate for men being 9% and women 20%.

Even more encouraging is that when only those participants that had been in The Torch In-Community program for over 2 years are considered (n=43), the percentage who returned to jail in 2017-18 was only 9%.¹¹ Compared to a recidivism rate for Indigenous prisoners of 53.4% and non-Indigenous prisoners of 42.8% (2016-17) this result is impressive.

¹¹ While in both cases (in program over 12 months and in program for over 2 years) the return to prison rate was higher for women the sample sizes are small and caution needs to be taken in interpreting the data.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM COMPONENT

Marketing of Program and Art Works

The Torch promotes and shares artwork created through the program through a range of annual and one off exhibitions and events. Annual exhibitions include Confined, *Dhumbuda Munga: Talking Knowledge* and Deakin University Downtown gallery exhibitions. The Torch is proactive about creating opportunities for artists to engage with the broader art community.

The Torch also:

- Curates individualized promotions and stock room appointments for organisations and private buyers based on enquires through the organisation
- Continually builds its subscriber base and uses Electronic Direct Mail to engage with supporters, past buyers and subscribers to promote key events and products
- Has an increasing social media presence on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook through which artwork, the program and key news can be promoted and followers redirected to their online store
- Produces two calendars annually for sale
- Gives artists the opportunity to license their artworks for a fee which promotes their artwork to a broader audience.

In 2018 The Torch launched its new website which includes an online gallery to promote and sell artworks created through the program. The Torch currently has over 100 items for sale including paintings, emu eggs, scarfs, boomerangs, baskets and necklaces.

Art Exhibitions

The Confined Exhibition is the flagship exhibition of The Torch held annually and for several years a key part of the City of Port Phillip's *Yalukit Willam Ngargee Festival*. The 2018 exhibition held at the Carlisle Street Art Space was the largest Confined exhibition with 192 artworks. This included works from 172 men and women who, at the time, were in or had recently been released from prisons in Victoria.

Each year The Torch contributes a selection of 10-15 artworks to the Koorie Heritage Trust Awards. In 2013, two of The Torch's artists were selected to contribute artwork to National Gallery of Victoria's *Melbourne Now* exhibition.

In 2018 The Torch contributed artwork to St Vincent's Art Gallery's Reconciliation Week exhibition and Norton Rose Fulbright's *Raw* exhibition. The Torch worked with La Trobe Community Health to support one artist in a solo exhibition at Central Square Shopping Centre in Ballarat. The Torch also identifies strategic opportunities for the organisation to contribute artwork to a range community NAIDOC and Reconciliation week exhibitions.

Licensing of Artwork

The Torch licenses artwork on behalf of artists in The Torch's program, with 100% of the usage fee going directly to the artists. Artwork is licensed by a number of government and private organisations for a range of purposes including publications, merchandise and calendars. The economic benefits for participants are presented in table 10.

Table 10: Economic benefits for participants 2015-2018

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Exhibitions	1	4	6	6
Artworks sold	20	84	207	240*
Sales figures	\$16,200	\$120,000	\$225,404	\$256,000*
Artworks licensed	4	20	50	31*
Artwork license fees	\$3,850	\$10,500	\$22,985	\$30,000*

Source: Torch Strategic Plan 2018-2021

* Estimated at end of December 2018

The average sale price per artwork sold was just over \$1000 with artist's "income" derived from sales in the Confined exhibition being almost \$1500.¹²

¹² This figure is an estimate only based on the number of participants submitting work to the exhibition in Confined 9 (172) though it needs to be noted that some artists can have 3-4 works exhibited while others may only have 1.

IMPACT EVALUATION FINDINGS

Profile of Program Participants Involved in the Evaluation Project

Table 11: Evaluation Participants

Number of Evaluation Participants	
In-Prison	22
In-Community	13
Past Participants (no contact with Torch relating to making art in last 12 months)	4
Total	39

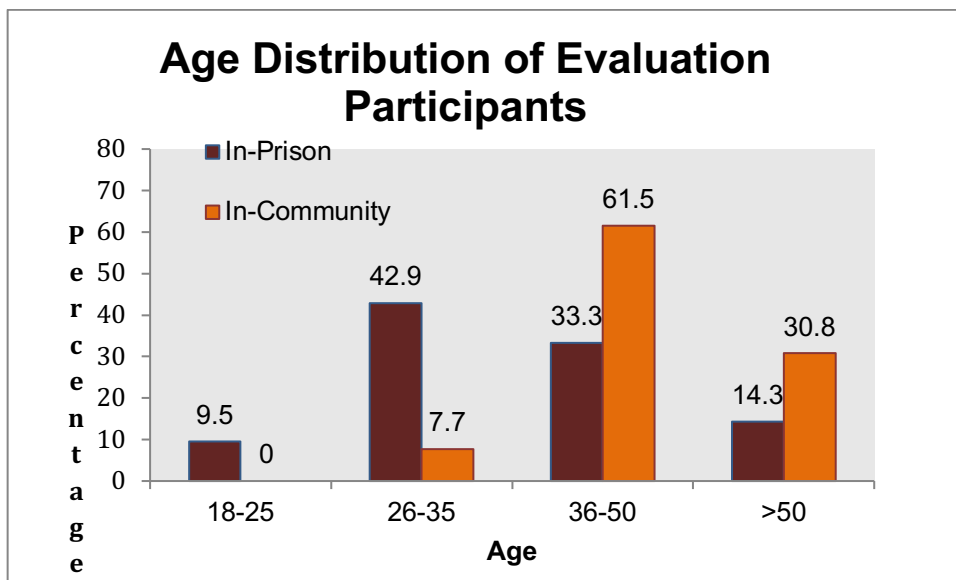
NB: 2 evaluation participants had participated in the previous evaluation in 2012.

Of the thirty-nine evaluation participants, seven were female (18%) – four in the In-Prison and three in the In-Community programs.

Only one person out of the 35 participants in the In-Prison and In-Community programs had not yet submitted their art for the annual Confined exhibition.

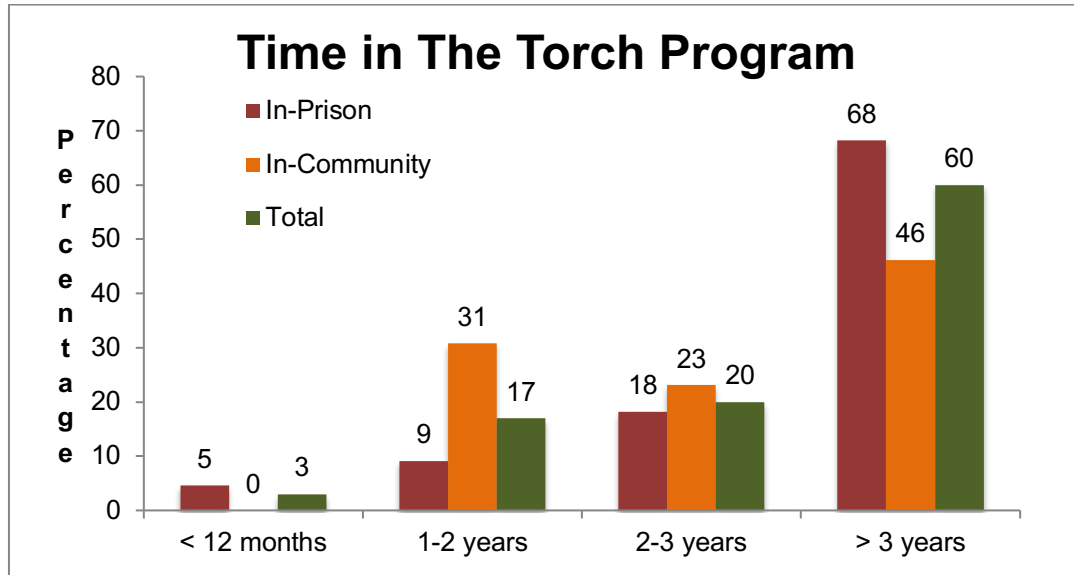
AGE OF EVALUATION PARTICIPANTS

The age of evaluation participants in the In-Prison program was typically 26-35, while those in the In-Community program was typically 36-50 with a significant proportion (31%) aged over 50.



TIME IN THE TORCH PROGRAM

Most of the evaluation participants (60%) had been in the program for over 3 years – 68% for In-Prison participants compared to just under half (46%) for In-Community participants.



HOW EVALUATION PARTICIPANTS FOUND OUT ABOUT THE TORCH

Respondents were asked how they found out about The Torch program (multiple answers were allowed).

In-Prison Evaluation Respondents

Prison staff members are a significant source of information about The Torch Program with 40% of respondents indicating they found out about the program from them with 60% hearing directly about the program from The Torch Arts Officer. A few other sources of information mentioned included:

- Other prisoners
- TAFE Arts Teacher
- Family
- Other prisoners

In-Community Evaluation Respondents

The Torch Arts Officer (In-Prison) is the main source of information for people participating in The Torch's In-Community program (83%). Prison staff were also a significant source of information when prisoners were close to or being released (40%).

WHY EVALUATION PARTICIPANTS GET INVOLVED IN THE TORCH

Reasons for getting involved in The Torch programs provided by evaluation participants included:

- To learn more about Aboriginal art (26%)
- To practice/ improve art skills (21%)
- To be part of cultural activities (21%)
- To help with exhibiting and selling art (17%)
- To be involved with others (16%)

There were noticeable differences in responses from In-Prison and In-Community participants in relation to why they were involved with The Torch. A third (32%) of In-Community participants cited their involvement was about practicing/improving their art skills compared to a quarter (23%) of In-Prison participants. Conversely In-Prison participants were more likely to mention that the reason they were involved was for exhibiting and selling their art – 20% compared to 10% of In-Community participants.

Others comments included:

- Fills the time, helps deal with boredom in prison
- It keeps me calm, helps me with my mental health
- To learn more about culture and history

All other stakeholders were asked what they knew or had observed about the reasons participants get involved in The Torch.

Corrections staff specifically commented that the reasons Indigenous prisoners get involved in the program were to:

- Sell art and make money that can be saved up for when they get return to community
- Connect to other Indigenous prisoners – *“It brings Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners together like a brotherhood”.* (AWO)

In addition, they mentioned that making art was something prisoners could do for their families and that the Courts often look on participation in Arts programs favourably at the time of parole as evidence that prisoners are engaging positively. Portfolios or photos of artwork can be considered in consideration of parole. *“It is a positive way for the Magistrates to connect with prisoners around their art.”* (AWO)

Other stakeholders also noted that Indigenous prisoners are likely to get involved in Arts programs to:

- Join in with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners to learn about and connect to culture
- Exhibit and sell their art to make money.

Participant Experiences in The Torch Programs

EXTENT TO WHICH THE TORCH PROGRAMS MEET PARTICIPANT EXPECTATIONS

The Torch Program has overwhelmingly met participant expectations. All In-Community evaluation participants (100%) indicated the program has met their expectations while almost three quarters (77%) of all evaluation participants currently in the In-Prison program felt the same.

The most commonly cited reasons for participants indicating the program had met their expectations included:

- Opportunities to sell paintings and make money
- Learning about art and culture
- Support provided by The Torch – advice on art, provision of supplies, no judgement, welcoming attitude of Torch staff
- Participating helps to manage negative thoughts and behaviour, building confidence
- Participating helps with improving health and spiritual and emotional wellbeing
- Makes things a little easier in prison

“I only have good things to say about it [The Torch]. My time inside went by so fast because I had something to occupy my mind and keep me focused... I did it because I loved the art and doing the paintings.” (IC)

For those who indicated the program only partially met or did not meet expectations, things mentioned included that they would like to see the Arts Officers more often or that they weren’t getting the support they needed for developing their art. One participant said, *“I want to paint what I am feeling, but we are not encouraged to do that, they only want a certain type of painting.”* Another mentioned the income generated from sales was important to him and others but that he would like to see the Arts Officer more often and would also like help having his paintings taken out of the prison for storage, otherwise *“the prison officers just take it away.”*

WHAT PARTICIPANTS LIKE ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Participants were asked what they liked about the program. Answers from In-Prison and In-Community program evaluation respondents were similar.

Table 12: What evaluation participants like about The Torch program (multiple responses allowed)

What participants like about The Torch	In-Prison %	In-Community %
Talking with, and spending time with the Arts Officer	86	100
Getting involved in cultural activities	95	92
Something interesting/ meaningful to do	95	85
I learned a lot about my culture and art	86	100
I developed/ discovered my art skills	86	100
Helps me relax	100	100
Helps me feel better about myself	95	100
Helps me feel more connected to my culture	90	92
Helps my mental health/ SEWB	86	100
I was able to exhibit / sell my art	90	92

Clearly, involvement in The Torch programs provides multiple benefits for participants, all of which are highly valued.

“I’ve been able to develop my own style of painting and I’ve sold some work. It makes you feel good about yourself. Doing art is therapeutic. I start in the morning and before I realise it the day is over. If I had known about this years ago, I would have started a long time ago and may not have gone to jail. Painting is a lot about the journey.” (IC)

“[It] helps my depression and helps a lot with my mental health, the money for me is just an extra.” (IC)

“Being part of Confined makes you feel happy on the inside. It’s good to see your work in the booklet and then in the exhibition – it’s magic to see.” (IC)

“I feel good inside. I look forward to doing my art and the exhibitions.” (IP)

“Gives me sanity.” (IP)

“When I do my art it’s like a mood stabilizer. It helps me stay focused and I feel more settled. I’d rather do my art than see a Counsellor.” (IP)

“It opens up business opportunities as well, and maybe in the future as well.” (IP)

“It brings to life my culture. Doing art keeps me out of trouble in here. It also gives us exposure for us in jail [as artists] because we can’t just go into a gallery and sell art.” (IP)

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING PART OF CONFINED

Being part of The Torch art exhibitions, particularly Confined, is hugely important for participants. While making money is an important result (mentioned by 77% of evaluation participants), it was the least important reason cited. Other impacts cited more frequently included:

- Building confidence
- Being recognised as an artist
- Feeling pride
- Feeling strong as an Aboriginal person

“I felt wanted, special and unique. When you do art you expect to just like it yourself, when other people like it, it feels great.” (IP)

“When I get the Confined book and I see my mob at the exhibition it makes me feel proud even though I can’t attend. Just knowing they are there makes a big difference. I think it surprises them that I can do art and then sell it.” (IP)

“It made me feel like part of the community.” (IC)

Participant Outcomes

BENEFITS FOR PARTICIPANTS AS A RESULT OF BEING PART OF THE TORCH

The major themes emerging from consultations with evaluation participants in relation to the benefits resulting from involvement in The Torch programs include:

- Improvements in participant social and emotional wellbeing
- Cultural connection
- Development of art skills
- Providing an opportunity for a positive future
- Financial benefits

Comments made by program participants (in order of importance) were:

Benefit	In-Prison	In-Community
Improved SEWB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top of the world • Happy • On-purpose • Belonging • Hope, optimism • Energised • Self-respect • Strong • Psychological release 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confident • Art is part of healing journey • Good for me • Keeps me alive • Proud
Cultural Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culturally connected • Strong identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection to culture and history • Builds connections to mob, family and community
Development of Art Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping/ mentoring younger ones in prison • Encouraged and encouraging • Comfort zones pushed • Helping each other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouragement offered by Kent • Exhibition opportunities • Explore / express stories through art
Belief in a Positive Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking about other things – other than prison – future, positive things • Transfers you to another place • Learn to be patient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get involved with things/ contribute
Financial Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to make money • Developed belief that art could be a financially viable future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to make money

“Staying in touch with Uncle Ray means a lot. He is a good support. Without him I may not be here.” (IC)

“It’s picked up my self-esteem and stopped me being a loner. I want to talk about my art and images and be able to tell people the stories about my art. This helps me realise my path and journey.” (IP)

“Just being able to do art one day a week allows me to connect to other prisoners. The art space is a very safe space where we get to practice our art and culture and share stories. It’s very special.” (IP)

“I’ve gained strength of courage and I look at life differently. I’m not just a number, I am a person. Confined helped me shift my thinking. It helps me to connect to my culture, it’s a big thing and is what I paint about – my culture.” (IC)

“It’s good to feel like you belong, a sense of belonging is a big thing for me. I’ve never felt like I belonged anywhere up until now.” (IC)

Other stakeholders offered similar views in relation to the benefits gained from participating in The Torch Programs. They particularly commented on:

- The importance of connecting or re-connecting to culture
- The pride of both the participants and their families when the participants can both exhibit and sell their work
- The opportunity for participants to think about a future not connected to the justice system
- The benefits to mental health/ SEWB

*“Participants have an opportunity to think about and get more in touch with culture, learn design techniques, animals, totems and styles. This can provide a chance for participants to think more positively about their lives and future.”
(Partner organisation).*

Other stakeholders also identified the importance of participants’ sense of identity being one that is not about their crime, but rather about their culture and story expressed through their art. It allows participants to feel connected to culture and country even if they are “jailed up”.

Similarly, for those participants who may not have had any or much connection to their culture before getting involved, The Torch gives them an opportunity to learn about their culture and the artistic styles of their tribe/ mob, gives them credibility, a voice and makes them feel connected even if they “sit outside the community”.

The process of developing art for exhibitions is also considered important. The need to research, read, and learn from others in order to paint often replaces other more negative behaviour in prison and in community. Participants also begin to think differently about their situation and their future. They can start to plan a future, starting with planning for the next exhibition. For some, success in their painting also gives them confidence to participate in other prison-based programs. It breaks the cycle of thinking that prison is the only future they may have.

Some stakeholders, particularly Corrections staff, spoke of the program providing a safe place from the prison environment which is otherwise a harsh place to be. For some the therapeutic benefits are significant. A lot of prisoners have experienced trauma in their lives and continue to be impacted by depression, anxiety, anger and suicidal thoughts. Participation in the program *“allows them to think about and do things other than think about their trauma and harming themselves”.* (AWO)

“Prison is such a harsh place but when they are in the art room the world doesn’t seem so harsh. It opens up conversation about lots of things, even the future. Prison is not really a place where you can feel like a human being and be respected. Doing art gives them real joy or happiness, though I’m not sure if these are the right words, the feelings might be a lot deeper.” (TAFE Arts Teacher)

In addition, participation can also help break down tensions and help build relationships between prisoners and Corrections staff including Managers. Conversations can focus on the artwork rather than individual behaviour or other prison related issues.

In relation to the In-Community program participants, other stakeholders also mentioned the importance of the art-kit provided after release from prison. The kit is

particularly important to ensure participants can continue their art practice and stay connected to The Torch program which otherwise may not happen because of the cost of continuing their art in the face of competing financial priorities. The support of The Torch staff in both continuing to advise and mentor on art style as well as connecting participants to exhibition and sales opportunities were also seen as invaluable.

IMPROVING RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

The major themes emerging from consultations with evaluation participants in relation to how their involvement in The Torch programs helped improve their relationships with family and community included:

- Being recognised as an artist
- Knowing and connecting to family
- Building relationship skills

Comments made by program participants (in order of importance) were:

	In-Prison	Post-Release (In-Community and past program participants)
Being seen as an artist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Painting for my family/ children • Telling my family my story through my painting • Sending paintings home to family – art is displayed in family homes helping family feel connected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not just a prisoner, seen as an artist by family
Knowing and connecting to family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program (through resources) helps participants to learn about family and mob • Learnt about family – can have conversations with family members about family connections • Send money to families and that helps maintain connection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps participants to have conversations with family members about history and mob • Increases sense of belonging
Building relationship skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn patience • Develop respect for Elders, community and family • Become role models to family members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence to get involved in community • Become more non-judgmental towards other family members

“When I send art home it gives the family a lift and they can see something I’ve done. Mum says to people “my son did this and proudly puts my art on the wall”.” (IP)

“I’m able to show my son I can do this, can sell my work and send money back home to support the family.” (IP)

“I think it helps them [participants] to become a lot closer [to family]. I think their family would be proud of them because of their art works. I think they are able to build better networks into the community.” (IC)

“Painting through stories brings people closer together, it’s about connections, being closer to family. It keeps you in touch with your past and the present. Building the connections is part of healing.” (IC)

“Art is a cultural key that can help reintegrate the prisoners back into community in a positive way and they can then contribute to their community and they can pass on the cultural knowledge, connections and art skills onto their kids.” (AWO)

CHANGES FOR PARTICIPANTS AS A RESULT OF BEING PART OF THE TORCH

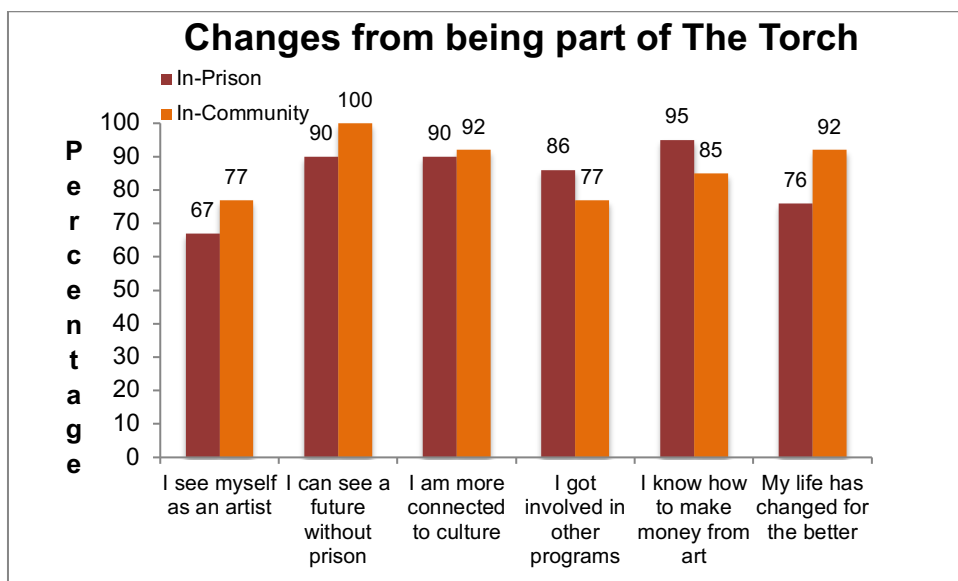
Program evaluation participants were asked about what had changed for them as a result of being part of The Torch programs.

The most frequently cited change was “seeing a future without prison” followed by “being more connected to culture”.

Seeing themselves as an artist was the least cited answer, but the consultants observed that for many evaluation participants art was still seen as something they did rather than part of their identity as a person. Nevertheless, a number who have had success and recognition through exhibitions such as Confined are starting to see themselves differently.

“What is an artist? I see myself as an Elder who shares art. I know I can make money from my art... My life has changed for the better...I use it as a tool for myself and keeps me in perspective and in line. It is like water finds its own level. That is me and my art.” (IP)

“I suppose I see myself as an artist. It’s a strange feeling.” (IC)



ART ON THE OUTSIDE

All In-Prison evaluation participants were keen to continue their art once released from prison.

Overwhelmingly (95%) said they would continue with The Torch. Other sources of support that participants thought they would access included:

Local Aboriginal Co-op	75%
Aboriginal Men's Group	65%
Family and Friends	60%
Aboriginal Arts Organisation	55%
Aboriginal Gathering Place	35%
Healing Service	35%
Koorie Heritage Trust	35%
Other Arts Programs	30%
Creative Victoria	25%
Aboriginal Women's Group	10%

Some indicated they didn't really know how to get in contact with other organisations other than The Torch and indicated they would like Kent (CEO) and Paul (In-Prison Arts Officer) to help with the contact.

Participants in the In-Prison program were also asked how what they have learned from being part of The Torch program will help them with their art on the outside. Participant responses generally reflected three main themes.

The first relates to financial issues including:

- Knowing the business side of things and being able to sell artwork to make money to support themselves and their families
- Understanding how the potential for being financial independent would enable them to stay "off the path to jail"

The second theme relates to how art has facilitated learning around culture, mob and connection to family and community and how to share that with others.

"It will help me teach other people learn about their culture and how to express their emotions." (IP)

Thirdly, participants commented on how engaging in art has helped them manage their stress and stay positive.

"I now know that when I get stressed, if I practice my art, I know how to re-focus and get back on the straight and narrow. Why would I throw away these new skills when I know how to use them." (IP)

The Torch participants in the In-Community program were very positive about how ongoing involvement in the program is helping them to continue to develop their art. Their feedback in the main related to:

- Being more knowledgeable about art styles and techniques
- Developing a habit of regular practice / developing art
- The Torch Arts Officers helping participants address issues in their lives, which gives them the space to practice art
- Developing a passion for continuing to do art and improve as an artist

"I want to always strive to make improvement and be the best I can. I want to stand out as an artist. I want my art to stand out at the exhibition and be noticed. Painting every day helps you change and getting feedback from Ray is very important. It's really positive and makes me feel good." (IC)

REDUCING RECIDIVISM

The majority (92%) of participants in the In-Community program confirmed that being part of the program has helped them stay out of the justice system. Comments provided included:

"It gives me something to think about and plan for when I'm doing my art, it shifts my thinking away from other distractions." (IC)

"It provides me with more opportunity to think about things I can do that links to the arts. I can now see if I apply myself, I can work in this space and make a living." (IC)

"I look forward to painting each day and it keeps me focused and grounded, otherwise I think I'd look for other distractions. I've got a family now and I'm too old to be going in and out of jail. I'm done." (IC)

"It's because of the support that you get from Uncle Ray and Kent, it's a big deal. The guidance they give you to help with your art is really good. The program helps you stay out of prison. If I didn't have it, I'd be back in jail." (IC)

Feedback from other stakeholders, particularly the AWOs/ ALOs also supported the contention that participation in The Torch program keeps people from re-offending. One AWO commented *"it is one of the best programs for Indigenous prisoners we have."*

It was generally felt that if In-Prison program participants continued with the program after they were released from prison and they were able to continue to make money from their art and/or gain employment in other fields they were much more likely not to re-offend. Learning patience and planning while in the In-Prison program were also thought to help participants post-release to work more successfully with Koorie service providers and Koorie organisations were more likely to work with them to help them reintegrate into community because of the positive attitude they had developed.

Other stakeholders indicated that they believed the program was helping to reduce re-offending but acknowledged that the evidence still needs to build to be able to conclude this irrefutably. During the consultations there were many examples given of success for individual participants including staying out of the justice system, gaining success as independent artists (exhibiting and sales), and reintegrating into community including securing accommodation and gaining employment.

"I have seen guys blossom when they get out. There are two or three guys that have stayed out of prison and exhibited in prestigious exhibitions e.g. NGV, Museum Victoria, Shepparton Art Gallery." (TAFE Arts Teacher).

"Long-time serious offenders can change over time but it might take five, six or seven years. Staying connected to The Torch helps. Some men with anger, alcohol and other drug issues are able, over time, to make different decisions, plan, and replace old habits with new ones." (The Torch Staff member).

HOW PARTICIPANTS FELT ABOUT REINTEGRATING INTO COMMUNITY

Three quarters (77%) of In-Community participants also mentioned that through The Torch they had been able to connect into services they needed to reintegrate into the community and build a network with other artists.

Nearly all (84%) also spoke about being better able to connect into community events, feeling more positive about getting a job, and having improved social and emotional and wellbeing. Most importantly, participants (92%) spoke about feeling positive about their future.

However, it was also acknowledged that being released from prison can be very challenging for some offenders as they often have many complex issues they need to deal with and don't always have the time or "head space" to continue with their art.

"In the prison it [the program] has an impact because they get involved in paintings. Though I have seen when they are out it is not having much of an impact because they need more support. They can go off in different directions." (IC)

STRENGTHS OF THE PROGRAM

Strengths of the program identified by evaluation program participants were:

- The cultural resources provided including the books and research undertaken for participants about the art styles of their mob/tribe
- Opportunities to learn about culture and art
- The respect and encouragement given to participants by The Torch staff
- The program being led, designed and delivered by Indigenous staff
- Staff who are supportive, non-judgmental and trustworthy
- Opportunities provided to exhibit (both through Confined and other exhibitions) and sell art
- Opportunity to socialize and connect with others in the program
- Art supplies provided to participants as they commence in the In-Community program
- The support provided to settle people back into community after release

"The support I get [from the Arts Officer]. Getting to do my artwork and working with Uncle Ray Thomas and Kent Morris. They are amazing people. They keep us strong and give me the confidence to keep doing my art. It helps keep me and my family strong. Uncle Ray has had a big impact on me and I'd be lost without his support." (IC)

Other stakeholders thought the strengths of the program were:

- The ability of the CEO to engage others and tell a compelling story about The Torch
- Board members who are well networked and able to attract funding and support for The Torch
- Skilled and passionate staff
- The Arts Officers being experienced and respected artists in their own right
- The one on one support provided to participants to build skills and practice styling
- The Aboriginal Art Policy Model allowing participants to earn money from their art while in prison

- The reputation of The Torch and recent growth in funding support
- Cultural booklets and other resources provided to participants (which also help TAFE Arts Teachers)
- The financial gains for *all* participants from selling their art with no commission fees
- The help provided to participants in prison to connect with each other, reduce negative behaviour and break down barriers between participants and Prison staff
- The Confined Exhibition:
 - providing an opportunity for participants to exhibit art
 - its reputation and ability to increase awareness of the arts industry and the broader community about the over-representation of Indigenous people in the justice system
- The quality of the art being produced and exhibited through Confined (which has increased over the years)
- The Confined Booklet – a source of pride for participants and their families showcasing and acknowledging participants as artists
- Older/ more experienced participants becoming role models and supporters of other participants both the In-Prison and In-Community programs
- The continuity of support for participants as they transition from In-Prison to In-Community programs
- The opportunity for licensing of artworks
- Linking participants into other exhibitions e.g. Deakin, Koorie Heritage Trust

LIMITATIONS OF THE PROGRAM

Limitations of the program identified by evaluation program participants were generally around three main issues including:

- Not having enough access to Arts Officers
- Wanting more opportunities for exhibiting and selling art each year
- The need for clear and constructive feedback on what “art styles” are appropriate for Torch exhibitions.

The issues mentioned by In-Prison evaluation participants were:

- The need for more visits to prisons by the Arts Officers
- The need for more Arts Officers including a female Arts Officer
- Prison visits generally needing to be longer allowing more time to be spent with each prisoner
- More exhibition opportunities each year for In-Prison participants would be valuable
- The process for selection of artworks for Confined needs to be clearer – (some participants indicated they “feel judged and not good enough” even though this is not the program’s intention)

“The program needs some clear criteria so we know what we are working toward assisting us as we prepare our work [for exhibitions].” (IP)

For In-Community evaluation participants, comments were also provided about:

- The need for more staff (Arts Officers)
- The current Torch gallery and office space being too small

Other stakeholders involved in the evaluation felt the current limitations of the program related to:

- **Program Delivery**

- The need for more staff to meet increasing demand and provide an adequate service to all prisons across the State
- In-Prison participants have indicated to AWOs and TAFE Arts Teachers that they would like to see the Arts Officer more times during the year - there seems to be a “rush” in the lead-up time to the Confined exhibition and *“it sometimes feels like Confined is driving the program”*
- More time is needed for one-one-one support for participants for them to work on technique and style more intensely
- “Class size” in most prisons are too large limiting both the time and space for one-on-one private feedback - when “negative” feedback is provided in a group setting it can have a harmful impact on participants
- The need for clear selection criteria or explanation about how art is chosen for exhibitions
- The venue space for the Confined exhibition needs to be larger
- Currently, all exhibitions are held in and around Melbourne with no regional exhibitions offered at this point in time
- If there is no AWO or TAFE Arts program in a prison, The Torch program can be difficult to deliver
- A clearer relationship/ collaboration between The Torch program and the TAFE Arts programs run in prisons would be beneficial to the overall art class experience of participants
- Many In-Prison participants don’t understand the difference between TAFE run Arts Program and The Torch Program and see them as part of the same thing
- Currently there are limits to the type of art that can be done – mostly it is restricted to painting and it would be helpful if additional art forms could be incorporated
- There is a need for clear service / program guidelines in both programs
- The In-Community program outcomes are not clear or measurable, making evaluation difficult
- Recidivism is a difficult indicator to capture in a meaningful way and perhaps isn’t the best measure of success for the program
- Connection to, and ongoing engagement with In-Community participants can be challenging

- **Organisational Capability**

- The Torch premises are becoming too small –dedicated space for artists (post-release), gallery, office and storage space is needed
- The organisation is growing fast and needs clear strategic direction (note: the strategic plan has recently been completed)
- A lot of participants are still reliant on Kent, the CEO for art advice and support
- Connections with Indigenous organisations around the State could be strengthened
- Indigenous representation on the Board is important and potentially a risk in terms of attracting future funding and reputation (Note: the Board is already in the process of recruiting Indigenous Board members)

- **Role of Other Justice Programs and Policies in Supporting The Torch Programs**
 - The majority of TAFE Arts Teachers are non-Indigenous and are “thrown in” - they don’t have the cultural/ art knowledge they need to support work done with prisoners by Torch staff
 - Inconsistent supply of art materials across the prison system means that some participants in The Torch program in some prisons are disadvantaged
 - Improved information sharing with Corrections Victoria so that The Torch can initiate contact with In-Prison participants when they are released rather than relying on participants contacting The Torch would be helpful (Note: this is currently being addressed)
 - Lack of “wrap around” service support for participants post-release – the role of The Torch in relation to other service agencies needs clarification

SUMMARY OF PROGRAM IMPACTS

The evaluation brief included four key indicators to measure the impact of The Torch program against. These included:

1. The extent to which the Program provides a forum for cultural exploration, expression and strengthening among participants
2. The extent to which the Program supports development and strengthening of participant creative skills
3. The extent to which the Program contributes to social and emotional wellbeing and financial stability
4. The extent to which the Program increase the understanding of participants about the arts industry and arts opportunities

For the purpose of assessing how well these indicators are being met each of these is addressed separately. Please note that we have separated the indicators of social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) and financial stability in our analysis.

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE PROGRAM PROVIDES A FORUM FOR CULTURAL EXPLORATION, EXPRESSION AND STRENGTHENING AMONG PARTICIPANTS

The program is clearly effective in providing participants an opportunity and forum for cultural exploration, expression and strengthening.

Evaluation participants from all stakeholders commented positively about the impact the program has on cultural identity and connection. Without a doubt it is a key benefit of the program for participants. The In-Prison program is particularly important in this regard, playing a critical role especially for participants who may not have much knowledge or connection to their culture and country. Many evaluation respondents commented on the fact that participation in the In-Prison program can be a place where their connection to culture starts. It does so, not only through the artistic guidance and advice provided by The Torch Arts Officers, but also through the “space” where art is made. As one stakeholder said:

“It provides a culturally safe environment for brothers and sisters. The don’t need to feel shame, nervous or scared – it is a space where they can just connect.”

Many stakeholders including participants, prison staff and TAFE teachers also told us that the program enables those participants who are connected to culture and are experienced in their art to support and encourage new participants by sharing their stories and cultural knowledge as well as helping with art techniques and styles.

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE PROGRAM SUPPORTS DEVELOPMENT AND STRENGTHENING OF PARTICIPANT CREATIVE SKILLS

All evaluation stakeholder groups provided positive feedback on the capacity of the program and its staff to support the development of participant artistic and creative skills. This was true for both In-Prison and In-Community participants. In-Community participants in particular benefit from one-on-one support from the Arts Officers when they need it and the value of being able to work with such experienced and renowned artists was consistently mentioned.

Having said this, The Torch has a clear focus on developing artistic skills that are true to participants' culture and country. While advice and guidance is provided to everyone in relation to cultural knowledge and artistic technical skills, design and interpretation it appears that participants appear are not encouraged to create art in styles that they do not have sufficient cultural connection and understanding of, nor the ability to convey the intricacies of symbols via the story that accompanies the artwork/s.

During the evaluation process the consultants did receive feedback that not all program participants go down a path of painting in their cultural style. For some participants who are new to art there can be a tendency to "copy" other styles such as dots. For some there is a tendency to paint in styles that they know "sell" in the market and for others it is a matter of painting in styles (often non-traditional) that they simply "like" to paint.

The issue of whether The Torch should accommodate non-authentic cultural painting was raised by some stakeholders with no consensus emerging around this issue during the consultations. There was a general sentiment from respondents that all Indigenous prisoners need to be able to participate in art if it helps their mental health and social and emotional wellbeing and should not be discouraged to paint "for themselves". This is an issue that the consultants believe needs further discussion, and possibly one that could be had within or led by Naalamba Ganbu Nerrlinggu Yilam, the unit in Corrections with carriage of leading the design, implementation and monitoring of Correction Victoria's policies, programs and services aimed at reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal people within the Victorian correctional system.

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE PROGRAM CONTRIBUTES TO THE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING OF PARTICIPANTS

All evaluation participants confirmed that participation in The Torch program improved social and emotional wellbeing.

Program participants in both programs overwhelmingly indicated that the program helps them relax, helps them feel better about themselves and helps with their mental health and social and emotional wellbeing. Some spoke about art taking them to another place where they could forget about being in prison, that it filled the time in a positive way and stopped them thinking negative thoughts. Being able to submit to the Confined exhibition was particularly important for building self-esteem and pride, strengthening relationships with family on the outside and creating hope

about a future other than prison. Having their artwork exhibited at Confined captured in the Confined booklet was also a great source of pride both for participants and their families.

Other stakeholders with direct involvement with program participants also shared stories of how the program impacts participants in a positive way. Prison staff talked about program participation helping to reduce negative behaviour, improving relationships between participants and between prisoners and prison officers, helping participants to learn patience and building participant confidence to get involved in other prison-based programs.

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE PROGRAM INCREASES THE UNDERSTANDING OF PARTICIPANTS ABOUT THE ARTS INDUSTRY AND ARTS OPPORTUNITIES

In-Prison participants build their knowledge of exhibiting, and “what sells” in the market. Being part of the TAFE Arts program also helps build their understanding of the arts industry.

In-Community participants clearly have opportunities post-release that are not available for In-Prison program participants and through the guidance and advice of their Arts Officer can learn about issues such as getting funding to support their work, exhibiting in both Aboriginal and mainstream galleries and getting involved in arts networks.

Having said this, the consultants believe there is more that could be done around this measure particularly in the In-Community program in relation to identifying other artistic and creative courses/programs and connections to other Aboriginal artists to further strengthen skills, self-expression, self-identity and self-confidence and connection to culture and country.

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE PROGRAM CONTRIBUTES TO FINANCIAL STABILITY

Participation in the program has the potential to improve the financial stability of participants but not everyone is able to achieve this outcome.

For those in the In-Prison program the benefits of participating in the Confined exhibition include being able to provide financial support to their partners and family while they remain in prison as well as saving some money to support themselves at the time of release. These are benefits that would not otherwise be the case if Aboriginal prisoners were not participating in The Torch In-Prison program.

However, financial gain is not the same as financial stability and it is not possible to conclude that financial stability is an outcome for all Torch program participants. There are individual examples of where In-Prison participants transition into the In-Community program and continue to develop their art in ways which provide them with a viable income. Likewise, we understand that some In-Prison and some In-Community participants develop their skills and confidence sufficiently to make their way as successful artists without staying connected to The Torch. The Torch may well be the catalyst for the artistic success of some participants, but not all participants will end up making a living and achieving financial stability.

Nevertheless, the Aboriginal Art Policy Model is an important part of the program, providing a positive incentive for program participants in prison and needs to be retained and continue to be monitored and evaluated as a key contributor to participants being able to make a choice about their pathway away from prison.

HOW THE PROGRAM CAN BE IMPROVED

Participant Views

For In-Prison participants the main areas identified for improvement included:

- More visits from Torch Arts Officers
- Longer visits and more one on one advice and feedback
- Clearer direction on how art is selected for the Confined exhibition
- More than one exhibition a year

Other suggestions made included:

- Improved storage space for In-Prison participants' artworks
- Bigger art spaces / bigger building to show art
- Art Teachers (TAFE) need training and better understanding of culture and art styles
- More staff especially a Women's Arts Officer
- In-Community Arts Officers could do work with prisoners prior to release, to give them better support for continuing with The Torch after release
- Some different sessions from visiting artists – not just The Torch Arts Officer

For In-Community and Past Participants the main areas identified for improvement included:

- Extending the program through an increase in the number of Arts Officers in located in different areas in Victoria
- Including a range of other activities in the program including:
 - Opportunities to meet/ network with other Indigenous artists
 - Group-based tutorial days
 - Artist workshops (over several days)
 - Excursions to galleries and other exhibitions
- Increasing connection to Aboriginal spaces e.g. Co-ops – if programs can be run in Co-ops there is greater chance that *“the guys will get access to other supports and get back on track and reintegrate”*

Other suggestions included:

- More exhibitions throughout the year
- More resources – art supplies and cultural books
- Provide men and women who have been through the program with mentoring and coaching so they can become role models and support other participants
- More promotion and marketing the program *“to get the word out about how the program changes lives”*

Other Stakeholder Views

Other stakeholder suggestions for program improvements included:

- More Arts Officers
- Visiting artist program and greater involvement of Elders in In-Prison program
- Improved integration/ linkage with Indigenous programs delivered In-Prison (AJA4 initiatives and other already established programs)
- Better coordination within Corrections Victoria of timing of visits across the range of Indigenous programs that are delivered in prisons
- Clearer communication/ transparency needed about the scope of the In-Community program

- Opportunities for In-Community program participants – workshop activities, exhibitions in galleries in metro and regional Victoria
- Training for Torch staff in trauma-informed practice to support them to work with participants who have experienced trauma and understand the triggers (including “negative feedback”/ criticism). They may also need support and coaching
- Cultural training for TAFE Arts Teachers
- Improved linkages with established programs and networks e.g. post-release programs (e.g. VACRO, VACCA) housing, drug and alcohol, training and employment, men’s behaviour change programs to enable The Torch staff to appropriately advise participants post-release how to link into the supports they need
- Stronger relationships with other arts organisations and Philanthropic organisations supporting the arts
- Improved relationships and networking with other relevant Indigenous organisations
- Establish arrangements/ partnerships with other organisations to purchase artworks e.g. Koorie organisations (ACCOs), Koori Courts, hospitals, Councils, residential and commercial developers.
- Better data capture, recording and reporting
- Develop success measures for the program (review recidivism as a key indicator of success)
- Improved infrastructure (office, gallery, artist workshop space, storage space)
- Indigenous representation on the Board (Note: being addressed).

In summary, feedback from program participants and other stakeholders indicates that the main growth areas where limitations were identified include the need to:

- Increase the number of Arts Officers
- Increase one on one time available for individual participants in the In-Prison program
- Explore regional exhibition opportunities
- Formally document program guidelines
- Finalise Indigenous representation on the Board
- Continue to develop organisational capability in relation to data collection, monitoring and reporting
- Increase formal collaboration with other programs for Indigenous people in the justice system to contribute to better “wrap around” support particularly post-release

SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS

The suggestions for improvement to The Torch detailed below have been made on the understanding that:

- The Board has recently completed a new Strategic Plan for the next three years with a focus on:
 - Extending the reach of both the In-Prison and In-Community programs and building organisational capacity
 - Strategic partnerships

- Establishing the Melbourne Torch Gallery (new premises)
- Expanding operations beyond Victoria
- The Torch is embarking on a recruitment strategy to strengthen program management and increase the number of Arts Officers in prisons (at the time of writing 2 additional Arts Officers had been employed) and the In-Community based program (including the employment of a female Arts Officer to work in Dame Phyllis Frost and Tarrengower prisons and to provide post-release support).
- The In-Community Arts Officer currently working in Gippsland has taken on an extended role to provide support to the In-Prison program at Fulham prison.
- The Torch is planning to work with Corrections Victoria to develop and deliver cultural workshops in prisons beyond painting and to include activities such as basket weaving, object making etc.
- The Torch is in the process of identifying additional exhibition opportunities to compliment the Confined exhibition.
- A body of work is in progress to improve sales and marketing of art produced through the program including on-line purchasing.
- The Torch is working with Corrections Victoria to improve data sharing to enable tracking of participants within the prison system and to facilitate Torch contact participants on release from prison.
- Work is underway within The Torch to enhance and integrate its artwork and customer relationship database and develop an evaluation framework to improve data collection processes and systems and assist in more accurate program monitoring and reporting.
- The Board is actively recruiting to extend its own membership to include Indigenous representation.
- The Torch is actively exploring alternative, larger space for the Confined art show given the continued growth in the number of works exhibited.
- In the next 12 months The Torch will embark on identifying a new location with better office space, gallery and storage facilities.

All of this work places The Torch in a strong position to address issues raised through the evaluation and continue to strengthen program delivery and outcomes. It should also be noted, that the consultations highlighted some issues impacting The Torch programs, which are not the direct responsibility of The Torch, but could be addressed with a broader system response.

Recommendation 1

Program staff, particularly Arts Officers, are provided training in trauma informed practice and the benefit of art in healing trauma

Currently The Torch's Arts Officers are recruited based on their experience in the arts, education and community development experience. The consultants believe

that training for all Arts Officers to increase their capability and skills in relation to working with people who have or are experiencing trauma will be beneficial given that a significant number of Indigenous prisoners have been exposed to high levels of social adversity, trauma and health problems.¹³

Recommendation 2

The In-Prison and In-Community program models are formally documented

Documenting the program model will help guide Arts Officers in the delivery of the program and ensure consistency in how programs are delivered in both the In-Prison and In-Community programs.

Recommendation 3

The Torch develops guidelines/ an information kit for program participants so they are clear about the program scope and what they can expect from their participation.

Feedback through the evaluation indicated that not all participants are clear about aspects of the program including how artwork is selected and how many artworks can be submitted to each exhibition. Guidelines/ an information kit should include:

- *Program purpose and values*
- *Objectives of the program*
- *Program scope*
- *Program delivery – visits, advice, resources, feedback, etc*
- *Relationship to other programs e.g. TAFE Arts Program*
- *Information on Aboriginal art styles and protocols – the do's and don'ts of painting (a snapshot)*
- *The Confined exhibition*
- *The Art Policy and options around how sales proceeds can be used*
- *Looking after your art*

Guidelines will help participants and other stakeholders to understand the purpose of the program, what it delivers (support, advice, feedback, exhibition opportunities) and what participants can expect to achieve through participation.

Recommendation 4

In addition to planned marketing and promotion strategies The Torch consider ways to continue building the program brand and showcasing its successes.

Recommendation 5

The Torch develops a staff wellbeing program to ensure the social and emotional wellbeing and mental health of staff is supported.

Through the evaluation the consultants heard and observed that The Torch staff can experience the “heaviness” of working with clients who have or who are experiencing trauma in their lives. It is well known that professionals working with traumatized clients can experience vicarious trauma, becoming stressed or burned out. This may not only impact their own mental health but also interfere with the quality of their work and interactions with The Torch participants e.g. through experiencing grief, rage, loss of empathy, and feelings of helplessness. Consideration should be given to providing training and support in self-care as well as sourcing supports outside of the

¹³ A study in 2013 by Ogloff, Patterson, Cutajuar, Adams, Thomas and Halacas found that 72% of Indigenous men and 92% of Indigenous women in prison had received a life time diagnosis of mental illness (compared to 45% in the general population). The most prevalent illnesses included major depressive episodes and post-traumatic stress disorder.

organisation to assist with counselling, healing and other wellbeing programs.

CONCLUSION

The Torch Indigenous Arts In Prison and Community program is an important program, having positive impacts on participants and making a real difference to participant lives.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, cultural concepts such as connection to land, culture, spirituality, ancestry and family and community are common protective factors which can serve as sources of resilience and can moderate the impact of stressful circumstances on social and emotional wellbeing.¹⁴

The Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA Phase 4) specifically identifies that Aboriginal prisoners and offenders should be provided opportunity to strengthen cultural identity and increase their connection to family, community and country in order to reduce the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in the justice system. The Victorian Government is investing in a number of programs across the Corrections and Justice system to address incarceration and recidivism rates. The *Indigenous Arts In Prison and Community Program* managed, designed and delivered by The Torch plays a critical role in this space and is beginning to be able to demonstrate very positive outcomes in terms of reducing the chances of returning to jail for some participants, particularly those in the In-Community program.

This evaluation project has built on the evaluation of The Torch programs conducted in 2012 examining quantitative program data and involving an extended consultation process with a wide range of stakeholders.

The results of this evaluation have confirmed the findings of the previous evaluation including that The Torch continues to contribute to:

- improved social and emotional well-being – building self-esteem, confidence and hope in a more positive future
- enabling participants to re/connect to culture and strengthen cultural identity
- some participants being able to pursue a career in art
- raising awareness amongst prison staff and the broader community about Indigenous incarceration and the role that cultural strengthening through art can make a difference and change lives

In addition, it can be concluded that:

- The program is clearly effective in providing participants an opportunity and forum for cultural exploration, expression and strengthening.
- The program is effective in supporting the development and strengthening of participant creative skills.
- The program is clearly effective in improving the social and emotional wellbeing of participants.

¹⁴ Zubrick, S.R., Dudgeon, P., Gee, G., Glaskin, B., Kelly, K., Paradies, Y., Scrine, C. & Walker, R.; *Social Determinants of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social and Emotional Wellbeing*, in Purdie, N., Dudgeon, P., & Walker, R, (eds) 2010, Working Together, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health and Wellbeing Practices and Principles, Department of Health and Ageing, Commonwealth of Australia, Page 81

- The program is effective in increasing the understanding of participants about the arts industry and arts opportunities
- Participation in the program has the potential to improve the financial stability of participants but not everyone is able to achieve this outcome.
- More work is needed to enable The Torch to confidently measure the impact of the IAPC on recidivism rates

All evaluation participants said it was “really important” for this program to continue.

SEWB

“It’s imperative it keeps going. If it didn’t happen, we would all go mental. It gives us something positive to do and think about and keeps us sane and out of trouble.” (IP)

“It builds stronger people. It helps a lot of people inside and out.” (IC)

“It makes a difference to the guys lives. Most of the men are lost and then when they are connected to their culture through art, positive things happen, you build pride and makes you feel good.” (IC)

Cultural strengthening and social connection

“The Torch program creates a safe space for us to gather and do our art and connect to each other and our culture.” (IP)

“It’s very important to continue the program. It gives us a voice. “Inside” is a community of its own. We speak through our art and reinforce our sense of community – it gives us a voice.” (IP)

“Very important for the program to continue, it’s a no brainer. Without The Torch you become disconnected. The program provides opportunities to talk about art and share stories, helping to connect to the outside world and helping to connect back to culture and community.” (IC)

“The program helped me and it will help others just like me. You can’t underestimate the change that comes when you take part in the program. It changes you once you get to interact with cultural knowledge and start to paint your own stories.” (IC)

Economic development

“It’s very important. Without The Torch we wouldn’t be able to sell our paintings.” (IP)

“It has to continue. It’s good to have some money on the side for when we get out.” (IP)

In the time since the last evaluation The Torch has continued to grow and is now facing the next stage of its development with a significant increase in government and philanthropic funding for the next three years. This injection of financial investment reflects the increased recognition and acknowledgement of the program’s contribution to offender outcomes and will allow the organisation to respond effectively to the ongoing growth in program demand.

The IAPC program continues to gain traction and the learnings to date are important, highlighting the need to keep building on and improving the existing program activities and finding new opportunities to develop additional program activities in both the In-Prison and In-Community components. Reviewing and strengthening the way the program impacts are measured is an important piece of work ahead to ensure The Torch can confidently demonstrate that participants can walk out of prison with a stronger cultural identity, strong arts practice and capacity to reform themselves and lead a more positive life.

APPENDICES

1. Sample Participant Information Sheet
2. Sample Consent Form
3. Interview/ Consultation Questions



Evaluation of The Torch Indigenous Arts in Prison and Community Program Participation Information Sheet

Introduction

We are inviting you to take part in this evaluation because you have been involved with The Torch Program. This information sheet tells you about the evaluation so you can decide if you want to be involved.

If, after you have read it (or had it read to you), you have any questions about the project, please talk to one of the members of our research team. Contact details are at the end of this sheet.

1. Who is involved in this research project? Why is it being conducted?

EMS Consultants has been engaged by The Torch to undertake this evaluation. Karen Milward (Yorta Yorta) and Brian Stevens (Gunai) will be undertaking interviews with participants. The Torch Program has three parts.

- The program that is run in Victorian prisons to help Aboriginal prisoners learn more about their language group, culture and country and the Indigenous arts industry.
- Post release support to help participants reintegrate back into the community. It helps them to continue to build their cultural knowledge, confidence and artistic skills.
- The program's promotion and marketing which includes the annual Confined exhibition and other exhibitions. The exhibitions give Program participants a chance to show and sell their artworks and tell their stories.

2. Why have I been invited to take part in the evaluation?

You have been invited to participate because you have been a participant in the program and we think your experience and thoughts about the Program will help us to make sure we continue to improve what we do.

3. What am I expected to do?

We would like you to take part in a one-on-one interview with members of our Research Team. It will take about an hour. We only want to know what you think about the program and its activities.

During the evaluation process you do not need to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable. If you want to, you can choose to stop the interview at any time.

4. What is the Participant Consent Form?

If you want to be part of the evaluation, you will need to complete the **Participant Consent Form**, so you can confirm your interest in taking part. We will give you a signed copy of this form to keep. This form will also be signed by the researcher/s and an independent witness. You will need to give your signed consent form to one of the researchers before you start.

5. Do I have to take part?

Taking part is entirely up to you. If you decide to participate, then change your mind, you may leave and/or withdraw your comments at any time without giving a reason.

Your decision will not affect your relationship with The Torch or Corrections Victoria.

6. What happens to the information I provide?

The EMS Consultants research team will be the only people to see the information you provide. We are committed to protecting your privacy in line with legislation (Privacy and Data Protection Act). We will manage the information you provide in a secure and confidential way.

The researchers will write a report on the evaluation findings for The Torch that will also be provided to Corrections Victoria and other funding bodies that support the work of The Torch. Nothing that identifies you will be included in any reports, presentations or papers from the project.

You can withdraw from being involved in the evaluation at any time before it is completed. If you do, we will delete all of your information and not include it in any way in any reports that are produced.

7. Are there any risks or benefits from participating?

Being part of the evaluation process will not help you directly. However, the information you give will be very helpful in assisting The Torch to improve the program and build the evidence about how programs like The Torch can contribute to improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners.

As a way of thanking everyone who contributes to the project (regardless of whether you personally decided to get involved or not) the researchers have committed to support The Torch to purchase fine line brushes which will be made available to **all current participants** once the evaluation is completed.

8. What else do I need to know?

If you want to take part, please do not tell us anything about illegal activities that have not been finalised in court. If you do, the researchers may have to give that information to government agencies and courts.

The interviewers also have to tell their supervisors (The Torch) if you tell them that you have or you are thinking about hurting yourself or someone else so that relevant services can be informed (including the police if necessary) to support you and others and ensure everyone stays safe.

As part of the research, the researchers will be requesting information about you from Corrections Victoria. This information, which is about your involvement in the justice system since your involvement with The Torch program, will only be provided in a de-identified form back to the researchers. Information specifically about you will not be identifiable in any way.

9. Who should I contact if I have any questions?

One of the members of our research team would be happy to help if you have any questions or concerns relating to participation in this evaluation. It is important you understand what the research involves before make up your mind. We will discuss any questions you may have.

Members of the research team who will be conducting the interviews are:

- 1) Mr Brian Stevens – EMS Consultants on 0448 332 197 or
- 2) Ms. Karen Milward – EMS Consultants on 0407 048 631 or
- 3) Ms. Deb Blaber – EMS Consultants on 0411 403 826

<i>If you have any concerns about the evaluation process, please contact:</i>	<i>If you are not satisfied with the response of the evaluators to your questions or answers, please contact:</i>
Kent Morris CEO The Torch Phone: (03) 9042 1236 Email: ceo@thetorch.org.au In writing: 46 St Kilda Road, St Kilda, VIC, 3182	Department of Justice and Regulation The Secretary Human Research Ethics Committee Phone: (03) 8684 1514 Email: ethics@justice.vic.gov.au In writing: Level 24, 121 Exhibition Street, Melbourne, Victoria, 3000.

Thank you for taking the time to consider taking part in the evaluation of The Torch Program. This information sheet is for you to keep. If you do not wish to participate, please ignore this information sheet.



Consent Form

If you have any questions about this form, please ask one of the EMS Consultants research team members.

I (print name) _____ agree to participate in the evaluation of The Torch Indigenous Arts in Prisons and Community Programs conducted by EMS Consultants on behalf of The Torch.

The researcher and/or my chosen support person has discussed the evaluation study with me. I have read (or had read to me) and kept a copy of the Participant Information Sheet and understand generally what is involved in this research. I have had the chance to ask questions about this research and have received answers that I have understood and am satisfied with. I agree to take part because:

1. I know what I am expected to do and what this involves.
2. The risks and inconvenience of being involved have been explained to me.
3. I am happy that all my questions have been answered fully.
4. I know the project may not help me directly.
5. I understand that I can withdraw from the evaluation process at any time without any questions.
6. I know I don't have to answer questions if I don't want to.
7. I know that I must not talk about any illegal activities that have not yet been finalised in court.
8. I understand that my participation will not affect the relationships I have with The Torch, Corrections Victorian or any service provider I use.
9. I can get a summary of the results of the evaluation study when it is completed.
10. I understand that the researchers will be requesting information about me from Corrections Victoria and I consent for Corrections Victoria to provide that information back to the researchers in a way that will not identify me in anyway.
11. I know my personal information will be kept private.
12. I agree to the publication of results from this evaluation so long as details that might identify me are not included. (An example of the prime publication of this evaluation will be the Evaluation Report which will be available to The Torch strategic partners and anticipated to be available on The Torch website. Information on individual participants will not be identified in the publicly available report.)
13. I am satisfied with the explanation of the evaluation study as it affects me and my consent is freely given.

Signed by the participant: _____ Date: _____

Signed by an independent witness: _____ Date: _____

(Print name of independent witness in full) _____

Address of independent witness (*Professional or Home*): _____

Signed by the researcher: _____ Date: _____

If you have any questions about this research please contact Deb Blaber, Principal Researcher, EMS Consultants, PO Box 15, Hampton, Vic, 3188: Phone 0411 403826. This research is being monitored by the Department of Justice and Regulation Human Research Ethics Committee. Any ethical concerns about the research can be referred to the Secretary, Department of Justice and Regulation Human Research Ethics Committee, Level 24, 121 Exhibition Street, Melbourne Vic 3000. Tel: 8684 1514. [A signed and witnessed **copy must** be given to the participant.]

Questions used in Interviews and Consultations

1. TORCH PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Questions	Stakeholders
What sort of art are you making now?	In-Prison program participants In-Community program participants Past Participants
What other cultural activities are you involved in?	In-Prison program participants In-Community program participants Past Participants
Where do you work on your art? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prison Art Room • In your own cell • Common area in prison • Not doing any art at the moment 	In-Prison program participants
Where do you work on your art? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At home • Community space / ACCO • Other (specify)..... • Not doing any art at the moment 	In-Community program participants Past Participants
When did you start making art?	In-Prison program participants In-Community program participants Past Participants
How did you find out about The Torch? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Torch Arts Officer came to the prison and told me about it • Referred from other agency/ program • Someone told me about it • Prison staff told me about it • I participated in the program last time I was in prison • Other 	In-Prison program participants In-Community program participants Past Participants

Questions	Stakeholders
<p>Why did you get involved in the program?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People I knew were involved • To be part of cultural activities • To practice/ improve my art skills • To learn more about Aboriginal art practice & styles • To help me exhibit and sell my art • Other 	<p>In-Prison program participants</p> <p>In-Community program participants</p> <p>Past Participants</p>
<p>How long have you been involved in the program?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than 12 months • Between one and two years • Between two and three years • More than three years 	<p>In-Prison program participants</p> <p>In-Community program participants</p>
<p>How long were you involved in the program?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than 12 months • Between one and two years • Between two and three years • More than three years 	<p>Past Participants</p>
<p>Has the program met your expectations?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • Partly • Didn't really have any expectations <p>In what ways?/ Why not?</p>	<p>In-Prison program participants</p> <p>In-Community program participants</p> <p>Past Participants</p>
<p>What do you like about the program?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The talking with/ spending time with the Arts Officer • Getting involved in a cultural activity • Something interesting / meaningful to do • I learned a lot about my culture and art from my mob • I developed/ discovered by art skills • Helps me relax • Helps me feel better about myself • Helps me feel more connected to my culture • Helps my mental health/ SEWB • I was able to exhibit/ sell my art • I can now make money from doing my art • Other, please specify: 	<p>In-Prison program participants</p> <p>In-Community program participants</p> <p>Past Participants</p>

Questions	Stakeholders
<p>Have you exhibited your art through The Torch program (e.g. the annual Confined exhibition or other exhibitions)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • Not Yet <p>If yes, what did it mean to you to be able to be part of the exhibition/s?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Felt there was more meaning to my life • Built my confidence • I felt recognised as an artist • I felt proud of myself • I felt strong as an Aboriginal person • I made some money • Other 	<p>In-Prison program participants</p> <p>In-Community program participants</p> <p>Past Participants</p>
<p>What has been most valuable to you? (e.g. what have you most gained from being involved?)</p>	<p>In-Prison program participants</p> <p>In-Community program participants</p> <p>Past Participants</p>
<p>Can you tell me what, if any, effect The Torch has had on you?</p>	<p>In-Prison program participants</p> <p>In-Community program participants</p> <p>Past Participants</p>
<p>How does being involved in the program help people improve their relationships with their family and/or community?</p>	<p>In-Prison program participants</p> <p>In-Community program participants</p> <p>Past Participants</p>
<p>Do you think it's had an impact on other prisoners? If yes, in what ways?</p>	<p>In-Prison program participants</p> <p>In-Community program participants</p> <p>Past Participants</p>

Questions	Stakeholders
<p>Do you think you'll continue to work on art when you're released?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • Not sure <p><i>If yes, Where do you think you could get support to continue your art once you're out?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue with The Torch post-release • Local Co-op • Gathering Place • Healing Service • Aboriginal Arts Organisation • Creative Victoria • Other Arts Programs • Koorie Heritage Trust • Aboriginal Men's Group • Aboriginal Women's Group • Family and friends • Other <p><i>If no or not sure, Why do you feel that way?</i></p>	<p>In-Prison program participants</p>
<p>How is the program influencing your development as an artist?</p>	<p>In-Community program participants</p>
<p>Are you still making art?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No <p><i>If yes, what are you doing right now?</i> <i>If no, why not?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can't afford it (materials too expensive) • Have other priorities right now • No longer interested • Other 	<p>Past Participants</p>
<p>Why did you stop being involved in The Torch Program?</p> <p>No longer interested Found it hard to access Arts Officers The level of support offered was not enough Did not connect well with Arts Officer Linked into other arts programs/ networks which meet my needs Other things in life got in the way Fell back into old ways Other</p>	<p>Past Participants</p>

Questions	Stakeholders
How has the program influenced you as an artist?	Past participants
How do you think the things you've learned about working on your art, exhibiting, and selling your art will help you when you get out?	In-Prison program participants
How are the things you've learned about making, exhibiting, and selling your art helped you since you left prison?	In-Community program participants Past participants
With The Torch's support, have you made other community links, or tapped into other programs, exhibitions or opportunities?	Past participants
What has changed for you as a result of being part of The Torch Program? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I see myself as an artist • I can see a future that doesn't involve prison • I feel more connected to my culture • I got involved in other programs in prison that helped me • I can make money from my art • I feel my life has changed for the better • Other 	In-Prison program participants
Has continuing your art since prison helped you to stay out of the justice system? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No How/ why not?	In-Community program participants Past participants
In what ways has being part of The Torch program helped you reintegrate back into community? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I was able to connect into services needed to help settle back in • My relationships with family/ community improved/ are positive • I kept focused on something positive rather than going backwards • I had greater confidence/ self-esteem • I feel better connected to my culture and stronger in identity • It helped provide me with a source of income from sale of artwork • Helped me to build a network with other artist • Helped me get involved in relevant community events 	In-Community program participants Past participants

Questions	Stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I linked into training relevant to my art/ work/ financial goals • I felt motivated and confident about getting a job • I feel positive about my future • Helped with my Social and Emotional Wellbeing • Other 	
<p>What has changed for you as a result of being part of The Torch Program?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I see myself as an artist • I can see a future that doesn't involve prison • I feel more connected to my culture • I got involved in other programs in prison that helped me • I can make money from my art • I feel my life has changed for the better • Other 	<p>In-Community program participants</p> <p>Past participants</p>
<p>What are the best things about The Torch program?</p>	<p>In-Prison program participants</p> <p>In-Community program participants</p> <p>Past participants</p>
<p>What doesn't work so well in The Torch program?</p>	<p>In-Prison program participants</p> <p>In-Community program participants</p> <p>Past participants</p>
<p>How could The Torch program be improved?</p>	<p>In-Prison program participants</p> <p>In-Community program participants</p>
<p>How important is it for the program to continue?</p>	<p>In-Prison program participants</p> <p>In-Community program participants</p> <p>Past participants</p>

2. OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Questions	Stakeholders
How are you involved with The Torch?	Funders/ partners Board Members Torch Staff AWOs/ ALOs TAFE Arts Teachers
How long have you been involved?	Funders/ partners Board Members Torch Staff AWOs/ ALOs TAFE Arts Teachers
Why did you decide to get involved?	Funders/ partners Board Members Torch Staff AWOs/ ALOs TAFE Arts Teachers
How have you been involved in promoting and supporting the Program in the prison/s you work in?	AWOs/ ALOs TAFE Arts Teachers
What attracts prisoners to the program?	AWOs/ ALOs TAFE Arts Teachers
Why do some prisoners choose not to get involved in the program?	AWOs/ ALOs
What benefits does the program provide to participants: a) while they are in prison b) after they are released from prison	Funders/ partners Board Members Torch Staff AWOs/ ALOs

Questions	Stakeholders
What does the program offer prisoners that they otherwise would not experience during their stay in prison?	Funders (Corrections) AWOs/ ALOs TAFE Arts Teachers
What are the differences you see in Aboriginal prisoners who engage in the Program compared to those who don't?	AWOs/ALOs
What outcomes have you seen for participants in the program?	Funders/ partners Board Members Torch Staff AWOs/ALOs
Do you think the program has any impact on rates of recidivism/ re-offending for Aboriginal prisoners?	AWOs/ALOs
Why is this program important? To who?	Funders/ partners Board Members Torch Staff
What have you learned from working with Aboriginal prisoners engaged in the Program?	AWOs/ ALOs TAFE Arts Teachers
How would you rate your relationship with The Torch program staff?	TAFE Arts Teachers
What do you see as the strengths of The Torch program?	Funders/ partners Board Members Torch Staff
What are its limitations?	Funders/ partners Board Members Torch Staff AWOs/ ALOs TAFE Arts Teachers

Questions	Stakeholders
<p>Do you have suggestions or ideas about how The Torch program could be improved?</p>	<p>Funders/ partners Board Members Torch Staff AWOs/ ALOs TAFE Arts Teachers</p>
<p>How important is it for the program to continue?</p>	<p>Funders/ partners Board Members Torch Staff AWOs/ ALOs TAFE Arts Teachers</p>

REPORT TO
JUSTICE HEALTH
11 DECEMBER 2019

EVALUATION OF ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG INTERVENTIONS FOR MEDIUM AND HIGH RISK OFFENDERS



KICKSTART CRIMINOGENIC ALCOHOL AND
OTHER DRUGS PROGRAM
FINAL REPORT V3 - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY





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This evaluation of Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) Interventions for medium and high risk offenders has utilised a range of data collection methods which drew heavily on data provided by AOD service providers as well as consultations with AOD service providers, staff from Community Correctional Services, Corrections Victoria, Justice Health and the Department of Health and Human Services. Their time and active participation in this evaluation is greatly appreciated.

We also extend our appreciation to the Modelling, Analysis and Statistics team in Corrections Victoria, as well as the data teams from Caraniche and the Australian Community Support Organisation, for their efforts in compiling an extensive data set for this evaluation.



ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Meaning
ACSO	Australian Community Support Organisation
AOD	Alcohol and Other Drugs
CCO	Community Correction Order
CCO (IMP)	Community Correction Order (Imprisonment)
CCS	Community Correctional Services
COATS	Community Offender Assessment and Treatment Service
CV	Corrections Victoria
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services
DJCS	Department of Justice and Community Safety
ECADS	Eastern Consortium of Alcohol and Drug Services
IP	Individual Program
JH	Justice Health
LSI:SV	Level of Service Inventory: Short Version
LS/RNR	Level of Service – Risk Needs Responsivity
RAPIDS	Responsive Assessment Planning Intervention Diversion Service
SECADA	South Eastern Consortium Alcohol and Drug Agencies



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The KickStart program consists of a suite of interventions, designed to be delivered primarily in a group setting, for offenders with an Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) treatment condition on a community-based order (including parole) who are assessed as being at medium or high risk of reoffending. The program is part of a broader reform known as the Forensic AOD Treatment Service Delivery Model, including collaborative practice between agencies delivering forensic treatment services and justice agencies managing and supervising forensic clients.

The KickStart program commenced as a trial in June 2017 for a period of two years. The implementation was phased, with the more intensive 42-hour version of the program implemented in the first year and a 24-hour version in the second year. Each group program was also accompanied by an individual version of the program comprising 15 and eight hours of program delivery respectively.

Summary of findings related to implementation

Overall, the evaluation found that the implementation of the trial has been successful. The program has been implemented in accordance with its intended design and has produced positive outcomes for the forensic AOD service system as a whole as well as positive outcomes for individual participants. This represents a significant achievement given the scale of business and cultural change that has been required to implement the program as part of the Forensic AOD Treatment Service Delivery Model successfully.

The KickStart program represents the first time a group-based criminogenic AOD treatment has been delivered to offenders in the community. Other forensic AOD interventions such as counselling are generally individual. KickStart also differs from other existing forensic AOD treatment interventions as it includes an induction session for treatment providers to assess the individual's suitability to participate in a group program. As such, the delivery of KickStart has required significant changes to the referral, assessment and treatment pathways for forensic clients. This has been enabled by significant collaborative practice between key stakeholders including the Australian Community Support Organisation (ACSO), Community Correctional Services (CCS) and KickStart providers. Over the trial period, these new processes have become embedded in the practices of the different organisations involved in delivering the program.

Both the qualitative and quantitative data indicate that the program has been able to deliver its intended benefits. There is evidence to suggest that the program is able to engage with offenders who are at higher risk of reoffending, including those who are on Community Correction Orders (CCOs) that are combined with a term of imprisonment. The group model of the program has been consistently cited by different stakeholders as a factor that has increased engagement with offenders. The group model fosters a sense of belonging and community with other group members, which in

turn makes offenders feel accountable to each other for their actions. They are able to learn from the experiences of others, and facilitators are able to draw on these experiences as learning points.

The effectiveness of the implementation has been supported by a strong, tiered system of governance. This governance included inter-agency executive leadership and clinical experts at the broad strategic level, and also brought together regional management staff from DHHS and DJCS in new and innovative ways. At the area level, there were operational KickStart working groups with representatives from all the agencies involved which ensured that implementation issues were monitored closely and resolved promptly. Where necessary, issues were also escalated for resolution by the senior leadership in a timely manner.

Another key factor in the implementation has been the proactive engagement strategy that accompanied the rollout of the program. Stakeholders indicated that initiatives such as road shows and presentations about the program were significant in raising awareness of, and interest in, the program. These were supported by more frequent communications between agencies at a local level, which continued to build CCS case managers' understanding of and support for the program. The communication of early achievements of the program was highly important and led to greater buy-in and willingness to support the program.

The implementation has benefitted from the use of identified staff members to act as champions of the program on the ground. In particular, Managers of Court Practice and AOD portfolio holders were identified as crucial in conveying information from the working groups to the broader CCS workforce. As the trial progressed and there were more examples of successful outcomes for offenders from the program, other case managers championed the program among their colleagues. Importantly, the achievements of the implementation have helped facilitate a significant cultural shift among service providers and CCS case managers. Any early reservations about the group model at the outset of the trial and at the interim evaluation were replaced by strong support for the program by the final evaluation.

The implementation of KickStart has also strengthened the building of inter-sectoral relationships between the AOD service and CCS sectors, supporting the formal release of the Collaborative Practice Framework midway through the trial. Through adherence to the KickStart operational guidelines and the new processes related to referral, induction, and follow-up processes throughout the program, stakeholders indicated that they now have an increased mutual understanding of the work they do and an improved level of trust. This has resulted in more consistent messages to offenders from both CCS and service providers and responsive case management of offenders where issues of non-compliance or non-attendance at the program are followed up more quickly. There has also been inter-sectoral capacity building, where CCS case managers have a greater understanding of how to respond to challenging offender behaviours in relation to AOD use and program participation.

The trial was valuable in identifying lessons to further strengthen the delivery of the program. A relatively high workforce turnover within ACSO and some CCS locations impacted the pace and continuity of sharing acquired experience, with new staff having to get up to speed with the processes that were put in place for the trial. This resulted in periods where the referrals to KickStart inductions slowed and programs commenced with lower than intended numbers of offenders. On occasion, staff turnover in CCS meant there was also no dedicated case manager allocated to the offender who would be able to follow up on any KickStart-related issues. This was mitigated to an extent by the AOD portfolio holder coordinating contact from service providers, but was not as effective as where there was close and ongoing contact between service provider clinicians and CCS case managers in managing offenders.

The second phase of the program implemented a version of the program aimed at medium risk offenders. However, the proportion of medium risk offenders was far lower than expected and the proportion of high-risk offenders was greater. The resultant difficulties in filling places for these group programs led to programs being delayed and having to be delivered concurrently towards the end of the trial period. In particular, clinicians indicated that they found it difficult to manage demand and workforce capacity to effectively deliver concurrent programs, along with the other activities that accompany the delivery of KickStart. Particularly in light of workforce limitations, there were capacity issues for service providers to cope effectively with periods of higher than usual demand.

While these challenges were addressed and managed effectively throughout the trial, workforce-related issues are likely to reoccur in the future and need to be factored into the ongoing planning and delivery of KickStart. The program model should be strengthened to mitigate the impacts of these issues. The positive message at the end of the trial was that stakeholders across the different organisations (CCS, ACSO and KickStart service providers) also believed that these processes were now embedded and were confident of being better placed to deliver KickStart as part of business-as-usual.

Summary of findings related to outcomes

The overall evidence from the trial indicates that offenders who participated in KickStart had positive outcomes, particularly in terms of their individual wellbeing outcomes. There was some evidence of positive justice-related outcomes, although these are fairly preliminary due to the large proportion of KickStart offenders whose orders have not yet been completed.

Among the qualitative feedback, CCS and AOD treatment providers reported on positive offender outcomes such as a deeper understanding of their offending and knowledge of strategies to prevent offending in the future. Other positive outcomes included improved social connections with others, including the confidence to share their stories and experiences. For some offenders, case managers indicated that they were more open to discussing issues that may be affecting them.

The qualitative and quantitative data both indicate that successful completion of KickStart is likely to predict successful completion of the order, with those who complete KickStart approximately three and a half times more likely to complete their order compared with those who do not complete KickStart. Conversely, offenders who do not complete KickStart are also more likely to be unsuccessful in completing their order, with unsuccessful discharges approximately two and a half times greater than those who complete the program. This indicates that there has been a positive impact on case management among offenders who participated in KickStart, with offenders who do not attend the program being followed up promptly with appropriate disciplinary actions taken for their non-compliance and non-attendance.

The commencement and completion data also demonstrate the capacity of the KickStart program to engage effectively with and produce good outcomes for offenders who are at medium and high risk of reoffending. These achievements are relatively consistent between offenders on CCOs and CCO (Imprisonment) orders (CCO (Imp)), which indicates that the program is able to meet the needs of more complex offenders who are on combined orders.

The average commencement rates for the 42 and 24-hour group versions of KickStart were 74 and 75 per cent respectively. Of those who commenced the programs, 60 per cent completed the 42-hour group program and 72 per cent completed the 24-hour group program. These commencement and completion rates are better than those for Complex Counselling (25 per cent completion rate in 2015-16), which is currently the most commonly provided intervention provided for the target cohort. This is despite KickStart being a more intensive intervention than Complex Counselling, which speaks to better engagement and better retention than Complex Counselling. A cost-efficiency analysis of the KickStart program also showed that, compared to Complex Counselling, the KickStart program is more efficient as it generates a higher number of successful outcomes for the same amount of funding¹.

The psychometric assessment data analysed indicate that participants who manage to successfully complete the program demonstrate statistically significant improvements in emotional regulation and mental health, improvements in quality of life and reduced criminal thinking traits. There was a small to moderate effect sizes for these outcomes.

As an overall assessment of the trial, the introduction of the KickStart program is considered widely to have had a positive outcome for the Forensic AOD Treatment Service Delivery Model, now providing options for more intensive interventions for offenders that are focused on the relationship between their substance use and offending behaviour.

¹ ACIL Allen Consulting (2019). *Demand and cost modelling of future KickStart delivery*. Report prepared for Justice Health, Department of Justice and Community Safety.

Summary of recommendations

The findings and lessons from the trial are discussed further in the report and have led to the following specific recommendations regarding the KickStart program.

- Recommendation 1: Expand the KickStart program in the trial locations and into new locations, with the scale of the expansion subject to forecast demand and workforce constraints.

The evaluation findings indicate that the program is valuable and meets the needs of the target cohort of offenders. It is therefore recommended that, subject to forecast demand and workforce constraints, that the program be rolled out to other areas of the state and the number of programs be increased where needed.

- Recommendation 2: Strengthen current governance and communication processes to
 - (a) safeguard against ongoing challenges such as workforce turnover and capacity
 - (b) ensure effective implementation in expansion sites.

The governance and communication processes work well currently to respond to challenges of implementation and operation of the program. They should be sustained and strengthened to proactively safeguard against known challenges, such as staff turnover. This can be done by strengthening onboarding processes or documenting the policies and processes related to KickStart, so that new staff are provided with information about KickStart. The governance and communication processes will also be required for effective monitoring of ongoing adherence to policies and procedures as well as expansion of the program.

- Recommendation 3: Conduct an audit of case files for which the referral process does not appear to follow the operational guidelines and review the model to improve future adherence.

While there was generally strong adherence to the service delivery model and operational guidelines, there were a small proportion of cases where the referral processes appeared to deviate from these guidelines. A targeted audit of these cases should illuminate issues in the operational guidelines that require further clarity, or additional processes that may need to be instituted to prevent such deviations in the future.

- Recommendation 4: Consider holding treatment provider induction days on site at CCS locations.

Stakeholders, particularly CCS case managers, reported that ACSO assessments that are held on-site tend to have better engagement and attendance among offenders. This is because they can attend assessments at the same time as their supervision appointments. Further, on-site assessments mean that offenders are assessed in an environment that is familiar and accessible. There may be potential to increase engagement, particularly at the induction stage, if inductions are held on site at CCS locations.

- Recommendation 5: Explore the feasibility of a follow-up or 'step-down' program.

KickStart is typically delivered early in the offender's order, which means that there is intensive support provided to the offender at the start of the order. However, once the program is completed, there is no further AOD-related support provided as part of the program, even when there is a relatively long period of the order left. Stakeholders indicated that there was a need for, and supported the development of, options for a follow-up or 'step-down' program. This could be completed as a voluntary program. Leveraging the relationships developed as part of the KickStart group may be one way of facilitating this.

- Recommendation 6: Explore ways to improve the uptake of clinical supervision, whether through a change to the mode of delivery, or other adjustments.

There was some evidence to suggest that clinical supervision was useful, but uptake was limited due to a number of factors. Different models of clinical supervision and/or the use of other technologies to facilitate participation may help to increase participation in clinical supervision.

- Recommendation 7: Strengthen data collection for the KickStart program in order to improve its ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

The data available to the evaluation lacked detail around the inductions process, and there was little comparable data with which to compare outcomes from the KickStart program to other interventions.

Data collection for the KickStart program should include data on inductions in the future, and other similar programs in the forensic AOD service delivery sector should also have their commencement and completion rates monitored, at a minimum, so that the effectiveness of programs at engaging offenders can be compared with each other.