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# Research in Practice

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## Policing substance abuse in Indigenous communities

Report from a workshop held in  
Mildura, Victoria, 5–6 August 2008

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## Acronyms

<b>ACLO</b>	Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers
<b>AIC</b>	Australian Institute of Criminology
<b>AJA2</b>	Aboriginal Justice Agreement
<b>APLO</b>	Aboriginal Police Liaison Officer
<b>BOCSAR</b>	Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research
<b>CLO</b>	Community Liaison Officer
<b>DAT</b>	Drug action teams
<b>LAC</b>	Local Area Command
<b>LACACC</b>	Local Area Command Aboriginal Consultative Committee
<b>NATSIHS</b>	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey
<b>NDLERF</b>	National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund
<b>NDSHS</b>	National Drug Strategy Household Survey
<b>NSWPF</b>	New South Wales Police Force
<b>OPI</b>	Office of Police Integrity
<b>PCYC</b>	Police Citizens Youth Club
<b>VSM</b>	Volatile substance misuse
<b>YLO</b>	Youth Liaison Officer

## Executive summary

On 5 and 6 August 2008, staff from the New South Wales Police Force (NSWPF) and Victoria Police attended a workshop in Mildura, Victoria to discuss the policing of substance abuse in Indigenous communities. The workshop was funded by these police organisations and the National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund (NDLERF). It was conducted in accordance with a good practice framework developed through NDLERF research.

The workshop provided an opportunity to disseminate findings from NDLERF research to an audience of people involved in implementing and managing the policing response to substance abuse in Indigenous communities. These personnel were able to share experiences, build understanding of the issues and contribute to discussion around development of responses.

Staff from the NSWPF and Victoria Police presented environmental scans from their respective jurisdictions. The NSWPF presentation highlighted some differences in substance abuse between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. While cannabis is the most commonly used illicit substance for both populations, it makes up a higher proportion of detections for Indigenous offenders. Although there appears to be a slight increase in cannabis use among Indigenous people, at the same time there is a declining rate of use in the general community. The Victoria Police presentation noted that, while alcohol continues to be the major substance abuse problem, illicit substances are of increasing concern. Police make widespread use of diversion to health service providers and Victoria is moving to greater recognition of diversion initiatives arising from the Aboriginal community.

A range of case studies highlighted both diversity and areas of similarity in policing responses to substance misuse in Indigenous communities. The workshop heard case study presentations from New South Wales and Victorian police working in both rural and urban locations. The presentations showed that the particular circumstances and issues police need to address vary between locations. These include the challenges of operating in cross-border situations, particularly along major transportation routes that can be utilised to convey drugs across states. Problems of substance misuse are often linked with other antisocial behaviour problems, such as family violence.

The need to work collaboratively with other agencies—such as health, education and housing—was a feature of most of the case study presentations. Very positive results have been achieved when agencies have worked together, with each bringing its own area of

expertise to help resolve the range of problems that affect some Indigenous communities. Throughout the presentations, there was a theme of working with local Indigenous organisations and community representatives and the importance of engaging with and maintaining good relationships with these groups. The vital role of liaison officers, particularly Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers (ACLOs), was also highlighted. As well as working with the offending population and at-risk youth, the case studies showed the gains that can be made by offering positive incentives to young people who have not come to police attention to build on the pro-social developments they have already made.

During the workshop, participants divided into groups to discuss responses to hypothetical scenarios and to develop further scenarios based on their own experiences. Group responses showed the importance of maintaining core policing responses, such as the use of intelligence and seizures, to control substance use problems while building effective relationships with Indigenous communities to achieve sustainable changes.

Participants at the workshop were surveyed to examine their perceptions of the current status of policing responses to substance abuse in rural and remote communities. While the participants were only a small and not representative sample, the results provided some interesting insights. Similar to the results seen in a previous workshop, participants identified recruitment, education and training as areas for improvement.

Throughout the workshop, the importance of enthusiastic and motivated individuals in developing and driving interventions was highlighted. A challenge for police is to effectively employ these individuals while also establishing sustainable arrangements and processes that do not rely on individuals for their ongoing success. Working with multi-agency committees is one way of building these arrangements, but there is a need to ensure that interagency approaches achieve effective collaborative outcomes that are not impeded by committee structures and discussion.

While workshop participants emphasised the importance of working with the local Indigenous community, there is a need to balance resources available for services and interventions between the specific needs of the Indigenous community and the needs of the general community. Particularly in small towns and where limited resources are available, maintaining the effectiveness of crime reduction and prevention can rely on ensuring that resourcing issues do not lead to conflicts between different sectors of the community.

The inclusion of participants from rural and urban environments provided a stimulating mix of perspectives to the workshop and made apparent the need for further research on policing responses

to illicit drug use in urban Indigenous communities; an area not covered by previous NDLERF research.



## Introduction

This report outlines the results of a workshop that was held in Mildura, Victoria on 5 and 6 August 2008. The theme of the workshop was *Policing substance abuse in Indigenous communities in urban, rural and remote areas*.

The workshop was organised by the NSWPF and Victoria Police. It was funded by both police services as well as the NDLERF, which is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

The workshop was attended by 45 staff from NSWPF and Victoria Police. Participants included sworn officers across a range of ranks, ACLOs and unsworn staff. The workshop was primarily facilitated by Dr Judy Putt from the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC).

The origins of the workshop can be found in two NDLERF research projects which examined the policing of illicit drugs and volatile substances in Indigenous communities. These research projects were reported in three NDLERF monographs:

Delahunty B & Putt J 2006. The policing implications of cannabis, amphetamine and other illicit drug use in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities. *NDLERF Monograph* no. 15. Adelaide: Australasian Centre for Policing Research

Delahunty B & Putt J 2006. Good practice framework—policing illicit drugs in rural and remote local communities. *NDLERF Monograph* no. 15A. Adelaide: Australasian Centre for Policing Research

Gray D, Shaw G, d'Abbs P, Brooks D, Stearne A, Mosey A & Spooner C 2006. Policing volatile substance misuse and Indigenous Australians. *NDLERF Monograph* no. 16. Adelaide: Australian Centre for Policing Research

The Mildura workshop followed previous workshops held in Cairns, Alice Springs, Darwin, Katherine, Nhulunbuy and Tennant Creek. A report of the Alice Springs workshop, and the three monographs cited above, can be downloaded from [www.ndlerf.gov.au/pub.php](http://www.ndlerf.gov.au/pub.php).

The Mildura workshop provided an opportunity to disseminate the findings from the two research projects to key people directly involved in managing and providing the policing response to the issues covered in the reports. It also provided an opportunity for these personnel to share their experiences and to provide information, in the form of data and case studies, to help build a better understanding of the

issues involved in policing substance abuse in Indigenous communities and to contribute to discussion and the development of further responses.

The workshop was opened by Victoria Police Assistant Commissioner Steve Fontana. The Assistant Commissioner spoke of the severe social disadvantage which underlies many of the problems facing Indigenous communities. He discussed the implications for Indigenous people of Australia having been declared terra nullius and how this had led to the deprivation of land rights and a breakdown of Indigenous peoples' spiritual relationship to the land. He discussed the importance of the rule of law, its universality and boundlessness and the need to preserve it for the benefit of all. At the same time, he acknowledged that colonisation imposed the rule of law on Indigenous people without recognising the existence of traditional laws and spoke of the need to understand Indigenous culture when working with Indigenous communities. Assistant Commissioner Fontana then set out the objectives of the workshop:

- establish what the key issues are for police with respect to substance abuse in Indigenous communities
- identify differences in policing illicit drug use in Indigenous communities compared with other communities
- identify where police may be able to improve their response to these issues.

Following this, Brendan Delahunty (formerly of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and currently of the NSW Ombudsman's Office) gave a presentation on the findings from the NDLERF study into policing implications of illicit drug use in Indigenous communities. Pat Ward, Manager of the Drug and Alcohol Coordination Unit, NSWPF and Annette Vickery, Manager of the Aboriginal Advisory Unit, Victoria Police then presented environmental scans from each of their jurisdictions. These presentations provided important background information on the types of illicit drug issues being experienced in each jurisdiction and some of the initiatives being undertaken to deal with them. Over two days, officers from both New South Wales and Victoria gave case study presentations that set out in more detail some of the initiatives that have been undertaken to deal with the illicit drug-related problems being encountered in their local areas. These presentations are summarised in the following section of this report.

Throughout the two days of the workshop, group work sessions were held involving all participants. These sessions used tools developed as part of the good practice framework in NDLERF Monograph no. 15A. Hypothetical scenarios contained in the monograph,

reflecting practical situations police might encounter in Indigenous communities, were distributed to the groups, which were then asked to discuss how they might respond to each situation. The responses were then discussed with the whole workshop group. Groups were also asked to develop their own scenarios, again reflecting situations that might be encountered in daily practice.

Through group work sessions, participants also identified specific problems needing a strategic policing response. These covered issues such as drug and alcohol abuse in a particular remote local area, as well as among Indigenous youth more generally, improving cultural identification among Koori youth, the existence of problem premises that attracted illegal and anti-social behaviour and the development of better information collection and management systems. The groups then worked through these problems to identify their objectives in addressing them, strategies and activities to meet these objectives and the outcomes they would expect after a six and a 12 month period.

As a final exercise, participants completed a checklist drawn from the good practice framework, designed

to assess how well participants felt a range of priorities and strategies were being progressed at statewide, regional and local levels. The checklist and the results of this exercise are presented in the 'Hypothetical scenarios developed at the workshop' section of this report.

Following this, Brendan Delahunty gave a presentation on sources of funding that could potentially be accessed to fund the kinds of community-based programs discussed during the workshop.

This report provides a way for the findings of the workshop to be captured and documented for the benefit of participants and their agencies and for a broader audience including other police services, practitioners and policy makers. This report also provides a way of conveying this information, and the issues it raises, to the NDLERF Board of Management and other stakeholders. In this way, the report seeks to draw on the efforts of participants to help police and others respond to the challenges that policing substance use in Indigenous communities brings.



# Knowledge of substance abuse in Indigenous communities and good practice in policing and other responses

During the workshop, a range of presentations were given by researchers and practitioners. These provided information on the extent of problems, changes in substance abuse patterns and some of the ways in which police are responding, often in partnership or cooperation with other agencies and community groups. Presentations covered the issues and responses both at broad levels and in the form of case studies. A summary of each presentation is provided below. For reasons of privacy and confidentiality, certain data and other information from the original presentations has been excluded from these summaries.

## Key findings from research into policing responses to illicit drugs problems in rural and remote Indigenous communities

PRESENTATION BY BRENDAN DELAHUNTY

Mr Brendan Delahunty (formerly from Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies) provided an overview of the key finding of the research that formed the basis of:

Delahunty B & Putt J 2006. The policing implications of cannabis, amphetamine and other illicit drug use in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities. *NDLERF Monograph* no. 15. Adelaide: Australasian Centre for Policing Research

Delahunty B & Putt J 2006. Good practice framework—policing illicit drugs in rural and remote local communities. *NDLERF Monograph* no. 15A. Adelaide: Australasian Centre for Policing Research

The funding for the project was provided by NDLERF. Its aim was to improve the law enforcement sector's understanding of illicit drug use by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and to identify good policing practices that will help prevent and minimise harm from illicit drug use in rural and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The project was conducted between April 2004 and June 2005.

The research involved community consultations via meetings, forums and interviews as well as access to local data from Indigenous communities in Western Australia (Kalgoorlie, Laverton, Warburton),

Queensland (Rockhampton, Woorabinda, Mount Morgan), South Australia (Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands) and the Northern Territory (The Tiwi Islands). It also involved consultations with representatives of key stakeholder groups in government and non-government organisations, a review of relevant literature and legislation and a survey of 792 police (most based in regional, rural and remote locations) from the four jurisdictions involved.

## Key findings

While some information is available on illicit drug use by Indigenous people in urban locations, much less is known about drug use by Indigenous people in rural and remote regions. What data is available suggests that compared with non-Indigenous people, Indigenous people in urban areas report higher rates of recent cannabis and other illicit drug use.

Police surveyed for the project reported that various illicit drugs were commonly or very commonly used by Aboriginal people in their region. The same percentage of police (88%) in both urban and non-urban areas reported that cannabis was commonly or very commonly used in their region. There were important differences however in amphetamine use, with common or very common use reported by 57 percent of urban police and 25 percent of non-urban police.

The researchers also asked police 'how much of a problem' various substances were among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in their local area. Alcohol was seen by many as a problem (with 93% of urban police and 93% of non-urban police identifying it as a 'serious' or 'moderate' problem), followed by cannabis (77% of urban police, 77% of non-urban police), inhalants (57% of urban police, 47% of non-urban police) and amphetamines (53% of urban police, 29% of non-urban police).

In recent years, there has been a dramatic increase in the availability and use of cannabis in many remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander settlements. This new wave of cannabis use is occurring in addition to, not instead of, the use of alcohol and other substances.

At the time of the study, up to two-thirds of males and one in five females in some Arnhem Land communities were regularly using cannabis. Some users were spending between one-third and two-thirds of their income on cannabis. The age of first-time use was falling to around 10 or 11 years of age in some areas. Patterns of use were also problematic, as evidenced by the wide use of 'bucket bongs', home-made devices which allow users to smoke the equivalent of up to 20 joints in a single session.



Police reported that heavy cannabis use exacerbates many existing problems among local Indigenous residents, particularly family violence and mental health problems. This was the same for both urban and non-urban areas.

The supply of cannabis is facilitated through drug distribution networks. In some areas, these are run by Indigenous people with positions of power or influence. The growth in demand for drugs in remote areas appears to have attracted the interest of profiteers from outside those communities, accelerating the flow of money from remote communities to urban areas. The research found that these networks can generate very high profits, with cannabis bought in a capital city able to be quickly and easily sold for four to five times the price in remote areas. The success of the cannabis trade and the establishment of trafficking routes will potentially provide avenues for the distribution of other drugs, notably amphetamines, in the future.

In terms of harm, the increased use of cannabis is having a range of impacts on some Aboriginal communities. Where large amounts are spent on cannabis, there may not be enough money for basic necessities. There are indications of high levels of violence, injuries, accidents, psychosis and self harm. Use can also impact on education and employment, levels of crime (which may increase to obtain money for drugs) and participation in community and cultural life. There is also evidence of the use of sexual favours to obtain drugs.

Policing illicit drug use in remote communities creates unique challenges and requires different techniques from those used in urban areas. In small and close-knit communities, commonly used police practices such as surveillance and intelligence gathering can be very hard to achieve. Successful strategies involve working much more closely with the community than typically occurs in urban settings, including:

- asking the communities to define the harms that are of concern to them and to outline their expectations of police
- introducing policing measures that provide respite and build confidence
- providing strategic support to sustain and extend local initiatives
- prevention, leadership and capacity building.

Effective drug law enforcement in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities requires:

- close cooperation and support of community leaders
- high quality intelligence
- sensitivity to local issues
- strong logistical support from police organisations

- enhanced use of police information systems
- building partnerships with other government agencies, non-government organisations and communities.

Training, recruitment and support are very important aspects of ensuring an effective policing response in Indigenous communities. It is important for police organisations to identify and reward the skills needed to police effectively in sparsely populated but high-need locations. Appropriate training, induction and support to enable members to respond to community concerns about drug use, crime and other problems are also critical. A further challenge lies in recruiting, supporting and developing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff at all levels of the organisation and encouraging other employers to do the same.

Police play an important role in reducing drug-related harm through managing drug-affected people in public and in custody. This can be made difficult in rural and remote areas because of the long distances involved in custody transfers, outdated or unsafe police facilities, inadequate staffing and a lack of 'sobering-up' facilities. In this regard, promising community and police initiatives include:

- night patrols
- the involvement of community leaders in determining responses to drug-affected behaviour
- focusing police resources on offences that are of greatest concern to the community
- a permanent police presence in more remote locations
- capital works to improve facilities.

### **Good practice examples**

The report identified strategic responses adopted to improve policing responses in Indigenous communities.

#### **Multi-function police facilities in remote areas (Western Australia)**

New police facilities in remote areas improve safety in the community, help victims and provide a strong visible police presence. Staff from other agencies share police facilities, which fosters a more collaborative and coordinated response to child abuse and family violence. Specific police training for positions in border settlements includes cultural familiarisation, acclimatisation, additional legal education and information sharing. This training and preparation takes account of the need to maintain continuity and minimise disruption when personnel change.

### Integrated approach to community consultation (Queensland)

This approach consists of a series of programs and strategies designed to strengthen police links with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Elements include:

- a network of community consultation and liaison
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment strategies
- cross-cultural training for officers
- a part-time cell visitors scheme
- Police Citizens Youth Club activity centres
- the development of indicators to better identify data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims and offenders
- revised oral and written licence testing programs and the provision of practical tests in local areas to reduce the number of unlicensed drivers
- the return of ancestral remains and other sacred objects to ancestral lands.

### Remote Communities Drug Strategy (Northern Territory)

The Remote Communities Drug Desk is staffed by specialist drug intelligence officers. The Strategy was developed from a workshop involving police, other government and non-government organisations, a parliamentary committee and representatives from various remote Aboriginal communities. This facility takes information and intelligence from local level policing initiatives and uses it to contribute to a broader understanding of drug issues across rural and remote areas. This intelligence complements other measures, such as the introduction of drug detection dogs and drug house legislation.

### Indigenous drug action teams (South Australia)

Drug Action Teams (DATs) are locally-based committees made up of representatives from a number of agencies which meet to reduce legal and illegal drug-related harm. Indigenous DATs respond to the specific needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. They provide a liaison point for Aboriginal services and the DAT program to improve their understanding of community resources and programs which could assist in reducing alcohol and other drug misuse in Aboriginal communities. They can also:

- assist in identifying and implementing projects or actions that are relevant to Aboriginal communities
- encourage Aboriginal people to access prevention, diversion and treatment programs
- increase the capacity of DATs to respond to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander alcohol and other drug issues.

The strategies employed by individual teams are determined by the nature of the local drug problem.

### Jurisdictional overviews. Environmental scan, New South Wales

PRESENTATION BY PAT WARD, DRUG AND ALCOHOL COORDINATION UNIT, NSWPF

This presentation provided background information on the New South Wales Indigenous population and the question of their overrepresentation in the criminal justice system. In 2006, the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) looked at the higher rates of imprisonment of Indigenous offenders and found no evidence of systemic or institutional bias in the criminal justice system's response to Indigenous offenders in New South Wales. Instead, they identified that the overrepresentation was a reflection of Indigenous offenders having longer records, being more likely to have been convicted of a serious violent offence, having committed multiple offences, being more likely to have breached a justice order and/or having re-offended after being given an alternative sentence to full-time imprisonment. More importantly, however, was the BOCSAR (2006) finding that when looking at the economic and social determinants of Indigenous contact with the justice system, other than being male, the most powerful predictor of being either charged or imprisoned was substance use. High risk alcohol consumption was also found to be a significant factor which led the researchers to suggest that 'one of the key ways to reduce Indigenous contact with the criminal justice system is to reduce Indigenous drug and alcohol abuse' (BOCSAR 2006).

An examination of the available data sources on drug and alcohol prevalence rates such as National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS) and the National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS) reveals that, when compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts, Indigenous individuals:

- are almost three times as likely to smoke, although they consume less
- are less likely to report having consumed alcohol in the previous 12 months but, when they do, are more likely to have consumed alcohol at risky or highly risky levels
- are almost twice as likely to report recent illicit drug use, with those who do use illicit substances being more likely to do so at a younger age.

As for non-Indigenous populations, cannabis is the most commonly used illicit drug in Indigenous populations. However, while there is evidence that cannabis use is declining in the general community, there is no indication that the same trend is being observed in Indigenous communities.

Consistent with the NDSHS, NSWPF drug detection data indicate that across the state between 2000 and 2007, cannabis remained by far the most commonly detected drug, with the number of seizures showing a slight decline over the period. Again, in keeping with the NDSHS findings, police detection data for the same period identified increases in amphetamine and ecstasy detections. There was a decrease in heroin detections, while cocaine seizures fluctuated.

Police data in relation to Indigenous offenders involved in drug detection incidents reaffirms that cannabis is the most commonly detected drug and that, compared with non-Indigenous drug offenders, cannabis detections make up a higher proportion of all drug detections. Drug detection data involving Indigenous offenders shows similar trends to those involving non-Indigenous offenders. The data shows increases in amphetamine and ecstasy drug detections, decreases in heroin drug detection incidents and a fluctuating number of cocaine seizures. Preliminary analyses suggest a slight upward trend in the total proportion of drug detection incidents involving Indigenous offenders. While these findings may be linked to police activity, they may also be indicative of sustained cannabis use against a declining use rate in the general community and a greater uptake of the 'other drugs' category (thought to be comprised mainly of illicit prescription drugs, primarily analgesics and anti-anxiety medications).

Police data, the NDSHS and NATSIHS provide useful information on the incidence or prevalence of alcohol and drug use in Indigenous populations. Additional data on the patterns of use including frequency, quantity and poly-drug use are also important to better understand and quantify the social, health and criminal impact of drug use on Indigenous communities. Of particular concern are the potential mental health consequences, given the high levels of cannabis use in Indigenous populations and the increase in methamphetamine use. In response, NSWPF will more closely analyse its data on the involvement of Indigenous offenders in drug detection incidents. NSWPF will also seek to facilitate and support a replication of the NDLERF study which examined illicit substance misuse among, and its impact on, remote and rural Indigenous communities within an urban context.

On a more practical front, NSWPF will continue its volatile substance misuse (VSM) initiative which seeks to improve the capacity of police to appropriately respond to VSM when the issue arises. Finally, in keeping with the BOCSAR (2006) suggestion that

'one of the key ways to reduce Indigenous contact with the criminal justice system is to reduce Indigenous drug and alcohol abuse', NSWPF will continue to promote and monitor the involvement of Indigenous offenders in police drug diversion schemes. NSWPF will work collaboratively with other partner agencies to modify and/or develop diversion initiatives with the aim of enhancing offender participation and outcomes for Indigenous individuals.

## **Jurisdictional overviews.**

### **Environmental scan part 2, Victoria**

PRESENTATION BY ANNETTE VICKERY, VICTORIA POLICE

The Victorian environmental scan showed that alcohol continues to be the major substance abuse problem for Victoria Police. Most police strategies in the drug and alcohol area therefore focus on alcohol misuse. Major strategies include alcohol management plans, partnerships with local councils, night patrols and sobering-up centres.

Victoria Police recognise that illicit substances are becoming an increasingly significant issue among Indigenous people as well as the general population. There are indications of increased use of ice, with associated problems in managing the violent behaviour of affected users. Chroming, or the inhalation of solvent-based substances such as paint, petrol or adhesives is also an increasing issue for police.

While police make widespread use of diversion to health service providers, data on the numbers being processed and diverted was not able to be made available at the workshop. Aboriginal cultural healing centres are being used as an alternative to diversion into health services, though they are not presently recognised as an official diversion option. In a similar way, there are a range of community initiatives in place that appear to be having positive outcomes and assisting many Aboriginal people, but are not officially recognised. Victoria is moving to recognise more of these initiatives and the way in which they help the Aboriginal community to manage its own issues.

The Victorian environmental scan highlighted the way in which failure to address the underlying causal factors of offending can lead to very high numbers of convictions among some young people. These causal factors and convictions tend to have detrimental impacts across the offenders' life course, contributing to mental health problems, homelessness, addiction, co-morbidity and dysfunctional family arrangements.

# Case studies of policing approaches to substance misuse in Indigenous communities

## Mildura: Koori and youth diversion program

PRESENTATION BY SUPERINTENDENT PAUL NAYLOR

The Mildura command is located in Victoria but shares borders with New South Wales and South Australia. This creates a range of cross-border issues and complexities as offenders may reside in one state while committing offences in another. Offenders must be dealt with by the criminal justice system of the state in which the offences are committed. These issues are partly overcome by police in the border areas of each state being sworn members of the other states' police services and legislation being proposed to address problems, such as those surrounding extradition.

The main antecedents of offending in Mildura are drugs and alcohol as well as homelessness and family violence. These problems tend to be interconnected, with each tending to increase the likelihood of the others occurring. In Mildura, while there are 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 behaviour and social problems.

Programs and initiatives to deal with Indigenous offending in Mildura have focused strongly on listening to communities and engaging with them to address their needs and involve them in resolving crime-related problems. These initiatives have recognised the important role of Indigenous elders in making links between police and communities and have included community meetings to improve local perceptions of police.

Some specific community-level initiatives put in place in Mildura have included:

- establishment of an Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer and a general Community Liaison Officer
- development of an Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Program
- streamlining the complaints process
- recruitment of Aboriginal persons into both sworn and unsworn roles through the Structured Training and Employment Project
- provision of prosecutors' support to Koori Court and Koori Children's Court. This has included working to alter public and community perceptions about Koori Courts, creating awareness that the Courts are stringent, with magistrates handing down strong penalties when appropriate

- establishment of the Mildura District Aboriginal and Police Liaison Committee.

Another valuable initiative in Mildura that seeks to reduce Indigenous involvement with the criminal justice system has been the Koori Youth Cautioning and Diversion Program, which started in March 2007. The primary aims of the program are to:

- decrease Koori youths' contact with the criminal justice system
- increase access to diversions and other community support programs
- address the underrepresentation of Koori youths in cautioning.

The program covers a full range of offences, but involvement is conditional on the offender making an admission of guilt. The assessment of suitability for involvement in the program also takes into account the offender's prior offences and the needs of the victim in determining whether this is the most appropriate option.

Cautioning and diversion within the program is conducted through the ACLO and the Youth Resource Officer. The ACLO is considered to be an essential part of the process and critical to securing the engagement of families.

The program has increased the rate of cautioning for Koori youths, who were previously underrepresented in this area and hence overrepresented in charging and prosecution. For the period of March 2007 (implementation) to the end of July 2008, there has been an increase in cautions of 45 percent compared with the control period of 2004–05. Follow-ups and referrals have occurred for over 90 percent of these cautions. There are indications that the program is achieving positive results in reducing recidivism, with only a small number of re-offences by those undergoing cautioning and diversion. Of the 57 young people cautioned under the program, only four (7%) have reoffended and only one of these took part in the referral process. Therefore, of the 52 young people cautioned and referred, only one has reoffended at this stage.

## Barrier LAC: illicit drug use in Indigenous communities/remote locations. Service access issues

PRESENTATION BY ACTING INSPECTOR GREG MACMAHON

The Barrier Local Area Command (LAC) covers a large area in far western New South Wales with a population of around 28,500. The regional centre is Broken Hill. Most of the larger centres in the LAC have Indigenous populations above the national average. Broken Hill has an Indigenous population of just over six percent, Dareton 19 percent, Ivanhoe 27 percent, Menindee



28 percent and Wilcannia 64 percent. Of the approximately 600 people in Wilcannia, around 400 are Indigenous.

Alcohol represents the biggest substance misuse problem in the Barrier LAC, with a large proportion of incidents requiring police attendance being the result of intoxicated residents. In Wilcannia, street violence resulting from alcohol misuse has lessened in recent times due to a police crackdown, but there are concerns that this may have led to an increase in family violence as more drinking now takes place in private homes.

Drug-related crime is a smaller but significant problem in Barrier, including drug-defined crime such as supply or possession and incidents such as family violence, where drugs are a contributing factor. Despite the prominence of alcohol as a problem, the presenter indicated that the workshop had already given an indication that police in Barrier may not be fully recognising the extent of illicit drug problems. An analysis of crime factors in the three policing clusters within Barrier shows that drug-related crime ranges from eight percent of incidents in the eastern cluster, 24 percent in the Broken Hill cluster to 41 percent in the southern cluster. Alcohol is a factor in 38 percent of incidents in the southern cluster, 43 percent in the eastern cluster and 47 percent in Broken Hill. Domestic and family violence is a factor in 21 percent of incidents in the south, 29 percent in Broken Hill and 49 percent in the east. However, the actual number of incidents is quite low, particularly in the eastern cluster.

Most drug-related incidents within the LAC occur in Broken Hill and Dareton, with few incidents in Wilcannia (where incidents tend to alcohol-related). There have been relatively few drug detections in the LAC, with most occurring in outdoor/public places. Most drug detections have involved cannabis, with small amounts of amphetamines detected, but only a small amount of drug-related detections or prosecutions have involved Indigenous people.

There appears to be an emerging problem with cannabis in the LAC, with seizures being of good quality hydroponic product that appear mainly to be coming from major producers in South Australia. The movement of high quality cannabis through Broken Hill and Dareton appears to be linked to these centres lying along major transportation routes that run from Adelaide through Mildura then into Sydney. It appears that some of the drug transportation routes are run by Indigenous people. Mental health problems are a big issue for New South Wales and Victorian police in the area, with around 30 to 40 percent of mental health interventions linked to drug use, apparently resulting from the high tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) content in hydroponic cannabis.

There is also an emerging problem with amphetamines in the LAC, with the presence of these substances appearing to be increasing. The misuse of volatile substances (e.g. petrol) tends to fluctuate, with no significant problems having been observed in 2006. The fluctuating popularity of volatile substances make them hard to police. As levels of misuse tend to vary, it is difficult to identify patterns or generate intelligence. There have only been small amounts of ice and ecstasy observed in the LAC, with minor quantities of heroin and cocaine.

One consequence of the relatively minor drug problems that have until now affected the LAC is that there are few drug support services in the region. Those services that exist are mainly focused on alcohol abuse issues. Most clients of these services who require drug interventions have to travel far away from the LAC, usually to Melbourne, Adelaide or Orange. This creates major difficulties in service provision and the lack of services may become a serious problem if drug use in the area continues to increase. One positive note is that Aboriginal health services in the region can be very proactive in supporting Aboriginal clients. While these services do not have strong links with police, efforts are actively underway by police to improve this situation.

## Policing in Dareton

PRESENTATION BY INSPECTOR MARK ROWNEY

This presentation focused on the response undertaken by local police to a range of offending and antisocial behaviour problems in Dareton, far western New South Wales. Some of the circumstances that have shaped policing responses in Dareton have included the extent of mental health issues among Indigenous people in local hospitals and the occurrence of sexual abuse as a result of drug and alcohol misuse. Another issue is the high mobility rate of Indigenous people through the area, mainly due to family ties in Broken Hill, Wilcannia and other major centres in the region, or to and from Mildura.

Police in Dareton took a very 'back to basics' approach in their policing strategies. A crucial element of this was getting out into the community, getting to know people and understanding their views. This approach gave police insights into the nature of offending and different perspectives to their policing strategies. For example, police observed that most break and enters that occurred did not involve the theft of items such as electronic goods that might be sold to purchase drugs, but food and money to buy food. It was apparent that much offending was motivated by basic needs for sustenance.

One issue that had to be tackled by police in Dareton was the lack of interagency communication between

police and other service providers. This was particularly critical given the range of basic needs that had to be addressed to reduce offending. Interagency meetings are now run regularly, involving police, health and education agencies.

## Shepparton: OPI corruption prevention and leadership analysis

PRESENTATION BY SERGEANT JOHN TREBILCOCK

This presentation covered an Office of Police Integrity (OPI) corruption prevention and leadership analysis which focused on Shepparton Police Station. It must be noted that this was part of the normal process of analysis run by the OPI and was not the result of any particular issues of concern relating to Shepparton. The analysis examined management practices, the efficiency of general day to day functions and overall conduct with a focus on discipline, morale and adherence to instructions and procedures.

A particular focus of the analysis was on communication and relationships between police and the local Indigenous community. There around 6,000 Indigenous people in greater Shepparton. The analysis identified issues between police and the Indigenous community which needed addressing, including the lack of stability and ongoing accountability for roles in managing relationships with the community. The analysis identified the need for formalisation of services and links to the community, including the need for a full time ACLO.

As a result of the analysis, a group which included local Aboriginal representatives and leaders was formed to advise on strategies for improving relationships between police and the Indigenous community. At the same time, a police-based group was formed which focused on resolving local crime and behavioural problems through the implementation of a range of programs and addressing communication issues with the local community.

A range of crime prevention strategies were implemented following the analysis. These included:

- The provision of additional lighting in a city park renowned for the gathering of Koori youth and antisocial behaviour.
- A night patrol bus, operated by Koori people, was established to run on Friday and Saturday nights.
- Increased internal and external CCTV coverage was implemented in local nightclubs by club owners/operators.
- An additional nightshift was put in place with a two member foot patrol on Friday and Saturday nights.
- Cultural awareness camps and induction packages were developed and implemented for newly arriving

members of the police force to help them better understand and work with the Indigenous community.

The OPI had some specific requirements as a result of the analysis. The OPI noted the need for police, the VALS Client Service Officer and Aboriginal Community Justice Panel representatives to have a high level of awareness of the role, functions and responsibilities of all agencies and community groups involved in providing justice related service delivery. The OPI also emphasised the need for those agencies and community representatives having responsibility for managing, coordinating, evaluating and reporting on strategies and initiatives concerning police and Koori relationships to operate in a more inclusive manner.

There was also a range of recommendations which resulted from the analysis. These included:

- Establishment of a District Police and Aboriginal Liaison Group, operating as a subcommittee of the Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee, Local Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee to manage, coordinate and oversee local police/Koori strategies and initiatives.
- Establishment of a District Aboriginal Liaison Team to manage and oversee local police/Koori relationships and the connectivity of those relationships with other multicultural programs.
- Appointment of a full time Aboriginal Police Liaison Officer (APLO) at the rank of Sergeant with responsibility for liaison with and coordination of district and station initiatives.
- Development of a district policy, whereby Leading Senior Constables and the APLO receive cross-cultural training directly relevant to the mandate of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA2). This should include in-depth knowledge of local Indigenous services and issues and education in good practice frontline policing strategies for building police/Koori community relations.

Another outcome from the analysis was the development of the Greater Shepparton Statement of Cooperation. This was created to specifically address issues involving Indigenous people in police custody and to provide clear guidelines in relation to their care and management. One aim of the Statement is to reduce the number of Indigenous people being arrested by police and detained in police cells. Another aim is to improve communication and liaison and to develop respect and understanding between police and members of the Shepparton Aboriginal community and relevant Aboriginal organisations.

The Shepparton presentation included some of the views of the local ACLOs on their role. The ACLOs

emphasised the importance of maintaining flows of information to the police, recognising that their operations are information-driven. The ACLOs have developed a range of programs to assist local youth, such as leadership, sport, education and spiritual and cultural development programs. They saw a need for police, not just in Shepparton but more broadly, to become more directly involved with the community (e.g. through sport and recreation activities). They emphasised the importance of positive involvement in building good relationships with the community and the way in which this involvement could help police get to know local children and their family situations. This could be highly valuable in helping police work with children to address problem behaviours.

## Wagga Wagga: Operation Berilda

PRESENTATION BY DETECTIVE INSPECTOR ROD SMITH

Wagga Wagga is a large regional centre in central New South Wales with a population of 65,000, of which four percent are Aboriginal. The presentation outlined the case study of a housing estate which has 40 percent Aboriginal residents and a broad range of antisocial behaviour problems linked to social disadvantage, with alcohol and drug abuse as contributing factors. Local problems included family violence, stealing, break and enter, intimidation and violence, malicious damage, drug supply, child prostitution and other child at risk situations. As well as drugs and alcohol, boredom, inappropriate associations, lack of parental supervision and health/social issues were also contributing problems. Problems in the community culminated in November 2005, centring around the local store. Included were problems of theft and social unrest that attracted very negative local media coverage.

In response to the problems in the estate, police invited government agencies to work cooperatively on solving the problems. The police response incorporated Operation Berilda, implemented as part of the broader Buwanha Miya program. Police developed operational, tactical and strategic plans. A series of interagency meetings over the following 18 months, under the auspices of a steering committee, failed to reach agreement on a collaborative plan involving the various agencies. Little progress was able to be achieved during this time, other than appointment of a Community Action Plan Worker for the estate. The Buwanha Miya program ceased, but Operation Berilda continued involving only police in partnership with the Department of Housing.

Towards mid-2008, problems at the housing estate received a renewed focus following an increase in the level of criminal behaviour and high level state and Commonwealth government interest. Police commenced one deployment of members to the

estate each week. A *living map* was developed by a police intelligence analyst, which involved an interactive map that provided details of the residents of each house and their documented histories. This map allowed police to conduct a full risk assessment of the estate and to properly determine who was actually living in each home. In some cases, a greater number of people were living in homes than had been approved by housing authorities and police were able to pass relevant information to housing authorities to make appropriate arrangements for the residents. The map and risk assessment also enabled police to determine whether each household was likely to respond to police in a friendly or hostile manner. Intelligence was also gathered on vehicles in the estate, drugs, alcohol and firearms issues and the antisocial behaviour of young people.

Some elements of the response program focused on the physical and social issues of the estate by dealing with:

- environmental problems (such as rubbish and graffiti)
- truancy and students who had been suspended from school (in conjunction with education authorities)
- the provision of mental health services
- drug and alcohol services
- stray dogs on the estate.

The police response included taking enforcement action to deal with the non-use of bicycle helmets, littering and offensive/language conduct and identifying wanted offenders. Correctional authorities managed residents who were on bail or supervision orders and those recently released from prison. Community services responded to children at risk.

A wide range of results and outcomes were achieved through the Buwanha Miya program and Operation Berilda. A full safety audit was conducted on the estate. A new park and activity centre for children was built, along with a new community centre and sporting equipment that encouraged positive social activity and gave children opportunities to be occupied. A *walking bus* program encouraged many children to attend school regularly, including some who had not previously been enrolled. Information provided to housing authorities allowed stabilisation of housing arrangements and reduced problems of overcrowding, with evictions being used where necessary. A family violence advertising and education program was implemented in the Wagga Wagga area. Police began ongoing operations to respond to and prevent antisocial behaviour and criminal offending. Police Citizens Youth Club (PCYC) programs were implemented and an Aboriginal Interagency Liaison Officer, funded through the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services



and Indigenous Affairs, was established to support the existing ACLO.

Early indications are that these interagency initiatives are having a positive impact on antisocial behaviour in the estate, contributing to improvements across a wide range of social measures.

## **Collingwood: local council issues and urban Indigenous communities**

PRESENTATION BY SERGEANT TONY LOVERIDGE

Collingwood is an area within the city of Greater Melbourne and in the City of Yarra, which has been a traditional homeland for Aboriginal people. Around 750 Aboriginal people live in the local city area. The case study focused on a small area within Collingwood being a street corner located at a traditional gathering place for Aboriginal people. People now meet in this area on a daily basis, often drinking together. This drinking tends to lead to public drunkenness, criminal behaviour, violence, offensive and unsociable behaviour. There are associated problems with drug use, homelessness and with physical and mental health issues. The behaviour has led to confrontation and poor relations between police and Aboriginal people, a lack of understanding within the local Aboriginal community about what is acceptable behaviour and why police need to respond to it and concerns from local business operators. There has also been a lack of understanding from police regarding Aboriginal culture and heritage.

As part of the response to these issues, police established an ACLO position for the local area. The ACLO serves as a point of contact with the Indigenous community at known trouble spots within the City of Yarra. The ACLO works within the six major objectives of the AJA2:

- to provide crime prevention and early intervention
- diversion/strengthening of alternatives to imprisonment
- reduce reoffending
- reduce victimisation
- provide responsive and inclusive services
- strengthen community justice responses.

One of the functions of the ACLO has been to help police to develop partnerships with the local council and Aboriginal organisations and assist with counselling Aboriginal community members with alcohol problems. The ACLO provides a point of contact for City of Yarra police members regarding Indigenous issues and provides guidance and direction to local members regarding cultural or politically sensitive information. Another function of the ACLO is to assist local police and support groups in steering local Indigenous people towards

a greater awareness of their culture and encourage Indigenous members of the community to report criminal matters. Linked to this is a role in being a continuing point of contact for Indigenous victims of crime. The ACLO has also developed and enhanced Victoria Police service delivery principles.

Police sought the imposition of bans on drinking on the streets in the problem area, however this was refused by the local council for a range of reasons. The Council lacks services in the area to help people experiencing alcohol and health problems. They were also concerned that street bans would displace drinking to other areas or into homes where it would be harder for services to identify and access those with drinking and health problems. Council also cited issues of inequity and discrimination as the bans targeted Aboriginal people, while more affluent people could continue to drink outside at licensed bars and cafes.

Police then developed three key strategies to deal with the continued problematic behaviour. Establishment of a sobering-up facility would provide accommodation for intoxicated persons and diversion from the hospital system, and allow the health and wellbeing of people to be monitored while they sobered up. Development of a community cultural centre, run by Aboriginal people, would provide a place of gathering and a pathway out of harmful alcohol consumption. Implementation of a mobile assistance patrol would provide transport of intoxicated people to an appropriate place, ensuring they did not harm themselves or others.

Police efforts to work with the local council and the state Indigenous Affairs agency in implementing these strategies are continuing.

## **Redfern: urban issues. Overview of recent history of drug law enforcement and policing in Redfern**

PRESENTATION BY SUPERINTENDENT LUKE FREUDENSTEIN

Redfern is an inner-city area of Sydney, which has traditionally had a large Indigenous population. Parts of Redfern have been affected over a period of decades by criminal and antisocial behavioural problems, typically involving violence and street crime in surrounding areas. This has been accompanied by sometimes very poor relations between police and the Aboriginal community.

Alcohol has been the main issue and contributor to problems. Illicit drugs have become a huge problem more recently, with police first identifying an organised network distributing cannabis and heroin in the late 1980s. The main illicit drug problem has been heroin use and dealing, but cannabis has emerged as a

growing problem. In the Redfern area, there is a large overrepresentation of Aboriginal people across various types of offences and drug use among Aboriginal people in the area is increasing at the same time that it is decreasing in the general community.

Crime prevention efforts in Redfern have been strongly linked to the relationship between police and the Aboriginal Housing Corporation. Efforts on both sides have resulted in the development and maintenance of a good relationship in recent years.

Redfern has been the site of some serious disturbances in recent years. Reaction to these incidents has included granting a large amount of state government funding. Local government also plays an important role by keeping the area clean and free of garbage which helps residents maintain their respect for the area. After a disturbance in 2004, a review concluded that human services in the area were poorly integrated and this is an issue that requires continuing efforts to address.

The head of the Aboriginal Housing Corporation, Mick Mundine, noted in a video shown during the presentation, that a contributing factor to the disturbances that followed the death of a young person in Redfern was people who brought their own issues and agendas to the situation, helping to build feelings of anger and unrest. Mr Mundine noted that it was important for Aboriginal people to take ownership of the issues and recognise that they are the ones committing offences and selling drugs etc. The presenter also noted that it was not only Aboriginal people supplying drugs in Redfern, but Lebanese and Chinese people as well, and police recognised that it was not just an Aboriginal issue.

Redfern police have staged a number of major operations in recent history. These have typically resulted in violent confrontations with only short-term gains, where drug dealing and other criminal behaviour resume shortly after the operations. Recent strike forces have reduced the number of robberies in the area and led to drug arrests, but again with drug dealing resuming shortly after. One of the most positive impacts for policing has been a reduction in the overall numbers of people living in those areas where many of the problems have been centred. A consequence of this has been that police are able to stage more realistic targeting of problem houses.

In recent years, police have implemented a range of initiatives in Redfern and broader areas to address antisocial behaviour, improve social networking and build better relationships between the police and the community. These have included:

- introduction of the *Young Offenders Act 1997*
- youth mentoring, drawing on talented and 'good kids' as mentors

- midnight basketball
- Redfern-Waterloo case coordination to improve the provision of services across the local area
- Street Bus/Street Beat team
- 'Horse Whisperer' program
- working in close liaison with the local Aboriginal men's and women's groups
- greater police involvement in community activities
- introduction of family violence programs, including a Family Violence Taskforce and Inner City Domestic Violence Group
- introduction of an 'anti-violence in schools' program
- community family days, with positive police involvement
- introduction of alcohol-free zones.

A range of direct crime prevention strategies have also been implemented in and around the problematic areas in Redfern, including a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design review which resulted in over 100 recommendations, removal of fencing in certain areas, a clean up of garbage and other environmental problems and the removal of derelict housing. The City of Sydney Council has taken over cleaning in the area and has a strong partnership with police.

Police felt that existing procedures and the social networks that have been built with the local community were working well and need to be maintained. At the same time, there is a need for more proactive policing and the development of more positive relationships with the local community. Police also saw value in the provision of education to the wider Aboriginal community on the effects of substance addiction as a way to combat increasing levels of substance misuse.

## Macquarie Fields: the Good Kids program

PRESENTATION BY CHIEF INSPECTOR DARRIN WILSON

Macquarie Fields is an outer suburb located in the south-west of the Greater Sydney area with a total population in the LAC of approximately 79,000 people. It is an area with a high proportion of public housing, socioeconomic disadvantage and range of social problems. The Aboriginal population of Macquarie Fields (2.5%) is roughly the same as the national average, with around 1,900 people. The unemployment rate for the Aboriginal community is less than the state average. Also, contrary to trends in many other areas, Aboriginal people are underrepresented in offending, being responsible for less than one percent of offences in the LAC. The presenter pointed out that in the LAC, Aboriginal

people are not seen as the problem when it comes to crime and behavioural problems, but as the orators of the solution.

In August 2003, Macquarie Fields established a Local Area Command Aboriginal Consultative Committee (LACACC), chaired by the police, with a community member as the secretary. The LACACC has a mix of 30 government and community representatives, meeting tri-monthly. Its recent initiatives have included training for cell support volunteers, an Aboriginal debutante ball and the Good Kids program. The low offending rate among the Aboriginal community allows the LACACC to focus on positive initiatives that enhance the relationship between police and the community, especially among youth. The LAC considers this to be a telling factor in maintaining ongoing low crime rates.

The Good Kids program arose from a number of social disturbances in 2005, known as the Macquarie Fields riots. After the riots, a number of young people were charged with offences. This led to the development of programs for young people involved in the disturbances, such as the development by police of Camp Impact and Camp Dare and the implementation of programs for at risk young people by Youth Off The Streets. However, through the LACACC, the community asked what was being done for the 'good kids'. These were defined as youths who were continuing to demonstrate appropriate behaviours, engaging with education and other social activities and displaying positive community involvement. The community felt that something needed to be done to recognise, reward and encourage these young people.

The Good Kids program targets four of the strategies covered by the Aboriginal Strategic Direction:

- strengthen communication and understanding between police and Aboriginal people
- reduce Aboriginal people's contact with the criminal justice system
- increase Aboriginal cultural awareness in the police force
- divert Aboriginal youth from crime and antisocial behaviour.

The LACACC determined eligibility criteria for young people to take part in the Good Kids program. The program would be open to males and females between 10 and 14 years of age, who were attending

school within the Macquarie Fields LAC and who came from a financially or socially disadvantaged environment. To be eligible, the young people had to be attending school regularly, not been suspended or detained and be actively participating in the school community.

The criteria allowed police and the LACACC to gather a large cross section of young boys and girls of Aboriginal descent who had not come under notice of police and work with them to form and improve police and community relations at an early age. The program gave participating youth opportunities beyond their immediate community that their circumstances might otherwise not allow them to experience. It also helped them to maintain a relationship with police and LACACC as they grew and supported them to achieve positive results from life.

Police contacted every school principal in the command and sought recommendations for two Aboriginal students from each school. A total of 36 schools were contacted and police received responses from 30 schools that each gave glowing reports of two students. From this group, police selected 14 students to participate in the first stage of the program.

Through affiliations with the Royal Australian Navy, the 14 students together with four police and a community supervisor, spent three days onboard HMAS Albatross and HMAS Success, experiencing naval life alongside and at sea during exercises between Jervis Bay and Sydney Harbour. A police media officer recorded the event, with a DVD being made available for all participants as well as to school principals to show to other students. The program has attracted very positive feedback from the young students involved and their parents and has seen very good relationships between the young people and police. At the time of the Mildura workshop, police were planning the next rewards program, with selected young people spending three days doing bush walking, camping and abseiling in the Blue Mountains with the police rescue squad.

The presenter emphasised that he saw the Good Kids program as something that could easily be run in any LAC. He saw the key to the success of this, or any other program, as having passionate, committed people who actively want to run and take part in the program.

## Hypothetical scenarios developed at the workshop

Workshop participants were divided into groups and they developed scenarios to work on. The scenarios were based on the experiences of those involved.

### Responding to problems with group alcohol abuse

#### *The problem*

The problem addressed by this group concerned the excessive consumption of alcohol accompanied by the formation of large, loosely structured groups that engaged in antisocial behaviour and clashes with police.

#### *The strategy*

The group recognised the need to minimise incidents of violence and increase public safety. They saw the development of an 'early warning' capacity as an important component of their response, using intelligence to identify where and when problems might occur. They saw involving the community and other agencies as crucial, with the engagement of responsible community members and agencies such as the Department of Health in any interventions.

One of the key components of the group's strategy was to reduce alcohol consumption. One way to achieve this was the implementation of a binge drinking awareness campaign to make community members aware of the health and social costs of excessive alcohol use and risky drinking behaviours. Another possibility put forward was a system to promote and reward alcohol-free homes (i.e. where all the members of the household refrained from alcohol use). Engaging the media and generating media interest and support were put forward as avenues for increasing public awareness and education around alcohol use.

The group considered that targeting the availability of alcohol on credit might be one way of reducing the supply of alcohol to problem drinkers. They also suggested there might be ways of using victims in receipt of crime compensation to assist those affected by the antisocial behaviours of drinkers, but noted that this would need further consideration.

#### *Objectives*

Six month objectives:

- fewer incidents of excessive alcohol consumption
- a reduction in violence and antisocial behaviour
- elimination of the need for an escalated police response

- improved health outcomes for those affected by alcohol use.

Twelve month objectives:

- improved relationships between police and the Aboriginal community, particularly young people
- improved health and social outcomes for the community.

### Drug use by Indigenous youth

#### *The problem*

The problem identified by this group concerned the use of illicit drugs by Indigenous youth.

#### *The strategy*

The group saw core police operations as the primary response to this problem, through enforcement of illicit drug-related laws and the disruption of suppliers. They saw the role of police as to first and foremost maintain the rule of law, using established police procedures, strategies and intelligence to minimise drug use through supply reduction and arrest of offenders.

At the same time, the group saw the education of drugs users as very important. Strategies centred around using the ACLO, Community Liaison Officer (CLO) and Youth Liaison Officer (YLO) to engage with education authorities to provide education to youth through schools, the PCYC and youth groups.

Another strategy proposed by the group was the diversion of users away from drug use and antisocial behaviour. The group proposed engaging with external agencies to identify diversion programs and activities and to establish referral networks through which young people could gain access to such programs.

#### *Objectives*

Six month objectives:

- reduction in drug-related crime
- reduction in drug use by Indigenous youth.

Twelve month objectives:

- ongoing reduction in crime
- positive development of youth through engagement in prosocial activities.

### Illegal and antisocial behaviour in identified premises

#### *The problem*

The problem addressed by this group concerned a problem premises in a particular area which was attracting illegal and antisocial behaviour.



### ***The strategy***

The group saw the primary objective as elimination of the criminal behaviour occurring in and around the premises, adopting a zero tolerance and highly visible policing approach. A major element of the suggested response to this behaviour was the gathering of intelligence to define the criminal problems occurring and the instigators and contributors to these offences. The targeting of criminal behaviour would positively influence community perceptions and reduce the fear of crime in the area.

The group saw engagement with the community, particularly the Indigenous community, as an important element in their strategic response. They suggested establishing a community focus group, with the ACLO as a primary member of the group. This group would help facilitate an interagency approach, with agreements set up to shape and inform the involvement of each agency. They saw capacity building within the Indigenous community as important to maintaining crime reduction and prevention efforts.

As a way of giving those involved in the problem behaviour a more positive outlet and focus for their activities, the group proposed establishing a community centre that would act as a gathering point. They also suggested a community safety audit, informed through door-knocking and direct engagement with the community, as a way to address perceptions and fear of crime.

The group emphasised the importance of being proactive in their engagement with the community and building support within the community to promote positive behaviours and crime prevention. One strategy proposed to achieve this was the delivery of workshops through which community representatives could work together on developing proactive solutions.

### ***Objectives***

Six month objectives:

- completion of intelligence gathering and analysis
- establishment of the community focus group
- development of an action plan by the community focus group
- assess results of high visibility policing and zero tolerance approaches and enforcement activities.

Twelve month objectives:

- receive funding for establishment of the community centre
- a measurable reduction in crime
- reduction in the perceptions of crime and fear of crime in the community

- awareness in the community of the services available to help offenders and those at risk
- continued communication with all agencies involved
- evaluation of the police and community response to the problem.

## **Cultural identification of Koori youth**

### ***The problem***

The problem addressed by this group concerned Koori youth not identifying and engaging with their culture and background.

### ***The strategy***

The group saw it as important that Koori youth were able to identify with their culture and strengthen their cultural identity as this would build resilience and capacity in the young people and reduce their involvement with the criminal justice system. They saw education, awareness, information provision and mentoring as the keys to developing cultural identification.

The group saw the best strategic approach to cultural development as very much lying in engagement with the community. They proposed identifying police and community members who could work together with the ACLO on building programs and services. The group saw it as critical to engage with families and the community to create plans based on a community code of conduct which would incorporate respect for country, property, other people and self.

The strategic approach put forward by the group emphasised the need to develop a solid capacity and grounding for building these programs and services. They identified the need to locate sources of funding and to begin engaging with funding agencies early on. Identifying or establishing Koori youth education officers was also an important practical step in the strategy.

Identifying the Koori youth who were at risk or would benefit from the program was another vital part of the strategy, with this identification taking place through consultation with school welfare coordinators. The group suggested targeting the program at those aged 10 to 11 years as this would be the optimal time for them to benefit and at which to intervene before any problem behaviours developed.

The group suggested a number of ways through which cultural identification and engagement could be enhanced. They suggested a range of activities, such as attendance at the Trust League and teaching young people about significant cultural sites in the local area.

## Objectives

Six month objectives:

- funding sources identified and funding arrangements in place
- a process developed and implemented to identify young people at risk
- creating an engagement process for families and the community
- contact with Koori community organisations
- establishment of agreements with Koori community organisations and other agencies in the form of MOUs
- developing a measuring and evaluation process, with review of progress every three months.

Twelve month objectives:

- the number of at risk young people identified, engaged, measured and reportable
- the number of young people participating in program, and whether they have engaged and stayed engaged with the program and services, measured and reportable
- MOUs in place where appropriate and being monitored for effectiveness
- families demonstrating improved confidence in the community and in their relationship with police
- an agreed number of police members having participated in the program.

## Drug and alcohol abuse in a remote regional centre

### The problem

The problem addressed by this group concerned drug and alcohol abuse occurring within the community of an identified regional centre located in a remote area, together with associated criminal behaviour and a lack of targeted resources and services.

### The strategy

The group saw the first objective for police as achieving a reduction in alcohol and drug-related offences such as family violence, property crime and antisocial behaviour through primary policing responses.

To assist the crime reduction effort and maintain its outcomes (and noting the lack of services in the identified area), the group proposed the establishment of a purpose-built facility for the rehabilitation of illicit drug and substance users. This would be a family-friendly facility which would help families to support users and to address problems within the user's immediate environment that might be contributing to their problem. Creation of the facility would be

accompanied by the appointment of a specialist drug and alcohol counsellor.

The group saw the proposed rehabilitation facility as being supported through an education program that would apply a harm minimisation approach in educating the community about the effects of drug and alcohol abuse. One way of promoting and delivering the education campaign could be to door-knock and invite targeted members of the community to attend an education barbecue or similar event.

In developing these responses, the group identified the need to adopt an interagency approach and encourage active and cooperative involvement across a range of agencies. They also saw it as important that rehabilitation efforts be accompanied by the availability of diversionary options and court alternatives that would allow referral to the proposed local drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility and services.

## Objectives

Six month objectives:

- a working program established with all involved parties engaged
- clients identified and taking part in a trial rehabilitation program
- the program and response reviewed and refined during this period
- community feedback from participants and agencies solicited, received and responded to as appropriate.

Twelve month objectives:

- expansion of the program into other major centres within the LAC
- review of the program undertaken, with assessment of its suitability for long-term retention
- continual feedback from stakeholders being received and responded to
- decrease in drug-related crime.

## Strategic information management

### The problem

The problem addressed by this group concerned the strategic collection and management of information used to inform an evidence-based response to substance misuse problems. The group identified that current systems are in need of an overhaul to improve the consistency and comparability of information.

### The strategy

The group identified the first main objective of the system overhaul as not to increase the current information collection requirements for police, but to collect the data with smarter, improved input

processes that would allow provision of a better understanding of broad issues. Another main objective was to use the data more effectively to identify and respond to current and emerging issues.

In achieving these objectives, the group noted the need to analyse current incident forms, software and programs to identify areas for improvement. They saw a need to collate current information systems to reduce fragmentation of information within and between programs. In turn, they saw this as a way towards improving the reporting capabilities of the systems.

The group saw the results of the information systems analysis as the key to progressing improvement of the systems, with the results of the analysis being used at

an appropriate corporate level to secure resources and develop a strategic program of redevelopment.

### **Objectives**

Six month objectives:

- liaison with stakeholders undertaken
- recommendations and options for systems improvement developed
- support for recommendations and options sought among corporate stakeholders and sponsors.

Twelve month objectives:

- change program for systems enhancement and a business case for its implementation developed.



## Workshop participants' perceptions of the current status of policing responses to drug problems in rural and remote communities

*Good practice framework: policing illicit drugs in rural and remote local communities* (Delahunty & Putt 2006b) outlines a systematic process that police can use to assess, plan respond to and evaluate drug problems in these communities. It considers these approaches from strategic (statewide), local district (regional) and local perspectives. Part of the Monograph contains a checklist that police can use to review and monitor how well drug problems are being addressed from each of these perspectives.

The Workshop participants were provided with a copy of the checklist that appears on pages 10 and 11 of *Good practice framework*. They were asked to provide an indication of how they rated existing policing practices in relation to each of the 37 aspects of good practice. They used a scale from one to three, with one representing a positive perception and three representing a negative perception. Each of the 37 aspects were rated from statewide, regional and local perspectives. There was variation in how participants completed the questionnaire. For instance, some participants only answered questions at one level (e.g. local) while others answered at two or three levels. Some participants did not answer all questions at any one level and some answered some questions at each level.

In total:

- 16 participants rated some or all of the practices from a statewide perspective
- 14 participants rated some or all of the practices from a regional perspective
- 24 participants rated some or all of the practices from a local perspective.

The results were then compiled and the scores for each of the 111 practices (37x3) averaged to provide an overview of the perceptions of participants. The authors of the Monograph divided the 37 aspects of good practice into six general topics, namely:

- drug strategies
- custodial safety
- communication and liaison
- education and training
- improving recruiting
- safety and crime prevention.

This enabled an average score to be applied to each of these general topics.

The results of this exercise provide a basic indication of how the workshop participants, who were a very small selection of those involved in policing illicit drug use in Indigenous communities, see relevant areas of practice. These results are not representative of the views of police more broadly, either within the areas and jurisdictions represented or beyond. While a similar exercise was conducted at the Alice Springs workshop, and the results presented in the report of that workshop, a different scale was used with each group of participants so the data are not comparable. The report of the Alice Springs workshop noted that the results of that exercise were likely skewed towards the situation in the Northern Territory. It is likely that these results will be similarly skewed towards situations relevant to New South Wales and Victoria and not necessarily those occurring elsewhere.

The results indicate that workshop participants felt that most practices and strategies were working reasonably well, but with room for improvement in many areas (see Table 1). At regional and local levels, participants saw the strengths of policing in what may be considered core policing activities such as assessing local drug crimes and intelligence networks, providing alternatives to arrest and charging, assessing local crime trends and in crime prevention information and advice. There were also generally positive responses to practices involving support and referral for Indigenous victims and witnesses and local complaints monitoring. Positive responses were also given to practices involving working at a community level, such as Aboriginal police liaison/community police and police/community meetings.

Participants were more critical in the areas of education and training and recruitment. There was a perceived lack of a resource list for Indigenous personnel and deficiencies in providing specialised training for those working in communities with a high proportion of Indigenous residents and encouraging local Indigenous community members to become involved in training. Recruitment was perceived as a problematic area, with deficiencies in strategies for targeting local Indigenous applicants, preparatory courses, career development assistance and mentoring programs for Indigenous applicants. While, as noted, the results from Mildura are not directly comparable with those from Alice Springs, it is worth noting that workshop participants in Alice Springs also noted education and training as an area particularly in need of recruitment. As noted in the report of that earlier workshop, there would be value in conducting a learning/needs analysis for police working in communities with a high proportion of Indigenous residents.

There could also be much to gain from working with local communities and Indigenous personnel to

**Table 1 Respondents' rating of existing police practices against good practice framework, at state, regional and local level**

Theme	Statewide	Regional	Local	Topic average
<b>Drug strategies</b>				
Assess local drug crime—seizures, charges, information	2.1	1.5	1.4	
Assess intelligence network	2.1	1.8	1.6	
Formal and informal meeting with local community regarding priorities in DLE	2.4	2.0	2.0	
Protocols with health and other services	2.3	2.1	2.3	
Agreed processes to manage and promote diversion of drug offenders	2.0	1.7	2.1	2.0
<b>Custodial safety</b>				
Local or regional alternatives to arrest/charging	2.0	1.8	1.6	
Local or regional alternatives to incarceration	2.4	2.0	1.9	
Protocols to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services, Aboriginal medical and community health services and other agencies	2.3	2.1	2.2	
Local complaints monitoring	2.0	1.6	1.6	
Use and /or promotion of other 'alternative services' e.g. community justice panels, elders, sobering-up centres, translators	2.1	2.0	2.2	
Improved prisoner screening processes and access to medical support and counselling services in watch houses	2.0	1.9	1.7	
Assessment of local or regional monitoring systems (arrest and/or complaints)	2.3	2.0	1.8	2.0
<b>Communications and liaison</b>				
Aboriginal police liaison/community police (or equivalent)	1.8	1.5	1.6	
Police/community meetings	2.1	1.8	1.7	
Relationships with other key agencies	2.2	2.2	2.0	
Participation in youth programs and activities (sporting and cultural)	2.3	2.2	2.0	
Respect for and/or participation in traditions/events/celebrations (not youth sporting and cultural events)	1.9	2.0	1.9	
Greater/improved support for Indigenous victims and witnesses	1.9	1.8	1.9	
Provide referral and/or advice on services available to Indigenous victims and witnesses	2.0	1.8	1.7	
Use of leaders and others with authority to convey information	2.5	2.4	2.2	2.0
<b>Education and training</b>				
Local level cultural training—ongoing	2.5	2.1	2.0	
Resource list of Indigenous personnel	2.7	2.6	2.4	
Specialist training for those in communities with significant Indigenous populations	2.6	2.5	2.2	
Specialist training for officers attending family violence incidents	2.3	2.3	2.0	
Encourage local Indigenous community members to become involved in training delivery	2.6	2.5	2.3	2.3
<b>Improving recruitment</b>				
Strategies targeting local Indigenous applicants	2.7	2.6	2.5	
Use appropriate and respected Indigenous representatives on selection and other panels	2.0	2.0	2.1	
Preparatory courses	2.3	2.4	2.3	
Identifying racist tendencies in applicants	2.0	2.0	2.5	
Career development assistance	2.6	2.2	2.4	
Mentoring program for Indigenous recruits	2.4	2.6	2.6	2.4
<b>Safety and crime prevention</b>				
Assess local crime trends	1.7	1.7	1.4	
Strategy to reduce family violence	2.1	1.9	1.8	
Multi-agency partnerships	2.1	2.3	1.9	
Assist Indigenous community to develop diversionary programs and to encourage their use	2.3	2.3	2.2	
Assist community to secure external funding for crime prevention initiatives	2.4	2.3	2.4	
Crime prevention and other information availability/accessibility	2.0	1.7	1.8	2.0

In the above table, scores that fall below 2.0 tend to indicate positive perceptions and these become more positive as the score approaches 1.0. At the other end of the scale, scores approaching 3.0 indicate more negative perceptions.

improve Indigenous peoples' access to employment in police services and supporting those already employed in shaping and directing their careers. Initiatives are underway in police agencies. For example, at the time of writing, the NSWPF was

due to release its *Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2009–2012* and was working with adult education and training providers on developing vocational pathways and school-based traineeships to assist Aboriginal people become police officers.

## Themes and issues

The case study presentations and group discussions at the workshop, particularly those in the context of the hypothetical scenarios, showed that any approach to illicit drug problems in Indigenous communities needs to recognise that the primary responsibility of police is to uphold their sworn duties under the law. The policing response needs to stop or reduce illegal and antisocial behaviour, reduce supply and take enforcement action against offenders. While the nature of responses needs to take into account the situations and community circumstances which occur, responding to illicit drug use will continue to involve core policing activities such as intelligence gathering, patrols, raids and arrests.

Police recognise that these first-line responses need to be exercised in conjunction with the development of interventions to maintain reductions in the level of crime and prevent further offending. Workshop participants strongly emphasised the importance of collaborative and cooperative approaches, working with other agencies at various levels of government, local councils and community representatives. At the same time, participants recognised that working in this way brought its own challenges. Some of these are discussed below.

A key theme of the workshop was the importance of maintaining good relations between police and the Aboriginal community. Regular and ongoing meetings and consultative groups were the main mechanism used throughout the case studies presented. Police also emphasised the importance of engaging in positive interactions with the community and especially young people in the community. Participation in sport was commonly presented as a way of achieving this engagement and also involving young people in prosocial, healthy activities. Many participants emphasised the key roles played by liaison officers, such as ACLOs, Aboriginal Police Liaison Officers (APLOs), CLOs and YLOs and examples were given of cases where these key people were seen as doing a crucial and effective job.

Participants emphasised the importance of the ACLO role, but also acknowledged that it can lack wider recognition and therefore result in ACLOs not being utilised as frequently as they could be. This can result from general-duty police not knowing enough about the role of ACLOs or how to most appropriately utilise their knowledge, relationships and the unique position they hold. The lack of proper police training and career path is a problem for ensuring that this knowledge, and the relationships ACLOs form, are preserved. This is an issue that needs to be addressed at a corporate level.

One area not discussed in depth, and which could be explored further, is the way in which liaison officers (especially ACLOs) balance their roles as both members of the Aboriginal community and members of the police service and how they manage conflicts that might arise from this duality. There was also some discussion about the important roles played by Aboriginal elders and families and this could also be explored further.

In addition to the specific roles played by liaison officers and others in the community, participants highlighted the way in which certain critical individuals contributed to much of the success seen in intervention programs. It was apparent that in order for a program to succeed, it must be led by enthusiastic and motivated people who are able to expend the energy and develop the relationships to drive the program. Where these people are involved, programs can readily achieve impressive outcomes. A key challenge for police services is setting up stable arrangements and processes that will allow programs and interventions to continue without reliance on particular individuals.

Workshop participants stressed that it is important to identify and understand drug abuse issues in the local community and the level of community support for drug law enforcement. This was linked to operational actions such as raids on houses and the need for police to have some sense of how the local community people might react to the raid. In relation to diversion and referrals, stress was placed on what services are available, whether protocols are in place (at state or regional level) and the need to build personal relationships and linkages with both drug-specific and Indigenous specific service providers. While a range of diversion programs were presented and discussed, and the target groups and processes varied, there was agreement that the focus of diversion should be on young people and on fostering community engagement among these young people.

A number of case studies presented at the workshop were from police working in cross border areas and a range of issues were identified as arising from the movement of offenders across borders and the need to work with the criminal justice system and other services in other jurisdictions. While there was some discussion of the measures police have enacted to resolve some of these issues, there was not discussion of how well police responses were connected with other services in adjoining jurisdictions or whether these services connected with each other.

One issue that arose from the region in which many of the participants were based was the impact of transportation routes that ran through these areas. While providing important regional transit points for legitimate transportation, these routes appear to have a direct role in allowing the transit of illicit drugs into

and through the regional centres. This is a problem that appears to be increasing, especially in relation to high quality hydroponically-grown cannabis containing large amounts of THC. It appears that at least some of the transportation of illicit drugs is controlled by Indigenous people.

While there was evidence at the workshop of illicit drugs being an increasing problem among Indigenous communities in New South Wales and Victoria, illicit drugs still have a fairly low level of visibility in crime and antisocial behaviour problems. Alcohol related crime remains the major direct or indirect contributor to the problem behaviours confronting police. Illicit drugs are more of an issue among urban Indigenous people, with use in some areas increasing at the same time that it is decreasing in the general community.

Throughout the workshop, a number of other issues of interest emerged through presentations and group discussions. One issue that arose in a number of areas was balancing resources available for services and interventions between the specific needs of the Indigenous community and the needs of the general community. With only limited resources available, focusing these on the Indigenous community may mean that others in the local community fail to receive the services and interventions they need. This can undermine the effectiveness of crime reduction and prevention efforts and potentially cause problems and lead to resentment in the broader community. The extent to which this is an issue will vary between communities, depending on the availability of resources, the size of the Indigenous community, the extent of offending and relationships between the police, the Indigenous community and other parts of the community.

Management of collaborative interagency relationships was a major theme of the workshop. While presenters and participants emphasised the necessity and benefits of interagency approaches, they also noted areas of difficulty. A critical aspect of managing an interagency approach has been resolving issues around funding, particularly competition for limited funds. With each agency trying to secure their piece of funding, those most in need of the funds, particularly children, can be left out of the equation and fail to receive the services they need.

While many participants suggested committees as an integral component of strategic responses, both in the

case studies and in hypotheticals, it was also clear that a good deal of time and resources could be used up in organising and participating in committees, without progress necessarily being made. Committee structures were sometimes seen as blocking police responses, as police would develop plans and be prepared to go ahead, while other committee members failed to reach agreement. The failure of some agencies to engage with others or contribute to attempts at achieving cooperative and collaborative responses could create a great deal of tension.

In one case where an interagency approach was attempted, police encountered a number of barriers from other agencies that stifled attempts to achieve a collaborative response. In this case, police felt that other agencies lacked appreciation of the extent of issues confronting the community. At the same time, they had sufficient appreciation of the problems to cite occupational health and safety grounds for not attending the community or providing services directly to it. Other agencies also became unclear as to what they could do or how their services could be applied to addressing the broad range of problems in the community. Police eventually advised these agencies to simply continue doing their core business and delivering core services, but concentrating these on the affected community.

Some police expressed concerns about the advice given by some legal representatives to Aboriginal clients, whom they advise not to speak to police. As entry to most diversion programs is subject to the offender making admissions, this leaves police with no option to charge offenders and contributes to the numbers of Aboriginal people in custody.

As indicated by the surveys completed by participants, education and training is a major issue for police services in equipping members to work with Indigenous communities. There is a strong need for localised cultural awareness training that recognises local problems and issues, including understanding relationships within and between local families and how these might create risk or resilience factors. Generic corporate models for cultural awareness training do not reflect the diversity of Indigenous communities or provide the local specialisation identified by participants as a critical element of training.



## Conclusion

Illicit drug use is a problem for Indigenous communities in New South Wales and Victoria, though it is largely overshadowed by the prominence of alcohol as a contributing factor to much Indigenous offending. Participants at the Mildura workshop indicated that information presented at the workshop, through the findings of the NDLERF research and environmental scans, had made them aware that illicit drug use may be more of an emerging issue than they realised. If the workshop helped to raise police awareness of the potential for illicit drugs to become a problem in their area and contributed to a more proactive approach to this issue, then it was a successful exercise.

It appears there is a range of differences between urban, regional and remote communities when it comes to policing illicit drug use. Wide variations in the proportion of Indigenous people in a given community, the extent of their cultural identification, family and kin relationships and activities of Indigenous organisations, services and community representatives, as well as non-specific services, can change the nature of crime and justice issues and how police shape their responses. To the extent possible, police must ensure that their responses take into account the needs of the whole community and recognise those elements of offending by Indigenous people that are not necessarily linked to their Indigenous status. In urban communities, Indigenous residents may not have strong cultural identification or affiliation and the underlying causes of their offending may not be different from those of non-Indigenous residents of the same community. The response to illicit drug use and other behaviours among these Indigenous residents may not be different from the response to other residents.

The differences in policing responses to illicit drug use in urban Indigenous communities highlighted by this workshop suggest a strong need for further research in this area. The inclusion of police from

urban locations enabled the workshop to explore the links between urban and non-urban Aboriginal drug use and distribution. The workshop highlighted particular issues and patterns of use among urban Aboriginal drug users and some of the particular difficulties experienced in targeting urban Aboriginal illicit drug use. Group discussions provided opportunities to build on material presented by police from Melbourne and Sydney and suggested there would be value in conducting research to look further into urban issues. The NDLERF Board of Management may wish to consider funding an extension of the previous research to build a greater understanding of illicit drug use patterns and issues in urban Indigenous communities and develop a good practice framework for these communities.

The Mildura workshop provided a good example of research being operationalised and put into practice. As was the case with previous workshops in Darwin, Cairns, Nhulunby, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs, it provided an excellent opportunity for those directly involved in managing the subject issues to share information, experiences, strategies and good practice. It was clear that there are commonalities in the approaches taken by police and that these are consistent with the good practice framework in Monograph 15A. At the same time, it was apparent that operational police and personnel, such as ACLOs from different areas, have a great deal they can learn from one another and that the opportunity to network and share with others stands to produce great benefits. Following on from the success of the previous workshops, it is suggested that the NDLERF Board of Management may wish to consider funding other such workshops in the future.

Having the authors of the research and framework facilitating the workshops helped to make it directly relevant and applicable. Their independence from policing operations was also beneficial. If further workshops are to be held, it is recommended that Mr Delahunty and Dr Putt again act as facilitators.

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