



Australian Government

Australian Institute of Criminology

Crime Stoppers Victoria: An Evaluation

Dennis Challenger

Technical and Background Paper

No. 8

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Disclaimer

This research report does not necessarily reflect the policy position of the Australian government.

1 Crime Stoppers: a global phenomenon

The origin of Crime Stoppers

In 1976 an American police officer, Greg MacAleese, was frustrated by his lack of progress investigating a murder at a service station on a busy Albuquerque street. He convinced a local television station to make and screen a re-enactment of the incident to encourage local residents to provide information to assist his investigation. Moreover, he offered a cash reward (apparently from his own pocket), and assured any caller of anonymity. The early 1970s had seen a number of police-based programs in the United States that used cash rewards and anonymity as their primary incentives, but Officer MacAleese was the first to feature the media in a central role (Rosenbaum, Lurigio & Lavrakas 1987: 2). Information received in response to the media broadcast led to an arrest within five days and that success led to the creation of the Crime Stoppers concept.

Crime Stoppers Victoria

Crime Stoppers Victoria (CSV) commenced operation in 1987. It followed a Churchill Fellowship report by Geoff Wilkinson, then director of media for Victoria Police, who had comprehensively surveyed existing programs in America and Britain for enlisting the community in 'crime solution' (Wilkinson 1987). He recommended that Victoria Police implement a program involving the police, media and the public. The police subsequently employed the Crime Stoppers concept.

Victoria's Crime Stoppers program is one of over 1,000 operating around the world. All have the same features – the provision of a free phone hotline for information to be passed anonymously to the police with a possible reward if that information leads to resolution of a criminal matter. CSV currently describes itself on its web site (www.vic.crimestoppers.com.au) as 'a community-based initiative which encourages members of the public to provide information on unsolved crimes, wanted people and people they know are involved in criminal activity.'

The web site also states that Crime Stoppers is 'a unique program that is based on a joint effort between the community, police and the media.' In practice the community is represented by the board of management of Crime Stoppers Victoria Ltd, an incorporated non-profit company. The board meets monthly to approve rewards, review promotional and fundraising activities, set policy and plan future strategies. Police staff the Crime Stoppers call centre, where they receive and process crime information then refer it to appropriate investigators. The media publicise details of particular crimes and 'wanted' people, as well as reporting arrests and providing crime prevention advice. Involving these three groups is a fundamental basis for any Crime Stoppers program. Carriere and Ericson (1989: 1) provide a succinct description of Crime Stoppers as 'a charitable, non-profit, community-based criminal control program that operates through the cooperative efforts of the public, the mass media and the police.'

The key features of Crime Stoppers programs

Apart from being based on community, police and media cooperation, all Crime Stoppers programs offer a toll-free hotline, anonymity to callers and the possibility of a reward. These last two features are often strongly presented, as for instance in the opening screen for the UK Crimestoppers Trust web site which reads 'Anonymous information about crime could earn a cash reward.' The UK web site is at www.crimestoppers-uk.org. (Note that in Britain the program title is Crimestoppers, rather than the two-word Crime Stoppers used elsewhere in the world.)

From Wisconsin USA, the Green Bay Area Crime Stoppers web site (www.gbcs.org) opens:

The Green Bay Area Crime Stoppers, Inc. is a program which involves the public, the media and the police in a fight against crime.

It offers anonymity and cash rewards to persons who furnish information leading to the arrest and filing of criminal charges against felony crime offenders and to the capture of fugitives.

Anonymity overcomes fear of involvement and cash overcomes apathy.

And from Canada's National Capital Area Crime Stoppers (www.crimestoppers.org):

Crime Stoppers pays cash for confidential information that helps police solve crimes. We are a charitable organisation that raises money, we are not funded by government grants. You don't give your name, we want your information not your identity.

Anonymity

Of these two features (anonymity and reward), it is anonymity that is arguably the more important. Lippert (2002: 488) puts the matter very baldly – 'From its birth, anonymity has been the linchpin of [Crime Stoppers]. Without it the program collapses like a house of cards.' The UK Crimestoppers Trust puts it less flamboyantly on their web site. 'Callers with information on crime are not asked their name. This anonymity is the key to the scheme's success, because it provides callers with complete safety from any reprisals.'

It also means that callers will not find themselves 'caught up in the system' as they do not run the risk of being called to give evidence in court. They can feel they have done their civic duty without any onerous consequences. The importance of anonymity cannot be overstated. After all, citizens know they can call the police at any time to report criminal matters, but they also know that their name will be recorded and that it could become known to others. And that may be a real disincentive to them.

Those running Crime Stoppers programs are well aware of the importance of maintaining the anonymity of their callers and do what is necessary to preserve it. In recent times that has involved providing advice in response to the threat to anonymity from technical advances in communication like 'caller ID' (which Crime Stoppers does not use). As an example, Wichita Crime Stoppers in the United States specifically advises callers on their web site (www.wichitapolice.com): 'when calling Crime Stoppers do not use a cordless phone or cell phone. These are not secure lines and people with scanners could hear your call.' Crime Stoppers coordinators in the United States also tell callers to 'erase their call memory so that the last number dialed cannot be discovered or to immediately switch to a landline if using a cellphone' (Lippert 2002: 490).

Anonymity is scrupulously preserved by CSV notwithstanding their operators invariably asking callers if they would be happy to provide their name and a contact number. CSV operators explain that sometimes it is very useful for an investigator to be able to re-contact the caller for elaboration of some point. On many occasions the caller agrees to provide their personal details, but they are not forwarded automatically to the investigator. The details are noted in the CSV database and will only be passed to the investigator on request.

If the caller wishes to remain anonymous the operator makes no issue of it. However, if the operator believes that the investigator would most certainly want the opportunity to speak with the caller they suggest the call be transferred to the investigator. This happens from time to time and much valuable information has been acquired as a result.

Rewards

Crime Stoppers Victoria has found that many callers have no interest in a reward. In 2001–02, only 23 callers requested and received rewards. This reluctance to collect a monetary reward appears to be the Crime Stoppers experience around the world. A recent British evaluation (Gresham et al. 2001: 4) notes that:

most people eligible for rewards do not actually claim them...however most [police] officers interviewed believed that the possibility of a reward may be important to some callers whose information is especially valuable.

In the United States, Central Wyoming Crime Stoppers note on their web site (www.crime-stoppers.com) that 107 rewards had been paid compared with 302 which were declined. And the Wichita Crime Stoppers web site describes their research into the use of rewards in which they found that 'over 54 per cent of respondents reported crime to Crime Stoppers because it was the right thing to do. Only 39 per cent reported crime solely for the reward money' (www.wichitapolice.com). There are therefore two types of callers to Crime Stoppers who were identified back in 1983 as the 'good citizen' (who are assumed to be content with 'moral rewards') and 'criminals themselves' (who are believed to be driven by revenge but will happily accept a monetary reward too) (Lippert 2002: 495–6). It appears that in most Crime Stoppers programs the good citizen is in the majority – that is certainly true for Victoria.

The possibility that people would not give information direct to the police because they could now get money for doing so was an initial objection to the Crime Stoppers concept (Carriere 1987: 106) and seen as immoral (Rosenbaum & Lurigio 1985: 58). But in practice, around the world, it appears that rewards are not important for most callers. This is supported by American research which showed that variations in reward size had no effect on the willingness of callers to provide information (Rosenbaum, Lurigio & Lavrakas 1987: 48–49). The view of rewards is somewhat idiosyncratically put on the Queensland Crime Stoppers web site (www.police.qld.au/pr/program/crime):

[Some] information often comes from the fringe element of criminal society and this is why it is necessary to have a reward fund as an incentive for these people to phone...It is important to note that Crime Stoppers is not funded by the government, but by community sponsorship. We, like everyone else, have limited resources and rewards cannot be paid to every person who assists the police. It would be a sad day if every person expected a reward for giving information. As previously stated, Crime Stoppers rewards are generally for those who are not public-spirited enough to call the police without some incentive.

That Queensland view is somewhat blunt. Most Crime Stoppers programs will publicise the possibility of a reward in a less pointed way. One American program puts it directly – 'crime doesn't pay but we do.'

An interesting reflection on rewards is provided by a recent arson attack on an American school that was solved after Crime Stoppers publicity about it. Independently the insurance company involved had offered a \$25,000 reward for information, but the Crime Stoppers program had already received tips with the names of the suspects (Caller 2002). Plainly the caller in that case was not holding back on the off chance of a reward.

Toll-free telephone hotline

In the majority of cases the Crime Stoppers hotline number is readily identifiable as being toll-free but even so, Crime Stoppers programs will often state that explicitly. For instance, the UK Crimestoppers Trust states on its web site that it 'is the only UK charity aimed at putting criminals behind bars through an anonymous freephone number...' Nevertheless in a survey of the public in Gloucestershire, 63 per cent of respondents said it was not important to them that a call to Crimestoppers was free (Fletcher 1997: 11).

Previous evaluation of Crime Stoppers

A number of modest studies of aspects of Crime Stoppers programs have been completed over the past 26 years, and the more easily acquired of them are referred to within this report. However there are only three widely available published evaluations – from the USA (1987), Canada (1989) and the UK (2001). In some part the lack of research seems to have been because of the assumption that the only measure of success would be the number of apprehensions of offenders that could be attributed to Crime Stoppers, and that is challenging. Carriere and Ericson (1989: 81) in their Canadian evaluation put it strongly:

It is impossible to directly evaluate the effectiveness of Crime Stoppers programs in apprehending criminal suspects. By guaranteeing anonymity to tipsters, Crime Stoppers effectively precludes systematic observation of the manner in which informants obtain incriminating evidence about the behaviour of others. Hence it is impossible to determine whether Crime Stoppers is actually solving crimes that would have otherwise remained a mystery, or if the organisation is simply diverting calls from traditional channels of communication that exist between the public and the police.

Further, the validity of arrest statistics 'is undermined to the extent that many of these cases would have been cleared even if the program did not exist' (Carriere & Ericson 1989: i). Carriere and Ericson's seminal research was subtitled 'a study in the organisation of community policing' and they analysed one specific Crime Stoppers program to see how it added to the community policing movement at the time. It was not, therefore, an evaluation of the program in a general sense, although it concluded that Crime Stoppers was successful in representing itself as 'the embodiment of law and order' (Carriere & Ericson 1989: 88) and appeared to have been 'highly effective in penetrating images of its effectiveness into the public consciousness' (Rosenbaum, Lurigio & Lavrakas 1987: vii).

In an earlier US study, Rosenbaum and colleagues (1987) published a report of a two-year study entitled 'Crime Stoppers: a national evaluation of program operations and effects.' The study included a telephone screening survey of all known Crime Stoppers programs, mailed questionnaires to program coordinators, board members and media executives, and provided case studies of two sites.

Their general findings were positive but mostly descriptive – Crime Stoppers was a highly standardised program, was visible and well received by media executives, and generated citizen participation. However 'accurately documenting the performance of Crime Stoppers programs [was] a very difficult task because of measurement problems...[and] identifiable limitations of...record-keeping practices' (Rosenbaum, Lurigio & Lavrakas 1987: vii). Nevertheless Crime Stoppers 'can be viewed as cost-effective...for every crime solved Crime Stoppers recovers, on the average, more than \$6,000 in stolen property and narcotics. Nationally a felony case was solved for every 73 dollars spent in caller reward money' (Rosenbaum, Lurigio & Lavrakas 1987: v). Many recommendations of an administrative nature were made.

No further published studies of Crime Stoppers appeared until the British Home Office's national evaluation in 2001 (Gresham et al. 2001; Gresham, Stockdale & Bartholomew 2003). It found that:

- Crime Stoppers own figures for effectiveness underestimated their actual worth;
- the Crime Stoppers message was getting to the public;
- up to 17 per cent of actionable calls led to clearance of offences; and
- a significant number of calls (and arrests) related to drug-related offending.

Details of this British study appear in later chapters where they are compared with CSV data.

2 Crime Stoppers Victoria in action

CSV's core activity

The core activity for CSV is providing a facility for the receipt of anonymous telephone calls from the public about possible criminal activity, and ensuring that the resulting information reaches those whose responsibility it is to investigate such matters. The Crime Stoppers unit of the Victoria Police therefore operates a call centre from which operators (including both sworn members and civilian staff) take calls from the public. The CSV operators make handwritten notes of the caller's comments and if they assess them as potentially useful to investigators they are logged into a computer database called Cypher.

The operator prepares an information report within Cypher which is validated by a senior police member, not only to ensure it is accurate, but also to make certain it does not compromise the anonymity of the caller. For instance, even the use of 'he' or 'she' rather than 'the caller' in any information report could compromise the caller. After validation, the information report is electronically forwarded to the appropriate investigating area.

For information reports that refer to offences other than drug matters, that appropriate investigating area is either the relevant squad (murders to the homicide squad, rape to the sexual crimes squad, and so on) or the district information management unit (DIMU) covering the location where the offence is alleged to have occurred. After assessment, the DIMU allocates the information report to a local crime investigation unit (CIU), to a regional response unit (RRU) or to uniformed members at a local police station.

Drug-related information reports are forwarded to the drug intelligence data centre (DIDC) where they are first checked against existing intelligence on drug activity. The DIDC thus act as a third party, and they decide whether the information report will remain with the drug squad or whether it will be forwarded to the relevant DIMU.

Any call alleging police misbehaviour is directly referred to the ethical standards department. Calls relating to matters in other states are referred to Crime Stoppers programs in those states. Calls relating to Commonwealth matters are referred to the Australian Federal Police (if criminal) or to the relevant Commonwealth department (such as Taxation or Immigration).

The eventual recipient of the information report within the Victoria Police is asked to inform CSV if the information was: 'of value and led to an arrest,' 'of value though no arrest was made,' 'retained for intelligence purposes only' or was 'of no value.' If no response is received after 90 days, a 'chaser' is automatically sent to the nominated recipient of the information report by Cypher. The chaser specifically asks, 'did this information lead to an arrest,' and if it did, further information is sought regarding property recovered or drugs seized. If there is no response within the next 90 days, a further chaser is automatically sent until a response is received. Recipients can respond to the chaser in hard copy or electronically through the Victoria Police intranet. Telephoned responses to information reports are not acceptable.

The nature of calls to CSV

It should not be thought that the calls received at the CSV call centre all take the same form. Incoming calls could be classified into the categories listed below, however that is not done as a matter of course. It is not a CSV priority and would not be of much value in CSV's day-to-day operations. Nevertheless, from the point of view of understanding the nature of CSV's activities, it is necessary to consider the categories of calls. They comprise:

- calls initiated by callers who have information or knowledge about apparent illegal or irregular activity;

-
- calls responding to police requests for assistance relating to major crimes that have occurred (crimes that particularly catch the public's attention, such as the Wales-King murders in mid-2002, can lead to a large rush of calls);
 - calls in response to regular Crime Stoppers publicity in newspapers, on television and local radio;
 - calls prompted by news reports of criminal incidents in mainstream media or local suburban newspapers where the Crime Stoppers hotline is mentioned at the conclusion of the article;
 - calls relating to major incidents where CSV acts as a collection point for information about major incidents (for instance, following the Bali bombings in October 2002, concerned families were publicly requested by government to ring the Crime Stoppers phone number to assist with identification of victims; CSV staff took details from families of missing persons who had personal items that might have been useful to identify fatalities; in November 2002 the public were asked to call Crime Stoppers if they had any information or observations about possible terrorist activity);
 - calls reporting unusual behaviour of concern to the caller;
 - misdirected calls or 'wrong numbers';
 - nuisance calls;
 - calls from Victoria Police members seeking further information from CSV staff about information reports they have received; and
 - calls from people who have previously called either providing more information, or seeking an update or requesting a reward.

Despite the fact that incoming calls are not categorised, the Cypher database provides some indication of the type of calls taken. When Cypher is accessed following a phone call, operators must classify the reason for that access. The Cypher statistics for the 12-month period defined below show that from a total of 7,914 instances when Cypher was accessed:

- 5,353 constituted 'new information' being entered into Cypher;
- 1,701 were 'police inquiries' invariably following up an information report they had received;
- 426 provided 'further information' about a matter previously recorded in Cypher;
- 349 were 'caller inquiries' usually seeking follow-up information or enquiring about rewards; and
- 84 were 'nuisance calls' recorded formally because of the persistence of a particular serial nuisance caller against whom evidence was being gathered.

It is plain from the above categories that only some of the calls that are received by Crime Stoppers have the potential to lead to the arrest of an offender. That becomes an issue in Chapter 3 where the 'success' of Crime Stoppers is discussed.

The 12-month period

In order to examine how CSV calls are handled it is necessary to collect data for a given period of time. In this report, the relevant '12-month period' – a phrase used hereafter – is from 1 October 2001 to 30 September 2002. That period was selected for two reasons. First, the Cypher database has only been in full operation since August 2001 and while some old data have been added, complete data could only be assured after that date. Second, that period allows a three-month follow-up period when records were reviewed up to the end of December 2002.

The volume of calls to CSV

All mainland Australian Crime Stoppers programs use the same hotline number – 1 800 333 000 – and calls from within a state are automatically connected to that state's Crime Stoppers program by Telstra. Tasmania is an exception. It has its own hotline number (1 800 005 555) and if anyone in Tasmania telephones the mainland hotline they are connected to CSV, who will refer them back to their own Crime Stoppers free-call number (without logging the call in Cypher).

Telstra provides monthly statistics of calls that are made to the hotline number from around Australia, sorting them into 'successful' and 'unsuccessful' calls. From Telstra's point of view, a successful call is one that is connected to the dialled number, after which the duration of the call is recorded. An unsuccessful call is one that was not connected at all, and has a duration of zero in the Telstra statistics.



The Telstra statistics preserve the anonymity of the caller and the statistics are broken down into states and territories, using the Telstra exchange from which the call originated. Telstra reported 139,375 calls from around Australia to the hotline in the 12-month period, and 14.3 per cent of them (19,880 calls) were directed to CSV.

However there were also 12,649 calls from mobile telephones and Telstra cannot say to which particular Crime Stoppers program they were directed. CSV operators know they get some calls from mobile telephones so there are certainly more calls to CSV than the 19,880 recorded by Telstra. In addition there are another 1,666 calls which are not able to be 'matched' to a telephone exchange by Telstra, some of which would probably have come to Victoria.

It is already plain that the number of calls received by CSV is difficult to quantify. However there are further practical issues that mean some of the calls that are received should not be counted as 'real' Crime Stoppers calls. For instance, some of the inward calls are wrong numbers, many of those being for a Victorian motoring organisation whose number is only one digit different from the Crime Stoppers number.

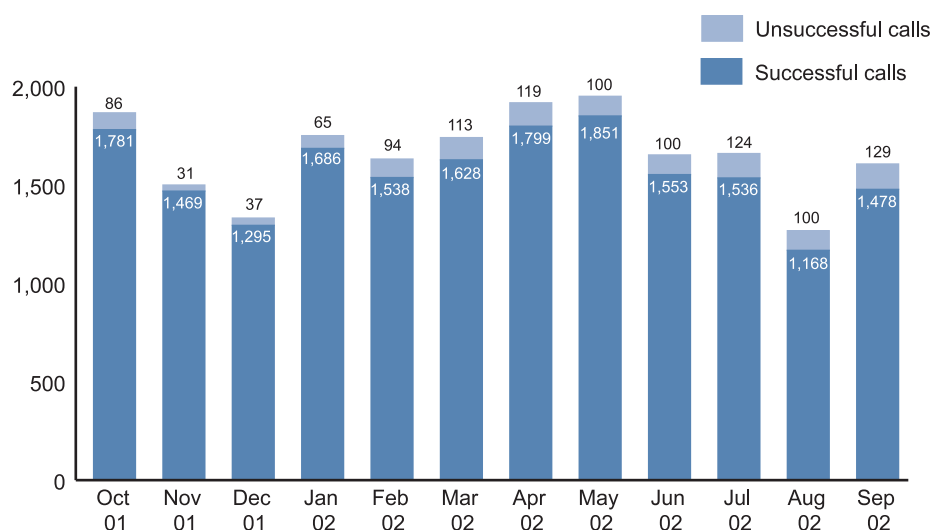
Then there are other practices that make it difficult to discover the volume of 'useful' calls to CSV. For instance, the Crime Stoppers column in the *Ballarat*

Courier newspaper includes two Crime Stoppers phone numbers with its logo. One is the Australia-wide toll-free hotline, the second is a contact number at the Ballarat police headquarters. Calls to this last number are not referred to the CSV call centre so are lost from any Crime Stoppers call statistics.

Further difficulties exist with measuring the volume of inward calls to CSV. All the 1 800 calls are passed through CSV's internal phone system. That system organises caller traffic, monitors call activity and produces call statistics. For the 12-month period, the system reported 26,647 calls, but only 21,726 of them were actually answered rather than abandoned by the caller or transferred by the system. The internal phone system's total also includes internal telephone traffic within the police department and other calls related to day-to-day office activity.

While the internal phone figures are used to measure CSV call activity, they include a substantial and unknown number of calls which are *not* information calls from the public. As those calls cannot be isolated from the other calls through the internal system, these figures cannot be used as a reliable

Figure 1: Number of calls to CSV by month of the year



indicator of Crime Stoppers calls from the public. In any event, the British evaluation (Gresham et al. 2001) with which comparison will be made later is based on British Telecom call figures, so the Telstra call data alone will be used here.

Of the 19,880 calls directed to CSV by Telstra in the 12-month period, 95 per cent (or 18,782) were successfully connected to the CSV call centre. Figure 1 shows that these calls to CSV were not uniformly received over the months of the year, with November, December and August being slow months. Whether these are recurring seasonal differences could only be established by analysing data for a number of years.

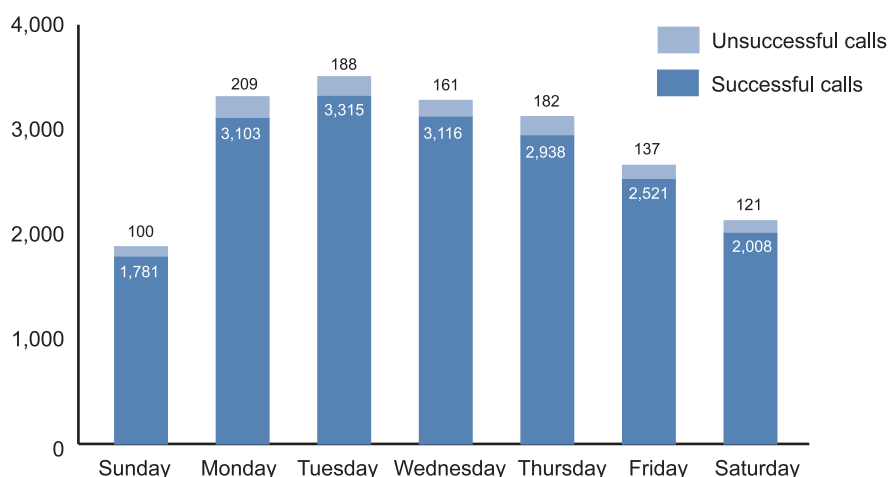
Nor were these calls evenly distributed over the days of the week. Figure 2 shows calls peaking on Tuesdays, and dropping off at weekends. The Tuesday peak in calls is explained by the fact that the weekly Crime Stoppers television segment screens on Monday nights, and the regular weekly 'Victoria's most wanted' page appears in the *Herald Sun* newspaper on Tuesdays.

Calls to Crime Stoppers: Australian comparisons

As already noted, Telstra reported 139,375 calls to the Australian Crime Stoppers hotline during the 12-month period. One of those calls was excluded from this sample as Telstra records showed it lasted for over 15 hours. The jurisdiction where the call was logged agreed that the most likely explanation was that the caller was inadvertently left connected overnight. The origins of the remaining 139,374 calls are presented in Table 1. Of these, 89 per cent (or 123,871) were successful calls, although significant variations in this rate can be seen across the jurisdictions. Most notably, NSW and the ACT had low successful call rates. Low rates were also recorded for calls from mobile phones, and calls that Telstra was not able to source (the 'unmatched' calls).

Table 1 also shows that the average duration of the unmatched and mobile calls were both over a minute shorter than the average for all calls. So too were calls originating from Tasmania which, as explained earlier, would simply have been referred back to that state's own hotline. The calls from these three sources are different from the others and are also removed from further analysis.

Figure 2: Number of calls to CSV by day of the week



The remaining five states and two territories – the ‘mainland’ sample – received 124,593 calls and that total appears at the foot of Table 1. The successful call rate for the mainland is just under 90 per cent. NSW (77%) and the ACT (78%) have significantly lower rates than the other jurisdictions. These low rates may be explained by the fact that the Crime Stoppers units in NSW and the ACT only offered an answering service during business hours in the 12-month period.

Table 1 shows that the average mainland call had a duration of 198 seconds (that is, three minutes and 18 seconds). CSV records the lowest average call duration on the mainland at just under three minutes, or almost half a minute short of the mainland average, and over a minute less than the South Australian average. Of course longer does not necessarily mean better. Victorian callers might simply present their information more rapidly or clearly. In general the length of a call depends on the content of the call, the detail that the caller wants to impart, and their ability to do so. However, the length of a call can be impacted by the behaviour of the call-taker. It may be that CSV call-takers are more efficient. Conversely it may be that the CSV call-takers do not take time to tease out more information from callers. No conclusions can be drawn here. The only way to throw any light on the differences in average call duration would be to compare call-takers’ training, practice and ‘skill’ across the different jurisdictions.

There are other ways of looking at the distribution of the calls to Crime Stoppers on the Australian mainland. An obvious choice is to calculate the rate of calls per population. However in this sense Victoria performs worst, registering only 41 calls per 10,000 population in the 12-month period (see Table 2). When the distribution of the Australian mainland population is considered, it is apparent that both Victoria and NSW are under-represented with respect to attracting calls to Crime Stoppers. Table 2 clearly shows that it is the ACT, Western Australia and South Australia where Crime Stoppers is apparently enthusiastically embraced. Indeed ACT residents appear to be four times, and West Australians three times, more likely to make a call to Crime Stoppers than are Victorians.

Looking a little bit deeper at the Victorian situation, city residents are more likely to call Crime Stoppers than are country dwellers. City residents call at a rate of 45 per 10,000 population, while the rate for the country is only 30 per 10,000 and that is a low rate indeed.

Table 1: Calls to Crime Stoppers hotline in the 12-month period

Jurisdiction	Total number of calls	Percentage successful calls	Average duration of successful calls (seconds)
Vic.	19,880	94.5	172
NSW	32,264	77.1	184
Qld	26,169	93.7	202
WA	24,963	97.1	203
SA	15,086	94.9	240
ACT	5,176	77.6	214
NT	1,055	95.5	205
Tas.	466	96.8	107
Mobiles	12,649	82.2	132
Unmatched*	1,666	75.6	120
Total	139,374	88.9	192
Mainland total	124,593	89.7	198

* Calls that Telstra were not able to source to a jurisdiction

Of course one reason for differences in the volume of calls might simply lie in the differing levels of crime across the jurisdictions. If there is little crime in one jurisdiction it might be expected there would be fewer calls there to Crime Stoppers. Victoria has for many years had the lowest crime rate in Australia as reported by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, so this seems a possibility here. When ABS crime statistics are used to calculate a rate of calls to Crime Stoppers per 1,000 reported crimes, Victoria's relative position improves only marginally (see Table 3). Victoria's rate of 68 per 1,000 reported crimes is higher than that of NSW (60) and the Northern Territory (56), but it is still well below the mainland average and well in arrears of the ACT (249) and Western Australia (135). Just why this should be is beyond the scope of this evaluation – only a thorough review of Crime Stoppers activities in other jurisdictions would produce any explanations. Nevertheless it is hard to see why the Victorian rate is as low as it is. Victoria's achieving the mainland average would translate into an additional 5,262 calls per year, an increase of 26 per cent over the present level of calls.

Table 2: Rates of calls by population to Crime Stoppers hotline in the 12-month period

Jurisdiction	Total number of calls	Calls per 10,000 population	% of all mainland calls	% of Australian mainland population
Vic.	19,880	41	16.0	25.4
NSW	32,264	49	25.9	34.8
Qld	26,169	72	21.0	19.1
WA	24,963	131	20.0	10.0
SA	15,086	100	12.1	8.0
ACT	5,176	161	4.2	1.7
NT	1,055	53	0.8	1.0
Mainland total	124,593	66	100.0	100.0

Table 3: Rates of calls by reported crime to Crime Stoppers hotline in the 12-month period

Jurisdiction	Total number of calls	Total number of crimes*	Calls per 1,000 reported crimes
Vic.	19,880	294,421	68
NSW	32,264	541,806	60
Qld	26,169	235,124	111
WA	24,963	184,631	135
SA	15,086	146,557	103
ACT	5,176	20,788	249
NT	1,055	18,679	56
Mainland total	124,593	1,442,006	86

* ABS 2002

Table 4: Classification by offence of CSV information reports prepared between October 2001 and September 2002

Offence	No.	%	Offence	No.	%
Drugs (cultivate manufacture, traffic)	2,450	46.3	Burglary (aggravated)	16	0.3
Drugs (possess, use)	13	0.2	Burglary (other)	66	1.2
Total drugs	2,463	46.5	Burglary (residential)	38	0.7
			Total burglary	120	2.2
Theft from motor vehicle	20	0.4			
Theft of motor vehicle	105	2.0	Robbery	236	4.5
Total vehicle crime	125	2.4	Total robbery	236	4.5
Deception	118	2.2	Arson	61	1.2
Theft (other)	120	2.3	Handle stolen goods	119	2.2
Theft (shopsteal)	15	0.3	Nuisance	51	1.0
Theft of bicycle	4	0.1	Other indictable	233	4.4
Total theft	257	4.9	Other summary	377	7.1
			Property damage	14	0.3
Abduction	64	1.2	Traffic (serious)	124	2.3
Assault (indictable)	117	2.2	Warrants	136	2.6
Assault (summary)	46	0.9	Total other	1,115	21.1
Homicide	587	11.1			
Rape	55	1.0			
Sex offence (non-rape)	108	2.0			
Total violence	977	18.4			
			Grand total	5,293	100.0

Table 5: Comparison of offences in information reports from Victoria and Britain (%)

	Victoria	Britain
Drug offences	47	34
Vehicle crime	2	13
Theft	5	10
Violence against the person	18	7
Burglary	2	4
Robbery	5	4
Other	21	28

The above discussion has centred on the raw number of calls to the Crime Stoppers hotline recorded by Telstra. But the number of calls alone is only one indicator of performance. The value of the information provided in those calls is arguably a better measure. Obviously a few calls of great value are far more beneficial than a large number of meaningless calls. The following section looks a little closer at the content of CSV's calls. The value of those calls to CSV is explored in the next chapter.

The content of calls to CSV

As indicated above, 18,782 calls were successfully connected to the CSV call centre in the 12-month period, and CSV operators generated 5,293 information reports from them. Records of the 13,489 calls that did not generate information reports only exist as operators' notes and it is not possible to say anything about them. The calls for which information reports were generated were classified by the CSV operators into the offence types shown in Table 4. That classification was made on the basis of the information reported to the operator at the time. Subsequent investigation of this information occasionally led to a person being arrested for an offence different from that original classification (however, this was not frequent). For instance, in one case a caller reported seeing an apparent vehicle licence plate switch, but the investigation led to an arrest for burglary. And it is easy to see a report of drug use eventually leading to an arrest for drug cultivation.

The distribution of offences in Table 4 is quite different from that reported in the British evaluation (Gresham et al. 2001: 2). A comparison with Victoria is provided in Table 5. Crime Stoppers calls in Victoria are far more likely to involve drug offences, with almost half of the calls leading to information reports being related to the more serious drug offences.

Victoria's relatively high number of calls relating to violence against the person is explained by the number relating to homicide. These are the calls made in response to police requests for information relating to particular incidents that occurred during the 12-month-period.

After the calls relating to drug offences and homicide, the next biggest single offence type in Table 4 is 'other – summary' which is at the opposite end of the seriousness spectrum from drugs and murder. As this group is so substantial, and as it might be thought that it is only very serious offences that are reported to Crime Stoppers, 100 of the 377 calls in this group were randomly selected and classified. The sorts of incidents that were reported appear in Table 6.

It should be remembered that all 377 calls had been screened by CSV operators and deemed worthy of being passed on to investigators. That means they are part of the population of calls that will be used in Chapter 3 to measure success in terms of arrests. Yet arrests would not seem that likely to follow for some of the incidents in Table 6. It would seem more likely that many of those involved might have received visits from the police and been warned about engaging in such behaviour.

Table 6: Random sample of 100 information reports classified as 'other – summary'

Incident	No.	Comprising
Selling incidents	24	Selling cigarettes to under-age customers (6), untaxed tobacco (11), fireworks (2), mobile telephones at school (1), counterfeit DVDs (3), X-rated videos to under-age (1)
Driving incidents	19	Driving unlicensed (10), driving while 'stoned' (2), witnessed accident (3), aged driver (1), dangerous driving (1), fake drivers' licences (2)
Weapons	16	Person carries gun (7), selling weapons (4), unlicensed firearms (5),
Suspicious activities	12	Suspicious vehicles (3), person or neighbour behaving oddly (5), man in playground (1), property dumped (1), possible prostitution (2)
Vehicle crime	8	Cars being re-built or stripped down (4), switching number plates (4)
Witnessed	5	Fight in street (1), distressed person (2), car wanted by police (1), girl later found injured (1)
Missing person	4	Possible sightings (4)
Damage	2	Graffiti (1), vandalism (1)
Internet	2	Internet user seeking child pictures (1), police shirt for sale on internet (1)
Other	8	False names used (2), possible illegal immigrant (2), child not cared for (1), uncontrollable youth (1), drugs smuggled into prison (1), 'planes flying around' (1)

3 Measuring the success of Crime Stoppers Victoria

How is success measured?

A fundamental measure of success for any Crime Stoppers program is whether information provided by the anonymous callers actually leads to clearing up a crime, most notably through an arrest. Considerable claims are made on this matter. For instance it has been suggested that calls to Crime Stoppers in Western Australia 'helped police solve more than 10 per cent of the state's solved crimes last year' (Howard 2002: 16). However, it is difficult to say whether a matter would have been cleared up without the involvement of Crime Stoppers. The information obtained from a Crime Stoppers call may not by itself lead to an arrest. But it might be the crucial final piece of the jigsaw that allows an arrest to be made.

When a caller provides information about a matter previously unknown to police, and the investigation leads to an arrest, there is no doubt that Crime Stoppers has been successful. The UK Crimestoppers Trust, on its web site, is probably referring to these sorts of calls when it notes that 'independent research has shown that nearly two-thirds of the offenders exposed by Crimestoppers were unknown to the police, or not suspected of the crime in question' (www.crimestoppers-uk.org). That possibility is supported by the Gloucestershire survey in which 12 per cent of respondents said they would call both Crimestoppers and the police to report a crime involving someone they did not know. That means that the other 88 per cent of offenders would only become known to the police through Crimestoppers (Fletcher 1997: 8).

When a call is made in respect of a request in the media for information about a particular incident, and the caller provides specific information such as a name or an address, again there is no doubt that Crime Stoppers has been successful. But when a caller provides a piece of general information, whether in response to a media appeal or not, then that call could not necessarily be said to be successful. This is especially so when there is a major investigation and an appeal to the public leads to a large volume of calls.

In Victoria, the decision as to whether the call is 'successful' or not is made by the investigating officer to whom the information report has been sent. As described earlier, when an information report is sent to an investigator they are asked to let CSV know if the information was:

- 'of value and led to an arrest':
- 'of value though no arrest was made':
- 'retained for intelligence purposes only'; or
- 'of no value'.

Sometimes a reply is received within a day or two of the information report having been disseminated. It is hard not to wonder whether that information report had received close consideration. Certainly it would seem the investigator concerned has not actually had time to conduct any sort of active investigation of it. Sometimes no reply is forthcoming for some time and CSV will send a 'chaser' for an assessment of the value of the information report. Further 'chasers' are sent at three-monthly intervals but CSV still remains unaware of the value of many information reports to investigators. At least members of the Victoria Police seem aware that Crime Stoppers would like feedback. In Gloucestershire almost three-quarters of police surveyed said that they 'were unaware that there was space on the Crimestoppers form for them to give feedback' (Fletcher 1998: 16–17).

In the British evaluation, higher rates of successful calls were found after careful tracking of a sample of calls in three separate Crime Stoppers regions, than were disclosed in the national statistics. One reason put forward for the lack of feedback was that investigators were overstretched and feedback 'was just one more, apparently inessential piece of form filling' (Gresham et al. 2001: 4). That could well be true for Victoria.

There are also problems with the currency of the investigator's response. For instance, information might be initially retained for intelligence purposes, and that action advised to CSV. At a later time, an arrest may be made as a result of the accumulated intelligence but CSV may not learn of that arrest because a response has already been sent to them.

Despite these feedback difficulties, Crime Stoppers programs around the world do publish the number of arrests they have achieved as an indication of their success. Those arrest statistics are generally published cumulatively. That is, when an arrest is notified to them it is added to their current statistics irrespective of how long ago the actual call was made to Crime Stoppers. CSV follows this practice and publishes their current arrest statistics in the weekly *Herald Sun* Crime Stoppers page (see Chapter 4).

The number of arrests advised to CSV in each of the last 15 financial years is provided in Table 7. Note that 'arrests' in this case are actually the number of notifications of individual persons who have been arrested as a result of an information report being issued by CSV. So, if four people were arrested for participating in an offence that was 'solved' using information from a CSV information report, then four arrests are added to the statistics. Note that it does not matter if the information report concerned had been disseminated last week or last year – the arrests are added to the current statistics. There is therefore no direct relationship between the number of information reports issued in any one year and the number of arrested persons notified to CSV in that year. Despite this, the number of information reports and the notified arrests can be summed as the years progress, and the cumulative statistics for the last 15 years generate a ratio of one arrest for every 11 information reports.

Table 7: CSV information reports (IRs) and arrests, 1988–2002

Fiscal year	Number of IRs issued	Number of arrested persons notified to CSV	Ratio of arrested persons to IRs (cumulative)
1988	899	75	1 in 12
1989	1,930	255	1 in 9
1990	2,371	190	1 in 10
1991	5,275	318	1 in 13
1992	5,325	416	1 in 13
1993	5,107	378	1 in 13
1994	3,472	437	1 in 12
1995	2,594	395	1 in 11
1996	3,361	337	1 in 11
1997	4,677	392	1 in 11
1998	5,776	505	1 in 11
1999	6,328	493	1 in 11
2000	4,554	471	1 in 11
2001	5,642	560	1 in 11
2002	5,545	502	1 in 11

Tracking information reports

The better way to measure Crime Stoppers' performance is to track the disseminated information reports and see what resulted from them. In the 12-month period under review some 5,293 information reports were disseminated. They had resulted from 5,293 individual 'actionable' phone calls, that is, calls where the information received in the call is important enough to be passed on to investigators as an information report.

The records from Cypher were used to establish how these 5,293 information reports had been assessed by investigators up to the end of December 2002. That creates a methodological problem in that some information reports had only a three-month follow-up period and others a 15-month period. However a greater problem is the fact that there had been no responses from investigators for 1,660 (or 31%) of those information reports – a stark reminder of the feedback problem. The pity of that is, as the British researchers note, the 'lack of feedback does lead to an underestimate of call usefulness' (Gresham et al. 2001: 4). Notwithstanding those difficulties, the 'attrition' of calls to CSV, starting with the 19,880 calls reported by Telstra as having been made in the 12-month period, appears in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Calls to CSV, October 2001–September 2002

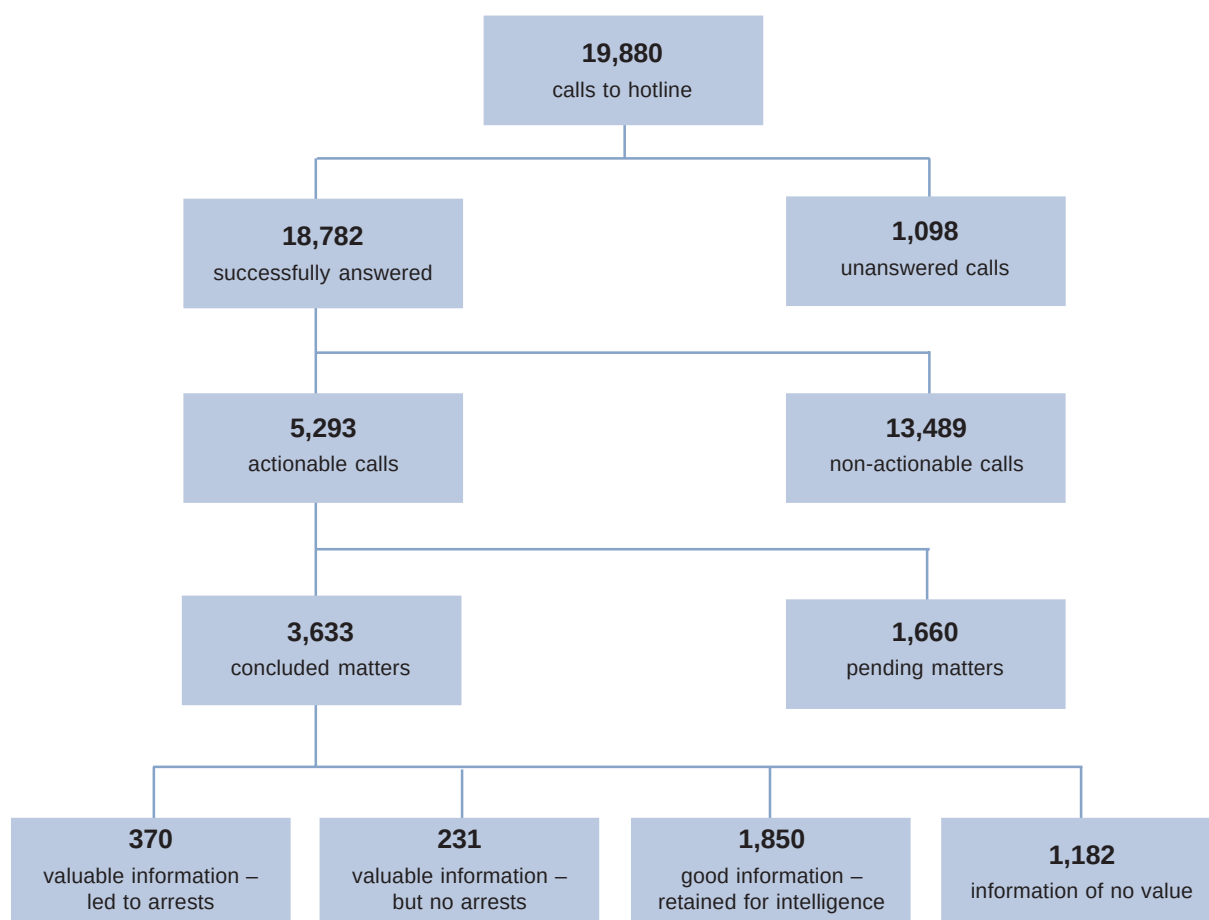


Table 8: Comparison of the performance of CSV with the UK Crimestoppers Trust

	Victoria	UK
Calls recorded by the toll-free phone number provider	19,880	536,477
Successfully answered calls as a percentage of all calls	94.5% (18,782 of 19,880)	84.6% (454,085 of 536,477)
Actionable calls as a percentage of answered calls	28.2% (5,293 of 18,782)	12.5% (56,555 of 454,085)
Successful calls as a percentage of actionable calls	7.0% (370 of 5,293)	9.6% (5,423 of 56,555)
Successful calls as a percentage of all calls	1.9% (370 of 19,880)	1.0% (5,423 of 536,477)

Investigators' assessments of 3,633 information reports were available and two-thirds of them (67.5%) were said to be useful to investigators. Taken as a percentage of all 5,293 actionable calls, useful calls measured 46 per cent. This is exactly the same rate as reported in the British evaluation, when investigating officers who were interviewed stated that 46 per cent of actionable calls 'provided some useful information' (Gresham et al. 2001: 2). Just over half of the useful calls were deemed as good information and retained for intelligence purposes. Ten per cent of them had led to arrests, and those 370 arrests involved 498 individuals. That gives a ratio of one arrested person for every 11 information reports – the prevailing ratio shown in Table 3.

It would be useful to be able to compare Crime Stoppers Victoria's performance with that of a number of other Crime Stoppers programs, but detailed data of this sort are scarce. South Australian Crime Stoppers indicates on its web site (www.crimestopperssa.org.au) that it achieves the apprehension of one offender for each six reports that they generate for investigators. That is considerably better than Victoria's figure of one for 11 reported above. It is the British Home Office report (Gresham et al. 2003) that provides the only benchmark against which the performance of CSV can be compared. The key indicators are provided in Table 8 and show that CSV:

- successfully answered more calls;
- issued more information reports, having double the actionable call ratio; and
- almost doubled the UK's ratio of arrests to calls.

These are good results for CSV, but the completeness and accuracy of record-keeping has a considerable impact on the figures. There are a large number of 'disseminated' or 'pending' information reports in the Victorian figures – 1,660 in all. If investigators were to later advise CSV that these were assessed as having no value, then the rate of useful calls will fall when those assessments are included. On the other hand, some of the disseminated matters may have successfully ended in an arrest that has yet to be conveyed to CSV. Plainly they would raise the success rate. The possibility that there are 'unreported' arrests is high if the British situation holds in Victoria. It is suggested that only about 75 per cent of successful cases in the UK are reported back to Crimestoppers staff because officers 'burdened with more critical paperwork often overlook the notification of a positive result (Marlow & Miller 2000: 145). And while the Home Office study found an overall British rate of 9.6 per cent for arrests as a percentage of actionable calls, careful tracking of information reports in three regional areas there produced rates of 11, 13 and 24 per cent (Gresham et al. 2001: 3).

A closer look at the content of information reports

In total, 498 people were arrested as a result of the information provided in the 370 information reports. The majority of arrests – 286, or 77 per cent – involved only one person. Overall, an average of 1.3 persons were arrested for each information report. The majority of the arrests – 196, or 68 per cent – related to drug offences. This figure is much higher than that reported in the British research as ‘a high success rate in solving drug-related offences with 41 per cent of all successful resolutions relating to drug offences’ (Gresham et al. 2001: 2). Not only did CSV receive more calls about drug-related offences than Britain (see Table 5), but more of their subsequent arrests were for drug-related offences. Together these facts suggest it is reasonable to conclude that some part of the reason for Victoria’s better success rate of 1.9 per cent of all calls (Table 8) lies in its successful investigation of these drug-related information reports. But could that successful investigation be related to the quality of information provided by callers to CSV?

The most obvious quality information from a caller is information that identifies a possible offender. This hard information comprises identifying details such as names and addresses. A sample of 400 information reports was drawn to see whether more of this hard information was provided in drug-related cases. As shown in Table 9, overall details were provided of a name or part name in 51 per cent of cases, and details of an address in 53 per cent. These percentages are not as high as in Britain where the corresponding figures are 72 per cent and 85 per cent.

More hard information is provided in drug-related cases in the CSV sample. There, the corresponding figures are 59 per cent (names provided) and 85 per cent (addresses provided). But in 16 per cent of the cases there is information identifying a vehicle and in nine per cent a telephone number is provided. In drug cases, then, significantly more hard information is provided, and that must aid an investigation.

Of course it cannot be assumed that when a caller provides hard identifying details they are accurate, even though they may be provided in good faith. A recent episode illustrates this. An appeal for assistance with an armed robbery was published in a provincial newspaper with a photograph of the offender. It produced four calls to CSV: two suggested different names for the offender, and the other two named the same person. After investigation the latter person was charged with robbery.

There is no way around this difficulty but it can cause some investigators to lose some faith in Crime Stoppers’ information. Comments from the police survey include:

- ‘have received files re ‘rumour’ passed to Crime Stoppers from civilians to check premises re drugs etc – about 50% correct’ (Uniform, 30 years service); and

Table 9: Hard information provided in a sample of 400 CSV information reports

Information provided	Percentage in drug cases	Percentage in non-drug cases	Percentage in all 400 cases
Name	47	40	43
Part name	12	4	8
Address	75	26	47
Part address	10	3	6
Vehicle registration	15	8	11
Vehicle description	1	4	3
Telephone number	9	2	5

-
- 'Crime Stoppers has been used by local drug community to dob one another in, while intent of some complaints is malicious the information contained some correct information' (Uniform, 28 years service).

Police members also receive unreliable and inaccurate information from other sources during the course of their investigations. At least in the above comments, the members do acknowledge they have received useful information. Other members are more positive:

- 'have personally been provided with accurate info from Crime Stoppers previously unknown to investigator which ultimately led to identification of offender – great value' (CIU, 32 years service).

And at the end of the day, the information reports which have led to arrests must have included some accurate information!

4 Keeping Crime Stoppers Victoria in the public eye

Around the world Crime Stoppers programs use an extensive variety of initiatives to keep the public aware of their availability. CSV have used talks to community groups, leaflets, posters, billboards, signs on taxis and trams, fridge magnets, notice boards in shopping centres, and notices on roadside benches. Overseas, Crime Stoppers publicity can be found on the backs of police officers' business cards, on the sides of fleets of delivery trucks and semi-trailers, in trivia games in pubs and bars, and on bus bumpers (Lippert 2002: 481). All of these approaches help keep the public aware of the presence of Crime Stoppers in their community but it is in the media that Crime Stoppers gets its most regular and comprehensive coverage.

The crucial role of the media

As one of the three partners in a Crime Stoppers program, the media make a vital contribution to its success. They not only make sure that the hotline number is well broadcast and kept in the minds of the community, but they also highlight incidents for which police are seeking assistance. In short, any 'Crime Stoppers news articles have the potential to broaden the sources of information available to police to solve a crime' (Thomson 1995: 165).

There are two main ways the media publicises CSV. First, the Crime Stoppers toll-free number is attached to news reports of criminal incidents. Ideally the Crime Stoppers number should always be given as a contact point for the public in any TV or radio news bulletins, and printed in news stories in major and local suburban newspapers. In practice this does not always occur and alternative contact numbers are given, or in some cases, no contact number at all is given.

Second, CSV receives considerable media exposure through special segments in all branches of the media. Specifically during 2002, CSV featured weekly in:

- a regular 60-second television segment on the Nine Network in prime time at 8.30pm on Monday nights;
- a regular half-page – 'Victoria's most wanted' – in the *Herald Sun* newspaper on Tuesdays; and
- three regular radio spots on stations Gold-FM, AW 1278 and AK Talk 1116.

These media spots all focus on the weekly 'target crime' (or 'Crime of the week' as it used to be called), a particular incident about which police are seeking information from the public through Crime Stoppers.

Crime of the Week

The target crime, or Crime of the week, is a central part of any Crime Stoppers program. As Greg MacAleese puts it in his Crime Stoppers manual:

The Crime of the Week is the heart of the promotion for the program. It must be selected with care...A steady diet of the same kind of crime will likely produce a loss of interest in the public. In selecting a Crime of the Week...crimes should be evaluated on a 'person' rather than a 'business' priority. You want to create the idea that Crime Stoppers is trying to help people rather than solve business crimes. Don't show a lot of burglaries of businesses, or even armed robberies of businesses, unless they can be done from the victim's point of view.

(cited in Carriere & Ericson 1989: 48)

It is also necessary that the Crime of the week is attractive to the media themselves – they need to see it as interesting and even entertaining to readers and listeners. While the media support for Crime Stoppers makes them appear to be community-minded, they nevertheless want to make sure the resources they contribute to Crime Stoppers are commercially sound.

The risk is that Crimes of the week may give a distorted view to readers and viewers. Thomson suggests the 'overall impression created by these articles is of public, violent crime committed by strangers' (Thomson 1995: 171). And Carriere and Ericson found that 81 per cent of the televised Crimes of the week in Canada were 'violent' crimes, with an associated script that was overly dramatic and emotional (Carriere & Ericson 1989: 56). A similar view has been expressed about the scripts of televised CSV spots (Galanapoulos 1998: 62–64). It might be that publicising 'dramatic' and serious crimes makes some people more afraid of the possibility of crime. Conversely it might prompt people to increase their role in crime detection. The selection and presentation of target crimes must therefore be undertaken with care.

But it is not the aim of the Crime Stoppers newspaper coverage to represent the state of crime in the community. As Thomson points out, Crime Stoppers articles can be 'very unlike most newspaper articles on crime' as they do not generally indicate the progress of the investigation or possible suspects, there are no interviews with bystanders or neighbours, and there is no expert commentary or discussion of like crimes or offending patterns (Thomson 1995: 68). He suggests they are more like advertisements for the police.

Advertisements or not, the regular Crime of the week publicity can be seen as a mechanism that keeps the Crime Stoppers message in the public eye. If the public does provide useful information about the target crime then that could be seen as a bonus. Notwithstanding that, Crime Stoppers in South Australia report on their web site that 63 per cent of the information reports they generate relate to what they call target crimes, of which there appear to be about 30 on their web site at any time.

'Victoria's most wanted' page

Victoria's largest circulation daily newspaper, the *Herald Sun*, publishes at least half a page each Tuesday entitled 'Victoria's most wanted'. It generally includes the target crime, or Crime of the week, which was televised the night before on the Nine Network, and which is aired in radio broadcasts later in the week. But it also includes other items – an average of six per page plus statistics – which collectively give readers a positive view of Crime Stoppers and indicate that crime reporting is useful and appreciated. (See Figure 4 for a typical *Herald Sun* page).

This weekly *Herald Sun* page is a joint effort of Crime Stoppers and the Victoria Police media unit. CSV initiate the target crime, and the 'wanted' persons, and provide the current statistics. The media unit prepares the items on general crime, arrests and the crime prevention tips for the page (see Table 10).

'Victoria's most wanted' page: target crimes

Target crimes (or Crimes of the week) are usually selected by CSV officers from incidents for which investigators have sought CSV's assistance. CSV then sends documentation and photographs relating to the particular incident to the media unit for appraisal. At the media unit, a journalist

Table 10: Content analysis of the *Herald Sun* Crime Stoppers page, February 2000–September 2002*

Type of item**	Number of items
Target crime (Crime of the week)***	114
General crime	295
Wanted person	189
Arrest	237
Crime prevention tip	103
Miscellaneous	28
Total	966

* Based on 135 separate pages from inception on 15 February 2000 until 24 September 2002. The page did not appear on 14 May 2002 and 6 August 2002

** Excludes the table of statistics which appears every time

*** Note that these are items distinguished by the heading 'Target crime' but when the target crime relates only to wanted persons, it is classified here as a 'wanted person' item

Figure 4: A typical *Herald Sun* Crime Stoppers page

22 www.heraldsun.com.au
Herald Sun, Tuesday, October 1, 2002

CRIME STOPPERS
1 800 333 000

VICTORIA'S

most wanted

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY THE **Herald Sun** AND YOUR LOCAL **RSL**

UPDATE

CALLS to Crime Stoppers have resulted in the following:

ARRESTS MADE	
Last week	1
Since 1/7/02	97
Total	583

RECOVERED STOLEN PROPERTY	
Last week	\$0
Since 1/7/02	\$327,475
Total	\$14,170,885

DRUGS SEIZED	
Last week	\$0
Since 1/7/02	\$693,990
Total	\$63,160,770

Totals date from Crime Stoppers' inception in 1987.

ARRESTS OF THE WEEK

DETECTIVES have charged a man over an alleged arson rampage in Heidelberg West over the past 18 months.

Michael Anthony Demicoli, 31, of Corvette St, Heidelberg West, has been charged with 25 counts of criminal damage by fire and associated offences.

He was arrested on September 22 after a fire in Redwood St.

PREVENTION HINT

PARENTAL supervision is crucial when children are on the Internet. You wouldn't leave your child alone in the real world so don't do it in a virtual world. Keep in mind in some countries a 14-year-old is considered an adult.

For further information visit: www.safekids.com or www.netparenting.com.

Girl held up

TARGET CRIME

A GIRL, 13, was threatened with a golden handgun in an attempted hold-up at a Bentleigh milk bar.

The desperate gunman fled empty-handed when the cool-headed teenager ran out the back of the store, screaming for her father.

Moorabbin Embona taskforce detectives have released security footage of a man they wish to interview over the crime.

The girl went to assist a customer after hearing the door bell ring about 7.30pm on June 5 and was confronted by the gunman, who demanded cash.

She fled to rear living quarters and the man was last seen running east on Centre Rd.

He is described as Caucasian, in his late teens or early 20s, 165-170cm tall, of medium build with short brown hair. He was clean-shaven and wore a peaked cap, and dark spray jacket.

Carjacking charges

A BENTLEIGH East man faces 41 charges including kidnapping, unlawful imprisonment, robbery and assaults after allegedly c.j. along several vehicles on September 25.

The 27-year-old man was arrested that night after a car crash outside a doctor's surgery in Centre Rd.

He is expected to appear in Melbourne Magistrates' Court.

CHELSEA detectives have charged a man over an armed robbery at a Mentone milk bar.

The man, 34, allegedly threatened a shop attendant with a syringe before stealing cash on September 24.

He was arrested that night after police intercepted a ute in the Springvale area.

APRESTON man, 20, has been charged by police over an armed robbery at a Reservoir service station on September 27.

Police allege the man jumped the counter of the High St store and stole cash at knifepoint.

POLICE caught 97 drivers above the legal alcohol limit in a two-day blitz on St Kilda Rd last month.

Almost 5000 motorists were breath-tested in an operation aimed at patrons of Southbank entertainment venues.

Failed to appear

WANTED

RAYMOND Alexander Burns is wanted by police investigating several thefts from cars in the Benalla area in October last year.

Mr Burns, 25, was arrested and charged but warrants were signed for his arrest after he failed to appear in court.

He is 183cm tall, of fair complexion and medium build with blue eyes and brown hair.

Armed bandit escapes

A BANDIT pointed a shotgun at a Richmond service station employee and demanded money before escaping with cash and cigarettes.

The balaclava-clad man burst into Shell service station in Punt Rd about 9.35pm on Thursday, August 29.

The store attendant handed money from the till to the robber, which he placed in a carry bag.

Investigators want to speak to a man described as 172-178cm tall, of fair complexion and thin build.

He was wearing a black hooded jacket and blue pants.

Officers seek toothless man

INDECENT ASSAULT

A MAN missing his top teeth is being sought by police investigating the indecent assault of a schoolgirl on a Broadmeadows line train.

Two 12-year-old girls wearing school uniforms boarded a train at Broadmeadows railway station about 8.20am on Tuesday, July 30.

During the three-stop journey to Oak Park, a man sat next to one of the girls and allegedly indecently assaulted her.

Transit police wish to speak a man aged about 45, who was missing his top teeth.

He is described as 178cm tall, with a medium build and greying brown hair.

He was wearing a dark brown jacket and bone-coloured pants.

Store suffers heavy losses

BREAK IN

BURGLARS have helped themselves to more than \$35,000 of power tools from a Hawthorn store in the past three months.

Boorondara detectives need your help to trace the tools stolen in two break-ins.

Thieves first struck at Canning and Sons in Burwood Rd at 2.50am on July 29.

About a month later, on August 27, more equipment was stolen at 4am.

The total haul of new power tools included 22 Stihl chainsaws, five Stihl power blowers, two Stihl concrete cutters and two Honda generators.

Anyone who comes across tools in unusual circumstances or details of the burglaries is urged to come forward.

CRIME STOPPERS: 1800 333 000

prepares a media release relating to the incident and returns it to Crime Stoppers who are then able to use that as the basis for the preparation of a television re-enactment. The incident becomes a target crime when television footage of it is screened, and it is then also publicised in the *Herald Sun* and radio broadcasts.

When CSV staff select a target crime, the availability of useful photographs or videotapes, as well as their understanding of what makes good television, influences them. They know that the TV network would not be interested in vision if the network did not believe it was 'entertaining' (see Carriere & Ericson 1989: 51). So in a subtle way the TV network influences which crimes are selected as target crimes, and TV re-enactments tend to be more 'dramatic' than a lot of crime.

This is borne out by an analysis of the types of crimes represented in the 114 target crimes from the content analysis (Table 11). Robberies – good television footage – account for 63 per cent of all target crimes, a figure quite different from the contribution of robbery to total crime in Victoria. Indeed 84 per cent of all CSV target crimes could be classified as violent – similar to the previously noted 81 per cent in Canada in 1989 (Carriere & Ericson 1989: 56).

Table 11: Offences featured as target crimes

Offence type	Number	Average delay until publicity (in months)
Homicide	2	182.8
Car theft	2	7.8
Aggravated burglary	1	6.9
Abduction	5	6.7
Robbery	72	5.6
Theft	6	5.5
Assault	9	5.2
Sexual assault	5	4.5
Arson	4	3.3
Burglary	7	3.2
Fraud	1	2.7
Total	114	8.4
Total (without homicides)	112	5.3

However a 1995 commentary reports that only 26 per cent of 332 Canadian Crime Stoppers' news articles reflected violence (Thomson 1995:172). And more recently an analysis of 640 Crime of the week 'advertisements' in Canada found a rate of only 21 per cent (Lippert 2002: 482). This suggests a different approach to Crime Stoppers media coverage in that country.

Table 11 also shows the average delay between an offence occurring and its being publicised as a target crime. The two homicides that have appeared were both quite old, and their inclusion skews the average delay figure. The first homicide was featured in the very first Crime Stoppers page in February 2000. It described the murder of a young woman 'whose death has puzzled police for almost 20 years,' and was used to draw the reader's attention to this new page in the newspaper. The second homicide was reported in July 2001 with 'police appealing for information regarding the fatal stabbings of two teenagers more than 10 years ago.' It was run as part of Missing persons' week activities. Removing these two target crimes from the sample leaves an average delay between the offence and its publicity as a target crime of 5.3 months.

This delay figure is of interest because it lends some weight to the suggestion that Crime Stoppers publicity is used as a last resort by investigators to solve the case. The only published figures with which to compare the Victorian situation come from the 1987 Canadian study (Carriere & Ericson 1989: 61). Sixty-three per cent of the Canadian cases were under three months old, compared with 34 per cent in

Table 12: Data relating to the six solved target crimes

Target crime	Number of days between offence occurring and it being published as a target crime	Number of days between target crime appearing in the <i>Herald Sun</i> and an arrest being made as a result of information through Crime Stoppers
Robbery	387	22
Robbery	108	8
Assault	128	79
Robbery	87	1
Assault	45	9
Robbery	97	22

Victoria. And over half of the Victorian target crimes (56%) had occurred between four and 12 months before the publicity, whereas the comparable figure for Canada was 23 per cent. This indicates that the Victorian cases tended to be older – although the dated Canadian data may no longer be typical of today.

In the Canadian research Carriere and Ericson (1989: 103) note that ‘there is no way of knowing how many of the Crime of the Week incidents would have been cleared...if the program did not exist.’ They found that publicising the target crimes did not frequently lead to apprehension of the advertised suspects, and cited Canadian police coordinators who estimated that only ‘five to eight per cent of crimes advertised are cleared by the laying of charges’ (Carriere & Ericson 1989: 83). That is similar to Victoria where six (5.3%) of the 114 Victorian target crimes under consideration were cleared as a result of information obtained through Crime Stoppers Victoria. These were four robberies and two assaults. Table 12 shows the time delay between the incident, its publicising and its solution. There are no common trends relating to those delays.

Lippert (2002: 483) suggests that clearance rates of target crimes of 10 to 15 per cent were ‘consistently low’ but that seems unrealistic. The current data show that the target crimes were an average of five months old and they had not been solved by traditional investigation. It would be a very optimistic person who would expect more than a modest clearance rate for crimes of that sort. It seems that CSV staff themselves appreciate there is a low likelihood of an arrest resulting from publicising a target crime. However that does not mean that such publicity is not of value. Publicising a target crime in a manner that attracts public interest ensures that the public remains aware of CSV and its activities.

‘Victoria’s most wanted’ page: general crimes

The media unit sources the additional ‘general crime’ stories that are included on the Crime Stoppers page. These incidents have invariably been brought to the unit’s attention by an investigator who is seeking help with an active investigation. This is confirmed by the figures in Table 13 which show the average delay between the described crime occurring and its appearance on the Crime Stoppers page is only 3.2 months, compared with 5.3 months for the target crimes (see Table 11).

Indeed all types of offences included in the general crimes are more recent than the target crimes, with the exception of frauds. The general crimes include four fraud cases where the original offences occurred around 12 months earlier. These of course inflate the average. The general crimes also include some offence types not included in the target crimes. One such offence type, which has a very low average delay time before appearing on the Crime Stoppers page, is driving offences. There were only two of these:

- a hit and run incident publicised seven days after it happened; and
- an incident of road rage which was 43 days old.

Once again the incidents included as general crimes could be said to give a lopsided view of crime in Victoria. Robberies are the most frequently published incident, accounting for 35 per cent of the total, followed by assaults (18%), thefts (15%) and sexual assaults (10%). If the target crimes and the general crimes are added together those four offence types remain the most frequently published, with robberies accounting for 43 per cent of the total, assaults (15%), thefts (12%) and sexual assaults (9%). The *Herald Sun* page is a visual format that includes photographs or identikit pictures so it is not wholly surprising that these offences predominate. There are often security-camera photographs of robbers and the victims of assaults often assist in the preparation of a likeness of their assailants. Visual material is simply less likely in the case of prevalent offences like burglary or car theft.

Table 13: Offences featured as general crimes

Offence type	Number	Average delay until publicity (in months)*
Abduction	7	3.1
Aggravated burglary	6	1.7
Arson	2	1.3
Assault	53	2.9
Burglary	17	2.4
Car theft	5	1.7
Criminal damage	3	1.9
Driving	2	0.8
Drugs	1	5.5
Fraud	18	6.4
Homicide	1	4.3
Indecent exposure	4	6.5
Robbery	102	3.2
Sexual assault	30	3.9
Theft	44	2.7
Total	295	3.2

* Exact date of the occurrence of the incident was not published in 21 cases, so the average delays were calculated for 274 offences.

It would be very interesting to know how many of these publicised general crimes were cleared as a result of their appearing on the Crime Stoppers page but unfortunately there are no data on this point. Before the media unit includes an incident as a general crime, it contacts the investigator concerned to ensure that the incident is still an active case. The only way to find out if the incident is subsequently cleared would be to contact the investigator after the publicity for an update. As distinct from the Crime Stoppers follow-up activity for the target crimes, there is no follow-up mechanism in place for general crimes.

‘Victoria’s most wanted’ page: wanted persons

The wanted persons who are featured on the page are selected by Crime Stoppers often in conjunction with the information branch records (IBRs). It is important to note that the descriptions accompanying photographs of these people indicate they are wanted for failing to appear at court in conjunction with alleged criminal activity. It is not suggested that they have committed any offence, merely that they have been charged with one.

Table 10 shows that 189 wanted person articles appeared in the pages under review, but they involved only 157 distinct persons (three individuals appearing on three different occasions and 26 appearing twice). It seems that there were no particular reasons for these multiple appearances; rather, it seems when a wanted person was needed for inclusion and no new person had been provided by Crime Stoppers, one of the old cases was reprinted.

Up until the end of October 2002, 62 (39%) of these wanted persons had been arrested, but in only 36 of those cases (23%) could the arrest be attributed to the publicity on the Crime Stoppers page. In fact, no less than 14 of those 36 arrests occurred within a day of that publicity, and the average time from publication to arrest for the whole 36 is 13 days. By contrast, the remaining 26 arrests, which could not

be said to have been a result of the Crime Stoppers publicity, averaged 173 days. There is therefore no doubt that publicising in the Crime Stoppers page those who breach bail conditions and fail to appear at court is a very useful practice. The widespread media coverage of a bail jumper's photograph seems to be a key ingredient in their surrender.

'Victoria's most wanted' page: arrests

The media unit sources recent arrests and writes brief descriptions of them to include on the page. These comprise the 'good news' component of the page, indicating that criminals are being caught. There were 237 arrest articles in this content analysis, with robberies being the single most reported offence – just over 40 per cent of all arrest reports. Arrests for drug offences accounted for about 14 per cent, with assaults and homicides each providing eight per cent of all arrests. Again, this configuration of offences does not reflect the reality of Victoria's crime problem. It could be argued that the public might be more relieved to read about serious offenders being arrested, but again, the emphasis on robberies could give some readers a misleading impression about the prevalence of that type of crime.

Only eight of these arrests were accompanied by a commentary to the effect that Crime Stoppers had been instrumental in the arrest. There is no doubt that publicising successes is a valuable move. Readers would be impressed, and maybe more likely to assist Crime Stoppers, when they read such paragraphs as:

- surveillance pictures featured in last week's *Herald Sun's* 'Victoria's most wanted' page have led to several arrests. Transit divisional response unit police made the arrests after *Herald Sun* readers called and tipped off Broadmeadows officers. Several youths aged about 17 from the Broadmeadows area are expected to face theft charges' (April 2002);
- 'a man accused of robbing an elderly couple has turned himself in after being featured on the *Herald Sun's* 'Victoria's most wanted' page' (March 2000); and
- 'a call to Crime Stoppers helped lead to the arrest of three teenagers who allegedly lit a \$300,000 school fire' (March 2000).

'Victoria's most wanted' page: crime prevention tips

The media unit also selects crime prevention tips to be published on the page and they are sourced from Victoria Police's crime prevention department. An effort is made to include tips that are timely. For instance, around a holiday period, the tips will cover good security practices while a house is temporarily vacant.

The sorts of offences that are addressed by the tips are far more representative of the real crime spectrum in Victoria. The tips include advice on such topics as ATM security (6 mentions), bicycle security (7), burglary and theft prevention (8), car security (7), handbag security (8), holiday security (9), home security (18), public transport safety (8), robbery prevention (6) and shoplifting prevention (8).

Inclusion of these crime prevention tips provides a really positive aspect to the page. They inform readers of constructive action that they themselves can take to avoid falling victim to crime. And that in turn may cause them to be more inclined to ring Crime Stoppers with information. The tips can also be seen as truly directed at stopping or preventing crimes, and that should be an underlying component of any Crime Stoppers program.

‘Victoria’s most wanted’ page: miscellaneous items

This content analysis identified 966 miscellaneous items. These items included:

- eight promotional pieces for Crime Stoppers, or commentaries by the Chief Commissioner;
- six articles describing or picturing (expensive) stolen property;
- two where police had recovered valuable property and were seeking the owners of it;
- two described particular police activities – with a focus on amphetamines and an unroadworthy taxi blitz;
- two where readers were asked for help in identifying people who had been found dead in unusual circumstances;
- five relating to particular missing persons cases;
- two where particular callers to Crime Stoppers were urged to call back; and
- one apology to a couple whose photograph was inadvertently published.

Crime Stoppers coverage in other media

Victoria Police media releases now generally include a reference to the Crime Stoppers hotline, so it is not surprising that some callers mention they have been prompted to call by something they had seen or read in the media. While analysing the sample of 400 information reports that were discussed in Chapter 2, it was noted whether the caller had made any reference to the media. In all, 63 of the information reports did mention some sort of media prompt. CSV’s close media partners (the *Herald Sun* and the Nine Network) were mentioned most by the callers, with 27 and 11 referrals respectively. Country newspapers prompted six callers, local suburban papers prompted 10, the other metropolitan paper prompted 1, other TV channels prompted 5, and three callers simply mentioned ‘the media’. While 16 per cent of the sample of 400 information reports mentioned a media prompt, this is probably an understatement of the true situation. Many callers may not have thought to mention it, and in some cases it might not have been recorded in Cypher even if it had been mentioned in passing.

Many country and local newspapers appear to use their local police to gather information for their ‘Police briefs’ columns (for example, the *Bendigo Advertiser*) which they may run on several days a week. The media unit prepares the fortnightly Crime Stoppers column in the *Ballarat Courier* and that accounted for three of the six country callers above. This media publicity does not mean that readers will necessarily rush to call Crime Stoppers. In the only local research on this issue Carey (1997: 78), examined 50 serious crimes widely reported in local media between October 1995 and January 1996. Calls to Crime Stoppers were made in relation to only 18, with 46 of the 69 calls received relating to nine crimes that were subsequently solved. Only two of the callers actually provided information that was useful to investigators in clearing the crime. Notwithstanding that, there is no doubting the valuable role that the media play in prompting the public to remember that Crime Stoppers is there, and encouraging them to call.

4 The public's views of Crime Stoppers Victoria

What do people think of Crime Stoppers?

It is obvious that Crime Stoppers needs enthusiastic support from the community in order to provide information to police investigators that they would otherwise not get. While the volume of calls is one measure of this community support, it only accommodates those who actually have some information to impart. It is worthwhile trying to gauge total community support.

The 1989 Canadian evaluation noted members of the public were enthusiastic about Crime Stoppers. It cited an American study that concluded most citizens 'enjoyed' their exposure to the Crime Stoppers program. And a Canadian survey of metropolitan respondents had assessed Crime Stoppers as either highly or moderately effective, indicating support for it (Carriere & Ericson 1989: 3). Locally, some indication of the way that Victorians viewed Crime Stoppers emerged from an internet survey on *The Age* web site in May 2002 (www.theage.com.au/yoursay/2002/05/01). In the 'Your say' segment, web site readers were asked for their opinions in response to the following invitation after a news report about a missing couple whose bodies had just been found:

Crime Stoppers says it received about 1,500 calls regarding the missing couple and lacked the resources to analyse the input. Had it done so, it appears likely that there would have been a lead in the case much earlier.

What do you think? Is Crime Stoppers of any use in a major case like this? Should it receive more funding? Or should it be scrapped?

Of the 26 responses that were received, 21 were positive about Crime Stoppers (a further four responses were not focused on the issue and the one negative comment was idiosyncratic). Typical positive comments included:

I think Crime Stoppers plays a crucial role in solving crimes and I think funding should be provided by both the federal and state governments.

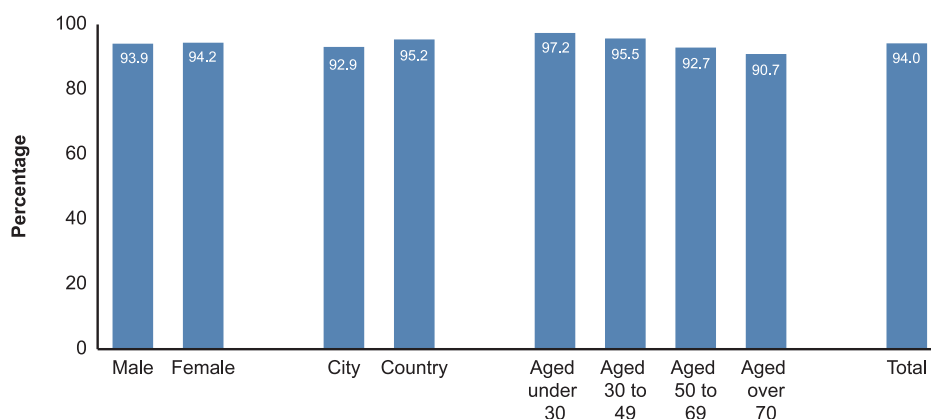
I think it's a great service and people who sometimes may be reluctant in calling the police, for whatever reasons, have another option and that being contacting Crime Stoppers and providing what could be very useful information.

A survey of Victorians

The above comments indicate support for Crime Stoppers, but they do not necessarily represent the views of the community. To gauge these views, a telephone survey of 1,008 Victorians was undertaken over the weekend of 4–6 October 2002. The sample for the survey was based on random selection of telephone numbers from the 12 Telstra directories covering Victoria. Respondents were drawn equally from city and country areas for the survey. The city sample comprised those drawn from Melbourne metro (with telephone prefixes 8 or 9) and the south east fringe (with the telephone prefix 59). All remaining respondents were country-based and were selected in proportion to population. In brief, the 1,008 respondents comprised:

- 505 males and 503 females;
- 143 aged under 30, 376 aged between 30 and 49, 317 aged between 50 and 69, and 172 aged over 70; and
- 504 city dwellers and 504 resident in the country.

Figure 5: Respondents' recognition of Crime Stoppers



The survey was brief and aimed at establishing whether respondents understood the components of the Crime Stoppers program, how they had become aware of it, and whether they would be likely to use it if the occasion arose. The results of the survey follow.

Recognition rate for Crime Stoppers

After agreeing to participate in a 'brief survey of community issues,' respondents were simply asked 'do you know what Crime Stoppers is?' A positive response to this question was forthcoming from 948 respondents resulting in a high 'recognition rate' of 94 per cent. Commercial entities spend huge amounts of money to keep their brand in the public eye and readily recognisable. That Crime Stoppers has achieved this high rate of recognition is most impressive. The level of recognition was not significantly different across the demographic characteristics of the sample, as shown in Figure 5. Notwithstanding that, there was a tendency for younger respondents to be more likely to indicate that they recognised Crime Stoppers.

While the 94 per cent recognition rate reported here is high, 'independent research in Western Australia showed that 98 per cent of the public [there] is aware of Crime Stoppers' (Howard 2002: 16). And locally the 2001 Local Community Safety Audits conducted by Crime Prevention Victoria (CPV) report a 97 per cent recognition rate of Crime Stoppers in Victoria (www.crimeprevention.vic.gov.au). Those audits are based on samples of 100 respondents drawn from each of the 78 local government areas in Victoria. That means the total CPV sample comprises 40 per cent city and 60 per cent country residents.

In this study, respondents are split evenly between city and country respondents and, as shown in Table 14, the city respondents have a lower recognition rate. In fact the Melbourne metro area has a notably lower recognition rate of only 91.6 per cent (see Table 14 for an area breakdown of recognition rates). The total recognition rate is lowered because of the higher proportion of city responses.

Spontaneous mention of Crime Stoppers' features

Admitting that they recognise the name Crime Stoppers does not necessarily mean that respondents know what Crime Stoppers actually does. Accordingly, the 948 respondents who said they knew what Crime Stoppers was were then asked to describe it in their own words. Not all people find it easy to give a quick and accurate description when suddenly asked to do so by a telephone interviewer, and that

proved to be the case here. Interviewers were asked to note which of the four main features of Crime Stoppers were spontaneously mentioned by the respondents. These are that Crime Stoppers provides:

- an avenue for making reports to the police;
- a free telephone service;
- a completely anonymous service; and
- the possibility of a reward.

Of course, the fact that a respondent did not spontaneously mention any of these features may not mean that they do not know of them. Rather, they may simply not have immediately recalled them when asked. In most cases respondents only spontaneously mentioned one feature. In the cases where no reference was made to any of these four features, interviewers recorded the verbatim answers that were given. These answers were then carefully examined to see if they did indicate that the respondents had actually referred to one of the features even if not expressed clearly. As an example, some respondents plainly did understand that Crime Stoppers provided an avenue to report matters to the police even though they gave broad verbatim answers such as:

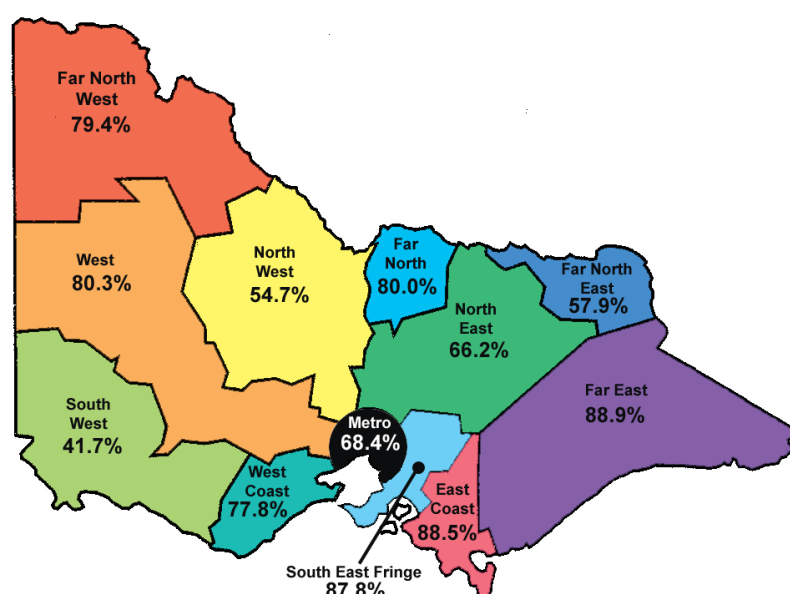
- it's a 'program on TV that asks assistance from public to apprehend criminals';
- it 'advertises a crime that has happened and gets people to ring up'; and
- it's a 'local organisation, people looking out for crime taking place and reporting it, also a show on TV.'

Responses such as these were recoded as 'spontaneously mentioning reports to the police' in the following analysis. There were still 225 respondents who did not mention any of the four features in their answers, and their verbatim answers did not indicate that they were really aware of Crime Stoppers activities. Subtracting these 225 from the 948 respondents who said they knew what Crime Stoppers was, results in an 'awareness rate' of only 71.7 per cent (723 in 1,008), as distinct from the admitted recognition rate of 94 per cent. But this awareness rate is ultimately based on respondents' ability to put into words how aware they were of Crime Stoppers activities. (A separate discussion of the 225 'unaware' responses appears below.)

Table 14: Recognition and awareness rates across Victoria

Area	Recognition rate (%)	Awareness rate (%)
Melbourne metro	91.6	68.4
South east fringe	100.0	87.8
Far east	95.2	88.9
West coast	93.9	77.8
North west	97.2	80.3
West	93.8	54.7
South west	100.0	41.7
East coast	96.2	88.5
North east	94.8	66.2
Far north	100.0	80.0
Far north west	91.2	79.4
Far north east	94.7	57.9
Total	94.0	71.7

Figure 6: Awareness rates across Victoria



Nevertheless the awareness rate is arguably a more accurate indicator of the public's understanding of Crime Stoppers. A recent survey of the public in Gloucestershire produced a similar result in that 71 per cent of respondents (to a mailed questionnaire) said that they had heard of Crime Stoppers 'and knew what it was, 20 per cent said they had heard of Crime Stoppers but did not know what it was, and the final nine per cent had not heard of Crime Stoppers at all' (Curtis & Cook 2002: 2).

The use of the 'awareness rate' leads to interesting regional variations. Most notably the south west region which had a 100 per cent recognition rate, has a low awareness rate of 41.7 per cent – well below the state average. Table 14 provides a comparison of the two rates for all regions. Awareness rates vary across Victoria. Some country areas have high rates (like the far east region with the highest rate overall) and some have low rates (with the south west region having the lowest overall). The map in Figure 6 provides an opportunity to see how the regions vary according to awareness.

Awareness of Crime Stoppers' features

The 723 respondents who spontaneously mentioned at least one of the four features were most likely to mention the fact that Crime Stoppers was an avenue for providing information to the police. In fact 91.6 per cent mentioned this feature, but there were comparatively few mentions of the other three features (see Table 15). The only statistically significant difference in Table 15 is that females are more likely than men to spontaneously note that a call to Crime Stoppers was a free call. It is notable that respondents aged under 30 were much more likely to spontaneously mention that it was possible to earn a reward from providing information to Crime Stoppers.

Table 15: Spontaneous mention of major features of Crime Stoppers (percentages)

	'Report to police'	'Free phone call'	'Anonymity of call'	'Reward'
City (n=359)	93.2	14.5	3.1	0.6
Country (n=364)	90.1	21.2	3.5	1.1
Male (n=351)	92.8	16.2	2.5	1.4
Female (n=372)	90.4	19.8	4.1	0.3
Aged under 30 (n=107)	88.8	19.6	0.9	4.7
Aged 30–49 (n=283)	91.2	19.4	4.2	0.0
Aged 50–69 (n=226)	91.2	17.3	4.4	0.4
Aged over 70 (n=107)	96.3	14.0	0.9	0.0
Total (n=723)	91.6	18.0	3.3	0.8

Note: Multiple responses allowed

Prompted awareness of Crime Stoppers' features

The fact that not all of the 723 respondents spontaneously mentioned Crime Stoppers features does not mean that they did not know of them. If they did not mention any features they were then prompted about each of them in turn. For example, if the respondent had not spontaneously mentioned the anonymity aspect, they were asked, 'did you know that all calls to Crime Stoppers are completely anonymous?' Thus, all 723 respondents were able to indicate that they knew Crime Stoppers' main features. The responses to these prompting questions were then added to the previous spontaneous responses with the following results:

- 99.3 per cent of respondents knew that Crime Stoppers provided an avenue to report matters to the police (the 'missing' 0.7 per cent comprised two males and three females who had all spontaneously described Crime Stoppers as a free call service, but who did not seem to comprehend what it was for);
- 77.3 per cent of respondents knew that calls to Crime Stoppers were 'completely anonymous';
- 68.3 per cent of respondents knew that calls to Crime Stoppers were free; and
- 67.5 per cent of respondents knew that it was possible to earn a reward as a result of passing information to Crime Stoppers.

It can be seen that some of the features of the way that Crime Stoppers operates are not that widely known. For instance, just over a third of respondents did not know that calls were free, or that rewards were possible. Whether this is necessarily a shortcoming is a moot point. Is it possible that someone might not call from afar because they think it would be an expense for them? And is it likely that someone might be more likely to call if they knew a reward might come their way? Irrespective, the features are important components of the Crime Stoppers program and should be made known.

Some demographic groups show different degrees of knowledge of the various Crime Stoppers features, and these are illustrated in Figures 7 to 10. Only one of these differences is statistically significant, and that relates to rewards, where the knowledge of the availability of rewards decreases as respondents get older. Indeed, the older age group is less aware of all aspects of Crime Stoppers other than that it is a way to report matters to the police – which they all know.

Figure 7: Overall awareness that Crime Stoppers provided an avenue to report matters to the police

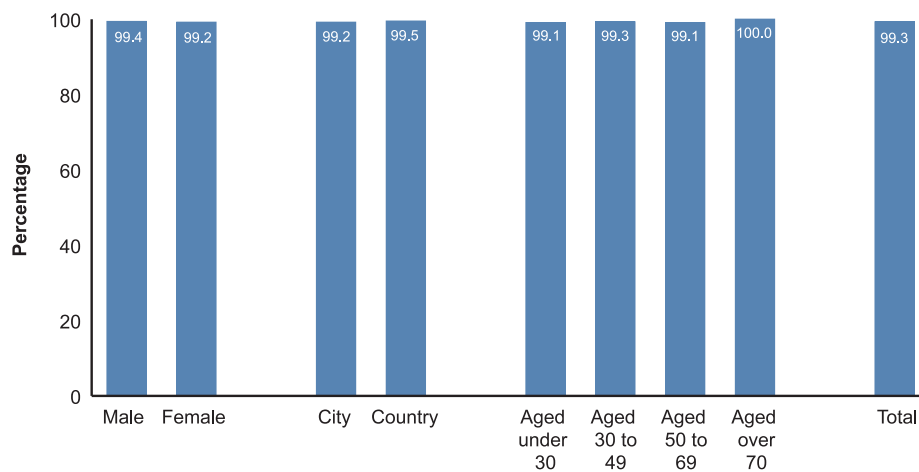


Figure 8: Overall awareness that calls to Crime Stoppers are anonymous

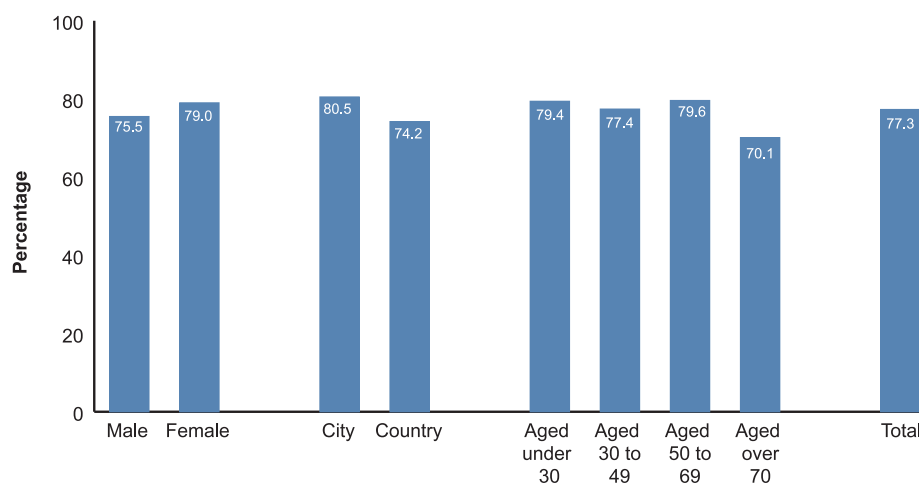


Figure 9: Overall awareness that calls to Crime Stoppers are free

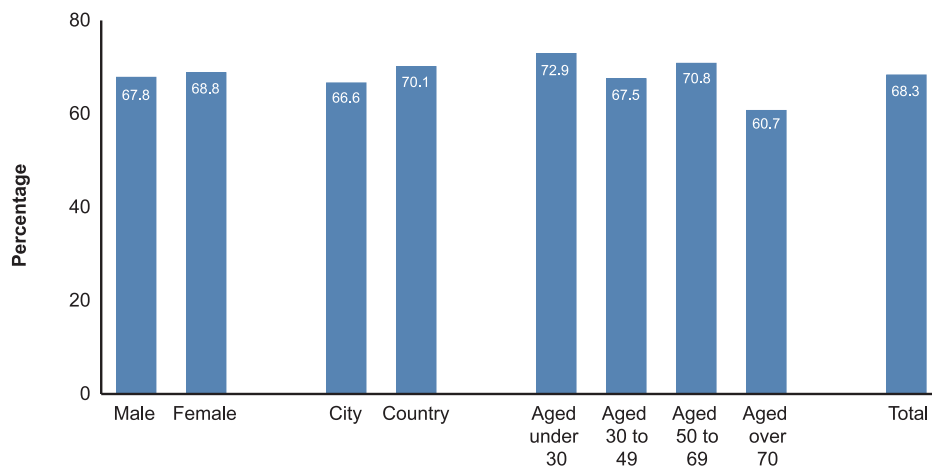
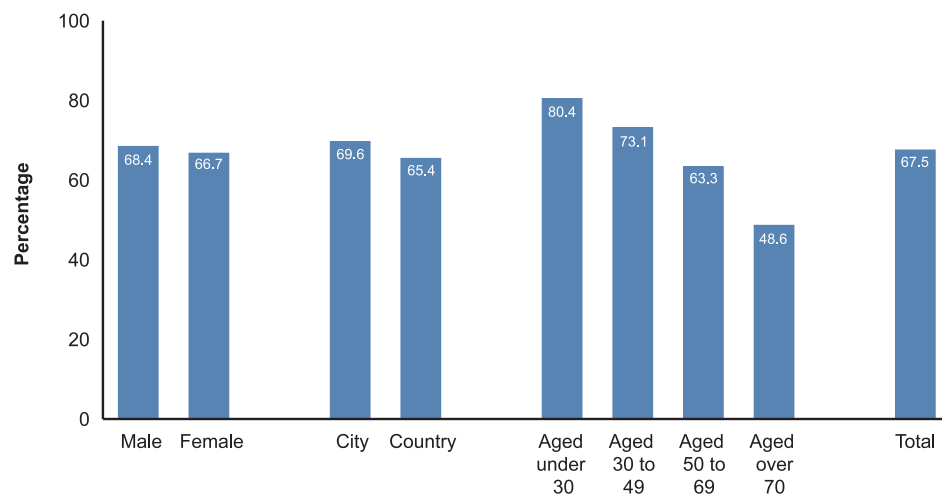


Figure 10: Overall awareness that calls to Crime Stoppers may lead to a reward



The 'unaware' respondents

As previously noted, some 225 of the 984 respondents who said they recognised Crime Stoppers, were not able to describe it in such a way as to indicate they really knew the fundamentals of the program. The descriptions they gave of Crime Stoppers are as follows. A third of these respondents (n=74) described Crime Stoppers as a television show, but without any detail of the underlying principle of Crime Stoppers. Typical comments included:

- 'show that is on TV to recognise criminals';
- 'on TV they advise about people who are wanted';
- 'TV show to help catch crooks';
- 'TV advertising show that asks people to look out for criminals'; and
- 'a state government organisation on TV that advertises to help prevent crime'.

Eighteen per cent (n=40) of these 'unaware' respondents reported that Crime Stoppers was geared towards preventing, stopping or making people aware of crime. Typically they described it as:

- 'a community organisation to help against crime';
- 'organisation that tries to prevent crime by letting the general public know what is happening in the wider community'; and
- 'community-based program for people to keep their eyes open', and [to] 'stop people from doing crimes'.

A further 18 respondents (8%) associated Crime Stoppers with the Neighbourhood Watch program or with neighbourly cooperation in general:

- 'neighbourhood group that looks after the community';
- 'a community organisation who keep an eye on the streets';
- 'it's neighbours looking after each other'; and
- 'a group of the general public like Neighbourhood Watch'.

Sixteen respondents (7%) saw Crime Stoppers as a police-associated activity:

- 'people that try to help the police – if they see crime they ring the police';
- 'police using community to solve crime';
- 'something the police do to stop crimes...on the TV'; and
- 'community based – if you suspect anything you report to police'.

A small group of fourteen (6%) saw Crime Stoppers as oriented towards trying to solve crimes:

- 'community-based – help apprehend criminals';
- 'public putting pieces together to solve crimes'; and
- 'program run by public trying to find people who have committed crime'.

The remaining 28 per cent of this group (n=63) simply provided ambiguous, vague or peculiar descriptions of Crime Stoppers:

- 'a law abiding group that you report evil things';
- 'organisation to protect community and to help solve problems';
- 'it is to do with the law';
- 'be alert and be interested';
- 'community-based advertising for crimes in the local area'.

None of the above comments necessarily indicate that the 225 respondents do not know what Crime Stoppers is. Nor, by themselves, do they provide a basis for believing that the respondents do know what it is. The actual extent of their knowledge was established through use of the prompt questions about the four Crime Stoppers features. The results from those questions are summarised on Table 16.

Table 16: Prompted awareness of features of Crime Stoppers by unaware respondents (percentages)				
	Knew of report to police	Knew of free phone call	Knew of anonymity of call	Knew of reward
City (n=109)	86.2	59.3	67.5	58.5
Country (n=116)	85.3	51.0	70.6	61.8
Male (n=123)	85.3	51.4	64.2	57.8
Female (n=102)	86.2	59.5	73.3	62.1
Aged under 30 (n=32)	87.5	68.8	84.4	62.5
Aged 30-49 (n=76)	93.4	57.9	69.7	71.1
Aged 50-69 (n=68)	91.2	54.4	73.5	51.5
Aged over 70 (n=49)	65.3	44.9	51.0	53.1
Total (n=225)	85.8	55.6	68.9	60.0

Note: Multiple responses possible

Learning about Crime Stoppers

All respondents were asked how they had become aware of Crime Stoppers, and their responses are summarised in Table 17. The great majority (89.3%) of the 948 respondents who recognised Crime Stoppers mentioned television as the source of their knowledge. That was also the case in the 1987 American evaluation (Rosenbaum et al. 1987: 28) where residents in Indianapolis were more likely to have been exposed to Crime Stoppers via network television than by listening to the radio or reading the newspaper even though the program was publicised through all major types of media.

Overall, 80 per cent of respondents mentioned only one source of information, probably because they thought that was all that was necessary. It is likely that Table 17 is not a true reflection of the impact of other media on respondents. Take the print media as an example. While only 15.7 per cent of respondents mentioned it as a source, it is likely that many of those who spontaneously mentioned television would

Table 17: Sources of information about Crime Stoppers

Source	Percentage mentioning source		
	Aware respondents (n=723)	Unaware respondents (n=225)	All respondents (n=948)
Radio	5.7	7.1	6.0
Television	91.8	81.3	89.3
Print media	15.8	15.6	15.7
Posters	2.1	1.8	2.0
Through police	1.5	0.0	1.2
Pamphlets	1.0	2.2	1.3
Neighbourhood Watch	1.2	3.6	1.8
Other	2.6	5.3	3.3

(Note: Multiple responses possible)

have admitted to having seen *Herald Sun* newspaper articles had they been prompted, simply because of the wide circulation of that newspaper. Indeed, specific comments about the *Herald Sun* had been made when describing Crime Stoppers in the earlier question:

- 'I see it in the *Herald Sun* all the time – it's about people watching out for people doing the wrong thing and acting suspiciously';
- 'an article in the *Herald Sun* that tells about crimes that may have occurred'; and
- 'reports in the *Sun* everyday, about whose getting caught'.

Involvement with Crime Stoppers

Nineteen respondents indicated that they had previously made contact with Crime Stoppers but the nature of those contacts was not pursued. More important was the question of whether respondents would contact Crime Stoppers in the future. Accordingly they were asked 'would you call Crime Stoppers if you had information about a crime that you thought would help police locate the offender?' All 1,008 respondents were asked this question. Twelve respondents said they could not answer it, and their exclusion left a sample of 996. Of those, 923 (92.7%) said they would contact Crime Stoppers. By way of comparison, 'independent research in Western Australia showed that...86 per cent [of the public there] will anonymously report crime or suspicious activity via the hotline' (Howard 2002: 16).

Both these Australian responses are better than that reported by the UK Crimestoppers Trust from an online survey they conducted on their web site (www.crimestoppers-uk.org). They asked 'would you phone Crime Stoppers if you had information?' Seventy-three per cent responded 'yes', six per cent 'no', and the remaining 21 per cent responded 'maybe'. Whether this is a reliable reflection of the average Briton's view is debatable as the respondents here were internet users (from anywhere) who had actively sought out the Crime Stoppers web site. Another indication of the British view is provided by Fletcher (1997) in a survey which asked members of the public in Gloucestershire if they would call Crimestoppers for a number of specified crimes. Overall, 57 per cent of 1,079 respondents said they would call Crimestoppers (Fletcher 1997: 4). (Note, however, that this figure includes a small number of respondents who said they would also call '999 or local police'; Fletcher 1997:6.)

The Gloucestershire survey, then, explored respondents' willingness to call Crimestoppers when the person about whom they had information was a stranger ('someone you don't know') or an acquaintance ('someone that you know or that lives near to you') (Fletcher 1997: 7, 16). A significantly greater number of respondents said they would use Crimestoppers when the matter involved an acquaintance. The most likely offence for which Crimestoppers would be called was buying or selling (handling) stolen goods, with 51 per cent of respondents saying they would call to report acquaintances and 49 per cent to report strangers. Then follows drug selling (48% and 43%), theft (47% and 38%) and vehicle crime (46% and 37%) (Fletcher 1997: 7). The Gloucestershire survey also asked respondents why they would call Crimestoppers, and the results of that question appear in Table 18. Here again there are differences according to whether an acquaintance or a stranger was the subject of the call. Table 18 shows that British respondents were more likely to use Crimestoppers to report the suspicious activities of acquaintances presumably because that ensured they would not be identified as the source of the information, always a possibility if a matter is reported directly to the police. Intuitively that would seem to be a possible scenario in Victoria.

Table 18: Why Britons would call Crimestoppers, 1997

Reason for calling Crimestoppers	Offender is a stranger (%)	Offender is an acquaintance (%)	Statistical significance*
Do not want face-to-face contact with the police	27	28	p<0.05
Do not want repercussions	88	90	ns
Do not want to go to court	75	78	p<0.01
Interested in reward	22	20	ns

* This statistical significance was not calculated from the displayed data but from the subset of responses where the given reason applied only to one of the offender types.

Source: Fletcher 1997: 9–10

Equally interesting are the reasons why people do not utilise a Crimestoppers facility. The Gloucestershire survey shows that the most common reason given by those who would not use Crimestoppers was that the matter 'has nothing to do with me', as shown in Table 19.

Table 19: Why Britons would *not* call Crimestoppers, 1997

Reason for <i>not</i> calling Crimestoppers	Offender is a stranger (%)	Offender is an acquaintance (%)	Statistical significance*
Do not want any contact with the police	17	33	p<0.01
Do not want to 'grass' on anyone	43	49	ns
It has nothing to do with me	74	71	ns

* This statistical significance was not calculated from the displayed data but from the subset of responses where the given reason applied only to one of the offender types.

Source: Fletcher 1997: 9

In the current Victorian survey, only 73 respondents said they would not call Crime Stoppers. However 49 of them indicated the reason they would not call was because they would directly call police in the first instance. It would distort the public's view of Crime Stoppers to leave these 49 as negative responses because they actually show willingness to pass information onto the police. (Three said they would call police because they knew the 000 number but not the Crime Stoppers number, which one described as 'long'.) The 24 remaining respondents represent only 2.5 per cent of the sample and explained their unwillingness to use the Crime Stoppers program in the following ways:

- eight simply 'did not want to get involved';
- one would not 'dob in';
- two were fearful of possible retaliation;
- three were anti-police;
- one 'did not trust anyone';
- one thought Crime Stoppers would take too long to respond;
- one did not know the phone number;
- one did not think they would ever witness a crime;
- one would 'rather bash the person than lag on them'; and
- five were not able to provide a sound reason (including one who simply said 'there are a lot of bad people out there in the world').

Putting aside these 24 respondents, it can be said that 923 of the 947 Victorian respondents (that is, 97.5 per cent of all surveyed) would be ready to use Crime Stoppers to report information about offending. That indicates a considerable level of public support.

6 Investigators' views of Crime Stoppers Victoria

A survey of Victoria Police members

In order to establish the way that serving members of Victoria Police were exposed to, utilised and viewed the Crime Stoppers program, a random survey of members was conducted. The human resources department of Victoria Police drew a random sample of 998 staff to which a brief questionnaire was sent in early December 2002. That sample was split evenly between staff dedicated to investigation (working in the criminal investigation units and the specialist investigating squads like fraud, homicide, organised crime etc), and uniformed staff based in police stations across Victoria. Eleven survey forms were returned from staff who were unsworn personnel supporting investigators and from uniformed staff working in training and communications. The final working sample size is thus 987, and the responses that had been received after four weeks are summarised in Table 20.

Table 20: Respondents to Crime Stoppers survey

	Number of survey forms sent	Number of responses received (response rate)	Respondents' average years of police service	Respondents' average years of criminal investigation experience
CIU	153	77 (50.3%)	17.7	9.8
Squad	333	129 (38.8%)	17.9	9.6
Uniform	501	211 (42.1%)	25.6	1.5
Total	987	417 (41.8%)	21.7	5.5

The overall response rate for this survey (41.8%) is good for a survey of this sort and means that the views of the respondents can be seen as representative of Victoria Police members. The response rate for a similar survey of members of the Gloucestershire Constabulary in the UK achieved a response rate of 44 per cent (Fletcher 1998: 2).

In the Victorian survey the demographic differences between what will be called 'the investigators' and the 'uniformed members' is quite apparent from Table 20. The inclusion in the sample of country-based police stations is in part responsible for the uniformed members' profile. There were at least 46 country-based uniformed members with over 30 years service among the respondents (these country-based respondents were identified by the postmarks on their returned envelopes where readable).

The predictable differences between the investigators and the uniformed members are quite apparent in Table 21. It shows that the great majority of investigators knew of cases that had been cleared with information from Crime Stoppers, and that they had personally talked with investigators involved in such cases. Notwithstanding those differences, 95 per cent of all respondents said they would recommend their colleagues seek assistance from Crime Stoppers if they were asked. That indicates a high 'approval' of Crime Stoppers activities even in the absence of knowing of a Crime Stoppers success.

Experience with Crime Stoppers

The positive view of Crime Stoppers extends to the analysis of members' interactions with CSV. As shown above, 211 members (50.6%) had had information from Crime Stoppers in relation to an incident they were investigating. They comprised 68 criminal investigation unit (CIU) members, 98 from squads,

Table 21: Victoria Police members' exposure and attitude to Crime Stoppers

	Percentage who had received information from Crime Stoppers for an investigation	Percentage who had heard of a case cleared with help from Crime Stoppers	Percentage who had personally spoken with an investigator who had cleared a case with Crime Stoppers help	Percentage who would recommend that a colleague seek help from Crime Stoppers if they were asked
CIU (n=77)	88.3	94.8	93.5	98.7
Squad (n=129)	76.0	81.4	76.0	96.9
Uniform (n=211)	17.5	61.6	45.0	93.4
Total (n=417)	50.6	73.9	63.5	95.4

and 37 uniformed staff who collectively stated that they had received over 11,000 incident reports from Crime Stoppers. Nine members reported that they had received one information report from CSV, and at the other end of the spectrum, two estimated they had received 500 information reports and one put it at 1,000.

It should be remembered here that detectives who might be jointly working on an investigation with others might have all counted the same information report as their own, so this total figure might be exaggerated. In any case, many respondents made broad estimates of the number of information reports they had received so the total is not an accurate figure. Nevertheless, the average number of (reported) information reports by location reflects the sorts of investigations undertaken by respondents (see Table 22). Investigators from the squads, for instance, reported the highest number – an average of 87 information reports. This is readily explained by, say, the homicide squad receiving many calls in response to requests in the media for assistance with a particular investigation.

Many of the information reports that make their way to CIU members seem to be reports of alleged criminal activity of which they were previously unaware, and their average number of 30 information reports is consistent with that. The uniformed members' modest average of 18 results from a fairly low rate of referrals to police station staff (although respondents who have moved from a specialist detective role back to a station may account for a number of these).

Just under half of all information reports issued are retained for intelligence purposes, suggesting that the information was useful. That is similar to the UK situation where police officers stated that 46 per cent (of actionable calls) provided useful information (Gresham et al. 2001: 5). Uniformed members retained

Table 22: Victoria Police members' experience with information reports from Crime Stoppers

	Total number of information reports reported by respondents	Average number of information reports per member	Percentage of information reports deemed of value to the investigation	Percentage of information reports retained for intelligence purposes
CIU (n=68)	2,016	30	38.9	54.3
Squad (n=98)	8,548	87	23.0	46.9
Uniform (n=37)	652	18	68.2	62.8
Total (n=203)	11,216	55	28.5	49.2

a slightly higher 62.8 per cent of their information reports, and their assessment of information reports as 'valuable' is also highest. That figure is strongly impacted by one police station respondent who reported having received 300 drug-related information reports, 80 per cent of which were valuable.

CIU members reported that 39 per cent of information reports overall were of value, while squad members who received the lion's share of reported information reports here, thought less than a quarter were of value for a particular investigation. These figures are similar to those resulting from the Gloucestershire police survey. There, 56 per cent of officers had been given information by Crimestoppers (compared with 51 per cent in Victoria), and overall 'only 72 per cent of these had been able to use [that] information on one or more occasions' (Fletcher 1998:8) leaving 28 per cent providing information of value, compared with 28.5 per cent in Victoria.

One measure of the 'acceptance' of Crime Stoppers is provided by members actively seeking its assistance. Respondents were asked what percentage of information reports had followed their making an approach to Crime Stoppers for assistance. CIU members reported that 24 per cent of the information reports had resulted from their making a request, while squad members reported a rate of 27.6 per cent. These figures indicate a most positive view of Crime Stoppers' capacity to assist an investigation. The uniformed members only initiated 5.9 per cent of the information reports they ultimately received, but as their investigations are less major, that is a not surprising result. Respondents were asked why it was they had approached Crime Stoppers for assistance and the following possibilities were provided:

- it would lead to a breakthrough – 155 responses;
- the incident was of major interest to the public – 115 responses;
- it would help speed up the investigation – 89 responses; and
- it was a last resort and the investigation was cold – 41 responses.

A number of other suggestions were also made including:

- 'somewhere someone knows something and they might just ring!' (Squad member, 21 years service);
- 'to locate witnesses whose identities were unknown but whose presence at scene was known' (Squad member, 15 years service); and
- '[it's a good] central information point, public have confidence in Crime Stoppers, a valuable addition to support Squad resources (Squad member, 30 years service).

That CSV is seen as a most useful resource is also supported by responses to the question 'in what percentage of all investigations do you think Crime Stoppers could be a useful source of assistance?' Squad members put this at 64.6 per cent overall, criminal investigation unit members suggested 61.5 per cent, and uniformed members put it at only 52 per cent. These rates convey a positive view of Crime Stoppers, although it may be that many members see Crime Stoppers having other strengths over and above being a source of assistance to them. For instance, Galanopoulos (1989: 59) noted that the 'biggest advantage seen by police was its capacity to act as a focal point for information from the public and to get closer to the community,' rather than getting ground-breaking information.

So why is it, if there is a general recognition that Crime Stoppers is a most useful investigative resource, that many members admit they had never approached Crime Stoppers for help? Some respondents have good reason for not contemplating an approach to Crime Stoppers. They include 20 respondents

who stated they were in some supervisory or administrative role, and one who was involved in covert operations. Then there were 35 who thought Crime Stoppers help was 'not needed, not necessary or not required.' That left 149 respondents whose explanations for not initiating contact with Crime Stoppers included the following:

- did not know what Crime Stoppers could do – 52 responses, including one who said 'Crime Stoppers does not reach its internal customers' (Uniform, 8 years service);
- did not think of it – 47 responses;
- did not think there was any point – 43 responses;
- assumed that Crime Stoppers was only for serious offences – 24 responses, including 'don't investigate anything worthy of using it' (Uniform, 30 years service);
- thought Crime Stoppers was only for city crime – 10 responses;
- understood that Crime Stoppers contact was for CIU or senior staff – nine responses, including 'thought of as non-local or higher level of assistance' (Uniform, 31 years service);
- believed that local resources or media were sufficient – six responses; and
- not suggested by supervisors – one response (Uniform, 28 years service).

The above comments indicate that a considerable number of respondents were not aware of Crime Stoppers and what it could achieve for them, and the following section includes more comments of this sort. This general sentiment also emerged in the Gloucestershire survey, with 60 per cent of police respondents saying they felt that they did not know enough about Crimestoppers, and six per cent of them wished to know more about the successes of the program (Fletcher 1998: 5).

Spontaneous comments about Crime Stoppers

Apart from the formal questions on the survey form, respondents were invited to make any other comment about Crime Stoppers and its potential use. As with all social surveys, these spontaneous comments draw attention to matters about which respondents feel most strongly. The fact that they have made the effort to provide them is evidence of that. And it can also be assumed that many of these comments would be supported by other (silent) respondents. In this survey, 131 respondents (31%) took the opportunity of making additional comments. While 24 respondents provided general or often personal comments about the Crime Stoppers program, the remaining 107 respondents' comments can be summarised under the following headings.

Strong support for Crime Stoppers

The largest single group of comments, 51 in all, emphasised that they saw Crime Stoppers as a most valuable resource. Typical comments included:

- 'a valuable asset – not utilised to its potential' (CIU, 28 years service);
- 'a valuable source to refer informants to, who do not want to speak to local police or divulge their details' (Uniform, 30 years service);
- 'excellent resource, inspires public confidence' (Squad, 20 years service);

- 'excellent tool for investigations, excellent for community spirit/involvement, positives outweigh negatives, great as a tool now so I can get junior police to use it and get used to it, it should be retained' (Uniform, 29 years service);
- 'good central contact point for police to receive info from public, if they don't know who to phone they'll phone Crime Stoppers because they've heard of it' (Squad, 23 years service);
- 'it is a fantastic investigative/information tool, by having a particular incident shown on TV it opens the investigation up to virtually thousands of investigators at home, many who are keen to help' (Squad, 10 years service); and
- 'very good police tool, one point of entry to police where you can remain anonymous' (Uniform, 30 years service)

The need to promote Crime Stoppers within the police

Nineteen respondents oriented their comments towards the need for Crime Stoppers to better market itself to their colleagues. All but one were uniformed members and their lack of appreciation of what the Crime Stoppers unit can do for them seems not uncommon. Comments such as those below make this clear:

- 'a high profile is needed to put the use of Crime Stoppers to the forefront of investigators' and supervisors' minds' (Uniform, 30 years service);
- 'advertise the benefits and abilities of your department to members' (Uniform, 30 years service);
- '[advertise] criteria needed to approach Crime Stoppers' (Uniform, 12 years service);
- 'forward information to members detailing the role and function of Crime Stoppers to enlighten ignorant members, have a Crime Stoppers lecture included on the curriculum/timetable for the Vicpol field investigators course' (Uniform, 6 years service);
- 'have seen Crime Stoppers on TV, no one has ever suggested general use by members' (Uniform, 28 years service);
- 'I have not had any training or information re Crime Stoppers and don't know what it offers' (Uniform, 30 years service);
- 'it actually gives one the impression that it is for civilians only, I've never seen anything (that I can recall) which has encouraged me as a police officer to use it' (Uniform, 30 years service);
- 'it may be of great value but I have not received any material regarding your services, that may be because you have not 'sold' yourself to police members as well as you have to the public, or it may be that the material has been available but not read by me' (Uniform, 31 years service);
- 'members tend to leave it up to CIU units, maybe it should be opened to general ranks' (Uniform, 28 years service);
- 'more information required about how they can assist other than with the more major offences that are on TV' (Uniform, 14 years service);
- 'promoted and marketed towards public only, if they wish members to use their services they should inform them what they can offer' (Uniform, 8 years service); and

-
- ‘very useful tool to police members in appropriate cases [but] have never received information as to its service provision’ (Uniform, 31 years service).

Clearly there needs to be some mechanism or documentation by which serving members can be acquainted with what CSV can do for them.

Criticism of the Crime Stoppers program

Sixteen respondents provided comments that were critical of some aspects of the Crime Stoppers program to varying degrees. Those raising questions of legitimate concern are shown below:

- ‘all persons I speak to about it state the events on it are too old – need to be more recent incidents’ (Uniform, 15 years service);
- ‘at times the information provided and the computer printout to investigator does not reflect the notes taken by the Crime Stoppers member’ (Squad, 20 years service);
- ‘better trained call-takers in obtaining relevant information, unsworn members have little experience in talking to criminals wishing to give info’ (Squad, 30 years service);
- ‘can be a very useful avenue of inquiry but sometimes can bog down with lots of useless information...[example] actually bogged the investigation down with too many dead ends’ (CIU, 22 years service);
- ‘getting assistance from Crime Stoppers takes time and effort, I think I would rather ‘write-off’ an investigation than go to the trouble, I’ve got plenty of other work to do’ (Uniform, 15 years service);
- ‘I know they have claimed success with providing information when it came from other sources – inflated success’ (Uniform, 30 years service);
- ‘information given needs to be acted on very shortly after information received, often the information is not received until weeks later and may no longer be valuable or current’ (CIU, 12 years service);
- ‘need to increase rewards and speed up process to make it more attractive to people to provide information’ (CIU, 20 years service);
- ‘often difficult and very time-consuming sorting wheat from chaff – for every valuable piece of information in a high-profile case there are 100 false (well intentioned) calls’ (Squad, 23 years service);
- ‘should consider charging people who deliberately cause police to investigate persons where information is supplied to get back at enemies or people who have grudges, happens all too often’ (Squad, 9 years service); and
- ‘where anonymous callers ring in it would be advantageous if call-taker could at least identify sex, approximate age and accents etc’ (Squad, 15 years service).

Some of these comments indicate a misunderstanding about the CSV program, which again highlights the need for some education of members.

Appreciation of Crime Stoppers Victoria

Fifteen respondents provided comments concerning their experiences with CSV. They included the following, which appreciate the efforts made by CSV staff:

- 'Crime Stoppers is a very good resource, a good central point to collect information, the staff are motivated, enthusiastic, eager to assist and courteous' (Squad, 30 years service);
- 'quality members at helm of Crime Stoppers really makes the difference' (CIU, 30 years service);
- 'very helpful, professional with filming and media contact' (Squad, 15 years service); and
- 'always of value to assist with media releases' (Squad, 29 years service).

Then there are the comments that reflect on experiences with CSV:

- 'although the odds of success are low they reflect the chances needed during an investigation, that is, you only need one good call to Crime Stoppers to solve a case' (Squad, 26 years service);
- 'obviously it is a focal point and the benefits outweigh any faults it may have' (Uniform, 37 years service);
- 'have seen many matters which were dead in the water get a good suspect/offender from Crime Stoppers often without any media interest to it being a major public investigation' (Squad, 21 years service);
- 'very beneficial to have reports go to Crime Stoppers in major investigations to free up investigator's time otherwise investigators get held up taking calls' (Uniform, 14 years service); and
- 'have personally been provided with accurate info from Crime Stoppers previously unknown to investigator which ultimately led to identification of offender – great value' (CIU, 32 years service).

Expanding Crime Stoppers' activities

Mostly senior members of the squads are responsible for all but one of the six comments that suggested possible activities for CSV in the future:

- 'Crime Stoppers should also be used as an information source for the public on how to not become a victim, for example latest scams etc' (Squad, 15 years service);
- 'inform members of the public re current methods of operandi of criminal enterprises and request information re suspects' (Squad, 21 years service);
- 'media outlets need to give more time to Crime Stoppers so it can be fully utilised by more investigators' (CIU, 17 years service);
- 'needs to have more impact rather than all comments being ring Crime Stoppers – I recommend more targeted use on major crimes' (Squad, 27 years service);
- 'should be used more to highlight serious fraud scams on the general community so that members of the public know the MO of fraudsters. Millions of dollars are lost annually to fraud scams, all the public needs information' (Squad, 27 years service); and

- 'used for special phone-ins – dob in a drug dealer, report a child molester – highly promoted yearly event' (Squad, 8 years service).

These suggest expanded activities for CSV most of which would increase the visibility of CSV to the public. (This topic is discussed again in Chapter 8.)

General observations by Gloucestershire Police

Similarities between the views of Victoria Police members in this survey and the earlier survey of Gloucestershire Police have been mentioned above. The latter's attitudes to Crime Stoppers are summarised in Table 23, and nothing resulting from the current survey makes these unlikely for the Victoria Police.

Table 23: Gloucestershire Police attitudes to Crimestoppers		
Attitudinal statement	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
Crimestoppers is useful to me in my present role	31	27
Too many malicious calls come through the scheme to be of any use	8	42
All officers...should have an understanding of Crimestoppers	82	3
It is better to have a Crimestoppers scheme than nothing at all	89	2
The intentions of the scheme are good but it doesn't work well in practice	24	22
The scheme doesn't have much credibility amongst police officers	22	25
Without Crimestoppers we would not detect as much crime as we do	22	30
Most of the information we get has to be taken with a pinch of salt	17	29

Source: Fletcher 1998: 16

7 The cost effectiveness of Crime Stoppers Victoria

Measuring cost effectiveness

The economic viability of a Crime Stoppers program is a further way to evaluate it. In the past, programs have often been assessed simply by comparing the value of property and drugs recovered (as a result of arrests initiated by calls to Crime Stoppers) to the quantum of rewards paid. In their Canadian evaluation, Carriere and Ericson (1989: 83–84) attack this measure. They argue that claims of cost effectiveness for Crime Stoppers rest on an unsupported assumption and selective bookkeeping. The first assumes that the incidents would not have been solved without Crime Stoppers. The second means that only the quantum of rewards is taken into account – not all of the costs involved in running the program. The reality is that there is no simple measure that can be used to show how economically sound a Crime Stoppers program is.

Nevertheless, some programs still publish such figures. For instance, Crime Stoppers of Newfoundland and Labrador report \$21 as the ‘average amount recovered per \$1 reward paid’, and a ‘cost per case solved of \$76’ (www.nf.crimestoppers.ca). Crime Stoppers of Boulder County in Colorado report ‘for every \$1 donated, an average of \$261 in stolen property or narcotics is recovered, [and] for every case cleared, an average of \$5,923 in recovery is cleared [sic]’ (www.co.boulder.co.us). Crime Stoppers of Thurston County in Washington report that the ‘average cost per case solved [was] \$157.80’ (www.crimebusters.org). The UK Crimestoppers Trust report on their web site (www.crimestoppers-uk.org) that each of their arrests cost them £200 (although the Home Office research puts it at between £485 and £860). But all these are simplistic measures.

It is necessary to define as accurately as possible how much a Crime Stoppers program costs to run, not simply how much it pays out in rewards. It is also necessary to define as accurately as possible the value of the program for the community in which it operates, not simply the total value of recovered illegal drugs and property. Only then can a judgment be made about whether the program has a favourable cost benefit for the community, or indeed the taxpayer.

At a superficial level it could be argued that because Crime Stoppers Victoria is funded by private contributions it can be said to be a cost-effective program for the taxpayer who contributes nothing. Conversely, as discussed by Carriere and Ericson (1989: 84), where Crime Stoppers is a registered charity (as it is in Canada and other places) there is also an argument that because tax deductions apply to the donations that are used to run the program, taxpayers are effectively paying for it.

So how are costs and benefits to be established? Defining costs is relatively easy, but quantifying benefits, or establishing ‘value’ is certainly not. Berry and Kennedy (1995) looked at the cost-effectiveness of Crimestoppers programs in the UK in terms of the value of the savings that emerged when police resources were freed up. They were faced with methodological difficulties including the lack of feedback from investigators, the difficulty of linking information received to a particular crime, and the wide variations in the nature and extent of data gathered by different Crimestoppers programs. Their final conclusion was that ‘the annual gross police resource savings generated by using [Crimestoppers] are at least £4.6 million (per annum), representing an additional 70 [police] officers for duty’ (Berry & Kennedy 1995: 4), but they caution that ‘the quantifiable benefits are difficult to accurately assess in terms of resource saving’ (Berry & Kennedy 1995: 7).

Another piece of research was commissioned by the UK Crimestoppers Trust and aimed to quantify ‘added value’; that is, ‘what would be lost if Crimestoppers was not available’ (Marlow & Miller 2000: 143). It involved an analysis of cases with successful outcomes to which Crimestoppers directly contributed,

and reached the general conclusion that 'each member of the Crimestoppers office is...responsible for the apprehension of 103 offenders who are either previously unknown to the police or who are linked to offences of which they were not previously suspected' (Marlow & Miller 2000: 152).

Broadly, the above findings indicate that Crime Stoppers programs are of positive value one way or another, but none itemises costs and benefits (however described). The British Home Office report notes that 'any estimate of the financial costs and benefits of the Crimestoppers scheme is likely to be subject to a very wide margin of error, especially where benefits are concerned' (Gresham et al. 2003: 49). Yet that does not mean that a cost-benefit analysis should be avoided. As previously mentioned, establishing costs is straightforward but quantifying benefits is indeed fraught with difficulties. The assumptions that have to be made in order to provide some sort of financial benefit are likely to be the subject of much disagreement. This can be expected to be the case here. However, even if the assumptions are disputed, and the estimated dollar amounts are challenged, the following does set out the required components of a cost-benefit analysis.

The costs of running Crime Stoppers Victoria.

The direct costs in operating Crime Stoppers Victoria for the fiscal year 2001–02 are presented below:

- Police department – Crime Stoppers unit
Figures from the Victoria Police finance department show that the actual costs for the Crime Stoppers unit were \$687,335 for the year (predominantly salaries and associated costs).
- Police department – media unit
The media unit spend four shifts a fortnight on CSV work, primarily preparing material for the *Herald Sun* and *Ballarat Courier* Crime Stoppers pages. That amounts to an annual cost of about \$26,000.
- Crime Stoppers Victoria Ltd
Audited accounts for the year show costs of \$274,564, predominantly salaries and employee benefits for the CEO and administrative officer (\$100,175) and other expenses of \$172,813. The latter includes promotional materials, re-enactment and filming expenses, web site maintenance, the telephone monitoring system rental and rewards.

Community benefits from Crime Stoppers Victoria

The value of the benefits attached to CSV comprise the value of services that CSV would otherwise have to buy if it were not a community-based entity, and the value to the community that flows from its activities. Estimating the value of the financial benefits that flow to the community from any crime control program is quite difficult. It involves a number of assumptions, the most notable of which is that the program was directly responsible for (usually) a reduction in crime and, in the Crime Stoppers case, an apprehension. It then involves the attribution of a dollar value to the social changes that have occurred.

Crime Stoppers generates a number of positive results for the community that it is impossible to cost. For instance, people may feel 'safer' or less fearful of crime after reading in the *Herald Sun* that Crime Stoppers calls have led to arrests. Or they may implement a crime prevention tip that appears in the paper which provides them with peace of mind. That lessening fear could lead to fewer call-outs for

police (from persons who are really only seeking reassurance), or ultimately fewer demands on the (mental) health system. That peace of mind may make people more confident and more interested in helping police by noting unusual activities. These distant benefits are not included in the list of benefits that appear below.

- *Herald Sun* – 'Victoria's most wanted' page

CSV benefits by having access to a free half page in the *Herald Sun* each week to 'advertise' its activities and seek the assistance of the public. The cost of a full-page weekday display advertisement is \$27,424.60, so the annual value of the Crime Stoppers pages is around \$685,000.

- Nine Network – television coverage

CSV benefits from the weekly television segment shown at prime time on Monday nights through the year, and brief community service announcements that are shown throughout the year. The Nine Network advises that the commercial value of those broadcasts is in excess of \$1.1 million for the former, and \$1.2 million for the latter.

- Recoveries of property and drugs

As a result of CSV activities, property and drugs are recovered when arrests are made but the total value of those recoveries cannot be classified as a benefit. Property recovered in 2001–02 was valued at \$877,106. If all of that had been returned to its rightful owners, they (or their insurance companies) would be saved the cost of replacing it. Assuming that happened in about half the cases would leave a benefit of \$440,000.

Drugs worth \$7,639,192 were recovered in the year but they have no legal value. Instead it is the damage that they have *not* inflicted on the community that should be valued. Assume that some of those who would have bought these drugs ended up buying less, so needed to steal less to raise the funds to buy their drugs. Assuming that happened in about 10 per cent of cases would generate a community benefit of about \$750,000.

The total benefits that arise from the recovery of property and drugs amount to \$1,190,000.

- Criminals desistance from offending

During 2001–02, 502 persons were arrested as a result of Crime Stoppers' information and they were charged and appeared at court. Some received custodial sentences that certainly curtailed their further offending for the time of their detention. Others who remained in the community may have decided to desist from offending (at least for some time). The figure of \$1,190,000 was calculated (above) as the total community benefit from the apprehension of the 502 offenders. Assume that half of all the offenders reduced their offending by half after they had been arrested. That would give a further community benefit of \$297,500.

- Crime or criminals deterred

The publicity that keeps the community aware of Crime Stoppers activities is also visible to potential offenders and it may well cause some of them to refrain from offending. For example, a potential convenience store robber might see security camera photos in the *Herald Sun* and realise that there is a high chance he will be photographed if he robs such a store. That raises the probability of his detection to a level with which he is not comfortable, so he decides not to commit a robbery.

There are obvious community benefits here but they are very difficult to quantify in financial terms. Assume their value would be about a quarter of the value of desistance in the previous paragraph, say, \$30,000. (The only way to be more definite about any deterrence effect of Crime Stoppers would be to interview convicted offenders and see if they are directly impacted by its activities.)

- Police savings

The better utilisation of police resources brings a benefit to the community both in service delivery and in costs. Crime Stoppers provides a call centre that can save trained detectives being tied down receiving phone calls, many of which may not actually be of value to an investigation. Crime Stoppers staff can filter calls for investigators freeing them up to pursue their specialist roles. Assume that in 2001–02 the use of Crime Stoppers to filter calls regarding major incidents ‘freed up’ a tenth of one per cent of Victoria Police’s investigative resources – this would amount to \$306,800.

The existence of Crime Stoppers also provides an alternative to the traditional door-knocking approach for finding witnesses to a criminal incident. There was a good example of this in 2002: following the murder of a man and the death of two others in South Yarra, residents in an apartment block overlooking the murder site were delivered a note asking them to contact Crime Stoppers rather than their being personally visited (and re-visited) to establish if they had seen anything. The cost of two detectives visiting those 150 apartments would have been in excess of \$2,000 (five apartments an hour at \$30 per hour). Were this practice to be more widely used, additional benefits would be achieved, but they will be assumed to be covered in the above amount.

- Government savings

The existence of the Crime Stoppers call centre has saved government the costs of having to put in place special hotline facilities for particular issues. In 2003, for instance, the Crime Stoppers hotline was used as the central point for families of the Bali bombing victims to advise whether they had personal items that might be used to help identify those victims. Crime Stoppers then forwarded that information to the appropriate federal agency. And of course, up until the Australian Government’s establishment of its own terrorism hotline, Crime Stoppers programs received calls about terrorism across Australia. There is no reason to think that government in the future will not similarly use the Crime Stoppers hotline. The value of the benefits to the community in avoiding duplication of a central call centre is hard to estimate, but assume a dedicated call centre was needed for four weeks and that it would cost about the same as CSV’s call centre to run, the cost would be at least \$60,000.

- Board members’ time

Seven of the 11 directors of Crime Stoppers Victoria Ltd are in private employment and attendance at board meetings is therefore an expense to their employers. Allowing for attendance at 10 meetings a year, these employers provide the community with an annual benefit of over \$10,000.

- Auditor’s fees

Ernst and Young, as their contribution to Crime Stoppers Victoria Ltd, provide a partner to complete the annual company audit. The value of this is in excess of \$3,000.

Cost–benefit summary for 2001–02

The figures from the above discussion are consolidated in Table 24. In short, it shows that the benefits from the activities of Crime Stoppers Victoria are worth over three times the cost of running the program (given the assumptions described). No attempt has been made to build these figures into a financial analysis model because those assumptions are such as to make that a capricious exercise. In addition, the sorts of activities that CSV might embark upon in the future could not be accommodated in such a model.

Table 24: Cost–benefit summary for Crime Stoppers Victoria, 2001–02

Costs	\$
Police department – Crime Stoppers unit	687,335
Police department – media unit	26,000
Crime Stoppers Victoria Ltd	274,564
Total costs	987,899
Benefits	
Benefits in kind from the media	
<i>Herald Sun</i> 'Victoria's most wanted' page	685,000
Nine Network television coverage	2,300,000
Benefits from Crime Stoppers activities	
Recoveries of property and drugs	1,190,000
Criminals desistance from offending	297,500
Crime or criminals deterred	30,000
Police savings	306,800
Government savings	60,000
Board members' time	10,000
Auditors' fees	3,000
Total benefits	4,882,300

8 Crime Stoppers Victoria: a worthy program

The previous chapters have evaluated Crime Stoppers Victoria from a number of different perspectives. Taken together they indicate that CSV is a useful, valuable and important organisation for Victorians wishing to assist in dealing with crime. The evaluation was based on examining CSV from a number of different perspectives, which collectively show the overall soundness of CSV and its work. Specifically they show that CSV demonstrates:

- A most acceptable level of success

As measured by the number of calls that led to arrests as a percentage of all calls received on the Crime Stoppers hotline. The CSV rate of 1.9 per cent exceeds that of the UK Crimestoppers Trust whose comparable rate of 1.0 per cent was the only available international benchmark (up until now). (Chapter 3)

- Sound levels of financial viability

In that the direct costs of running CSV are easily surpassed by the benefits that flow from its activities. Calculation of total benefit is a difficult exercise, and here it includes the value of media coverage and assumptions about the value of changes in criminal behaviour. The resulting total benefit is over five times the direct costs of CSV. (Chapter 7)

- Substantial public awareness and enthusiasm

As demonstrated by the survey of Victorians which showed that the name Crime Stoppers is well recognised and over 70 per cent of respondents are aware of key features of the program. The public goodwill towards Crime Stoppers is evidenced by the respondents' stated willingness to report matters in the future. Whether that comes to pass in practice depends on that willingness being converted into action. It also depends on respondents finding themselves in a situation where they actually have something to report to the police. (Chapter 5)

- Significant support from investigators and operational police

This was revealed by a survey in which 95 per cent of police respondents would recommend that a colleague seek assistance from CSV. Well over three-quarters of the specialised investigators (detectives) had received information reports – an indication of the penetration of CSV – and about half of those reports were said to contain useful information that was retained for intelligence purposes. (Chapter 6)

- Effective and attractive media coverage

As outlined in the content analysis of the *Herald Sun's* Crime Stoppers page in particular. That page has led to arrests for five per cent of its 'target crimes' (a rate that meets the international benchmark), and directly led to the location of 23 per cent of the 'wanted' persons featured on the page. Its weekly appearance keeps the community aware of Crime Stoppers and provides positive messages for them in terms of arrest reports and crime prevention tips. (Chapter 4)

The only area in which CSV did not perform well relates to the number of calls that it directly receives through the hotline. It has to be said that CSV demonstrates a low volume of calls by the Australian standard for ratio of calls to both population and reported crime. CSV received 41 calls per 10,000 population over a 12-month period, compared with an Australian mainland rate of 66. CSV received 68 calls per 1,000 reported crimes, compared with an Australian mainland rate of 86. In addition, the average duration of a call to CSV was 172 seconds, compared with an Australian mainland average duration of 198 seconds (Chapter 2).

In summary, Crime Stoppers Victoria succeeds from a number of perspectives. But the continued success of the program depends on its three partners working together. The Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police has recently noted that 'Crime Stoppers...is a wonderful investigative tool for police, and allows us to work together with the community to solve more crimes and that leads to a safer Victoria' (*Herald Sun*, 12 November 2002: 22). This evaluation confirms that CSV will continue to make a positive contribution for all Victorians.

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