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# Evaluation of the *Proceeds of Crime Act 2002* funding program: final report

s 47F

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# Executive summary

The Australian Government Attorney-General's Department (AGD) contracted the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) in late 2011 to evaluate the *Proceeds of Crime Act 2002* (POCA) funding program. The evaluation was designed to examine the implementation and impact of the Program both at a program and project level. More specifically, the evaluation has sought to:

- assess the appropriateness of POCA's funding focus and its administrative efficiency;
- review the consistency of funded projects with program assessment criteria, current and emerging crime problems, and best practice crime prevention approaches;
- understand the extent to which the different models of service delivery funded through POCA have delivered anticipated outcomes, and the nature of these outcomes;
- generate lessons drawn from the experience of funded projects; and
- make a series of recommendations for the future funding of non-government and community organisations under POCA.

The evaluation's major findings are summarised below and cover those generated through the administrative review (S 47F 2012), as well as those established as part of an in-depth stakeholder consultation process, the chief subject of this report. The findings, considered against the backdrop of the project's literature review (S 47F 2011), point to a number of recommendations for the future operation of the POCA funding program, which are also outlined.

## Summary of major findings from the administrative review

The findings indicate that POCA has funded a diverse range of community crime prevention work since it was established in 2003. Over the five funding rounds that took place between 2003 and 2009 (the period of this evaluation) POCA awarded \$35.2 million to 174 projects, covering interventions including substance misuse treatment, early intervention, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras, and criminal recidivism.

Over its life, improvements have been made in a number of different areas of program administration and delivery, although there remain areas that would benefit from further development. Important positive findings include:

- Projects funded by POCA have addressed a diverse array of crime types, offender/victim groups and interventions.
- Projects have generally been developed under the auspices of good practice, improving on the type and quality of information used in the application process since the time of the former government's National Community Crime Prevention Program (NCCPP).
- Projects engaged a wide range of stakeholders during project implementation. Where projects had been evaluated, multiple data sources were used to demonstrate program impact.

- The application process has been streamlined and is working well relative to the administrative processes implemented by the Department during the life of the NCCPP.
- POCA staff understand and are able to clearly articulate their various roles and responsibilities within the funding program, which is an important ingredient in good program governance.
- The application and project reporting process is comprehensive and yet, according to project managers, not onerous. This indicates that the Department has struck an efficient and effective balance between program accountability and the needs of project managers.

Notwithstanding these positives, there are a number of areas in which the administrative review found opportunities to improve practice in order to maximise Program operation and project outcomes. These include:

- The POCA program has little formal interaction or engagement with other Commonwealth or state/territory agencies that have a crime prevention interest, such as the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. The research evidence suggests that this lack of engagement with key stakeholders could be limiting the ability of the POCA funding program to support focused and coordinated crime prevention activity, which could lead to a duplication of effort with other agencies and resource wastage. This is because the crime prevention work that is currently being funded and implemented nationally is taking place without a sound understanding of precisely what is being funded by the states and territories and if this activity is actually effective.
- The findings suggest that while project managers are aware of the necessity of drawing on empirical evidence to support a claim for project funding, the use of rigorous data for day-to-day project monitoring and reporting purposes is less well understood. This situation is essentially unchanged from the time of the NCCPP review in the 2007.
- The practice of engaging stakeholders in project design, particularly in the application stage, was adopted by fewer than half of all projects. The main reason given by the project managers for not engaging with stakeholders early in project development is that they found it difficult to attract relevant groups who were sufficiently interested in the intervention, although several project managers also indicated that conflicting organisational priorities and poor communication hindered stakeholder engagement.
- Only a small number of projects had concluded and were evaluated at the time of this evaluation. Among those that had been evaluated the findings indicate that few projects had the impact that was anticipated at project commencement. These findings are likely to be due to a combination of issues. Chief among these is that the evaluation follow-up period was generally insufficient to capture what, in many instances, were long term outcomes. Compounding this were:
  - human resource constraints (eg too few project staff and/or high staff turnover);
  - an absence of specialist skills; and
  - failure to adequately engage with key stakeholders.
- Only a fraction of projects used comparative statistics in their evaluations. This is most likely because project staff have limited capacity to apply more rigorous quantitative evaluation techniques using these data for program review purposes. However, irrespective of the precise reason why more rigorous data and analytical techniques were not used by POCA project managers, the findings again indicate that there has been little change in this area since the review of the NCCPP.

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## Summary of major findings from the stakeholder consultation process

Through a program of in-depth discussions and input from crime prevention experts, the stakeholder consultation process was designed to explore perceived strengths and limitations of the POCA funding program, as well as options for its future operation. The strengths of POCA identified by stakeholders include:

- That it is an important resource for Australian community crime prevention. In particular:
  - it is a means through which small, locally-based organisations can seek funding;
  - it supports communities to address local crime problems, which is empowering for these communities;
  - it is an important source of funding for crime prevention projects that are unlikely to be funded by other grant programs;
  - it plays an important role in funding original and innovative projects.
- Stakeholders considered that the use of Federal money for locally based crime prevention could, if underpinned by strong strategic management, circumvent some of the funding uncertainty present within the states and territories.

While these are important positives, the findings indicate that there are a number of factors that currently constrain POCA's operation and impact. Chief among these are:

- Program funding is non-recurrent – this impacts on the ability of POCA to provide sustained investment to crime prevention, particularly projects that are attempting to address long term outcomes; and
- the variable or unpredictable nature of the amount of available funds – that is, money available for funding crime prevention activity under POCA originates from the seizure of criminal assets, which fluctuates over time. As such, the amount available for funding crime prevention activity cannot be guaranteed year-to-year.

Within this context, the AIC explored with stakeholders how AGD could enhance the POCA funding program to maximise its impact. Overall, what was perceived to be missing was a clearly articulated strategic statement about POCA's major goals and priorities. Clearly defining these will not only assist POCA to move from being an essentially reactive program to being more proactive and forward-focused, it will also help the Department to drive the national crime prevention agenda.

There were two areas that stakeholders considered the Department could significantly improve or modify to enhance overall Program impacts: more effective priority setting, and redesigning the POCA funding model.

### *Priority setting*

Currently, the priorities for each POCA funding round are determined by the Minister, with input provided by Departmental staff only. While this report is not advocating that this process change, it needs to be recognised that the Department is missing an important opportunity to drive a proactive national crime prevention agenda through more effective priority setting.

The Department could consider improving the way it sets its priorities through using the National Crime Prevention Framework to inform the broad funding priorities, as well as through regular, formal consultation and collaboration with a national advisory group of crime prevention experts working across different levels of government and (ideally) the non-government and academic sectors.

A national advisory group would provide an important mechanism through which independent advice on crime prevention priorities, sub-priorities and other issues can be provided to the Minister for Home Affairs and Justice. It could also serve as a public mechanism for raising issues of national crime prevention significance. The Department could consider using an existing group for this purpose, such as the Australian and New Zealand Crime Prevention Senior Officers Group (ANZCP SOG) or the newly formed Australian Government Crime Prevention Advisory Committee (CPAC).

### *Funding models*

While the current funding model meets a need, it could be modified to enhance program effectiveness. Different funding models were explored in discussions with the evaluation's stakeholders. The version favoured by most crime prevention experts is a split funding model, which would comprise a closed tender process and a smaller, open funding round. The open funding round would be available to community-based organisations and operate much as the POCA funding program does now. This would allow the Program to continue to cater to smaller, community-based organisations and incorporate infrastructure and capital works projects. The closed tender stream would involve organisations competing for funding for specific crime prevention activity, as determined through consultation with the advisory body. This stream would also have a strong emphasis on quality outcome evaluation. The tender process could support specific innovative crime prevention projects designed to enhance and grow the available crime prevention knowledge base in Australia through demonstration projects that might otherwise struggle to attract support from mainstream funding sources.

As a further suggestion, stakeholders discussed the possibility of setting aside a pool of funds each year as 'seed' money for the extension of a small number of projects with proven success. The aim would be to extend project funding for a finite period (say a further 12 months) to allow more time to gain funding through other means, such as through the state and territory governments. This could also allow for more rigorous evaluation of these projects, which would contribute to the crime prevention evidence base in Australia.

## Recommendations

Taken as a whole, the major evaluation findings outlined above that relate to the administrative review and the stakeholder consultation process point to a number of recommendations that the Department may wish to consider to improve the POCA funding program's overall operation and impact.

### *Project-level recommendations, stemming from the administrative review*

- *Improving project-level stakeholder engagement during project design and human resource management* — including in the application form a risk management matrix that encourages applicants to consider key perceived risks (for example, lack of stakeholder input, staff losses and skills needs) and responses they can implement to mitigate these risks before and as they occur, if indeed they do. This recommendation is designed to improve project managers' risk management planning prior to project implementation and derives from the finding that project managers commonly cited human resource issues as impacting on project effectiveness.
- *Explicitly including the presence of a project outcome monitoring process as a selection criterion within the funding guidelines and in the funding application form* — this should encourage applicants to more fully consider anticipated project impacts as part of overall project design and implementation. This report is not recommending that every project should be formally evaluated. However, the Department may consider seeking a minimum amount of

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information from applicants that would not only assist project managers to better articulate their data monitoring needs in the application, but would help to ensure that they understand the importance of regularly monitoring program effects during project implementation, as well as at program completion. For example, the Department could request in the application that applicants

- establish and articulate a clear set of outcome monitoring objectives and questions, which are linked to overall project goals;
- identify what data are required for day-to-day outcome monitoring as well as impact assessment at program completion. These should be linked to the same objectives and questions above; and
- describe how the relevant data will be accessed and collected.

### *Strategic recommendations*

- *Developing a clearly articulated strategic statement about POCA's major goals that is linked to a series of specific funding priorities* — defining these will not only assist the POCA funding program to be forward-looking, but will help the Department to drive a national crime prevention agenda.
- *Establishing regular, formal contact with national and state/territory agencies that have a crime prevention focus, as well as crime prevention experts working in the non-government sector and in academia* — this will ensure that the Program's priority setting is fully informed and that project funding is coordinated with other Australian crime prevention activity, minimising project duplication and resource wastage. It could be achieved by working through an existing group, such as the ANZCP SOG or the CPAC, or through the establishment of a new, independent advisory committee.
- *Splitting POCA into two separate streams; an open funding round, and a closed tender process* — the open funding round would allow the Program to continue to cater to smaller, community-based organisations. The second stream would involve a closed tender process, where organisations and groups would compete for funding for specific crime prevention activity that may be innovative in nature and in which there is a strong emphasis on quality outcome evaluation.

# Introduction

## Crime prevention in Australia

Crime prevention refers to the range of strategies that are implemented by individuals, communities, businesses, non-government organisations and all levels of government to target the various social and environmental factors that increase the risk of crime, disorder and victimisation (AIC 2003; ECOSOC 2002; Van Dijk & de Waard 1991). This includes a variety of approaches, including:

- *social approaches* – which focus on the underlying social and economic causes of crime in the community and on limiting the supply of motivated offenders, and include developmental prevention and community development models (Crawford 1998; ECOSOC 2002; Hope 1995; Hughes 2007; Sutton et al. 2008; Weatherburn 2004).
- *environmental approaches* – which include situational crime prevention techniques and broader urban planning initiatives that seek to modify the physical environment to reduce the opportunities for crime to occur (Crawford 1998; Hughes 2007; Sutton et al 2008).
- *criminal justice approaches* – which include programs delivered by police, the courts and corrections, frequently in partnership with a range of other government and non-government partners, and that aim to prevent recidivism among those people who have already engaged in offending behaviour and who have come into contact with the criminal justice system (ECOSOC 2002; UNODC 2010).

Crime prevention in Australia occurs at a number of different levels, from national through to state and territory levels, as well as at the ‘grass roots’ or community level. Reflecting this, its management is also undertaken by a wide range of government and non-government organisations, including law enforcement and other criminal justice agencies, local government organisations, not-for-profit groups, and other agencies (such as those in the welfare, health, and education sectors) whose mandate is not necessarily crime prevention *per se*, but whose work may contribute to important crime prevention outcomes.

## National-level crime prevention funding

The Australian Government has played an important role in funding crime prevention activity for many years. Aside from supporting programs and policies that foster social cohesion and build stronger communities (such as through income support, education, health and employment programs), the Australian Government has funded a wide range of local-level crime prevention activity. For example, in 1997 the then Prime Minister launched the National Campaign Against Violence and Crime (later known as the National Crime Prevention Programme), which was a seven year, \$38 million funding program that supported the identification and promotion of innovative ways to reduce and prevent crime and the fear of crime (Homel et al 2007). More recently, local crime prevention has also been supported at the national level through the National Community Crime Prevention Programme (NCCPP), the Safer Suburbs Plan, the Secure Schools Program, and the *Proceeds of Crime Act 2002* (POCA) funding program, the latter of which is the subject of this evaluation.

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## *National Community Crime Prevention Programme*

Established in 2004, the NCCPP was a \$65.5 million four year initiative that provided funding for grass roots projects designed to enhance community safety and crime prevention by preventing or reducing crime and anti-social behaviour, and reducing the fear of crime. Funding under the NCCPP was available to community groups, local government, businesses, and non-government organisations for up to three years. Over its life, the program supported in excess of 240 community-level crime prevention projects (Homel et al 2007: 11).

A review of the NCCPP was undertaken by the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) in the 2007 (Homel et al 2007). The review found that the crime prevention field valued the program, particularly as it represented to community-level agencies and organisations an important resource for community crime prevention. The particular strength of the NCCPP was that it (for example):

- provided a vehicle for national leadership on a crime prevention agenda;
- provided a good model for promoting partnership approaches to community crime prevention;
- was a genuine national program reaching many communities across Australia; and
- was effective at promoting the use of an evidence based response to crime prevention (Homel et al 2007: 12).

Notwithstanding these strengths, a number of challenges for its continuation were identified in the review. Chief among these was that the program was deliberately established to be no more than a community grants program with a focus on only a limited number of crime prevention goals, and so was only able to contribute to a narrow band of issues that made up the wider crime prevention agenda in Australia (Homel et al 2007: 12). Ultimately, the NCCPP was discontinued. However, it is worth noting that, while the NCCPP was not formally linked with POCA, following its termination the types of crime prevention responses funded through POCA expanded to capture a number of those activities that probably would have received funding under the NCCPP had it continued.

## *Safer Suburbs Plan*

The Safer Suburbs Plan is a program designed to fund specific situational crime prevention community safety measures, including the installation of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) systems and improved street lighting for local communities. Since its implementation in 2007 the Federal Government has committed over \$20 million to the program (AGD n.d.).

## *Secure Schools Program*

The Secure Schools Program also commenced in 2007 and was designed to assist at-risk government and non-government schools to meet particular security needs. Funding is awarded to schools on the basis of assessed security needs. The main types of projects funded under the program involve situational crime prevention measures like security related infrastructure (such as CCTV), fencing, lighting and improving window security (AGD n.d.).

## *The POCA funding program*

POCA was passed by Parliament in late 2002 and came into effect in January 2003. The legislation was enacted 'to discourage and deter crime by preventing criminals from enjoying the financial benefits of their illegal activity' (AGD 2011: 3). It does this by providing a mechanism through which the proceeds of crime against Australian law can be traced, held and confiscated.

POCA describes what can be funded under part 2 of section 298 of the Act. Specifically, the Act states that:

The expenditure is to be approved for one or more of the following purposes: (a) crime prevention measures; (b) law enforcement measures; (c) measures relating to treatment of drug addiction; (d) diversionary measures relating to illegal use of drugs (*Proceeds of Crime Act 2002* (Cth), s 298)

This evaluation is concerned with the provision of community crime prevention funding under the Act.

Administered by the Australian Government Attorney-General's Department (AGD), POCA has funded a diverse range of community crime prevention work since its inception. This reflects the series of changes that have occurred in the priority areas across the five funding rounds that were evaluated (one round each in 2003, 2006, 2007 and two rounds in 2009)<sup>1</sup>. For example, while the focus for funding in the first three rounds was drug treatment and rehabilitation services, this changed in February 2009 to Indigenous Prisoner Throughcare services and a broader range of crime prevention responses. In December 2009 the focus was on a wide array of crime prevention responses (for example, diversion and prevention programs for youth and Indigenous Australians, early intervention projects with families, crime prevention for seniors, and assisting victims of violent crime).

Since 2011 the focus of funding has narrowed. In the November round of that year funding was directed at improving the security of domestic violence accommodation services, while in the February and March 2012 rounds it was directed at preventing and responding to graffiti and in supporting the work of Policy Youth and Citizens Clubs (PCYCs), respectively.

To be eligible for POCA community grants funding, applicants must meet a number of strict eligibility criteria, both in terms of the type of organisation applying for funding and the type of project proposed. Eligible organisations must be not-for-profit. Depending on the round, they can also be incorporated, community or local government organisations. Funding applications are not accepted from individuals, political organisations, government agencies (excluding local government), unincorporated organisations or commercial/for profit organisations.

Each POCA grants round is advertised in a range of different ways, including through major national and state and territory newspapers, via the AGD website, and through local government websites. Eligible agencies and groups then apply for funding using an application kit, which is available online through the AGD website. As noted above, applicants must meet a series of eligibility criteria and are required to provide comprehensive information in their applications relating to:

- the aims and objectives of the project;
- a description of the project, including its history (for extant projects), scope, target group and anticipated outcomes;
- a detailed project work plan and budget;
- evidence of the need for the project in the local area;
- any research evidence upon which the project is based, including consistency with proven best practice;
- evidence of community engagement/partnership activity;
- an evaluation strategy; and
- details of other funding the project has received/is receiving.

Completed applications are assessed by a small team of AGD staff in accordance with these criteria, as well as in accordance with the priority areas for the particular funding round. This

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<sup>1</sup> At the time of reporting, three further funding rounds are underway (the November 2011, February and March 2012 rounds). These are not captured in the evaluation because they were announced after the commencement of the evaluation.

process helps to ensure that each application is scrutinised by more than one member of staff and that the merits or suitability of each application is assessed relative to every other application in the round. An electronic database of all projects considered for funding (both accepted and rejected) in each round is maintained by the Department. Figure 1 outlines the key stages in the POCA funding program application and assessment process.

The amount of funds available through POCA varies between funding rounds because the total assets seized through the legislation varies considerably from year-to-year. For instance, in the 2006 round applicants could seek funding of up to \$750,000 for each project, while in the December 2009 round the maximum amount available for each project was \$150,000. All grant monies are non-recurrent.

## The evaluation

The AGD contracted the AIC in late 2011 to evaluate the POCA funding program. The evaluation was designed to examine the implementation and impact of the funding program at program and project levels. It was anticipated at project commencement that the evaluation findings would also facilitate the development of recommendations for future funding of non-government and community organisations under POCA.

The evaluation of the POCA funding program has addressed the following areas:

- the overall effectiveness of the program;
- administration of the program;
- the crime prevention benefits that are delivered by the different models of service delivery funded by the program; and
- recommendations for future directions for the funding of non-government and community organisations under POCA.

Key questions that the overall evaluation has sought to answer include:

- What outcomes have been delivered through the provision of funding for non-government organisations?
- Has the POCA funding program been developed and implemented in a way that has ensured its maximum possible appropriateness, efficiency and effectiveness?
- To what extent have the different models of service delivery funded by the program delivered different outcomes, and have certain types of initiatives been more effective than others?
- What general lessons can be drawn from the experience of funded projects?
- What approaches to crime prevention and drug treatment and what models of delivery should be funded under POCA to effectively target current and emerging crime problems?

The evaluation involved a mixed methods design that was intended to address the diverse range of evaluation questions outlined above. Key among these were: an extensive literature review to identify factors influencing crime, current and emerging crime problems and evidence in support of different crime prevention approaches and drug treatment interventions and requirements for effective implementation; analysis of POCA administrative and project data; and an extensive consultation program involving one-on-one interviews, surveys and a national roundtable. The consultation program was designed to capture the views and experiences of POCA program staff, project managers and professionals working within the area of crime prevention. Detailed information about the methodologies used by the AIC to answer the evaluation questions can be found at Appendices 1 (the administrative review) and 2 (the stakeholder consultation process).

## Purpose of this report

This report is the final of three major outputs delivered as part of the evaluation program. The report summarises key findings from all components of the evaluation including the crime prevention literature review (S 47F [REDACTED] (2011), the review of program administrative effectiveness (S 47F [REDACTED] 2012), as well as findings from the project's major qualitative evaluation component, which is the subject of this report.

Focusing on an in-depth stakeholder consultation process, the final evaluation component involved a number of research methods undertaken concurrently. These were:

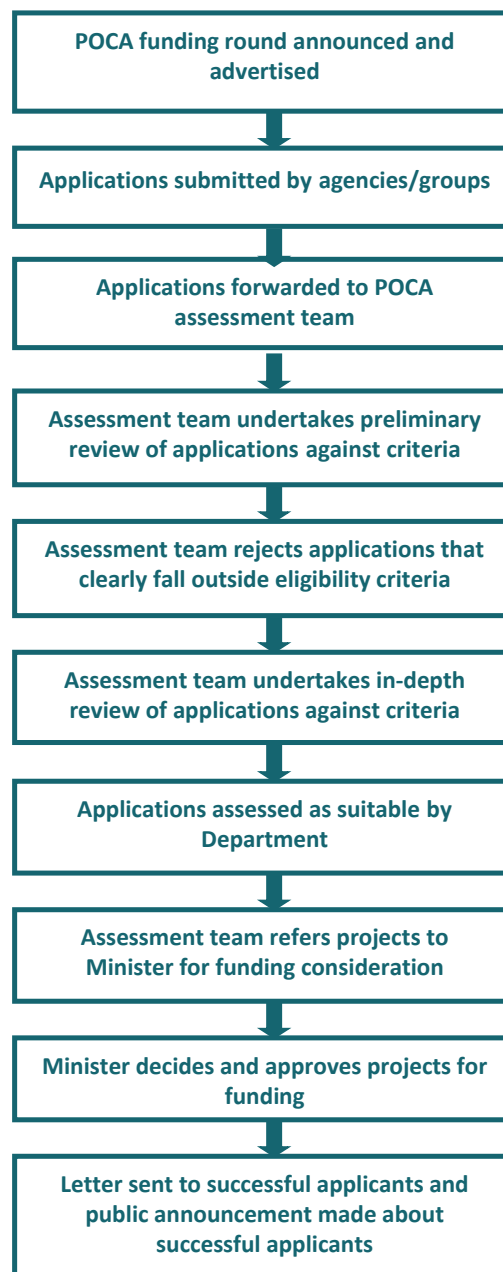
- an online qualitative survey directed at crime prevention policy-makers, academic experts and practitioners;
- one-on-one telephone interviews with an additional number of crime prevention policy-makers, academic experts and practitioners; and
- a national roundtable involving crime prevention experts, as well as professionals working in a range of other sectors (for example, the drug and alcohol field and Indigenous justice) who have an interest in POCA and in crime prevention more generally.

A list of all stakeholders consulted during this final phase of the evaluation is provided in Appendix 3.

The findings from all phases of the evaluation are combined in the report to provide a comprehensive overview of what POCA has achieved to date, as well as its future development and direction as a national crime prevention funding program.

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**Figure 1: Key stages in the POCA funding program application and assessment process**



# Key findings from the review of contemporary crime prevention literature

The first stage of the evaluation involved an assessment of the priorities for the POCA funding program, which centred on a rigorous and comprehensive desktop review of Australian and international research literature on community-based crime prevention (including drug and alcohol treatment programs). Drawing on the research and evaluation literature as well as government strategies and reports, the purpose of the review was to identify:

- key factors influencing crime and current and emerging crime problems;
- evidence in support of the different approaches to crime prevention (including but not limited to those delivered as part of the funding program, as well as drug and alcohol treatment programs);
- the characteristics of effective crime prevention projects and interventions and the requirements for their successful implementation; and
- important lessons for the effective management of community-based crime prevention programs, based on recent experience from Australia and overseas.

The report that outlines the findings from this exercise (s 47F [REDACTED] 2011) aims to inform decision making as part of future rounds of POCA funding for non-government and community organisations. Findings from the review are considered together with the results from the administrative review and stakeholder consultation process to guide the recommendations outlined in this final report, particularly in terms of future directions for the program.

A brief summary of the major issues and findings from the literature review is outlined below, although readers are encouraged to view the full report where a more comprehensive discussion of the key issues is provided. In particular, the research evidence (and related publication citations) upon which the discussion is based is considerably more extensive in the full report.

## Australian models of crime prevention

In Australia, commitment to community-based models of delivery has emphasised the important role of government and non-government organisations in local communities for the implementation of crime prevention strategies. This approach has been reflected in both national and state and territory crime prevention programs. Similar models have been adopted internationally, with an emphasis on programs that are centrally developed and delivered locally.

The emphasis on a community-based approach has influenced the range of crime prevention strategies implemented in Australia over the past two decades. There has been an emphasis on community engagement and on a range of initiatives to build social cohesion, as well as

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attempts to address neighbourhood disadvantage, particularly in Indigenous communities. Local councils have been responsible for a range of community development programs, as well as being entrusted with engaging the local community in strategies to address local crime and safety. There has been significant growth in the popularity of initiatives that draw upon the principles of developmental prevention and target at-risk young people in schools and the community. Other approaches adopted in Australia are as follows:

- Situational crime prevention and broader urban planning initiatives have become increasingly common, although not as dominant as in other countries such as the United Kingdom. CPTED has had a major influence on crime prevention policy and practice in Australia, and a number of state, territory and local governments now have specific planning policies that incorporate CPTED principles or guidelines. There has been considerable growth in the use of closed circuit television in public spaces as a crime prevention measure, and a range of campaigns have been developed in an attempt to improve personal, vehicle, household and business security. This reflects the prominent role of local governments, which have been largely responsible for leading the development of local crime prevention plans, developing and implementing a range of crime prevention initiatives in partnership with other stakeholders and performing a range of functions relevant to environmental crime prevention, such as the management of public space and building design.
- The role of police in crime prevention includes intelligence-led, proactive and visible policing of crime hot spots, programs that divert individuals away from the criminal justice system (sometimes into treatment), disseminating crime prevention information and advice and implementing a range of prevention initiatives in partnership with various stakeholders, including the local community.
- Courts work in partnership with a range of community-based organisations to implement a variety of diversion and specialty court programs. These programs target specific offender types and modify the criminal justice process to address the needs of offenders and those factors that increase the likelihood that they will reoffend. Correctional agencies deliver a range of rehabilitative programs to offenders in custody and work with service providers in the community to reduce reoffending and support the reintegration of offenders into the community.

## The priority areas for prevention and treatment

Each Australian state and territory faces a range of local crime problems. These problems vary across communities and locations within each jurisdiction. While each jurisdiction experiences different types and levels of criminal offending and victimisation, a number of issues warrant particular attention. These are a consideration of:

- the factors that influence crime;
- current and emerging crime problems; and
- the beneficiaries of specific crime prevention activity.

### *Factors influencing crime*

There is a range of factors that may have an important impact on the type and level of crime. These include the following:

- The risk of becoming involved in crime, or being victimised, is greater in communities that experience high levels of social exclusion or a lack of social cohesion. There is also growing recognition of the importance of addressing social exclusion (deprivation, disadvantage and limited access to services) and assisting disadvantaged groups to reduce their risk of involvement in crime. Aspects of social exclusion, including neighbourhood disadvantage,

unemployment, intergenerational disadvantage, limited education prospects, poor child health and wellbeing and homelessness are important risk factors for criminal behaviour.

- Poor parenting practices, and child abuse and neglect, are among the strongest predictors of juvenile involvement in crime. The number of children substantiated by child protection services as having suffered child abuse or neglect has increased in Australia over the past 20 years, leading to significant social and economic costs due to an increased need for child protection and out-of-home care services, as well as the short and long term costs to the child in terms of psychological and physical trauma and damage to family cohesion.
- The development of new technologies has been identified as a key factor in the expansion of consumer fraud and can also be exploited to commit identity related crimes, scams targeting vulnerable people, cyber stalking and bullying, computer vandalism, theft of information and the dissemination of objectionable material online. There is evidence of increasing levels of concern in the community regarding identify theft and credit card fraud via the internet. The growing use of personal computers and mobile devices by young people is increasing the risk of online scams, and harassment and bullying targeting young people. The increased use of high speed internet, and growth in social networking sites and online chat rooms, presents potential opportunities for both criminal activity and crime prevention.
- Research shows that the drug using population is responsible for a disproportionate amount of crime and that a significant proportion of offenders report using illicit drugs. Recent research suggests that there have been increases in cannabis use, cocaine use and the use of pharmaceuticals for non-medical purposes, as well as a recent upturn in methamphetamine use. Responses include early intervention approaches for minor offenders and minor drug users to prevent escalation of drug use and offending and applying a multidisciplinary approach to crime prevention and drug treatment as part of a coordinated approach to reducing illicit drug use and drug-related crime.

### *Current and emerging crime problems*

The evidence relating to current and emerging crime problems highlights a number of important trends and issues for prevention strategies, including:

- The majority of family and domestic violence events in Australia are committed by men against women. There is considerable evidence surrounding the negative impact of domestic violence on victims and their families.
- Criminal justice, health and survey data show that there is a significant level of alcohol-related violence. While the majority of people who consume alcohol do not engage in violent behaviour, there is evidence of a relationship between the excessive consumption of alcohol and an increased risk of being a victim or perpetrator of assault.
- While there has been a general decline in property crime, it still remains the crime most commonly reported to police. There is strong evidence in support of situational and environmental prevention approaches to reduce property crime in a range of different settings.
- The development of new technologies, changes to law enforcement practices and the changing economy have all been identified as potential risk factors for organised crime. The UK experience with organised crime suggests that harms associated with organised crime are concentrated in the most deprived communities. Further research is needed into the potential impact of community-based prevention strategies in addressing organised crime.

### *The beneficiaries of specific crime prevention activity*

There are a number of important contextual considerations for the development and implementation of prevention strategies directed at preventing crime against vulnerable groups. These are:

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- There is significant evidence to show that young people are disproportionately affected by crime. While the majority of young people are not involved in crime, people under the age of 25 are overrepresented as both offenders and victims. Young people who have experienced or witnessed violence are at increased risk of becoming violent offenders themselves. Males comprise the majority of young people involved in crime, although rates of female offending appear to be increasing.
- Indigenous people come into contact with police, the courts and corrections at a higher rate than the rest of the community. They are overrepresented as both offenders and victims of crime. Serious social and economic disadvantage within Indigenous communities is a significant contributor to high rates of offending and victimisation.
- Despite having relatively lower victimisation rates compared to the remainder of the population, older people are more likely to fear becoming a victim of crime (which can lead to social isolation), perceive crime to be a problem and have more punitive attitudes towards appropriate responses to crime.
- The social exclusion of vulnerable individuals based on factors such as culture, religion, national origin and language is an area of concern, particularly given Australia's large migrant population. It is generally recognised that migrants from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities may face a range of complex issues upon arrival in a new country, including discrimination and prejudice, social isolation and acculturation. In addition, refugees or people who have migrated to Australia as a result of adversity may be suffering from undiagnosed or untreated trauma.

## The use of evidence and evaluation in crime prevention

An important principle underpinning effective crime prevention is a commitment to evidence-based (or evidence-informed) decision-making. Evidence-based decision-making involves consideration of the best available evidence in the development and implementation of a program or policy designed to prevent or reduce crime. This is regarded as the foundation of a rational approach to crime control policy.

Evidence-based crime prevention requires the practical application of research and evaluation findings in the development and implementation of measures to reduce and prevent crime, directed to areas and populations of the greatest need (based on a detailed analysis of the problem) and adapted to suit local conditions. Furthermore, evidence-based crime prevention focuses on outcomes and a commitment to demonstrating measurable results (and contributing to the evidence base) through evaluation and performance measurement.

The literature review revealed a number of important findings in this area. These are:

- There is an existing and still growing body of high quality research that demonstrates the effectiveness (or otherwise) of different approaches to crime prevention that include responses based on urban planning and design, situational approaches, early intervention approaches, community development, drug and alcohol treatment, and criminal justice responses.
- The level, quality and strength of the evidence in support of different crime prevention interventions can vary considerably. Some prevention approaches do not appear to be supported by evidence of effectiveness (or evidence demonstrating that they are not effective). There is strong evidence to suggest that environmental approaches to crime prevention are effective in reducing priority number of crime types, particularly volume crime such as burglary. Although some promising evidence is apparently now emerging about the effectiveness of certain social approaches (see Sampson 2012), further work needs to be

undertaken to confirm these findings. For example, currently there is little evidence about the effectiveness or otherwise of diversionary measures targeting young people (particularly as a primary intervention), an approach that is a common strategy employed by local government. There continues to be a lack evidence of the effectiveness of efforts to modify community level factors to reduce crime.

- The lack of high quality evidence from Australia and in many cases overseas in relation to common intervention types is possibly because most crime prevention programs have placed less emphasis on systematically generating evidence than on the practical application of the available research. Numerous initiatives have been implemented that have not been subjected to evaluation or ongoing monitoring and, where they have been evaluated, the methodological rigour of these evaluations has often been poor.
- To improve the evidence base for effective crime prevention interventions and the requirements for their implementation, it is important that there are strategies in place to increase both the amount and quality of evaluation research being conducted in this country. Determining the most effective approach to supporting evaluation work, particularly work undertaken at the community level where there are often scant resources, will need to be based on an assessment of the existing capacity and potential needs of those likely to be entrusted with the responsibility for evaluation.

## Lessons from Australian and international experience

There are a number of important principles that underpin effective crime prevention policy and practice, irrespective of the approach or model of delivery (ECOSOC 2002). Adhering to these standards is important for crime prevention work to deliver optimum results. These are:

- *Government leadership*: at all levels to create and maintain an institutional framework for effective crime prevention.
- *Socio-economic development and inclusion*: integration of crime prevention into relevant social and economic policies, focus on integration of at risk communities, children, families and youth.
- *Cooperation and partnerships*: between government organizations, civil society, non-government and business sectors.
- *Sustainability and accountability*: adequate funding to establish and sustain programs and evaluation, and clear accountability for funding.
- *Use of a knowledge base*: using evidence of proven practices as the basis for policies and programs.
- *Human rights/rule of law/culture of lawfulness*: respect for human rights and promotion of a culture of lawfulness.
- *Interdependency*: take account of links between local crime problems and international organized crime.
- *Differentiation*: respecting different needs of men and women and vulnerable members of society (ECOSOC 2002).

Experience from crime prevention programs implemented in Australia and overseas suggests that there are several key elements that contribute to the effectiveness of a community-based crime prevention program. These are:

- Strong and committed national leadership operating within a coherent and flexible policy framework.
- Evidence informed strategies and practice that are informed by reliable data about crime problems and responses, outcome focused, regularly reviewed and monitored and reported.

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- Responsive and flexible partnership arrangements with governance mechanisms that are respectful of specific communities, priorities and existing experience.
- Supported by long term and adequate resourcing to establish and sustain programs and evaluation.
- A commitment to develop the crime prevention workforce and to actively disseminate good practice knowledge to enhance practice and program implementation.
- A clear and coherent strategy for promoting the crime prevention agenda (Homel 2009).

# Key findings from the administrative review

This evaluation component sought to provide some insight into the appropriateness and the administrative efficiency and effectiveness of the POCA funding program through a comprehensive examination of POCA funded activities. The administrative review also sought to shed light on the extent to which funded projects were developed and implemented in accordance with good practice, as well as the degree to which these projects have addressed the factors influencing crime and current and/or emerging crime problems.

Focusing on a detailed examination of a sample of 60 POCA funded projects and information obtained via a survey of project managers, supplemented with consultations with AGD staff, this part of the review centred on an examination of key areas of program administration and delivery, including priority setting, the application process, project development and implementation, intervention types and any preliminary evidence in relation to the delivery of project outcomes. A summary of findings is provided below (see **S 47F** 2012 for the full report). Detailed information about the methodologies underpinning this evaluation phase can be found at Appendix 1.

## Priority setting

As part of the consultation process, the AIC's evaluation team asked the AGD staff responsible for administering the POCA funding program a series of questions about priority setting within the Program. These questions were designed to understand how the funding priorities are established for each round and the extent to which the Department draws upon the crime prevention sector and available crime prevention research to inform this exercise.

At its highest level, the funding priorities are determined by the Minister for Home Affairs and Justice, with advice provided by AGD staff. This advice is based on a combination of research evidence, as well as experience drawn from working in the field. However, the consultations with AGD staff administering the POCA funding program indicate that there is little formal engagement with Commonwealth or jurisdictional agencies that have a crime prevention mandate or focus in relation to crime prevention priorities. While there is some contact and discussion with the crime prevention sector through the ANZCP SOG, the POCA funding process appears to be occurring largely in isolation from the broader crime prevention sector.

It is unlikely that POCA will make a lasting impact on crime prevention at a national level without adequate engagement with relevant external agencies at national and state/territory levels. The research literature summarised in the previous section clearly demonstrates that where this does not occur the crime prevention activity that does take place lacks focus and coordination, leading to duplication of effort and resource wastage, both human and capital. Better practice approaches indicate that where genuine engagement does occur through formal channels (such as through regular fora, collaborations or partnerships) these form an important mechanism

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through which coordinated and integrated activity can take place, which helps to maximise the overall impact and effectiveness of all responses.

POCA is also potentially missing an important opportunity to contribute to a coordinated and more strategic approach to crime prevention at the national level. However, this situation is likely to significantly improve if the Department embraces the principles and priorities outlined in the new National Crime Prevention Framework.

## The application process

As outlined earlier, each POCA grants round is advertised in a range of different ways, including through major national and state/territory newspapers, via the AGD website, and through local government websites. Eligible agencies and groups apply for funding using an application form, which is available online through the AGD website. Applicants must meet a series of strict eligibility criteria and are required to provide comprehensive information relating to:

- the aims and objectives of the project;
- a description of the project, including its history (for extant projects), scope, target group and anticipated outcomes;
- a detailed project work plan and budget
- evidence of the need for the project in the local area;
- any research evidence upon which the project is based, including consistency with proven best practice;
- evidence of community engagement/partnership activity;
- an evaluation strategy; and
- details of other funding the project has received/is receiving.

Completed applications are assessed by a small team of AGD staff in accordance with these criteria, as well as in keeping with the priority areas for the particular funding round. This process ensures that each application is overseen by more than one member of staff and that the merits and suitability of each application is assessed relative to every other application in the round.

Overall, the processes established by the AGD for the administration of POCA appear to work well and have facilitated the reasonably efficient selection of eligible and appropriate crime prevention projects throughout the various funding rounds. In particular, and to put this finding in some context, the average time between application submission and signed funding agreement for all projects funded under the NCCPP was approximately 11 months, while for POCA it is eight months. This represents a three month (or 27%) improvement in the time between application submission and signed funding agreement for the POCA program.

While a number of POCA staff indicated that they are frequently under considerable pressure to manage the POCA assessment process in combination with the assessment phase of other funding programs and that this can lead to system delays, they understand and are able to articulate clearly their various roles and responsibilities within the funding program. However, it is of little surprise that the staff who have worked in the Program the longest are also able to draw on the widest range of information, both in the application assessment phase as well as throughout project implementation.

A key strength of the POCA application process, and indeed the funding program more generally, is that the paperwork, while needing to be comprehensive, is not apparently onerous. Importantly, this finding was not only reflected in the opinions of Departmental staff, but in the views of the funded project managers themselves. This allows project managers and other project staff the time to focus on the important work of project implementation.



## Project development and implementation

Over the six year period between 2003 and 2009, POCA has funded projects that target a diverse array of crime types, offender/victim groups and interventions. Changes to POCA's eligibility criteria over time have ensured flexibility in the system of grants administration, which has permitted funding to be directed towards areas of perceived need or significance. Importantly, the findings indicate that projects funded through the six separate rounds between 2003 and 2009 are well aligned with the Program's eligibility criteria in those rounds.

The combined findings suggest that projects are being developed under the auspices of good practice in a number of ways. To be successful in attracting funding the POCA application requires applicants to demonstrate a need for and efficacy of the proposed intervention. This is critical as it ensures the funding of well-considered projects that are grounded in evidence. Encouragingly, the majority of projects examined as part of the comprehensive review had drawn upon more than one type of evidence to demonstrate need and had also used these same types of information in project development; this generally included the use of academic research and local crime statistics. Many more POCA project managers included academic research in their applications to demonstrate need than was the case during the NCCPP review. This represents a small, but significant improvement in the type and quality of information used in the application process.

However, anecdotal evidence is still used by many project managers in project development and to substantiate need in the application process. Few applicants appeared to draw on evaluation material. It is unclear if this latter issue is an access problem (that is, a general paucity of publicly available Australian evaluation material) or because project managers find it difficult to apply evaluation findings to their own projects and so tend to avoid using them.

The engagement and participation of stakeholders in project design and implementation also reflects good practice. Where external support was sought in project implementation an average of six parties were engaged in each project, generally comprised of a range of local government agencies, educational institutions, and community-based groups such as support groups and PCYCs. Overall, among those who did engage the active participation of external groups, there was a tendency to seek the input and support of agencies and groups not traditionally perceived as being directly involved with crime prevention work. This suggests that these project managers are considering the broader context of underlying social and economic issues related to criminal offending and not just the offending in isolation.

Notwithstanding this, the practice of engaging stakeholders in the project design phase, particularly in developing the application for funding, was only adopted by fewer than half of all projects and so there is considerable scope for improvement, something that would ultimately further strengthen project implementation. The main reason given by the project managers for not engaging with stakeholders during project design was that they found it difficult to attract relevant groups who were sufficiently interested in the intervention, although several project managers also indicated that conflicting organisational priorities and poor communication hindered stakeholder engagement.

The POCA application form requires evidence from applicants of formal partner agencies, without which an application will not be considered for funding. The form also requires information about other groups that may be involved in project implementation and applicants must provide information about who the stakeholders are and their specific roles, skills and experience. These provisions should assist in improving the level of stakeholder engagement in future funding rounds. However, to fully realise their potential, partnerships need to be carefully considered and managed from project design right through to implementation, and their effectiveness monitored by project managers. The hallmarks of effective crime prevention partnerships hinge on (among other things):

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- clearly articulated goals, objectives, roles and responsibilities;
- commitment of resources;
- strong leadership and partnership structures that have a clear decision-making process;
- staff continuity; and
- documentation of major processes and decision-making.

There are a number of ways in which effective project engagement and partnerships can be promoted. For instance, it is important to propose and develop projects that the community are likely to have a stake in, or want to become involved with. It is also important that community groups and agencies are given an opportunity to provide input into project design and implementation. Other issues include ensuring that:

- any consultation with prospective partners is not a one-off occasion, but is undertaken openly and regularly;
- no particular group or individual dominates the consultations or prescribes what is to be done; and
- the community in which the project is being implemented is made aware of the project through a number of different mechanisms, such as through the local media and community meetings.

## Interventions funded through POCA

In the period under review, POCA moved from supporting only those projects that had a drug treatment and rehabilitation focus to supporting a far broader range of crime prevention activity. This trend has allowed for the funding of a diverse mix of community-level crime prevention responses that may not otherwise have attracted funding from elsewhere. It has also permitted the achievement of a broader range of crime prevention outcomes than would have been the case earlier in the life of the Program (see below).

The sorts of issues targeted by POCA funded projects reflect many of the same issues identified in this project's literature review as important current and emerging areas for crime prevention effort (see [S 47F](#) 2011). Key among these are the POCA projects that target:

- illicit and licit substance misuse (and related behaviour such as violence);
- social exclusion;
- youth crime;
- family/domestic violence; and
- Indigenous offending issues.

While a range of approaches to tackling offending and antisocial behaviour is evident across the projects, the focus of activity is on (not surprisingly) drug and alcohol treatment, as well as approaches that include a community development component, such as through the establishment of community support services as well as education and training activities. A smaller proportion of POCA funded projects is based on the principles of situational crime prevention. Few projects based on developmental crime prevention approaches were funded and no projects involving urban planning and design were in operation during the evaluation period.

These findings indicate that POCA funding is directed at supporting many projects where there is a broad evidence base in support of the general crime prevention approach. For example, there is now good evidence in support of drug and alcohol treatment in community and (particularly) criminal justice settings. While it is still unclear how effective some community development approaches are in the longer term, there is evidence that short-term gains can be

made. There is strong evidence in support of many situational crime prevention approaches, although the evidence specifically relating to the effectiveness of CCTV is mixed (AIC 2009, s 47F 2011).

## Project outcomes

Project outcome information is very important as it forms the basis for judging whether a project achieved what it set out to do. Without quality outcome information, particularly that derived from outcome evaluations, there is no way of knowing if the expenditure on a particular project was worthwhile, nor is it possible to make an assessment about the efficacy of funding similar projects elsewhere in the future.

While it forms part of POCA's funding agreements, the one area in the administrative review in which the least information was available about projects related to project outcomes. It was anticipated that few project case files would include information about project outcomes or evaluation material as many of the projects had not yet concluded. Indeed, at the time of the case file examination three-quarters of the projects were still active, leaving 15 projects available for potential review. As such, findings from this part of the review should be viewed as indicative only.

Overall, the findings show that few projects have had the impact that was anticipated at project commencement. However, it is clear that where projects are least likely to have achieved their anticipated outcomes this is because many of the identified outcomes are long-term in nature (for example, improvements in life skills, social skills and risk/protective factors) and therefore the full impact of the project is unlikely to be observed in the evaluation follow-up period, which was typically short and undertaken soon after project completion. In contrast, where the outcomes are more likely to have been achieved, they are more tangible and short-term (for instance, increased service use and the establishment of new programs). Other more specific reasons why projects may be falling short of achieving all anticipated outcomes were identified through the case file review and survey of project managers and include issues to do with:

- human resource constraints (for example, too few staff and/or high staff turnover);
- an absence of specialist skills; and
- failure to adequately engage with key stakeholders.

All three issues, but particularly the first two, impacted on the ability of project managers to effectively project manage. It is likely that with limited resources project managers focused their efforts on project delivery at the expense of the collection of important program monitoring and evaluation data.

While disappointing, these findings are consistent with experiences documented in the research literature in Australia and overseas (Anderson & Homel 2005, Brown 2006, Homel 2006, Homel et al 2007, Morgan & Homel 2011). Nevertheless, there are things that can be done that reduce the likelihood of these problems arising, or at least ensuring that they are seriously considered during project planning. For example, it is useful for project managers to develop a risk management framework during project planning. Such frameworks do not have to be overly detailed, but should outline the key perceived risks and what can be done to address these risks before and as they occur. In relation to the specific issues outlined here, such a framework could include the ways in which project managers can encourage staff to stay with a project, such as providing ongoing support once staff are employed and including training and/or mentoring options. It is also critical that project managers maintain a comprehensive record of the project's activities so that new staff can pick things up with relative ease.

Where evaluations were undertaken, multiple data sources were used, which suggests that project managers understand the importance of triangulating different types of data to gauge

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project impacts. Most evidence of program impacts was derived from stakeholder surveys, including project participant and project staff perceptions captured before and shortly after project implementation, although only a small fraction of projects made use of comparative statistics in their evaluations. It is uncertain precisely why statistical data were not used more widely in evaluating project outcomes and is somewhat surprising, especially since these data were commonly used to support project funding in the application rounds. However, one could speculate that it is due to one or more of the following:

- a limited capacity of project staff to apply more rigorous quantitative evaluation techniques using these data for program review purposes. This skills gap is something that has been frequently observed by the AIC in its various evaluation projects and experience in working with crime prevention practitioners over many years;
- the short evaluation period that was typically observed and/or
- an understanding among project managers of the necessity of drawing on empirical evidence to support a claim for project funding, but a corresponding lack of understanding about the utility of applying data to day-to-day project monitoring and reporting..

While acknowledging that measuring and evaluating project outcomes (particularly long-term outcomes) can be challenging, even for evaluation experts, there are a number of things that can be considered that facilitate the process. Key among these are:

- understanding the long term goals of the project;
- establishing a clear set of evaluation objectives and questions that are linked to the goals;
- identifying what data are required to answer the questions and how the data will be accessed and collected;
- considering the most appropriate and feasible outcome monitoring or evaluation;
- where practicable, considering the involvement of an outside consultant who has the expertise to assist project staff to develop an evaluation plan that outlines what needs to be done, why, by whom, and when. If the budget is sufficient an independent evaluator can also be employed to undertake the evaluation itself.

There are many useful 'plain language' resources available online that provide practical information about different evaluation approaches and the important steps needed to execute a good quality evaluation. Some of these are available through the POCA link on the AGD website. Given the importance of project outcome monitoring and evaluation in improving project management and the overall evidence base, the findings suggest that AGD should consider pointing applicants to these resource materials as part of the funding application process.

Furthermore, while reference is made in the funding guidelines and application form about the importance of demonstrating the long term benefits of project activity, neither document explicitly highlights project outcome monitoring or evaluation. In particular, neither is included as a selection criterion.

## Administrative review recommendations

Together, these findings point to a number of recommendations that the Department may wish to consider in relation to the future administration of the Program:

- *Establishing regular, formal contact with national and state/territory agencies that have a crime prevention focus* — this will ensure that the Program's priority setting is fully informed and that project funding is coordinated with other Australian crime prevention activity, minimising project duplication and resource wastage. It will also provide an opportunity for the Department to act and be viewed by others as a leader in crime prevention. The new National

Crime Prevention Framework represents an important mechanism that could potentially facilitate improved stakeholder engagement and collaboration.

- *Improving project-level stakeholder engagement during project design and human resource management* — including in the application form a risk management matrix that encourages applicants to consider key perceived risks (for example, lack of stakeholder input, staff losses and skills needs) and responses they can implement to address these risks before and as they occur.
- *Explicitly including the presence of a project outcome monitoring process as a selection criterion within the funding guidelines and in the funding application form* — this should encourage applicants to more fully consider anticipated project impacts as part of overall project design and implementation. The AIC is not recommending that every project should be formally evaluated. However, the Department may consider seeking a minimum amount of information from applicants that would not only assist project managers to better articulate their data monitoring needs in the application, but would help to ensure that they understand the importance of regularly monitoring program effects during project implementation, as well as at program completion. For example, the Department could request in the application that applicants
  - establish and articulate a clear set of outcome monitoring objectives and questions, which are linked to overall project goals;
  - identify what data are required for day-to-day outcome monitoring as well as impact assessment at program completion. These should be linked to the same objectives and questions above; and
  - describe how the relevant data will be accessed and collected.

# Key findings from the stakeholder consultation process

The remainder of this report focuses on describing findings from the final evaluation phase, which involved an in-depth consultation program with Australian crime prevention professionals and experts whose work directly informs or contributes to crime prevention outcomes. Stakeholders consulted in this evaluation phase included those working in police and justice agencies, local government authorities, community-based and non-government organisations and academia. More details about the precise methodologies used are at Appendix 2, while a full list of stakeholders that the AIC consulted with can be found at Appendix 3.

The themes explored below reflect the questions and issues discussed, including awareness about the funding program, its particular strengths and limitations, as well as the Program's future operation.

## Awareness

Participants were asked to indicate how aware they were of the POCA funding program. The majority of respondents to the online survey (6 of 10) indicated that they were aware of the POCA funding *prior* to being contacted as part of the AIC evaluation. Most of these individuals became aware of the Program through connections with government departments or through their work with agencies or organisations who had accessed POCA funding. Similarly, all the attendees to the roundtable forum and those interviewed over the telephone had some previous awareness of POCA and its aims.

Despite this, awareness about the Program tended to be superficial, with most stakeholders indicating that they did not have a detailed understanding of POCA, including:

- its overall operation;
- how much money was available;
- how the funding was determined and allocated;
- who the primary beneficiaries were;
- how priorities were set;
- whether funding was actually directed at the priority areas; and
- program eligibility criteria.

Importantly, the Australian Local Government Association, which represents all local governments in Australia, indicated that they had no information regarding the Program or its aims. Given that local governments are primary contenders for funding under POCA this may suggest that a key demographic is not currently being reached through current marketing strategies.

Ways in which the level of Program awareness could be improved were canvassed by stakeholders at the roundtable. Participants suggested that it would be beneficial to actively promote initiatives/projects found to be particularly effective. It was further suggested that the Program would benefit from greater publicity through some form of social marketing campaign that highlighted the benefit to the community to be gained by the reallocation of seized criminal assets being directed to effective crime prevention action through the POCA funding program.

## Strengths

### *Re-investment*

The main strength of the Program identified during the consultation process is that POCA is a worthwhile way to re-invest seized criminal assets. Using money taken from criminal activities to fund targeted crime prevention activity was seen as vital to supporting the priorities and longevity of crime prevention in Australia. Further, participants at the roundtable considered that the use of Federal money for locally based crime prevention could, if well managed, bypass some of the issues related to the vagaries of state and territory funding. In particular, stakeholders indicated that the policy environments within the states and territories are frequently reactive, rather than being responsive to longer term crime prevention needs. This type of environment is not conducive to adopting a proactive approach that sets a solid, forward-looking crime prevention agenda, which is an important facilitator of targeted activity that more effectively addresses long term crime prevention needs.

### *Accessibility*

Another key strength of POCA is that it is considered to be an important means through which small, locally-based organisations can seek funding. It was generally believed that these organisations would be unable to meet the stringent academic requirements and application processes established for other national funding programs (for example the Criminology Research Council and the Australian Research Council). In addition, it was suggested that supporting communities to address a local crime problem through initiatives and projects funded by POCA was empowering for those communities, particularly for Indigenous communities.

### *Types of projects/initiatives*

POCA is seen as an important source of funding for crime prevention projects or initiatives that are unlikely to be funded by other grant programs. For instance, several stakeholders commented that infrastructure and capital works (excluding CCTV) were not a high priority for state and territory funding programs and were unlikely to be funded through jurisdictional crime prevention funding sources.

Stakeholders also considered that POCA was uniquely placed to provide funding to original and innovative projects or initiatives. The ability to target POCA funds at small, highly focused community-based projects designed to address specific or unique problems would mean that new approaches to crime prevention could be nurtured and developed. In turn, this would assist to build an evidence base that meets the needs of specific communities across Australia.

## Challenges

### *Non-recurrent funding*

All stakeholders consulted indicated that effective crime prevention requires long term commitment and investment. This is critical in areas such as early intervention and drug and

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alcohol treatment and rehabilitation, although strategic investment in situational and other crime prevention approaches is also important. However, these views are at odds with the non-recurrent nature of POCA funding, where it is currently not possible to allocate funding beyond 18 months per project. This means that projects funded through POCA must find other financial support at the end of the funding period or cease operations altogether. The Department clearly articulates the funding parameters in its marketing and program documentation (including on the POCA funding application form and in its project contracts), although this has not apparently deterred applicants who plan to implement long term projects from applying.

Several stakeholders noted that when POCA funding ceased project managers often turned to state or territory government agencies to support the crime prevention interventions through recurrent funding. These stakeholders spoke of the (sometimes considerable) pressure placed upon them to step in and take over the funding of these projects, even if the projects were not well aligned with jurisdictional crime prevention priorities.

### *Collaboration*

The stakeholder consultations confirmed the finding from the administrative review that there is currently minimal collaboration or consultation between AGD and the states and territories in determining national crime prevention funding priorities and sub-priorities, and coordinating these with jurisdictional crime prevention priorities and activities. All stakeholders expressed the view that there was a need for more effective collaboration between POCA and state and territory government agencies, as well as representatives from drug and alcohol service based NGOs and other significant non-government organisations. This was seen as essential in order to avoid any duplication of effort while also maximising the crime prevention impact of funded projects. It was also viewed as critical for the establishment of a clear strategic crime prevention agenda, a theme that is explored further below.

### *Transparency*

Most stakeholders consulted indicated that the program lacked transparency. These stakeholders called for a greater level of information to be made available about the POCA funding program, including its successes. This was reflected not just in the statements stakeholders made during the consultations, but also in the questions they asked during the consultation process about how the priorities were determined, where the money was spent and how projects and initiatives were approved.

### *Evidence base*

All stakeholders agreed that the POCA funding model should aim to contribute to the improvement of the crime prevention evidence base in Australia. Stakeholders were unanimous in their support of POCA funding projects and initiatives that had a strong and sound evidence base or, at the very least, strong theoretical underpinnings. However, a number of stakeholders also believed that the program should not only fund these projects, but also should aim higher and fund projects that had the potential to add rigorous information about project impacts to the evidence base. This, it was argued, was best achieved through supporting projects that included good quality evaluation, such as (where possible) randomised control and quasi-experimental designs as part of overall project design.

While it was accepted that undertaking experimental and quasi-experimental evaluation designs were probably beyond the skills and capacity of most groups who apply for POCA funding, one suggestion canvassed at the roundtable was that an amount of POCA funds be set aside to allow for independently conducted evaluations of a small number of funded projects, particularly projects that were deemed to be promising. Moreover, it was believed that publicly



disseminating the results of these evaluations, including highlighting project 'success stories' would strengthen the reputation of the POCA funding program.

## Future directions of the POCA funding program

The second purpose of the stakeholder consultation phase was to explore the future directions of the POCA funding program; specifically, improvements to service delivery and the scope for an enhanced national crime prevention funding program.

While there is clearly broad support for a national crime prevention funding program and that POCA has a number of real strengths, stakeholders also believed that there was an opportunity to significantly enhance overall program effectiveness. Specific suggestions for improvement are outlined below – each relates to the overall strategic focus of the program. However, these must be considered alongside a number of important contextual factors. These are:

- The variable nature of available funds – money available for funding crime prevention activity under POCA originates from the seizure of criminal assets, which varies over time. As such, the amount available for funding crime prevention activity cannot be guaranteed year-to-year. Therefore, the funding available under POCA must perforce remain non-recurrent.
- The exit strategy – in line with non-recurrent funding, the requirement for projects to have an exit strategy should be retained. However, greater effort should be made to ensure the feasibility of exit strategies and support them through collaboration with state and territory governments.
- Accessibility to community organisations – as many small community organisations are not eligible for or miss out on funding through other competitive grants process, stakeholders believed that it was important to retain this element of POCA.

### *Priority setting*

Stakeholders generally agreed that the purpose of an Australia-wide crime prevention funding program should be to support activity that is focused and aligned with a series of national priorities that underpin a clearly articulated crime prevention agenda. Currently, the priorities for each POCA funding round are determined by the Minister, with input provided by Departmental staff only. In common with many other funding initiatives (including the previous government's NCCPP – see Homel et al 2007), the Department's focus is centred on the day-to-day operation of the funding program, and available resources are heavily skewed towards the administrative tasks (advertising the rounds, reviewing applications, drafting the contracts, administering the funding deeds, and so on).

While there is no suggestion that these essential processes should change, stakeholders believed that the Department needs to recognise that it is missing a significant opportunity to drive a proactive national crime prevention agenda through effective priority setting. However, at the national roundtable, stakeholders suggested that the Department could consider enhancing its role in this area, including through use of the National Crime Prevention Framework in informing the broad funding priorities, as well as through regular, formal consultation and collaboration with crime prevention experts.

### **The National Crime Prevention Framework**

Developed by the AIC on behalf of the ANZCP SOG, the National Crime Prevention Framework serves as a useful basis for informing POCA's high-level crime prevention priorities and would provide an important link between the POCA funding program and the broader Australian crime prevention agenda. It also describes how the Department can work with different levels of



government and experts in the crime prevention field to achieve more coordinated and effective crime prevention activity nationally.

The Framework's major criminal offending and victimisation priorities, established through an extensive international literature review and stakeholder consultation process, are those that contribute to:

- reductions in alcohol-related violence;
- improvements in the safety of young people;
- improvements in the safety of Indigenous people;
- preventing child abuse and neglect; and
- reductions in violence against women.

A further set of priorities includes work that is designed to: combat local problems, address new and emerging issues, improve the overall evidence base, and build better ways of disseminating effective crime prevention practice and knowledge (AIC 2012).

### **Consultation and collaboration with a panel of crime prevention experts**

Stakeholders at the roundtable and in the telephone interviews suggested that the more specific sub-priorities (that is, those established for each individual funding round) could be determined by a regular, possibly annual, meeting of a select group of independent senior crime prevention experts drawn from different levels of government (Federal, state and territory, and local government) and, ideally, also involving non-government and academic representatives. It was further suggested that the Department consider using an existing group for this purpose, such as the ANZCP SOG or the CPAC.

Irrespective of the precise mix of representatives, a national advisory group would provide an important mechanism through which independent advice on crime prevention priorities, sub-priorities and other issues could be provided to the Minister for Home Affairs and Justice. It could also serve as a public mechanism for raising issues of national crime prevention significance.

### ***Funding models***

During the evaluation the AIC also discussed with stakeholders the POCA funding model and if it could be improved to more effectively lead and support crime prevention activity in Australia. Feedback received through the telephone interviews; online survey; and roundtable suggested that, while the current funding model meets a need, it could be modified to enhance program effectiveness. Three options were explored, which are outlined below.

#### **Tendering model**

One option discussed at the national roundtable was that the funding program moves away from a competitive grants model to a closed tender process. The key to such a model would be well defined and clearly articulated program goals, priorities and sub-priorities. Once these were established, organisations and groups would submit tenders focused on achieving the priority areas. It was argued that this would not only significantly reduce the amount of Departmental administration, but would also assist to limit the number of ineligible grant applications received. Stakeholders argued that a further advantage of this model would be that the Department could take the lead in driving the type of crime prevention activity funded and that it could support the implementation of cross-jurisdictional projects, with the aim of taking a broader approach to crime prevention than allowed through community focused prevention.

However, support for this type of model was tempered by concern that this may prevent smaller, community-based organisations from successfully tendering for funding. This was of particular concern for small Indigenous organisations, as they often did not have the resources to

compete with larger organisations and groups in tendered process. As a result, they could miss out on the opportunity to fund crime prevention activity within their communities.

### **Innovation fund**

As noted previously, a key strength of POCA is its ability to fund innovative crime prevention projects and initiatives. Making this a key aim and priority of the Program received significant support from stakeholders at the roundtable forum. The predominant stakeholder view was that rather than funding the same general types of projects and initiatives over and over again, that funding be dedicated to supporting original or innovative projects. These projects would need to be underpinned by sound research evidence and/or crime prevention theory and have comprehensive monitoring and evaluation, which would be undertaken by evaluation experts, built into the project design and budget.

In this way POCA would be seen to support experimental crime prevention approaches and expand the evidence base around 'what works?' in crime prevention. Re-branding POCA as an 'innovation fund' would separate it from the work undertaken at a state and territory level, as well as assist in generating new approaches to crime prevention in Australia. Stakeholders believed that it could also significantly enhance the reputation of the Program here and internationally.

### **Split funding model**

The third (and preferred) option explored by stakeholders was to split the funding model into two separate streams; a closed tender process, and a smaller, open funding round. The open funding round would be available to community-based organisations and operate much as the POCA funding program does now. This would allow the Program to continue to cater to smaller, community-based organisations and incorporate infrastructure and capital works projects. The closed tender stream would involve organisations competing for funding for specific crime prevention activity, as determined through consultation with the national advisory body. The priority for the tender process would be highly focused, for example specifically targeting innovative projects designed to enhance and grow the available crime prevention knowledge base in Australia through demonstration projects that might otherwise struggle to attract support from mainstream funding sources. Funding would remain non-recurrent, although it would allow for a more considered and directed approach.

It was also suggested that a pool of funds be set aside each year as 'seed' money for the extension of a small number of projects with proven success. The aim would be to extend project funding for a finite period (say a further 12 months) to allow more time to gain funding through other means, such as through the state and territory governments. This could also allow for more rigorous evaluation of these projects, which would contribute to the crime prevention evidence base in Australia.

# Summary of major evaluation findings and recommendations

This evaluation was designed to address a series of questions about the administrative effectiveness and impact of the POCA funding program at both project and program levels. In answering these questions the evaluation has sought to:

- assess the appropriateness of POCA's funding focus and its administrative efficiency;
- review the consistency of funded projects with program assessment criteria, current and emerging crime problems, and best practice crime prevention approaches;
- understand the extent to which the different models of service delivery funded through POCA have delivered anticipated outcomes, and the nature of these outcomes;
- generate lessons drawn from the experience of funded projects; and
- make a series of recommendations for the future funding of non-government and community organisations under POCA.

The evaluation's major findings are summarised below and cover those generated through the administrative review, as well as those established as part of the in-depth stakeholder consultation process. The findings, considered against the backdrop of the literature review, point to a number of recommendations for the future operation of the POCA funding program, which are also outlined.

## Overview of major findings from the administrative review

The findings indicate that POCA has funded a diverse range of community crime prevention work since it was established in 2003. Over the five funding rounds that took place between 2003 and 2009 (the period of this evaluation) POCA awarded \$35.2 million to 174 projects, covering interventions including substance misuse treatment, early intervention, CPTED, CCTV cameras, and criminal recidivism.

Over its life, improvements have been made in a number of different areas of program administration and delivery, although there are also areas that would benefit from further development. Important positive findings include:

- Projects funded by POCA have addressed a diverse array of crime types, offender/victim groups and interventions. The problems targeted reflect many of the same issues identified in the literature review (S 47F 2011) as important current and emerging areas for crime prevention effort.
- Projects are being developed under the auspices of good practice in a number of ways. For example, most projects draw upon a range of rigorous evidence to demonstrate need and also use these same types of information in project development. This represents a small, but significant, improvement in the type and quality of information used in the application process since the time of the former government's NCCPP.

- Projects engage a wide range of stakeholders during project implementation. Where projects have been evaluated, multiple data sources are used to demonstrate evidence of impact.
- The application process has been streamlined and is working well relative to the administrative processes implemented by the Department during the life of the NCCPP. This has assisted in the selection of eligible and appropriate crime prevention projects in each funding round.
- POCA staff understand and are able to clearly articulate their various roles and responsibilities within the funding program, which is an important ingredient in good program governance.
- The application and project reporting process is comprehensive and yet, according to project managers, not onerous. This indicates that the Department has struck an efficient and effective balance between program accountability and the needs of project managers.

Notwithstanding these positives, there are a number of areas in which the administrative review found opportunities to improve practice in order to maximise Program operation and project outcomes. These include:

- The POCA program has little formal interaction or engagement with other Commonwealth or state/territory agencies that have a crime prevention interest; such as the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. The research evidence suggests that this lack of engagement with key stakeholders could be limiting the ability of the POCA funding program to fund focused and coordinated crime prevention activity. Ultimately this could lead to a duplication of effort with other agencies and resource wastage.
- While project managers are aware of the necessity of drawing on empirical evidence to support a claim for project funding, the use of rigorous data for day-to-day project monitoring and reporting purposes is less well understood. This situation is essentially unchanged from the time of the NCCPP review in 2007.
- The practice of engaging stakeholders in project design (including at the application stage) was adopted by fewer than half of all projects. The main reason given by the project managers for not engaging with stakeholders is that they found it difficult to attract relevant groups who were sufficiently interested in the intervention, although several project managers also indicated that conflicting organisational priorities and poor communication hindered stakeholder engagement.
- Only a small number of projects had concluded and were evaluated at the time of this evaluation. Among those that had been evaluated the findings indicate that few projects had the impact that was anticipated at project commencement. These findings are likely to be due to a combination of issues. Chief among these is that the evaluation follow-up period was generally insufficient to capture what, in many instances, were long term outcomes.

Compounding this were:

- human resource constraints (for example, too few project staff and/or high staff turnover);
  - an absence of specialist skills; and
  - failure to adequately engage with key stakeholders.
- Only a fraction of projects used comparative statistics in their evaluations. This is most likely because project staff have limited capacity to apply more rigorous quantitative evaluation techniques using these data for program review purposes. However, irrespective of the precise reason why POCA project managers did not use more rigorous data and analytical techniques, the findings again indicate that there has been little change in this area since the review of the NCCPP.

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## Overview of major findings from the stakeholder consultation process

The stakeholder consultation process was designed to explore perceived strengths and limitations of the POCA funding program, as well as options for its future operation, through a program of in-depth discussions and input from crime prevention experts. The strengths of the current Program include:

- That it is an important resource for Australian community crime prevention. In particular:
  - it is a means through which small, locally-based organisations can seek funding. These organisations are often unable to meet the stringent academic requirements and application processes established for other national funding programs;
  - it supports communities to address local crime problems, which is empowering for these communities (particularly for Indigenous communities);
  - it is an important source of funding for crime prevention projects that are unlikely to be funded by other grant programs. For instance, the funding of infrastructure and capital works (excluding CCTV) is not a high priority for state and territory funding programs and these sorts of works are often essential for the long term viability of certain projects;
  - it plays an important role in funding original and innovative projects. The ability to target POCA funds at small, highly focused community-based projects designed to address specific or unique problems means that new approaches to crime prevention can be nurtured.
- Stakeholders considered that the use of Federal money for locally based crime prevention could, if well managed, circumvent some of the issues related to the vagaries of state and territory funding, particularly the policy environments within the states and territories, which were described as being reactive, rather than responsive to longer term crime prevention needs. This type of environment is not conducive to adopting a proactive approach that sets a solid, forward-looking crime prevention agenda, which is an important facilitator of targeted activity that more effectively addresses long term crime prevention needs.

Notwithstanding these important positives, the findings indicate that there are a number of factors that currently constrain Program operation and impact. Chief among these are:

- Program funding is non-recurrent – this impacts on the ability of the Program to provide sustained investment to crime prevention, particularly projects that are attempting to address long term outcomes; and
- the variable or unpredictable nature of the amount of available funds – that is, money available for funding crime prevention activity under POCA originates from the seizure of criminal assets, which varies over time. As such, the amount available for funding crime prevention activity cannot be guaranteed year-to-year.

Within this context, the AIC explored with stakeholders how AGD could enhance the POCA funding program to maximise its impact. Overall, what was perceived to be missing was a clearly articulated strategic statement about POCA's major goals and priorities. In short, what the Program stands for and is seeking to achieve in the long term. Clearly defining these will not only assist the Program to move from being essentially reactive to having a forward-looking approach to crime prevention, but will help the Department to drive a national crime prevention agenda.

There were two areas that stakeholders considered the Department could significantly improve or modify to enhance overall Program impacts: more effective priority setting, and redesigning the POCA funding model.

## *Priority setting*

Currently, the priorities for each POCA funding round are determined by the Minister for Home Affairs and Justice, with input provided by Departmental staff only. While this report is not advocating that this process change, it needs to be recognised that the Department is missing an important opportunity to drive a proactive national crime prevention agenda through more effective priority setting. However, it could consider improving the way it sets its priorities through using the National Crime Prevention Framework to inform the broad funding priorities, as well as through regular, formal consultation and collaboration with crime prevention experts working across different levels of government and (ideally) the non-government and academic sectors. The Department may consider using an existing group for this purpose, such as the ANZCP SOG or the CPAC.

Irrespective of the precise mix of representatives, a national advisory group would provide an important mechanism through which independent advice on crime prevention priorities, sub-priorities and other issues could be provided to the Minister for Home Affairs and Justice. It could also serve as a public mechanism for raising issues of national crime prevention significance.

## *Funding models*

While the current funding model meets a need, stakeholders at the national roundtable, in the telephone interviews and the survey believed that it could be modified to enhance program effectiveness. Three options were explored with stakeholders at the roundtable. These included an exclusively tendered process, refocusing the Program as an innovation fund, or having a split funding model where a portion of the funding was directed towards supporting community level crime prevention activity (as currently occurs) and where a portion was dedicated to supporting highly targeted interventions, including (for example) innovative projects. The major strengths and limitations of each model were discussed at the roundtable. A summary of key issues covered is as follows:

**Tendering model** – This model relies on clearly defined and articulated program goals, priorities and sub-priorities. It would significantly reduce the amount of Departmental administration that is currently required to manage the Program and would also assist to limit the number of ineligible grant applications received. Moreover, the Department could drive the type of crime prevention activity funded and support a broader approach to crime prevention than possible through the current Program. However, this model is likely to prevent smaller, community-based organisations from successfully tendering for funding, something that all stakeholders agreed was a particular strength of the current Program.

**Innovation fund** – Under this model POCA would be seen to support experimental crime prevention approaches and expand the evidence base around ‘what works?’ in crime prevention. Re-branding POCA as an innovation fund would separate it from the work undertaken at a state and territory level, as well as assist to generate new approaches to crime prevention in Australia. It could also significantly enhance the reputation of the Program here and internationally.

**Split funding model** – The third model (which was preferred by stakeholders) was to split the funding Program into two separate streams; a closed tender process, and a smaller, open funding round. The open funding round would be available to community-based organisations and operate much as the POCA funding program does now. This would allow the Program to continue to cater to smaller, community-based organisations and incorporate infrastructure and capital works projects. The closed tender stream would involve organisations competing for funding for crime prevention activity, as determined through consultation with the national advisory body. This stream would also have a strong emphasis on quality outcome evaluation.

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The tender process could support specific innovative projects designed to enhance and grow the available crime prevention knowledge base in Australia through demonstration projects that might otherwise struggle to attract support from mainstream funding sources.

## Recommendations

Taken as a whole, the major evaluation findings outlined above point to a number of recommendations that the Department may wish to consider to improve the POCA funding program's overall operation and impact.

### *Project-level recommendations, stemming from the administrative review*

- *Improving project-level stakeholder engagement during project design and human resource management* — including in the application form a risk management matrix that encourages applicants to consider key perceived risks (for example, lack of stakeholder input, staff losses and skills needs) and responses they can implement to mitigate these risks before and as they occur, if indeed they do. This recommendation is designed to improve project managers' risk management planning prior to project implementation and derives from the finding that project managers commonly cited human resource issues as impacting on project effectiveness.
- *Explicitly including the presence of a project outcome monitoring process as a selection criterion within the funding guidelines and in the funding application form* — this should encourage applicants to more fully consider anticipated project impacts as part of overall project design and implementation. This report is not recommending that every project should be formally evaluated. However, the Department may consider seeking a minimum amount of information from applicants that would not only assist project managers to better articulate their data monitoring needs in the application, but would help to ensure that they understand the importance of regularly monitoring program effects during project implementation, as well as at program completion. For example, the Department could request in the application that applicants
  - establish and articulate a clear set of outcome monitoring objectives and questions, which are linked to overall project goals;
  - identify what data are required for day-to-day outcome monitoring as well as impact assessment at program completion. These should be linked to the same objectives and questions above; and
  - describe how the relevant data will be accessed and collected.

### *Strategic recommendations*

- *Developing a clearly articulated strategic statement about POCA's major goals that is linked to a series of specific funding priorities* — defining these will not only assist the POCA funding program to be forward-looking, but will help the Department to drive a national crime prevention agenda.
- *Establishing regular, formal contact with national and state/territory agencies that have a crime prevention focus, as well as crime prevention experts working in the non-government sector and in academia* — this will ensure that the Program's priority setting is fully informed and that project funding is coordinated with other Australian crime prevention activity, minimising project duplication and resource wastage. It could be achieved by working through an existing group, such as the ANZCP SOG or the CPAC, or through the establishment of a new, independent advisory committee.



- *Splitting POCA into two separate streams; an open funding round, and a closed tender process* — the open funding round would allow the Program to continue to cater to smaller, community-based organisations. The second stream would involve a closed tender process, where organisations and groups would compete for funding for specific crime prevention activity that may be innovative in nature and in which there is a strong emphasis on quality outcome evaluation.

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# Appendix 1: Methodologies underpinning the administrative review

The second phase of the POCA evaluation was designed to review AGD's administration of the POCA funding program. To answer questions about Program fidelity and administrative effectiveness, the AIC collected four distinct sources of data: POCA administrative data collected by the AGD; a comprehensive review of project data related to 60 funded projects; interviews with AGD staff directly involved in the administration of POCA; and a survey of POCA-funded project managers. The data collection methods and rationale for their inclusion in the second phase of the evaluation are outlined briefly below.

The decision to include these data collection sources in the evaluation was not only made because these were considered the best types of information to answer a number of the evaluation questions, but because these were the same types of information used for the review of the NCCPP that was undertaken by the AIC in the mid-2000s (Homel et al 2007). While it was not the purpose of this evaluation to directly compare the operation and outcomes of the POCA and NCCPP funding programs, there were nevertheless some important findings from the NCCPP review that assisted to shed light on the administrative efficiency and effectiveness of POCA. These are highlighted at appropriate points in the body of this report.

## Administrative data

At the commencement of the evaluation, the AGD provided the AIC with administrative data relating to all 174 non-government and community projects that have been funded by the Program since 2003. This dataset contained demographic information regarding the projects (project name, organisation, location, contact details and status) as well as basic funding information (funding round, dollar amount and funding period). This information was used to create a broad profile of POCA funding activity between 2003 and 2009.

## Comprehensive review of project data

Between October and November of 2011, three AIC researchers conducted a comprehensive review of a random sample of funded projects (N = 60), representing a third (34%) of the total project sample. The data were sourced from project documentation located on file at the AGD, including the grant application and, where available, the final evaluation reports. Data were collected according to a strict and comprehensive framework specifically designed by the AIC for the evaluation and allowing for the systematic review of prevention strategies and treatment interventions. The framework was designed to identify a wide variety of program characteristics including project design, outcome and approach to evaluation. These data provided useful

insights into the projects while also enabling the evaluation team to assess the criteria and consistency of the Program funding process.

To ensure that the sample of projects assessed as part of the detailed project review was unbiased and reflected the total sample, the AIC compared key aspects of the sub-sample of 60, with the total project sample. Table 1 outlines the findings from this exercise. Overall, the two samples are similar, which suggests that findings from the detailed project file review can probably be generalised to the total sample of POCA funded projects. For example, in terms of program focus, there is little overall difference between the proportions expressed in the review sample compared to that in the administrative dataset (in the total sample 83% of projects had a crime prevention focus, compared with 77% in the sub-sample – similarly, in the total sample 17% of projects had a drug treatment focus, compared with 23% in the sub-sample). There is also little difference between the two datasets for location; however the review dataset does contain a slightly greater proportion of projects from Western Australia and the Northern Territory than contained in the administrative file.

| Table 1 Comparison of review sample to administrative file |               |                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------|
|                                                            | Review sample | Administrative file |
| <b>Number</b>                                              | 60            | 174                 |
| <b>Focus</b>                                               |               |                     |
| Crime prevention                                           | 46 (77%)      | 145 (83%)           |
| Drug treatment                                             | 14 (23%)      | 29 (17%)            |
| <b>Location</b>                                            |               |                     |
| NSW                                                        | 16 (25%)      | 62 (36%)            |
| Vic                                                        | 14 (23%)      | 37 (21%)            |
| Qld                                                        | 5 (8%)        | 16 (9%)             |
| SA                                                         | 5 (8%)        | 11 (6%)             |
| WA                                                         | 10 (16%)      | 25 (14%)            |
| Tas                                                        | 3 (5%)        | 7 (4%)              |
| NT                                                         | 6 (10%)       | 13 (7%)             |
| ACT                                                        | 2 (3%)        | 3 (2%)              |
| <b>Funding amount</b>                                      |               |                     |
| \$10,000 - \$99,999                                        | 16 (27%)      | 42 (24%)            |
| \$100,000 - \$199,999                                      | 19 (32%)      | 94 (54%)            |
| \$200,000 - \$449,999                                      | 7 (12%)       | 13 (8%)             |
| \$450,000 - \$499,999                                      | 4 (7%)        | 5 (3%)              |
| \$500,000 and over                                         | 12 (20%)      | 20 (12%)            |
| <b>Status</b>                                              |               |                     |
| Ongoing                                                    | 45 (76%)      | 131 (84%)           |
| Completed                                                  | 12 (20%)      | 23 (15%)            |
| Terminated                                                 | 2 (3%)        | 2 (3%)              |

a: Due to round, totals may not add up to 100 percent. Review sample n = 58, as two projects were unsuccessful in obtaining funding.

b: Status information was unavailable for 1 project in the review file, therefore n= 59. Administrative data does not include 18 projects where funding was being negotiated (n= 156).

## Interviews with POCA administrative staff

In November 2011, AIC researchers conducted interviews with the seven AGD staff who are directly involved with the day-to-day administration of the POCA funding program. The interviews followed a semi-structured format, with interviewees asked questions centred on the following themes:

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- perceived purpose, aims and objectives of the Program;
- crime trends targeted by the Program;
- perceived effectiveness of the Program to meet its aims and objects;
- perceived effectiveness of the Program to prevent crime and increase community safety;
- relevance of the Program's priority areas;
- consistency with similar programs at the national and state/territory level;
- collaboration with other programs and inter-agency collaboration;
- funding criteria;
- changes to the funding structure;
- perceived problems or concerns regarding the structure of the Program;
- strengths/limitations of the Program; and
- future directions of the Program.

Interviews were recorded either electronically via a recording device and/or through handwritten notes. The purpose of interviewing Program staff was to gain a greater understanding of the process through which projects and initiatives are funded, as well as to provide important context to the information contained in the other evaluation datasets.

## Survey of project managers

The administrative review also included a computer-based survey, which was sent to the managers of all 174 non-government and community POCA funded projects. Project managers were initially approached by the AGD through a letter of introduction, sent by email. This letter informed project managers that an evaluation of the Program was being undertaken by the AIC, who would soon approach them regarding their participation. Once this letter was sent, the AIC then emailed all 174 project managers/contacts a copy of the questionnaire, along with more detailed information related to the evaluation and the role of the survey. The survey opened in December 2011 and closed in late January 2012. The survey was divided into seven parts, with questions designed to elicit information regarding:

- demographic information;
- project development;
- partnerships;
- project description;
- project implementation;
- project results; and
- general views on the project and POCA funding program.

Participation in the survey was voluntary. The survey was designed to be completed offline on the computer and then emailed back to the AIC directly.

To quantify the primarily qualitative survey responses, answers were coded according to overarching themes. Key themes identified related to specific challenges and outcomes achieved, as well as the different types of projects and partnerships. These themes were then used as the foundation for the basic analysis, which was conducted in the statistical software Stata (version 12).

The AIC received a total of 86 responses to the survey, representing 50 percent of the total number of projects funded. Inadequate sample size can influence the quality and accuracy of research findings. A sufficient sample depends on the size of the population under study, although in social research a sample of around 75 percent of the total population is generally

considered to produce the most reliable results for the type of analysis undertaken here. Given this, the results summarised here in relation to the survey of project managers, but presented in more detail in the report of the administrative review (S 47F [REDACTED]), should be viewed as indicative only.

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# Appendix 2: Methodologies underpinning the stakeholder consultation process

Participants in the consultation phase were initially recruited through the Australian and New Zealand Crime Prevention Senior Officers Group (ANZCP SOG) and the newly formed Australian Government Crime Prevention Advisory Committee (CPAC). ANZCP SOG provides a national forum for senior crime prevention staff from each state and territory as well as Commonwealth and New Zealand government to exchange and share information about crime prevention practices. CPAC is designed to provide advice to Government on national crime prevention issues. In addition to these two groups, representatives from the drug and alcohol councils, Neighbourhood Watch, and the Australian Local Government Association were approached to participate in the evaluation.

The consultation program involved a number of research methods undertaken concurrently. These were:

- an online qualitative survey targeting crime prevention policy-makers, academic experts and practitioners;
- telephone interviews with an additional number of crime prevention policy-makers, academic experts and practitioners; and
- a national roundtable held at the AIC on the 4<sup>th</sup> of April 2012 and involving crime prevention experts, as well as professionals working in a range of other sectors who have an interest in POCA and in crime prevention more generally.

Overall, the stakeholder consultations were intended to be used to inform possible recommendations relating to POCA's future directions, including the best way for the national funding program to support community-based crime prevention in Australia. More specifically, each of the three consultation components addressed the following issues:

- general awareness of the funding program;
- perceptions of the overall impact of the program and its success in achieving its strategic objectives;
- appropriateness of the program's decision making and management principles, and views about the capacity of community-based organisations funded through the program to adhere to these principles;
- relevance of the program's priority areas, including any emerging crime problems;
- consistency with other programs operating at both the national and state/territory levels; and
- views about how the program might be improved and possible future directions for the funding of non-government organisations under POCA.

In total, four stakeholders opted to participate in a telephone interview, 10 stakeholders completed the online survey and 15 attended the roundtable forum.



# Appendix 3: Crime prevention stakeholder consultation list

ACT Policing  
Alcohol and other Drugs Council of Australia  
Attorney-General's Department, South Australia  
Australian Government Attorney-General's Department  
Australian Local Government Association  
Australian National Council on Drugs  
Australian and New Zealand Crime Prevention Senior Officers' Group  
Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency  
Community Crime Prevention Unit, Victorian Department of Justice  
Crime Prevention and Aboriginal Programs, NSW Department of Attorney General and Justice  
Crime Stoppers Australia  
Institute for Social and Behavioural Research, Griffith University  
National Congress of Australia's First Peoples  
Police Federation of Australia  
Victim Services, NSW Department of Attorney General and Justice

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