

Talking Together – Relations between Police and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Victoria

A Review of the Victoria Police
Aboriginal Strategic Plan 2003-2008



Talking Together – Relations between Police and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Victoria

A Review of the Victoria Police Aboriginal
Strategic Plan 2003-2008

The path leading to the future will be another
solitary journey, unless we listen to each other.

*Reflecting on the river all the hues that nature provides
from the horizon down to the ripples on the water,
and deep within the spirit of the forest.
The river ... the vein ... and the life force of the land.
As I painted this piece I slipped into a trance
as if I was relaxing by the banks of the Murray River
in tune with the land and in tune with my ancestors.*

Jilalga Murray-Ranui

Foreword

This report relates to a review I commissioned to examine whether Victoria Police has implemented the strategies in its *Aboriginal Strategic Plan 2003- 2008* and whether those strategies are achieving their intended aims.


Since the *Report of the Royal Commission Into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* was published in 1991, it has been widely accepted that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are over-represented in Australia's criminal justice system.

In Victoria concerted efforts have been made to address this problem over a lengthy period. These efforts have been part of a broader policy framework based on working in partnership with Koori people to tackle disadvantage and inequity between them and non-Koori people in a range of areas, including health and education.

As a Judge of the County Court, I was aware of the importance of promoting access to the legal profession for Koori people. On taking office as Director, Police Integrity I was concerned to ensure Victoria Police was striving to improve justice outcomes for Koori people.

As part of the review, I engaged a Koori Project Officer to talk with Koori Elders, members of Koori communities and police involved in working with Koori communities to gain their individual assessments of existing arrangements. I am pleased to report there have been significant improvements in police-Koori relations in some areas and some wonderful initiatives implemented by committed individuals. I am confident that with mutual respect, on-going dialogue and a willingness to learn from each other, Victoria Police will continue to work with Koori communities to improve Koori justice outcomes.

I am very grateful to everyone who gave their time to talk with me and my Review Officers. In particular, I wish to acknowledge the Koori Elders and members of Koori communities who contributed to the review. Their participation in the review is warmly appreciated.



Michael Strong

DIRECTOR, POLICE INTEGRITY

Contents

Foreword	3
Language	8
Glossary of terms and abbreviations	8
Terminology	8
Use of statistics in this report	8
Overview	10
Context	10
Victoria Police <i>Aboriginal Strategic Plan 2003-2008</i>	11
Methodology	12
Key findings and recommendations	12
Victoria Police Aboriginal Strategic Plan 2003-2008	16
Improving Safety in Custody	19
Key strategies	19
Use of alternatives to custody	19
Notifications to Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service	21
Notifications to Aboriginal Community Justice Panels	21
Use of Sobering-Up Centres	23
Education in care and welfare of prisoners	24
Implementation of arrest monitoring system	24
Suggestions for improving safety in custody	24
Better data collection	24
Improved community liaison	24
Better training for police	25
Reducing incidence of intoxication	26
Improving communication and liaison	27
Key strategies	27
Maintain Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers	27
Institute local priority policing meetings	28
Regional liaison meetings to coordinate ongoing issue resolution	29

Quarterly meeting of the Victoria Police Aboriginal Policy Reference Group	29
Annual Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers' Workshop	30
Interaction with Youth Programs and Activities	30
Complaints Monitoring System	30
Participation in the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement Regional Committees	31
Development of an Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer Program	31
Suggestions for improving communication and liaison	34
Improving the Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers program	34
Align police-Koori liaison groups with Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees	36
Revamp annual Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer workshop	36
Coordinate and resource work with Koori youth	36
Increase numbers and support for Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers	37
Improving training and education	38
Key strategies	38
Maintain Aboriginal Cultural Awareness components of training courses	38
Conduct local cultural awareness courses	39
Facilitate research on police and Indigenous issues	40
Market the 2003 Strategic Plan	41
Suggestions for improving training and education	41
Committing resources	41
Broadly disseminate the new Strategic Plan	41
Improving recruitment	42
Key strategies	42
Marketing for recruitment to Victoria Police	42
Preparatory Courses	43
Identification and targeting of racist tendencies in recruits	44
Mentor Program	44

Develop and implement retention and recruitment strategies in line with Wur-cum Barra Strategy	44
Suggestions for improving Koori recruitment	45
Role modelling, mentoring and flexible terms and conditions	45
Queensland model	45
Improving crime prevention	46
Key strategies	46
Assessment and resolution of local crime trends	46
Support Aboriginal victims of crime	46
Use a multi-agency approach to develop strategies for crime reduction	47
Suggestions for improving crime prevention	47
Improved data collection and reporting	47
Formalising the role Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers have in victim support	47
Improving responses to family violence and child protection	48
Key strategies	48
Improving the police response to reports of family violence	48
Develop local solutions to family violence and child abuse	50
Continue the involvement of Aboriginal representation on the Violence against Women project	50
Suggestions for improving responses to reports of family violence	50
Ensure culturally appropriate responses to reports of family violence	50
Improving responses to substance misuse	51
Dealing with the effects of volatile substance use	51
Support formal Government strategies	51
Represent Victoria Police on relevant committees addressing substance misuse	51
Conclusion	52

Appendix One: Victoria Police <i>Aboriginal Strategic Plan 2003-2008</i>	54
Appendix Two: Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer Survey Results	66
Appendix Three: Police Service Area Managers Survey Results	73
Q4 Yes respondents	73
Q4 No respondents	80
Appendix Four: Statement of Cooperation for Greater Shepparton (2008)	86

Language

Glossary of terms and abbreviations

Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer	This is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander employed by Victoria Police to liaise between Victoria Police and local Koori community members to foster mutual trust, understanding and respect. A prerequisite for the position is an understanding of Koori cultural issues. No formal qualifications are required.
AJA2	Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 2
LEAP	Law Enforcement Assistance Program
OPI	The Office of Police Integrity
Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer	This is a sworn member of Victoria Police whose role is to work with Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers and Koori communities to build strong relationships between operational police and Koori communities.

Terminology

This report predominantly uses the term Koori people. This term is intended to include people who identify as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent. Where the term Aboriginal is used by itself, it is intended to include people of Torres Strait Islander descent.

Use of statistics in this report

It should be noted that some trend data kept by Victoria Police in relation to Koori people may be misleading because processes for recording individuals who identify as being of Koori descent continue to change.

Since 2004, the Victoria Police Law Enforcement Assistance Program (LEAP) data entry forms include a compulsory field relating to whether or not a person identifies as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent. Police are required to fill out the form in relation to everyone they interview, that is, every suspect and every victim of crime. According to Victoria Police, the field was introduced to improve the quality and reporting of Koori status for crime statistics purposes.¹ Prior to its introduction, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status was determined by police on the basis of the individual's racial appearance. The tendency for police to make assumptions of this type was identified as a problem for policing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the 1991 *Report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody*. It indicates a lack of knowledge and cultural awareness about Aboriginal and Torres

¹ Victoria Police Operations Coordination Department 2008 *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategic Assessment* p9

Strait Islander peoples. This is one of the reasons it became compulsory for police to ask every person if he or she is of Koori descent.

Accurate data depends on police consistently asking every interviewee and person in custody if he or she is of Koori descent. Staff from the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service told OPI Review Officers that some of their clients believe they were not asked if they were Koori because some police continue to make assumptions based on the appearance of a person as non-Aboriginal.

Victoria Police acknowledges there are still some flaws in the data it collects in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice issues, although the accuracy of trend data since 2004 comparing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander police contacts continues to improve.²

² Victoria Police Operations Coordination Department 2008 *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategic Assessment* p9

Overview

Context

The broad formal acknowledgment of the unique place occupied by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in contemporary Australia is a relatively recent phenomenon.³ But the special attention given to the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia's criminal justice system has been much more long-standing. Since the 1991 *Report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody*, Victoria, along with most other Australian jurisdictions, has undertaken a range of strategies aimed at reducing the disproportionate numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people incarcerated in prisons.

Because police have significant discretionary powers and play an important role as the point of entry to the criminal justice system, many of these strategies have specifically targeted police practices. But police are only a component of a much broader continuum that influences justice outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Although alcohol abuse and violence were not features of traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, they are now predominant themes associated with Koori offending. The underlying factors associated with alcohol abuse and violence

in Koori communities are complex. Clearly, the most effective strategies to improve justice outcomes for Koori people are those that achieve a reduction in alcohol abuse and violence. While police may have some role in effective prevention strategies, leadership for developing and implementing strategies for reducing Koori family violence must come from Koori communities themselves and be supported by a whole-of-government approach.⁴

Achieving sustained systemic change is a long term goal. It is probable police will continue to have a disproportionately substantial role in the lives of many Kooris for some time.

In 2003, one in three Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Victorians, many of whom were children, were reported to be the victim, a relative of a victim or a witness to an act of violence.⁵ The great majority of these acts of violence were likely to have resulted in a police call-out. But by the time police respond, there may be little they can do, other than use their powers of arrest to

...the most effective strategies to improve justice outcomes for Koori people are those that achieve a reduction in alcohol abuse and violence.

3 See for example the Preamble and Section 19 (2) of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*

4 See Aboriginal Affairs Victoria 2008 *Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families – Toward a safer future for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities 10 year strategic plan*

5 Department for Victorian Communities 2003 *Victorian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Violence Task Force Final Report – Summary Report* p4

extricate an offender and provide for the safety of others. Similarly, police often have few options when responding to concerns about a Koori who is alcohol-affected, other than to take the person into custody for his or her own safety or the safety of others.

Although in many cases police may have limited options, how they go about performing their duties is important. Unlike their non-Koori counterparts, many Koori children will have had contact with police from an early age. How police first interact with Koori children can have a strong and lasting impact on how Koori children and young people relate to police as they mature into adulthood.

Similarly, the interaction between police and Koori community Elders can influence the outcome of potentially volatile situations. Understanding cultural issues and building relationships based on mutual respect can be the difference between diffusing a situation or escalating it.

It is within this context that in 2003 Victoria Police developed a strategic plan for policing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

How police first interact with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children can have a strong and lasting impact on how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people relate to police as they mature into adulthood.

Victoria Police Aboriginal Strategic Plan 2003-2008

Principles and objectives to guide the on-going implementation of recommendations from the Royal Commission Into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and to improve justice outcomes for Kooris in Victoria were documented in 2000 in the *Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement*.⁶

Victoria Police used the principles and objectives identified in the *Aboriginal Justice Agreement* to develop the *Victoria Police Aboriginal Strategic Plan 2003-2008* (the 2003 Strategic Plan). A copy of the 2003 Strategic Plan is attached to this report as Appendix One.

The 2003 Strategic Plan was based on the *Victoria Police Aboriginal Policy Statement 2003-2008*. Using principles established in the *Victoria Police Five Year Plan, The Way Ahead 2003-2008*, this policy statement established a framework that encouraged dialogue between police and Kooris and a partnership approach to ensuring mutually-acceptable policing services were delivered to Koori communities.

⁶ Department of Justice Victoria 2000 *Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 1 2000*

Methodology

The focus of this Review was to establish how the 2003 Strategic Plan and other Department of Justice initiatives aimed at improving justice outcomes for Kooris have affected local communities.

Lack of available quantitative data meant the Review Team had to adopt a qualitative approach. Accordingly, the Office of Police Integrity (OPI) engaged a Koori Project Officer to talk with members of Koori communities, Koori Elders and police working with Koori communities to gain their individual assessments of existing arrangements. Particular attention has been given to establishing whether formal and informal arrangements are in place to support the future work of Victoria Police to ensure Victoria Police meets the expectations of government and local and regional Koori communities.

In addition, as part of the OPI review, Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers and Police Service Area Managers (Inspectors) were surveyed to gauge their perspectives on Koori issues. The results of the surveys are attached to this report as Appendices Two and Three respectively.

At the same time OPI was conducting this review, Victoria Police was undertaking a broad consultation process to update and develop a new strategic plan. As at January 2011 the new plan was still in draft format.

A draft copy of this report was forwarded to the Chief Commissioner, the Chief Executive Officer of the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service and the Director of the Department of Justice's Indigenous Issues Unit for comment. Their feedback has been incorporated in the final version of this report.

Key findings and recommendations

The stated purpose of the 2003 Strategic Plan was to improve *justice outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians*.

Although the 2003 Strategic Plan identifies how the impact of some strategies will be measured, the overall impact of Victoria Police efforts to improve justice outcomes for Kooris in Victoria is impossible to assess. In some instances, data that could benchmark or measure the success of strategies is not collected, or not collected in a way that can be readily analysed. For example, an arrest monitoring system has not been implemented.

Recommendation

That Victoria Police implement better data collection in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues to measure progress towards reducing:

- the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in prison or police custody
- the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims of crime
- the incidence of crimes committed by or against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In other instances, a stated objective in the plan was beyond the control of Victoria Police. For example, there is little Victoria Police can initiate to improve the whole-of-community response to Aboriginal peoples adversely affected by the misuse of substances.

In hindsight, it also appears that some of the strategies in the plan may have had an adverse impact. For example, the introduction of a complaints monitoring system may have resulted in failure to respond to calls for assistance because *'if we don't attend... don't interact, we don't get complained about.'*

Recommendation

That any updated or revised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategic Plan should comprise strategies developed in consultation with Koori communities that can be measured for their effectiveness.

Notwithstanding issues with the content of the 2003 Strategic Plan, the Review found there have been significant improvements in some areas and some aspects of relationships between Victoria Police and Koori communities since 2003. In talking with some community Elders, the Review Team was able to identify police who have established innovative programs aimed at building mutual trust and respect, particularly between police and young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Recommendation

That information about successful programs aimed at improving justice outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be broadly disseminated amongst police and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander networks.

Despite a strong commitment by many within Victoria Police, more needs to be done to build a better understanding of Koori culture and local Koori issues to ensure police who are working with Koori communities can provide a culturally appropriate response to their needs.

Recommendation

That Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural training is desirable for all police but should be a prerequisite for all police prior to deployment to Policing Service Areas where there is a significant Koori population.

Feedback from surveys indicates that in some Koori communities, competing priorities for sworn members of police with part-time Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer responsibilities reduce the capacity of those members to adequately respond to policing needs of the Koori community.

Recommendation

That Victoria Police should consider increasing the number of appropriately trained full-time Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers.

There was consensus amongst people spoken to by the Review Team that there should be more Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers. More Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers would create opportunities for them to have a peer support network and mentoring program. Victoria Police could also adapt the principles of a model used in Queensland, and other jurisdictions. Young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people could be trained and act as Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers with a view to preparing them for police recruit training. Appropriate exemptions could apply to recruitment prerequisites based on their demonstrated record of experience as an Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer.

Recommendation

That Victoria Police should consider employing and training an increased number of Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers. This program could be one of the ways young Kooris are prepared for police recruit training.

The Review Team identified effective meeting structures for improving police-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communication and liaison in a number of areas.

Recommendation

That in order to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice outcomes from a statewide and whole-of-government perspective, Victoria Police should establish a Regional Police and Aboriginal Liaison Group in each Region, modelled on the Greater Shepparton Community Group. In Police Service Areas where there are significant Koori communities, Victoria Police should then establish a District Aboriginal Liaison Team modelled on the Shepparton and Echuca Teams.

Victoria Police Aboriginal Strategic Plan 2003-2008

The stated goals of the 2003 Strategic Plan are:

1. *A commitment to the ongoing application of the Principles contained within the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement.*
2. *Acknowledgment that improving justice outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians⁷ is core business for Victoria Police.*
3. *To create and promote positive partnerships between members of Victoria Police and the Aboriginal community to reduce Aboriginal over-representation in the justice system.*
4. *A commitment by Victoria Police to offer a service free of individual and institutional discriminatory practices.*
5. *In the process of Victoria Police striving for a diverse workforce, the promotion and provision of Aboriginal employment opportunities is maximised.*
6. *Assist Aboriginal communities in identifying the ways in which police can work together with them in attaining recognition of the rights of Aboriginal people.*
7. *To increase levels and perceptions of safety and security within Aboriginal communities.*
8. *The provision of equal quality service to Aboriginal Victorians as for all Victorians.*
9. *To reduce the level of offenders and victim rates experienced by Aboriginal Victorians through the development and implementation of initiatives between Victoria Police and Aboriginal communities.*
10. *To ensure that the Victoria Police Aboriginal Advisory Unit maintains a role in establishing and setting the agenda for Victoria Police Aboriginal affairs issues.⁸*

⁷ The plan made it clear references to 'Aboriginal' included Torres Strait Islanders

⁸ See Appendix One

These goals were focused on achieving practical results through strategies developed using the following objectives:

- Safety in Custody
- Communications and Liaison
- Training and Education
- Recruitment
- Crime Prevention
- Family Violence and Child Protection
- Substance Misuse

Launched in 2006, the second phase of the *Aboriginal Justice Agreement*⁹ (AJA2) represented a recommitment by Government to addressing justice issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Signatories to the AJA2 embraced a range of strategies that built on the work undertaken in the first phase.

The stated purpose of the AJA2 was to:

- Minimise Koori over-representation in the criminal justice system
- Improve accessibility, utilisation and efficacy of justice-related programs and services in partnership with the Koori community
- Ensure that within the broader Victorian community, Kooris have the same access to human, civil and legal rights and
- Ensure Kooris experience the same justice outcomes as non-Kooris through the elimination of inequalities in the justice system.

The four year action plan for AJA2 provided six strategies designed to:

- Prevent crime and intervene to reduce the numbers of young Koori people coming into contact with the criminal justice system
- Strengthen community-based alternatives to prison for Koori people and to divert them from more serious contact with the criminal justice system
- Reduce the rate of re-offending among Koori people by changing factors in the environment and in people's behaviour
- Reduce victimisation – and its impact on Koori communities, families and individuals – to help intergenerational factors in offending
- Make mainstream justice-related services respond better to the needs of the Koori community and include the community more and

9 Department of Justice Victoria *Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 2* (2006)

- Build capacity and strength in Koori communities to help improve justice outcomes, especially by delivery of local initiatives.

In 2006 the AJA2 strategies were incorporated into the framework of the 2003 Strategic Plan. Also in 2006, the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (the Charter) provided additional acknowledgment of specific rights for Kooris in Victoria.¹⁰

OPI Review officers used this framework to conduct this review. The impact of the 2003 Strategic Plan is assessed against each of the six key objectives set out in the plan.

¹⁰ See Preamble and section 19(2)

Improving Safety in Custody

Objective

In accordance with the recommendation of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody,¹¹ police strive to minimise the risk of Aboriginal peoples in custody.

The plan identifies six strategies to improve safety in custody. They are:

- Use of alternatives to custody
- Early access to the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service
- Notifications to Aboriginal Community Justice Panels
- Use of Sobering-Up Centres
- Education for police regarding the care and welfare of prisoners
- Implementation of an arrest monitoring system

The review examined the effectiveness of each of these six strategies.

Key strategies

Use of alternatives to custody

Alternatives to custody include increasing the use of cautions, summonses and penalty notices for Koori people. Although Victoria Police has suggested there has been an increase in the use of cautioning for Koori offenders since 2002/2003, these figures are not conclusive evidence that police are issuing cautions as an alternative to custody.¹²

Crime statistics published by Victoria Police indicate a steady pattern of numbers of Koori offenders processed by police. For example, in 2005/6 Kooris were approximately:

- 8.4 times more likely than all Victorians to be identified as an offender in a homicide
- 8.9 times more likely than all Victorians to be identified as an offender in a robbery
- 17 times more likely than all Victorians to be identified as an offender in an aggravated burglary
- 9.6 times more likely than all Victorians to be identified as an offender in a residential burglary

¹¹ Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody 1991

¹² Victoria Police Operations Coordination Department 2008 *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategic Assessment* p27

- 9.4 times more likely than all Victorians to be identified as an offender in a theft of motor vehicle offence
- 7.3 times more likely than all Victorians to be identified as an offender in a justice procedures offence and
- 10.7 times more likely than all Victorians to be identified as an offender in a public behaviour offence.¹³

Police explanations for the increased police contact with Kooris refer to high rates of recidivism amongst Koori offenders and increased prevalence of offending at earlier ages by young Kooris.¹⁴ However, the 2005/6 numbers of Koori offenders processed for 'behaviour in public' offences raise other issues. These offences are associated with high levels of police discretion. The fact that Kooris were 10.7 times more likely than all Victorians to be identified as an offender in this category may indicate there is an over-policing of Kooris in some communities.

In 2006/07 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders represented 9.5 percent of all Victoria Police custody episodes across the State.¹⁵

Data in relation to attendances at police stations throughout the State in 2007 indicates attendances by Koori people were rising and at a disproportionately higher rate, compared with non-Koori people in the same areas. According to Victoria Police, Koori attendances comprised up to 5 percent of the total attendances in 41 Police Service Areas.¹⁶ These figures did not include attendances by Koori victims of crime.

There are some Police Service Areas, for example, Morwell, Mildura, Shepparton, Bairnsdale and Warrnambool, where there is reported to have been recent progress in diverting Koori people, particularly younger Kooris, away from the criminal justice system. Each of these Police Service Areas has an active management interest in Koori issues, a Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer (a sworn member of Victoria Police) and an Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer (a civilian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Victoria Police employee) available to support alternatives to custody arrangements.

Notwithstanding some apparent improvements in particular areas, data published by the Department of Justice indicate although the proportion of Koori to non-Koori prisoners may be dropping slightly,

Police explanations for the increased police contact with Kooris refer to high rates of recidivism amongst Koori offenders and increased prevalence of offending at earlier ages by young Kooris.

13 Victoria Police Crime Statistics 05/06 – DOC 07/3024

14 Victoria Police Operations Coordination Department 2008 *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategic Assessment* p29

15 Victoria Police Operations Coordination Department 2008 *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategic Assessment* p27

16 Victoria Police Operations Coordination Department 2008 *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategic Assessment* p27–28

the numbers of Koori people in prison continues to rise in line with the rise in overall prison populations.

Figure 1: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status of all prisoners

	30 June 2005		30 June 2006		30 June 2007		30 June 2008		30 June 2009	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status										
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	220	6.0	215	5.5	238	5.7	245	5.8	241	5.5
Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ¹⁷	3,472	94.0	3,690	94.5	3,945	94.3	3,978	94.2	4,109	94.5
Total	3,692	100.0	3,905	100.0	4,183	100.0	4,223	100.0	4,350	100.0

Source: Department of Justice October 2009 *Statistical Profile of the Victorian Prison System 2004-05 to 2008-09*

Notifications to Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service

Where a person has identified as being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, police are required to notify the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service within 60 minutes of the person arriving at a police station. The 2003 Strategic Plan identified there should be 100 percent compliance with this strategy.

A 2008 report by Victoria Police identified 304 instances where notification to the Legal Service took longer than 60 minutes.¹⁸ The number of notifications which occurred within the required time was not reported, so it is not known what percentage of notifications exceeded the prescribed time limit. Of the 304 notifications that exceeded the prescribed time limit, 43 percent were accomplished within the next hour. However, as the report noted:

... most disconcerting is the 23% (68) of notifications which occurred over 9 hours past the required time, 25 incidents of which were more than a day later, the longest being almost seven days.¹⁹

Notifications to Aboriginal Community Justice Panels

Aboriginal Community Justice Panels were established in Victoria in 1988. Part of the reason for establishing Aboriginal Community Justice Panels, following the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, was to provide an alternative

¹⁷ Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander includes prisoners whose Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status is 'unknown' or not recorded

¹⁸ Victoria Police Operations Coordination Department 2008 *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategic Assessment*

¹⁹ Victoria Police Operations Coordination Department 2008 *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategic Assessment* p28

to detention in police cells. Comprising volunteers from Koori communities, the role of the Aboriginal Community Justice Panel is to assist people at risk and where appropriate take custody of the person. The Panels are a key strategy aimed at improving the safety of Koori suspects or offenders.

Originally administered by the Victoria Aboriginal Legal Service, the Aboriginal Community Justice Panel Program is now funded and administered by Victoria Police and coordinated by the Victoria Police Aboriginal Advisory Unit. Currently there are 12 regional Aboriginal Community Justice Panels located in:

- Shepparton (Rumbalara)
- Swan Hill
- Warrnambool (Gunditjmara)
- Heywood (Palawarra)
- Warragul
- Mildura
- Dandenong
- Wodonga
- Geelong
- Horsham
- Robinvale
- Ballarat

The Aboriginal Community Justice Panel initiative is one of several success stories concerning Koori and police relations in local communities.

As one Panel member told OPI Review Officers:

The Warrnambool Aboriginal Community Justice Panel has been in operation for approximately 15 years. The relationship between the Aboriginal people in the Warrnambool area and the local police has improved considerably. There has definitely been a more conscious effort to work together on a number of issues. The reason why this relationship has worked is due to a number of contributing factors: the Aboriginal Community Justice Panel members are well-respected members of the community; they introduce themselves to new members at the police stations; they invite police to cultural functions; and they have 'an open door' to police members. One other factor that strengthens the relationship between the Aboriginal Community Justice Panel and the police is the role both the Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer and the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer play in the liaison process.

Although Aboriginal Community Justice Panel members told OPI Review Officers that they get no formal training in their role, the Aboriginal Community Justice Panel Program is a key component for providing support to Koori communities in justice-related matters.

Despite the overall benefits of the program, there are local issues with some Aboriginal Community Justice Panels. For example, some Aboriginal Community Justice Panel members raised concerns that, in some instances, police do not contact them promptly enough when a Koori is taken into custody.

OPI Review Officers were also told by some people that there were concerns about the membership of their local Aboriginal Community Justice Panel. Some individuals who, as part of community, want to share the workload and become a member of their local Aboriginal Community Justice Panel have been excluded. OPI Review Officers were told that, in some cases, it can be difficult to become a member of an Aboriginal Community Justice Panel due to alliances within particular family-based Koori communities.

Some Aboriginal Community Justice Panel members have been in their roles for more than 10 years. OPI Review Officers were told of community concerns that when the same people operate as the Aboriginal Community Justice Panel for quite a number of years they 'pick and choose' who they want to do business with. Some police agree. They told OPI Review Officers that on several occasions the local Aboriginal Community Justice Panel member had refused to attend the police station after having been told the name of the Koori person in custody. As a result, in some instances community members do not, and will not, have anything to do with their local Aboriginal Community Justice Panel.

Use of Sobering-Up Centres

Sobering-Up Centres were introduced in some regions to provide a safe haven for Koori people who were drug or alcohol affected. Intoxication is not only a significant public health issue for Kooris, it also regularly results in public order issues and accounts for a significant proportion of contacts between police and Kooris.

In the absence of a local Sobering-Up Centre, or other safe alternatives able to be offered by the Aboriginal Community Justice Panel, police, in providing for the safety of the person or others, often have no alternative but to lodge an intoxicated Koori in police cells until he or she has sobered up and is safe to be released.

There are Sobering-Up Centres in a number of Victorian country towns – Mildura, Bairnsdale, Echuca, and Warrnambool. However, lack of funding, public liability issues and the lack of skilled people to staff and maintain the facilities, have given rise to concerns about whether Sobering-Up Centres are appropriate to provide a safe environment for the care of intoxicated Kooris. The establishment of Sobering-Up Centres does not appear to be a priority in communities where there are Koori Night Patrols or other alternatives provided by the Aboriginal Community Justice Panel. Koori Night Patrols collect Kooris who may be intoxicated and at risk of committing public disorder offences and drive them home.

*...the Aboriginal
Community Justice
Panel Program
is a key component
for providing support
to Koori communities
in justice-related
matters.*

Education in care and welfare of prisoners

The 2003 Plan identified police training in risk awareness for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in police custody as a key strategy for improving safety in custody. As identified in OPI's Parliamentary report tabled in July 2010, *Update on Conditions in Victoria Police Cells*, Victoria Police does not have standardised training in relation to the care and welfare of individuals in police custody. Police Service Area managers who responded to OPI's survey confirmed training tends to happen in an ad hoc manner. Although most police stations in Victoria do have Standard Operating Procedures that incorporate basic recommendations from the Royal Commission, they vary considerably.

Implementation of arrest monitoring system

The purpose of this strategy was to establish an effective and efficient data collection system that would enable arrests and alternatives to arrest to be monitored for effectiveness. Victoria Police is yet to implement this strategy.

Suggestions for improving safety in custody

Better data collection

Current data collection processes used by Victoria Police do not enable accurate recording of police interventions that divert Koori people away from criminal justice processes. Two internal reviews conducted by Victoria Police, the *Indigenous Strategic Assessment 2008* and the *Koori Complaints Project 2006-2008*, highlight the limitations of data and information held by Victoria Police. In January 2008, the Aboriginal Advisory Unit requested statistical services to construct a report enabling analysis of Koori offending linked to areas where there are Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers. This is yet to occur. While some progress has been made to better capture data in relation to Koori justice issues, more needs to be done to set benchmarks and measure progress in improving Koori justice outcomes.

Improved community liaison

Those Police Service Areas that appear to be achieving success in diversionary programs or other alternatives to custody rely on effective communication and liaison with local Koori communities at the point of service delivery. This is delivered through appropriately trained and committed Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers and Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers. Police Service Areas without these dedicated resources appear less successful.

It appears the presence in Warrnambool of a full-time Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer, who works with the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer, other police and the community, is key

While some progress has been made to better capture data in relation to Koori justice issues, more needs to be done to set benchmarks and measure progress in improving Koori justice outcomes.

to ensuring positive Aboriginal Community Justice Panel outcomes. Issues appear to arise in areas where there are no Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers or where the Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer is not able to devote enough time or energy to build understanding and nurture relationships between police and Koori community members. Effective liaison between police and Koori communities is critical for Koori communities to have confidence in police.

It is also worth noting that recent research in New South Wales suggests that a focus on supporting compliance with court orders, and the reintegration and rehabilitation of Koori offenders who have been released from prison has a positive impact on reducing incarceration rates for Koori people.²⁰

Better training for police

Victoria Police needs to ensure its own policies and procedures in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons are understood and implemented by all police.

Police must inquire whether or not any person being interviewed identifies as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent. It is acknowledged that even if police are 100 percent compliant with relevant procedures, it still may be difficult to ensure Koori people are correctly identified and treated accordingly. There are a number of reasons individuals may choose not to tell police that they are Koori. They may have concerns about how police will use the information. They may have privacy concerns. They may or may not want to be treated differently, or may not want the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service to be automatically contacted by police. Police need to be sensitive to these concerns and reassure individuals that early identification as a Koori is in the person's best interests and will not result in any detriment to the person in police custody.

Where a person identifies as being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent, police must make timely reports to the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service. Victoria Police should monitor reporting times and take steps to improve compliance rates.

In addition to recruit training, particular emphasis needs to be placed on these obligations during localised induction and on-the-job training at police stations, particularly in areas where there are established or emerging Koori communities. In these areas, Victoria Police must educate and train all staff, including police in Criminal Investigation Units and Traffic Management Units. Police supervisors and managers should audit and monitor compliance with these training requirements.

Victoria Police has undertaken to develop training packages for the care and welfare of individuals in police custody. Care should be taken to ensure the new training package meets the custody needs of Koori people and incorporate the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

20 NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research *Issues Paper no. 54* December 2010

[Koori communities]

should also focus on implementing strategies that will reduce the incidence of intoxication and associated risks to the safety of Koori community members and others.

Reducing incidence of intoxication

According to the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, Victoria remains the only Australian jurisdiction where public drunkenness is a criminal offence. Other jurisdictions treat the issue as a public health issue. It is clearly desirable to reduce the incidence of intoxicated Koori people in contact with police and to provide safe alternatives to lodging intoxicated Kooris in police cells. The simplest way for this to be achieved is for local Koori communities, with the support of other government agencies, including police, to work closely together. Their common goal should be to provide alternatives to police custody for intoxicated Kooris, such as Sobering-Up Centres and Koori Night Patrols. They should also focus on implementing strategies that will reduce the incidence of intoxication and associated risks to the safety of Koori community members and others.

Improving communication and liaison

Objective

To improve the level of communication and liaison through proactive consultation and dialogue, and work together to identify and develop a mutual understanding.

The plan identifies nine strategies to improve communication and liaison between police and Koori communities. They are:

- Maintain Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers
- Institute local priority policing meetings
- Coordination of ongoing issue resolution through regional liaison meetings
- Quarterly meetings of the Victoria Police Aboriginal Policy and Reference Group
- Institute annual Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers' Workshop
- Encourage interaction between police and Koori youth
- Institute a complaints monitoring system
- Support Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement Regional Committees
- Development of an Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer Program

Key strategies

Maintain Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers

The Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer program has been operating for approximately 15 years. The number of Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers throughout the State has increased dramatically since then. There are currently more than 100 part-time Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers and Assistant Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers at about 53 police stations throughout the State. Bairnsdale and Warrnambool each employ a full-time Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer.

As part of this review, the 102 Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers and Assistant Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers were sent a survey. The detailed results of the survey are attached in Appendix Two.

Responses to the survey were varied. Although longer-serving Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers indicate they have received formal training, the vast majority of more recently appointed Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers indicate they have not.

It is therefore not surprising that many Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers are confused about the requirements of their role.

In broad terms, the role of the Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer is to create a bridge between Victoria Police and Koori communities. Responsibilities include liaising with communities, establishing positive partnerships and implementing strategies to improve service delivery and assist with crime prevention.

The selection and appointment process of Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers varies across the State and, in some instances, there seems to have been little consideration given to whether an appointee will be able to undertake the requirements of the role. Koori community representatives told OPI Review Officers that in quite a number of instances the individual appointed to the Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers' position was unsuited to working with Koori communities.

Koori representatives who spoke to OPI Review Officers, such as representatives of the Department of Justice's Koori Justice Unit and the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, also said there was a marked difference in the quality of the relationship between police and Koori communities where there was a full-time Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer. In these areas, the Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer has more time to be involved in local crime prevention initiatives with Koori communities. In other areas, a part-time Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer has competing priorities arising from other policing duties.

Institute local priority policing meetings

The Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 2 states:

Koori communities will inform and participate in Local Priority Policing initiatives and Local Safety Committees. This will enable them to make their communities safer and reduce over-policing by police who may not understand Koori culture and who may not fully understand the impact that colonisation and discriminatory policies has had on Kooris.²¹

During the consultation process, OPI Review Officers found that in areas with significant Koori communities, a number of Police Service Areas have established formal networks with Koori organisations. Examples include Darebin and Shepparton.

In Darebin, the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer has established the Darebin Police Aboriginal Consultative Committee. The Committee comprises representatives of police and local Koori agencies, who come together at designated times throughout the year to discuss real or perceived policing issues. The Committee has been established to foster positive relationships and to open channels of communication

²¹ Department of Justice Victoria *Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 2 (2006) Objective 6: Strengthen community justice responses*

between Victoria Police in the Darebin region and local Koori agencies and community members.

In Shepparton a Divisional Police Aboriginal Liaison Group has been operating for three years. Membership comprises senior representatives from the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, the Koori Justice Unit, the Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative, and Victoria Police. The Shepparton Region Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer, the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer, and other health and Aboriginal Co-Operative representatives also attend its quarterly meetings.

The Shepparton Group effectively operates as a 'sub-committee' of the Local Aboriginal Justice Agreement Committee which was convened in response to AJA2.

Meeting more frequently to discuss problems between local Kooris and police are District Aboriginal Liaison Teams, established in Shepparton in 2007 and Echuca in 2009. Attached as Appendix Four is a Statement of Cooperation that sets out the framework for the way the liaison teams in the Greater Shepparton area meet and discuss issues. The Statement of Cooperation demonstrates the way police and Kooris living in and around Shepparton have established formal links to improve communication between each other to advance a common purpose – reducing the number of Koori people who are arrested or held in police custody. It is included as an example that other areas may wish to adopt.

Regional liaison meetings to coordinate ongoing issue resolution

With the introduction of Police Service Areas, local district and divisional management arrangements now reflect an integrated approach to police service delivery at Station, District and Divisional levels. The Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers are now part of these business arrangements. Issues relevant to Koori Justice and local Koori communities are expected to be included in local priority policing decisions. In practice, this only works well in areas where there are established police and Koori liaison meeting structures or where there is a full-time Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer.

Quarterly meeting of the Victoria Police Aboriginal Policy Reference Group

OPI Review Officers met with a representative of the Victorian Police Aboriginal Policy Reference Group. This person, who had been a member of the Reference Group since 2003, advised that approximately three or four years ago it was decided to dissolve the reference group because a majority of the members on the Reference Group were also members of both the Aboriginal Justice Forum and the Koori Caucus, both of which meet on a regular basis.

Annual Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers' Workshop

An annual Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer Workshop has been held for the past seven years. Feedback from several Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers indicated that whilst this is worthwhile, it is more of an information session and catch-up and does not provide much in the way of continuous development or learning.

Interaction with Youth Programs and Activities

There are number of local community initiatives aimed at creating positive relationships between police and Koori youth, for example, the Kicking Goals Program:

The Kicking Goals Program was developed by Koori Elder and Murray Valley Aboriginal Cooperative youth worker Aunty Lillian Pettit and Melbourne police officer Kemal Brkic, a member of the Victoria Police Football Club. Aunty Lillian Pettit is quoted as saying, "Koori teenagers often mistrust the police because of their own experiences. The camps are all about trying to show police in a different light, and seeing them as real people who have a job to do."²²

Other initiatives include the Robinvale S.T.R.O.N.G (Sticking together, respecting others, new goals) and Success programs aimed at keeping young Koori people in school and improving relationships between police and young Koori people.²³

Currently these initiatives occur on an ad hoc basis. There is little information-sharing within Victoria Police about these initiatives. Most of the initiatives rely on the energy and enthusiasm of individual Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers, some of whom are required to embark on their own fundraising activities to support programs, arranging sporting events, barbeques etc. Most of these initiatives are officer-dependent and cease if the member of police is transferred or leaves the area.

Complaints Monitoring System

In August 2006, the Aboriginal Justice Forum raised concerns that Koori people experience fear and disillusionment about reporting police misconduct. In response to those concerns, a joint *Koori Complaints Project* was undertaken by Victoria Police's Ethical Standards Department and the Koori Issues Unit of the Department of Justice.²⁴

The project found Koori people are almost six times more likely than non-Koori Victorians to come in contact with Victoria Police and, although access to accurate data was limited, the project confirmed that there is significant under-reporting by Koori people of complaints about police misconduct.

²² Department of Justice *Koori Justice Spring 2009* p6

²³ Office of Police Integrity 2009 *Annual Report* p34

²⁴ Victoria Police Ethical Standards Department, Department of Justice Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Issues Unit *Koori Complaint Project 2006 – 2008 Final Report*

OPI Review Officers were told by a member of the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service that:

The general talk out there among community members is that you are wasting your time making a complaint because the police investigate police and therefore nothing will be done about it.

Participation in the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement Regional Committees

The Aboriginal Justice Agreement established Local and Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees for Koori and multi-agency participation at local and regional levels to address a broad range of Koori justice issues, not just policing issues. Victoria Police representatives currently participate in these Committees. From a policing perspective, service delivery outcomes appear to be enhanced in those areas which have developed District Police Aboriginal Liaison Groups with active Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers and Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers (such as Darebin and Shepparton). In these areas, Committees meet more regularly and respond to local policing issues in a timely way. The district liaison meetings supplement the work of the local and regional committees, enabling the latter to operate more strategically.

From a policing perspective, service delivery outcomes appear to be enhanced in those areas which have developed District Police Aboriginal Liaison Groups with active Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers and Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers (such as Darebin and Shepparton).

Development of an Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer Program

The Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer program was developed to complement the work of the Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers. It involves the appointment of a member of the Koori community whose role is to work with police and Koori communities to improve their relationships. There are currently nine Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers throughout Victoria.

OPI spoke with Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers in Morwell, Bairnsdale, Mildura, Swan Hill, Fitzroy, Dandenong, Warrnambool, Northcote and Shepparton. It was clearly evident that despite facing challenges, Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers are extremely passionate about their roles and enjoyed working within their respective Koori communities and alongside members of Victoria Police.

One Senior Sergeant told OPI Review Officers:

In terms of the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer position, it's been a sensational innovation.

The first Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer was appointed in 2005 at Morwell. There were some initial 'teething' problems with the program, with some appointees facing hostility and negativity from both police and Koori community members.

Role can feel isolated

Some police viewed the appointment of the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer as tokenistic. Others viewed it with suspicion, believing the appointee was there as a watch-dog to gather information detrimental to police.

At the same time, some members of the Koori community were reportedly extremely hostile, calling the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer 'a pig' and 'turncoat.'

Several Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers told OPI Review Officers that at times they still question their reasons for taking on the role, as they feel isolated from both police and the community. Some Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers reported that members of their local Koori community treated them with the traditional mistrust they had for police and no longer spoke to them.

One Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer from a large Koori community, who had been in the role for less than 12 months, told OPI Review Officers:

I found it really overwhelming to begin with. I remember thinking in my first week I was just going to just walk back out the door. I found that the lingo that they (police) use and some of the mannerisms is so not what I was used to.

When I would walk over to the station, particularly to the tea room, I felt that the members would stop what they were saying and other members would walk out. It did impact on my position as I did feel intimidated.

I couldn't get my head around different sections of policing. When I first started it was poorly handled, I thought that the Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer was going to be my mentor. I really didn't know who I was to go to.

Another Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer, who had been in the position for two months, said:

I get here after two days in central office, and I had no-one. After a week I realise that [name of Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer] was the Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer worker but he's working as a cop. This slowed me right down 'cause no-one showed me. I nearly chucked the job in. A week later, after I started, I was going to chuck it in cause there was no support or nothing.

The Inspector really believes in the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer position the concept of it, and I believe in it too and I believe it will work. I just got to get the knowledge, I just gotta get what's expected of me.

Unique insight into policing Koori communities

Despite the difficulties some experience with the role, a common theme amongst the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers who spoke to OPI Review Officers was that:

I believe that I have something to offer the Koori community 'cause I hear so much about the police mistreatment and I believe I am a role model as well.

Coming from the community gives Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers insight into how police deal with local Koori community members. In a particular rural town:

The police will not view the community as a wide view – they've got a narrowminded view of the Koori community. Most police only know the Aboriginals through the judicial system and the young offenders program. They don't know any Kooris outside that. Therefore to a lot of these sworn police there's no human face. They get a mindset whether it's into (sic) racism. It appears that only the Aboriginals get pulled up. It appears that the Aboriginals get rough treatment more than anyone else, and you'll talk to any Aboriginal in the community, this community, cops will pull them up and ask them their name, produce their licence and address but they won't pull a white person up, and that's known for the black fellas for years. The police don't make allowances for why they are walking down the street – anyone else can walk down the street but a Koori will get pulled up.

This insight is important. Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers are well placed to understand the mutual mistrust and prejudice that exists between some police and some Koori community members. This understanding equips them with the capacity to challenge false perceptions and to work with police and community to improve police-Koori relations.

Training and support

While there were varying views, a number of the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers told OPI Review Officers they did not feel they had the necessary initial training to undertake their role effectively. Once an Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer is appointed, he or she participates in an induction program conducted by the Aboriginal Advisory Unit at the Victoria Police Centre. This program sets out the roles and responsibilities of the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer, but some liaison officers told OPI Review Officers that they would like to know more about 'police procedures.'

Some of the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers felt that they were 'left up to their own devices' in the police station and felt that they lacked supervised direction.

*OPI Review
Officers were able
to witness first-hand
the close bond that
most Aboriginal
Community Liaison
Officers had formed
with their counterpart,
the Police Aboriginal
Liaison Officer.*

Relationship with Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers

OPI Review Officers were able to witness first-hand the close bond that most Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers had formed with their counterpart, the Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer. In Bairnsdale and Warrnambool, the Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers work full-time in their roles. They work closely with their relevant Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers and liaise together with the community on a daily basis. As a result, police and Koori relations are reported to have improved considerably in Bairnsdale and Warrnambool in the last three years.

In other areas, the Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer is assigned to general duties and responsibilities and only undertakes Koori liaison duties when time permits. Their capacity to work with their relevant Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer or Officers occurs on a more ad hoc basis. The uncertain availability of a Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer can be a barrier to ensuring effective communication and liaison between police and Koori communities.

Suggestions for improving communication and liaison

The benefits of forging strong relationships between police and Koori community representatives speak for themselves. Koori people, police and local service providers are able to work together to develop and implement local solutions for local issues.

Improving the Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers program

The Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers program has achieved some success in terms of breaking down barriers between police and Koori communities in Victoria. More could be achieved through structural changes to the program.

Improve selection process

It is evident that, in certain areas, additional work is required to attract suitable police to the role of Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer. Such police need to be committed to improving communication and liaison between police and Koori communities. There appear to be clear benefits to ensuring police who take up the role are committed to staying in the role for long enough to develop and maintain strong working relationships with Koori communities and other service providers involved with Koori communities.

To ensure suitable applicants are able to work with Koori communities, the Chair of the relevant Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee could be involved in the final selection process.

More full-time positions

Victoria Police should give serious consideration to increasing the number of full-time Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers in areas where there are larger Koori communities. Priority areas for full-time officers should be determined in consultation with the Aboriginal Advisory Unit, the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service and the Department of Justice's Koori Justice Unit.

In addition to being responsible for day-to-day police-Koori liaison and crime prevention, full-time Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers could play a more strategic role. Full-time Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers could be funded and deployed within a Police Service Area rather than have the position allocated to a specific police station.

Reporting directly to the Police Service Area management team, a full-time Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer could align appropriate Koori justice initiatives with those of relevant youth, multicultural, sexual-assault and domestic violence initiatives being undertaken at a district level. Under these arrangements, the Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer would be responsible for the Aboriginal Justice Agreement strategies where police have a lead role, or where police have a joint lead agency role.

Full-time Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers could also provide a mentoring and/or coaching role to Assistant Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers, Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers and Aboriginal Community Justice Program representatives within their jurisdiction. This would provide consistency in the implementation of policies and procedures and be a mechanism for timely responses to local Koori issues as they arise.

Improved training

Compulsory regular training and a clearer understanding of what is expected of Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers will improve the effectiveness of the program. The Aboriginal Advisory Unit and the Victoria Police Education Department, in consultation with representatives from Koori communities, the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service and a representative of the Koori Court, need to develop a comprehensive training and awareness program for Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers. The training program should include, but not be restricted to, diversionary programs, the operation and administration of the Koori Court, family violence programs, Koori youth liaison and the role, functions and responsibilities of each of those agencies who are signatories to the Aboriginal Justice Agreement.

Combat racist attitudes

The concerns raised by some Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers regarding racist attitudes expressed by some police are serious and call for immediate attention by Victoria Police.

In addition to being responsible for day-to-day police-Koori liaison and crime prevention, full-time Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers could play a more strategic role.

Align police-Koori liaison groups with Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees

Some of those involved in the Shepparton model told OPI Review Officers that they saw real benefits in the establishment of regional police and Aboriginal liaison groups that directly align with the current Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees. If membership comprised senior representatives of key agencies, a statewide approach to Koori Justice issues, driven by joint goals to achieve better justice outcomes for Koori peoples, could be achieved.

In other areas where there are larger Koori communities, district Aboriginal liaison teams, using the Darebin, Shepparton and Echuca models, should be established to ensure Koori communities participate in decisions relevant to policing their local areas.

In areas where there are district liaison teams, local issues that may have systemic impact could be brought to the attention of the higher-level regional meeting through the Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer.

Revamp annual Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer workshop

Although annual networking and information sessions can be a valuable way to exchange ideas concerning a range of Koori justice-related issues, it is timely for the Victoria Police Aboriginal Advisory Unit to review the purpose of the workshop. The agenda of the annual workshop could be more aligned with AJA2 Objectives. It could be a forum for discussing performance against the AJA2 Objectives, identifying emerging Koori justice issues, identifying information gaps and assisting in the collection of information to meet Victoria Police Aboriginal Justice Agreement outcome reporting obligations. It could also invite presentations that demonstrate initiatives which have improved justice outcomes for Koori peoples.

Coordinate and resource work with Koori youth

The more full-time Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers there are, the more likely it is that Victoria Police can implement initiatives aimed at engaging young Koori people. Victoria Police could demonstrate a commitment to this strategy by linking with primary and secondary schools in strategies aimed at reducing the number of Koori youth in contact with the criminal justice system. School-based programs, such as the Robinvale program, not only foster positive interaction between police, Koori youth and young adults, but can also become a way of marketing policing as a career for Koori young people.

Increase numbers and support for Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers

Respondents to OPI's survey of managers and most people who spoke to OPI Review Officers strongly supported the recruitment of more Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers across the State. For example:

Robinvale needs an Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer absolutely. We need an Aboriginal face in the police station. I think it will break down a lot of barriers. It's not good enough that Swan Hill has one and Mildura has one, they rarely visit Robinvale.

Consideration now needs to be given to extending the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer program and creating additional positions able to support police and Koori communities in areas such as Echuca, Robinvale, Ballarat, Lakes Entrance, Lake Tyers, Orbost, Portland, Heywood and Horsham. The more Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers there are, the more they will be able to provide peer support to each other.

In some areas with large Koori communities, female and male Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers should be recruited to ensure appropriate awareness of a broad spectrum of community concerns.

Engaging young Koori people as Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers could be part of a pre-recruitment strategy to ensure there are more Koori members of Victoria Police.

In addition to improving peer support, Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers (in particular full-time Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers) are well placed to fulfil a mentoring role for their Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer counterparts.

Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers told OPI Review Officers they would like to be part of a mentor program that could provide support and direction in terms of cultural consultation and safety as well as personal and career development opportunities.

Engaging young Koori people as Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers could be a part of a pre-recruitment strategy to ensure there are more Koori members of Victoria Police.

Improving training and education

Objective

Through improved training and education, enhance positive relationships between members of Victoria Police and Aboriginal peoples.

The 2003 Strategic Plan identifies four strategies to improve training and education and enhance positive relationships between police and Koori peoples. They are:

- Maintain Aboriginal Awareness components of training courses
- Conduct local cultural awareness courses
- Research police and Indigenous issues
- Market the 2003 Victoria Police Strategic Plan

Key strategies

Maintain Aboriginal Cultural Awareness components of training courses

Until recently, one hour of the 20 week recruit training curriculum was allocated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. This hour covered historical aspects of police and Koori interaction, the Stolen Generations, and the 1967 Referendum. The training was coordinated by the Aboriginal Advisory Unit and delivered by Koori Elders and Respected Persons. More recently an additional one-week *Introduction to contemporary policing* module has been added to the beginning of the recruit training program. This module includes a cultural competency component with a 65 minute session presented by a member of the Victoria Police's Aboriginal Advisory Unit that deals specifically with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues. Other sessions in the module may also deal with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues; for example, sessions dealing with gay and lesbian issues may use a case study involving a gay Aboriginal person.

Although this training may do little to properly prepare a recruit for the realities of police work in dealing with Koori people or policing Koori communities, it does 'set the scene' for recruits, the majority of whom have had little or no exposure to Koori peoples or their culture prior to joining Victoria Police.

Most people the OPI Review Officers spoke to agreed that a greater level of understanding and awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional and contemporary cultures was needed to improve relationships, and ensure better outcomes for Koori people from the criminal justice system.

Conduct local cultural awareness courses

This strategy was intended to ensure police attached to districts with significant Koori communities would attend Victoria Police Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Courses. Police on transfer to these districts were expected to attend a course within six months of their arrival in the district.

Included in OPI's survey of Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers was a question about whether the respondent conducted local cultural awareness courses. Those who said they did provide training ranged from those who were dedicated to providing a certain number of cultural training camps per year to those who conducted training on an ad hoc basis.

Fifty percent of respondents said they didn't conduct local cultural awareness courses. When asked to explain why, respondents said:

- *Haven't received any training in it (in role for 1 year).*
- *None in this region I am aware of but the Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer and I have discussed arranging something suitable (in role for 1 year 6 months).*
- *Have not been trained (in role for 2 years 1 month).*
- *Haven't even heard of it (in role for 6 months).*
- *Haven't made the time (in role for 1 year 4 months).*
- *No (in role for 2 years).*
- *Haven't received training myself (in role for 5 years).*
- *No, wasn't aware of it (in role for 6 months).*
- *Time (in role for 1 year 2 months).*
- *My own knowledge of the culture is still developing and I would like to get a community member involved (in role 2 years 4 months).*
- *I personally don't conduct awareness as I don't believe I have the knowledge as yet. I have approached the co-op and money seems to be (an) obstacle (in role 2 years 6 months).*
- *Not enough time. I do educate members in general conversation.*
- *Yet to put one together – working on a formula for one.*
- *Without training, let alone time to, how do you expect me to?*
- *This is something that I am keen to do, but I do not have the appropriate information to deliver it.*

It is concerning that some Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers, particularly some who have been in the role for significant periods of time, have never conducted local cultural awareness courses. Indeed some Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers who represent Victoria Police and have responsibilities to advance Koori justice issues appear to do so without background knowledge of local Koori cultural issues. It appears these Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers have not established relationships with members

from their local Koori community who can provide the necessary insight into local cultural issues or provide support for local cultural awareness training.

The areas where regular cultural training is being conducted have an active Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer and an Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer, for example Shepparton and Heywood.

The training conducted in Shepparton is promoted by the Victoria Police representatives of the District Police Aboriginal Liaison Group. It is undertaken with the assistance of Koori community Elders and others. The training is held over a two day period and involves an overnight stay in the Barmah State Forest.

Some police who have transferred to Shepparton have had very little previous contact with Koori people and as a result often arrive with little understanding or preconceived ideas based on stereotypes. Feedback from these police about Koori cultural awareness training is very positive. In addition to helping to break down cultural barriers, other comments include:

The camp was very informative and provided a great opportunity to highlight issues we tend to face, primarily with Koori youth in the course of our duties as police officers.

The camp consisted of highly respected Aboriginal mentors teaching the attending staff members the Aboriginal way of life, both past and present, and their hardship endured over the years. The camp (was) aimed at making all who attended properly aware of Aboriginal culture and understanding of not only the issues police face with the Aboriginal community, but the issues the Aboriginal community have faced with police in years gone by.

The local cultural awareness training at Shepparton is in addition to the induction package provided for all new starters. The Station Induction Package includes specific references to policy and procedures for dealing with Koori people and their local communities.

OPI Review Officers attended cultural awareness training conducted by the Pallawarra Aboriginal Community Justice Program and the Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation. The day began at the Winda Mara Aboriginal Co-Operative in Heywood where police were told about the Gunditjmarra people, their history and their culture. This was followed by visits to local sites important to the Gunditjmarra people.

The day provided a unique opportunity for police to ask questions and to interact with Gunditjmarra people in a positive environment. Police attendees clearly found the experience beneficial.

Facilitate research on police and Indigenous issues

Victoria Police has been involved in two significant research projects since the 2003 Strategic Plan was published. The first was an *Indigenous Strategic Assessment 2008*

commissioned by the Operations Coordination Department to provide a statewide assessment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policing issues likely to impact on Victoria Police in the medium-to-long term. The second was a project jointly commissioned by the Victoria Police Ethical Standards Department and the Koori Justice Unit in the Department of Justice, the *Koori Complaints Project 2006-2008*. This project examined patterns of complaints by Koori people following police contact.

The extent to which the outcomes of the two research projects were disseminated is not known. The *Indigenous Strategic Assessment 2008* is subject to an IN-CONFIDENCE security classification.

Both documents are well researched and raise contemporary issues. Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers and others would benefit from having access to them. The documents provide insight into key issues and would better equip those involved in day-to-day Koori liaison work to adopt a more strategic approach to some of the issues.

Market the 2003 Strategic Plan

It appears this strategy was not implemented. OPI Review Officers spoke with a range of Victoria Police employees and members of Koori communities who had never seen or heard of the 2003 Strategic Plan.

Suggestions for improving training and education

Committing resources

Training and education that involves Koori people able to share their history and provide insight into their culture is one of the best ways to break down prejudices and build constructive relationships between police and Kooris.

Victoria Police must demonstrate its commitment to improving police and Koori relations by freeing up rosters to enable Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers to coordinate local cultural awareness sessions. The success of the Shepparton cultural awareness training program demonstrates the value of investing resources to promote understanding and build relationships in a non-confrontational setting. It provides a model that can easily be adopted statewide.

Resourcing research on policing and Koori issues in Victoria could inform the development of more sophisticated strategies aimed at improving police-Koori relations and outcomes for Koori people in the criminal justice system.

Broadly disseminate the new Strategic Plan

Victoria Police is in the process of finalising a new Aboriginal Strategic plan. It should ensure it is widely disseminated amongst key stakeholders who can use it as a 'road map' for achieving practical outcomes.

The success of the Shepparton cultural awareness training program demonstrates the value of investing resources to promote understanding and build relationships in a non-confrontational setting.

Improving recruitment

Objective

To provide Aboriginal peoples with the opportunity to work with Victoria Police in a work environment that respects cultural diversity and supports the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement and the Wur-cum Barra strategy.

The 2003 Strategic Plan has five strategies to achieve this objective. They are:

- Marketing for recruitment to Victoria Police
- Enrolling Aboriginal applicants in preparatory courses
- Screen recruits to exclude those with racist tendencies
- Mentor Aboriginal recruits
- Develop and implement retention and recruitment in line with Wur-cum Barra strategy

Key strategies

Marketing for recruitment to Victoria Police

To date, Victoria Police does not appear to have embarked on a distinct marketing strategy focused specifically on Koori recruitment. There have been a number of initiatives generated by local Police Service Areas such as attending Koori Job Fairs and conducting police information days, but from a broader perspective these activities do not appear to be contributing to increasing the number of Koori people recruited to Victoria Police.

In consulting with Koori communities, OPI Review Officers spoke to a number of people who were keen to join Victoria Police, but they identified a number of inhibiting factors that stopped them applying for jobs. These include:

- being away from family
- the existence of immediate family obligations
- how they would be perceived by their own community
- how, as a Koori person, they would be treated by other police members
- concerns about lack of educational qualifications.

According to Victoria Police, there are currently 26 sworn members of Victoria Police and 28 civilian employees who identify themselves as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.

OPI Review Officers spoke to a number of these employees. They indicated that they often felt they were treated 'differently' from non-Koori employees. Some Koori employees also reported struggling with the constant need to 'justify' their Aboriginality. One Koori police member said:

Local managers have been supportive generally. Some have struggled to acknowledge that even though I'm white I am a Koori person.

A senior member of Victoria Police with significant policing experience said:

One of the disappointing things for me generally after nearly 40 years in the police force is we haven't been very successful in recruiting Kooris into the police force.

In January 2010, Victoria Police employed a Koori Attraction and Retention Officer. Some of the responsibilities of this role are to:

- Lead and manage the development and implementation of the Victoria Police Aboriginal Employment Plan in partnership with Recruiting Services Branch and the Aboriginal Advisory Unit.
- Develop proactive partnerships with Victorian Koori communities and stakeholders, to ensure successful outcomes under the plan and contribute to ongoing relationship-building with the communities.
- Develop and implement an Aboriginal Employment Program and an Aboriginal Mentoring Program in partnership with Recruiting Services Branch and the Aboriginal Advisory Unit.

The original six month role was extended to 31 December 2010. It is too early to evaluate the success or otherwise of this strategy, but OPI understands Victoria Police has made a commitment to a one percent increase in Koori employees by 2015.

Preparatory Courses

This strategy was intended to encourage Koori applicants seeking to join Victoria Police to participate in appropriate preparatory courses to increase the likelihood of long term recruitment to Victoria Police.

In the course of this review OPI Review Officers became aware of two examples of preparatory courses targeting Koori applicants. Mildura and Warrnambool piloted a program, known as STEP or *Structured Training Employment Program*. The program is funded by the Commonwealth Government's Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. The Mildura pilot program provided traineeships to seven people wanting to join Victoria Police from Koori communities in Mildura (3), Robinvale (1), Swan Hill (2), and Kerang (1). An additional Koori was employed to mentor the trainees. Although the traineeship does not guarantee a position within Victoria Police, it does provide the trainee with a 'look in' to life working for Victoria

Police and work experience that they can use in a variety of roles, not just policing. The program is seen to be nurturing future leaders in Koori communities and gives non-Koori police the opportunity to act as role models and develop relationships with Koori people as colleagues.

Identification and targeting of racist tendencies in recruits

Specific research to screen out recruits with racist tendencies has not been undertaken. But significant progress is being made by the Victoria Police People Department to remove systemic practices that could discriminate against a broad range of potential Victoria Police employees – including Kooris. The establishment of the *Introduction to contemporary policing* module is intended to identify individuals who may be racist or discriminatory or who do not have appropriate ethical values required for contemporary policing so they can be excluded prior to operational training. More work needs to be done to evaluate whether these improved recruitment and training processes succeed in excluding applicants with racist or discriminatory beliefs.

Mentor Program

Supporting Koori employees who are employed in Victoria Police is an integral part of retaining staff. One former member of police, with more than 10 years policing experience, told OPI Review Officers:

When I joined I was so excited at the prospect of working for Victoria Police. However, even in the early stages upon entering the police academy, I was taunted and the subject of inappropriate comments. Some of the other squad members would say things like 'you are only here cos you're Aboriginal', 'you will never make it' and 'you won't last long.'

Victoria Police's initiatives in the recruitment screening process and training include the implementation of a general recruit mentor program. It is hoped that experiences like those of this former member of police can be relegated to history.

Develop and implement retention and recruitment strategies in line with Wur-cum Barra Strategy.

The Wur-cum Barra Employment Strategy was launched in 2002. This strategy outlined the State Government's commitment to improving employment for Kooris. In 2005/2006, Victoria Police developed its first Koori Employment Plan which outlined current and future policy commitments to improving employment opportunities for Koori people within Victoria Police.

This plan included a range of strategies aimed at removing barriers for potential Koori employees, as well as providing active support and assistance. Although this plan talked about marketing, this aspect of the plan does not appear to have been implemented.

Suggestions for improving Koori recruitment

Role modelling, mentoring and flexible terms and conditions

Major factors that discourage Koori peoples from applying to join Victoria Police are how they will be seen by their community and difficulties about being away from their families for quite a considerable time.

If more non-Koori police act as good role models for Koori people, it is more likely that policing will become an attractive option for younger Kooris. If there are targeted recruitment drives in areas where there are significant Koori communities, employment terms and conditions could be varied to accommodate Koori issues. In addition to implementing a specific mentor program that supports Koori applicants and recruits, Victoria Police should consider adopting a more flexible approach to leave and work placement for Koori employees to ensure the numbers of Koori recruits grow and more Koori police are retained in the workforce.

Consideration could be given to engaging more young Koori people potentially interested in becoming police as Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers. This would increase the number of Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers and provide some individuals with a career pathway into general policing. In addition, or alternatively, Victoria Police could adopt a model used in Queensland and other jurisdictions.

If more non-Koori police act as good role models for Koori people, it is more likely that policing will become an attractive option for younger Kooris.

Queensland model

The Queensland Police Service offers traineeships under the Justice Entry Program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and is an element of the Queensland Police Service's Diversity Management Plan. The Traineeship provides the education qualifications for entry into the Queensland Police Service as a police recruit, including a First Aid Certificate. Trainees who successfully undertake this program are also eligible to receive an Australian National Training Authority endorsed qualification. Applicants must be Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people and ideally have completed year 12 school education, with at least one or two years employment experience. Alternatively, applicants who have Year 10 education, with extensive employment and life related skills, and who demonstrate a potential to succeed as a police officer, may also apply. Applicants must also meet police recruit entry requirements that include meeting integrity, health and fitness standards.²⁵

²⁵ <http://www.police.qld.gov.au/join/recruitment/alternativeEntry/atsi.htm>

Improving crime prevention

Objective

To reduce the level of crime committed by and against Aboriginal people.

The 2003 Strategic Plan has three strategies to achieve this objective. They are:

- Assessment and resolution of local crime trends
- Support Aboriginal victims of crime
- Use a multi-agency approach to develop strategies for crime reduction

Key strategies

Assessment and resolution of local crime trends

This strategy was intended to be implemented by Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers who would use police data to inform targeted crime prevention strategies.

Some respondents to OPI's survey of Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers clearly indicated this was the focus of their activities. Of these, the majority focused on preventing family violence and reducing Koori youth crime through active engagement. One respondent acknowledged Koori people were victims of crime and described the implementation of programs aimed at addressing racist graffiti and theft from local Aboriginal gathering places.

Support Aboriginal victims of crime

The 2003 Strategic plan commits Victoria Police to report annually on the incidence of Koori people as reported victims of crime. This is yet to be implemented.²⁶

OPI Review Officers are aware that in some areas both the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer and the Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer take on the role of supporting Koori victims of crime. Victim support is not currently a formal part of the role of the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer.

²⁶ Victoria Police (2009) *Crime Statistics 2008/09*

Use a multi-agency approach to develop strategies for crime reduction

The introduction of Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees and Local Aboriginal Justice Action Committees has facilitated the development of multi-agency relationships and local solutions to local problems.

Unfortunately, little appears to have been done to document or disseminate information about the success of targeted crime prevention strategies.

Suggestions for improving crime prevention

Improved data collection and reporting

As previously stated, it is impossible to demonstrate whether there is a reduction in crime committed by and against Koori people if the data is not adequately captured. Crime prevention initiatives have little value if their impact cannot be measured.

Formalising the role Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers have in victim support

If more positions for Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers are created, consideration should be given to formalising the role these officers have in providing victim support.

Improving responses to family violence and child protection

Objective

Support the aims of the Victorian Aboriginal Family Violence Task Force and work in consultation with the Victoria Police Family Violence Unit and Sexual Offence and Child Abuse Unit.

The 2003 Strategic Plan has four strategies to achieve this objective. They are:

- Improve the police response to reports of family violence
- Develop local solutions to family violence and child abuse
- Continue the involvement of Aboriginal representation on the Violence against Women Project
- Use a multi-agency approach to develop strategies for crime reduction

Key strategies

Improving the police response to reports of family violence

During OPI consultations with community members about Victoria Police's response to family violence, a community member replied:

No. They don't get it. They really don't get it. We work with some of the most victimised people. The police will quite often make comments and say 'oh well, they're just as bad as each other.'

One community member who had an Invention Order against her ex-partner explained that one of the conditions was that he not telephone her. She spoke of her experience of dealing with the police when she was contacted and threatened by her partner:

I rang the police to tell 'em to hurry up and grab him because I knew he was coming over to where I was. And they said, 'There is nothing we can do.' And I said, 'It's against the law and it says here, you know he – he's not allowed to telephone me. I'm telling you, if you don't grab him that something really bad is going to happen.' And they didn't listen to me. They just said, 'Well there is nothing we can do' and I said, 'This is where he is. You need to go and see if he's still there and tell him before he gets here.' So it was the worst time ever. He turned up – actually I think I was still on the phone to them when he turned up. He actually smashed the windows and let himself into the house. So many neighbours

had called 000. I was screaming on the phone to 000 because he took our daughter and he physically hurt me again. He tried to get the car keys and drive the car. Now I don't know how long it took, but it felt like about 15 minutes for anybody to attend. And when they got there I said to them, 'What the (expletive) took you so long', they said, 'Oh sorry it was changeover.'

Both reported and unreported family violence is a significant problem in Koori communities. Although the extent of the problem is obscured by the under-reporting of abuse, available data consistently reveals disproportionately high rates of repeat violence against Koori women in domestic situations with both Koori and non-Koori intimate partners.

Violence towards children and the so-called 'perpetuation of a cycle of abuse' within many Koori families is considered to contribute to the perpetration of violence by Koori people in later life.²⁷

In a recent study, one in five Koori young people aged 15 to 24 said they had experienced physical violence in the last 12 months. Only one in three had reported their most recent experience to police.²⁸

One of the reasons Koori people do not report matters to police relates to trust. Victoria Police must strive to gain trust amongst Koori communities if efforts aimed at reducing family violence are to be successful.

Other reasons Koori people do not report matters to police may be based on their past experience of an inadequate police response. Insight into the way police respond to reports of domestic violence was provided by the former Assistant Commissioner of the Ethical Standards Department. In an interview with OPI Review Officers, he said he had recently attended a regional area to congratulate the local police on achieving a significant reduction in the number of complaints against police by Koori people. With a view to sharing their success story with others, he asked them how they had achieved this result. They replied:

Oh we just don't attend any calls to the community on Friday or Saturday night.

Horrified but needing to know more, he asked for the rationale behind this decision and was told it was a matter of occupational health and safety for police – *if we don't interact, we don't get complained about.*

This disturbing response exemplifies the urgent need for a joint preventative approach between police and Koori communities.

²⁷ Secretariat of the National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care 1996; National Crime Prevention 1999, cited in; Attorney-General's Department 2001, Violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, p183-196

²⁸ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2009 *The State of Victoria's Children* p7

In 2009, Victoria Police released a five year strategy to reduce violence against women and children.²⁹ Part of this strategy involves implementing Victoria Police commitments in the *Strong Culture, Strong People, Strong Families: Toward a safer future for Indigenous families and communities 10 year plan*.³⁰ These include:

- providing tools to police to ensure they provide culturally competent responses to Koori victims and perpetrators of family violence
- developing protocols between Victoria Police and Koori communities to increase cultural competency of Police staff and assist Koori communities in addressing family violence

Develop local solutions to family violence and child abuse

The majority of respondents to the OPI survey of Police Service Area Managers, who had significant Koori communities in their local area, reported local initiatives were being undertaken to address family violence and child abuse in their area. Although it appears these initiatives are being driven by broader commitments to reduce the impact of family violence on communities generally, rather than the 2003 Strategic Plan, it is heartening to see local solutions are being undertaken in a collaborative way with the local community.

Continue the involvement of Aboriginal representation on the Violence against Women project

The Victoria Police Aboriginal Advisory Unit represents Victoria Police at inter-agency and community forums aimed at reducing violence against women and children. However, without dedicated police resources at the point of service delivery and opportunities to evaluate successful local interventions, the Aboriginal Advisory Unit is locked into a policy monitoring role at those forums.

Suggestions for improving responses to reports of family violence

Ensure culturally appropriate responses to reports of family violence

Where Victoria Police has an active Family Violence team, it is critical that the Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer and the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer act to ensure police response to Koori family violence is undertaken with cultural awareness.

²⁹ Victoria Police 2009 *Living free from violence – Upholding the right. Victoria Police strategy to reduce violence against women and children 2009–2014*

³⁰ Department of Planning and Community Development 2008 *Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families Towards a safer future for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Families and communities 10 year plan*, second edition

Improving responses to substance misuse

Objective

To improve the whole-of-community response to Aboriginal peoples adversely affected by the misuse of substances.

The 2003 Strategic Plan has three strategies to achieve this objective. They are:

- support communities to deal with effects of volatile substance use
- support formal Government strategies
- represent Victoria Police on relevant committees addressing substance misuse

Dealing with the effects of volatile substance use

In response to OPI's survey of Police Service Areas, none of the Police Service Area Managers, including those with significant Koori communities in their area, reported any issues concerning the use of volatile substances by Koori people. This is in contrast to issues concerning alcohol abuse. Two Managers specifically reported that this was a key issue for their local Koori community.

Support formal Government strategies

The Victorian *Drugs Poisons and Controlled Substances (Volatile Substances) Act 2003* commenced operation on 1 July 2004. It did not criminalise inhalant use but enabled police to provide an early intervention to protect the health and welfare of young people.

The Aboriginal Advisory Unit has no information to indicate what impact the Act has had on Victoria Police. This is probably because the Act and the Protocol emphasises welfare and health agency responsibilities, rather than policing responsibilities. They also suggest any use of volatile substances amongst Koori people may be masked by alcohol use.

Represent Victoria Police on relevant committees addressing substance misuse

The Victoria Police Aboriginal Advisory Unit undertakes this role.

Conclusion

Until relatively recently, relationships between Victoria Police and Koori communities were often confrontational and characterised by mutual mistrust. The 2003 Strategic Plan and other Government initiatives provide key ingredients to improve relationships and achieve better outcomes for Koori Victorians.

This review set out to examine whether Victoria Police had implemented the strategies in the 2003 Strategic Plan and whether those strategies are achieving their intended aim. It has established that some, but not all, of the strategies have been implemented. Some of the strategies identified in the 2003 Strategic Plan have not been fully implemented, for example, the implementation of an arrest monitoring system. In some instances, strategies appear to have become quickly redundant or impractical, for example quarterly meetings of the Victoria Police Aboriginal Policy Reference Group.

Of the strategies that have been implemented, it is clear some have achieved better outcomes for Koori people. For example, OPI Review Officers heard numerous positive stories regarding the implementation of regional and local liaison meetings. Regular meeting opportunities for police and Koori community members have contributed to the development of relationships built on mutual respect that are improving outcomes for individuals and community in places like Darebin and Shepparton.

They have also heard there is still a lot more work to be done.

Back in the day, race relations with the Victoria police in this town were atrocious and they did very little to appease the community in any way and on several occasions were outright, blatantly prejudiced and racist about their business. I think their attitudes have changed remarkably – mind you there are still some members that will come and have no willingness or understanding of the Aboriginal community.

One Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer said:

I have seen an improvement of relationships between police and [the Koori] community during the last 12 years in the job, however, we still have a long way to go!!

Future work to improve justice outcomes for Koori people will be undertaken in an environment of increased competition for finite public resources. Victoria Police must be able to demonstrate the effectiveness of its strategies. This means improved centralised data collection that can establish benchmarks and provide a coordinated statewide response on Koori issues.

Mainstream law and order responses dealing with issues such as drug and alcohol related crime or family violence must be modified to be culturally appropriate for Koori communities. This means learning from Koori Elders and supporting them to reduce the prevalence of substance abuse and violence within their communities. It also means working with them to provide culturally appropriate interventions.

Koori justice issues arise in the context of social disadvantage on a broad range of issues, including health, education, housing and unemployment. Improving Koori justice outcomes requires a holistic approach where multiple services, including police, work in a coordinated way at local, regional and statewide levels, in collaboration with Koori communities.

Appendix One: Victoria Police *Aboriginal Strategic Plan 2003-2008*

VICTORIA POLICE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES THE ASSISTANCE OF THE:-

Victoria Police Aboriginal Policy Reference Group and
Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees

VICTORIA POLICE - THE WAY AHEAD

Our objective is to deliver a safer Victoria in conjunction with our partners.

Victoria Police will provide intelligent and confident policing focused on the development of partnerships and a community capacity that empowers individuals to build a safer Victoria.

We Will

- Reduce the Crime Rate by 5% over 2003-2008
- Reduce the Road Toll and the incidence of Road Trauma in accordance with arrive alive! 2002-2007
- Increase levels of community perceptions of safety over 2003-2008; and
- Increase levels of customer satisfaction over 2003-2008.

Our focus for a safer Victoria

Victoria police has four key value areas that will drive change throughout the organisation and increase our ability to make a difference to community safety over the next five years.

Intelligent Policing encourages innovation and creative problem solving. It is about a people centred and enabling management style that aims to create police as community leaders who are capable, ethical and high performing.

Confident Policing is focused on local level service needs and delivery to achieve maximum impact on local priorities and safety outcomes.

Community Policing collaborates and works with other agencies and groups in the pursuit of common community safety outcomes through developing and strengthening community partnerships across the State.

Partnership Policing collaborates and works with other agencies and groups in the pursuit of common community safety outcomes through developing and strengthening community partnerships across the State.

For further information regarding the strategic plan contact the
Victoria Police Aboriginal Advisory Unit
Victoria Police Centre
P.O. Box 415 Melbourne 3005
Telephone: (61 3) 9247 5245 Facsimile: (61 3) 9247 5237



GOALS OF THE VICTORIA POLICE ABORIGINAL STRATEGIC PLAN

1. A commitment to the ongoing application of the Principles contained within the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement.
2. Acknowledgment that improving justice outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians is core business for Victoria Police.
3. To create and promote positive partnerships between members of Victoria Police and the Aboriginal community to reduce Aboriginal over-representation in the justice system.
4. A commitment by Victoria Police to offer a service free of individual and institutional discriminatory practices.
5. In the process of Victoria Police striving for a diverse workforce, the promotion and provision of Aboriginal employment opportunities is maximised.
6. Assist Aboriginal communities in identifying the ways in which police can work together with them in attaining recognition of the rights of Aboriginal people.
7. To increase levels and perceptions of safety and security within Aboriginal communities.
8. The provision of equal quality service to Aboriginal Victorians as for all Victorians.
9. To reduce the level of offenders and victim rates experienced by Aboriginal Victorians through the development and implementation of initiatives between Victoria Police and Aboriginal communities.
10. To ensure that the Victoria Police Aboriginal Advisory Unit maintains a role in establishing and setting the agenda for Victoria Police Aboriginal affairs issues.

This strategy is focused on achieving practical results through the following key objectives:

**SAFETY IN CUSTODY
COMMUNICATION AND LIAISON
TRAINING AND EDUCATION
RECRUITMENT
CRIME PREVENTION
FAMILY VIOLENCE AND CHILD PROTECTION
SUBSTANCE MISUSE**





VICTORIA POLICE MISSION STATEMENT

Victoria Police is a public organisation providing police services to the community throughout the State, on a 24 hour basis.

The objective of Victoria Police is:

"to deliver a safer Victoria in conjunction with our partners".

In delivering these outcomes we will demonstrate our organisational values of:

- Integrity
- Leadership
- Flexibility
- Respect
- Support
- Professionalism

These functions are integral in the maintenance of the professional standards of Victoria Police. Such standards ensure that the Victorian community receives policing services of the highest quality and that Victoria Police is a responsible and accountable organisation.

Policing services for Aboriginal communities will be provided in accordance with professional standards and will demonstrate the Victoria Police commitment to the building of partnerships with the Aboriginal communities.

THE ABORIGINAL ADVISORY UNIT

The AAU, which has primary responsibility for all Aboriginal policy related and advisory matters associated with Victoria Police, has prepared this strategy in partnership with the VPAPRG.

The function of the Unit is to provide a full-time facility to further improve existing relationships and develop new partnerships between Victoria Police and Victorian Aboriginal communities.

Key functions of the Unit are to:

- Advise police on operational issues affecting Aboriginal peoples;
 - Coordinate management and statewide delivery of the Aboriginal Community Justice Panel Program;
 - Be responsible for liaison between police and organisations associated with and representative of Aboriginal peoples;
 - Drive the implementation of the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers (ACLOs) program;
 - Provide liaison between investigating police and Aboriginal peoples;
 - Advise Aboriginal peoples on police practice and procedures;
 - Co-ordinate the roles and functions of the Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers;
 - Co-ordinate and conduct lectures at Recruit Police training on topics which include:
 - the role and function of the Aboriginal Advisory Unit
 - historical and cultural Aboriginal issues
 - traditional, transitional and contemporary Aboriginal lifestyles
 - Aboriginal/Police relationships, and topical issues of concern to police
 - Represent Victoria Police on the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement Working Group;
 - Represent Victoria Police at seminars, conferences and interdepartmental meetings on Aboriginal issues;
 - Maintain a resource centre on Aboriginal issues for use by police;
 - Provide an advisory service to Victoria Police on Aboriginal matters; and
 - Keep abreast of current Aboriginal issues, research, and where possible address future problem area.
- 



INTRODUCTION

This Strategic Plan aims to provide a structure in which Victoria Police focuses its efforts on developing closer relationships and partnerships with the Aboriginal communities of Victoria with the aim of improved justice outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians. Of paramount importance is the promotion of positive police/Aboriginal relations at the local, regional and state level to ensure that mutually accepted services are implemented.

Victoria Police recognises that the Victoria Police Aboriginal Policy Reference Group (VPAPRG), the Aboriginal Advisory Unit (AAU), Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers (ACLO's) and Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers (PALO) are fundamental to meeting its commitment to the provision of effective service to the Aboriginal community. These are key groups which will allow Victoria Police to meet its obligations under the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement.

VICTORIA POLICE

Victoria Police strive to learn and build on experiences of other police services who have undertaken similar strategies in order to develop better relations with Aboriginal peoples and their communities. This strategy has been specifically designed for Victoria Police, taking into account its role and structure.

Victoria Police further recognises the leadership role of the VPAPRG supported by the AAU in the implementation of this Strategic Plan. Victoria Police is committed to the process of consultation to identify and address the future demands and expectations of the Aboriginal community. In accordance with the Principles and Objectives of the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement objective 6.7 (4.5) and in addition to strategies outlined in this plan, Victoria Police will

- Continue the development and promotion of the Aboriginal Community Justice Panel program;
- Increase Aboriginal recruitment and career paths for Indigenous Victorians across Victoria Police;
- Develop appropriate selection and continued training of Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers;
- Develop local protocols in communities where significant numbers of Aboriginal peoples reside.

This strategy has been produced in accordance with the key value areas of the Victoria Police Five Year Plan:- "The Way Ahead".

- Intelligent policing — building a strategic capability to identify emerging problems, issues and opportunities; and introducing integrated systems to acquire, store, use and secure information;
- Confident policing — developing a working culture that encourages integrity, innovation and creative problem-solving; transitioning to a people centred and enabling management style; and creating police as community leaders;
- Community policing — providing flexible resource deployment to achieve maximum impact on local priorities and safety outcomes;
- Partnership policing — establishing relationships with partner organisations designed to identify opportunities and solve problems.

• All references to 'Aboriginal' in this document are intended to include Torres Strait Islanders





Key Result Area **IMPROVING SAFETY IN CUSTODY**

OBJECTIVE FOR IMPROVING SAFETY IN CUSTODY

In accordance with the recommendation of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC), police strive to minimise the risk of Aboriginal peoples in custody.

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING SAFETY IN CUSTODY

1. Alternatives to Custody

Implement the preferred practice of not incarcerating Aboriginal peoples in the police cells by use of cautions, summonses and penalty notices to a rate comparable to the wider community.

2. Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS)

Whenever a person, who is taken into custody, identifies as Aboriginal, the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service is to be notified with minimum delay in accordance with Victoria Police Operating Procedures (113-1, 4.3.5)

3. Aboriginal Community Justice Panels (ACJP)

Whenever Aboriginal persons come into custody the Aboriginal Community Justice Panels are to be utilised in assisting people at risk, and where appropriate, release the person into the care of the ACJP member.

4. Sobering-Up Centres

Ensure Sobering-up Centres; where operating, are notified of all Aboriginal persons apprehended for intoxication and where there is no security risk, release into their care.

5. Education with "Care and Welfare" of Prisoners

Train Victoria Police employees to ensure an acceptable standard of appreciation of their responsibilities in methods of risk awareness, recognition of risk and the concept of police custody as defined in the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

Train Victoria Police employees in the appropriate use of Victoria Police Manual Chapter 113 and 115 and all other associated policies and procedures which relate to Aboriginals in custody.


6. Arrest monitoring system

Establish an effective and efficient data collection and analysis plan to enable implementation of an arrest and alternatives to arrest monitoring system.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Per capita rate of juvenile cautions, summons and penalty notices involving Aboriginal peoples.

100% compliance with

- notification, referral and release of Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service
 - notification of ACJP where available
 - notification, referral and release to Sobering-up Centres where available
(Police Operating Procedures. 113-1, 4.3.5)
 - Number of Police employees trained in "Care and Welfare of Prisoners".
 - Regular monitoring and reporting to VPAPRG of police complaints and commendations by Aboriginal peoples
 - Quarterly reporting on ACJP Call Out Register information.
- 



Key Result Area IMPROVING COMMUNICATION AND LIAISON

OBJECTIVE - IMPROVING COMMUNICATION AND PARTNERSHIP

To improve the level of communication and liaison through pro-active consultation and dialogue, and work together to identify and develop a mutual understanding of critical issues .

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING COMMUNICATION AND LIAISON

1. Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers

Maintain appointment of Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers in all areas where there is a significant number of Aboriginal peoples residing. Training, support and monitoring of Liaison Officers to be provided by the Victoria Police AAU (Rec. VAJA 6.7, 4.8 p.43)

2. Police Aboriginal Local Priority Policing meetings

Where significant Aboriginal communities exist, formal links will be developed in furtherance to Recommendation 6.4 (1.6) of the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement.

3. Regional Liaison Meetings to Co-ordinate Ongoing Issue Resolution

Police/Aboriginal Liaison Officers to attend Regional Headquarters on a regular basis to provide feedback to the Regional Local Priority Policing Inspector on local initiatives, problems and issues identified at the local level. Status reports to be forwarded quarterly to the Aboriginal Advisory Unit.

4. Quarterly meeting of the Victoria Police Aboriginal Policy Reference Group

The Victoria Police Aboriginal Policy Reference Group will meet quarterly or as requested to review the status of the Strategic Plan.

5. Annual Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer's Workshop

An annual Police/Aboriginal Liaison Officer's workshop to be conducted at a state level to evaluate effectiveness of communication and identified issues of concern.

6. Interaction with Youth Programs and Activities

Aboriginal youth to be invited and encouraged to become involved in clearly defined and positive partnerships with local police. Such activities to include excursions to

policing areas and sporting and cultural activities which involve local police.

7. Complaints monitoring system

Analyse the number of complaints made to police or the Ombudsman's Office (Police Complaints) by or on behalf of Aboriginal peoples concerning police behaviour. Such analysis to be made available each 6 months to the Ethical Standards Reference Group.

8. Support of the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement Regional Committees

Maintain active participation of Victoria Police representatives at Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees and all tiers of the Justice Agreement consultation.

9. Proposed ACLO Program

Aims to:

- Help build a solid foundation of trust and respect between police and Indigenous peoples
 - Improve understanding between police and Aboriginal peoples through better communication and working towards common goals
 - Increase the number of Aboriginal peoples working within Victoria Police
 - Support and enhance the existing structures and programs such as the Aboriginal Community Justice Panels (volunteer-based), RAJACs and Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers (PALOs)
 - Support the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement (VAJA).
- 



PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- % of Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers who have completed training
- Number of formal partnerships from Aboriginal committees within 12 months of promulgation of this plan
- Number of Regional Liaison Meetings conducted annually (benchmark)
- Number of VPAPRG meetings held annually
- Number of Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer workshops held annually
- Number of young Aboriginal peoples engaged in youth programs conducted through Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer initiatives
- % of formal Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement meetings attended by Police representatives.
- Measure crime rates in areas where Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers are situated (LEAP) when implemented
- Measure positive partnerships formed as a result of the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers program once introduced
- ACJP quarterly reports re activities/initiatives in their areas





Key Result Area IMPROVING TRAINING AND EDUCATION
OBJECTIVE FOR IMPROVING TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Through improved training and education, enhance positive relationships between members of Victoria Police and Aboriginal peoples.

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING TRAINING AND EDUCATION

1. Training Courses

Aboriginal Cultural Awareness components to be maintained to appropriate police training programs provided or facilitated by Victoria Police.

2. Local Cultural Awareness Courses

All police attached to Districts with a significant population of Aboriginal peoples required to attend the Victoria Police Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Course. Members on transfer to these Districts are required to attend this course within 6 months.

3. Research on Police and Indigenous Issues

Facilitate the research of Aboriginal and policing issues through staff of the AAU and other associated areas. Disseminate the research outcomes to VPAPRG and police working with Aboriginal Communities.

4. Marketing of Victoria Police Strategic Plan

Develop a marketing strategy for the Victoria Police Aboriginal Plan throughout Victoria Police and Aboriginal communities.

Utilise the Victoria Police Corporate Communications Unit to develop a network of media personnel to promote positive interaction between police and Aboriginal communities to promote the Victoria Police Aboriginal Policy and Strategic Plan.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Number of sessions on Aboriginal Cultural awareness delivered in formal courses.
- Victoria Police Aboriginal Cultural Awareness training meeting National Competency standards.
- % of newly transferred police trained within 6 months
- Number of Police who have undertaken training concerning police/Aboriginal relations.
- Number and nature of research findings disseminated
- Marketing strategy implemented



Key Result Area **IMPROVING RECRUITMENT**

OBJECTIVE FOR IMPROVING RECRUITMENT

To provide Aboriginal peoples with the opportunity to work with Victoria Police in a work environment that respects cultural diversity and supports the Victorian Aboriginal Justice agreement and the Wur-cum Barra strategy.

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING RECRUITMENT

1. Marketing for Recruitment to Victoria Police

Specific marketing strategies that encourage Aboriginal people desiring to become members of Victoria Police.

2. Preparatory Courses

Aboriginal applicants seeking to join Victoria Police will be encouraged to participate in appropriate preparatory courses.

3. Identification and Targeting of Racist tendencies in Recruits

Develop a research proposal in conjunction with Human Resource Department and Equity and Diversity Unit to determine the effectiveness of Victoria Police screening process to remove any systemic practices that discriminate against Aboriginal employees.

4. Mentor program

Develop a proposal to support Aboriginal applicants to Victoria Police through encouraging participation in a recruit mentor program.

5. Develop and implement retention and recruitment strategies in line with Wur-cum Barra Strategy

Explore and research options as to how to further improve understanding of Aboriginal Culture by Victoria Police employees.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Number of Aboriginal peoples who apply to join Victoria Police.
 - Percentage of Aboriginal peoples who are successful in their application to join Victoria Police.
 - Marketing strategy for recruitment of Aboriginal peoples.
 - Number of Aboriginal peoples attending preparatory courses.
 - Number of Aboriginal peoples completing preparatory course that apply to join Victoria Police.
 - The inclusion of screening for racist attitudes in recruitment selection techniques.
 - Number of Aboriginals who participate in Recruit Mentor Program.
 - Increase representation of Aboriginal employees in line with targets in accordance with the Wur-cum Barra Strategy.
- 



Key Result Area **IMPROVING CRIME PREVENTION**

OBJECTIVE FOR IMPROVING CRIME PREVENTION

To reduce the level of crime committed by and against Aboriginal peoples.

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING CRIME PREVENTION

1. Assessment and Resolution of Local Crime Trends

Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers will use police data on Aboriginal Offenders and Victims of crime to identify local crime trends and implement appropriate local initiatives to reduce crime.

- Police Community Consultative Committees;
- Local Safety Committees; and
- Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees.

2. Support Aboriginal Victims of Crime

Identify Aboriginal victims of crime and their needs and (where appropriate) provide advice on network of services available to assist them.

with a view to developing local solutions to problems associated with Aboriginal communities.


3. Use a Multi-Agency approach to develop strategies for crime reduction

Maintain partnerships with support agencies including, but not limited to:

- Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service
- Victoria Police Aboriginal Policy Reference Group;
- Aboriginal Affairs Victoria;
- Victoria Aboriginal Community Services Association Incorporated;
- Aboriginal Community Justice Panels Program;
- Local Government;
- Department of Human Services, Department of Justice Aboriginal and Diversity Unit, Department of Education, Department of Victorian Communities.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Increase in reporting of incidents due to increased confidence and perception of police.
- Number and type of specific initiatives introduced as a result of trends analysis.
- Report annually on the incident of Aboriginals as reported victims of crime.
- Trends as in number of Aboriginals within the criminal justice system.



Key Result Area

IMPROVING THE RESPONSE TO FAMILY VIOLENCE AND CHILD PROTECTION

OBJECTIVE FOR IMPROVING THE RESPONSE TO FAMILY VIOLENCE AND CHILD PROTECTION

Support the aims of the Victorian Aboriginal Family Violence Task Force and work in consultation with the Victoria Police Family Violence Unit and SOCA Unit.

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING THE RESPONSE TO FAMILY VIOLENCE AND CHILD PROTECTION

1. Improve the police response to reports of Family Violence

Implement a greater cultural awareness program for police officers dealing with Family Violence issues in significant Aboriginal communities, through The Victoria Police Family Violence Code of Practice.

2. Develop local solutions to Family Violence and child abuse.

Victoria Police will support the development of local Aboriginal community solutions to issues of Family Violence.

3. Continue the involvement of Aboriginal representation on the Violence Against Women Project.

The Victoria Police Violence Against Women Project will maintain a focus on the issue of violence within Aboriginal communities.

4. Use a Multi-Agency approach to develop strategies for crime reduction

Maintain partnerships with related support agencies.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Number of Police Family Violence Liaisons Officer completing Cultural Awareness training in areas of significant Aboriginal population
 - Number of local community committees dealing with family violence and child protection involving police
 - Monitor trends in the reporting of family violence to police by Aboriginal peoples
 - Variation in rate of intervention orders resulting in police reports of violence per annum
 - Monitor trends in the reporting of child abuse matters to police
 - Implementation of The Victoria Police Family Violence Code of Practice and associated training.
- 



Key Result Area

IMPROVING THE RESPONSE TO SUBSTANCE MISUSE WITH ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

OBJECTIVE FOR IMPROVING THE RESPONSE TO SUBSTANCE MISUSE WITH INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

To improve the whole of community response to Aboriginal peoples adversely affected by the misuse of substances.

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING THE RESPONSE TO SUBSTANCE MISUSE

1. Use of volatile substances

Victoria Police will continue to support Aboriginal communities in dealing with the effects of volatile substance use, particularly by young peoples.

2. Supporting formal Government strategies

Victoria Police will support appropriate equitable legislation to assist in the resolution of harmful substance use, whilst supporting a primary focus on the welfare of substance users.

Victoria Police will establish partnerships with communities and organisations to identify and resolve local problems with local solutions.

3. Represent Victoria Police on relevant committees addressing substance misuse

Maintain membership on the working group regarding protocols for introduction of new legislation.

(Volatile substance Act 2003 commenced July 1, 2004)

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Reduction in the incidence of drug related offences
- Increase in the number of referrals to appropriate services.



Appendix Two: Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer Survey Results

The survey comprised closed and open ended questions and was based on questions used throughout this project in semi-structured interviews with other stakeholders.

Of the 102 surveys sent, 36 were returned. This was a response rate of 35.3 percent. Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers from each former Victoria Police Region responded. Three responses were received from Region 1, seven each from Regions 3, 4 and 5 and 12 responses from Region 2. Region 4 had the highest response rate with 58.33 percent of Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers or Assistant Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers responding.

Focus of activities

A number of respondents indicated the initiatives they have undertaken included engaging with young Koori people through recreational activities. These activities were varied, ranging from youth camps to sporting programs including football tournaments, golf days and surfing competitions.

Other respondents indicated they had been involved in other types of community activities including arranging events as part of NAIDOC week. A number of respondents indicated they had arranged for the Aboriginal flag to be flown outside their police stations. Some initiatives were intended to promote a greater awareness of the role of police. These included work-experience placement programs for young Koori people in police stations.

Other respondents appeared to focus more on crime prevention. This included the development of programs to address family violence and conflict resolution programs aimed at resolving neighbour disputes. One respondent described the implementation of programs aimed at addressing racist graffiti and theft from local Aboriginal gathering places. This included broader community liaison aimed at educating local non-Koori residents about Koori issues.

Some respondents indicated that they undertake a more hands on approach to assist other police in their interactions with Koori people, for example, providing general advice to other police and assisting with interviews.

Training

One of the performance indicators in this area identified by Victoria Police in the 2003 Strategic Plan was the percentage of Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers who have completed training.¹ Over 85 percent of Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers who responded to the OPI survey indicated that they had not received any formal training.

¹ See Appendix One

Some noted they had not even been given any details of the role and its responsibilities, let alone an induction package.

The six respondents who indicated they had received formal training had received it in different ways. Three respondents indicated they had undertaken a Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers' training course at the Airlie Leadership Development Centre, one respondent had received training from the Aboriginal Advisory Unit, another had received Koori cultural awareness training from local Elders, the sixth respondent did not specify who had provided the training.

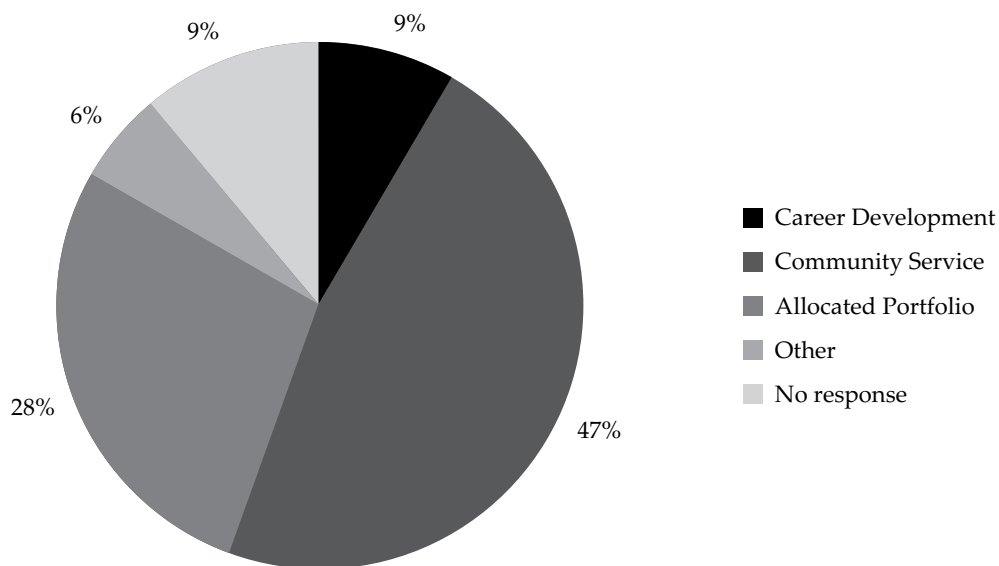
It appears the Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers who had been in the role the longest were most likely to have received formal training. The average length of tenure for the six respondents who had received training was almost seven years. The majority who had not received training had, on average, only been in the position for just over two years.

Respondents who did not receive any formal training were asked to comment on what type of training they would have liked to receive. A number of respondents suggested that some type of cultural awareness training would be appropriate.

Reasons for taking up the role

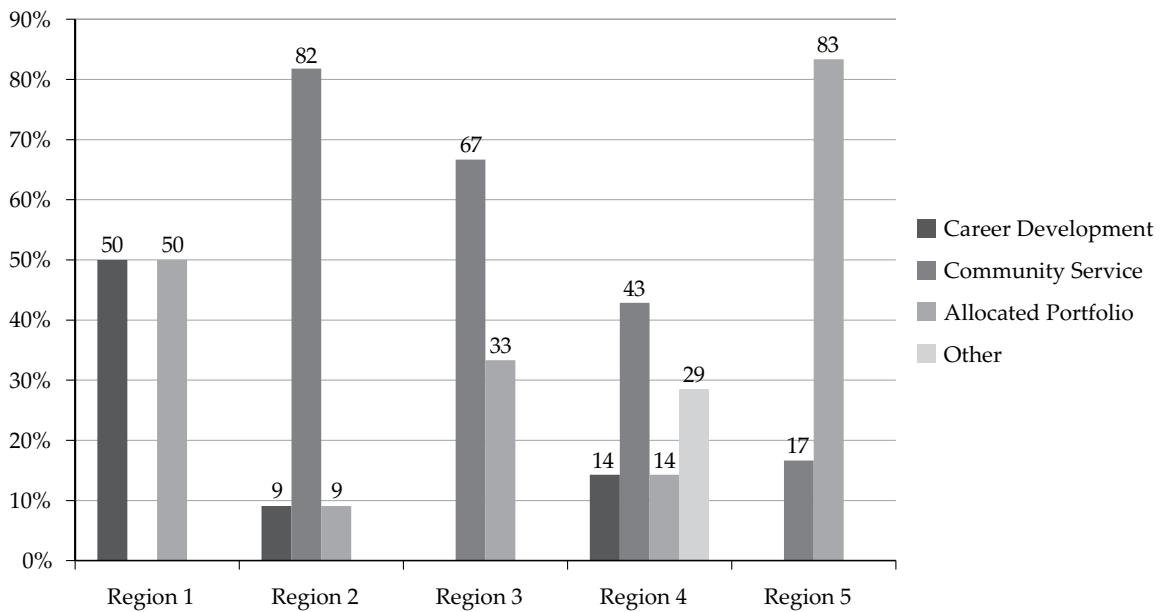
Respondents were asked what attracted them to apply for the role. A few respondents (9%) indicated they had taken up the role as a career development opportunity. Just over a quarter of respondents (28%) indicated they were allocated the portfolio, but a larger proportion (47%) noted they had applied for the role to serve their community (Figure 2).

Figure 2 – What most attracted you to apply for the position of Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer?



The reasons for taking on the role also varied from region to region. In Regions 2, 3 and 4 a higher proportion of respondents indicated they were undertaking this role as a 'community service.' In Region 5, by comparison, the vast majority of respondents indicated they were 'allocated [the] portfolio' as demonstrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3 – Reason for taking on Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer role by region (total percentage of respondents from each region)



The 'allocated portfolio' response may imply that some respondents did not necessarily take on the role willingly. This is something that was reflected in responses about how other police and the community perceived the Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer when he or she commenced the role.

Responses of others

One respondent wrote that after being allocated the liaison officer responsibilities, other police:

... laughed that I was lobbed with the job.

Another respondent wrote that other police indicated they were:

Glad it wasn't them.

One respondent wrote:

Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer portfolios are constantly 'frowned upon', a 'stigma' is attached to the position.

One respondent suggested this attitude was not solely directed to the Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer role and could be applied to other liaison roles more broadly:

It doesn't matter what role it be in liaison with, members will always have a bit of a laugh at your expense... Had I taken on this role 20 years ago with the same commitment, I would not have survived the banter.

Another respondent suggested that the basis for negative attitudes did not relate to the role per se, rather that the:

Small amount of negativity [was] due to endemic racism and prejudices.

When asked what some of the major issues they faced, one Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer stated:

Ignorance & negativity from police members. Us versus them syndrome.

This analogy of Koori communities being the 'other' in relation to police was also evident from otherwise unrelated responses. One respondent wrote that some Koori:

... people were very negative & liked to be victims.

Although this was an isolated statement, some other responses supported negative attitudes from both police and Koori communities. One respondent said that a major problem is:

Racism – both ways, probably more put it down as misunderstanding.

Racist attitudes of some Victoria Police members were also noted by other respondents. One Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer commented that there was a larger problem with:

Racism by police! This is common in the [location removed] area. Management talk the talk but don't walk the walk.

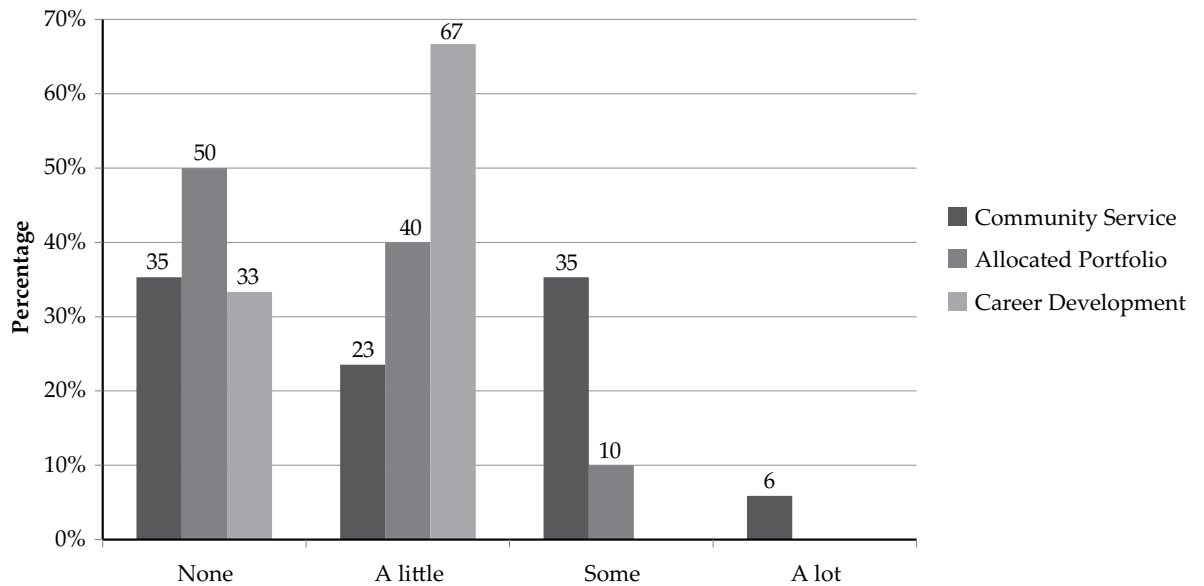
Some respondents indicated they are trying to transform negative attitudes through their Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer work. One respondent noted that while other police initially perceived the role as a "waste of time," they:

... now appreciate the value of interaction which makes our [the Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers'] role easier. Attitudes are now more positive.

Prior knowledge of the role

Respondents indicated they had differing levels of knowledge about the requirements of the role prior to taking it up. Those who took up the role as a 'community service' and 'career development' indicated they had higher level of prior knowledge when compared to those who were 'allocated portfolio' (Figure 4).

Figure 4 – Prior to taking on the role of Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer, how much knowledge did you have about the role?



Tenure

A number of respondents identified that building relationships between Koori communities and police had been problematic due to the inability of some communities to form personal ties with a particular Victoria Police member. One respondent noted that:

... my station had not had any stability in the role of PALO [Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer] for quite some time. They [Koori community members] did not think that I would be serious about the role and would relinquish it as soon as I could.

Such concerns were noted by a number of other respondents who reported that other police had come and gone quickly from the role in the past. One respondent noted this may be the result of the way the Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer program is structured:

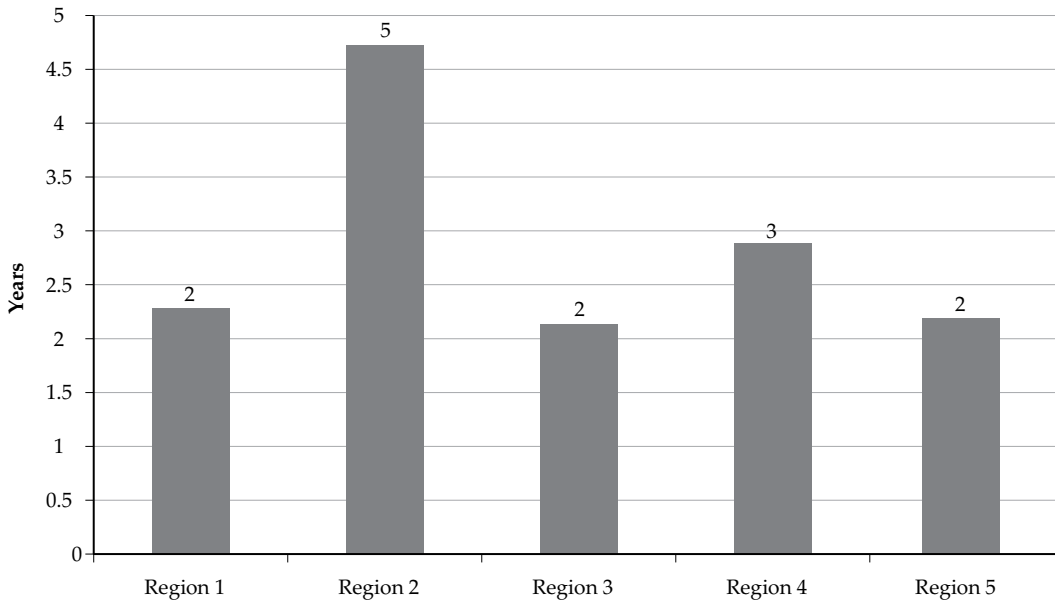
PALO [Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer] portfolios have been the subject of 12 month tenures. Community members have been disadvantaged because of short term positions.

Despite the comments in surveys reflecting that Koori communities perceive instability in the role, statewide this does not appear to be the case.

The duration of service of Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers in their role varies from region to region across the state. In Region 2, there appears to be relative stability in the roles. Region 1 has the lowest average length of service for the Police Aboriginal Liaison

Officer. This is not surprising as anecdotally police in Region 1 (central Melbourne and inner Bayside suburbs) generally do not remain in the same position for as long as their regional counterparts.

Figure 5 – Average length of years in Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer role by region



Developing working relationships

For Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers to be effective they need to establish working relationships with appropriate stakeholders. The vast majority of respondents indicated that they attend inter-agency meetings in their Koori liaison capacity.

In addition to being able to effectively liaise with other agencies, Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers need to be able to effectively communicate with their local Koori community. The majority of respondents reported attending Koori community meetings.

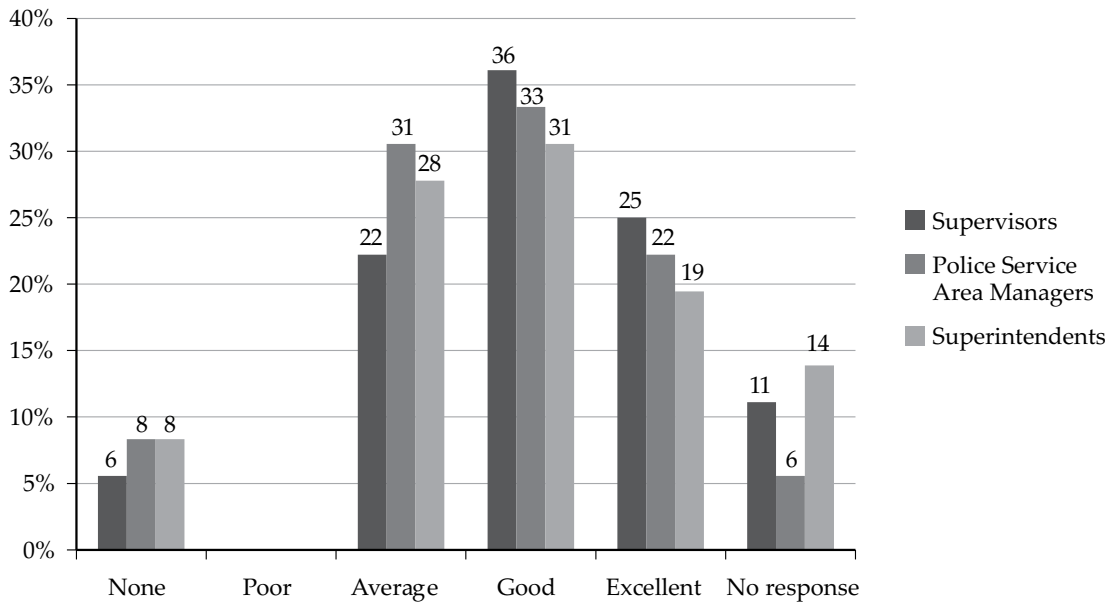
One respondent who had implemented a number of innovative initiatives said that the key to improving the relationship between Koori peoples and the police was for police to:

*Find out what **they** want – and how we can help **them** [emphasis added].*

Management Support

To indicate the overall commitment of Victoria Police to improving communication and liaison with Koori communities, respondents were asked to nominate the level of support given to them by their supervisors and managers. Most respondents indicated that they were getting good or excellent levels of support from their supervisors (Sergeants and Senior Sergeants), but only average or good support from Police Service Areas Managers (Inspectors) and Superintendents (Figure 6).

Figure 6 – Levels of management support



Despite indicating they were receiving a high level of supervisory support, a number of respondents raised concerns that the program was not adequately resourced. Generally speaking, Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers undertake their liaison role in addition to their existing duties. Many respondents said they thought it was impractical to expect them to undertake the liaison role in less than a full-time capacity. One said that the ability to undertake the role is:

Purely limited by time. As this is not a dedicated position it is a matter of finding time between other duties.

This sentiment was echoed in a number of other responses. A number of respondents said they had to do a significant amount of work in their own time just to meet the requirements of the role.

Appendix Three: Police Service Area Managers Survey Results

A total of 23 completed surveys were received out of 56 that were sent, comprising a 41 percent response rate.

Completed surveys were analysed in two parts – those who responded ‘yes’ and those who responded ‘no’ to Q4 – *Is there a significant number of Aboriginal people residing in your Police Service Area?*

Q4 Yes respondents

A total of eight Managers reported a significant number of Aboriginal people residing in the Police Service Area.

Q1. For how long have you been a Police Service Area Manager?

The average length of time respondents have been a Manager is 6.7 years. This, however, is skewed by a range of between 12 months and 38 years. Four respondents have between two and four years experience, and two other respondents have approximately 18 months experience.

Q2. Is your Police Service Area in a metropolitan or regional area?

The Police Service Areas are evenly divided between metropolitan (4) and regional (4) areas.

Q3. Are you familiar with the Victoria Police Aboriginal Policy Statement 2003–2008?

All (7) but one Manager reported being familiar with the Victoria Police Aboriginal Policy Statement.

Q8. Do members in your area receive training in the care and welfare of prisoners?

All (7) but one Manager indicated that members receive training in the care and welfare of prisoners.

Respondents reported that the following type of training is offered (*Q9, if yes, what type and how often?*):

- *Cross-cultural training annually. Divisional training twice-yearly.*
- *Through the Sobering-Up Centre.*
- *Ongoing. If issues are raised they are addressed at the next training day.*

- *Not formal training per se, but part of the station induction process for all new members.*
- *Very little though.*
- *Ongoing.*
- *New arrivals are taught on the job by Sergeant with custody portfolio. RTO has delivered custody package.*

Of the seven Managers who indicated training is offered, five reported that the training has Koori-specific component (Q10). Some additional information provided by two Managers included:

- *Yes as it relates to role/function of Community Justice Panels.*
- *Yes, we have just developed through our Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer a very comprehensive Koori package to increase members' awareness of the issues. Very well received.*

Two Managers indicated that the training does not include a Koori specific component.

Q13. Are there any Sobering-Up Centres in your area?

Only two Managers reported that there are Sobering-Up Centres in their area.

Q18. Do you consider the number of Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers in your Police Service Area adequate?

All Managers (8) reported that the number of Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers was adequate. Reasons put forward for this include (Q19 *why/why not?*):

- *Train the trainer – one person can spread the word and educate others.*
- *I have sufficient Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers for each cluster. I have a very active Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer within my Police Service Area.*
- *Have a greater population of other ethnic communities, could utilise increase in Afghan or Islander multicultural liaison officers.*
- *If we did not have an Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer, I would demand more from them but I think the number is o.k.*
- *3 is sufficient, however the reality is that one of the three Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers should be a full-time position.*
- *Very few issues with local Koori community.*
- *One Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer at each of the major towns.*
- *The Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers can and do obtain assistance from other members when they need to.*

Q21. How many Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers are there in your Police Service Area?

Five Managers reported having no Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers in their Police Service Area, and three reported having one Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer. Of the three Police Service Areas that do have Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers, all reported they provide specific support to this person (Q22). This includes (Q23):

- *Regular meetings. Provide advice and guidance.*
- *Time, attention, focus, carve time out for member training in Koori issues. Absolute commitment to improvement.*
- *Unlimited access to all policing areas, internal familiarisation, time to provide support to Aboriginal community members.*

Q24. Do you consider the number of Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers in your Police Service Area adequate?

Only three Managers considered the number of Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers adequate. Two reasons put forward for this included (Q25):

- *Have a greater population of other ethnic communities, could utilise increase in Afghan or Islander multicultural liaison officers.*
- *Current workload indicates that there is enough work for one Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer, however, the position of a full-time Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer would be more practical than a second Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer.*

Conversely, four respondents reported the number was not adequate. This was because (Q25):

- *Not funded.*
- *We should have one for western suburbs.*
- *Having an Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer position would further strengthen the relationship between police and Koori community.*
- *Due to remoteness of Police Service Area and distance required to travel – two Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers would be needed to accommodate entire Police Service Area.*

Q26. In the last 12 months, how many meetings of the Local Aboriginal Justice Area Committee have you or your representatives attended?

In the last 12 months, six Police Service Area Managers (or their representatives) have attended meetings of the Regional Aboriginal Justice Area Committee. Of these, half (3) have attended two meetings, and half (3) have attended three meetings.

Q30. Are police in your Police Service Area involved in any activities with local Koori youth?

All (7) but one Police Service Area Manager reported that police in the Police Service Area are involved in activities with local Koori youth. These activities include (Q31):

- *At-risk offenders, truancy, sporting events and local community reconciliation events.*
- *Football, surfing, horse riding.*
- *Future employment program (DVD made), football match, NAIDOC.*
- *Horsham Police/Koori youth group. Meet weekly.*
- *Mentoring.*
- *Operation 'NewStart', 'Midnight Basketball', other school based programs. Koori cycling project.*
- *Smoking ceremonies, attend Aboriginal advancement league leave often for dinner, lunch etc, mentor program, development of case management model of diversion for youth, regular Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer relations.*

Q32. Have you attended Koori cultural awareness training (or similar)?

Five Managers indicated they have received training. The most recent session was reported by Managers to be (Q33):

- *4 years ago.*
- *Approximately four years ago. Full day.*
- *August 09 – half day.*
- *Part of an Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer session late last year.*
- *1/11/2009.*

Q34. Has your Police Service Area been involved in activities or initiative to encourage Aboriginal people to join Victoria Police?

Five Managers indicated that their Police Service Area had been involved in these activities. In particular, activities and initiatives to encourage Aboriginal people to join Victoria Police have included (Q35):

- *Darebin community info session (22/4/10). Active recruitment and four to five referrals to recruitment (Koori attraction and retention officer). I questioned Darebin Council as to why no Koori staff resulting in appointment.*
- *Discussed at Local Aboriginal Justice Area Committee. Police recruiting and HRD, Koori reps have held community forums.*
- *Future employment program (DVD made), copy available.*
- *Ongoing project led by member. Previously organised a police career day at Rumbalara co-op many years ago.*
- *Through police/Koori youth group.*

Q36. Are there or have there been any initiatives in place in your Police Service Area to address crime committed by Aboriginal young people?

All (7) but one Manager reported there are or have been initiatives in place to address crime committed by Aboriginal young people. Examples of these activities include (Q37):

- *Aboriginal family violence project pilot. See Q31 (smoking ceremonies, attend Aboriginal advancement league often for dinner, lunch etc, mentor program, development of case management model of diversion for youth, regular Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer relations).*
- *Activities with youth through Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer.*
- *Arranged and attended numerous community meetings. Koori court program supported youth initiatives as per Q31 (Operation 'NewStart', 'Midnight Basketball', other school based programs. Koori cycling project).*
- *Future employment program (DVD made), football match, NAIDOC.*
- *Engage local Elders to assist with education and employment.*
- *Proactive work with Elders and Koori court.*
- *Through Local Aboriginal Justice Area Committee – bicycle program to provide bicycles and maintenance training to young Koori offenders for theft of bicycles.*

Q38. Are there any initiatives in place in your Police Service Area to address crime committed against Aboriginal people?

Only half (4) of the Police Service Area Managers reported that there are initiatives in place to address crime committed against Aboriginal people. These initiatives include (Q39):

- *Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer contacts victims of crime and referrals to Koori victim of crime group.*
- *Koori Cautioning Program – youth activities.*
- *Raised at Local Aboriginal Justice Area Committee and addressed on needs basis. Regular BBQ between police and community.*
- *Scheduled meetings between police and Goolum Goolum Coop to address Koori persons to increase reporting of crime.*

Q43. Are there any initiatives in place in your Police Service Area to address family violence specifically in Aboriginal families?

All (7) but Manager reported there are initiatives in place to address family violence. These initiatives include (Q44):

- *Family violence unit. Sgt in Charge also Police Service Area Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer.*
- *Koori Family Violence Protocols Project.*

- *Local Aboriginal Justice Area Committee. Regular meetings between Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, AJJPC and subsequent referrals.*
- *Meetings with Koori workers at Goolum Goolum to assist in addressing repeat offenders.*
- *Mentoring pilot with Anglicare and Salvation Army to local young families.*
- *Recent funding and subsequent appointment of family violence personnel at Rumbalara co-op. Will do wonders to alleviate Aboriginal family violence issues.*
- *Specific Darebin Family Violence Unit, Darebin domestic violence network with Koori representatives and focus, Aboriginal family violence pilot with crime Department.*

Q45. Does your Police Service Area have any partnerships with support agencies to develop solutions to Aboriginal family violence?

Of the seven Managers who reported having initiatives in place to address family violence, all reported having partnerships with support agencies to do so.

Six respondents provided details of these partnerships, which included (Q46):

- *Full time family violence liaison officer appointed several years ago. Specific partnership will now be created following appointment of Aboriginal family violence practitioners at Rumbalara.*
- *Goolum Goolum, Wimmera Uniting Care.*
- *Koori Family Violence Protocols Project, Local Aboriginal Justice Area Committee.*
- *Local Government and Department of Human Services.*
- *VACS – Aboriginal victim of crime. Specific family violence unit to Darebin.*
- *Western health – family violence in general.*

Q47. Are there any initiatives in place in your Police Service Area to address the use of volatile substances by Aboriginal people?

None of the Police Service Area Managers reported any initiatives to address the use of volatile substances by Aboriginal people. Two Managers specifically reported that this is not a recognised or major issue in the area.

Q49. Are there any youth community initiatives in your Police Service Area specifically targeted at Aboriginal communities?

Five Managers reported the existence of youth community initiatives specifically targeting Aboriginal communities in their Police Service Area. Four Managers provided details of these initiatives, which included:

- *Future employment program.*
- *Koori Cautioning Program.*

- *Police/Koori youth group.*
- *Smoking ceremonies, attend Aboriginal advancement league often for dinner, lunch etc, mentor program, development of case management model of diversion for youth, regular Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer relations.*

Q51. What do you see as the major issues faced by Aboriginal communities in your area?

All (7) but one Police Service Area Manager identified issues faced by Aboriginal communities in their Police Service Area. These include:

- *Adequate access to employment, education and housing. Access to coaches who can guide their development, youth main issue.*
- *Family violence fuelled by drugs and alcohol.*
- *Finding their own identity.*
- *General community, cultural awareness and reconciliation.*
- *Lack of support by parents and accountability by them for their children. Substance abuse. Lack of Koori programs (youth-related).*
- *The need for more youth based activities.*
- *Unemployment, alcohol abuse.*

The Police Service Area Manager who didn't identify any issues wrote, *'have little to do with Aboriginal communities in this Police Service Area. Was surprised when advised of population of Aboriginal community as do not significantly come to police attention when compared with other communities (i.e. Islanders etc).'*

Q52. What difficulties, if any, does your Police Service Area face in addressing Aboriginal issues?

In terms of difficulties faced by Police Service Areas in addressing Aboriginal issues, six Police Service Area Managers reported the following:

- *Engagement by Elders and key community reps.*
- *It is ongoing.*
- *Lack of a full time Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer. More volunteer support required from Aboriginal community to assist with programs.*
- *Obtaining funding more for short term. The fact that the Koori community is very splintered and you have varying groups that do not work well together often work against each other.*
- *Remoteness.*
- *Usual barriers. History, understanding, role, over representation.*

Q53. What do you think could be done to improve the relationship between police and the local Aboriginal community?

Suggestions for improving the relationship between police and the local Aboriginal community were provided by seven Managers. These suggestions included:

- *Another Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer Position. Need outside agencies to get on board and take an active role specifically for Koori youth.*
- *Appointment of a full-time Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer.*
- *Come out and see the working relationship at Werribee or Footscray. It should be 'bottled' and used throughout State.*
- *Establishment of recreational facility managed by local community and supported by police.*
- *Filling an Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer position for Horsham Police Service Area.*
- *Focus and involvement. Perhaps more training committing time to each other.*
- *Must continue with cultural awareness of new members to station.*

Q54. Comments?

Three Managers made additional comments about working with Koori communities. These included:

- *I could not speak more highly of the work of the Darebin Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer. His role supports the Police Service Area manager in so many ways and he really is making an incredible difference both at strategic and grass roots levels.*
- *There is scope for improvements but we need to address specific youth issues. Dedicated Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer positions that are not taken from our gazetted Police Service Area authorised strength.*
- *Things have certainly improved between Koori people and police over last few years. Very pleasing to see that Elders and community are very proactive, not just a police issue.*

Q4 No respondents

A total of **15 Police Service Area Managers** reported that there is not a significant number of Aboriginal people residing in the Police Service Area.

Q1. For how long have you been a Police Service Area Manager?

The average length of time respondents have been a Police Service Area Manager is 19 months – with a range of one month to four years experience. Approximately half of the Managers (7) have less than 12 months experience in the job.

Q2. Is your Police Service Area in a metropolitan or regional area?

The majority of Police Service Areas (11) are located in metropolitan areas with only three in regional areas. One Police Service Area Manager did not respond to this question.

Q3. Are you familiar with the Victoria Police Aboriginal Policy Statement 2003–2008?

Three-quarters (10) of Police Service Area Managers reported being familiar with the Victoria Police Aboriginal Policy Statement. Three Managers indicated they were not familiar with the document and two Managers did not respond to the question.

Q8. Do members in your area receive training in the care and welfare of prisoners?

The majority (12) of Police Service Area Managers indicated that members receive training in the care and welfare of prisoners. Specifically, Police Service Area Managers reported that the following training is provided (Q9):

- *Although we do not have cells we encourage new members to perform temporary duties at a cells station, however resource commitments restrict this option.*
- *Delivered via local training days and OSTT (Occupational Safety Tactics Training).*
- *In house training, SOPS (Standard Operating Procedures).*
- *Induction, regular mentoring by experienced Sergeants.*
- *Infrequently via Custodial Risk Management Unit.*
- *Nil cells at this Police Service Area but members are aware of responsibilities for persons in custody only.*
- *Normal watch house procedure induction package when members transfer to station.*
- *Routine or station level. In house packages or Ringwood Police Station made available to other work locations and which has been adopted by Police Academy for recruit training.*
- *Sergeant at 24 hour station – on the job and consistent.*
- *Station training day – twice a year.*
- *The members receive basic training in care and welfare of prisoners from the academy and at OSTT training.*

Of the 12 Police Service Area Managers who indicated training is offered, only three reported that the training has a Koori-specific component (Q10). One Police Service Area Manager noted, *all members of VicPol have an awareness of the special notifications required re: Koori persons in custody. Cultural awareness, given our very diverse community in Brimbank, is very limited.*

Q18. Do you consider the number of Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers in your Police Service Area adequate?

All Police Service Area Managers (15) reported that the number of Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers was adequate. This was mainly due to Managers believing that they do not have any issues with Koori people or there is only a small Koori population in their Police Service Area. Examples of these comments include (Q19 *why/why not?*):

- *Because we only have 13 people who identify as Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander.*
- *Currently share Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer from other Police Service Areas as minimal Aboriginal resident numbers in Police Service Area.*
- *Have not had any incidents or concerns re: Aboriginals. Nil residents or issues.*
- *Minimal number and no issues identified.*
- *Not an issue in this Police Service Area – cannot recall any issue with Koori persons over last 3 years.*
- *Sufficient to adequately deal with issues.*
- *Very few (if any) Kooris.*
- *Very low Koori population and very few issues between police and these community members.*
- *We don't have a significant Koori community.*

Q24. Do you consider the number of Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers in your Police Service Area adequate?

Only three Managers considered that the number of Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers was not adequate. One Manager reported they have submitted an application to get an Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer while another Manager reported, *I'm not aware of who the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer is. Our community is reasonably small compared to other Culturally and Linguistically Diverse groups* (Q25).

Ten Managers reported that the number of Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers was adequate. Again this was mainly because Managers reported they do not have any issues with Koori people or there is only a small Koori population in their Police Service Area. Examples of comments made by Police Service Area Managers include (Q25):

- *Aboriginal numbers in Police Service Area would not warrant creation of Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer position.*
- *Because we only have 13 people who identify as Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander.*
- *Not an issue for this Police Service Area.*
- *Our Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer has been a role model for Koori people for a long time. As an Koori police member she has pride and a genuine commitment to VicPol, young people and her community and culture.*
- *Population too small to justify one. Low Aboriginal offending.*

- *Have not had any incidents or concerns re: Aboriginals. Nil residents or issues.*
- *Shared Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer for region.*
- *We don't have a significant Koori community.*

Q26. In the last 12 months, how many meetings of the Local Aboriginal Justice Area Committee have you or your representatives attended?

In the last 12 months, four Police Service Area Managers (or their representatives) reported attended meetings of the Regional Aboriginal Justice Area Committee. Of these, one person attended four meetings, one person attended two meetings, and two people attended one meeting.

Q32. Have you attended Koori cultural awareness training (or similar)?

Over half of the Police Service Area Managers (9) indicated they received cultural awareness training. The most recent session reported by Police Service Area Managers was (Q33):

- *1996 for 2 hours.*
- *2007 for 3 hours.*
- *About 5 years ago for 2 hours.*
- *I was the first Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer at Geelong in the early 1990s and had many dealings with the Koori community when I was the manager of VicPol Youth Affairs and for 18 months was Acting Supt in charge of the Aboriginal Advisory Unit of VicPol.*
- *More than 10 years ago.*
- *Some time back whilst working at Shepparton.*
- *Within last 10 years – don't recall duration.*
- *Years ago at Bairnsdale – between 2002-2005.*

Q51. What do you see as the major issues faced by Aboriginal communities in your area?

Very few issues were reported by Police Service Area Managers – with most Police Service Area Managers reporting either 'nil' or 'not a problem/issue' in response to this question. Of those Police Service Area Managers who did identify issues, these include:

- *Custody issues as occurring given the larger Aboriginal community in Healesville and those persons coming to the attention of police who claim Koori heritage.*
- *Health is the major issue in my Police Service Area. Justice issues are very low with little Aboriginal offending.*

- *Interaction with police is a constant challenge for our Aboriginal community. We have very few custody contacts so building community confidence in police is our greatest challenge to foster further contact.*
- *Same as other vulnerable groups, of which there are many.*

Q52. What difficulties, if any, does your Police Service Area face in addressing Aboriginal issues?

Similarly, there were very few difficulties identified by Police Service Area Managers because of the small population of Koori people in these areas. Of those Managers who did identify difficulties, these include:

- *Aboriginal issues make up a very small part of our service delivery. The challenge is keeping this to the fore against other competing issues.*
- *Difficulty prioritising cultural awareness given the low number of custody contact and the diverse Culturally and Linguistically Diverse groups in this area along with a capacity issue given our calls for service and staffing levels.*
- *Literacy levels predominantly are low. A history of traffic and alcohol violations has previously seen the conduct of an Aboriginal Driver Training program sponsored by Shell or METEC within the Maroondah Police Service Area.*
- *Not knowing what portion of the local community is Aboriginal.*

Q53. What do you think could be done to improve the relationship between police and the local Aboriginal community?

While Police Service Area Managers report not having any issues/difficulties with the Koori population in their Police Service Area, half (7) of the Police Service Area Managers made suggestions for improving the relationship between police and the local Aboriginal community. These suggestions include:

- *Building strong relations with the few here.*
- *Greater exposure to positive Aboriginal experiences.*
- *I think the continued support of our Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer and if any issues do arrive, I believe we are in a strong position to work with the Koori community to address them.*
- *Training for members regarding Koori culture issues. However the Aboriginal population within my Police Service Area is not significant.*

Q54. Comments?

Three Managers made additional comments about working with Koori communities. These included:

- *I think that the low numbers of Koori people in our Police Service Area and the lack of issues is good. At this stage I believe we are well positioned should any issues arise. Our Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer has been involved and continues to be on VicPol and Koori groups and her enthusiasm and interest in this role is great.*
- *It is important that all police see Aboriginal Justice issues as important and not just something for the Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer. The Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer should also be used as the change agent amongst operational police to create an understanding of the issues facing Aboriginal communities.*
- *While not an issue for this Police Service Area, it has been pleasing to see significant inroads made in recent times to deliver a better understanding of the significant issues faced by Aboriginal communities in some areas and build partnerships with them. The appointment of liaison officers has been a positive step forward.*

Appendix Four: Statement of Cooperation for Greater Shepparton (2008)



Shepparton Community Justice Panel
"Working together for a better community"



VICTORIA POLICE



Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative



Greater Shepparton Statement of Co-operation

Between:

Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative Limited,

Aboriginal Community Justice Panel,

Hume Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee,

Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-Operative Limited.

and

Victoria Police.

Background:

The Statement of Co-operation has evolved and been created as a local agreement negotiated between the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative Limited [VALS], the Aboriginal Community Justice Panel [ACJP], the Department of Justice [DoJ], Hume Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee [RAJAC], Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative Ltd and Victoria Police of the Greater Shepparton Police Service Area [PSA].

This agreement has been created to specifically address issues involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in police custody and to provide clear guidelines in relation to the care and management of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in police custody.

The aim of the Statement of Co-operation is to reduce the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples being arrested by police and detained in police cells, and to improve communication, liaison and develop respect and understanding between police and members of the Shepparton Aboriginal Community and relevant Aboriginal organisations.

In addition, this agreement has been designed to ensure that appropriate support, advice and guidance is made available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in police custody. The following excerpts from the Recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, helps to clarify the importance of this document and the relevance to particular agreed protocols.

Recommendation No. 87 - 'Diversion from Police Custody'

"That all Police Services should adopt and apply the principle of arrest being the sanction of last resort in dealing with offenders"

Recommendation No. 88 - 'Preventative and Community Policing'

"That Police Services in their ongoing review of the allocation of resources, should closely examine, in collaboration with Aboriginal organisations, whether there is a sufficient emphasis on community policing". (They) should consider whether:

- (a) *There is over-policing or inappropriate policing of Aboriginal people in any city or regional centre or country town;*
- (b) *There is sufficient emphasis on crime prevention and liaison work and training directed to such work.*

Recommendation No. 215 - 'Improving the Criminal Justice System – Aboriginal People and Police'

"That Police Services introduce procedures, in consultation with appropriate Aboriginal organisations, whereby negotiation will take place at the local level between Aboriginal communities and police concerning police activities affecting such communities".

Parties to the Statement of Co-operation and District of Operation:

The parties to this Statement of Co-operation are:

1. Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative Limited;
2. Aboriginal Community Justice Panel;
3. Victoria Police;
4. Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee; and
5. Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative Limited

Agreement:

It is hereby agreed that the following 'Statement of Co-operation' will be effective from the 12th June 2008 and will be reviewed from the date of signing or after any change/amendments in state legislation, police/VALS policy that directly effects the 'Statement of Co-operation'.

1. **Police and Aboriginal Justice Agency Meetings.**

- The VALS' Client Services Officer [CSO] the Chairperson of the Aboriginal Community Justice Panels [ACJP] Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer [ACLO], Deputy Chief Executive Officer – Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative, Executive Officer – Hume RAJAC, Rumbalara Youth Justice Officer and the Police Aboriginal Liaison Officers [PALO's] will meet bi-monthly to discuss any problems, real or perceived by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples or Police. These meetings will be attended by appropriate representatives of the aforementioned organisations and police officers, who will form a committee as members of the **'District Aboriginal Liaison Team [DALT]**.
- All meetings will be co-chaired by representatives from each agency and rotated equitably between agencies. The responsibility for taking minutes will be also be rotated equitably between the above agencies. All minutes will be recorded and distributed within agreed time frames.
- The meetings will **NOT** be used as a forum to discuss individual complaints against police or be used as a forum to lodge complaints. The primary objective and focus of the meetings will be service delivery and developing positive initiatives, programs and strategies within the local area.
- In the event of a particular incident or situation arising requiring urgent attention, an extraordinary meeting may be convened to address the 'issue or issues of interest'. The initiating party will chair the meeting and minutes will be taken and circulated by a person mutually agreed upon by all interested parties.

2. **Co-operation and Communication between the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative Limited, Aboriginal Justice Panel and Police.**

- The PALO's of the PSA will, as soon as practicable, introduce newly appointed police personnel to the area to the ACLO and arrange for an introduction to CSO and the ACJP personnel.
- Aboriginal cross-cultural training will be undertaken for all new police personnel arriving in the PSA as soon as practicable after their arrival.
- Police will provide relevant information to the CSO and/or an ACJP representative with up-to-date information regarding the status of investigations, dealings and health of a person who identifies as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent while in police custody for any reason. Enquiries will be attended to promptly unless urgent or operational circumstances prohibit police from doing so.
- The CSO and ACJP representatives are to provide police members, if known and where possible, with information concerning any significant health risks or behavioural issues likely to affect an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person in custody.
- Police will provide Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander persons who are drunk, affected by alcohol, or causing a public nuisance [resulting in the disruption to community safety], with the opportunity to wait for the attendance of ACJP/Koori Night Patrol. The decision to wait for these Services rather than effecting an immediate arrest will be based on the availability of ACJP personnel/Koori Night Patrol, the behaviour of the person found so offending and any urgent operational police demands for services. If persons by their behaviour continue to cause undue detriment to community safety, or engage in behaviour which is threatening or

aggressive, they will be arrested and returned to the police station. In situations of public drunkenness involving an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person, Police are to consider the ACJP/Koori Night Patrol as an alternative to arrest for public drunkenness.

- ACJP representatives have the discretionary power to either receive into their care/custody or decline receiving/removing Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander persons from police custody when lodged for public drunkenness.
- Members of Victoria Police stationed in the Police Service Area will recognise that if the CSO is also a member of the ACJP, there is **no conflict** of interest between the respective roles when he/she attends at the police station.
- If the suspect/defendant and/or the CSO are unable to contact a solicitor within a reasonable time, then member/s of Victoria Police stationed within the PSA will recognise that the VALS CSO can advise the suspect of his/her rights prior to an interview.
- If the CSO or ACJP representative requests to be present during the interview or the suspect requests the presence of either of the above, the investigating member/s **shall** allow the representatives to be present.
- The investigating member/s will advise the CSO or the ACJP representative present during an interview that:-
 - (i) He/she may be present at the interview;
 - (ii) By reason of his/her presence the CSO or the ACJP representative may be called as a witness for the prosecution of the defence, if the matter proceeds to a prosecution at court.
 - (iii) The CSO or the ACJP representative must not take part in or interrupt the interview by any means unless such representative has sought permission of the investigating member/s to interrupt.
 - (iv) If the CSO or the ACJP representative continues to interrupt the interview after being warned not to do so by the investigating member/s conducting the interview, the investigating member/s may request the CSO and /or ACJP representative to leave. A CSO or ACJP representative requested to leave and refuses to do so may be removed and,
 - (v) If the CSO or ACJP representative is removed, the suspect/perpetrator/defendant should not be interviewed further until given the opportunity to communicate with or attempt with a friend or relative, the Chairperson of the ACJP or another ACJP representative or a legal practitioner.

- Investigating member/s are not obliged to defer the investigation or questioning for a reasonable time to allow a suspect to exercise his/her rights of communication, if the investigating member/s believes on reasonable grounds that communication with a legal practitioner, CSO or ACJP representative will:-
 - (i) result in the escape of an accomplice or fabrication or destruction of evidence; or
 - (ii) the questioning or investigation is so urgent, having regard to the safety of other people, that it should not be delayed.
 - (iii) In such circumstances the suspect should be advised that the investigation or questioning will not be deferred in the usual way.

3 Information Privacy Act 2000 Relative to ACJP Callout Register.

- Where person/s identify themselves as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and declines the attendance of an ACJP representative or refuses to allow police to give personal details to the ACJP representative, police will complete the ACJP Call Out Register to that effect. No further notification details are required.

4 Independent Third Persons Being Present at Interviews Of Intellectually Impaired Or Mentally Ill Persons.

- A relative or close friend (not associated with the inquiry), or a trained Independent Third Person [ITP] is to be used as the Independent Person. An ITP must be used where a relative or close friend;
 - [1] cannot be contacted,
 - [2] the presence of the relative or close friend may impede the interview process.

Members should not discourage parents or relatives wishing to be present or suggest that they are not suitable as ITPS' but merely indicate the ITP may remain more objective because of their independence.

5. Distribution

- [1] A copy of the Statement of Co-operation will be posted in a prominent place in each police station in the PSA;
- [2] A copy of the Statement of Co-operation will be provided to each new member of the ACJO as soon as possible after commencement of their tenure; and
- [3] A copy of the Statement of Co-operation will be provided to each newly arrived Police Member in the PSA as soon as possible after their commencement of duty in the PSA. The respective Officers-in-Charge of Police Stations and Units and the PALO will be responsible for ensuring that this occurs.

The respective Station and Standard Operating Procedures will be amended to reflect this Statement of Co-operation.

Review.

- The Statement of Co-operation will be reviewed every two [2] years from the date of signing, or after any change to State legislation, police/VALS policy that directly affects the Statement of Co-operation.

Signed by the parties, at Shepparton on this 12th day of June 2008:

Signed for and behalf of Victoria Police:

Ian BULL
Acting Inspector

Signed for and on behalf of the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative Limited:

Frank E GUIVARRA
Chief Executive Officer

Signed for and on behalf of the Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative Limited:

Felicia DEAN
Chief Executive Officer

Signed for and on behalf of the Aboriginal Community Justice Panel:

Wayne Muir
Statewide Chairperson

Signed for and on behalf of the Hume Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee:

Hume RAJAC

Other OPI Reports

- Managing conflict of interest in Victoria Police
(tabled October 2010)
- Complaint Investigation Report
(tabled August 2010)
- Update on conditions in Victoria Police cells
(tabled June 2010)
- Information Security and the Victoria Police State Surveillance Unit
(tabled February 2010)
- Review of the Use of Force by and against Victorian police
(tabled July 2009)
- Offers of gifts and benefits to Victoria Police employees
(tabled June 2009)
- The Victorian Armed Offenders Squad – a case study
(tabled October 2008)
- Associations that compromise Victoria Police - risks and remedies
(tabled September 2008)
- Improving Victorian policing services through effective complaint handling
(tabled July 2008)
- Report on investigation into Operation Clarendon
(tabled June 2008)
- Exposing corruption within senior levels of Victoria Police
(tabled February 2008)
- Report on the 'Kit Walker' investigations
(tabled December 2007)
- A Fair and Effective Victoria Police Discipline System
(tabled October 2007)
- Ceja Task Force – Drug Related Corruption: Third and Final Report
(tabled July 2007)
- Past Patterns - Future Directions: Victoria Police and the problem of corruption and serious misconduct
(tabled February 2007)
- Report on Victoria Police Missing Persons Investigations
(released October 2006)
- Conditions for persons in custody
(tabled July 2006)
- Review of fatal shootings by Victoria Police
(tabled November 2005)
- Investigation into the publication of One Down, One Missing
(tabled September 2005)
- Review of the Victoria Police Witness Protection Program
(tabled July 2005)
- Investigation into the Victoria Police's Management of the Law Enforcement Assistance Program (LEAP)
(tabled March 2005)
- Report on the Leak of a Sensitive Victoria Police Information Report
(tabled February 2005)

OPI Reports are available for download from the OPI website
www.opi.vic.gov.au

Hard copies of the reports are available by request to
opi@opi.vic.gov.au or 03 8635 6188