



**ACT**  
Government

*safe, strong  
& connected  
young people*



# BLUEPRINT FOR YOUTH JUSTICE

IN THE  
**ACT**  
2012-22

IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE OVER THE NEXT 10 YEARS

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### Acknowledgement of Country

The ACT Government acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as the traditional custodians of the Canberra region. The region was also an important meeting place and is significant to other Aboriginal groups.


The ACT Government respects their continuing culture and the unique contribution they make to the life of this area.

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The artwork incorporated in the design of the *Blueprint for Youth Justice in the ACT* created by young people as part of their involvement in programs at the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre. See also pages 54 and 55.





## Members of the Youth Justice Implementation Taskforce

The Taskforce comprises representatives from the ACT Government and community sector

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<b>Adrian Makeham-Kirchner</b>	Director	Social Policy and Implementation, Chief Minister and Cabinet Directorate (until April 2012)
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# Minister's foreword



**Joy Burch MLA**  
Minister for Community Services

## **The *Blueprint for Youth Justice in the ACT* is released at a time of change in youth justice.**

Across Australia—and around the world—communities and governments are changing the way they respond to children and young people who break the law. This shift has been away from systems that deal largely with the consequences of youth crime, towards ones that address the underlying causes of offending by children and young people.

Efforts and resources are directed towards early intervention and prevention, diversion, including restorative justice practices, and only using detention for serious and repeat offending behaviour. For young people who come into contact with the youth justice system, the focus is on rehabilitation and reconnection with families and the community. Such approaches are not only delivering better outcomes for children and young people, but they have an important role in shaping community safety.

National and international research tells us about what works, and what doesn't, in getting children and young people back on track. While early intervention and prevention are very much guiding the direction for youth justice in the ACT—and indeed are at the heart of the Blueprint—many Canberrans also had a say about how we can make our youth justice system better.

The Blueprint draws on the experiences and understanding of people who work with young people who come into contact with the law. Importantly, we have also listened to the voices of young people and their families and to victims of crimes committed by young people. The Blueprint sets out the ACT Government's commitment over the next ten years to provide better supports for vulnerable young people to make positive life choices, strengthen their families and build connections within the community. This is the basis for creating lasting change in the lives of children and young people, and their families.

It is important to recognise that there is already much good work happening in the ACT. Many of our services and programs for young people and families are about addressing problems early on or building resilience, and these are achieving positive outcomes. But





we need to make sure that services are better linked and aligned, are easy to access and that they deliver the right kind of support when it is most needed. As well, we need people working in youth justice to be skilled and well supported to do their jobs.

Critical to achieving the objectives in the Blueprint will be the full cooperation of ACT Government agencies that have responsibilities for children, young people and their families. I encourage agencies to embrace the Blueprint and play their part.

It must be acknowledged that funding will be an important element in achieving the objectives of the Blueprint. In response, the ACT Government has committed \$5.5 million over the next four years towards implementing initiatives across the priority areas identified in the action plan for the Blueprint.

While this is a substantial initial investment in a constrained financial environment, the focus will be on justice reinvestment. This means redirecting funding towards early intervention and prevention programs rather than detention. As well as achieving cost efficiencies, the result of justice reinvestment is a community-oriented justice system that provides better outcomes for children and young people and the community.

The changes identified in the Blueprint will take time. This is why it has a ten-year planning horizon. As a living document, monitoring and evaluation of results may reshape the Blueprint over the course of its life.

I extend my thanks to the members of the Youth Justice Implementation Taskforce and the Youth Justice Advisory Panel for their guidance in the development of the Blueprint. Their skills, passion and hard work in drawing together so many important voices in this Blueprint were invaluable.

Finally, all Canberrans have a role in helping to realise the Blueprint's vision that 'children and young people are safe, strong and connected' and in so doing, make our community a safer place to live.



# Introduction

## What is the Blueprint and who is it for?

The *Blueprint for Youth Justice in the ACT* (the Blueprint) establishes a youth justice response and intervention continuum that creates lasting change in the lives of children, young people and their families, and builds a safer community. The Blueprint provides strategies that set the direction for the youth justice system in the ACT for the next ten years. A three-year action plan has also been developed to give effect to the strategies in the initial period of the Blueprint.

The strategies and actions identified in the Blueprint are about finding better ways to support children, young people and their families who are vulnerable to, or at risk of, coming into contact with the youth justice system through their offending behaviour. The Blueprint is also about supporting children and young people who are already in contact with the youth justice system.

Importantly, the Blueprint promotes the involvement of the whole-of-government and the whole-of-community in supporting responses to children and young people to keep them out of the youth justice system. Better outcomes for children and young people and their families will benefit the whole ACT community through reduced youth crime and improved community safety.

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## What does the Blueprint aim to achieve?

Overall, the Blueprint seeks to achieve the following long-term outcomes:

- A community where fewer children and young people are engaged in or at risk of offending.
- Children and young people and their families, at risk of or involved in the youth justice system, receive every possible opportunity to get back on track and live healthy, happy and fulfilling lives.
- The ACT community is a safer and better place to live.

These outcomes will be realised when the following goals in relation to children and young people in the youth justice system are achieved:

- 1 Youth offending and re-offending is reduced.
- 2 The over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the youth justice system is reduced.
- 3 Children and young people are diverted from the formal youth justice system.



- 4 Detention rates are reduced.
- 5 Children, young people and their families are helped early and provided with the supports and services they need.
- 6 Children and young people are given every possible chance to be successfully reintegrated into the community upon leaving detention.

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## The principles that underpin the Blueprint

The Blueprint is underpinned by the following core principles:

- 1 **Community safety** is supported by an effective youth justice system that results in better outcomes for vulnerable or at risk children and young people.
- 2 **Early intervention and prevention** is the most effective way of reducing youth offending.
- 3 **Children and young people will be diverted** from the justice system wherever possible and practicable with **custody being a measure of last resort**.
- 4 By **supporting and engaging families**, we help children, young people and the community as a whole.
- 5 A young person who has offended should be supported and encouraged to **accept responsibility** for their actions through restorative justice or other appropriate measures.
- 6 The **rights, needs and best interests of the young person** will be taken into account in all decisions involving a young person.
- 7 Better youth justice outcomes can only be achieved with significant improvements to the **wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people**.
- 8 The **voices of children and young people will be heard** in discussions and decisions that affect them.
- 9 The best outcomes for children and young people will be achieved through a **whole-of-government and whole-of-community services system**.
- 10 Programs, initiatives and services are **grounded in evidence** and are **regularly evaluated** to ensure effectiveness and efficiency.

# Context for the Blueprint

## What is the youth justice system?

Generally the term ‘youth justice system’ refers to the formal services and institutions for children and young people who have engaged in crime and who come into contact with police. The youth justice system in this case involves any interactions that may follow offending—including the police, custody, the court, legal services, and Bimberi Youth Justice Centre. These are unavoidable elements of the ACT’s response to youth crime.

The Blueprint takes this definition and includes a broader interpretation that ranges from primary health professionals and school teachers who identify young people ‘at risk’ of offending, to mediators who work in restorative justice and service providers who deal with the consequences of trauma. It also includes children and young people themselves and their families.

## The challenges for youth justice in the ACT

The ACT faces significant challenges in its youth justice system. The profile of young offenders indicates that:

- there is an increasing rate of detention—the detention rate of young people aged 10–17 years in the ACT rose from 0.29 (per 1000 in juvenile detention on an average night) in the June quarter 2007, to 0.50 in the June quarter 2011. This is the third highest rate of detention nationally
- there is a high proportion of young people on remand—in 2009–10 the proportion of young people on remand (unsentenced) in detention was 77 % of the total number of young people in detention in the ACT on a monthly average
- there are more young people being placed on community-based orders<sup>1</sup>—in 2009–10 the rate of young people under community-based supervision was 6.07 (per 1000 population) compared to the national average of 4.49
- there is an over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young offenders in detention—in 2009–10 the daily rate of detention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people aged 10–17 years was the third highest nationally at 595.9 per 100,000 young people. An Indigenous young person aged 10–17 years is 11 times as likely to be under community-based supervision as a non-Indigenous person aged 10–17 years and 22 times as likely to be in detention
- there is an increasing rate of recidivism—the recidivism rate of sentenced young people in custody<sup>2</sup> increased from 22 % in 2010–11 to 29 % in 2011–12, and the recidivism rate of young people on community-based orders<sup>3</sup> increased from 31 % in 2010–11 to 32 % in 2011–12.<sup>4</sup>

1 More young people being placed on community-based orders may also indicate a greater use of alternatives to custody.  
2 Refers to the number of young people who have been subject to more than one committal sentence in the previous two years.  
3 Refers to the number of young people who have been subject to more than one final supervised community based order during the current and or previous reporting year.  
4 Sourced from Community Services Directorate data; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare *Juvenile detention population in Australia 2011*, Table A10; *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Juvenile Justice in Australia, 2009–10*; Table 6.3 p83; Table 8.6 p189; and Table 15A.176 (unpublished).  
**Note** that some of the national comparisons exclude WA and NT. These figures should also be read with some caution. The small size of the ACT jurisdiction can mean that small changes in numbers of young people may result in large fluctuations in proportions and rates. This is particularly relevant to the data reporting recidivism.



Data in the ACT also shows that boys are heavily over-represented in the youth justice system. While girls form a minority of the youth justice population, there has been a noticeable increase in the proportion of girls who commit crimes in recent years. This is a trend in other jurisdictions, and internationally.

It is well documented that children in the care and protection system are over-represented in the youth justice system. They also generally have poorer life outcomes on a range of dimensions than their peers. Initiatives that directly address care and protection issues are not identified in the Blueprint, rather it is acknowledged that this important work is addressed in other forums. Preventing child abuse and neglect and improving outcomes for abused and neglected children, whether in the care of the Territory or in the community, will contribute to achieving the aims of this Blueprint.

Progress in reducing young people's involvement with the youth justice system also relies on continuing to close the gap on a broad range of social and economic wellbeing measures between Australia's Indigenous people and the general population.

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## Understanding the problem: why do children and young people offend?

Crime by young people is not just a legal problem; it is also a social problem with social causes and effects. There are many factors that contribute to anti-social behaviour and offending by young people, emphasising that prevention and early intervention approaches need to target multiple factors to reduce these behaviours. Any response to children and young people who break the law requires an understanding of the factors that can contribute to the likelihood of offending.

### ***Biological factors***

Children and young people are biologically different from adults. This is particularly true for the brain and how it functions. The brain is constantly developing and changing until around the age of 25, and children and young people are still learning how to understand and navigate their way in the world. This means children and young people are often unable to understand the consequences of their actions, both prior to acting, as well as after. Children and young people are also more likely to take risks and are more susceptible to peer pressure.



# Context for the Blueprint

## **Risk factors**

The likelihood of a child or young person becoming involved in criminal activity or behaviour is influenced by the existence of risk factors or protective factors within the child or young person, and in their family, school and community environments.

Risk factors are individual and social factors in children and young people's lives that increase the likelihood of individuals developing problems or difficulties.<sup>5</sup> These are long-term predictors that identify the likelihood that a child or young person may sooner or later engage in risky, anti-social or criminal behaviour. Risk factors may include socio-economic disadvantage, family breakdown, poor health and living conditions, intergenerational trauma, poor educational achievement and disengagement from education, sexual abuse and family violence, neglect, family drug and alcohol abuse, mental health problems, previous contact with the youth justice system, social and cultural discrimination and a history of failures—their own, their families and their support systems.

Risk factors combine in the lives of some children and young people and the likelihood that these children and young people may become anti-social and engage in criminal activity increases together with the number and intensity of risk factors. These risk factors can first be identified at the prenatal and perinatal stages, and can continue to influence throughout childhood and adolescence.

## **Protective factors**

Protective factors are supports that safeguard children and young people against the risks to which they are exposed.<sup>6</sup> Protective factors may moderate or reduce the influence of risk factors and, in some cases, decrease the likelihood of anti-social and offending behaviour. Protective factors may include supportive environments and strong bonds with family, mentors, schools and the community, as well as healthy beliefs, attitudes and behavioural standards.<sup>7</sup> The presence of protective factors can help to explain why some children and young people can be exposed to a range of risk factors, but do not engage in anti-social behaviour or commit criminal offences.

## **Young people, risk and patterns of offending**

The rates for both prevalence and incidence of offending appear highest during adolescence; they peak sharply at about age 17 and drop precipitously in young adulthood.<sup>8</sup> Engaging in some anti-social behaviour during adolescence is not uncommon and most young people who engage in this behaviour will not become serious and prolific offenders.<sup>9</sup> This behaviour is temporary and situational, and is referred to as *adolescence-limited* to reflect their more temporary involvement in anti-social behaviour.<sup>10</sup>

5 Homel, R. (1999) *Pathways to prevention: developmental and early intervention approaches to crime in Australia*, National Crime Prevention Report No 6, Attorney-General's Department, Canberra.

6 Homel, R. (1999) *Pathways to prevention: developmental and early intervention approaches to crime in Australia*, National Crime Prevention Report No 6, Attorney-General's Department, Canberra.

7 Hemphill and Smith (2010) *Preventing Youth Violence. What does and doesn't work and why? The Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth*. University of Melbourne.

8 Australian Institute of Criminology (2002) *What works in reducing young people's involvement in crime?*

9 Richards, K. (2011) *What makes juvenile offenders different from adult offenders?* Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice, Australian Institute of Criminology, No. 409.

10 Moffitt, Terrie E. (1993) *Adolescence-Limited and Life-Course-Persistent Anti-social Behaviour: A Developmental Taxonomy* *Psychological Review*, Vol. 100, No. 4, 674–701.



In contrast, the anti-social behaviour by some young people is stable and persistent, and they continue to engage in anti-social behaviour of one sort or another at every stage of life. This group of people can be referred to as *life-course-persistent* to reflect the continuous course of their anti-social behaviour.<sup>11</sup>

Young people who show more persistent and repeat offending behaviour generally have histories of neglect, low levels of educational achievement, harmful levels of substance use and usually experience family trauma and conflict. Certain childhood experiences, such as abuse by adults or time spent in care, may also result in children being disproportionately exposed to more risk factors and fewer protective factors.

There is no single factor that can be identified as the cause of anti-social or criminal behaviour by children or young people. Youth offending is more accurately understood by the way that multiple risk factors combine together to interact in the lives of children and young people, while important protective factors are insufficient or absent. Action taken to reduce identified risk factors and to strengthen levels of protection for children and young people will help to prevent a range of negative outcomes, including offending by young people.

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## Addressing factors associated with youth offending

The primary focus of the Blueprint is to prevent offending by children and young people, and to better support children and young people who are vulnerable to, or at risk of, coming into contact with the youth justice system. The Blueprint's approach to addressing the factors associated with anti-social and offending behaviour in young people is based on a framework that *reduces* risk factors and *strengthens* protective factors.

Reducing risk factors is about:

- preventing young people from having repeated contact with the youth justice system
- intervening to support young people to desist from crime
- strengthening connections with family and the community to reduce the risk factors associated with anti-social or criminal behaviour
- minimising young people's involvement in crime and the associated stigmatisation from involvement in the formal justice system to lessen the likelihood of offending.

Strengthening protective factors is about:

- focusing on early intervention and prevention approaches that address the needs of children and young people
- building individual and family resilience
- improving supports that address the needs of children and young people.

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<sup>11</sup> Moffitt, Terrie E. (1993) *Adolescence-Limited and Life-Course-Persistent Anti-social Behaviour: A Developmental Taxonomy* *Psychological Review*, Vol. 100, No. 4, 674–701.

# Context for the Blueprint

## The role of diversion

Diversion is broadly described as any process that prevents young people from entering or continuing in the formal justice system.

There is strong evidence indicating that time in remand has negative implications for a young person in areas such as education, employment and personal relationships. There is also evidence that time spent in remand may increase the likelihood of the young person being drawn further into the system.

As well, there are significant financial and social costs that come with placing a person in custody, compared to keeping them in the community with intensive supervision and support.

Diversionary action is usually divided into three categories:

- Primary prevention programs: are based on early intervention and prevention to respond to issues or problems before they escalate. In the ACT the work of the Child and Family Centres, and specific initiatives like the Family Support Program and Schools as Communities are examples.
- Secondary prevention programs: target young people who are seen by police, schools or other agencies as being at-risk and/or exhibit anti-social behaviours. Examples would be programs or supports for drug or alcohol issues, accommodation or re-engagement with education.
- Tertiary prevention programs: for young people who have already become involved in crime. Examples here are transition programs that link young people back into education, training, employment or independent living in the community.



# The way forward for the Blueprint

**The Blueprint lays the foundation for a shift in how the community views and responds to young people who are at risk of losing their way.**

The shift is towards policies and programs that focus on addressing the underlying causes of offending by children and young people, rather than the consequences of youth crime. It focuses on developing and evaluating programs and strategies that have been proven to work in addressing the needs of children and young people, and preventing anti-social and offending behaviour among young people.

The Blueprint identifies a long-term commitment to provide better support to children and young people who are at risk of coming into contact with the youth justice system. It recognises that early support to address problems faced by these young people is one of the most effective ways of keeping them safe and strong.

Importantly, families play a critical role in a young person's life and support needs to be provided to keep young people and their families connected, with each other and their community. For young people who come into contact with the youth justice system, the Blueprint recognises that the focus needs to be on developing their life skills, supporting their rehabilitation and linking them with their families and into their community.

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## Vision

The Blueprint establishes the following vision for the ACT youth justice system:

*Children and young people are safe,  
strong and connected.*

This vision articulates a requirement to keep children and young people safe from harm; to build their resilience; to strengthen their connections with their families; and to encourage their participation in the wider community. Children and young people who are safe, strong and connected are more likely to reach their full potential and less likely to engage in offending behaviour, making the ACT a safer community.



# The way forward for the Blueprint

## Strategies

Seven strategies for long-term change in the ACT youth justice system have been identified:

- 1 Focusing on early intervention and prevention of contact with the youth justice system** by helping children and young people and their families to become strong and to connect with the services and supports they need.
- 2 Diverting children and young people away from the formal youth justice system** as early as possible with custody being a measure of last resort.
- 3 Engaging and encouraging the participation of children, young people and their families** by ensuring they are actively involved in discussions and decisions affecting them.
- 4 Providing intensive individualised support to children and young people** by strengthening young people and their families, recognising individual circumstances and responding appropriately.
- 5 Connecting and reintegrating children and young people into a home and the community through effective throughcare**, by enabling those who enter the justice system to leave it as quickly as possible.
- 6 Creating an integrated whole-of-government and whole-of-community services system to support children and young people**, by creating a greater sense of shared responsibility across government and within communities for reducing youth offending.
- 7 Building a strong and smart workforce** by ensuring that people who work in the youth justice system have the necessary skills and capabilities to work with children and young people.

Through these strategies, the Blueprint aims to develop a youth justice response and intervention continuum that begins with prevention and early intervention and continues through diversion and prevention of repeat offending. The strategies focus on reducing the risk factors for offending behaviours and strengthening the protective factors to build resilience in children and young people. Effective action to address offending by children and young people requires a holistic approach that integrates responses at a family and community level and across whole of government service provision.



## The framework for the Blueprint's strategies

BLUEPRINT STRATEGY	REDUCES RISK FACTORS	STRENGTHENS PROTECTIVE FACTORS
Focusing on early intervention and prevention of contact with the youth justice system	✓	✓
Diverting children and young people from the formal justice system	✓	
Engaging and encouraging the participation of children, young people and their families		✓
Providing intensive individualised support to children and young people	✓	
Connecting and reintegrating children and young people into a home and the community through effective throughcare	✓	
Creating an integrated whole-of-government, whole-of-community services system to support children and young people		✓
Building a strong and smart workforce		✓

The Blueprint will be supported by the development of an evaluation framework to ensure the outcomes of the strategies are met. A logic model for the Blueprint (*see Appendix A*) provides the basic guide for the evaluation framework. It demonstrates how the strategies connect to the goals and outcomes the Blueprint is seeking to achieve.

Each strategy has a defined outcome and objectives, as well as practical actions for delivery in the first three years.

The Blueprint is more than just a series of strategies, actions and indicators. Through its vision and principles, the Blueprint aims to gradually change how the community views and responds to young people who are at risk of losing their way.

Specific actions in the Blueprint will be strengthened and enhanced by ongoing dialogue with children, young people, families, service providers, government agencies, elected decision makers, statutory officers, the legal community, courts and the community generally to support change in the ACT youth justice system.

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## Who developed the Blueprint?

The Blueprint has been developed by the Youth Justice Implementation Taskforce (the Taskforce), which was established by the Minister for Community Services in July 2011. Members were drawn from government agencies and community organisations (*see page 3 for members*).

# The way forward for the Blueprint

## How was the Blueprint developed?

The Blueprint has taken time to come together. The youth justice system in the ACT has undergone significant review and change in recent times and the Taskforce needed to reflect on and consider a large array of information in developing the strategies and actions in the Blueprint. This information included:

### ***The ACT Human Rights Commission Review 2011***

The Blueprint is influenced by the recommendations of the *ACT Youth Justice System 2011: A report to the ACT Legislative Assembly by the ACT Human Rights Commission*. The ACT Human Rights Commission recommended that the youth justice system can do better for young people by:

- enhancing young people's participation and giving them a voice in decisions that affect them
- building services around vulnerable young people and strengthening their families to support them
- embedding youth justice services and supports in the community so that we can all support young people at risk
- promoting evidence-based practice especially by prioritising early intervention, prevention and diversion
- strengthening the capacity of workers in the youth justice sector
- having ongoing monitoring and evaluation to inform changes to policies and programs.

### ***Consultation with the ACT Community***

Importantly, the Blueprint strongly reflects the key messages from public consultations across the ACT community, which were undertaken by the Taskforce from December 2011 to March 2012. More than 300 people participated in the consultation process including young people, families, the youth sector, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and community organisations, as well as ACT Government agencies. Key messages from the consultation were:

- early intervention and prevention should be a priority for children, young people and their families at the first signs of difficulty or adversity
- children and young people should be kept out of the formal justice system as much as possible
- children and young people should be supported to connect with their family and community in their transition from custody
- children, young people and their families should be engaged and encouraged to participate in decisions concerning their lives



- children, young people and their families should be provided intensive, targeted support to address offending-related behaviour
- services to children, young people and their families should be better coordinated with a shared responsibility across government and the community
- the youth justice system requires a highly skilled and competent workforce to work effectively with children, young people and their families.

### ***Data, research and evidence***

The Blueprint draws on the well-established youth justice research on effective practice and evidence of what works in reducing youth crime. Many of the themes in the research and the consultation were consistent.

### ***The Hawke Report***

The ACT Government commissioned a major independent review of the ACT Public Service in October 2010. *The Hawke Report*, released in February 2011, recommended that the ACT Public Service be restructured as a single department to reflect the city-state nature of the ACT and to allow for greater coordination between areas of the government. The Taskforce considered the key messages in the Hawke Report, notably the commitment to 'One ACT Government' with a long-term goal of coordinated and integrated service delivery.

### ***ACT Government strategies***

Importantly, the Taskforce took care to consider how the Blueprint links to existing ACT Government strategies and plans. The Blueprint works within and builds on these strategies and plans in relation to children and young people at risk of or involved in the youth justice system.

The ACT Government has other whole-of-government approaches to promoting community safety and dealing with crime and violence in the community that positively impact on young people. These include the *ACT Property Crime Reduction Strategy 2012–15*, the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice Agreement 2010–13* and the *ACT Prevention of Violence Against Women and Children Strategy 2011–2017*.

Other whole-of-government and whole-of-community approaches that also support the wellbeing of young people include: *The Canberra Plan: Towards Our Second Century 2008*, *The Canberra Social Plan 2011*, the *ACT Children's Plan 2010–14*, the *ACT Young People's Plan 2009–14*, *The ACT Youth Commitment*, and the *Mental Health Plan 2009–2014*.

# The way forward for the Blueprint

## ***Youth Justice Advisory Panel***

The Taskforce also sought advice on the development of the Blueprint from a group of experts with experience and qualifications in the fields of child and adolescent psychology; trauma and abuse; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement; vulnerable families; youth justice; education and health.

Members of the Youth Justice Advisory Panel include:

- Dr Diana Boswell from the Thomas Wright Institute
- Ray Lovett from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
- Dr Kelly Richards, from the Australian Institute of Criminology
- Professor Debra Rickwood from the University of Canberra
- Associate Professor Chris Trotter from Monash University
- Dr Joe Tucci from the Australian Childhood Foundation.

## ***Recent change within youth justice services***

The Taskforce considered a number of recent specific developments in youth justice services that are having positive impacts on outcomes for young people and their families. These include:

- The Bimberi Youth Justice Centre change management program that began in 2010 continues to deliver improvements in the way staff work with children, young people and their families.
- The introduction of a Single Case Management model in youth justice services to facilitate young people in their transition between different environments, such as custody and the community.
- The introduction of an After-Hours Bail Support Service to help make custody a measure of last resort.
- A two-year Youth Drug and Alcohol Court pilot to address issues related to drug and alcohol offending.
- A new Child, Youth and Family Services Program focusing on integration, coordination, early intervention and at risk children, young people and their families.
- Establishment of the ACT Re-Engaging Youth Boards to work with young people in relation to education, training or employment.



### **Justice reinvestment**

As a result of a cost-benefit analysis, the theory of justice reinvestment emerged in the United States.<sup>12</sup> This theory states that the money that would be spent on incarceration should be redirected (reinvested) into prison alternatives, such as neighbourhood justice centres. The resulting long-term savings can then be redeployed into early intervention and prevention programs for populations with particularly high rates of offending and imprisonment.<sup>13</sup> Justice reinvestment can be used for any prison population; however, suggestions have been made that the youth population would be the most effective place to start. In addition to creating cost efficiencies, the result of justice reinvestment is also an enhanced community-orientated justice system, which is associated with better outcomes for children and young people.

## **The Human Rights Framework**

Australia is a signatory to the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989) and the *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2007), as well as the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, and the *Convention against Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment* (and has indicated an intention to ratify the Optional Protocol to this Convention which will impose requirements to regularly monitor all places of detention). It has a responsibility to protect children and young people, provide the services necessary for them to develop and achieve positive outcomes, and enable them to participate in the wider community.

The ACT *Human Rights Act 2004* provides the statutory basis for respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of young people in the ACT community.

The ACT *Children and Young People's Act 2008* provides the principles, including the best interests principle and youth justice principles, that apply to the provision of services to children and young people.

The Blueprint is underpinned by these principles and reflects the essential elements of a quality youth justice system within this human rights framework. It builds on the ACT Government's commitment to human rights and will contribute to a culture of dignity and respect for all young people.

In addition, it is acknowledged that as a progressive jurisdiction, the ACT is committed to considering longer term reform of its youth justice system to reflect emerging best practice and alternative perspectives on youth offending.



<sup>12</sup> Murphy, McGinness, Balmarks, McDermott and Corriea (2010) *A Strategic Review of the NSW Juvenile Justice System*.

<sup>13</sup> [www.justicereinvestment.org/strategy/quantify](http://www.justicereinvestment.org/strategy/quantify)

## STRATEGY 1

### Focusing on early intervention and prevention of contact with the youth justice system

Early intervention and prevention of a child or young person's contact with the youth justice system is the most effective way of reducing young people's offending behaviour in the long-term. It is about helping those children and young people who are at risk of contact with the youth justice system, and their families to become strong and to connect with the services and supports they need.

The factors that increase the risk of a child or young person offending are well understood (see pages 9–11). A comprehensive early identification approach based on this understanding is vital for well targeted prevention and early intervention strategies. Ensuring ACT families are strong and provide safe nurturing environments for children, even when faced with adversity, is an important objective of this strategy. Research highlights the particular need for early intervention and prevention programs to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families.

Keeping children and young people engaged in education and training is critical to the well being of all young people. It is known that children and young people who have the confidence of knowing they are autonomous learners and have the skills to participate in society are less prone to influences that might lead to offending. The ACT has a high performing education and training sector, but more can be done to engage the most at risk young people. Engagement in schooling and training will be a vital element of any effective early intervention and prevention strategy.

### Outcome of this strategy

Children and young people receive supports that are responsive early in the life of a problem or problems that may place them at risk of contact with the youth justice system.

### Objectives of this strategy

- Identify children and young people who are at risk of offending and tailor effective early intervention and preventative responses to minimise their risk of contact with the youth justice system.
- Ensure children and young people who are at risk of contact with the youth justice system, and their families, connect with the services and supports they need.
- Ensure programs and services to children, young people and families are based on evidence-based practice.



- Improve mental health and drug and alcohol services to children and young people.
- Improve the engagement of young people in education and training.

## **Key actions 2012–15**

- 1** Develop an across agency early identification approach / framework to identify children and young people who are at risk of contact with the youth justice system with a particular focus on:
  - children who are involved in the care and protection system
  - children and young people transitioning from out-of-home care
  - children and young people with parents who are incarcerated
  - children in mid- to late primary school and young people at risk of disengaging from the school system
  - children and young people who are engaged in early offending behaviours.
- 2** Develop a comprehensive framework that will lead best practice in engaging all young people in education, training or work.
- 3** Provide culturally appropriate mental health services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.
- 4** Establish a shared understanding and co-ordinated actions across the government and the community to implement evidence-based programs to address behavioural disorders in children aged 5–12 years.
- 5** Further develop care and protection services to improve outcomes for children and young people who are involved in out-of-home care.
- 6** Improve access and better target alcohol and other drugs services for children and young people.
- 7** Improve mental health outcomes for young people and access to mental health services.

## STRATEGY 2

### Diverting children and young people from the formal justice system

Once in the youth justice system, the likelihood of children and young people becoming regular offenders and then entering the adult corrections system later in life increases significantly. Diversion is therefore a critical element of the Blueprint.

This strategy aims to minimise children and young people's contact with the formal justice system and thereby improve life outcomes for children and young people. Young people's contact with the justice system is influenced by their background and social context. There are many risk factors associated with young people offending at the individual, family, community, school and peer-group levels. To develop effective diversionary strategies and tailor responsive programs, it is necessary to understand the reasons behind offending behaviour for different groups of young people including young people who misuse drugs and alcohol; young people disengaging with education, young people who are homeless, young people who are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and those young people experiencing abuse and neglect or mental health issues.

Diversionary style services that exist in the ACT range from universal services such as public health and education to more specialised and targeted services such as community-based sentencing, restorative justice, and referral to the Youth Drug and Alcohol Court.

#### Outcome of this strategy

Young people and their families receive targeted support early in the offending cycle to address their immediate and long-term needs and reduce their likelihood of re-offending.

#### Objectives of this strategy

- Reduce young people's contact with the formal youth justice system.
- Reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Islander young people in the youth justice system.
- Ensure that young people are diverted away from the youth justice system as early as possible with custody being a measure of last resort.
- Deliver interventions that are appropriate and proportionate to the seriousness and circumstance of the offence, and the personal circumstance of the young person.



- Divert young offenders with alcohol and substance problems from contact with the youth justice system into appropriate treatment services.
- Prevent young people from exposure to the negative effects of further involvement with the youth justice system, including the stigma of conviction and sentence and the development of anti-social peer networks.

### **Key actions 2012–15**

- 1 Increase restorative justice options for children and young people.
- 2 Deliver ACT Policing diversionary measures that meet or exceed targets in relation to the number of children and young people referred to diversionary programs.
- 3 Strengthen support for Galambany Court (circle sentencing) process and sentencing options and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.
- 4 Develop the After-Hours Bail Support Service and better integrate the service into the ACT youth services system.
- 5 Strengthen initiatives to assist young people to adhere to their bail conditions.
- 6 Strengthen therapeutic programs for children and young people on community and detention orders.
- 7 Enhance diversionary accommodation options for children and young people.
- 8 Finalise and implement supported recommendations from the Evaluation of ACT Drug Diversion Programs.
- 9 Progress the development and implementation of an evaluation framework for the Youth Drug and Alcohol Court.

## STRATEGY 3

### Engaging and encouraging the participation of children, young people and their families

Ensuring the participation of children, young people and their families in decisions that affect them will encourage the development and ownership of solutions. This engagement contributes to accountability and developing solutions that will have the best chance of success.

Young people's voices and their families' voices need to be placed at the centre of the youth justice system. This means ensuring case plans are culturally appropriate and a young person's family and natural supports are strengthened to support them. It also means providing young people and their families with information that clearly sets out their rights, responsibilities and the processes of the youth justice system.

An important part of both prevention and diversion is the engagement of the young person and their family or carer. The need for engagement extends from the moment a young person is identified as being at risk to when a young person has come into contact with the justice system. Engagement means encouraging and allowing young people to take part in decisions that are made about them, actively involving young people and their families in developing solutions, choosing between available options and planning for the future.

By giving young people the opportunity to actively participate in decisions, they will understand their options better and feel more empowered to choose and follow their own pathways. Engagement also means keeping young people and their families fully informed about matters concerning them. By giving young people and their families a voice, services can also be tailored to best meet their needs.

The current services are primarily focused on providing services *for* children and young people. This strategy aspires to a system that works *with* children, young people and their families to develop and design services, programs and even policies that affect them.

### Outcome of this strategy

Young people and their families are valued and encouraged to have a voice in matters that affect them as well as the ongoing development of the youth justice system.

### Objectives of this strategy

- Enable young people and their families to participate confidently in decisions that affect their lives.
- Provide practical assistance to enable young people and their families to participate and stay connected.



- Engage children, young people and their families as early as possible before and when coming into contact with the youth justice system.
- Strengthen the focus of the rights and the voice of the young person throughout the youth justice system.
- Improve the engagement and participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and their families through culturally respectful and safe practices.
- Help young people take responsibility for their actions.
- Help young people build natural support networks in their community.
- Empower young people to take part and be active in the ACT community.

### **Key actions 2012–15**

- 1 Enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to contribute to the effective development and implementation of case management plans that include appropriate Cultural Care Plans.
- 2 Develop a Family Engagement Plan that will recognise the role of families in preventing offending and strengthen them to support their children and young people more effectively.
- 3 Positively engage children, young people and their families at Court.
- 4 Develop collaborative service approaches to support young people and families with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- 5 Contribute to the forward planning and design of the new Supreme and Magistrates Courts to ensure the buildings are child and family-friendly and culturally appropriate.

## STRATEGY 4

### Providing intensive individualised support to children and young people

Each child and young person's circumstances are particular to them and responses need to be tailored to those circumstances if the response is to be successful. There is evidence that intensive, individualised support at times of crisis can significantly improve the outcomes for children and young people and their families.

Providing intensive individualised support can make the child or young person's experience of the youth justice system more constructive and ultimately divert them from future offending behaviour. There is a growing body of practice indicating that support directly addressing factors leading to offending is the most effective, including recognising that children and young people are often victims as well. This practice might include practical measures to help young people and their families to meet their obligations or specific interventions that build the capacity of young people and their families to make sure the changes necessary help to prevent future offending.


This strategy seeks to transition to a service delivery approach where children, young people and their families are given the right type and intensity of support at the right time. Assisting children, young people and their families from their first formal contact, through the court process, and beyond is the aim of this strategy.

#### Outcome of this strategy

Children, young people and their families are strengthened and services meet their individual needs.

#### Objectives of this strategy

- Ensure that children, young people and their families receive the right services at the right time.
- Address the needs of children and young people who are in contact with the youth justice system.
- Deliver services and programs that lead to behaviour change or prevent further offending.

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- Provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families with access to culturally appropriate services.
  - Ensure children and young people understand the consequences of their behaviour that is harmful, anti-social and unacceptable and may endanger the safety of others.
  - Decisions about the type and level of intensity of support are based on evidence and best practice.

### **Key actions 2012–15**

- 1 Provide intensive support to children, young people and their families when they come in contact with the justice system through the continued development of the youth justice single case management approach.
- 2 Develop effective initiatives to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families to explore their own cultural identity, family history and sense of belonging.
- 3 Develop targeted family support programs including identifying siblings of children and young people in custody to assist them.
- 4 Enhance the ACT Government's Youth Commitment to support young people through key life transition points.

## STRATEGY 5

Connecting and reintegrating children and young people into a home and the community through effective throughcare

High quality services that work to address the causes of offending while in detention and follow the child or young person into the community on release are vital to prevent re-offending. Assisting children and young people from the time that they enter Bimberi Youth Justice Centre until they are successfully re-established in the community after their period of detention is the key objective of this strategy.

Detention is a last resort. In some cases detention provides an opportunity to identify and address the circumstances that lead to offending. The work in detention will only be successful if it is part of a planned program of supports in the community upon a young person's release. Throughcare is the co-ordinated, integrated and collaborative approach to reducing the risks of re-offending.<sup>14</sup> It commences at first contact with the justice system, is focussed on rehabilitation and successful reintegration into the community. Effective throughcare will reduce re-offending, which benefits both the individual and the community.

This strategy will aim to build on the early work already undertaken in the ACT community. The actions in this strategy will also address the need for more mentoring services, more accommodation options upon exit from detention, and more flexible learning options to improve a young person's reconnection with the community and to establish a better life.


### Outcome of this strategy

Children and young people have access to supports and services to successfully reconnect with the community and the likelihood of re-offending is reduced.

### Objectives of this strategy

- Provide evidence-based interventions aimed at addressing the causes of offending behaviour when young people are in detention.
- Ensure community service providers engage young people in detention and that supports follow them into the community.

<sup>14</sup> [www.correctiveservices.nsw.gov.au/about-us/publications/throughcare](http://www.correctiveservices.nsw.gov.au/about-us/publications/throughcare) Accessed 10 April 2012.

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- Ensure young people in the youth justice system have stable and safe accommodation, adequate income support and are engaged in education, training and/or employment.
  - Support young people to build and maintain positive support networks in the community.
  - Reduce re-offending by young people.

### **Key actions 2012–15**

- 1 Strengthen the existing throughcare model and enhance the youth justice single case management model to deliver continuity of coordinated support.
- 2 Develop a formal process for coordination of youth justice case management and youth homelessness services.
- 3 Develop flexible learning options (particularly for young people leaving detention) as determined by the Student Engagement Framework.
- 4 Explore and develop conditional release options.
- 5 Provide structured engagement opportunities for businesses, as prospective employers, to become involved with young people in detention through evidence-based mentoring models.
- 6 Develop formal partnerships with the community sector (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers) to flexibly coordinate services for children and young people in the youth justice system.

## STRATEGY 6

### Creating an integrated whole-of-government, whole-of-community services system to support children and young people

A comprehensive and effective youth justice system that delivers the best outcomes for children, young people and their families relies on coordinated action by government and authentic participation of the community.

The community has a role to play in improving youth justice outcomes. Government has an important role to play in ensuring that its services are linked up and children and young people receive the services they need regardless of where and how they enter the system. The community has an equally important role to play through the work of community organisations that assist government in the provision of services to children and young people. Perhaps most importantly, everyone in the community has a role through their actions and attitudes towards children and young people. By valuing and supporting all children and young people, the ACT will become an even better place to live.

While the ACT has numerous services and programs for children and young people, (both in the justice system and beyond), in many cases service providers do not work together to leverage one another's work and coordinate their efforts. The actions under this strategy aim to improve this coordination and alignment, and increase community participation leading to a better connected and integrated services system.

#### Outcome of this strategy

A shared responsibility across government and community for reducing offending and re-offending by young people.

#### Objectives of this strategy

- Ensure government agencies accept a shared responsibility for youth justice and work together to deliver solutions for youth justice.
- Ensure the service system is well informed, is flexible in adapting to a changing environment and open to new partnerships.
- Ensure community participation in future decision-making about the youth justice system.
- Ensure the most skilled and capable people are connected so that services are delivered to the most vulnerable at the right time.



## Key actions 2012–15

- 1 Develop and implement a multi-agency cross-sector statutory mechanism to ensure shared accountability and timely response across government agencies to improve outcomes for at risk young people with high and complex needs.
- 2 Develop across government early intervention strategies that drive coordinated responses to improve outcomes for children and young people at risk. Initial projects will include:
  - across agency early identification of children and young people at risk (action 1.1)
  - a new family engagement plan that recognises the important role of families in preventing offending behaviours (action 3.2)
  - an enhanced youth justice single case management approach (action 4.1)
  - a multi-agency and cross sector statutory mechanism to ensure timely responses for young people at risk with high and complex needs (action 6.1).
- 3 Better coordinate youth justice and adult corrections services including the development of information sharing protocols and training opportunities.
- 4 Better coordinate youth justice and police services.
- 5 Develop a Performance and Evaluation Framework for the Blueprint, including the ability to evaluate programs and services.
- 6 Create or strengthen existing information systems to support a whole-of-government approach as part of an information sharing framework.

## STRATEGY 7

### Building a strong and smart workforce

Ensure the ACT Government and community sector have people with the necessary skills and capabilities to work with children and young people. A skilled youth justice workforce is critical to the delivery of effective youth justice outcomes.

Building a strong and capable workforce is about more than just training staff—a long-term workforce plan is required to build and sustain workforce capacity and capability. It is also acknowledged that the workforce needs to have the capability to respond to needs of culturally and linguistically diverse children and young people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and to adapt to changes in context and practice over the life of the Blueprint.

Significant outcomes have already been achieved by introducing a culture of learning at the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre, which has included changes to recruitment procedures and training and the identification of evidence-based practice in youth justice case management. This strategy aims to build on these successes and to extend these to develop a culturally-competent and skilled workforce in government and the community sector.

#### Outcome of this strategy

People who work in the youth justice system have the skills and capabilities to meet the needs of young people and their families.

#### Objectives of this strategy

- Recruit people who display the desirable qualities and attitudes to undertake youth justice work and share a commitment to the vision of youth justice articulated in this Blueprint.
- Develop a diverse workforce, including active recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Develop an ongoing culture of learning and inquiry.
- Embed effective recruitment and retention practices, including opportunities for professional development, supervision and support.
- Create opportunities for best practice to be shared.



## Key actions 2012–15

- 1 Build on the workforce development and reform strategy under progress in the Community Services Directorate to include a core training needs analysis for government directorates.
- 2 Enhance cultural awareness and competence training for government and community service providers and ensure that all staff participate.
- 3 Provide staff with training and professional development in trauma and its impact on children and young people, including intergenerational trauma resulting from abuse, neglect and past discriminatory policies targeted at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- 4 Develop and implement training plans in youth justice case management at Bimberi Youth Justice Centre and in community youth justice services.
- 5 Partner with the community sector in providing and delivering training to maximise opportunities for relationship building and partnerships.
- 6 Actively recruit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at Bimberi Youth Justice Centre and in community youth justice services (in line with the ACT Public Service Employment Strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and relevant legislation).
- 7 Implement core skills building for care and protection workers to more effectively respond to children and young people in care and protection who may be at greater risk of being involved with the youth justice system.
- 8 Host a conference biennially to showcase best practice and innovative approaches in youth justice for all workers in the youth justice system across government and the community.

# Implementing the Blueprint

While the seven strategies are equally important to the overall achievement of an effective youth justice system, the priorities at any one time will require an emphasis on some strategies over others.

Early efforts will be placed on strategies two and four. This builds on the current momentum and positive outcomes being achieved for children and young people through diversion and provision of individualised supports.

The Blueprint provides an action plan for the first three years (2012–15). The actions contained in the plan are ones that ACT Government agencies have committed to delivering.

The actions are supported by the ACT Government’s commitment in the 2012–13 ACT Budget of \$5.5 million over four years to support the implementation of initiatives under the Blueprint.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

A 10-year plan is ambitious, however this timeframe is needed to effect change. The Blueprint is a living document that will be monitored, evaluated and amended over time.

There will be regular reporting on progress and review to ensure that the strategies and actions remain relevant. The reporting timeframes and scope are as follows:

TIMING	REPORTING SCOPE
At the end of year one (August 2013) and then annually	Report on, review and update Blueprint actions (actions will be reported by the lead agency to the Blueprint Implementation Group).
At the end of year three (August 2015) and then biennially (August 2017 and August 2019)	Evaluate, review and update the Blueprint. Report to Government on progress against the primary goals.
At the end of year ten (August 2022)	Evaluate the Blueprint and recommend next steps.

The Blueprint and its actions are underpinned by evidence on effective practice. However, it is important that the Blueprint is evaluated regularly to ensure the actions are achieving the goals. A Performance and Evaluation Framework will be developed as an early action. The Framework will include the following key indicators to measure progress against the goals of the Blueprint.

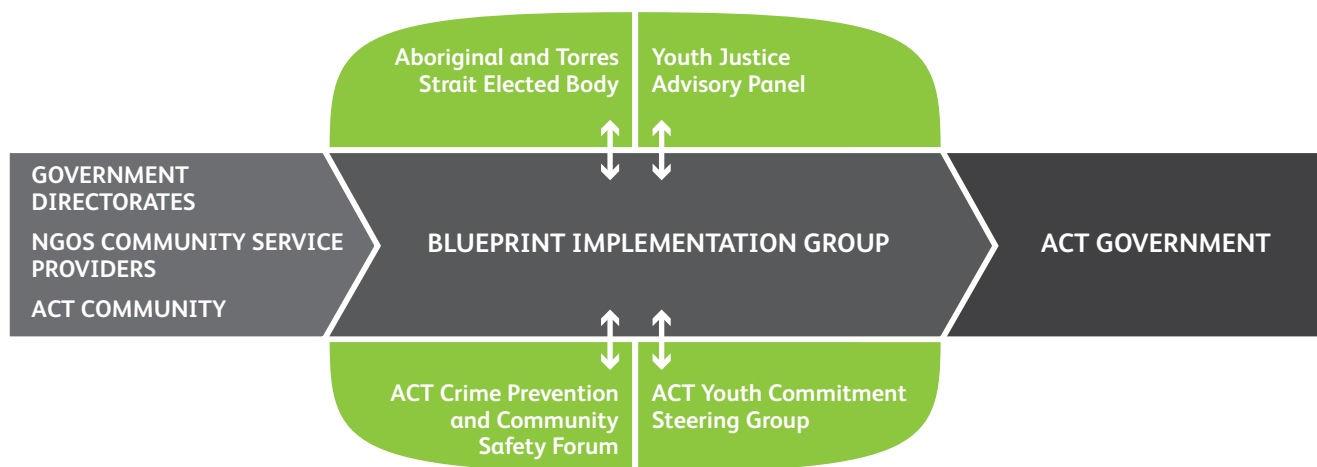


GOALS OF THE BLUEPRINT	INDICATOR
<b>Youth offending and re-offending is reduced.</b>	Number and rate of young people who have offended and re-offended.
<b>The over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in the youth justice system is reduced.</b>	Number and rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ in contact with police</li> <li>■ who appear in Court</li> <li>■ who are either on sentenced or unsentenced community-based supervision</li> <li>■ who are either on sentenced or unsentenced detention</li> <li>■ who re-offend.</li> </ul>
<b>Young people are diverted from the formal youth justice system.</b>	Number and rate of young people who are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ diverted from police prosecution</li> <li>■ diverted from the Courts</li> <li>■ receive an alternative intervention including warnings, cautions, referrals to restorative justice and health interventions.</li> </ul>
<b>Detention rates are reduced.</b>	Numbers and rates of young people in detention (on remand and sentenced). Average length of stay in custody. Number in contact with the After Hours Bail Support Service.
<b>Young people and their families are helped early and provided with the support and services that they need.</b>	Number and rate of uptake of services. Satisfaction of services received. Rate of youth homelessness. Reengagement with education, employment and training. Self-report of wellbeing.
<b>Children and young people are given every possible chance to be successfully reintegrated into the community upon leaving detention.</b>	Number and rate of young people who re-offend, both as young and adult offenders. Number of leaving plans that transition into training, education or employment.

The Performance and Evaluation Framework will also identify indicators of progress for each strategy that may be developed and changed over time.

# Implementing the Blueprint

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BLUEPRINT WILL BE OVERSEEN BY THE FOLLOWING BODIES:



## Governance

The **Blueprint Implementation Group** is a high-level working group comprising representatives from ACT Government agencies and the community sector. The role of the Implementation Group is to monitor implementation of the Blueprint. The Implementation Group will also be responsible for overseeing the reporting and evaluation of actions, including making recommendations for changes to the strategies and actions.

In addition, the **Youth Justice Advisory Panel** will provide specialist advice to the Implementation Group in relation to the Blueprint. This includes advice on the priority actions for the first 12 months. The Panel has expertise and knowledge in youth justice, child and adolescent psychology, trauma and abuse, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement, vulnerable families, education, and health.

**The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body**, the **ACT Crime Prevention and Community Safety Forum** and the **ACT Youth Commitment Steering Group** will also have an important role in providing advice to the Implementation Group on issues and outcomes for young people in the ACT youth justice system.



# Youth Justice Blueprint Action Plan 2012–2015

## STRATEGY 1

### Focusing on early intervention and prevention of contact with the youth justice system

Early intervention and prevention of a child or young person's contact with the youth justice system is the most effective way of reducing offending behaviour in the long term. It is about helping those children and young people who are at risk of contact with the youth justice system, and their families, to become strong and to connect with the services and supports they need.

ACTION	EXPLANATION	LEAD AGENCY <i>supporting agencies and stakeholders</i>
<p><b>1.1 Develop an across agency early identification approach/framework to identify children and young people who are at risk of contact with the youth justice system with a particular focus on:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ children who are involved in the care and protection system</li> <li>■ children and young people transitioning from out-of-home care</li> <li>■ children and young people with parents who are incarcerated</li> <li>■ children in mid- to late primary school and young people at risk of disengaging from the school system</li> <li>■ children and young people who are engaged in early offending behaviours.</li> </ul>	<p>An across agency approach will enable children and young people at risk to be identified and connected to the services that will assist them and their families. This needs to be aligned with existing strategies, policy settings and programs.</p> <p>A common risk identification tool will enable across portfolio information sharing and integrated responses to support children and young people at risk.</p> <p>Providing tools for teachers will be particularly important in the early recognition of young people and families at risk.</p>	<p><b>Community Services Directorate</b> (Health Directorate, ACT Policing and Education and Training Directorate)</p>
<p><b>1.2 Develop a comprehensive framework that will lead best practice in engaging all young people in education, training or work</b></p>	<p>The framework will be an evidence- based framework for coordination of engagement for school-aged children. It will include targeted preventative and reengagement strategies for those at risk of disengaging or who are already disengaged. It will incorporate strengthening partnerships with families, community sector, business and government.</p>	<p><b>Education and Training Directorate</b> (Community Services Directorate, Health Directorate and community organisations)</p>



ACTION	EXPLANATION	LEAD AGENCY <i>supporting agencies and stakeholders</i>
<b>1.3 Provide culturally appropriate mental health services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people</b>	These initiatives, which will be developed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives, will address one of the key risk factors for youth offending and will contribute to lowering the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in the justice system.	<b>Health Directorate</b> (ACT Policing and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community)
<b>1.4 Establish a shared understanding and co-ordinated actions across the government and the community to implement evidence-based programs to address behavioural disorders in children aged 5–12 years</b>	Disruptive behavioural disorders (such as oppositional defiance disorder and conduct disorder) are highly predictive of onset of offending in young people. Children with these disorders are more likely to come into contact with the both the care and protection, and the youth justice system. This action will ensure that future initiatives that fill the current gap in programs addressing these types of behavioural problems are effective and grounded in evidence.	<b>Community Services Directorate, Education and Training Directorate, Health Directorate</b>
<b>1.5 Further develop care and protection services to improve outcomes for children and young people who are involved in out-of-home care</b>	Cross-over from out-of-home care (particularly care and protection) into the youth justice system is common. This action, by improving out-of-home care, will assist in breaking this cycle. This is consistent with the ACT Government's commitment to the National Partnership on this issue.	<b>Community Services Directorate</b> (community organisations, kinship carers and foster carers)
<b>1.6 Improve access and better target alcohol and other drugs (AOD) services for children and young people</b>	By expanding the availability and types of AOD services, this action will increase the number of children and young people who receive services addressing their particular needs.	<b>Health Directorate</b> (community organisations)
<b>1.7 Improve mental health outcomes for young people and access to mental health services</b>	Mental health is a key risk factor for youth offending.	<b>Community Services Directorate</b> (Health Directorate, ACT Policing and community organisations)

## STRATEGY 2

### Diverting children and young people from the formal justice system

Once in the youth justice system, the likelihood of children and young people becoming regular offenders and then entering the adult corrections system later in life increases significantly. Diversion is therefore a critical element of the Blueprint. This strategy aims to minimise children and young people's contact with the formal justice system and thereby improve life outcomes for children and young people.

ACTION	EXPLANATION	LEAD AGENCY <i>supporting agencies and stakeholders</i>
<b>2.1 Increase restorative justice options for children and young people</b>	Implementing initiatives to improve the availability and scope of restorative justice.	<b>Justice and Community Safety Directorate</b>
<b>2.2 Deliver ACT Policing diversionary measures that meet or exceed targets in relation to the number of children and young people referred to diversionary programs</b> <i>(as defined in the Key Performance Indicator in relation to the number of juveniles referred to diversionary programs in ACT Policing's Purchase Agreement)</i>	By adopting a principle that is applied universally, this action will ensure improved consistency in police referrals and increase diversion efforts away from the formal justice system. This supports the intent of the <i>Property Crime Reduction Strategy 2012–2015</i> .	<b>ACT Policing</b> (Justice and Community Safety Directorate)
<b>2.3 Strengthen Galambany Court (circle sentencing) process and sentencing options and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people</b>	This action will assist in reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in the justice system, by providing culturally appropriate sentencing options and outcomes.	<b>Justice and Community Safety Directorate</b> (the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community)
<b>2.4 Develop the After-Hours Bail Support Service and better integrate the service into the ACT youth services system</b>	The After Hours Bail Support Service is a key initiative to assist young people to meet conditions of court orders and to reduce short remand periods resulting from breaches. By continuing to responsively develop this service and integrate it with key services systems such as youth homelessness, child youth and family services and child protection, it will continue to improve its effectiveness.	<b>Community Services Directorate</b> (ACT Policing)



ACTION	EXPLANATION	LEAD AGENCY <i>supporting agencies and stakeholders</i>
<b>2.5 Strengthen initiatives to assist young people to adhere to their bail conditions</b>	A large proportion of young people are in detention for breach of bail. This action will help young people adhere to their bail conditions, for example by ensuring that bail conditions are reasonable and appropriate given the circumstances of the young person. A particular focus will be ensuring that young people understand their bail conditions. It will also include intensive support around adhering to conditions through practical support such as the provision of transport assistance.	<b>Community Services Directorate</b> (Justice and Community Safety Directorate)
<b>2.6 Strengthen therapeutic programs for young people on community and detention orders</b>	Therapeutic programs, such as programs addressing violent offences and anger management, assist young people at risk in a targeted rehabilitative way to reduce youth offending. Program needs and requirements will change over time and will therefore require a governance system that can allow flexibility in setting priorities and targeting resources.	<b>Community Services Directorate</b> (community organisations)
<b>2.7 Enhance diversionary accommodation options for children and young people</b>	Developing safe accommodation options for young people at risk of being detained or as they leave detention is essential to help them stabilise their lives. It is recognised that stable and effective accommodation is critical to break the cycle of offending.	<b>Community Services Directorate</b> (community organisations)
<b>2.8 Finalise and implement supported recommendations from the Evaluation of ACT Drug Diversion Programs</b>	The Evaluation's recommendations, developed in conjunction with key local stakeholders, have been designed to increase the capacity of the ACT Alcohol and Other Drugs diversion system to build upon its strengths, and to minimise the most noted system barriers.	<b>Health Directorate</b> (Community Services Directorate, Justice and Community Safety Directorate)
<b>2.9 Progress the development and implementation of an evaluation framework for the Youth Drug and Alcohol Court</b>	This action will build on work already underway to develop an evaluation framework for the Youth Drug and Alcohol Court further strengthening the evidence base for diversionary initiatives.	<b>Health Directorate</b> (Community Services Directorate, Justice and Community Safety Directorate)

## STRATEGY 3

### Engaging and encouraging the participation of children, young people and their families

Ensuring the participation of children, young people and their families in decisions that affect them will encourage the development and ownership of solutions. This engagement contributes to accountability and developing solutions that will have the best chance of success.

ACTION	EXPLANATION	LEAD AGENCY <i>supporting agencies and stakeholders</i>
<b>3.1 Enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to contribute to the effective development and implementation of case management plans that include appropriate Cultural Care Plans</b>	By involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in case planning, this action will ensure plans are culturally appropriate and serve young people in the most effective way.	<b>Community Services Directorate</b> (in collaboration with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body and community organisations)
<b>3.2 Develop a Family Engagement Plan that will recognise the role of families in preventing offending and strengthen them to support their children and young people more effectively</b>	This plan will outline in detail the ways in which families can be supported and engaged to improve outcomes for children and young people. It will include measures such as Family Group Conferencing and the embedding of a family centred approach at Bimberi Youth Justice Centre. Family engagement needs to sit across all services providers (both government and non government). This may include the formation of a Diversionary Programs Unit within Youth Justice to coordinate family support. ACT Policing will play an important role in this action.	<b>Community Services Directorate</b> (Justice and Community Safety Directorate, ACT Policing and community organisations)



ACTION	EXPLANATION	LEAD AGENCY <i>supporting agencies and stakeholders</i>
<b>3.3 Positively engage children, young people and their families at Court</b>	<p>Many young people and families feel excluded in Court. Engaging them, by improving two-way communication and explanation of court processes and bail conditions, their court experience and understanding will be improved. This also makes young people less likely to breach bail and helps families support their children.</p>	<p><b>Community Services Directorate</b> (ACT Policing, ACT Courts, Children and Young People Commissioner, and community organisations)</p>
<b>3.4 Develop collaborative service approaches to support young people and families with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds</b>	<p>Young people from a culturally and linguistically diverse background often have different expectations from the youth justice system. By engaging with CALD stakeholders expectations can be managed and met through effective communication and appropriate services.</p>	<p><b>Community Services Directorate</b> (Multicultural Youth Affairs Network)</p>
<b>3.5 Contribute to the forward planning of the new Supreme and Magistrates Courts' building design to ensure the buildings are child and family-friendly and culturally appropriate</b>	<p>This action will ensure that the design enables children, young people and their families to be provided the services and support they need during the court process. This action will be a contribution to the planning and design of the new Supreme and Magistrates Courts.</p> <p>This action will also build on work currently underway seeking to have the Forensic Mental Health Service (FMHS), Youth Justice Case Management and the Court Alcohol and Drug Assessment Service (CADAS) collocated in the new courts with a view to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ increase the likelihood of joint assessments being undertaken where relevant</li> <li>■ improve information exchange between assessment services, and</li> <li>■ increase awareness amongst referrers of the range of assessments that may be relevant.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Justice and Community Safety Directorate</b> (community organisations, and the Children and Young People Commissioner)</p> <p><b>Health Directorate</b> (Community Services Directorate)</p>

## STRATEGY 4

### Providing intensive individualised support to children and young people

Each child and young person's circumstances are particular to them and responses need to be tailored to those circumstances if the response is to be successful. There is significant evidence that intensive, individualised support at times of crisis can significantly improve the outcomes for children and young people and their families.

ACTION	EXPLANATION	LEAD AGENCY <i>supporting agencies and stakeholders</i>
<b>4.1 Provide intensive support to children, young people and their families when they come in contact with the justice system through the continued development of the youth justice single case management approach</b>	<p>By developing the current youth justice single case management approach this action will better support children and young people at court and in the community to the appropriate level of intensity as determined by the young person's needs.</p> <p>Case workers will also provide brief interventions in addition to compliance checking and engaging therapeutic services.</p> <p>Case workers will have the ability to broker specialised therapeutic services.</p>	<b>Community Services Directorate</b> (Justice and Community Safety Directorate, community organisations, Health Directorate, Education and Training Directorate, ACT Policing)
<b>4.2 Develop effective initiatives to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families to explore their own cultural identity, family history and sense of belonging</b>	<p>By enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to develop their cultural and individual identity, this action will help these young people find a sense of belonging and feel more connected to the community.</p>	<b>Community Services Directorate</b> (with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, and Education and Training Directorate)



ACTION	EXPLANATION	LEAD AGENCY <i>supporting agencies and stakeholders</i>
<b>4.3 Develop targeted family support programs including identifying siblings of children and young people in custody to assist them</b>	<p>By increasing support for families, by helping them structure their lives and understand the issues and options their children are facing, families are empowered to support their children and improve outcomes.</p> <p>Siblings of young people involved in youth justice are an ‘at risk’ group, both because of influence from their siblings and the family environment. By identifying and providing assistance to siblings early on, they can be diverted from the youth justice system.</p> <p>By supporting the entire family through capacity building and mentoring in all aspects of their lives, children and young people are more likely to achieve rehabilitative outcomes. This is particularly important for young people on bail as their families often need support to help them adhere to bail conditions.</p>	<b>Community Services Directorate</b> (Justice and Community Safety Directorate, Education and Training Directorate and Commonwealth Government)
<b>4.4 Enhance the ACT Government’s Youth Commitment to support young people through key life transition points</b>	<p>This action will ensure there are measures in place for children and young people who need help adjusting into new environments, and will improve inclusion and engagement. This includes important points such as the transition from primary to secondary schooling. This will include facilitating the provision of services outside of normal business/operating hours.</p>	<b>Education and Training Directorate</b> (Community Services Directorate and community organisations)

## STRATEGY 5

### Connecting and reintegrating children and young people into a home and the community through effective throughcare

High quality services that work to address the causes of offending while in detention and follow the child or young person into the community on release are vital to prevent re-offending. Assisting children and young people from the time that they enter Bimberi Youth Justice Centre until they are successfully re-established in the community after their period of detention is completed is the key objective of this strategy.

ACTION	EXPLANATION	LEAD AGENCY <i>supporting agencies and stakeholders</i>
<b>5.1 Strengthen the existing throughcare model and enhance the youth justice single case management model to deliver continuity of coordinated support</b>	Develop a service model that details the options and pathways to successful engagement in the community on transition from detention, remand or community orders, to ensure that no young person will exit detention without a place to go and a pathway to participate in the community. A new program and service delivery framework will direct the delivery of throughcare options.	<b>Chief Minister and Cabinet Directorate</b> (Community Services Directorate, Education and Training Directorate, community organisations)
<b>5.2 Develop a formal process for coordination of youth justice case management and youth homelessness services</b>	Homelessness is a key risk factor for youth offending. By ensuring that no young people exiting detention transition into homelessness, this action will reduce the likelihood of re-offending. It will also assist the greater number of young people on non-custodial supervision orders.  Kinship care is a proposed initiative as a response to accommodation needs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. This action will also further develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific housing initiatives providing places of cultural significance with appropriate support.	<b>Community Services Directorate</b> (community organisations)



ACTION	EXPLANATION	LEAD AGENCY <i>supporting agencies and stakeholders</i>
<b>5.3 Develop flexible learning options (particularly for young people leaving detention) as determined by the Student Engagement Framework</b>	Reintegrating into a standard learning environment can be difficult after detention. This action will provide new learning programs for young people to remain engaged in education and ensure they receive the same opportunity as other young people to obtain an education.	<b>Education and Training Directorate</b> (Community Services Directorate, community organisations)
<b>5.4 Explore and develop conditional release options</b>	Developing the pro-social skills and confidence of young people leaving custody is essential for success. By developing the current Transition Unit program in Bimberi Youth Justice Centre to address this skill development in the community will increase successful transition out of custody.	<b>Community Services Directorate</b> (Justice and Community Safety Directorate)
<b>5.5 Provide structured engagement opportunities for businesses, as prospective employers, to become involved with young people in detention through evidence-based mentoring models</b>	Building support networks in the community for young people in detention is important to ensure there is an established network of support as young people leave custody. Formal mechanisms to ensure community sector service providers are engaged in Bimberi Youth Justice Centre will work to improve the natural supports available to young people.	<b>Community Services Directorate</b> (Justice and Community Safety Directorate, Economic Development Directorate, and Chief Minister and Cabinet Directorate, Education and Training Directorate, the business community and community organisations)
<b>5.6 Develop formal partnerships with the community sector (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers) to flexibly coordinate services for children and young people in the youth justice system</b>	Authentic partnerships between government and community to monitor service effectiveness are essential. Through the establishment of formal partnerships better and more responsive decisions will be made to coordinate service delivery to young people.	<b>Community Services Directorate</b> (the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community)

## STRATEGY 6

### Creating an integrated whole-of-government, whole-of-community services system to support children and young people

A comprehensive and effective youth justice strategy that delivers the best for children, young people and their families relies on coordinated action by government and authentic participation of the community.

ACTION	EXPLANATION	LEAD AGENCY <i>supporting agencies and stakeholders</i>
<b>6.1 Develop and implement a multi-agency cross-sector statutory mechanism to ensure shared accountability and timely response across government agencies to improve outcomes for at risk young people with high and complex needs</b>	<p>By creating a cross-sector body (similar to the Queensland Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect Team), this action will enable a coordinated, multi-agency response where statutory intervention is required to assess and meet the protection needs of a child or young person. This initiative will also enforce whole-of-government accountability and the participation of sufficiently senior agency officers.</p>	<p><b>Director Generals' Vulnerable Families Committee Community Services Directorate</b> (Justice and Community Safety Directorate, ACT Policing, Health Directorate, Education and Training Directorate, and community organisations)</p>
<b>6.2 Develop across government early intervention strategies that drive coordinated responses to improve outcomes for children and young people at risk. Initial projects will include:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ across agency early identification of children and young people at risk (action 1.1)</li> <li>■ a new family engagement plan that recognises the important role of families in preventing offending behaviours (action 3.2)</li> <li>■ an enhanced youth justice single case management approach (action 4.1)</li> <li>■ a multi-agency and cross sector statutory mechanism to ensure timely responses for young people at risk with high and complex needs (action 6.1)</li> </ul>	<p>Early intervention is one of the most cost-effective means of reducing the rate of young people in detention, and improving outcomes for the community as a whole.</p> <p>Across government early intervention strategies will ensure joint effort to achieve agreed early intervention outcomes for children and young people.</p> <p>The earlier identification of children and young people at risk, and coordinated responses to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families will be the central focus.</p> <p>The maintenance of family relationships and effective out-of-home care will reduce the numbers flowing into the youth justice system. It will deliver benefits across the community not just in the justice sector.</p> <p>The Blueprint's performance and evaluation framework (action 6.5) will include performance indicators that measure the efficacy of across government interventions.</p>	<p><b>Community Services Directorate and Chief Minister and Cabinet Directorate</b> (all other Directorates, Children and Young People's Taskforce)</p>



ACTION	EXPLANATION	LEAD AGENCY <i>supporting agencies and stakeholders</i>
<b>6.3 Better coordinate youth justice and adult corrections services including the development of information sharing protocols and training opportunities</b>	By allowing adult corrections to understand the past of a young offender, this action will increase efficiency and improve the services provided to adult offenders or for improving case planning and management for transfers from Bimberi Youth Justice Centre to the Alexander Maconochie Centre.	<b>Justice and Community Safety Directorate and Community Services Directorate</b>
<b>6.4 Better coordinate youth justice and police services</b>	Police are vital in the decision making around diversion and in early contact. Better coordination of youth justice services and police processes will improve diversionary outcomes for children and young people.	<b>Justice and Community Safety Directorate, Community Services Directorate and ACT Policing</b>
<b>6.5 Develop a performance and evaluation framework for the Blueprint, including the ability to evaluate programs and services</b>	This action will ensure accountability and that the objectives and outcomes of the Blueprint are monitored. Evaluation of programs and services will ensure that resources can be targeted appropriately.	<b>Community Services Directorate</b> (Chief Minister and Cabinet Directorate)
<b>6.6 Create or strengthen existing information systems to support a whole-of-government approach as part of an information sharing framework</b>	By creating an information management system or enhancing an existing one (such as Supportlink), this action will ensure that the necessary infrastructure to support information sharing is in place.	<b>Community Services Directorate</b> (Justice and Community Safety Directorate, Health Directorate, Education and Training Directorate, and community organisations)

## STRATEGY 7

### Building a strong and smart workforce

Ensure the ACT Government and community sector have people with the necessary skills and capabilities to work with children and young people. A skilled youth justice workforce is critical to the delivery of effective youth justice outcomes.

ACTION	EXPLANATION	LEAD AGENCY (supporting agencies)
<b>7.1 Build on the workforce development and reform strategy under progress in the Community Services Directorate to include a core training needs analysis for government directorates</b>	This action will ensure that all directorates have the skills and capabilities they need to effectively work with children and young people.	<b>Community Services Directorate</b> (Justice and Community Safety Directorate, Health Directorate, the Commissioner of Public Administration and Education and Training Directorate)
<b>7.2 Enhance cultural awareness and competence training for government and community service providers and ensure that all staff participate</b>	By giving all relevant service providers an understanding and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other cultures, this action will ensure a workforce that can effectively help all children and young people in a way appropriate to their culture.	<b>Community Services Directorate</b> (the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse stakeholder groups)
<b>7.3 Provide staff with training and professional development in trauma and its impact on children and young people, including intergenerational trauma resulting from abuse, neglect and past discriminatory policies targeted at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people</b>	This action will increase support and professional development opportunities for professionals dealing with children and young people. By improving their confidence and skills in working with, and increasing their understanding of, children and young people at risk, this action will improve outcomes for ACT's youth at risk. It will initially be focussed on providing this training to school staff and police.	<b>Each Directorate</b> is responsible for facilitating its professional learning to ensure relevance for their own context (the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community)
<b>7.4 Develop and implement training plans in youth justice case management at Bimberi Youth Justice Centre and in community youth justice services</b>	This action strengthens the capacity and capability of staff to respond to the needs of children and young people and ensure a consistent approach to the provision of services.	<b>Community Services Directorate</b>



ACTION	EXPLANATION	LEAD AGENCY (supporting agencies)
<b>7.5 Partner with the community sector in providing and delivering training to maximise opportunities for relationship building and partnerships</b>	This action provides greater opportunity for sharing best practice and experience.	<b>Community Services Directorate</b> (community organisations)
<b>7.6 Actively recruit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at Bimberi Youth Justice Centre and in community youth justice services (in line with the ACT Public Service Employment Strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and relevant legislation)</b>	By increasing the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the youth justice workforce, this action will increase cultural awareness and ensure availability of culturally appropriate and safe practices for young people and their families.	<b>Community Services Directorate</b> (Justice and Community Safety Directorate, ACT Policing, Health Directorate, Education and Training Directorate, Chief Minister and Cabinet Directorate, Bimberi Youth Justice Centre, community organisations, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community)
<b>7.7 Implement core skills building for care and protection workers to more effectively respond to children and young people in care and protection who may be at greater risk of being involved with the youth justice system</b>	By expanding the skill set, knowledge and understanding of Care and Protection workers, this action will contribute to reducing the cross-over of children and young people from care and protection to the youth justice system. Building core skills will help to respond more effectively to children and young people in care and protection who may be at greater risk of being involved with the youth justice system.	<b>Community Services Directorate</b>
<b>7.8 Host a conference biennially to showcase best practice and innovative approaches in youth justice for all workers in the youth justice system across government and the community</b>	By hosting an annual conference with key relevant stakeholders, such as Australian Institute of Criminology, Australian Juvenile Justice Administrators, the youth justice workforce, those working in the youth justice system will have regular access to international and national best practice. This will also enable the ongoing transfer of research based knowledge into day-to-day practice.	<b>Community Services Directorate</b>

## Appendix A Logic model for the Blueprint

### STRATEGIES



Focusing on early intervention and prevention of contact with the youth justice system

Diverting children and young people from the formal justice system

Connecting and reintegrating children and young people into a home and the community through effective throughcare

Engaging and encouraging the participation of children, young people and their families

Creating an integrated whole-of-government, whole-of-community services system to support children and young people

Providing intensive individualised support to children and young people

Building a strong and smart workforce



### TARGETS



Reduce risk factors

Strengthen protective factors





# GOALS



Youth offending and re-offending is reduced


The over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the youth justice system is reduced

Children and young people are diverted from the formal youth justice system


Detention rates are reduced

Children and young people are given every possible chance to be successfully reintegrated into the community upon leaving detention

Children, young people and their families are helped early and provided with the supports and services they need



# LONG-TERM OUTCOMES



A community where fewer children and young people are engaged in or at risk of offending

Children and young people and their families, at risk of or involved in the youth justice system, receive every possible opportunity to get back on track and live healthy, happy and fulfilling lives

The ACT community is a safer and better place to live

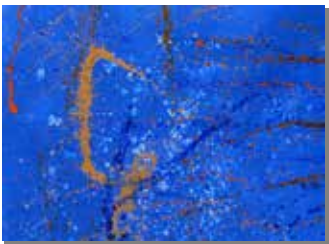
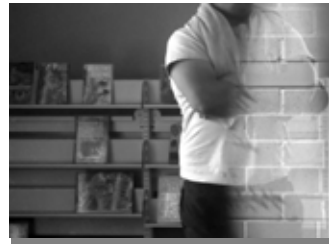
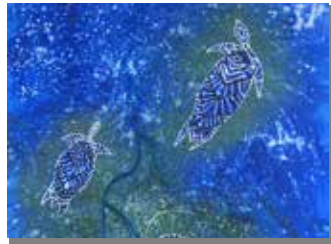


## Original artworks

The artwork incorporated in the design of the *Blueprint for Youth Justice in the ACT* created by young people as part of their involvement in programs at the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre.

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