

The logo graphic consists of a 3x3 grid of squares. The top row has three blue squares. The middle row has a white square, a grey square, and a blue square. The bottom row has a blue square, a white square, and a blue square. The text 'NDLERF' is positioned to the right of the grid, with 'NDLER' in white and 'RF' in orange.

NDLERF

Good practice framework - Policing illicit
drugs in rural & remote local communities

Monograph Series No. 15a

Funded by the National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund
An Initiative of the National Drug Strategy

Good practice framework

Policing illicit drugs in rural and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

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Introduction

The advice in this guide is intended for police and police organisations looking to review their approaches to policing illicit drug use and reducing drug-related harms among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in rural and remote areas. No one size fits all: communities, and situations in those communities, vary widely, so each must be treated on its merits. In applying advice from this guide to these varied situations, users should rely on their professional judgement, any available evidence, the experience of colleagues, and feedback from a range of community sources to guide their decision-making.

The complexity of police work in isolated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander settlements affected by high levels of substance abuse, violence and other offending behaviour is often not well understood by those who have not lived or worked in those areas. Good police practice at all levels – i.e. at the levels of individual practice, local, district or regional practice, and across the organisation – is critical to maximising the effectiveness of strategies to address illicit drug offending and reduce drug-related harms.

The advice and materials in this guide focus on opportunities to improve policing through the use of:

1. **Strategic policies and programs** requiring different sectors and jurisdictions to commit to coordinated approaches to drug control.
2. **Local, district and regional area planning** to prevent crime and promote community safety, including the reduction of illicit drug supply and use; and
3. **Individual police practices.**

Each of these elements is distinct, yet they do interact and influence each other. Typically they work best when coordinated as part of an holistic police approach to working in partnership with Aboriginal communities and other organisations to improve police effectiveness and improve outcomes. An holistic approach based on harm minimisation is outlined in Part 4.

The aim is to provide good practice materials – examples, checklists, scenarios – that can be adapted to suit particular locations and organisational and jurisdictional priorities.

Where relevant, the examples refer to the main report *Policing implications of cannabis, amphetamine and other illicit drug use in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities* (see Delahunty and Putt 2006).

Part one: Strategic policies and programs

The policing approaches used at each level must also be consistent with Australia's National Drug Strategy, which sets the context for policing illicit drug use and efforts to reduce drug-related harms. The strategy is a comprehensive framework that requires all sectors and jurisdictions to commit to an integrated approach to drug control.

The principle of *harm minimisation* has formed the basis of successive phases of the national strategy since its inception in the mid-1980s. Harm minimisation strikes a balance between activities aimed at reducing drug availability and use through:

- **supply reduction** strategies to disrupt the production and supply of illicit drugs, and the control and regulation of licit substances;
- **demand reduction** strategies to prevent the uptake of harmful drug use, including abstinence-orientated strategies and treatment to reduce drug use; and
- **harm reduction** strategies to reduce drug-related harm to individuals and communities.

It is important to recognise that harm minimisation does not condone drug use, but rather aims to mitigate established drug use. Harm minimisation encompasses a wide range of measures aimed at improving health, and social and economic outcomes for, individuals and communities.

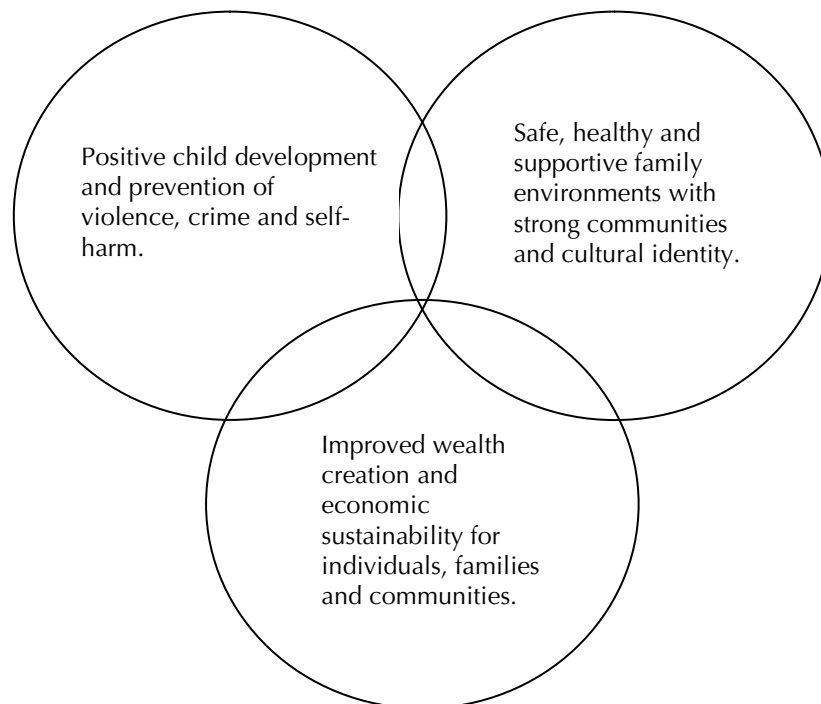
The need for strategic policies and programs to address illicit drug use among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in rural and remote areas is highlighted by the issues affecting those communities. Factors that predispose disadvantaged urban communities to high levels of hazardous substance use are often more pronounced in rural and remote areas. They include poverty, unemployment, poor health, limited education, poor infrastructure, fractured family life, stretched services, disputes over resources, and other characteristics of communities under stress. Regular employment, quality education, a cohesive family environment and other protective factors – that is, the kinds of factors that encourage users to regulate their own use and plan for the future – can be in short supply in struggling remote settlements or in neighbourhoods located in or near rural and regional centres.

Police can play a critical role in reducing drug-related harms and helping to create the right conditions for safe and healthy community life. The Productivity Commission's Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision identifies three priority outcomes for all sectors and jurisdictions working towards improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:

The Report's indicator framework is depicted in Figure 1. Three priority outcomes sit at the top of this framework. They reflect a vision for how life should be for Indigenous people that is shared by governments and Indigenous people alike. The outcomes are linked and should not be viewed in isolation from each other.

(SCRGSP 2005)

Figure 1: Priority outcomes



Source: Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage key indicators 2003 report.

The committee identifies action on substance abuse and misuse as one of several strategic areas for attention, and points to so-called 'headline indicators' that provide measures of major social and economic factors that need to improve if this vision is to be achieved. These indicators include much-needed improvements in life expectancy at birth, rates of disability, school retention and attainment, post-secondary education, employment, income, home ownership, suicide and self-harm, child protection, victim rates for crime, and imprisonment rates.

For many remote Aboriginal communities, and in settlements in or adjacent to rural and regional centres, conditions are far from ideal. Where settlements and neighbourhoods are affected by widespread behavioural dysfunction and abuse, rigorous law enforcement will have little lasting impact unless it is accompanied by other changes that seek to address the *causes* of offending. This requires the active participation of other services and agencies, and partnerships with communities themselves.

Broader strategic measures, that require different sectors and jurisdictions to work with communities and commit to coordinated approaches to drug control, include programs to enhance the effectiveness of:

- police work in rural and remote locations;
- Aboriginal-police relations; and
- drug law enforcement.

Police work in rural and remote locations

The principle aim of strategic policies and programs affecting police work in rural and remote locations is to improve police effectiveness by finding ways to:

- identify and reward the skills needed for these positions;
- establish remote area placements with proper training and induction;
- recruit, support and develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff;
- broaden the evidence base on police effectiveness; and
- build partnerships with other government agencies, non-government organisations and communities.

While there are numerous potential policy options in relation to all of these issues, it is critical that senior managers recognise and understand how working in rural and remote areas differs from police work in other environments. This requires that managers, including the senior executive, regularly get out to rural and remote areas and actively engage with police, other services and community sources to address issues of mutual concern.

Other critical elements in efforts to improve police work in rural and remote areas include:

- careful selection of staff to work in rural and remote communities, including, where possible, ways to consult communities about the kind of policing services required for their area;
- the involvement of the officer's partner and family in the recruitment and placement process;
- supportive induction and ongoing support networks;
- comprehensive training; and
- assisting officers and their families with the transition back to mainstream life at the end of their placement, including an ongoing role for officers who were effective in rural and remote environments.

Law enforcement organisations in all jurisdictions struggle to address the training needs of officers working in these environments. Western Australia has one of the most comprehensive pre-deployment training programs for its officers, which seeks to address critical training issues for remote area service delivery, including:

- *Forensic skills, exhibit handling and brief preparation* – to lift the rate of successful prosecutions of alleged offenders and prevent serious charges being downgraded.
- *Remote area training* – outback survival, applied 4WD operation and recovery, applied land navigation, applied land search, team building and field leadership, critical areas, operational planning and command.
- *Investigations* – crime investigation and crime scene management, sexual assault investigation, investigative interviewing, domestic violence, community by-laws and communication with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- *Child abuse investigations* – training officers in specialist child interviewing skills and specialised procedures.
- *Location-specific training* – recognising the differences from one community to the next, and the need to involve local Aboriginal leaders in the training and induction of their officers.

Getting the elements of these policies and programs right will ensure that police are well-placed to deliver in other strategic areas too – particularly in improving police-community relations and the effectiveness of drug law enforcement.

Aboriginal-police relations

Most Australian police organisations have wide-ranging programs and strategies designed to strengthen their links with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and improve outcomes for those communities. The effectiveness of these can vary widely. Some are little more than a series of ad hoc projects and programs with few links to related measures, whereas others strive to reconcile the various strands of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs to ensure gains in one area are, where possible, used to inform and build momentum in others. Often the main difference is the strength of the organisation's policy and planning process.

At the very least, a planned approach helps police demonstrate that the organisation has a positive commitment to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander initiatives are part of a broader vision rather than merely an exercise in damage control.

However, as the Queensland example set out in Chapter 7 of the main report shows, there are operational advantages to putting a balanced mix of strategic planning, coordination and review in place. For each element to complement and enhance the others, they must be:

- a. integrated into day to day operational policing systems and relevant to the practical needs of frontline police; and
- b. flexible enough to respond to the evolving challenges facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Drug law enforcement

Getting the right staff working in rural and remote settlements and developing a healthy working relationship with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are both essential pre-conditions to improving police drug law enforcement in outlying areas. Progress on one is highly unlikely without concurrent improvements to the other.

A leading example of an innovative strategic intervention, aimed at targeting the most harmful and damaging aspects of illicit substance abuse in Aboriginal communities, is the Northern Territory's Remote Communities Drug Strategy which is set out in Chapter 7 of the main report (Delahunty and Putt 2006). The Northern Territory's revised approach to policing drugs in isolated areas takes information and intelligence from local level policing initiatives and police work with those communities, and uses it to contribute to a broader understanding of drug issues across rural and remote areas. That information can then be used to support and enhance an evolving remote communities drug strategy across the Northern Territory.

The remote communities strategy, including the introduction of a 'drug desk' to collate and analyse intelligence from the remote or 'bush' stations, complements other measures to make drug policing more effective. The initiative highlights how:

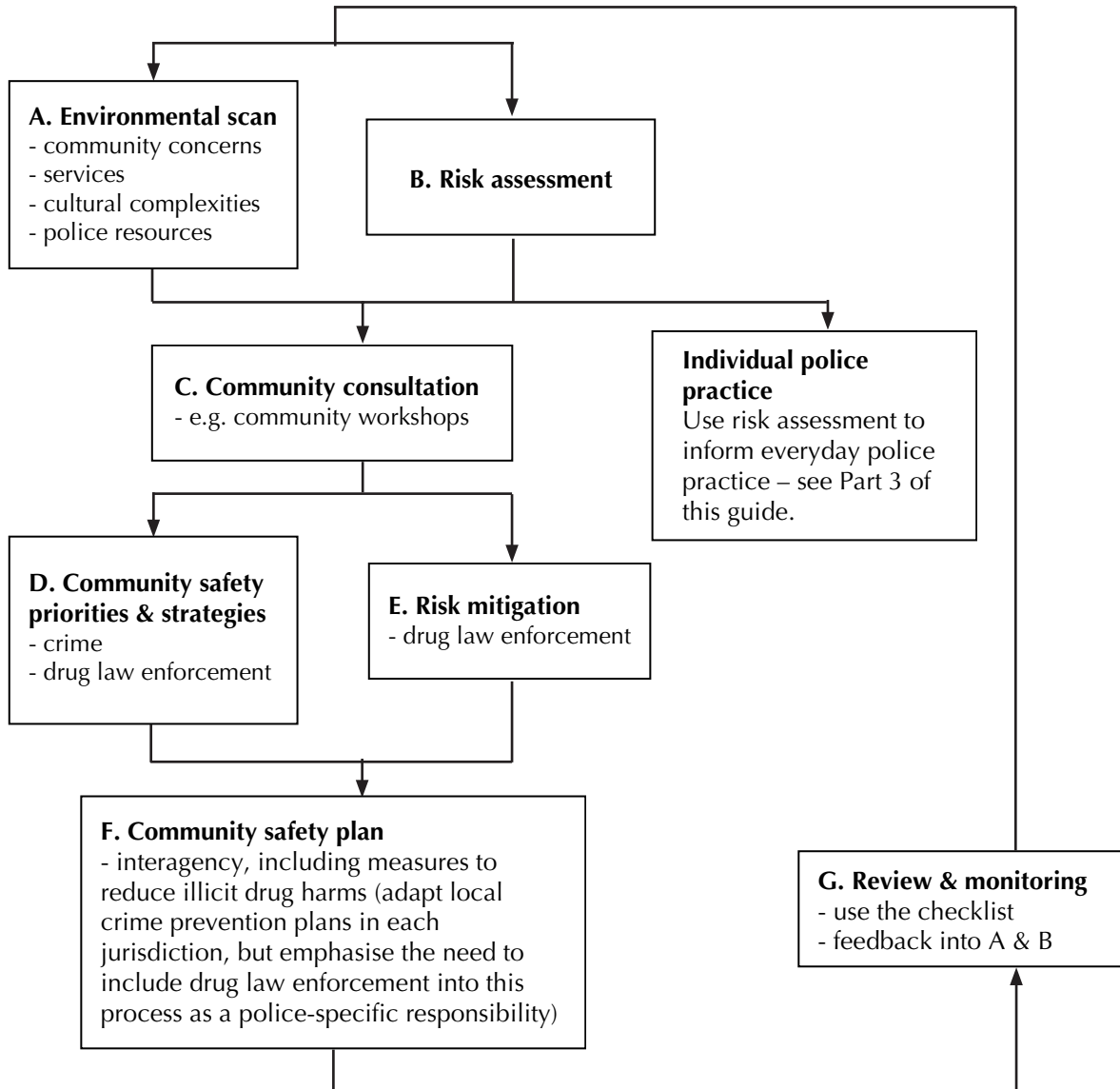
- careful planning and consultation;
- some additional but modest funding; and
- effective local police relationships with communities affected by drug abuse and high crime;

can be used to change the way police do business and deliver results for police and the communities they serve.

Part two: Local, district and regional planning

Local, district and regional area planning to prevent crime and promote community safety, including the reduction of illicit drug supply and use, should focus on ways to incorporate drug law enforcement into existing community safety initiatives (see figure 2).

Figure 2: Developing and monitoring plans



First stage

With planning, each local or regional area may have existing approaches to crime prevention and drug law enforcement, and different capacities to address identified priorities. The following checklists – for environmental scans and to assess risks associated with drug law enforcement situations – are provided as examples that can be modified to meet local or regional needs.

A. Assessment – environmental scan

- Environmental scan – **community concerns**
 - trends in local recorded crime
 - local intelligence on local and regional drug use and supply
 - drug-related issues raised in community forums and through consultations
- Environmental scan – **services**
 - local health and social services
 - contact with other criminal justice agencies
 - formal mechanisms for liaison; e.g. local drug prevention committee
- Environmental scan – **cultural complexities**
 - local cultural practices and beliefs
 - familial networks and politics
 - formal mechanisms for liaison with local Indigenous communities
 - Indigenous services and formal representatives
 - key brokers/interpreters
- Environmental scan – **police resources**
 - number of police
 - Aboriginal police liaison/community police
 - vehicles
 - communications

B. Risk assessment

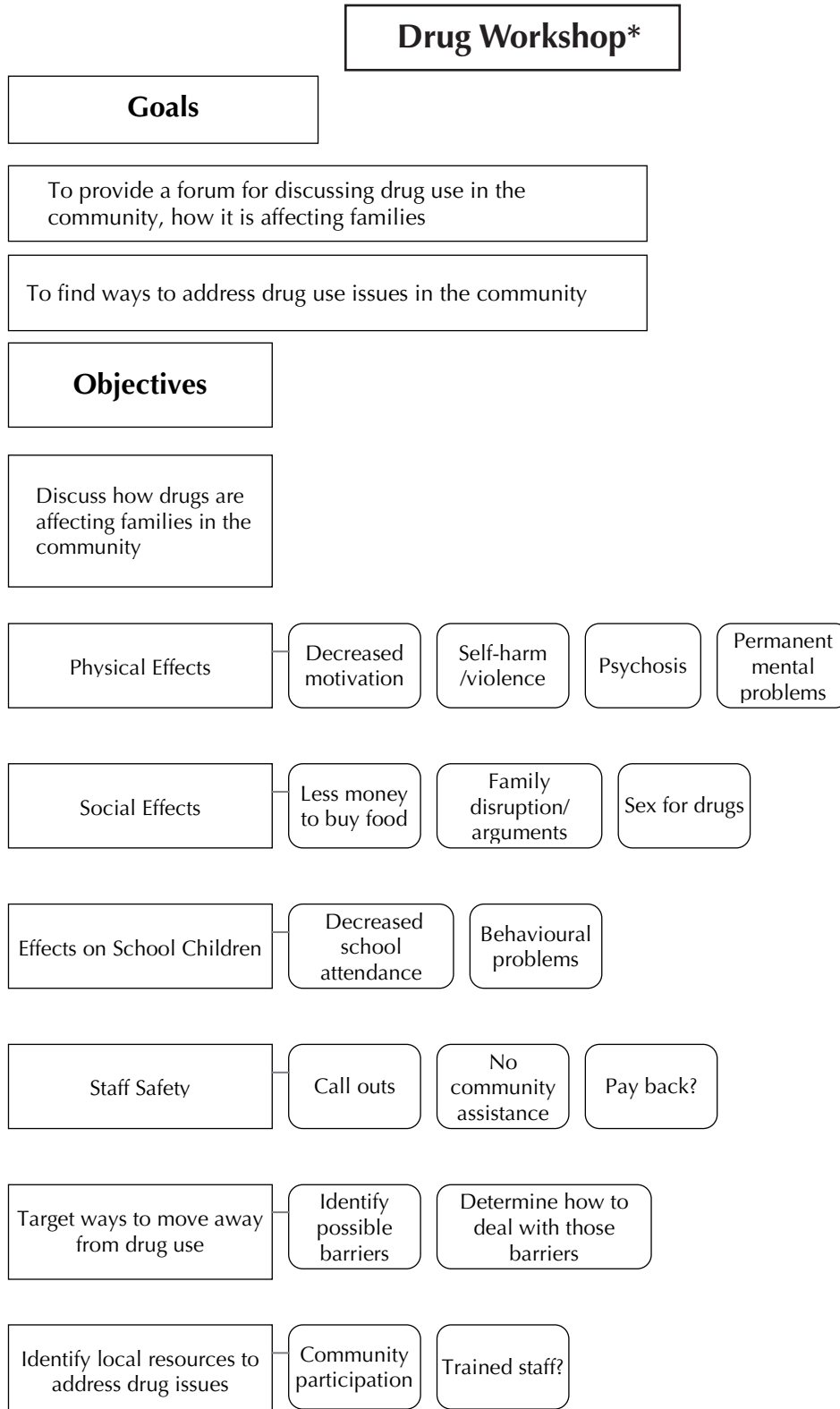
- *People affected by alcohol and other drugs*
 - when apprehended
 - in police custody, in vehicle and in cells
- *Group fighting*
 - multiple number of people affected by alcohol and other drugs
 - in public and inside
- *Search and seizure – of vehicles and of dwellings*
 - implicating sources of information
 - antagonism towards police

C. Community consultations

There are many ways that community consultations can occur, ranging from formal meetings and committees through to informal personal consultation. Where illicit drug use is assessed as being a potential concern to local communities, a workshop can be a useful tool to discuss the effects of illicit drug use and help identify how to address illicit drug demand and supply. Workshops can be an invaluable way to seek support, endorsement or feedback on drug and crime prevention plans. Police can be involved as instigators, leaders, facilitators, participants or as non-participating supporters of the initiative. It may also be very important to link the workshop or workshops to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander drug workers or agencies with expertise in illicit drugs. For example, the WA Drug and Alcohol Office has produced resources specifically focusing on Aboriginal ways of reducing harm from alcohol and other drugs – *Strong Spirit, Strong Mind*.

Below is an example of a drug workshop framework that was employed in a Western Desert community. The workshop involved local community members and local service providers in the local community, and was the first time that this particular community had held a forum to explicitly discuss illicit drugs.

Figure 3: Example of a drug workshop format



*Based on a workshop convened at Blackstone, Western Australia, 2004.

Second stage

Having undertaken various activities in the first stage, it is important to identify agreed priorities and strategies that will improve community safety and reduce risks associated with drug law enforcement. A community safety plan is a tangible statement of intent that can help ensure there are clearly articulated goals, activities and responsibilities related to crime prevention and drug law enforcement.

D. Community safety priorities and strategies

- Aboriginal community relations
 - regular meetings
 - duty statement and support for Aboriginal police liaison/community police
 - staff training and mentoring
- Drug law enforcement and prevention
 - medical checks
 - diversion
- Demand reduction
 - education – school
 - alternative activities
- Supply reduction
 - intercepting supplies
 - apprehending key suppliers

E. Risk mitigation

- Good practice:
 - communication – respecting cultural protocols
 - good intelligence
 - experienced local staff
 - using regional specialists
 - liaison with night patrol, sobering-up shelter
 - emergency medical contacts
 - clear role of Aboriginal police liaison/community police
 - involving key leaders and brokers
 - management support
 - monitoring plan
 - periodic reviews

F. Community safety plan

- Measures used depend on crime prevention strategies used in each jurisdiction, but features often include:
 - inter-agency participation
 - leadership and/or funding by other departments
 - police specific responsibilities as part of a broader mix of measures.

Third stage

In many respects, a plan is only the first step. It is always important to review and monitor how well the plan is being implemented and whether it is having unexpected consequences. Below is a checklist that can be used to assess progress at a state, regional or local level.

G. Review and monitoring with local community

Theme	Statewide	Regional	Local
Drug strategies			
Assess local drug crime – seizures, charges, information reports			
Assess intelligence network			
Formal and informal meetings with local community regarding priorities in drug law enforcement			
Protocols with health and other services re managing drug-related harms			
Agreed processes to manage and promote diversion of drug offenders			
Custodial safety			
Local or regional alternatives to arrest/charging			
Local or regional alternatives to incarceration			
Protocols to work with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander legal services, Aboriginal medical & community health services and other agencies			
Local complaints monitoring			
Use and/or promotion of other or 'alternative' services; e.g. community justice panels, elders, sobering-up centres, translators			
Improved prisoner screening processes and access to medical, support and counselling services in watch houses			
Assessment of local or regional monitoring systems (arrest and/or complaints)			
Communication and liaison			
Aboriginal police liaison/community police (or equivalent)			
Police/community meetings			
Relationships with other key agencies			
Participation in youth programs and activities (sporting and cultural)			
Respect for and/or participation in traditions/events/celebrations (not youth sporting/cultural events)			
Greater/improved support for Indigenous victims and witnesses			
Provide referral and/or advice on services available to Indigenous victims and witnesses			
Use of leaders and others with authority to convey information			

G. Review and monitoring with local community – continued

Theme	Statewide	Regional	Local
Education and training			
Local level cultural training – ongoing			
Resource list of Indigenous personnel			
Specialist training for those in communities with significant Indigenous population			
Specialist training for officers attending family violence incidents			
Encourage local Indigenous community members to become involved in training delivery			
Improving recruitment			
Strategies targeting local Indigenous applicants			
Use appropriate and respected Indigenous representatives on selection and other panels			
Preparatory courses			
Identifying racist tendencies in applicants			
Career development assistance			
Mentoring program for Indigenous recruits			
Safety and crime prevention			
Assess local crime trends			
Strategy to reduce family violence			
Multi-agency partnerships			
Assist Aboriginal community to develop diversionary programs and encourage their use			
Assist community to secure external funding for crime prevention initiatives			
Crime prevention and other information availability/ accessibility			

Source: Adapted from AGD APMC reconciliation plan working group checklist, 2004.

Part three: Individual police practice

Even in centres affected by high levels of substance abuse, crime and dysfunction, there is scope for police and other services to make a positive difference when working with communities to turn these problems around. For many 'bush cops' this is one of the most satisfying aspects of working in isolated areas.

A common difficulty for police is that, without firm community support, enforcement activity might be seen as heavy handed or unfair. In extreme situations, mistimed or poorly executed enforcement may even provoke a violent backlash. Winning over community support is no easy task if a high-need community is riven with factions and disputes, or the services provided by police and other organisations are disjointed or grossly under-resourced.

So what is the role of police in these situations? Individual communities vary widely from one area to the next. The options available to police will depend on what is available, and the potential to foster other supports. Police officers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community police or liaison staff should consider the following four principles in their approach:

1. Firstly, take community concerns seriously. Listen to residents, work with them, get them talking with each other about the issues. If communities can agree on a set of *priority* problems or issues and what their expectations are of police and liaison officers, this gives staff in those roles something concrete to work with and helps enhance the legitimacy of those positions in the eyes of the community. Law enforcement strategies that have the backing of the community can enhance police authority to deal with obstruction and resistance to those strategies.
2. Secondly, respond to community concerns with law enforcement measures that provide some respite to the stressed communities. That is, look for opportunities to use conventional law enforcement to target the small number of people that give residents in these communities the greatest deal of grief. This means giving priority to arresting and prosecuting the dealers who 'rip off' users and have no allegiances to the community, the bashers who inflict grievous injuries, and other harms identified by community sources as priority policing issues.
3. Thirdly, build on the goodwill created by selective but fair use of discretion and other confidence-building measures. Work with the community by convening forums and canvassing informally, to identify the kind of district, regional and other organisational supports needed to sustain and enhance policing strategies.
4. Finally, prevention. In most areas police (and sometimes health and community-based services such as community night patrols) are often the only service readily available to intervene in case of a crisis. Police are well placed to provide leadership to other agencies, to educate them on the issues and bring them together with key figures in the community. It is not the police role to provide welfare, child protection, mental health and drug counselling services, but building community capacity in this regard would considerably enhance the options available to police.

The aim throughout is to work with community leaders, and encourage them to build on the community's strengths and enhance residents' capacities to regulate and address problems themselves. This is preferable to simply listing communities' needs and getting agencies to respond. The former approach is developmental. It identifies strengths and builds capacity. The latter merely responds to clients' needs and often does little to prevent problems recurring. Ideally, interventions by police and other agencies should aim to build capacity and help communities address their own needs. This requires resources and strategic planning.

These principles underpin the following police practice scenarios outlined in the main report:

- a. Small towns, big problems (from Chapter 2)
- b. Suspects and critics (from Chapter 3)
- c. Intoxicated and in custody (from Chapter 4)
- d. Recruiting the right person for the job (from Chapter 5)
- e. Living and working in isolation (from Chapter 5)
- f. Anxious and inconsolable (from Chapter 6)
- g. A change for the better (from Chapter 7)

When considering these scenarios, remember every situation is different and must be treated on its merits. Use your professional judgement, any available evidence and the experience of colleagues to guide your decisions when dealing with new situations.

a) Ch 2 – Police practice scenario

Small towns, big problems

You are the Officer in Charge of a rural police district. There is a small country town in the district (approx. 200 residents) with a two-officer police station. Nearby is a former mission settlement which is now a self-determining Aboriginal community (200 residents). There is a history of race-based clashes in and around the town. Relations are generally poor between the police and Aboriginal residents. You receive information that a large quantity of cannabis has been brought in to the Aboriginal community for sale to local users.

How should you approach this situation?

Suggested approach

- Early in your posting, identify community leaders in both communities and attempt to build rapport with them.
- Drug raids are dynamic events which require a high level of forward planning. Generally a tactical group will need to be formed consisting of members from surrounding stations and at least one detective. In exceptional circumstances staff from specialist drug units, drug detection dogs and other specialist staff may be needed.
- It may be advisable to act as a liaison between the community and police. Distancing 'local' police from the actual 'raid' has the tactical advantage of maintaining firm control of the overall operation while enabling you to maintain the respect and goodwill you have built up with the community.
- It is generally not possible to include community leaders in the planning, but plan for the community response. There may be scope to brief elders or other community leaders as the operation is occurring to explain what is happening and why.
- Depending on the general level of understanding of policing procedures, it may be necessary to point out the reasons why individual premises are being targeted (without giving away source information). This will allay suspicions that individuals are being singled out for no particular reason.
- By way of follow up, seek out the contacts that have been made earlier and attempt to address any issues they may have in relation to the operation. Maintaining open communication helps dispel myths, builds better relationships and can be a good intelligence gathering technique.

- Generally speaking the whole community will be aware of what has transpired and who has been arrested or reported in relation to offences. It may be useful to approach local schools in the short to medium term to run classes on substance abuse in conjunction with teachers. The children will be well aware of the punitive aspects of drug possession, growing and trafficking. It would be appropriate to provide some education on the subject.
- Local media coverage could potentially inflame already simmering racial tensions. Take care in how you present issues associated with the operation and its outcomes.

b) Ch 3 – Police practice scenario

Suspects and critics

Surveillance of a suspected drug house indicates various people use the house as a place to stay, fence stolen goods, purchase drugs or use drugs. Friends of teenagers living at the house often drop by to watch TV. Visitors' vehicle registration details are noted, and at various times over the following weeks the drivers are stopped and their vehicles searched. Those using the house include a number of Aboriginal people. Local Aboriginal leaders air claims in the local press that police "constantly harass our kids". One woman says she is often stopped by police when she drives her grandson's car and was recently stopped three times in one day. A senior officer raises these concerns at a regular Aboriginal community forum convened by the local council, but is assured that the critics in the press do not represent 'the majority' of Aboriginal people in the town. In fact, the forum leaders know of places where children as young as 14 years old buy and use drugs, and want to know why police won't act. The high school's Aboriginal liaison officer at the forum confirms that cannabis smoking is common among older students at the school.

As the local commander, what can you do?

Suggested approach

- It is common for regular forums to be made up of one group (such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees of government agencies) and not necessarily represent all or even most residents in a community. Do not question the forum's credentials. Simply explain the need for you to independently meet everyone with concerns about police and policing.
- As the commander or officer in charge, consider calling a meeting at an agreed location to speak directly with those affected. People appreciate senior police taking the time to speak with them.
- If the drug house and the house where 14 year olds obtain drugs is the same/different, explain the process needed for police to gather evidence and then execute search warrants if there is enough evidence to obtain one.
- Inform parents, representatives and others that if their children are caught during a raid they may be charged. Tell them to have their children avoid the premises for this reason. This does not compromise any future police operation.
- Explain the serious consequences for young people involved, even if it is likely they would be cautioned for minor drug possession and use.
- Make it clear that you take their concerns seriously, and require their help to reduce drug use and gather the evidence needed to act.

Consider the following situation:

At home and at risk

Consider the following situation. A non-Aboriginal barman at a hotel in an isolated town tells young Aboriginal girls at the pub that he has money and owns property 'down south'. He offers them drinks and invites them home. Over time, his housing department residence becomes known as a place to get free drinks and drugs. Girls as young as 12 years old are seen coming and going at all hours, and a number live there more or less permanently. There are rumours that young girls offer male visitors sex for money or drugs. Police say they are 'watching' the barman but don't seem to act. None of the girls complain. They say the man has everything they want – money, food, grog, drugs and a place to sleep. Nor do their mothers make a fuss – some even say they trust the man because he 'looks after' their kids, providing food and a place to sleep.

- *What are the policing issues?*
 - *How can police help change this situation for the better?*
 - *Who else can help?*
- Invite anyone with concerns to provide specific details either immediately after the meeting or at another time.
 - Invite the thrice-stopped grandmother to speak with the nearest police Aboriginal liaison staff or an Aboriginal liaison officer in the State Ombudsman's office to ascertain if she wishes to formally complain – then explain the processes and alternatives.
 - If there is insufficient information to act on the suspected drug house, what steps are needed to protect or avoid compromising the operation?
 - Check whether the house is a housing department property and whether the housing authorities are likely to act.
 - If there is sufficient evidence to show a housing department house is being used for drug supply and receiving stolen goods, consult the department about warning the tenants or moving them to another location. If continual noise is a problem, consider issuing a noise abatement order and working with local council on longer-term strategies to reduce nuisance to neighbours.
 - Consider asking the local media to run a story inviting the public to provide information about locations where drugs are being supplied.
 - Possibly explain the drug offender diversion options – indicate that police are interested in working with others to encourage substantive change, not just supply disruption/reduction.

General advice

Effective communication is critical to bridging the gap between police and the community, and in encouraging groups within a divided community to talk with each other about common concerns. Communities that work well with police tend to have the confidence to raise their concerns directly at all levels of the local police command – with senior and specialist officers, Aboriginal police liaison staff and frontline staff. In addition to helping sort out any grievances quickly and effectively, broadening the range of formal and informal contacts can help break down any reluctance to approach police for help in dealing with difficult and sensitive issues.

c) Ch 4 – Police practice scenario

Intoxicated and in custody

You arrest a young man outside the public bar at the annual country show of a regional town. He had been shouting and threatening one of the bar staff, then turned on your colleague when she tried to speak with him. The man was very agitated and sweating heavily, and appeared to be intoxicated. He says he is from another region. Back at the station he insists on contacting the Aboriginal legal service. The request causes some surprise as he does not 'look' Aboriginal. There is no legal service in the town.

What are your options?

Suggested approach

- If a search reveals substances, then caution and initiate procedure to interview, charge and bail as appropriate. Check eligibility for diversion for minor drug offences.
- Ask if he is in town with someone who could come to the station to act as a support person. If not, offer to contact volunteers on a list of Aboriginal cell visitors in the charge area.
- If there is no list, or no visitor on the list can come or be contacted, then consult the nearest station with regular access to an Aboriginal legal service or contact the legal service directly by telephone. Also offer a list of local lawyers.
- Ask whether he would like to contact someone in his home town or elsewhere to speak with or make arrangements to collect him.
- Order a meal and feed him. If he is likely to remain in custody, offer a shower and clean clothes if there are facilities.
- Breathalyser ... not needed to assess whether he appears affected by alcohol or other drugs.
- Ask about his health and any medications. If he was found with substances, ask about his drug use. If he complains of illness or there is an obvious injury, or if he is obviously unwell, pale (shock) or has a high temperature, arrange for a medical examination or take him to an outpatient clinic or emergency department for assessment and treatment. Be alert to suicidal behaviour or anything indicating he is likely to harm himself.

General advice

- Immediately start the arrangements for his next port of call (someone to pick him up, a taxi etc) after he leaves the police station right from the word go.
- Do everything with the intention of keeping him in custody for the shortest possible period.
- Do not leave him alone.
- Ensure training in observation, first aid and supervision skills is up to date for all officers, including training for first aid in mental health.¹ Talk with local alcohol and other drug services to assess the potential to involve them in delivering components of the training with a view to adapting materials to local circumstances, encouraging discussion on problem solving and strengthening police links with professionals from other agencies who are dealing with related issues.

¹ For an example of a mental health first aid course, see resources developed by the Australian National University at www.mhfa.com.au – including Kitchener B & Jorm A 2002 *Mental Health First Aid Manual*, Centre for Mental Health Research, Australian National University.

- If there is no Aboriginal cell visitors scheme in place, initiate discussions with community leaders and other service providers on ways to get one started and expand the range of prevention, first-response, referral and diversion options.

d) Ch 5 – Police practice scenario

Recruiting the right person for the job

You are tasked to develop a job description and list desirable attributes for recruiting a community constable or liaison officer to work in a traditionally-oriented Aboriginal community. Previous attempts to recruit and retain community members in the job were unsuccessful. Illicit drug and inhalant abuse is widespread, and there are frequent deliveries of 'sly grog' despite liquor controls. Almost every family has members who use drugs or have criminal convictions.

What do you recommend? What pitfalls should be avoided?

Suggested approach

Start by reviewing the earlier attempts to fill the position. Include those directly involved in the recruitment process, as well as community and other agency representatives who might have some insight into how the process could be improved.

Consider the following in your discussions:

- The standing or respect needed for the community constable or liaison officer to be effective.
- The pros and cons of choosing someone from within the community, taking account of the history and group make-up of the community.
- The need for a history of relatively low levels of adverse contact with police, and what prior offences might disqualify potential candidates.
- The level of education needed to work in a policing environment.
- The adequacy of documents setting out the taskings or duties expected of the successful candidate.
- Opportunities to involve the community in the selection process, and advising on how to go about this.
- Checking the community's expectations and whether the taskings and duties for the position can address their needs – this can provide an opportunity to explain the limitations of the position and discuss the community and police support needed to make the recruit more effective.

With respect to advising on the training needs of the successful candidate, consider:

- The level of formal, police academy or college-based training available for community constable or liaison staff.
- Whether the training would be as part of a group. If not, consider the need for other supports such as inviting a senior member of the community to accompany the trainee or providing an officer experienced in the complexities of traditional life and its policing implications to assist the trainee.
- The need for a course of a fixed duration and relatively fixed content to enable a degree of re-socialisation. This cannot be done in a few days at the nearest police station.

- Consulting community partners (elders, justice groups, community-police liaison forums, Aboriginal services, etc) on developing course content involving members of the community.
- Opportunities for ongoing training and whether it is scheduled, rather than fitted in to suit operational needs.
- The scope of training required. Generally training is limited to police-oriented concepts rather than providing or facilitating general educational requirements.
- Specialist training on conflict resolution and dealing with people affected by alcohol and other drug issues, including practical peer-based training provided by more experienced colleagues and staff from other organisations working with substance affected people.

Your advice should also include an explanation of any ongoing organisational and local supports likely to be needed for this position. These might include:

- Ways to support the strategic use of the position, such as community consultative mechanisms (formal or informal) and/or internal mechanisms such as reviews of police data highlighting particular issues or needs.
- Ongoing mentoring support from a senior officer (either locally or elsewhere), a more experienced community constable or liaison officer, and/or respected members of the community.
- Periodic reviews (formal or informal) involving the officer in charge, other service providers and community members to check the position is being used in a way that is consistent with their respective expectations and needs.
- Opportunities to network and develop proposals in conjunction with Aboriginal staff in neighbouring commands or from other agencies, and temporary transfers to broaden their work experience.

Police and community constables or liaison officers who have worked well in other locations are a particularly valuable resource. Consider advising on ways to better apply that expertise locally, perhaps through:

- Listing the activities of police officers and community constables or liaison officers who have found ways to successfully deal with common issues in other remote areas – and include those officers' current contact details.
- Creating email networks and forums for sharing ideas and addressing issues.
- Documenting the knowledge and experience gained by staff *before* they move to other locations.
- Using experienced officers to relieve temporary vacancies in remote areas when permanent staff take leave or go for training.
- Formalising their role as mentors for new recruits, even if this mentoring takes place by email or phone.

There are also lessons to be learned from failed initiatives, poor practice, errors of judgement and accidents. Police services generally review critical incidents. Using the key issues from these incidents can provide valuable lessons for new recruits. For instance:

A heavily intoxicated man from an outlying Aboriginal community was driving drunkenly (but slowly) through the main street of a remote outback town. Police saw the erratic driving and followed, turning on their lights and sirens. The driver accelerated along the main street, with police in pursuit. On the outskirts of town the vehicle swerved onto a dirt road at high speed, lost control and overturned, killing one of the passengers.

What other options might normally be considered in situations like this? What training could assist in encouraging police to consider those options? How might an incident such as this impact on the police-community relationship and how could this be managed?

e) Ch 5 – Police practice scenario (ii)

Living and working in isolation

A remote area police station has had a high number of stress and fatigue-related absences. Officers at the station routinely conduct many long-range, roving patrols. These often involve long hours of overtime dealing with violent substance-affected offenders. Officers are absent from home for up to a week at a time. One officer's partner is a nurse who initially moved with him to the settlement expecting to work at the local health clinic, but left after finding that she was unsuited to remote area work. Another officer has a partner and young children living in the police compound. Accommodation for school and health clinic staff are located elsewhere. Many of the teachers are newly qualified and most of the clinic staff are on short-term contracts. Concerns about isolation, safety and work conditions contribute to high staff turnover.

What can be done to address these issues?

Suggested approach

Even the most attractive remote area postings can be hard to fill. The broad range of demands on police in isolated areas, the inherent dangers in this environment and the pressures on officers' families all impact on remote area recruitment and retention. It is important to attract the 'right' staff, not just any staff. Officers need to:

- be accepted by the community (even when they are off-duty);
- cope with working in isolated situations; and
- work effectively in team environments with little back-up and few resources.

An initial rotation or trial period (say 3 months) may help both the officer and the police service determine whether the officer can work effectively in that location.

When recruiting and placing officers to remote settlements you should consider:

- The incentives needed to get staff to these locations, such as better pay, extra leave to compensate for the time needed to get to and from remote locations, flights out of the area for members and their direct families on days off, high quality and secure housing for families of staff living in the communities, and schooling subsidies for children who complete their education elsewhere.
- The available employment opportunities for partners or spouses can provide an important additional incentive and may help extend a couple's tenure beyond their minimum placement periods. Get to know potential employers in the area to assist the partner with introductions and advice.
- Assessing the facilities for staff in the settlement, the available incentives for remote area postings and the experience of other remote areas with better recruitment and staff retention.
- Auditing to check for any particular hardships affecting conditions in that location, such as the frequency of major disturbances, the adequacy of arrangements for removing violent offenders, the adequacy of other services in the area, and other practical issues affecting officers' ability to work effectively.

- The quality of supervision and support, both on and off-site. This might include mentoring by senior officers who understand the challenges of working in remote areas, yet are outside of the immediate line of command.
- The availability of suitably qualified and experienced relief staff to enable permanent staff to take leave or attend training. One option might be to create a pool of officers from those who have worked effectively in remote areas in the past, but have left those areas for promotion or other reasons.
- Involving officers' partners in the recruitment process and providing mentors and supports for officers and their families throughout the posting.

Preparation is essential when moving officers and their families to a new area. Successful applicants must be given a realistic explanation of conditions at their new posting. Induction processes need to be comprehensive and relevant to the tasks being undertaken, such as courses to cover specialist vehicles or equipment used in the area (e.g. 4WDs, non-standard firearms, public order equipment), comprehensive and locally relevant cultural awareness training, general bushcraft skills and survival techniques, and other specialist training (e.g. long distance driving techniques, crash investigation techniques, forensic investigation techniques, and custody training).

On arrival, officers (and their families) should be:

- Properly introduced to members of the community, especially elders, elected leaders and other senior people. This might include informal gatherings such as community barbecues and sporting events.
- Provided with an introduction to local culture and history, preferably a structured induction process involving key local people in the design and delivery of that training. This cannot be done in a few hours at the nearest police station. This is additional to general information about Aboriginal culture and cultural differences that officers should receive *before* transferring. Some initial travel through country surrounding the community, with elders, will help contextualise many social lores and demonstrate an interest in community and culture that extends beyond the immediate service-delivery environment.
- Given realistic goals to achieve in relation to getting residents to talk with each other and work with police on reducing crime.

Longer term planning might include:

- Priority transfers to postings of the officers' choosing once their tenure is complete.
- Providing career opportunities that recognise the unique basket of skills officers obtain through working in remote areas.
- Strategies to minimise the length of unfilled vacancies such as requiring a lengthy notice period for all transfers.
- Ways for officers to transfer the knowledge they have built up over an extended placement, including cultural and other local knowledge. Consider the scope for a one or two week hand-over so the contacts and expertise of the departing officer are not lost, and proper recording of contacts, introductions and other key information to provide a template for future transfers.
- Offering debriefing and other support to assist the transition for officers and families moving from extended placements at isolated areas to busy urban environments.

Note on cross-cultural training

Although locally-based cross-cultural training and induction is critical to making new arrivals more effective from the earliest opportunity, broader training is also needed. For instance, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in all areas are often regarded by non-Aboriginal people to be either 'traditional' or 'modern'. This misconceived dichotomy can lead to assumptions that anyone who uses modern facilities is not 'traditional' and therefore unable to legitimately claim 'traditional rights' such as subsistence hunting of native animals.

A better understanding of alternative modernities can help break down this psychologically damaging dichotomy. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander modernities, both urban and rural, often maintain distinctive meanings of 'family', child-rearing practices, work practices, concepts of time, processes of decision-making and forms of sociality. Sometimes these cultural differences can be interpreted by non-Aboriginal people as potentially criminal behaviours. If police and other organisations work *with* these cultural differences rather than against them, beneficial things can happen.

In encouraging discussions about reducing crime, it is important to talk with Aboriginal people about Aboriginal perceptions of crime. This includes conduct that might not be regarded by some Aboriginal people as 'offences' – e.g. people who can't afford to use the town mechanic driving without lights, brakes or registration. While police could enforce the law in situations caused by a lack of money or access to resources, alternatives may lead to better outcomes. For example, some jurisdictions allow disqualified drivers in rural and remote areas to apply for a conditional licence to enable them to participate in paid employment – and, over time, pay off the fines that led to their licence being disqualified in the first place. Queensland Police Service is involved in a good example of what can be achieved when services talk with each other and work with communities to reduce this kind of crime:

Case study from chapter 7: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Licensing Program

Queensland police analysis of custody information indicates that unlicensed driving is a significant contributor to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arrests in remote, isolated areas. Repeat offences result in higher incarceration rates, adding to Aboriginal over-representation. Police believe increasing the number of licensed drivers in remote areas has the potential to reduce Aboriginal incarceration in these areas by as much as 6%.

Revising written and oral licence testing programs made the process more accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and providing practical testing in applicants' local area or community greatly reduces the costs of getting a licence. Cost can be a major impediment. Police estimate that residents in isolated and remote areas pay an average of \$1,000 to access testing at a regional centre. For example, a recent licensing program visit to Darnley Island cost \$2,000 to conduct 83 license transactions and renewals, but saved the islanders involved about \$80,000 in travel and related costs.

f) Ch 6 – Police practice scenario

Anxious and inconsolable

Police attend a late night call for urgent assistance in a remote Aboriginal community. A woman meets them at the door of her home, saying that her partner has 'gone off the edge' and is trying to hurt himself. He has been out for a couple of days 'smoking with his mates'. She is concerned for him, for the safety of her children and for other young relatives staying in the house. The man appears very tense, very anxious and inconsolable. He is taken to the health clinic but there is no doctor available. Clinic staff refuse to admit him while he is so intoxicated because he has threatened them in the past. There has been no drug and alcohol counsellor at the clinic since the last one quit months earlier. A regional mental health service has Aboriginal outreach workers, but they rarely visit.

As the officer in charge, what should you do?

There is a need for proper clinical assessment and a period of observation, preferably under medical supervision. While some jurisdictions allow police to hold intoxicated people in protective custody, this is arguably far from ideal. Nor is it safe or reasonable to take the man home in his current state.

Issues for police to consider include:

- Address the clinic's immediate concerns about security by ensuring there are enough police or other people present to protect clinic staff.
- Work with the clinic on options for seeking further advice on how best to assess and treat the man's intoxication (considering the possibility of acute cannabis intoxication), including telephone advice on treatment options; there might be a need to move him to a larger centre.
- Check whether there is a relative or friend who may be able to assist.
- If there is a cell visitors scheme in place, consider whether there are volunteers on the list who might be able to help. Take care to ensure their safety, and avoid putting physically frail volunteers at risk.

Soon after the incident:

- Tell the man and his family about the likely legal consequences of future drug use, the scope for diversion and any appropriate treatment options.
- Talk with clinic staff and local leaders about upgrading security at the clinic and other contingencies to better assist in responding to substance-related incidents. Consider the potential to adapt the cell visitors scheme to supplement the clinic's upgraded security.
- Use inter-agency forums to press for existing drug counselling and mental health vacancies to be filled, and suggest opportunities for other services to work with community organisations and leaders to develop strategies to improve outcomes.
- Work with community leaders and other service providers on expanding the range of prevention, first-response, referral and diversion options, including the scope to establish a community night patrol, involve justice groups or elders in outcomes, and other strategies to reduce drug use and drug-related harms.
- Seek community feedback on current policing strategies and support for trying new approaches. Incorporate these into regional or statewide policing initiatives, such as establishing a mechanism for sharing, analysing and acting on drug-related intelligence across a number of remote settlements.

Referral options can vary widely, depending on what is available in the community. These can include women's shelters, sobering-up centres, alcohol counselling and education, government-run placement and support centres and other family support programs. Meet and work with these bodies to develop agreements and protocols with respect to mutual clients and shared responsibilities. Talk with alcohol counselling centres about the need for cannabis programs and assist in identifying where funding might be obtained.

g) Ch 7 – Police practice scenario

A change for the better

You are posted to command a police station with about 50 officers in a large country town (pop. 15,000+). Many of your officers are long-term residents with close social and family ties to the community. Illegal drug use is widespread at all levels in the community. The area is generally affluent and considered a 'nice' place to live. Aboriginal people are among the poorest residents. You hear the head of a local Aboriginal organisation say it is a waste of time trying to work with police and that those with money and influence can get away with anything, while the poor and Aboriginal just 'boost the arrest statistics'.

How could this situation be changed for the better?

Suggested approach

No one person or strategy can change perceptions of an ingrained police culture overnight. Even if you succeed in shifting attitudes about police, there may be situations where family members and friends of officers are employed by local companies owned by individuals with dubious connections. Such relationships can present multiple dilemmas.

Consider the following:

- What are the immediate challenges facing your command?
- What is the mix of skills needed to create a healthier work environment?
- How can you identify and attract the right people?
- What incentives and opportunities will encourage them to stay, with a view to expanding the pool of talent needed for future improvement and leadership.

Talk with other service providers, including education and health, about their efforts to work with the community and create a more positive relationship with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents. It is important to recognise that:

- 'Nice' country centres can sometimes have a very different style of policing to so-called 'tough' postings. Over time, local police can develop a dual philosophy to policing.
- Staff selected to go to a town such as this should be carefully scrutinised, especially those wanting to 'retire' into positions or those with less than exemplary conduct records.
- Good leadership is critical at all levels. Consider the need for incentives to attract high quality officers.
- Consider the scope for policies and oversight positions to ensure fair and equal treatment of those coming into contact with police.
- Review and rigorously enforce 'length of tenure' policies as a check against officers becoming too close to the community and check for potential conflicts of interest involving officers holding positions of influence in the community.

- Integrity issues should be carefully monitored in communities by an outside source to ensure proper practices are followed.

In attempting to build bridges with local Aboriginal residents, start by getting communities – including critics of police – to talk with each other, making it clear you are open to addressing any policing issues they raise. When issues are raised, talk about what police can do and what is needed to put those strategies in place. Use frontline policing to underpin efforts to build bridges, as your work with communities should be central to the policing role, not merely an adjunct to it. Use feedback to refine and improve those strategies.

Depending on the circumstances, 'bridge-building' strategies might include:

- Tasking Aboriginal, senior and specialist staff to extend the range and diversity of links with local Aboriginal residents and organisations to encourage discussion on policing issues. Emphasise the need to get residents talking about the problems, and that police are keen to work on solutions. It may take some time before communities believe you are serious about this.
- Convene meetings or use existing forums to talk with Aboriginal residents about the crime affecting them, discuss policing strategies that might help, and look for ways to incorporate those strategies in your day to day policing. If residents identify domestic and family violence as an issue, look for frontline strategies to focus police efforts on the most violent or prolific offenders. If truancy is high, task staff to work with the schools. If drugs are a problem, look for ways to intervene. Where necessary, request specific resources or help from senior police management and other agencies to implement the strategies.
- Look for agents of change at all levels within your ranks. This might include placing younger officers with local Aboriginal organisations (e.g. youth, health or domestic violence services, drug and alcohol services, etc) on arrival in the command, as part of an extended training and induction process. If properly planned and implemented, providing opportunities for local organisations to get involved in the induction process can give inexperienced officers a unique training opportunity, bring a fresh perspective to the established policing culture and provide important potential community partners with a 'friendly' face to approach with issues.
- Look for other opportunities to involve Aboriginal staff and local residents in training non-Indigenous police. Formal training and induction might include training days and camps, organised visits to local Aboriginal services, and sending staff to community meetings and forums. Other opportunities include using staff musters and briefings to alert staff to key events such as funerals or gatherings for festivals or NAIDOC (National Aboriginal Islander Day Observance Committee) celebrations.
- Informal links can also be built through tasking police patrols to attend the predominantly Aboriginal areas of the community in times other than when responding to incidents, such as through 'goodwill patrols' to known swimming or fishing spots. Social and sporting events such as police-community barbecues, football matches or 'Black and Blue' golf days can further break down the barriers.
- Other forms of partnerships could be forged between community stakeholders, with the police acting as a broker of these types of agreements. In this way the police come to be seen as impartial and the facilitator of a bi-partisan approach. An example may be to form a progress society or a standing committee within council to address these issues.
- Aboriginal community members could be encouraged to take part in local mainstream organisations or stand for local council.
- Other agencies may need to be involved in addressing longer-term issues. Work with public housing authorities on allocation policies to enclaves of any one demographic. Work with schools to encourage breakfast programs for young people skipping school. Work with youth

services on providing positive role models and opportunities to steer young offenders away from crime. Work with local CDEP and other Aboriginal training groups on employment and training initiatives, including taking on and training Aboriginal staff for administrative duties or mentoring young people for a career as a police officer.

Part four: Putting policy into practice

The National Drug Strategy's *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Complementary Action Plan 2003-2006* calls for all sectors, including law enforcement, in all jurisdictions to apply a range of strategies to reduce illicit drug use and drug-related harms. This requires police and other services use a range of *harm minimisation* principles to underpin any efforts to reduce substance use and minimise substance-related harms:

'Harm minimisation' refers to policies and programs designed to reduce drug-related harm. The aim of this approach is to improve health, social and economic outcomes for both the community and the individual. It encompasses a wide range of strategies, including:

- supply-reduction strategies designed to disrupt the production and supply of illicit drugs;
- demand-reduction strategies designed to prevent the uptake of harmful drug use, including abstinence-oriented strategies to reduce drug use;
- strategies to provide effective treatment, follow-up and rehabilitation services to people affected by use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs; and
- a range of targeted harm-reduction strategies designed to reduce drug-related harm for individuals and communities.¹

In a review of the police role in preventing and minimising illicit drug use and its harms, Spooner, McPherson and Hall² argue that good practice in harm minimisation is generally good police practice and that police across Australia already apply many of these principles in their day-to-day work.

In separate advice regarding strategic issues for drug law enforcement policy makers at the jurisdictional level, Spooner et al.³ set out a number of indicative examples of how police practice can complement and enhance broader harm minimisation measures. These are summarised below under the headings 'harm-reduction', 'demand-reduction', 'supply-reduction' and 'all strategic areas'.

The following tables also highlight some the additional challenges facing police in small towns and isolated centres when tasked to apply these kinds of strategies. That is, what works in better-serviced urban and larger regional centres will not necessarily apply in rural and remote areas – see *impediments* listed in the centre column.

Finally, the column on the right provides an indication of practical ways that police and community leaders can adapt their approach to overcome some of the impediments to applying national harm minimisation policy principles to smaller, sparsely serviced centres.

These lists are by no means exhaustive. Nor are practices applied consistently. But they do show that when police, other services and local communities work together, and are backed by higher-level strategic policy and support, the factors impeding harm minimisation in rural and remote areas can be overcome.

¹ MCDS (Ministerial Council on Drugs Strategy) 2003 *National Drug Strategy: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Complementary Action Plan 2003-2006 – Background Paper*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, p.1.

² Spooner C, McPherson M, Hall W 2005b *The role of police in preventing and minimising illicit drug use and its harms: A resource for police*, National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund.

³ Spooner C, McPherson M, Hall W 2005c *The role of police in preventing and minimising illicit drug use and its harms: Strategic issues for drug law enforcement policy makers at the jurisdictional level*, National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund.

Police involvement in preventing illicit drug use & minimising harms

Impediments to applying strategies in rural and remote areas

Promising police and community initiatives to address these issues

HARM REDUCTION

Managing drug-affected people

Police play a significant role in managing drug-affected people in public and in custody.

Protective custody (where permitted) is limited by:

- outdated or unsafe police facilities,
- inadequate staffing and
- a lack of sobering-up shelters and other facilities.

Long-distance custody transfers can be risky and time-consuming, creating disincentives to arrest and remove violent offenders from remote communities.

Establishing permanent police presence in remote communities.

Using community night patrols to reduce police involvement in less serious incidents.

Involving 'skin groups', elected councils, justice groups and others with cultural authority in determining responses to drug-affected behaviour (e.g. banning offenders from licensed clubs).

Focusing police resources on serious offences or offences of greatest concern to the community. Using police intelligence, regular liaison with leaders, and community feedback to guide priorities.

Capital works to improve the safety of custody facilities.

Managing youth in public spaces

Some police work with councils and others to encourage design and management of public spaces to incorporate young people.

Narrow rates base limits councils' discretionary spending on crime prevention measures.

Taking young people home can expose them to greater danger if households are over-crowded or abusive or intoxicated adults are present.

Using 'move on' powers or by-laws to 'ban' drinking, petrol sniffing and other substance use might just move the problems to less visible, less safe areas.

Using community night patrols that know the home environment and can trigger longer-term interventions.

Service providers working with community leaders to develop strategies that support young people and reduce abuse.

Structured programs through youth clubs, sporting groups and other activities that provide a safe and inclusive environment to reward pro-social behaviour.

Police involvement in preventing illicit drug use & minimising harms	Impediments to applying strategies in rural and remote areas	Promising police and community initiatives to address these issues
Use of discretion when attending overdoses and policing near harm-reduction services		
<p>Policies/guidelines exist to encourage police discretion so that police presence does not deter people from a) calling an ambulance when they witness an overdose; and b) using needle syringe programs.</p> <p>These policies appear to have been generally well implemented by police.</p>	<p>Rural and remote areas have little experience in dealing with injecting drug use. There is little recognition where it does exist, and unsafe practices are common.</p> <p>A more common issue is the high incidence of substance-related psychosis in communities with heavy cannabis and alcohol use. Local policing protocols involving health services appear to be well supported.</p>	<p>Supplementing established primary health services with specialised clinical support.</p> <p>More flexible delivery of drug treatment and mental health services through outpatient and other health programs.</p>
Encouraging safer illicit drug use		
<p>A number of initiatives have been undertaken to encourage safer use, including involvement in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dance party guidelines • circulating information about toxic or strong drugs • encouraging drug users to dispose safely. <p>Most police have been active supporters of harm-reduction services such as needle and syringe programs.</p>	<p>Notions of 'safer' drug use are often met with scepticism in small settlements, especially where factors enabling users to regulate their own use are not present or only weakly present.</p> <p>Harm-reduction messages designed for a mainstream audience often translate poorly in rural and remote Aboriginal contexts.</p>	<p>Creating 'grog-free' and 'drug-free' cultural festivals, sporting carnivals and other major community events.</p> <p>Rewarding abstinence from drug use with selection in representative sporting teams, excursions and other prestigious events.</p> <p>Prison health programs targeting the period of inmates' transition from prison to community life.</p>
DEMAND REDUCTION		
Encouraging entry into treatment		
<p>Giving opportunistic advice and information to drug users and their families.</p> <p>Use of cards or other information resources to give to drug users seeking information on treatment.</p> <p>Diversion programs are likely to greatly expand the police role in encouraging drug users to seek treatment.</p>	<p>Drug treatment options remain extremely limited in rural and remote areas.</p> <p>Court-directed schemes often exclude heavy drinkers – a common factor in Aboriginal offending.</p> <p>Compartmentalised services: Bifurcation of alcohol from other drugs, and of substance use from mental health.</p>	<p>Local and regional protocols between law enforcement and health sectors.</p> <p>Flexible delivery of drug treatment and non-medical detox services through primary health services.</p> <p>Inclusion of illicit drug treatment in community-controlled residential treatment programs, and varying treatment regimes.</p>

Police involvement in preventing illicit drug use & minimising harms	Impediments to applying strategies in rural and remote areas	Promising police and community initiatives to address these issues
		<p>Opening court-supervised drug diversion schemes to problem drinkers.</p> <p>Men’s cultural groups following the lead of women’s groups in confronting substance-related violence, assisting victims, and supporting ex-prisoners.</p>
Community drug education		
<p>National guidelines for community drug education were published in 1995.</p>	<p>Monitoring, evaluation, documentation and dissemination of community drug education is poor.</p> <p>Outreach educators often do not reach many outlying communities in their area.</p> <p>Materials designed for mainstream or urban use often translate poorly to Aboriginal settings in rural and remote areas.</p>	<p>Police involvement in community forums to invite leaders to identify problems and discuss solutions.</p> <p>Promoting major events as 'drug-free' and 'grog-free' celebrations of culture.</p> <p>Publicising successful drug prosecutions to educate and warn communities.</p> <p>Identifying opportunities for brief interventions to educate users on drug-related harms.</p>
School-based drug education (SBDE)		
<p>Drug education in schools provides an opportunity for police to build partnerships in the community and to establish/build positive relations with young people.</p>	<p>There are few materials and little training to assist teachers and police. Practice inconsistent with evidence on effective SBDE risks wasting police resources.</p> <p>Few materials address the limitations of isolated locations, the lack of social infrastructure and issues related to high crime and endemic substance use. Few materials provide positive messages about Aboriginal people and culture.</p>	<p>Schools give police in small communities opportunities to build a rapport with young people outside the stress and anger of arrests and conflict situations.</p> <p>Drug education in schools also demonstrates to parents that police care about positive outcomes.</p>
Community activities – general community		
<p>Involvement in general community activities, such as sport and recreation programs, can build general</p>	<p>This is an under-researched area, the value of which is possible but not demonstrated.</p>	<p>Strategies to identify and prepare officers suited to working in isolated communities, specialised</p>

Police involvement in preventing illicit drug use & minimising harms	Impediments to applying strategies in rural and remote areas	Promising police and community initiatives to address these issues
networks between police and the community as well as encourage pro-social activities other than drug use.	In small settlements police participation in community life is expected and appreciated. Conversely, officers failing to respect cultural protocols can encounter resistance and hostility to police initiatives.	<p>training, pre-transfer visits to communities and high-level mentoring and support.</p> <p>Community involvement in officer inductions.</p> <p>Career incentives for working at isolated locations, recognising the skills gained, and minimising unfilled vacancies.</p> <p>Including officers' partners in the application process and responding to the needs of officers' families.</p>

Community activities – at-risk youth

Police are involved in a range of alternative activities with at-risk youth. Research suggests that this could be useful in the context of a broader program.	<p>As with other settings, activity in rural and remote areas varies and is likely to be ad hoc, rather than part of a coordinated program.</p> <p>Additional challenges in remote areas include high levels of offending, intensive community scrutiny, and hazardous drug use from an early age and other demands that can overwhelm sparsely resourced initiatives.</p> <p>Measures must be carefully targeted and explained to avoid perceptions that at-risk youth are being rewarded for anti-social behaviour.</p>	<p>Using established PCYCs and other programs to structure police involvement with at-risk young people, and seeking broad input to identify greatest needs.</p> <p>Requiring bailed offenders to report to police at PCYCs and other supervised clubs instead of police stations, with a view to involving them in club activities.</p> <p>Mentoring to link at-risk youth with positive role models.</p> <p>Changing programs to offer Aboriginal young people activities that interest them.</p> <p>Persistent marketing of established programs and activities.</p>
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SUPPLY REDUCTION

Drug law enforcement

This approach emphasises the value of large drug seizures and 'successes' such as 'cleaning up' known drug areas.	Supply-side drug law enforcement can disrupt local drug dealing, but there is little research on displacement and other unintended effects.	Identifying, targeting and removing local drug dealers and undermining their support base.
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Police involvement in preventing illicit drug use & minimising harms	Impediments to applying strategies in rural and remote areas	Promising police and community initiatives to address these issues
	<p>Focusing police resources on the upper end of the drug trade appears to have little impact on drugs flowing into rural and remote areas. It may even make sparsely policed non-urban areas more attractive to dealers.</p> <p>Opportunities to disrupt drug trafficking to remote communities are often overlooked, despite the damage done by dealers and the intelligence they could provide.</p>	<p>Seeking formal community recognition of the harms linked with illicit drug use and building support for policing initiatives.</p> <p>Strategic support from senior police management to link information from local policing initiatives with other drug intelligence, building a more complete picture of drug networks and enabling better targeting of resources.</p> <p>Sharing of information and intelligence about drug trafficking across state and territory borders.</p>

ALL STRATEGIC AREAS

Collaborative partnerships

Police are increasingly involved in community consultation and inter-sectoral collaborative partnerships. Some excellent examples of collaborative partnerships were identified.

Community recognition of harms arising from hazardous drug use is a prerequisite to giving police the authority or capacity to act, especially in Aboriginal communities with strong cultural protocols.

Staff turnover impedes the continuation of collaborative partnerships, particularly in isolated areas where positions can be hard to fill and vacancies are common in all key service sectors.

Knowledge and use of evidence-based guidelines for collaborative approaches in remote communities appears to be lacking, so that collaborative approaches are often not as effective as possible.

Recognising community liaison as a key responsibility for police and other agencies working in Aboriginal communities, and recognising that successful navigation of cultural protocols can be time-consuming and complex.

Selecting and supporting officers suited to this kind of community-oriented policing.

High level, strategic reviews across sectors and agencies to identify and address systemic needs – e.g. the Gordon Inquiry into the incidence of child abuse and family violence in Aboriginal communities in WA, and Fitzgerald’s Cape York Justice Study in Queensland.

Further reading/other resources

The issues of managing violent, substance-affected offenders are complex and there are numerous resources and potential sources of advice, but at least consider the following:

- Police departmental policies, resource manuals and relevant training materials.
- Manuals and materials directed at staff from other services including:
 - The National Health and Medical Research Council's manual to assist health workers to deal with issues of violence, *When it's right in front of you: Assisting health care workers to manage the effects of violence in rural and remote Australia* (NHMRC 2002) – available via the web at www.nhmrc.gov.au.
 - Brady M 2005 *The Grog Book: Strengthening Indigenous Community Action on Alcohol* Revised Edition, Canberra, Department of Health and Ageing – www.alcohol.gov.au.
- References that adapt specialist material for a broader audience – e.g. if there are no psychiatric services in an area, consider *Where There is No Psychiatrist: A Mental Health Care Manual* (Patel 2003), which has helpful plain English advice on diagnosing alcohol or drug dependence, dealing with aggressive or violent patients, and other useful guidance – see www.rcpsych.ac.uk for details.
- Information and resources listed on other web sites for:
 - national research organisations such as the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC), the National Drug Research Institute (NDRI) and the National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction (NCETA);
 - government web sites such as the National Drug Strategy site; and
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander information from the Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council (SA) site and the Australian Drug Foundation's www.kooridruginfo.adf.org.au.

All have up to date information and materials and links to useful web sites of other organisations.

Delahunty and Putt (2006). The main report referred to in this document is available from the NDLERF website – www.ndlerf.gov.au; as Monograph 15, in the NDLERF series.