

The logo for the National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund (NDLERF) is a 3x3 grid of squares. The top row consists of three blue squares of varying shades. The middle row has a white square on the left, a grey square in the center, and a white square on the right. The bottom row has a blue square on the left, a white square in the center, and a blue square on the right. The text 'NDLERF' is positioned to the right of the grid, with 'NDLE' in white and 'RF' in yellow.

NDLERF

**Policing responses to  
substance misuse in rural and  
remote indigenous communities**

The report from a National Workshop held at the  
Crowne Plaza, Alice Springs, 29–30 August 2007

Prepared by Roger Nicholas, Senior Researcher,  
National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary .....	2
1 Introduction.....	6
2 What we know about substance misuse in Indigenous communities and good practice in policing and other responses to it.....	8
2.1 Policing responses to illicit drugs problems in rural and remote Indigenous communities.....	8
2.2 Policing responses to volatile substance misuse and Indigenous Australians.....	12
2.3 Central Australian Petrol Sniffing Strategy.....	15
3 Case studies of policing approaches to substance misuse in rural and remote Indigenous communities.....	18
3.1 Case studies of policing approaches in rural & remote Queensland.....	18
3.2 Attracting and retaining police with the necessary skill sets and attributes to work with remote Indigenous communities.....	26
3.3 Case Studies: Hypothetical scenarios developed at the Workshop.....	27
4 The Workshop participants' perceptions of the current status of policing responses to drug problems in rural and remote communities.....	34
5 Other issues.....	38
6 Conclusion.....	39
7 References.....	40

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report concerns a National Workshop held at Alice Springs on 29–30 August 2007. The Workshop focused on policing responses to alcohol and other substance misuse problems in rural and remote Indigenous communities. The purpose of this report is to provide a vehicle to help disseminate the learning that occurred at the Workshop (including the research itself) and to highlight further issues that the NDLERF Board of Management may wish to consider. The report does not set out to evaluate the Workshop. This was undertaken by Northern Territory Police. It is, however, noteworthy that the evaluation was very favourable.

An important feature of the Workshop was that it acted as a good demonstration of the process of operationalising research. This involved taking NDLERF research findings and applying them to situations that were of direct relevance to the Workshop participants, using a systematic framework that was also developed as part of NDLERF-funded research. Added to this was the opportunity for networking amongst participants that enabled them to share their experiences and perspectives.

A number of key themes arose throughout the Workshop. Foremost among these was a sense of optimism that although alcohol and other drug problems are entrenched in many rural and remote Indigenous communities, positive change is possible and policing can make a substantial contribution to that change. Indeed, without an active and effective policing presence in the communities, little positive change is likely. This is because a satisfactory level of community safety is necessary in order to attract the range of service providers that are necessary to improve health, welfare and educational conditions in the communities. In addition, those community members who are most likely to have a positive influence on the community often need the assistance and support of police in order to exert this influence. While police can play an important leadership role in service provision to these communities, it is important that they do not take over roles that should more appropriately be taken on by other agencies.

The process of assisting to bring about longer-term change in Indigenous communities is dependent on recognising the extent to which they have been disempowered over the past several generations. The key issue, therefore, becomes the identification of the measures that are necessary to empower communities to bring about positive change. Part of this involves identifying and dealing with current blockages in this regard.

Another important issue highlighted was the need to recognise the value of incremental changes in bringing about positive outcomes. By working with communities to achieve small but clearly demonstrable successes, it is possible to build on these successes as the communities become more confident in their ability to orchestrate change. Also important is establishing benchmarks to measure progress over short- (weeks), medium- (months) and long- (years) terms.

Workshop participants noted that policing in remote Aboriginal communities involves a great deal of work with other community agencies. In this regard, it is important that each agency is clear about its area of responsibility, and that mechanisms are developed to ensure that agencies are held accountable for their actions (or inaction). In addition to mechanisms that hold agencies accountable at the local level, it is important to have mechanisms in place to hold agencies accountable for local and regional actions at

the regional level. This is so that more senior staff are aware of successes and shortfalls regarding the performance of their agencies.

Successful policing practices in rural and remote Indigenous communities differ markedly from those applied in regional centres or urban settings. The role of police in Indigenous communities can extend into areas of need usually met by other agencies. In addition, the ability to work with other agencies and to engage with communities is central to the role of remote area police. Drug supply-reduction strategies also differ markedly from those used in urban areas such as surveillance, infiltration and targeting distribution. Surveillance is difficult because police are highly visible in remote communities; infiltration can be problematic because of the close cultural networks; and targeting dealer networks is problematic because of the very rapid distribution of drugs.

Successful strategies include: asking the communities to define the harms that are of concern to them and to outline their expectations of police; introducing policing measures that provide respite from violence and other drug-related harms and build confidence; providing strategic support to sustain, and extend local initiatives; and prevention, leadership, and capacity building.

Effective drug law enforcement in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities requires: the close cooperation and support of community leaders (where appropriate); high quality intelligence; sensitivity to local issues; strong logistical support from police organisations; enhancing the use of police information systems; and building partnerships with other government agencies, non-government organisations and communities. Overall, the effective policing of alcohol and other drug-related issues in these communities is dependent upon the existence of positive relationships between police officers and communities. This gives police the *authority* not just the *power* to intervene. Positive policing styles involve developing rapport, being caring and approachable, non-judgemental, respectful and consistent.

It is also important to target both alcohol and other drug issues and to implement supply, demand and harm reduction strategies when addressing problems in Indigenous communities (as elsewhere). While police have the primary role in supply reduction, they also have a role in supporting demand and harm reduction strategies. It is important that police work with other agencies to ensure that the full spectrum of strategies is implemented. It was the clear experience of a number of Workshop participants that introducing supply reduction strategies in the absence of demand reduction strategies can lead to either the displacement of substance use onto other substances, or to obtaining the original substances from alternative sources.

The provision of policing services to rural and remote regions is an extremely resource-intensive endeavour. A major factor in this is the vast distances that are often involved. The establishment of infrastructure is also very expensive. Nevertheless, Workshop participants argued that the provision of adequate policing services is a basic right of all citizens and these costs need to be factored in to policing budgets.

It is evident that cannabis use is becoming an increasing problem in some rural and remote Indigenous communities. It is also evident that this use is occurring over and above existing problems with alcohol, volatile substance misuse and other drugs. This heavy cannabis use is exacerbating many existing problems among local Indigenous residents, particularly family violence and mental health problems. There is strong anecdotal evidence that some local and non-local Aboriginal people, including those in elected positions, are heavily

implicated in the cannabis trade in regional and remote areas, but less so in dealing and distributing amphetamines.

It does appear, however, that patterns of supply are changing in some communities towards the involvement of drug 'entrepreneurs' who extract extreme levels of profit but do not reside in the communities. This means that the funds used to purchase cannabis are not retained in the communities. This is likely to make drug dealing less acceptable in the communities which may, in turn, provide police with a point of leverage to assist them to obtain information from community members about trafficking routes and the individuals involved.

Equally, however, these drug entrepreneurs from outside the communities are also more likely than their locally-based counterparts to have links to the methamphetamine trade. Therefore, these individuals and the methods they use to bring in cannabis could be relatively easily adapted to traffic methamphetamine into Indigenous communities. This would have a profoundly negative impact on the communities and would make the provision of policing services much more difficult.

The misuse of volatile substances (VS) remains a major problem in many communities. In considering the issue of volatile substance misuse (VSM) it is important to be mindful that many volatile substance misusers (VSMs) are users of multiple substances. This means that efforts to reduce the supply of VS (without corresponding demand reduction strategies) are likely to displace this use onto the use of other substances. It is also important to be mindful that a relatively small number of users can have a disproportionately large impact on local communities.

VSM in remote Aboriginal communities is both a product of, and cause of, broader dysfunction. VSM presents a number of difficulties for policing because: the extent of the problem is not well documented; it is not a criminal offence; most volatile substances are cheap and legally available; many inhalant users are young and marginalised; VSM is often associated with violence, property damage and other offences; and VSMs are resource-intensive people and police often have few options available to them to deal with this problem.

In addition, the relative roles of police and other agencies, especially from the health and welfare sectors, are often poorly defined. Referral options can be limited or non-existent, and there are often competing demands on limited police resources. There is also a lack of evidence about the effectiveness of interventions and, in particular, very few policing interventions for volatile substance misuse have been systematically evaluated. There is also a risk that the additional powers that have been given to police may lead to other agencies placing undue reliance on police to solve all the problems.

The roll-out of non-sniffable Opal fuel to 74 communities in the tri-state area has led to a dramatic reduction in petrol sniffing in those communities. There is a need for caution, however, about assuming that the problem of petrol is 'fixed' as a result of this roll-out. This not only risks the withdrawal of funding programs, but unless demand reduction strategies are implemented, substitution will occur.

There is also a need to collect data on the effects of the Opal roll-out, from health and policing perspectives. Documenting the impact of the Opal roll-out is difficult for police because their systems are not generally set up to collect non-crime-related data. However, in much the same way that assaults can be a proxy measure for alcohol misuse problems, break and enter offences (especially those which are opportunistic) can be a good proxy measure for levels of petrol sniffing.

There are a number of pre-conditions for effective law enforcement for VSM. These include: legislation creating appropriate and adequate police powers, with associated guidelines and protocols; an adequate police presence in VSM-affected areas; trained and supported community-based agencies, including night patrols; places of safety other than police cells; adequate referral and sentencing options; and clearly articulated linkages with health and welfare sectors, in which both of the latter also fulfil their required roles.

Gray et al. (2006) highlighted that police clearly have a range of unmet learning needs as far as their abilities to deal with volatile substance misuse is concerned. Specifically, they indicated that more training was required on: the effects of volatile substances; the assessment of users and their needs; dealing with intoxicated users; clarification of policing powers; background issues concerning volatile substance misuse; working with young people in Indigenous communities; and proactive responses to the problems. There were some preliminary indications from attendees at this Workshop that learning needs may also extend to other aspects of policing in Indigenous communities. This is an issue that warrants further investigation.

The assessment, attraction, support and retention of suitably skilled police to work in rural (and in particular remote) regions is a difficult but not insurmountable problem. The skill set of police that succeed in these settings differs from that required in other settings and it is important that these skills are recognised and rewarded. Some jurisdictions have recently implemented substantial changes in this regard.

There is a paucity of evidence about the extent, nature of and appropriate policing responses to alcohol and other drug problems among Indigenous Australians from more urban areas. In recent years there has been concerted research effort to examine these issues from rural and remote area perspectives, particularly that which has been funded by NDLERF. It is also important to consider these from an urban perspective. This is an issue that the NDLERF Board of Management may wish to consider so far as its funding priorities are concerned.

The Workshop participants also indicated a need to develop networks of police who work in rural and remote Indigenous communities. Given the large degree of commonality between the problems faced by rural and remote police in each jurisdiction, they indicated that it would be useful if strategies could be developed that would make it easier to share their experiences of successful and not-so-successful strategies. This is another issue that the NDLERF Board of Management may wish to consider.

Arguably, a key factor in the success of the Workshop was having facilitators who were independent of the agencies attending. In this case it was valuable to have the researchers themselves fulfilling this role because they had a high level of expertise in the subject matter, but were removed from the agencies involved.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report concerns a National Workshop that was held at the Crowne Plaza in Alice Springs on 29–30 August 2007. The Workshop focused on policing responses to alcohol and other substance misuse problems in rural and remote Indigenous communities.

Fifty-eight participants attended the Workshop which was organised by Northern Territory Police. It was funded by the Remote Workforce Development Strategy (Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment, Northern Territory Government) and the National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund (NDLERF). NDLERF is, in turn, funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

Key aims of the Workshop were to disseminate the findings of two NDLERF-funded research projects and to determine the ways in which the findings of the research could influence policing practices in rural and remote Indigenous communities. The reports from the two projects were published as three NDLERF monographs<sup>1</sup>:

- Delahunty, B. & Putt, J. (2006). *The Policing Implications of Cannabis, Amphetamine and other Illicit Drug Use in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities*. NDLERF Monograph No. 15. Adelaide: Australasian Centre for Policing Research.
- Delahunty, B. & Putt, J. (2006). *Good Practice Framework — Policing Illicit Drugs in Rural & Remote Local Communities*. NDLERF Monograph No. 15A. Adelaide: Australasian Centre for Policing Research.
- Gray, D., Shaw, G., d'Abbs, P., Brooks, D., Stearne, A., Mosey, A., & Spooner, C. (2006). *Policing Volatile Substance Misuse and Indigenous Australians*. NDLERF Monograph No. 16. Adelaide: Australasian Centre for Policing Research.

Similar workshops had previously been held in Cairns and Darwin. Workshop participants were drawn from police departments from each jurisdiction; the Australian Crime Commission; health, welfare, and justice agencies; NDLERF; and research agencies. Given the focus of the Workshop, 40 of the 58 participants were from law enforcement agencies. Although there were representatives from each of the states and territories, there was a particularly large contingent of Northern Territory community policing officers. There were also a large number of officers present from Queensland, many of whom had attended the earlier Cairns workshop. Several of these officers gave case presentations concerning problems and policing responses from their local areas.

<sup>1</sup>These three monographs are available for download at <http://www.ndlerf.gov.au/pub.php>.

The Workshop afforded a valuable opportunity to both disseminate the findings from the research, and for those providing services to rural and remote communities to share their experiences. The key facilitators of the Workshop were Scott Mitchell of the Northern Territory Police, and Dr Judy Putt, Research Manager at the Australian Institute of Criminology.

The Workshop was opened by Commander Coffey, from NT Police and this was followed by a presentation on NDLERF which was provided by Mr Roger Nicholas, Senior Researcher, NDLERF. Presentations on the relevant research projects were provided over the two days by the researchers themselves: Mr Brendan Delahunty (in relation to the Delahunty and Putt illicit drugs project) and Associate Professor Peter d'Abbs (in relation to the Gray et al. volatile substances project). Queensland Police officers then gave local case study presentations on problems and policing responses from that jurisdiction. Mr Steve Vaughan, Manager Central Australian Petrol Sniffing Strategy, Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA), also provided an overview of the Central Australian Petrol Sniffing Strategy.

Group work sessions were conducted throughout the two days and primarily focused on using the tools identified as part of the good practice framework contained within NDLERF Monograph 15a. In the first instance, the tools were applied to the range of hypothetical scenarios outlined in the framework report. Groups of participants worked on each of the scenarios. Groups were also asked to develop their own scenarios —situations that police encounter in their everyday practice in rural and remote locations. Then, as is outlined in the Good Practice Framework, a process of environmental scanning was undertaken in order to better understand the local environment, to identify the key problems, as well as policing strengths and weaknesses. On the second day, the groups developed short term (weeks or months), medium term (months or a year) and long term (longer than a year) objectives for each of the problems identified. The groups also prioritised the problems and developed measures that would allow them to determine if the objectives had been met.

Finally, the participants applied the checklist contained within the Good Practice Framework to the situations in their local area. This was done with a view to identifying the strengths and weaknesses of existing approaches to problems from jurisdiction-wide, regional and local perspectives.

The purpose of this report is to provide a vehicle to help disseminate the learning that occurred at the Workshop (including the research itself) and to highlight further issues that the NDLERF Board of Management may wish to consider. The report does not set out to evaluate the Workshop. This was undertaken by Northern Territory Police and it is noteworthy that the evaluation was very favourable.

## 2. WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT SUBSTANCE MISUSE IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES AND GOOD PRACTICE IN POLICING AND OTHER RESPONSES TO IT.

A number of presentations were given by researchers, practitioners and other service providers concerning the extent of problems and what is known about effective responses to substance misuse in Indigenous communities. A summary of these presentations is provided below.

### 2.1 Policing responses to illicit drugs problems in rural and remote Indigenous communities.

Mr Brendan Delahunty (formerly from Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies) provided an overview of the key finding of the research that formed the basis of Delahunty, B. & Putt, J. (2006), *The Policing Implications of Cannabis, Amphetamine and other Illicit Drug Use in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities* (National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund [NDLERF] Monograph 15) and Delahunty, B. & Putt, J. (2006), *Good Practice Framework: The Policing Implications of Cannabis, Amphetamine and other Illicit Drug Use in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, NDLERF Monograph 15A*.

The funding for the project was provided by NDLERF. Its aim was to improve the law enforcement sector's understanding of illicit drug use by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) peoples, and to identify good policing practices that will help prevent and minimise harms from illicit drug use in rural and remote ATSI communities. The project was conducted between April 2004 and June 2005.

The research involved community consultations via meetings, forums and interviews as well as access to local data from Indigenous communities in Western Australia (Kalgoorlie, Laverton and Warburton), Queensland (Rockhampton, Woorabinda and Mount Morgan), South Australia (Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands), and the Northern Territory (The Tiwi Islands). It also involved consultations with representatives of key stakeholder groups in government and non-government organisations; a review of relevant literature and legislation; and a survey of 792 urban and (predominantly) non-urban police from the four jurisdictions involved.

#### **Key findings**

- There is some limited information available on the illicit drug use of Aboriginal people from urban locations, but (at least prior to this research) little quality information about Aboriginal drug use in rural and remote regions. What data is available suggests that Aboriginal people in urban areas have much higher rates of recent use of cannabis and other illicit drugs than do non-Aboriginal people. The project involved an examination of the available information from a range of sources concerning Aboriginal drug use. Of the police surveyed about their perceptions of Aboriginal drug use in their local areas, the following percentages reported that various illicit drugs were commonly or very commonly used by Aboriginal people in their region: cannabis 88% — the same for

police in both urban and non-urban areas; but as far as amphetamines are concerned there were important differences — 57% of urban police and 25% of non-urban police. The researchers also ascertained the proportion of police officers who regarded various substances as being a serious or moderate problem among local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: alcohol 93% of urban and non-urban police; cannabis 77% of urban and non-urban police; inhalants 57% of urban police and 47% of non-urban police; amphetamines 53% of urban police and 29% of non-urban police.

- In recent years, there has been a dramatic increase in the availability and use of cannabis in many remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander settlements. This new wave of cannabis use is occurring in addition to, not instead of, the use of alcohol and other substances.
- Up to two-thirds of males and one in five females in some Arnhem Land communities are regularly using cannabis, including some who use 'bucket bong's to smoke the equivalent of up to twenty 'joints' in a single session. Some of the poorest and youngest users spend between one-third and two-thirds of their income on cannabis, and the age of first time use is falling, with children as young as 10 or 11 years smoking the drug. Also significant is the use of 'bucket bong's which makes cannabis use more efficient and provides a more concentrated means of inhalation.
- Police reported that heavy cannabis use exacerbates many existing problems among local Indigenous residents, particularly family violence and mental health problems. This was the same for both urban and non-urban areas.
- The drug distribution networks that are currently supplying cannabis are highly profitable. As an example of the extreme profits that are available, 400–500 grams of cannabis, which could be bought for \$4,000 in Darwin, could clear \$16,000–\$21,000 within hours of landing in remote settlements. The cannabis trade is also resulting in a concentration of money and influence among those involved in the trade. There is also great concern that these trafficking routes could pave the way for the rapid expansion in the use of amphetamines or other injectable drugs in the future.
- There is evidence that there is a shift towards 'drug entrepreneurs' from outside the communities who are shifting profits to urban areas rather than the profits staying within communities. In addition, the 'drug entrepreneurs' are likely to have closer links to the amphetamine trade than local dealers.
- There is strong anecdotal evidence that some local and non-local Aboriginal people, including some in elected positions or positions of responsibility, are heavily implicated in the cannabis trade in regional and remote areas, but less so in dealing and distributing amphetamines.
- Other problems associated with the cannabis trade include: expenditure on cannabis leaves less money for basic necessities; increased levels of violence, injuries, accidents, psychosis and self-harm; compromised education and employment outcomes; the use of sexual favours to obtain drugs; committing crime in order to obtain money for drugs; and falling participation in community and cultural life.
- There are substantial differences between the drug law enforcement methods used in urban areas and those which are successful in remote areas. Surveillance is often difficult because police are highly visible; infiltration is also problematic because of the close cultural networks; and targeting small-time user-dealers is problematic because of the rapid distribution of drugs. Successful strategies include: asking the communities to define the harms that are of concern to them and to outline their expectations of police; introducing policing measures that provide respite and build confidence; providing

strategic support to sustain, and extend local initiatives; and prevention, leadership, and capacity building. Effective drug law enforcement in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities requires: the close cooperation and support of community leaders; high quality intelligence; sensitivity to local issues; strong logistical support from police organisations; enhancing the use of police information systems; and building partnerships with other government agencies, non-government organisations and communities.

- It is also important for police organisations to identify and reward the *skills* needed to police effectively in sparsely populated but high-need locations. Equally important is providing remote area police with appropriate training, induction and support to enable them to respond to community concerns about drug use, crime and other problems. A further challenge lies in recruiting, supporting and developing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff at all levels of the organisation, and encouraging other employers to do the same.
- Police play an important role in reducing drug-related harm through managing drug-affected people in public and in custody. This is made difficult in rural and remote areas because of the long distances involved in custody transfers, outdated or unsafe police facilities, inadequate staffing, and a lack of sobering-up facilities. In this regard, promising community and police initiatives include night patrols; the involvement of community leaders in determining responses to drug affected behaviour; focusing police resources on offences that are of greatest concern to the community; a permanent police presence in more remote locations; and capital works to improve amenities.
- Monograph 15A synthesises the findings of the research into a single document that focuses on opportunities to improve policing in this area. It examines these opportunities at the levels of strategic programs and policies; local, district and regional area planning; and individual policing practices. This provides examples, checklists and scenarios that can be adapted to suit particular locations and organisational and jurisdictional priorities.

### ***Good practice examples***

The report set out some of the strategic initiatives that police and partner organisations were developing at the time of the review in 2004.

#### **A. Multi-function police facilities in remote areas (WA)**

WA is extending a permanent police presence to a number of remote areas. These new police facilities provide a first-line response for victims and improve community safety. Staff from other agencies share police facilities, which fosters a more collaborative and coordinated response to child abuse and family violence. Specific police training for positions in border settlements includes cultural familiarisation, acclimatisation, additional legal education and information sharing. This training and preparation takes account of the need to maintain continuity and minimise disruption when personnel change.

#### **B. Integrated approach to community consultation (Qld)**

This approach consists of a series of programs and strategies designed to strengthen police links with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It involves a network of community consultation and liaison; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment strategies; cross-cultural training for officers; a part-time cell visitors scheme; Police Citizens Youth Club activity centres; the development of indicators to better identify data

on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims and offenders; revised oral and written licence-testing programs, and the provision of practical tests in local areas to reduce the number of unlicensed drivers; and the return of ancestral remains and other sacred objects to ancestral lands.

#### C. Remote Communities Drug Strategy (NT)

The Remote Communities Drug Desk is staffed by specialist drug intelligence officers. The Strategy developed from a workshop involving police, other government and non-government organisations, a parliamentary committee and representatives from various remote Aboriginal communities. This facility takes information and intelligence from local-level policing initiatives and uses it to contribute to a broader understanding of drug issues across rural and remote areas. This intelligence complements other measures, such as the introduction of drug-detection dogs and drug-house legislation.

#### D. Indigenous Drug Action Teams (SA)

Drug Action Teams (DATs) are locally-based committees made up of representatives from a number of agencies, which meet to reduce legal and illegal drug-related harms. Indigenous DATs (IDATs) were established in two sites (Adelaide and Port Augusta) as a trial, in an effort to respond to the specific needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The IDATs sought to provide a liaison point for Aboriginal services and the DAT program, to improve their understanding of community resources and programs which could assist in reducing alcohol and other drug misuse in Aboriginal communities. The IDATs also sought to: assist in identifying and implementing projects or actions relevant to Aboriginal communities; encourage access by Aboriginal people to prevention, diversion and treatment programs; and increase the capacity of DATs to respond to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander alcohol and other drug issues. Following an independent evaluation, the program was not extended beyond the trial stage.

### ***Conclusions and implications for policing***

There is little doubt that there is a need for urgent action to stem the unprecedented flood of cannabis availability that has occurred in some remote communities in recent years. This is particularly concerning, in the context that it is occurring in addition to the existing problems associated with the misuse of alcohol and other substances. It is also occurring in the context of considerable social disadvantage.

It can be hard for police to know where to begin in responding to these problems; however, the tools provided by the researchers will undoubtedly assist to make sense of what are clearly complex situations. Indeed, the researchers highlighted a number of existing policing strategies that are consistent with good practice in this area. Foremost among these is working closely with other agencies involved in responding to these issues.

Doing nothing is clearly not an option, particularly when it is considered that the trafficking routes and methods that are currently used for cannabis could easily be adapted to amphetamines and other injectable drugs. If the use of amphetamines were to become as prevalent as is the use of cannabis, the results would be catastrophic for the communities and would make the provision of policing services considerably more difficult.

The recruitment and retention of police staff to work in remote areas is clearly a major (but not insurmountable) challenge. The researchers highlighted a number of strategies that could assist in this regard.

Finally, it is important to be realistic about what police can be expected to achieve in these high-need areas, particularly given the complexities of the underlying problems.

## 2.2 Policing responses to volatile substance misuse and Indigenous Australians.

Associate Professor Peter d'Abbs from the School of Public Health, Tropical Medicine & Rehabilitation Sciences, James Cook University, Cairns, gave a presentation on the findings of the research that formed the basis of *Policing volatile substance misuse, and Indigenous Australians, National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund (NDLERF) Monograph No. 16*. (Gray, Shaw, d'Abbs, Brooks, Stearne, Mosey and Spooner, 2006). The project was funded by NDLERF.

The aims of the project were to: review the literature relating to policing volatile substance misuse (VSM) among Indigenous people; assist police to better understand their role with respect to VSM; and identify best practice in this area. The researchers took a qualitative case-study approach to the project. This involved communities from South Australia (four communities in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands), the Northern Territory (Kintore and Alice Springs), Queensland (Mount Isa and Cairns) and Western Australia (Perth). The researchers conducted 160 interviews with 195 people as part of this process.

### **Key findings**

- There are four main categories of volatile substances (VS): volatile solvents (e.g. petrol, paint thinners, dry cleaning fluids); gases (e.g. butane lighters and propane gas); aerosols (e.g. spray paint, deodorant sprays); and nitrites (e.g. illegally-diverted amyl nitrite). Apart from the nitrites, inhalants produce pleasurable effects by depressing the central nervous system. The effects of chemical compounds in VS remain poorly understood.
- Four categories of volatile substance misusers (VSMs) have been identified: 'average' young people who experiment with inhalants, and generally don't persist; marginalised youths in towns and cities 'chroming' or sniffing aerosol paints; petrol sniffing in some remote Aboriginal communities; and chronic VSMs among some disadvantaged and usually homeless adults.
- Many VSMs are users of multiple substances and a relatively small number of users can have a disproportionately large impact on communities. In addition, VSM does not fit the dependence/withdrawal treatment model that is applied to other drugs. Some treatments are available, but these are not well developed and the treatment outcomes are generally poor. There is an urgent need for effective treatments in this area.
- The short-term effects of VSM result from the absorption of hydrocarbons into fatty tissues in the brain. This causes rapid intoxication (euphoria); hallucinations (at higher doses); muscular un-coordination (at times); headaches and palpitations; and sometimes death ('sudden death syndrome'). Effects that accrue over a longer period of time include brain damage (some may be reversible) and damage to the heart, lungs, liver, and kidneys. Maternal VSM is linked with spontaneous abortion, congenital malformation, increased risk of developmental delay, and behavioural problems in later life.
- VSM in remote Aboriginal communities is both a product of, and cause of, broader dysfunction. VSM presents a number of difficulties for policing because: it is not a criminal offence; most volatile substances are cheap and legally available; many inhalant

users are young and marginalised; and VSM is often associated with violence, property damage and other offences. In addition, the relative roles of police and other agencies, especially from the health and welfare sectors, are often poorly defined. Referral options are often limited or non-existent, and there are often competing demands on limited police resources. There is also a lack of evidence about the effectiveness of interventions and, in particular, very few policing interventions for volatile substance misuse have been systematically evaluated.

- Some confusion is also evident concerning how the VSM problems should be viewed; for example, whether they should be considered drug issues or youth issues.
- Data on the extent of use of these substances is not systematically recorded. The researchers found that there was considerable variation in the estimations of the levels of use between communities and within communities. Data collection is also problematic because most drug surveys do not include those who are less than 14 years of age, and many young inhalant users are not included in school-based surveys. It is also difficult to ascertain the full extent of deaths from VSM because the death certificates often do not include VSM as a cause of death, even when it was implicated.
- VSM is a difficult problem to address because there are approximately 250 (and possibly many more) substances which are readily available, that are able to be used in this way. The large number of substances involved highlights the limitations of responses that rely solely on supply reduction. Strategies to address volatile substance misuse need to be part of a broad approach to reducing all substance misuse; otherwise, there is a risk of users substituting the use of one substance for another. Supply-reduction strategies directed at specific substances can be useful, however, if the substances are particularly problematic.
- In remote areas, the role of police often expands into areas that would normally be the responsibility of other agencies. In general, the researchers found that communities do want police involvement in volatile substance misuse, although there are sometimes conflicting views about the extent of this involvement. Indeed, the mere presence and support of police officers can encourage community members to take action themselves.
- The roll-out of non-sniffable Opal fuel to 74 communities in the tri-state area has led to a major reduction in petrol sniffing in those communities. There is a need for caution, however, about assuming that the problem of petrol is 'fixed' as a result of this roll-out. This not only risks the withdrawal of funding programs, but unless demand-reduction strategies are implemented, substitution will occur. There is also a need to collect data on the effects of the Opal roll-out, from health and policing perspectives. Documenting the impact of the Opal roll-out is difficult for police because their systems are not generally set up to collect non-crime related data. However, in much the same way that assaults can be a proxy measure for alcohol misuse problems, break and enter offences (especially those which are opportunistic) can be a good proxy measure for levels of petrol sniffing.
- Police clearly cannot be responsible for all the proactive activities in this area, but without effective policing, the implementation of other initiatives is extremely difficult. Consequently, effective policing is the basis for proactive action. Nevertheless, there is a risk that the additional powers that have been given to police may lead to other agencies placing undue reliance on police to solve all the problems. It is also important to be mindful that VSMs are resource-intensive people and police often have few options available to them to deal with this problem.
- There are two groups of issues that warrant consideration by police. First, there are

the reactive issues which concern responding to VSM-related intoxication, where the aim is to reduce the risk of death or injury. Second, there are the proactive strategies which involve engaging communities in preventive initiatives. There are two kinds of preventive initiatives, those which are initiated by police, and those in which police are partners.

- As far as reactive strategies concerning responses to intoxication are concerned, decisions about whether and how to intervene depend on factors such as: the legislative and administrative frameworks within which officers work; the level of threats to safety; the distance officers must travel to incidents; the ranking of the seriousness of incidents in relation to other policing priorities; local policing culture; perceived community expectations; and the perceived consequences of intervention. The principles for police in dealing with intoxicated individuals include:
  - careful assessment and monitoring of any encounter or incident, including monitoring their own behavior;
  - putting first their own safety and that of their colleagues, users and members of the general public;
  - treating users with empathy and respect;
  - keeping them calm;
  - maintaining effective communication;
  - formulating a clear plan of action; and
  - maintaining control and not acting in a manner that might exacerbate any incident.
- Proactive policing strategies include: supply reduction (both in terms of illegal supply and supply from retail settings); generalised and targeted patrolling; dedicated police operations targeting substance misuse, violence and other crime (which are effective but only in the short term); the use of alternative legislation (such as trespass legislation and restraining orders); the establishment of specialised units or by dedicating officers to address problems among ‘at-risk’ young people; police involvement in recreational and cultural activities; police involvement in evidence-based community and school-based drug education; the coordination of policing responses with those from other agencies; providing active support to community groups that aim to reduce volatile substance misuse; and cooperating with and supporting night patrols.
- The effective policing of volatile substance misuse is dependent upon the existence of positive relationships between police officers and communities. This gives police the *authority* not just the *power* to intervene. Positive policing styles involve developing rapport, being caring and approachable, non-judgemental, respectful and consistent.
- Policing styles that undermine community relationships include: having limited communication with agencies and the communities themselves; a failure to observe local etiquette; having negative attitudes to volatile substance users and their behaviour; and the use of overly ‘heavy handed’ policing.
- Many police reported that they — or those that they supervised — had insufficient training to deal with VSM. Specifically, they indicated that more training was required on: the effects of volatile substances; the assessment of users and their needs; dealing with intoxicated users; clarification of policing powers; background issues concerning VSM; working with young people in Indigenous communities; and proactive responses to the problems.
- There are a number of pre-conditions for effective law enforcement for VSM. These include: legislation creating appropriate and adequate police powers, with associated guidelines and protocols; an adequate police presence in VSM-affected areas; trained

and supported community-based agencies, including night patrols; places of safety other than police cells; adequate referral and sentencing options; and clearly articulated linkages with health and welfare sectors, in which both of the latter also fulfil their required roles.

- In 2005, the Commonwealth adopted an eight point plan to reduce petrol sniffing. This involves:
  1. Consistent legislation — for example, the SA, WA and NT governments have introduced strong penalties for offences relating to the sale or supply of volatile substances for sniffing.
  2. Appropriate levels of policing. This includes a zero tolerance approach to traffickers.
  3. Further roll-out of non-sniffable petrol, such as Opal fuel.
  4. Alternative activities for young people.
  5. Treatment and respite facilities.
  6. Communication and education strategies.
  7. Strengthening and supporting communities to become real partners in solving the problem.
  8. Evaluation — capturing what works so it can be applied elsewhere.
- In addition, the Report from the National Inhalant Abuse Taskforce, endorsed by the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy, is highly relevant to this issue. It is available from [http://www.health.vic.gov.au/drugservices/downloads/niat\\_report.pdf](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/drugservices/downloads/niat_report.pdf)

### ***Implications for police***

While there is little in the way of formal evaluations of policing interventions to address VSM, there is little doubt that police can make an important contribution to the protection of individuals, the communities in which volatile substance users live, and the wider society. VSM is clearly also an issue for the health and welfare sectors, for communities and families. There is a clear need for protocols that define their relative roles and to commit them to action their relative areas of responsibility.

Neither the researchers from this project or any of those they interviewed were able to suggest any radical new approaches to this problem. There is, however, an opportunity to improve the effectiveness of policing and other activities that are currently being undertaken. In particular, there is a need to strengthen partnerships between key stakeholders — particularly between Indigenous community members and police — and to enhance the provision of mutual support between agencies.

The researchers also pointed to a need for a greater commitment from the Australian and state/territory governments to provide a wider range of appropriate and accessible support services. Without this, they argue, policing responses to volatile substance misuse will be severely constrained. Police may well have a role in lobbying for the provision of these services. There is also a need for police to develop methods to share information concerning community and police-based interventions.

## **2.3 Central Australian Petrol Sniffing Strategy**

Mr Steve Vaughan, Manager Central Australian Petrol Sniffing Strategy, Department of

Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA), provided an overview of the Central Australian Petrol Sniffing Strategy.

In recent years, there have been two important changes in governmental approaches to health and other issues affecting Indigenous Australians in general, and to the problems they are experiencing that are associated with petrol sniffing in particular. The first of these has been the incorporation of governmental approaches to Indigenous affairs into mainstream programs (as opposed to Indigenous-specific programs). Also important is the adoption by the Australian Government of its eight point plan to reduce petrol sniffing (in conjunction with the SA, NT and WA governments). The Australian Government's eight point plan was outlined in the presentation provided by Associate Professor d'Abbs.

A major problem in the past has been the number of 'fly-in, fly-out' services provided to remote communities. Not only is this expensive, but it means that there has been a lack of continuity of service provision and little opportunity for individual service providers to understand the needs of remote communities. A major new initiative, funded by the Australian Government seeks to address this.

The government has committed \$12 million to provide integrated youth services to four southern Northern Territory communities (Finke, [Aputula], Impanpa, Mutitjulu, and Docker River [Kaltukatjara]). The funding for the project comes from FaCSIA, the Australian Government Attorney-General's Department and the Australian Government Department of Education Science and Training. The project is being managed under a single contract by FaCSIA and will run over three years.

Tenders were sought to conduct this work and Mission Australia was the successful tenderer. As is evident, this level of expenditure equates to \$3 million per community over the three years. This expenditure does, however, need to be seen in the contexts of: the very substantial costs associated with establishing infrastructure in the communities (for example, even basic buildings cost upwards of \$400,000 to construct); and the massive costs associated with caring for those who are injured or otherwise affected by their substance misuse.

A key aim of the program is to assist communities to identify the issues they see as significant, in order that tailored programs can be developed. The more specific objectives of the program are to:

- build the confidence, self reliance, leadership skills and life skills in the four communities by intensively engaging with them, so that they take responsibility for their own care and development, and move away from welfare dependency;
- counteract negative influences, including those related to substance misuse, by engaging young people in a range of culturally-, age- and gender-appropriate educational, social, cultural and recreational activities;
- help young people to build on, and in some cases re-build, their learning pathways to literacy and numeracy and other forms of accredited training, by engaging with them in a partnership over time;

- help communities to address the effects of substance abuse in young people and build community resilience by engaging with communities in a partnership over time; and
- assist young people to achieve the education, life skills and employability skills they need for them to participate autonomously and fully in learning, work and community life.

In each of the communities, this involves the employment of: one male and one female worker on a permanent basis; one male and one female local Anangu youth worker from within the communities (a male and female youth worker are to be present in communities on a 24/7 basis); one male and one female local Anangu youth worker/administrative officer trainee; and up to four local Anangu Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) participants, who are to be trained as youth and administrative support workers.

These locally-based workers are to be supported by staff from Alice Springs including an operations manager and a personal assistant, and four relief/outreach youth workers. In addition, an outreach education coordinator and support staff will be employed to work with schools and youth workers, and to develop partnerships that will enable the outreach education services to be delivered to young people. The role of the outreach coordinator is to engage young people, schools and other relevant service providers in strategies to encourage school attendance.

Mission Australia is also required to provide appropriate support, ongoing professional development, training and respite for all the staff.

In addition, governance arrangements and links to communities will be established via: local youth communities; an overarching Youth Advisory Board; and the development and maintenance of a Youth Activity Plan (YAP) for each community.

A range of diversionary activities are to be provided, including: travelling workshops to develop self-esteem and leadership skills; school holiday programs; supervised night-time activities; a youth carnival that rotates between the four communities; traditional activities and contemporary history education to be delivered in conjunction with the elders; and sports, music and creative art activities. Extra funds (\$10,000) are to be made available in each community to help implement the YAP.

Mission Australia will also work closely with other service providers to offer young people referrals to specialised services and to provide assistance and support to other agencies engaged in case management.

A large number of specific key performance indicators have been established to ensure that service providers are held accountable for undertaking the agreed work.

### 3. CASE STUDIES OF POLICING APPROACHES TO SUBSTANCE MISUSE IN RURAL AND REMOTE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

The first case studies in this section are derived from presentations given by representatives from the Queensland Police Service in relation to actual problems and policing responses from rural and remote Queensland. A further case study is provided on strategies being adopted in Western Australia to attract and retain suitably skilled police to work in remote areas. In addition, five hypothetical case studies that were developed by Workshop participants and potential policing responses to these are described.

#### 3.1 Case studies of policing approaches in rural & remote Queensland

##### 3.1.1 Woorabinda: Presentation by Sergeant Ashley Hull

Woorabinda is located approximately 180 kilometres west of Rockhampton and was first established in 1927 as a replacement for the settlement at Taroom. The Woorabinda community is the only Deed of Grant in Trust (DOGIT)<sup>2</sup> community within the Central Queensland region. When Woorabinda was established, hundreds of Indigenous people from a wide range of different regions and language groups were forcibly taken there under the control of the 'Government Protector'. There were 52 different family groups relocated there. Woorabinda has a population of approximately 940 people, of whom about 95 percent are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders.

In 2003, at the request of the Woorabinda Aboriginal Council, the government applied alcohol restrictions to the whole community area except for one licensed premise which has since closed. The carriage of alcohol within the restricted area is limited to: 18 litres (48 cans) of beer; 9 litres (24 cans) of pre-mixed spirits (with a concentration of no more than 5.5 per cent); or 2 litres of wine. There are, however, problems with pallets of alcohol being dropped off just outside of the controlled area and then being driven into Woorabinda in quantities that do not exceed the maximum allowable limits for carriage.

The current strength of Woorabinda Police Station is one Senior Sergeant (Officer in Charge), one Sergeant and four Senior Constable/Constable positions. This will soon be upgraded to provide a total of 10 positions. Other government and community agencies include: Woorabinda Shire Council; a hospital; primary and high schools; a child care centre; Anglicare; and the Youth Justice Group (a group of elders who have an interest in justice, who assist the police, and make sure offenders see solicitors).

Woorabinda has several significant crime problems, including high levels of sexual assault, assaults, unlawful entry, and unauthorised use of motor vehicles. Many of the council houses have been stripped to empty shells, covered in graffiti or burned.

<sup>2</sup> In 1984, Queensland established a system of community level land trusts, to own and administer former reserves under a special form of title called a Deed of Grant in Trust (DOGIT). Each trust area became a local government area. Incorporated Aboriginal Councils, which elect representatives every three years, manage the community's affairs. The Councils are able to make by-laws, and appoint community police and are responsible for maintaining housing, infrastructure, the Community Development Employment Program, licences and hunting and camping permits.

New fences have been ripped up, with the wood used for bonfires lit by locals outside their homes during alcohol- and drug-fuelled parties. Council vehicles also are regularly stolen from the depot and community school teachers recently went on strike after their homes were broken into.

Family violence is also a considerable problem. The manager of the women's safe house in Woorabinda reported that she provides services for approximately 12 women per week and approximately half of all the women in the community have been clients in recent years. There have also been four youth suicides in the last twelve months. There is strong anecdotal evidence to suggest that there is a significant under-reporting of child protection issues in Woorabinda. Fear of retribution and a culture of shame are the major contributors to this under-reporting.

The community faces a range of other problems including:

- difficulties in attracting and retaining suitable staff for community agencies;
- a lack of cultural awareness in the community because elders are dying out;
- housing issues — there is a need for an increase in capital works to cater for increases in staff from community agencies;
- new and existing staff have a range of unmet training needs including cultural awareness;
- there has historically been a lack of strong community leadership;
- there is a high level of unemployment and a lack of local business and training opportunities;
- there is a lack of people in the community that have the education and skills required to run projects effectively, and it is very difficult to get skilled outsiders into the community to run projects;
- the swimming pool is currently not working due to leaks from recent renovations and damage to the filtration system caused by youths — however, funding has recently been approved to rebuild the pool; and
- it is difficult for police and other service providers to develop trusting partnerships with the community because many of the service providers are on short (six month) rotations.

The misuse of alcohol, cannabis and petrol are major problems in the community. The pumps at the petrol station are enclosed in steel cases and padlocked, in an attempt to keep the petrol sniffers out. This led children to break into the council workshops to steal petrol from mowers and vehicles. As a result, the council no longer stores petrol on site. While there are many overt problems caused by petrol and alcohol misuse, cannabis supply and use is often overlooked.

Woorabinda Council employs a project officer who recently surveyed a significant portion of the population to identify their concerns. There were issues raised concerning the full spectrum of community services. Those which have relevance to policing, law and order, and safety include:

- truancy problems and resultant poor literacy of children;
- control of the illegal supply of alcohol into the community;
- vandalism and break and enter offences by youths;
- the need for education and improved awareness of alcohol and its effects;

- the need for better family support to address effects of alcohol and other drugs;
- gambling and child neglect;
- the need to reduce and prevent offences against children;
- a lack of programs for young people relating to drugs and volatile substance misuse;
- an ongoing need for an alcohol rehabilitation centre;
- a need for a place of safety for young sniffers; and
- a lack of role models for young people.

### ***Initiatives and changes***

- There have been improvements in recent months following the arrival of a new Chief Executive Officer and Mayor.
- In the future, a locally-based Child Protection Investigation Unit (CPIU) officer (yet to be formally approved) will provide an immediate response to reported offences. It is anticipated that having an individual with local knowledge will result in greater consistency in investigations and a marked improvement in client service delivery for Juvenile Justice Act (JJA) and child protection matters. A local CPIU officer will also provide a consistent point of contact for other government and non-government agencies in relation to child protection issues. This will also: enhance the QPS's ability to: build rapport with the community; conduct proactive operations in relation to child protection issues and JJA matters; and allow for greater personal contact with key stakeholders. It is also anticipated that this will enable further enhancement of proactive programs targeting volatile substance misuse, truancy and personal safety issues.
- Council is in process of introducing a 6 pm to 6 am curfew for all youths under 16. The measure, intended to force parents to take responsibility for their children, is believed to be the first of its kind to be introduced in Queensland.
- Laws are already in place restricting the volume and type of alcohol brought into the community, but the council has now declared all new homes in Woorabinda to be dry areas. Tenants are required to sign an agreement saying there will be no alcohol in the home. If they are found to have broken the stipulation, they will be evicted.
- Council has commenced an aggressive campaign to recover the \$787,468 owed in council rents.
- The Boundary Riders Project aims to teach young kids the skills of jackaroos. There is a history of horsemanship in the community and the project involves taking small groups of youth on five-day camps to teach various stockman skills such as fencing. They are also taught reading and writing skills.
- A number of cultural camping programs have been introduced. These teach story telling, tracking, and making didgeridoos and spears.

### ***Policing and related strategies***

- The Woorabinda Negotiation Table, which was established in 2002, provides a means of encouraging communication between communities and local service providers.
- An Indigenous Community Police Consultative Group (ICPCG) was established to enhance relations between the community and police.
- The Woorabinda Indigenous Policing Project (WIPP). The WIPP officially commenced on 10 September 2007. The project aims to develop a policing strategy which promotes the best use of police resources in delivering services to the Woorabinda community

and to provide practical suggestions for possible changes to police responses, policy and practice which may improve relations between police and the Woorabinda community.

- The Woorabinda Community Safety Plan was formulated as a result of the 'Policing Drugs in Rural & Remote Queensland' forum held in Cairns in May 2007. The Safety Plan involves: community consultation processes; the implementation of crime prevention strategies; the implementation of supply-, demand- and harm-reduction strategies for drugs, alcohol and volatile substances; truancy reduction strategies; sexual assault reduction strategies; establishing Neighborhood Watch, Watch Out, and Crime Stopper programs; encouraging community and government agencies to report crime; and encouraging programs in schools concerning protective behaviours.
- Movies/discos are held on the last Friday of the month, organised by police in partnership with council, activities officers, Anglicare and local sponsors.
- Anglicare runs a free BBQ at each event from its own funding.
- There is a plan to implement the Police Citizen Youth Clubs Indigenous Basketball program.

A key point made concerning responses to these problems in Woorabinda was the need to implement small programs that lead to measurable successes upon which other successes can be built.

### ***3.1.2 Cherbourg: Presentation by Sergeant Scott Prendergast***

Cherbourg is located off the Bunya Highway approximately 250 kilometres north-west of Brisbane. It has a population 1,870 people, 41% of whom are under 18 years of age. Cherbourg was founded in 1904 when 7,000 acres (2,835 ha) of the Cherbourg selection was set aside by the Queensland Government for an Aboriginal settlement. Cherbourg became independent in 1986 when the government issued the community with a DOGIT. Its main tribal groups are the Wakka Wakka people (who originally lived in the area between Dalby and Maidenwell) and the Culidy people (who originally lived in the area between Roma and Quilpie). Thirteen different tribal groups were brought together to form the Cherbourg Aboriginal Settlement. Cherbourg has seven full-time police officers, and six community police who are employed by Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council. Cherbourg is six kilometers away from the nearest police station at Murgon.

Substance abuse, truancy, domestic violence and youth development problems are the key issues that dominate policing in Cherbourg.

The Barambah Community Justice Group, in cooperation with the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, Liquor Licensing Division and people of the Cherbourg community, developed an Alcohol Management Plan (AMP). The plan involved the introduction of declared dry places which was supported by State Government regulations effective from 17 December 2004. The regulations make it an offence to consume alcohol in a large number of places in the community. These restrictions apply to anyone within a dry area, whether a resident, visitor or tourist. While heavy penalties apply for breaches of the regulations, the AMP has not been particularly effective at reducing alcohol problems.

Minimal levels of chronicling have been detected in the community and this tends to be associated with the presence of specific individuals. Cannabis use is very widespread.

School truancy is a major problem in the community and, as a result, there are rigorous school policies relating to attendance and the policing of truancy. There is a high level of cooperation and support between the police and the schools to deal with this. Police also use a range of community by-laws to assist in the reduction of truancy.

Cherbourg police deal with an average of 15 reportable domestic violence incidents per month. The police station has appointed a liaison officer to help address this. A Problem Oriented and Partnership Policing (POPP) approach has also been developed in conjunction with stakeholders from the Toowoomba Domestic Violence Service and the Jundah Shelter in Cherbourg. The project involves measures such as: seeking variations to expiring domestic violence orders and utilising stakeholders to follow-up aggrieved spouses to determine if extensions of orders are required; and seeking continuations of existing orders upon breaches being detected and court action commenced.

The Cherbourg Community Youth Project commenced in 2004 in response to a range of youth-related issues in the community. Stakeholders in the project are QPS, Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council, the Indigenous Coordination Centre, Community Training Centre (CTC) Youth Services, the Qld Department of Sport and Recreation, and the Federal Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA). QPS has designated a police position for project development and the Project committee has recently appointed a Youth Development Worker. Activities are held at the local sports complex (for example, QPS runs activities between 5 and 9 pm at the complex). This includes a light meal, supervision and access to sporting equipment. Recently, the project has sourced a small bus and is in the process of seeking funding for further projects.

### ***3.1.3 Remote Communities in the Mt Isa District: Presentation by Superintendent Les Hopkins***

This district has three remote Indigenous communities: Doomadgee, Mornington Island, and Normanton.

#### ***3.1.3.1 Doomadgee***

Doomadgee is a DOGIT community which has a population of more than 1,200, 93% of who are Indigenous Australians. The community currently has nine uniformed police plus one detective; however, this is to be increased by one officer. The community had an Alcohol Management Plan (AMP) introduced on 2 April 2003 which limits possession to 27 litres (72 cans) of beer. The restrictions apply to anyone in the Restricted Area, whether a resident, visitor or a tourist passing through. The major illicit drug problem is cannabis; however, there have been very limited seizures and prosecutions. There is no evidence of the presence of other illicit drugs. Petrol sniffing is periodically a problem in the community; however, this has reduced since Opal fuel was introduced. Alcohol remains by far the major problem at Doomadgee. Doomadgee Council is not supportive of the AMP and the Doomadgee AMP boundaries are in dispute which makes policing the AMP difficult. In addition, the Burketown Hotel sells liquor without restriction to residents of Doomadgee. A further issue is that the Doomadgee Council recently dismissed the Community Police.

### **3.1.3.2 Morningson Island**

Morningson Island is also a DOGIT community and has a population of more than 1,100, 90% of who are Indigenous. There are currently six police in the community but this is to be increased by four, to ten officers. An AMP was introduced in November 2003 and alcohol is prohibited on the island and on the internal waterways of the island. The exceptions to this are the Lelka Murrin Hotel and Birri Fishing Lodge. The sale of alcohol from these premises is restricted to light- and mid-strength beer only, and there are no take-away sales. Binge drinking during the restricted hours of trade at the hotel on Morningson Island is a problem. The restrictions apply to anyone in the Restricted Area, whether a resident, visitor or a tourist passing through. The Morningson Island Council is supportive of the AMP.

In March 2005, new offences relating to home brew were introduced; however, the overwhelming majority of problems relate to alcohol sales from the hotel, rather than from home brew. As with Doomadgee, the illicit drug most commonly used is cannabis and there is no evidence of other illicit drugs being used. There have only been a limited number of seizures of cannabis. Petrol sniffing is not a problem and Opal fuel has been successfully introduced. This introduction has been successful due to the isolated nature of the location.

### **3.1.3.3 Normanton**

Normanton is not a DOGIT community and is situated in the lower gulf area. It has a population of more than 1,100, 60%, of who are Indigenous. The community is served by four uniformed police and one detective. There is no AMP in place as the community is not a DOGIT. The community has three hotels and one bowls club and it has significant domestic violence issues resulting from alcohol abuse. Indeed, Normanton has one of the highest rates of domestic violence in the State on a per-capita basis. Normanton does not receive the same level of resources as the DOGIT communities. As with Doomadgee and Morningson Island, cannabis is the principal illicit drug use problem and there is no evidence of other illicit drug use. Petrol sniffing not a problem and there are no other VSM issues.

### **3.1.3.4 Issues common to all communities.**

All communities have high levels of domestic and other violence which result from alcohol misuse. The majority of community members spend all their money on alcohol between Wednesday and Sunday. Child protection is also a key priority for police in all the areas. A further issue is that large numbers of Indigenous people drift between Doomadgee (which has an AMP) and Normanton (which does not have an AMP). This causes a range of problems within Normanton, particularly in the context of the limited level of policing resources in that community. A further issue is the difficulties associated with the recruitment/retention of police officers, as they are reluctant to work in the communities.

### **3.1.3.5 Strategies implemented**

QPS is seeking to work closely with a range of government agencies because of the importance of a whole of government approach to the issues in the communities. This whole of government approach has had some successes and has led to the implementation of a range of projects. The implementation of AMPs has led to some successes, while educational programs have had limited success.

Some of the strategies implemented include:

- Community Negotiation Tables;
- appointing community champions;
- decreasing the trading hours of the Mornington Hotel;
- establishing Police Citizen Youth Clubs (PCYC) on Mornington Island supported by two Police Liaison Officers;
- implementing and enforcing offences concerning home brewing;
- ensuring that police, PCYC and the schools work together to ensure that children attend school;
- working with the Liquor Licensing Division to address both the sale of alcohol from the Burketown Hotel, and the AMP boundaries at Doomadgee; and
- developing a Liquor Accord with Normanton licensees so that these licensed premises do not sell cask wine.

A range of other programs have been established including:

- Support your Mob (Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drug Services)
- Indigenous Suicide Awareness Program (QPS)
- Meet the Police Program (QPS)
- Ending family Violence (Corrective Services)
- Men's Group (Justice Department)
- Horsemanship Program (TAFE)
- Normanton Building Safer Communities Action Team
- Normanton Family Place Project
- Normanton Building Safer Communities Action Team
- Normanton Family Place Project

Two programs in particular have had a dramatic impact. The Normanton 'Domestic Violence: It's Not Our Game' Project has had a substantial impact on levels of domestic violence. Over the past year, there has been a 55% reduction in domestic violence incidents and a 64% decrease in the number of breaches of existing domestic violence orders.

The 'Family Place' Project encourages community members to declare that no drinking or drug use is to take place in their homes. Community members can publicly reject alcohol and drug use by displaying signs on the fences of their houses stating that they choose to have a 'Family Place', in which no alcohol or other drugs are allowed. The greatest success has been identified by families in Palmer Street, Normanton, where two homes are registered with the project and have signage on their front fences. This street has apparently become much quieter, and a safer place for their children. Indeed, some participants have reported that if family members who are in possession of alcohol do visit their homes, they leave their alcohol on the footpath outside of the residence.

### **3.1.4 Far Northern Region: Presentation by Senior Sergeant Kersley & Sergeant Banaghan**

The Far North Region consists of three districts — Cairns, Mareeba and Innisfail. There is a Superintendent in charge at Cairns (which includes Cape and Torres Stations) and Inspectors at Mareeba and Innisfail. The population of the region is 289,000, served by 572 police from 44 stations. Far North Queensland has the highest population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders out of all QPS Regions. There are 14 DOGIT communities, which are the subject of AMP enforcement. Localised support such as shelters, welfare and access to some government agencies is not readily available in these Cape communities. The communities in the region all differ regarding the stringency of their AMPs, their degree of isolation, their employment opportunities and the degree to which they can be accessed during the wet season. This means that the communities have differing demographics and needs for service and therefore require differing policing responses. The policing responses that work in one community will not necessarily work in others.

The region faces a number of policing challenges. Foremost among these are the difficulties associated with attracting and retaining adequate numbers of police. Historically, there was no financial incentive for police to serve in these regions. There were also no mechanisms in place to reward (in a career advancement sense) police who time spent serving the communities. Equally, it was difficult to attract police officers who had families because they were subject to the same conditions and rules which govern the communities.

It is anticipated that a new enterprise bargaining agreement will increase the number of incentives for police to serve in these regions. In addition, it is also hoped that with increased numbers of police and improved infrastructure, the QPS will be able to move to a more proactive role and this will begin laying foundations for change. Other issues facing policing in the region include:

- the challenge of distance and enforcement in remote areas where there is a lack of support from other government agencies;
- the need to garner community support for policing activities;
- officer safety;
- the fact that remote area policing is very resource-intensive;
- difficulties associated with exhibit management and resultant problems associated with securing convictions;
- the level of media attention which policing in remote areas attracts; and
- police reporting and control structures.

Police in the region have implemented a range of measures to enhance the effectiveness of their activities. These include:

- developing strategies that break down barriers between communities and the police;
- police-initiated community-based programs such as structured outdoor activities, movie nights and sports;
- implementing targeted programs such as 'Be strong be heard' addressing child abuse, and the 'Violence No Way' domestic violence-reduction program;
- increasing staffing levels, infrastructure and support to enable a more proactive role rather than the existing reactive mode; and
- attempting to break the drinking and drug cycles.

There is a need to recognise and promote the good policing work that is being done in these communities. There is also a need to find a balance between the core policing duties and the need to be involved in proactive community-based programs. It is also important to educate and motivate relevant agencies and the communities themselves about strategies that are likely to lead to improvements.

The Queensland Government appoints regional directors of government services who have a significant role to play in coordinating the activities of agencies involved in working with communities. These directors are key stakeholders in the development of whole-of-government approaches to community problems.

A key lesson that has been learned in the implementation of measures to reduce alcohol and other drug related harm in the Far North Region has been the need to ensure that alcohol demand-reduction strategies are in place when supply-reduction strategies are implemented. In the absence of demand-reduction strategies, the implementation of supply-reduction strategies can lead to displacement onto other drug use or the sourcing of alcohol via alternative routes.

### **3.2 Attracting and retaining police with the necessary skill sets and attributes to work with remote Indigenous communities.**

One of the key issues highlighted at the Workshop was the difficulties associated with attracting and retaining suitably skilled police to work in rural and remote Indigenous communities. WA Police has recently introduced a raft of measures, many of which were contained in the Western Australia Police Industrial Agreement (2006). What follows is a description of the conditions that apply to the police officers working at the Multi-Function Policing Facilities (MFPF) at Kintore, Warburton, Balgo, Kalumburu, Warakurna/Docker River, Bidyadanga, Dampier Peninsula, Warmun, and Jigalong.

Employees stationed at an MFPF do not have fixed hours of duty, in that they are required to become involved in after hours and weekend activity such as community reference groups, sporting events, blue light discos etc.

Employees who occupy the position of officer-in-charge (OIC) of an MFPF are provided with the brevet rank of senior sergeant and are permitted to wear the insignia of this rank while the officer in charge of the MFPF. These officers are paid the senior sergeant country OIC rate. Employees who occupy positions other than that of OIC at an MFPF are provided with the brevet rank of sergeant and are permitted to wear the insignia of this rank while stationed at the MFPF. These officers are paid at the rate of sergeant. Officers who occupy the position of OIC of an MFPF are paid a salary loading equivalent to 40% of the senior sergeant base rate but are not entitled to the payment of overtime, or shift allowances. Officers who occupy positions other than that of OIC of an MFPF are paid a salary loading equivalent to 40% of the sergeant base rate and are also not entitled to the payment of overtime, or shift allowances. Officers stationed at an MFPF are not permitted to undertake secondary employment.

Employees stationed at an MFPF receive a Remote Community Allowance of \$3,500 per annum, free housing, and free electricity and water. They are also entitled to 160 hours remote community leave for each completed year of service while stationed at the MFPF.

Remote community leave is accrued per year and taken at the end of the employee's posting to the MFPP. Remote community leave is also available on a pro-rata basis in multiples of three months, following the employee's completion of their minimum tenure at the MFPP. Absence on Remote Community Leave counts as service for all purposes.

Employees stationed at an MFPP are also entitled to an additional annual leave travel concession.

The minimum tenure for an OIC is two years and further yearly extensions are possible up to a maximum of four years. Other employees have a minimum tenure of one year with a further two yearly extensions possible up to a maximum tenure of three years. Upon completion of minimum tenure at a MFPP, the employee's choice of transfer location will be given preference consistent with the operational requirements of WA Police. Employees who relieve an officer stationed at an MFPP also receive many of the benefits applied to tenured officers.

Staff are provided with new air-conditioned homes which have a double lock-up garage and reticulation irrigated, landscaped yards. Homes are furnished with white goods, an outdoor setting, a three-piece lounge, and a dining setting. Free-to-air television services are provided as is the installation of Foxtel equipment. Staff are allowed to use the police computer system to access internet services such as on-line banking, paying bills and the like.

As far as staff selection is concerned, staff participate in a psychological assessment with a WA Police Health and Welfare Branch clinical psychologist prior to being endorsed to work at a MFPP. This is predominantly to assess their capacity, or otherwise, to survive in a remote environment. A psychologist is then required annually to endorse, or otherwise, extensions of tenure. In addition, the psychologist attempts to visit each site every six months. At the completion of tenure, additional assessments are conducted to determine if any assistance or programs are required to assist officers to commence duties in a new location.

WA Police is currently establishing a working group to develop an agency policy on health and welfare issues for the remote sites.

### **3.3 Case studies: Hypothetical scenarios developed at the Workshop**

Workshop participants were divided into groups and they developed scenarios to work on. The scenarios were based on the participants' experiences.

#### ***3.3.1 Preventing problems with town camps***

##### ***3.3.1.1 The problem***

The problem addressed by this group concerned alcohol-related offences, and petrol sniffing issues related to town camps.

### **3.3.1.2 The strategy**

The group identified that there are Indigenous Australians who are proud of their camps and others who aren't. In order to reduce these problems, the group recognised that it is important to join forces with those who are supportive of positive change and to assist them to achieve small, clearly evident successes. In this way, the group would empower those with a positive peer influence to enhance community respect and pride. In addition, the group would educate the leaders and supporters, and camp members generally, in the value of intelligence concerning the identities of offenders, particularly those who are bringing petrol and alcohol into the camps, as well as other problem individuals. The group would also use law enforcement data to evaluate the success of the strategy and feed this back to the camps. Policing strategies would need to be proactive, intelligence-led and applied consistently to all community members. Particularly important in this regard is the need for a consistent approach to repeat offenders.

Other strategies discussed by the group included:

- the nomination of a camp 'champion' (for example, a leading service provider from policing, health or education organisations);
- the formation of a camp leaders' forum with representatives from a broad spectrum of male and female elders, grandmothers, mothers and youth;
- the development of youth organisations and after school activities;
- allocating a patrol group to oversee camp/s and to build relationship with residents;
- dedicating an intelligence officer to camp/s;
- establishing a 'safe camp competition' between the camps to reduce violence and to provide a mechanism to feed information back to the camps concerning trends in crime;
- linking the camps to alcohol and other drug services;
- finding out what services the communities want and working with other service providers to ensure that these services are provided; and
- obtaining additional intelligence from the other service providers involved in the camp communities.

#### ***Six-month objectives:***

- to have identified and commenced work with the leaders and supporters of change in the town camps;
- to have an enhanced intelligence base resulting from improved communication between community members and the police, particularly concerning when people are bringing alcohol or petrol in to the camps; and
- to reduce the number of alcohol-related offences in town camps by reducing the amount of alcohol entering the camp.

#### ***Twelve-month objectives:***

- Evaluation of the initiative will show a reduction in alcohol-, drug- and petrol-related incidents and offences.
- An enhanced sense of pride and respect present in the communities.
- The maintenance of a consistent and proactive pattern of policing over the 12-month period.

### ***3.3.2 Responding to child abuse in Indigenous communities***

#### ***3.3.2.1 The problem***

The problem identified by this group concerned appropriate policing and other community responses to child abuse in Indigenous communities.

#### ***3.3.2.2 The strategy***

The group primarily focused on a developmental approach to enhance the skills of police and other service providers in responding to child abuse. Particularly important in this regard was identifying and building on the strengths of police, other service providers, and the broader community to prevent and respond to child abuse.

The group recognised the need to both inform/remind service providers of their mandatory responsibilities regarding reporting child abuse, and to enhance the relationships with these service providers. In this regard, interagency meetings would be held at local and regional levels, which would have action items on mandatory reporting. The two levels of meeting would be necessary (local and regional) so that regional stakeholders are aware of the issues occurring at the local level, and to promote interagency cooperation. These meetings could also serve to increase pressure on other agencies and make them more accountable for their responses to child abuse. There would also be a need to upskill local service providers in relation to their ability to respond to child abuse issues and to increase the overall local capacity to respond.

The group also saw the need to obtain police executive endorsement for the establishment of a state-wide consistent approach to training concerning child abuse issues. There is an opportunity to collate existing police training packages and develop them into a single package that meets national competency standards. The package should also be piloted prior to dissemination, to ensure that it meets the needs of a wide range of police. A train--the-trainer approach could be adopted to ensure that the package has wide dissemination. This would also make it easier for local police districts to take responsibility to implement the training. The training package could be supported by a resource kit and an aide memoir for police.

Police officers working in Indigenous regions would need to be particularly targeted for training with programs that meet their needs. One issue that is particularly relevant to police working with Indigenous communities is that of foetal alcohol syndrome.

Also important in this regard are measures to enhance the intelligence-gathering processes so that police are more aware of the occurrence of incidents of child abuse.

The group also saw the need to enhance data collection that highlights the links between alcohol and other drug misuse and child abuse. This is particularly important in the context of obtaining evidence to support applications for further program funding.

The group was also mindful that increases in reporting would lead to pressure on health and welfare service providers, so far as their ability to respond to increased numbers of child abuse notifications is concerned. Also important would be assisting other agencies to manage community responses to situations in which it was necessary to remove children from their parents.

### **3.3.2.3 Objectives**

By the end of 12 months, the group would be expecting:

- an increase child abuse reporting;
- decreases in the levels of school truancy;
- decreased calls for service by police;
- 100% compliance with child abuse reporting;
- enhanced local service delivery (such as increased visits from family and community service workers); and
- improved response times to notifications of child abuse by local agencies.

## **3.3.3 Responding to family violence in Indigenous communities**

### **3.3.3.1 The problem**

This group examined the issue of family violence in Indigenous communities.

### **3.3.3.2 The strategy**

The group also recognised the need to enhance the training of police and other service providers in responding to family violence. The group highlighted the links between family violence and substance misuse issues and the need to identify the key substance misuse issues that impact on family violence. In addition, the group was also aware of the importance of working with other service providers and the need for all of the stakeholders to clearly identify their roles so far as responding to family violence is concerned. There was also an important need to ensure that other stakeholders are aware of their roles and boundaries.

The group would initiate interagency meetings on a local and regional basis and have action items for the meetings which clearly identify the parties that are responsible for those items. In this way, agencies which do not meet their obligations at the local level could be held to account at the regional level. The meetings would also provide an opportunity for police to express their concerns about the level of compliance with mandatory reporting requirements and to develop strategies to address this. The group also wanted to establish community consultation committees to determine what the communities see as the key issues and solutions.

The group wanted to develop mechanisms to ensure that the community is aware that police are responding to the problem. The community consultation committees could be used for this purpose, as could local media.

### **3.3.3.3 Objectives**

The short-term objectives were to have:

- identified the key issues and key stakeholders in the communities;
- established local- and regional-level meetings of service providers and local community consultation committees;
- more closely engaged with communities to gain intelligence as well as provide

reassurance; and

- trained all police and other service providers in their responsibilities as mandated notifiers (police may have a role in conducting programs for mandated notifiers in their communities).

The medium-term objectives were to:

- enhance the level of protection for family violence victims and reduce the incidence of family violence;
- have a high level of awareness among communities concerning their roles and responsibilities and those of each of the service providers;
- achieve 100% compliance with reporting;
- have improvements in school attendance levels; and
- increase referrals to drug and alcohol counselling.

The long-term objectives were to:

- increase voluntary victim complaints and referrals;
- have enhanced police intelligence and reporting; and
- enhance the level of service delivery both among those agencies that respond to family violence and those that address some of the underlying causes.

### **3.3.4 Family violence**

#### **3.3.4.1 The problem**

This group also examined family violence issues and their links to substance misuse (in particular alcohol and cannabis use), truancy, and other youth-related issues.

#### **3.3.4.2 The strategy**

The group recognised that it was very important for police to follow up all incidents of family violence in order to change the culture of the communities regarding the problem, and to enhance the communities' safety and perceptions of safety. The group recognised that this would be a highly resource-intensive process. The group highlighted the need to establish consultative structures involving community members to determine the issues that they see as being most important (across the spectrum of issues of concern to the community). These structures would also provide an opportunity to gather intelligence and to reinforce the importance of mandatory reporting of family violence. The group also recognised that police may have a role in providing training sessions and information and resources to staff from other government agencies to reinforce their awareness of their legislative obligations.

Other strategies included the need to: enhance policing intelligence in this area; identify key community members who are offenders and victims of family violence and focus policing attention on them; and to work with schools to reinforce the content of the 'Be Seen, Be Heard' program.

The group would also use the media to inform the community about links between family violence and alcohol and other drug problems.

### **3.3.4.3 Objectives**

Short-term objectives (six months) were to have:

- established community consultative structures;
- reinforced within communities and among service providers the nature of and importance of the mandatory reporting of family violence;
- increased the visible policing presence in the affected communities;
- identified persons of interest who are victims and perpetrators;
- begun working with schools to reinforce the content of the 'Be Seen, Be Heard' program;
- developed and implemented a media strategy, utilising radio and print media; and
- an increase in reported family violence offences of both a current and historical nature.

Longer-term objectives (twelve months) were to have:

- all the staff from the relevant government agencies trained in their mandatory reporting obligations;
- clarified and delineated the roles of all of the agencies involved in responding to these problems and have developed mechanisms to hold all agencies accountable to carry out their allocated actions;
- an ongoing training program targeting new staff when they arrive in the area;
- identified where any supplementary training among police and other service providers is required and facilitated access to this;
- increased levels of community confidence that family violence matters will be addressed and have associated increased community perceptions of safety;
- implemented a data collection system to enable ongoing monitoring; and
- a decrease in the number of current family violence offences being reported.

## **3.3.5 Petrol, alcohol and illicit drug trafficking in remote communities**

### **3.3.5.1 The problem**

This group focused on addressing the trafficking of petrol, alcohol and other illicit drugs along with the associated problems.

### **3.3.5.2 The strategy**

A key aim of the group was to establish a project to disrupt the supply of substances by increasing the flow of law enforcement intelligence among all those with a role in this area. The group also recognised the need to maintain the security of the intelligence (that is, maintaining security without secrecy). This exchange of information could occur via a weekly telephone conference between those involved, via emails, and where these methods are unavailable, fax. A key aim of this would be to identify the method of operation of persons of interest and to disrupt supply by adopting a zero tolerance approach to targets.

Other strategies that the group would adopt included:

- identifying a police manager to take responsibility for the project;
- seeking to obtain additional funds via a project submission to ELG/Commander, or sourcing a grant from the Remote Workforce Development Strategy — among other things, the additional resources could be used to expand the Substance Abuse Intelligence Desk;
- initiating meetings with health, Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) representatives, Alcohol and other Drug Services Central Australia, and the Central Lands Council;
- increasing the number of human sources and tasking the Aboriginal Community Police Liaison Officers to gather further information on trafficking and persons of interest;
- becoming better connected with the community in order to better understand the issues of most concern to them and informing community members regarding drug use and the associated problems from a policing perspective;
- enhancing education in schools regarding crime prevention, and working with the NPY Women’s Council and encouraging them to educate Indigenous women about the extent, nature and problems associated with trafficking;
- meeting the local Member of the Legislative Assembly so that she can better inform her constituents on these issues;
- liaising with the Central Lands Council and health staff to gain more information on the severity of these problems;
- developing media releases about the problems and the policing responses;
- consulting with specialist areas and interstate police to ascertain the strategies that they find effective;
- implementing road blocks in conjunction with other stations;
- enhancing proactive policing using drug warrants, the Volatile Substance Abuse Prevention Act, and traffic offences, and making more effective use of drug-house notices and criminal asset forfeiture;
- improving policing procedures regarding exhibit handling, and liaising more closely with prosecutors to secure convictions;
- arguing for stronger bail conditions such as the requirement for urine drug testing;
- initiating a training workshop for remote community members; and
- amending the project plan in response to issues and learnings that arise as it progresses.

### **3.3.5.3 Objectives**

Within six months the group wanted to:

- have applied to relevant sources of funds to expand policing activity in this area;
- have enhanced policing intelligence concerning trafficking;
- increase the number of: successful prosecutions of relevant offences, bail objections, reported offenders, and alcohol, drug and volatile substance seizures;
- have established links with other key stakeholder agencies and organisations; and
- have initiated measures to better inform the community about substance abuse issues from a policing perspective.

#### 4. THE WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE CURRENT STATUS OF POLICING RESPONSES TO DRUG PROBLEMS IN RURAL AND REMOTE COMMUNITIES.

The *Good Practice Framework — Policing illicit drugs in rural and remote local communities* (Delahunty and Putt, 2006) monograph outlines a systematic process that police can use to assess, plan, respond to, and evaluate drug problems in these communities. It considers these approaches from strategic (state-wide), local district (regional) and local perspectives. Part of the monograph contains a checklist that police can use to review and monitor how well drug problems are being addressed from each of these perspectives.

The Workshop participants were provided with a copy of the checklist that appears on pages 10 and 11 of the *Good Practice Framework*. They were asked to provide an indication of how they rated existing policing practices in relation to each of the 37 aspects of good practice. They used a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 representing very poor practices and 5 representing excellent practices. Each of the 37 aspects was rated from state-wide, regional and local perspectives. The results were then compiled and the scores for each of the 111 (37x3) averaged to provide an overview of the perceptions of participants. The authors of the monograph divided the 37 aspects of good practice into six general topics, namely Drug Strategies, Custodial Safety, Communication and Liaison, Education and Training, Improving Recruiting and Safety, and Crime Prevention. This enabled an average score to be applied to each of these general topics.

Before considering the results of this Workshop activity, it is important to be mindful that this can in no way be regarded as either a rigorous examination of the perceptions of Workshop participants, nor representative of the majority of police working in (or having responsibility for) rural and remote regions. This was never the intent of conducting this exercise at the Workshop. Rather, after the exercise was completed, it was considered that — given the participants had recorded this information — it could be useful to compile and examine these data to determine if any trends arose that may warrant more thorough investigation. In this way, these results might best be considered to be a 'thumb nail sketch' of the perceptions of a particular group of Workshop participants at a particular point in time. It could also be anticipated that the results of this exercise could be skewed towards the situation in the Northern Territory, given that this jurisdiction had the largest representation at the Workshop. The results of this appear below.

<b>THEME</b>	<b>JURISDICTION WIDE</b>	<b>REGIONAL</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>	<b>TOPIC AVERAGE</b>
<b>DRUG STRATEGIES</b>				
Assess local drug crime — seizures, charges, information	3.6	3.4	3.4	
Assess intelligence network	3.3	3.3	3.0	
Formal and informal meeting with local community regarding priorities in DLE	2.2	3.0	3.0	
Protocols with health and other services	2.5	2.3	2.4	
Agreed processes to manage and promote diversion of drug offenders	3.1	3.0	3.7	3.0
<b>CUSTODIAL SAFETY</b>				
Local or regional alternatives to arrest/charging	2.8	2.9	3.1	
Local or regional alternatives to incarceration	2.5	2.7	2.7	
Protocols to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services, Aboriginal medial & community health services and other agencies	2.1	1.9	2.8	
Local complaints monitoring	2.5	3.1	3.6	
Use and /or promotion of other 'alternative' services; e.g. community justice panels, elders, sobering-up centres, translators	2.3	2.3	2.7	
Improved prisoner screening processes and access to medical support and counselling services in watch houses	2.9	2.8	2.5	
Assessment of local or regional monitoring systems (arrest and/or complaints)	3.4	3.6	3.4	2.7
<b>COMMUNICATION AND LIAISON</b>				
Aboriginal police liaison/community police (or equivalent)	2.7	2.9	3.1	
Police/community meetings	2.7	3.1	3.3	
Relationships with other key agencies	3.0	3.0	3.1	
Participation in youth programs and activities (sporting and cultural)	3.0	3.3	2.8	
Respect for and/or participation in traditions/ events/celebrations (not youth, sporting and cultural events)	2.2	2.5	2.7	2.6

THEME	JURISDICTION WIDE	REGIONAL	LOCAL	TOPIC AVERAGE
<b>EDUCATION AND TRAINING</b>				
Local-level cultural training — ongoing	1.9	1.9	2.0	
Resource list of Indigenous personnel	2.0	1.7	1.9	
Specialist training for those in communities with significant Indigenous populations	1.5	1.2	1.5	
Specialist training for officers attending family violence incidents	3.0	2.9	3.0	
Encourage local Indigenous community members to become involved in training delivery	2.0	1.7	1.8	2.0
<b>IMPROVING RECRUITMENT</b>				
Strategies targeting local Indigenous applicants	2.6	2.2	2.5	
Use appropriate and respected Indigenous representatives on selection and other panels	1.8	1.9	2.3	
Preparatory courses	2.3	2.2	2.1	
Identifying racist tendencies in applicants	2.6	3.1	2.3	
Career development assistance	2.2	2.3	2.4	
Mentoring program for Indigenous recruits	2.2	2.0	2.3	2.7
<b>SAFETY AND CRIME PREVENTION</b>				
Assess local crime trends	3.5	3.9	3.8	
Strategy to reduce family violence	3.5	3.5	3.6	
Multi-agency partnerships	3.3	4.8	3.3	
Assist Indigenous community to develop diversionary programs and to encourage their use	2.1	2.0	2.3	
Assist Indigenous communities to secure external funding for crime prevention initiatives	1.9	1.8	2.2	
Crime prevention and other information availability/accessibility	3.0	3.6	3.3	3.6

As is evident, the Workshop participants indicated that they regarded policing practices which impact upon safety and crime prevention issues as being conducted very well. Prominent among this general topic area were high ratings for strategies that assess local crime trends.

The 'stand-out' ratings were, however, associated with education and training issues, in that participants rated the current situation as being quite poor. In particular, the participants rated the current status of specialist training for those working in communities with significant Indigenous populations as being very problematic at state-wide, regional and local levels. While great caution needs to be adopted in reading too much into these findings, it is interesting to note that the finding concerning education and training programs is consistent with that of Gray et al. (2006). These researchers reported that many police felt that they, or those that they supervised, had insufficient training to deal with volatile substance misuse in Indigenous communities. Delahunty and Putt (2006) also highlighted the importance of appropriate training for police working in rural and remote locations. There may be some benefit in conducting a learning needs analysis among police working in rural and remote Indigenous communities to better ascertain the nature of their learning needs and how these could best be met.

## 5. OTHER ISSUES

Two other issues of interest arose throughout the Workshop. The first of these concerned the paucity of evidence about the extent, nature and policing responses to alcohol and other drug problems among Indigenous Australians from more urban areas. In recent years there has been concerted research effort to examine these issues from rural and remote area perspectives, particularly that which has been funded by NDLERF. It is also important to consider this from an urban perspective. This is an issue that the NDLERF Board of Management may wish to consider in the context of its funding priorities.

The Workshop participants also indicated a need to develop networks of police who work in rural and remote Indigenous communities. Given the large degree of commonality between the problems faced by rural and remote police in each jurisdiction, they indicated that it would be useful if strategies could be developed that would make it easier to share their experiences of successful and not-so-successful strategies. This is another issue that the NDLERF Board of Management may wish to consider.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Despite the myriad difficulties associated with policing responses to substance misuse problems in rural and remote Indigenous communities, the overall sense of the Workshop was one of optimism, tempered by realism. The participants also recognised that the NDLERF monographs made a substantial contribution to the understanding of these issues and the nature of appropriate policing responses.

A further important outcome of the Workshop was that it acted as a good demonstration of the process of operationalising research. This process involved taking NDLERF research findings and applying them to situations that were of direct relevance to the Workshop participants, using a standardised framework. Added to this was the opportunity for networking and the sharing of experiences of participants with a wide variety of policing and other experiences.

The evaluation of the Workshop undertaken by Northern Territory Police also indicated that it was highly successful, particularly as far as the ability to share strategies and experiences was concerned. This Workshop followed equally successful similar workshops that were conducted in Darwin and Cairns. As such, the NDLERF Board of Management may feel it is appropriate to fund other such workshops to disseminate the findings of these and other NDLERF monographs. Arguably, a key factor in the success of the Workshop was having facilitators who were independent of the agencies attending. In this case it was valuable to have the researchers themselves fulfilling this role because they had a high level of expertise in the subject matter but were removed from the agencies involved.

## 7. REFERENCES

Delahunty, B. & Putt, J. (2006). *The Policing Implications of Cannabis, Amphetamine and other Illicit Drug Use in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities*. NDLERF Monograph No. 15. Adelaide: Australasian Centre for Policing Research.

Delahunty, B. & Putt, J. (2006). *Good Practice Framework — Policing Illicit Drugs in Rural & Remote Local Communities*. NDLERF Monograph No. 15A. Adelaide: Australasian Centre for Policing Research.

Gray, D., Shaw, G., d'Abbs, P., Brooks, D., Stearne, A., Mosey, A. & Spooner, C. (2006). *Policing Volatile Substance Misuse and Indigenous Australians*. NDLERF Monograph No. 16. Adelaide: Australasian Centre for Policing Research.



Produced by the

**NDLERF**

National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund  
GPO Box 308, Hobart, Tasmania 7001

© Commonwealth of Australia 2007

ISBN: 978-0-9803794-9-5

ISSN: 1449-7476

This work is copyright. Apart from any use as permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part may be reproduced by any process without prior written permission from the Commonwealth available from the National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund. Requests and enquiries concerning reproduction and rights should be addressed to the National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund, GPO Box 308, Hobart, Tasmania 7001.

Opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund (NDLERF) Board of Management or the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.