

WORKING WITH ADOLESCENTS TO

Prevent domestic violence

INDIGENOUS RURAL MODEL

REPORT

National Anti-Crime Strategy
An initiative of the Australian States and Territories





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The Commonwealth Government is strongly committed to crime prevention and aims to achieve a safer society by addressing the causes of crime and violence through its program National Crime Prevention. This approach involves partnerships with a range of stakeholders whose activities may impact on crime, including, Commonwealth agencies, State and Territory governments, local governments, non-government organisations, academic institutions, community groups and the business sector. National Crime Prevention is part of the Attorney-General's Department and was formerly known as the National Campaign Against Violence and Crime.

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National Anti-Crime Strategy

The National Anti-Crime Strategy is a shared initiative of State and Territory governments and is supported by the Commonwealth.

It is the task of the National Anti-Crime Strategy to harness Australia's crime prevention talent and ensure that all agencies and officials cooperate to develop and promote best practice in crime prevention.

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REPORT

**A report prepared for National Crime Prevention
and the National Anti-Crime Strategy**

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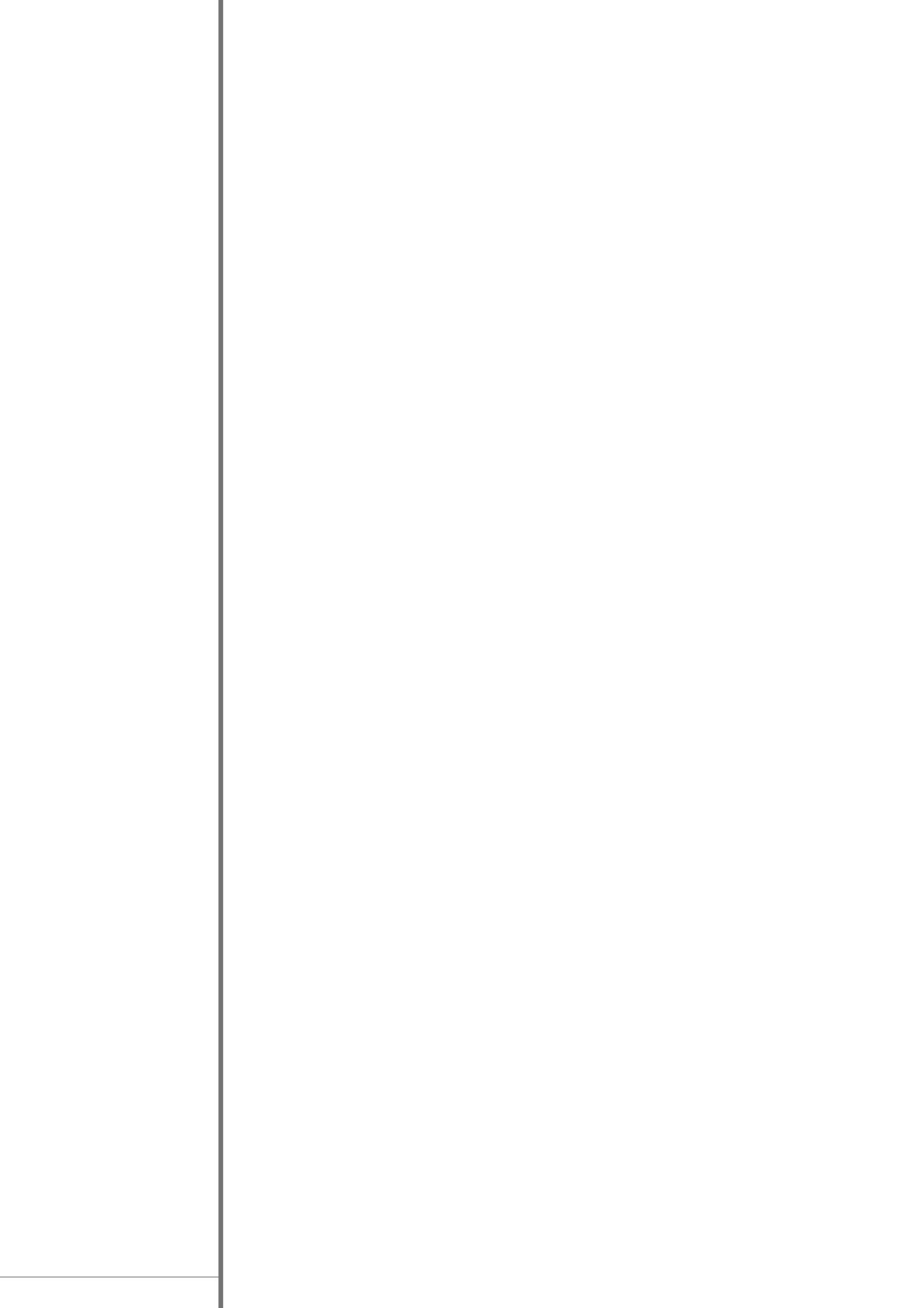
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FOREWORD



This report, *Working with adolescents to prevent domestic violence: Indigenous rural model*, complements an earlier report, *Rural town model*, from the Federal Government's program National Crime Prevention and the National Anti-Crime Strategy (NACS).

Domestic violence is an issue of concern for all Australians, from all backgrounds and all walks of life. Adolescence has been identified as a critical period for the prevention of future violence within domestic relationships. It is a time when young people are becoming involved in intimate relationships with other members of their peer groups, and hence a time when patterns of violence may be formed.

Whilst programs for the prevention of domestic violence exist, there are few that focus on Indigenous communities. Research has shown that there are issues to be addressed within Indigenous communities and that distinct programs need to be developed.

The Federal Government, working with NACS Ministers will be following up the findings of this report with a pilot program based in Derby, Western Australia.

I hope that you find this report a useful document containing practical suggestions for work with Indigenous young people to prevent domestic violence.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amanda Vanstone".

Senator the Hon. Amanda Vanstone
MINISTER FOR JUSTICE AND CUSTOMS

OVERVIEW

PREVENTING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

This is a report presented to National Crime Prevention (formerly known as National Campaign Against Violence and Crime) and the National Anti-Crime Strategy which covers the second phase of a project aimed at developing strategies to prevent domestic violence by intervention with adolescents. The first phase was undertaken in Northam, Western Australia (see National Campaign Against Violence and Crime — *Working with adolescents to prevent domestic violence: Rural town model*). This second report focuses on Derby in the West Kimberley region of Western Australia.

The research project as a whole, which includes both the rural town and Indigenous community phases, has developed models of intervention with adolescents to prevent domestic violence which are derived from:

- l a review of the relevant research and policy literature
- l an environmental assessment of each locality
- l intensive discussions with key stakeholders

This report assumes some knowledge of the first phase of the project. A number of its fundamental perspectives are founded on ideas and theories developed through phase one, particularly those relating to:

- l the cycle of violence
- l the learned dimension of violent and aggressive behaviour
- l the important role played by cultures of masculinity and the corresponding social structures in generating and sustaining acceptance of violence

In the second phase of the research these underpinning perspectives were adapted and modified to meet the specific requirements of Derby; a location that experiences problems of relationship violence within quite a different sociocultural framework from Northam.

The discussion of the underpinning theories and perspectives on the issue of violence that is found in the first report will not be repeated here. This research was premised on the hypothesis that, irrespective of cultural milieu, beliefs about interpersonal violence tend to be generated through broadly similar processes. These beliefs are transmitted through culture, have a cyclical dynamism, and are exercised under similar conditions, such as where (usually male) authority and status are under threat.

In this report emphasis was instead placed, in greater depth than in the Northam phase, on a careful analysis and mapping of the institutional and cultural context of the locality, and on consultations with stakeholders

and communities. It is now widely accepted that listening to and negotiating with Indigenous communities must preface any research or policy initiative which may impact upon them. Indigenous people remain adamant that respect for Indigenous culture requires that due weight be accorded to the unique qualities of *specific* Indigenous peoples and places. While such local factors may not be sufficiently unique to make lessons from schemes developed in one area non transferable to others, they may influence the character of local problems and of possible solutions.

INDIGENOUS ISSUES

It was a fundamental premise of the research project as a whole that, in Western Australia or similar states with a sizeable Indigenous population, two distinct models would need to be devised for intervention with adolescents. Projects designed within non Indigenous contexts often fail to mobilise Indigenous people. Research reveals that structures which do not take account of 'Aboriginal social relations' (O'Malley, 1996) in a particular locality, or what has been called the 'Aboriginal Domain' (von Sturmer, 1984; Rowse, 1992; Trigger, 1986) with its culturally specific forms of reciprocity and collectivity, will tend to underachieve. A review of Commonwealth, State and Territory initiatives aimed at addressing problems in Indigenous communities (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs, 1990) concluded that 'imposed structures' often fail to be culturally relevant and to meet Indigenous aspirations (1990: 41, 133). Those initiatives which have emerged from within Indigenous communities and meet aspirations tend to perform better (1990: 45).

It has become increasingly clear that many Indigenous Australians hold a different view about the nature and content of interpersonal violence from the view held by many non Indigenous people. Indeed, Indigenous people prefer to use the term 'family fighting' or 'feuding', rather than domestic violence, to describe the multiple forms of conflict and aggression that form in and around Indigenous intimate relations.

This description accurately reflects the incidence and prevalence of violence in Indigenous communities. Research by Ferrante *et al* (1996) shows that violent behaviour involving Indigenous people (including homicide and serious assaults) tends to be directed more towards intimates than strangers. While violence towards spouses represents 35.5% of homicides and 39.5% of serious assaults in Indigenous communities in Western Australia, it represented only 19.8% and 7.5% respectively in non Indigenous communities. Moreover, the rate of violence directed towards 'family' in general was also higher: 22.6% of homicides and 17.2% of serious assaults in Indigenous communities, as opposed to 14.8% and 4.4% respectively in non Indigenous communities. What the category 'family' may obscure, however, is the scope of potential victims. Evidence from consultations in Derby suggests that the perpetrators and victims (both direct

and indirect) of family violence can include aunts, uncles, cousins, children of previous relationships, and so on. Clearly, any definition of ‘family’ must be sensitive to Indigenous notions of family which can encapsulate a diverse range of reciprocal ties of obligation and mutual support.

The above statistics reinforce the urgency of directing anti-violence work in Indigenous communities towards violence between intimates and kin. It also reinforces the need to focus interventions on young people, as they are clearly both witnessing and experiencing violence from a young age. These are factors which the literature review found to be strongly associated with desensitisation to violence and which contributes to people becoming violent in their own relationships. Family based violence clearly represents a significant proportion of all violence within Indigenous communities, and so it is essential that strategies are implemented which not only focus on the issue but which also involve families in the process. This underpins the ‘family camp’ work in Derby mentioned later in this report.

Indigenous people in Derby are adamant that only strategies designed to heal and strengthen the Indigenous family structure will have lasting impact.

While work with individual young people in the school or through outreach work is important in preventive work, these strategies can not succeed without the involvement of significant figures from the young person’s home environment.

AN INDIGENOUS MODEL

This model assumes that a number of Indigenous facilities capable of supporting an initiative of this nature are in place. It is well suited to contexts where a number of institutions and structures have developed in order to resolve problems associated with alcohol. Indigenous communities distanced from urban structures (in Western Australia, these would include communities such as Balgo Hills and similar East Kimberley desert communities, Kulumburu and Oombulgurri in the extreme north, and communities such as Jigalong in the Pilbara region) may lack the infrastructure necessary to support this particular model.

While the model based on Derby is suitable to similar contexts, it would be necessary for it to be modified in the light of local circumstances. This may then influence the mix of agencies involved in developing an anti family violence project. For example, Fitzroy Crossing in the Kimberley Region, some 290 km east of Derby, has an infrastructure similar to Derby and Northam (a sobering up shelter as in Derby and a women’s refuge as in Northam). However, after taking account of the local issues, both the shelter and the refuge may not be chosen as the basis for the project, given the greater ‘energy’ being generated locally by the Marrala street patrol and *Marra Warra Warra (Cultural Health) Project*, which are already driving initiatives in areas such as family violence, alcohol reduction, health education and other related issues.

SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR CRIME PREVENTION WORK

In this research project two sharply contrasting organisational models of intervention were adopted to meet the needs of differing localities and social constituencies. What these differing organisational models have in common, however, is that neither would fit into a standard definition of a crime prevention project; such a definition entails establishing a specifically crime prevention oriented body charged with the development and implementation of a local crime prevention plan. The models developed in the Rural Town and the Indigenous phases were established on the premise that crime prevention should set out to 'add value' to pre existing structures and processes with a commitment to some facet of the problem, and to utilise, in an extended and supplemented form, pre-existing multiagency and/or networking groups. This suggestion met with the approval of professionals and community groups in both research sites, relieved at not having to establish another committee structure or, worse still, having one imposed upon them.

In both research phases a number of practical, organisational and procedural matters were deliberately left understated. These matters related to the proposed models of intervention and the roles of various actors, such as the project coordinators, who would have the leading role in implementing the programs on the ground. The purpose of the research was to establish a process and a framework within which relevant agencies and the coordinators could begin to identify, in a more concrete and nuanced fashion, specific areas of work, time frames, protocols, target groups and so on. This process was initiated in the research phase and, in Northam, given depth through a bridging phase, where the research team worked with the stakeholders to embed the aims and objectives of the project. This also associated those involved locally in claiming ownership of the project. Further modification and fine tuning of procedures and program content may well occur as lessons are absorbed through practice. The evaluation component of the program will provide useful feedback and should identify gaps in service provision that can then be corrected by the project management committee.

INTRODUCTION

The model program proposed in this report is designed to suit the needs of Derby, a town in the West Kimberley district of Western Australia. The model takes advantage of a number of initiatives which already enjoy considerable local support, and which focus on alcohol abuse, family violence, and the needs of local youth.

This report sets out the framework for a domestic violence prevention initiative specifically targeted towards Indigenous adolescents, their families and communities. The framework set out here is one suited to the realities of many rural and remote Indigenous communities, typified by limited infrastructure and scarce capital and human resources, and where interpersonal violence takes place within a context of endemic alcohol use and social fragmentation. Developing new initiatives in such localities requires a willingness to creatively innovate and take advantage of, or 'piggy back on', existing initiatives, structures and processes, particularly those having grass-roots support.

The *Rural town model*, the first phase of this project was developed in Northam in the south west of Western Australia. This model took account of the leading roles, in the domestic violence prevention area, already being played by the Women's Refuge, Northam Senior High School and the Northam Regional Domestic Violence Committee, as well as the innovative outreach work with 'marginal' local youth being conducted by Northam Youth Outreach. The model utilised these bodies for the coordination and management of the program and as the sites for intervention with Northam youth. The researchers supported this choice of structure by arguing that this would also eliminate the need to set up new committees.

The Derby situation, on the other hand, required a different approach to the issues of coordination, management and intervention, to take account of the social and institutional characteristics of the locality.

LOCALLY RELEVANT APPROACHES TO INTERVENTION WITH ADOLESCENTS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

It was a fundamental premise of the research project as a whole that two distinct models would need to be devised for intervention with adolescents in Western Australia with a sizeable Indigenous population and significant variation in regional characteristics. To summarise:

- I Given the particularly entrenched nature of violence in Indigenous communities and the damaging effects it has on women and children, a specifically focused project was considered necessary in order to thoroughly identify effective strategies.

- Projects designed within non Indigenous contexts tend not to be transportable to Indigenous contexts and often fail to mobilise Indigenous people.
- Significant local variations in Indigenous culture and context need to be acknowledged and incorporated into any action plan. There are significant differences in the cultural and historical experiences of Indigenous people in the northern and southern parts of Western Australia which need to be taken into account.
- Models of intervention need to be flexible enough to accommodate the realities of vastly differing regional and cultural contexts; successful intervention requires a variegated and location sensitive response, one capable of identifying and working within the particularities and idiosyncrasies of specific places, cultures and communities.
- Problems relating to the uneven spread of human and capital infrastructure and distance from administrative and government centres also need to be accommodated.

The development of programs targeted at Indigenous people must also address which structures provide the greatest potential to optimise Indigenous involvement in the design, delivery and management of the program. It is now widely accepted that forms of intervention which do not work in an 'Indigenous way' can themselves damage the social fabric of Indigenous communities and compound the very conditions they seek to ameliorate. There is an imperative, therefore, to ensure that the project is run *by* as well as *for* Indigenous people.

The researchers also considered it important that the specific dynamics of Indigenous family and kinship structures be given a central place in any strategy focused on Indigenous youth.

COMPARISONS AND CONTRASTS: THE NORTHAM AND DERBY MODELS

The literature review undertaken for this project led to the following conclusions:

- violence is a form of learned behaviour
- social learning theory provides the most comprehensive set of explanations as to how violent behaviour is patterned and configured
- the social construction of gender, particularly the way specific values and ideals of masculinity are embedded, are central to understanding violence
- the 'cycle of violence' needs to be addressed through intervention with young people
- adolescence is an optimum time to reconfigure attitudes, values and behaviours likely to contribute to violence (NCAVAC, 1998)

The literature review and the experience gained through a national audit of violence prevention programs led to the firm conclusion that work within the school setting was important in breaking the cycle of violence in society.

However it was also clear that not all violence prevention programs in schools are effective. In particular, 'at risk' groups would be less amenable to generalised programs within mainstream structures such as schools. Successful intervention would require a multilayered and variegated response capable of ensuring that both the broad cross section of young people integrated into school receive adequate education on violence issues and those groups on the margins of the mainstream are also engaged.

The Northam model, developed on the basis of the literature review, the national audit and the environmental assessment, was dual focused. One dimension of the project was to provide intensive support for 'vulnerable' youth and their families, while the other was designed to reinforce positive attitudes amongst the broad cross section through work within the school curriculum.

The Derby model has a number of features in common with the Northam model but there are also a number of significant differences. These differences relate to practical matters of available resources and infrastructure, to the greater stress placed on issues of Indigenous culture, and to the larger pool of 'vulnerable' youth and their families.

While the basic contours of the Derby model have features in common with Northam, the specifics differ. For example, in both models work will be conducted both within the school and within the community, but in Derby the significant balance of the project will be weighted towards the community dimension of the project.

Also, whereas the theoretical model of social learning developed through the literature review remains as valid in the Indigenous context as it does in the non Indigenous context, it is essential to reconceptualise the networks of 'significant others' (those whose behaviour and attitudes provide the models for conduct) to accommodate the distinctive patterns of family, kin and cultural affiliations present in Indigenous communities like Derby. For example the extent to which aspects of child socialisation are separated out from biological parenthood and the greater role played by 'uncles', 'aunts' and tribal elders in child development.

The Northam model was devised using evidence supporting forms of intervention focused on adolescence. Once again this remains a valid point of intervention in relation to Indigenous violence. However a number of additional factors need to be considered. These factors relate to the conflicts and tensions experienced by Indigenous youth as they attempt to balance traditional practices¹ with non Indigenous values acquired in the school and wider society.

¹ For example, in Indigenous communities a male reaches adult status once they have been through 'the law', which may occur as young as 15 years of age.

A number of other issues which emerge from the particular problems existing in many Indigenous communities need to be accommodated in models of intervention. These relate to the greater risks Indigenous children run of early initiation into violence, alcohol use, sexual activity, sexual violence and crime. A point made in the Northam report, that later adult behaviours are often patterned and explored in adolescent relationships, is even more pertinent in the Indigenous context where adolescence brings virtual autonomy to experiment. Tragically, for many Indigenous children, childhood and adolescence are not a period in which they are safely protected from the dangers of the adult world.

Another concern which emerges from the research for the Derby model relates to specific work with girls. In the Northam model, it was recommended that intervention with girls, both to increase protection and to allow them to articulate clear messages about the unacceptability of violence, was an important element in anti-violence work with young people. The particular vulnerability of Indigenous girls makes such work imperative if they are to acquire skills and strategies to avoid the multiple hurdles placed in their way and to avoid destructive relationships.

The national audit conducted as part of Phase 1 found little evidence of violence prevention programs designed specifically for Indigenous young people. This model will contribute to the development of anti-violence programs that are appropriate to Indigenous youth and their communities.

The field work for this report was undertaken in Derby, adjacent communities and Broome. Three site visits were undertaken in January, March and May 1998. Consultations were conducted with relevant agencies and community organisations.

These direct consultations were supplemented by discussions with organisations in the Perth area (Aboriginal Affairs, Aboriginal Justice Council, Aboriginal Legal Service, the Alcohol and Drug Authority, and the Domestic Violence Unit) with an interest in the topic.

The field work was supported by a review of relevant literature on Indigenous violence issues.

BACKGROUND ISSUES

FAMILY FIGHTING AND FEUDING: INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

In recent years, a number of studies have drawn attention to the high rates of interpersonal violence in Indigenous communities (Atkinson 1990, 1993, 1995; Bolger, 1991; Daylight and Johnstone, 1986; Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, 1991; Langton and Ah Matt, 1991; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997; Hunter, 1993; Sam 1992). These findings are consistent with evidence from other 'settler' societies where colonisation displaced Indigenous society and culture (see, Duran, Guillory and Tingley, 1993; Zion & Zion, 1993; Redbird, 1995). Research in Western Australia by Ferrante *et al* (1996) provides a disturbing portrait of the extent and seriousness of violence against Indigenous women. They found that Indigenous women were 'vastly over represented in the police statistics on domestic violence', accounting for just under half of all victims (p34). Indigenous women were at an increased risk of serious injury in comparison to non Indigenous women – 23.5% as opposed to 11.4% of reported cases (p35).

The Kimberley region of Western Australia has one of the highest rates of reported domestic violence in Western Australia (Ferrante *et al*, 1996: 37). It also has the highest rate of alcohol related injuries in Western Australia, nearly one third of injuries being related to alcohol (d'Abbs and Togni, 1997). The issues of violence and alcohol are inseparable in the Indigenous context.

Evidence from the literature on violence in Indigenous communities suggests no single over riding cause for such high rates of interpersonal violence but points to a multiplicity of interwoven causes, including:

- l marginalisation and dispossession
- l loss of land and traditional culture
- l the break down of community kinship systems and Indigenous law
- l entrenched poverty
- l the 'redundancy' of the Indigenous male role and status, compensated for by an aggressive assertion of male rights over women and children

Recent feminist work on Indigenous women and violence (see Smallwood, 1996; LaRoque, 1995) argues that the process of colonisation was particularly harsh on Indigenous women who, prior to colonisation enjoyed a comparative status to men. They argue that the imposition of western patriarchal values and institutions drastically reduced the authority and status of women. In countries

like Australia, this process was continued through forms of ‘anthropological denial’ which relegated women’s law, ceremony and culture to a subordinate position in favour of the male initiation ceremony, the latter becoming representative of Indigenous culture in its entirety. While it is acknowledged that violence against women by Indigenous males existed before colonisation, they also argue that the destructive effects of the process exacerbated the problem. Moreover, what is seen as a European belief that ‘men rule the roost and women have to obey’ (Smallwood, 1996: 134) justified increased male power over women. This power has also been legitimated by selective references to so-called ‘traditional culture’ by males eager to claim privileges over women in their communities (Bolger, 1991).

In reality it is difficult to draw comparisons between pre and post colonial Indigenous communities where issues of violence are concerned. For example, violence has always played a role in traditional customary law. On the other hand the changes brought about by colonisation and the considerable damage inflicted by alcohol have created a context in which violence has now become virtually uncontrollable within many communities. Previous cultural constraints which may have set limits to violence have been eroded.

There is an increasing acknowledgement in the literature of the extent and depth of psychological damage existing in Indigenous communities. The work of Indigenous therapists, such as Judy Atkinson, stress the interconnectedness of family violence, suicide, crime, drug and alcohol abuse as manifestations of what Atkinson calls ‘intergeneration trauma’.

She writes:

I found I had to extend my reading beyond feminist explanations of violence against women and children, to explore disaster/trauma theory. The violence I was seeing and hearing was much more than ‘domestic violence’. In the context of colonisation, there are, I began to understand, human trauma experiences, implicit in human acts of violence, which result in trauma behaviours. Violent outbursts, on others and on self, are one manifestation of traumatisation. Alcohol and drug misuse appeared to fit the same self-medicating needs of those who are traumatised (Atkinson, 1995: 3).

This notion of intergenerational trauma is useful in describing the cultural transmission of destructive patterns of self abusive and violent behaviours in Indigenous communities. The concept can also be used to enhance our understanding of the particular ways in which the cycle of violence is perpetuated in the Indigenous context.

THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

The literature and policy review conducted for Phase 1 led the researchers to conclude that violence is an expression of cultural values rather than simply an individual pathology. Violent behaviour is learned behaviour, acquired within a social context that shapes and legitimates its usage. It was also suggested that violence is frequently instrumental rather than simply expressive, meaning that it is employed to achieve certain ends, usually the acquisition or maintenance of power relationships, rather than being simply a matter of someone 'lashing out' indiscriminately.

Violence is sanctioned in a number of overt and covert ways in particular cultures. While social attitudes may express abhorrence of violence in general, it may be tacitly condoned, and its impact neutralised in particular situations (for example silencing a 'nagging wife'). Within cultures experiencing crisis, violence may have a wider currency due to the absence of alternative control mechanisms.

It is also maintained (NCAVAC, 1998) that the 'cycle of violence' needs to be recognised in interventions aimed at violence reduction and prevention. The metaphor of the 'cycle' has become a central motif in violence literature and is also useful in identifying the intergenerational component in violent behaviour within Indigenous communities. As with social learning and other cultural theories, it emphasises the extent to which the aggression and violence are transmitted through social and cultural process, rather than simply emerging 'out of the blue'.

The cyclical nature of violence is widely acknowledged in Indigenous communities. However, the cycle metaphor has to be modified and reworked to accommodate the unique patterns of culture, kin affiliations and conflicts in Indigenous communities. It also needs to be acknowledged that non Indigenous institutions and policies perpetuate the cycle through interventions which fragment, divide and disempower Indigenous communities.

Indigenous people prefer to use the term 'family fighting' rather than domestic violence to describe the matrix of aggressive behaviours which centre around family relationships. Researchers developing the *Kimberley Regional Domestic Violence Plan* were told by Indigenous women in the West Kimberley region that:

Family violence is family fighting. It happens when someone uses violence or threats to have power and control over someone close to them. This can be a partner or involve other family members. It includes family feuding (Clarke and Voros, 1995: 2).

Stress was also placed on the extent to which violence was accompanied by other 'frightening' forms of behaviour and acting out. Intimidation, threats,

deprivation of liberty, attempts to isolate partners from contact with kin, and so on, accompany violence. Women consulted for the action plan identified the following as components of family violence:

- l social violence — not being allowed to mix with others because of jealousy
- l verbal violence — putting down, swearing, blaming, bossing
- l sexual violence — rape, exploitation
- l economic violence — not sharing finances
- l psychological violence — made constantly fearful

RESPONDING TO FAMILY VIOLENCE IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

The emerging pattern of preventive and other forms of work around family violence in Indigenous communities focuses on strengthening community controls and developing culturally appropriate ‘healing’ processes.

There is a clear preference by Indigenous women, who are the main victims of violence, for strategies that change behaviour while maintaining family relations. Indigenous women tend to use shelters and refuges as places of safety and respite rather than as exit points.

Indigenous women have impressed upon the researchers in both phases of this project that the idea of leaving the family is virtually impossible; there is little ‘choice’ or alternative to staying. One reason for this is that marriage means becoming bonded to a densely interconnected universe of reciprocal ties and obligations, the breaking of which is inconceivable.

Indigenous women are also deeply suspicious of involvement with justice and welfare agencies. They see aspects of the system, particularly prisons, as an aspect of the violence cycle that desocialises, brutalises and deskills their men folk. There is a profound mistrust of social work agencies who may take the children away from a violent home, and there is still considerable suspicion of police involvement in domestic disputes.

DERBY: AN ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN AND ANALYSIS

Derby is situated in the West Kimberley area of Western Australia, roughly 220 km from the regional centre of Broome. While itself not a 'remote' community, Derby is associated with a number of Indigenous communities along the Gibb River Road, the Fitzroy Valley and other adjacent areas (discussed further below). Derby is in many respects typical of other Indigenous communities in northern and central Australia with a similar age and demographic profile and suffering similar social and economic ills.

Family violence is a significant issue in the Derby region and is taken very seriously by Indigenous organisations. This relates to both town based Indigenous people and those in the adjacent communities. Derby has communities close by (Mowanjum, Karmulinunga, Pandanus Park, and others) and has strong links (both in terms of family connections and law business) with communities in the Fitzroy Valley (such as Looma, Jarimandangaah, Bayalu, Koorabay), the Gibb River (Windjaingayr, Imintji and others), on or close to the Broome peninsula (Balginjirr, etc) and southwards (Bidyadanga, Gunibuy etc). While the Indigenous population of Derby itself is estimated at around 40% to 60%, the population is fluid and increases at certain times of year.

Problems in the surrounding communities are quickly visited on Derby. People from 'dry' communities go there to drink and fight. Derby people consider these people to be the source of most of the 'humbugging', anti social behaviour and serious violence. Young people from outlying communities regularly swell the town population, staying with kin or sleeping rough.

The age profile of Derby is similar to patterns in other parts of Australia, with a relatively young Indigenous population. Approximately 67% of the high school population is Indigenous, with Indigenous families representing 90% of chronic truancy cases. Indigenous children are also over represented in care and protection cases and in the juvenile justice system.

VIEWS ON VIOLENCE IN DERBY

The views of Derby people on violence were consistent with the established literature on Indigenous communities and violence. Many attributed the problems of violence to the break down of traditional law and values. Local elders in particular focused on the destructive impact of contact with western culture. Their views can be summarised thus:

- The breakdown of traditional mechanisms for allocating and determining 'marriage' through 'skin' systems has led to a 'free market' in relationships.

This, it was suggested, made young girls particularly vulnerable to sexual assaults from an early age (because there is no 'promised man' to protect them).

- The decline in traditional rules and norms seems to have led to a degree of 'anomie' and uncertainty in regards to appropriate interpersonal behaviour. Community elders in the West Kimberley maintained that all man/woman relationships have become inherently unstable and insecure because, as one elder said, 'no one is sure what the rules are anymore'. Another said 'our old ways have gone but nothing good has been put in its place.' Such anomic situations may tend to encourage aggression, particularly where there are no meaningful, consistent sanctions against its use.

Local professionals working in the violence area concurred with this view. One said that:

Young Aboriginal people are genuinely surprised when they are told they have been wrong to take a young girl or bash a girlfriend senseless.

Consultations also found parallels with the situation in Northam in terms of strong dynamics of jealousy and possessiveness in relationships between young Indigenous people.

Indigenous youth are vulnerable to profound crises of identity which generate insecurity and a tendency to develop highly possessive and exclusive interpersonal relationships. These relationships compensate for the fragmentation, uncertainty and unpredictability of community and family life and are aggressively policed.

'Jealousing', the practice of deliberately provoking the partner by flirting, to test commitment, is a common phenomenon and tends to reinforce the culture and cycle of violence. It locks young Indigenous girls into a destructive pattern of abusive reciprocity as the price for intimacy.

Jealousy and insecurity can lead to the deliberate disfigurement of a partner; a police officer in Derby said:

Men become insecure with good looking young wives. Bashing them so no one else will want them, restores security.

There is a strong social learning dimension to this acceptance of aggression. Young people in Indigenous communities both witness and are subject to violence from an early age. This routinisation and normalisation of violence as a 'natural' part of social interaction has damaging long term consequences if left unchallenged. Indigenous people recognise the need to intervene with young people before aggressive behaviour becomes entrenched and reinforced through the 'grog and fighting' culture of the street.

The consistent view expressed by community leaders and professionals in the West Kimberley was that Indigenous parents, particularly those who were institutionalised, grew up in the mission system or were part of the ‘stolen generation’, never acquired parenting skills from a consistent and dependable Indigenous role model. They therefore lacked knowledge of how to live in a family unit, to resolve conflict through negotiation, and to cope with the demands of independent living.

Elders also argued that controls in communities were overstrained by the ratio of children to adults which diluted the quality of socialisation and acculturation. So that while much ‘law business’ was still practised, important minor rituals of daily life (stories, hunting, etc) which ensured that communities could function in a peaceful and orderly way were seriously diluted. One manifestation of this was the lack of respect shown to elders by the young. There were complaints of constant ‘humberging’ and violence against elderly relatives, theft of money and property. As one Indigenous health worker said:

On pension day some old people are in fear. Their young (relatives) come round and bash them for drink money.

Other issues raised by Indigenous people in Derby in relation to violence included:

- I Family violence is not just about men attacking women (or occasionally the other way around) but also about men abusing women and children. Rarely is spousal violence unaccompanied by violence against children. Indigenous people are also highly attuned to the extent to which children suffer and become traumatised by witnessing violence in the home and community, and ultimately become desensitised to it.
- I Indigenous communities do not delineate between ‘public’ and ‘private’ spheres of community life in quite the same way as non Indigenous communities. There is a greater likelihood that interpersonal conflicts will spill over into the community domain and that community conflicts will have repercussions in personal relationships. Conflict cannot simply be sealed off from involvement by the outside world, or simply remain a ‘private’ matter. Others may claim the right to be involved.
- I Family conflicts may become communal property and draw in a wide range of parties. It is not unknown in Derby, for example, for a man’s kin to be involved in beating his wife, should she be making him envious or not fulfilling her responsibilities to him. It is also not uncommon for kin to instruct a man, or young male, to beat his partner if they feel she is acting inappropriately – ‘flirting’, behaving too independently, or ‘looking too pretty’. On the other hand, a wife’s relatives may also deal out ‘tribal’ punishments on men who ‘take it too far’ with their wives.

- Family and other forms of interpersonal violence can be ignited by old feuds and vendettas which sometimes split families. Partners from different communities with a history of conflict may become drawn into disputes on opposing sides. ‘Wrong skin’ marriages are said to be vulnerable to being undermined by kin, leading to conflict and violence.

Attention in the consultations was also drawn to the fact that gender differences in Indigenous society are not constructed in a way that culturally outlaws female violence as ‘unwomanly’. Indigenous women in the Kimberley area have a tradition of ‘fighting’ (a phenomenon identified in other areas of Australia, see for example Langton, 1998; Burbank, 1994). Moreover toughness and strength, it was suggested, may be measured by a capacity to tolerate male violence if this is the price for maintaining a relationship and keeping the family together.

In other respects, however, the aggression shown by adults and young males in Indigenous communities towards women and children mirrors the behaviour of other marginalised men in crisis. In this respect there is considerable overlap with mainstream ‘violence’ literature (NCAVAC, 1998). Violence represents a means of asserting male authority in a context where socially acceptable opportunities are limited due to social and economic marginalisation.

ALCOHOL AND VIOLENCE

When the men drink they know they cannot maintain control, they hit their women to remind them who is boss. (Family Violence Worker, Derby).

Alcohol used to be a symptom, now it’s the problem (cited in Crime Research Centre, 1998).

The alcohol issue (and its relationship to violence) is of ongoing concern in Derby. It has been estimated that Derby and the adjacent West Kimberley region has one of the highest rates of per capita consumption of alcohol among the over 15 age group in the State, over 70% higher by some accounts (d’Abbs and Togni, 1997).

Young Indigenous people in the West Kimberley, as in many other parts of Australia, receive an early induction into the culture of drink and fighting. Entry into the drink culture has become part of the rites of passage to adulthood for Indigenous males. Young men who have ‘been through the law’ can take their place in drinking circles with other men. The link between achieving manhood and drinking is said to have been formed when citizenship rights and the right to drink were granted to Indigenous people. Drinking itself came to symbolise freedom, emancipation from rigid state and mission controls, and equality with other Australians (see Brady, 1990; Togni, 1997). Indeed in remote Australia the right to drink was perhaps the only discernible gain of ‘citizenship’ (Togni, 1997).

Contemporary drinking patterns among Indigenous people, including the practice of 'binge' drinking, have been seen by some commentators as a legacy of prohibitory legislation which encouraged the rapid, furtive consumption of alcohol (Brady, 1990).

In Derby, local concern about drinking and its social, economic and health consequences led to the establishment of an *Alcohol Action Group* in the mid 1990s. After several years of negotiation with local liquor outlets, the *Derby Alcohol Action Group* was able to develop a strategy which, after initial objections by a number of retailers, was met with broad agreement. The resulting liquor restriction 'Accord', launched in April 1997, included:

- l a ban on selling liquor on pension day
- l time restrictions on sales of packaged liquor on other days
- l a ban on sales of 4 litre casks
- l restriction on sales of liquor in glass containers
- l discouraging excessive drinking (eg drinking 'competitions') and drink promotions (eg 'happy hours')

An evaluation of the Accord by the Menzies School of Health Research (d'Abbs and Togni, 1997) found a slight reduction in the sales of high alcohol beverages and an increase in sales of low alcohol beverages, although this trend preceded the Accord. The first 4 months of the Accord also saw a marked decrease (37%) in numbers of police recorded incidents of assaults, sexual offences, criminal damage and threatening behaviour although anecdotal evidence suggests that such incidents have increased again. A lack of adequate base line data prevented a thorough examination of the Accord's impact on rates of alcohol related injury *via* hospital admission records. Available data, however, suggested no change. Generally, the Accord met with approval from local Indigenous people, particularly women. On the other hand, there was widespread agreement that the problem of alcohol abuse and related issues of violence were too entrenched and complex to be dealt with by alcohol restrictions alone.

This view was forcefully made during consultations with Indigenous people conducted for this research project. There was concern that violence had simply been displaced from the street to the home. Also, as alcohol can now only be bought directly over the counter from local pubs, it consumed even more of the families budget, therefore increasing tensions and conflict within families.

There was particular concern about the lack of preventive intervention within communities, in particular with at risk groups such as children and young mothers. As one health worker said:

Every evening I see young mothers with babies sitting on the oval with cans of beer with older heavy drinkers, no one seems to be doing anything about it.

A related concern was the extent of gambling in the town. A strip of land off the main street has become the site for card games during which, it was said, the household budget could be 'blown' in an afternoon.

SERVICES FOR FAMILY VIOLENCE VICTIMS

Derby has no women's refuge. Women escaping domestic abuse (and who are willing to leave Derby) are taken to Broome, 220 km to the west. *Marin Bowa Dumbara* (the Domestic Violence Information and Referral Service), *Ngunga Women's Group* and the Department of Family and Children's Services act as referral points for this arrangement.

VIOLENCE PREVENTION

A domestic violence prevention project (funded by ATSIIC) was run by *Ngunga Women's Group* until funding ran out in 1997. The project employed a man/woman team to conduct workshops in the West Kimberley with communities and family groups. The co-workers on the project stressed the need for separate work with groups of males and females. The scheme was considered highly successful locally in raising the question of violence as a community issue. Workers on the project reported that it had made men more conscious of the need to seek help when in crisis as well as raising women's consciousness of the issues.

NUMBUD PATROL

Numbud Aboriginal Street Patrol has been in operation since 1995. Initially it was purely concerned with picking up intoxicated people and taking them home. Recently however it has begun picking children up from local communities (particularly Mowanjum) and ensuring they get to school. Numbud workers expressed anxiety about the extent of drinking and violence by young people.

POLICE

Police in Derby have been active in youth and violence initiatives. Popular *Blue Light Discos* have been running for several years, and recently on the initiative of an Indigenous police officer, the *Indigenous Horse Patrol*, which teaches Indigenous youth about riding and husbandry, was established. A female Senior Constable has taken a leading role in the establishment of family camps and in seeking funding for the establishment of a *Mobile Care Unit* to support young Indigenous mothers in Derby.

FAMILY RECONCILIATION CULTURAL CAMPS AND FAMILY HEALING

In recent years there has been increased focus on the development of forms of intervention which 'heal' communities in a holistic fashion, rather than seek to separate out specific problems for discrete forms of treatment or therapy. The interest shown within Indigenous communities in the work of Indigenous therapists such as Judy Atkinson, which focus on 'narrative' forms of therapy at the cultural and group levels to reclaim lost forms of social solidarity and harmony, shows that such ideas have resonance for Indigenous people.

This approach has been used in the Derby area through a series of family camps as part of a local *Family Violence Intervention Program* run by local people which has brought together 'crisis families' for weekend activities. The forms of healing activities are not restricted to mainstream counselling but include bush skills, art and story telling as well practical advice on family budgeting and child care. A key element in this work is a respect for traditional culture: separate men and women's activities and groups ensure that participants are not 'shamed' by having to speak on sensitive issues in the presence of the other gender.

These camps have children's activities as well as separate male/female group discussions with local elders (on alcohol, violence issues). The camps follow on from some successful youth camps (*Young, Black and Deadly*) run by the Derby Aboriginal Sporting Association (DASA).

FAMILY HEALING CENTRE

The Western Australian Department of Family and Children's Services has recently agreed to fund a *Family Healing Centre* to provide crisis accommodation for victims of family violence. The centre will also develop preventive strategies for work with whole families. There will be separate living areas for men, women and young people and areas where mixed group sessions can be run.

DERBY HIGH SCHOOL

The high school has some experience in dealing with violence and related issues through a number of curriculum based programs in which students have taken a leading role in developing local campaigns. This has included video and other multimedia techniques. The school is willing to be involved in this project and to incorporate it into the main curriculum.

THE DERBY MODEL: A PROPOSED STRUCTURE FOR THE PROGRAM

RATIONALE

There are a number of practical reasons why a structure different from the Northam model is desirable. Firstly, there is no women's refuge in Derby, and secondly the relevant Regional Domestic Violence Committee (situated in Broome) is too distant from the 'coal face' to provide effective support and leadership.

Moreover, many Derby Indigenous people (women as well as men) are ambivalent about what some perceive to be a *gadiya* ('white fella') refuge which, they believe, aims to permanently break up families. Indigenous women tend to use refuges for temporary respite and see longer term solutions in 'healing' the family as a whole. There is also some local resentment (shared by Indigenous and non Indigenous people alike in Derby) that Broome attracts most of the resources in the West Kimberley region and that Derby is being allowed to 'die'. Situating the management of this program in Broome would compound this sense of disempowerment and alienate local people.

As we have already noted, the damaging effects of alcohol abuse have become the focus of significant community concern in Derby. It is seen as a major contributor to interpersonal violence, family break down, juvenile crime and anti social behaviour. Recently a new sobering up shelter, *Garl Garl Walbu*, has been established in Derby with a broadly based management committee comprising key government and community based organisations, a number of which also have a keen interest in family violence prevention.

OUTLINING THE MODEL

The proposed Derby model has been developed in close consultation with key agencies and community representatives in the area. It proposes that the routine management of the program be vested in a subcommittee of the sobering up shelter's management committee. This subcommittee would play a role similar to that of the committee in Northam and will ensure routine management and coordination of the project. The subcommittee would also recruit a number of youth focused agencies not currently represented on the management committee such as the local high school, the Derby Aboriginal Sporting Association and the Derby Telecentre.

The model has received endorsement from the Western Australia Alcohol and Drug Authority (ADA) which is responsible for the funding and oversight of the state's sobering up shelters. The ADA believes that the program's aims and objectives are in keeping with the mandate of the shelter, which includes a commitment to preventive as well as interventionary strategies where alcohol and related problems are concerned.

Additional support will be given to the project by the Aboriginal Justice Council (AJC) based in Perth. The AJC was established on the basis of Recommendation 2 of the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC)*, which called on state and territory governments to establish independent Indigenous councils to advise government on the implementation of report recommendations. The Chair of the AJC, Ms Glynis Sibosado, has given her full backing to the project and it is hoped that this link will ensure state government support as well as provide broader Indigenous ownership of the issues. Ms Sibosado is from the Derby area and is fully aware of local issues.

This model is novel and innovative. The arrangement maximises Indigenous self management and involvement at all levels of the project. It directly empowers and supports Indigenous people engaged in violence prevention work on the ground and, at the same time, actively involves the peak Indigenous body concerned with justice issues at a state level. If successful, it may represent a model for management and coordination in other fields and be transportable to other states and territories.

In this respect it fulfils important recommendations of the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* relating to community participation and the utilisation of Indigenous organisations (see, for example, RCIADIC Recommendations 188–204, 'The Path to Self Determination and 234–245 'Breaking the Cycle: Aboriginal Youth').

The model advanced here is sensitive to the specific local culture of Derby and builds on some existing organisational strengths. In advocating this 'locality specific' approach, however, the researchers are not suggesting that localities are 'unique' entities, to the extent that lessons cannot be applied elsewhere, or models transported to other regions. Rather, intervention needs to take account of local conditions and work from within, rather than over the top of, existing local structures.

In several respects the proposed model for Derby is consistent with the intervention strategy designed for Northam. For example, the program would need to have a dual focus and to include work within the school curriculum and focused activity with 'vulnerable' youth and their families. On the other hand, it is expected that given the greater degree of vulnerability of Indigenous youth

and the instability of Indigenous family life, more weight may be placed on the 'vulnerable' dimension of the project.

A significant proportion of the time of staff on the program, for example, will need to be allocated to running workshops and camps with family groups (as opposed to simply with individual young people) in ways which validate and respect Indigenous culture.

Also, given the extreme vulnerability of Indigenous girls to sexual and other forms of exploitation and violence — their tendency to become entangled in violent interpersonal relationships at an early age, their early involvement in high risk activities (sex, drugs, alcohol, fighting) and their involvement in aggressive 'courtship' rituals such as 'jealousing' — it may be necessary to place greater emphasis on the development of 'protective' strategies for girls.

Given the under development of youth leisure activities in Derby, the project coordinator(s) would also need to liaise closely with relevant agencies, youth organisations and funding bodies (local, state and Federal) to attract additional resources for Derby youth.

The researchers propose that the project be managed by a subcommittee of the sobering up shelter. Additional members will include representatives from the school and from youth organisations. The subcommittee would develop interagency cooperation in the region, which would ensure agency support for the project and foster a cooperative environment. Good interagency coordination, the development of information and resource sharing, and a culture in all agencies which places anti-violence at the centre of its activities is as essential in the Derby context as it was in Northam.

The sobering up shelter has a number of advantages besides its strong and broadly based management committee. It is currently only used in the evening and its resources, which include a seminar room and office space, cooking and other facilities, could be utilised as a base for running group work as well as individual counselling with families and young people disengaged from the school system.

The additional support to the project given by the Aboriginal Justice Council in Perth may attract additional resources and ensure government and agency support at a senior level. Such support may engender wider ownership of the project's aims and objectives and disseminate knowledge of the scheme. This may also ensure that the project runs on beyond the pilot phase.

THE COORDINATOR(S)

As in the Northam model we propose that the project employs a dual strategy of curriculum based work in the school and work at the community level. However, given the extent of violence and related problems within Indigenous communities and the need to work with and strengthen Indigenous family structures, it is expected that more weight may be given to the community dimension of the project than in the Northam case. Also, there may be greater stress placed on the requirement to develop 'protective' strategies with Indigenous girls around issues of 'jealousing' and other high risk behaviours.

For 'cultural' reasons, it may be necessary to employ two part time posts to coordinate the project: a man and a woman. The coordinator(s) will be based in the sobering up shelter but would also work within the school.

School activities would include:

- l development of a 'whole school approach' to violence issues
- l work with Indigenous liaison staff to identify 'vulnerable' children
- l develop targeted prevention programs and relevant multimedia aids

Work at the community and family level will be a vital ingredient in this program. The coordinator(s) can build upon the foundations established through the *Family Violence Intervention Program* and the *Family Reconciliation Cultural Camps*. Work with family groups as well as outreach work with individual young people around Derby will represent an important dimension of the project.

The coordinators would develop, in consultation with other groups and agencies, some key program objectives, principles and protocols. These objectives would need to support and reflect messages about cultural healing within Indigenous communities.

In other respects, the coordinator(s) roles would be similar to that of the Northam coordinator and would include:

- l the development of better interagency coordination and planning
- l conducting a needs assessment
- l establishing a baseline data collection system
- l developing new youth initiatives in the town, given the lack of current resources and infrastructure for youth work

It is also expected that the scheme will be subject to rigorous evaluation. This should take the form, as in the Northam model, of process and outcome evaluation. However, there should be scope for qualitative research which goes broader than attitudes to violence within the school and should encompass inquiries in the Indigenous community about attitudes and behaviours on violence.

EVALUATION

The evaluation of the two phases of the project lay outside of the researcher's brief. We did, however, establish a few markers for others to follow when evaluating the two models. It was suggested that the evaluation should encompass both process and outcome evaluation.

PROCESS EVALUATION

Process evaluation is important in learning lessons about good and bad practice. There is little point in measuring outcomes if it is impossible to identify the processes which made the outcomes possible, particularly where the intention is to replicate the practice elsewhere. Process evaluation should begin as the project is being established and should involve establishing records of which agencies and groups are involved, clarifying the records to be kept by the coordinator(s), and ensuring that all parties agree on the goals and objectives of the project as well as the protocols and agreements locking them into the process.

The process research would entail checking on records, interviewing stakeholders and key players, and holding seminars and workshops. The evaluator would need to check on progress in school, be present at family camps, go out with Numbud's truancy and street patrols, talk to young people at various gathering places in Derby and retain contact with local elders.

The two models developed through the research are highly dependent on establishing and maintaining processes which generate cross sectional commitment and joint work, and which enable high levels of community participation. In the Derby case, as in Northam, the process component of the evaluation would need to carefully monitor the implementation phase of the model. Interagency cooperation can be the basis of synergetic innovation; on the other hand conflicts between agencies, over ownership, goals and resources, can disable innovation. The process evaluation can assist in keeping the project on track by checking on the degree and quality of joint work. Periodic feed back sessions involving the project team and local stakeholders, where the evaluator can report on the impact of the project locally (eg do people know about it and what do they think it is doing) as well as place on the agenda problems in relation to interagency work or the interface between the agencies and the community, may be vital in maintaining the project.

Projects are also likely to suffer problems associated with poor communication within as well as between agencies. For example, while managers within key agencies may be aware of the project and its aims, this may be poorly communicated vertically within the organisation. The evaluation may also report on whether the project is understood by personnel on the ground. Projects, particularly those which bring together a variety of disciplines, can also be

subject to 'drift', as the initial focus of the project becomes blurred in practice and the project loses focus. The process evaluation can also ensure that the substantive goals of the project are not obscured or the project itself 'taken over' by the agendas of powerful agencies (for a discussion see NCAVAC 1998: 64–65).

OUTCOME EVALUATION

Outcome evaluation can be an expensive undertaking should the aim be to measure changes in attitude and behaviours over the long term. As many of the behaviours the project wishes to change will only occur within later relationships, the time lag between intervention and desired outcomes may be considerable. On the other hand, there are important milestones which can be identified and attempts made to measure change. Since the Derby project is linked into wider family violence work, changes in the behaviour of adults themselves, in terms of reduced rates of family violence, may be a signifier of change.

It will be necessary, as in the Northam phase, to conduct periodical self report studies of young people's attitudes and behaviour (including victimisation and offending). Linked surveys, perhaps conducted in partnership with the sobering up shelter and Numbud patrol, could find out about rates of drinking among young people and check also on the success of campaigns intended to reduce 'jealousing' behaviour. Studies should also include information from family camps on the ways families as a whole are thinking about violence, and of course, behaving.

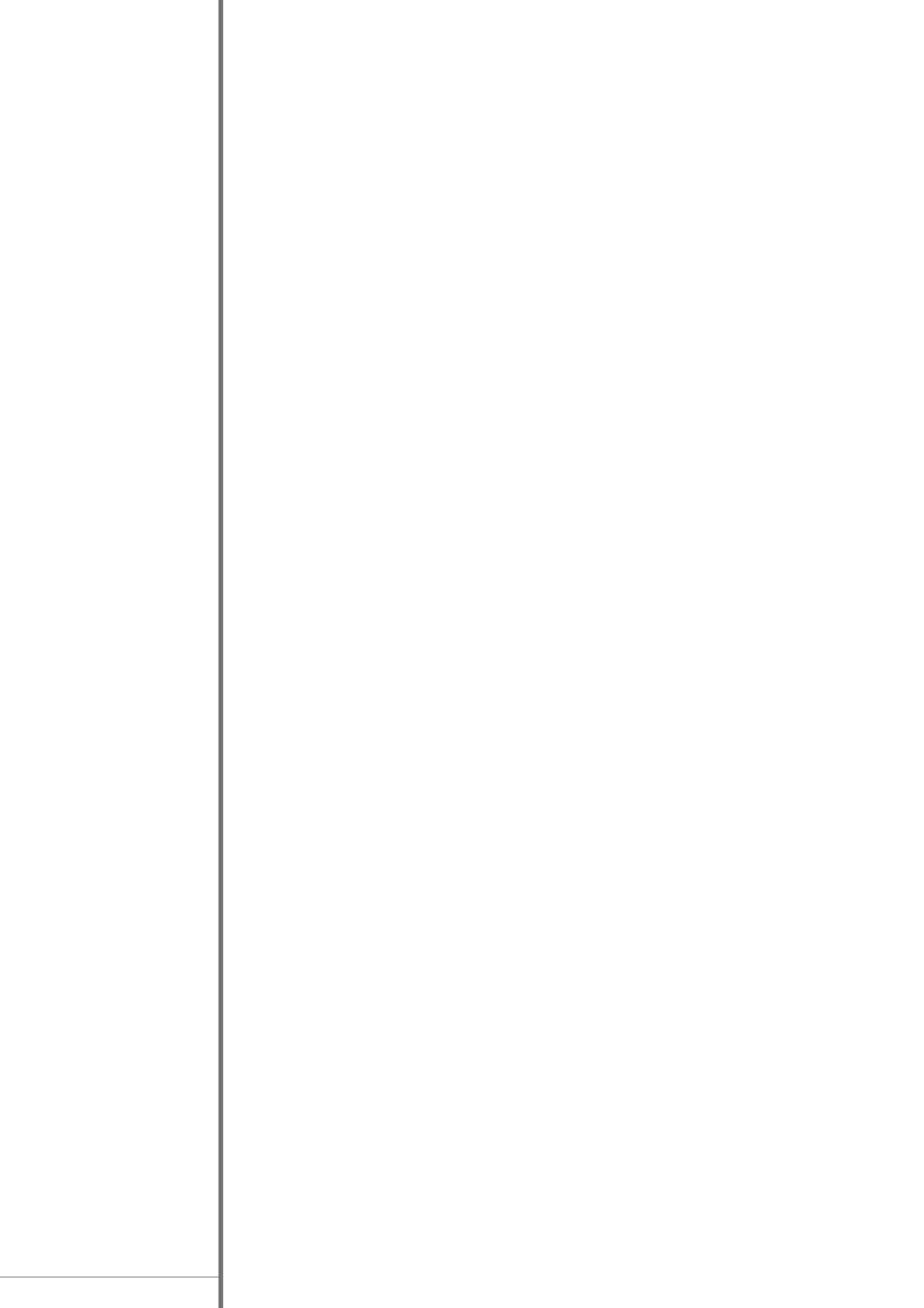
CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Although the model program described above was developed to meet the needs of Derby, it would also 'fit' other communities with an Indigenous presence, particularly those where aspects of traditional law, language and culture coexist with non Indigenous life styles. Given the widespread concern with alcohol abuse in many Indigenous communities around Australia, it may be possible, as in the Derby model, to situate violence prevention programs within the orbit of initiatives designed to intervene in alcohol related issues and take advantage of sobering up shelters, street patrols and treatment centres developed to reduce the problem.

In some areas it may be possible to identify domestic violence initiatives which could play a central role in the development of specific Indigenous prevention strategies.

As in all worthwhile community crime prevention initiatives, it is essential that, whatever the institutional context and the range of agencies involved, the process is owned and supported by key groups and individuals in the community. This is particularly the case in small localities where the energy and initiative of a few individuals can make the difference between a successful and an unsuccessful project.

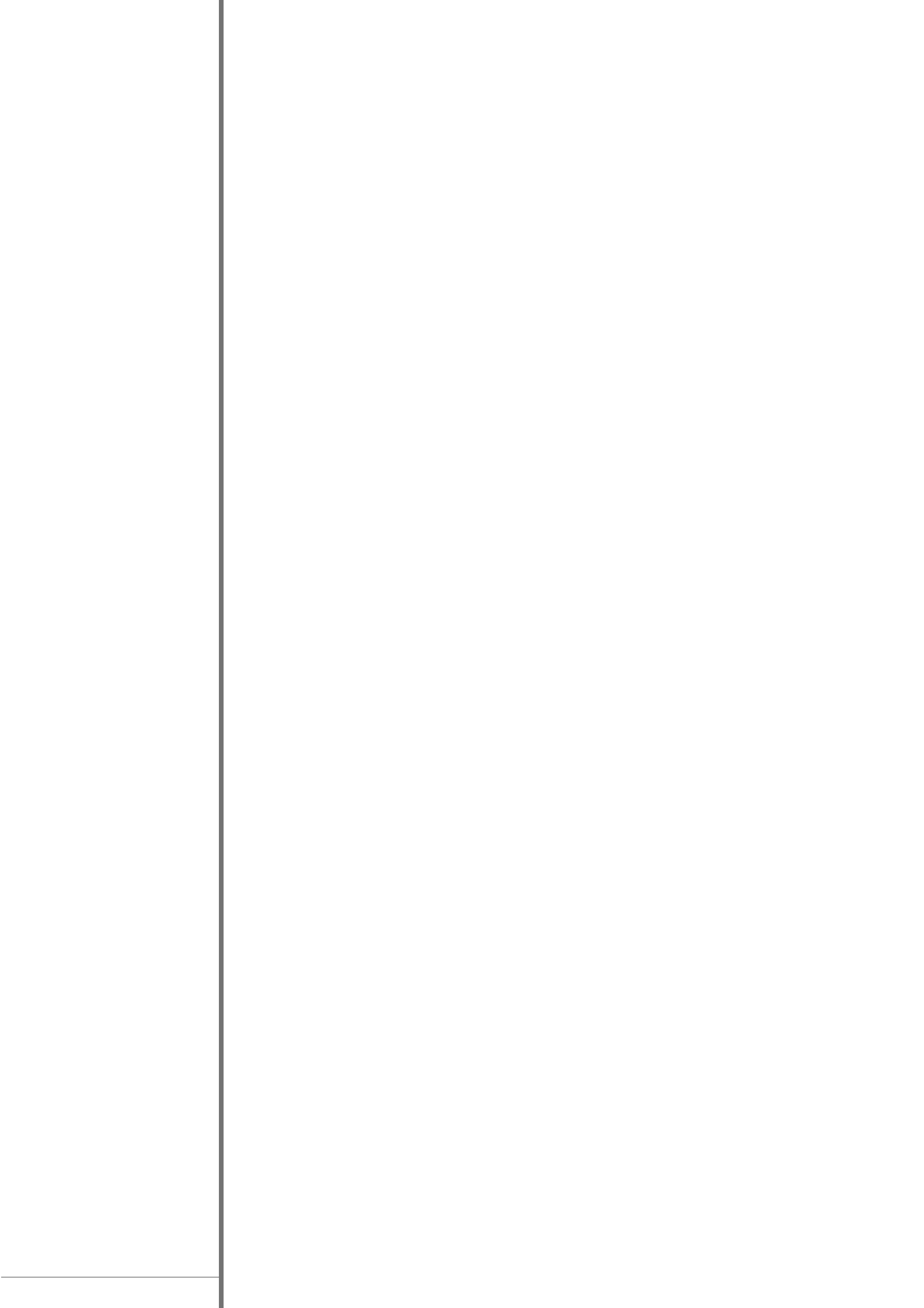
In the specific case of Derby, it is clear that there is significant local support for this kind of venture and an enthusiastic and energetic body of people, drawn from diverse agencies and groups, willing to take a leading role in the process.

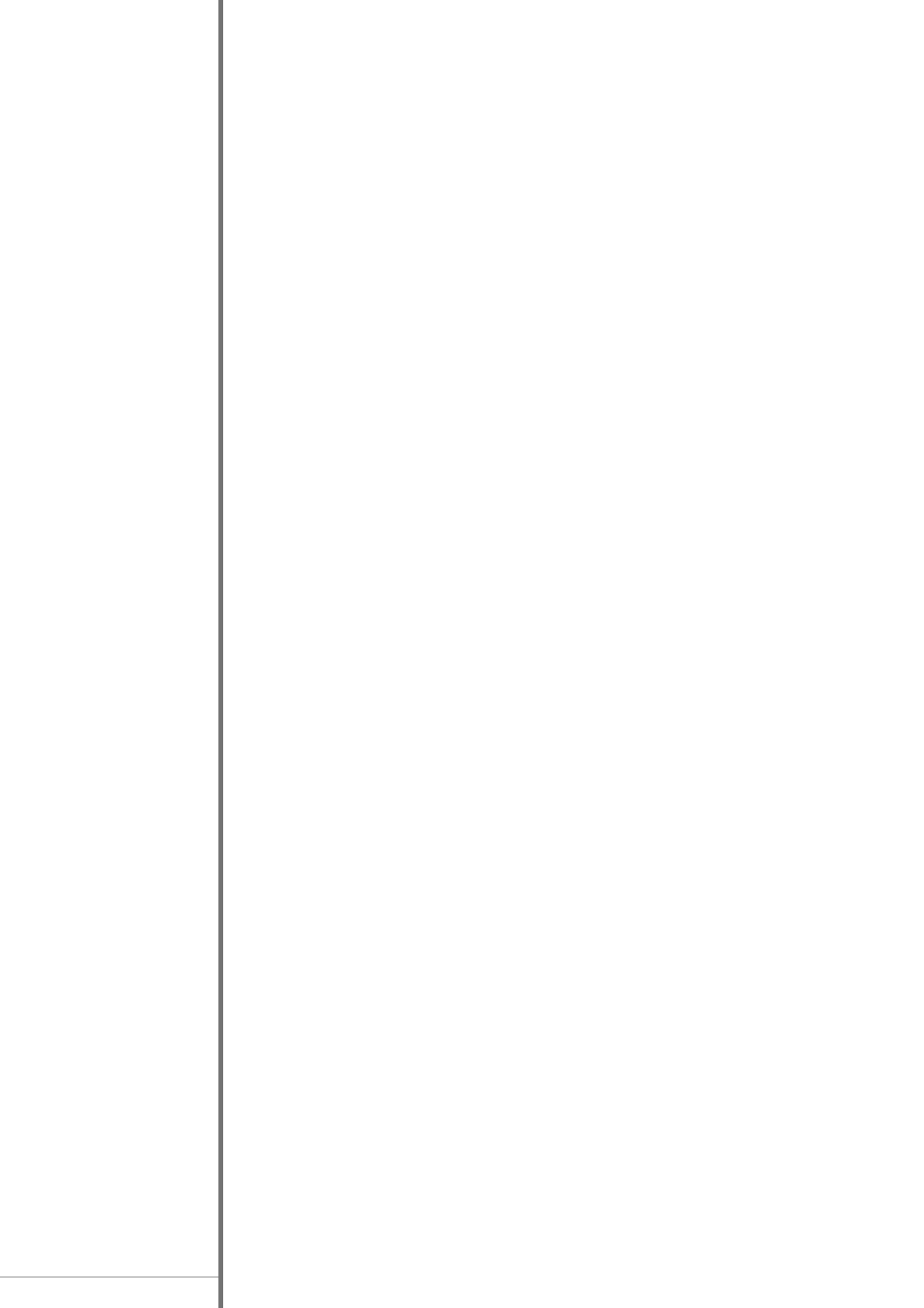


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National Anti-Crime Strategy
An initiative of the Australian States and Territories