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Policing in Indigenous Communities

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Abstract

Policing in Indigenous communities is a vast topic to summarise, analyse and discuss in a few thousand words. It is an important issue on any range of measures. It is also an issue that demands attention to a range of broad political, socio-economic, cultural and historical contexts, as well as the more mundane matters of police operational concern. The political context requires us to understand the parameters in which Indigenous communities operate including the nature of Indigenous political demands and the key organisations that articulate those demands. The socio-economic context requires us to have knowledge about the position of Indigenous people in Australian society, in particular the consequences which arise from the profound level of disadvantage which many communities face and the impact that has on the relationship with the criminal justice system. The cultural context requires some knowledge about the nature of social relationships and cultural concerns in communities. Finally, the historical context is probably more important for police than any other government organisation delivering a service in Aboriginal communities, because police were an important arm in implementing government policy for Indigenous people in many parts of Australia during the much of the twentieth century.

Given the complexity of the topic, this chapter will be selective and, from necessity, concentrate relatively briefly on a few key themes. They include an analysis of the background to the contemporary relationship between police and Indigenous people; a discussion of some of the key drivers for reform including the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and more recently Aboriginal Justice Advisory Councils and the development of Aboriginal Justice Agreements; and a discussion of some of the key policing approaches specific to Indigenous communities such as Aboriginal liaison officers and Aboriginal community police.

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Policing in Indigenous Communities

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Introduction

Policing in Indigenous communities is a vast topic to summarise, analyse and discuss in a few thousand words. It is an important issue on any range of measures. For example, recently some members in the Indigenous community of Palm Island were so impassioned after a death in police custody, they burnt a police station to the ground. This alone should give us pause for reflection that even when Aboriginal / police relations appear stable there can be an underlying volatility. In 2005 the fourth national police custody survey was released by the Australian Institute of Criminology. The survey showed that 26.3 per cent of police custodies in Australia involved Indigenous people. The rate of Indigenous custody was 2028.7 per 100,000 of the Indigenous population. Indigenous people were 17 times more likely to be held in custody than non-Indigenous people in the Australia (Taylor and Bareja 2005: 22-23). Conversely, Indigenous victimisation rates are also high. The Steering Committee for the Report of Government Service Provision (SCROGSP) noted that, nationally, twice the proportion of Indigenous males and more than two and a half times the proportion of Indigenous females reported being victims of physical or threatened violence than their non-Indigenous counterparts (SCROGSP 2005: Table 3A.11.2). Clearly a great deal of police work involves working with Aboriginal people as both offenders and victims of crime.

Policing in Indigenous communities is an issue that demands attention to a range of broad political, socio-economic, cultural and historical contexts, as well as the more mundane matters of police operational concern. The political context requires us to understand the parameters in which Indigenous communities operate including the nature of Indigenous political demands and the key organisations that articulate those demands. It also requires us to understand the state and federal policy framework which governments have applied to working with Indigenous communities. The socio-economic context requires us to have knowledge about the position of Indigenous people in Australian society, in particular the consequences which arise from the profound level of disadvantage which many communities face and the impact that has on the relationship with the criminal justice system. The cultural context requires some knowledge about the nature of social relationships and cultural concerns in communities. This might include local aspects of customary law that are important, or local mechanisms for dealing with disputes such as the use of elders. Finally, the historical context is probably more important for police than any other government organisation delivering a service in Aboriginal communities, because police were an important arm in implementing government policy for Indigenous people in many parts of Australia during the much of the twentieth century.

Given the complexity of the topic, this chapter will be selective and, from necessity, concentrate relatively briefly on a few key themes. They include the following:

- The background to the contemporary relationship between police and Indigenous people.

- A discussion of some of the key drivers for reform including the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCADIC), and more recently

Aboriginal Justice Advisory Councils (AJACs) and the development of Aboriginal Justice Agreements.

- A discussion of some of the key policing approaches specific to Indigenous communities such as Aboriginal liaison officers and Aboriginal community police.

- A discussion of some of the key interface issues between police and community including the development of Indigenous community justice mechanisms.

Background

The fundamental contextual issue in the historical relationship between Indigenous people and the police is the fact that Australia was a continent colonised by the British and at the expense of the original inhabitants. The various Indigenous peoples and nations spread throughout the land before the arrival of the British were systematically and extensively removed from their land and generally denied recognition of legal rights to that land and the social and political structures which had governed their lives. This colonising 'project' did not occur in a single instance but can be seen as a long historical process over several centuries.

The legal order which police came to enforce was very much the law of a colonial state which excluded Aboriginal people and sought their control. The defining features of colonial policing in relation to Indigenous people in Australia included the following.[1] First, Indigenous people were subject to paramilitary policing units in a way which was largely outside the experience of other people in Australia. These included groups such as mounted police and native police forces. Secondly, much of the policing which occurred in the nineteenth century was in the context of military style operations which at many times resembled far more a state of war, than the type of policing expected in rural and urban communities where there was a degree of political and social consensus. The war-like police operations which existed were influenced by the level of Indigenous resistance, which at times could appear to threaten the general prosperity of the colony (Reynolds 1987: 27). Policing was an important component in the expansion of British *de facto* jurisdiction in Australia.

Thirdly, policing was contextualised within the legal ambiguity which surrounded the position of Indigenous people within the colonies. While on the one hand they were seen to be British subjects, Indigenous people were afforded little protection by the law. During the nineteenth century summary executions and mass murder[2] by police and settlers showed how clearly Indigenous people were beyond the boundaries of legal protection. A characterisation of the early colonial period was the suspension of the rule of law in relation to Indigenous people: the murder of Indigenous people could be overlooked.

In the later 'protection' period of the first half of the twentieth century police also played a fundamental role in many States in ensuring government policy was

[1] For extensive discussion of these issues see Cunneen 2001, Chapter 4.
[2] See Kercher (1995: 7-9) for a discussion on the use of the term 'mass murder' in this context.

implemented. Police were involved in enforcing work relations and prohibiting movement, in controlling day-to-day lives of Indigenous people, in the removal of children in some parts of Australia, and in policing particular moral and social standards (Johnston 1991: vol 2, 21). The protection period was a time in Australia's history when common law protections ensuring basic rights and freedoms could be cast aside[3] and when basic citizenship rights were denied[4].

As a result, the rule of law as a constraint on arbitrary power and as a guarantee of equality before the law was suspended in relation to Aboriginal people from the time of first colonisation in the late eighteenth century until firmer legal commitments to the equality before the law came into play in the 1970s.[5] In the long term, police legitimacy itself relies on the rule of law; on the impartial application of rules, the protection of individual rights and procedural fairness. In this sense, police legitimacy has not existed in Indigenous communities. Historically, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have not been policed by consent in Australia.

Finally, the suspension of the rule of law and the use of violence against Indigenous people was also contextualised and legitimated within racialised constructions of Aboriginal people as inferior, lesser human beings. There is no doubt that these racialised constructions of Aboriginality changed during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries from notions of primitive barbarism to views about a race 'doomed' to extinction, and indeed competing views about race were often prevalent at the same time (McGregor 1997). However, what is important in the context of policing is that racialised constructions of Aboriginality inevitably facilitated discriminatory intervention. Such institutionalised and legalised discrimination reached its peak during the protection period when police were authorised to exercise extensive control over the lives of Indigenous people.

The Impetus for Reform

The key driver to reform the relationship between Indigenous people and the police over the last several decades has been the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCADIC) and the range of initiatives that were connected to the recommendations from the inquiry, including the development of Aboriginal Justice Advisory Councils (AJACs), the national Indigenous and Ministerial Summits on Deaths In Custody (1997) and the subsequent development of Aboriginal Justice Agreements.

The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody

The RCADIC was established in 1987 and reported to the Federal Parliament some four years later. It was generated by the activism from Aboriginal organisations including the Committee to Defend Black Rights and Aboriginal Legal Services, the families of those who had died in custody and their supporters. From the early 1980s there had been a number of deaths in police and prison custody which caused serious

[3] See the Bringing Them Home report for a discussion of the loss of common law and international human rights protections (NISATSIC 1997: 247-276).
[4] Chesterman and Galligan (1997) for an extensive discussion on citizenship rights and Indigenous people in Australia.
[5] Such as the introduction of the Commonwealth *Racial Discrimination Act* (1975).

alarm among Aboriginal communities across the country. In the end the RCADIC investigated 99 deaths, of which nearly two thirds (63) occurred in police custody.

The Royal Commission found that the high number of Aboriginal deaths in custody was directly relative to the over-representation of Aboriginal people in custody. The RCADIC did not find that the deaths were the result of deliberate violence or brutality by police or prison officers. However, failure by custodial authorities to exercise a proper duty of care was also exposed by the Royal Commission (Johnston 1991:vol 1). The Commission found that there was little understanding of the duty of care owed by custodial authorities (including police) and there were many system defects in relation to exercising care. There were many failures to exercise proper care. In some cases, the failure to offer proper care directly contributed to or caused the death in custody (Wootten 1991; Cunneen 2001:124-125).

The Royal Commission found that there were two ways of tackling the problem of the disproportionate number of Aboriginal people in custody. The first was to reform the criminal justice system; the second approach was to address the problem of the more fundamental factors which bring Indigenous people into contact with the criminal justice system - the underlying issues relating to over-representation. The Commission argued that the principle of Indigenous self-determination must underlie both areas of reform. In particular the resolution of Aboriginal disadvantage could only be achieved through empowerment and self-determination.

The Royal Commission made 339 recommendations to achieve the ends of reducing custody levels, remedying social disadvantage and assuring self-determination. All Australian Governments committed themselves to implementing the majority of recommendations.

The Royal Commission clearly prioritised the need to address the 'underlying issues' affecting Indigenous contact with the criminal justice system:

> Changes to the operation of the criminal justice system alone will not have a significant impact on the number of persons entering into custody or the number of those who die in custody; the social and economic circumstances which both predispose Aboriginal people to offend and which explain why the criminal justice system focuses upon them are much more significant factors in over-representation (Johnston 1991: vol 4, 1).

However, the Royal Commission also found that there was much potential to reform the criminal justice system, including both increased diversion from the system and reforms for minimising deaths in custody. This overall focus is reflected in the recommendations from the Royal Commission. The 339 recommendations can be broadly grouped as follows:

- 126 recommendations dealing with underlying issues
- 106 recommendations dealing with over-representation in the criminal justice system
- 107 recommendations dealing with deaths in custody (Victorian Implementation Review Team 2004:18).

Thus more than a third of recommendations dealt with underlying issues (including education, health, housing, employment and land issues), and slightly less than a third dealt with the changing the criminal justice system to minimise over-representation (law reform and changes to law, policies and procedures) and another third with deaths in custody issues (including reforming the coronial system and improving custodial health and safety).

Many of the recommendations dealt with diversion from police custody and this is not surprising given that two thirds of all the deaths which were investigated occurred in police custody rather than prison. Furthermore, most Aboriginal people at the time of the Royal Commission were in police custody for public drunkenness and, to a lesser extent, street offences (Johnston 1991: vol 1, 12-13). The focus of recommendations in this regard was to decriminalise public drunkenness, provide sobering-up shelters, change practice and procedures relating to arrest and bail (particularly for minor offences) and to provide alternatives to the use of police custody[6].

While there were many recommendations made in relation to specific issues like arrest and bail, it is the broader policy-oriented recommendations that are of interest to us in the context of this chapter. Many of the recommendations addressing underlying issues and reform of the criminal justice system implicitly or explicitly referred to the need for negotiation with Indigenous people and organisations. In other words, self-determination is a principle that runs through all the recommendations. It is encapsulated in recommendation 188.

> That governments negotiate with appropriate Aboriginal organisations and communities to determine guidelines as to the procedures and processes which should be followed to ensure that the self-determination principle is applied in the design and implementation of any policy or program or the substantial modification of any policy or program which will particularly affect Aboriginal people (Johnston 1991: vol 5, 111).

Self-determination was the broad context in which the process of change was to occur.

Aboriginal Justice Advisory Councils

As part of establishing a framework for negotiating with Aboriginal communities, the Royal Commission recommended that independent Aboriginal Justice Advisory Councils be established to provide advice to government on justice-related matters, as well as monitoring the implementation of the Royal Commission recommendations.

In the years immediately following the RCADIC, all Australian states and territories established AJACs. Below is a summary of the relevant organisations that were originally formed (ATSIC 1997:6-14).

- *South Australia.* AJAC established in 1990.

[6]Changes to police practice and legislation to enhance diversion from police custody are called for in recommendations 60-61, 79-91 and 214-233 (Johnston 1991: vol 5).

- *Western Australia.* An interim AJAC was formed in 1992, followed by the Aboriginal Justice Committee (AJC) in 1994. Later disbanded by the government.
- *New South Wales*. An AJAC was established by the New South Wales Attorney-General in 1993. Still operating today.
- *Victoria.* An AJAC was established in 1993. Still operating today.
- *Queensland.* An AJAC was formed in 1993. In 1997 it was combined with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Overview Committee and reformed as the Indigenous Advisory Board. Disbanded by the government in 2002.
- *Australian Capital Territory.* An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Consultative Council was appointed by the ACT Government in 1995.
- *Northern Territory.* An AJAC was established in 1996. It is unfunded and only partially functioning.
- *Tasmania.* An interim AJAC was established in September 1997.

In the subsequent years many of the AJACs have been either abolished or allowed to collapse by government. However, New South Wales and Victoria provide examples where the Advisory Committees have flourished and are an important contemporary voice for Indigenous people in relation to criminal justice issues. When AJACs have failed to operate, police management has often found it necessary to develop a statewide advisory structure (for example, Queensland Indigenous and Police Service Review and Reference Group).

Indigenous and Ministerial Summits on Deaths in Custody 1997

In 1997 AJACs, ATSIC and other key Indigenous organisations met in Canberra to discuss the outcomes of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and the continuing issue of deaths in custody and high incarceration rates.

The Indigenous Summit recommended the development of Justice Agreements for each State and Territory as a way of improving the delivery of justice programs. It was recommended that Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments develop bilateral agreements on justice issues, and they negotiate with AJACs and other relevant Aboriginal organisations in the development of the agreements. It was recommended that the framework provided by the National Commitment to Improved Outcomes in the Delivery of Programs and Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People be utilised in the development of the Justice Agreements, particularly given that this was a Council of Australian Governments endorsed process, and one that had established precedents in health and education during the early part of the 1990s.

The National Commitment had placed a strong emphasis on developing a framework which respected Indigenous self-determination and it was seen as appropriate that this emphasis be included in the development of Justice Agreements. The guiding principles for Justice Agreements as developed at the Indigenous Summit included empowerment, self-determination and self-management by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The need to negotiate with and maximise participation by Indigenous people through their representative bodies in the formulation of justice policies which affect them was held to be a central requirement (Ministerial Summit 1997:221).

The Indigenous Summit noted best practice examples of Aboriginal community justice initiatives[7] and established three key principles for the development of Justice Agreements in regard to policing issues. These were

- that the full implementation of the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody in relation to police and Aboriginal community relations would result in a significant decline in Aboriginal contact with the criminal justice system;
- that Aboriginal communities had made significant efforts through community justice programs to address the level of contact between Aboriginal people and the police; and
- that locally devised community justice strategies were generally a voluntary effort which required greater government commitment for their development and expansion (Ministerial Summit 1997:228).

In July 1997 some twenty Commonwealth, State and Territory ministers responsible for various criminal justice portfolios met with Indigenous representatives from ATSIC, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commission and AJACs. The Summit resolved to develop justice agreements between Government and Indigenous peoples relating to justice issues. These agreements would address social, economic and cultural issues; justice issues; customary law; law reform and Government funding levels for programs. The agreements would include targets for reducing the rate of Indigenous over-representation in the criminal justice system; planning mechanisms; methods of service delivery; and monitoring and evaluation (Dodson 1997:153).

Indigenous Justice Agreements

Queensland, Western Australia, Victoria and New South Wales have negotiated and signed Justice Agreements with Indigenous people (as represented through AJACs). These agreements vary between jurisdictions but can be seen to contain commonalities, and certainly set the policy framework within each state in relation to criminal justice issues.

The Queensland Justice Agreement can be used as an example. The long term aim of the Agreement is to reduce Indigenous contact with the criminal justice system to parity with the non-Indigenous rate. A specific goal was to reduce by 50 per cent the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples incarcerated in the Queensland criminal justice system by 2011. It will achieve this goal through a range of twenty supporting outcomes and initiatives. Justice agencies, including police, have been required to report against these initiatives and outcomes. There is not space here to discuss each of these twenty initiatives[8], however they include such matters as

[7] These community justice initiatives include the Kowanyama and Palm Island Community Justice Groups in Queensland, the Community Justice Panels in Victoria, and various night patrols in Western Australia and also Murri Watch (Queensland), and Tangentyere (Northern Territory). See Cunneen 2001: 193-201 for further discussion of these programs.
[8] See Cunneen 2006 for a full evaluation of the Agreement.

- Effective early intervention for Indigenous young people at risk of criminal justice intervention
- Effective diversionary strategies
- Safety and security for Indigenous people in custody
- Criminal justice policies, procedures and practices that are appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Increased participation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in the administration of justice including the development of own solutions

A recent evaluation of the Justice Agreement in Queensland found that there had been progress in meeting the aims of the Agreement. However, there was a need to resource and expand current initiatives. While the police service had introduced some innovative programs (like the Indigenous Licensing Program) one of the main failings was to ensure alternatives to arrest are used more equitably for Indigenous juveniles and adults (Cunneen 2005).

Agency-Specific Indigenous Strategic Plans

In many States and Territories, police services have developed their own strategic plans for working with or responding to Indigenous clients. Some have been aimed at reducing over-representation, while others have focussed on more effective service delivery. These should be distinguished from Justice Agreements because they are not negotiated agreements, although their aims may be similar to the agreements.

An example of this type of plan is the New South Wales Police Service Aboriginal Strategic Direction 2003-2006. The plan sets out six objectives with a range of strategies designed to meet those objectives.[9] The plan was audited by the New South Wales Ombudsman in 2005. In general the Ombudsman found that 'there appears to be an historic shift in the willingness of many Aboriginal communities and leaders to work with police on achieving better outcomes' and that local area commanders 'are now much more conscious of their obligations under the Aboriginal Strategic Direction' (New South Wales Ombudsman 2005: 27).

Indigenous People in Policing Roles

Indigenous people can have a number of roles in policing. The most obvious role is as a fully sworn police officer. Other roles include community police, Aboriginal police/community liaison officers, or as 'special' police such as the pilot Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Police (QATSIP) program.

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[9] The Strategic Direction is available at http://www.police.nsw.gov.au/about_us/policies__and__procedures/policies/aboriginal_strategic_direction. Accessed 30/8/06. The six objectives are:
• Strengthen communication and understanding between Police and Aboriginal people.
• Improve community safety by reducing crime and violence within the Aboriginal community.
• Reduce Aboriginal people's contact with the criminal justice system.
• Increase Aboriginal cultural awareness throughout NSW Police.
• Divert Aboriginal youth from crime and anti-social behaviour.
• Target Aboriginal family violence and sexual abuse.

Aboriginal police/ community liaison officers have been in existence for several decades. It appears that in more recent years there has been an improvement in training, employment conditions, and utilisation, at least in some States (Cunneen 2005). However, there are also ongoing endemic problems including the basic difficulty of the role in providing a bridge between police and the community. Some issues recently identified in New South Wales include the failure to fill vacant positions promptly, the lack of females in the position and the lack of an obvious career path (New South Wales Ombudsman 2005: 14-15).

Indigenous community police emerged on the former reserves, and in general exercise powers conferred on them through legislation which enables community councils to pass by-laws for the maintenance of peace and good order. The problems associated with the role and functions of the community police in Queensland for example, have been identified in reports by the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, and a number of coronial inquiries into Indigenous deaths in custody.[10] The main issues which have been identified are the very limited powers of arrest. Supervision by State police has been consistently found to be inadequate. There are also a range of problems similar to those identified with community liaison officers including employment conditions and training.

In an attempt to resolve the problems with Indigenous community police, the Queensland Government piloted the transfer of management and control of Aboriginal and Islander community police to the Queensland Police Service (QPS). Officers were sworn is as 'special constables' and completed the accredited training course designed for Aboriginal community police, as well as additional POST (Police Operational Skills and Tactics) training and training in the use of QPS information technology. An evaluation of the trial on Yarrabah, Woorabinda and Badu Island found at each of the sites, despite contextual differences, that the trial had been successful. However, it was most successful where there was an effective community justice system operating in the community concerned, and a local court to hear charges under the community by-laws (See Cunneen 2005: 183-186).

Contemporary Issues at the Interface with Police and Indigenous Communities

Community and Problem-Solving Policing

Much of the change in policing in recent decades was brought about within the broad policy framework of community and problem-solving policing. Community policing has been a powerful influence on policing developments even if its adoption has been uneven and contradictory. Problem-solving policing can also lead to contradictory results for the policing of Indigenous people – particularly if it reinforces a particular 'zero tolerance' towards specific types of offenders or offences (for example, repeat offenders or street offences).

The policy initiatives involved in community policing (particularly those aimed at improving Aboriginal/police relations) can sit uncomfortably with the issue of 'over-

[10] The most recent being the *Coronial Findings in the Death of a Hope Vale Man in an Aboriginal Community Police Van*. http://www.justice.qld.gov.au/courts/coroner/findings/HopeVale.pdf Accessed 30/8/06.

policing' which has often been associated with policing in Indigenous communities (Cunneen 2001). In townships with a large Indigenous population and with a large police presence it is difficult to see how community policing can be matched with the feeling among the Aboriginal community that they are the object of constant and adverse police attention. Indeed, the 'local problems' which community policing might be called upon to resolve are complex social divisions generated by racism, marginalisation and the history of colonisation. Although the problem of racial tension and poor Aboriginal-police relations manifest themselves at the local level, the genesis of these issues lie more deeply in the specific history of colonial relations in Australia. Understanding and discussing these issues does not mean that community policing is bound to fail, but it does mean we must be aware of the constant constraints and tensions in which particular policies operate.

Community Justice Mechanisms

Rather than seeing community policing in narrow terms, police managers would do well to think of community policing in the context of its potential relationship to the community justice mechanisms that have developed as initiatives by Indigenous people. Thinking about these potential linkages between community policing and community justice mechanisms allows police managers to consider how they might reposition or realign their interests in developing better relations with Indigenous communities to the interests of Indigenous communities in developing programs and initiatives that reflect an Indigenous response to crime.

Over the last two decades there have significant development in Indigenous community justice and there are many initiatives in Aboriginal communities that have shown positive results or are promising in their potential impact. When we are looking at successful programs such as those relating to drug and alcohol or to family violence there are a number of themes that re-emerge in relation to ensuring success.

In relation to drug and alcohol programs there appears to be consensus that culturally appropriate and community-based programs that utilise multiple modes of intervention and involve the family and community in treatment are most successful. Harm reduction, treatment and supply control should not be seen as mutually exclusive approaches – for example coordinated approaches between night patrols, sobering-up shelters and treatment facilities might bridge all three approaches (Cunneen and AJAC 2002).

The common themes in evaluations of Indigenous family violence programs include the need for holistic approaches, the utilisation of community development models which emphasise self determination and community ownership, the provision of culturally sensitive treatment which respects traditional law and customs and involves existing structures of authority such as elders, including women (Blagg 2000).

Evaluations of night patrols, community justice groups and Aboriginal courts (or circle sentencing) have been promising (Blagg and Valuri 2004; Harris 2004; Marchetti and Daly 2004; Potas et al 2003). Several of these programs, in particular the community justice groups, have the potential to operate as effective primary crime prevention programs, and to address issues such as:

- Working with Aboriginal young people to keep them connected with their school and actively engaged in learning and/or other pursuits
- Help Aboriginal communities strengthen their families and communities to better address issues such as early learning difficulties and protection from child abuse and neglect
- Help Aboriginal people enhance their social and economic well-being; and
- Build on the cultural strength of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal communities.

Involvement of Aboriginal courts and community justice groups in sentencing Aboriginal offenders can have a powerful effect on reducing recidivism and assisting rehabilitation. For these types of Indigenous initiatives to work they need the active cooperation and assistance of police at both local and state levels. The type of practical assistance that is required by police can be covered in protocols, guidelines and referral processes.

More generally, police can also play a role as active supporters and advocates for Indigenous run projects. This provides a real opportunity for police to support Indigenous people, to engage with the community and develop a type of community policing that has its starting point in the aspirations of Indigenous people. In this vision of community policing, the building of better Aboriginal/police relations starts with support for local initiatives that derive from Indigenous community aspirations.

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