



# UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY JUSTICE

An introduction to the Neighbourhood Justice Centre  
for VCE teachers and students

The Neighbourhood Justice Centre is committed to ensuring that its online information and experiences are accessible to the widest possible audience.

If you are experiencing any accessibility or usability issues when using this document, please contact us for an alternative format.

[njc@courts.vic.gov.au](mailto:njc@courts.vic.gov.au)

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri people, the traditional owners of the land that the City of Yarra and the Neighbourhood Justice Centre rests upon. In this document the term 'Aboriginal' refers to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people either in Victoria or in other parts of Australia unless otherwise stated, for example, using clan name/s or generic names such as Koori (VIC, NSW), Murri (QLD), Palawa (TAS), Nunga (SA) and Noongar (WA). The term 'Koori' used in this document respectfully refers to the local Aboriginal community in Victoria. Within the Koori community, the NJC acknowledges there are also other Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander persons residing, working and gathering in the local area.

Published by the Neighbourhood Justice Centre, Specialist Courts and Programs Division, Magistrates' Court of Victoria.

Unless indicated otherwise, content of this publication is provided under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 international licence (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0), except for:

- any images, photographs of branding including the:
  - Victorian Coat of Arms
  - Victorian Government logo
  - Magistrates' Court of Victoria logo
  - Neighbourhood Justice Centre logo
  - Court Services Victoria logo
- content supplied by third parties.

For the relevant licence conditions and full legal code see Creative Commons at [creativecommons.org](http://creativecommons.org)

#### **Attribution**

Material obtained from this document is to be attributed as © Court Services Victoria.

#### **Third party copyright**

In some cases, third parties may hold copyright in material presented in this document. Their permission may be required to use the material.

For more information contact the NJC at 241 Wellington Street, Collingwood, Melbourne, VIC 3066.  
Telephone: 03 9948 8777

# Contents

<b>ABOUT THE RESOURCE</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>VIRTUAL TOUR TECHNICAL INSTRUCTIONS</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>CURRICULUM LINKS</b>	<b>3</b>
Civics and Citizenship Curriculum Links:	3
VCE Legal Studies Curriculum Links:	3
<b>PART ONE</b>	<b>4</b>
The Neighbourhood Justice Centre: A Snapshot	4
<b>Virtual Tour Classroom discussions</b>	<b>5</b>
Section 1: Introduction to community justice and the NJC	5
Section 2: Promoting access through design and architecture	6
<b>Ground floor of the Neighbourhood Justice Centre</b>	<b>6</b>
Section 3: Serving and equipping the community	8
Section 4: Communicating with clients and promoting access	9
Section 5: Therapeutic justice and court registry at the NJC	10
Section 6: The NJC courtroom and its one-Magistrate model	11
<b>The Neighbourhood Justice Centre Courtroom</b>	<b>13</b>
Section 7: Protective areas	14
Sections 8 and 9: The Client Services model	15
<b>Quiet room at the Neighbourhood Justice Centre</b>	<b>15</b>
Section 10: Community engagement and crime prevention: an innovative approach	16
Section 11: Security with a Smile	18
Further Questions and Discussion Points	19



Smith Street Collingwood



## ABOUT THE RESOURCE

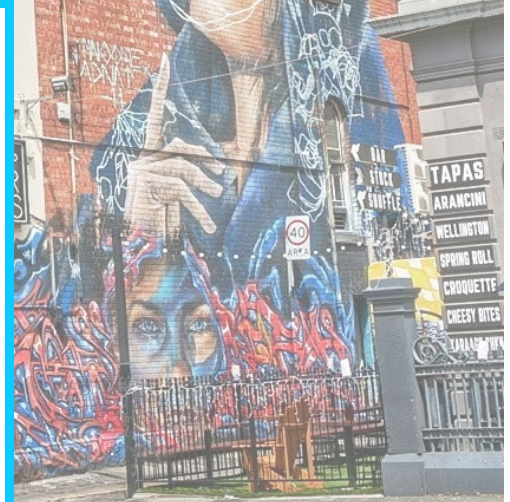
This resource about the Neighbourhood Justice Centre (NJC) in Melbourne has been created for VCE Legal Studies teachers and students.

It is designed for use in conjunction with the virtual tour and video of the NJC, which you can find here: <https://youtu.be/gWecTFIQIOW>

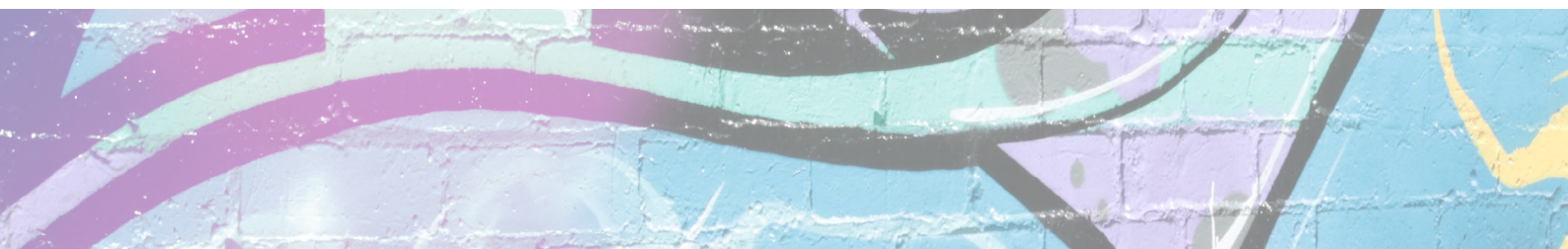
The virtual tour takes viewers inside the centre. It provides an overview of what happens every day at the NJC and explains how principles of community justice guide the centre's operations and have informed the centre's architectural and design features.

Part One of this guide provides some extra information about the centre and some ideas for classroom discussion topics. The numbered sections in the guide correspond to the numbered sections within the virtual tour. The timestamps correspond to the timer at the bottom of the playing video. There are curriculum links to VCE Legal Studies within the document too.

Part Two is an overview of some related resources about the NJC and other, similar models of community justice.



Artwork by Two One and Adnate





## VIRTUAL TOUR TECHNICAL INSTRUCTIONS

The Virtual Tour is a 360° interactive video, which means that while the video is being viewed, you can control the viewing direction and look around the environment. To watch the 360° video, simply follow the link (<https://youtu.be/gWecTFIQIOW>) to YouTube and press Play, as you would for a normal video.

If you are watching on a personal computer, while the video is playing you can use the mouse to Click and drag anywhere in the video screen to change the viewing direction.

YouTube officially supports playback of 360° videos using these browsers: Chrome, Firefox, MS Edge, and Opera. Other browsers may also support 360° video playback, but please make sure that your browser is updated to the latest version.

If you are watching the Virtual Tour using a smartphone or tablet, you will need to watch it using the official YouTube app. The tour will not work if you try to view it through a browser. To look around while the video is playing, simply move your phone or tablet around to shift what you are looking at. You don't even need to touch the screen.

You can also view 360° videos on the YouTube VR app available on most VR headsets. You can learn more about that on YouTube's website here: 'watching with a VR headset'.



# CURRICULUM LINKS

## Civics and Citizenship Curriculum Links:

### Levels 9 and 10 – Laws and citizens

- Describe the key features of Australia’s court system, including jurisdictions and how courts apply and interpret the law, resolve disputes and make law through judgements
- Discuss the key principles of Australia’s justice system, including equality before the law, independent judiciary and right of appeal

## VCE Legal Studies Curriculum Links:

### Unit 1: Guilt and liability – AOS 1, Outcome 1

#### Key knowledge

- The principles of justice: fairness, equality and access
- The role of individuals, laws and the legal system in achieving social cohesion and protecting the rights of individuals

#### Key Skills

- Define key legal terminology

### Unit 2: Sanctions, remedies and rights – AOS 1, Outcome 1

#### Key knowledge

- The purposes of sanctions: punishment, deterrence, denunciation, protection and rehabilitation
- Factors considered by judges in sentencing
- Alternative approaches to sentencing, such as the use of the Drug Court, the Koori Courts and diversion programs

#### Key Skills

- Discuss the principles of justice in relation to the enforcement of criminal law and sanctions
- Discuss the ability of sanctions to achieve their purposes
- Discuss approaches to sentencing

### Unit 3: Rights and justice – AOS 1, Outcome 1

#### Key knowledge

- The principles of justice: fairness, equality and access

#### Determining a criminal case

- The role of institutions available to assist an accused, including Victoria Legal Aid and Victorian community legal centres
- The purposes of sanctions: rehabilitation, punishment, deterrence, denunciation and protection
- Factors considered in sentencing, including aggravating factors, mitigating factors, guilty pleas and victim impact statements

#### Reforms

- Factors that affect the ability of the criminal justice system to achieve the principles of justice including in relation to costs, time and cultural differences
- Recent reforms and recommended reforms to enhance the ability of the criminal justice system to achieve the principles of justice

#### Key Skills

- Discuss the ability of sanctions to achieve their purposes
- Discuss recent reforms and recommended reforms to the criminal justice system
- Evaluate the ability of the criminal justice system to achieve the principles of justice

# PART ONE

## The Neighbourhood Justice Centre: A Snapshot



### In the community

The Neighbourhood Justice Centre (NJC) is located in Collingwood, in the heart of the City of Yarra in Victoria. It has been serving the local community here since 2007.

The NJC is a court venue but it is also a community justice centre, taking a proactive approach to reducing crime in the local area. The NJC is sometimes called a one-stop justice centre because, under the same roof as the court, the centre also offers support services for people who may have committed crimes or who may have been victims of crime.

Mainstream courts are focused on determining guilt and punishing those found guilty of crimes. The NJC, in addition, works to address the underlying causes of criminal activity (e.g. financial problems, mental health issues, drug or alcohol addiction).

### In Victoria and in Australia

The NJC is Australia's first and only community justice centre. It is part of the Magistrates' Court of Victoria, Specialist Courts & Programs. The NJC is multijurisdictional, which means it is a venue for more than one court. The Magistrates' Court, the Children's Court (criminal division), the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal and the Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal all sit on different days and at different times in the NJC's single courtroom. The NJC is a high-volume court, hearing more than 3,000 cases in 2018/19.

### In the world

The NJC is one of 80 comparable community justice centres in the world.

The world's first community justice centre was Red Hook Community Justice Center in Brooklyn, New York. Red Hook's model helped to inspire the development of the NJC.

Many communities across the globe are looking for alternatives to punitive 'one-size-fits-all' models of justice, that often see the same people offending again and again and struggling to break the cycle of crime, particularly in areas with high rates of crime and socioeconomic disadvantage. While many community justice centres have similar features, each centre is uniquely designed to serve the specific needs of the people in its local area. Other countries with community justice centres include Israel, South Africa, Canada and Singapore.

This short video on the NJC Youtube channel, gives a helpful overview of the NJC: The Neighbourhood Justice Centre: Helping tackle the underlying causes of crime.



<https://youtu.be/DM7sSs09cXI>

We suggest you begin your learning about the NJC by watching this video. Then watch the virtual tour and use this resource to unpack some of its key points.

# Virtual Tour Classroom Discussions

## Section 1: Introduction to community justice and the NJC (outside the NJC)

VCE Unit 1, Outcome 1: The role of individuals, laws and the legal system in achieving social cohesion and protecting the rights of individuals

VCE Unit 1 & Unit 3: The purposes of sanctions: punishment, deterrence, denunciation, protection and rehabilitation

Topics for discussion	Possible responses
<p>Can you identify three principles underpinning community justice?</p>	<p>Underlying Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community justice seeks to address the underlying problems causing criminal activity, rather than just finding people guilty of committing crimes and punishing them</li> <li>Addresses lower-level crimes (not murder or 'indictable offences')</li> </ul> <p>Community Involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operates at a local level, placing great value on family, neighbourhood, social and community relationships as the foundations of public safety</li> <li>Sees crime/safety issues as a set of problems for the community to solve, not just matters of individual failure or violation</li> <li>Focuses on improving quality of life for the whole community</li> </ul> <p>Relationships and trust</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involves the local community in the justice process by building local relationships and partnerships, e.g. improving relationships between police and local youth</li> </ul>
<p>Community justice centres like the NJC are set up in areas with high crime rates.</p> <p>Can you suggest two reasons for this?</p>	<p>Addressing the crime rate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It could be argued that a high crime rate means the justice system is not working well to make society safe in that area</li> <li>When the crime rate is high, there is a need to do more than what is being done in the mainstream justice system</li> </ul> <p>Reducing the cost of crime</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Courts, police and corrections services (including jails) are expensive to run</li> <li>The NJC model, which is more focused on prevention and rehabilitation, aims to reduce reoffending</li> <li>It may be more cost-effective for tax-payers to invest in preventing crime and reducing reoffending rates, than building prisons</li> </ul>
<p>After a crime is committed, mainstream justice asks:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) What law was broken?</li> <li>2) Who did it?</li> <li>3) What punishment do they deserve?</li> </ol> <p>Community justice also asks: Why did this crime happen in the first place?</p> <p>Why is this last question important?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We cannot stop people from committing crimes unless we understand what the underlying factors are</li> <li>If we understand and address health and social factors such as: mental health issues, drug and alcohol dependency, lack of education, homelessness, the impacts of disadvantage and marginalisation on Aboriginal people, refugees and migrants, then we have a better chance of helping people change their offending behaviour</li> <li>This is more effective in reducing crime than imposing severe sentences</li> </ul>



## Section 2: Promoting access through design and architecture (ground floor foyer)

### VCE Unit 1 & Unit 3: Principles of justice: fairness, equality and access



Timestamp: 0:00:53

Topics for discussion	Possible responses
<p>What are three architectural and design elements at NJC that help to make the building a more comfortable, accessible and useful place for all visitors?</p>	<p>Natural light and ventilation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are open public spaces inside the building, as well as easy access to fresh air outdoors</li> <li>• There are windows showing views out of the courtroom</li> </ul> <p>Spaces sensitive to children and family violence cases</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The children's play area makes it easier for families to manage long waits at the Centre, whether they are attending a community meeting, waiting for an appointment with a support worker or attending court</li> <li>• The building's design makes it easy for people to be kept separate from each other in family violence cases</li> </ul> <p>Security and placement of the courtroom</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Security is dynamic and non-intimidating</li> <li>• The courtroom is located on the first floor and is out of sight for those people who attend the building for other reasons</li> <li>• The court is to be seen as part of the function of the NJC and not the primary purpose for the building</li> </ul> <p>Art exhibition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The building contains calming pastel colours on its walls and a rotating community art exhibition, helping to create a welcoming environment</li> </ul>
<p>What are some of the problems with traditional courtrooms that can be experienced by clients coming before the court?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having to discuss personal information with their lawyer, registrar or other support worker in a large open foyer area</li> <li>• Being intimidated by the formality of a courtroom</li> <li>• The physical dominance of the Magistrate, raised above other members in the courtroom</li> <li>• People with mental health issues, in particular, may not want to participate in court processes because they are intimidated/confused</li> </ul>



Ground floor of the Neighbourhood Justice Centre

Topics for discussion	Possible responses
<p>What elements of the design of the NJC building are different from a regular Magistrates' court building?</p> <p>How can these design elements help to alleviate the problems clients sometimes experience at court?</p>	<p>Co-location of services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The NJC is a community justice centre, not just a court building</li> <li>Staff from a wide range of local support services (including mental health, housing and family violence support services) work together under the same roof as the court</li> </ul> <p>Layout, artwork and colour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The NJC contains calming pastel colours on its walls and a rotating community art exhibition helping to create a welcoming environment</li> <li>There are a number of areas for visitors and court users to wait, read a newspaper or get a free coffee or tea</li> </ul> <p>Inclusion of the community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For the Centre to achieve its objectives, it needs to be understood as part of the community and not separate from it</li> <li>There is a café on level one, which employs members of the community</li> <li>The children's play area provides a safe and welcoming space for parents and children to wait</li> </ul> <p>Ease of access/decreased security presence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visitors are free to enter the building and access the services whenever it's open</li> <li>The Magistrate and staff share much of the same space as visitors to the Centre (and they enter and exit via the main entrance)</li> </ul>
<p>How can conventional court design alienate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of our community?</p>	<p>Enforces Western systems of hierarchy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Courts signify the British legal system (which is adversarial and retributive) which contrasts with Indigenous law systems (more likely to be restorative and conciliatory)</li> <li>The British legal system was an instrument of dispossession of Indigenous people from their traditional lands; Australian court design symbolises the exclusion of Indigenous laws</li> <li>Conventional court design reinforces Western hierarchical systems of law, power and social order and can be intimidating to those who are subject to its processes</li> <li>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags and acknowledgement of country are not always prominently displayed; Indigenous artwork is not always exhibited</li> <li>Symbols, signs and flags of government and state institutions are featured prominently</li> </ul> <p>Disregards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander customs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conventional courts do not accommodate Indigenous users' privacy, safety and comfort, for example there are not usually facilities allowing people to avoid each other, where two people should not be in the same room</li> <li>Courts are often located in the same places as police stations, which can make them appear as homogenous with the police, and aimed only at processing offenders</li> </ul>

### Section 3: Serving and equipping the community



Timestamp: 0:02:35

Topics for discussion	Possible responses
Can you suggest two reasons why the NJC has a café and provides free hot drinks?	<p>Helping those in need</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The NJC is a community justice centre in an area with many disadvantaged people; it is appropriate to provide free hot drinks to those in need</li><li>• The café is also a place where local residents can obtain hospitality training, skills and experience</li></ul> <p>Welcoming atmosphere</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The café adds to the welcoming atmosphere of the Centre</li><li>• In the NJC Court User feedback surveys, the café is often mentioned as one element of the Centre which visitors appreciate</li></ul> <p>Practical measure to avoid delays</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• People don't need to leave the building for lunch, so they're less likely to miss their court hearings</li><li>• People are less likely to be hungry and thirsty, so they can focus on dealing with their court matter</li></ul>



## Section 4: Communicating with clients and promoting access

### VCE Unit 3: Reforms to the justice system (increased use of technology)



Timestamp: 0:03:20

Topics for discussion	Possible responses
What is the MyCase system?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MyCase is a web-based tool that provides court users with information on the progress and status of their cases</li> <li>It works in a couple of different ways:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There's a MyCase information screen located near the entrance of the courtroom – similar to an arrivals/departures screen at an airport – displaying information about the progress of court matters listed on that day, including delays</li> <li>Through MyCase, court users can receive updates about the progress of their case directly to their smart phones</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
What is the purpose of the MyCase messaging system?	<p>Managing expectations around wait time for cases</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Going to court – whether a mainstream court or the NJC – often involves a lot of waiting around, as it's not always possible to predict how long it will take to resolve any matter before the court</li> <li>In mainstream courts, it's often difficult for people to get information about when their hearing will be, causing anxiety and stress</li> <li>The MyCase system is a central point of communication, so that clients can receive messages from lawyers, support workers and the registrar about where they need to be in the NJC building and when their matter will proceed in court</li> </ul> <p>Provides court users with agency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MyCase recognises that clients have ongoing responsibilities and commitments (their jobs, their children etc) that don't go away just because they have to attend court on a particular day</li> <li>The system gives clients more control over managing their own time and other commitments while they're waiting, alleviating stress</li> </ul> <p>Efficiency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Court hearings can proceed with less disruption; people are less likely to miss their hearings</li> <li>Less crowding around the courtroom creates a more relaxed and predictable environment for clients and court staff</li> <li>The court is able to coordinate the order of cases more efficiently because they know if clients are ready and also if they need an interpreter</li> </ul>

## Section 5: Therapeutic justice and court registry at the NJC

### VCE Unit 1 & Unit 3: Principles of justice: fairness, equality and access



Timestamp: 0:04:42

Topics for discussion	Possible responses
What is meant by the term therapeutic justice (also sometimes known as 'therapeutic jurisprudence')?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Therapeutic justice is a practice that takes a person's mental health into consideration at all stages of their interaction with the justice system and the law</li> <li>• Therapeutic justice acknowledges that the law has the capacity to positively or negatively impact a person's psychological and emotional wellbeing</li> <li>• This may affect a person's future behaviour and the likelihood of them coming into further contact with the justice system</li> </ul>
How are principles of therapeutic justice put into practice by registrars at the NJC?	<p>Paging system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The paging system is more discreet and personalised than the loudspeakers used to call clients into mainstream courts</li> </ul> <p>Referrals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Registry staff at NJC are able to make immediate, on-the-spot referrals to support workers, lawyers and community corrections staff located within the same building, so clients can get help with underlying problems straight away, and have a better chance of rehabilitation</li> <li>• This is important because:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People found guilty of crimes in mainstream courts often struggle to pay their fines or to complete community orders due to financial, mental health, housing or other issues</li> <li>• Failure to pay their fines or attend appointments compounds their problems; they may be issued with more fines or an arrest warrant</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Meaningful relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Registry staff at the NJC make an effort to build respectful relationships with clients coming before the court</li> <li>• Many registry staff engage with the local community outside of court and attend community events</li> </ul> <p>Clear communication and less formality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Registry staff use simple language and avoid complicated legal terms as much as possible</li> <li>• People coming before the court are referred to as clients rather than 'offenders' or 'accused persons' to remove stigma</li> </ul> <p>Neighbourhood Justice Officer (NJO) role</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The NJO works closely with the registry team, and acts as an intermediary between the court, services and clients</li> <li>• This role is a unique feature of the NJC</li> </ul>

## Section 6: The NJC courtroom and the 'one magistrate' model

VCE Unit 1 & Unit 3: Principles of justice: fairness, equality and access

VCE Unit 2

- Factors considered by judges in sentencing
- Alternative approaches to sentencing, such as the use of the Drug Court, the Koori Courts and diversion programs



Timestamp: 0:05:24

Topics for discussion	Possible responses
<b>The role of the magistrate &amp; therapeutic Justice</b>	
Why has the NJC adopted a 'one magistrate' model?	<p>In-depth understanding of issues and clients</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows the Magistrate to develop a strong understanding of local issues and people</li> <li>• Better enables the Magistrate to hold clients accountable (i.e. the Magistrate is able to remember people who appear before the court more than once)</li> </ul> <p>Efficiency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improves consistency and efficiency of the court because information doesn't have to be repeated to a new Magistrate who is unfamiliar with the case/client.</li> </ul>
What are some practical examples of how a judicial officer (judge or Magistrate) can apply therapeutic justice in their court?	<p>Use of language and body language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being polite, using attentive body language</li> <li>• Speaking slowly and carefully; explaining processes in simple language (and with interpreters when necessary)</li> <li>• Speaking directly to the client and not just to their legal representative</li> </ul> <p>Acknowledgement of client</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking the time to listen carefully to the client and show they are listening by asking questions or making comments; not interrupting</li> <li>• Asking the client for their input, encouraging the client to ask questions</li> <li>• Engaging with clients after each step to ensure they understand the process</li> </ul> <p>Explanation of decision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sentencing remarks should include acknowledgement and validation of victim's experience, condemnation of offending behavior and acknowledgement of factors that may assist the client's rehabilitation</li> </ul>
What are some of the benefits of a judicial officer taking a therapeutic approach in court?	<p>Increased wellbeing of clients</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimises negative effects of the legal system on participants' emotional and psychological wellbeing</li> <li>• May help participants feel more respect for the court, to see its processes as fair and to feel a sense of satisfaction; all of which can improve compliance with court orders</li> </ul> <p>Addresses underlying issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps people to address the problems that led to the offending behaviour, and to seek comprehensive resolutions to the problems that may have brought them to court</li> <li>• Helps the offender understand the chain of events that led to the offending and provides them with an opportunity to develop skills to deal with their problems constructively</li> </ul>

Topics for discussion	Possible responses
<p>Therapeutic justice tries to keep the psychological wellbeing of people who come before the court in mind at all stages throughout court processes. What are some factors that can affect court users' wellbeing?</p>	<p>The client</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The emotional state of the participants (they may be stressed, intimidated, agitated, angry, afraid, frustrated, confused or distraught)</li> <li>• The ability of participants to give careful responses to questions may be affected by their emotional state, mental health or language/cultural differences</li> </ul> <p>Court processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The nature and formality of processes used</li> <li>• Time constraints may hamper the judicial officer's ability to interact with participants (in the other Magistrates courts, the judicial officer may have only a few minutes per case if the court is busy)</li> </ul> <p>Court staff and judicial officers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The personality, communication skills and overall ability of judicial officers as well as the time pressure they are under</li> <li>• Attitude and approach of court staff, lawyers, community corrections, police</li> </ul>
<p>Why is it important that the NJC Magistrate ensures people understand court proceedings?</p> <p>Think about the principles of justice (fairness, equality and access).</p>	<p>Clear communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• So that clients understand the progress and outcome of their cases and what the next step is</li> <li>• To ensure clients understand the consequences of their behaviour, hopefully reducing recidivism and increasing accountability</li> </ul> <p>Agency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To promote a sense of agency for a client surrounding their case. When a client understands what is being asked of them, they are able to take ownership of their situation, otherwise they may feel that decisions are being made for them without consultation</li> <li>• To remind the client that they have a voice</li> </ul> <p>Fairness and Access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To make the court less intimidating</li> <li>• To encourage a more therapeutic approach to justice</li> </ul> <p>Equality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To promote equality</li> <li>• All clients coming before the court have a right to equal treatment, this means ensuring that all clients understand what is taking place in court</li> </ul>
<b>NJC courtroom design</b>	
<p>What is different about the design/use of the NJC courtroom compared to other Magistrates' Courts?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Magistrates' bench is lower than in most courts</li> <li>• The accused sits at the bar table, to the right of their legal representative and the police prosecutor. This enables the accused to be front and centre in their own hearing (though the dock is still used if the client is in custody)</li> <li>• The court engages people to participate as fully as possible in their hearing and, in many cases, refers people to treatment for the conditions that contribute to their offending behaviour</li> <li>• Many mainstream courtrooms typically have no natural light at all, but the NJC courtroom has windows looking out over the streets and the neighbourhood</li> <li>• Nearly every court in Australia is entered through solid timber doors, which can be unnerving for people visiting courts, but the doors to the court at the NJC are ceiling-to-floor glass</li> </ul>

Topics for discussion	Possible responses
Why has the courtroom been designed in this way? (especially useful if students have already visited a regular Magistrates' Court)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A less intimidating courtroom atmosphere promotes the idea that authorities are working with clients rather than just issuing directives</li> <li>• The windows in the NJC courtroom, which look out over nearby schools and the Collingwood community, promote the idea that the activities of the court are part of everyday life</li> <li>• The windows also remind court users and the Magistrate of the community in which they live and work</li> <li>• The glass doors allow clients and legal representatives to see the courtroom – and who is present – before they enter, reducing anxiety for many clients and promoting transparency</li> </ul>
<b>Use of Audio Visual Link (AVL) in the courtroom</b>	
<p>What legislative changes were introduced in Victoria in 2016 with regard to accused people in custody who need to attend court?</p> <p>You may need to do some desktop research</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Legislative changes in 2016 provided that all accused will appear before the court by way of Audio Visual Link (AVL), pursuant to the Evidence (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1958 unless an order is made under s42L(1) or if an accused person is required to appear physically before the court': <a href="https://www.mcv.vic.gov.au/news-and-resources/publications/avl-information-legal-practitioners">https://www.mcv.vic.gov.au/news-and-resources/publications/avl-information-legal-practitioners</a></li> <li>• In other words, accused people will only appear physically in court if an order has been made for them to do so</li> <li>• Many more clients will attend court virtually, through a video link</li> </ul>
What are the advantages and disadvantages of Audio Visual Link (AVL) for court users as compared to being physically present in court?	<p>Advantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Savings on the costs (and police resources) of bringing people to the court from custody</li> <li>• Saves victims the emotional difficulty of having to see the other person face to face, which is especially important in family violence cases</li> <li>• Convenient for the client, as they do not need to leave custody to attend court</li> <li>• In certain cases AVL enhances the safety of other court users, as the client is not present in the courtroom</li> </ul> <p>Disadvantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sometimes poor connection and audio quality from custody makes communication difficult</li> <li>• Can be difficult for the judicial officer to establish rapport with the client</li> </ul>



The Neighbourhood Justice Centre Courtroom



Topics for discussion	Possible responses
What is post-sentence judicial monitoring and how does it work at the NJC?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditionally, a Magistrate's interactions with an offender will end once the Magistrate has sentenced the client</li> <li>• With post-sentence judicial monitoring, however, the Magistrate holds a series of meetings with clients sentenced to Community Correction Orders (CCOs), to check their progress</li> <li>• The client, the client's designated corrections officer, the Magistrate and sometimes the client's friends or family members attend these meetings</li> <li>• The Magistrate and corrections officer will acknowledge the positive steps the client has taken towards their own rehabilitation and encourage them to address the underlying causes of offending by engaging with treatment</li> <li>• They will discuss compliance with the CCO if necessary and remind the client of the potential consequences of a CCO breach</li> <li>• Judicial monitoring meetings also happen in the NJC courtroom, although these meetings are closed to the public</li> </ul>
What are some benefits of post-sentence judicial monitoring?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post-sentence judicial monitoring helps to develop relationships between the Magistrate, client, corrections officers and other support staff</li> <li>• It promotes accountability</li> <li>• Focusing purely on compliance has an unhelpful punitive effect, but encouragement to address the underlying causes of offending is more effective</li> </ul> <p>Statistics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An Australian Institute of Criminology review found that NJC offenders are three times less likely to breach CCOs than other Victorian offenders</li> <li>• Post-sentence judicial monitoring supports compliance with CCOs</li> </ul>

## Section 7: Protective areas (NJC's quiet rooms)

VCE Unit 1: The role of individuals, laws and the legal system in achieving social cohesion and protecting the rights of individuals

VCE Unit 1 & Unit 3: Principles of justice: fairness, equality and access



Timestamp: 0:07:32

Topics for discussion	Possible responses
Why might a woman want to access one of the NJC's quiet rooms on a day when she is attending court to take out a family violence intervention order?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• She might fear for her safety as the respondent (person accused of the violence) must attend court at the same time as the victim</li> </ul>
Why is there a children's room attached to the quiet room?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides a safe and child-friendly space for people who have come to the Centre with children and need to talk to a counsellor, registrar or lawyer about a family violence situation</li> <li>• The children's room means the children can remain visible to their parent but possibly out of earshot, if a traumatic family situation is being discussed</li> </ul>

Topics for discussion	Possible responses
Why has the NJC created quiet rooms?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To give people experiencing family violence, especially women, the confidence to use the justice system</li> <li>To respond effectively to family violence and to support women</li> <li>To be more sensitive to the needs of court users</li> </ul>



Quiet room at the Neighbourhood Justice Centre

## Sections 8 and 9: The Client Services model

### VCE Unit 2

- Factors considered by judges in sentencing
- Alternative approaches to sentencing such as the use of the Drug Court, the Koori Courts and diversion programs

### VCE Unit 3: The role of institutions available to assist an accused, including Victoria Legal Aid and Victorian community legal centres



[Timestamp: 0:08:07](#)

Topics for discussion	Possible responses
What is meant by 'Client Services' at the NJC? What are the benefits of the open-plan office design?	<p>Staff from multiple areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff from around 20 different local community agencies (including refugee support services, housing services and family violence support) work on the top floor at NJC, as a united team called 'Client Services'</li> <li>NJC clients often have complex, interrelated problems (for example, they have mental health problems that are hard to treat when they don't have secure housing) and they may need assistance from more than one type of service to help them stop reoffending</li> </ul> <p>Benefits of open-plan office</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bringing all the services together under one roof benefits the whole community, including court users and Client Services staff</li> <li>Local services can work together much more efficiently on behalf of clients when they are close by, exchanging information quickly, making on-the-spot referrals and learning and exchanging skills with each other</li> <li>There are private meeting rooms in the building that are easily accessible for exchanging sensitive information</li> <li>Client Services workers can work more collaboratively with lawyers, police prosecutors and corrections officers when they are close by too</li> </ul>

## Section 10: Community engagement and crime prevention: an innovative approach

### VCE Unit 3

- Factors that affect the ability of the criminal justice system to achieve the principles of justice including in relation to costs, time and cultural differences
- Reforms to the Justice System



Timestamp: 0:08:47

Topics for discussion	Possible responses
<b>Crime Prevention</b>	
What is the difference between 'mainstream' crime prevention and crime prevention under a community justice model?	<p><b>Mainstream Justice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional approaches to preventing crime often emphasise surveillance, tightening security (locks, gates etc), deterrence through severe sentences and jail time</li> </ul> <p><b>Community Justice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community justice aims to empower and equip the community to participate in and to co-design solutions to local crime &amp; safety issues</li> <li>• Community justice is about the justice system consulting and working with local people and groups, and building relationships and understanding within the community (e.g. between retailers and homeless people or between young people and local police)</li> </ul>
What are some practical examples of a community development approach to crime prevention?	<p><b>Smith Street Dreaming Festival</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One of the major streets and thoroughfares in Collingwood, Smith Street, has seen significant tension between police, retailers and local Aboriginal people for a number of years</li> <li>• In response to this, the NJC helped to establish a working group of Aboriginal elders, local businesses and police, called the Smith Street Working Group, to build better relationships between the groups and work through any issues/conflict</li> <li>• The Smith Street Working Group worked together to organise a music festival called Smith Street Dreaming, showcasing Aboriginal artists and boosting trade for businesses on the street</li> <li>• The festival was a celebration of all members of the City of Yarra, and actively promoted diversity and inclusion</li> <li>• Police have reported a drastic reduction in call-outs from retailers since the establishment of this program</li> </ul> <p><b>Collingwood Allstars Soccer Program (CASP)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For a number of years, the NJC has helped to facilitate a soccer program in Collingwood, designed as a way to connect with local children and families</li> <li>• The program was initiated by Victoria Police, and is a way for police and NJC staff to connect with local community members, many of whom are from disadvantaged and culturally diverse backgrounds</li> <li>• NJC staff regularly volunteer at the program, and have developed relationships with local community members; this helps to build trust and confidence in the justice system</li> <li>• The program is not only a fun and healthy way to connect, but it also helps NJC staff to understand underlying issues faced by local community members, if they ever come into contact with the justice system</li> </ul>

Topics for discussion	Possible responses
<p>How can we measure whether crime prevention works to reduce crime?</p> <p>In other words, does crime prevention work? And how do we know this?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing crime and preventing crime are not only about responses after crimes have been committed, but also about understanding what the underlying causes of crime are, and taking preventative measures</li> <li>• An important aspect of crime prevention is also community engagement</li> <li>• Engaging with the community and investing in the wellbeing of the people within a community may prevent crime from occurring in the first place, by building social capital and improving people’s outcomes</li> <li>• There are a number of ways that we can measure the effectiveness of crime prevention. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measuring the crime rate before and after crime prevention and community engagement measures are put in place, and comparing the crime rate</li> <li>• Crime prevention is not just about stopping crime, but about building trust within the community so that people feel safe and are able to live and work without fear of crime taking place</li> <li>• Measuring the number of people using local shops and businesses before and after the crime prevention measures can be another indicator; it is likely that the safer people feel, the more likely they will be to use local facilities</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Innovation</b>	
<p>What kinds of innovation does the NJC develop in efforts to reduce crime and improve the ways local people interact with the justice system?</p>	<p>Digital innovations</p> <p>Family Violence Intervention Order Application (FVIO)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The NJC developed and launched Australia’s first online Family Violence Intervention Order application</li> <li>• The previous FVIO application was paper-based, 12 pages long, used complex legal terminology and was inconvenient and time-consuming to complete</li> <li>• The online application uses plain English, is user-friendly and easy to navigate, making the process of applying for an intervention order much simpler and less stressful for individuals</li> <li>• The online application also saves court time, as registry staff do not assist individuals as much with filling out an application form, and spend less time manually entering client information into their online database</li> </ul> <p>E-Recovery App</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The NJC is trialling an app called eRecovery to help clients with alcohol and drug dependencies cope with cravings, avoid risky situations and stay focused on beating addiction</li> <li>• The app seeks to reduce clients’ reoffending by helping and empowering them to manage their substance use, and providing support mechanisms when needed</li> <li>• Some specific features of the app include: appointment and medication reminders, ability to chat with other clients also managing substance use, surveys to track progress, and helplines for when a client feels at risk of relapsing into substance use</li> <li>• The app also assists Client Services staff to track the progress of their clients, which helps to inform treatment plans</li> </ul>

## Section 11: Security with a smile

VCE Unit 1 & Unit 3: Principles of justice: fairness, equality and access



Timestamp: 0:09:15

Topics for discussion	Possible responses
How does security at NJC differ from that in mainstream courts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The NJC's dynamic security model supports a building that is designed for multiple purposes</li><li>• The NJC does not have 'airport'-style security screening at the entrance, as most other courts do, because it is a community justice centre as well as a court and heavy security can be confronting for some visitors</li><li>• The NJC's dynamic security model emphasises the importance of respectful relationships between security staff and clients to maintain safety.</li><li>• There is always one member of the security team on patrol, including walking outside the building, and always one guard stationed on the court floor. Security do not solely rely on physical and technical security measures, but also on personal contact and a general awareness and knowledge of what is going on in the building</li><li>• Architectural features of the building, including the use of glass and natural light assist with surveillance by providing transparency, maintaining lines of sight, and helping people to feel more relaxed</li></ul>

## Further questions and discussion points

<p>Isn't it just being 'soft on crime' if you help criminals with their problems? Why should we care about their problems? They have broken the law and caused harm</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It's not about being 'soft on crime' but effective</li> <li>• The NJC approach works - see evaluations below</li> <li>• Clients at the NJC do not just receive assistance in addressing their underlying issues as their penalty for committing a crime. The Magistrate at the NJC must apply the same sentencing legislation as any other Magistrate in Victoria, and this includes prison sentences.</li> <li>• Some clients have said it is harder to go into drug rehabilitation and change their behaviour than it is to go to prison</li> <li>• An 'us and them' mentality does not allow a holistic view of people in our society</li> <li>• 'Tough on crime', usually means putting people in prison, but for lower level crimes (which is what community justice is aimed at) it's common for people get out of prison and reoffend</li> <li>• High recidivism rates mean jail does not always stop people committing crime again after release from prison (and therefore does not reduce crime in long term)</li> <li>• Statistics show that people who go through the NJC court are 22% less likely to reoffend than in any other Magistrates Court</li> <li>• Less crime means less victims and a safer society</li> </ul>
<p>Does community justice achieve its objectives?</p>	<p>Independent evaluations of the NJC show:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The local crime rate has reduced</li> <li>• Recidivism is lower at the NJC than the state average</li> <li>• NJC has the lowest breach rate for Community Correction Orders in Victoria (2017)</li> <li>• The NJC model is more cost effective than mainstream court models across several measures</li> <li>• The NJC is particularly effective with reducing recidivism among medium to high-risk offenders</li> </ul> <p>Independent evaluation of Red Hook Community Justice Center in the US (a similar model to the NJC) shows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced custodial sentencing, recidivism and arrests</li> <li>• Improved perceptions within the community of procedural justice</li> <li>• Savings outweighed costs 2:1</li> </ul>
<p>If the NJC is so successful, why is there only one community justice centre in Australia?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community justice is a relatively new idea</li> <li>• The mainstream justice system is hundreds of years old (inherited from Britain) and it takes a while for new, progressive ideas to gain traction</li> <li>• Some of the NJC's practices and innovations are now used in mainstream courts</li> <li>• There are efforts to try and set up other neighbourhood justice centres around Australia, but it will require the right combination of timing and political will to make this happen</li> </ul>

Artwork by Vexta and Ella (EllaStreetArt)

### Neighbourhood Justice Centre

241 Wellington Street Collingwood VIC 3066  
 PO Box 1142 Collingwood VIC 3066  
[www.neighbourhoodjustice.vic.gov.au](http://www.neighbourhoodjustice.vic.gov.au)  
 03 9978 8777 | [njc@courts.vic.gov.au](mailto:njc@courts.vic.gov.au)