

Crime Prevention and Community Justice at the Neighbourhood Justice Centre.

**Mapping the 'Lived Experience' of the Crime Prevention
and Community Justice Team in Yarra**

NEIGHBOURHOOD
JUSTICE CENTRE

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We would like to 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 both Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people either in Victoria or in other parts of Australia unless otherwise stated e.g. Clan name/s or generic name i.e. Koori (VIC, NSW), Murri (QLD), Palawa (TAS), Nunga(SA), Noongar (WA), Torres Strait Islander

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.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

'Crime Prevention and Community Justice at the Neighbourhood Justice Centre' is an innovative guide for courts, criminal justice agencies, and community organisations about what it means to undertake crime prevention and community justice work in Yarra. It has been written collaboratively with the Crime Prevention and Community Justice Team at the Neighbourhood Justice Centre (NJC) and has been informed by feedback and reflections from their stakeholders and partners.

This guide is not a formal evaluation report or a strategic document, but rather an attempt to document the 'lived experience' of the Crime Prevention and Community Justice Team. It outlines the vision, goals and principles of their work from their perspectives, and the perspectives of the stakeholders that work alongside them. Further, it explores the challenges and successes of doing crime prevention and community justice work in Yarra, and documents key learnings that can be used as a resource for others.

Crime prevention and community justice initiatives have been delivered by the NJC since its establishment in 2007. From 2007 to 2011/12 crime prevention initiatives were delivered under the banner of the Local Solutions Program funded by Victoria Police and located at the NJC. From 2012, crime prevention work continued to be delivered by the Crime Prevention Team, but a new approach to dealing with crime and safety in Yarra was starting to take shape – community justice. As this guide outlines, this new approach has the Yarra community at the centre of its work, and extends the role of the justice system to enhance community resilience, connection and

capacity so that communities can tackle the causes and impact of crime for themselves. The goal of community justice work at the NJC is to support and build the capacity of communities to ensure a safe, healthy and vibrant Yarra.

Specific case studies have been used to highlight how theory is applied on the ground, the complexities and challenges of this work and the benefits for the Yarra community. They demonstrate NJC's commitment to working in collaboration with stakeholders to deliver justice locally in ways that are participatory, responsive and innovative. These case studies highlight there is 'no one size fits all' approach to doing community justice work, rather it's about working with local communities on the ground to identify and tackle crime and disadvantage, repair the damage from crime, and to support communities to generate collective solutions.

Key external stakeholders and partners provide their feedback and reflections on the community justice work undertaken in Yarra in the last section of this guide. As this highlights, these reflections emphasise the role the Crime Prevention and Community Justice Team plays across Yarra in bringing organisations, agencies and the community together to develop a collective vision and common agenda for change. This strong coordination and leadership is crucial to ensuring the collective sharing of ideas and commitment to aligning efforts toward new ways of tackling crime. This is a new approach for the NJC, and one that is maturing over time to ensure it effectively meets the identified needs and challenges of the of the Yarra community.

CRIME PREVENTION AND COMMUNITY JUSTICE: UNPACKING THE THEORY

Crime Prevention

Crime prevention is defined by the United Nations Handbook on Crime Prevention as “strategies and measures that seek to reduce the risk of crimes occurring, and their potential harmful effects on individuals and society, including fear of crime, by intervening to influence their multiple causes”¹. This concept of prevention is grounded in the notion that crime is driven by causal or underlying factors. Understanding the factors that are associated with different types of crime, then developing strategies to change those factors, can lead to the prevention or reduction in the incidence of those crimes.

Traditionally, the delivery of crime prevention initiatives was seen as the solely the province of the police and justice system. However, over the past twenty years there has been an increasing shift away from this view toward an understanding that prevention of crime is a collective responsibility. Research has shown that it is more effective, cost-efficient and beneficial, to take a collective and proactive approach to preventing crime that involves all levels of government, community agencies and services, as well as the police and justice system². Modern approaches to crime prevention now argue that action should focus on local communities in partnership with government sectors and civil society. Further, it should be sustained and accountable, rather than short term; and

based on sound evidence based practice³.

There are a variety of different approaches to crime prevention that differ in terms of the focus of the intervention, the types of activities that are delivered, the theory behind how those activities are designed to bring about the desired results and the mechanisms that are applied. The major fields of crime prevention include: environmental, developmental, situational, and community-based crime prevention. These different responses traditionally target either environments, people or situations to reduce the likelihood that crime will occur.

Environmental Crime Prevention

The environmental approach seeks to change the specific characteristics of the environment that may cause crime to occur. This includes both situational approaches to crime prevention and broader planning initiatives. Both aim to reduce crime by designing and/or modifying the physical environment to reduce the opportunities for crime to occur.

Situational crime prevention is based upon the premise that crime is often opportunistic and this approach uses a range of measures that target specific forms of crime in certain circumstances⁴. Examples of situational crime prevention initiatives include: residential security kits, business security kits, CCTV, car immobilisers, and Neighbourhood Watch Campaigns.

¹ International Centre for the Prevention of Crime, Handbook on the Crime Prevention Guidelines, Making them work, UNODC, New York, 2010, pg. 9.

²Ibid, 2010

³ Ibid. 2010.

⁴ Morgan, A., Boxall, H., Lindeman, K & Anderson, J., 'Effective crime prevention interventions for implementation by local government', Australian Institute of Criminology Research and Public Policy Series 210, 2010.

Broader planning initiatives such as CPTED (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design) and urban renewal projects seek to reduce the opportunities for crime through the design and management of the built and landscaped environment. As Morgan et al argue, CPTED has had a major influence on crime prevention policy and practice in Australia, and a number of state, territory and local governments now incorporate CPTED principles and guidelines in their planning policies and processes⁵.

Modern approaches to crime prevention also include urban design, where the built environment including buildings, streets, public spaces and neighbourhoods are specifically designed to improve liveability. Research shows that poorly designed and managed built environments create opportunities for crime and make people feel unsafe⁶. New urban design projects incorporate design principles such as visibility, sightlines, and natural surveillance, community ownership and mixed-use to encourage interaction, activity and access which reduce risk of crime.

Social Crime Prevention

Social crime prevention focuses on trying to influence the underlying social and economic causes of crime as well as offender motivation, rather than on the physical environment. This may include initiatives that seek to enhance the health, wellbeing and resilience of individuals to those that focus on improving community cohesion and connection⁷.

⁵ Ibid, 2010

⁶ Ibid. 2010.

⁷ Cherney, A., & Sutton, 'A Crime prevention in Australia: Beyond 'what works'?' The Australian and New Zealand, Journal of Criminology 40(1), 2007, pg.65-81

Developmental crime prevention focuses on intervening early at critical transition points in a person's development to build resilience, and enhance health outcomes to mitigate against the risk of offending. These transition points include birth, preschool years, primary to high school, and from high school to further education or the workforce.

Early intervention aims to address risk factors and enhance protective factors that impact upon the likelihood that a person will engage in offending behaviour. Examples of developmental crime prevention approaches include: enhanced maternal and child health services; primary to secondary school transition programs and leadership programs targeting at risk young people.

Community development approaches to crime prevention are premised on the belief that changing the physical or social organisation of communities may influence the behaviour of individuals who live there. This is based on the belief that the risk of becoming involved in crime or a victim of crime is increased in communities that experience high levels of social exclusion and/or cohesion. Community development strategies aim to build social cohesion and address factors leading to community disorganisation by empowering communities to participate in community decision making, increase resources and services, and provide opportunities for those that are disadvantaged⁸.

Crime prevention initiatives have been delivered by a number of staff at NJC in partnership with the local Yarra

⁸ Bennett, T., 'Crime prevention', in Tonry M (ed), The handbook of crime and punishment. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.pg. 369-402

community to respond to crime and local safety issues. These initiatives tended to be framed by principles of community engagement and community strengthening, and focused predominately on the reduction of crime in local areas, and improving perceptions of safety. Attachment 2 outlines the crime prevention activities that were delivered by the Local Solutions Program from 2007 to 2011/12.

From 2012, many of the crime prevention initiatives delivered by the LSP continued to be implemented by the Crime Prevention Team in partnership with Victoria Police and local agencies. The team used the guiding principles of crime prevention to identify local crime issues, develop strategies to reduce anti-social behaviours and reduce crime, and build a strong community. In turn, a strong community means a reduction in victimization, an increase in community safety and stability, opportunities for sustainable development, and good law and order. There is also the long-term benefit of a reduction in the associated cost of formal criminal sanctions and other social costs of crime⁹.

Community Justice

“Community justice is not achieved simply by a just response to particular criminal incidents. The shift from traditional to community justice requires a change in purpose from a narrowly conceived agenda of crime control to a broadly determined mission of enhancing the quality of community”¹⁰.

In 2010, Clear et al stated that “community justice was a new idea” for criminal justice, being barely a decade old. Community justice they argue had already begun to have serious

application in some traditional criminal justice functions – across police, courts and corrections. It offered a new foundation for innovative practices that had the potential to transform the current criminal justice system. Although arguably there are a range of community justice approaches, as Karp highlights “community justice broadly refers to all variants of crime prevention and justice activities that explicitly include the community in their processes and set the enhancement of community quality of life as a goal”¹¹.

Key Components of the Community Justice Model:

- Community focused
- Emphasis on places not cases
- Targets ‘high impact’ locations
- Proactive not reactive
- Problem solving not blaming
- Decentralisation not hierarchy
- Fluid organisational boundaries not fragmented organisational accountability
- Restoring order and strengthening community cohesion

According to Clear et al, there are three essential components of community justice:

- *Place* – actions that take place in a designated location, neighbourhood, or place where people live and share a life together
- *Adding value* – that public safety and crime reduction is not just a matter of strategic subtraction i.e. the criminal sanctioning of offenders, but a matter of improving the area or place to ensure that communities are safe and better places to live
- *Public safety* – that community justice has a broad view of public

⁹ Hieng Lim, Community Justice Series, October 2014.

¹⁰ D.R, Karp, ‘Community Justice: Six Challenges’, 27 (6) Journal of Community Psychology. 1999. 751, 752 pg. 323.

¹¹ Ibid, 1999, pg.324.

safety and order rather than traditional concepts that equate public safety with rates of crime. Instead, community justice initiatives are focused on enhancing community life¹².

For Clear et al, 'high impact' areas are the logical targets for community justice initiatives. Firstly, they argue that traditional methods of criminal justice in high impact locations have proven inadequate. Secondly, there is a significant and cumulative impact in these areas of community members being arrested, incarcerated and returned to the community. This they argue, compounds issues of significant disadvantage and weakens community capacity and resilience with traditional criminal justice approaches to crime becoming "little more than a debilitating revolving door"¹³. Lastly, targeting high impact areas makes sense, in that this is where the problems are and this is where there is most to gain. For Clear et al, community justice includes the following priorities:

- *Focuses on high impact locations* – areas or places where crime, criminal justice activity and social disadvantage are high
- *Strengthening the capacity of informal systems of social control* – for example individuals, families, community groups to build community capacity and to strengthen the foundation for public safety
- *Develop partnerships* with residents, businesses, community agencies and others to strengthen community capacity and coordinate collectively the

way crime and safety issues are addressed¹⁴.

Building on this, Karp also argues that there are a number of core process components that can guide community justice workers in the design and development of community justice initiatives. They are described as:

- *System accessibility* – ensuring that the locations of community justice agencies are accessible, that service delivery is flexible and responsive to identified needs and conditions, and that services and relationships are respectful, sensitive and emphasise consensus and conflict resolution.

"Making the system accessible to the public is a precondition for initiating reparative and reintegrative justice processes. It sets the parameters for deliberation based on local priorities, egalitarian principles, and responsiveness rather than rule bound coercion or single interest usurpation"¹⁵.

- *Community involvement* – includes processes for ensuring active recruitment and participation of offenders, victims and community members which is not coercive, but rather encourages meaningful participation. It recognises that there are power differentials between community justice agencies and community members, and that processes of participation and decision making need to be democratic and inclusive.
- *Reparative process* – which is grounded in the problem-solving model, where rather than focus

¹² Clear.T., Hamilton.J., & Cadora.E., Community Justice, Routledge, London 2010.

¹³ Ibid. 2010, pg.2

¹⁴ Ibid, 2010.

¹⁵ D.R, Karp, 'Community Justice: Six Challenges', 27 (6) Journal of Community Psychology. 1999. 751, 752 pg. 341

on the precedence and procedure of justice, the focus is on understanding the underlying causes of crime and the problems caused by crime. The term 'reparation' Karp argues is traditionally used in relation to the sanctioning process, but in a community justice approach the focus is on collectively rectifying specific community problems that cause crime.

- *Reintegrative processes* – which involves both the restoration of victims and communities, and the social integration of community members experiencing disadvantage. For Karp, this involves identifying standards of behaviour, social norms or community values, and developing consensus and agreement across all stakeholders in the community that these are important to uphold. The focus is then on problem behaviours, rather than types of people who are often targets of social control or order mechanisms.

"Together, these processes should foster a set of important community justice outcomes—the operationalized meaning of community justice as a collective experience"¹⁶.

As the next section highlights, these priorities and principles are embedded in all aspects of the work of the Neighbourhood Justice Centre (NJC), but this has not been without its challenges. As Walker argues:

"Community justice is capacious, fluid and egalitarian in its work, joining law with community. It is able to adopt, adapt and reveal in agile problem solving that invites partnership and leadership in the community, of the community. It

is both the boundary rider and the whip-ugly stock hand inside the corral"¹⁷

Community justice work at the NJC provides a different way of doing crime prevention. Unlike traditional crime prevention approaches, it does not have reducing crime as its sole objective, rather it focuses on strengthening communities in order to prevent crime from occurring in the first place, and on improving community life. The NJC as Australia's first 'community court' seeks to "bring together treatment and support services, a court, education, community engagement and crime prevention, which means it sits differently, and is in a different milieu"¹⁸.

As case studies in this guide highlight, the NJC understands that crime does not occur in isolation to disadvantage and this means that community justice approaches need to be flexible and operate both inside and outside the courtroom. This is new territory for the NJC, as this type of work has not been undertaken before by traditional mainstream courts in Australia. In this respect, community justice for the NJC is a continually evolving process of action, reflection and learning.

"It seeks to theorise through practice, in other words, develop a principled practice that is able to respond to lessons learned and to evolve into a better and more robust practice through that process"¹⁹.

¹⁶ Ibid, 1999. pg.346.

¹⁷ Walker.K., Community Justice in theory and in practice: a prelude. Unpublished Essay 2013 pg.6

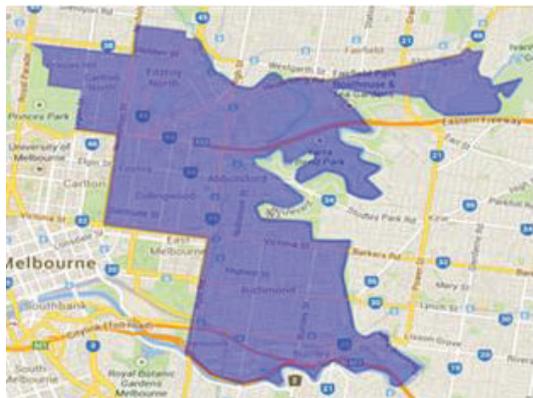
¹⁸ Walker, K., Discussion re Community Justice. 14 December 2015.

¹⁹ Neighbourhood Justice Centre. Reflections on Practice: The First Six Years, May 2012.pg. 1.

DOING JUSTICE LOCALLY

Yarra – A City of Many Peoples and Cultures

The City of Yarra is an inner metropolitan municipality, located in the north-east of Melbourne. It is home to an estimated population of around 86,500 residents and this is expected to grow to around 110,500 by 2031. The municipality is 19.5 square kilometers and includes the suburbs of Abbotsford, Burnley, Clifton Hill, Collingwood, Cremorne, Fitzroy, North Carlton, North Fitzroy, Princes Hill, Richmond, and parts of Alphington and Fairfield²⁰.



Prior to the colonisation of Melbourne, Yarra held significant and cultural importance to the Wurundjeri people, and this connection still exists today. The Wurundjeri originally inhabited the area known as Fitzroy, Richmond and Collingwood and still hold spiritual connection to places within Yarra's municipal boundaries, like the Yarra River, and the confluence of the Yarra and Merri Creek. Since the early 1900s, Victoria's Aboriginal community has flocked to Yarra, in particular to Gertrude Street in Fitzroy, to find that sense of community and connection. The 2011 Census indicated there were over 300 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Yarra. However,

²⁰ Yarra City Council, Annual Report 2014-15.pg.10.

many more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people come into Yarra to visit family, attend cultural activities and events, and to access services.

Yarra has areas of affluence, but also has significant pockets of disadvantage. As highlighted by the 2006 SEIFA Index, the City of Yarra scored 1019.5 on the 2006 SEIFA index, indicating a level of advantage higher than the national average of 1005.2. However, suburbs such as Collingwood, North Richmond and Fitzroy, which have some of the largest public housing estates in Victoria, have SEIFA Indexes between 894 and 955, which indicate high levels of social disadvantage.

Yarra has one of the highest crime rates of any Victorian Local Government Area (LGA) other than the City of Melbourne. In 2007/08, when NJC was first established in Yarra, the aggregate crime rate was around 18,000 per 100,000 population in comparison to the state as a whole which had just over 7,000 per 100,000 population. Property crime in Yarra at this time was around 14,500 per 100,000 as compared to 5,400 for the state as a whole, and three and half times the rate of drug related crime (980 versus 270 per 100,000). Yarra was at the time defined as a 'high-crime location', and NJC was established to provide new ways of tackling and reducing crime in the community with a particular focus on burglary and motor theft²¹.

As Ross has recently identified, since the establishment of the NJC total crime has fallen in Yarra by thirty-one percent, largely as a result of a decline in property crime. Although crime rates have generally fallen in Victoria over

²¹ Ross, S., 'Evaluating neighbourhood justice: Measuring and attributing outcomes for a community justice program', Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice, No: 499, Australian Institute of Criminology, 2015.

this time “the decline in Yarra is greater than observed in comparable inner urban LGA’s (Melbourne, Darebin, Port Phillip, Maribyrnong and Stonnington) or LGA’s with higher levels of social disadvantage (Dandenong and Frankston)”²². Although as Ross highlights, it is difficult to directly or solely attribute this decline to the impact of the NJC because of a lack of evaluation data, the change in crime rates “are what would be desired from an effective community court in Yarra”²³.



(Collingwood Public Housing Estate, 2014)

However despite the decline in crime rates over the past ten years, there is an acute awareness within NJC that in order for community justice initiatives to be effective, there needs to be a long term commitment to engaging with community to address the underlying causes of crime. Some of Yarra’s communities experience entrenched and complex social, cultural and economic issues and there is a collective understanding and recognition that these communities require consistent, long-term care and support. The increasing polarisation in Yarra of its rich and poor also has the potential to compound these vulnerabilities. At the heart of the NJC is the endeavour to work alongside agencies and communities to reduce the impact of

²² Ibid, 2015. pg.3.

²³ Ibid, 2015. pg. 4.

social disadvantage, and to influence positive social change.

The Neighbourhood Justice Centre

“On one hand it is a court, on the other hand it is a community centre. I think it can be a real challenge to explain the NJC because it is so unusual in the sense of having so many services located in the one place. And also in terms of having a community engagement focus. This is unusual for a traditional court”. Magistrate David Fanning, Magistrate, NJC²⁴

The Neighbourhood Justice Centre (NJC), based in the City of Yarra opened in 2007 as an innovative three year pilot project of the Victorian Department of Justice as part of the State Government’s *A Fairer Victoria* policy. Nearly nine years on, it remains the first and only community court in Australia. NJC was designed to be a departure from a traditional court and is based on a ‘community justice’ or ‘neighbourhood justice’ model established to provide new and innovative ways of dealing with “crime and other forms of social disorder, disadvantaged and conflict in the City of Yarra”²⁵.



(Neighbourhood Justice Centre)

The NJC incorporates a multi-jurisdictional court, which implements therapeutic and restorative approaches to the administration of justice. Strong

²⁴ Magistrate David Fanning, NJC. Interview May 2011.

²⁵ Ross, S., Halsey, M., Bamford, D., Cameron, N., and King, A., ‘Evaluation of the Neighbourhood Justice Centre, City of Yarra, Final Report’, December 2009. pg. 4.

community involvement, engagement and partnerships are fundamental to the NJC’s approach.

Mission and principles

The mission of the NJC was developed in 2010, and this mission still guides its work and reflects its level of responsibility in 2015:

“Doing justice locally; strengthening the City of Yarra communities”

The NJC has three strategic goals which are:

- *Goal 1:* Prevent and reduce criminal and other harmful behaviour in the Yarra Community
- *Goal 2:* Increase confidence in and access to the justice system in the City of Yarra
- *Goal 3:* Strengthen the Community Justice Model and facilitate the transfer of its practices to other courts and communities²⁶.

The practice of the NJC is “a story of merging theory and practice”²⁷. In 2012, the core practices of the NJC were described by staff, agency partners and clients in terms of process, relationship and outcome principles. The critical elements of how NJC works or its practice principles were distilled into the following broad approaches:

- *Integration* is central to the NJC practice and is incorporated into all aspects of the centre from the building’s design and the co-location of staff through to practices around court phases,

and case management and support.

- *Local Focus:* NJC’s client catchment area and focus is the City of Yarra and this enables the centre to identify and understand the needs of the local community. This has been important to NJC’s identity and its value within and for the local community.
- *Deliberation* – characterised by its ability to move from an adversarial model of justice to a community justice model framed by collaborative problem solving.
- *Adaptation* – ability to adapt and change to different ways of working and to learn from those experiences.



Relationship principles were identified as multifaceted and not easily replicated or transferred because of its local experience. These included:

- *Two-way learning* - respecting and learning from different knowledge that people hold and capturing learnings to inform practice.
- *Respect* – value of ongoing and mutual respect in all relationships.
- *Empowering* – staged principles that enable people to change their behaviour, and consolidate changes to improve community life.
- *Expanding or deepening relationships* – creating a more robust court and organisation

²⁶ Ibid, 2009.

²⁷ Neighbourhood Justice Centre. Reflections on Practice: The First Six Years, May 2012.pg. 11.

through internal relationship strengthening.

Lastly, outcome principles defined what the NJC hoped to achieve and these were articulated as the four broad goals of:

- *Prevention* – a core outcome principle of the NJC is to prevent crime, and to work with the community to improve the social, economic, physical and civic conditions in the community.
- *Restorative justice* – aimed at healing and includes notions of stewardship, restitution, transformation and accountability.
- *Simplification* – to simplify the justice system for offenders, victims and the wider community.
- *Serves Justice* – where people feel offences are appropriately dealt with, victims of crime are supported, and that the wider community has confidence in the system²⁸.

Key Elements of the NJC's Model of Community Justice:

- Places, not cases
- Strong communities provide the foundations for community safety
- Proactive not reactive
- The court – beyond traditional roles
- New organisational structures, rather than rigid hierarchies
- Involving citizens, not just agencies

Community engagement

Within the NJC model, community engagement underpins and is paramount to the centre's effectiveness. All of the NJC staff work with and in the community in some capacity to ensure they have an understanding of local

issues and can build connections between justice and the wider community. This provides "the basis for improved service delivery to NJC clients, more targeted and effective local crime prevention, and community development programs that contribute to justice system goals and outcomes"²⁹.

Community engagement is embedded and flows through all elements of the centre's operations from the location of the friendly Security Team at the front entrance, to community-focused court proceedings, to the delivery of integrated client-centred services, and the hosting of community events to encourage community participation and ownership of the centre.

"In the practice of the Neighbourhood Justice Centre in Collingwood, Victoria the objective of community engagement is twofold: To strengthen community efficacy to manage the effects of crime and to involve the community in crime prevention"³⁰.

Central to the idea of community engagement at the NJC is the development of partnerships with stakeholders across Yarra that include, but are not limited to: local council, State Government Departments, service providers, community agencies, schools, residents, local Aboriginal community members and local traders. The NJC's culture, model and organisational structure have all been designed to foster the flexibility, innovation and responsiveness necessary to enable effective community engagement across a range of domains – individual, family, community and municipal wide.

²⁸ Ibid, 2012.

²⁹ Neighbourhood Justice Centre, Strategic Framework 2010-2013. pg.1.

³⁰ Walker. K., 'Community Justice in theory and in practice: a prelude' Unpublished Essay, 2013.pg.13.

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE: DOING COMMUNITY JUSTICE

“My work as a Crime Prevention Program Manager at the NJC is about uniting communities, about relationships, about healthy, strong and holistic communities – more than and a little different to traditional crime prevention. Traditionally, crime prevention is associated more with hotspots, data analysis, responding to broken windows effect, using CPTED to deal with environmental design needs, high volume crimes such as thefts of and from properties. What we do at the NJC is crime prevention, and community justice is where we build, enable and facilitate relationships that bring about strong communities and strong solutions with and by communities. Relationship is central to our work. We know that if people have strong relationships, it does not matter what problems they face, their relationship will allow them to work together to come to a suitable solution for everyone. We also know that people might have ‘brilliant’ solutions to problems, but they cannot make it work if they don’t have the right relationship. I work on the basis that if we can get the relationship right (if I can trust you and you can trust me) then we can work out the solution to any problems together. That solution is based on the sum of us, our whole community and our journey together” Hieng Lim, Senior Project Manager, CPCJ Team. 2014³¹.

On October 2011, the Local Solutions Program ceased and funding for the LSP Manager position moved from Victoria Police to Department of Justice. Morgan Schultz the LSP Manager, remained in the role until June 2012. In mid-2012, the Senior Project Manager, Hieng Lim returned from a period away from NJC, and the focus of the team started to shift or “morph” from primarily delivering crime prevention and community engagement programs to initiatives that started to embrace the principles of community justice work.

The Crime Prevention Team from mid-2012 consisted of two staff – Hieng Lim, the Senior Project Manager and Maree Foelz, the Crime Prevention Project Officer, who was already based at the NJC and had been working alongside the LSP Managers. Both are highly skilled and bring to the NJC extensive skills and experience in policing, law, mediation, crime prevention, restorative justice, project management, conflict coaching and community justice.

The next three years marked a new period for the CP Team as community justice work started to be piloted across Yarra. Led by Hieng Lim, the team undertook a “stock taking” process, which entailed reviewing all of the current crime prevention and community engagement activities being delivered, identifying current crime and safety issues and mapping all of the stakeholders across the municipality as well as internal to the NJC. Once this knowledge had been gathered, some existing projects were finalised, others continued as ‘business as usual (BAU’s)’ and new areas of work were identified. This process enabled the team to consolidate their understanding and to start planning new projects with a community justice focus. Key champions and potential partners were also identified at this time, and there was a concentrated effort to build the new relationships necessary to ensure effective community justice orientated work.

“I talk about our role as working predominately around crime prevention, but not in a traditional sensein a broader sense in terms of working with people, facilitating connections, identifying where people have support they can provide. And we engage with the community and are involved working in partnerships across the housing estates. We use resources that are often at hand or experiences that we might have that others do not, to work in an integrated way to develop

³¹ Hieng Lim, Senior Project Manager, CPCJ Team, NJC. Speech at the Match Our Mates Event, 2015.

solutions” Maree Foelz, Crime Prevention Officer, CPCJ Team. 2015³².

The Crime Prevention and Community Justice Team’s Model

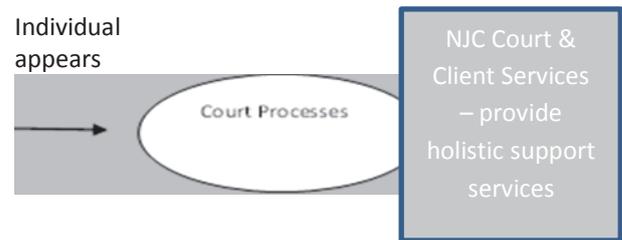
In mid-2015, the team changed its name from the ‘Crime Prevention’ Team to the ‘Crime Prevention and Community Justice’ Team to reflect this new shift in focus and way of working. A simple way of unpacking how the NJC’s Crime Prevention and Community Justice Team work on the ground is as follows:

1. Traditional Court Process: in the traditional court process at a magistrate’s court, a person (I) will proceed through the court processes, be given an order of a sort and will be asked to serve the order. This may have resulted from a myriad of entry points but let us begin with the scenario that the individual committed an offence, was arrested by police and will now proceed through the processes below:



2. NJC Court Process: at the NJC, the individual coming to court is monitored by the NJC Magistrate and the supporting client services to ensure the greatest efficacy in the outcome for the individual, for the serving of any order. This also enhances the prospect of the individual being assisted to get on with their lives, whether that is reintegration or rehabilitation into their community.

The following diagram outlines the NJC process:



Both of the above pathways return the individual back to his or her community.

The team’s work is guided by both traditional crime prevention approaches as well as community justice principles. The team understands that an individual following either of the paths illustrated above, will come from, and be returned to, their community after intersecting with the justice system. Some communities in Yarra live in areas or neighbourhoods where there is significant disadvantage when compared to other locations. These communities experience unemployment, failing schools, impoverished households which can lead to the creation of drug markets and other criminal enterprises.

At the same time, the existence of criminal activity in these areas makes them less desirable places for people to live and for businesses to flourish, with the result that disadvantage becomes even more ingrained in these areas. The people who try to live and work in these areas find it harder to build successful lives³³. It is therefore much more likely that in these areas or communities, individuals have a greater chance of re-offending and re-entering the justice system when they return to such a community, location and environment.

³² Maree Foelz, Crime Prevention Officer, CPCJ Team, NJC. Interview 15 October 2015.

³³ Clear, T., Hamilton, J., & Cadora, E., Community Justice, Routledge, London 2010.

The team understands this and work to:

1. Respond to criminal events and problems of public safety within these communities
2. Employ strategies that are directed to deal with criminal events and to address the informal social control deficits that make crime possible
3. Help improve the quality of life and the building of social capital in locations where community justice is needed.

Accordingly, key elements of the team's model of practice are outlined below:

Key Elements of the Crime Prevention and Community Justice Team's Model:

- Restore order
- Strengthen community cohesion
- Repair damage from crime
- Build partnerships that nurture a more beneficial community life
- Build bonding social capital to enable communities to act in defence of their interests and pursue other goals
- Build bridging social capital to close the gap between groups that are not alike
- Build an understanding and ownership of 'communitarianism'

As Clear et al highlight, as a strategy, community justice broadens the responsibility of traditional criminal justice agencies to make room for partnerships with various citizen groups and other service providers, so that a more comprehensive level of activity is sustained in high impact areas. This comes from an understanding that crime and disadvantage are mutually reinforcing aspects of community life³⁴. The focus of the Crime Prevention and Community

Justice Team's work is primarily on working with communities to nurture a more vibrant, fulfilling and beneficial community life.

Goals and Objectives of the Crime Prevention and Community Justice Team

The goal of the Crime Prevention and Community Justice Team that aligns with and contributes to, the overall vision and aims of the NJC is to:

Support and build the capacity of community members and organisations to prevent, reduce and tackle the underlying causes and impact of crime, and strengthen community cohesion to ensure a safe, healthy and vibrant Yarra community.

Set beneath this goal are specific objectives for the CPCJ Team which are to:

1. Increase confidence in and access to the justice system in the City of Yarra
2. Proactively build partnerships and collaborate with stakeholders across Yarra to plan, develop and implement targeted responses to identified issues
3. Put into practice community justice principles through the building of relationships, capacity and social capital to:
 - a. Strengthen community cohesion
 - b. Repair the damage from crime
 - c. Proactively work to prevent conflict, harm and crime

³⁴ Ibid, 2010.

- d. Support communities to act in defence of their own interests and be key agents in creating a strong and safer community
4. Drive and/or support new innovative approaches to undertaking community justice work in Yarra
5. Facilitate professional development and community education opportunities both internally within NJC, and externally with key stakeholders to ensure best practice
6. Undertake evaluation of crime prevention and community justice initiatives and ensure that evidence is used to inform the planning and implementation of future projects and activities
7. To lead and advocate community justice practice across Magistrates Courts Victoria, Department of Justice and across local, national and international practice communities.

Principles of Practice

The Crime Prevention and Community Justice Team's model of community justice includes the following core principles. Case studies have been included to highlight how these principles are applied on the ground, and the complexities and challenges of this work from the perspective of the team and their external partners.

Places Matter

*"Community Justice selects high-impact locations – places where there is a concentration of crime and criminal justice activity"*³⁵.

³⁵ Clear.T., Hamilton.J., & Cadora.E., Community Justice, Routledge, London 2010. pg. 2.

The work of the Crime Prevention and Community Justice Team focuses specifically in the municipality of Yarra, a 'high crime' location in Melbourne, Victoria. However, they recognise that suburbs within Yarra, areas within suburbs, and communities that live in those areas are not homogenous. Yarra is economically, socially and culturally diverse. It has pockets of affluence and pockets of significant disadvantage. The team recognise that this diversity both creates and deters crime. In addition, it also means that some communities hard hit by crime and disadvantage, lack the resources and the social capital to respond to safety issues and crime for themselves. The team understand that 'high impact' crime areas in Yarra such as the housing estates are often locations where some of Yarra's most disadvantaged communities live, where support is required, and hence where community justice initiatives need to be targeted.

"Yarra has got so many marginalised people. You know you have 11% of the population living in public housing, they don't live in there without stories. Every single flat has a story associated with it and those stories are sad. And those stories are of people who are struggling and many of those people who are struggling are living in these margins, where they are involved and are exposed to crime. So it's really important for agencies within Yarra to realise that reducing crime is a really important part of the business of people who work in Yarra" Leading Senior Constable Anthony Brewin, Victoria Police³⁶.

The team does not primarily focus on cases, but rather focuses on the particular problems facing a local area or community. It often hears of cases through memberships to reference groups, from partners and even from case workers at the NJC; but the cases are often symptomatic of larger

³⁶ Leading Senior Constable Anthony Brewin, Youth Resource Officer, Victoria Police. Interview 6 November 2015.

systemic problems and or deeper community linked issues. The team works collaboratively with stakeholders in the local area to strengthen the capacity of communities to respond to local issues for themselves. In addition, their membership in Yarra's area based, safety forums, safety working groups, and local area networks ensure they have a comprehensive understanding of the issues and challenges facing particular communities. Gathering local information and hearing directly from workers and communities on the ground are not only critical to their own work, but also to the work broadly of the NJC. Taking a place-based approach rather than a traditional case-based approach is a significant shift in strategic emphasis, and one that defines community justice work.

The Reporting of Crime Project developed in 2012 by the NJC in partnership with Victoria Police, Office of Housing and estate residents, is an example of a place-based approach to doing community justice. This project demonstrates the complexities of working at a local level to ensure that initiatives effectively respond to requirements of local organisations, and the needs of the community.