Strategies to Integrate and Co-ordinate Victims of Crime Services

Paul Wilson  
*Bond University*, Paul_Wilson@bond.edu.au

Robyn Lincoln  
*Bond University*, Robyn_Lincoln@bond.edu.au

Michelle Mustchin  
*Bond University*

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STRATEGIES TO
INTEGRATE AND COORDINATE
VICTIMS OF CRIME SERVICES

REPORT FOR FAMILIES, YOUTH AND
COMMUNITY CARE QUEENSLAND

Paul Wilson, Robyn Lincoln and Michelle Mustchin
Centre for Applies Psychology and Criminology
Bond University, February 2001
INTRODUCTION

This report provides recommendations on potential improvements that may assist in unifying the current delivery of support services for victims of crime in Queensland. The suggestions are aimed at developing a strategy for an integrated and coordinated system that has two main goals:

? to enhance access and equity across all services for all crime victims; and

? to continue the current specialised services for those with specific needs.

These recommendations are based on the premise that there exist currently some excellent specialised services for victims of crime, and that these need to be preserved and further developed in the future. Victims needs are still evolving and a diverse range of services and needs are required. The recommendations are also proposed on the basis that there is limited research on crime victims’ needs and almost no evaluation of available services and so there is scope within the proposed strategy to engage in research and evaluation. Finally, these recommendations are framed within a context which recognises that there are finite funds available, so the strategy is geared toward eliminating duplication of services where they may occur.

This report was commissioned by Families, Youth and Community Care Queensland in November 2000. The brief was to provide strategic policy advice that would encompass identification of gaps in the service system to assist in the targeting of future resources, provide examples of innovative service models, provide best practice examples, to ensure efficient and effective departmental responses, and to provide suggestions for developing an integrated and coordinated service system in Queensland for victims of crime.
The methodological approach involved research and review of secondary sources on victims of crime services from published and internet materials both in Australia and internationally. It also comprised telephone contact with the key service providers in the State. These included the six main victims of crime services that Families, Youth and Community Care Queensland provide funding for, namely - Central Queensland Community Legal Centre, Men Affected by Rape and Sexual Abuse, MICAH, Protect all Children Today, Queensland Homicide Victims Support Group and the Victim of Crime Association Queensland. The Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Development and Queensland Health were also contacted.

The report was compiled by Paul Wilson, Robyn Lincoln and Michelle Mustchin. Professor Wilson is Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences at Bond University, and a leading Australian criminologist who has published 30 books, over 100 academic articles and numerous other publications on crime and social justice issues. Assistant Professor Robyn Lincoln teaches in criminology at Bond University and has written and researched on crime and justice issues, especially in the Aboriginal justice and juvenile justice fields. Ms Michelle Mustchin is a postgraduate student at Bond University who was employed to conduct the primary research work for this project.

This report firstly provides a brief overview of general observations about victims of crime and the current services available to provide a framework for making the recommendations. It then presents a limited review of the Australian and international literature that describes the expressed concerns of victims, the perceived gaps in service delivery and presents details of some innovative service models from other
jurisdictions. The proposed strategy is then reported and the key recommendations are presented under the headings of Advisory Council, Community Awareness, Coordinating Body, Research Coordination, Phased Implementation and Future Directions.

It should be noted that the remit of this project was not to provide a detailed literature review nor to engage in original research. The project was aimed at providing practical solutions to the FYCCQ given its new role to oversee victims of crime services. There are, therefore, significant gaps in what has been presented here, as many important issues have, of necessity, had to be omitted. There are further noticeable limitations in that our recommendations are generalised where the finer details of implementation have been deemed to fall outside the scope of this report. Nevertheless, the aim is to make suggestions for an integrated and coordinated victim of crime service based on efficient and effective management, equity across all services and adequate coverage of services to those with specialised needs.
KEY OBSERVATIONS ABOUT CRIME VICTIMS

It is not within the purview of this report to provide a detailed overview of the extant literature on victims of crimes. For, while the victimology field is relatively new, there is a significant body of theoretical and empirical work from which to draw. The following merely extracts from that literature four key observations about crime victims to guide our present discussion.

1. It is important to recognise that victims of crime can range from foetus to centurion, and therefore can include people of every age, sex, race and ethnic group. While those from all socio-demographic categories can become victims of crime, in Australia the majority of crime victims are categorised as young (usually 15 to 25 years of age), male (except for sexual assault) and are generally from lower socio-economic groups for victimisation from most crime types. It is also important to recognise the emerging empirical evidence examining victimisation over the life-course that suggests that the prevalence rates are higher than previously thought and that repeat or chronic victimisation is a frequently observed pattern.\(^2\)

2. Clearly victimisation results even when crimes are not reported to police or other authorities so that there is a significant proportion of crime victims who may not access available services. Measures of reportability levels vary depending on the crime category but it is suggested that less than one in three females who are victims of violence, one-third of victims of assaults and less than half of all victims of all crime types do in fact report crime. There is a range of reasons why victims fail to report crimes to authorities including:
perceived seriousness of the crime, compensation/insurance access, poor perceptions of police or criminal justice agencies, and more personal factors that concern the victim or the offender. Of most importance here is the fact that certain groups, such as younger people and Aboriginal people, are less willing to report crimes.

3. The consequences of crime victimisation range from minor harm to extremely severe and long-term effects. Victimisation covers any negative outcomes, or any kind of loss, harm or injury, whether the harm is material, physical or psychological. The effects can vary according to the crime type (eg. white collar versus sexual assault) but a range of other factors both personal and situational also have significant impacts. Of most importance is the view that there is a multiplier effect, that is, where victims do not receive adequate support and intervention then the effects of crime victimisation create long-term disadvantage in many other areas of their lives.

4. It is also imperative to recognise that there are secondary victims who are affected by the crime event even if not directly involved. Secondary victims can include parents, other relatives, friends, work/school colleagues, or even witnesses and bystanders. The needs of secondary victims are often forgotten due to the intense focus on the primary victim’s needs. While caution should be exercised in adopting too broad a definition of “victims”, the effects of crime on a wider group of people are now rightly acknowledged. Many secondary victims require the same assistance as the victim either to assist them in dealing with the crime event or in allowing them to be of benefit to the primary victims.
SERVICES CURRENTLY AVAILABLE

Queensland is still evolving and originally developed from community needs rather than from a more formalised beginning. Indeed Queensland is seen as more community based than other jurisdictions. There are four main government bodies that currently fund the existing victims of crime services in Queensland. These include the following.

? Families, Youth and Community Care Queensland fund 29 domestic violence services, and 48 accommodation services. They also fund six main victims of crime services namely - Central Queensland Community Legal Centre, Men Affected by Rape and Sexual Abuse, MICAH, Protect all Children Today, Queensland Homicide Victims Support Group and the Victim of Crime Association Queensland.

? The Queensland Department of Health provide funds for sexual assault and prevention programs, which include 14 in Southeast Queensland and 14 regional agencies. There is also funding through the scientific services for the Victims of Homicide Counselling Service, and through the Child Youth Health Policy Unit for the Child Sexual Abuse Treatment Program.

? The Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Development — although not directly involved in funding victim services — manages the Local Justice Initiatives Program and funds around 30 Community Justice Groups, which offer support for victims of crime as part of their range of crime prevention programs.

? The Department of Justice and Attorney General handles all complaints and contributes to various support groups including the Queensland Homicide
Victims Support Group. The Department also provides a victim support service that supplies written information about the legal process to victims, information on domestic violence, compensation and victim impact statements. The office of the Director of Public Prosecutions develops strategies to assist victims of crime who consult with their office. They are also conducting a community outreach program centred in some select Aboriginal communities.

**OTHER SERVICE PROVIDERS**

There are other organisations that provide direct assistance and services to victims of crime such as the Queensland Police Service and the Department of Corrective Services.

? The Queensland Police Service provides various assistance by supporting many community groups through consultations, and regular attendance at meetings. They also conduct a Victims of Crime survey every two years which focuses on the quality of services available to victims.

? The Department of Corrective Services provides a “Concerned Persons Register” and information for victims of crime regarding the movement or release of offenders.

There is also a myriad of agencies and organisations that can and do provide assistance to victims of crime. A key agency is the Victims of Crime Association Queensland which is largely staffed by volunteers and was established in 1988 by the
community. Other agencies are in the private, public and voluntary sectors and their services are most likely to come in the form of awareness or education to assist in preventing victimisation. They may also involve direct charitable assistance from organisations such as Lifeline, Salvation Army and the Red Cross.
VICTIM CONCERNS

There are four areas where victim rights require strengthening. These are:

- the right to play an active part in the process of the criminal justice system;
- the right to knowledge;
- the right to financial help; and
- the right to support and advice.

The introduction of the Criminal Offence Victims Act 1995 (COVA) provides protection of some of these rights for victims, and the services that have developed in Queensland since the early 1980s operationalise these rights in the form of practical assistance. The next step however, is to redefine the existing service system to ensure greater equity and access.

While victims’ rights are enshrined in legislation, the experience of victims internationally suggests that substantive justice provisions do not always adequately cater for their requirements. Indeed, negative consequences for victims have been documented as a result of the legislative provision of victims’ rights in some areas.

The key concern of victims is to be treated with respect and this involves having a role or real input into criminal justice processes. Indeed, victims have two sets of needs: one is for a sense of justice in the treatment of their crime case; and the other is for practical assistance (eg. court attendance, compensation, counselling, etc). Unfortunately many victim services are delivered after there has been some significant interaction by the crime victim with the criminal justice system. Yet, the
procedures of the criminal justice system should be designed with the victim in mind, and be able to meet their specific needs.  

POLICE GATEKEEPING ROLE

It is important to acknowledge police as the main gatekeepers of the criminal justice system, therefore their role and relationship with victims of crime are critical. The interdependence of the crime victim and the police is one of the most important relationships in the functioning of the criminal justice system. Because police are the first point of contact and often a source of protection, victims rely on the police response. The actions and demeanour of police can have a lasting impact on crime victims.

In regard to the police role, the international literature suggests that the following are essential requirements:

? Guidelines for police through first report or contact, the interview process and all subsequent interactions should be adhered to.

? Police should provide all victims with written details of services available in their areas including compensation, counselling and other assistance.

? A sensitive criminal justice response is essential not only for increased reporting of crimes and for the supply of information about crimes, but in this context is imperative if victims are to make use of the services available to them and to experience positive outcomes from those services.
PERCEIVED GAPS IN THE SERVICE SYSTEM

This section outlines the gaps in the current system and identifies areas that require attention. These gaps relate to the special needs of particular groups; the need to continue to improve victim confidence in the justice system; and the fact that victim assistance should be geared toward long-term support.

NEEDS FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS

The specialised needs of the Indigenous population of Queensland include isolation factors, language barriers and cultural differences. Many of the offenders and victims come from the same small communities, leading to complex interpersonal problems and ongoing trauma for the victim. These difficulties are partially overcome by the Local Justice Initiatives program provided by the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Development. However there are only around 30 of these programs in existence.

The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions has also identified the need for specialised services for indigenous people with the introduction of the community outreach program, although this program currently only exists in Kowanyama, Thursday Island and Aurukun.

Funding is clearly the main barrier to an increase of services for Aboriginal communities. Even though the numbers may be small, specialised services such as interpreters, and respect for individual customs are required.
NEEDS FOR PEOPLE FROM NON ENGLISH SPEAKING BACKGROUNDS

As with Aboriginal and Islander victims there are special needs for people from NESB. These needs are often unique and require separate services to deal with specific aspects of their culture. Translation services and the identification and respect of customs and religious requirements are important. Isolation or lack of access is similarly a problem. Once again funding is the main barrier to an increase in services available to people from Non English Speaking Backgrounds.

NEEDS IN REGIONAL AREAS

The needs of communities in isolated areas are often overlooked due to the expense of setting up support groups and other services to deal with sparse populations across wide geographic areas.

While it is not practical to establish a variety of support groups in each community, there is no reason why adequate information cannot be made available on the type of support services available in neighbouring regions. This information can be provided through local papers, police, hospitals, and even through the local post office to ensure that victims in regional areas are adequately catered for. Though it has been reported that video links other electronic forms of communication (Internet, e-mail) as well as outreach services are relatively well catered for in Queensland compared to other states.

It is essential that funds are continued and expanded to support these innovations. Funds should also be provided for victims of crime services to be able to travel to
these outlying areas to firstly provide information, and then, secondly, when needed, to provide victim assistance.

**NEED FOR OTHER SPECIALISED SERVICES**

There are three other special groups that are often overlooked and display resistance in utilising services. These are the youth, the elderly, and the disabled.

Young people may or may not have any specialised needs, but they most definitely lack knowledge about support services available. Education in schools, colleges, and universities could overcome much of this ignorance. Even though these institutions have counsellors on campus the fear of confidentiality may prohibit their use. Younger people are less likely to report crime, yet they show high probability of being victimised. A campaign providing information on victim of crime services would increase awareness and decrease the stigmata associated with being a victim of crime.

The elderly require specialised services and increased awareness for a better understanding of the services available. Specialised services for the elderly include home visits, transportation, escorts to court, emergency home repair, and emergency monetary support. While the crime rate among the elderly is relatively low older people have the greatest fear of being victimised.

The overall needs of the disabled are similar to the elderly, however services for the disabled may be more complex depending on the degree of incapacitation. Quite often the carer will also require assistance and support from victim of crime services.
Specialised training of staff within support services may be required to better assist and support victims of crime who are disabled.

**NEED FOR CONFIDENCE IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM**

The needs of victims who do not report crimes are often overlooked, especially in the case of sexual abuse and domestic violence. This is an important area that requires addressing through specialised publicity campaigns designed to target victims who are reluctant to report crimes. A large proportion of the population has little faith in the criminal justice system, and may not report a crime due to the notion that they will be victimised further with no end result.\(^\text{20}\)

**NEED FOR LONG-TERM SUPPORT**

Considerable emphasis is placed on the immediate response of victims of crime services. Though immediate crises response is clearly important, many victims need ongoing support. Victims of crime services need to be available for as long as needed, and information on how these services can help should be more readily available.\(^\text{21}\)

The effects of certain crimes can be devastating for many years, especially in the case of the family of a murder victim. Anniversaries, birthdays and other special events all become reminders of what has been taken away. It is crucial that access to the initial support and counselling they received be made ongoing, especially during these difficult times. Follow up phone calls and visits by support groups would provide familiarity and comfort for many grieving families.
Similarly, the release of offenders from custody can reproduce the trauma the victim initially felt. Often the victims are not notified of the offender’s release and discover this through the media, making them feel forgotten and unimportant.\textsuperscript{22}

Research has shown that once a victim of crime, the chance of being revictimised increases dramatically.\textsuperscript{23} Many victims are revictimised by the same type of offence within the same year, and often within weeks or months of the last offence.\textsuperscript{24} Repeat victims are less inclined to report subsequent incidents to the police, therefore making ongoing support essential.\textsuperscript{25} Long-term support is needed to ensure that people are not being revictimised, and that they are educated to avoid high risk situations that make them more vulnerable to crime.

**AREAS THAT REQUIRE ATTENTION**

The recent survey from the Australian Institute of Criminology and our own investigations, in addition to the above identified gaps have isolated a number of areas that require attention.

? Lack of coordination in the referral process, so there is a need for an initial point of contact for all victims rather than information being provided on an ad hoc basis.

? There is a tendency to focus too exclusively on violent or serious crime categories and ignoring the larger number of victims who have suffered from property crimes.

? There is also a tendency to focus too heavily on specialised services (Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault). This leads to a situation where there is a lack of staff skilled in generic services.
There is a tendency to rely on volunteers and voluntary organisations. Additional funding is required to address this area.
INNOVATIVE SERVICE MODELS

There are models in other states or countries that have developed integrated approaches to support services for victims of crime. New South Wales and Victoria will be examined to compare how they differ from the current Queensland system. Internationally, Britain, the United States, and the province of British Columbia in Canada provide innovative models that could be adopted in Queensland.

NEW SOUTH WALES

The Victims of Crime Bureau was established in New South Wales as a government initiative after the introduction of the Victim Rights Act 1996. Among their objectives a crucial one was to provide a critical link between victims of crime and support services throughout the State. The organisation aimed to: provide support and referral services to victims of crime; coordinate the delivery of victims’ support and counselling services by both government and community agencies; and oversee the implementation of and report on the statutory Charter of Victims Rights. While the Victims of Crime Bureau does provide support and counselling themselves they also maintain a large database of support services and also act as a referral agency. An Approved Counselling Scheme has been established to accredit counsellors to ensure a standard of delivery between support services. The Victims of Crime Chronicle is a newsletter published by the department that provides updates on the Bureau’s activities and acts as a forum for exchange of information and ideas.
VICTORIA

The Victims Referral and Assistance Service (VRAS) was introduced in Victoria in 1996. Input is received from victims of crime regarding their experience of the criminal justice system, their needs once they become a victim of crime, the services they received and ideas for improvement in services available. VRAS follows a consultation process to ensure that input is received from victims and professionals who have been involved in the criminal justice system. This information is used to improve the quality of services and to address areas that require attention. One of the key elements of VRAS is that it is a centralised referral service that provides victims of crime with appropriate information on support services available.

UNITED KINGDOM

The Victims Charter in Britain sets out explicit functions and requirements for both police and victims of crime support services. It acts as not only as a referral agency but also explains to individuals and services what will happen after the crime has been reported to the police and what level of service they can expect to receive. The Victims’ Steering Group monitors standards and is chaired by the Home Office. This group includes representatives from all the agencies involved in providing services to victims of crime.27

The main victims of crime support organisation in Britain is “Victim Support”. Their structure is designed in accordance with the legislative requirements as set out in the Victims Charter and their actions accountable to the Home Office.28 The main aspect of the British system that is unique is that the Victims Charter states that Victim Support should receive daily reports from police on referrable crimes. The Victim
Support service then contacts the victims of crime on the list and makes first contact. The success of this system depends on the close relationship between the police and the victims of crime services.

**UNITED STATES**

The Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) in the United States was established in 1994 and provides funding to state victim assistance and compensation programs. It is one of five bureaus and four offices that provide funding within the Office for Justice Programs. Its main role is to administer funds, though these funds are not derived from taxpayer dollars, but from fines and penalties paid by Federal criminal offenders. The department also supports training designed to educate criminal justice and allied professionals regarding the rights and needs of victims of crime. Another of its functions is to develop projects to enhance victims’ rights and services, and undertake public awareness and education programs.\(^{29}\)

The National Organisation for Victim Assistance (NOVA) is another American group but one that takes a more integrated approach. It is a private non-profit organisation established in 1995 to represent and sustain the diversity of support groups throughout the United States. One of its main functions is to debate public policy and best practice issues with input from both professionals and community groups.\(^{30}\) The main aim of NOVA is not to provide counselling themselves but to provide a forum for improving victims’ rights. They provide a framework where different and competing voices can be heard to debate policies and practices for the one common goal of improving support services.\(^{31}\)
BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

The Victims Assistance Program in British Columbia is at a provincial level, and is a branch of the Ministry of Attorney General. This program is designed to provide referrals to other agencies, educational material to the community, act as a liaison between victim and investigator, provide court information, court orientation, court accompaniment, compensation details, and help prepare victim impact statements. The main function of the Victims Assistance Program is to handle the generic needs of victims and refer them on for specialised counselling depending on their individual needs.

BEST PRACTICE AT THE SERVICE LEVEL

The above innovative models are largely presented here to demonstrate the need for a coordinated service system and they offer examples of how this can best be achieved. However, our review of the literature, especially with respect to the five examples given above, also reveal principles of best practice at the service delivery level.

Victims of crime services should be:

- Non discriminatory
- Supporting cross section of population
- Supply training and support for supervisors and staff
- Allow for Professional development

Allocate a proportion of funds for services to clients not just on administration
COMMUNITY EDUCATION

The key to ensure that all groups have access to support is through community education and targeted publicity campaigns. It is important to acknowledge the finite capacities of the victims of crime organisations and not to place unrealistic demands on services through an increase of victims requiring services as a result of publicity.  

Community education can be achieved through ongoing teaching of victims’ rights through schools and community programs. Such education needs to focus on the general rights of victims in regards to identifying that there are services available to help with the court procedure, compensation, victim impact statements, mediation and restorative justice and various other generic but less well known facets of victims of crime services.

Specialised targeted publicity campaigns would concentrate on the more focused services such as men’s sexual abuse, elder abuse, and outreach campaigns to remote communities informing them of the services available.

The media treatment of victims of crime is also an important issue. They often vilify or deify victims depending on the crime, and of the victim’s personal background. Media publicity can have devastating effects on not only the victim and their family and friends, but also on the investigation and pending court case.
STAGED IMPLEMENTATION FOR COORDINATION OF SERVICES

By studying the models of other Australian States and overseas countries it becomes clear that there is a need in Queensland for a more integrated and coordinated service system. Queensland’s victims of crime services began on an ad hoc basis and services receive funding from a variety of sources. It should be recognised, however, that Queensland is a unique State in that it has a large indigenous population and immense open space, which accommodates many remote populations.

For a more integrated system a three stage approach is suggested.

STAGE 1: CREATION OF AN ADVISORY COUNCIL

The first stage would be the introduction of an umbrella group, which would be similar to the Victims Steering Committee in Britain and the Victims Assistance Program in British Columbia. The introduction of a Federation of Members Advisory Council made up representatives from Families, Youth and Community Care Queensland, the police, and of all the major victims of crime support services would be a worthwhile beginning.

One of the Federation of Members Advisory Councils main functions could be to provide strategic policy advice in the form of best practice. Best practice is an important aspect in any organisation and helps to coordinate departments and services to ensure the following:
to improve communication between agencies, and between professional and volunteer services;

to ensure efficient and effective departmental responses;

to make all support services equitable and accountable;

to improve service delivery standards;

to ensure continuous improvement; and

to provide a more proactive, effective and better-informed approach to managing key public resources, which includes financial, personnel and information management.

Another of the Advisory Council’s main functions would be to provide a forum for policy debate and implementation with input from all parties concerned. This would provide an opportunity where all victims of crime services could have their say on an equal footing, regardless of whether they are a professional body or a community organisation. The information gained from these meetings would be used to improve the quality of services and to address areas that require more attention.

**STAGE 2: FAMILIES, YOUTH AND COMMUNITY CARE QUEENSLAND AS LEAD AGENCY**

The next stage in moving towards a more integrated service system would be to nominate Families, Youth and Community Care Queensland as the lead agency responsible for victims of crime services and providing core functions to the community. An important role would be to provide a critical link between victims of crime and support services.
The most reasonable solution would be to devolve this responsibility to Families, Youth and Community Care Queensland. FYCCQ would therefore take the lead agency role for state government policy and service development and would also coordinate research, evaluation and community education. However, close consultation with other government departments would be necessary before this suggestion was implemented.

The core functions that FYCCQ would be responsible for would include:

- maintenance of a database that included all of the victims of crime support services;
- maintenance of a free call (1800) number and referral service;
- identification of gaps and duplication in the system;
- coordination research on current policies and victims’ needs;
- oversight of education and community awareness campaigns; and
- improving or expanding mediation and restorative justice measures.

**STAGE 3: CLARIFICATION OF THE ROLE OF SPECIFIC SERVICES**

The third stage would be to clarify and focus on the specific functions of each particular victims of crime service. To assist in this process each specific service would be advised that the lead agency would be responsible in delegating the certain functions such as research, and public education. Families, Youth and Community Care Queensland would also maintain a database and act as a referral agency. This would eliminate duplication of services and allow for better identification of victims needs. Given this change, each group would be encouraged to focus more intensely on their own client group.
Figure 1 displays a diagrammatic example of the overall picture of the three stages. This model allows for a more integrated approach by displaying the current services and proposed new services that will all contribute to the advice given by the Federation of Members Advisory Council. The diagram also demonstrates the need for a lead agency (FYCCQ) to coordinate needs such as research, education and referrals.
Figure 1. Model of an Integrated and Coordinated Service System

Current Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Organisations</th>
<th>Government Organisations: FYCCQ, Health, JAG, DATSIPD, QPS, DCS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VOCAQ (General)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Domestic Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sexual Assault</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men’s Sexual Assault</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elder Abuse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Proposed Integration

Federation of Members Advisory Council
Representatives (8 to 10) of existing community and government organisations

Lead Agency
Families, Youth and Community Care Queensland

New Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indigenous Needs</th>
<th>Youth Needs</th>
<th>Disabled Needs</th>
<th>NESB Needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Specialised groups are essential to be able to provide specific services to accommodate individual needs. However, an integrated approach will permit:

? the elimination of duplication of services;
? gaps in the system to be addressed;
? better tailoring of specialised services for specific groups such as youth, the elderly and the disabled;

While organisational change is always difficult and is often met with some resistance, the benefits of a more integrated approach are born out in the international experience. Figure 1 displays one example of how a more integrated and coordinated service system could be achieved. The referral responsibility of the lead agency (FYCCQ) would require the establishment of a free call number and database of current victims of crime services that would allow victims to easily access all services. Additional funds will be necessary for the introduction of the advisory council and the extra resources that the lead agency will need to provide.

**BEST PRACTICE AT THE SERVICE LEVEL**

The following are some of the best practice principles of service delivery at the ground level that would be addressed by the introduction of a Federation of Members Advisory Council and a lead agency to ensure they are occur. Victims of crime services should be:

? Non discriminatory

? Supporting cross section of population

? Supply training and support for supervisors and staff

? Allow for Professional development

? Allocate a proportion of funds for services to clients not just on administration
KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations, if implemented, should be carried out in a staged manner. The priorities need to be isolated and implemented with the involvement of all victims of crime services. The authors of this report believe that Families, Youth and Community Care Queensland should decide on the priorities and timeline for implementing our recommendations. This report only provides general guidelines as broad policy options obtained through the review of current literature and models of other organisations. A summary of the recommendations proposed throughout the report fall into the following categories.

COMMUNITY AWARENESS

? Public education and targeted publicity campaigns will provide information to groups within the community that may not be currently aware of victims of crime services presently available. The main groups within the community that need to be focused on include young people, the elderly, the disabled, the indigenous, and people from NESB.

? The continuation of research on current literature and on victim surveys would ensure that the latest services and information are provided to victims of crime and to the services that represent them.

? The increased involvement of the police at an early stage reflects research that clearly demonstrates that the initial contact of the police significantly influences the victims’ recovery process and improves their experience with the criminal justice system.
**FEDERATION OF MEMBERS ADVISORY COUNCIL**

- An umbrella group which consists of representatives from Families, Youth and Community Care Queensland, the police, and various victims of crime support services is envisaged.

- The Federation should provide a forum for strategic advice about the potential to implement these recommendations and to monitor the standards and delivery of support services.

- The Federation should also provide a forum for policy debate in order to improve the quality of services and to address areas that require attention through advising the lead agency on areas that require research and evaluation.

**LEAD AGENCY ROLE OF FYCCQ**

Families, Youth and Community Care Queensland would be the lead agency responsible for all core victims of crime support services. The FYCCQ would have an oversight role for:

- maintenance of a database that included all of the victims of crime support services;

- maintenance of a free call (1800) number and referral service;

- identification of gaps and duplication in the system;

- coordination research on current policies and victims’ needs;

- oversight of education and community awareness campaigns; and

- improving or expanding mediation and restorative justice measures.
RESEARCH COORDINATION

While bureaucracy does not often have a specific research role, the literature does support the need for conducting primary research for victims’ needs and for the evaluation of services. It is envisaged that individual research/evaluations/projects would be recommended by the Federation of Members Advisory Council. The actual research would be coordinated by Families, Youth and Community Care Queensland and conducted by Federation Members, other support services, or contracted to an external body.

We recommend that primary research and evaluation are important functions and additional funding should be made available to resource these. The Federation of Members Advisory Council would advise the lead agency on the types of research and evaluation. It would take a role in monitoring the services available in other Australian States and overseas and provide information on innovative methods so that research could be identified. It would also provide advice about evaluation on policies and services to identify gaps and monitor victims’ needs. From this advice the lead agency would be able to conduct or contract out research functions for issues identified by the Federation.

PHASED IMPLEMENTATION

As previously identified, the integrated approach should be introduced in stages according to a timeline devised by FYCCQ:

? The first stage would be the implementation of the Advisory Council.

? The second stage would to make Families, Youth and Community Care Queensland the lead agency.
The third stage would be to more clearly focus the specialised victims of crime services and establish new services that fill the current gaps in the system.
FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Any framework for victim of crime services needs to take into account the importance of victim input and involvement in the criminal justice process. There are also of course practical needs such as assistance with transportation and the provision of counselling advice, but victims of crime also have justice needs such as input into the sentencing process.

? Victim impact statements help the victim feel they have made a contribution to the criminal justice process by being part of the sentencing hearing.\textsuperscript{35}

? Compensation for financial loss helps victims regain their stability once the court proceeding is over. It is important that victims have access to compensation even if the offender is never caught in order to help them pay for both physical and mental damages incurred by the crime.\textsuperscript{36}

? While both victim impact statements and compensation have had beneficial outcomes to victims of crimes, notification is a more contentious issue in regard to the recovery process. Specific requests by victims to be notified of an offender’s release may have individual beneficial effects in terms of involving them in the process. However, broader notification actions may be counterproductive to victims and to the general community.

As was stated at the outset, victims have two broad areas of need: one is a sense of justice in their treatment; and the other is practical assistance. This can best be achieved through a restorative justice paradigm that emphasises the importance of mediation and conferencing.
Restorative justice holds tremendous promise for crime victims who seek justice that is fair, supportive services that are readily available, and sensitivity from professionals and volunteers who guide them through justice processes as well as through the process of reconstructing their lives in the aftermath of crime.\textsuperscript{37}

In particular we endorse a restorative justice paradigm for the following reasons:\textsuperscript{38}

? Victims of unreported crime are more likely to officially report their victimisation and/or seek services and assistance, because the processing is less formal and adversarial.

? A wider group of victims such as secondary victims of crime who are not well catered for at present, are more likely to be embraced by procedures like family conferencing.

? Victims of crime are less likely to be revictimised by criminal justice processes because their role is legitimised and empowering in conferencing and mediation.

There is limited research available on victims of crime and the effects of new services that are put into place through political, community or media pressure. Research guided by the Federation of Members Advisory Council would help considerably to evaluate current procedures, suggest future directions and provide constructive feedback on policy options. The continuing evolution of victims of crime services in Queensland could be given direction by this integrated and representative group.
NOTES

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