

INQUIRY INTO THE ADEQUACY OF YOUTH DIVERSIONARY PROGRAMS IN NSW

Organisation: Australian National University
Name: Dr Jill Guthrie
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Australian
National
University

ANU College of Medicine, Biology and Environment
Professor Michael Levy
Medical School

Dr Jill Guthrie
National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health

30 January 2018

Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety
NSW Parliament

Dear Committee members

INQUIRY INTO YOUTH DIVERSIONARY PROGRAMS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

We wish to make a submission to the Committee's Inquiry into the adequacy of diversionary programs to deter juvenile offenders from long-term involvement with the criminal justice system.

In our submission we highlight Justice Reinvestment as a policy option that has potential in the context of youth diversion with particular application to all of the terms of reference.

We are:

- A public health physician with over 20 years' experience in Australian justice health, with career experience with the World Health Organization and the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and the Western Australian Custodial Inspectorate (ML);
- A senior Research Fellow at the National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health at The Australian National University where my work is on health-related research projects with a particular focus on the relationship between criminal justice and justice (JG);
- Mayor of Cowra, first elected to Cowra Shire Council in 1999, voted Mayor in September 2008 and re-elected Mayor each year since; immediate past Chair of CENTROC, acting as a strong voice and advocate for central NSW¹ (BW).

1. CENTROC is a voluntary regional collaboration of councils in Central NSW, existing to advocate for and improve operational efficiencies of its member councils - Bathurst, Blayney, Cabonne, Cowra, Forbes, Hilltops, Lachlan, Lithgow, Oberon, Orange, Parkes, Upper Lachlan, Weddin and Central Tablelands Water.
<http://www.centroc.com.au/>

Juvenile detention should be a measure of last resort. Youth diversion therefore is critical to ensuring young people are deterred from entering the criminal justice system. Evidence shows that it costs approximately \$200,000 per year to maintain a juvenile in custody. That money can be better used to enable young people to lead meaningful lives in safer communities.

Justice Reinvestment (JR) is a criminal justice policy approach that diverts a portion of the funds spent on detention towards local communities where there is a high concentration of offenders. The money that would have been spent on deprivation of liberty is re-invested in programs and services that address the underlying causes of crime in these communities.

To enable such change to occur, health services, social services and justice services work collaboratively with improved information sharing and shared management plans. Providing responsive, community-based health and social services attuned to the needs of those who are vulnerable to imprisonment represents a highly preferable allocation of resources. Achieving successful outcomes depends largely on increased interdisciplinary collaboration and greater availability of safe, well-designed and resources community-based options within health and social services in urban, regional and remote settings.

Working broadly within this approach, from 2013 to 2017, we were involved in an Australian Research Council funded research project that explored the research theory and methodology of JR with the community in Cowra NSW, a town of 10,000 people situated on Wiradjuri land in the State electorate of Cootamundra and Federal electorate of Riverina.

The entire Cowra community participated, represented by stakeholders from health, education, housing, employment and criminal justice including the judiciary and police, as well as representatives from Indigenous and non-Indigenous governance structures. In particular, the Cowra Aboriginal Land Council, Cowra Information and Neighbourhood Centre and Cowra Shire Council were actively involved, enabling whole of community responses to issues related to the incarceration of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Cowra citizens.

JR is a systems-based approach covering areas such as health, housing, employment, justice, family support, mental health, substance misuse services, all of which were reflected in the priorities that emerged from community deliberations. Specifically these included the need for emergency accommodation and halfway houses, and/or bail hostels, which can afford safety both for the community and for the young person (away from the gaze of the community), and whose behaviours threaten the community. However, it is not only community safety that is important in thinking about youth diversion: it is the safety that the community can offer that young person in the form of wrap-around services to address their needs and that could take the form of therapeutic facilities and a case management approach, run within the community by relevant agencies.

We enclose *Exploring the potential of Justice Reinvestment in Cowra*, a community report describing how the project was designed to work with the community to enable them to set their priorities for how they would like money that is currently spent on incarcerating their citizens re-invested back into their community.

One of the key findings of the research for the Cowra community was how much money is spent by the NSW government on sending their citizens away to prison. The community deliberations estimated that the total direct cost of incarcerating Cowra citizens for crimes which the community

considered 'JR-amenable' – that is, if a JR policy were in place, there would be alternatives to imprisonment for those crimes – was approximately \$23 million, representing a notional \$2.3m per annum over ten years.

Another important outcome of the research was a Resolution passed by Cowra Shire Council in December 2015 supporting the concept of JR and resolving that Council would advocate to policymakers and funders of the merits of JR and seek intergovernmental collaboration to establish a JR pilot in Cowra. For more information on the project please see:

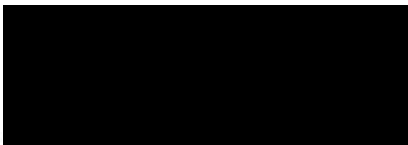
<https://rsph.anu.edu.au/research/research-stories/exploring-potential-justice-reinvestment-cowra-community-report>

It is evident that diversionary options are not available across all of NSW particularly in regional and remote areas. Magistrates and police are therefore unable to divert people from prison, a situation that impacts disproportionately on Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people living in these communities.

It is our view that the research in Cowra provides a model for other communities to explore. We also note work commenced by Dubbo Shire Council to explore JR initiatives. These examples provide the impetus for the NSW government to consider implementation of a JR framework through community-led trials.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Inquiry. We look forward to learning of your recommendations. Please let us know if there is any further information we may be able to provide.

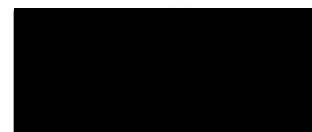
Yours sincerely,



Professor Michael Levy AM



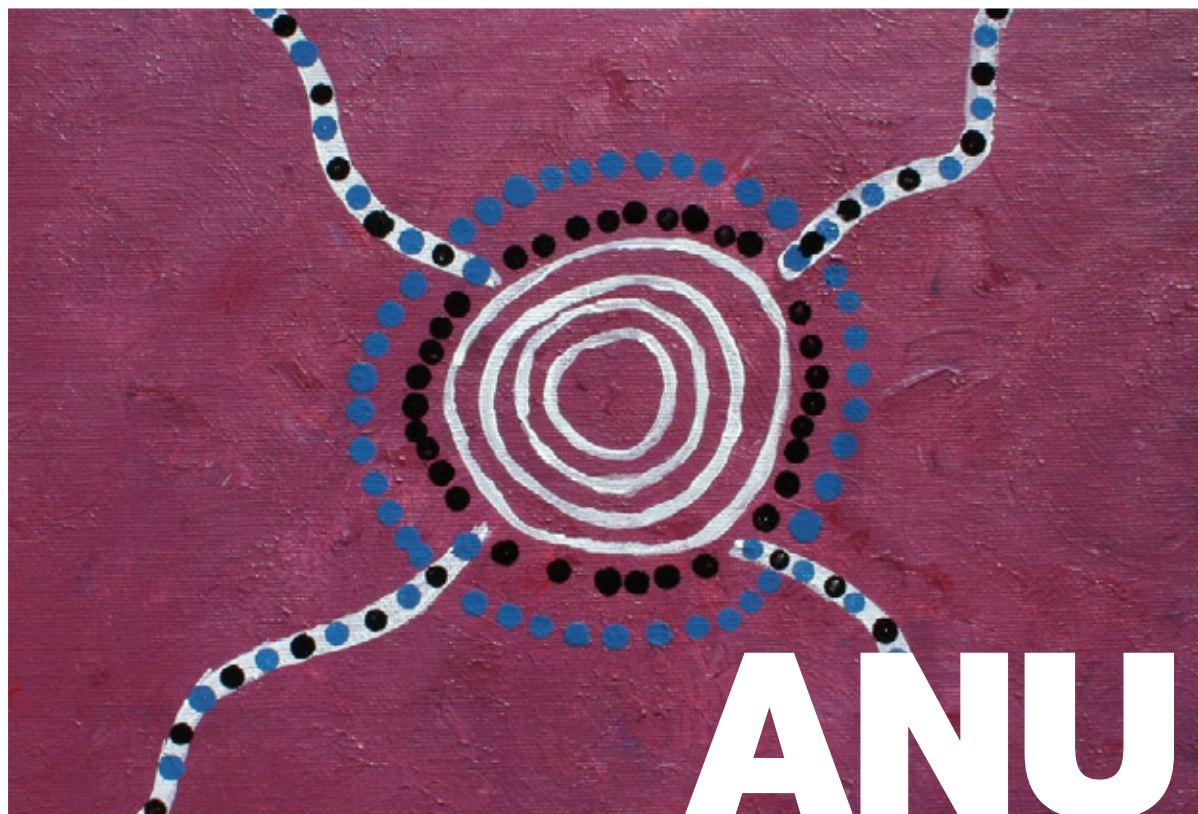
Dr Jill Guthrie



Councillor Bill West



Australian
National
University



EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL OF JUSTICE REINVESTMENT IN COWRA

Community Report

National Centre for
Epidemiology &
Population Health

ANU College of
[Medicine, Biology
& Environment](#)

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FOREWORD

I would like to congratulate Dr Jill Guthrie, the representatives of the Cowra community and all those involved in this wonderful production which explores and tests the research methodology and theory of Justice Reinvestment (JR).

This report is a valuable piece of research which will guide future JR initiatives, especially those in regional areas. In particular, this report highlights the importance and value in engaging all stakeholders in the JR process, including families, community groups, government and non-government agencies.

JR is a powerful articulation of the principle of diversion. This report embraces the willingness of the Cowra Community to take responsibility for the prioritisation of money spent on the community, by reinvesting money spent on incarceration in strategies that can address and decrease criminal activity committed by young offenders and strengthen the community.

In my experience as President of the Children's Court of NSW over the past five years, better outcomes are achieved where children and young people are dealt with and supported by their local community, rather than in detention.

As responsible, engaged and concerned community members, we must not act as spectators, sitting idly by as we witness social failures, such as the detention of children and young people where alternative options such as diversion or early intervention are, or should be, available. This report highlights the need for agencies and stakeholders to coordinate their services effectively as part of this process, to ensure the needs of children and young people are appropriately identified and met.

It is important to listen to and empower the voices of those children and young people whose lives are, or could become, characterised by decisions made in the Children's Court. Children and young people themselves are best able to identify and articulate any barriers they face to becoming productive, engaged and happy members of society, and, as this report will demonstrate, it is crucial that we, as policy makers, law enforcement officers, educators and family and community members, listen and respond appropriately.

This report is a testament to the Cowra community spirit and the willingness to take action and champion the lives and wellbeing of society's most vulnerable members.

I look forward to seeing the outcomes of this research and collaboration.

Judge Peter Johnstone

President of the Children's Court of
New South Wales.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Community Report was written and compiled by Dr Jill Guthrie¹, Dr Phyll Dance², Dr Kamalini Lokuge¹, Professor Michael Levy³, assisted by Ms Corinne Walsh⁴ and Dr Melissa Lovell⁴. Editorial assistance was provided by Ms Eris Jane Harrison.

This success of this project has been made possible by the willingness of the Cowra Community to explore and embrace the philosophy of Justice Reinvestment. This Community Report is dedicated to the Cowra Community, particularly those young people, parents and service providers who presented for interview and those who participated in the Community Forums. They shared their knowledge and wisdom so that others may be empowered to enjoy lives away from involvement with the criminal justice system.

We acknowledge with gratitude many other Cowra people who committed themselves to ensuring positive outcomes from the research, particularly Mr Les Coe and staff and members of the Cowra Aboriginal Land Council; Ms Fran Stead and Ms Hellen Horton, staff and others at the Cowra Information and Neighbourhood Centre; and Mayor Bill West, Councillor Ruth Fagan, Mr Paul Devery and Ms Tracey Robinson of Cowra Shire Council. We thank other members of the Research Reference Group⁵ who gave generously of their time and wisdom to guide the research, particularly his Honour Judge Peter Johnstone and Dr Laurie Bamblett.

We thank researchers and research assistants who worked with us: Dr Fleur Adcock, Dr Bill Fogarty, Associate Professor Cressida Fforde and Dr Diane Smith. Particular thanks go to Mr Len Kanowski and Dr Paul Simpson: Len, for his expertise in mental health issues, including in the Indigenous context, which he unreservedly shared throughout the project; and Paul, for his expertise on the deliberative processes utilised during the Third Community Forum.

We thank the staff at various NSW adult and juvenile detention centres within the Corrective Services NSW portfolio for facilitating visits to their centres so that young Cowra people in detention who wished to participate could be interviewed.

We also acknowledge and thank all those Cowra people who may have wished to participate in the study or the Forums but were unable to for a variety of reasons (such as other commitments at the time). We hope that this Community Report enables Cowra citizens, as well as the wider community, to continue the conversation about the potential for Justice Reinvestment in their communities.

Project funding

The research was funded by the Australian Research Council (ARC) (INI30100048) and the National Health and Medical Research Council (S6380005). Dr Jill Guthrie undertook the research while employed at the National Centre for Indigenous Studies (NCIS) from 2013 to 2016. Dr Phyll Dance was also employed at NCIS during 2015.

Artworks

Artworks for the report were commissioned through the Cowra Information and Neighbourhood Centre (CINC). CINC Youth Worker, Ms Hellen Horton, worked with seven young Indigenous people — Trent Field, Jaunita Gordon, Jamal Cutmore, Jayelem Cutmore, Chris Dzeirgas, Luke Doolan and Tyrese Simpson — to produce the artworks which we are proud to feature in this Community Report. The artworks are exhibited at CINC.

- 1 National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health, The Australian National University
- 2 ANU Medical School, the Australian National University
- 3 Clinical Director, Justice Health Services, ACT Health
- 4 National Centre for Indigenous Studies, The Australian National University
- 5 Members of the Research Reference Group are listed at Section 9.

REPORT SUMMARY

Cowra, in central west New South Wales, is in the Federal electorate of Hume and the state electorate of Cootamundra. This research project was designed to work with the community to enable them to set their priorities for how they would like money that is currently spent on incarcerating their citizens reinvested back into the community. The project was led by Dr Jill Guthrie with colleagues from the Australian National University (ANU), the University of New South Wales and other organisations. It was guided by a reference group of representatives from the Cowra Aboriginal Land Council, Cowra Shire Council and other local and international experts.

The project tested the research methodology and theory of Justice Reinvestment (JR), a framework for rethinking the criminal justice system in terms of value for money invested. Within a JR approach, taxpayer money is not spent imprisoning people for low-level criminal activity; instead, that money is reinvested into the community where those people live. JR requires a shift in policy and social outlook from one of incarceration to one of non-incarceration and investing in the community and in people. It requires involvement by governments at all levels (federal, state and local, as well as Indigenous governance), non-government organisations, service providers, the business sector, the education, employment and health sectors, the police and the judiciary.

The entire Cowra Community – Indigenous and non-Indigenous – participated, represented by stakeholders from health, education, housing, employment and criminal justice as well as Indigenous and non-Indigenous governance structures. This enabled whole-of-community responses to the issues.

Research findings

Sixty-two young people participated in focus groups, 14 young people in individual face-to-face interviews, and four parents and 32 service providers in focus groups or interviews. Four Community forums were held – each with the aim of exploring the concepts of JR and its possibilities – culminating in community decisions about how to re-invest monies currently spent on incarcerating its citizens for the low-level criminal activities which it ranked as ‘JR-amenable’. Another important outcome of the research was a Resolution, passed by Cowra Shire Council, which supported the concept of JR and determined that Council would advocate the merits of JR to policymakers and funders and seek intergovernmental collaboration to establish a JR pilot in Cowra.

These findings are summarised below.

Interviews with young people and parents

A sense of belonging

Young people, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, expressed a sense of belonging to the town; for Indigenous young people, this was in terms of being ‘on country’.

Family and social relationships

Young people and parents reported that family ties, close friendships and good relations with teachers, peer groups and other community members were important for wellbeing. While many young people expressed a strong sense of family and had positive role models and mentors, it was evident that others do not have those networks. Parents whose children had been in contact with the juvenile justice system believe that family is an important part of the rehabilitation process and said that parents in that situation need more support.

Being safe and feeling safe

Young people had various impressions of their safety. Many did feel safe: some from disadvantaged backgrounds described coping mechanisms they had developed to ensure themselves of a 'safe place' in the community. However, others did not feel safe. For some, home was an unsafe environment; for some, aggressive public behaviours, especially around pub closing time, contributed to their fears for their safety. Both young people and parents said that better public transport services, as well as activities to occupy young people, would increase the safety of young people in town.

Education

Young people's views on education seemed to depend on the quality of their relationships with peers and whether they felt teachers understood the issues students were dealing with. Some had been suspended or expelled from school. Parents of students who had been suspended or expelled expressed frustration with their interactions with school. Because of this, some parents called for better education for teachers about the complexities of young people's lives and how those complexities might impact on students' commitment to school.

Employment

Many young people found the transition from school to employment challenging. They thought that they didn't have enough information given to them about study or work following school. Many relied on Centrelink benefits as their main source of income. Young people and parents were concerned about a downturn in job opportunities in recent years and a lack of local training including apprenticeship opportunities.

Mental and emotional health

There were strong indications that bullying was widespread and had an impact on young people's health. Many young people had experienced bullying and/or admitted to being bullies themselves. Youth suicide had a significant impact on some of those interviewed. While both parents and young people praised the Headspace service, some young people reported that they did not receive the mental health services they needed, and they spoke of the stigma around accessing such services. Parents and young people felt that Cowra would benefit from more professional counsellors and that teachers could be trained in counselling and outreach skills.

Alcohol and other drug use

Illegal drug use and alcohol use were seen as acceptable by many young people. Parents reported that drug use was probably higher than when they themselves were young, and drugs were more readily available. Parents whose children had been in contact with the legal system associated this with the use of alcohol and other drugs.

Socioeconomic factors

Young people interviewed said they would like more activities for them to get involved in. This was reinforced through indications that there was not much for young people unless they were interested in sport. Some mentioned the need for more small business to generate jobs and economic activity.

Interviews with service providers and business sector

Mental health services, including Headspace

Service provision for young people with mental health issues is a significant concern, as demonstrated by a spate of suicides of young people going back more than a decade. Overwhelmingly, there was high praise for Headspace and other mental health services; but there was concern over waiting times, the difficulty of persuading young people to access mental health services and the stigma attached to mental health issues. Mental health services face a number of challenges, including heavy administrative and clinical caseloads, uncertainty about the continuity of service funding, a shortage of male clinicians and limited access to senior staff by junior staff in need of support and professional development.

Housing, homelessness, domestic violence

Homelessness was a common theme, with unsafe home environments named as a contributing factor. One service provider estimated that at least six of their young clients were homeless. Some young people were evidently 'couch surfing', with no secure housing arrangement.

Integration of services

The town is well resourced in terms of services, and youth service providers generally thought that integration among them was very strong. However, there were said to be some problems with communication between services. Service providers described themselves as 'time poor' and were frustrated by their lack of time to communicate properly with other service providers. An 'open conversation' and service mapping exercise were suggested.

Education

There was acknowledgement that some families need extra support for their young people to get them through the education process and into the wider world. Educators reported that applying the suspension policy can be a stressful situation for teachers and school management, but that good involvement from parents could ensure that student behaviour subsequently improved. The challenge to find role models who can connect with young people was a recurring theme.

Employment

Several service providers emphasised that there is a lack of entry level positions in the town. Participation in employment was a particular challenge for Indigenous young people. One participant felt that the Council and the business sector might take a leadership position in this regard.

Business sector

The business sector and the Shire Council were praised for their contributions towards strengths-based initiatives such as the Breakaway Program and the Police Citizens' Youth Club (PCYC).

Young people returning to community following detention

Many service providers are not routinely advised when a young person who has been in custody is returning to town. Several believed that having this information would not only benefit the young person returning, but would also make service providers' jobs easier.

Interviews with young people in detention

Contact with police and the justice system

Of those young people who had had contact with the justice system, most had been involved in minor misdemeanours such as driving while unlicensed. Others had been involved in violent altercations with friends. Parents reported similar histories of contact between their children and the justice system and expressed concerns about the influence of young people's peer groups on their initial involvement in criminal activity.

Returning to the community following detention

Young people who had been through the criminal justice system reported that they received useful programs, services and support in gaol. This included anger management, alcohol management, art and exercise, as well as helpful parole and corrections officers. Indeed, the message was that there are better services and support in gaol than in the community. Transition back to the community was reported as difficult, with some young people experiencing stigma and isolation on their return to the community.

Priority setting outcomes

A series of Community Forums estimated the total direct cost of incarcerating Cowra citizens for crimes which the Community considered 'JR-amenable' – that is, if a JR policy were in place, there would be alternatives to imprisonment for those crimes – was \$22,531,724. Rounded to approximately \$23 million, this would represent a notional \$2.3 million per year over ten years. The Community considered alternatives to incarceration and how to better spend the notional \$2.3 million. An overriding message from the forum participants was that the notional \$2.3m per year would easily cover all their priorities.

JR is a systems-based approach and covers areas such as health, housing, employment, justice, family support, mental health and substance misuse services. These areas were all reflected in the priorities that emerged from the Fourth Community Forum deliberations. Participants identified service mapping, particularly the need to map local services to improve residents' understanding of service availability. They also noted the need for mental health services, drug and alcohol services, sexual health and other services to be integrated, along with the need for service providers to work together to avoid duplication of services and to identify missing services. Other priorities were the need for 'maintaining young people in education at all costs'; the need for a suspension/homework centre and for after school activities; the need for mentoring programs and employment and skills development; the need for community transport, so that citizens, particularly

young people, are able to get to services; and the importance of personal safety and of housing in the process. Specifically, this included the need for emergency accommodation and the need for halfway houses and/or hostels, one for adults and one for young people returning from detention.

Strengths-based initiatives in Cowra

There are many strengths-based initiatives in Cowra, where people work tirelessly to provide support and advocacy services for citizens, including young people. The Community is rightly proud of this. Three particular services were highlighted in our interviews – the Breakaway Program, Cowra PCYC and Weigelli Centre Aboriginal Corporation. Comprehensive descriptions of these initiatives are contained in the Discussion Paper at Appendix D.

Report

1. WHAT IS JUSTICE REINVESTMENT?

Justice Reinvestment (JR) originated in the United States of America (US). Initially developed by the Open Society Institute 2003, it has since been adopted in various forms in some 27 States. Demographic mapping and cost analysis have identified so-called 'million dollar blocks', that is, geographic locations from which high proportions of the incarcerated population emanate. The Justice Reinvestment argument is that, because of this high concentration of offenders in a small area, there should be a commensurate concentration of restorative health and social welfare services and programs to prevent offending flowing to those same areas. As a policy option, Justice Reinvestment diverts a portion of funds intended to be spent in the criminal justice system back to local communities with a high concentration of offenders, into programs and services that address the underlying causes of crime, thus preventing people from ever engaging with the criminal justice system. The second JR argument is that imprisonment cannot be considered a success, because it neither makes good financial sense nor prevents re-offending. Justice Reinvestment retains detention as a measure of last resort for dangerous and serious offenders but actively shifts the culture away from imprisonment to restoration within the community.⁶

JR, therefore, is an idea for rethinking the criminal justice system. Within a JR approach, taxpayer money is not spent imprisoning people for low-level criminal activity; instead, that money is reinvested into the community where those people live. At a broad level, JR requires a shift in policy and social outlook from one of incarceration to one of non-incarceration along with investment in crime prevention and early intervention. It requires a political decision to reinvest that money back into the community. Importantly, JR involves all levels of government – Commonwealth, state, local and Indigenous governance – as well as non-government organisations, service providers, education, health, commercial and justice sectors. JR keeps detention as a measure of last resort.

More comprehensive information about how the research project adapted JR methodology in this case study can be found in the Discussion Paper (Appendix D).

Much of the work on JR that has occurred over the past 10 to 15 years has been in the United States. More information about JR can be found in Section 8.

⁶ See Justice Center (the Council of State Governments) in the US. Justice Reinvestment –Overview. 2010 [30 June 2010]; Available from: <http://www.justicereinvestment.org/about>.



Artist: Jamal Cutmore



Artist: Juanita Gordon



Artist: Trent Field

2. WHERE DID WE DO THE RESEARCH?

This research was conducted on Wiradjuri land in Cowra, NSW.



Map of Australia, indicating the location of Cowra

Cowra was an ideal place to undertake this research for several reasons:

- > It is a discrete community of some 10,000 people, incorporating an Indigenous population of 7.2% (greater than the 2% national average), historically through Erambie Mission.⁷
- > The town has no identifiable economic reliance on a prison as an employment base.
- > Generally speaking, it ranks highly on selected offences – such as stealing, break and enter, assault, resist or hinder officer, stealing from a dwelling, arson and offensive language.
- > It does not, however, feature highly in media reportage regarding criminal activities in the same way that some other towns do.

⁷ See <http://bigstories.com.au/film/les-wiradjuri-elder-cowra>



Artist: Jamal Cutmore



Artist: Luke Doolan



Artist: Trent Field

3. HOW WAS THE RESEARCH CONDUCTED?

It is important to note that, from the outset, the project was about the 'whole of community' working with the 'whole of community'.

In other words, it was not a project where the whole-of-community looked at an Indigenous issue. The research did not result from a crime emergency in the town or any spikes in criminal activity by any particular demographic group in town. In the context of this research project, an underlying philosophy of JR is that it is the community that 'reclaims' an individual who is in contact with the criminal justice system as 'belonging' to that community. In this regard, the project took a community development approach. We also used participatory action research.

Community development approach

A community development approach is one where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems. Effective community development recognises connections between social, cultural, environmental and economic matters and the diversity of interests within a community. It is a grassroots process. Through it, communities become more responsible; organise and plan together; develop healthy lifestyle options; empower themselves; reduce poverty and suffering; create employment and economic opportunities; and achieve social, economic, cultural and environmental goals.⁸

Participatory action research

Participatory action research (PAR) is a collaborative process. It involves all participants in a project in actively examining the project's activity in order to improve it and to get better outcomes. To do this, participants reflect on the historical, political, cultural, economic, geographic and other contexts of the work and are prepared to make changes as needed. This sets up a reflective cycle of data collection, reflection, and action. Careful attention is paid to power relationships, data collection and analysis, and decisions about actions arising from research findings.

Working with key informants and stakeholder groups (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) and all levels of government, the project set out to integrate the administrative data available to us with the input of focus groups and semi-structured interviews. The goal was to explore whether JR as a policy option can reorientate policy responses to juvenile and young persons' offending.

Ethical approvals

Approval to conduct community stakeholder meetings was received from the ANU Human Ethics Research Committee on 14 March 2013 (Protocol: 2012/712). It also became evident that approvals were needed from the ethics committees of each of the stakeholder organisations involved. Approval was subsequently received from NSW Attorney General's Department, NSW Education Department, the Catholic Education Office and the Commonwealth Department of Human Services. After the December 2013 Community Forum, it was determined that further ethics approval was required for the questionnaire to be used to interview young people. A variation to protocol 2012/712, dated February 2014, enabled the researchers to interview people over 16 years; a further variation, dated June 2015, enabled the researchers to interview people under 16 years of age at the PCYC HOP night.

⁸ See <http://www.peernetbc.com/what-is-community-development>.



Artist: Jamal Cutmore



Artist: Juanita Gordon



Artist: Trent Field

4. HOW WAS THE COMMUNITY ENGAGED?

Building rapport and trust through engagement between the Community and the researchers is essential for a successful community-driven research project.

Together, we strengthened relationships and exchanged and clarified ideas. Numerous meetings, workshops, forums and presentations were held over the life of the project. Cowra Aboriginal Land Council and Cowra Shire Council provided letters of support for the funding application.

13 December 2012

When we learned of the success of the funding application – we visited Cowra to meet with key community people, including members of the Cowra Aboriginal Land Council and the Cowra Shire Council.

On 1 March 2013

We held a second meeting of key community people and researchers, commencing at the Cowra Aboriginal Land Council offices. As part of the relationship building process, we toured the town to visit sites of importance and historical significance. The meeting resumed at the Cowra Shire Council offices.



The research team meets Cowra Council representatives and the local Aboriginal Land Council, March 2013

23 April 2013

A third meeting was held at Cowra Aboriginal Land Council offices. Participants aimed to reach agreement on which stakeholder representatives would be invited to the First Community Forum.

30 May 2013

The First Community Forum was held. It was attended by his Honour Judge Peter Johnstone, President of the NSW Children's Court, and many local service providers: teachers, police, doctors, health workers (including mental health workers), youth workers, community workers, child care workers, state and local government representatives and members of the local Indigenous Community.



Participants at First Community Forum

11 December 2013

The Second Community Forum was held at the Cowra Japanese Gardens, attended by representatives from education, health, judiciary, police, Cowra Shire Council, Aboriginal Land Council and the research team. Its aim was to develop a locally-tailored questionnaire and recruitment strategy for interviewing young people. Working in groups, participants workshoped a draft questionnaire to ensure that the questions were locally appropriate.



Participants at Second Community Forum

15 March 2014

The researchers attended the Cowra Community Festival to inform the Community about the project and to recruit people for interviews.



Jill Guthrie and Len Kanowski at the Cowra Festival, March 2014

11 June 2014

The researchers were invited to a meeting of the Business Chamber. Being Community members and parents themselves, Business Chamber members had a clear understanding of how young people sometimes make unwise decisions – but they believed that those decisions should not be allowed to taint young people for the rest of their lives. One member said:

“Even older, experienced people make mistakes ...”



Researchers meeting with members of the Business Chamber, June 2014

22 August 2014

The researchers returned to Cowra to begin planning for the Third Community Forum.



Planning for Third Community Forum: Mayor Bill West, Geoffrey Steele, Jill Guthrie, Laurie Bamblett, Melissa Lovell, Les Coe, Michael Levy, August 2014

26 May 2015 (afternoon) and 27 May 2015 (morning)

The Third Community Forum was held at the Cowra Agricultural Station, co-chaired by Councillor Ruth Fagan and Professor Mick Dodson. Over the two days, about 40 people from a wide cross-section of stakeholders attended, including representatives of police, education, health and community organisations, government representatives, parents and grandparents.



Participants at Third Community Forum, May 2015

31 July 2015

A Young People's Forum was held at the PCYC Youth Club on Binni Creek Road, aimed at collecting ideas from young people about how their needs might be better served. This became the Fourth Community Forum.

Community engagement through media

An important part of Community engagement was regular communication of the research in the local newspaper, *The Cowra Guardian*. The researchers thank the newspaper for their support and contribution towards the research in this way.

Rethinking the justice system, 05/06/2013

Keeping young people out of jail, 10/01/2014

Research project launches to keep young people out of jail, 28/03/2014

Breaking the cycle, 25/04/2014

Passionate about working with young people, 11/06/2014

Chamber hosts ANU researchers, 30/06/2014

Cowra youth study to benefit community, 8/09/2014

Former Australian of the Year to co-chair Justice Reinvestment forum in 2015, 3/12/2014

Justice Reinvestment project entering its final year, 20/05/2015

Justice-reinvestment forum helps community focus on finding better outcomes, 10/06/2015

The Cowra Justice Reinvestment project, protecting the community and providing alternatives to jail, 09/11/2015

Governor oversees Justice Reinvestment Program process, 13/05/2016

Justice Reinvestment program reaches new milestone, 8/1/2016

Excerpts from the Cowra Guardian articles can be found at Appendix C.



Artist: Juanita Gordon



Artist: Chris Dziergas



Artist: Tyrese Simpson

5. WHAT FEEDBACK DID THE COMMUNITY PROVIDE?

Feedback given at each of the four Community Forums is presented below.

First Forum

The First Community Forum was aimed at informing stakeholders about the research and introducing and explaining the concept of Justice Reinvestment. Understandings of the research project and expectations of the stakeholders attending were openly discussed, ending with the stakeholders affirming their enthusiasm to be involved. It emerged that, for particular stakeholders to be involved, ethics approvals would need to be obtained from their institutions. These were subsequently sought and received before the Second Forum occurred.

Second Forum

The second Community Forum led to several agreements for the way forward, including the theme for the project, which was:

Cowra's youth of today helping Cowra's youth of tomorrow

Excellent feedback was obtained on the structure and nature of the draft questionnaire, which was modified accordingly.

The sampling frame for interviews was agreed as:

- > all young people aged 16 to 24 years living in Cowra and surrounds
- > families, friends, siblings, guardians, carers of young people living in Cowra and surrounds
- > anyone living in Cowra who had been through the NSW criminal justice system and was living back in Cowra.

Data Collection

From April 2014 until February 2015, we interviewed young people, parents, service providers and other stakeholders within the community. We also interviewed young people from Cowra who were incarcerated in either the NSW adult corrections system or the NSW juvenile corrections system.

Engagement and interviews

Community members

We interviewed 62 young people through focus groups and 14 young people through face-to-face interviews. We interviewed 32 service providers in either face-to-face interviews or focus groups. Seven Business Chamber members provided input and feedback, and approximately 30 Erambie Community members attended a meeting at the Cowra Aboriginal Land Council offices in May 2014. While only four parents were interviewed face to face, service providers' views as parents were also often evident in their interviews.

Young people in detention

Ethics approvals obtained from the NSW Department of Juvenile Justice allowed us to invite young people from the Cowra postcode to participate in the research. Ethics approval obtained from the NSW Department of Corrective Services allowed us to invite young people in the adult corrective system to participate in the research. Consequently, information packs were sent to 29 young people (aged 16 years and over) from the Cowra postcode in NSW Corrective Services, inviting them to participate in the interviews. In addition (given ethics approval to interview people aged less than 16 years) information packs were sent to 13 young people (aged 16 years or less) from the Cowra postcode in NSW Juvenile Justice, inviting them to participate in interviews.

Third Forum

The Third Community Forum began with a barbeque to welcome stakeholders and an Acknowledgement of Wiradjuri Country by Cowra High School student, Jaylee Dunn.



Mick Dodson, Jaylee Dunn, Mick Gooda at Third Community Forum, May 2015

Jill Guthrie gave an overview of progress, including a report on the team's engagement and interviews with community members and engagement and interviews with young people in detention, as detailed below.

A Discussion Paper summarising progress had been provided to attendees as pre-reading for the Third Community Forum (see Appendix D). Opening the Forum, Jill Guthrie invited attendees to reflect on any 'stand-out' points from the Discussion Paper. Participants raised issues about school, employment, racism, culture, alcohol and other drug use, service provision (with a distinction made between availability and accessibility, particularly for young people) and homelessness. There was discussion around whether local services made young people feel welcome or prevented them from using some services. There was consensus that services need to be better coordinated.

One participant referred to:

... the reactionary nature of service provision

noting that there was:

... little mention of a proactive approach for youth, even though young people might identify the need for services and things to do including around mental health and youth work services.

This person felt that:

... support comes after young people hit a crisis point

adding that there was a:

... need to be looking at supporting people at a much younger age.

Another participant asked:

Why do people have to go to detention to get good services, such as getting their teeth fixed, good health services, sporting programs? We should try to fix these kinds of issues up outside of prison.

There was consensus about the need for a halfway house or emergency housing. For young people especially, that could help build life skills needed to move into their own place, such as cooking, cleaning, gardening and paying rent. One participant said:

We need to start with young people when they're young, in the home. The problem is when people feel there's nothing to look forward to. This is something that children get from their parents' sense of hopelessness and they grow up from a very young age feeling that they don't have much to look forward to. This can lead to people making mistakes ...

His Honour Judge Peter Johnstone (member of the Research Reference Group) was unfortunately unable to attend the Third Community Forum. He extended his apologies and forwarded a paper which he had prepared (Appendix E). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Mr Mick Gooda read Judge Johnstone's paper to the participants. As part of knowledge exchange about JR and its potential, particularly for the Cowra community, Michael Levy made a presentation to Forum participants (Appendix F).

Priority setting activity

A priority setting activity was undertaken, using data provided to the researchers by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) of all Cowra citizens who had been incarcerated, together with the crime category for which they had been detained. There were seventeen local forum participants. They were asked to individually consider the BOCSAR crime categories⁹, in order to decide which ones they believed should be subject to justice provisions other than incarceration. There was some discussion about how the crime categories should be interpreted; then final votes were cast. Individual votes were tallied to obtain an aggregate Community vote. Crime categories which received more than 50% of participants' aggregate vote were deemed 'JR-amenable'. There were eight of these:

- > Traffic offences
- > Public order offences
- > Justice procedure offences
- > Property damage
- > Drug offences
- > Fraud and deception
- > Theft
- > Unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter.

9 The complete list of BOCSAR crime categories is: Traffic offences; Public order offences; Justice procedure offences; Property damage; Prohibited and regulated weapons offences; Drug offences; Fraud and deception; Theft; Unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter; Robbery; Abduction, harassment and other offences against the person; Dangerous or negligent acts endangering persons; Sexual assault; Acts intended to cause injury; Homicide.

BOSCAR data for the 10-year period 2004–2014 for the Cowra postcode showed the total number of episodes of juvenile incarcerations during that period (2,544) and the total number of episodes of adult incarcerations during that period (611). These were used to calculate how much it had cost to have juveniles and adults from Cowra incarcerated during that period for the above eight 'JR-amenable' crime categories. This amounted to 49.6% of all juveniles and 47.9% of all adults. (See Table 1.)

Table 1: Crime category rankings

Crime category	No. of Yes Votes	% Sentenced NSW Juveniles	% Sentenced NSW Adults
Public order offences	17 (100%)	2.9	1.2
Traffic offences	16 (94%)	1.4	3.3
Property damage	15 (94%)	4.3	0.7
Theft	15 (94%)	10.1	3.2
Justice procedure offences	12 (75%)	11.5	14.2
Drug offences	12 (75%)	0.7	13.6
Unlawful entry with intent/burglary break and enter	10 (59%)	16.5	9
Fraud and deception	10 (63%)	2.2	2.7
Prohibited and regulated weapons offences	8 (47%)		
Acts intended to cause injury	6 (35%)		
Dangerous or negligent acts endangering persons	5 (29%)		
Abduction, harassment and other offences against the person	2 (12%)		
Robbery, extortion and related offences	1 (6%)		
Sexual assault	1 (6%)		
Homicide	0 (0%)		
Total	130	49.60%	47.90%

Using the daily direct cost of incarcerating a juvenile¹⁰ and the direct cost of incarcerating an adult¹¹, by a factor of average length of incarceration¹², by 49.6%¹³ and 47.9%¹⁴ respectively, we learned that the direct cost of incarcerating juveniles from Cowra during that period was \$822,709¹⁵ and the direct cost of incarcerating adults from Cowra during that period was \$21,709,016¹⁶. So the total direct cost of incarcerating Cowra citizens, for crimes which the Cowra Community deemed JR-amenable, was \$22,531,724 – approximately \$23 million – equating to a notional \$2.3 million per year over the ten years.

10 \$652 per day (See Page 20, Value of a JR approach in criminal justice in Australia)

http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Legal_and_Constitutional_Affairs/Completed_inquiries/2010-13/justicereinvestment/report/index

11 \$305 per day (See page 19, Value of a JR approach in criminal justice in Australia)

12 Average length of incarceration for adults – 8 months (i.e, 30.4 days x 8)

13 % sentenced NSW Juveniles – see Table 1

14 % sentenced NSW adults – see Table 1

15 49.6% x 2544 x \$652 per day = \$822,709

16 47.9% x 611 x 8 months [30.4 days x 8] x \$305 per day = \$21,709,016

How would the Community reinvest?

Participants agreed that this money, spent on prisons, could be better spent on improved community services, access to safe affordable housing and youth engagement programs and initiatives. This would result in better outcomes, not just for the young people, but for the whole Community.

Working in four groups, participants brainstormed ways the notional \$2.3 million could be better spent in the Community. Michael Levy facilitated the session. A representative from each group presented feedback to the whole Forum. To honour the depth of involvement by participants, verbatim notes of groups' discussions are presented.

Group One

A one stop shop would be a really good thing, with the exception of Headspace (given the privacy concerns of clients).

Elders as mentors.

Apartments for young people who would need to be involved in maintenance, learning life skills etc. There would be a high end cost at the beginning.

Family programs for people with young kids.

Alternatives to school if kids don't want to be there.

Local council needs to look after these kinds of developments, rather than state government agencies.



Group One reporting back

Group Two

A centre for youth which has links to school, PCYC, mentoring, including life skills, anger management, case management and advocacy for interacting with other services. Teacher would cost about \$150,000, plus three other workers including an Aboriginal male and female and a manager. Important to organise things so that workers don't burn out.

Building sector to build two flats for emergency accommodation. Some additional costs around transport, salaries for support workers, etc. Work skills program such as lawn service, maintenance skills, etc. Link to Aboriginal housing, Centrelink and other services. Approximately \$300,000. Total: about \$1.5 million.

Wanted to know if there are any mentoring programs in Cowra, as well as what housing options exist now and what housing options there might be.



Group Two in discussions

Group Three

Number one priority from a youth perspective was a suspension centre/youth hub for students who are no longer engaged in schooling. This could be a collaboration between schools, PCYC, youth workers, etc., that would link young people with services, mentoring, etc. Need for a teacher salary, etc., estimate that it would cost about \$220,000 a year to run.

Pre-suspension kids: Behaviour School (Years 5–9, with kids transitioned into high school or TAFE after Year 9) engages kids at the 'pointy end' who are disengaged. Young people would spend a period there (e.g. a couple of years) and transition back to school. This service would require a principal, part-time teacher, teachers' aide, etc. Utilise the PCYC and their bus. Modelled on a program in Dubbo

which runs a number of training and work services to provide kids with real life skills. Running costs of \$500,000 after establishment and would take about \$500,000 to set up. This might be located in somewhere like Homewood where the site is already established.

Community transport cost about \$200,000 if volunteers are used. This would require an upgrade of the PCYC bus (budget based on leasing a bus at about \$20,000 a year).

Headspace needs about \$100,000 a year to increase their capacity and their impact.

Linkages of services including dedicated social service workers who have a relationship with the local schools.

Workers for family support tasks and \$50,000 for Yalbalinga to support preschool programs etc.

Halfway houses and hostels it would be better off looking at different locations for people with different needs e.g. 4–5 bedrooms for youth with a live-in youth worker and vehicle (\$120,000) and other arrangements for other homeless (e.g. 50 year old man) in other locations around town. \$10,000 to Breakaway program to keep it strong.

Total: \$2.3 million.



Group Three in discussions

Group Four

Halfway/Safe house build two big houses for \$600,000 each (one for homeless kids, one for older people including single adults). It's important that kids have a place to stay, food to eat, support for getting to school, etc. People could learn cooking skills, grocery shopping, how to do laundry, etc. while living in the house. Work with the

PCYC. For older people, we could help people find employment, learn life skills, and have a garden etc. so people can learn how to grow vegies etc.

A suspension centre so kids have another place to go when they're suspended/expelled from school or when they become disengaged or fed up with school. More funding for after school activities outside of school – places for kids to go after school. PCYC could be involved in this. Get kids involved in activities so they're not playing up on the streets.

This should include cultural activities, with older people stepping up to share their culture with young people. Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) should be brought back to help people look after their community and build skills, e.g. basic maintenance, gardening skills. This is helpful because employees on CDEP can help older people stay in their homes etc.



Group Four in discussions

Report back session: emerging themes

Michael Levy facilitated the report back session and noted several key emerging themes:

- > Service Mapping
 - Undertake a comprehensive mapping exercise of local services in order to improve understanding of service availability, including the need for services to be linked, to work together to avoid duplication of services and to identify missing services.
- > Education
 - maintaining young people in education 'at all costs'
 - a Homework Centre and Suspension Centre and after school activities

- mentoring programs – the importance of the Breakaway Program was highlighted.
- > Employment and skills development
 - the importance of personal safety
 - the importance of housing, including the need for emergency accommodation, halfway houses and hostels, one for adults and one for young people returning from detention.
- > Community transport.

Reflecting on these emerging themes, one participant said:

*... it's hard to get kids involved in programs
... [but] it's Important to get them involved in
working out how to involve them and what they
want to do.*

Concluding the Forum, Mayor Bill West said that it was great to see a wide range of people engaged in the project. He stressed that Council is keen to commit and contribute to the development of JR in Cowra. Councillor Ruth Fagan thanked everyone for openly sharing their personal experiences and ideas and encouraged people to think about how JR might work in the town. Mick Dodson said that everyone participated with open minds and hearts and that he was impressed by how modest the Community was, noting that this is about reinvestment in the town's future, particularly its young people.

An overall message from the discussions was that the notional budget of \$2.3m per year is more than sufficient for all the suggested priorities.

Fourth (young people's) Forum

An important issue raised at the Third Community Forum was the need for young people's voices to be heard. The research team were aware of 'HOP nights' organised by the Neighbourhood Centre, PCYC and Headspace and held on Friday nights. On 31 July 2015, a forum for young people was held as part of the HOP Night at the PCYC Youth Club on Binni Creek Road, with about 40 young people attending. Young people who attend HOP nights are known fondly as 'The Superstars'. Cowra Information and Neighbourhood Centre Youth Worker, Hellen Horton, invited the researchers to

attend. Hellen Horton, Liz Reynolds (Headspace) and Senior Constable Tim Waite (Cowra PCYC) led the discussions with the young people.

What did the young people say?

Two interview groups were held, one with young men and one with young women. The findings are summarised below under the (abridged) questions asked of the young people about the Drop-in Centre provided through the Neighbourhood Centre. While some responses were very general, the young people offered valuable insights into what they thought was needed in Cowra. Many suggestions related to sports activities. Others were more general, proposing improvements in buildings and roads and a halfway house, rehabilitation centre or refuge. Many of the young people named formal and informal supports that were in place for them. They also showed glimpses of their ambitions and their hopes for their futures in terms of their education and employment aspirations.

What is it about [the Youth Drop-in Centre] that makes it better than going to school?

One young man offered the most substantive response about what made the Drop-in Centre better than going to school:

Help with finishing assignments.

He added:

The teachers don't help.

One young woman made a negative comment about school:

School is boring.

Responses from three other young women were:

I like sports.

It's fun.

It gives us some options.

If you were the boss of Cowra, what would you spend your money on so that kids didn't go to gaol?

> Sport and other activities

Most suggestions were related to sport and other activities, including ideas for:

New grass on the footy oval

and water-related activities such as:

A waterpark [and] water slides and a Swimming pool.

Other sports-related activities suggested were:

A flying fox/spider web thing

Ten pin bowling.

A young woman suggested:

A movie theatre.

This young woman thought that this would be a way to spend money to keep young people out of gaol. She explained her response:

Movies at the Council are too small.

➤ General infrastructure

There was discussion among some of the young men about the need for infrastructure. They suggested that money could be spent on:

A Boys' Home or Boys' Camp where we could stay a couple of weeks.

One young man commented that it could be:

... like a rehab.

Others debated the word 'rehab', saying that it could be too stigmatising and might prevent young people from attending.

Another comment related to the need to:

... fix the houses and roads [there are] lots of potholes.

One young woman suggested that there was a need to:

... fix up the school.

Another thought that money should be spent on improving:

Transport [there is a] need [for] buses, better public transport everywhere in town.

One suggestion was:

... fix the [Erambie] Mission.

Another young person saw a need for a:

Playground at the [Erambie] Mission like the one at [name of fast food outlet].

A young woman thought money could be spent on:

More fast food, cafés, restaurants.

In a similar vein, two of the young men named specific fast food outlets they would like to see in Cowra. One young woman saw a need for:

New shops which sell nice clothes, jewellery ... [but] not too expensive.

Another was interested in a completely different type of shop:

A tattoo shop ... [the] nearest one is Bathurst.

➤ Education and employment

A young woman thought money should be spent on more:

TAFE courses – there is only automotive, child care and aged care currently. [There is a] need [for] beauty courses.

Another young woman suggested that there should be:

Training and life skills programs [such as] music [and] art.

One young woman simply wanted:

More jobs and better jobs.

Thinking about yourself in five years' time, what would make you feel proud of yourself, and make your family and friends proud of you?

When asked to think about themselves in five years' time and what would make them and others feel proud of them, one young man's ambition was simply to:

... have a car.

Another gave a very general response:

... achieve my goals.

One young woman said that she would like to:

... finish school.

and a young man said he would like to:

... get an education.

A second young man mentioned both finishing school and:

... get [ting] a job.

One of the young men wanted to:

... work in the mines.

All other responses to this question centred on employment which would require some type of tertiary education.

One young man said he wanted to:

... do an apprenticeship.

Other employment ambitions were specific.

One young man wanted to:

... be a builder.

while another wanted to:

... be a personal trainer.

and yet another wanted to:

... be a police officer.

Young women specified ambitions to be:

... a preschool worker

... a carpenter

... an electrician.

A young man mentioned a:

... mechanic.

A young woman had a similar ambition, saying that she would like to be employed in:

... automotive work.

Another young woman said that she would like to:

*Help people ... in aged care [and] disability work
.... We'd like better access for young people to
get into disability work.*

Other employment aspirations mentioned were:

... forensic anthropology

... social work

... nursing/midwifery

... medicine.

If you had the money to spend on things that would support you to live and thrive in Cowra, how would you spend it?

When asked how they would spend money, if they had money to spend on things that would support them to live and thrive in Cowra, one young woman responded very generally. She simply said:

... wisely.

Other responses from the young women overlapped with those given to the question about what young people would spend their money on so that kids didn't go to gaol, since they were generally about infrastructure. Housing was mentioned by three young women, with one specifying:

... especially the houses at the [Erambie] Mission.

Another saw a need for:

... housing for the homeless [such as a] refuge ...

Another called for:

*... more places to rent, and more affordable
places to rent at that.*

She added:

... young people always get knocked back.

One wanted:

... more shops.

Another young woman believed money should be spent on:

... better doctors – retrain the doctors.

The responses from the young men were initially more related to personal needs, since they said they would spend money on:

*... either a house, a car, a job, a motorbike or
a farm.*

These general responses led the interviewer to prompt with the question: 'What's missing?' This elicited responses similar to those given for the question about what young people would spend their money on so that kids didn't go to gaol:

... a flip out [trampoline]

... a foam pit for the skate park

... a scooter hut

... a BMX track

... a better footy field

... a stadium

... an indoor skate park – make the skate park bigger.

One young man saw a:

... need [for a] better PCYC.

adding less specifically:

... and more stuff.

What are the sorts of things at the moment that support you? (e.g. a particular person, a particular organisation, a certain process that is in place)

In response to the question about what sorts of things currently support them, young women mentioned friends and family, organisations such as Headspace, Child and Adolescent mental health services, the Neighbourhood Centre, the Hospital and Lifeline.

One young woman said:

We'd like more youth workers.

The young men were less forthcoming. They were prompted by the interviewer who asked: 'What would stop you going to JJ [Juvenile Justice]?'

One young man replied:

Having something to do. Something to stop us from getting into mischief. Boredom is the main problem.

Interviews with young people in detention

As at mid-2014, 29 young Cowra people were in the adult system and 13 young Cowra people were in the juvenile justice system. Information packages were sent to each of these young people inviting them to be part of the research.

Of those these young people who volunteered to be interviewed, we found them all to be thoughtful and brimming with dreams and goals for when they would be released from detention and returning to town. In that regard, they were aware of the need to adjust to returning to town from detention and they were hopeful that the town might be able adjust to them as well. Each was adamant that

they wanted to 'stay out of trouble', that they would 'do the right thing' and that they would make the most of the rehabilitation they were receiving in detention. Moreover, they had hopes that there would be skills development opportunities and job opportunities when they returned to town, and hopes for carving out a life for themselves in town, and foresight towards finishing their education, going to university, going to TAFE, having children, raising a family, and playing sport.

The following excerpts from interviews with those young people illustrate some of their hopes and dreams.

One young man said –

I reckon, personally, if there was more job opportunity at home it would be easy because I could get released from jail, apply for a job and then just get comfortable each day working at the job and then going into town on a Sunday afternoon get my shopping and go back home, and just slowly adjust.

In relation to benefiting from rehabilitation while in detention, one young man said –

So, I can't wait to start doing this education, it will teach me a little bit but then I'll be able to get my writing and that a bit better because I write pretty rough. I want to benefit, I want to benefit from jail, not go downhill and keep coming back. ... So this time I've had it, I know I've only done a couple of years but I've had it, I just want to do good for myself, get a job if I can and do good. ...

One young man was in detention for issues with his driving record. For him have his driver's licence was paramount to his being able to return to town to lead a meaningful life.

... I've been told by my solicitor that if I get a clean driving record for the next five years I know it's a long time ... they're things to look forward to for me.

His dream was to return to the town: he reiterated that once he had returned to town, he needed access to transport – that without 'wheels' he was not able to get his driver's licence. His dream to be healthy and happy and ultimately to have children and a family was evident in his words –

Living at home, like I'm always going to live out home, I love the bush. I'm never going to live down on the water, on the beaches, it's just not

me. But that's my biggest thing, I need to get wheels; if I've got no wheels I'm stuffed, I can't do nothing. Get a good job and get my licence ... And, keep my family healthy and happy, my two children and my partner.

One young woman's dreams for when she was released from detention were towards learning new skills, getting a job, and being able to continue playing sports.

I just want to stay out of trouble. ... I just want to go back to [tertiary education]. I just want to do ... anything. I just want to stay out of trouble. Keep going with my sports and do the right thing. ... I just want to get a job hopefully somewhere and hopefully play for [sports team] ... probably go to uni' ...

One young man's dreams were influenced by his love of the town, and towards returning to and staying in town for as long as he could, to having a family and raising children. He wanted to get his licence, get a full time job, a house.

Well when I get out, I want to go back to work and I'm planning on staying there for as long as I can, like for basically until my retirement, you know what I mean? Because that's how much I love it out there ... like if I settle down and have kids and that there, I'll still go out there and I'll work and that but even if we move to another town ... I'll just say I've had skills at this [workplace] and I can just give them my resume or something like that there and just tell them ... like go from one [workplace] to another. So either way it's going to be all good for me when I get out anyways.

[Talk of fiancée and kids he'd like.] If I had a girl and a boy, I'd be happy but I'd probably try until I get a girl and boy. ...

I want me licence, I want a full time job. ... Yeah, that's what I'm going to try and do when I get out; get me "ls" and work me way up to a full time job. I'd love to have everything, like my own car, a couple of cars, own a house, probably even two houses, you know ...

6. WHAT HAS HAPPENED SINCE?

Cowra Shire Council Resolution

On 7 December 2015, a presentation of the research project was given at the Cowra Shire Chambers. A meeting of the Cowra Shire Council followed, where Council passed its Justice Reinvestment Resolution (see Appendix G: Mayoral minute to Cowra Shire Council).



Public presentation, Cowra Shire Council Chambers, December 2015

Council members expressed their keen support of the concept of JR and agreed to seek engagement with policymakers and funders to establish a JR Authority and a JR Accord in Cowra. Mayor Bill West recommended that the Council work for the establishment of a JR pilot in Cowra (Appendix G: Mayoral Minute to Cowra Shire Council). The JR Resolution was the mechanism for the Community, together with the researchers, to write to the local member, the Hon. Katrina Hodgkinson MP, in late 2016 (Appendix H: Submission to Member for Cootamundra, Hon. Katrina Hodgkinson). This in turn was the mechanism for Ms Hodgkinson to begin negotiations with the NSW Attorney General regarding the establishment of a JR pilot in Cowra.

On 11 December 2015, representatives of the Cowra Shire Council, Cowra Information and Neighbourhood Centre and the Cowra Aboriginal Land Council, together with members of the research team, met with Ms Hodgkinson to discuss how recommendations from the research project could move towards implementation of a JR Authority in Cowra.



Policymaker meeting, Cowra Shire Council Chambers, December 2015

On 5 May 2016, the NSW Governor, His Excellency Mr David Hurley, visited the Cowra Information and Neighbourhood Centre to learn about developments regarding the research. Members of the Cowra Aboriginal Land Council and Cowra Shire Council and local community members from the Indigenous and non-Indigenous Communities also attended, as well as local State Representative, Member for Cootamundra, the Hon. Katrina Hodgkinson MP. The Cowra Guardian featured an article on 16 May 2016 describing the Governor's visit:

<http://www.cowraguardian.com.au/story/3903189/governor-oversees-justice-reinvestment-program-process/>

Following the Governor's visit, Jill Guthrie was invited to meet His Excellency Mr Hurley and his staff at Government House in Sydney on 30 June 2016 to discuss developments related to the research:

<https://ausday.dpc.nsw.gov.au/governor/vice-regal-program/thursday-30-june-2016/>

During 2016, Bill West, Fran Stead, Les Coe and Jill Guthrie worked together to develop a submission to Ms Hodgkinson seeking funding to implement a JR trial in Cowra, incorporating the establishment of a JR Authority (see Appendix H).

On 8 November 2016, NSW Member for Liverpool, the Hon. Paul Lynch MP, placed the following Question on Notice (No 4417) to the NSW Attorney General:

1. What has been the result of your discussions about a Justice Reinvestment Scheme for Cowra?
2. Will you and the Government fund a Justice Reinvestment Scheme in Cowra?

On 13 December 2016, the Attorney General provided the following answer:

'The Department of Justice is reviewing the proposed Justice Reinvestment Scheme':

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/la/papers/pages/qanda-tracking-details.aspx?pk=234160>



Artist: Jayelem Cutmore



Artist: Juanita Gordon



Artist: Trent Field

7. ADVOCACY AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

A high level of interest has been shown from various quarters, including the media, academic institutions and other advocacy organisations in how the study was conducted, its findings, and whether these could have potential more broadly for governments and policy makers.

Professor Michael Levy and Dr Jill Guthrie provided a joint submission to the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory.

<https://childdetentionnt.royalcommission.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>

In their submission they highlighted the importance and relevance of JR approaches. In June 2017 Professor Levy and Dr Guthrie were invited to give evidence at the Royal Commission.

In addition, numerous opportunities for knowledge exchange about the study, where the researchers were invited to present at conferences and seminars, were taken up, as outlined below.

Advocacy through media

On 25 January 2016, journalist Marie McNerney wrote an online article for Croakey about the research project:

<https://croakey.org/meet-the-perfect-town-taking-an-historic-step-towards-better-justice/>

On 20 September 2016, an article titled 'Justice Reinvestment: Cowra research suggests non-custodial solutions could save millions' appeared on the ABC online network:

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-09-20/justice-reinvestment-cowra-research-suggests-non-custodial/7860722>

On 22 October 2016, journalist John Power wrote an article for The Saturday Paper about the research:

<https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/law-crime/2016/10/22/justice-reinvestment-trial-cowra/14770548003883>

A follow-up article to the Croakey article by Ms McNerney appeared in The Guardian on 23 February 2017:

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/feb/23/the-small-town-trying-to-shift-spending-from-punishment-to-prevention>

Knowledge Exchange

Michael Levy presented to the Second International Conference on Law Enforcement and Public Health (LEPHCON) Conference in Amsterdam in October 2014.

http://www.lephcon.com.au/files/1014/1491/9443/Mol_3_Guthrie_Levy.pdf

Jill Guthrie presented to the Crime, Justice and Social Democracy Conference in Brisbane in July 2015.

<http://eprints.qut.edu.au/93147/>

Jill Guthrie presented to the Sustainable Economic Growth for Regional Australia (SEGRA) Conference in Bathurst in October 2015.

<http://2015.segra.com.au/segra15ConfProc/Day%202/Best%20Practice/Best%20Practice%205/jill-guthrie-bp.pdf>

Jill Guthrie presented to the Reintegration Puzzle Conference in Geelong in June 2016.

Jill Guthrie presented to the Australian Institute of Judicial Administrators Indigenous Justice Conference in Alice Springs in August 2016.

<http://www.aija.org.au/IJC%202016/Papers/Guthrie.pdf>

Jill Guthrie presented to the Australian Human Rights and Discrimination Commissioners Annual meeting in Canberra in October 2016.

Jill Guthrie presented at the Australian National University's Alice Tay Lecture in law and Human Rights in Canberra in November 2016.

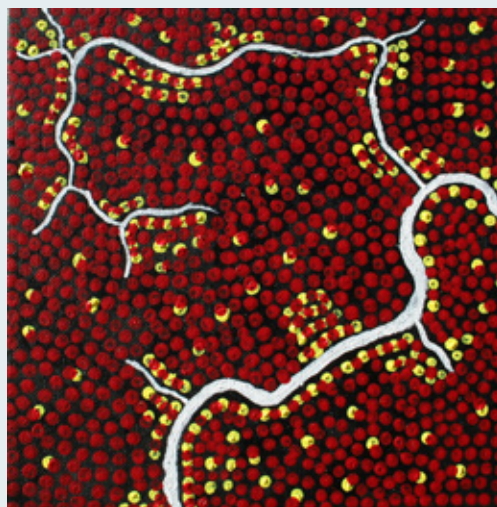
<http://cass.anu.edu.au/news/events/2016-annual-alice-tay-lecture-human-rights-unpacking-justice-reinvestment>



Artist: Jamal Cutmore



Artist: Juanita Gordon



Artist: Trent Field

8. OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

The following information about JR is not intended to be exhaustive.

ANU project website

More comprehensive information about the research project can be found at:

<http://ncis.anu.edu.au/cowra/>

Just Reinvest NSW

Just Reinvest NSW formed as an independent, non-profit, membership-based, incorporated association in May 2012. It works to let people know about JR and why it should become policy in NSW.

<http://www.justreinvest.org.au/>

NSW Parliamentary Research Office e-brief

The NSW Parliamentary Research Office produced an e-brief (No. 07/2016) in December 2016 which summarised JR from an international and national perspective at that date, discussed developments in the United States and the United Kingdom, and referred to the Cowra research project and other initiatives in Australia.

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/researchpapers/Pages/Justicereinvestment.aspx>

Smart Justice

Smart Justice is a coalition of organisations in Victoria led by the Federation of Community Legal Centres (Victoria) Inc., committed to promoting a community development approach to JR that resources communities and their young people to discuss and decide what early intervention, prevention or diversion supports are needed by young people in their community.

http://www.smartjustice.org.au/cb_pages/justicereinvestment_sjfp.php

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioners' Reports

JR first emerged in the Australian context through the work of Dr Tom Calma in 2009 when he was the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner. His work was continued by Mr Mick Gooda and reflected in his 2015 Social Justice Commissioner report, and then by Ms Robynne Quiggin and reflected in her 2016 Social Justice Commissioner report.

http://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/content/social_justice/sj_report/sjreport09/pdf/sjr_2009_web.pdf

<https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-social-justice/publications/social-justice-and-nati-0>

https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/AHRC_SJNTR_2016.pdf

Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee

In October 2016, the Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee recommended JR in its Report on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experiences of law enforcement and justice services.

http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Finance_and_Public_Administration/Legalassistanceservices/Report

The Council of State Governments Justice Center

The US-based Council of State Governments Justice Center provides practical, nonpartisan, research-driven strategies and tools to increase public safety and strengthen communities, including to the 26 US States that have implemented JR policies into their jurisdictions.

<https://csgjusticecenter.org/jr/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VNII9IW2468&feature=youtu.be>



Artist: Jayelem Cutmore



Artist: Juanita Gordon



Artist: Trent Field

9. THE RESEARCH TEAM

Chief investigators

The chief investigators on the Australian Research Council funded research application were Dr Jill Guthrie, Professor Michael Levy, Dr Phyll Dance, Dr Kamalini Lokuge, Professor Tom Calma, Professor Tony Butler, Professor Mick Dodson and Professor Lisa Strelein.

Research reference group

A Research Reference Group, consisting of representatives of the Cowra Shire Council and the Cowra Aboriginal Land Council, Dr Laurie Bamblett, Professor Pene Matthew (ANU human rights lawyer and academic), Professor Todd Clear (US-based JR academic) and his Honour Judge Peter Johnstone (President of the NSW Children's Court), was established early in the life of the research project. It was also hoped that a representative of NSW Justice Health might be able to join the reference group. While resource constraints prevented this, officers from that department provided valuable contributions throughout the project.

Other contributors

Other colleagues who worked on the project were Dr Paul Simpson (UNSW), Mr Len Kanowski, Associate Professor Cressida Fforde, Dr Bill Fogarty, Dr Melissa Lovell, Ms Corinne Walsh and Dr Fleur Adcock.



Artist: Jamal Cutmore



Artist: Trent Field



Artist: Chris Dziergas

10. AFTERWORDS: REFLECTIONS FROM COWRA PEOPLE

Mr Les Coe, CEO, Cowra Aboriginal Land Council and Wiradjuri Elder

From my perspective, the whole process of this research project has been a journey that has helped bring the whole community together. We haven't necessarily addressed all of our differences, but at least we're talking now. The process has not tried to make any promises: it's important not to make promises. Too many people come in and make promises but they don't always deliver. What some people promise isn't always clear in other people's minds. Aboriginal people are sick of empty promises. For us, that's water off a duck's back. Aboriginal people won't believe empty promises and we will walk away. It's all about trust. Regardless of whether we are funded for the JR program, from what I can see, the community has already received benefits from this whole process. We can't even measure it at the moment, but for me this has already started the journey of healing. This was an unexpected result and I think what comes out of this will give us a lot more unexpected results too.

Ms Fran Stead, CEO, Cowra Information and Neighbourhood Centre

From my eyes, the benefits that have come from the research project are already evident. Partnerships are already forming, and the new, never before collaboration is an exciting new area. Personally, I have not seen our whole community heading in the same direction with the same goal. We have gained new friendships with a wealth of knowledge and new ways of thinking have emerged. A brighter future is a given, we are 100% committed to making Justice Reinvestment in Cowra happen.

I strongly feel the time for change is here, there are no promises, and there is no magic wand, and I am under no illusion that this is a quick fix. We are here for the long haul, because everyone is so very much worth it. I will conclude with Cowra Information and Neighbourhood Centre's vision of 'Local Supporting Local'.

Councillor Bill West, Mayor Cowra Shire Council

The journey with Justice Reinvestment has been a remarkable one from the outset to the final report, now giving so much hope to delivering a ground up process to continue to provide a better way of dealing with young people at risk and at jeopardy of incarceration or in incarceration.

Quickly identifying there must be a better way than just locking up, gaining support from the community via a thoughtful and considered approach, it has become apparent that the JR process has unveiled a side of the community that is steeped in compassion and a willingness to help.

The hallmark of the process has been the complete community involvement and support, and the fact that there were no promises made for an easy solution and a clear understanding that results would come from community involvement and ownership of all groups.

Truly the team from ANU are to be congratulated on looking for a new and better way of dealing with an issue that costs both financially and socially in what is fast becoming unacceptable.

I have every confidence that given correct support the Justice Reinvestment project will be a wonderful tool leading to the essential and desired change. Whilst it will be challenging, the aim to support youth and particularly Aboriginal youth is a goal worthy of the highest consideration, an aspiration of this generation to the next

Ms Hellen Horton, Youth Worker, Cowra Information and Neighbourhood Centre

As I look back on the Justice Reinvestment study, I have been blessed to have true insight to the young people for whom this could potentially change their course in life, and saddened that I have seen the path that is taken when there has been no change in a failing system.

I have seen young people fail and fall, go and serve their sentence, grow into better people in a lot of ways, come home standing tall – bulletproof. From this moment, so glad to be home, I have seen judgement and small-mindedness lance their puffed out chests and, with relentless repetition, cause them to cave and walk lowly. In this mindset, feeling they are worthless, they have acted with the belief they are worth nothing, and in these actions become another victim of an unforgiving judicial system – they have become entrenched.

There is a light in these young people, one that wants to be fanned, protected and harnessed. In the current way, and the ease of incarceration and the judicial system as an ‘answer’ these lights, in all their beauty, are snuffed out far too soon and the light often remains dim.

There has to be direction to look for a new way. I want to fight for these kids like they are my own, and I want to fight with like-minded people on their behalf and bring a town together to raise good young men and women. What we’re doing isn’t working, JR brings hope, where there is hope we can keep the lights in these kids bright ... blinding.

Dr Jill Guthrie

My colleague Michael Levy has worked in justice health for over two decades as a physician and researcher, enabling him to directly observe the devastating effects that the justice system has for some young people and their families and communities. He persuaded me that we should look at exploring the potential of Justice Reinvestment in a discrete community to help end that cycle. It transpired that Cowra, my home town, met the criteria for testing our hypothesis. I have strong ties to Cowra, having grown up there, gone to school, to TAFE, and having worked there before departing for greater adventures some thirty years ago. Even after such a long time away, in many ways those ties gave me entrée to the community to do this project. But I believe the people of Cowra have always been open to taking up a challenge, particularly when it comes to their young people. I believe the principles of JR are transferable across Australia, but it requires local leadership and community driven processes. Strong community leadership has been crucial to the success of this project. This was demonstrated at every turn. For that reason, it has been an honour to be part of this research project. I hope the outcomes are of value to the people of Cowra, especially its young people, and to other communities and young people more broadly.

Appendices

A: RECRUITMENT BROCHURE

You can make a difference.

Be part of this important and exciting research.

This research is inclusive of all cultures.

We'd love to hear your experiences of living in Cowra.

**Want to know more?
Contact the research team.**

web: <http://ncis.anu.edu.au/cowra/>
phone: 1800 010 448 (free call)
email: cowra@anu.edu.au

**Cowra's youth of today helping
Cowra's youth of tomorrow**

Do you have ideas on —

- what makes Cowra a great place to live for young people?
- what can make Cowra an even better place to live for young people?

We'd love to hear from you.



The collage features a circular landscape photo on the left, a central oval photo of a bridge, a QR code below it, and two Polaroid photos on the right labeled 'Lockhart River Bridge' and 'Milly Gorge Hill'.

Researchers from The Australian National University invite you to be part of a research project funded through the Australian Research Council.

We are looking into ways of reducing the number of young people getting into trouble with the Justice system.

We will be conducting interviews and discussion forums during 2014. Information gathered through these will be analysed to try to build a case for better organising services and resources that may help prevent young people from getting into trouble with the justice system.

The research uses aspects of 'Justice Reinvestment' — an idea which can lead to re-thinking the justice system so that large sums of money are not spent on imprisoning people for low-level crime, and instead reinvesting into the community.

This research is community-driven.
It's taking place only in Cowra.

A locally-based Research Reference Group is assisting our understanding of services available across education, health, community services and the justice systems.

We'd love to hear from you if you are:

- Aged 16-24 years and living in Cowra
- Living in Cowra and have ever been involved with NSW Juvenile Justice or NSW Corrective Services system
- Aged 16-24 years, your last address was Cowra, and you're currently in NSW Juvenile Justice or NSW Corrective Services system
- A parent, guardian or carer of any of the above
- A service provider working with any of the above

The research is inclusive of all cultures

What we'd like to explore with you

What 'works' about living in Cowra?

What 'doesn't work' about living in Cowra?

What can be done to help everyone live a positive life in Cowra?

What can be done to stop young people getting into trouble with the justice system?



The collage features a Polaroid photo of a landscape labeled 'View from Belterus Hill', a central Polaroid photo of a shelter labeled 'Bus shelter at Examble', and another Polaroid photo of a landscape on the right.

B: RECRUITMENT FLYER

Cowra's youth of today helping Cowra's youth of tomorrow



view from Bellevue Hill

- What can be done to help everyone live a positive life in Cowra?
- What can be done to stop young people getting into trouble with the justice system?



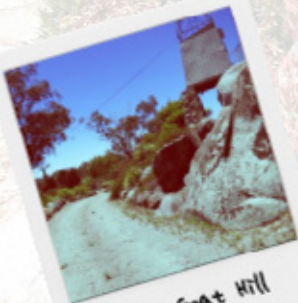
bus shelter at Erambie

Researchers from The Australian National University will be conducting interviews and discussion forums in Cowra throughout 2014.

**Want to know more?
Contact the research team!**

**We'd love to hear about your
experiences of living in Cowra.**

web: <http://ncis.anu.edu.au/cowra/>
phone: 1800 010 448 (free call)
email: cowra@anu.edu.au



Billy Goat Hill



C: RESEARCH PROJECT ARTICLES APPEARING IN THE COWRA GUARDIAN

Cowra Guardian

Rethinking the justice system

June 5, 2013, 5 p.m

Cowra will be the site of an exploratory study looking for ways to prevent young people from being imprisoned. Australian National University (ANU) researchers will engage with the town during the project, which could lead to recommendations for reducing the number of young people in jail.

The research, funded by a three-year Australian Research Council grant, will explore potential use of 'Justice Reinvestment', an approach to addressing crime which emphasises concentrating health and social welfare services in areas with high populations of offenders. Under this approach, which researchers say requires policymakers to take a long-term view, money usually spent on the criminal justice system is diverted to these services, which address the underlying causes of crime. Research fellow Dr Jill Guthrie said under Justice Reinvestment prison is considered a last resort for dangerous and serious offenders. "It actively shifts the culture away from imprisonment to restoration within the community," she said.

Researchers found Cowra an 'ideal case study site' due partly to its stable population and middle range crime profile. It is also suitable because its economy does not benefit directly from a prison. Working relationships to increase the trust necessary for the study have been enhanced as Cowra Shire Council and the local Aboriginal Land Council met several times with researchers since March to learn more about the project.

"This study is a conversation with the town to explore what are the conditions, the understandings, the agreements that would need to be in place in order to return those juveniles who are incarcerated in detention centres away from the town, back to the town, and to keep those juveniles who are at risk of incarceration from coming into contact with the criminal justice system," Dr Guthrie said.

"The project invites the entire Cowra community to participate in exploring the issues of incarceration of its young people. "While we know that the impact of incarceration is greater for Australian Indigenous populations, this research will focus on issues of incarceration of all young people from Cowra, and community options will be explored from a whole of community perspective."

Cowra Guardian

Keeping young people out of jail

Jan. 10, 2014, 8:30 a.m.

The criminal justice system can be a frightening, overwhelming and complicated maze and one that most people generally want to avoid. A group of researchers from Canberra has chosen Cowra as the site of an exploratory study looking for ways to stop people, particularly young people, from ending up in jail.

After beginning the ethics, community consultation and approval process in March last year, the team from the Australian National University (ANU) will soon begin their research project, working with the community through workshops and questionnaires to discover issues that could ultimately lead to recommendations for reducing the number of young people in gaol. The research, funded by a three-year Australian Research Council Grant, will explore the potential of 'Justice Reinvestment,' an approach to addressing crime which emphasises concentrating on health and social services.

Research Fellow Dr Jill Guthrie, along with other members of the research team, held a series of meetings last year with several people involved with the project, including representatives from the Cowra Shire Council, Cowra Aboriginal Land Council, Dr Louise Baker, representatives from the PCYC and Judge Peter Johnstone, President of the NSW Children's Court. A Community Forum held in mid-December saw several topics and ideas raised, particularly in relation to the recruitment process.

“Everyone was very engaged, very helpful and the meeting certainly went better than we could have hoped for,” Dr Guthrie said. “A lot of ideas were discussed on how we can encourage people to self-recruit.”

Beginning the recruitment process around March, Dr Guthrie said the next step will essentially involve “encouraging a conversation” with young people, aged approximately between 16-24 years on their experiences and their understanding of the criminal justice system. Working with local high schools and various organisations including police, health and council, the team will be distributing information flyers then conducting interviews and holding focus groups to gather their information.

“There’s a few cohorts we’re looking at; these include all young people living in Cowra, even those who haven’t had contact with the criminal justice system; they might include people who’ve been in the criminal justice system but are now living back here and young people who are currently away in detention” Dr Guthrie said. “We’d like to get an idea through the town of what the town would like to keep its young people here and how to return and retain young people back who have been away in detention - what needs to be set up in order for this to happen?”

Under Justice Reinvestment, Dr Guthrie said, with the permission of the community, prison is considered a last resort to be used for dangerous and serious offenders, not for those who have committed less serious offences. “It actively shifts the culture away from imprisonment to restoration within the community” she said.

Researchers found Cowra an ‘ideal case study site’ partly due to its stable population and middle range crime profile, and because its economy does not benefit directly from a prison. While Dr Guthrie said that ideally the three year project will assist policy makers and see Cowra become a town with Justice Reinvestment agreements, there are no promises being made. “It is hypothetical, there’s no promise of any money and when we take it to policy makers they may not even be interested so it’s important everyone’s clear on that,” she said.

Cowra Guardian

Research project launches to keep young people out of jail

March 28, 2014, 8:30 a.m.

A group of Canberra researchers returned to Cowra during the recent Festival weekend to launch their research project looking for ways to stop people, particularly young people, from ending up in jail. After beginning the ethics, community consultation and approval process in March last year, the team from the Australian National University (ANU), the team utilised the International Festival of Understanding to start the interview recruitment process. Research Fellow, Dr Jill Guthrie said the response from Cowra has already been a positive one. “We understand we’re just kicking this off but it’s definitely warming up,” she said. Setting up a stall at the festival, Dr Guthrie said flyers highlighting their research and the proposed interviews with young people were well-received.

“We gave flyers to several community representatives, including Tim, Janine and Shane at the Police Citizens Youth Club, who we will be working closely with. We’ve already conducted two interviews from people who visited the stall,” she said. “We had quite a lot of interest and people indicating they will call; we also expect that young people will tell each other and it will snowball from there.”

Dr Guthrie said the upcoming national Youth Week, held April 4-13 will also provide a chance for the team to “encourage conversations” with young people on their experiences of living in Cowra and what makes Cowra ‘work’ or ‘not work’ for them, as well as their understanding and experience of the criminal justice system. While several service providers, organisations and community groups have been assisting the research, Dr Guthrie made a special thanks to those who helped during the weekend’s event.

“I would like to acknowledge Mayor, Bill West, and Community Projects Officer, Lisa Robertson, for organising for the research team to have the stall and Lawrence Ryan for publicising the research during the festivities,” she said. The research, funded by a three-year Australian Research Council Grant, will explore

the potential of 'Justice Reinvestment,' an approach which emphasises concentrating on health and social services. Under Justice Reinvestment, Dr Guthrie said, prison is considered a last resort to be used for dangerous and serious offenders, not for those who have committed less serious offences. "It actively shifts the culture away from imprisonment to restoration within the community" she said.

Researchers found Cowra an 'ideal case study site' partly due to its stable population and middle range crime profile, and because its economy does not benefit directly from a prison. Interested in being involved in this study? The research team would love to hear from you if you are: *aged 16-24 years and living in Cowra; *Living in Cowra and have ever been involved with NSW Juvenile Justice or NSW Corrective Services system; *Aged 16-24 years, your last address was Cowra, and we're currently in NSW Juvenile Justice or NSW Corrective Services system; *A parent, guardian or carer of any of the above; *A service provider working with any of the above. Contact the research team on 1800 010 448 (free call) or email cowra@anu.edu.au or check out their website <http://ncis.anu.edu.au/cowra/>

Cowra Guardian

Breaking the cycle

April 25, 2014, 8 a.m.

A group of Canberra researchers returned to Cowra during Youth Week as part of their research project looking for ways to stop people, particularly young people, from ending up in jail. ANU Research Fellow, Dr Jill Guthrie said the response from the community had already been a positive one.

"We have been working very closely with organisations in the town including the CLASA Cowra Support Cowra, Cowra Youth Council, Cowra Lions Club, the Police Citizens Youth Club, Cowra High School, Cowra Aboriginal Land Council, Cowra TAFE, Headspace, the Mental Health Service, Cowra Aboriginal Land Council, Cowra Business Council and many other individuals along the way," she said. "There were also

many individual community members that we met during the week. We were very warmly welcomed by everyone."

"There is much interest in the research and we have had quite a lot of interest from people indicating they will participate in the research. We also expect that young people as well as other community members will tell each other and the research and it will snowball from there. "We met a group of senior students at Cowra High School and another group of young people at the TAFE College to let them know about the research and its aims."

The researchers also attended a touch football game which was organised as part of Youth Week by Linda Barron and Lisa Robertson of the Youth Council. It was well attended by about 60 young people playing touch, and around 30 other parents, coaches, PCYC and sports trags. "We took the opportunity to go the Touch Footy to opportunistically talk with young people about the research, and it did result in a couple of interviews which took place later in the week," Dr Guthrie said.



ANU researchers Len Kanowski (centre) and Melissa Lovell (right), with Cowra local Mr Mark Barron

All of these meetings provided the opportunity for the research team to "encourage conversations" with young people on their experiences of living in Cowra and what makes Cowra 'work' or 'not work' for them,

as well as their understanding and experience of the criminal justice system. The research, funded by a three-year Australian Research Council Grant, will explore the potential of 'Justice Reinvestment,' an approach which emphasises concentrating on health and social services. It involves all levels of government (Commonwealth, State, local), non-government organisations, service providers, education, health, commercial and justice sectors.

"For this reason, we are actively involving the local Council through Mayor Councillor Bill West. During our visit I met with officers for the Federal Member for Hume, Angus Taylor, MP, and his office has arranged for the research team to meet with him in his Canberra office in May to inform him of progress with the research," Dr Guthrie said.

Under Justice Reinvestment, Dr Guthrie said prison is considered a last resort to be used for dangerous and serious offenders, not for those who have committed less serious offences. "It actively shifts the culture away from imprisonment to restoration within the community," she said.

Researchers found Cowra an 'ideal case study site' partly due to its stable population and middle range crime profile, and because its economy does not benefit directly from a prison. The research team are keen to hear from anyone interested in being involved in this study? The research team would love to hear from you if you are: * aged 16-24 years and living in Cowra; * Living in Cowra and have ever been involved with NSW Juvenile Justice or NSW Corrective Services system; *Aged 16-24 years, your last address was Cowra, and we're currently in NSW Juvenile Justice or NSW Corrective Services system; * A parent, guardian or carer of any of the above; *A service provider working with any of the above. Dr Guthrie said that the team will return to Cowra again in May for another round of interviews and consultations. Anyone interested in being involved in the research project or simply interested in hearing more about it is encouraged to contact the research team on 1800 010 448 (free call) or email cowra@anu.edu.au or check out their website <http://ncis.anu.edu.au/cowra/>

Cowra Guardian

Community members tell researchers how to make Cowra a better place for young people

Thursday 29 May 2014

As part of an innovative and encouraging research project which is investigating how to keep people under the age of 25 out of the criminal justice system, a group of researchers from the Australian National University visited the NSW town of Cowra last week to hear the perspectives of local community members and service providers.



Students from Cowra High School

Dr Jill Guthrie, Dr Phyll Dance, Dr William Fogarty, Dr Cressida Fforde, Mr Len Kanowski and Ms Corinne Walsh spent five days in Cowra conducting face-to-face interviews and focus groups with a range of people in the community, including school students, school and TAFE teachers, hospital and health workers, mental health workers, PCYC staff, the Land and Shire councils, the judiciary, Centrelink, youth workers, local residents and graduates of an exciting local initiative for young people called the Breakaway program.

This trip marked the second major fieldwork trip as part of the three Australian Research Council-funded research project, titled 'Reducing Indigenous incarceration using Justice Reinvestment: an exploratory case study'. Cowra is an ideal site for this project, Dr Guthrie said, because it does not have a high level of serious crime, but sees regular low-level crime such as break-ins and vandalism. The project kicked off in December 2012, and a number of visits were made to Cowra in 2013 to bring the community on board, obtain ethics approvals, and plan how to recruit participants into the research. Posters, pamphlets and a website have aided in spreading the word about the

project throughout the country town. Data collection has only really begun this year, with the first fieldwork trip conducted in April.

ANU Research Fellow, Dr Jill Guthrie, who is leading the project, said her team has gained invaluable first-hand evidence through talking to key community members about living in Cowra, and what needs to be done to prevent its youth from getting into trouble.

“Service providers and people in the town have given us a wealth of incredibly useful information and we are beginning to identify common themes. For example, we know that when young people are enduring turmoil or rapid change in their lives, or do not have meaningful, sustainable things to engage in, that they are likely become involved in troublesome activities which put them at risk of coming into contact with police and the justice system,” Dr Guthrie said.

“The town is fully aware of what is working and what isn’t – we’ve heard consistent messages from all sectors in Cowra regarding this. What is clear is that sending these kids to detention or jail rarely has any positive outcomes, for any party involved. Imprisonment is very costly and rates of recidivism are high. The aim of our project is to show that there are effective alternatives to prison which ought to be invested in, such as better, more-integrated services, and holistic and long-term initiatives which address the underlying reasons why a person becomes involved in crime in the first place,” explained Dr Guthrie.

Take, for example, the Breakaway program - a unique and successful local initiative which was established in 2003 due to a request from Cowra’s Indigenous community to address behavioural and educational issues among teenage girls. The program has developed further so that all Indigenous students are able to join the course, and some non-Indigenous have also participated. Breakaway has resulted in increased school attendance, improved self-esteem, and has diverted participants from the criminal justice system. The program is run by a committee with members from Cowra High School, Cowra TAFE, PCYC & Greater Western Area Health, and funded by TAFE Western through Cowra TAFE College. In the eleven years it has been running, more than 150 students have graduated from the program, and ANU’s research team were fortunate to be able to conduct a focus group

with a handful of recent Breakaway graduates (see photograph), as well as interview key people currently involved in running the program.

Dr Guthrie expressed her thanks to all those who have participated in the research project to date, adding that everyone has been extremely positive, enthusiastic and cooperative. The ANU research team plan to make a few more trips to Cowra this year and are keen to talk to as many people as possible, especially young people. Please contact the research team on 1800 010 448 (free call), email cowra@anu.edu.au or check out the website <http://ncis.anu.edu.au/cowra/> if you are over the age of 16 and are living/have lived in Cowra, particularly if you or someone you know has ever been involved in some way or other with the Juvenile Justice or Corrective Services System.

Cowra Guardian

Passionate about working with young people

June 11, 2014, 7 a.m.

As part of an innovative research project exploring how to keep people away from the criminal justice system, researchers from the Australian National University returned to Cowra recently to hear from local community members and service providers.

As part of an innovative research project exploring how to keep people away from the criminal justice system, researchers from the Australian National University returned to Cowra recently to hear from local community members and service providers.

Dr Jill Guthrie, Dr Phyll Dance, Dr William Fogarty, Dr Cressida Fforde, Mr Len Kanowski and Ms Corinne Walsh spent five days in Cowra conducting face-to-face interviews and focus groups with a range of people, including senior school students, school and TAFE teachers, hospital and health workers, mental health workers, PCYC staff, the Aboriginal Land Council, the Shire council, judiciary, Centrelink, youth workers, and local residents.



Mr Len Kanowski talks with St Raphael's senior students about what works for young people in Cowra

The visit marked the second fieldwork trip as part of the three year Australian Research Council-funded research project. The project kicked off in December 2012, and a number of visits were made to Cowra in 2013 to bring the community on board, obtain ethics approvals, and plan how to recruit participants into the research. Posters, pamphlets and a website have aided in spreading the word about the project. Data collection began this year with the first fieldwork trip conducted in April.

ANU Research Fellow, Dr Jill Guthrie, who is leading the project, said her team has gained valuable first-hand evidence through talking to key community members including young people about living in Cowra and what can be done to prevent its youth from getting into trouble.

“Service providers and community members have given us a wealth of useful information and we are beginning to identify common themes. It is clear that there are many positive influences in the town and people are passionate about working with young people. A very exciting outcome is the formation of a Youth Group from a meeting with Erambie Community members. We also know, however, that when any young person is enduring turmoil or rapid change in their lives, or does not have meaningful, sustainable things to engage in, they are likely become involved in troublesome activities which put them at risk of coming into contact with police and the justice system,” Dr Guthrie said.

“The community is fully aware of what’s working and what isn’t. We’ve heard consistent messages from all sectors in Cowra. What is clear is that detention or gaol rarely has positive outcomes for any party involved. The aim of our project is to explore effective alternatives to prison which ought to be invested in, such as better, more-integrated services, and holistic

and long-term initiatives which address the underlying reasons why a person gets into trouble in the first place,” explained Dr Guthrie. The research team were fortunate enough to meet with senior students at St Raphael’s High and Cowra High including several graduates of the very successful Breakaway Program and key people currently involved in running the program.

The research team expressed sincere thanks to all those who have participated in the research project to date, adding that everyone has been extremely positive, enthusiastic and cooperative. The research teams plans to make a few more trips to Cowra this year and are keen to talk to as many people as possible, especially young people. They welcome enquiries from anyone interested in the research to contact the research team on 1800 010 448 (free call), email cowra@anu.edu.au or check out the website <http://ncis.anu.edu.au/cowra/> if you are over the age of 16 and are living/have lived in Cowra, particularly if you or someone you know has ever been involved with the Juvenile Justice or Corrective Services System.

Cowra Guardian

Chamber hosts ANU researchers

June 30, 2014, midnight

The Cowra Business Chamber hosted researchers from the Australian National University to its meeting earlier this month to hear about their ongoing project.

The Cowra Business Chamber hosted researchers from the Australian National University to its meeting on Wednesday, June 11 to hear about the research project - Cowra’s Youth of Today helping Cowra’s Youth of Tomorrow. Over the past few months the Guardian has been running articles about the progress of the research. Dr Phyll Dance, Mr Len Kanowski and Dr Jill Guthrie said they were warmly welcomed to the meeting by members of the Business Chamber to the meeting.

“We would like to thank the Business Chamber, especially its Chair, Mr Ben Casey, for the invitation to attend the meeting. Each meeting is held at a member’s business venue - and last Wednesday we

had the opportunity to be hosted by Mr Mark Rankin of Chernco who took us all on a tour of his exciting business venture,” Dr Dance said.

“We found it extremely interesting to be a part of the Chamber’s discussions. In particular, we really appreciated being asked to inform the Council about the research, its progress so far and its future directions.”

It’s clear that members of the Chamber, being community members and parents themselves, have a clear understanding of how young people can make some unwise decisions in their early years, but more importantly, that those decisions should not be allowed to taint them for the rest of their lives. Attendees quickly understood the aims and objectives of the research and were keen to be involved.

“They appreciated why Cowra is a unique location in which to undertake the research, as well as some of the underlying considerations about why some young people might find themselves in a situation that brings them in touch with the law,” Mr Kanowski said.

“Business Chamber members were very mindful of the fact that young people often need to be given a second chance when they do make mistakes, and that even older, experienced people can make mistakes,” Dr Guthrie said.

The research project is exploring issues of Justice Reinvestment theory. Justice Reinvestment is a rethinking of public policy so that taxpayer funds are reinvested into the community instead of being spent on imprisoning people for low-level criminal activity. That rethinking includes all levels of government and non-government organisations, including the business sector, as well as service providers, the education sector, the health sector and judiciary.

“The meeting resulted in some good discussion about how these issues might impact on the business sector in town. We look forward to further discussion with the business sector and indeed how all sectors might be able to work together,” Dr Guthrie said. More information about the research can be found at <http://ncis.anu.edu.au/cowra/>

Cowra Guardian

Cowra youth study to benefit community

Sept. 8, 2014, 4 a.m.

Cowra is participating in an exploratory study which is exploring the effects of creating a safer community. The study looks at the potential use of ‘Justice Reinvestment,’ with the theme being “Cowra’s Youth of today helping Cowra’s Youth of Tomorrow.”

Being conducted by researchers from the Australian National University and funded through an Australian Research Council grant, the project commenced in early 2013 and will run until early 2016. Over the past few months The Cowra Guardian has been running articles on engagement of Cowra citizens and stakeholders in the research.

Justice Reinvestment is a framework for re-thinking the criminal justice system so that large sums of taxpayer money are not spent imprisoning people for low-level criminal activity. It requires a systemic, whole-of-government, whole-of-community approach. Justice Reinvestment has been studied in the United States (where it originated over ten years ago), the United Kingdom and in at least two other Australian towns as a possible solution to burgeoning levels of incarceration. The other Australian trials are in Bourke in far west New South Wales and Ceduna in South Australia. Focused primarily on lower level criminal activity, it is underpinned by economic cost-benefit analysis and requires broad political will, and consensus of a wide range of stakeholders including the citizenry, bureaucrats, judiciary, media, service providers, non-government organisations.

Members of the research team Dr Jill Guthrie, Dr Melissa Lovell and Dr Michael Levy, AM and members of the Research Reference Group Mr Les Coe, Mr Geoffrey Steele, Dr Lawry Bamblett, the Mayor of Cowra Councillor Bill West, and the Cowra Shire Council General Manager Mr Paul Devery met recently in Cowra to discuss the next phase of the research which includes a Community Forum planned for early 2015.

“We are thrilled with the level of community engagement in the research including the commitment by members of the Research Reference Group who are keen for us to work together towards the Community Forum and others we’ve met over the past few months of the research,” Dr Guthrie said.

“The Forum will be an opportunity to share information and to workshop options. Information sharing will include feedback from interviews with young people, parents and service providers who have participated in the research project.”

Workshopping of options will be in the form of a ‘Hypothetical’ where participants will canvass ideas for how moneys currently spent on young people in detention could be spent in the community, on health and welfare and other services as appropriate. “An underlying philosophy of Justice Reinvestment methodology is that the community - so Cowra - ‘reclaims’ an individual ‘belonging’ to that community - in order words, Cowra as a community takes ownership of all its young people who might be caught up in the juvenile detention system. In this way, it is true Community Development,” Dr Levy said.

The study is a ‘conversation with the town’ to explore issues such as the conditions, the understandings, the agreements that would need to be in place in order to return those young people from Cowra who are currently incarcerated in juvenile detention facilities.’ “The response from the town has been very positive. We really look forward to working more with Cowra citizens and stakeholders in the lead up to the Community Forum in 2015.”

“While everyone we meet through the research is aware that the research is exploratory - which means there is no guarantee of funding coming from it - they are keen to a part of evidence building about the important issue of juvenile justice and keeping young people out of prison,” Dr Lovell said.

Anyone wishing to find out more about the research or the proposed Community Forum is welcome to contact members of the research team at the Australian National University on 02 6125 3993 or visit the project website at <http://ncis.anu.edu.au/cowra/>

Cowra Guardian

Former Australian of the Year to co-chair Justice Reinvestment forum in 2015

Dec. 3, 2014, 6 p.m.

Cowra Mayor, Cr Bill West, and Councillor Ms Ruth Fagan, together with distinguished community leaders from the Cowra Aboriginal Land Council, Mr Les Coe and Mr Geoffrey Steele, recently travelled to the Australian National University (ANU) in their role as research reference group members for a Justice Reinvestment research project where Cowra is the case study site.

The group’s trip coincided with a talk given by Professor Mick Dodson AM, Director of the National Centre for Indigenous Studies at the ANU, on Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians.

The Cowra Guardian has been highlighting how the research project has been progressing over the past twelve months. Cowra Councillor Ruth Fagan and Professor Mick Dodson will co-facilitate the Justice Reinvestment Forum to be held in May 2015. Justice Reinvestment is a framework for re-thinking the criminal justice system.

Justice Reinvestment is a framework for re-thinking the criminal justice system so that large sums of taxpayer money are not spent imprisoning people for low-level criminal activity. It requires a systemic, whole-of-government, whole-of-community approach. Focussed primarily on lower level criminal activity, it is underpinned by rigorous economic analysis and requires broad political will, together with consensus of a wide range of stakeholders including the citizenry, bureaucrats, judiciary, media, service providers, non-government organisations. The Cowra research project is testing the methodology that underpins Justice Reinvestment theory.



Les Coe, Geoffrey Steele, Jill Guthrie, Corinne Walsh, Mayor Bill West, Melissa Lovell, Councillor Ruth Fagan and Phyll Dance met in Canberra recently to discuss the ongoing Justice Reinvestment research project.

The Cowra group's trip coincided with a talk given by Professor Mick Dodson AM, Director of the National Centre for Indigenous Studies at the ANU, on Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians. Professor Dodson, a member of the Yawuru peoples of Broome in Western Australia, was Australia's first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner and was named Australian of the Year in 2009. He has long been a prominent advocate on land rights and other issues affecting Indigenous peoples in Australia and around the world.

"Despite being the first peoples of Australia for more than 50,000 years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are still not recognised in the Australian Constitution", Professor Dodson said. The group met with ANU researchers, including Professor Dodson, to progress planning for a stakeholder forum as part of the Cowra Justice Reinvestment research project.

"We were delighted to be invited to Professor Dodson's talk and to then have the opportunity to meet with colleagues we have been working with over the past eighteen months on the Justice Reinvestment research project," Mr Coe said. Councillor Ruth Fagan and Professor Dodson will co-facilitate the Forum to be held in May 2015.

"The Stakeholder Forum will be an opportunity to share information and to workshop options. Information sharing as part of the Forum will include feedback from interviews with young people, parents and service providers who have participated in the research project," ANU researcher, Dr Jill Guthrie said.

Cr West said Cowra is very excited to be part of this important research. "An underlying philosophy of Justice Reinvestment methodology is that the community - so Cowra - 'reclaims' an individual 'belonging' to that community - in other words, Cowra as a community takes ownership of all its young people who might be caught up in the juvenile detention system. In this way, it is a Community development approach," he said.

Mr Coe reflected on the research, highlighting the importance of the research. "I see it as a conversation to explore what needs to be in place so that when young people from Cowra who are currently in detention return to town we have all the proper supports in place for them, so they don't get caught up in the cycle of recidivism," he said.

"I welcome the opportunity to co-facilitate the Forum with Professor Dodson, such a distinguished Australian. I am sure our skills and qualities will complement each other," Councillor Fagan said.

Cowra Guardian

Justice Reinvestment Project entering its final year

April 20, 2015, 9:50 a.m.

Dr Jill Guthrie, research fellow from the Australian National University, is the Chief Investigator on the project, titled Reducing incarceration by testing Justice Reinvestment theory and methodology: an exploratory case study.

On Wednesday, March 25, the mayor of Cowra, Cr Bill West, and Deputy Mayor, Cr Ruth Fagan, visited the Australian National University in Canberra, as part of the collaborative research project between the University and the Cowra community investigating alternatives to imprisonment.

Dr Guthrie delivered a lunchtime seminar, providing an update on the project. "The abiding message that we as researchers are learning is the need to 'Hasten Slowly' when undertaking community driven research. The community has been fully engaged in the research project and this is demonstrated by the ongoing commitment of the Research Reference Group, which

includes the mayor and Councillor Fagan and other leading community members including Mr Les Coe,” Dr Guthrie said.



Mayor Bill West visited the Australian National University in Canberra, as part of the collaborative research project between the University and the Cowra community investigating alternatives to imprisonment.

The three year ARC-funded research project - which began in 2013 - sees Dr Guthrie and a team of researchers from The Australian National University working closely with Cowra community members, to explore the theory and research methodology of ‘Justice Reinvestment’ as a way of preventing young people from ending up in the criminal justice system. Numerous interviews and focus groups have been conducted with many people at all levels - from service providers to politicians to young people who have been in jail or detention themselves.

In addition to the inter-disciplinary research team from the ANU, the research is being guided by a Research Reference Group comprising representatives of the Cowra Shire Council (Mayor, Deputy Mayor and General Manager) representatives from the Cowra Aboriginal Land Council, the President of NSW Children’s Court, an ANU-based human rights lawyer and US-based JR academic.

Mayor Bill West expressed his personal and professional support for the research at Dr Guthrie’s presentation and hoped it would help bring about positive outcomes. The goal is that the research will help change current attitudes, policies and approaches to incarceration and alternatives to incarceration. There is currently research occurring internationally which shows the merits of the justice reinvestment approach.

In keeping with the participatory action research design, continuous consultation and workshops with Cowra community members has occurred over the last

two years to ensure they are involved in decisions that empower them to explore alternatives to incarceration for their young people. “Since the very start, when the research first kicked off in 2013, we have had strong commitment and support from all facets of the Cowra community to the project which is very inspiring to see,” told Dr Guthrie.

This research project is now entering its final year, and the next major phase is a stakeholder forum, being held in Cowra over two half days in late May 2015. The aim of this forum is for the research team to present findings, and to give service providers and community members who have participated in the research to date the opportunity to deliberate and make recommendations for policy and practice. This forum will be facilitated by Cowra Deputy Mayor, Cr Ruth Fagan, and Director of the National Centre for Indigenous Studies, Professor Mick Dodson.

The research team are still welcoming input into the project and encourage Cowra community to contact them on 1800 010 448 (free call), email cowra@anu.edu.au or check out the website <http://ncis.anu.edu.au/cowra/>

Of particular interest is those over the age of 16 who are living or have lived in Cowra, particularly those who have (or know someone who has) ever been involved in some way or other with the Juvenile Justice or Corrective Services System.

Cowra Guardian

The Cowra Justice Reinvestment project, protecting the community and providing alternatives to jail

9 Nov 2015, 10 p.m.

The Cowra Justice Reinvestment project, which looks at alternatives to jail and better ways to ensure community justice, has been presented to more than 200 people at major regional conference at Charles Sturt University in Bathurst. The Sustainable Economic Growth for Regional Australia (SEGRA) Conference is Australia’s premier conference on regional issues. It aims to help regional, rural and remote Australia to

source and identify the techniques, skills and issues they need to address to achieve successful economic growth and development.

Dr Jill Guthrie from The Australian National University (ANU) presented on the Justice Reinvestment exploratory research project that has been underway in Cowra over the past two years. Dr Guthrie's talk on the progress of the research, and informed SEGRA participants of the outcomes from the Stakeholder Forum held in Cowra in May 2015. The project has considered alternatives to jail and how to better spend the around \$23 million which had been spent over the past 10 years to imprisoning Cowra citizens for crimes which the Cowra community considered would be amenable to a Justice Reinvestment approach.

"The presentation prompted a lot of interest and discussion," Dr Guthrie said. "In the same way that Cowra stakeholders were surprised by the level of spending on incarceration for what can be considered low level criminal activities, attendees at the SEGRA conference were similarly astounded by the amount of spending on locking people up for low level criminal activities - particularly young people - and how those monies could be spent in ways that value those young people and their communities." The next steps in the research project will be a Justice Reinvestment Resolution to be considered by the Cowra Shire Council in early December and a public presentation on progress of the research project.

Cowra community members are invited to attend the public meeting as did Cowra Mayor, Councillor Bill West. "Key policymakers and stakeholders will be been invited to attend the public meeting including the Federal member and the State members representing Cowra," he said. "It is hoped that the evidence that the research project has provided will enable a Justice Reinvestment trial to be conducted in town."

The SEGRA conference, established in 1997, provides a unique opportunity for all sections of the Australian community, rural and urban, to explore the key issues affecting regional, rural and remote Australia and be part of providing positive sustainable outcomes to ensure future prosperity and sustainability. With a theme of Leading and Growing Sustainable Regions, the 2015 SEGRA conference included agendas such

as environment, productive landscapes, attracting investment, emerging industries, human capital, export and trade - and the policy settings needed to ensure regional Australia's continuing role in the national agenda.

Anyone wishing to attend the public presentation should contact Dr Jill Guthrie on 02 6125 3993, or Ms Corinne Walsh at 02 6125 7573 (Australian National University), or Ms Tracey Robinson at Cowra Shire council on 6340 2000.

Cowra Guardian

Council supports project aimed at re-directing funds spent on prisons

Dec 9, 2015

Jailing Cowra residents has cost us \$46 million

Jailing Cowra citizens has cost approximately \$46m according to a Justice Reinvestment project held in the town over the past two a half years, figures which prompted mayor Bill West to call for continued support into the project.

In a report to this week's Cowra Shire Council meeting Cr West recommend the council push for establishment of a Justice Reinvestment pilot in Cowra.

The pilot, Cr West said, would include the formation of a Justice Reinvestment Authority and a Justice Reinvestment Accord in Cowra.

The Authority, Cr West said, would concentrate on finding suitable funding to appoint a CEO, together with the administrative support and infrastructure to run the Authority.

The Justice Reinvestment Accord would be reliant on the establishment of the Authority and would aim to achieve significant and lasting social change as a way of tackling complex social issues.

"Community driven research shows that approximately \$46 million has been spent on incarcerating Cowra citizens over the past 10 years," Cr West said.

"Almost half of this was for crimes which this community considers to be Justice Reinvestment amenable."

“Money that would have been spent on incarcerating medium to low security prisons is instead invested in supporting programs and services at the local community level which aim to address systemic disadvantage.

“Reinvesting prison expenditure into communities allows a broad range of programs from healthcare, housing, education and job training to be strategically implemented to maximise the potential to reduce crime and reoffending,” Cr West said.

A team of researchers from the Australian National University in Canberra has been working closely with Cowra on a case study for reducing incarceration using Justice Reinvestment for the past two and a half years.

Professor Mick Dodson AM and Dr Jill Guthrie presented their findings to council on Monday, with the aim of not spending taxpayer money on incarcerating people for low level criminal activity.

“We as researchers are very proud to be involved with the research and the Cowra community,” Professor Dodson said.

“It’s simply a research project in which we try to test justice reinvestment methodology.”

Cr West said many interviews, meeting, workshops and discussions have been conducted during this time with a range of people in Cowra and beyond to find out their views on how to keep young people in particular out of trouble.

“It’s been a great journey for our community,” Cr West said.

The project is due to wrap up at the end of April next year.

QUICK BITES: Support for Justice Reinvestment

Mayor Bill West: Wonderful work going into this. It’s not a silver bullet but it could reduce incarceration in numbers and keep young people out of trouble

Cr Kevin Wright: It’s important to get his off the ground. It’s an investment in our young people.

Cr Bruce Miller: It’s disappointing in this day and age we need something like this. I fully support the process.

Cr Ruth Fagan: I feel privileged to be involved, it’s a great opportunity for us.

Cr Ray Walsh: The costs are well laid out. It’s a sad loss of potential and a big economic loss there too. The project will help remedy that.

OPINION: What we say

WORTHY OF ALL OUR SUPPORT

Can you imagine the good that could be done from the introduction of a Justice Reinvestment program in Cowra.

According to a study conducted over the past two and one half years the cost of incarcerating Cowra residents over the past 10 years has been \$46 million.

Approximately \$23 million of this has been for crimes considered Justice Reinvestment amenable.

Under Justice Reinvestment this money is directed back to the community.

That’s an extra \$2.3 million per year for health, education and community facilities.

We live in a great little community now but imagine how much better it would be if this funding was available.

State member Katrina Hodgkinson is already behind the idea pointing out to her colleagues in State Parliament in October that under Justice Reinvestment large sums of taxpayer money are not spent on imprison people for low level criminal activity such as traffic offences, public order offences and justice procedure offences. Instead a portion of the funds are directed back to the community.

Already similar schemes operate successfully in 30 states in the United State.

Cowra Guardian

Justice Reinvestment program reaches new milestone

8 Jan 2016, midnight

The Justice Reinvestment (JR) research project, a collaboration between the Australian National University and the community of Cowra, has reached an important milestone. The two and a half year research project has been examining the value of Justice Reinvestment, which sees the money spent on incarceration people for low level crimes, channelled into providing them and their community with support and training. The Cowra Shire Council adopted a Justice Reinvestment Resolution in December, with Mayor Bill West recommending that the Council push for the establishment of a Justice Reinvestment pilot in Cowra. 'The JR Resolution is an important mechanism through which we can now work towards the next phase of the project, which is to seek funding to implement the findings of the research', lead researcher Dr Jill Guthrie said.

Representatives of the Cowra Shire Council, the Neighbourhood Centre and the Cowra Aboriginal Land Council and the ANU research team met with Member for Cootamundra local member, Ms Katrina Hodgkinson, on Friday, December 11, to discuss how recommendations from the research project can move towards implementation of a Justice Reinvestment Authority in Cowra. 'We had a very warm and positive meeting with Ms Hodgkinson. I very much appreciated that Ms Hodgkinson took time out of her busy schedule to meet with us to discuss how we might be able to move forward with the recommendation', Dr Guthrie said.

'After more than two years of relationship-building, interviewing and collaborating it is exciting to see such support for the notion of Justice Reinvestment,' Corinne Walsh, Research Assistant for the JR project said. "After our successful meeting with Katrina Hodgkinson, I enjoyed a chat and a laugh with her at the Cowra Christmas Festival. It was great to be at such a feel-good occasion with Cowra community members and see many familiar, friendly faces." The

JR research project is now in its final stages, and is due to wrap up at the end of April 2016. It is hoped that after the project's completion, the concept of Justice Reinvestment will be embraced by all levels of Government and ultimately become a feature of policy and practice.

Cowra Guardian

Governor oversees Justice Reinvestment Program process

13 May 2016, midnight

NSW Governor David Hurley visited the Cowra Neighbourhood Centre Tuesday, May 3 to learn the progress of the centres Justice Reinvestment Program. The trial program which has been three years in the making will attempt to see the \$2.3 million spent locally on sending indigenous offenders into the juvenile justice and justice systems reinvested into the local community and community support programs. The programs co-ordinator Hellen Hurfow said it was about supporting the individuals and the community.

"The program lets us work with local services and council to to reinvest the money spent on sending people into the justice system on support networks and community programs that give them the knowledge to make a better path for themselves." "If they do go to justice system they have support when they come out, Cowra doesn't have a refuge or a halfway house so it's hard for offenders to break that cyclical nature."



Hellen Horton, Fran Stead and Rhee Bryant talk with Governor Hurley

"This lets us support them in the community by the community," she said. NSW Governor David Hurley said the program had excellent potential.

“It puts the driving ideas into the hands of elders, but its nested in a lot of community support.” “It’s community taking responsibility of youngsters who are at risk of being put into the juvenile justice program or who are already in it and having a different way of looking at it,” he said. Governor Hurley said the program re-established leadership roles for elders and changed the way programs were delivered to Aboriginal communities.



Les Coe and Fran Stead talk with Linda Hurley

“In both places Bourke and Cowra the broader community is right their beside them, If your trying to list the ingredients for success it would appear they have a lot of them in this program.” “Its not all about money its not another request for a grant, It’s how do we change some of the things we are doing not to have kids fall out of society,” he said.



Marion Speechley, Trish Gundersen, Katrina Hodgkinson, Karen Pearson and Clare Bezvidenhout at the meeting.

D: DISCUSSION PAPER FOR THIRD FORUM

Note: The Executive Summary that was part of this Discussion Paper has been removed to be incorporated into an updated Report Summary at the start of this Report.

Justice Reinvestment explained

This research project, titled 'Reducing incarceration using Justice Reinvestment – an exploratory case study' is a hypothetical study to test the research methodology and theory of Justice Reinvestment.

Justice Reinvestment is a framework for rethinking criminal justice system so large sums of taxpayer money are not spent imprisoning people for low-level criminal activity, together with a political decision to reinvest that money back into the community from where those offenders originate.

An underlying philosophy of Justice Reinvestment is that it is the community that 'reclaims' an individual who is in contact with the criminal justice system as 'belonging' to that community – it's a community development approach.

Justice Reinvestment should not be thought of as a single program or a collection of programs – rather, it is a systems approach – it requires involvement by governments at all levels (federal, state, local, as well as Indigenous systems); non-government organisations; service providers; the education, sector; the health sector; the police and the judiciary).

At a broad level, Justice Reinvestment requires a shift in policy and social outlook from incarceration, to non-incarceration and investing in the community and in people.

Methodologically, Justice Reinvestment involves a four step process –

1. Analysis and mapping of offender patterns ('million dollar blocks');
2. Development of options to generate savings and improve local communities;
3. Quantification of savings from incarceration and potential to reinvest in high needs communities;
4. Measurement and evaluation of the impact of reinvestment.

Justice Reinvestment retains detention as a measure of last resort. This research adapted these methodological steps by using a community-driven approach in Cowra.

In his Year in Review report 2014, Social Justice Commissioner, Mr Mick Gooda had a chapter entitled, 'Justice Reinvestment in Australia five years on', explaining the concepts involved and discussing some initiatives occurring around the country including the Cowra research project.

www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/SJNTR%20FINAL.pdf

In the context of this study - an underlying philosophy of JR is that it is the community that 'reclaims' an individual as 'belonging' to that community. Therefore, this research project also takes a community development approach.

It is also important to be mindful of what Justice Reinvestment is NOT. It is not just restorative justice; it is not short term and not top-down from centralised governments; it is not about diverting funds from health, education, employment & training to diversionary or early intervention programs, and it is not the responsibility of a single government department.

Genesis of project

In December 2012 researchers based at The Australian National University were awarded an Australian Research Council grant (No. 130100048) to work with Cowra community members on a community-driven research project that explores the theory and research methodology of Justice Reinvestment (JR) as a way of reducing incarceration of juveniles. An earlier application made to the ARC in 2011 had not been successful, however, that application was subsequently resubmitted in 2012.

In Australia, JR has not been adopted either as a methodology or a policy response and is therefore an under-researched topic. Using a case study approach, the study provides much needed information on the antecedents of crime, leading to possibilities for prevention. Our approach focused on Steps 2 (development of options) and 3 (cost benefit analysis to estimate projected

savings that would accrue if funds were reinvested in resources to repatriate juveniles to the case study community).

In our planning we envisaged that in the Australian context, ‘million dollar block’ communities – inevitably mostly Indigenous communities – could suffer from over-exposure to media attention and potential re-stigmatisation.

We therefore further envisaged that by focusing on a community-led project – one which follows that described in Step 2 of JR methodology outlined above – that is, to explore the circumstances under which all juvenile offenders may be able to return to and remain in the community – would more likely yield sustainable whole-of-community outcomes and solutions.

At the broader level, we saw that this exploratory research could result in recommendations which can be of benefit in developing new policies for dealing with Australia’s burgeoning criminal justice and justice health costs, while at the local level it could benefit community development and safety.

Utilising participatory action research (PAR) with key informants and stakeholder groups (Indigenous and non-Indigenous, and all levels of government), the study integrates administrative data with focus groups and semi-structured interviews to explore whether JR as a policy option can reorientate responses to juvenile and young persons’ offending behaviours. In addition, it will result in findings and recommendations for addressing the high level of juvenile and young people’s health care burden related to alcohol and other drug use, potentially enabling recipients to re-engage in health promoting activities, as well as leading to improvements in the social determinants of health such as education, employment, and housing. The proposal invited the entire Cowra community to participate, not just the Indigenous community, thus enabling whole-of-community responses to juvenile justice issues.

Case study site

Cowra local government area, in central west New South Wales, within the Federal electorate of Hume and the State electorate of Berrinjack, is the case study site.

Why Cowra?

Cowra is an ideal study site for the research for a number of reasons including –

- > its proximity to ANU in Canberra where most research team and other Research Reference Group members are based helped ensure sustained engagement;
- > it is a discrete community of some 10,000 people,
- > it has a proud and historic Indigenous population (through Erambie), 7% Indigenous population (higher than national average of 2.5%)
- > it has no identifiable economic reliance on a prison as an employment base;
- > it ranks highly on selected offences - such as stealing, break and enter, assault, resist or hinder officer, stealing from a dwelling, arson, offensive language - however, it does not feature highly in media reportage regarding criminal activities in the same way that some other towns do.

Community support for grant application

Three letters of support for the funding application were received. Excerpts are set out below.

Erambie Advancement Corporation

The board members of Erambie Advancement Aboriginal Corporation are pleased to support you and your colleagues to conduct case study participatory action research in Cowra. We support the plan to explore whether justice reinvestment is a policy option for dealing with juvenile justice issues. ... Our board members appreciate the way that you have involved the community in the development of the project. (Mr Brian Moynihan, Erambie Advancement Aboriginal Corp, letter received July 2010 for previous funding application.)

Cowra Shire Council

Cowra Shire Council has been advised that ... a research grant for exploring Justice Reinvestment as a policy option to address juvenile justice in Australia ... and that Cowra has been chosen as the area of analysis for this study. Council understands this study enables whole-of-community responses to juvenile justice, not just the Indigenous community. Council wishes to indicate their support for the application. (Mr Paul Devery, General Manager, Cowra Shire Council, letter received August 2010 for previous funding application)

Rutgers School of Criminal Justice

I ... express my support for the application ... by ... Dr Jill Guthrie, ... Prof Michael Levy and their colleagues to undertake a case study adapting JR methodology ... as a policy solution to incarceration in Australia. JR ... one of the most important new ideas to emerge in the field of criminal justice reform ... calls for a redirection of public safety fiscal investments away from institutional formal social control toward community informal social control.... I have worked in the JR field for some fifteen years in the United States. Here it has proven to be an effective policy option to reduce reliance on incarceration while strengthening the capacity of communities to remain safe from crime. I can see that the proposal... would add to its evidence base, both internationally and in Australia. I am very happy to be part of ... this study and look forward to assisting the work in Australia. (Prof Todd Clear, Dean, Centre for Law and Justice, 5 April 2010.)

People involved

The following people have been involved in the development and conduct of the research funding application and the research project.

Chief investigators

Dr Jill Guthrie
Dr Phyll Dance
Prof Michael Levy
Prof Mick Dodson
Prof Tom Calma
Prof Tony Butler
Dr Kamalini Lokuge
Prof Lisa Strelein

NCIS colleagues

A/Prof Cressida Fforde
Dr Bill Fogarty
Ms Corinne Walsh
Mr Len Kanowski
Dr Melissa Lovell
Dr Fleur Adcock
Dr Paul Simpson

Research Reference group

Cowra Aboriginal Land Council: Mr Les Coe, Ms Nioka Coe, Mr Geoffrey Steele

Cowra Shire Council: Mayor, Cr Bill West, Cr Ruth Fagan, Mr Peter Devery

Dr Lawrence (Laurie) Bamblett

His Honour Judge Peter Johnstone, (President, NSW Children's Court)

Prof Pene Mathew (Human rights lawyer & academic)

Prof Todd Clear (US-based JR academic)

Ethical approvals

In keeping with University ethical research practice, several ethical approval processes were necessary in order for the research to be undertaken – these occurred as separate phases as outlined below.

Phase 1 – ANU Protocol 2012/712

The initial approval from ANU Human Research Ethics Committee was received on 14 March 2014. This approval was for a Community Forum to be held (subsequently held on 30 May 2013) the purpose of which was to inform and engage stakeholder representatives in the research. An outcome of that workshop was that stakeholders advised that their respective institutions would require separate ethical approval processes to be undertaken to enable their individual involvement in the research project. A copy of the ANU ethical application and approval was made available to all stakeholder representatives as necessary for subsequent consideration and approval by their respective institutions. The separate ethical processes are outlined below.

Commonwealth Department of Human Services

Approval was received from the Commonwealth Department of Human Services on 11 September 2013 (Ref 44/2013) to work with employees of that Department on the research.

NSW Government – Education & Communities (SERAP No. 2013219)

Approval was received from the NSW Department of Education and Communities on 13th October 2013 to interview students at the Cowra High School (aged 16 years and over). In order to meet ethical approval for those interviews it was also necessary for researchers to undertake NSW Working with Children checks.

NSW Government – Working with Children Checks (SERAP No. 2013219, Doc 14/116348)

Working with Children Checks were approved for six researchers associated with the research (Jill Guthrie, Phyll Dance, Len Kanowski, Fleur Adcock, Melissa Lovell and Corinne Walsh), who were subsequently involved in interviews with

young people and students at the Cowra High School. Working with Children checks were also necessary for interviews with young people in juvenile detention.

Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Bathurst

Approval was received from the Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Bathurst, on 13 September 2013 for involvement of St Raphael's Central School students (aged 16 years and over), as well as staff of the school.

Headspace

Approval was received for Headspace to be involved as a stakeholder organisation in the research in July 2013. This did not extend to Headspace facilitating recruitment of young people into the research, for which a separate ethical process would have been required (but which was not submitted, as it was decided that recruitment of young people would be through other means.

NSW Attorney General's Department

Approval was received on 21 June 2013 for the Registrar, Court Services, Cowra Court House, to participate as a stakeholder in the research.

Phase 2 – ANU Protocol 2012/712 (variation)

This variation followed previous approval which enabled researchers to conduct a workshop with the community, the aim of which was to develop a questionnaire for use when interviewing young people in the community. A revised iteration of the questionnaire which incorporated feedback provided by workshop attendees was the basis of ethics variation, and subsequent approval.

NSW Correctional Services (Ref 44.20103)

Approval was received from Commissioner Peter Severin on 2 September 2014 to interview persons aged 16-24 years currently held in Correctional Services NSW Centres, whose last known address was the Cowra postcode. Following approval, logistical arrangements were set in place with the NSW Department of Correctional Services for the researchers to obtain the names of those relevant persons and to invite them to volunteer to participate in the research.

NSW Department of Juvenile Justice

The ethics process for NSW Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) had two phases – the first sought in-principle approval for the research. A two page expression of interest to the DJJ Research and Information Unit was submitted in January 2014. A change of personnel in DJJ occurred at that time, such that the in-principal approval was not received until July 2014. A formal ethics application was submitted in late July 2014. When the application was considered by DJJ ethics Committee, it prompted a question from DJJ about whether - if approval was given - we would prefer DJJ to send letters directly to eligible young people for them to self-refer into the research, or we would be seeking contact details of those young people from DJJ. Given the community-driven approach of the research, this question was subsequently put to a meeting of the Research Reference Group (RRG) in August 2014. The RRG felt it was more appropriate if names of young people from Cowra currently in the DJJ system were provided to the research team, so that letters could be sent directly to the young person.

Permissions to interview young people in custody

NSW Department of Corrective Services (NSWCS)

In NSW, anyone over the age of 18 years who is sent to prison is sent to an adult facility. The ethics approval obtained through New South Wales Corrective Services (NSWCS) allowed for the researchers to prepare an information package and expression of interest which NSWCS subsequently forwarded to any one person from Cowra postcode in prison at that time. Thirteen (13) packages were sent to young people (eleven males and two females) located in eight separate NSW correctional centres, ranging from maximum to minimum security, inviting them to be interviewed as part of the research.

NSW Department of Juvenile Justice

In NSW, anyone under the age of 18 years when they commit a crime is sent to a juvenile facility. The ethics approval obtained through the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) allowed for DJJ to provide

the names of those young people in custody so that the researchers corresponded directly with that young person. The names of 29 young people who had spent time in juvenile detention or who were currently serving a community service order through DJJ were subsequently provided to the researchers. Twenty nine packages were sent to young people living in the town – two packages were returned with the annotation 'no longer at this address'. We note that no young person responded to the invitation to be interviewed through this means.

Community engagement

In order to build the rapport and trust needed to undertake a community-driven research project, considerable engagement between the Community and the researchers has been undertaken as outlined below. Field trips when interviews were conducted are also summarised.

Courtesy visit, December 2012

When researchers were advised of the successful grant application, it was by that stage some two years since the original thinking, and some Cowra personnel who had been liaising with the researchers had changed. On 12 December 2012, Dr Jill Guthrie and A/Prof Cressida Fforde (NCIS) paid a courtesy visit to Cowra to renew the working relationship built during the grant development, and to meet representatives from the Cowra Aboriginal Land Council, including Mr Les Coe and Ms Linda Coe, and a representative from the Cowra Shire Council, Mr Graham Apthorpe, to inform Cowra representatives of the success of the application and to re-engage them in the thinking and research process. The meetings were held separately at Cowra Aboriginal Land Council and Cowra Shire Council offices.

Chief Investigators visit, 1 March 2013

An outcome of that visit was an invitation from the Cowra representatives to the researchers to meet at a combined Cowra Aboriginal Land Council and Cowra Shire Council meeting, so that everyone involved could to know each other better. This meeting began at the Land Council offices with a brief summary of the research project, followed by a tour of several of the town's sites of pride and history, such as Erambie and Yalballinga Pre

School, the Lachlan River low level bridge murals, Japanese Cemetery, the Japanese Gardens, Cowra Breakout memorial cairn, and Bellevue ('Billy Goat') Hill for a panoramic view of the town. Afterwards, the meeting reconvened at the Cowra Shire Council offices, to continue planning the project.

Project planning meeting, 23 April 2013

The purpose of this meeting was to meet with key informants from Cowra Aboriginal Land Council and Cowra Shire Council to develop a list of stakeholder invitees to the proposed Stakeholder Forum proposed for May 2013. The meeting venue was Cowra Aboriginal Land Council offices, Fishburn Street.

1st Workshop, 30 May 2013

The purpose of this Forum was to inform invited stakeholders of the research project, including introducing and explain the concept of Justice Reinvestment. The form venue was Paradise Guest House & Conference Centre, Macquarie Street.

2nd Workshop, 11 December 2013

The purpose of this workshop was to work with stakeholders on how to recruit young people to participate in the research. A draft questionnaire was workshopped to make it locally relevant and youth friendly. It was emphasized by attendees that a strengths-based approach was the best way forward in designing the questionnaire. The workshop venue Japanese Gardens Education Centre.

Research Reference Group meeting, 12 December 2013

A Research Reference Group meeting was the day after the above Stakeholder Forum to consider the outcomes of the Workshop and subsequent research planning. The meeting venue was Paradise Guest House & Conference Centre, Macquarie Street.

Cowra Festival visit (launch of participant recruitment), March 2014

Researchers were invited to set up a stall at the Cowra Festival Parade on Saturday 9 March to promote the research project and launch participant recruitment. This facilitated good

engagement by community members with the research project and an invitation to return to town during Youth Week to conduct interviews. The venue for the Festival was River Park, Cowra.

Youth Week (interviews), April 2014

During Youth Week (7-11 April) researchers conducted interviews with as many young people, parents and services providers as possible. The PCYC made their facilities on Young Road available for interviewing young people. Squire Park in Kendal Street was the other venue for interviews with young people.

Fieldwork (interviews and focus groups), May 2014

From 19-23 May researchers conducted interviews with young people, parents and service providers. The venue for interviews with young people was Squire Park in Kendal Street; focus groups with young people were held at Cowra High School, Cowra TAFE College and St. Raphael's Central School. Venues for interviews with parents were usually in their home; venues for interviews with stakeholder was usually at their workplace.

Parliamentary representatives

As mentioned, JR requires involvement by governments at all levels. In May 2014, researchers met with the federal member for Hume, the Hon Angus Taylor, MP, at Parliament House in Canberra in May 2014; in July 2014, researchers with senior advisers of the State member for Burrinjuck, the Hon Katrina Hodgkinson, MLA. The purpose of both meetings was to discuss progress with the research project and to invite the parliamentarians to a proposed Stakeholder Forum in 2015. These discussions allowed the Forum to be scheduled around parliamentarians' diaries and most notably the NSW elections to be held on 28th March 2015. It was also noted that an electoral boundary was imminent and that Cowra would be redistributed into a new electorate to be known as Cootamundra. It was assured that by May 2015, the usual machinery of government processes would be in place such that the NSW member for Cootamundra or their delegate could attend the Forum.

Research Reference Group meeting, August 2014

A Research Reference Group meeting was held at Cowra Shire Council offices on 24 August 2014 to begin planning for a Stakeholder Forum and discuss progress of the research. It was agreed Professor Mick Dodson and Councillor Ruth Fagan would be invited to co-facilitate the Forum. It was agreed that Reconciliation Week 2015 would be a suitable time during which to hold the Forum.

Research Reference Group meeting, Canberra, November 2014

The next Research Reference Group meeting was held in Canberra, coinciding with a lecture given by Professor Mick Dodson at The Australian National University on Recognition of Australia's First Peoples in the Australian Constitution. The Cowra delegation attended the lecture and dinner, then a Reference Group meeting the following day, to further plan the proposed forum, including guest speakers, stakeholder representatives, community engagement, and media planning.

Community consultations

As outlined above, interviews and focus groups were held mostly during April and May 2015. Venues for interviews and focus groups with young people were Cowra High School, St. Raphael's Central School, Cowra TAFE College, Policy Citizens' Youth Club (PCYC) Young Road, and the Squire Park in Kendal Street.

Venues for interviews with parents were usually in their own home or a café venue. Venues for interviews and focus groups with service providers was usually at their work place or a café venue.

Sixty two (62) young people were interviewed as members of focus groups and 14 young people as face-to-face interviews (sometimes with more than one person interviewed simultaneously). Thirty two (32) service providers were interviewed, either as part of a focus group or face-to-face interviews. Four (4) parents were interviewed face-to-face. In many instances, however, services providers were also responding in the context of their parental roles.

Approximately 30 people, representing a wide range of ages and largely as family groups, attended a Community meeting at Erambie in May 2014 chaired by RRG member, Mr Les Coe. Seven Business Chamber members attended the meeting that was addressed by the researchers on 30 June 2014.

Interviews with young people and parents

The research team met with 62 young people in three focus groups at the two high schools, and interviewed 14 young people and four parents face-to-face. In some instances when stakeholders were interviewed they responded from their parental role: their parental perspectives in that context are incorporated into the excerpts in this section.

Family and social relationships

For many young people interviewed there was a strong sense of family, community, close friendships and peer groups at school, good relations with teachers. Many demonstrated that they were very socially engaged.

For those young people interviewed who have a history of detention, one indicated how close they were to family and how trustworthy and supportive their family was, particularly while that young person was in detention –

I trust my family members. I wouldn't trust anyone else. If I didn't have my family, I'd be stuffed, I'd be buggered. I don't know what I'm going to do when my father goes because that's who I look up to and he's everything I know, you know what I mean...he's getting on, it's going to destroy me when he goes, I'm not gonna know what to do.

A parent whose child had been in contact with the Juvenile Justice system talked of the importance of family closeness, despite family separation –

[We] never argued ... over the children. We had [son's] birthday here last night ... here was mum, me, their dad, brothers, sisters, girlfriends babies, it's a family thing. Which I think has been good, maybe that's the only thing that [son] may have been stable in that he did have both sets of parents. ... everything is still shared birthdays, Christmases, we're still a family.

The importance of positive role models and mentors, whether a parent or grandparent or other family member, a parole officer, a partner, or a friend, came through strongly for many young people. One young person whose sister has a full time job sees their older sister as their role model –

I look up to my older sister because she's got a full time job and that, got her licence She's got everything that I want, you know what I mean? I want my licence, I want a full time job.

Another talked about their father and brother as their source of support and advice –

If I needed help financially and things of that nature, my father. But, if I needed help with transport or getting a bit of advice on things I would ask my brother.

One parent mentioned the importance of role models particularly in relation to blended family structures –

Now we've got this whole range of blended families, a lot of non-structure and there's not that many great role models left anymore. Dad's vacated, everybody's busy, once ... if your dad couldn't be your role model, there was an uncle, grandparent, and now it's like ... there's no role models.

Young people frequently indicated they had reliable social networks, such as a partner, or friends. For some it was evident that they did not necessarily have lots of friends, either at school or currently, and that they tended to rely on themselves and preferred their own company. The modern-day lifestyle was seen by one parent to have detrimental effects –

It's a very hectic life. ... I think kids do want to do things but parents don't have the time to let them do it, so they give them an iPod and say 'Sit down and shut up' you get in the car and it's like 'Here's the latest DVD, watch that' so we can drive peacefully. I think kids do want to play, they do. I think it's the time thing ... it's just become part of our life to sit the kid down to watch the telly or to play a game. I don't think it's all their [children who may misbehave] fault.

This parent also believed that Cowra –

... like lots of country towns, there's lots of dysfunctional families ... lots of broken families ... if the parents aren't diligent, the kids fall through the cracks.

Later adding –

I've always had a real heart for young people, but gee, you're tested over these last years ... okay, policing needs to be there, but something's got to happen ... at grass roots first, and ... I think it's parenting stuff, it's got to be structured. We're not allowed to reprimand them ... so what are you left with? Every child knows their rights, so okay, if that's what the government's going to do ... they need to put strategies in to help implement how we can parent these kids ...

One parent mentioned organisations in town which provided parental support –

... there is a family support group and I know that they have – they do run some things for I think mostly younger people ..

and applauded sessions given by a visiting child psychologist some time ago by –

[Child psychologist]... came to Cowra to run these seminars, he spent a couple of days in the school ... where he just met teachers and another day he met with Year 11 and 12s, another day he met with all the other kids and then, one of the nights he ran ... a free seminar, it was pouring rain and traditionally if it's raining, no one goes out. They had it at the Civic Centre and there was not a spare seat in the house. Now does that tell you that there's a need? We looked around and thought 'Oh my God, how many desperate parents are there?'

Other information offered by parents whose children had been in contact with the Juvenile Justice System demonstrated that the support of family and friends was an essential part of the rehabilitation process.

One parent indicated that becoming a father had transformed her son –

I thank god and everyone that they sent us that little boy [grandson] because I strongly believe ... that little man made the big difference for [son].

Being safe and feeling safe

While some young people interviewed may have experienced what could be described as an under-privileged life, many have developed coping mechanisms for themselves to the extent that they have a 'safe place' in the community. This is not always the case, however, with one young person responding to whether they felt protected by anyone, saying –

You're never protected really.

And that growing up in Cowra was –

A lot harder than I expected.

Young people do not always feel safe in the community. One young person related how his friend who lives close to pubs in the main street and does not feel safe because of aggressive behaviours emanating from the pub, particularly at closing time –

... a friend lives close to [where] people walk ... home from the pubs. ... of the four nights [her Mum] was away I spent three there 'cause she rang me and she's like, 'There's people walking up and down my street yelling stuff'. On one night there was an actual fight so she was like, 'Can you just come and stay with me'.

Another young person felt that policies and practice in relation to pub closing time were –

... from my experience the pubs have been ... good in one aspect but there are some things that I feel need to be improved

On a positive note, many young people grew up in households where they felt very safe. One young person related what a positive experience his home-life had been for him, while also reflecting on how some of his peers may be exposed to different home-life-experiences –

Neither of my parents drank ... [or] did any illicit drugs I think that's the kind of stuff that can potentially be a dangerous environment ... you know excessive alcohol, smoking, illicit drugs. Seems like that sort of stuff is ... the driver towards domestic violence and ... other problems, financial problems and stuff like that.

However, that young person was aware of circumstances for other young people in the community which meant that they were potentially exposed to an unsafe home-life.

I don't want to speculate too much but there are certainly places that I assumed that the environment wasn't that great ... and I do know that there are issues with drugs and issues with alcohol that do occur.

In terms of transport facilities and safety, one young person who lives out of town said –

I walk everywhere. I live [number] kilometres out of town and I just walk home.

Regarding whether they felt safe walking around at night including in and out of town –

Oh I wouldn't say that. I just got no other way to get around.

Some concerns were raised regarding aspects of current services, facilities and general environment. Several young people interviewed wanted more intervention and support programs and service, for example, health practitioners, mental health counsellors, and courses (at school, at TAFE, in the community) that teach general life skills and coping skills.

One young person who was experiencing mental health issues lamented the lack of appropriate facilities in Cowra –

It's hard getting help in Cowra, bloody oath it is. You've got to travel so far, like they don't have the facilities like say Sydney. Each town should have some sort of a facility for people like me and other people who've got problems and stuff, you know.

One parent talked of their family's experience of being victims of minor property crimes perpetrated by young people affected by alcohol and/or other drug use and suggested some solutions –

... everybody talks about policing, there's got to be a higher presence of policing and I don't know whether you can set curfews and things like that, but it's getting them [young people affected by alcohol and/or other drug use] off the streets, get them home ... because usually there's a big contingent ... they're all walking and as they walk they [commit property crime].

Later adding –

I guess you've got to try and find some sort of structure for them. We all know that they work well when there's structured things, but ... there's always going to be a contingent of kids that don't conform ... we put the skate park in up here, it gets used quite a lot, unfortunately, they put that in, they used to have the light on up there that used to be, you know, but then it just became another place where kids congregated and drank and wrecked things, they left rubbish everywhere, so that got short lived. I know the PCYC works hard with some parts of the community, but it's a very small portion of kids ...

A sense of belonging

Many young people, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, expressed a sense of belonging to the town. For Indigenous young people this came through in terms of being 'on country', as eloquently expressed by one who had a history of detention –

I can't move away (from Cowra). It's just something calls me home. I don't know what it is.

Another young person confidently told their feeling of belonging in the community.

I know a lot of people in the community. I don't get bullied or anything like that, it's all just friendly.

Education

Many young people spoke of how they did not engage well with school and that it was not always experienced as useful or as preparation for work and life. One young person described how the trajectory for them from being disengaged, to being suspended, to leaving school –

I found school pretty hard because I wasn't really a good reader. The only thing I was basically good at was maths and just hanging around the wrong students at the time and that and I was getting in trouble all the time. Suspended ... probably three times a month or something like that but then eventually I just left school.

Another said they enjoyed the learning aspects of school, but had been expelled – their perception was that the expulsion was linked to their not being focused and taking time off to care for a close relative.

I enjoyed science, like practical stuff using the bunsen burners and stuff. They expelled me ... since my [close relative] started going to hospital I just started losing focus, not going to classes and stuff. ... They said I only went two days the whole year - when really I was in the library studying, plus I'd take time off to [see my close relative].

This was contrasted however by one young person who spoke very positively about Aboriginal Studies at school.

The only good thing about school was Abstudies. I just loved that class a lot because that was my top class and everything. I know everything about my culture.

One young person praised the Aboriginal teachers at their school for looking out for them.

Yeah, positive. Because when we wagged they'd come out and say "get in the class now. You're going to get marked off, like you're not showing up", you know. They'd kick our asses if we needed it.

Some teachers were sometimes seen to lack understanding and to be unsupportive of young persons' personal issues such as low literacy, mental health, behavioural issues, anger and self-esteem, with one young person stating –

If there's the right teachers and that, I would have probably liked school; if they treat you right and that but then some other teachers ... they don't treat you how you want to be treated and that and that's when I started disliking school.

The subject of problems with schooling was also brought up by parents. One said of their child –

... he did Year 7 in [nearby town] and was in and out of trouble, just doing dumb boy things, they suspended him, suspended him, suspended him. I felt there were some months that I was just at that school all the time.

The solution was to home school their son for a period after which he returned to high school and

It worked out that there was two teachers there that just hammered him and he lasted six weeks back at high school ... they wanted him out and he was gone. ... Then I think he just gave up in the end with the two teachers, it just didn't matter what he said. It was all his fault and he just left. It was unfortunately two teachers that it

didn't matter whether [son] was in the room or ... wasn't, he got the blame. Yes there are cruddy teachers out there but there are a lot of good ones, he just didn't get any of the better ones on his side.

In summing up what they thought could help prevent young people in Cowra from getting into trouble with the law this parent's view was –

I think better education for teachers. ... Just making them aware of these kids that do have issues, instead of jumping down that kid's throat maybe approach it differently.

Employment

The transition from school to employment was experienced as challenging for many of the young people interviewed, with not enough information provided for study or work following school. One young person expressed this as –

Not enough information about options for study/work after school. It was like 'a wall between the city and country'.

All young people interviewed conveyed their desire to work but saw few opportunities in town. One expressed this as –

I reckon you've got to know people to get a job in Cowra. If there was more work opportunities and ... transport, getting from point A to point B, I reckon there would be a lot less crime. Especially the work thing, that's a big thing. There's not a lot of work, the biggest thing out there is they've got the Council, ... the abattoirs, ... retail outlets ... and maybe like a delivery boy or something like that but other than that there's squat, there's nothing.

Another young person lamented the downturn in job opportunities over recent years, particularly at entry level employment, linking it to issues of hope:

You could almost argue that it's endemic in many small communities in NSW – there are issues around a sense of hope and forward planning for the future. Many years ago there was substantially more work available for young people that were able to access it ... we had a cannery that was a big employer, ... a wool scouring plant, ... an abattoirs that's reopened. I certainly mean this respectfully – at that

lower level ... that just disappears. You've got machinery now that does things at a much more advanced rate.

Many of those interviewed rely on Centrelink benefits such as Youth Allowance, Newstart or parents and family for financial assistance, with one young person expressing it as –

I never had any money to go out and spend on things I wanted. If I wanted something like that I would have to save a little bit of money each week or the other thing, I would just ask Dad, and say, "Look Dad, I've got no money can you buy this for me?" and he would say yes or no, and if he said yes, well then I had to work for it to pay it back for him.

A parent who knew of apprenticeship systems relayed some of the problems employers had experienced –

... there's so much paperwork now and all the rules, and there are courses out there but ... who pays for those? ... business people [have] got to take time out of [their] day [to attend training].

They added that the training may be held out of Cowra and employers needed to drive some distance after a full day of work –

... no one pays ... so it's the last thing [an employer feels] like doing, to go to a seminar so that [they] can be educated how to treat ... Gen Y apprentices.

Another parent felt –

... wouldn't it be good if ... these kids [who commit minor crimes] instead of doing community services, or be incarcerated or whatever ... if there was an incentive for a business person to take that kid on? Obviously it would have to work, they'd have to be interested in it ... and there'd have to be commitment on both sides, but ... if the conditions were good, they would still have to be paid a reasonable amount of money to make them stay there. But if the government actually said 'This is how much it's going to cost us if we keep this person in \$x a week ... we'll pay you for his wages or her wages, and they sign a contract. You keep them for 12 months' or whatever their time would be.

Mental and emotional health

There were strong indications of the prevalence of bullying. Many of the young people interviewed have experienced bullying and been bullies themselves.

Yeah, I'd say it's a pretty big thing through the schools. Oh well I was bullied a bit through school and then I'd say it sort, when I got to high school it sort of, I did some bullying as well.

One young person found being bullied the hardest part of school.

Probably the bullying side, that was definitely the part that made [school] hard.

Another young person experienced being bullied and was also a bully, but learned to self-manage the situation so that they would not get suspended from school.

In primary school I had a short temper so when people bullied me I would give it back but then I realised that it's not what you're meant to do, it's easier just to keep your head down and continue and just ignore it. But then when it started going off again eventually my temper started getting the better of me so I just stopped 'cause it was just easier that way. If I lost my temper I'd get suspended and have bad records and stuff.

One parent talked about bullying their children had experienced some time ago –

Our kids got bullied [one] got lots of bullying ... so much so that we actually took [child] out of the school. We did have some counselling for [child] ...

For some young people interviewed, the situation extends to cyber-bullying. One young person interviewed described cyber-bullying as –

Cyber bullying is absurd. It is ... one of the most absurd things in Cowra. I do know of people who ... have been kind of taken to the principal's office or whatever at school the next day because of it and it's been very serious as far as really, really horrible.

It is apparent that some young people are not receiving the mental health services they need.

I've got some friends who have had mental health problems [and] on medication, some ... did engage in self harm at times. ... do know of other people who do have mental health issues and probably aren't getting the help that they need.

When one young person who was dealing with anger management issues was asked what sorts of things would help other people in their situation, they responded –

Counselling I'd reckon.

When asked if they were aware of any services that would help, this young person said –

No-one tells us anything. They don't tell us anything.

One parent strongly articulated what they saw as a paucity of mental health services –

... there's absolutely bugger-all out here for our youth as far as mental health goes... .

Headspace was strongly praised as a good service by young people and parents. One young person said –

...one of my friends I made, like I made them go to Headspace because I wasn't happy. Like the way that she was going downhill like so fast and Headspace helped her, like she's better now I feel.

The stigma that sometimes surrounds mental health issues is evidenced in what one young person said about their friends who were not getting the help they needed.

One of my friends who recently did end up on medication ... didn't want to be seen as weak. There's others who probably are ashamed, it's probably a bit lame to go to Headspace, it's probably considered not cool to get help for mental health issues which is absurd, that's just the attitude behind it, just the way people see it.

One young person's perception was that Headspace was too personal, preferring a service that would provide more careers counselling.

Yeah. But they sometimes don't go [to Headspace] because ... they get too in, like, ask you really, really, really personal questions ... Yeah. Yeah real personal. ... They asked me why. I said, 'Because youse are getting too personal'.

Young people interviewed in a focus group felt that more mental health workers and teachers with specific counselling and outreach skills towards young people who may be struggling, would not only fill a current service gap, but would stop young people from getting into trouble with the law.

We need more professional counsellors for the youth of Cowra, like Headspace. Also ... if teachers got more involved with students that have a tough time, instead of waiting for the students to come and talk to them. They need to take the time to ask the kids, and hopefully if a student did have problems, that they will be able to talk things out and potentially stop the kid from getting into trouble with the law.

One parent mentioned school counselling services –

I think there still is a counsellor that does the primary school. I think he goes around the schools, but [just] one person when there's eight hundred odd kids, nine hundred kids at the high school.

One parent mentioned psychological problems their child had been diagnosed with when younger. Recalling their children's teenage years, one parent spoke of her son having suicidal thoughts and another of her concern that her son may commit suicide. She also spoke more generally of the current situation –

... we have a lot of youth suicide here in town, in the district. ... I know there's a suicide awareness group in town but maybe some support for them. Because there are a lot of kids out there that need it.

Socioeconomic factors

There were strong indications from the young people interviewed that they would like more things for them to get involved in. Some mentioned more small business to generate jobs and economic activity, for example, through a cinema, a games arcade, internet café etc. This was reinforced through indications there was not much for young people, except if they are interested in sport. The demise of the town's cinema was a recurrent theme and was mentioned by young people and parents. Comments from young people included –

'No cinema – there used to be, but no there isn't'. 'Not enough things in Cowra to entertain young people, especially at night (e.g. cinema) – leads to risky social attitudes about 'fun things to do'.

Many young people stressed the need for a cinema to open up again, as well as fun and engaging activities for young people especially those under 18.

The only thing you could do is go to the river for a swim, go to the pool or hang with mates or something or play sports. That's--other than that, that's--well, that's what I was doing; just going to the river, playing sports. Like that's the main things that I'm happy with in Cowra but there could be a lot of other things that you could enjoy in Cowra, like the cinemas.

There was a quite strong perception that community activities seem to be geared towards

'over 50's' and under 12 [but] nothing for the teenage/early adolescent years.'

One parent was, however, also concerned about a lack of activities, except for sport, for younger children

A lot of the young kids are involved in their sport, it takes up the majority of their time but apart from that there's nothing else here for them. Targeting the smaller kids as well, probably setting up a few things. ... I'd be looking at stuff for smaller age groups as well, stuff that they could probably do like maybe a play centre.

Boredom seems to be a major issue resulting in anti-social activities by some young people. Lack of social engagement by young people is reinforced through indications of little for young people to do, except sport. There were strong indications of the link between sporting opportunities and young people staying out of trouble. One young person encapsulated this link –

All my mates ... they've all been in trouble and it's all because they've got nothing in Cowra, you know. But they had cinemas there and that and like we always used to go to cinemas, like once a week. Like every weekend we'd go down there and watch movies and that there and we always used to get together and go down there but they don't--they've closed it down now... And it's basically ever since that there, the boys have just

been wanting to do their own thing. Like I've seen boys sneak into pubs and that there, like at young ages and that and, I don't know, stealing cars.

One young person made the direct link between lack of activities and contact with the criminal justice system –

There's nothing here in Cowra – that's why people go to gaol and that's why houses get broken into.

Young people interviewed in a high school focus group talked about a range of services and facilities – including a youth medical centre where there are not long waiting lists and a youth 'drop-in' space where young people who are experiencing trouble could sleep if necessary – that they would like in the town in order to keep young people engaged and out of trouble with the law.

Education on what is available, like for when we need it and stuff. ... We'd have a youth medical centre specifically for youth and focusing on their health, and it's not, like there's not a long waiting list, you can get in straight away hopefully. We'd [like] ... a space where high schoolers can just go and hang out like a huge beanbag room where they're just free to do whatever, and if say they don't have a nice background or home they can sleep there if they want, or study, whatever. And then teachers available on weekends for those who have assessments due in Year 12.

One parent mentioned youth church groups for young people, lamenting that they no longer played a major role –

... there are still some youth groups that run through some of the churches, but you know what? The church groups have really failed the community in that sense as well now, and so once upon a time, there was always a church run youth group and anybody could go there and there was structure and mentor's and stuff like that.

Alcohol and other drug use

Illegal drug use and alcohol use is seen as acceptable by many young people and normalised. This was encapsulated by one young person who was asked whether friends were able to accept support services for their drug use and whether they found those services beneficial –

I don't think so, no.

One young person suggested that young people are in a degree of denial about their drug and alcohol use, saying,

I think they don't think they have a problem.

One young person linked the lack of activities for young people and underage drinking and other illegal activities –

There's things that other towns have that Cowra doesn't ... you can't go bowling, you can't go to the movies ... a lot of things that you just can't do. And ... it's not anyone's fault that you can't, it's just Cowra, it's just the population just wouldn't sustain businesses such as that, that's why the movies shut down ... In that kind of a community I think like the worst sort of stuff, the underage drinking, illegal behaviour after dark is more reliant on social attitudes. ... alcohol is a big part of the culture. You see a lot of it, you're exposed to a lot of it.

In contrasting the way Cowra was when they were a teenager, one parent believed –

... the availability of drugs probably wasn't so high then ... I think [currently] it's very high, very available.

This parent said that in addition to marijuana –

... goey's [amphetamines] eccys [ecstasy] and stuff like that ...

were being used, adding about underage drinking –

[Currently kids] ... do their underage drinking in meeting places, so someone gets their alcohol for them then they go to different locations and they drink.

Some of these parties, where people from the age of 15 years congregated and used alcohol and other drugs, were out in the open –

... you've only got to drive around on a Friday or Saturday night and there's just kids, groups of kids wandering ... And then they might all just be at a roadside sitting in the gutter and they're all drinking whatever and then ... just walking around. And ... they're fuelled by alcohol and drugs, and then they're destructive ... property destructive mostly obviously there are fights and I think probably some of the pubs and

things, they've worked hard to try and get it out of the pubs, but ... there are still fights ... I don't frequent these places, so for me it's just what I hear, but I certainly have seen with my own eyes and especially if there's something on.

Parents whose children had been in contact with the legal system associated these problems with the use of alcohol and other drugs. One parent shared this information –

Alcohol and drug taking became a big part of [my child's] life. ... Poor decision making and poor choices accompanied [my child's] lack of boundaries and of course it was only a matter of time before [my child] landed in the hands of corrective services. ... Drugs [and] alcohol are a big problem in Cowra ...

Another parent whose son at one 'point was ... using harder drugs' credited the fact that he was now no longer having problems with the law, in part, with the fact that –

[My child's] not using drugs anymore and is about four months or so off the beer.

Contact with police and justice system

Most young people interviewed have access to transport, either their parents' car, their own car with many having their P-plates, or they simply walk or skate. While transport was not seen as problematic for most and not the biggest issue they are facing, for many of those young people interviewed who have had contact with the criminal justice system, it was for minor misdemeanors such as driving while unlicensed.

One young person acknowledged their own part in how they had come contact with the justice system, and how that had impacted on their own transport needs –

I had my P's for 8 weeks and I was caught speeding ... I was just driving thinking I wasn't getting pinched, but it didn't work, every time I was being silly I got pinched. It's the most silliest thing in my head that I'm in gaol for, like I didn't hurt anyone ... I just drove because I needed to get from point A to point B. Now I'm sitting here doing gaol time for a silly thing.

The reason for another young person's contact with the justice system was an altercation –

I had an argument with my best friend and I wasn't thinking straight and I smashed someone's house up.

For one young person who had experienced incarceration wanted to gain from that experience, learn and not come back, and get a job when they returned to town –

I want to benefit from gaol, not go downhill and keep coming back. So this time I've had it, I know I've only done a couple of years but I've had it, I just want to do good for myself, get a job if I can and do good.

One young person reflected on a friend's contact with the police as positive following a trespassing incident where the friend was given a warning –

It was just trespassing, yeah so it wasn't anything bad. Yeah didn't know what they were doing was bad. ... he got lucky and didn't get fined or anything. ... probably a wakeup call as to what can really happen.

Parents also discussed legal problems their children had following what they saw as minor crimes. One said –

It started reasonably young, [my child] was just my tearaway.

Another parent shared information about minor crime which resulted in their child being arrested when they were living out of Cowra –

At night time [my child] got into [minor crime]. Got in with a group of unemployed kids ... lost [their] job, didn't look for work but instead spent [their] days doing [minor crime]. Got arrested for destroying public property.

Young people returning to the community following detention

Of those young people interviewed who had been through the criminal justice system respondents commented how they receive useful programs, services and support in gaol e.g. anger management, alcohol management, art, exercise and helpful parole and corrections officers. The message was that there are better services and support in gaol than in the community.

[My relationship with parole officer] is excellent. She helped me get along with psychiatrists and she helped me get all my documents sent over

because I was seeing the psychiatrist in Sydney. Well she got this person in Cowra and she got me all the documents sent over.

Stigma was experienced by some young people interviewed. One young person reflected the fact that they had done something wrong and had been through the justice system, but also on how hard it is to adjust when they came back to town after being in detention –

As soon as I went back to football, like I'd go and play and then people like 'I haven't see you for a while' ... It's like discrimination, like because I've been to gaol, they're like shocked. Yeah. Like, 'Oh how can you go to gaol?' I'm like, 'Yeah I've done stupid things, you know. I'm not a bad person', doesn't make you a bad person.'

There's a lot of people out home if you tell them you've been to gaol--I mean you try not to but if they ask you the question you've got to answer it, to me if someone asks me if I've been to gaol I'm not going to say, "No, I haven't," and then they find out I have, I can't lie.

One young person interviewed alluded to a 'name and shame' attitude in the town, where the names of young people going before the courts and their sentence is published in the local paper, enabling adults to gratuitously comment on how disappointed they are in that young person. The young person interviewed felt that they would prefer people simply say nothing.

... in the newspaper at home they've got the courts and they show your name, age, address, what you've done, and that's where they've heard it, seen it. ... It's embarrassing ... because they just look at me like I'm a criminal ... a bad criminal ... they come and say to me, 'I'm very disappointed in you', and they look at me completely weird and different now. [Interviewer – Would you prefer they say nothing?] Yeah. Yes.

Another young person reflected on the difficulty to adjust to the transition from gaol to the community, particularly for a young people with mental health issues –

Coming out of gaol is hard ... to adjust to society ... I can't wait to get out the door but then when I get out the door just seeing the cars swish past and all these people in one spot... Like being

in gaol you're used to 50 or 60 odd people and that's it, you've got the same faces. Well, seeing all different faces I find it real hard.

A parent whose child had been in trouble with the law for minor crime talked of the support offered by people in Cowra that helped him come back to the town.

Interviews with service providers and business sector

Thirty two (32) service providers from the health, education, employment, justice and social service sectors participated in the research through face to face interviews and focus groups discussions during the period April to July 2014. Researchers also met with the business sector at a meeting of the Cowra Business Chamber in June 2014.

Mental health services including Headspace

It is evident that service provision for young people with mental health issues is a significant concern. It was disclosed that there was a spate of suicides of young people in the town going back to 2003. Of concern to several service providers was the fact that there are no statistics at the local level on youth suicide, related to the need for a deeper conversation about youth suicides to inform mental health services in the town.

Around 2003 we had a ... very high number of youth suicides. That number hasn't been maintained, thank goodness. It's very hard to get statistics on it at our level. You can get broad statistics across the region ... but at a Cowra level it's very hard to get statistics on youth suicide.

One service provider reported that the town's doctors provide a comprehensive service that includes attention to mental health needs.

... several doctors will give young people a priority appointment if they feel there's mental health issues going on.

More specifically, interviews with the Mental Health team revealed some of the challenges they face, including administrative and clinical caseloads, a dearth of male clinicians, limited access to senior staff, as the following excerpts attest:

1. the amount of paperwork and the statistics that we have to log in that to me takes away from face to face client hours.

2. ... the worry that we're continually having to justify our jobs and worry that we will lose more positions when in reality it's a growing field in health and we need more people rather than less. So we're all managing really high caseloads and that, it becomes a juggle sometimes.

3. ... a very big shortage of male mental health clinicians ... we've got one male clinician that comes over from Orange one day a week.

4. My biggest challenge is not having access to senior staff. We only have a temporary clinical nurse consultant at the moment. Our psychiatry hours are up in the air - at the moment they're good but at any stage that can change.

An interview with an education sector service provider also revealed frustration around waiting times for young people to see a mental health professional:

When a parent says to me, I want to get my child in to see adolescent mental health but they're not going to see them for six weeks and we know it's urgent, it's very frustrating.

Overwhelmingly, there was high praise for Headspace and other Mental Health services in the town, as articulated in two interviews:

1. [Headspace]... made a big difference because I think the kids don't feel like they are just on some sort of roundabout and having to work with people who they felt didn't understand them.

2. ... comes back to Headspace being the most important government funded agency that has made an impact for young people in the town.

Those commendations were echoed by one service provider who described how Headspace works holistically:

Headspace ... they're just heaven on a stick ... because they look at the whole case. This person might be struggling with ... depression ... addiction ... unstable, perhaps, violent home space. Do you have to go to three different [services]? Not when you're dealing with Headspace because ... their role is ... along the

lines of case management. They will take over the case and ... act as an agent for that person and orchestrate the support. So they're fantastic.

One youth service provider (whose Commonwealth funding was due to finish shortly after this interview) spoke about the normalisation of mental health issues for some young people and how that service provided worked within that young person's mental framework to achieve common aims:

... no kid's going to walk in here and say I've got self-esteem issues, anger management ... mental health issues - so please send me to Headspace. To [that kid] they're alright, they're all good, they're okay, they don't need any extra help. So my job is to get to know them and work out what's going on and the way you say it, is whether they're going to either go mad at you or they're going to go, You know what, that sounds like a pretty good idea.

For those young people who do use mental health services and for service provider referring them to services such as Headspace, waiting periods can become problematic:

Because living in Cowra we don't have services that I can just ring up and say this is what I need, can I get it now. So it might be a matter of, a young person goes to Orange. Headspace is great, fantastic but then there's also a waiting period there.

Alarmingly, it was reported that Headspace is constantly at risk of de-funding. One health sector service provider described this as:

We were very fearful 18 months ago that we would lose Headspace ... but we were able to maintain it for now. But it's almost there's a hatchet hanging over it and any minute now the pendulum will swing and the hatchet will fall. So we do worry that if that service were to be lost to Cowra, that would be a huge loss to that 12-25 years age group ... not just [for] mental health, they look after other aspects too for young people.

Another service provider referred to the constant struggle to fund Headspace:

We had to struggle ... we were running fundraisers and that sort of stuff for several years to try and keep Headspace afloat.

Against this backdrop, it was reported, however, that Headspace does not always fulfil all the needs of young people often because of stigma associated with mental health issues, with two service providers expressing it as:

1. We struggle getting them into Headspace ... like the kids just don't want to go there, they don't want to be associated with Headspace ... because of the stigma.

2. [with] Headspace ... kids don't always feel comfortable to access those services. ... I think kids expect themselves ... to be normal ... and don't want to look different from other people. Peer pressure is quite strong: I'm not going to go and see [Headspace] because they'll think I'm a nut - you know, that sort of stuff.

Housing, homelessness, domestic violence

Homelessness was a recurring theme throughout several interviews. One service provider lamented the divergent sectoral priorities in relation to homelessness and domestic violence:

We all have our own agenda. I mean things that are important to me may not be important to a member of the chamber of commerce, may not be important to someone that works at the council. Things that I'm passionate about, which is the homeless and the domestic violence and a fair go for everybody may not be what their agenda is ...

It was reported that Bathurst is the closest town to Cowra that has a youth refuge. One service provider estimated at least six homeless youth in town as clients, describing a situation for one young person who had come to them:

Unfortunately if a 19 year old comes in (which happened only a week ago) and says, 'I've just been kicked out of where I was staying' - we don't have options.

This is complicated by degrees of homelessness: the service provider further described this in terms of what advice they may be able to give a homeless young person:

[I might say], I can send you to housing, however if you have a roof over your head, you won't be eligible for any emergency accommodation if you're couch surfing.

This service provider summarised how they would like to see the situation resolved:

I'd love the State government to give us a youth refuge: I'd love Council to recognise that ... [and] have a youth worker.

Education

Service providers in the education sector made the point that they want to prepare their young people for a broader participation in life,

We get a lot of pressure from community and at times from government saying that we've got to prepare them for jobs. ... [but] We want to prepare them to be good citizens, and to be a good citizen you need a broad education. Schools know that we don't just teach literacy and numeracy. We teach the whole child and the whole person.

NSW Education Department suspension policy

The NSW Education Department suspension policy can be found at:

https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/policies/student_serv/discipline/stu_discip_gov/suspol_07.pdf

Application of the suspension policy can be quite a stressful situation for teachers and school management involved.

[Suspending a student must be very stressful.] It can be. Certainly the ... repeat kids is very - because you're thinking we're running out of ideas.

It was mentioned, however, that where parents are involved in the process and are actively involved in the educational network, the issue of suspension does not have to be prolonged.

Where the parent/s come on board, we don't have repeats. In most cases - very, very much in the vast majority - when we've got parents or carers on board we don't have repeats. A quick short suspension is normally enough. Unfortunately there are a lot of kids who have parents who ... don't have the capacity to instigate that change.

There is acknowledgement within the education sector that some families need extra support for their young people to get through the educational process and into the wider world. The frustrations experienced by some resonates in this excerpt:

... if the family is strong and the school is strong, then the kids can't help but benefit. But what about the kids whose families are not strong? When that's broken? How on earth do you do that?

The challenge to find role models who can connect with young people was a recurring theme. One service provider within the education sector was aware of an informal group of young Indigenous men in the town, whose experiences have provided them with wisdom and insight which can be passed on to young people:

I think it's more that they've kind of not been through it, but seen it. And they don't want other younger ones to go down that path so they're just kind of ... you could call them role models. But I think they're striving for something themselves as well and hopefully that the young kids see ...that blokes like [names] are out there

Employment

Several service providers made the point that there is a lack of entry level positions in the town, alluding to the leadership role that the Council and the business sector might take in this regard.

- 1. Challenges are finding entry level position. It's an employer's market in Cowra. ... the Council needs to take more of a role here. There's no entry level jobs, it's who you know, if you've got the right surname.*
- 2. I don't think we have enough opportunities whether it's a traineeship kind of process or to give some of these kids that may have had a rough start in life an opportunity, to give them that trial I don't see that very often.*
- 3. We need more traineeships.*
- 4. I would like to see more Aboriginal people in our workforce but not necessarily employed in Aboriginal health positions ...*

The latter point was reinforced where, in recommending how prospects for young people could be improved, one service provider

adjudged that the employment situation for many young Aboriginal people needs to be more accommodating and more inclusive.

I think employing more Aboriginal people. I think a lot of Aboriginal people, they walk in if they haven't got a job ... like I've been in shops before and I've watched them and they'll just watch the Aboriginal person. And if they had an Aboriginal person working behind the counter, it would be a whole lot different. But I think that could change more, but then yeah it's hard to say. You've got to change people's view of Aboriginal people I guess within town.

Several service providers articulated the need for a mentoring program in the town.

- 1. My dream would be to have some kind of mentoring program where young people could learn some skills.*
- 2. I would love to see some strong Indigenous men mentors to mentor some of the younger kids. We have got some with dance, I think the girls have some good things happening with the breakaway program and stuff at the high school. That's all really fantastic, but then to have that keep moving into employment.*

The business sector

The business sector and the Shire Council were praised for their contributions towards strengths based initiatives such as the Breakaway Program and the PCYC –

- 1. ... they enormously support any project that gets off the ground. When we were running Breakaway we went to businesses again and again ... and they all came good with whatever it is we wanted. They're very supportive of anything that they think will help with youth. They do a great job. The Shire Council are very happy to listen to any potential project that will give the youth something to do. But I think the businesses really just need to be asked and I think that when they're asked, they're willing.*
- 2. Chamber of Commerce, they've definitely said that they're behind Headspace and Rotary does fundraising for us and things like that and lots of businesses got behind that effort so if you go and approach them and say we need help with things they're really good at donating prizes or jumping on board ...*

Integration of services

Interviews with services providers suggested that the town is well resourced in terms of services and that youth service integration was largely seen as very strong. However, there was mention of some dysfunction in terms of communication between services. The need for an 'open conversation' and service mapping exercise was suggested:

1. I think Cowra is probably one of the most well-resourced community towns ... there are so many community organisations ... [but] there seems to be a bit of politics around [service integration]... there's not a lot of conversation between the groups. So although it's well resourced ... it's almost dysfunctional. I think a proper community forum where everybody actually came along and we could do a proper map would be really good.

2. We've quite a number of services here ... but the left hand doesn't necessarily know what the right is doing. That's where it's frustrating. The vision would be to have a one-stop shop ... to be able to say, 'This is what I'm dealing with. Can you help?' and [the service] says, 'We'll take care of all of the to-ing and fro-ing between those services you need and we'll pull it together for you.'

The communication issue, together with how time-poor service providers feel, was mentioned by another service provider:

... communication between the services is probably the one issue. And I suppose it's around time, we don't get the time to actually meet.

That frustration was reiterated by another service provider who described how counselling services for the town were (unsatisfactorily) gauged:

... they've done some work and come up with an algorithm which compared Cowra to other towns and mapped the number of counselling services to the population weighted by Aboriginality, population and demographics. They decided that Cowra had enough services. So that was a disappointment all around ... it's been a difficult transition.

Another service provider stated that out-of-hours services for young people displaying severe mental health stress present challenges to service providers:

If we have a patient who presents to the facility at a weekend or after 6 o'clock at night, we have great difficulty even if they are delusional and suicidal and really difficult to contain, we have great difficulty transporting them from Cowra to [say, Orange].

Young people returning to the community following detention

The inadequacy of local service integration extends to the situation of where a young person is returning to town from detention. Many service providers are not routinely advised when a young person who has been in custody is returning to town. Several service providers believed that having this information would not only benefit the young person returning, but would also make service providers' jobs easier.

Centrelink case workers, employment provider case workers, mental health case workers and education sector workers lamented the fact that they were not routinely provided with information, as these excerpts illustrate –

1. When we see them in crisis [when they return to town]. [Maybe we could] track back and go, 'OK, ... maybe we can put into your plan that you see Probation & parole every fortnight, you see drug and alcohol every week: that's what we want you to do to participate, rather than look for ten jobs and all these other things that are not going to work for you'. We don't necessarily know about that at the beginning, we find out at this crisis end.

2. [Knowing when they're returning to town would] definitely [help] because then we could put in - not protections - but some appropriate participation ... so people don't fall through the cracks at the end.

3. [Currently] It would be up to the young person unfortunately or their Parole & Probation officer. They're often eligible for a [Centrelink] payment when they leave if they've been incarcerated for over 30 days. I would hope they would get information at that time ... I would imagine it would be really stressful so you're not going to take in any of that information anyway.

4. No, we're not provided with that information; unfortunately usually how we find out is if they re-offend!

5. *If they want them followed up by mental health when they're coming out of detention they will give us some information, but not a great deal. It's mainly Probation & Parole that provide whatever they have, not Justice Health. If they've even been seen by a psychiatrist in the facility we don't get copies of their letters or assessments or anything like that. Definitely, I think we should [be provided with that].*

6. *We've had students who've been in custody ... where we've only heard through the grapevine and that can be very frustrating. It can be very frustrating when a student has been involved in initial breaches of the law ... but it may have meant they're on bail or they're going before a magistrate. ... the local police are quite good - when they can, they'll let us know, but not always. There isn't a systematic approach to it, and that can be frustrating.*

7. *We would like to be routinely informed] for two reasons: one, if that child needs extra support coming back, it gives us the opportunity to be aware of it and to try and do that; ... two, a group of kids may have attacked another student and the police have been involved and it's going through the system. We need to know so we can manage to avoid a repeat of what happened.*

Strengths based initiatives in Cowra

It is evident that there are many strength based initiatives in Cowra that the community is fittingly proud of and where personnel work tirelessly in the provision of support and advocacy services for its citizens, including its young people. In addition to those services, three services were also highlighted in our interviews – the Breakaway Program, PCYC and Weigelli, now described.

The Breakaway Program

The Breakaway program was developed in 2003 in response to growing concerns over the number of Aboriginal girls disengaging from school. A community meeting was held bringing together local service providers to discuss how best to address the issue. School engagement levels were discussed in relation to related social problems including low self-esteem, a lack of positive and appropriate role models, and limited 'life skills' and job prospects for young people. A working group

was formed comprising community members and relevant service providers including the local Aboriginal Health service, NSW Education (TAFE), the police and Police Citizens' Youth Club (PCYC), and Cowra Community Health. The working party aimed to provide an interagency service which would address issues of truancy and self-esteem, and provide role models and life skills to young people. A Memoriam of Understanding delineated the individual roles of and responsibility of agencies and services providers in the working group.

Participants in the first program were female Aboriginal students aged 13-15 considered 'at risk' of disengaging from school, who had been identified by parents, school staff and the Home Liaison Officer. Students and their families were then notified of the proposed program and given the opportunity to participate. A group of 10 girls formed the first participants of a 10 week program, termed 'The Breakaway Program'. The working group developed a program based on the structure of an existing program used in two neighbouring high schools. The program was then adapted and modified for use with other Aboriginal students in Cowra.

The program was funded from grant money received by the PCYC from the NSW Department of Sport and Recreation. Individual components of the program were chosen by the project drivers, parents and school staff. Sessions were designed to complement the school curriculum and were mapped onto the school syllabus for Personal Development Health and Physical Education. They covered topics including self-esteem, stress and anger management, sexual education, nutrition, drug and alcohol awareness, life skills, and legal issues. Additionally the program included sessions aimed at transmitting life skills to students to help prepare them for life outside of school (run by Centrelink).

Community members were invited to speak with participants about their education and employment and act as positive role models. All sessions were facilitated by the school counsellor and local Aboriginal health workers, with the exception of the legal sessions which were run by a local PCYC officer. The program was initially run one day a week during school hours at the local PCYC club. This was intended to provide a safe and learning positive environment for students outside of school.

At the conclusion of the first program an internal evaluation assessed self-esteem measures, school attendance rates, student reflective journals, group discussions, and parent and key stakeholder interviews. Positive improvements were noted in school attendance rates and self-reported self-esteem measures. Sessions on sexual health, personal grooming and cooking were reported as highlights of the program for students. All students expressed an intention to remain in school until at least until year 10, with some expressing remain in school until year 12. Feedback from interviews with key stakeholders and parents were overwhelmingly positive.

The efficacy of the program was attributed to a sense of community ownership over the program and the influence of positive interagency communication and cooperation. The program was celebrated by the community as a success and key stakeholders committed to support at least two future programs.

In 2004 Breakaway was expanded to encompass three separate groups including two male cohorts. The groups consisted of one eight-week program for nine girls in years 8-11, one eight-week program for four boys in years 10-12 and one five-week program with eight boys in years 8-9. The program was adapted from the 2003 Breakaway program structure to include support for students transitioning out of the school system into further education or into workplace. Each project had a literacy and numeracy component provided by TAFE; a health, lifestyle and life skills component provided by Mid-West Area Health, local Police, Cowra High School and other relevant agencies; and a careers and work component provided by a range of relevant local agencies.

The program was complemented by a supporting program, Helping Youth People at Risk (HYPAR), provided by local TAFE staff and the Home School Liaison Officer. Sessions were adapted and delivered according to the relative needs and interests of students. Stakeholders of the 2004 program included Cowra Public High School, Mid-West Area Health Service, Cowra TAFE, Cowra Aboriginal community, Police and PCYC and Department of Education and Training (DET) District Office. Funding for the 2004 program was received from the Learning Works Program through

the District Office (DET). A portion of this funding was set aside by the PCYC to provide food and transport to students during the program.

At the conclusion of the three programs an internal evaluation observed increases in student self-esteem levels, attendance rates and engagement with school. Student feedback revealed that on the whole students found the less structured, more 'hands-on' activities of the program more engaging and beneficial than teacher-directed activities. The program was once again widely celebrated within the community as a success. Parents and key stakeholders indicated that this was partly attributable to the provision of food and transport to students.

In 2005 the program was re-funded and adapted from the 2004 structure and expanded to include Canowindra High School. Three separate projects were run comprising an 8-week program with eight girls from year 8, a 7-week program with seven girls from years 8-9 (including two from Canowindra High School) and a 7-week program for seven boys in years 8-9 (including one from Canowindra High School). Each project included a literacy and numeracy component, a health and wellbeing component and an employment skills and experience component. Stakeholders included Cowra High School, Greater Western Area Health, Cowra TAFE, Cowra Aboriginal Community, Police and PCYC, and the Department of Education and Training (DET) District Office. Reconnect, an agency which provided dance and art services was also added to the program. A full-time co-ordinator for boys programs and more male Aboriginal health workers were also funded. Increases in student self-esteem, attendance rates were observed. Other notable successes of the 2005 program included an increase in student contact with the Careers advisor at the school and the formation of an art program and dance group through Reconnect.

The provision of food and transport was again recognised by community members as an integral component to the success of the wider program.

The Breakaway program has been running each consecutive year in Cowra since its inception in 2003. The program is dynamic, adaptive and driven by student needs and interests. In recent years however there appears to be a greater push towards coordinating sessions with the school

curriculum and for greater levels of responsibility to be delegated to teachers in delivering the program. While the impetus of the program remains strongly on supporting female Aboriginal students, it has been expanded to include male students, non-Aboriginal students and students from neighbouring high schools. Parents, school staff or students may make referrals, but funding determines the number of places in each program.

In 2004, Cowra High School awarded the Breakaway program with the CEO's Award and People's Choice Award Cowra Guardian, 2004). In 2005, the Breakaway program was awarded a Director-General's School Achievement Award by the Director of Education. Breakaway has been trialed in at least 7 other Central Western high schools (Cowra Guardian, 2004).

The separation of the program from the school is recognised as a strength by students and community members, as providing a supportive and informal environment which complements learning at school. The interactive and responsive nature of the sessions is also recognised as a strength. The success and longevity of the program is largely attributable to the commitment of individuals within the working group. Interagency cooperation is also recognised as a considerable strength of the program. Regular interagency meetings are held and service providers and community members reports a sense of 'ownership' over the community driven program. While the program has not been formally evaluated, anecdotal evidence strongly supports the efficacy of the program.

Cowra Police Citizens' Youth Club

Police Citizens' Youth Clubs (PCYC) serves as an interface between NSW Police and the citizens of New South Wales, especially young people. The aims of PCYC are to get young people active in life; develop their skills, character and leadership; reduce and prevent crime by and against young people; promote citizenship within communities across the State. NSW Police who work with the PCYC strive to prevent and reduce crime by and against young people, through case managing young offenders and working closely with youth at risk, to help get them away from crime. The Cowra PCYC operates in two locations - Young Road complex, which is the main operations centre, and Binni Creek Road, which is the Gymnastics,

Dancing and Vacation Care Centre. Activities and programs offered through Cowra PCYC offers are archery, Basketball, Boxing, Gymnastics, Junior Disco, Kindergym, Laser Tag, PCYC Debutante Ball, Safer Drivers Course for Learner Drivers, Vacation Care, Winter Exercise Group, Camps. Boxing gets particularly good attendance.

PCYC Cowra has a Manager and two Youth/ Caseworkers. The role of Cowra's Youth/Case Managers is to find young people that have come into contact with police and have been charged with offences. They receive referrals from the police station, Headspace, OCTEC, parents and schools. The Case Managers then get in touch with the young person and interview them to find out what they want to do and where they're headed. The aim is not to arrest them but to actually prevent them from entering the court system. These police officers strive to help the young people and try and keep them out of trouble.

Cowra PCYC offers Friday Night H.O.P (Headspace, OCTEC, and PCYC Health). This weekly event sees PCYC, Headspace and OCTEC Youth Connections staff work together to engage young people aged 12 years and older, offering a range of sports, art & craft, and recreational activities between 6.30pm and 8.30pm, with a sausage sizzle provided. The PCYC in Cowra works closely with other services in the town, particularly Headspace and OCTEC Youth Connections and the Breakaway Program.

It was highlighted in interviews with service providers that the PCYC Case Workers have been involved with young people in town for a very long time, often up to 20 years for some young people. It was also noted that through those long relationships a great deal of trust has developed with many young people and their parents. A PCYC case worker summarised how they work with young people, including diversion away from activities that might get that young people in contact with the criminal justice system –

We get referrals from police, the police station, we get referrals from Headspace, for OCTEC, parents can refer kids, high school can refer. And then we just, then we go and find, we go the child's house and speak with their parents and sign them up, put them on our books, look up their offences, their history and then we interview them. We do an assessment with them and

then we start to find out what they want to do and where they're headed or if they're interested in sport or interested in working and just be mentors too for them, other than arresting them we're there to help them and try and keep them away from the court system.

Another youth worker praised the work of the PCYC caseworkers, making the point that these caseworkers had particular personal skills and qualities that worked with young people.

We're very lucky in Cowra to have two PCYC officers as cool as [PCYC caseworkers] ... without them I couldn't do half of the stuff that I do. So the kids are now respecting – like [PCYC caseworker] has worked with some of the kids since they were little. ... So with [PCYC caseworker] coming onto the Cowra scene has been a godsend because the other young fellows, they respect him. They know he's a police officer. They have a muck around with him and most of the kids that are on my caseload feel that if they've got a police issue, the first person they're going to go and see is [PCYC caseworkers] where prior to that that wouldn't have happened.

Weigelli Centre Aboriginal Corporation

Weigelli (a Wiradjuri word meaning 'drink') Centre Aboriginal Corporation is an alcohol and other drug (AOD) residential rehabilitation centre located on a former farm approximately 25 km from Cowra. Local Aboriginal Health Workers started planning for the centre in the early 1970s. In 1992 funding was secured for its establishment. Over time, Weigelli has received funding from a variety of sources, mostly various government grants.

Weigelli initially operated as a service exclusively for Indigenous people. It now also provides services for non-Indigenous people. It is governed by a committee with representatives from Cowra and other Aboriginal communities from the lower central west area of NSW. It has capacity for 18 residents who before admission must attend a withdrawal program or have a doctor's letter abstaining them. In April 2014, it employed 20 people. The aim was always to expand the program and put more focus on preventative aspects, especially for young people. Part of the strategy

was to develop an educational and preventative package to be promoted in schools, health centres and communities. The need for client care after discharge was always recognised and this is now operating as the Weigelli Centre Outreach program. One of the AOD aftercare workers interviewed in April 2014 said that the program runs assessment for four weeks after residents are discharged. He maintains regular contact and support mainly through Facebook and he "keeps the door open" for as long as needed by clients.

At the time of data collection (April 2014), Weigelli was going through a process of accreditation and staff reduction due to government budget cuts. The consequence was reduced aftercare services. In case of emergency, residents are taken to Cowra hospital. Weigelli has links with a Canowindra doctor where residents may attend for assessment. Several relevant services including Lyndon Community Withdrawal Unit in Orange and Nepean Hospital in Sydney also collaborate with Weigelli to, for example, run men's groups, provide support and facilitate transfer of clients back to communities. Weigelli also collaborates with the NSW Attorney General & Justice MERIT (Magistrates Early Referral into Treatment) Program whose main objective is to break the alcohol and other drug use crime cycle by involving defendants in treatment and rehabilitation. If found guilty of a crime associated with alcohol use an Aboriginal person who appears before a magistrate in local rural communities of central West NSW has the choice of treatment in Weigelli or of going to Bathurst Correction Centre. All rehabilitation centres across rural NSW, including Weigelli, have funding until June 2015. Funding after that date remains uncertain.

E: HIS HONOUR JUDGE PETER JOHNSTONE'S PAPER TO THIRD FORUM



Children's Court of New South Wales

JUSTICE REINVESTMENT STAKEHOLDER FORUM

Cowra New South Wales

Tuesday 26th May 2015

JUDGE PETER JOHNSTONE

PRESIDENT OF THE CHILDREN'S COURT OF NEW SOUTH WALES

"JUSTICE REINVESTMENT - A WAY FORWARD FOR DIVERSION AND EARLY INTERVENTION"

INTRODUCTION

1. This paper has been prepared for the 2015 Justice Reinvestment Stakeholder Forum on Tuesday 26 May 2015. The topic for my address is "Justice Reinvestment – A way forward for diversion and early intervention."
2. I wish to acknowledge the traditional occupiers of the land on which we meet, and pay my respects to their elders, past and present.
3. I am honoured to return to Cowra, after attending the commemoration of the Cowra World Peace Bell in September of 2013. In my 2013 oration, I stated that we must not act as spectators, sitting idly by as we witness social failures. We must take responsibility, beginning with unity and cohesion within families, in order to find the expression of unity and cohesion in the community.
4. Justice Reinvestment is a powerful articulation of diversion. It espouses the need to mobilise families, volunteers, community groups and government and non-government agencies to protect and promote positive futures for children and young people.
5. I have been asked to report on the implications of the research findings in 'Reducing Incarceration using Justice Reinvestment – an exploratory case study.' The central thesis of this study was to determine whether finances currently utilised to incarcerate citizens within the Cowra region could be successfully reinvested back into the community.¹
6. In my time as President of the Children's Court of New South Wales, I view it as my duty to ensure that young people are diverted from the criminal justice system as early as possible.
7. I will not traverse the various deleterious impacts contact with the criminal justice system can have on a young person's life course and criminal trajectory, as this has been well established in a wealth of reputable research over the years.
8. Justice Reinvestment is an innovative mechanism that aims to facilitate successful and meaningful interagency collaboration. By aiming to address the underlying causes of crime and improve outcomes for both individuals and communities, it recognises that investment in people is the key to successful communities. In fact, one of the refrains of Just Reinvest is 'Give Them a Life, Not a Life in Prison.'
9. In order to ensure we have a mutual and consistent concept of Justice Reinvestment, we must maintain an awareness of what Justice Reinvestment is not. This is cogently articulated in the research at page 9:

"It is not just restorative justice; it is not short term and not top-down from centralised governments; it is not about diverting funds from health, education, employment and training to diversionary or early intervention programs, and it is not the responsibility of a single government department."

¹ Guthrie, J. (2015) 'Reducing Incarceration Using Justice Reinvestment – an exploratory case study', Discussion paper presented at the Cowra Justice Reinvestment Stakeholder Forum Tuesday 26th and Wednesday 27th May 2015 at p.4.

10. Therefore, when approaching the question of reporting on the findings and implications of this research, I believe I am being asked to speak to two critical concepts.
11. Firstly, what is Justice Reinvestment really trying to achieve and secondly, how can the Children's Court assist in collaborating and supporting these aims.

JUSTICE REINVESTMENT AND THE CHILDREN'S COURT OF NSW

12. While I have been asked to speak to the findings of the research, I feel that this is something we can all discover from engaging with the research. I highly recommend that you all undertake this task as it is a worthwhile contribution to academia on Justice Reinvestment.
13. Accordingly, I feel that my time is best spent summarising what Justice Reinvestment is about and how that connects to the strategic initiatives being trialled in the Children's Court. I am certain you are all aware of the proverb "It takes a whole village to raise a child."
14. Justice Reinvestment highlights this ideology by empowering communities with the resources and support to address the circumstances that result in a young person's offending behaviour.
15. As Justice Reinvestment diverts funds into early intervention, crime prevention and diversionary programs, it creates savings in the criminal justice system which can be tracked and reinvested.
16. I am pleased to report that my commitment to diversionary processes has resulted in the development of two innovative initiatives the Children's Court of NSW has implemented to foster collaboration and interagency support to improve outcomes for young people. These initiatives are the Youth Koori Court and the Youth Diversion Process.
17. Justice Reinvestment recognises the undisputed fact that Aboriginal people are overrepresented in the justice system. In the Children's Court, this is manifested in both the juvenile crime jurisdiction and in the care and protection jurisdiction. Aboriginal children are similarly overrepresented in detention centres.
18. Over my time as President of the Children's Court I have encouraged discussion and thought with regards to the ways and means the Court can institute to ameliorate this tragic reality. One such way has been through the introduction of a Youth Koori Court at Parramatta Children's Court.
19. The Children's Court began trialling the Youth Koori Court in January 2015 at Parramatta Children's Court. The Youth Koori Court is a deferred sentencing mechanism that focusses on providing greater Aboriginal involvement in court process.
20. This involvement and empowerment is particularly important with regards to the interagency and community collaboration implicit in Justice Reinvestment.
21. In 1991, The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody articulated that:

"...running through all the proposals that are made for the elimination of these disadvantages is the proposition that Aboriginal people have for two hundred years been dominated to an extraordinary degree by the non-

Aboriginal society and that the disadvantage requires domination and an empowerment of Aboriginal people; that control of their lives, of their communities must be returned to Aboriginal hands.²⁸

22. In addition to involving the Aboriginal community to ensure the process is culturally relevant, the Youth Koori Court aims to reduce the risk factors that impact on reoffending behaviour and ultimately, to reduce the number of Aboriginal young people being sentenced to a period of detention.
23. Unlike a mainstream Court, the Youth Koori Court is more informal and all participants sit around a table and speak 'plain English' rather than complicated legal jargon. Elders are involved to provide cultural advice to the Magistrate and may also speak with the young person about their risk factors, circumstances and why they are before the Court.
24. An informal conference with the young person is conducted prior to sentencing. The participants at the conference will include the facilitator, the young person, their family, Elders and staff from both government and non-government agencies.
25. As you can see, the Youth Koori Court is a fantastic example of a diversionary process incorporating some of the key elements of Justice Reinvestment. It is a strategic innovation that brings together the different agencies and cultural supports the young person needs in order to thrive.
26. Interagency collaboration and community engagement is also exemplified through an additional program in pilot stage at the Children's Court. Legal Aid NSW is working in partnership with the Children's Court to trial a Youth Diversion Process at Parramatta Children's Court.
27. The trial of the Youth Diversion Process is driven by 3 key elements: diversion, rehabilitation and interagency support. Under this process, legal practitioners engaged by Legal Aid NSW will identify young people who are likely to become regular users of Legal Aid services against specific criteria developed by Legal Aid and informed by research conducted on High Service Users.²⁹
28. The legal practitioner will also assess the young person against the criteria used by the Integrated Case Management Panel (a panel coordinated by the Department of Family and Community Services in the Western Sydney District) and in appropriate cases make a referral to that panel in conjunction with Juvenile Justice.
29. Unless a young person has entered a plea of not guilty, the Children's Court agrees that an adjournment of 3 or 6 weeks, where the Court has ordered a Juvenile Justice Background Report is appropriate to allow for referral to and assessment by the Integrated Case Management Panel.
30. The Children's Court will thereafter manage and deal with these matters having regard to any additional information or action taken by the Integrated Case Management Panel or related agency.

²⁸ Commonwealth of Australia (1991), *Royal Commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody*, vols 1-4, Canberra, Australia at vols 1.7.5-1.7.6.

²⁹ Van de Zandt, P. and Webb, T. (2013), *High Service Users at Legal Aid NSW: Profiling the 50 highest users of legal aid services*.

CONCLUSION

31. It is my view that any research aimed at addressing Indigenous overrepresentation in prison and empowering communities is worthwhile. A plethora of qualitative and quantitative research highlights that there is a clear link between levels of disadvantage in Aboriginal communities and offending.
32. The strategies and mechanisms we employ to address this historic and systemic disadvantage is less clear.
33. It is important that we approach the fundamental precepts of Justice Reinvestment in an educated and comprehensive way. We must be cognisant of the fact that what may work well in one area, may be problematic in another. Therefore tailored, piloted programs are critical.
34. At its core, Justice Reinvestment is about diversion. As President of the Children's Court, I will continue to advocate for better outcomes for Aboriginal young people and will continue to educate all stakeholders that overrepresentation begins much earlier than when an Aboriginal young person is incarcerated. It begins when the young person is apprehended, in the use or misuse of Police discretion under the *Young Offenders Act 1997* and extends through to Judicial approaches in sentencing.
35. While Justice Reinvestment and its associated programs and community collaboration are not a panacea, they are a positive step toward systemic change and I am honoured to be included in the discourse on Justice Reinvestment.

F: PROFESSOR MICHAEL LEVY'S PRESENTATION TO THIRD FORUM

Justice Re-investment What are the Possibilities?

Professor Michael Levy

Australian Prisoners

- Education: Low school achievement = best independent predictor of convictions up to age 32 years
- Disability: 18% ♀ and 27% ♂ scored below "pass" on intellectual disability screening
- Employment: ~ 50% of total will never gain meaningful employment; those that do resume work experience a drop in salary



Juvenile Justice – 2011 - 2013

- The daily average number of young people aged 10–17 years in youth justice detention centres decreased from 819 to 789 between 2011-12 and 2012-13.
- The daily average rate of detention of young people aged 10–17 years decreased from 36.4 per 100,000 the population aged 10–17 years in 2011-12 to 34.9 per 100 000 in 2012-13.
- Females comprised 11 per cent of the total population of youth justice detention centres during 2012-13.



Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody

- Report released in April 1991
- 339 Recommendations
- “The conclusion was that too many Aboriginal people are in custody too often.”



Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody

- The Commission's findings were:

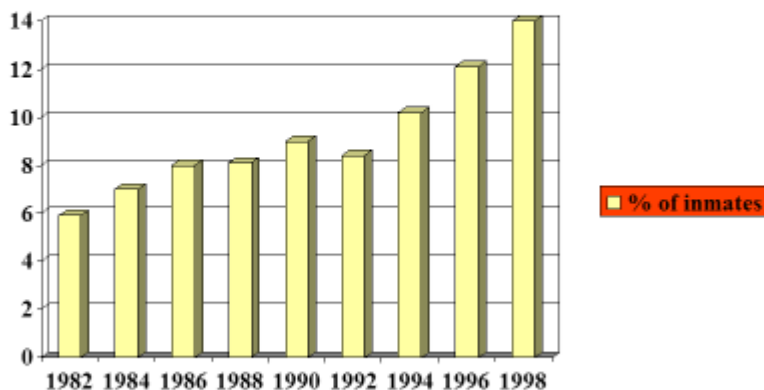
Aboriginal people do not die at a higher rate than non-Aboriginal people in custody; however

The rate at which Aboriginal people are taken into custody is overwhelmingly different.

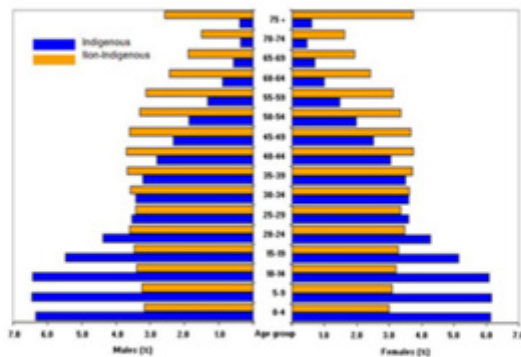
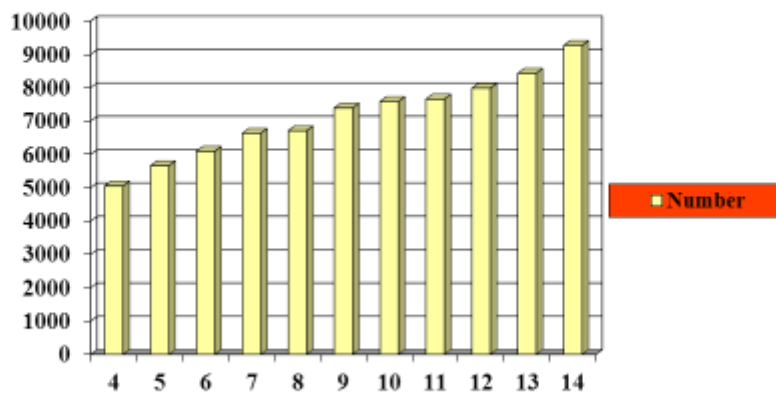
- Source: <http://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/law/royal-commission-into-aboriginal-deaths-in-custody#ixzz3aM07RSD7>



Trends in Aboriginal Incarceration, NSW, 1982-98



Trends in Aboriginal Incarceration, Australia, 2004-14



Source: Experimental Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2006 (ABS cat. no. 3238.0.55.001)



Young Aboriginal People and the Juvenile Justice System (RCIADIC)

- 62. That governments and Aboriginal organisations recognise that the problems affecting Aboriginal juveniles are so widespread and have such potentially disastrous repercussions for the future that there is an urgent need for governments and Aboriginal organisations to negotiate together to devise strategies designed to reduce the rate at which Aboriginal juveniles are involved in the welfare and criminal justice systems and, in particular, to reduce the rate at which Aboriginal juveniles are separated from their families and communities, whether by being declared to be in need of care, detained, imprisoned or otherwise. (2:252)



Young Aboriginal People and the Juvenile Justice System – a Way Forward

- 62. That governments and Aboriginal organisations recognise that the problems affecting Aboriginal juveniles are so widespread and have such potentially disastrous repercussions for the future that there is an urgent need for governments and Aboriginal organisations to negotiate together to devise strategies designed to reduce the rate at which Aboriginal juveniles are involved in the welfare and criminal justice systems and, in particular, to reduce the rate at which Aboriginal juveniles are separated from their families and communities, whether by being declared to be in need of care, detained, imprisoned or otherwise. (2:252)



Sir Thomas More, Utopia (1478 - 1535)

For if you suffer your people to be ill-educated, and their manners to be corrupted from their infancy, and then punish them for those crimes to which their first education disposed them, what else is to be concluded from this, but that you first make thieves and then punish them.



The Possibilities

- Keeping our children engaged in education
- Responding positively to disability
- Creating meaningful employment
- Maintaining high quality housing
- Supporting families through the community – justice – community cycle

G: MAYORAL MINUTE TO COWRA SHIRE COUNCIL

MAYORAL MINUTE TO GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETING TO BE HELD ON MONDAY 7 DECEMBER 2015.

Author: Mayor

Item No: I.

Subject: Justice Reinvestment

Precis: The National Centre for Indigenous Studies at the Australian National University has been undertaking a Justice Reinvestment study in Cowra and their initial findings have been presented to Council. This Mayoral Minute outlines a proposal for Council's ongoing support and the next steps.

Budget: Nil

Recommendation:

1. **Council resolves that, based upon the research project undertaken in Cowra, it supports the concept of Justice Reinvestment (JR)**
2. **That Council advocate to policymakers and funders of the merits of Justice Reinvestment and seek intergovernmental collaboration to establish a Justice Reinvestment pilot in Cowra including investigating the formation of a JR Authority and a JR Accord in Cowra.**

I. Justice Reinvestment

Background

A team of researchers from the Australian National University in Canberra is working closely with Cowra on an important project titled *Reducing Incarceration using Justice Reinvestment – an exploratory case study*.

This project is a hypothetical study to test the research methodology and theory of 'Justice Reinvestment' (JR). JR is a framework for rethinking the criminal justice system so large sums of taxpayer money are not spent imprisoning people for low-level criminal activity, together with a political decision to re-invest that money back into the community from where those offenders originate. Justice Reinvestment requires a shift in policy and social outlook from incarceration, to non-incarceration and investing in the community and in people. It requires involvement by governments at all levels (Federal, State, Local, as well as Indigenous systems); non-government organisations; service providers; the business sector; the education, employment and health sectors; the police and the judiciary.

This innovative project has been running for approximately 2.5 years now, and many interviews, meetings, workshops and discussions have been conducted with a range

MAYORAL MINUTE TO GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETING TO BE HELD ON MONDAY 7 DECEMBER 2015.

of people in our town and beyond to find out their views on how to keep young people in particular out of trouble. The project is due to wrap up at the end of April 2016.

The project invited the entire Cowra community, including the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, and representatives from the education, employment, health, community service, police, judiciary, and business sectors, as well as young people, parents and grandparents and carers to participate in the research, thus enabling whole-of-community responses to juvenile justice issues affecting the town.

This Council resolution supports the concept of Justice Reinvestment and seeks engagement with policymakers and funders to establish a JR Authority and a JR Accord in Cowra, as described by Dr Jill Guthrie (Research Fellow, National Centre for Indigenous Studies, ANU) in the attached document (Attachment A).

Cowra Shire Council is proud to have been involved in a research project with Australian National University researchers since 2013, which has tested the theory and methodology of Justice Reinvestment in our community.

This community-driven research shows that approximately \$46m has been spent on incarcerating Cowra citizens over the past ten years, almost half of which (49.7% = \$23m) was for crimes which this community considers to be 'Justice Reinvestment-amenable'.

Currently, there are some 30,000 Australian prisoners. The Australian Productivity Commission indicates that in 2013-14, Australia's prisoners cost an average of \$292 per day in a system that cost the nation \$2.6 billion. New South Wales has some 11,000 prisoners, costing more than \$1 billion per year. The incarceration rate for Indigenous Australians is significantly higher than non-Indigenous Australians: 3% of Australia's population identifies as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, however Indigenous Australians represent 27% of the prison population, and the rate of imprisonment of Indigenous Australians is 16 times higher than for non-Indigenous Australians.

Research indicates that addressing disadvantage, increasing income equality and providing stable housing and employment opportunities can reduce crime.

Recognising these issues, a **Justice Reinvestment** approach uses research-based policies to save money on corrections, lower recidivism rates and make communities safer. Money that would have been spent on incarcerating medium to low security prisoners is instead invested in supporting programs and services at the local community level which aim to address systemic disadvantage.

Reinvesting prison expenditure into communities allows a broad range of programs from healthcare, housing, education and job training to be strategically implemented to maximise the potential to reduce crime and re-offending.

Several recent parliamentary committee reports have recommended state governments consider or trial Justice Reinvestment programs and that initiatives

MAYORAL MINUTE TO GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETING TO BE HELD ON MONDAY 7 DECEMBER 2015.

such as the 'Change the Record' campaign and the Australian Red Cross and Amnesty International are engaged in broad-based strategies to support Justice Reinvestment approaches across the country.

Council notes that:

- Cowra citizens involved in the project have determined that they would rather see monies currently being spent on incarcerating people for 'Justice Reinvestment-amenable' crimes reinvested into community-based prevention and early intervention, education, treatment and intense supervision initiatives;
- Approximately \$46m has been spent on imprisoning Cowra citizens over the past ten years, some 49.7% (\$23m) of which was for incarcerating people for crimes that the community considers to be 'Justice Reinvestment-amenable'
- Justice Reinvestment is a data-driven strategy for lowering correction services spending on medium to low security crime, lowering recidivism and improving public safety for citizens
- Justice Reinvestment policies work by saving money through criminal justice reforms and reinvesting a portion of those funds into targeted services that reduce recidivism and prevent prison growth
- Incarcerating people for crimes which are 'Justice Reinvestment amenable' does not represent good return on taxpayers' investment, nor does incarcerating those same people necessarily translate into improved community safety.

Recommendation

In acknowledging the importance of Justice Reinvestment it should be noted that Council's role at this time should focus on advocacy and inter-Governmental collaboration representing both the wishes of our community and those at risk.

Direct funding ought to be the role of both State and Federal Governments to provide or source.

I note and welcome recent comments in Parliament from the Member for Cootamundra.

A considerable and compelling body of work has been undertaken by Dr Guthrie and her highly respected team. The Council's support for this pilot project is one I commend to Council.

**MAYORAL MINUTE TO GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETING TO BE
HELD ON MONDAY 7 DECEMBER 2015.**

Attachments

- Attachment A *Enacting the Cowra Justice Reinvestment Resolution* (Dr Jill Guthrie, National Centre for Indigenous Studies, ANU)
- Attachment B Proof: Hon Katrina Hodgkinson MP, Crime Prevention Private Members Statement, NSW Legislative Assembly Hansard, 20 October 2015

Cr Bill West
Mayor
2 December 2015

Enacting the Cowra Justice Reinvestment Resolution

Two elements are fundamental to enacting the Cowra Justice Reinvestment (JR) Resolution – formation of a JR Authority and agreement of a JR Accord.

The Cowra JR Authority

The Resolution calls for the establishment of a **Cowra Justice Reinvestment Authority**.

It is envisaged that at least the first year of enacting the JR Resolution will concentrate on finding sustainable funding to appoint a CEO of the Authority, together with the administrative support and infrastructure to run the Authority.

The CEO would be responsible for the day-to-day management of the Authority and would be accountable for driving and delivering its priorities. Essentially this person would be responsible for the relationship building that is necessary for both the JR Accord and any JR initiatives deriving from the JR trial. As part of the selection criteria he or she would be required to have excellent people skills and the ability to engage and develop lasting, positive relationships with a range of stakeholders, internal to and external from the Cowra community.

For JR to be successful in Cowra, initially, funding for the CEO needs to be through 'new' monies (i.e., government and/or philanthropic), so that the CEO is able to focus on setting up the JR Accord and JR initiative/s in the town. While 'new' monies are necessary as start-up to the JR trial, the overall aim is that savings from JR initiatives are achieved within a specified time period, which will be reinvested back into the Authority for subsequent reinvestment into JR initiatives.

The Cowra JR Accord

The Cowra JR Accord is reliant on the establishment of the JR Authority above.

The **Cowra Justice Reinvestment (JR) Accord** is a formal agreement between all relevant human services agencies and criminal justice agencies – in the government and community sectors – that provides the overarching framework to work in partnership to support those people in our community who have had contact with the criminal justice system for 'JR amenable' criminal behaviours, or at risk of contact with the criminal justice system.

The Accord is underpinned by the **Collective Impact** approach¹. This is an innovative and structured approach to making collaboration work across government, business, philanthropy, non-profit organisations and citizens to achieve significant and lasting social change as a way of tackling complex social issues. The CEO of the JR Authority would lead the Collective Impact approach, which has five elements:

1) A common agenda

All participants share a vision for change that includes a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving the problem through agreed-upon actions.

¹. See <http://collectiveimpactaustralia.com/about/>

[Members of the Accord deliberate on and agree to a shared vision, encompassing particular questions, for example (but not limited to) the following:

How can we as a community wrap our services around individuals who are at risk of contact with the criminal justice system, for low-level ('JR-amenable') criminal activity, or who are returning to town following incarceration for low-level ('JR-amenable') criminal activities?

How can we as a community monitor the data associated with those individuals who are currently in the criminal justice system for low-level ('JR-amendable') criminal activity, or who are due to return to town following incarceration for low-level ('JR-amenable') criminal activity, so that services can be wrapped around them on their return?

2) Shared measurement

All participating organizations agree on the ways that success will be measured and reported on, with a short list of common indicators identified and used for learning and improvement.

[Members of the Accord agree on what the 'Headline' (overall, strategic) indicator/s are, as well as what the 'Process' (day-to-day, relational) indicators are – to meet the common agenda. Notably, these should not be too ambitious at the outset; incrementally, the indicators can be built up, once the shared measurement system has been established and stabilized.]

3) Mutually reinforcing activities

A diverse set of stakeholders, typically across sectors, coordinate a set of differentiated activities through a mutually reinforcing plan of action.

[Members of the Accord reinforce the common agenda above and agree on the initiatives and activities to be undertaken through regular contact and communication.]

4) Continuous communication

All players engage in frequent and structured open communication to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and create common motivation.

[The CEO of the JR Authority will be responsible for setting up a communications strategy: that person will also need to have high level written and oral communications skills.]

5) Backbone support

An independent, funded staff dedicated to the initiative provides ongoing support by guiding the initiative's vision and strategy, supporting aligned activities, establishing shared measurement practices, building public will, advancing policy, and mobilizing resources

[The JR Authority provides the 'backbone support' to the Collective Impact approach. It therefore needs to be adequately funded.]



Crime Prevention (Proof)

Crime Prevention

Extract from NSW Legislative Assembly Hansard and Papers Tuesday 20 October 2015 (Proof).

Speakers [Hodgkinson Ms Katrina](#)

Business Private Members Statements, PRIV

CRIME PREVENTION

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Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Cootamundra—Parliamentary Secretary) [9.44 p.m.]: Since December 2012 the National Centre for Indigenous Studies at the Australian National University [ANU], led by Dr Jill Guthrie, has been conducting a research project exploring the concept of justice reinvestment as an alternative to incarceration. The groundbreaking project, funded by a three-year Australian Research Council grant, entitled "Reducing incarceration using Justice Reinvestment: an exploratory case study" is based in Cowra in my electorate. The study's aim is to evaluate the theory, methodology and potential use of a justice reinvestment approach to addressing crime and particularly the imprisonment of the town's young people.

About 6.5 per cent of Cowra's population of around 10,000 identifies as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent. Cowra was chosen as an ideal study site due to its stable population and middle range crime profile, the fact that it does not have a prison that is an economic base for the town, and because the research team has good links with the community. The study focuses on issues of incarceration of all young people from Cowra, not just the Indigenous population.

Justice reinvestment [JR] looks beyond offenders to the needs of victims of crime and communities. It is a crime prevention strategy that can help create safer communities. JR is a framework for rethinking the criminal justice system so large sums of taxpayer money are not spent on imprisoning people for low-level criminal activity such as traffic offences, public order offences and justice procedure offences. It diverts a portion of funds that would have been used for imprisonment of the offender back into local communities through early intervention, crime prevention and diversionary programs. The money that would have been spent on imprisonment is reinvested into health and social welfare services that address the underlying causes of crime in these communities. Justice reinvestment retains detention as a measure of last resort.

Justice reinvestment involves all three levels of government as well as non-government organisations, the business sector, service providers, the education sector, the health sector and the judiciary. It was developed in the United States around 10 years ago and has had terrific results in more than 30 states and more than 18 counties. In Australia there are many supporters of justice reinvestment at a national level as well as grassroots supporters from all walks of life. In an article entitled "Rethinking the justice system" the *Cowra Guardian* quotes Dr Jill Guthrie as saying:

This study is a conversation with the town to explore what are the conditions, the understandings, the agreements that would need to be in place in order to return those juveniles who are incarcerated in detention centres away from the town, back to the town, and to keep those juveniles who are at risk of incarceration from coming into contact with the criminal justice system.

Attachment B

The ANU research team has met with senior students from Cowra's high schools, local business leaders, Cowra Shire Council and the community as a whole, and has held forums and conducted fieldwork trips, gaining firsthand evidence through talking to key community members and discussing measures to prevent Cowra's youth from getting into trouble. Organisations such as the Cowra Information and Neighbourhood Centre, Cowra Youth Council, Cowra Police Citizens Youth Club, Cowra Aboriginal Land Council, Headspace and the local mental health service have all enthusiastically participated in this project. The research will continue into 2016, but already common themes are emerging.

This investigation will identify and explore effective alternatives to prison that should be invested in, such as better, more integrated services and holistic and long-term initiatives that address the underlying reasons why a young person may get into trouble in the first place. Dr Guthrie and her research team are keen to talk to as many people as possible, especially young people, and welcome inquiries from anyone interested in the research. Many young people need to be given a second chance when they make mistakes or take unwise decisions, and these decisions should not necessarily haunt them for the rest of their lives. Keeping young people out of jail is a worthy goal. The concept of justice reinvestment and the exploratory research by the ANU and Dr Jill Guthrie in Cowra are opening the eyes of the community to a worthwhile alternative to jail. I commend Dr Guthrie, her team and the town of Cowra for their participation and research to date and support them in their efforts. I look forward to meeting Dr Guthrie and discussing this matter further with her when she comes to Cowra in December.

H: SUBMISSION TO THE HON KATRINA HODGKINSON

27th Of October 2016

The Hon Katrina Hodgkinson
Member for Cootamundra
PO Box 350
YOUNG NSW 2594

Dear Ms Hodgkinson

Cowra Justice Reinvestment Authority

We would like to take the opportunity of thanking you for your support and involvement in the Justice Reinvestment (JR) research project that has taken place in Cowra over the past three years. As you know, the research culminated in a Resolution to Cowra Shire Council which endorsed the concept of JR and recommended the establishment of a JR Authority under the auspices of the Cowra Information & Neighbourhood Centre. The imperative for the Cowra JR Authority has come from the Cowra community who participated in the research.

We enclose a briefing which sets out a suggested role, governance and costings for the Authority. We hope that it may be useful in any negotiations with your NSW government colleagues for establishing the Authority.

We are proud to have been involved in the research. It leads us to believe that we may be entering an exciting time as a community, where we are involved in innovative ways that can result in alternatives to incarceration for our young people so that they may be enabled to lead positive and meaningful lives in the town. Establishing the JR Authority represents that opportunity for us.


Please let us know if there is anything else you require.

We look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours faithfully


Mayor Bill West



Fran Stead, CEO,



Les Coe, CEO CALC

Cowra Local Aboriginal Land Council


Jill Guthrie, ANU

Cowra Shire Council 02 63402000
CINC 02 63401100

CALC 0263423259
Dr Jill Guthrie 02 6125 0782

Cowra Justice Reinvestment Authority

Need and opportunity

Evidence shows that it costs approximately \$200,000 per year to maintain a juvenile in custody. An innovative policy idea that is gaining traction is Justice Reinvestment (JR), an idea that originally came from the United States. It is a criminal justice policy approach that diverts a portion of the funds spent on imprisonment to the local communities where there is a high concentration of offenders. The money that would have been spent on imprisonment is reinvested in programs and services that address the underlying causes of crime in these communities.

Justice reinvestment is based on the evidence that a large number of offenders come from a relatively small number of disadvantaged communities. Demographic mapping in the US has identified 'million-dollar' blocks where literally millions of dollars are being spent imprisoning people from certain neighbourhoods. In monetary terms, a minimum of just five juveniles receiving Justice Reinvestment resources for one year rather than being incarcerated equates with the 'million-dollar block' concept.

Evidence of JR success internationally

In partnership with the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance, in 2014 the Urban Institute released a report that assesses the Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI) and describes the experiences and interim outcomes in participating JRI states. Seventeen states were projected to save as much as \$4.6 billion through policies designed to control corrections spending and increase public safety. Eight states that had JRI policies in place for at least one year—Arkansas, Hawaii, Louisiana, Kentucky, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio and South Carolina—reduced their prison populations and subsequently reinvested more than \$165 million in public safety initiatives.

(See <https://csgjusticecenter.org/jr/>)

(See <http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/alfresco/publication-pdfs/412994-Justice-Reinvestment-Initiative-State-Assessment-Report.PDF>)

JR is the Australian context

As a policy option, Justice Reinvestment has not been implemented in Australia: consequently, no Australian evidence is available. The 'art and science' of its implementation - either large or small scale - requires high levels of skills, knowledge and understanding of community development as well as the complex issues surrounding Australia's socio-political history, particularly the experiences of Indigenous Australians in the context of the criminal justice system. The Cowra JR research conducted by Dr Jill Guthrie and colleagues project provides the much needed opportunity for JR to be implemented and evaluated in an Australian context.

Further, the Premier's priorities point to the need for strategies and initiatives for reducing domestic violence, tackling child obesity, improving educational results, protecting our children, reducing homelessness, keeping our environment clean, improving services, protecting the vulnerable, creating safer communities and boosting apprentices and

increasing employment and skills development. (See <https://www.nsw.gov.au/premiers-priorities>).

The opportunity to address the Premier's priorities presents itself through research conducted in Cowra, where local community members, including the police, judiciary, Cowra Shire Council, Cowra Aboriginal Land Council, Cowra Information and Neighbourhood Centre as well as health, education and community service sectors, deliberated on ways of how monies otherwise spent on incarcerating their citizens for low level criminal activity could be reinvested and better spent on local community services. In particular, activities that could help reduce the incarceration rate of Aboriginal youth, youth suicides, reducing youth unemployment and building pathways to careers can all be encompassed through a JR policy and strategy.

(See <https://ncis.anu.edu.au/cowra/>).

Through Dr Guthrie's research, the foundation has been set for activities in Cowra such as:

- raising youth self-esteem through cultural activities to help build confidence and self-worth through dance, story-telling, knowing and identifying traditional nutrition and food gathering techniques and methods that are culturally and environmentally friendly;
- Community capacity building, educational support with pre-schools, primary, secondary, tertiary and higher education pathways;
- running breakfast programs and homework centres within the Aboriginal community not only to involve Aboriginal youth but allowing parents to become more involved and taking more of a direct involvement in their children's education and development by becoming role models and mentors themselves to help change the parents out-look towards their own entrenched negative experiences and attitudes in the education system, and
- identifying mental health issues along with finding ways to break the cycle of intergenerational trauma.

Australianising JR: Establishing the Cowra Justice Reinvestment Authority

The imperative for the Cowra JR Authority has come from the Cowra community who participated in a three-year research project that culminated in a JR Resolution being adopted by the Cowra Shire Council in December 2015.

The Cowra JR Authority will be underpinned by the Cowra JR Accord. This is a formal agreement between all relevant human services agencies and criminal justice agencies in the government and community sectors that provides the overarching framework to work in partnership to support those people in the Cowra community who have had contact with the criminal justice system for 'JR-amenable' criminal behaviours, or at risk of contact with the criminal justice system for those sorts of behaviours.

The Authority's Project Leader will be responsible for the day-to-day management of the Authority and will be accountable for driving and delivering its priorities. This person would be responsible for the relationship-building that is necessary for both the JR Accord and any initiatives deriving from it.

It is envisaged that the Cowra Justice Reinvestment Authority will comprise a Project Leader, supported by an Executive Assistant, both of whom will be provided with running costs to enable them to fulfil their roles, initially for three years. In addition, it is essential that evaluation of the activities undertaken by JR Authority is undertaken. Costings for the JR Authority and evaluation are therefore part of this budget.

Governance of the Cowra JR Authority

The Cowra JR Authority will run as a program under the governance and management of Cowra Information and Neighbourhood centre (CINC). CINC have a strong and established governance system in place, having operating under this system for 32 years. CINC's board of management comprises of Indigenous and non-indigenous community members. (See <http://www.cinc.org.au/>).

Role and activities of the Cowra JR Authority

The Cowra JR Authority will work within the principles of the Cowra JR Accord which encompasses a Collective Impact approach¹, that is, a common agenda, shared measurement, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication and maintaining the backbone support that it requires. Activities it will undertake include the following:

- Map relevant services for the region;
- Develop a communications strategy between all partners in the Cowra JR Accord;
- Map all justice matters at the local level, ie, data collection and surveillance, including examination of recidivism rates for people returning to town following detention, and economic cost benefit analysis of providing proper supports for those people;
- Identify and co-ordinate activities between Authority and the Department of Corrective Services, Department of Juvenile Justice and other relevant local services when working with people returning to town from detention to ensure those people have proper supports including housing, health, educational, employment and social supports;
- Identify and co-ordinate activities between the Authority and the Department of Education and local schools about young people at risk of disengagement with education;
- Identify and co-ordinate activities between the Cowra JR Authority and the police, judiciary, legal services (including Aboriginal Legal Services) to develop data collection systems at the local level (postcode 2794) of people who may be engaging in low level criminal activity to develop alternatives to incarceration;
- Identify and co-ordinate activities between the Authority and local services and government agencies, including the judiciary, to establish supports and mechanisms that will ensure there are alternatives to incarceration, particularly for young people engaging in low level criminal activity;
- Identify and co-ordinate activities between the Authority and the local Business Chamber, Cowra Shire Council, Cowra Information and Neighbourhood Centre, and Cowra Aboriginal Land Council to provide feedback on all JR Authority activities;

1. A Collective Impact approach is an innovative and structures approach to making collaboration work across government, business, philanthropy, non-profit organisations and citizens to achieve significant and lasting social change as a way of tackling complex social issues.

- Identify and co-ordinate activities at the local level with local services and government agencies that will lead to legislative reform that will provide magistrates and the judicial sector with alternatives to incarceration for low level criminal activity;
- Identify and co-ordinate alternative sentencing options, such as Circle Sentencing and Justice Conferencing for the region.

Deliverables

Year 1	<p>Knowledge Exchange Ms Fran Stead and Ms Hellen Horton to visit Bourke and look at day-to-day operations of Maranguka Justice Reinvestment project to gain firsthand knowledge of its progress, with a particular view to what works and what doesn't work in that particular setting. Jill Guthrie to visit Bourke to attend Working Party meeting. Bourke visits will give the overview and insight on how to ensure success of Justice Reinvestment, establishes partnerships and support. Acknowledging that Cowra JR project is a unique, living program that will change and grow throughout the first year, this will enable flexibility in the approach, i.e., if something isn't working, change the approach and focus on what is working.</p> <p>Accountability and Evaluation Appoint Project Leader and Executive Assistant; Establish and embed the Cowra JR Accord with relevant stakeholders and community members; Establish and ratify the vision, strategic plan, business plan and operational plans and plans of action, and set of measurements and indicators² for the JR Authority. Set up data collections systems and evaluation systems, including to establish social and economic benefits arising from the JR Authority's activities. Monitor economic cost benefits arising from JR Authority's activities that could lead towards sustainability of the Authority after three years of funding (the 'Reinvestment' argument).</p> <p>Community and stakeholder consultations Conduct conversations with Cowra Indigenous community and other stakeholders, including the wider Cowra community; focus needs to be driven from grass roots as this will ensure success. From information gathered draw up main focus and goals for the JR Accord, setting achievable timeline, operational plan and plan of action.</p> <p>Communications strategy Develop a communications strategy plan for the Authority.</p>
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2. The JR Accord will set and establish the measurements and indicator on which the accord will report, with a strong focus on outcome, rather than outputs.

Year 2	Continue to monitor, refine and deliver on the activities arising from Year 1
Year 3	Continue to monitor, refine and deliver on the activities arising from Years 1 and 2, in particular the "Reinvestment" argument.

Budget and budget justification

It is estimated that \$750,000 is required as establishment and running costs for the Cowra JR Authority, as shown by the annual costs below. This will cover the staffing and secretarial and administrative costs and programs costs of working with young people and their families.

A finding of the research project was that \$2.3 million per annum in direct costs is being spent on incarcerating people from the Cowra postcode for crimes for which the Cowra community deemed as 'JR-amenable' (ie, low level criminal activity). Given this, and also that it costs \$200,000 per annum to maintain a juvenile in custody, it makes good economic sense to trial a new way of working with the community to see if those monies could be better spent by re-investing them in community.

Draft Budget for Cowra JR Authority

Staff wages

Project Leader	\$	105,000.00	leadership, evaluation, implementation - 2 days per week
Evaluation services	\$	48,191.00	

Service Delivery

Rent	\$	10,000.00	
Telephone	\$	8,000.00	
Printing stationary, photo copying	\$	7,000.00	
Program expenses for clients	\$	4,000.00	parenting groups, support groups/court attendance
Program licence purchase	\$	5,000.00	Annual licence for CAISD-Q, and GRAMS tool assessment
Therapy	\$	7,000.00	allowance toward cognitive and behavioural therapy
Family training	\$	10,000.00	cultural awareness training from LALC
Motor vehicle expenses	\$	21,000.00	lease and fuel

Administration

admin add 12%	\$	27,022.00	governance, management, admin, accounting, audit, acquittal
TOTAL	\$	252,213.00	

In-kind contributions

The Cowra Shire Council, the Cowra Aboriginal Land Council, and the Cowra Information and Neighbourhood Centre will contribute the in-kind time of several of their personnel, including:

- **Cowra Shire Council:** Mayor (Councillor Bill West), General Manager (Mr Paul Devery), other administrative staff;
- **Cowra Aboriginal Land Council:** CEO (Mr Les Coe), other administrative staff;
- **Cowra Information and Neighbourhood Centre:** CEO (Ms Fran Stead), Youth Worker (Ms Hellen Horton), other administrative staff.

The in-kind contributions that each bring to the initiative demonstrate the commitment they have to providing the necessary expertise and experience they have through their position and discipline, namely leadership in public policy, advocacy and service provision. This level of in-kind support demonstrates the commitment from each of their organisations to the initiative and the extent to which the work of the JR Authority aligns with their organisations' vision, objectives and strategic aims regarding this important area of reform.

CONTACT US

National Centre for Epidemiology & Population Health

Building 62, Mills Road
The Australian National University
Canberra ACT 2601

T +61 2 6125 0782

F +61 2 6125 0740

E nceph@anu.edu.au

W nceph.anu.edu.au

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