

## **Annual Year in Review of the Indigenous Justice Clearinghouse 1 July 2008 - 30 June 2009 for the National Justice CEOs Group and the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General**

### **1. Introduction**

The Indigenous Justice Clearinghouse (IJC) website was launched in November 2006 to provide Indigenous justice policy makers in Australia and New Zealand with a centralised information resource on Indigenous justice. The site is a joint project between the NSW Attorney General's Department (NSW AGD) and the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) and has Ministerial endorsement. The project is entirely funded by the National Justice CEOs (NJCEOs) with NSW AGD and AIC providing in-kind support.

### **2. Functions**

During the year the website was fully operational. The website included

- 490 key publications and evaluations
- a news page highlighting significant events in Indigenous justice
- weblinks to 25 centres involved in research on Indigenous Justice
- descriptions of 17 national datasets relevant to Indigenous justice and
- a series of Research briefs which summarise research findings for policy makers

### **3. Outcomes in 2008-09**

A review of the website was undertaken in November 2007 and changes were made in response to the review. Experts have been contracted to write research briefs (rather than preparing them in-house). Proactive dissemination has occurred, particularly in New Zealand where face to face presentations were made to key policy makers. Telephone contacts were made with senior policy officers in all Australian jurisdictions and with university researchers specialising in Indigenous justice. Information was actively sought from all jurisdictions on an ongoing basis. The news page was updated more frequently and IJC contact officers were notified of updates. The forum, which was rarely used, was removed from the website. A section on the secure national website, GovDex, has been developed for a private Indigenous justice forum. It will be used for nominated contacts to discuss particular issues, review research briefs and other papers, and exchange information. It can also be used for contact officers to advise of new material for the Clearinghouse.

### **4. Research Briefs**

The IJC produces research briefs that summarise the latest research on current topics of interest. They promote evidence-based policy by sharing knowledge about what works to address Indigenous justice issues. One research brief was produced for the Indigenous Justice Clearinghouse during 2008-09, *Staying strong on the outside: improving the post-release experience of Indigenous young adults*. The brief was co-written by the Project

Officer and an external author, and the comments of a reference group with representatives from Australia and New Zealand were incorporated. The brief was posted on the website and was widely disseminated. The Project Officer presented the paper at the 4<sup>th</sup> National Indigenous Justice Forum and hard copies were distributed to all participants. Hard copies were also sent to selected policy makers, practitioners and researchers.

The brief examined the research on efforts to improve the reintegration of young Indigenous people leaving prison. It found that international research indicates that programs based on cognitive behavioural methods can reduce reoffending. Australian research suggests that to be effective with Indigenous offenders, such programs would need to be placed in the context of a culturally appropriate, holistic, individualised effort to address depression and grief, educational disadvantage, and other pressing welfare needs. The brief revealed that evaluations of Australian rehabilitation efforts are rare. Principles for good practice were outlined, including through care, intensive programs, and the inclusion of elders and respected persons in the design and delivery of programs.

Work began on four new research briefs during 2008-9. The Australian Institute of Criminology is preparing a brief on *Violent Victimisation*. External authors have been commissioned to prepare briefs on *Indigenous Courts*, *Developmental Crime Prevention* and *Sentencing Indigenous Offenders*. Of the original seven topics identified by the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General as being of interest, six have been published or are being written, and the final one will be commissioned shortly. A second round of topics will be determined after the August 2009 Standing Committee of Attorneys-General meeting which is focusing on Indigenous issues.

## **5. Current Initiatives Papers**

The IJC has begun producing current initiatives papers that report on the latest efforts to improve Indigenous justice outcomes. One current initiatives paper was produced for the Indigenous Justice Clearinghouse during 2008-2009, *Victoria's Neighbourhood Justice Centre*. The paper was written by the Department of Justice, Victoria, and the AIC made a significant editorial contribution to this paper. This paper will be disseminated in 2009-10.

Work began on a second current initiatives paper in 2008-09. An external author was commissioned to prepare a paper on *Reducing the unintended impacts of fines on Indigenous people*. This paper will report on the efforts that have been made to avoid the sometimes disproportionate consequences of fines, such as loss of licence and imprisonment, and consider whether there is evidence for the success or otherwise of these efforts.

## **6. Governance**

The IJC is a joint project of the AIC and NSW AGD. The AIC provides information technology support and library services, as well as providing input on research topics, author selection and editorial tasks. The part-time project officer position resides within the NSW AGD. The project is run by a working group made up of the Research Director and Information Services Manager at the AIC, the Project Officer, and the Executive Officer of the NJCEOs Group.