



Australian Government

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

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Closing the gap clearinghouse

Diverting Indigenous offenders from the criminal justice system

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Summary

What we know

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are vastly over-represented in the Australian juvenile and criminal justice systems.
- Incarceration comes at a high cost through exposure to harsh prison environment, marginalisation, poor health outcomes and impact upon employment opportunities.
- A person's contact with or progression through the justice systems can be reduced through diversion programs.
- Indigenous Australians have lower participation and completion rates of diversion programs, particularly those who access mainstream programs.

What works

- Positive outcomes found for diversion programs include reduced drug and substance use, and improved social functioning.
- There is some evidence that diversion programs reduce reoffending, but the evidence is not strong.
- Diversion programs of between 12 and 18 months have better outcomes than those of very short or extended durations.
- On-the-job work experience and other forms of support, such as mentoring, help reduce reoffending and promote reintegration into the community.
- Culturally appropriate treatment initiatives and rehabilitation boost the participation in and completion of a diversionary program.
- Programs that address the concerns of Indigenous defendants by involving Indigenous Elders or facilitators in delivery work better.



What doesn't work

- Programs with strict eligibility criteria are not effective as repeat offenders are often unable to take advantage of relevant and helpful programs.
- Unrealistic participation requirements that affect an offender's ability to complete a program could encourage their continued involvement with the criminal justice system.
- Diverting offenders to protracted programs when their crimes were minor in nature can be counterproductive. The nature and length of a diversion program should be in proportion to the severity of the offence and any risk of reoffence. In some cases, a jail sentence of lesser duration may have been preferred to the program ordered.
- Focussing on illicit drugs often misses the target. Alcohol, and not substance abuse, is the major underlying problem for Indigenous offenders, but it is not addressed by most of the mainstream drug diversion programs.
- A lack of committed funding can limit the reach and functioning of a diversionary program, particularly in rural and remote Australia.

What we don't know

- Process rather than outcomes is often the focus for measuring success of a program and it is therefore difficult to determine the effectiveness of many diversionary programs.
- There is little by way of in-depth data and objective evaluations to determine the medium and long-term effectiveness of Australian diversionary programs.
- Outcomes for Indigenous participants of mainstream programs are not always measured or reported separately. Consequently, the suitability of these programs for Indigenous clients has not been fully verified.
- It is unclear whether some diversionary programs lead to net-widening—that is, they may increase rather than lessen the involvement of defendants with the justice system.

Introduction

A diversionary program is a form of sentencing usually run by police departments, courts and other agencies. It is aimed at better, long-term outcomes for the offenders and their community, as well as for the criminal justice system. These programs, available in all Australian jurisdictions, provide offenders an opportunity to avoid a criminal record or have a reduced sentence by meeting certain treatment and training requirements. Diversion can occur at any point—pre-arrest, pre-trial, pre-sentence, post-sentence and pre-release.

A range of diversionary programs are used to address the contact with and progression through the juvenile and criminal justice systems by Indigenous Australians. This is in accordance with the National Indigenous Law and Justice Framework, endorsed by the Australian governments in 2009 (SCAG WGJ 2009), which addresses unacceptably high levels of incarceration of Indigenous Australians.

This resource sheet reviews evidence for the functioning and effectiveness of various diversionary programs in the context of Indigenous contact with the justice systems. These include both mainstream and Indigenous-specific programs.



Background

Over-representation of Indigenous Australians in the juvenile and criminal justice systems is well documented (Kreig et al. 2008; Cunneen 2006; Snowball & Weatherburn 2006). More than 1 out of 4 incarcerated Australians is Indigenous (AIHW 2013b). Their imprisonment rate (prevalence rate) is 15 times that of non-Indigenous Australians. Indigenous offenders constitute more than one-third of prison entrants (incidence rate) annually (AIHW 2013b).

Repeat offending and re-incarceration is a large contributor to this excessive imprisonment. Nearly three-quarters (74%) of Indigenous prisoners in 2011 had been imprisoned previously, compared to less than half (48%) of non-Indigenous prisoners (ABS 2011).

A related issue is the health of offenders which may be affected adversely by imprisonment (Kreig et al. 2008). Although the health of both prison entrants and those incarcerated is in general worse than that of the broader population, it is particularly the case for Indigenous offenders (AIHW 2013b; NSW Health 2007). Individuals with a mental disability and/or intellectual disability are also overrepresented in the criminal justice system (AIC 2011).

Trends in Indigenous imprisonment

The above statistics get worse every year. Not only has the number of Indigenous prisoners risen due to the increase in the size of the population, their imprisonment rate also increased by 64% between 2000 and 2012 (Figure 1). The latter increase compares unfavourably with the non-Indigenous rate which increased by 5% during that period.

The nature and type of offences for which Indigenous people come into contact with the criminal justice system and the factors that contribute to their high offending rates are noticeably different from those of non-Indigenous Australians (AIHW 2013a; Fitzgerald 2009). Acts intended to cause injury, unlawful entry with intent, and offences against justice procedures, government security and operations accounted for almost 60% of their offences recorded in 2012 (Table 1). Indigenous prisoners are also more likely to have an assault charge against them than other inmates but less likely to be imprisoned for drug-related matters (Allard 2010).

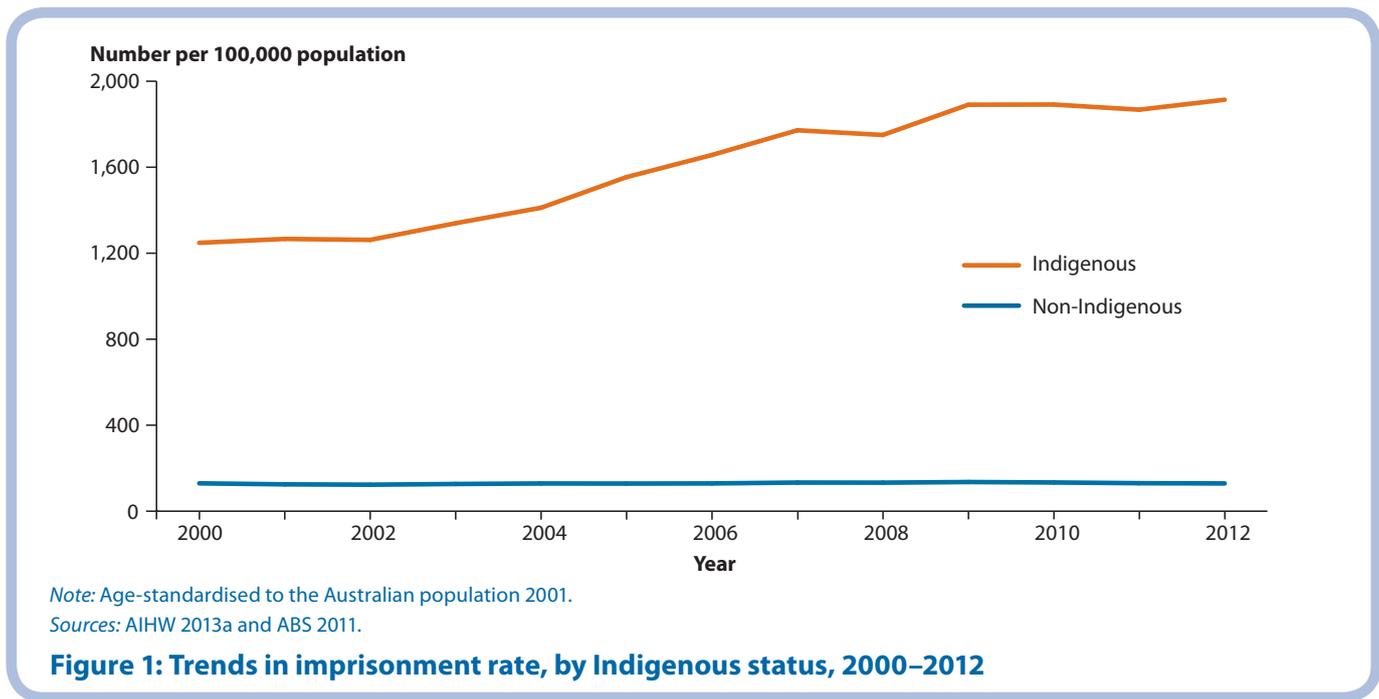




Table 1: Major reasons for imprisonment, by Indigenous status, 2011

Indigenous		Non-Indigenous	
Reason for imprisonment	Percent	Reason for imprisonment	Percent
Acts intended to cause injury	32.4	Illicit drug offences	14.9
Unlawful entry with intent	14.8	Acts intended to cause injury	14.5
Offences against justice procedures	10.6	Sexual assault and related offences	13.3
Sexual assault and related offences	10.5	Homicide and related offences	10.9
Robbery, extortion and related offences	9.2	Unlawful entry with intent	9.8

Note: As at 30 June 2011.

Source: AIHW 2013a.

Need for diversion programs

The high incarceration rates of Indigenous people are unacceptable. Incarceration is known to achieve little by way of increased community safety. It also has major health and socio-economic consequences, both for the individual and the communities from which the offender comes (and to which they will invariably return).

Aboriginal offenders are more likely to be incarcerated for violence than other inmates (Table 1). Although community safety is paramount, there is not much supportive evidence that incarceration significantly reduces this type of crime (Kreig et al. 2008). If anything, exposure to harsher prison environments may harden the anti-social attitudes of the offender. In addition, these offenders are more likely to be exposed to and mix with anti-social elements and indulge in behaviours that may lead to reoffending and re-incarceration post-release.

As stated earlier, individuals entering correctional facilities have many health problems which may be impacted adversely by incarceration (AIHW 2012). Also, post-release, prisoners are known to experience greater morbidity and mortality (Kreig et al. 2008).

Any contact with the criminal justice system not only increases social exclusion but also brings with it high financial costs for the offender (Morgan & Louis 2010). It is particularly the case for women (Bartels 2010). Incarceration also has high direct as well as indirect costs through increased marginalisation and reduced employment opportunities (Blagg 2009).

An acknowledged way to potentially reduce the high levels of Indigenous incarceration and its adverse consequences is to divert offenders from routine sentencing processes into rehabilitation—to reintegrate them into the community. A systematic review of 55 evaluations found that the offenders who appeared before a United States drug court were less likely to reoffend than those who attended a traditional court (Wilson et al. 2006).

However, this advantage has not been demonstrated to be huge. According to McGrath (2008), it is not currently possible to objectively compare the effects of court appearance and participation in diversion programs. This is mainly due to poor methodologies and approaches used to establish and evaluate various diversion programs.

Diversionary programs in Australia

A range of diversionary programs are available in the Australian judicial systems (Appendixes A and B). Although most of these programs are mainstream—available to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians—some are Indigenous-specific. A large majority of these programs relate to drug and mental health issues and are often dealt with by specific courts (for example, drug and mental health courts). The diversion of young offenders is overseen by children/juvenile courts.



The term diversionary program is often used loosely in literature. Although by definition it is an actual program of treatment and training, a diversion program is frequently used to identify a court or an agency that oversees/administers the program. Offender cautioning programs, such as those overseen by the police, are also referred to as diversionary programs.

The relative usefulness of many of these diversionary programs has been demonstrated in Australia as well as overseas. Their relevance (and usefulness) for Indigenous defendants is, however, contested. In view of this contention, several jurisdictions have set up Indigenous-specific programs to deal with Indigenous offenders/defendants. These include Aboriginal courts as well as drug (including alcohol) treatment programs (Appendix B).

There is no systematic way to categorise various diversionary programs. Three practical clusters are:

- police diversion
- mental health diversion
- drug diversion.

Some more specific programs, however, cannot be logically placed in any of these broad clusters.

Police diversion

The police usually exercise diversion at the front end of criminal justice. This early intervention is mostly in the form of cautioning, both informal and formal (Polk et al. 2010; Richards 2010). The police may also oversee their own issue-based diversionary programs (Table 2) or those established by other courts and agencies.

An informal cautioning is usually from the officer attending the scene of offence. If the matter is not of sufficient gravity, or is unclear, then the officer may give a verbal warning which is not formally recorded.

The formal cautioning involves recording the details of the offence. In most cases, the offender is asked to attend the police station for a formal warning. In the case of young offenders, parents or other responsible adults may be asked to join the cautioning process. No further action is usually required and the offender is diverted out of the justice system. Of late, however, formal police diversion includes other add-ons such as fines, community service and participation in treatment programs.

Table 2: Diversion programs overseen/administered by police

State/Territory	Program/initiative
New South Wales	Cannabis Cautioning Scheme
Victoria	Cannabis Cautioning Program Drug Diversion Program
Queensland	Queensland Police Diversion Program
Western Australia	Cannabis Intervention Requirement All Drug Diversion
South Australia	Police Drug Diversion Initiative
Tasmania	Illicit Drug Diversion Initiative
Australian Capital Territory	Early Intervention and Diversion Program Simple Cannabis Offence Notice
Northern Territory	Cannabis Expiation Notice Scheme Illicit Drug Pre-court Diversion Program Youth Diversion Program



Mental health diversion

Individuals with mental illness and/or intellectual disability are over-represented at all stages of the criminal justice system (AIC 2011). The traditional criminal justice responses may not be fully effective with this group of offenders. To take into consideration different needs of these offenders, many jurisdictions have set up special mental health diversion courts and programs (Table 3).

Under these programs, the defendant may be linked with mental health services or offered psychiatric support. These programs also seek to address the underlying causes of criminal behaviour by diverting them to drug treatment (drug diversion) or other programs.

Table 3: Mental health courts/ diversion programs in Australia

State/Territory	Program/initiative
New South Wales	State-wide Community and Court Liaison Service
Victoria	Assessment and Referral Court List Mental Health Court Liaison Service
Queensland	Mental Health List
Western Australia	Intellectual Disability Diversion Program Mental Health List
South Australia	Magistrates Court Diversion Program
Tasmania	Mental Health Diversion List

Note: There are no separate mental health courts in the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory.

The mental health diversionary programs are usually overseen by specialist mental health courts, commonly referred to as court-based mental health diversionary programs (Box 1). Often, a mental health court in itself is considered to be a diversionary program.

Box 1: Mental health courts

A mental health court is a specialist problem-solving court set up to deal specifically with offenders that have mental illness and/or intellectual disability. These courts use a team-based approach in which the court works with mental health professionals.

The court processes are typically informal and non-adversarial. The focus is on therapeutic application of the law rather than determining guilt. An important part of mental health court programs is treatment.

Mental health courts are a growing phenomenon in developed nations. In Australia, these courts have been set up in South Australia, Western Australia, Victoria and Tasmania. The Law Reform Commission is also looking at the option of establishing a mental health court in New South Wales.

Although evaluating court-based mental health diversion programs has proved difficult, they are likely to offer better interventions than simple incarceration. The mental health diversion programs not only screen for an individual's propensity to reoffend but also target factors contributing to their criminal tendencies. They usually connect offenders with mental illness to relevant mental health and community services (AIC 2011).

There is however a concern that the court-based mental health programs may deepen rather than lessen the involvement of people with mental illness in the criminal justice system.



Drug diversion

The need to divert illicit drug users into treatment programs for their addiction is a major focus of this form of therapeutic jurisprudence in Australia (Bull 2003). A variety of programs have been established that seek to cease or reduce criminal activity related to drug abuse in Australia (Table 4). The drug diversion programs often include close supervision, regular drug testing, sanctions, therapy and support services (Ziersch & Marshall 2012; Spooner et al. 2001).

Table 4: Mainstream drug diversion programs in Australia

State/Territory	Program/initiative
New South Wales	Court-based drug diversion program Magistrates Early Referral into Treatment (MERIT)
Victoria	Court Referral and Evaluation for Drug Intervention and Treatment (CREDIT) Rural Outreach Diversion Worker Service
Queensland	Court-based Drug Diversion Program Queensland Magistrates Early Referral into Treatment (QMERIT) Illicit Drug Court Diversion Program
Western Australia	Perth Court-based Drug Diversion Program Young Person’s Opportunity Program Youth Supervised Treatment Intervention Regime Pre-sentence Opportunity Program Supervised Treatment Intervention Regime
South Australia	Court-based Drug Diversion Program Court Assessment and Referral Drug Scheme (CARDS): Adult Court Assessment and Referral Drug Scheme (CARDS): Youth
Tasmania	Court Mandated Diversion Program
Australian Capital Territory	Court Alcohol and Drug Assessment Service (CADAS)
Northern Territory	Substance Misuse Assessment and Referral for Treatment (SMART)

Special drug courts have been set up in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia to establish and manage drug diversionary programs. Other agencies (for example, police, magistrates’ courts) have also set up their own drug diversion programs. In some jurisdictions, programs catering specifically to the drug-related treatment needs of young people have also been established.

An intermediate measure of the design and working of these programs is the completion or graduation rate which hovers between 30 and 40% (Ziersch & Marshall 2012; Payne 2008). Offenders who complete a drug diversion program are less likely to reoffend during the intervention period as well as after graduating.

A low rate of completion reflects poorly upon the functioning of drug diversion programs. Although the low program completion rates may reflect the entrenched nature of drug abuse and addiction, there seems to be a need for significant practice changes for these programs to work effectively (Ziersch & Marshall 2012).



Other forms of diversion

In addition to the abovementioned clusters of diversionary programs, many specific programs have been established by magistrates' courts, other government agencies and in some cases by private organisations (Table 5). Most of these programs have an in-built drug/substance abuse treatment component.

Table 5: Miscellaneous mainstream court diversion programs

State/Territory	Program/initiative
New South Wales	Forum Sentencing Court Referral of Eligible Defendants into Treatment (CREDIT)
Victoria	Criminal Justice Diversion Program Early School Leavers Pilot Program Youth Justice Court Advice Service Court Referral and Evaluation for Drug Intervention and Treatment (CREDIT)
Queensland	Special Circumstances Court Diversion Program
Western Australia	Intensive Supervision Program
Tasmania	Family Violence Offender Intervention Program (FVOIP)

The eligibility requirements of some of these programs are less restrictive. In some cases, individuals with a particular problem that is under the consideration of a court may enrol themselves in these programs. The effectiveness of many of these programs has not been fully studied.

Effectiveness of diversionary programs

Diversionary initiatives have a range of objectives and outcomes, each of which can potentially be used to evaluate and measure their effectiveness. These include:

- decreased reoffending/recidivism
- reduced illicit drug or alcohol dependency, abuse and harm
- improved health and social functioning
- reintegration of offenders into the community
- community involvement in crime prevention
- less pressure on the criminal justice system.

Reductions in reoffending/recidivism and drug or alcohol dependency are the most commonly used indicators of the success of these programs.



Reduced reoffending

One of the primary aims of diversion programs is the reduction of reoffending or recidivism. Payne et al. (2008) studied the outcomes of police drug diversion programs in various jurisdictions and found them to be effective in reducing recidivism, including for entrenched offenders. Studies of many other Australian diversion programs, supported by police, magistrates and drug courts, have also shown reductions in recidivism. For example:

- Lulham (2009) found that completion of the Magistrates Early Referral into Treatment (MERIT) program in New South Wales reduced reoffending by 12% over a two-year follow-up period. No comparable decline was noted among those who failed to complete the program.
- Weatherburn et al. (2008) report that the participants in the NSW Drug Court were less likely to be reconvicted for violent offences, drug offences, and any other offence that receives conventional sanctions.
- An evaluation of the juvenile pre-court diversion scheme in the Northern Territory found that three-quarters of the participants (76%) did not reoffend in the first 12 months following diversion (Cunningham 2007).

International studies of drug courts in US and Canada affirm the above mentioned findings from the Australian diversion programs (Latimer et al. 2006).

Reduced dependency on drugs and alcohol

Another desirable outcome of diversion programs is to reduce dependency on drugs and alcohol in view of their large contribution to offending (and reoffending). The effectiveness of police and court-based drug diversion initiatives in reducing such dependencies in Australia was reviewed by Wundersitz (2007). The findings of the review overall were inconclusive because of poor methodologies used in most of the program evaluations. Nonetheless, the review suggested that drug diversion programs are achieving certain positive outcomes. In particular, it found the reoffending and cost effectiveness analyses of the NSW Drug Court encouraging.

A more recent example of the feeble outcomes of a drug diversion program is described in Box 2. Several noteworthy points emerge from a study of the effectiveness of the Queensland Drug Court program. Although the number of participants testing positive fell through the treatment period, the proportion of offenders failing to complete the program (76%) was unacceptably high. Recidivism within 2 years was also unacceptably high both among graduates (59%) and non-graduates (77%), although there was a palpable decline in reoffending on the whole. The ineligibility of a large proportion of offenders to participate in the program (45%), despite referral, was another major concern.

Box 2: Effectiveness of the Queensland Drug Court program

The Queensland Drug Court program was introduced in mid-2000. Eligible participants undertook a compulsory 9-month program that included drug treatment, cognitive and behavioural programs, court attendance and compliance monitoring. The program was focused on those with extended criminal histories and heavy drug use.

A total of 1,361 offenders were referred to the program, 758 of which (55%) were eventually enrolled and 183 (24%) graduated. Payne (2008) compared the rate of reoffence by the first 100 graduates with the first 100 participants who were terminated from the program.

The study found that: 59% of the graduates had committed a new offence within 2 years compared to 77% of those who were terminated from the program. The number of offences committed by graduates also fell by 80% compared to that they had committed in the 12 months preceding their participation in the program. This decline was 63% among those who were terminated from the program. The program was also successful at reducing drug usage during the period of treatment with the positive tests falling over successive quarters from 9% to 3% to 2%.

This program has now ceased to operate.



Characteristics of effective diversionary programs

Not all diversionary programs are equally effective. Some of the programs are limited by poorly defined objectives and implementation strategies, but not adhering to certain basic features in the design can also render them ineffectual.

The AIHW has recently outlined major characteristics of effective diversionary programs, based on the evaluation of Illicit Drug Diversion Initiatives (IDDI) in rural and remote Australia (AIHW 2008). These include:

- targeting young people
- access to an appropriate range of treatment options, including for alcohol as the primary drug of concern
- an adequate period of intervention
- well-established communication mechanisms to provide regular feedback to the magistrates and drug and alcohol service providers
- high-quality case management to address broader social and health issues
- removing barriers to treatment, most notably transport barriers
- regular monitoring of compliance levels and follow-up of program graduates
- philosophical and practical support from the magistrates and drug and alcohol service providers
- relatively stable and experienced workforce
- secure funding.

Diversionary programs that are not effective in meeting their stated objectives are often established on the basis of limited research. Many of them have poorly conceived and unrealistic objectives, with no effective surveillance and monitoring system in place. Such programs are doomed to fail, and where successful they do not generate the supportive evidence required for their continued existence.

Diverting young offenders

A major focus of diversionary programs is on young offenders, many of whom are first-timers and could be at risk of becoming chronic offenders (Snowball 2008; Luke & Lind 2002). In all Australian jurisdictions, children and young people may be charged with a criminal offence if they are aged 10 years and over.

Young people first enter the justice system when they are investigated by police for allegedly committing a crime. Following the investigation, a decision is made as to whether police will initiate legal action against the young person (AIHW 2013c). They could face court actions (the laying of charges to be answered in court) or non-court actions (such as verbal warning, cautioning, conferencing, counselling or infringement notices—commonly referred to as police diversion).

If a young person is proceeded against by police using a court action, the matter is usually heard in a children's court (also called a youth court or a juvenile court). The person must be less than 18 years old, except in Queensland where the age limit is less than 17 years, at the time of offence for trial by the children's court. The children's court may decide to dismiss the charge, divert the young person from further involvement in the system or transfer them to other specialist courts such as drug or Aboriginal courts.



Making young people go through court processes may expose them to an unnecessary and possibly damaging experience (HRSCATSIA 2011; Blagg 2009; Cunningham 2007). It can also be a waste of time and resources of the criminal justice system (Wundersitz & Hunter 2005). Some of the considerations for diverting young people to diversion programs are listed in Box 3.

Box 3: Considerations that underpin diversion programs for young offenders:

- Early intervention may keep young offenders from entering the justice system.
- Diversion should reduce the chance of recidivism through education, treatment and rehabilitation.
- The programs provide support to the young persons and their families for building careers and pathways.
- Detention should be the last option.

There is considerable variation in the extent to which diverting young people out of the justice system is practised. Often there is reluctance on the part of authorities to offer diversion programs to repeat or chronic offenders (Box 4). They may have committed offences previously and/or breached a court order. They also may have been convicted of a serious violent offence and/or multiple concurrent offences. These adverse profiles preclude young offenders from availing a program.

Box 4: Chronic young offenders

A relatively small proportion of offenders account for a large proportion of juvenile crimes. A Queensland study has found that 5% of offenders account for 44% of the juvenile crimes (Allard et al. 2012).

The areas with the highest concentration of chronic offenders are those with a high proportion of Indigenous youth, high levels of disadvantage and are remote or very remote. In the top 10% of these locations, about 9% of the population are chronic offenders indicating the need for place-based interventions. This suggests that therapeutic programs such as counselling, multiple services and skill-building need to be introduced. Programs that are restorative in nature within a framework of broader community programs could also be effective in addressing the underlying causes of crime by young offenders (Lipsey et al. 2010).

A review by the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) as to what works in reducing young people's involvement in crime has identified several characteristics of diversionary programs for young offenders (Box 5).

Box 5: Characteristics of effective diversion programs for young offenders:

- Target individual needs
- Work across multiple social settings (for example, family, school, peers and the community)
- Deal with multiple risk factors
- Take a minimal interventionist approach with first-time offenders
- Have clear aims and objectives
- Employ well-trained and enthusiastic staff
- Have adequate length and intensity
- Consider cultural issues
- Are regularly monitored and evaluated.

Source: AIC 2002.



Young Indigenous offenders

Young Indigenous Australians come into contact with the justice system significantly more often than their non-Indigenous counterparts. On an average night, over half (53%) of young people in detention are Indigenous (AIHW 2012). The police proceed against Indigenous young offenders 5 to 10 times more often than they do against non-Indigenous offenders aged 10–14 years and 3 to 5 times more often against those aged 15–17 years (AIHW 2013c). Many of these detainees are repeat offenders.

The diversion of young Indigenous offenders has generally been found to be effective in reducing recidivism among program completers. According to an evaluation of the juvenile pre-court diversion program in the Northern Territory, three-quarters (76%) of graduates did not reoffend in the following 12 months (Cunningham 2007). A high rate of compliance was also observed under police diversion with most of the participants completing the required programs and a majority not reoffending in the 12 to 18 months after being cautioned (Ogilvie & Willis 2009). The diversion of young Indigenous offenders by the police however has not always worked satisfactorily for example as in Queensland (SCD 2010).

Access to and the use of mainstream diversion programs by Indigenous clients

However effective diversion programs are found to be across all Australians, their usefulness has yet to be established for Indigenous Australians. A common perception is that these programs do not work for them. Indigenous clients are less likely to access mainstream diversion programs and complete them. They also have higher reoffending rates than their non-Indigenous counterparts following their participation in and completion of a mainstream diversionary program (Joudo 2008; Potas et al. 2003).

The eligibility criteria for access to and use of diversion programs vary depending on the type of diversion and whether the offender is a juvenile or an adult. Two commonly used criteria are that the offender has pleaded guilty and they have a limited criminal history. The type and severity of the offence(s) committed may also determine eligibility for a specific program (Blandford & Sarre 2009). Unwittingly, these eligibility criteria are often the most significant barriers to Indigenous people accessing mainstream programs.

Barriers to access

Several factors act as barriers to Indigenous defendants accessing mainstream diversionary programs (Allard et al. 2010; Deloitte Access Economics 2012). A major impediment is the strict eligibility criteria, including the requirement of no previous offending. The preparedness to admit guilt also works against Indigenous clients commonly.

Some of the mainstream diversionary programs are not exactly suitable for Indigenous offenders (Strategic Edge 2009). For example, most of the mainstream rehabilitation programs tend to focus on illicit drugs rather than alcohol as a primary drug of concern. Since alcohol is the major drug problem for Indigenous offenders, this lack of focus on alcohol precludes them from accessing many of these programs. Residential rehabilitation services, with their limited placement numbers, are also not always available to Indigenous offenders for the same or similar reasons.

Other factors contributing to the lack of access to or use of mainstream diversionary programs by Indigenous clients are:

- inadequate understanding of the legal system and its diversionary processes
- refusal of bail, therefore making them ineligible

- living in a community that does not have the relevant program
- difficulty accessing regional programs due to lack of transport, the distances involved and/or road closures during the wet season
- limited support for the program by magistrates, lawyers and other court staff
- poor communication and engagement by police, magistrates and solicitors with the person in question
- cultural issues such as the age and sex of the counsellor
- inconsistent use of discretion by authorities to divert a defendant.

Participation and completion

The completion rates among Indigenous people for mainstream diversion programs also tend to be lower than those for non-Indigenous people (Urbis Keys Young 2003). This gap is mainly due to a lack of cultural appropriateness of the programs and a greater impetus for Indigenous clients to attend residential rehabilitation programs.

Since participation and compliance are more rigorous in residential programs, these factors in combination with separation from the family and community may affect program completion rates (Cain 2006). The time length of intervention and prior offending pattern also influence the utilisation and completion of diversionary programs by Indigenous offenders. However, residential programs offer certain benefits, particularly in cases where the offender is violent in nature. A residential program in those cases can protect the person's family and community from abuse (Cain 2006).

In view of this incongruence, an intervention trial was undertaken to improve the participation of Indigenous clients in mainstream diversionary programs (Box 6). The trial for participation in the Magistrates Early Referral into Treatment (MERIT) diversion program was deemed to be successful (AONSW 2009).

Box 6: Improving the participation of Indigenous defendants in mainstream diversion programs: the MERIT trial

An intervention trial was undertaken to improve the participation and completion rates for Indigenous people in the Magistrates Early Referral into Treatment (MERIT) diversion program. The project was aimed at improving the skills, training and practices of MERIT teams.

MERIT is a tailored, case management program developed to divert adult defendants with demonstrable drug problems to an intensive 3-month drug treatment program. The program is delivered by 24 teams across New South Wales. Participation in the program is voluntary. Approximately 16% of MERIT participants are Aboriginal (AHMRC 2010).

Seven MERIT teams were chosen for the trial. Over the 5-year trial period (2003–04 to 2007–08), the program completion rate for Indigenous clients under these teams increased from 55% to 73%. This compares with only 7% points gain, from 52% to 59%, for teams that did not change their work practices.

The project identified the following best practices for improving the participation and completion of this diversion program by Indigenous clients:

- using a key worker or team of culturally qualified intake workers for screening and assessment of Aboriginal clients
- case workers making contact with Aboriginal and other agencies who are currently involved with the client (with their agreement)
- formalising the case management processes in partnership with Aboriginal workers
- having an active focus on cultural requirements including those of Aboriginal families.

Source: AONSW 2009.



Indigenous-specific diversionary programs

In view of the poor access to and participation in mainstream programs by Indigenous clients, a number of Indigenous-specific diversionary programs have been established in all Australian jurisdictions except Tasmania (Appendix B). These programs, which include Aboriginal courts and conferences, as well as alcohol and substance abuse reduction programs, foster an environment that is less intimidating and culturally more acceptable to Indigenous people (Beranger et al. 2010). In addition, a variety of programs have been set up to support reintegration of Indigenous offenders into the community—to divert them from entering into the justice system in the first place and to improve community safety.

Effectiveness of Aboriginal courts

Aboriginal courts and conferences are based on the principles of restorative justice and seek to create an environment which is more appropriate than the mainstream courts for Indigenous people (Morgan & Louis 2010). These courts involve Aboriginal Elders and other respected community members. Examples are: Circle Sentencing (New South Wales), Koori Court (Victoria), Murri Court (Queensland) and Kalgoorlie Court (Western Australia).

Four major objectives of Aboriginal courts are:

- improving court attendance
- minimising court order breaches
- reducing rates of reoffence
- diverting offenders into rehabilitation.

Aboriginal courts do not necessarily help avoid prison. Their sentencing options are the same as those of mainstream courts, including release with or without conditions, fines, community-based or supervision orders, suspended sentences and custodial sentences. The offenders have to accept responsibility for their actions and be actively involved in the court processes.

The effectiveness of Aboriginal courts has been mostly evaluated in terms of reduction in recidivism or reoffending. Other indicators used are the length of time before the next offence and the level of its seriousness. Improved court attendance rates and the lessening of court order breaches are also commonly used measures.

No evidence of a reduction in reoffending, increase in the time to the next proven offence, or lessening of the seriousness of future offending was found in cases dealt by Circle Sentencing (Fitzgerald 2008; CIRCA 2008), Children's Koori Court (Borowski 2010, 2011), Murri Court (Morgan & Louis 2010) and Kalgoorlie Court (Aquilina et al. 2009). The only reported exception is the Adult Koori Court which has helped reduce recidivism (Harris 2006).

Notwithstanding this lack of evident effectiveness, that is, quantifiable outcomes, Aboriginal courts offer many intangible advantages. These include increased cohesiveness of the local community, improved accessibility to court services for Aboriginal people, and a better relationship between the court and the Aboriginal community. The overall rate of court attendance by Indigenous defendants is higher under this arrangement.

Effectiveness of Indigenous-specific alcohol and substance use reduction programs

High risk alcohol consumption and substance use are directly related to offending, family violence and sexual abuse. Initiatives to address these issues have been the focus of a significant amount of government, police and community work through a variety of Indigenous-specific alcohol and substance use programs. Other related objectives of these programs are improved health and social outcomes.



The effectiveness of some of these programs has been evaluated (Attorney-General's Department 2010). Although some of the reviews focussed on the effectiveness of programs in helping offenders avoid higher level penalties (SuccessWorks 2010; Crime Research Centre 2007a), others have looked at their effectiveness in terms of recidivism and health and social outcomes (Ogilvie & Willis 2009; SuccessWorks 2010). A more recent evaluation of pre-sentencing diversion of offenders into Indigenous community-based, residential drug and alcohol treatment also studied costs of the program in the context of imprisonment, recidivism, usage of mental health services, drug use by those who relapse and mortality (Deloitte Access Economics 2012).

These evaluations have generally reported improved outcomes for Indigenous clients and their communities. Brief overviews of the evaluations of the Queensland Indigenous Alcohol Diversion Program and the Western Australian Indigenous Diversion Program are in Box 7.

Box 7: Evaluations of Indigenous-specific drug and substance use programs

The evaluation of the Queensland Indigenous Alcohol Diversion Program, which has now ceased to operate, found improved health and social outcomes and reduced levels of alcohol consumption and reoffending. The program also helped offenders avoid higher level penalties (SuccessWorks 2010). Another review of this program by the Queensland Police Service, which specifically examined recidivism rates of program graduates, found reductions in the frequency of offending, non-arrest contacts with police and seriousness of offence(s) while on the program. However, these gains were not maintained over time (Ogilvie & Willis 2009).

The evaluation of the Western Australian Indigenous Diversion Program, which covered three different programs, also showed that participants who had completed the rehabilitation program had a lower re-arrest rate than predicted by risk estimates. This evaluation also suggested that clients who had completed the program experienced considerable gains in mental and physical health and achieved significant reductions in drug use. The qualitative feedback was particularly positive in relation to the program's focus on the role of the family and its holistic approach (Crime Research Centre 2007a). This evaluation was however based on a small sample size (34) with short follow-up periods. These results should therefore be interpreted with caution.

Gaps in the evidence base

There is insufficient information to definitively conclude that the Australian diversionary initiatives, particularly in relation to Indigenous offenders, are working and effective in reducing the processing of offenders in the criminal justice system. Several factors contribute to this gap in information prominent among which is the non-existence of an integrated surveillance system. Another major gap is the lack of a well-defined set of indicators against which the effectiveness of various diversionary programs should be measured. Poor design and conduct of evaluations also affect the interpretation of their effectiveness.

Data gaps

- The time depth and quality of data available are too limited to study the effectiveness of diversionary programs in Australia. The system is mostly dependent upon administrative data collections that are geared towards reporting process rather than tangible outcomes.
- Indigenous people are poorly identified in the mainstream diversion programs, due to apathy on the part of the administration and defendants attempting to avoid discrimination.
- Monitoring and performance data are not always in the public domain. In some cases the quality of data needs to be significantly improved (Morgan & Louis 2010; AONSW 2009).



Measures and indicators

- The measures used to test the effectiveness of a diversion program are not clearly defined. There are no standard data definitions; operational definitions of several measures also vary between jurisdictions.
- The most commonly used measure of the effectiveness of diversionary programs is the rate for recidivism. This straightforward measure does not take into consideration all the contributory factors, such as the past history of the offender, the nature, type and severity of offence or the circumstances of the new offence, and the attributes of the program that may affect its measurement.
- Information about trends in reoffending, changes in alcohol/drug dependency and the mental health of program participants before and after—highly important in measuring the effectiveness of a program—is also often inadequate.

Evaluation designs and methodologies

- There is a concern that the design of some of the diversionary program evaluations may have been faulty, conducted as an afterthought and unable to tease out tangible advantages from peripheral issues (Bartels 2010; McGrath 2008; Joudo 2008).
- The two most common methodological issues raised about the conduct of evaluations are:
 - invalid control groups, partly because it is difficult to find a valid control group without randomisation. To improve the reliability of results, some of the evaluations have resorted to modelling or a single group post-test design
 - short follow-up periods, which limit the ability to study medium and long-term effects of a program.
- There is an urgent need to undertake an evaluation of evaluations to generate suitable information about inter-jurisdictional and inter-program variation in program outcomes.

Program attributes

- There is not much reliable evidence about the types of programs that are most suitable for individuals in relation to their offences and circumstances. For example, there is little information about the participation of Indigenous women in diversionary programs.
- Several barriers to Indigenous people accessing and completing diversionary programs have been identified. However, there is no conclusive evidence as to what their participation and program completion rates are following a reduction in barriers.

Where to from here?

The above mentioned gaps in the evidence-base stress the need for proper planning and evaluation of diversionary programs. Planning needs to be based on the specific needs of the target group and agreed best practice while also building in measures during the planning stage to ensure effective evaluation can be undertaken.

In view of the dearth of evidence in this area, five evaluation projects are being undertaken by the Commonwealth Attorney-General to evaluate Indigenous law and justice programs in the context of the National Indigenous Law and Justice Framework (Attorney-General's Department 2010). These projects cover topics such as Aboriginal sentencing courts and conferences, offender support/reintegration, diversion programs, night and community patrols, and residential drug and alcohol programs.



These evaluations will review a range of programs designed to reduce Indigenous rates of offending, incarceration and recidivism, particularly among young offenders and perpetrators of violent crime. The evaluations will also assess whether or not, and on what basis, the programs can be considered to be 'good practice'. This will assist in identifying the best approaches to tackling crime and justice issues in Indigenous communities.

Two of these evaluations are briefly described in Box 8.

Box 8: Evaluations of Indigenous Justice Programs by the Attorney-General's Department

Five different subject-specific evaluations (Projects A–E) are currently underway to assess Indigenous-specific diversionary initiatives and programs. Brief overviews of two of these projects are given below.

Project A: Aboriginal sentencing courts and conferences

The aim of this project is to assess the effectiveness of Indigenous-specific courts and conferences. The limited amount of research in this area so far has generally been inconclusive. The project provides an opportunity to evaluate and comparatively examine the effectiveness of a number of community courts and conferencing models operating within Australia, including their ability to reduce rates of incarceration and recidivism.

Programs to be evaluated under this project are:

- Port Adelaide and Murray Bridge Nunga Courts, South Australia (SA)
- Port Augusta Aboriginal Sentencing Court (SA)
- Port Lincoln Aboriginal Conferencing (SA)
- s.9c (Criminal Law Sentencing Act) 1988 Aboriginal Sentencing Conferences (SA)
- Youth Justice Conferencing, Queensland (Qld)
- Community Courts, Northern Territory (NT).

Project C: Diversion programs

The aim of this project is to examine the impact of programs designed to divert Indigenous people from entering the justice system. This evaluation provides an opportunity to comparatively assess various diversionary models currently being implemented across a number of jurisdictions.

Programs to be evaluated under this project are:

- Aggression Replacement Training (Qld)
- Woorabinda Early Intervention (Qld)
- Aboriginal Power Cup (SA)
- Tiwi Islands Youth Diversion Unit (NT).

Source: Attorney-General's Department 2010.

All these evaluations, designed to run for 2 years, should enable an assessment of the impact of each initiative on participants' behaviour over time, in particular in terms of reoffending. The results of these evaluations are expected to be publically available in the near future.



Conclusion

Some of the diversionary programs described in this paper have delivered positive outcomes for defendants, their families and their communities. These include reduced drug and substance abuse and improved social functioning. The criminal justice administration has also benefitted from these programs through lower case pressure on the system.

However, the impact of diversionary programs in reducing recidivism, the major outcome measure of their effectiveness, has not been demonstrated unequivocally. Although there is evidence that these programs help reduce reoffending, overall the evidence is weak.

The benefits of diversionary programs also vary significantly for Indigenous and non-Indigenous offenders. The former are often not able to fully access, participate in and complete mainstream diversionary programs. The long-term, tangible outcomes for Indigenous clients of these programs have also been limited.

This issue is now being partially addressed by Indigenous-specific programs. Aboriginal courts in particular have been instrumental in improving court appearance rates which helps Indigenous defendants avoid some of the overly strict requirements of the judicial system. Other Indigenous-specific diversionary programs have also reported better participation and completion rates. These strategies have led to improved relationships between the court and Indigenous communities, as well as greater fairness and cultural appropriateness in the justice system. However, the effectiveness of these Indigenous-specific diversionary programs in reducing recidivism has not been unequivocally demonstrated.

Research suggests that to be effective diversionary initiatives need to include well-resourced, culturally appropriate rehabilitation programs that address the underlying causes of offending behaviour, take a holistic approach and have intervention periods of adequate duration. There is also a need for targeted interventions to cater for young repeat offenders.

Although the evidence on whether diversion reduces reoffending is inconclusive, it is worth noting that it does not appear to lead to increased reoffending. This is important to know as incarceration and contact with the court can have very negative consequences for Indigenous offenders, their families and communities. In addition, diversion, when it works, has been shown to be a cost effective alternative to incarceration with the potential to assist individuals across a range of health and socioeconomic issues.

A major limitation of the diversionary programs is that they are interventionist rather than preventative in nature. Unless factors that reduce the contact of Indigenous people with the criminal justice system are addressed, their rates of incarceration are likely to remain high. The effectiveness of diversionary programs in reducing recidivism may also be affected by these same or similar factors.

Appendix A: Mainstream diversionary programs

A variety of diversionary programs has been established in all states and territories of Australia (Table A1). All these mainstream programs are also available to Indigenous offenders.

Table A1: Mainstream diversion programs in Australia^(a)

State/Territory	Program	Evaluation ^(b)
New South Wales	Cannabis Cautioning Scheme	Yes
	State-wide Community and Court Liaison Service	Yes
	Forum Sentencing	Yes
	Court Referral of Eligible Defendants into Treatment (CREDIT)	Yes
	Drug Court	Yes
	Magistrates Early Referral into Treatment (MERIT)	Yes
Victoria	Cannabis Cautioning Program	Yes
	Drug Diversion Program < http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/0131F94CBE3BAB67CA2578960007D015/\$FILE/pilotprog.pdf >	Yes
	Assessment and Referral Court List	No ^(c)
	Mental Health Court Liaison Service	No ^(c)
	Criminal Justice Diversion Program	Yes
	Early School Leavers Pilot Program	Yes
	Youth Justice Court Advice Service	No ^(c)
	Drug Court	Yes
	Court Referral and Evaluation for Drug Intervention and Treatment (CREDIT)	Yes
	Rural Outreach Diversion Worker Service < http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/E475873CD0445E11CA25789600134738/\$FILE/rodw-evaluation.pdf >	Yes
Queensland	Queensland Police Diversion Program < http://www.sph.uq.edu.au/docs/drugdiversionreport2009.pdf >	Yes
	Special Circumstances Court Diversion Program	Yes ^(d)
	The Queensland Drug Court ^(e) < http://www.aic.gov.au/documents/7/C/C/%7B7CCCCFD2-FFF6-4DAB-B17F-49700902BC1D%7Drpp83.pdf >	Yes
	Queensland Magistrates Early Referral into Treatment (QMERIT)	Yes ^(d)
	Illicit Drug Court Diversion Program ^(d) < http://www.sph.uq.edu.au/docs/drugdiversionreport2009.pdf >	Yes
Western Australia	Cannabis Intervention Requirement	Yes
	All Drug Diversion	Yes
	Intellectual Disability Diversion Program	No ^(c)
	Mental Health List	No ^(c)
	Intensive Supervision Program	No ^(c)
	Perth Drug Court	Yes
	Young People's Opportunity Program < http://www.dao.health.wa.gov.au/Others/DocumentManager.aspx?Command=Core_Download&EntryId=241 >	Yes
	Youth Supervised Treatment Intervention Regime	No ^(c)
	Pre-sentence Opportunity Program	Yes
	Supervised Treatment Intervention Regime	Yes

continued



Table A1 (continued): Mainstream diversion programs in Australia^(a)

State/Territory	Program	Evaluation ^(b)
South Australia	Police Drug Diversion Initiative < http://www.ocsar.sa.gov.au/docs/evaluation_reports/PDDIFinalEvaluationReport2008.pdf >	Yes
	Magistrates Court Diversion Program < http://www.ocsar.sa.gov.au/docs/evaluation_reports/MCDP2.pdf >	Yes
	The South Australian Drug Court < http://www.ocsar.sa.gov.au/docs/evaluation_reports/SADrugCourtRecidivismStudy.pdf >	Yes
	Court Assessment and Referral Drug Scheme (CARDS): Adult < http://www.ocsar.sa.gov.au/docs/evaluation_reports/AdultCARDSFinalEvaluationReport2007.pdf >	Yes
	Court Assessment and Referral Drug Scheme (CARDS): Youth < http://www.ocsar.sa.gov.au/docs/evaluation_reports/YouthCARDSFinalEvaluationReport.pdf >	Yes
Tasmania	Illicit Drug Diversion Initiative	No ^(c)
	Mental Health Diversion List < http://www.magistratescourt.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/127029/Mental_Health_Diversion_List_-_Evaluation_Report_-_May_2009.pdf >	Yes
	Family Violence Offender Intervention Program (FVOIP)	No ^(c)
	Tasmania's Court Mandated Drug Diversion Program < http://www.justice.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/115463/CMD_Eval_Final_Report_Jan_09.pdf >	Yes
Australian Capital Territory	Early Intervention and Diversion Program	Yes
	Simple Cannabis Offence Notice	No ^(c)
	Court Alcohol and Drug Assessment Service (CADAS)	No ^(c)
Northern Territory	Cannabis Expiation Notice Scheme	No ^(c)
	Illicit Drug Pre-court Diversion Program	No ^(c)
	Youth Diversion Program	Yes
	Substance Misuse Assessment and Referral for Treatment (SMART)	Yes ^(d)

Notes:

- (a) References for the evaluation of the programs are at Appendix D.
- (b) Adopted from Joudo 2008.
- (c) No evaluation report found.
- (d) Evaluation report not publically available.
- (e) Program closed.

Appendix B: Indigenous-specific diversionary programs

Several Indigenous-specific diversionary initiatives (mostly courts) and programs have been established to address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australian prisons. These enterprises provide socially and culturally appropriate environments for Indigenous offenders. Although some of the courts and programs have now ceased to operate, their evaluations provide useful insight to their effectiveness (or lack thereof).

Table B1: Indigenous-specific diversion programs in Australia^{(a) (b)}

State/Territory	Court/ Program	Evaluated
New South Wales	Circle Sentencing < http://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/bocsar/ll_bocsar.nsf/vwFiles/CJB115.pdf/\$file/CJB115.pdf >	Yes
	Intensive Court Supervision Program	No ^(c)
Victoria	Koori courts For Adults	Yes
	For Children < http://www.aic.gov.au/events/seminars/2010/~/_media/seminars/borowski_presentation.ashx >	Yes
Queensland	Queensland Indigenous Alcohol Diversion Program ^(d) < http://www.justice.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/47487/QIADP-evaluation-report.pdf >	Yes
	Murri courts ^(c) For Adults	Yes
	For Children	No ^(c)
	Diversion from Custody Program	No ^(c)
Western Australia	Cairns Alcohol Remand and Rehabilitation Program	No ^(c)
	Regional community conferencing (police diversion)	No ^(c)
	Indigenous Diversion Program (IDP) < http://www.dao.health.wa.gov.au/Others/DocumentManager.aspx?Command=Core_Download&EntryId=239 >	Yes
	Regional Supervised Bail Program	No ^(c)
	Community Courts, including: Aboriginal Sentencing Court of Kalgoorlie < http://www.courts.dotag.wa.gov.au/_files/Kalgoorlie_Sentencing_Court_Report.pdf >	Yes
South Australia	Nunga Courts	No
Australian Capital Territory	Ngambra Circle Sentencing	No ^(c)
Northern Territory	Community courts	No ^(c)
	Volatile Substance Abuse Program	No ^(c)

Notes:

- (a) There are no Indigenous-specific diversion programs in Tasmania.
- (b) Based on Joudo 2008.
- (c) No evaluation report publicly available.
- (d) This program has ceased to exist.

Appendix C: Additional relevant material in the Clearinghouse

The Closing the Gap Clearinghouse Assessed Collection includes summaries of research and evaluations that provide information on what works to overcome Indigenous disadvantage across the seven Council of Australian Governments building block topics.

Table C1 contains a list of selected research and evaluations that were the key pieces of evidence used in this resource sheet. The major components are summarised in the assessed collection.

To view the assessed collection, visit <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/closingthegap/collections/>>.

Table C1: Assessed collection items for *Mentoring programs for Indigenous youth at risk*

Title	Year	Author(s)
Reducing juvenile crime: conferencing versus court	2002	Luke G & Lind B
Juvenile Justice in South Australia: Where are we now?	2005	Wundersitz J & Hunter N
Participation of Aboriginal people in the MERIT program	2006	Cain M
Indigenous over-representation in prison: the role of offender characteristics	2006	Snowball L & Weatherburn D
The effectiveness of the Illicit Drug Diversion Initiative in rural and remote Australia	2008	AIHW
Does circle sentencing reduce Aboriginal offending?	2008	Fitzgerald J
Responding to substance abuse and offending in Indigenous communities: review of diversion programs	2008	Joudo J
The Queensland Drug Court: a recidivism study of the first 100 graduates	2008	Payne J
Police drug diversion: a study of criminal offending outcomes	2008	Payne J, Kwiatkowski M & Wundersitz J
Diversion of Indigenous juvenile offenders	2008	Snowball L
Evaluation of the Aboriginal Sentencing Court of Kalgoorlie: Final report	2009	Aquilina H, Sweeting J, Liedel H, Hovane V, Williams V & Somerville C
Performance audit: helping Aboriginal defendants through MERIT	2009	Audit Office of New South Wales
The Magistrates Early Referral Into Treatment Program	2009	Rohan Lulham
Indigenous participation in the Western Australian diversion project evaluation – barriers and strategies to participation in adult court diversion programs: Final report	2009	Strategic Edge Consulting Australia Pty Ltd
Improving Aboriginal participation in the MERIT program	2010	Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW
Police diversion of young offenders and Indigenous over-representation	2010	Allard T, Stewart A, Chrzanowski A, Ogilvie J, Birks D & Little S
Evaluation of the Queensland Murri Court: final report	2010	Morgan A & Louis E
Targeting crime to reduce offending: Identifying communities that generate chronic and costly offenders	2012	Allard T, Chrzanowski A & Stewart A
An economic analysis for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders: prison vs residential treatment	2013	Australian National Council on Drugs



Table C2 contains a list of Closing the Gap Clearinghouse issues papers and resource sheets related to this resource sheet.

To view the publications, visit <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/closingthegap/publications/>>.

Table C2: Related Clearinghouse resource sheets and issues papers

Title	Year	Author(s)
Community development approaches to safety and wellbeing of Indigenous children	2010	Higgins DJ
Parenting in the early years: effectiveness of parenting support programs for Indigenous families	2012	Mildon R & Polimeni M
Strategies to minimise the incidence of suicide and suicidal behaviour	2013	Closing the Gap Clearinghouse
Strategies and practices for promoting the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	2013	Closing the Gap Clearinghouse
Programs to improve interpersonal safety in Indigenous communities: evidence and issues	2013	Day A, Francisco A & Jones R
Trauma-informed services and trauma-specific care for Indigenous Australian children	2013	Atkinson J

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Terminology

Indigenous: 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' and 'Indigenous' are used interchangeably to refer to Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Closing the Gap Clearinghouse uses the term 'Indigenous Australians' to refer to Australia's first people.

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