



Australian Government
Australian Institute of Criminology

ACT victims of crime referral project: Final report

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AIC Reports
Technical and
Background Paper **55**

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Foreword

This report presents the findings of a project funded by Victim Support ACT and ACT Policing to examine the experiences of victims referred by police to support services and the operation of the referral process in the Australian Capital Territory. The findings of the research were presented to Victim Support ACT and ACT Policing in late 2009 and included a number of policy-focused recommendations to enhance the experiences of victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory.

Since the completion of the report in 2009, Victim Support ACT and ACT Policing have used it to facilitate better access to support services for people affected by crime. Following the establishment of the Victims Advisory Board in 2011, the Victims of Crime Commissioner sought the support of the Board to progress matters that had been raised in the report. The Commissioner was of the view that the Board, having a function to develop and maintain protocols and procedures for the treatment of victims by agencies involved in the administration of justice, was well placed to assist Victim Support ACT and ACT Policing to progress these issues. To assist the Board to perform this function, the report is now being published to allow public access to the information.

Since the research was conducted, there have been a number of noteworthy improvements made to the victim support services and police referral processes in the Australian Capital Territory; some of which responded directly to the recommendations made by Australian Institute of Criminology. Examples of such improvements include:

- The development by ACT Policing of online training relating to victim awareness.
- Improvements to the AFP Practical Guide on victims of crime (ACT Policing), which outlines the policies and procedures AFP members must follow when dealing with victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory and the supporting role of Victim Liaison Officers.
- The announcement by the ACT Attorney General in November 2007 that \$4m of funding would be provided for reforms to the management, prosecution and victim support framework for sexual assaults, including the establishment of interagency case management of victims.
- The establishment of the Victims Advisory Board by the amendments to the *Victims of Crime Act 1994*, which came into force on 28 February 2011. The Board provides advice on policies, priorities and strategies for the acknowledgement, protection and promotion of the interests of victims in the administration of justice and helps develop and maintain protocols and procedures for the treatment of victims by agencies involved in the administration of justice.
- The development by ACT Policing and the Victims of Crime Commissioner of a draft protocol aimed at formalising existing information exchange activities between the two agencies.

Improvements have also been seen in other jurisdictions. At the time the research was conducted, the Australian Capital Territory was the only jurisdiction using the SupportLink mechanism to facilitate the referral of victims of crime. Since then, both Victoria and Queensland have begun using the SupportLink framework to provide referrals across metropolitan and rural areas of each state.

While there have been improvements since the research was conducted, the issues raised remain valid and relevant to the development of referral pathways and interagency communication. Thus, the report remains an important reference point to guide the work of Victim Support ACT and ACT Policing in enhancing their partnership to enable victims of crime to access services.

Adam Tomison
Director

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Acronyms

AIC	Australian Institute of Criminology
BCS	British Crime Survey
CALD	culturally and linguistically diverse
CRCC	Canberra Rape Crisis Centre
CYFS	Department of Child, Youth and Family Services
DPP	Department of Public Prosecutions
DVCS	Domestic Violence Crisis Service
FBIR	Family Violence Incident Review
ICVS	International Crime Victimization Survey
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NZCASS	New Zealand Crime and Safety Survey
PERT	Performance, Evaluation and Review team
PROMIS	Police Realtime Online Management Information System
SCS	Scottish Crime Survey
TIG	Territory Investigations Group
VLOs	Victim Liaison Officers
VoCC	Victims of Crime Coordinator

Executive summary

The Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) was contracted by the Australian Federal Police (ACT Policing) and Victim Support ACT to conduct a research project that examines the experiences of victims referred by police to support services and the operation of the referral process in the Australian Capital Territory. The findings of the research were presented to Victim Support ACT and ACT Policing in late 2009 and included a number of policy-focused recommendations to enhance the experiences of victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory. The publication of the research findings not only ensures transparency, but it establishes a baseline upon which improvements to policies and programs concerning victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory can be measured.

The tender guidelines for this project specifically outlined several activities that were to be covered in the project. These included:

- conduct a statistical description of victims reporting incidents to police within a 12 month period;
- conduct a survey of a sample of victims who identified their expectations of police and support agencies;
- undertake key person and stakeholder interviews;
- examine victim support referral models in Australia and other jurisdictions, with a view to determining current best practice;
- conduct an environmental scan and gap analysis of victim liaison and victim support services in the Australian Capital Territory;
- identify policy options for victim referral including any cost/resource implications and the identification of possible performance indicators for the options.

This report presents the findings of the research that were presented to ACT Policing and Victim Support ACT in December 2009.

Background and context

The report is divided into five sections. The first section provides an overview of the key findings identified from a review of relevant literature, and existing national/international police referral and victim support services. The research highlights that although crime surveys have shown that the most frequent emotional reaction to crime is anger and annoyance (Mayhew & Reilly 2008), victim services in Australia promote their counselling services and responsiveness to trauma as their main strength. In this way, victims of crime are represented as sufferers of trauma and grief; a representation that is directly reflected in the provision of support services, but that may not correspond to all victims' needs (eg victims of burglary). Furthermore, crime surveys indicate that a significant number of victims require additional support following victimisation and often this relates to practical needs such as information or advice relating to their experience.

While international crime victimisation surveys have shown that more than 60 percent of victims who reported to police were positive about the treatment they received (Van Dijk & del Frate 2004), studies examining the support received by victims indicate a gap in support from specialised agencies. Studies show that a significant proportion of victims receive limited or no support or advice from specialist victim support agencies. In fact, evidence shows that only a minority of victims receive help from a specialised

agency (Ingram 2002; Ringham & Salisbury 2004). In Australia, only six percent of victims receive support; this is compared with New Zealand (24%), Scotland (22%), Northern Ireland (21%), England and Wales (17%) and the United States (16%). This can partly be explained by the perception of some victims that they do not require support (Van Dijk, Van Kesteren & Smit 2008).

A review of existing national and international police referral and victim support mechanisms provides the background for a discussion about best-practice approaches to victim referral and support. Three key points are highlighted:

- Police must have a relationship with support services and knowledge of the services they provide.
- Referral processes must be clearly outlined.
- Using 'needs' as a basis for service provision is inadequate (Mawby & Gill 1987). Instead, support should be a 'right' for victims of all crime.

Victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory

The second and third sections provide a statistical snapshot of victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory and an overview of a survey of victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory, respectively. The Performance, Evaluation and Review team (PERT) within ACT Policing provided data relating to reported crime from the financial year 2007–08. Key points identified from analysis of the data indicate that during the reporting period:

- There were 26,018 victims of crime.
- Individuals were most likely to report being a victim of a theft (43%).
- More serious crimes (homicide, assault, sexual offences, other offences against the person and robbery) comprise less than 10 percent of reported offences.
- Men are more likely than women to be a victim of crime for all crime types except sexual assault.
- The largest category of victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory was aged between 21 and 30 years (19%).

- Approximately 30 percent of the sample was a victim of crime on more than one occasion during the period.
- Supportlink received 5,799 individual referrals.
- 4,533 referrals resulted in a support service accepting the referral.

The online survey of victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory produced a number of interesting results. Here, it must be noted that the relatively small sample size does not provide a comprehensive representation of the larger victims of crime population. Despite this, survey results showed:

- Respondents were generally satisfied with the initial behaviour of police, but were less satisfied with police follow up of their case.
- Only one in five respondents reported being referred to victim services by police.
- Practical help, information about being a victim of crime and assistance with navigating through the criminal justice system were identified as being the most sought after services requested by victims.
- Most respondents who had contact with victim services were satisfied with the service provided.
- Eighty percent of victims indicated that they should be asked by police before being referred to a victim support service.

Stakeholder interviews

The fourth section of the report summarises findings from a series of interviews conducted with police, government and non-government stakeholders. Interviews were conducted with range of key stakeholders; a list of the agencies consulted is available at *Appendix B*.

From the interviews conducted with stakeholders, nine key issues were identified as requiring further attention. These include:

- There is a lack of consistency surrounding how police communicate information to victims of crime.
- There are currently no ACT Policing guidelines outlining when it is appropriate to offer a referral to victim support services.

- Males are more likely to be a victim of crime than females; however, they are less likely to seek help and possibly to be offered help.
- Victim Liaison Officers (VLOs) have limited resources and this has an impact on the work they are able to undertake.
- The feedback mechanisms from victim support services in the Australian Capital Territory to ACT Policing are weak.
- The needs of victims of robbery, burglary, non-family violence, stalking and cyber-crimes, and families of victims of road fatalities are not well understood and may not be met by the current victim support services.
- There is sometimes confusion about which agency is the case coordinator in cases of victims of serious crime.
- Information exchange between the Department of Public Prosecutions (DPP), victim support agencies and ACT Policing has been identified as being a weakness that should be explored further.
- There is a lack of understanding at the community level about the services each agency can provide.
- The contents of the *Are You a Victim of Crime?* booklet should be reviewed by a sample of victims and an electronic copy should be made available on the internet to improve accessibility.
- ACT Policing should consider instructing police officers to hand the booklet out to every victim of crime they come in contact with.
- ACT Policing should consider establishing guidelines outlining who should be offered a referral and when it is appropriate for police officers to offer a victim a referral through SupportLink. ACT Policing should initiate training on these guidelines.
- Data related to victims' acceptance of offers of referral by the police should be collected in order to assist in understanding the experiences of victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory.
- It is suggested that strategic feedback be sought and provided to police from SupportLink and that ACT Policing and Victim Support ACT give consideration to the conduct of a roundtable to identify how the experiences of victims post-referral could be fed back to ACT Policing for dissemination to police officers and the executive.
- A formal review of Supportlink is recommended.
- It is recommended that Victim Support ACT examine the needs of victims of robbery, burglary, non-family violence stalking and cyber-crimes, and families of victims of road fatalities, with a view to better understanding the needs of these victims and expanding and targeting services for them.
- Where it is likely a victim is going to be offered access to a range of support options for the criminal justice process, protocols should be established to enable the victim to make a clear choice of which agency should be the point of contact.
- It is recommended that the DPP, ACT Policing and victim service representatives conduct a roundtable to discuss improved information exchange and specific information requirements to ensure victims are well supported.
- It is recommended that Victim Support ACT review information on the most effective ways to communicate with the community, with a view to undertaking a multi-stage advertising campaign on behalf of the victim support agencies in the Australian Capital Territory. This will assist the ACT community in understanding the services that various agencies are able to provide.

Discussion of issues and conclusions

The findings of the research suggest that the current victim referral process by police in the Australian Capital Territory has evolved to become an operationally collaborative and well-received service. While international research suggests that Australia has a very low rate of victims who access victim services when compared with other developed countries, analysis of ACT statistics demonstrates that the number of referrals made in the Australian Capital Territory is significantly higher than the national rate outlined in the literature examined.

However, it is clear that there is a need for clarification or expansion around some policies and procedures. Based on the issues outlined above, a number of policy-focused recommendations were developed, which are discussed in the penultimate section of the report:

Since the research was conducted, there have been a number of noteworthy improvements made to the victim support services and police referral processes in the Australian Capital Territory, some of which responded directly to the recommendations made by the AIC. The publication of the findings of the research not only ensures transparency, but it establishes a baseline upon which improvements to

policies and programs concerning victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory can be measured. Specifically, the report remains an important reference point to guide the work of Victim Support ACT and ACT Policing in developing an agreed partnership to enable victims of crime to access services.



Introduction

It is known that a large number of crimes are not reported to police (sexual assault and domestic/family violence are particularly under-reported). However, police are still the first point of contact for many victims of crime and as such, police are in a unique position to provide victims of crime with assistance in the form of referral to a variety of support agencies and services. Referrals to support services are extremely important. Research from the United States indicates that rape survivors who had the assistance of a rape victim advocate had more positive experiences with legal and medical systems than those who did not have an advocate (Campbell 2006).

In the Australian Capital Territory, the Domestic Violence Crisis Service (DVCS) and ACT Policing have a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that specifies that for all family violence incidents that the police attend, the services of DVCS must be offered to the victim by the attending officers. Even if the victim declines DVCS services, the attending officer, through the police communications area, is required to inform DVCS that they have attended a family violence incident. An MoU also exists between ACT Policing and the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre (CRCC), strengthening existing protocols of referral between the two agencies. This agreement simplifies the process by which victims of sexual assault can gain access to support services.

For other types of crime, ACT Policing are able to access SupportLink, which acts as a central referral point for police victim referrals. SupportLink Systems Pty Ltd is a non-profit organisation that mediates referrals of victims of crime from the police to victim support services via an electronic management system.

While ACT Policing have, in some instances, a mandate for offering a referral to victim services, the extent to which this occurs and how victims perceive the referral service is not currently known. The 'gaps', where victims could be referred to victim services but are not, need to be identified and addressed. In addition, it is important to capture information about victims who do not present to police; for example, some victims may prefer to speak only with support services (and data collected by support agencies will reflect those clients with whom they interact), while some victims may choose not to speak with anyone.

Research objectives

The AIC was contracted by ACT Policing and Victim Support ACT to conduct a research project examining the experiences of victim referral for individuals who have been a victim of crime in the

Australian Capital Territory. The project has four overarching aims. These are:

- To examine victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory. This includes their demographics and their recent experiences of crime, police and referral systems in the Australian Capital Territory.
- To identify current good practice models of referring victims of crime.
- To identify gaps in the current referral system in the Australian Capital Territory.
- To identify policy options to enable government to determine strategic directions for achieving better outcomes for victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory.

Methodology

For examining the experiences of individuals who have been a victim of crime in the Australian Capital Territory, the AIC study employed a mixed methods approach that covered several core activities as identified in the Request for Tender released by Victim Support ACT and ACT Policing. These were:

- develop a statistical description of victims reporting incidents to police within a 12 month period;
- conduct a survey of a sample of victims who identify their expectations of police and support agencies;
- undertake stakeholder interviews;
- examine victim support referral models in Australia and other jurisdictions with a view to determining current best practice; and
- conduct an environmental scan and gap analysis of victim liaison, and victim support services in the Australian Capital Territory.

Project management group

A project management group was formed and consisted of representatives from Victim Support ACT, ACT Policing and the AIC.

Statistical snapshot of victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory

Data on victims are collected by ACT Policing using their Police Realtime Online Management Information System (PROMIS). Operational police enter a range of data about incidents into PROMIS, including limited data specifically about victims. The AIC obtained PROMIS data from PERT in ACT Policing for the 2007–08 financial year, as it provided the most up-to-date information on the personal characteristics of victims and the incidents or offences in which they were involved.

Information collected on victims included:

- victim type (ie organisation/individual);
- victim ID (a unique victim code);
- victim gender;
- victim age; and
- victim's Indigenous status (ie Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, or non-Indigenous).

Data on victims were linked to apprehension data (where available); this enabled information relating to offence or incident to be obtained. Data provided by PERT show:

- the types of incidents victims are involved in;
- the victim's relationship to the offender;
- the location of the incident;
- how the offence was cleared (eg arrest, caution or conference);
- the numbers of incidents victims were involved in over the 12 month period examined (repeat victimisation) and the types of incidents; and
- whether any victims in the sample were also offenders.

It is not possible to present an analysis of the numbers of charges proceeding to prosecution, as these data are held by the courts rather than ACT Policing.

Online survey of victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory

In consultation with members of the Project Management Group, the AIC drafted a range of questions to collect quantitative information on victim demographics, the types of crimes victims were involved with and whether victims reported the most recent instance of victimisation to police. In addition, information was sought on:

- whether the victim was referred to support services;
- which service they were referred to;
- whether they acted on the referral;
- the ease of the referral process; and
- whether they had accessed victim services without having been referred by police.

An online version of the survey was developed and piloted by staff at the AIC. Comprehensive feedback was provided by AIC staff and these comments were incorporated into the final survey design. A copy of the survey is provided at *Appendix A*.

Sampling victims and mode of delivery

In consultation with the Project Management Group, it was agreed that the primary mode of delivery for the survey would be online, hosted on the AIC's website. In addition, a small number of surveys were mailed to victims of crime known to Victim Support ACT, with reply paid envelopes to ensure anonymity for survey respondents. It was agreed the survey would remain open for a period of one month (May 2009).

The survey was launched online and promoted extensively within the community. Both formal and informal means were used to market the survey to the broadest possible range of people. These included:

- Advertisement in the *Canberra Times* (front section) for the first two Saturdays of the survey period.
- Project flyers were placed in all ACT police stations and at Victim Support ACT.
- Two articles appeared in the *Canberra Chronicle*, one in the general section of the newspaper and the other in *On the Beat*.

- Several radio interviews were organised for the survey to be promoted on both local commercial and ABC radio.
- The survey appeared on the front page of the AIC's external website.
- The Business Liaison Team within ACT Crime Prevention forwarded the survey to the ACT Chamber of Commerce & Industry and requested that they promote the survey to their members via their email lists and/or their newsletter.
- The ACT Policing Multicultural Liaison Officer forwarded survey to the following networks—ACT Ethnic Schools Association, ACT Multicultural Council Inc, Adult Migrant Education Program, ANU International Student Support, ANU Security, Canberra Multicultural Communities Forum, Canberra Refugee Support, Companion House, Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services of the ACT Inc, Multicultural Youth Services ACT and University of Canberra International requesting their support and that they promote the survey to their clients; and
- RiotACT (a Canberra based online forum www.the-riotact.com) placed a free 'post' on their discussion board to promote the survey going live.

After the initial month-long data collection period, the number of survey responses was not high enough for meaningful statistical analysis to be undertaken (only 57 valid responses). The survey period was then extended for a further three weeks and the following promotional activities were undertaken:

- advertisement in the *Canberra Chronicle*;
- advertisement on RiotACT;
- distribution of an email asking for recipients to pass on the email to other Canberra residents and for them to pass it on etc. This email also asked if details of the survey could be placed on staff bulletin boards where appropriate; and
- survey details were distributed to all members of the ACT Government.

These additional measures had a significant impact and by the end of the additional survey period of three weeks, 149 valid survey responses had been received.

Methodological assumptions

The methodology for sampling was based on advice that it was not possible to access a sample of victims of crime who reported to police because of privacy and confidentiality concerns.

Given that the survey was administered online and was anonymous, it was not possible to ascertain whether respondents were honest in their identification as a victim of crime, or whether the survey was completed multiple times by the same respondent. However, it did appear from the tone of the responses to the open-ended questions that the respondents took the process seriously.

Stakeholder interviews

In 2009, as part of this project, the AIC conducted both face-to-face and telephone interviews with a wide range of government and non-government stakeholders. A full list of agencies interviewed is presented at *Appendix B*.

Format and length of interviews

Most interviews were semi-structured and were conducted one-on-one; however, two of the interviews involved more than one interviewee. In addition to this, a focus group was conducted with Victim Support ACT.

While interviews ranged in length, most ran for approximately 30 minutes. All interviews were conducted face-to-face and took place at the interviewee's place of work. Interviewees were informed about the project and assured that they would not be directly quoted or identified. It was explained that their views would only be presented in a general sense and their specific opinions would not be connected to them or identifiable in any way.

Examine victim support referral models in Australia and other jurisdictions with a view to determining current best practice

The focus of this project is on referrals by police to victims support services. The AIC sought information

from each Australian jurisdiction relating to their own police referral and victim support mechanisms. This enabled researchers to develop a picture of the current victim support models operating throughout Australia.

In addition, stakeholder interviews were conducted with both victim support services and operational police in a number of jurisdictions. Findings from the interviews were considered alongside findings from the literature review in order to develop an understanding of current good practice in victim referral.

Conduct an environmental scan and gap analysis of victim liaison and victim support services in the Australian Capital Territory

Data were requested from SupportLink on the number of referrals they received from ACT Policing over the past five years. Annual reports of Victim Support ACT were examined to gain a better understanding of the nature and outcomes for referrals they receive from police. In addition, interviews with stakeholders provided an opportunity to explore perceived gaps in existing services.

Report structure

A final in-confidence report was delivered to Victim Support ACT and ACT Policing in December 2009, which identified potential policy options to assist government in determining strategic directions for achieving better outcomes for victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory.

This report presents detailed findings from the in-confidence report. Care has been taken to ensure the individuals or agencies consulted during the research process are not identified in the analysis. The report is divided into six sections as follows:

- an introductory section that outlines the research objectives and methodology;
- an overview of relevant background and contextual information, including key findings from the literature;

- a statistical snapshot of victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory, detailing findings from analysis of data provided by ACT Policing and Supportlink;
- a summary of findings from an online survey of victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory;
- an overview of outcomes of interviews conducted with a range of stakeholders (both government and non-government); and
- a discussion of key issues that arose from the stakeholder interviews, informed by findings from the literature, analysis of statistics and the online survey.

Background and context



A central component of the research was a review of both Australian and international literature that examined the treatment and support needs of victims of crime. In addition, a review of victim support models in Australia and internationally was undertaken and potential best practice approaches were identified. This component of the research plays an important role in contextualising the ACT Victims of Crime Referral program. It should be noted that this review of literature was conducted as part of the original research and includes an overview of literature published up until the end of 2009. This relates also to the overview of existing victim support services and police referral mechanisms that follows. Changes that occurred after 2009 have not been incorporated in the report, but have been addressed in the Foreword.

Key findings from literature

The advent of the 'victim's movement' emphasised the importance of victim's rights in addressing crime. The emphasis of victims' rights in national and international legislation, policies and charters reflects the ideological concepts underlying the victim's movement. Key performance indicators for the effectiveness of these measures include the proportion of victims reporting to the police, the

proportion of victims satisfied with police treatment and the proportion of victims receiving support from specialised agencies (Van Dijk 2006). Research tools such as crime surveys assist in generating this information.

The provision of support to victims of crime is a major point of contention, with debates surrounding 'what' to provide and 'how' it should be provided. As such, the range of support services, victims' needs and the organisational elements of support service provision vary both within and between countries. What most participants in this debate seem to agree on is the early deliverance of support. As police officers are often the first point of contact for victims of crime, they have been described as the 'gatekeepers' to victim assistance and support. However, their role in referring victims to support services remains ambiguous and ill-defined. A review of the literature on this issue illustrates conflicting ideas about what victims need, a variance in the existing victim service and police referral models both internationally and nationally, and potential best practice models of victim service provision and police referral mechanisms.

Effects of crime: Victims' needs

It is important that the support provided by both the police and victim support agencies corresponds to

the needs of victims. A large proportion of reported crimes involve burglary or theft, yet victim services in Australia somewhat disproportionately cater to victims of violent crimes (ie domestic violence and homicide). Rock (2006) observes that this focus on victims of violent crime reflects the fact that the majority of victim services in Australia were originally established by families of homicide victims, and female victims of domestic violence and rape. For instance, the victims' movement, especially in Australia, was greatly driven by the advocacy of victims of sexual assault and domestic violence within feminist literature, hence the women's movement was greatly intertwined with the victims' movement in the early 1980s (LRC NSW 1996; Rock 2006). This ideological background has therefore manifested itself in the way victim support schemes prioritise their services.

Although crime surveys have shown that the most frequent emotional reaction to crime is anger and annoyance (Mayhew & Reily 2008), victim services in Australia promote their counselling services and responsiveness to trauma as their main strength. In this way, victims of crime are represented as sufferers of trauma and grief; a representation that is directly reflected in the provision of support services, but that may not correspond to most victims' needs (eg victims of burglary).

Reporting crime to police

Data from the International Crime Victimisation Survey (ICVS) showed that in Western Europe, North America and Australia, more than 60 percent of victims who reported to police were positive about the treatment they received (Van Dijk & del Frate 2004). A correlation between the levels of satisfaction with police and the rates of reporting for the various types of crime was also observed in the study (Van Dijk & del Frate 2004). A particularly high correlation was observed for assault/threat ($r=0.47$; $n=47$). Reasons for not reporting a crime to the police usually include having dealt with the matter themselves, or feeling that the matter was too trivial to report (Mayhew & Reily 2008).

Generally, studies show that a majority of victims are satisfied with the conduct and support provided by police (Ringham & Salisbury 2004; Shapland, Willmore & Duff 1985), with only a small number

claiming that their perception of the police prevented them from reporting an incident (Mayhew & Reily 2008).

Victims' reaction to crime

The emotional reaction of an individual to the experience of being a victim of crime is often used as a measure of the overall effect of crimes on victims and therefore as an indicator for the types of services they might require. The trauma associated with being the victim of certain types of crime—particularly violent or sexual crime—is likely to be significantly greater than other types of crime and therefore may warrant referral to particular services. However, in other cases, reactions can vary as a function of incident type and by individuals. In these cases, caution should be taken in assuming individuals' reaction to a crime and the need for particular services is dependent on the severity of the offence, as analyses show that the characteristics of an offence do not solely determine the effect on the victim (Lamet & Wittebrood 2009). Moreover, it is individuals with physical and social vulnerabilities who more often experience emotional problems (Lamet & Wittebrood 2009) and factors such as age and socioeconomic background may account for variation in vulnerability. As such, the needs of a victim of crime can vary depending on an individual's pre-existing coping mechanisms and the nature of the crime itself. Australian victim support websites list the following as the emotional reactions that victims of crime can expect to experience (Government of South Australia 2001: np):

- emptiness or numbness;
- fear or anxiety;
- sadness or depression;
- guilt, shame or dirtiness;
- anger or irrationality;
- grief;
- loss of privacy and control; and
- panic and confusion.

However, crime surveys convey a pattern of reactions less skewed towards the extreme. Victims of burglary reported feeling more angry, rather than fearful or scared (Victim Support 2005). Over half of respondents to the survey conducted by Victim Support in South Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and

Sussex (n=545) reported having difficulty sleeping after the incident, with 35 percent reporting experiencing some form of depression or anxiety.

The New Zealand Crime and Safety Survey (NZCASS) (Mayhew & Reily 2006) reported the following as the surveyed victims' emotional reactions to different types of crime:

- anger/annoyance (81%);
- depression (16%);
- crying/tears (16%);
- anxiety/panic attacks (11%);
- shock (30%)
- fear (24%); and
- shame/guilt (10%).

In breaking down these emotional reactions by offence type, a similar pattern emerges; 73 percent of victims of confrontational offences, 87 percent of victims of burglary and motor vehicle thefts, and 83 percent of victims of damage and other thefts reported anger and annoyance as their primary emotional reaction. Victims of confrontational offences tend to report feelings of shock (41%), fear (38%), crying/tears (30%), anxiety/panic attacks (18%) and depression (25%) more than victims of the other two categories of offences.

The findings from the 2000 Scottish Crime Survey (SCS) (Ingram 2002) are congruent with the findings from the NZCASS. In the SCS study, emotional reactions were categorised into only emotions of anger and irritation, other emotions indicating a level of anxiety, or no emotion. The following are the emotional reactions felt by victims of all offences at the time of the incident:

- 40 percent reported no emotion;
- 27 percent reported anger/irritation only; and
- 33 percent reported signs of anxiety.

Victims of personal offences showed a higher prevalence of signs of anxiety (40%) than victims of household theft (27%) and vandalism (29%). A smaller percentage of victims of personal offences reported feeling anger/irritation only (19%) compared with victims of household theft (28%) and vandalism (37%). Overall, the effects of crime are pervasive and can be persistent. Consistently, studies have shown that all types of crime can cause distress, causing an emotional reaction that can continue

over a significant length of time (Norris, Kaniasty & Thompson 1997; Shapland, Willmore & Duff 1985).

Support needed

The support required by victims of crime, like their reactions, varied according to the type of crime. Studies show that there is frequently a discrepancy between the support needed and the support provided. NZCASS found that a significant proportion of victims required further assistance in addition to that provided (13%; n=425; Mayhew & Reily 2008). Out of this group, the most popular forms of support needed were:

- more information/feedback from the police (32%);
- emotional support (31%);
- someone to talk to (28%);
- someone to explain what was happening (26%);
- counselling (22%); and
- advice on how to keep safe (22%).

These figures are reflected in the findings from the 2002–03 British Crime Survey (BCS) (Ringham & Salisbury 2004). As with NZCASS, the BCS involved a large sample size (n=11,832) and included both reported and unreported incidents. The most popular forms of advice or support wanted were information from the police (11% of incidents), protection from further victimisation (8%) and moral support or someone to talk to (7%).

In terms of practical problems resulting from crime, personal offences were least likely to inconvenience the victim (Ingram 2002). However, the SCS found that half of all incidents of household theft (50%) and vandalism (54%) caused practical problems and general inconvenience rather than emotional problems as such. These problems included the time or inconvenience involved in repairing or replacing items, inconvenience because of loss or damage to a vehicle or other item, and the worry and the loss of sleep (Ingram 2002). Similarly, data from the ICVS indicated that the gap between the supply and the demand for victim support was largest for burglary victims (Van Dijk, Van Kesteren & Smit 2008). It was identified that victims of burglary required a range of practical support services, including information from the police about case progress and advice on how to improve security, and someone to talk to (Victim Support 2005).

For victims of violent crimes, it is frequently assumed that what is most needed is emotional and psychological support. However, an American study on female victims of violent crime indicated that practical support, such as the provision of daycare, housing, education, food and job training was regarded as being more helpful than the provision of emotional support from family and friends, professional counselling, medication, and support from self-help groups and medical providers (Postmus et al. 2009). It is important to note that emotional support was not regarded as unhelpful, but rather that it was not as relevant to the practical needs of the victim. This result may reflect a misdirected emphasis on the provision of services to victims of violent crimes.

A study sponsored by the National Institute of Justice in the United States concluded that service providers often fail to adequately address the more concrete/tangible needs of victims, focusing instead on providing emotional/psychological support (Newmark 2004). In addition, an Australian qualitative study suggested that the three most important aspects of providing support services for victims of domestic violence were that they remain free, anonymous and flexible, with the added component that they address the longer term effects of the crime, as well as providing immediate crisis support (Nelson & Spalding 2009).

Support received

Sources of support can include the police, victim services and the victim's social network. Factors that can influence whether or not a victim of crime receives support include whether the incident is reported to the police, the nature of the crime and the vulnerability of the victim. Studies show that a significant proportion of victims receive limited or no support or advice from specialist victim support agencies. This is partly due to some victims who believe that they do not need support (Mayhew & Reilly 2008; Ringham & Salisbury 2004).

Other evidence shows that only a minority of victims receive help from a specialised agency (Ingram 2002; Ringham & Salisbury 2004). In 2005, only nine percent of victims of burglary with entry, robbery, sexual incidents and threats, and assaults who

participated in the ICVS reported receiving support (Van Dijk, Van Kesteren & Smit 2008). Labeled as the 'coverage rate' of victim support, the highest rates were observed in:

- New Zealand (24%);
- Scotland (22%);
- Northern Ireland (21%);
- England and Wales (17%); and
- United States (16%).

South Africa/Johannesburg, Netherlands, Canada, Hong Kong, Austria, Belgium, Denmark and Norway all had coverage rates between 10–15 percent. Australia had a low coverage rate of just six percent.

The SCS and BCS looked at victims who had received support from the Victim Support Scheme. Only three percent of victims participating in the SCS said they had asked for or received an offer of help from the Victim Support Scheme. In the BCS, it was found that only three percent of all incidents resulted in some contact with Victim Support, with eight percent of *reported* incidents resulting in contact with Victim Support. The Victim Support Scheme remains the largest victim support network in the United Kingdom. At the time the BCS was administered, it was linked to the police service through a referral process as outlined in the Victims Charter (Ringham & Salisbury 2004).

In the ICVS, participants who did not receive support were asked whether they wanted support. The 'take-up rates' of those participating in the ICVS were then measured as the proportion of those who received support out of the total who wanted support (this includes those who received support, plus those who did not receive but wanted support; Van Dijk, Van Kesteren & Smit 2008). In the 2004–05 survey, the countries with the highest take-up rates were:

- New Zealand (47%);
- United Kingdom—Scotland (40%);
- England and Wales (31%); and
- Austria (38%).

The Netherlands, Canada, Japan, the United States, Belgium and Denmark all had take-up rates of between 25–40 percent; Australia had a low take-up rate of 18 percent.

The advantage of the BSC is that it asked participants what type of support they wanted and received. A breakdown of the information from the BSC shows how many victims received support by the type of support they wanted (Ringham & Salisbury 2004). The largest proportion reported that they received support in the form of someone to talk to (5%) and/or information from the police (3%), with 89 percent of incidents receiving no support or advice. Of those who wanted information from the police, only 19 percent reported receiving it and of those who wanted protection from further victimisation, only 13 percent received it. A larger proportion received moral support/someone to talk to (48%; of those who wanted it). This may simply reflect the fact that this type of support depends more on the actions of the victim and less on the actions of external forces (ie the police and victim service agencies).

Summary

The findings of these surveys convey a fairly consistent pattern of emotional reactions to crime and their subsequent support needs. Essentially, what develops out of the literature is a picture of victims of crime as a heterogeneous group, with responses varying mainly around incident-type, with vulnerability and resilience factors accounting for variation between individuals. Those who are a victim of theft or burglary experience significant inconvenience and anger. In these cases, information from the police and addressing the threat of re-victimisation are highlighted as essential components of victim support models. Victims of personal crime, such as assault, usually experience more extreme emotional reactions, which may require support centred on counselling and having someone to talk to.

Existing victim service and police referral models

The UN *Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power*, passed in 1985, was a significant step towards recognising

the rights of victims of crime in a global context. The Declaration refers to access to justice and fair treatment, responsiveness of judicial and administrative processes to the needs of victims, and restitution and compensation (Ehrenberg et al. 2008). The UN subsequently called on all member states to incorporate the principles inherent in the Declaration into their domestic laws and practices (Ehrenberg et al. 2008).

In 1996, the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice adopted a resolution to develop a manual on the application and implementation of the Declaration (UNODCCP 1999). The subsequent *Handbook on Justice for Victims* was designed to be used as a tool for ‘implementing victim service programmes and for implementing victim-sensitive policies, procedures and protocols for criminal justice agencies...’ (UNODCCP 1999: iv). In reference to the roles and responsibilities of the police, it states that they should provide victims with ‘information regarding their rights and with referrals to services that will help them to heal’ (UNODCCP 1999: 57). The Handbook also highlights the ability to refer victims to the appropriate support groups as a key outcome of police training (UNODCCP 1999). What follows is an overview of some international examples taken from the findings of this component of the research.

International examples

Britain

The British victim support scheme was developed from a pilot program established by the Bristol Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders and the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (Mawby & Gill 1987). Their aim was to create an independent organisation that provided immediate crisis support for victims and was supported by statutory agencies such as the police and probation. Similar schemes appeared throughout the country and in 1979, the National Association of Victims Support Schemes (now known as Victim Support) was formed (Mawby & Gill 1987). Primarily a volunteer-based scheme, it was not until 1986 that the National Association of Victims Support Schemes received funding from the government (Mawby & Gill 1987). Initially a temporary grant, funding was expanded to support

full-time coordinators in 1987 (House of Commons 1987). Up until this point, it was considered that all necessary funds should be raised locally (Mawby & Gill 1987).

The Victims Charter 1996 sets out 27 standards of service that victims of crime or their families can expect to receive from criminal justice agencies. These expectations include the offering of emotional and practical support. While the Charter attempted to standardise the police referral process to Victim Support, it had no legal basis. This changed following a review of the Charter and the subsequent publication of the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in October 2005, which became law on April 2006 (Home Office 2009). For the first time, victims' rights were given a statutory basis.

The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (OCJR 2005) stipulates that all police officers in England and Wales are required by law to ensure that, no later than five working days after an allegation of a crime is made, the victim must be provided with information about and the contact details of local support services. This information can be provided via the *Victims of Crime* leaflet or by ensuring that the victim can access the information in another format such as via the internet. The Code also verifies that, with the explicit knowledge of the victim, the police will pass on their details to the relevant Victim Support Group. Victim Support aims to subsequently contact the victim within four working days of the reporting of the crime to offer their services (Home Office 2009).

New procedures were introduced on 24 October 2001 to address the need for compliance with the Data Protection Principles and other relevant legislation. These new procedures require police to provide victims with a genuine opportunity to consent to their details being passed on to Victim Support. It also requires Victim Support to ensure that arrangements for processing any data adhere to Data Protection Principles.

New Zealand

In 1990, a national coordinating body, the New Zealand Council of Victim Support Groups (also known as Victim Support), was formed from the various local victim support groups (Victim Support

nd). This victim service model differs from Britain's in three major ways

victim support services are located in local police stations; they have full access to local police victim records; [and] the police provide full logistical support to their local Victim Support Group (Outtrim 1999: 3).

Victim Support provides assistance to victims of crime, accident and emergency.

The *Victim of Offences Act 1987*, replaced by the *Victims Right Act 2002*, stipulates the standards of service that victims of crime and family members of victims of crime can expect to receive from specified agencies. These specified agencies include police, Department of Child, Youth and Family Services (CYFS), Department for Courts, Department of Work and Income, District Health Boards, and Accident Compensation Corporation. The Act operates under the general principles that:

Any person who deals with a victim (for example, a judicial officer, lawyer, member of court staff, Police employee, or other official) should—(a) treat the victim with courtesy and compassion; and (b) respect the victim's dignity and privacy (*Victims' Rights Act 2002* s 7).

and

A victim or member of a victim's family who has welfare, health, counselling, medical, or legal needs arising from the offence should have access to services that are responsive to those needs (s 8).

With regard to victim's rights to information, the *Victims' Rights Act 2008* states:

A victim must, as soon as practicable after the victim comes into contact with an agency, be given information by the personnel of the agency about programmes, remedies, or services available to the victim through the agency (s 11(1)).

These standards exist as mandatory obligations to which the respective agencies can be held accountable. However, the Act itself imposes no explicit sanctions for the failure of agencies to uphold these obligations, although processes for complaints are outlined.

Europe

Victim assistance services have developed inconsistently across Europe. The formation of the European Forum for Victim Services in 1990 (now Victim Support Europe) and the binding of EU member states to the Framework Decision on the standing of victims in criminal proceedings in 2001 are two major steps taken to address this inconsistency.

Victim Support Europe aims to:

- promote the development of effective services for victims of crime throughout Europe;
- promote fair and equal compensation for victims of crime in Europe, regardless of the nationality of the victim;
- promote the rights of victims of crime in Europe in their involvement in the criminal justice system and with other agencies; and
- exchange experience and information between member organisations to share best practices and knowledge (Victim Support Europe nd: np).

The Framework Decision was a landmark step in establishing the rights of victims, as it provides a set of minimum standards for victims that are binding on EU member states. Most of the provisions in the Framework Decision came into force on 22 March 2002 (Victim Support 2002). The Framework Decision provides victims with the rights to:

- justice and compensation in criminal proceedings, including legal costs and expenses;
- information; and
- protection (Victim Support 2002: 4).

In addition, victims are given the right to 'understand and be understood' and

- have allowance made for the disadvantages of living in a different member state from the one in which the crime was committed (Victim Support 2002: 4).

United States

Victim services were established from two areas in the United States—the criminal justice department and community victim advocacy groups. Therefore, the difference between victim assistance services

(which are associated with helping the victim through the criminal justice system) and the more advocacy-based victim support services is more pronounced in the United States. In countries such as Australia and Britain, the divide between the two types of victim services is less distinctive, with a majority of victim services advocating for victims' rights to practical and emotional support, in addition to guiding the victim through the criminal justice system.

The formation of the National Organization for Victim Assistance in 1975 helped consolidate victim assistance programs in advocating for victim's rights. The National Organization for Victim Assistance is without a global equivalent in terms of the diversity of the programs that fall under its organisation. The Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (a federal agency) began funding victim support initiatives in the seventies (Mawby 2003; Roberts 1990). With the demise of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration in the 1980s, federal grants to victim assistance programs declined, causing certain services to be discontinued (Roberts 1990; Young 1997). With the enactment of the Victims of Crime Act in 1984, a Crime Victims Fund was established based on the collection of fines from federal criminals to be used to support state compensation and local victim assistance programs (Young 1997).

A survey conducted by Roberts (1990) on victim and witness assistance programs revealed that most services surveyed were based within government agencies. Of these, a significant proportion were court-based services for witnesses or victims and these were based in prosecutor departments, with seven percent based in police departments, four percent in probation departments and only three percent independent (Mawby 2003). Roberts' (1990) survey also revealed that the most frequent source of referral to victim and witness assistance programs was from the police department. The second most frequent source of referrals came from the district attorney's office/assistant prosecutor and the third most frequent source was from social service agencies (Roberts 1990).

Recent initiatives, such as the Victim Services in Rural Enforcement Program and the Austin Police Department's Victim Services Division, reflect the growing trend in strengthening the relationship

between the police department and victim support services. The Victim Services in the Rural Enforcement Program involved 10 rural pilot sites setting up a

helpful and sensitive initial law enforcement response to crime victims and follow-up assistance designed to promote victim recovery and participation in the criminal justice process' (Littel 2009: np).

The Austin Police Department's Victim Services Division is a specialised unit set up within the police department that is designed to deliver fast responses to victim's needs after a crime has been reported. The Division's counsellors aim to deliver a mix of counselling and practical advice to victims (Parker 2001).

Australia

At the time this research was conducted, there were limited examples of police referral mechanisms for victims of crime operating in Australian jurisdictions. Some Australian jurisdictions had established a system of victim referral to police, or an arrangement between victim support services and police, although the systems varied between jurisdictions. It is important to note that some jurisdictions have since introduced automated victim referral systems among other notable changes; this is addressed in the Foreword of this report.

Further, despite a lack of referral mechanisms in existence at the time of the research, a dramatic transfer of focus to victims' rights occurred across most jurisdictions in the years preceding this, as reflected in the formation of Acts and Charters that established minimum standards that victims of crime and family members could expect from criminal justice agencies. At the time of writing the report in 2009, variance across jurisdictions was primarily seen in relation to the strategies police employed to uphold these legislated rights and principles, of which referral mechanisms and processes are but a part of the larger picture.

One of the more prominent programs, which was in operation at the time the research was conducted and continues to operate today, is the electronic referral system established in the Australian Capital Territory by SupportLink. Support Link is a not-

for-profit organisation that operates as a referral mediator between the police and victim assistance services. A summary of victim support in the Australian Capital Territory is provided below.

Australian Capital Territory

Victim Support ACT is described as 'the ACT government's integrated support and advocacy program for victims of crime' (VoCC 2008a: 4). The agency sits within the Justice and Community Safety Directorate and administers a wide range of services and programs for victims of crime and their families, including the Victims' Services Scheme and Justice Advocacy Program.

At the time this research was conducted, the agency supported the independent statutory positions of Victims of Crime Coordinator (VoCC) and Domestic Violence Project Coordinator. Since then, the position of Victims of Crime Commissioner was established under amendments to the *Victims of Crime Act 1994*. This role includes, but is not limited to, ensuring that 'victims receive the information and assistance they need in connection with their involvement in the administration of justice' (s 11(i)). In a review of the operation of the *Victims of Crime Act 1994* within the Australian Capital Territory, it was acknowledged that there was an absence of systematic means employed by agencies involved in the administration of justice in the Australian Capital Territory in upholding their obligations to crime victims in regards to the provision of information (VoCC 2008b). In addition, the review revealed that the majority of complaints in relation to the actions of police were about the lack of case status information supplied and 'inadequate or non-existent feedback' (VoCC 2008b: 68).

In July 2008, a survey was conducted by the VoCC on victims of crime who had reported to police and those who had sought help at Victim Support ACT. The aim of the survey was to ascertain the degree to which the criminal justice agencies were implementing the principles set out in the *Victims of Crime Act 1994* that govern the treatment of victims of crime. The governing principles under the Act do not directly address the provision of services to victims. However, the survey did ask respondents whether they had received information from ACT Policing about services that assist and support victims of crime. Of the

responses provided, 41 percent responded with 'yes, every time', 21 percent said 'yes, once or twice' and only four percent did not receive information about support services (VoCC 2008a). ACT Policing's Crime Prevention Unit has two VLOs who are mandated to assist ACT Policing in adhering to the governing principles inherent in the Act (Wilson & Segrave 2008).

At the time this research was conducted in 2009, the Australian Capital Territory was one of the few jurisdictions where a police referral mechanism for victims of crime had been developed. SupportLink Systems Pty Ltd is an early intervention system that links police, schools and doctors to the social support sector (Campbell 2002). SupportLink is the provider of the netPol Referral Management System, which is an online electronic tool used to streamline the referral process for police. Acting as an intermediary, SupportLink assesses the range of services that can assist the victim; a process that is based on a combination of personal contact with the victim as well as information provided by the police (Campbell 2002).

Conclusion: A best-practice approach

Overall, the literature describes victims of crime as a largely heterogeneous group with needs that vary in nature and across time. This creates difficulties for police in deciding who needs what support and for how long. In addition, a gap exists in the research on assessment tools for victims of crime in general, exemplifying the challenge in appropriately screening and referring victims of crime to the appropriate services. This challenge is directly reflected in the varying strategies employed by police in order to meet the legislative requirements for the provision of information and access to services for victims of crime. These strategies vary in their degree

of formality and statutory basis. Victim Support Australasia has provided a position paper delineating possible mechanisms of police referral (VSA 1998). Two main options are presented:

- the automatic transfer of victim contact details to an appropriate and authorised victim support provider; or
- a police victim liaison person making the contact for referral based on consent (VSA 1998).

Therefore, two key elements are revealed in establishing best practice principles for police referral mechanisms for victims of crime and support service provision. First, police must have a constructive relationship with victim service agencies, including a thorough knowledge of the services they provide. Another aspect of this relationship is the freedom of exchange of information. Privacy and confidentiality laws often set limitations on the ability of the police to successfully refer victims to the appropriate services. In Australian jurisdictions, this issue has historically been addressed via signed MoUs, within legislation or more informally through the establishment of a constructive relationship between victim services and police.

Second, there must be a clearly outlined process of referral that maintains objectivity in the provision of services to victims of crime. This refers to the belief that using 'needs' as a basis for service provision is inadequate (Mawby & Gill 1987). Basing service provision on victim needs involves assessing what the victim requires, often according to offence-type and other rudimentary characteristics. This approach may bias the supply of services to a certain type of victim and neglect the fact that victims' needs may vary regardless of offence type.

The implementation of victims' charters and other relevant legislation are vital steps to ensuring that services are available and accessible by all victims of crime who need and want access.

Statistical snapshot of victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory

The following section provides an overview of victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory. The data used for analysis were provided by PERT within ACT Policing and relate to the financial year 2007–08. Caution must be taken when comparing these results to other published data on victims such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics' publication *Recorded Crime—Victims* (ABS 2007), which uses reports based on the calendar year

It is important to note when reading this section that the data provided are only for victims who have reported their victimisation to police. As was discussed earlier, many crimes go unreported and this is particularly the case for those crimes that occur within the private sphere, such as domestic and family violence, and sexual assault.

Table 1 Victims in the Australian Capital Territory by crime type, 1 July 07 to 30 June 08

Offence type	n	% of the total
Homicide and related offences	4	<0.0
Assault	2,311	7.5
Sexual-related offence	339	1.1
Other offences against the person	101	0.3
Robbery	228	0.7
Blackmail and extortion	1	<0.0
Burglary	4,052	13.1
Fraud and misappropriation	458	1.5
Stolen motor vehicle	2,002	6.5
Theft other than motor vehicle	13,103	42.5
Property damage	8,236	26.7
Total	30,835 ^a	100

a: This identifies victims of offences. Victims may appear multiple times in the one offence

Source: ACT Policing, specific data request April 2009

Table 2 Victims in the Australian Capital Territory by location (type) of offences, 1 July 07 to 30 June 08

Location of offence	n	%
House	8,477	32.6
Public place (including street/path/bicycle path)	4,556	17.5
Car park	3,967	15.2
Shop	2,998	11.5
Service station	1,541	5.9
School (including all educational and surrounds)	936	3.6
Licensed premises	581	2.2
Office	321	1.2
Garage not attached to residence	291	1.1
Garage attached to residence	256	1.0
Building site	248	1.0
Recreational centre	188	0.7
Hotel/motel	184	0.7
Hospital (including all health facilities except chemist/surgery)	125	0.5
Church	87	0.3
Bank (including building society/credit union)	82	0.3
Bus depot	72	0.3
Chemist/surgery	32	0.1
Post office/mail exchange	18	0.1
Police station	17	0.1
Airport	15	0.1
Train station	5	<0.0
TAB	4	<0.0
Seaport	2	<0.0
Other	1,015	3.9
Total ^a	26,018	100.0

a: This identifies all unique victims regardless of the number of offences for which they were a victim

Source: ACT Policing, specific data request April 2009

Victim numbers in the Australian Capital Territory

The number of victims of various offences in the Australian Capital Territory for the financial year 2007–08 is presented in Table 1. It should be noted the numbers of victims of offences is not the same as the total number of individual victims in the Australian Capital Territory, as a single incident against a victim might include more than one

offence. During the reporting period, there were a total of 30,835 victims of offences (see Table 1); however, there were 26,018 individual victims, including organisations or the crown (see Table 2).

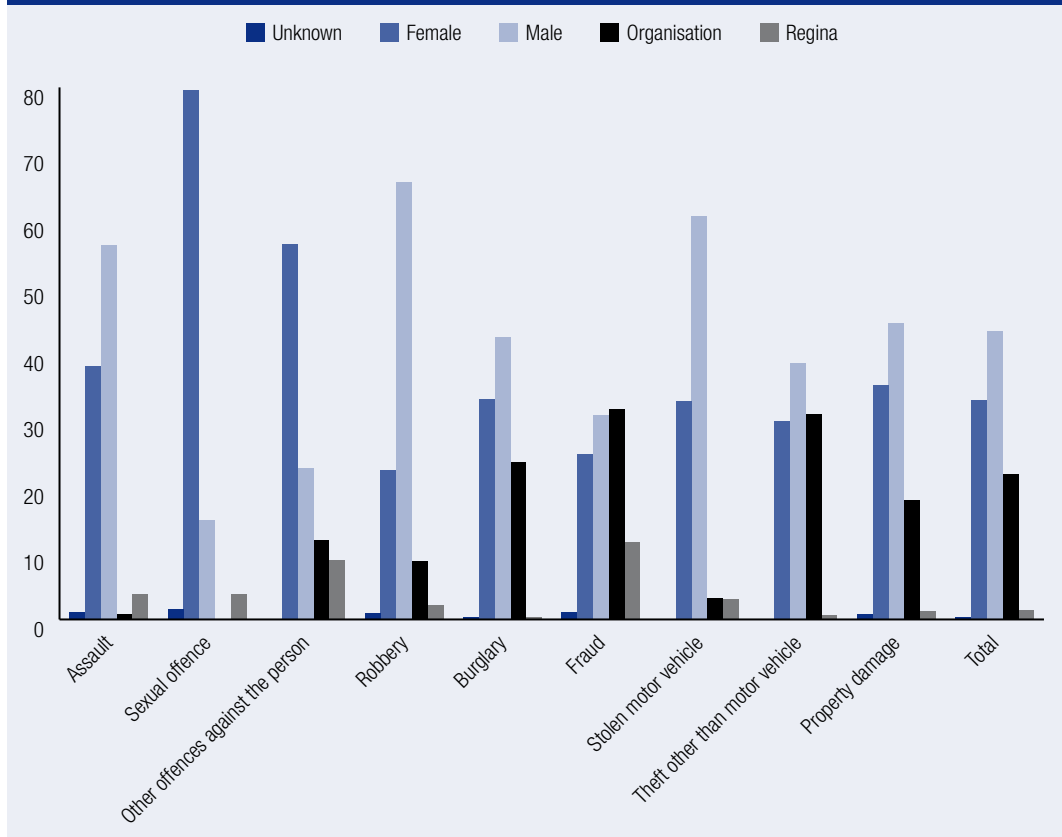
In the Australian Capital Territory, individuals were most likely to be the victim of a theft, other than a motor vehicle theft, with almost 43 percent of recorded victims falling into this category. This was followed by property damage (26.7%) and burglary (13.1%). More serious crimes comprised a much

Table 3 Victims in the Australian Capital Territory by gender, 1 July 07 to 30 June 08

Gender of victim	n	% of sample
Unknown	129	0.5
Female	8,530	32.8
Male	10,972	42.2
Organisation	5,966	22.9
Regina ^a	421	1.6
Total	26,018	100.0

a: Regina is the victim where an ACT/Commonwealth representative or ACT/Commonwealth property is offended against
 Source: ACT Policing, specific data request April 2009

Figure 1 Gender/type of victim by offence type, 1 July 07 to 30 June 08 (%)



Source: ACT Policing, specific data request April 2009

smaller proportion of the sample, with the main five offences against the person (homicide, assault, sexual offences, other offences against the person and robbery) combining to make up less than 10 percent of the total number of recorded victims of offences in the Australian Capital Territory.

The most common location for an offence in the Australian Capital Territory was in a residential house (33%), followed by a general public place such as the street (18%) or a car park (15%; see Table 2).

Table 4 Victims by age group, 1 July 07 to 30 June 08

Age of victim (years)	n	% of sample
Unknown	451	1.7
0–10	139	0.5
11–20	2,624	10.1
21–30	5,017	19.3
31–40	3,841	14.8
41–50	3,556	13.7
51–60	2,437	9.4
61–70	1,055	4.1
71–80	355	1.4
81+	156	0.6
Organisation	5,966	22.9
The Crown	421	1.6
Total	26,018	100.0

Source: ACT Policing, specific data request April 2009

The gender of victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory

While it may be perceived that women are more likely to be a victim of crime than men, Australian Bureau of Statistics' data for both recorded crime (crimes reported to police; ABS 2007) and victim-based surveys such as the *Crime and Safety Survey* (ABS 2005) show that for most crimes, men are more likely to be victims than women. Nationally, exceptions to this are the offence types of sexual assault (AIC 2011) and family-based violence (Morgan & Chadwick 2009), for which rates of victimisation are higher among females.

It is therefore not surprising that the data indicate that men are more likely than women to be a victim of crime in the Australian Capital Territory (see Table 3). Of the total number of victims (excluding instances where the victim was an organisation or the crown, or where the gender of the victim was unknown (n=19,502)), 56 percent of victims were male.

A breakdown of the type of victim for each offence by offence type is presented in Figure 1. In the Australian Capital Territory during 2007–08, males comprised the largest proportion of victims for every crime type with the exception of sexual offences.

In terms of the most notable gender differences, women were over five times more likely to report a sexual assault than men. By contrast, men were nearly three times more likely to report to police that they had been a victim of robbery.

While it is not addressed in this report, it has been well documented that men are far more likely to be the perpetrators of crime than women. Consequently, the dynamics of most crimes are male against male or male against female. PERT examined the number of victims who were also alleged to have committed crimes over the same period in which they were a victim. It was found that as of April 2009, of the 10,972 male victims, 1,683 (15%) were also an alleged offender. Of the 8,530 female victims, 732 (9%) were also an alleged offender during the same period.

Age and victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory

Where the victim was an individual, the largest category of victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory was aged between 21 and 30 years (19%; see Table 4). Individuals in their 30s were the second largest group, followed by those aged 10 to 19 years. While those aged over 65 years were the most likely to report feeling 'unsafe or very unsafe' in their own

homes (ABS 2005: 27), with the exception of those aged under 10 years, persons aged over 60 years were the smallest group to report being a victim of crime to police in the Australian Capital Territory. Indeed, only six percent of victims who reported a crime to police in the Australian Capital Territory during 2007–08 were aged over 60 years. These findings reflect the wider Australian population findings on crime (AIC 2008, 2007).

Using instances where both age and sex for victims of all identified crimes was known (as discussed previously, a victim may appear in this Table more than once), there were relatively few differences across age or sex in the reporting of crime to police (see Table 5).

Table 5 Victims by age and sex (where both are known), 1 July 07 to 30 June 08

Age of victim (years)	Male (n)	Male (%)	Female (n)	Female (%)
0–10	74	0.6	65	0.7
11–20	1,560	11.9	1,404	14.0
21–30	3,520	26.8	2,501	25.0
31–40	2,672	20.3	2,053	20.5
41–50	2,452	18.7	1,966	19.7
51–60	1,759	13.4	1,225	12.3
61–70	784	6.0	503	5.0
71–80	244	1.9	165	1.7
81+	74	0.6	114	1.1
Total	13,139	100.0	9,996	100.0

Source: ACT Policing, specific data request April 2009

Table 6 Victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory by crime type and Indigenous status, 1 July 07 to 30 June 08

	Unknown status		Non-Indigenous		Indigenous	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Homicide and related offences	1	0.0	3	0.0	0	0.0
Assault	706	7.1	1,440	10.6	59	43.4
Sexual-related offence	78	0.8	238	1.7	10	7.4
Other offences against the person	30	0.3	49	0.4	1	0.7
Robbery	64	0.6	137	1.0	2	1.5
Blackmail and extortion	0	0.0	1	0.0	0	0.0
Burglary	1,051	10.6	2,016	14.8	8	5.9
Fraud and misappropriation	94	0.9	166	1.2	0	0.0
Stolen motor vehicle	816	8.2	1,055	7.7	7	5.1
Theft other than stolen motor vehicle	3,915	39.5	5,048	37.0	18	13.2
Property damage	3,145	31.8	3,472	25.5	31	22.8
Total	9,900	100.0	13,625	100.0	136	100.0

Note: Individuals victims may appear more than once in the Table where more than 1 offence was committed against them. Further, this data excludes incidents where the victim was an organisation or the Crown

Source: ACT Policing, specific data request April 2009

Table 7 Victims in the Australian Capital Territory by how the incident was cleared, 1 July 07 to 30 June 08

Method of clearance	n	% of sample
Not cleared	21,425	82.3
Arrest	1,199	4.6
Insufficient evidence to proceed	757	2.9
Complaint withdrawn by victim	647	2.5
Cleared otherwise	493	1.9
Caution	486	1.9
Summons	472	1.8
Charged before court	198	0.8
Summons brief submitted	135	0.5
Unfounded	81	0.3
Diversionary conference	74	0.3
Charge withdrawn	19	0.1
Warrant	19	0.1
Infringement notice	13	<0.0
Total	26,018	100

Source: ACT Policing, specific data request April 2009

Indigenous status of victims in the Australian Capital Territory

Assessing the data by Indigenous status, it was found that those victims known to be of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background were more likely to be the victims of serious personal crime such as assault and sexual offences. Indigenous victims were also more likely to be the victim of a robbery than the rest of the sample, but less likely to be the victim of other property crime such as stolen motor vehicles (SMV) or burglary (see Table 6).

However, as the Indigenous status of almost 42 percent of the sample was not known, these results are not a reliable estimate of the reported victimisation of Indigenous Australians in the Australian Capital Territory.

Clearing offences in the Australian Capital Territory

In the Australian Capital Territory, offences can be cleared from the ACT Policing system in a number of ways. How offences that were linked to a specific

victim were cleared in 2007–08 is presented in Table 7. Overall, most offences were not cleared (82%) and this was usually the case where an offender was not known to the victim.

It was apparent that more serious crimes against the person, such as assault and sexual offences, were far more likely to result in an offence being cleared (see Table 8). For property-type offences between 84 percent and 91 percent were not cleared, while for assault and sexual assault, 37 percent and 36 percent were not cleared, respectively.

Repeat victimisation in the Australian Capital Territory

Around 30 percent of victims of crime on police records in 2007–08 were victimised on more than one occasion during that period (see Table 9). While experienced by a minority only (less than 2%), a small number of males and females were recorded as being the victims of crime on more than five occasions during 2007–08.

This analysis should be viewed with caution as the likelihood of an individual being re-victimised within

Table 8 Victims in the Australian Capital Territory by selected crime type and how the incident was cleared, 1 July 07 to 30 June 08

	Assault		Sexual offences		Burglary		SMV		Other theft		Property damage	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Arrest	453	20.0	49	14.6	117	2.9	82	4.4	217	2.4	188	2.4
Caution	79	3.5	5	1.5	7	0.2	4	0.2	333	3.7	51	0.6
Charge withdrawn	7	0.3	2	0.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	6	0.1	1	0.0
Charged before court	27	1.2	5	1.5	68	1.7	24	1.3	48	0.5	8	0.1
Cleared otherwise	104	4.6	11	3.3	39	1.0	15	0.8	172	1.9	113	1.4
Complaint withdrawn by victim	331	14.6	51	15.2	11	0.3	8	0.4	111	1.2	107	1.4
Diversionsary conference	20	0.9	0	0.0	5	0.1	5	0.3	20	0.2	24	0.3
Infringement notice	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	13	0.1	0	0.0
Insufficient evidence to proceed	197	8.7	58	17.3	55	1.4	31	1.7	211	2.4	168	2.1
Not cleared	828	36.6	120	35.7	3,620	91.0	1,682	89.8	7,515	84.2	7,181	90.8
Summons	124	5.5	12	3.6	37	0.9	14	0.7	214	2.4	44	0.6
Summons brief submitted	46	2.0	1	0.3	14	0.4	6	0.3	50	0.6	12	0.2
Unfounded	35	1.5	22	6.5	3	0.1	2	0.1	12	0.1	6	0.1
Warrant	11	0.5	0	0.0	3	0.1	0	0.0	2	0.0	3	0.0
Total	2,262	100.0	336	100.0	3,979	100.0	1,873	100.0	8,924	100.0	7,906	100.0

Source: ACT Policing, specific data request April 2009

Table 9 Victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory by incidents of victimisation and sex, 1 July 07 to 30 June 08

Incidents of victimisation (n)	Female		Male	
	n	%	n	%
1	5,607	71.6	7,090	70.1
2	1,893	24.2	2,609	25.8
3	227	2.9	292	2.9
4	68	0.9	88	0.9
5	26	0.3	23	0.2
6	8	0.1	8	0.1
7+	4	0.1	6	0.1
Total ^a	7,833	100.0	10,116	100

a: 1,553 cases missing

Source: ACT Policing personal communication April 2009

this period is dependent on the date they were originally victimised; therefore, the analysis is likely to be a conservative estimate of actual re-victimisation. A better measure of re-victimisation would be to follow up all victims for the same period of time after their initial incident; however, this was not possible for this research.

SupportLink statistics

In addition to information provided by ACT Policing, SupportLink provided information on the number of referrals received from police. During the 2007–08 financial year, SupportLink received 5,799 individual referrals on the SupportLink system. Individuals can have up to two issues identified by police and as a result, for the 5,799 individual referrals there

Table 10 Issues identified as primary issue by officers, 2007–08

Incident type	n	%
Home safety	1,737	21.7
General support	1,050	13.1
Parenting of youth	754	9.4
Couple relationships	536	6.7
Business security	434	5.4
Mental health—non crisis	431	5.4
Couple separation	349	4.4
Government services	324	4.0
Victim support counselling	295	3.7
Substance abuse	284	3.5
Mediation and conflict resolution	253	3.2
Neighbourhood Watch	238	3.0
Parenting children 0–12 years	217	2.7
Victim support court or general	210	2.6
Road trauma support	151	1.9
Couple separation legal	142	1.8
Aged care and support	142	1.8
Home safety assessment	132	1.6
Parenting youth mediation	95	1.2
Financial	73	0.9
PCYC	70	0.9
Sudden death	36	0.4
Post-suicide support	17	0.2
Domestic violence	15	0.2
Aged care and support	12	0.1
Mental health services	7	0.1
SIDS and kids	5	0.1
Grief and loss	2	0.0
Total number of issues	8,015	100.0

Source: SupportLink personal communication 2009

Table 11 Accepted referrals by agency, 2008–09

Supporting agency	Issues/referrals (n)	Issues/referrals (%)
Home Safety Program (SupportLink)	2,562	56.5
City Rangers	204	4.5
Victim Support ACT	155	3.4
Directions	146	3.2
Richmond Fellowship	119	2.6
DVCS	101	2.2
Conflict Resolution Service	99	2.2
Coroners Support (SupportLink)	98	2.2
Neighborhood Watch ACT	84	1.9
Mental Health Foundation	82	1.8
Centrecare Counselling	81	1.8
Standby Suicide Bereavement (SupportLink)	53	1.2
Menslink	52	1.1
Womens Information and Referral Line	52	1.1
Carers ACT	51	1.1
CRCC	48	1.1
C@W-FSP	43	0.9
National Mensline	37	0.8
PCYC	37	0.8
SCOPE	36	0.8
Relationships Australia	32	0.7
INANNA	31	0.7
ACT Parent line	30	0.7
Home Safety Assessments (SupportLink)	29	0.6
Reconnect	27	0.6
Canberra Family Support	26	0.6
Woden Community Service Family Support	23	0.5
Lone Fathers Association	22	0.5
Centre for Road Trauma	20	0.4
Marymead Family Support	17	0.4
Northside Community Service HACC	16	0.4
Domestic Animal Services	15	0.3
Northside Community Service Family Support	14	0.3
Gungahlin Regional Community Service Family Support	12	0.3
C@W-HACC	12	0.3
Navigate (YWCA)	9	0.2
National Association of Loss and Grief	9	0.2

Table 11 (continued)

Supporting agency	Issues/referrals (n)	Issues/referrals (%)
BCS	8	0.2
Canberra Family Relationship Centre	7	0.2
Parking Operations	6	0.1
Sids and Kids	4	0.1
Canberra Uni Counselling	4	0.1
GRCS-HACC Case Manager	3	0.1
C@W-Youth	3	0.1
Marymead	3	0.1
Supportlink -Manual	2	0.0
Compassionate Friends	2	0.0
NCSI-FSP	2	0.0
PANDSI	2	0.0
Elder Abuse Prevention Service	1	0.0
Winnunga	1	0.0
Public Advocate	1	0.0
Total number of accepted referrals	4,533	100.0

Source: SupportLink personal communication 2009

were 8,015 victim-related issues received from police. These figures suggest that nearly one in three individuals who were victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory received a referral to SupportLink. This is significantly higher than the national results reflected in the ICVS highlighted earlier where Australia was found to have a 'coverage rate' of just six percent.

SupportLink identified that most (n=1,737) of the referrals were for Home Safety (usually post-burglary clients requesting information on home security), followed by general support and the parenting of young people. Table 10 shows the full breakdown of issues identified by ACT Policing.

It should be noted that due to the MoU in place between DVCS and ACT Policing, and because most referrals to the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre come from the Sexual and Child Abuse Team within ACT Policing, for the most part SupportLink do not provide referrals to these agencies. However, the data provided by SupportLink can be used to estimate that for the approximately 26,000 victims of crime during the 2007–08 financial year, there were approximately 5,800 referrals made to SupportLink.

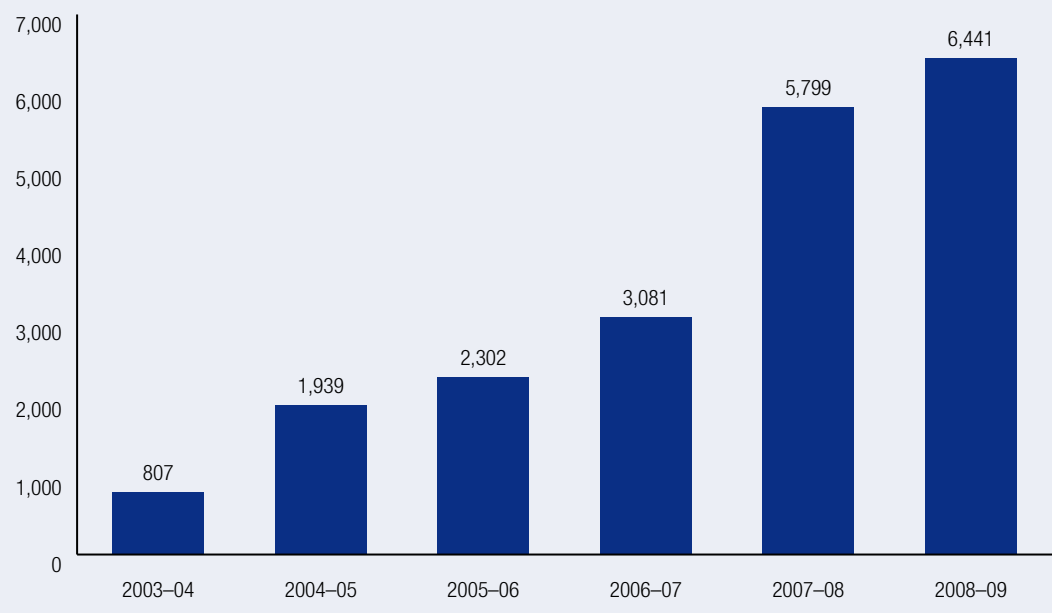
This indicates that close to one in five victims of crime who reported their matter to police agreed to be contacted by SupportLink.

The number of victims who came into contact with SupportLink is presented in Figure 2. The data show that the number of referrals from ACT Policing to SupportLink rose steadily from 2003–04, increasing from fewer than 1,000 referrals to over 6,000 in the 2008–09 financial year. It should be noted that the increase in the numbers of referrals does not reflect an increase in crime rates but rather continued improvement in police performance with regard to the referral of victims to support services.

Further data were provided by SupportLink to establish the extent to which the referrals offered by SupportLink result in a victim actually receiving assistance or support. There were 8,776 referrals made to SupportLink in 2008–09 and approximately half (n=4,533) resulted in an agency being engaged to provide a service. A summary of the accepted referrals by agency is provided in Table 11.

During subsequent communication with SupportLink, further information was provided

Figure 2 Referrals from ACT Policing to SupportLink by financial year



Source: Data provided by SupportLink on request

regarding referrals to victim counseling. Specifically, it was determined that of nearly 400 requests for victims counseling support in 2008-09, more than one-third were seeking generic victims counseling/support services, which they were subsequently offered through Victim Support ACT. A small number sought assistance through other services such as DVCS, Coronial Support and Family Support Programs, while nearly half declined further assistance beyond the initial SupportLink engagement. Reasons for victims declining further assistance included:

- victim's situation becoming settled;
- satisfaction from support given by family and friends;
- preference to not re-engage with the event; and
- needing time to consider follow-up support.

It is important to note that SupportLink provides all clients with a contact number in case they change their mind and decide to pursue further support services or a formal referral.

Online survey of victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory

Representativeness and general demographics

As a component of the research, an anonymous online survey of victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory was undertaken in May and June of 2009. The response rate for the survey was not as high as anticipated, with only 149 valid responses received at the end of the extended survey period. The survey results were not representative of the total population and for this reason, the results cannot be compared with statistics from the previous section.

A greater proportion of women than men completed the online survey (n=84 *cf* n=64; see Table 12). The level of education for those completing the online survey was high, with 85 percent (n=127) of the sample having completed a level of education greater than Year 12.

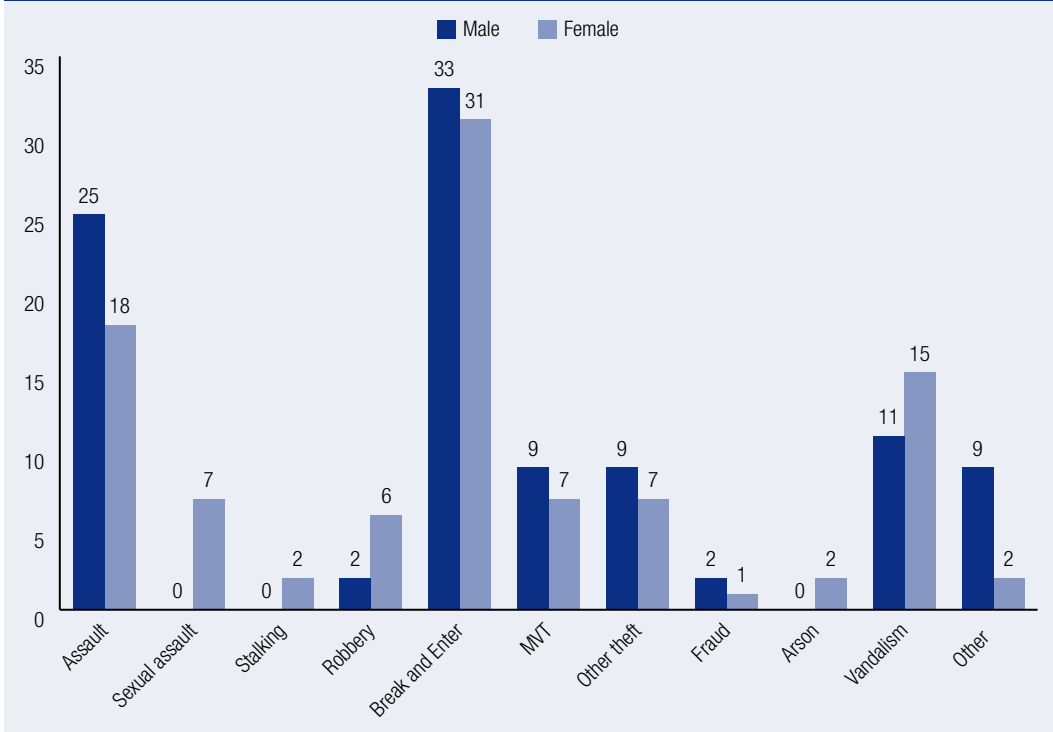
Respondents were most likely to have reported a break and enter (males 33%; females 31%) or an assault (males 25%; females 18%) as the last crime for which they were a victim (see Figure 3).

Table 12 Demographic profile of online victims of crime survey participants

Demographic information	n	%
Male	64	43
Female	84	56
Indigenous persons	2	1
Married/defacto	78	52
Education (Yr 12 or less)	22	15
Employed full-time or part-time	124	83
Total	149	

Source: AIC ACT Victims of Crime Online Survey [computer file]

Figure 3 Last crime that victims reported occurring in the previous two years by gender (%)



a: Respondents could select more than one category and therefore percentages do not total 100

Source: AIC, ACT Victims of Crime Online Survey [computer file]

Victims' experience with police

The majority of respondents (n=128; 86%) indicated that they had reported the last crime they were a victim of to the police.

Of those who did not report their last victimisation experience to police (n=21; 14%), six reported they felt that the police would be unwilling to do anything, four said that someone else reported the crime to police and three reported that there was nothing the police could do. There did not appear to be a link between the seriousness of a crime and the likelihood of reporting.

Respondents indicated a range of reasons for reporting a crime to the police, which were supported by the findings from the 1996 ICVS (Van Dijk, Van Kesteren & Smit 2008). These reasons are outlined in Table 13.

For those involved in either a personal offence (assault, sexual assault, stalking or robbery) or a property offence (break and enter, motor vehicle theft, other theft, fraud, arson or property damage), the most important reason for reporting a crime was *in the hope that offenders will be caught and punished* (see Table 13). Where the most recent offence was a property crime, individuals were significantly more likely to report that the reason for reporting the crime was because *all crimes should be reported, in the hope property would be recovered or so I could claim on insurance*.

In terms of the level of satisfaction with the police response to reported crime, respondents were asked to respond to a series of attitudinal statements. These statements were:

- the police treated me fairly;
- the police were polite and courteous;
- I was updated regularly about police investigations into my matter;

Table 13 Reason for reporting crime to police by broad crime type^a

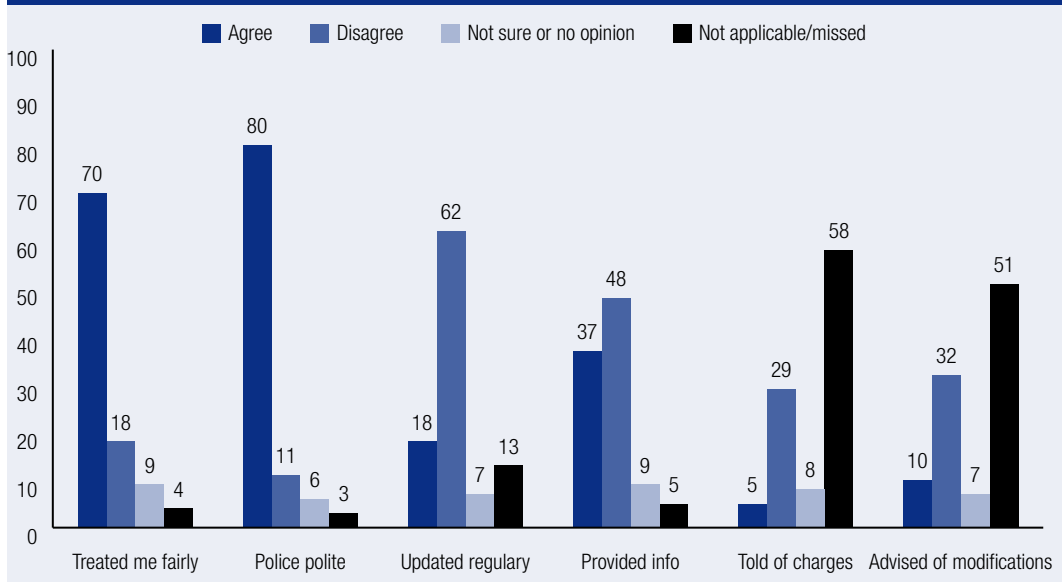
Reason	Crime reported was a personal crime		Crime reported was a property crime	
	n	%	n	%
All crimes should be reported/it is the right thing to do ^b	16	47	66	80
It was a serious/major/upsetting crime	25	74	49	60
In the hope that property would be recovered ^a	9	26	51	62
In the hope that offenders would be caught/punished	26	76	67	82
Needed to so I could claim insurance ^a	5	15	48	59
To satisfy other authorities	4	12	11	13
In the hope of avoiding repetition of crime to me	20	59	56	68
In the hope of avoiding repetition of crime to someone else	22	65	56	68
Needed assistance (eg to get home)	3	9	2	2
Third person reported crime ^a	6	18	1	1
Police were on the spot	3	9	3	4

a: A respondent may have had multiple reasons for reporting a crime to the police

b: Statistical difference exists between groups $p < 0.1$

Note: 7 respondents did not answer this question, 8 respondents' crime could not be defined

Source: AIC, ACT Victims of Crime Online Survey [computer file]

Figure 4 Opinions on police services by victims of crime

Source: AIC, ACT Victims of Crime Online Survey [computer file]

- I was provided with information and/or assistance about crime prevention/personal protection;
- I was told about any modifications made to charges laid against the accused (if applicable); and
- I was told about charges laid against the accused (if applicable).

Respondents were able to answer on a 5-point Likert scale—*strongly agree, agree, no opinion or not sure, disagree, strongly disagree or not applicable*. Generally respondents agreed that the police treated them fairly (70%) and that the police were polite and courteous (80%; see Figure 4). However, most respondents disagreed that police updated them regularly (62%) and almost half of respondents disagreed with the statement that they were provided with information about personal protection or crime prevention. Most respondents did not consider the last two statements to be applicable to them, but of those who did respond, most did not report they were informed about charges laid or informed about modifications made to the charges.

Respondents were also asked about overall levels of satisfaction with police. Responses were divided fairly evenly across the four choices—*very satisfied* (17%), *quite satisfied* (31%), *not very satisfied* (23%) and *not at all satisfied* (26%). For those who indicated they were not at all satisfied, they were much more likely to also report having a low level of satisfaction with the police (74%). This suggests that once a negative opinion of police has developed, it may be difficult to change this perception.

Police and the referral system

All respondents were asked whether police informed them about victim services in the Australian Capital Territory. Nineteen percent of respondents (n=29) reported they had been informed by police about victim services, 67 percent (n=100) said they had not been informed and the remaining respondents either were not sure or did not report the crime to police.

Of the 29 respondents who were informed about victim services, 19 reported that they accepted the referral. Those who did not accept the referral were asked to identify the reason why they did not take up the offer of assistance; the majority of these respondents indicated that they already had good support systems in place, or that they might contact victim services themselves. Other reasons provided for not accepting referrals included comments that they were ‘just not interested’, or that they did not really know about the types of services that could be provided. Further, an additional 14 individuals reported they had accessed victim support services at some point without being referred by police.

Victims’ experiences with victim support services

As mentioned above, 19 respondents accepted the referral from police and came into contact with victim services. It should be noted here that this small number of respondents does not allow for an effective quantitative analysis to be undertaken. Therefore, analysis of the data was conducted qualitatively.

Respondents were asked to identify the length of time between the victim being referred by police and victim services making contact with them. Only two reported that contact occurred within 24 hours, seven reported contact within one to two days, two in three to four days and six in more than 10 days. It should be noted that delays can be due to difficulties in contacting the victim initially but ideally, the length of time between referral and contact should occur within a matter of days. It would be beneficial to undertake a more thorough examination of the length of time between referral and contact, however, given the small sample size of the data provided, this was simply not possible.

For most respondents, the first contact with victim services came in the form of a visit at their home (n=14). Respondents were also asked to identify the type of support they were offered and the type of support they accepted. Interestingly, almost half of respondents answered ‘none/did not want support’ for one of these questions. This indicates that there

is a proportion of people who accept referral but then later decide that they do not require support. Other than ‘none/did not want support’, the most popular categories for the type of support offered were:

- information about being a victim of crime (n=11);
- practical help (n=8);
- help reporting the incident (n=7); and
- help with the criminal justice system (n=7).

The most popular categories for the type of support accepted were:

- practical help (n=7);
- information about being a victim of crime (n=5);
- help reporting the incident (n=5); and
- help with the criminal justice system (n=5).

All respondents were asked about the type of further contact they might want with victim services and the type of support that should be offered. There were 137 responses to this question and respondents were able to provide more than one answer, with the four most common answers being:

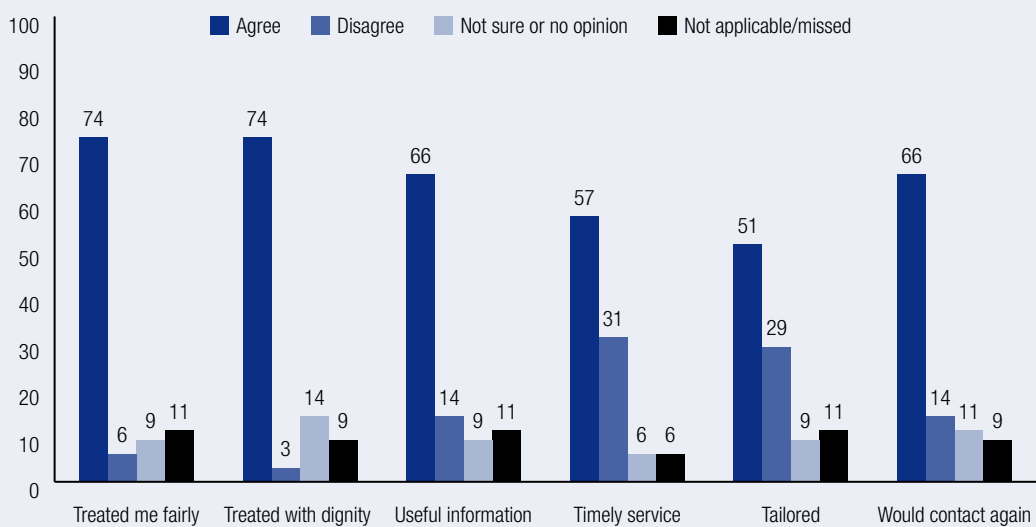
- practical help (45%);
- help with a compensation claim (45%);

- information about being a victim of crime (42%); and
- help with the criminal justice system (41%).

Twenty-three percent of the sample identified ‘counseling/someone to talk to’ as something they would like to be offered if they were to access a victim service in the future. This is worth noting, given that preconceptions of victim support services are often premised on a belief that such services are limited to counselling—yet in this case, it is clear that there is a need for services beyond counselling and that some of these relate to a need for very practical assistance. This is reflected in the findings from the review of international literature, outlined earlier, which indicate that victims require practical support as well as psychological support.

In terms of levels of satisfaction of those who accessed victim services, most respondents reported being *very satisfied* or *quite satisfied* (n=12), with five respondents reporting being *not very satisfied* or *not at all satisfied*. When respondents were asked to identify the reason why they were satisfied with the support provided by victim services, the most common responses were that the victim service listened to them, were

Figure 5 Opinions on victim services by victims of crime (%)



Source: AIC, ACT Victims of Crime Online Survey [computer file]

empathetic, treated clients with respect and were timely. Negative comments related to a belief that the service was overworked (which some considered produced a lack of sensitivity), that they made people feel like a number, or that there was a general lack of services offered.

There were 35 respondents who accessed victim services through a referral by police or via self-referral. These respondents were asked to respond to a series of attitudinal statements and questions about their experiences. The attitudinal statements included:

- the victim service treated me fairly;
- the victim service treated me with dignity and respect;
- the victim service provided me with useful information;
- the victim service provided a timely service;
- the victim service provided me with a service which was tailored to my needs; and
- if I were the victim of crime again, I would contact a victim service for help.

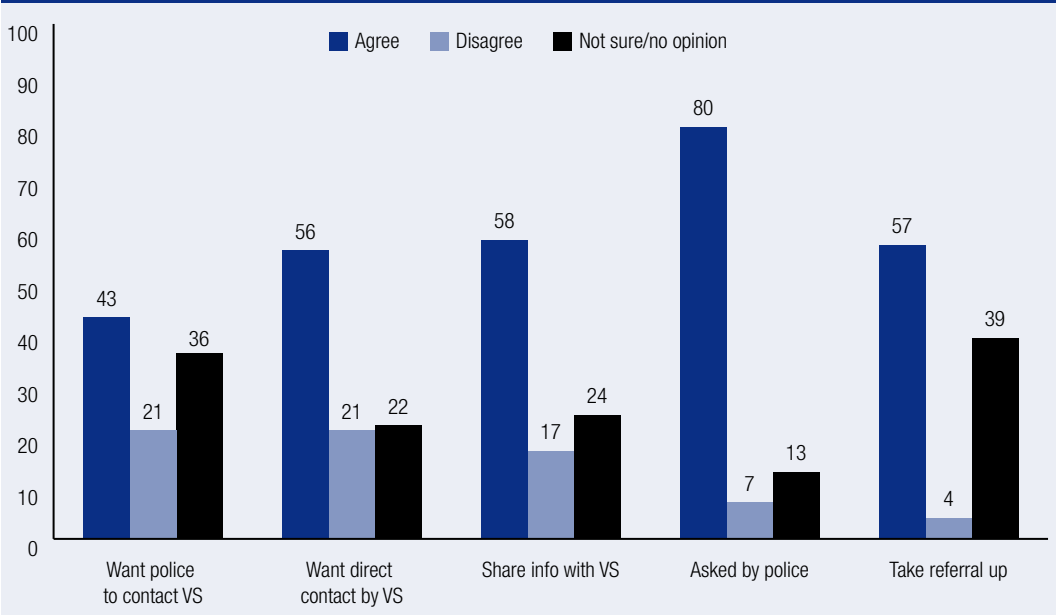
While it is acknowledged that the sample size is small, percentage responses to these questions are presented in Figure 5.

As can be seen in Figure 5, most respondents agreed with the above statements. However, fewer respondents agreed that the victim service provided a timely service or that the service was tailored to the victims' specific needs.

The final question in the survey asked respondents a series of attitudinal questions about the victim referral process generally. These questions were:

- If I were the victim of crime again, I would want the police to contact a victim service on my behalf.
- If I were the victim of crime again, I would like to be contacted directly by victim service after being referred by police.
- I would want the police to share information on my matter with the victim service so that they understood how to help me.
- I would prefer to be asked by a police officer before I was referred to a victim service.
- If I was offered a referral to a victim support service by police, I would take it up.

Figure 6 Opinions from victims of crime of the referral process (%)



Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding. VS=victim services

Source: AIC, ACT Victims of Crime Online Survey [computer file]

The range of responses given to these questions is presented in Figure 6. The response to the fourth statement *I would prefer to be asked by a police officer before I was referred to a victim service* is particularly noteworthy, with 80 percent of respondents indicating that they agreed with this statement.

Conclusion

The online survey produced a number of interesting results, however, the small sample size does not provide a comprehensive representation of the larger victims of crime population. Despite this, it appeared:

- Respondents were generally satisfied with the initial behaviour of police, but were less satisfied with police follow-up of their case.
- Only one in five respondents reported being referred to victim services by police.
- Practical help, information about being a victim of crime and assistance with navigating through the criminal justice system were identified as being the most sought after services requested by victims.
- Most respondents who did have contact with victim services were satisfied with the service provided.
- Eighty percent of victims indicated that they should be asked by police before being referred to a victim support service.



Stakeholder interviews

Interviews were conducted with range of key stakeholders and a list of the agencies consulted is available at *Appendix B*.

Interviews with police

The following section summarises the views of interviewed members of ACT Policing thematically and highlights a number of issues that arose from the interviews.

Differing approaches to referral

Police officers were asked to describe the way they respond to victims of crime when attending an incident and the decision-making process they use to decide whether to refer a victim of crime to support services. They were asked to identify the type of referral mechanisms they employed and whether there were specific policies or guidelines in place when referring victims. Police members were also asked to comment on how successful they considered the referral process to be for victims. Finally, they were asked to identify strengths and weaknesses of the current system and to provide possible suggestions for change.

It became apparent during the course of the interview process that ACT police officers possessed significant discretion in deciding whether to refer a victim of crime to support services. In addition, it was apparent that there was a lack of consistency around who would be offered a referral, in what circumstances they would be offered a referral and how they would be referred. As a consequence of this lack of clarity about the referral process among police officers, victims of similar crimes may experience a variety of different responses. Furthermore, the offer of referral to victim support may be largely dependent on the degree of understanding of the referral process by the police officer attending their incident.

Who to refer?

The referral of victims of crime varied significantly between interviewees, with some indicating that they offered a SupportLink referral to all victims encountered and others indicating that they distributed the *Are You a Victim of Crime?* booklet to most victims encountered. Other interviewees described making a decision on whether to refer a victim based on the way they presented themselves at the time of offence; for example, whether they appeared distressed or vulnerable. In this way, the referral of victims of crime to SupportLink was largely

dependent on a combination of both the behaviour of the victim and the attitudes of the responding police officer. Indeed, some interviewees described the process as 'ad-hoc'.

Almost all of the interviewees indicated that referral was necessary for female victims of crime and they provided examples of attending crimes where victims were female. None of the interviewees provided an example where the victim of crime was male, which may suggest that police officers do not place the same degree of importance on referring male victims of crime as they do female victims. This appeared to be the case for all offence types.

Furthermore, some interviewees were not aware of the breadth of services available to victims and therefore might not refer certain victims of crime or victims of certain types of crime on this basis.

How to refer

The responses given indicated that some interviewees did not understand the various approaches available to them in responding to victims of crime. As noted above, some police members used SupportLink, others handed out the *Are You a Victim of Crime?* booklet and some used a combination of both in referring victims of crime. Concern arose where interviewees reported using SupportLink as their only method of referring victims of crime to support services. This is particularly problematic in cases where a victim declines the offer of a referral to SupportLink and is not provided with the booklet, but later changes their mind about wanting to access services.

It was noted by interviewees that some victims in need of support may not be identified as requiring a referral because they did not display types of behaviour that indicated their need for support at the time of the offence. Yet some only offered victims a SupportLink referral and did not leave them the *Are You a Victim of Crime?* booklet. Conversely, others reported handing out the booklet at almost every job they attended, however, this left the responsibility of approaching a service provider with the victim.

Guidelines

At the time the research was conducted, ACT Policing had two practical guidelines relevant to responding to victims of crime:

- *Practical Guide: Victim Liaison Officer*; and
- *Practical Guide: Victims of Crime*.

Although interviewees were specifically asked if there were any guidelines to assist them with the referral of victims to support services, no police member mentioned either of these guides.

The *Practical Guide: Victims of Crime* only briefly mentions the process of referral of victims from ACT Policing through to support services and this was in the context of what is expected of a VLO, not a case officer. Nowhere in the *Practical Guide* is it clear, except in the case of Family Violence, that police members had the capacity and/or the responsibility to offer victims referral to support agencies.

Police received training on the SupportLink tool but did not receive specific training on victim assessment and referral unless it was for family violence or sexual assault.

Strengths of the current system

Value of SupportLink

All interviewees felt the SupportLink service was a key strength of the victim referral process in the Australian Capital Territory. Police members described the system as being user-friendly and an effective tool. Responses indicated that interviewees were comfortable with the procedure and considered the service to be clear, simple and effective. In addition, it was indicated that the SupportLink team was able to arrange support such as counseling very quickly if required.

General strengths

When asked to describe strengths of the current system, most interviewees focused exclusively on the value of SupportLink. However, other strengths were highlighted and these are outlined below:

- The ability of a police officer to offer victims support, whether it was accepted or not. Police reported that this assisted in building rapport with victims of crime, which is essential to investigations.
- The *Are You a Victim of Crime?* booklet was reported to be a useful tool.
- The VLOs, as a supplementary point of contact for some victims, were considered to be a strength of the referral process.

- Interviewees felt the current referral process had fostered positive relationships with service providers in the sector, such as DVCS, CRCC and Victim Support ACT.

Weaknesses of the current system

Interviewees were also asked to consider if the current referral system had any weaknesses. It was noted that there appeared to be a number of services available to assist victims of serious crimes (eg sexual offences and serious assault) but there were few services available for crimes such as burglary or other property offences. Several police officers referred to a scheme in operation some years ago—the Community Liaison Advisory Safety Project—that was specifically designed for victims of burglary, but interviewees were generally unsure about whether it was still offered or what the service actually entailed.

No interviewee identified the program that was available for victims of burglary at the time of data collection—the Home Safety Program, sponsored by the ACT Government and NRMA Insurance. While only a small number of police officers were interviewed and this cannot be considered a representative sample, those who are not aware of the range of services available to victims are going to be less likely to offer such referrals.

Concerns were raised in relation to offence types where there was no firm guidance as to the referral process, with the example that victims of common assault (as opposed to sexual assault or assault covered by family violence legislation) might be overlooked. This was considered to be particularly relevant for victims who are under the influence of alcohol at the time of the assault. These individuals are usually not offered support at the time of the offence, as they are intoxicated, but may require support after they sober up.

It was suggested by several interviewees that the current levels of feedback from victims on their experience with support services is inadequate. There does appear to be a mechanism within SupportLink for feedback to be given, however, not all of those interviewed seemed aware of its existence and those who were suggested it was rarely used.

Victims who do not receive referrals or access services

Most police officers interviewed indicated that they felt there were some victims in the community who police were in contact with and who might be in need of support, but who did not receive referrals. A number of reasons were presented for this, including:

- A victim may not appear to be emotional or traumatised at the time when police are in attendance, which may result in a referral not being offered. Any victim who has a subsequent reaction to being a victim of crime would then have to seek out victim services themselves rather than being contacted directly by the service.
- Police officers interviewed made the observation that an individual has to accept help—it cannot be forced on them. All interviewees had experienced situations where a victim was visibly upset but refused an offer of support. Reasons for refusal by victims varied, with some police members noting the person had a strong network of family or friends, had a previous negative encounter with a victim support service, or was simply adamant they did not want to be contacted by a support service.
- The workload of case officers and VLOs was identified as an issue. One senior police officer made the point that victims of the most serious crimes were given priority, both by case officers and by VLOs.
- Police officers interviewed suggested that services for victims of volume property offences such as burglary or car theft are limited. While it was acknowledged that many victims of these crimes simply want a police report for insurance matters, it seems likely there are victims of these crimes who are traumatised by their experience but have few services available to them.
- Men are less likely to accept help than women, but are more likely to be the victim of crime. Police officers appeared less likely to discuss victims of crime as being male and it can be hypothesised that they are also less likely to be offered support services.

The use of Domestic Violence Crisis Services in family violence/ domestic violence cases

Almost all police members interviewed were aware and able to describe the ACT Policing MoU with DVCS, which ensures all victims of family violence are offered the services of DVCS at the point of contact with the police. The majority of the feedback on DVCS provided by the police interviewees was positive.

Police officers interviewed did not generally comment on whether they believed DVCS had a positive impact on victims. In some interviews, it was indicated that there was a negative perception among police of the value of DVCS to victims and that some police saw mandatory referral as an obligation that they must fulfill, rather than seeing DVCS as making a significant difference to the victim. It was also felt by some interviewees that occasionally DVCS could get in the way of the criminal justice system by giving advice to victims, such as that they do not have to proceed with matters. However, notwithstanding these comments, interviewees felt the current system in place with DVCS was working well and they made no recommendations for changes to that system.

The role of Victim Liaison Officers within ACT Policing

The role of a VLO with ACT Policing is varied, but is mainly focused on assisting victims to provide victim impact statements, providing advice to both victims and case officers about victim-specific legislation and contacting victims on behalf of the case officer to offer support if, for example, they have refused the offer of SupportLink.

At the time of the research the role of the VLO, as specified in ACT Policing's *Practical Guide to VLOs*, was to:

- a) support members in meeting their obligations to victims of crime;
- b) provide a supplementary contact point for victims of crime;
- c) provide supplementary support to victims of crime;

- d) promote initiatives aimed at developing best practice models to support victims of crime;
- e) provide policy advice about issues that affect victims of crime;
- f) maintain client records;
- g) comply with the AFP/DPP Protocol on Victim Support as to the treatment of victims of crime; and
- h) interact effectively with other agencies as necessary (ACT Policing personal communication 2012).

The staffing levels of VLOs were identified as an area of concern both by police officers generally and the VLOs themselves. VLOs indicated that they had a priority system in place to manage the high volume of work, yet it was also indicated that most case officers are not using VLOs to their full capacity. In fact, a recent policy change has mandated that VLOs in some work areas liaise with case officers in person to encourage the utilisation of the full range of services available. However, given the high volume of work that VLOs are managing, it is unlikely that they would be able to keep up with demand at current staffing levels if case officers were to take full advantage of the services provided.

Feedback gathered from VLOs indicated that they felt their roles were reactive rather than proactive and this was attributed to the limited availability of staff. VLOs were concerned that low staffing would mean that victims in need of services would not receive adequate assistance, or any assistance at all. Yet the VLOs interviewed indicated that those in the role of VLO were genuinely concerned with the welfare of victims and they provided victims of crime with the support and assistance they require.

It is clear that the role of the VLO within ACT Policing is a positive one that is highly valued by members of the service. However, the service that VLOs are able to provide is hampered by the current low levels of staffing. Since the research was conducted a new *Practical Guide to Victims of Crime* was developed and the role of VLOs was divided into two portfolios.

VLOs within Crime Prevention are responsible for providing support to patrol members while VLOs within Criminal Investigations are responsible for supporting victims of serious crime (ACT Policing personal communication September 2012).

Consent issues

All police officers interviewed were aware that victims were required to provide consent for their details to be passed onto a victim referral service. All interviewees were asked to discuss their reaction to a hypothetical change to legislation whereby it would become mandatory to refer all victims to victim support services, potentially without the victim's consent. The level of detail given by police members in responding to this question differed greatly; however, almost all interviewees considered that the removal of the need to ask for consent before referring victims to a support service was negative and a potentially damaging position for the police. Interviewees indicated that consent was necessary as it ensured victims felt respected and that their right to privacy was maintained.

Issues specific to ACT criminal investigations

The Territory Investigations Group (TIG) within ACT Criminal Investigations is responsible for investigating serious crime in the Australian Capital Territory. Any sexual assault, death, or serious assault is immediately referred from the attending police officer to TIG. In this way, victims of crime referred to TIG are frequently those with the highest needs.

Although not within the scope of this report, it was noted that on occasion, some police officers in TIG had trouble complying with their obligations under the *Victims of Crime Act 1994*, which requires them to keep victims informed of police investigations at monthly intervals and to keep victims informed of the outcomes to any criminal proceedings. Interviewees indicated that the difficulty in meeting the requirements of the Act develops once the matter reaches court, where the case officer must rely on information from the DPP. Sometimes, they reported, it is the case that information is not passed on in a timely manner from the DPP to the case officer. For example, the case officer may not be informed of a bail application made by the alleged offender. In these circumstances, it is the case officer's obligation under the legislation to keep the victim informed, a process that is reliant upon the timely exchange of information between the DPP and the police.

Broader issues

The value of victim support services to police

More broadly, it was identified by several interviewees that while there is a heavy burden placed on the police to refer the appropriate victims to the appropriate services, no formal feedback process exists. That is, police do not receive any systematic feedback from the victim on the level or quality of support provided by the victim support service. The point was made that the victim support sector needs to demonstrate to police how they add value to the business of policing. Some police officers interviewed saw the process of referral as an obligation rather than a process that helps the victim. In order for the victim referral process to have the most value, police need confidence that the agencies they refer victims to provide high quality service.

Victim support services and the criminal justice system

The question of whether victim support services could or should be considered part of the broader criminal justice system is an important one. Ultimately, the purpose of the criminal justice system is to bring those who break society's laws to justice, that is, to prosecute crime. It is unclear whether victim support services might be able to play a more formal role in this process. In the United States, for example, the majority of victim and witness assistance programs operate within government agencies, with a close association to the criminal justice system (Roberts 1990). This is by contrast with independent, volunteer-run support programs.

One difficulty with this position was raised during interview. Namely, it was contended that if victim support services were to play a more formal role in the criminal justice system, they would not only have to advocate on behalf of the victim, but also on behalf of the criminal justice system. For example, to play a more formal role in the criminal justice process, it could be considered inappropriate for a victim service to recommend to a victim they do not proceed with giving evidence against the accused.

If victim support services were to play a more formal role in the criminal justice system, this would need

to be considered in the context of the *Victims of Crime Act 1994*, which at the time the research was conducted, was under review. For example, the role of the case officer was described in some interviews as being primarily concerned with cultivating a close relationship with the victim, as this would increase the level of cooperation from the victim at the time of a trial. Under the Act, the case officer has a series of legislated obligations to the victim, such as sharing information about the progress of their case. By developing a close relationship, the case officer is able to monitor and regulate the flow of information to the victim. However, where an advocate is involved, the case officer may lose control of the information the victim receives. Therefore, a reasonable question for police to ask (which involves legal advice beyond the scope of this study) would be whether police obligations under the *Victims of Crime Act 1994* would lessen if victim services became involved in the criminal justice process in a more formal way.

Conclusion

In summary, the interviews indicated that police were generally comfortable with the referral process. Key points derived from the interviews were:

- With the exception of domestic violence/family violence matters and child protection matters, police reported having total discretion with regard to when and how to refer a victim to support services. It was clear that the likelihood of a victim being referred to support services was therefore largely dependent on the police member attending the incident.
- At the time of data collection, ACT Policing did not have a specific manual or guideline to assist police with decision making in the victim referral process.
- Police officers interviewed requested that they be provided with additional information regarding the range of services available for victims of crime and the positive outcomes achieved by these services.
- VLOs play an important role in ACT Policing, but the number of VLOs were reported to be insufficient to meet the demand for their services.

- Officers from ACT Policing were firm in their views that the process of requiring the victim's consent prior to referring to support services should remain unchanged.

Interviews with government and non-government agency stakeholders (non-police)

As discussed earlier, interviews were conducted with a range of stakeholders, including representatives from the larger victim support agencies and government agencies involved in the referral system (see *Appendix B* for list of agencies interviewed).

Strengths of the current system

Most agencies appeared happy with the current process of victim referral. As the Australian Capital Territory is a small jurisdiction, close contact can be maintained between service providers, the police, other relevant government agencies and the court system. While there may be room for improvement, it would appear that the Australian Capital Territory is a national leader in terms of having a supportive police service and integrated IT system supporting referrals of victims from police to victim services.

Stakeholders interviewed were asked to identify strengths of the current system and these are summarised below.

SupportLink

SupportLink is contracted by ACT Policing to deliver an electronic referral (e-referral) framework and coordination services for victims who require additional support, as referred by police. SupportLink was identified as a strength of the current referral process by several agencies. Interviews conducted with both ACT Policing and service agencies indicated that the SupportLink model of 'e-referral' system was operating well.

Overall, the SupportLink system appeared to be working very effectively in the Australian Capital

Territory. Discussions with some other Australian jurisdictions indicated that difficulties often arose in relation to multifaceted and multi-agency support networks, where it can often be difficult to provide a coordinated service. It was considered that one of the strengths of the ACT victim referral system is the 'one desk' approach, whereby a single agency manages the referral process from police through to support services. It was further identified that some jurisdictions rely solely on police giving victims a phone number they can contact, whereas other systems are paper-based.

Support available to victims of sexual assault

Interviews with stakeholders indicated that a high level of support was being provided to victims of sexual assault in the Australian Capital Territory. The CRCC received referrals from a range of sources including self-referrals, community organisation referrals, the DPP, government agencies, SupportLink and general duties police officers (both through SupportLink and through other mechanisms). In addition to a focus on female victims of sexual assault, the CRCC operates Service Assisting Male Survivors of Sexual Assault. This service has been in operation for 11 years and provides assistance to male survivors of sexual assault, as well as their partners, family and friends. The service also operates the Nguru program, which provides culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients.

Interviews highlighted a close and effective working relationship between ACT Policing and CRCC. Protocols have been established between ACT Policing and CRCC, which were seen to be particularly useful. The top-down directive from police to refer victims to CRCC appeared to be working effectively. A protocol arrangement between the Sexual and Child Abuse Team at ACT Policing and CRCC means that CRCC is contacted by police when they come into contact with a suspected victim of rape or sexual assault. CRCC staff (often a counsellor) then attend the police station in order to provide immediate assistance and support to the victim.

The interviews drew attention to the importance of the 'wrap-around' service delivery approach provided to victims by police, Forensic and Medical Sexual Assault Care and CRCC, with the three agencies convening at the victim's location and providing collaborative support. This was reported to function well as victims were provided with multiple points of contact. In addition, the CRCC was holding monthly meetings with the police and Victim Support ACT, where they determined whether victims of sexual offences were receiving appropriate support. As part of this process, all victims discussed in the meeting had to give their consent for their names to be raised. Therefore, contact did not just occur at the initial event, but at subsequent meetings involving key agencies who were part of the referral and service delivery. This ensured systems were in place to make sure the victim received appropriate support.

Support available to victims of family violence

DVCS have an MoU in place with ACT Policing that stipulates that victims of family violence must be offered the services of DVCS by the attending general duties police officer. Interviews with stakeholders suggested that this process has improved the outcomes for victims of family violence.

In addition to the MoU, DVCS and ACT Policing introduced the Family Violence Incident Review (FVIR) in February 2009 to address the issue of cases not being identified as family violence early in the process. At FVIR meetings, the family violence Sergeant and the DVCS Case Coordinator review all family violence incidents police attended, in order to determine whether DVCS were contacted and if they were not contacted, examine the reasons for this. In the event that contact was not initially made between a victim and DVCS, based upon a review of the case information, DVCS may decide to contact the victim directly to ascertain whether they require support. In general, if the individual is already known to DVCS, they will follow up the matter, but if the individual is not known, follow up does not always occur. Stakeholders interviewed indicated that the FVIR had a positive impact as it increased the levels of police accountability and ensured police adhere to the protocols agreed upon by the two agencies.

Weaknesses of the current system

Support for victims of specific offence types

With the assistance of a number of powerful victims' advocates, the family violence and sexual assault interventions in the Australian Capital Territory have undergone significant transformation. Family violence and sexual assault legislative reforms have contributed to the professionalisation of the victim support network. Ideally, these positive transformations should be used as leverage to improve the provision of service to victims of other types of crime.

While it is clear that victims of sexual assault, family violence, and the friends and families of homicide victims are provided with a comprehensive support network in the Australian Capital Territory, it was identified by more than one agency, as well as by police, that support services for other victims of crime may not be as extensive. In particular, victims of the following crimes were mentioned by one or more of the agencies interviewed as potentially being overlooked by the current support systems:

- aggravated robbery;
- burglary;
- non-family violence related stalking and victims of cyber/text stalking; and
- families of victims of road fatalities.

Interestingly, police advised that support services like SupportLink are involved with assisting families of victims of road fatalities at the earliest opportunity, often attending when the police inform the family members of the death.

Reliance on police for victim referral

It is acknowledged that many crimes do not get reported to police. Even if all victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory who reported to police were offered a referral to victim services (and interviews conducted with stakeholders, including police, demonstrated they are not), given that significant numbers of crime are not reported, there is potentially a large group of victims who are not aware of victim services. It is important that the ACT community is aware of the support available to victims, even if they don't report their crime to police. Although beyond the scope of this project

(therefore, no formal recommendation will be made), it is considered important that Victim Support ACT review its advertising campaign with a view to ensuring victims of crime who do not report to police are aware of government-funded services available to members of the ACT community.

Specific issues

Crossover between Witness Assistants, VLOs and DVCS/CRCC counsellors

Examination of the system of victim service provision in the Australian Capital Territory suggested a need for a more streamlined process to avoid any overlap between Witness Assistants, VLOs and counsellors or other support staff provided by victim services. Several agencies observed that it was not always clear who was providing the support to the victim (where support was being provided) and what exactly the support involved.

DPP Witness Assistants are able to provide support to vulnerable victims who are involved in criminal proceedings. This service is designed to help victims with the court process and to ensure that they receive the support and services that they need. The primary focus of a Witness Assistant is to support vulnerable victims such as children, aged persons, people with disabilities or illness, families of deceased persons, victims of sexual offences and significantly traumatised people to give evidence in criminal proceedings. Family violence victims are also assisted if they are reluctant to participate as witnesses in criminal proceedings. The role of the Witness Assistant is to:

- assist witnesses both prior to and during court process;
- liaise with prosecutors and outside agencies;
- assist witnesses/victims to prepare Victim Impact Statements; and
- train police officers/court staff/advocacy groups.

It can be seen that there is potential overlap between the roles of the VLOs and Witness Assistants, as well as the role of a professional counselor in the criminal justice process.

It was suggested that there should be a process to develop a system where the victim nominates the case coordinator or staff that they would prefer to be

involved with—the CRCC or DVCS counselor, Victim Support ACT caseworker, Witness Assistant, or VLO. Providing the agencies are able to collaborate and communicate, this would ensure that the level of support provided to victims is appropriate and would prevent potential for overlap between various agencies involved.

Improvement of information exchange between agencies

A number of agencies cited that a more efficient information exchange between agencies would improve the outcomes for victims. Several examples of this were given that broadly fall into two categories—first, improvements in the communication between police and service agencies, and second, better communication between agencies involved with the same victim. It was acknowledged that this occurs best for family violence and sexual assault cases where a case-tracking model is in use.

There were few suggestions provided by stakeholders as to how improving information exchange might occur or exactly what information needed to be exchanged. It was a clear view that case tracking is highly resource intensive and as a result, should only be used for the most serious cases. Yet it was also clear that an improvement of information flow between agencies is needed. Therefore, it is recommended that victim support agencies, the DPP and ACT Policing conduct regular meetings to discuss (and monitor) the particular information that should be exchanged and the various ways to facilitate this exchange in the least resource-intensive manner.

Another associated issue that was raised by stakeholders relates to the need for agencies to provide a ‘seamless’ service for clients. Where multiple agencies are involved in providing support to a victim, having to recount their experience to each of the agencies can be traumatic. Furthermore, it is important that the public and other support agencies understand the role that each agency plays in providing support.

Decision making relating to agencies selected for referral

It is important to note that during interviews, one community-based victim support agency expressed concern relating to the decision making surrounding which agencies receive referrals through Supportlink. Feedback provided by the agency indicated that at the time they were interviewed, they were unhappy with the process for referral of victims from ACT Policing to victim support systems.

This suggests a need for clarity around the referral process and in particular, how agencies are selected as the most appropriate service to which a victim should be referred.

Clients of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

There appeared to be some discrepancies between agencies as to their view of whether victims of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds were being appropriately supported in the Australian Capital Territory. One agency specifically noted that the referral of CALD clients appeared to be working very well, whereas another agency commented they received very few CALD referrals.

The differing views between agencies means it is difficult to make a recommendation about the referral process for this particular group. Further assessment and/or research should be conducted on this issue, with the participation of Victim Support ACT.

Conclusion

From the interviews conducted with stakeholders, nine key issues were identified as requiring further attention. These are summarised below:

- There was a lack of consistency surrounding how police communicate information to victims of crime.

- There were no ACT Policing guidelines outlining when it is appropriate to offer a referral to victim support services.
- Men were more likely to be a victim of crime than women, however, they were less likely to seek help and possibly be offered help.
- VLOs have limited resources and this impacted the work they were able to undertake.
- The feedback mechanisms from victim support services in the Australian Capital Territory to ACT Policing were weak.
- The needs of victims of robbery, burglary, non-family violence stalking and cyber-crimes, and families of victims of road fatalities were not well understood and their needs may not be met by the existing victim support services.
- There was sometimes confusion about which agency was the case coordinator in the cases of victims of serious crime.
- Information exchange between the DPP, victim support agencies and ACT Policing was identified as being a weakness that should be explored further.
- There was a lack of understanding at the community level about the services that each agency could provide.

A more detailed analysis of these issues is presented in the following section.



Discussion of key issues and policy recommendations

A number of issues relating to the ACT victims of crime referral and support mechanisms were identified through interviews with stakeholders. While these were mentioned above, this section presents each of the issues and discusses them in further detail, highlighting possible policy options and performance indicators for each option where applicable.

How police communicate information to victims of crime

There is an apparent lack of consistency regarding the information that is passed on to victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory. The AFP currently produces a booklet titled *Are You a Victim of Crime?* This booklet is small, easily accessible and provides a good range of information for victims, including a detailed list of contact numbers for support services. At the time the research was conducted, this booklet was being updated by the Crime Prevention Unit of ACT Policing.

While the booklet is believed to be a useful reference tool for victims, questions arise as to whether the booklet is appreciated and fully understood by those who receive it, particularly those with vulnerabilities, such as people with intellectual disabilities and/or victims who are mentally ill. It would be beneficial for the contents of the booklet to be reviewed by a sample of victims. As part of the review process, it would also be important to gain the input of Victim Support ACT, DVCS and CRCC to comment on the content of the booklet. Finally, to improve the booklets accessibility, an electronic copy should be made available on the internet.

Once the contents of the booklet have been reviewed, ACT Policing should consider instructing police members to hand the booklet out to every victim of crime they come in contact with. In this way, if a victim is offered referral and declines, or if referral is not offered, the victim will still have access to information about victim services on hand if they wish to make contact at a later stage.

In terms of performance indicators, if an appropriate number of booklets were printed each year, the proportion of books to go into the community would be the best indicator of the extent to which the booklets were being handed out.

ACT Policing guidelines for referral to victim support services

ACT Policing should consider establishing guidelines outlining when it is appropriate for police officers to offer a referral through SupportLink to victim support services. It is also recommended that ACT Policing initiate training on these guidelines. Below are several policy options:

- ACT Policing encourage police members to refer all victims of crime, regardless of the severity of the offence or the reaction of the victim. Where a victim refuses referral, they should be left with the *Are You a Victim of Crime?* booklet.
- ACT Policing develop and implement guidelines that establish a triage system linked to the more severe crimes for active referrals and those that have been followed up. Given that victim support services have a finite budget and capacity to respond, this may be a means of ensuring that those most in need are offered assistance.
- ACT Policing undertake a police education campaign to increase the likelihood of referrals being offered to victims, as well as develop referral tools to promote greater consistency in the referral process.

This set of guidelines should go some way to addressing the stereotyping of victims and the assumptions that arise when associating a victim's reaction with their need for support services. It can be seen that within the current referral process, signs of emotional distress are linked with need for support, such that victims who do not display the typical symptoms of victimisation may not be offered a referral to support.

In theory, a referral should be offered to all victims of crime. Given that it is not always practical or welcome, it is recommended that at the least, victims should be left with the *Are You a Victim of Crime?* booklet. In addition to this, key groups should be targeted for referrals, including victims of sexual assault and domestic violence.

Finally, in terms of performance assessment, the most obvious indicators are the number of victims who accept a referral, as well as service coverage.

However, it is also important to include indicators linked to service quality, such as indicators that assess victim satisfaction and whether positive outcomes were achieved. Further, it is important to determine whether the support services provided met the needs of the people receiving them and whether they helped victims deal with the effects of victimisation.

Males victims seeking assistance

Men, particularly those under 30 years of age, are more likely than any other group in the Australian Capital Territory to become a victim of crime. However, men are less likely than women to self-identify as a victim of crime and therefore are less likely to display aspects of vulnerability described by police members as being a trigger for referral to victim services.

The introduction of a set of guidelines, as suggested above, will assist with this issue. It is important that where possible, victims of similar crimes receive a similar level of service from ACT Policing regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, or apparent levels of trauma. Furthermore, it cannot be assumed that all men will react in the same way to an offer of a referral or access to services.

Limited resources of Victim Liaison Officers

The services provided by the ACT Policing VLOs are valued by police, however, VLOs and other policing staff indicated that they felt that the area was understaffed. ACT Policing's practical guides for VLOs and victims make it clear VLO's should have a proactive, clear place in the criminal justice process, yet the current staffing levels prevent this and limit VLOs to a reactive role. This inhibits the ability of VLOs to educate other policing staff about the needs of victims.

It is understood by the authors that the Crime Prevention Unit of ACT Policing has already identified this as an issue and has allowed for additional VLOs

within the Crime Prevention Unit. This is a positive initiative and will assist in gaining better outcomes for victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory.

Feedback mechanisms from victim support services to ACT Policing

Ongoing feedback from victim services to police with regard to consumer/client feedback on the services provided by victim services will help enhance police understanding of the positive benefits of the involvement of victims with victim's services. While the authors understand that SupportLink has a feedback mechanism, interviews with police members indicate the mechanism is not well understood or well used by police. In addition, at a higher more strategic level, there is no feedback to ACT Policing on the overall experiences of victims who use victims support services in the Australian Capital Territory. It is suggested that strategic feedback be sought and provided to police from SupportLink and that ACT Policing and Victim Support ACT give consideration to the conduct of a roundtable to identify how the experiences of victims post-referral could be fed back to ACT Policing for dissemination to police officers and the executive.

As part of this process, a review of SupportLink is encouraged. While the feedback on SupportLink has been positive, SupportLink is a pivotal link between ACT Policing and victim support services, and it is important to determine formally whether the service is functioning well.

Needs of victims

Victims of violent and traumatic crimes such as robbery and assault, and the families of road fatalities were identified by both police and victim services as being victims who may not receive referrals or access services. The victim support system in the Australian Capital Territory is primarily focused on assisting victims of family violence and sexual assault in particular. Due to the traumatic nature of family violence and sexual assault, much

work has been done in examining the needs of this group of victims, who are predominantly women. This work is necessary and that these victims are so well catered for was identified as a strength of the system.

However, the needs of victims of other crimes, especially those listed above, are not as well understood. For example, in the course of this research, it emerged that it is not well understood that families of road fatalities could be referred for support by ACT Policing under existing arrangements. It is recommended that Victim Support ACT examine the needs of victims of robbery, burglary, non-family violence stalking and cyber-crimes, and families of victims of road fatalities, with a view to better understanding the needs of these victims, and expanding and targeting services for them.

Case coordination

There are cases where victims, usually of a serious crime, are dealing with several professional support agencies at one time. For example, a victim of sexual assault whose case goes to court may be provided with the services of an ACT Policing VLO, a court witness assistant, a support person from CRCC as well as their own personal support network. Where this is the case, it is in the best interest of the victim that one agency takes the lead role in organising the support network for the victim.

The decision about which agency should take the lead role is beyond the scope of this report, as this will differ depending on the case, the victim's preferences and existing workloads of the agencies involved. However, it is recommended that where it is likely a victim is going to be offered access to a range of support options for the criminal justice process, protocols should be established to enable the victim to make a clear choice of which agency should be the point of contact. The victim's choice in this decision-making process is supported. However, this change may require legal discussion, since some of the professionals assisting victims may have special duties to the criminal justice system under law, while others have only duties to the client victim.

Information exchange

It was identified by both ACT Policing and victim support agencies that the process of obtaining information on current cases with the DPP can be difficult. For example, one interviewee mentioned a family violence case where the victim was not informed that the offender had been released on bail as the courts had not notified police. This caused serious trauma to the victim.

As the DPP is not a partner-funding organisation, this issue to be an issue outside the scope of this project. However, as it is legislated that victims are given certain information about the status of their case in the Australian Capital Territory and in the general interests of victims and victim support agencies, it is recommended that the DPP, ACT Policing and victim service representatives conduct a roundtable to discuss improved information exchange, including specific information sharing requirements and the means of enhancing the process of information exchange.

Community level understanding

There are many different agencies that provide services to victims in the Australian Capital Territory. Some agencies are specialist agencies (eg DVCS and CRCC) and some are generalist (eg Victim Support ACT). There is also a level of crossover between the services that each agency can provide—for example, most are able to provide counselling services. However, the difference between services that each agency is able to provide does not appear to be well understood within the community.

It is recommended that Victim Support ACT review information on the most effective ways to communicate with the community, with a view to undertaking a multi-stage advertising campaign on behalf of the victim support agencies in the Australian Capital Territory. Obviously, the cost implications will vary according to the scope of the campaign, but at a minimum, it is suggested that information materials be produced, including web-based items and an updated pamphlet/

booklet outlining each victim support service and the assistance they provide. This pamphlet should be produced in consultation with all service providers. While some information about support services is provided in the *Are You a Victim of Crime?* booklet handed out by some police, the service provider's pamphlet/booklet will contain more comprehensive information. The pamphlet/booklet should be placed at all ACT Government Shopfronts, ACT hospitals, police stations and other public places. Copies should also be made available to ACT Policing to assist them when they offer referral (possibly to be handed out with the *Are You a Victim of Crime?* booklet).

In addition to the pamphlet/booklet and depending on available funds, running a radio and television advertising campaign, or possibly an expanded web-based program (ie YouTube and blog items) could be considered. Items should be short and simple, and highlight that if individuals are a victim of crime in the Australian Capital Territory, there are a range of services they can access free of charge (eg counselling and support, and help with negotiating the criminal justice system).

In terms of performance measurement, a community survey could be undertaken prior to and following the campaign to measure the impact of any change in community knowledge. It is recognised that extra funding would be required to run this sort of campaign, which may cause limitations, yet it is recommended that any funding applications include an allocated amount for such an evaluation.

Conclusion

The findings of the research were presented to Victim Support ACT and ACT Policing in late 2009, providing a number of policy-focused recommendations to enhance the experiences of victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory.

A range of data were analysed in order to assess the experiences of victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory, including data provided by ACT Policing and ACT victim support services, results from a survey of victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory and interviews with a range of stakeholders.

The findings suggested that the current victim referral process by police in the Australian Capital Territory had evolved to become a collaborative cross-agency operation that was well received by many victims. While international research suggests that Australia has a very low rate of victims who access victim services when compared with other developed countries, analysis of ACT statistics demonstrate that the number of referrals made in the Australian Capital Territory was significantly higher than the national rate outlined in the literature.

During 2007–08, there were approximately 19,500 crimes reported in the Australian Capital Territory where the victim was an individual (ie the victim was not the Crown or an organisation). During the same period, there were just under 6,000 documented referrals made through ACT Policing's victim referral system, SupportLink. This suggests that almost one in three victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory were referred. This can be contrasted with Australia's national coverage rate of just six percent (Van Dijk, Van Kesteren & Smit 2008). Yet it is important to recognise that for two in three crimes that are reported in the Australian Capital Territory, victims did not receive assistance through formal victim support mechanisms.

Analysis of results from the survey of victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory indicated that respondents felt that police treated them fairly, but some were unhappy with the lack of communication following the reporting of a crime. A significant number of respondents indicated that they were not informed by police about victim support services in the Australian Capital Territory and of those who were offered a referral to SupportLink and accepted, some were only contacted 10 days or more after reporting the crime to police.

Interviews with stakeholders indicated that there was no comprehensive framework to guide police on when to refer an individual to victim support services. Findings from this research suggested that service responses should be expanded to cater for a variety of diverse and long-term needs of victims, particularly services that address victims' practical needs. It is suggested that the establishment of

clear guidelines to assist police with referring victims of crime could address who should be referred to services, as well as when they should be referred.

Linked to this was the need to enhance the understanding of the needs of victims of certain types of crime who were typically not well understood and whose needs were not necessarily met by the current victim support services available in 2009. Examples of such individuals included victims of robbery, burglary, non-family violence stalking and cyber-crimes, as well as families of victims of road fatalities.

In addition, there was a clear need to enhance communication strategies between agencies, victims of crime and the community more broadly. Specifically, enhanced interagency communication would help in ensuring victims received a wraparound service, that they remained informed and that they would know which agency to contact if they needed assistance. In addition, communities need to be aware of the services that are available to victims of crime so that individuals are able to access services even where a referral does not occur. Mechanisms for feedback from victim support services to police relating to victims' experiences of referral processes and accessing services could assist police in understanding the importance of the referral process.

Finally, a series of policy-focused recommendations associated with key issues identified through the research were noted, including:

- The contents of the *Are You a Victim of Crime?* booklet should be reviewed by a sample of victims and an electronic copy should be made available on the internet to improve accessibility.
- ACT Policing should consider instructing police officers to hand the booklet out to every victim of crime they come in contact with.
- ACT Policing should consider establishing guidelines outlining who should be offered a referral and when it is appropriate for police officers to offer a victim a referral through SupportLink. ACT Policing should initiate training on these guidelines.

- Data related to victims' acceptance of offers of referral by the police should be collected in order to assist in understanding the experiences of victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory.
- It is suggested that strategic feedback be sought and provided to police from SupportLink, and that ACT Policing and Victim Support ACT give consideration to the conduct of a roundtable to identify how the experiences of victims post-referral could be fed back to ACT Policing for dissemination to police officers and the executive.
- A formal review of Supportlink is recommended.
- It is recommended that Victim Support ACT examine the needs of victims of robbery, burglary, non-family violence stalking and cyber-crimes, and families of victims of road fatalities, with a view to better understanding the needs of these victims and expanding and targeted services for them.
- Where it is likely that a victim is going to be offered access to a range of support options for the criminal justice process, protocols should be established to enable the victim to make a clear choice of which agency should be the point of contact.
- It is recommended that the DPP, ACT Policing and victim service representatives conduct a roundtable to discuss improved information exchange and specific information requirements to ensure victims are well supported.
- It is recommended that Victim Support ACT review information on the most effective ways to communicate with the community, with a view to undertaking a multi-stage advertising campaign on behalf of the victim support agencies in the Australian Capital Territory. This will assist the ACT community in understanding the services that various agencies are able to provide.

Since the research was conducted in 2009, there have been a number of noteworthy improvements made to the victim support services and police referral processes in the Australian Capital Territory, some of which responded directly to the recommendations made by the AIC. The publication of this research not only ensures transparency, but establishes a baseline upon which improvements to policies and programs concerning victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory can be measured. This research remains an important reference point that can guide the work of Victim Support ACT and ACT Policing in developing and refining their partnership to enable victims of crime to access services.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Online survey instrument

ACT Victims of Crime Referral project

Survey

The Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) has been funded by Victim Support ACT and the Australian Federal Police (ACT Policing) to conduct a research project examining the experiences of victim referral for individuals who have been a victim of crime in the Australian Capital Territory. It is planned that results from this project will assist in the formation of strong, evidence based policy to improve the referral process for victims of crime in the Australian Capital Territory.

We are seeking residents of the ACT who have been a victim of crime in the past two (2) years to fill out this survey.

The survey should take about 15 minutes to complete. You will be asked to provide information about your experience of being a victim of crime in the Australian Capital Territory, the police response to your matter, your experience of being referred to, and using, any victim services, and some demographic information about yourself at the

end (such as gender, age, formal qualifications). The questions have been developed to gain an understanding of the experiences of victims of crime in the ACT *over the past two years*. If you have been a victim of crime in the Australian Capital Territory over the past two years we thank you for your participation in the survey.

Information collected as part of this survey will be held in confidence, will be used only for the purposes stated for this study, and will not be disclosed to others. The survey is completely confidential and voluntary—if at any point you do not wish to proceed with completing the survey you are free to exit and discontinue. The survey is anonymous—you will not be asked to provide your name or contact details and it will not be possible to link any responses back to you.

This survey has ethical clearance from the Australian Institute of Criminology Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any questions about the survey, please contact Kiah McGregor on (02) 6260 9235 or kiah.mcgregor@aic.gov.au.

Thank you for your participation in the survey.

Your experience of being a victim of crime in the Australian Capital Territory

Q1 Thinking back over the last two (2) years, have any of the following happened to you in the ACT? And how many times did that type of crime happen to you over the last 2 years?

Circle all that apply and estimate how many time in the previous 18 months these things have happened to you

	Yes	No	Don't know	No of times
Assault/attempted assault	1	2	3	-----
Sexual assault/attempted sexual assault	1	2	3	-----
Stalking	1	2	3	-----
Robbery/attempted robbery	1	2	3	-----
Break & enter (burglary)/attempted break & enter	1	2	3	-----
Motor vehicle theft/attempted motor vehicle theft	1	2	3	-----
Other theft	1	2	3	-----
Fraud	1	2	3	-----
Arson	1	2	3	-----
Vandalism/property damage	1	2	3	-----
Other—please specify	1	2	3	-----

Q2 Out of all the crimes you mentioned above, we would now like you to focus on the most recent single incident of crime that has happened to you in the ACT over the last two years. What type of incident was it? And when did it occur?

Incident type _____

Approximate _____ month _____ year

Q3 In the most recent incident of crime described above, what was your relationship to the offender? Please circle one response

- Domestic partner (husband/wife/defacto)..... 1
- Family member..... 2
- Ex-partner 3
- Friend 4
- Work/study colleague..... 5
- Neighbour 6
- Acquaintance..... 7
- Other person known to you..... 8
- Stranger 9

Q4. For the most recent incident described above, how seriously did that crime affect your life in the following areas?

	Very seriously	Quite seriously	Not very seriously	Not at all seriously	Not sure/ don't know	Not applicable
Impact of any physical harm or injury	1	2	3	4	5	6
Your financial situation	1	2	3	4	5	6
Your feeling of safety in your home	1	2	3	4	5	6
Your feeling of safety outside your home	1	2	3	4	5	6
Your emotional wellbeing	1	2	3	4	5	6

The police response to your most recent incident of crime in the Australian Capital Territory

We are now going to ask you about the police response to your most recent incident of crime in the Australian Capital Territory. These questions should relate to the incident of crime you described in the previous section.

Q5 Did you report the most recent incident of crime to the police?	
Yes (skip to Q 7).....	1
No	2
Don't know/don't recall	3
Q6 Why didn't you report the most recent incident of crime to the police? After this skip to question 13	
Too trivial/unimportant.....	1
Someone else told police.....	2
Thought there was nothing the police could do	3
Thought police would be unwilling to do anything.....	4
It was a private matter/would take care of it myself	5
Told someone else instead.....	6
Did not want offender punished	7
Afraid of reprisal	8
Too confused/upset/injured.....	9
Other reason	10
Now skip to Q13	
Q7 Why did you decide to report the most recent incident of crime to police? Circle all that apply	
All crimes should be reported/it is the right thing to do	1
It was a serious/major/upsetting crime	2
In the hope that property would be recovered	3
In the hope that offenders would be caught/punished.....	4
Needed to so I could claim insurance	5
To satisfy other authorities	6
In the hope of avoiding repetition of crime to me.....	7
In the hope of avoiding repetition of crime to someone else	8
Needed assistance (eg to get home).....	9
Third person reported crime	10
Police were on the spot.....	11
Other	12
Not applicable.....	13
Q8 How was the most recent incident of crime reported to the police? Please circle the first that occurred	
Reported in person to a police station.....	1
Police notified by telephone	2
Police were already at the scene.....	3
Incident reported by someone else.....	4
Other	5
Specify other _____	

Q9 Did you receive verbal or written information from police about services for victims of crime?						
Yes.....	1					
No	2					
Don't know/don't recall	3					
Q10 Was anyone charged in relation to the most recent incident of crime you reported to police?						
Yes.....	1					
No	2					
Don't know/don't recall	3					
Q11 Thinking about the last crime you reported to police, could you indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements? There are no right or wrong answers, we are just interested in your opinion						
	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure/ no opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable
The police treated me fairly	1	2	3	4	5	6
The police were polite and courteous	1	2	3	4	5	6
I was updated regularly about police investigations into my matter	1	2	3	4	5	6
I was provided with information and/or assistance about crime prevention/personal protection	1	2	3	4	5	6
I was told about any modifications made to charges laid against the accused (if applicable)	1	2	3	4	5	6
I was told about charges laid against the accused (if applicable)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Q12 Generally, after reporting your last incident of crime to police, how satisfied were you with the police response?						
Very satisfied.....	1					
Quite satisfied.....	2					
Not very satisfied	3					
Not at all satisfied	4					
Too early to tell	5					
Q13 Would you report a similar crime to the police in the future?						
Definitely	1					
Probably.....	2					
Probably not	3					
Definitely not	4					
Don't know.....	5					
Q14 Have you ever previously reported a crime to police?						
Yes.....	1					
No (skip to Q16)	2					
Don't know/don't recall (skip to Q16)	3					
Q15 Thinking about the last incident of crime you reported to police PRIOR TO the most recent incident discussed above, how would you rate your level of satisfaction with the police response?						
Very satisfied.....	1					
Quite satisfied.....	2					
Not very satisfied	3					
Not at all satisfied	4					

Experience of the victim referral process and victim services in the Australian Capital Territory

We are now going to ask you a series of questions about your experience with 'victim referral' and 'victim services' in the Australian Capital Territory.

'Victim services' are those services which are specifically there to help victims of crime. They offer information, practical help and emotional support to victims of crime. Some of those agencies include the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, Victim Support ACT, VOCAL, Supportlink and the Domestic Violence Crisis Service.

'Victim referral' is when you are a victim of crime and the police ask your permission to put you in contact with a victim service. When you are referred, the police pass your details onto the victim service and the service contacts you directly.

Q16 Whether you had any contact with a victim service or not, did the police tell you about, or ask to give your details to a victim service?	
Yes.....	1
No (skip to Q26).....	2
Don't remember/not sure (skip to Q26)	3
Did not report my incident to police (skip to Q26)	4
Q17 Whether you accepted the referral or not, which victim service were you referred to by police?	

Q18 Did you accept the referral from the police to a victim service?	
Yes (skip to Q20).....	1
No.....	2
Q19 Why didn't you accept the referral?	
Please now skip to Q26	

Q20 How long after the incident was reported to police did the victim service contact you?	
Within 24 hours.....	1
1-2 days.....	2
3-4 days.....	3
5-10 day	4
More than 10 days.....	5
Q21 Thinking about the first contact you had with the victim service, which of these happened?	
Circle all that apply	
Victim service sent letter/leaflet	1
Victim service came to my home.....	2
Victim service telephoned me	3
I contacted victim service	4
Some other form of contact	5

Q22 Thinking about the first contact you had with the victim service, which of the following types of information, advice or support did they offer you? Please circle all that apply

None of these/did not want support.....	1
Information about being a victim of crime	2
Information about security/crime prevention	3
Practical help (eg with cleaning up or making a list of what was stolen).....	4
Counselling/someone to talk to for support.....	5
Help with making an insurance claim (not making a list)	6
Help with making a compensation/financial assistance claim.....	7
Protection from further victimisation/harassment	8
Help in reporting the incident/dealing with police	9
Help and guidance with the justice system	10
Help with my rights in the justice system.....	11
Physical therapies.....	12
Something else.....	13

Q23 Thinking about the contact you had with the victim service, which of the following did you take up? Please circle all that apply

Physical therapies.....	12
Something else.....	13
None of these/did not want support.....	1
Information about being a victim of crime	2
Information about security/crime prevention	3
Practical help (eg with cleaning up or making a list of what was stolen).....	4
Counselling/someone to talk to for support.....	5
Help with making an insurance claim (not making a list)	6
Help with making a compensation/financial assistance claim.....	7
Protection from further victimisation/ harassment	8
Help in reporting the incident/dealing with police	9
Help and guidance with the justice system	10
Help with my rights in the justice system.....	11
Physical therapies.....	12
Something else.....	13

Q24 How satisfied were you with the service provided by the victim service agency you accessed after being referred by police?

Very satisfied.....	1
Quite satisfied.....	2
Not very satisfied	3
Not at all satisfied	4
Too early to tell	5

Q25 Why were you satisfied / not satisfied with the service provided by the victim service agency after being referred by police?

Q26 Did you access the services of a victim service without being referred by police?

Yes.....1
 No (skip to Q30)2

Q27 Which agency did you mainly access?

Q28 How satisfied were you with the service provided by the victim service agency you accessed?

Very satisfied.....1
 Quite satisfied.....2
 Not very satisfied3
 Not at all satisfied4
 Too early to tell5

Q29 Why were you satisfied/not satisfied with the service provided by the victim service agency?

Q30 Thinking about the last time you used a victim service, could you indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements? There are no right or wrong answers, we are just interested in your opinion.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure/no opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable
The victim service treated me fairly	1	2	3	4	5	6
The victim service treated me with dignity and respect	1	2	3	4	5	6
The victim service provided me with useful information	1	2	3	4	5	6
The victim service provided a timely service	1	2	3	4	5	6
The victim service provided me with a service which was tailored to my needs	1	2	3	4	5	6
If I were the victim of crime again, I would contact a victim service for help	1	2	3	4	5	6

Q31 Thinking about any future contact you might have with victim services, which of the following would you like to be offered? Please tick the three most important to you.

None of these/did not want support.....	1
Information about being a victim of crime	2
Information about security/crime prevention	3
Practical help (eg with cleaning up or making a list of what was stolen).....	4
Counselling/someone to talk to for support.....	5
Help with making an insurance claim (not making a list)	6
Help with making a compensation/financial assistance claim.....	7
Protection from further victimisation/harassment	8
Help in reporting the incident/dealing with police	9
Help and guidance with the justice system	10
Help with my rights in the justice system.....	11
Physical therapies.....	12
Something else.....	13
Specify something else.....	

Q32 In the next set of questions we are interested in getting your views about how the victim referral process works or what changes could be made to it. You should answer these questions whether you have ever accessed a victim service or not.

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements. There are no right or wrong answers; we are just interested in your opinions.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure/no opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable
If I were the victim of crime again I would want the police to contact a victim service on my behalf	1	2	3	4	5	6
If I were the victim of crime again, I would like to be contacted directly by victim service after being referred by police	1	2	3	4	5	6
I would want the police to share information on my matter with the victim service so that they understood how to help me	1	2	3	4	5	6
I would prefer to be asked by a police officer before I was referred to a victim service	1	2	3	4	5	6
If I was offered a referral to a victim support service by police I would take it up	1	2	3	4	5	6

Q33 Thinking about your experience/s of being a victim of crime in the ACT, is there anything else you would like to comment further on?

Information about yourself

We are now going to collect some basic information about you. You do not have to answer any of the questions if you don't want to.

Q34 What is your age in years?

Specify age _____

Q35 What is your gender?

Male 1

Female..... 2

Transgender 3

Q36 Do you identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

Aboriginal 1

Torres Strait Islander 2

Both..... 3

Neither 4

Don't know 5

Q37 In which country were you born? (specify)

Q38 What language do you mainly speak at home?

English 1

Other 2

(Specify other) _____

Q39 Do you have an intellectual or physical disability?

Yes..... 1

No..... 2

Specify _____

Q40 What is your marital status?

Married 1

Defacto relationship 2

Have a partner but don't live with them 3

Divorced/separated 4

Widowed 5

Single..... 6

Q41 What is your highest level of education?	
No formal schooling	1
Primary school	2
High school	3
College/TAFE	4
Undergraduate degree.....	5
Post Graduate qualification	6
Masters or PhD degree.....	7
Q42 What is your current employment status	
Working full-time	1
Working part-time	2
Not employed	3
Retired	4
Studying full-time.....	5
Home duties	6
Q43 Are you the main person caring for someone else?	
Yes.....	1
No.....	2
Specify _____	
Q44 Please indicate who you care for	
Child	1
Parent	2
Sibling.....	3
Other family member	4
Other person	5

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

The information you have given will make a valuable contribution to understanding crime and safety issues in the ACT community.

If you would like more information about this project please contact:

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Appendix B: List of stakeholders consulted

- ACT Policing
- Victims of Crime Coordinator (VOCC)/Victim Support ACT
- Domestic Violence Crisis Service (DVCS)
- ACT Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) (Witness assistant)
- VOCAL Inc
- SupportLink
- Care and Protection Services (CPS)
- The Restorative Justice Unit (RJU)
- Department of Justice and Community Safety Directorate (JACS)
- Canberra Rape Crisis Centre (CRCC)
- Tasmania Police
- Victims Support Services at the Tasmanian Department of Justice
- Victims Support Agency at the Victorian Department of Justice
- Victim Support South Australia
- Victim Support Victoria
- Victim Support Northern Territory
- Victim Support Services Western Australia
- Victim Support Queensland
- Office for Children, Youth and Family Support, ACT

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