Submission

House Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth

Inquiry into the impact of violence on young Australians

From

**The Office for Youth – Department of Education,
Employment and Workplace Relations, with
The Attorney-General's Department,
The Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital
Economy,
The Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts,
The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and
Indigenous Affairs,
The Department of Health and Ageing,
The Department of Human Services, and
The Department of Immigration and Citizenship
The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.**

December 2009

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Introduction

Background to the Inquiry
The Australian Government has stated its commitment to investing in young people and to moving youth policy from the periphery of government to being central to government business. The Government has also outlined its commitment to giving young people a seat at the table and involving them in public discussion about issues that they find important.

On 16 June 2009 the Hon Kate Ellis MP, Minister for Early Childhood Education, Childcare and Youth and Minister for Sport, asked the Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth to inquire into and report on the impact of violence on young Australians.

This request was initiated by Minister Ellis following feedback from young people, through the Australian Government's Australian Youth Forum (AYF), that violence and personal safety is one of their top concerns[1].

This message is consistent with the 2009 Mission Australia national survey of over 47,000 young people which found that personal safety was rated as a major concern by almost one in four respondents aged between 11 and 24 years[2].

Minister Ellis stated in her media release on 25 June 2009 that 'the Government has heard these concerns and has asked the Committee to not only investigate the causes and consequences of violence on young people but to also identify solutions[3].'

It should be acknowledged at the outset that, overall, the picture of Australia's young people is a positive one. Most young people are responsible members of our community who make a major contribution to Australia's current and future economic and social prosperity.

When considering the impact of violence on young people, young people are often seen as the perpetrators of public violence; they are overwhelmingly the victims. For young people, being a victim of crime can negatively impact on health, well-being, perceptions of safety, educational achievement and socio-economic attainment.

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[1] The Australian Youth Forum's Violence and Safety report has been provided to the Committee for consideration. Is it also available online at www.youth.gov.au/ayf/documents/AYFwebsiteViolenceAndSafetyReport.pdf
[2] http://www.missionaustralia.com.au/document-downloads/doc_download/207-youth-survey-2009
[3] http://www.kateellis.com.au/newsroom/154/

About the submission

The Office for Youth leads the Government's commitment to working for and with young people, acknowledging that young people are valuable participants in Australian society and are crucial to our nation's economic and social prosperity.

In partnership with key Australian Government departments, the Office for Youth welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to this inquiry. This submission has been prepared with input from:

- Attorney-General's Department
- Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy
- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
- Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts
- Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
- Department of Health and Ageing
- Department of Human Services
- Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

This submission aims to provide the Committee with a comprehensive picture of Australian Government initiatives relevant to the terms of reference. It includes four key areas and an attachment:

- The first section gives information on the current context regarding violence and young people. This includes brief information on the level of violence in our community, who is most affected by violent behaviour, and links between violence, illicit drugs and alcohol.
- Secondly, the submission outlines the Australian Government's overarching youth policy, goals and vision for youth, and broader reform agendas
- The third section provides an overview of current Australian Government initiatives in this area. Recognising the complexity of this issue, a holistic approach has been taken to include information on preventative measures and other initiatives relevant to the positive development of young people.
- The submission then briefly highlights some developing areas of potential interest to the Committee.
- Finally, there is an attachment to the submission that outlines Australian Government initiatives that address risk factors of violence or other related issues.

Defining violence and young people

In considering the impact of violence on young people, it is important to recognise that violence can take many different forms in many different contexts.

There is no single universally accepted definition of violence in either an Australian or a worldwide context. Violence can mean different things within different societies and cultures.

A broad definition from the World Health Organization (WHO) provides a useful guide:

> 'Violence is the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation.'

In its report on world violence and health, the WHO also sets out a typology of violence, breaking it down to the nature of violence and who is affected by the violence (see diagram below)[4].

A typology of violence
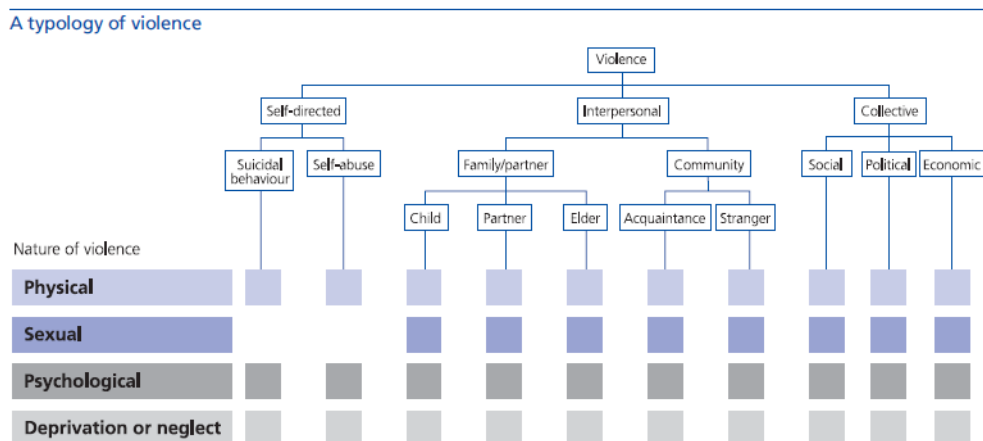
This submission takes a holistic approach to violence, with a particular focus on interpersonal violence. While it is important to acknowledge the gravity of self-directed violence, this type of violence was considered to be outside the scope of this submission. Further, the submission does not attempt to provide a comprehensive examination of sexual abuse/domestic violence, although these areas are touched on in providing an overview of Australian Government initiatives.

When defining 'young people', there are a number of definitions and age ranges for youth that are generally accepted. This submission is based on the range of 12-25 years. However, the Australian Government understands the importance of not only addressing issues young people face, but also preparing individuals at each stage of their life for the next stage. Therefore some initiatives focused on ages outside the scope of the above definition have been included to paint a coherent

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[4] http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/en/summary_en.pdf (page 5)

picture of the work of the Australian Government, acknowledging that experiences in early life impact significantly on the positive development of young people.

Role of the Commonwealth

The issue of violence in the community is complex and multi-faceted, requiring all levels of government, community organisations, parents, and young people themselves to work in partnership towards a range of solutions. State and territory governments, for example, have a direct role on important issues to do with violence such as the administration of policing and juvenile justice.

The Australian Government plays an important role in supporting the wellbeing of young Australians, including by:

- identifying national concerns and priorities for young people
- delivering targeted initiatives to support young people at risk
- working through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to implement reform agendas to strengthen the foundations in early childhood, education and in the employment participation of young people
- leading national collaborative work to strengthen connections across governments and improve integrated, coordinated service delivery
- directly engaging with young people at the national level and promoting positive opportunities for the participation of young people.

Young People and Violence in Australia – Current Context

This part of the submission does not aim to be a comprehensive literature review of research surrounding the occurrence and impact of violence in our community, but rather to highlight key information and issues related to the terms of reference to provide a brief background.

It must initially be acknowledged that there is an inherent difficulty when relying on statistics to paint the whole picture concerning violence. Most of the statistics and reports included in this submission only take into account reported cases of violence. While the rates of reported violence should not be dismissed, it is important to recognise that many cases of violence go unreported and will not be represented in statistics.

Perceptions and Actual Occurrence of Violence
Apart from the actual experience of violence, it is also important to look at perceptions that surround differing aspects of violence.

In the preparation of the 2009 *State of Australia's Young People* report a range of information including literature reviews, quantitative secondary data analysis, qualitative data from focus groups with young people and consultations with other key stakeholders helped to provide a clear picture of the overall state of Australia's young people.

Qualitative analysis through focus groups provided an indication of some young people's perceptions on violence :
− Violence was thought to be widespread and frequent among young people.
− Some specific locations such as train stations, certain pubs/clubs, car parks and public areas that were not well lit, were identified as areas where violence was more likely to occur.
− Males aged 15-20 years of age were singled out as the most likely perpetrators of violence.
− While there was not always agreement on racism as a motivation for violence, it was generally perceived that groups of young men who get involved in violence represent particular racial groups, and there was a belief that they tend to pick on members of other racial groups.
− All young participants, irrespective of their age or the location in which they lived, maintained that violence is frequent and commonplace in drinking environments.
− Bullying, while mentioned as a form of violence, was thought to be an issue for those in junior high school.
− Violence on the street and random acts of violence were thought to be more common today than at any time previously. Street violence was one of the most feared forms of violence.
− Relationship or domestic violence was the least mentioned form of violence. However, when discussed there was considerable concern expressed by both males and females in the study.

Perceptions regarding violence and safety are also discussed in the publication *A compendium of social inclusion indicators* released in May 2009 by the Social Inclusion Board.

The compendium cites that 'females express higher proportions of feeling unsafe or very unsafe (10.9% compared with 2.4% for males), and young people 18 to 24 years (10.3%) express higher levels of concern for their personal security'.

Apart from young people's perception of street violence and its severity, there also appears to be significant community concern regarding street violence. This topic has gained significant media coverage particularly in certain locations.

There are conflicting points of view in the literature about whether the rate of violent assaults perpetrated by young people is increasing or whether it is just receiving more attention in the media.

The Youth Violence Taskforce report to the Queensland Government noted that 'recent media coverage of isolated incidents has created a perception … of youth violence being on a dramatic rise. This perception is not accurate. However, anecdotal evidence suggests the seriousness of offences is escalating.'

In contrast to this, there are a number of statistical sources which suggest that assaults, in general, are increasing. The Australia21 report *Violence in Public Places* notes:
- The Melbourne Metropolitan Ambulance Service records show cases of assaults have roughly doubled since 1999.
- According to Victorian police, recorded assaults in the public domain in Victoria increased by more than 20% in the five years to 2007, to almost 14,000 a year. Most of the increase is in night-time assaults[5].

Richard Eckersley and Lynne Reeder also note that other states, including New South Wales, have seen a similar surge in antisocial behaviour, including violence, in public places. The rise is part of a long-term rise in violent crime (excluding homicide) in Australia[6].

Studies show that young people are disproportionately represented when it comes to statistics involving violence. Figures released from the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) 2005 Personal Safety Survey tell us that young people, and in particular, young men, are at a greater risk of experiencing violence than other age groups. As the table below indicates, men aged 18-24 years are almost five times more likely to experience physical assault by another male than men aged 25 years

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[5] Eckersley R. and Reeder L. (2008) Violence in Public Places, Explanations and Solutions. Austaralia21

[6] Eckersley R & Reeder, *Step in and Stop it now, an ugly situation's already developed*, Canberra Times 17/03/2009

and older. This is shown in the below diagram which outlines the proportion of persons in 2005 who experienced violence in the previous 12 months by age.
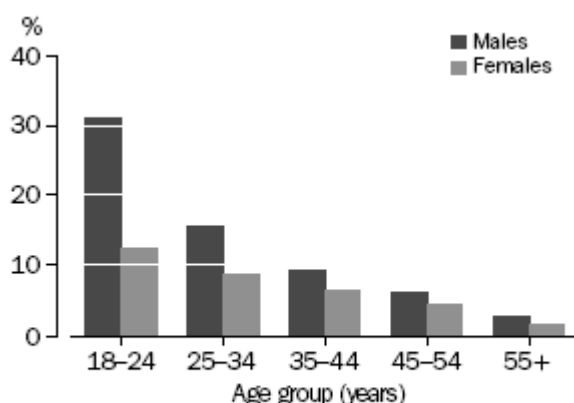
Source: ABS 2005 Personal Safety Survey.

It is also important to acknowledge that some groups in society experience much higher rates of violence than the general population. The ABS General Social Survey outlines that Indigenous men and women experience double the rate of being a victim of physical violence during their lifetime when compared to non-Indigenous Australians.

The 2007 Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage report noted that family and community violence problems are complex. They are interrelated with health issues, socio-economic and environmental conditions and alcohol and substance use have been identified as common contributing factors to violence in Indigenous communities[7].

Indigenous Australians aged 15-24 years were six times more likely to be hospitalised for assault than non-Indigenous Australians (in the period July 2004 to June 2006). They were also 7.5 times more likely to die from assault than non-Indigenous Australians aged 15-24 (for the period 2002 to 2006 in Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and Northern Territory).

Where violence is likely to occur
When considering the issue of violence, it is important to look at where young people are most likely to experience violence. Data tells us that the experience of violence is different for young men and young women.

Young men are more likely to be attacked by a stranger, and in a public location, while young women are more likely to be assaulted by someone they know and in their home or another person's home[8].

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[7] http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp/reports/indigenous/keyindicators2007

[8] http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/347E5D23ED6DB058CA25732F001CA444/$File/41020_Interpersonal%20violence_2007.pdf

Data from the Family Relationships Services Program provides an indication of the extent of the number of clients using the program that have a presenting need potentially linked to violence. Presenting needs include bullying, childhood neglect, drug/alcohol/substance abuse and family violence. Some statistics include:

- 83,832 clients seen under the Program for the 2008-09 financial year reported a presenting need that could contribute to violence.
- Forty-one per cent of clients seen for Early Intervention Services under the Family Relationship Services Program reported a presenting need that could contribute to violence. Twenty-seven per cent of the total clients were under the age of 30.
- Thirty-four per cent of clients seen for Post Separation Services which include Family Relationship Centres under the Family Relationship Services Program reported a presenting need that could contribute to violence. Twenty-four per cent of the total clients were under the age of 30.
- Forty-four per cent of clients seen for Counselling Services under the Family Relationship Services Program reported a presenting need that could contribute to violence. Twenty-seven per cent of the total clients were under the age of 30.

Young people also experience violence in the school context. The Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study (2009) found that being bullied every few weeks or more often (considered to be frequent) is a fairly common experience, affecting approximately one in four Year 4 to Year 9 Australian students (27%). Hurtful teasing was the most prevalent of all bullying behaviours experienced by students, followed by having hurtful lies told about them. Bullied students also reported having been physically hurt, sent 'nasty' messages over the internet and bullied covertly.

Almost one in ten students (9%) reported that they generally bullied others every few weeks or more often, with 11% of boys reporting they bullied others more frequently. By comparison, 7% of girls reported that they bullied others frequently.

The damaging physical effects of bullying have been highlighted in Australian studies. A number of studies have found that children who are bullied have higher levels of stress, anxiety, depression and illness and an increased tendency to suicide[9]. Studies also say the victims of bullying are two to three times more likely to contemplate suicide than their peers. Psychological well-being (e.g. self-esteem and happiness) has been shown to suffer with bullying, while loneliness and alienation from peers are also linked with victimisation.

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[9] Rigby, K. (1998). *The relationship between reported health and involvement in bully/victim problems among male and female secondary school students*. Journal of Health Psychology, 3(4), 465 – 476.
Cox, T. (1995). Stress coping and physical health. In A. Broome & S. Llewelyn (Eds.), *Health Psychology: Process and Application*. London: Singular Publication Group.

Research shows there are negative outcomes for those who bully others. Those who bully are also more likely to drop out of school, use drugs and alcohol, and, particularly relevant to this inquiry, engage in subsequent delinquent and criminal behaviour[10]. In 1984 Huesmann proposed that young bullies carry a one in four chance of having a criminal record by the age of 30. A more recent, large-scale study in Sweden found that 60% of the boys labelled as bullies in Years 6 – 9 (ages 13 to 16) had at least one criminal conviction by the age of 24[11].

Not all children who bully are on the trajectory that leads to violence and criminality later in life; but of all children, these are at risk of eventually committing violent crimes[12].

In Australia, this evidence has been recognised for some time. The Attorney-General's Department identified school bullying as a risk factor associated with antisocial and criminal behaviour in its 1999 publication *Pathways to prevention: Developmental and early intervention approaches to crime in Australia*.

A new aspect of bullying of concern is cyber-bullying. The *Review of Australian and international cyber-safety research* noted that cyber-bullying is emerging as a significant risk to cyber-safety for young people[13]. Rates of reporting of cyber-bullying among young people in Australia are much lower (less than 10%) than in the US and Europe (up to 50%). However, mobile phone and internet use are increasing exponentially, and it is predicted that an increase in cyber-bullying will follow. Over 80% of Australian Year 7-12 students own a mobile phone and a 2005 study found that a mobile phone was the most common technology used for cyber-bullying among adolescents in Australia.

The review states that most victims (up to 82%) know the identity of the perpetrator, although anonymity also plays a role. There is a connection between cyber-bullying and face-to-face bullying, however, the extent of the connection is not clear. It is also unclear to what extent gender is a factor in cyber-bullying. Older secondary school students are more likely to cyber-bully than younger students. This is linked to the amount of technology use (that is, older students aged 15-17 use email, internet and mobile phone technology significantly more than students aged 12-14).

Cost of violence
The WHO *World Report on Violence and Health* states that youth violence deeply harms not only its victims, but also their families, friends, and communities. Its effects are seen in death, illness and disability, and also in terms of quality of life.

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[10] Gottfredson, G. & Gottfredson, D. (1985). *Victimisation in Schools*. New York: Plenum.

[11] Huesmann, L. R., Eron, L. D., Lefkowitz, M. M. & Walder, L. O. (1984). Stability of aggression over time and generations. *Developmental Psychology*, (20), 1120 – 1134

[12] B. Morrison (Ed.), *From bullying to responsible citizenship: A restorative approach to building Safe School communities*: unpublished manuscript held by the Australian Institute of Criminology.

[13] Dooley, J.J., Cross, D., Hearn, L., Treyvaud, R. 2009. *Review of existing Australian and international cyber-safety research*. Child Health Promotional Research Centre, Edith Cowan University, Perth.

The report outlines that violence involving young people adds greatly to the costs of health and welfares services, reduces productivity, decreases the value of property, disrupts a range of essential services and generally undermines the fabric of society.

Over time, various estimates have been made as to the cost of a range of different forms of violence across a range of different communities. Regardless of which estimate is closest to the actual figure, it cannot be disputed that the effects of violence and its aftermath have a significant cost to society.

There are currently no definitive estimates that exist in an Australian context of the overall financial burden of violence on the Australian community. There are international examples and there have been attempts in the Australian context to estimate the cost of different forms of violence in differing contexts.

For example, while not focused solely on young people, a report commissioned by the Australian Government and undertaken by Access Economics estimates the total annual cost of domestic violence alone in 2002–03 was estimated to be $8.1 billion.

Again, focused on the general population, the report *The Costs of Tobacco, Alcohol and Illicit Drug Abuse to Australian Society in 2004-05* estimated that the cost of violence to Australian society attributable to alcohol was $187 million, attributable to illicit drugs was $196 million, and attributable to both was $203.2 million.

Alcohol-related crime is estimated to cost Australia $1.7 billion a year, with $750 million alone spent on policing.

Alcohol and other drugs
While extensive data is not available regarding the links between violence, and alcohol and drug use, key national data, research and surveys indicate that it is an issue of significant concern.

According to the 2007 National Drug Strategy Household Survey it was reported that in a 12 month period there were an estimated:
− 4.4 million victims of alcohol-related verbal abuse
− 2.3 million Australians aged 14 years or older who were 'put in fear' by persons under the influence of alcohol in the 12 months preceding the 2007 survey.
Further, more than three quarters of a million Australians were physically abused by persons under the influence of alcohol.

The 2007 Survey also found that in the past 12 months, the proportion of the population aged 14 years or older who had verbally abused someone while under the influence of alcohol was 5.7% and who had physically abused someone while under the influence of alcohol was 1.1%.

The proportion of the population aged 14 years or older who had verbally abused someone while under the influence of other drugs was 0.9% and who had physically abused someone under the influence of others drugs was 0.3%.

The below table from the National Drug Strategy Household Survey shows that young people are significantly more likely to be involved in alcohol-related incidents, with over 40% of total reported alcohol-related incidents occurring in the 20-29 year old age group.

Table 5.3: Number of victims of alcohol-related incidents: population aged 14 years or older, by age and sex, Australia, 2007

Incident	Age group						
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+	14+
	(number)						
Males							
Verbal abuse	257,600	702,000	519,200	455,900	334,700	227,600	2,491,400
Physical abuse	81,600	203,500	82,100	65,300	49,200	14,800	503,500
Put in fear	121,500	263,300	214,900	199,500	148,100	72,700	1,024,900
Females							
Verbal abuse	223,200	471,000	357,200	347,600	288,400	186,800	1,878,000
Physical abuse	38,200	101,700	40,700	42,600	27,600	18,300	272,200
Put in fear	176,900	323,300	228,900	245,600	151,900	99,300	1,233,500
Persons							
Verbal abuse	480,700	1,171,400	875,400	803,300	623,100	414,900	4,368,700
Physical abuse	119,600	305,300	122,400	107,700	76,800	33,100	775,000
Put in fear	298,800	586,900	443,800	445,600	300,100	172,100	2,259,400

Note: Statistical significance testing was not undertaken for this table.

The State of Australia's Young People report (page 89) states:
> "Based on the latest National Health and Medical Research Council recommendations, all 15-17 year olds who drink alcohol with some frequency (32% males and 21% females) are at risk; and 52 per cent of male 18-24-year-olds and 37 per cent of female 18-24-year-olds are drinking at levels that place them at increased risk of an alcohol-related injury."

The Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy estimated in 2006 that alcohol is involved in 62% of all police attendances, 73% of assaults, 77% of street offences, 40% of domestic violence incidents, and 90% of late night calls. Alcohol is also a major factor in homicides, with 34% of perpetrators and 31% of victims affected by alcohol at the time of the homicide occurring.

There is considerable evidence that amphetamine type stimulant use and violence are related, but no direct causal link has been established. McKetin, McLaren, Riddell, & Robbins (2006) have found that the strongest relationship between the two is in the context of methamphetamine-induced psychosis. However, there is ongoing debate about the adverse effects of polydrug use, especially the mixing of methamphetamine and alcohol use.

The National Drug Strategy Household Survey also tells us information about people who have been the victims of drug-related harm. The survey tells us that:

- 11% of Australians aged 14 years or over were victims of verbal abuse from a person under the influence of other drugs. This was an increase from the proportion verbally abused in 2004 (9.8%).
- The proportion 'put in fear' by a person under the influence of other drugs in 2007 (8.4%) increased compared with the proportion in 2004 (7.3%).
- The proportion physically abused by a person under the influence of other drugs also increased between 2004 (1.6%) and 2007 (2%).

The 2005 Personal Safety Survey from the ABS found that:

- 79% of young men aged 18-24 reported that the perpetrator had been drinking alcohol or taking drugs.
- 34% said they had been drinking or taking drugs.
- Alcohol and drugs were less frequently reported by women as involved in assault. However, 37% of women aged 18-24 years had been physically assaulted by a man reported that the perpetrator's consumption of alcohol or drugs had contributed to the incident.

Current activities of the Commonwealth to address violence impacting on young people

The Australian Government currently has a range of initiatives in place to reduce levels of violence and the factors associated with violence.

Initiatives that relate to the Government's overarching agendas, and those initiatives that deal directly with violence and the terms of reference, have been included in the body of the submission. These have been broadly grouped under six themes:
− overarching initiatives
− school bullying and violence related initiatives
− cyber-bullying related initiatives
− community related initiatives
− family and child protection related initiatives and
− drug and alcohol related initiatives.

It should be noted that some initiatives have relevance across more than one area, given their holistic nature.

Initiatives that deal with risk factors of violence outside the terms of reference, but of vital importance to the issue of violence and young people, have been included as an attachment to the submission.

Overarching Initiatives
The Australian Government's vision is for all young people to grow up safe, healthy, happy and resilient, and to have opportunities and skills they need to learn, work, engage in community life and influence decisions that affect them.

National Strategy for Young Australians
On 3 September 2009, the Prime Minister announced in his speech at the 'Just Think' AFL anti-violence campaign launch of the Government's intention to develop a *National Strategy for Young Australians*.

The National Strategy for Young Australians has seven priority areas for action:
− empowering young Australians in their schools, their TAFEs and their universities to shape their own futures.
− supporting young Australians within their families.
− mobilising young Australians within their communities.
− enabling young Australians to participate safely and confidently online.
− equipping young Australians with the skills and personal networks they need for employment.
− strengthening early intervention with young Australians to help prevent any problems getting worse and to help young people get their lives back on track.
− establishing clear cut legal consequences for behaviours that endanger the safety of others.

The *National Strategy for Young Australians* is being developed in consultation with young Australians, their families, the youth sector, academics and the broader community through a 'National Conversation'. This period of consultation builds on the Australian Government's ongoing engagement with young people through the Australian Youth Forum (AYF).

Australian Youth Forum
The Australian Government is committed to engaging with young Australians on issues of importance. Run by the Office for Youth, the AYF was established in October 2008 to provide opportunities for young Australians and the youth sector to engage with the Government and contribute their ideas and opinions directly on issues that matter to them and to society as a whole. It is open and accessible to all young Australians.

The two main objectives of the AYF are:
− achieving widespread youth engagement with the Australian Government across Australia
− achieving meaningful and ongoing engagement with the youth sector – those organisations that work on behalf of, for and with young people.

The AYF offers young people aged 15-24 various ways to engage and communicate with the Government, through **youTH**INK forums, the AYF website and outreach events.

The outcomes of the 20 February 2009 **youTH**INK event focusing on Violence and Safety have been provided to the Inquiry as a direct channel between the views of young people and this important inquiry.

More information can be found at www.youth.gov.au/ayf.

Social Inclusion
The Australian Government believes that every Australian should have an opportunity to be a full participant in the life of the nation. That is why it has committed to a social inclusion agenda across government.

Being socially included means that people have the resources, opportunities and capabilities they need to participate in education, training and work. This includes activities such as caring for family members and others in the community. Social inclusion means that people can connect with others by participating in local, cultural, civic and recreational activities. It also means that people have a voice and can influence decisions that affect them.

Young people are significantly represented across social inclusion priority groups, and these groups are often more likely to be represented in incidents of violence.

Since July 2008, youth unemployment has risen by around 60,000 people and is now over 12%. Young people feature prominently among homeless people and people with a mental illness. For example, approximately 1 in 4 young people aged 16 and 24 have a mental health disorder. Young people are also a significant population group among Indigenous Australians. In 2008, the year 12 retention rate for Indigenous students was almost 47%, compared to 76% for non-Indigenous students.

Young people growing up in jobless families and in low SES communities are particularly at risk of disadvantage. Young people from families who are heavily reliant on income support are 20 percentage points less likely to be studying and 12 percentage points less likely to be in full-time work than those from families not reliant on income support. Similarly, only 59% of young people living in low SES communities complete Year 12, compared to 78% for young people from high SES backgrounds[14].

While the future is bright for many young people, there is an ongoing challenge to ensure that all young people enjoy a safe, healthy, inclusive and productive life.

More information can be found at www.socialinclusion.gov.au.

Closing the Gap
The Australian Government has an urgent reform agenda to close the gap in real life outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The Australian

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[14] 'Young Australians and Social Inclusion', by Chris Ryan and Anastasia Sartbayeva, Social Policy Evaluation, Analysis and Research (SPEAR) Centre, ANU (September 2008)

Government is committed to this national effort in cooperation with other governments. In 2008, COAG agreed to six ambitious targets relating to Indigenous life expectancy, health, education and employment. The Closing the Gap priority outcomes relevant to the Inquiry are 'Safe, healthy, supportive family environments with strong communities and cultural identity' and 'Positive child development and prevention of violence, crime and self-harm' as well as COAG headline indicators 'Family and Community Violence' and 'Imprisonment and Juvenile Detention'.

More information on the Closing the Gap strategy is available at www.socialinclusion.gov.au/Initiatives/Pages/closingthegap.aspx.

Compact with Young Australians
Through COAG all levels of government have introduced a range of initiatives to improve the social inclusion of young people. The Compact with Young Australians will ensure every young person has access to an education or training place. As part of the Compact, the National Youth Participation Requirement (NYPR) will require more young people to be in education or training. In support of the Compact and the NYPR, strengthened income support arrangements focus on the importance of participation in education or training to achieve Year 12 or equivalent for those seeking financial assistance. The National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions will improve assistance for young people at risk of disengaging from school. The National Partnership is discussed further in the attachment.

More information can be found at http://www.deewr.gov.au/Youth/YouthAttainmentandTransitions/Pages/Home.aspx.

State of Australia's Young People Report
The Australian Government is also committed to creating a reliable information base concerning issues that affect young Australians. The first *State of Australia's Young People* report was launched on 21 October 2009. The report is an important part of developing evidence-based policy advice on how government can best serve the needs of Australian young people. The report provides a single, comprehensive and consistent view on how young people in Australia are faring, set against policy issues of interest to the Australian Government.

The *State of Australia's Young People* report can be found at www.youth.gov.au/Documents/YoungPeopleReport.pdf.

School Bullying and Violence Related Initiatives

Review of the National Safe Schools Framework
The Government is taking steps to help create safer schooling environments by reviewing the National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF). The NSSF was developed in response to concerns from parents and the wider community and their expectations that Australian education authorities take every possible measure to ensure the physical and emotional safety of students. The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) commissioned a review of the NSSF, which commenced in late April 2009 and is being undertaken by Erebus International.

The Government has commenced the Review to examine a number of issues that have emerged since the original Framework was introduced, including changes in legislation and cyber-bullying. The project is due for completion in mid-2010 and will then be put before the Ministerial Council on Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) for endorsement by all Ministers for Education. The Review involves consultations with state and territory education authorities, schools and other important stakeholders such as parent groups, bullying researchers, and principals' associations.

More information can be found at www.safeschools.deewr.gov.au.

Australian Government research into bullying
The Australian Government is also trying to better understand the issues surrounding differing forms of bullying, including covert bullying. The reports, *Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study*, undertaken by Edith Cowan University, and *Insights into the Human Dimension of Covert Bullying*, undertaken by the University of South Australia in collaboration with Flinders University, recommended a review of the NSSF and other strategies to address bullying issues in schools. The reports were released on 1 June 2009.

The *Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study* investigated young people's experiences with covert bullying including: the nature and types of covert bullying behaviours used by young people; how often and where these behaviours occur, and risk and protective factors that may inhibit or encourage covert bullying behaviour. Recommendations from the study cover national policy and practice, education systems and sectors, and schools.

The *Insights into the Human Dimension of Covert Bullying* was designed to capture the voices of stakeholders in schools to provide an authentic source. The report summarises the stories, gathered during the term of the project, from students, teachers, counsellors and parents, ensuring that the findings provide collective experiences of the impact of covert and cyber-bullying on all stakeholders. Recommendations from the report call for reviews of existing policy and practices, consideration of the legal responsibilities of schools, together with the shared educative responsibilities and positive partnerships between parents and schools.

Details of these reports can be found at
http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/NationalSafeSchools/Pages/research.aspx.

The Government also works with state and territory education authorities on the Safe and Supportive School Communities Committee, which is responsible for a range of initiatives including the *Bullying. No Way!* Website located at www.bullyingnoway.com.au.

Bundanon Trust
The Bundanon Trust is a wholly-owned Commonwealth non-profit company, limited by guarantee. The company holds the gift in charitable trust in accordance with its Constitution. It operates under the *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997* and the *Corporations Act 2001*. Funding for Bundanon is administered by the Department of the Environment, Water Heritage and the Arts under the terms and conditions of the 2007-08 to 2010-11 Bundanon Trust Funding Agreement.

Bundanon Trust will partner with the Australian Theatre for Young People (atyp) to work with a number of local Shoalhaven primary schools to deliver a drama workshop series that targets peer bullying in schools. The Bully Intervention Program will provide primary school students in Years 5 and 6 the opportunity to come together in meaningful drama activities facilitated by atyp staff and experienced Indigenous tutors. Through their participation, the students will gain confidence and an enhanced sense of their identity which will assist their development of positive self-esteem, particularly through their transition from primary school into high school which has been identified as a period where young people are vulnerable to bullying.

More information can be found at www.bundanon.com.au.

Cyber-Bullying Related Initiatives

Cyber-Safety Plan
The Australian Government, through the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, has developed a comprehensive Cyber-Safety Plan and has committed $125.8 million towards a range of initiatives including education, law enforcement, research, consultation and technological measures.

As part of the Government's Cyber-Safety Plan the following are being considered:
− those aspects of cyber-safety faced by Australian children
− requirements for operating and maintaining safeguards for Australian children in the digital economy
− priorities for action by government and industry.

The above considerations require an understanding of the nature, prevalence and implications of cyber-safety threats, specifically including cyber-bullying.

The Cyber-Safety Plan identifies the importance of addressing risks associated with online bullying, grooming, privacy breaches and exposure to inappropriate content. The Consultative Working Group (CWG) is advising the Australian Government on measures to counter these risks and has a specific Sub-Committee established to examine the issue of cyber-bullying. The advice takes into account the wide range of government, non-government and industry bodies already employing measures, as well as:
− commissioned and other research
− international experience and developments
− advice from the Youth Advisory Group (YAG) on cyber-safety.

The YAG advice to Government is focused on ways that young people, schools, parents, the private sector and government can work together to reduce the impact and incidence of cyber-bullying. Suggestions include:
− an anonymous chat facility for kids to discuss their problems with a professional
− promotion for cyber-safety tools and website.

Building on the advice of the CWG and YAG, on how to provide children with a safer online environment, the Government recently announced that additional funding has been allocated to the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) to continue and expand education activities to help deal with cybersafety risks, including cyber bullying.

In particular waiting times for schools participating in the ACMA cyber-safety outreach program will be reduced, and the operating hours for the Cyber-Safety Online helpline will be increased to ensure its availability when children are most at risk.

In 2009, the Government commissioned the Edith Cowan University to review existing Australian and international cyber-safety research. This research was released on 11 September 2009 and including data on cyber-bullying.

A repeatable survey will be undertaken to track changes in cyber-safety behaviour and attitudes over time. The research methodology will be finalised early in 2010, with surveying to take place in the first half of the year. The research will involve surveying teachers and parents or guardians about young people's internet use. Cyber-bullying will be explored in this research.

These studies will be complemented by new data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics on children's internet and mobile phone use and safety practices, and a range of cyber-safety research activities undertaken by the ACMA, including a study of cyber-safety and social networking services and research into parents' needs for cyber-safety information.

This research will continue to inform the Government's solutions and priorities for action relating to cyber-safety (including cyber-bullying) and e-security.

Stay Smart Online website
The Stay Smart Online website is a key element of the Government's cyber security awareness raising initiatives. The website provides information for Australian internet users on cyber security and safety issues, including measures they can adopt to avoid cyber bullying. These issues include advice on identity protection online and the safe use of social networking websites. The website provides access to a range of resources designed to educate users on these issues. It also directs parents and teachers to resources that will help them protect children from cyber bullying.

More information can be found at www.staysmartonline.gov.au.

Cybersmart website
The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) has a suite of cyber-safety education initiatives in train, including its cyber-safety schools package and outreach activities. The ACMA's programs include general cyber-safety awareness presentations to teachers, parents, students and other key stakeholders; it also provides online educational resources.

The ACMA have developed a new Cybersmart website (www.cybersmart.gov.au) to provide parents, teachers, trainee teachers, librarians and children with up-to-date, comprehensive and age appropriate online cyber-safety resources and assistance.

The website also provides a dedicated online helpline and counselling service for children provided by Kids Helpline, to provide a quick and easy way to report online incidents that cause concern.

Cyber-bullying is an issue that previous generations of Australians have not had to deal with. A review of Australian and international cyber-safety research

commissioned by the Australian Government in 2009 examined cyber-bullying research. The review[15] found that cyber-bullying is emerging as a significant risk to cyber-safety for young people.

Alannah and Madeline Foundation
In a response to the heightened emergence of reporting about cyber-bullying in Australian schools, the Government is funding the Alannah and Madeline Foundation to conduct a National Pilot for an approach to cyber-safety for Australian schools. The project commenced on 30 June 2009 and will conclude on 30 April 2010.

At least 150 schools across Australia will be involved in the pilot program which will help confront safety issues in e-communications, including cyber-bullying, and aims to identify content, website and back office support improvements to be made to the in-schools change framework and supporting program. The pilot is receiving $3.3 million in funding inclusive of GST.

More information about the pilot program can be found at
www.amf.org.au/Cybersafety.

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[15] http://www.dbcde.gov.au/online_safety_and_security/cybersafety_plan/research

Community Related Initiatives

National Indigenous Law and Justice Framework
The Australian Government is committed to reducing Indigenous disadvantage and closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous outcomes. The National Indigenous Law and Justice Framework provides a national approach to eliminating Indigenous disadvantage in law and justice. The Framework articulates an evidence-based good practice approach to guide agencies and service providers to identify the most appropriate response to specific issues at a local, regional, state or territory level. The finalised Framework has now been endorsed by the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General Ministers and is available at www.ag.gov.au/www/agd/agd.nsf/Page/Consultationsreformsandreviews_DraftNationalIndigenousLawandJusticeFramework.

The Framework focuses on prevention, diversion and reintegration measures for Indigenous youth, and encourages the implementation of culturally competent diversionary and other interventions for Indigenous youth capturing all points of contact with the criminal justice system and all stages of the offending cycle
It seeks to:
– improve support for vulnerable Indigenous children and youth
– review existing programs and identify and promote culturally competent good practice
– increase the number of and access to culturally competent support for Indigenous children and youth.

A good practice compendium will be released alongside the Framework, highlighting successful programs, including youth specific programs.

The Attorney-General's Department is also providing $2 million to evaluate the effectiveness of Indigenous law and justice programs, to contribute to the evidence base for the National Indigenous Law and Justice Framework. It is expected that some of the programs that will be evaluated include those focused on Indigenous youth.

Standing Committee of Attorneys-General
On 6-7 August 2009, the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General (SCAG) agreed that the Commonwealth Attorney-General would host a Roundtable of Attorneys-General, Police Ministers, Indigenous Affairs Ministers, Police Commissioners and Indigenous representatives to discuss crime and safety in Indigenous communities. The Roundtable was held on 6 November 2009 in Sydney and topics discussed were:
– strategies regarding policing in remote Indigenous communities
– options for community engagement and governance
– options related to drug and alcohol control and related services
– measures to support women and children in relation to reporting
– options for better integration and information sharing.

The Roundtable focus includes measures to improve services for Indigenous young people who are victims of violence or abuse, or are at-risk of entering the justice system.

Northern Territory Emergency Response
The Australian Government has committed to funding the Northern Territory Emergency Response for a further three years. Attorney-General's Department law and order measures will receive $80.248 million over 2009-12 to support community safety in communities within the Northern Territory. In 2009-10, the Department will receive:
− $21.2 million for night patrol services in 81 communities and town camps in the Northern Territory
− $0.55 million for the Northern Territory Aboriginal Interpreter Service
− $2.5 million for legal assistance service providers
− $1 million for welfare rights outreach.

While these services do not specifically target Indigenous young people, young people are often the recipient of these services. Night patrol services in particular are known to play a significant role in increasing community safety and reducing contact with the criminal justice system. Night patrols assist men, women and young people at-risk of either causing or becoming the victims of harm in order to break the cycle of violence and crime in communities. The service patrols local community areas, identifies people who may be at risk of coming into adverse contact with the justice system and takes them to an appropriate place. Night patrols generally transport people to a 'safe' place where their immediate needs can be addressed, and refer them to other services for ongoing assistance. In many cases they also provide information on appropriate support services for clients and follow up with clients. Night patrols do not work in place of police and do not have policing powers. The core functions of services are to provide basic services such as safe transportation, diversion from contact with the criminal justice system, and intervention to prevent disorder in communities.

Prevention, Diversion, Rehabilitation and Restorative Justice program
The Attorney-General's Department has funding of $6.576 million for 2009-10 for the Prevention, Diversion, Rehabilitation and Restorative Justice (PDRR) program. The PDRR program provides funding to develop and undertake activities that will divert Indigenous Australians away from adverse contact with the legal system. The program is also intended to facilitate activities that will rehabilitate and support Indigenous Australians who have been incarcerated or are in custody. The program complements the other Indigenous law and justice programs and seeks to fund activities that will lessen the need for legal aid and support the early resolution of disputes, including through restorative justice practices.

The PDRR program has three sub-programs, Prevention and Justice Support, Restorative Justice, and Community Patrols:
− Under the Prevention and Justice Support sub-program, the Government funds prevention, diversion and rehabilitation schemes for prisoners and people at risk

of incarceration. The objective is to reduce recidivism and to assist in the rehabilitation of incarcerated Indigenous Australians, particularly youth, and their return and reintegration into the community.

− The Restorative Justice sub-program funds projects that will involve or promote the involvement of families, communities, victims and offenders in developing criminal justice mechanisms for dispute resolution. The focus is on culturally appropriate alternatives to conventional sentencing procedures that recognise and strengthen community driven justice responses, and projects that explore areas of restorative justice such as reintegration into the community and resolving pay back issues.

− The Community Patrols sub-program funds community patrols to assist Indigenous Australians at risk, including intoxicated people, juveniles, victims of violence and the homeless, and to reduce their adverse contact of with the criminal justice system. The purpose of this sub-program is to support community safety by patrolling the streets, and/or local community areas, and to provide transport to a place of safety or where the immediate needs may be addressed.

While Indigenous young people are not directly targeted under the PDRR program, many of the projects funded have a youth focus.

Australia Council

The Australia Council provides a range of programs of assistance for cultural activities, including support for projects that seek to address social cohesion through specific initiatives and through a competitive grant process offered by the Community Partnerships division of the Council.

The Community Partnerships division has identified a number of priority areas for the delivery of support and has requested that all applications must address one of the eight priority areas: regional Australia; disability; young people; cultural diversity; emerging communities; Indigenous people; remote Indigenous communities; and specific social and cultural issues.

The aims of funded projects are to build community participation and engagement, leading to stronger, healthier and more vibrant communities.

Community Partnerships funding was delivered to the below projects that met the Inquiry's terms of reference.

The University of Newcastle (Research Grants and Infrastructure) (NSW) $35,000

'Safe at Home' is a project that will create a range of artworks challenging attitudes towards domestic violence.

Life Is... Foundation (VIC) $35,000

The project has been funded to produce a mixed media-exhibition reflecting the journeys of family survivors of children who have suicided.

Darwin Community Arts Inc (NT) $180,000
Frontline is a series of digital arts projects designed to help relieve tensions between Somalian and Indigenous young people in the suburb of Malak.

Southern Youth Theatre Ensemble Inc (SA) $17,000
Support for the creative development of *Retaliation* a musical about non violence by and for young people in south Adelaide.

In addition to providing funding for projects through a competitive round, the Australia Council has also initiated programs to address specific community needs as they occur.

An example of this was the partnership the Australia Council entered into with Arts NSW, the New South Wales Government's arts funding agency, to support a one year special initiative to use the arts to build social cohesion and inter-cultural dialogue in Sydney's south and south west following the 2005 Cronulla riots. The Australia Council's contribution was $130,000 and Arts NSW contributed $70,000.

Four projects related to the terms of reference were funded through this initiative are:

− *Big hArt Inc – Junk Theory*
Short-term inter-cultural project (programmed as part of the Sydney Festival 2007) to pre-empt negative media surrounding the one year anniversary of the Cronulla riots.

− *Urban Theatre Projects Ltd – Stories of Love and Hate*
Set within the cultural clash of the Cronulla riots, the play *Stories of Love & Hate* is a collection of personal stories on the subjects of love and hate, revealed by individuals and groups directly involved in, or affected by, the December 2005 Cronulla riots.

− *Powerhouse Youth Theatre Inc – City Quest*
A multimedia site specific performance event framed within a video game concept that used community cultural development processes and contemporary artforms. The project asked questions about young people, their relationship to public space and the powers that exist within this space.

− *Music NSW – Working Together*
A compilation CD created by young people in southern Sydney to express their artistic talent and values through the ideology of working together and respecting cultural differences, while gaining professional recording experience and industry knowledge.

More information can be found at www.australiacouncil.gov.au.

Family and Child Protection Related Initiatives

National Early Childhood Development Strategy
Information regarding the National Early Childhood Development Strategy is outlined in the attachment. Of direct relevance to the Inquiry is that part of the Strategy relating to commitments under the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children*. The Framework acknowledges protection of children is a responsibility across governments and portfolios with the Commonwealth playing a leadership role. It aims to build on significant investment by governments and the non-government sector in family support services and child protection.

COAG endorsed the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children* on 30 April 2009. The National Framework will operate through a series of three-year action plans, each of which will identify actions and strategies aimed at ensuring that Australia's children and young people are safe and well through a substantial and sustained reduction in child abuse and neglect in Australia over time.

There are a series of priorities and actions under the *National Framework* which address the impact of violence on children and young people:
− *Developing Standards for Out-of-Home Care*: The development of national standards for out-of-home-care will aim to improve the outcomes and experiences of children and young people who are unable to live with their families.
− *Responding to Sexual Abuse:* This priority aims to prevent child sexual abuse and exploitation and to provide survivors with adequate support through undertaking research to present a national picture of therapeutic services to all Australian children including research, training, promising practice, gaps in service provision, and challenges within the sector.
− *Transitioning to Independence:* This priority aims to increase support through non-government organisations for young people leaving care to better establish their independence and for state and territory government initiatives to better support young people as they leave care.
− *Seeing Early Warning Signs and Taking Early Action:* This priority aims to improve the identification of early indicators of the needs of at-risk children and their families through a common approach to assessment, referral and support in universal and secondary prevention services, with appropriate information sharing.

More information about the Strategy can be found at
http://www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Policy_Agenda/Pages/EarlyChildhoodDevelopmentStrategy.aspx.

Standing Committee of Attorneys-General
As part of the Government's immediate response to the 20 high priority actions recommended by the *Time for Action* report, on 29 April 2009, the Prime Minister announced that the Attorney-General has already taken steps to progress

appropriate legal measures through the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General (SCAG).

Specifically, at the meeting of SCAG held 16-17 April 2009, Ministers agreed:
− that the Australian Law Reform Commission, with the assistance of State and Territory law reform commissions, would examine the inter-relationship of Federal and State and Territory laws which relate to the safety of women and their children.
− that the Secretariat would conduct an audit of best practice in the investigation and prosecution of sexual assault and provide an initial report back to SCAG in August 2009.
− to establish a working group to develop options for a national scheme for the registration of domestic and family violence orders.
− that each State and Territory would take steps to monitor the progress of initiatives taken to encourage responsiveness to coronial recommendations and report back to Ministers at August 2009 SCAG.

On 24 July 2009, the Commonwealth and the then acting NSW Attorneys-General announced the terms of reference for an inquiry into the inter-relationship of laws that relate to the safety of women. The inquiry will consider the interaction in practice of State and Territory family/domestic violence and child protection laws with the Family Law Act and relevant Commonwealth, State and Territory criminal laws; and the impact of inconsistent interpretation or application of laws in cases of sexual assault occurring in a family/domestic violence context, including rules of evidence, on victims of such violence. The inquiry is due to be completed no later than 31 July 2010.

Following the August 2009 SCAG meeting, the National Justice CEOs agreed to work with the National Coroner's Information System to facilitate the recording of responses to coronial recommendations on their system. It is likely this capacity can be operational within six months. The National Justice CEOs will continue to monitor progress on this item and report back to SCAG.

A SCAG working group is currently developing options for a national registration scheme for domestic and family violence orders.

An audit is underway and the States and Territories have provided substantial information to the SCAG secretariat to assist with this work.

As part of the Government's immediate response to the Time for Action report, the Attorney-General's Department is also developing a multi-disciplinary training package for lawyers, judicial officers, counsellors and other professionals working in the family law system, to improve the consistency in the handling of family violence cases.

National Council's Plan for Australia to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children

In May 2008, the Prime Minister and the Minister for the Status of Women, the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, set up the 11 member National Council to Reduce Violence against Woman and their Children. The Council presented *Time for Action: The National Council's Plan for Australia to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, 2009-2021* to the Government in March 2009. The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) is leading the Women's Interdepartmental Committee (IDC) and the IDC's Violence Against Women Working Group that is supporting the development of a National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children.

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Child Support Program
The Child Support Program (CSP), administered by the Department of Human Services, has primary interaction with separated parents, and there is also direct contact with children and youths. CSP has developed a *Domestic and Family Violence Strategy and Action Plan* which is aimed at helping staff to more effectively deal with reported abuse or violence incidents. This action plan includes the training of all staff in CSP service delivery.

While not specifically developed and delivered for young Australians, the CSP has a range of self-help products for parents that enhance quality family relationships and support anger management.

For example, the CSP has developed a self-help, web-based tool to help families navigate 'pathways' through the family law system called *'My Family is Separating - What now?'* One of the online 'pathways' specifically relates to family separation involving abuse or violence.

The CSP has also developed and produced a self-help book specifically designed for teenagers used in the *Supporting children after separation* program to cope with separation, including cases that involve family violence.

The *Staying Connected* program for parents (primarily men) aims to enhance family relationships and support anger management. This program focuses on three areas: self care, working with the other parent and staying connected to their children. This program has achieved positive results such as an increase in the commitment to

create a business-like relationship with the other parent by 50 per cent. The *Staying Connected* program is currently being redeveloped to suit mums as well as dads and to be delivered in the community and online.

Finally, the *Parent Support Service – Priority Referral* is a telephone counselling service for CSP customers in crisis. The service provides telephone counselling with two follow-up calls. The service provider will also refer the customer onto appropriate providers for ongoing counselling.

The CSP is in the process of implementing the *Protocol for the Sharing of Information between the Commonwealth and Child Protection Agencies*, which aims to improve information sharing between authorities about children and families at risk of harm.

Family Support Program
$84 million of funding in 2009-10 is being provided for children and parenting services across Australia. These services are provided under the Community and Family Partnerships stream of the Family Support Program (FSP), administered by FaHCSIA. This stream delivers coordinated support targeted at significantly disadvantaged communities and families, especially vulnerable and at-risk families and children aged up to 12 years. There are 10 Activities under the Community and Family Partnership stream that enable more than 300 projects to be deliver thousands of services across Australia. The Activities are as follows:
- Invest to Grow (ItG)
- Child Care Links (CCL)
- Community Playgroups
- Supported Playgroups
- Locational Supported Playgroups (LSP)
- Intensive Support Playgroups (ISP)
- Indigenous Parenting Support Services (IPSS)
- Indigenous Childrens Program (ICP)
- Responding Early Assisting Children (REACh)
- Communities for Children (CfC)

Funding allocation is provided above for all 10 Activities in the 2009-10 financial year.

One particular program under the FSP is the Family Relationship Services Specialised Family Violence Services, which provides whole-of-family interventions to support those affected by family violence and work with those who use violent or abusive behaviour to change.

Consideration is currently being given to how FSP services can achieve an increased focus on links with the legal system, accessibility for disadvantaged groups, and children/young people in the greatest need. This refocus will likely increase service accessibility for children and young people impacted by violence.

The Attorney-General's Department is looking into ways to achieve safe post-separation parenting outcomes for families where family violence is an issue through the proposed Integrated Dispute Resolution Process (IDRP) pilot. The paper is in draft at this stage.

Family Violence Partnerships Program
Administered by the FaHCSIA, the Family Violence Partnerships Program supports projects and initiatives that aim to bring about a sustainable reduction in, and prevention of, Indigenous family violence and child abuse through the enhancement of existing, or the establishment of new services/initiatives in partnership with states and territories throughout Australia.

Projects funded under the Family Violence Partnerships Program work across the spectrum providing education and awareness of family violence through services to victims and perpetrators. These range from the establishment of safe houses, night patrols, counselling services, support workers, perpetrator programs and education programs.

The Family Violence Partnerships Program is delivered through non-government service providers funded in partnership with state and territory governments. Funding is provided for projects and initiatives that aim to develop a sustainable reduction in, and prevention of, Indigenous family violence and child abuse through the enhancement of existing, or establishment of new services/initiatives. More information can be found at http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/progserv/families/ifvp/Pages/default.aspx.

Family Violence and Regional Activities Program
Also administered by FaHCSIA, the Family Violence and Regional Activities Program (FVRAP) supports projects identified by Indigenous communities as a local priority to address family violence, sexual assault, child abuse and/or child protection. The program has a focus on projects that reflect the importance of protecting women and children and breaking the cycle of violence, including initiatives to address causal issues, such as recognition/healing/grieving projects as well as programs which address the perpetrators of violence.

Interventions that can be funded under the FVRAP need to target one or more of the following groups:
- victims
- perpetrators
- children
- women
- men.

Projects are not limited to one intervention but may take a holistic approach, for example, provide education and awareness workshops, counselling for victims and provide a program for perpetrators. More information can be found at http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/evaluation/fvrap/Pages/default.aspx.

Income Support

The Australian Government will invest $26.8 million to improve participation arrangements for parents and carers of children that will give them the opportunity to gain more skills and improve their job opportunities.

Eligibility for the existing 16 week special family circumstances exemption for domestic violence will be extended to include principal carer parents who are experiencing or have experienced domestic violence in the last six months, regardless of whether the principal carer parents has left the relationship or not. This exemption may be renewed for further discretionary periods, based on the advice of the Centrelink social worker. This Budget measure will come into affect from 1 July 2010. Targeted brochures and fact sheets will be developed for principal carer parents to provide advice on the Budget measure, including the changes to the domestic violence exemption, to ensure that they are better informed about these arrangements.

In terms of practical application, once an exemption for domestic violence expires a parent's level of disadvantage will be assessed by the Job Seeker Classification Instrument or, where required, a Job Capacity Assessment. Job seekers will be placed into one of four streams, based on their level of disadvantage.

The new Job Services Australia services are provided in four streams, in accordance with a job seeker's assessed level of disadvantage (both vocational and non-vocational). At the discretion of the employment service provider, a parent experiencing multiple barriers, including domestic violence, may not have job search requirements for the first 12 months of assistance. Instead, the provider will work with the parent to address their individual and family barriers.

The Australian Government is committed to supporting Australians most in need. Principal carer parents on Parenting Payment, Newstart Allowance and Youth Allowance generally have part-time participation requirements when their youngest child turns six.

Under the current rules, principal carer parents can meet their participation requirements through undertaking:
− at least 30 hours a fortnight of paid work; or
− self-employment (with an income of at least equivalent to 15 hours per week on the minimum wage, ($214.65 per week, $11,161.80 per annum); or
− full-time study (generally only if receiving Parenting Payment).

Under existing rules, a range of exemptions from participation requirements exist in recognition of the different family and personal situations parents face. Some of these exemptions are automatic and others are assessed by Centrelink on a case-by-case basis. A specific 16 week case-by-case exemption exists for parents who are or have been subjected to domestic violence. This case-by-case exemption is available to Parenting Payment recipients who have:

− ceased to be a member of a couple within 26 weeks of the determination; and
− been subject to domestic violence in that period of 26 weeks; and
− not again become a member of a couple.

A general 'special circumstances' case-by-case exemption of up to 13 weeks is also available in unforeseen or unavoidable circumstances including a major personal crisis. This exemption may also be applied in situations where a parent has been subjected to domestic violence. Both of these exemptions are renewable if appropriate.

Crisis Payment is a payment that is designed specifically to help new and existing income support recipients who are in financial hardship. The amount paid is equal to one week's payment at the maximum rate of the primary payment to which the recipient is entitled. People in extreme circumstances, such as a domestic violence situation, may be eligible for Crisis Payment. All claims for Crisis Payment for domestic or family violence are referred to a Centrelink social worker for assessment and assistance.

More information can be found at
http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/about/benefits/Pages/Crisispayment.aspx.

Sexual Assault Counselling Services
Significant progress has been made in partnership with the Northern Territory Government in implementing a 2007 Australian Government election commitment to expand sexual assault counselling services in remote areas – $6.2 million in funding over four years from 2008-09.

New funding to expand this service to include any form of child abuse has also been provided through the 2009-10 Budget - $9.388 million over three years from 2009-10.

The Sexual Assault Mobile Outreach Service currently provides culturally safe sexual assault counselling services to Aboriginal children, families and communities in remote Northern Territory communities from regional teams based in larger town centres.

The Australian Government has also provided funding of $1.08 million (GST exclusive) in 2008-09 as part of the $13.6 million *Closing the Gap – Northern Territory – follow-up care* measure for training and information on child abuse and trauma issues, including mandatory reporting obligations. This includes a training program for primary health care staff currently being delivered by the Centre for

Remote Health and information sessions for other community workers provided by the Department of Health and Families.

Expansion of the NT Sexual Assault Mobile Outreach Service
Through the 2009-10 Budget measure *Closing the Gap – Northern Territory – Indigenous health and related services*, the Australian Government is providing a further $9.388 million over three years from 2009-10 for the Northern Territory Department of Health and Families to expand the size and scope of the current Sexual Assault Mobile Outreach Service (MOS).
This funding will enable the MOS to:
− respond to any form of child abuse related trauma in remote communities and provide forensic medical examinations to children
− establish a specialist clinical support unit for culturally safe best practice in this challenging area.

This will bring the total for the implementation and roll-out of MOS and related services over a four year period from 2008-09 to $15.588 million.

Child Sexual Exploitation
In Australia, responsibility for enacting and enforcing child sex offences is shared between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories. The States and Territories have criminalised conduct occurring domestically, while the Commonwealth has criminalised conduct occurring across Australian jurisdictions (for example, using the Internet) or outside Australia (for example child sex tourism). The below table sets out an overview of Australia's laws criminalising child sexual exploitation, and the relevant jurisdiction responsible.

Overview of Australia's child sexual exploitation laws

Conduct	Jurisdiction
Child pornography offences	
Possession, production, distribution*	States and Territories
Using the Internet	Commonwealth
Child sex offences	
Sexual intercourse/other sexual conduct*	States and Territories
Procuring/grooming*	States and Territories
Exposure to indecent material*	States and Territories
Child prostitution*	States and Territories
Child sex tourism**	Commonwealth
Internet procuring and grooming	Commonwealth

* Applying domestically ** Applying extraterritorially

The Commonwealth has enacted the following criminal laws directed at the sexual exploitation of children:
− child pornography and child abuse material offences involving the use of a carriage service (such as the Internet or mobile phone) – carrying maximum penalties of 10 years imprisonment.
− offences for using a carriage service for grooming or procuring children – carrying maximum penalties of up to 15 years imprisonment.
− child sex tourism offences, criminalising Australians engaging in sexual activity with children overseas – carrying maximum penalties of up to 17 years imprisonment.

The Australian National Child Offender Register (ANCOR) is a national database that supports the compliance management of registrable persons upon their release from custody. The Commonwealth, through CrimTrac, developed and manages ANCOR on behalf of States and Territories.

Each State and Territory has enacted legislation that requires a person sentenced, in respect of a registrable offence, to report periodically to police, advise police of interstate and international travel plans and submit to periodic risk assessments. The registrable offences vary between jurisdictions, but typically include murder, kidnapping, assault, sexual assault, other sexual offences and child neglect.

On 11 September 2009, the Minister for Home Affairs released a consultation paper detailing proposed reforms to the Commonwealth's child sex-related offences. The consultation paper is available on the Attorney-General's Department website at www.ag.gov.au.

The reforms would ensure comprehensive coverage of offences in areas of Commonwealth responsibility, including carriage service (online) child sex-related offences and child sex tourism. The proposed reforms respond to issues raised by law enforcement agencies and reflect best practice approaches domestically and internationally.

The public consultation period ended on 23 October 2009. It is anticipated that legislation implementing the reforms will be introduced in early 2010.

Drug and Alcohol Related Initiatives

The Australian Government is implementing a range of policies that fall under the umbrella of the *National Drug Strategy 2004-2009* (NDS). The Strategy provides a framework for a coordinated, integrated approach to drug issues in the Australian community.

Endorsed by the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy (MCDS), which comprises Australian Government and State and Territory health and law enforcement agencies, the NDS aims to improve health, social and economic outcomes by preventing the uptake of harmful drug use and reducing the harmful effects of licit and illicit drugs in Australian society.

There are also a number of national strategies under the NDS that guide and coordinate the work of the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments. These include:
– National Alcohol Strategy 2006-2011
– National Amphetamine-Type Stimulant Strategy 2008-2011
– National Cannabis Strategy 2006-2011
– National Strategy to Prevent the Diversion of Precursor Chemicals into Illicit Drug Manufacture
– National Drug Strategy Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Complementary Action Plan 2003-2009
– National School Drug Education Strategy
– National Corrections Drug Strategy 2006-2009.

In particular, the strategies focused on alcohol and psychostimulants provide significant direction to Commonwealth activity.

National Alcohol Strategy 2006-2011
The National Alcohol Strategy is a plan for action developed through collaboration between Australian governments, non-government and industry partners and the broader community. It outlines priority areas for coordinated action to develop drinking cultures that support a reduction in alcohol-related harm in Australia.

The four priority areas that have been nominated as the focus of the Strategy are:
1.   Intoxication
2.   Public Safety and Amenity
3.   Health Impacts
4.   Cultural Place and Availability.

Many young people consume alcohol at levels that put them at risk of alcohol related harm. The impact of intoxicated behaviour on *public safety and amenity* has been increasingly recognised as a major social problem in Australia today and has therefore been acknowledged in the Strategy as a key priority area. The priority area of Public Safety and Amenity aims to:
– prevent and reduce alcohol-related injuries

- revise, develop where necessary, and disseminate best practice
- provide guidance on the management, safety and responsibility of drinking in licensed premises, sports clubs, private and public settings, including communities of concern in urban and regional locations
- increase the capacity of local communities, including government, to address public health and safety issues associated with alcohol.

More information can be found at
http://www.alcohol.gov.au/internet/alcohol/publishing.nsf/Content/nas-06-09.

National Amphetamine-Type Stimulant Strategy 2008-2011
The National Amphetamine-Type Stimulant Strategy 2008-2011 guides all levels of government in Australia to work collaboratively to reduce the availability and demand for illicit amphetamine-type stimulants and prevent use and harms across the Australian community. In doing so, it seeks to reflect the NDS.

The Strategy is a plan for action developed through collaboration between Australian and State and Territory Governments, non-government organisations and the broader community. It outlines priority areas for coordinated action to raise awareness of this issue associated with amphetamine-type stimulants; prevent use and supply; provides support to users, their families and the community; and enhances the capacity of the workforce in various support and treatment services to respond to the effects of amphetamine-type stimulants on users and the associated harms.

The Australian Government also funds a number of programs under these strategies with the goal of the reducing the use of illicit and licit drugs. These programs reduce the health, social and economic harms to individuals and the community arising from drug use. This includes improvement in general health, social functioning and a reduction in crime, including violence.

National Binge Drinking Strategy
Under the National Binge Drinking Strategy, the Australian Government has been working to confront young people with the consequences of binge drinking and to take responsibility for their behaviour.

Key measures to help reduce alcohol misuse and binge drinking among young Australians include:
- $14.4 million to invest in community level initiatives to confront the culture of binge drinking, particularly in sporting organisations
- $19.1 million to intervene earlier to assist young people and ensure that they assume personal responsibility for their binge drinking
- $20 million for advertising that confronts young people with the costs and consequences of binge drinking. It is also designed to increase the likelihood that for those teenagers and young adults who choose to drink alcohol, they do not drink to levels of intoxication which may result in harm to themselves or others.

This Campaign carries with it a tag line of 'Don't turn a night out into a nightmare'.

Illicit Drug Use – Targeting Young Methamphetamine Users (The National Drugs Campaign)
The Targeting Young Methamphetamine Users campaign aims to develop, reinforce and build awareness and understanding of the risks associated with the use of methamphetamines (speed and ice), ecstasy and cannabis; encourage avoidance; and promote reduction and/or cessation of the use of these substances. This $17.9 million education campaign provides young Australians with up-to-date information about methamphetamine, ecstasy and cannabis. More information can be found at www.drugs.health.gov.au.

National Psychostimulants Initiative
The National Psychostimulants Initiative (NPI) aims to reduce harms and prevent harms associated with psychostimulant use in the Australian community.

The NPI provides funding to undertake research, develop the drug and alcohol workforce, disseminate evidence based information to help reduce the impact of psychostimulant drugs in Australia, and educate young Australians about the risks and harms associated with psychostimulant drug use including ice.

Non-Government Organisation Treatment Grants Program
The Non-Government Organisation Treatment Grants Program (NGOTGP) provides funding to non-government organisations (NGOs) to operate a range of alcohol and drug treatment services. Under round three of the NGOTGP the Australian Government is providing $134.4 million (2008-2011) to 197 non-government treatment services. Treatment options available under the NGOTGP include counselling, outreach support, peer support, home detoxification, medicated and non-medicated detoxification, therapeutic communities and in/out patient rehabilitation.

Improved Services for People with Drug and Alcohol and Mental Health Problems Initiative
The Improved Services Initiative is providing approximately $20 million per annum to 2011-12 to fund NGO alcohol and other drug (AOD) treatment services to build their capacity to effectively address and treat coinciding mental illness and substance abuse.

Under the capacity building grants component of this initiative the Government is providing a total of $44.8 million over three years to 122 NGO AOD treatment services across Australia. The grants support workforce training, developing partnerships with local health services and the implementation of policies and procedures that support the identification and management of clients experiencing comorbid substance abuse and mental illness.

Amphetamine-Type Stimulants Grants Program
The Amphetamine Type Stimulants (ATS) Grants Program was a one-off grants round (2007-08 to 2008-09) to support time limited capacity building in AOD treatment services. Funding was used to provide infrastructure and training to better equip services to manage and treat the challenging behaviours that accompany ATS use and subsequent withdrawal and abstinence.

Mental Health Programs
As part of its commitment to mental health, the Australian Government also funds headspace (Australia's National Youth Mental Health Foundation), which provides access to 30 youth-friendly shopfronts across the country for young people aged 12-25 years. These shopfronts provide access to primary mental health care and alcohol and drug services as well as a range of other vocational and social support services. The aim of the project is to assist young people who are at risk of, or who have, a mental health or alcohol and drug problem. The holistic shopfront approach recognises that young people tend not to use traditional health services and that mental health and alcohol and drug issues are often accompanied by other problems.

headspace supports these services through research on best practice, and treatment and early intervention for young people, and by providing specialised training for health and other professionals involved in service provision.

The Australian Government has recently entered into a new funding agreement providing $45 million (GST exclusive) to continue headspace from 1 October 2009 to 30 June 2012.

The Department of Health and Ageing supports a number of data sources which inform the development of policy and the management programs. These include:

– the *National Drug Strategy Household Survey*, which is the most comprehensive national survey on substance use and related issues, and is the principal data collection vehicle to monitor trends and evaluate progress under the NDS. The survey is conducted on an approximately triennial basis with the next one scheduled for 2010. The survey examines the status of drug use, patterns of consumption, community support for drug-related policy, drug-related activities and drug-related harm.

– the *Illicit Drug Reporting System* (an annual national survey of approximately 1,000 injecting drug users) and the *Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System* (monitors the markets of ecstasy and related drugs).

– the *Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Services National Minimum Data Set* (AODTS-NMDS), which collects data on completed treatment episodes provided by publicly funded AOD treatment services. The purpose of the AODTS-NMDS is to aggregate standardised data from the Australian, State, and Territory Governments so that national information about clients accessing AOD treatment services, including service utilisation and treatment programs can be reported.

- the *Australian Secondary Students' Alcohol and other Drugs Survey,* which is a national survey of students aged 12 to 17 years on the use of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs and is conducted triennially. The last survey for which results are available was conducted in 2005 of which there were 21,805 respondents surveyed in 376 schools. Results from the 2008 survey are expected to be released in late 2009.

Substance abuse
The Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH) funds a range of Indigenous specific substance use services across Australia which directly and indirectly support Indigenous youth.

Under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Substance Use program, the Australian Government is providing $30.2 million in 2009-10 to 119 organisations providing Indigenous substance use services or support services across Australia. Services provided under this program include residential and non-residential substance use programs, and substance use services delivered within the primary health care setting.

A further $98.6 million is being invested under two COAG substance use measures to expand and enhance Indigenous substance use services in regional and remote Australia. Both measures are for four years, commencing 2006-07 and 2008-09 respectively, and both are ongoing. Projects funded under these measures include new and upgraded residential rehabilitation services and day centres; sobering up shelters; multidisciplinary teams with skills in substance use and associated issues; new models of service delivery, including outreach services; services to support individuals leaving rehabilitation and returning to their communities, and increased workforce capacity.

In the Northern Territory, a further $7.8 million over three years from 2009-10 under the *Closing the Gap – NT* measures is providing for continuation of enhanced substance use services which commenced in 2007 under the Northern Territory Emergency Response.

There is currently a whole-of-government effort aimed at reducing substance abuse in identified remote Indigenous communities. FaHCSIA leads this work with other partner agencies including the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Department of Health and Ageing and Attorney-General's Department.

As part of a whole community response, components such as youth workers, rehabilitation facilities, diversionary education and employment activities and the Opal fuel roll-out aim to have a greater positive impact on violence than stand alone programs.

Petrol Sniffing Strategy

The Petrol Sniffing Strategy (PSS) is a cross-agency collaborative approach between FaHCSIA, Department of Health and Ageing, DEEWR and the Attorney-General's Department that aims to reduce volatile substance abuse (particularly petrol sniffing) in regional and remote areas of Australia. The specific departmental responsibilities under the PSS are as follows:

− FaHCSIA: youth diversionary activities, strengthening and supporting communities, consistent legislation, appropriate levels of policing, evaluation

− Department of Health and Ageing: roll-out of Opal fuel, communication and education strategies, treatment and respite facilities

− DEEWR: alternative youth activities (with FaHCSIA and Attorney-General's Department), and

− Attorney-General's Department: diversionary youth activities (with FaHCSIA and DEEWR).

FaHCSIA is leading an evaluation of the PSS. The evaluation is due to be completed by 2012. The review of the first phase of the petrol sniffing strategy can be found at www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/indigenous/pubs/evaluation/petrolsniffing/Pages/default.aspx.

Concluding comments and emerging developments

The context outlined earlier in the submission highlighted a number of key issues regarding violence, including:

- The cost of violence to individuals and to the community is high.
- Young people are at much greater risk of experiencing violence when compared to other age groups.
- Men are more likely to experience violence in a public place by a stranger, while women more often experience violence in a home by someone known to them.
- In violence where alcohol and drugs are a factor, young people are overrepresented in these statistics.
- Bullying can have damaging effects, and perpetrators are at risk of future criminal offending.

The context also noted that young people's perceptions concerning violence include that:

- Young males are the most likely to commit violent crimes.
- Street violence is one of the most feared forms of violence.
- Violence is thought to be more likely to occur in public places and is frequent in drinking environments.

Media attention has raised concerns about the levels of youth violence, including the influence of drugs and alcohol, and young people themselves have identified violence as one of their top concerns. These perceptions show that violence involving young people is a significant issue for the community.

Most recently alcohol-fuelled violence has attracted community attention with a nation-wide blitz by police forces through Operation Unite. Agreed to at a 19 November 2009 meeting of police commissioners from across Australia and New Zealand, the two day crackdown (commencing on Friday 11 December 2009) was the first of its kind, involving comprehensive and coordinated action by police forces in all jurisdictions to tackle alcohol-fuelled crime and anti-social behaviour. Across Australia and New Zealand there were over 9,700 police deployed and over 2,700 arrests/ reports.

In considering solutions to the issue of violence, there is of course no simple answer. The issue of youth violence is a complex, multi-faceted problem and one that demands all levels of government, community organisations, parents, and young people themselves to work in partnership towards a range of solutions.

The WHO briefings on violence prevention find that

> *interpersonal violence is strongly associated with such macro-level social factors as unemployment, income inequality, rapid social change and access to education. Any comprehensive violence prevention strategy must ..also be integrated with policies directed at these macro-level social factors and*

harness their potential to reduce the inequities which fuel interpersonal violence[16]

The briefings identify broad violence prevention strategies, including:

- developing safe, stable and nurturing relationships between children and their parents and caregivers.
- developing life skills in children and adolescents.
- reducing the availability and harmful use of alcohol.

This submission has aimed to provide the Committee with a comprehensive picture of Australian Government activities that directly address the issue of violence or address risk factors that contribute to violence. In doing this, the submission outlines many of the Government's policies and initiatives that address macro-level social and economic factors, such as social exclusion and disadvantage, which may contribute to violence among young Australians.

The submission has also highlighted the Government's desire to engage directly with young people on issues that affect them, particularly through the AYF. It is vital that approaches to addressing violence impacting on young people involve young people's ideas and input. The role young people can play in tackling the issue of violence and bullying among young people is significant, particularly as young people highly value their friendships and are influenced by their peers. The submission also highlights the important role that arts and sports can play in positively engaging young people in their community.

One of the more recent developments highlighted in the submission, is the Government's work on a *National Strategy for Young Australians,* which includes a focus on the wellbeing of young people and behaviours that endanger the safety of others.

The Australian Government and state and territory governments have committed to working together in this area, particularly in relation to best-practice policing. At the December 2009 meeting COAG asked Police Ministers to work together to further develop best-practice policing, the features of which could include:

- targeted police effort in areas with a history of anti-social and violent behaviour and weapons use;
- restorative justice conferencing, which can require young offenders to face their victims and confront the impact and consequences of their actions and complete community service and other reparations;
- bans to prevent serious and persistent offenders from entering entertainment precincts (containing licensed premises) and reducing access to alcohol through strict enforcement of licensing legislation; and

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http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/4th_milestones_meeting/publications/en/index.html
Overview (p.5)

- ensuring that young people are dealt with by police as soon as possible following criminal incidents when they are still fresh in a young person's mind[17].

The COAG Communiqué also outlined that strategies to promote youth health and wellbeing are being progressed by the Australian Health Ministers Conference and COAG endorsed ongoing work through relevant Ministers to support health and well being in young people, including to:

- tackle cyber-bullying and
- build resilience and positive relationships among young people and the broader school community.

Further, COAG noted that the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy finalised its report on binge drinking in late November 2009, and that this has been submitted for future COAG consideration.

A further recent development of potential interest to the inquiry is the recently announced inquiry into the high level of involvement of Indigenous juveniles and young adults in the criminal justice system. On 19 November 2009 the Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, requested the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs inquire and report into the high level of involvement of Indigenous juveniles and young adults in the criminal justice system:

- How the development of social norms and behaviours for Indigenous juveniles and young adults can lead to positive social engagement
- The impact that alcohol use and other substance abuse has on the level of Indigenous juvenile and young adult involvement in the criminal justice system and how health and justice authorities can work together to address this
- Any initiatives which would improve the effectiveness of the education system in contributing to reducing the levels of involvement of Indigenous juveniles and young adults with the criminal justice system
- The effectiveness of arrangements for transitioning from education to work and how the effectiveness of the 'learn or earn' concept can be maximised;
- Best practice examples of programs that support diversion of Indigenous people from juvenile detention centres and crime, and provide support for those returning from such centres;
- The scope for the clearer responsibilities within and between government jurisdictions to achieve better coordinated and targeted service provision for Indigenous juveniles and young adults in the justice system
- The extent to which current preventative programs across government jurisdictions are aligned against common goals to improve the health and emotional well-being of Indigenous adolescents, any gaps or duplication in effort, and recommendations for their modification or enhancement.

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[17] http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2009-12-07/docs/20091207_communique.pdf

More information can be found at
http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/atsia/sentencing/index.htm.

These emerging developments are a positive step forward in strengthening support for the wellbeing and safety of all young Australians, and reflect the Australian Government's commitment to leading action in this area.

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