

Crime Prevention Strategy



COMMUNITY
CRIME PREVENTION





Minister Foreword

The best way to keep Victorian communities safe is preventing crime from occurring in the first place.

We must hold offenders to account and ensure we have strong law enforcement to keep our communities safe. We also need to tackle the underlying causes that can lead people to offend, which can include social and economic disadvantage, educational disengagement, community disconnection and social isolation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these issues for many Victorians, which means more support is needed to help people stay on the right path and out of the justice system.

This is why government is delivering a Crime Prevention Strategy which sets out a clear, long-term approach to addressing the causes of offending to keep our communities safe as they recover from the pandemic.

The Strategy will form part of government's broader social recovery agenda and will build on existing efforts and investments across government. One such investment is the Building Safer Communities Program, which includes grants and community forums designed to empower communities to identify and deliver crime prevention solutions that work for them.

We know that a collective effort across government, community, business and all parts of society is required to meaningfully address the causes of crime and recover from the pandemic. As Minister for Crime Prevention, I will work with my colleagues across government to build on our existing reforms in family violence, mental health support, education, employment and community policing, as well as government's broader social recovery plan.

We all benefit when every Victorian has the chance to achieve their full potential, and we have a collective interest in working together to help those who need it most.

We will build on what is already working and support local innovation to deliver results and help create safe, resilient and thriving Victorian communities.



The Hon. Natalie Hutchins MP
Minister for Crime Prevention

Intervening early to prevent crime

The Victorian Government's goal is to prevent crime and keep communities safe by addressing the root causes of offending.

We want to do more to prevent crime from happening in the first place. Crime causes physical and emotional harm to victim-survivors, their families and whole communities. For offenders, crime has life-long consequences that can lead to further and more harmful offending.

The Crime Prevention Strategy sets out a clear approach to preventing this harm by intervening early to address the underlying causes of crime, so we can:

- / keep Victorians and their communities safe
- / avoid the social and economic costs of crime and
- / support all Victorians to make positive contributions to our communities and fulfil their potential.

Preventing crime requires a whole-of-government and community effort. When people have access to education, employment and sustainable housing, have strong physical and emotional wellbeing and are connected to family and culture, they have a better chance of doing well in life. Access to the right supports and services at the right time is a strong protective factor against offending.

Some individuals and communities experience more risk factors than others, such as disadvantage, discrimination, poverty, homelessness, mental illness and drug and alcohol addiction. Some challenges are unique to specific communities, for example:

- / Aboriginal communities experience the ongoing impacts of colonisation, dispossession of land, lore, language and culture, and intergenerational trauma.
- / Many migrant and refugee communities continue to feel the effect of trauma, as well as isolation from the broader community, impacting community resilience and social cohesion.
- / Young people, particularly those from backgrounds where they have experienced disadvantage or discrimination, may need extra support to reach their potential and feel connected.
- / Some places and geographic communities have a greater concentration of risk factors that can lead to offending and require targeted efforts that respond to local issues.

Most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the number of people affected by these challenges and intensified the risk factors associated with offending for many Victorians. We need to intervene early, and work collaboratively across government and community, to ensure that the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 do not become long-term issues or translate into justice system involvement.

To do so, the Victorian Government is investing in a range of social, health and economic supports to assist communities to recover from the impacts of COVID-19. This includes investment in education, employment, housing, mental health and early intervention services, which help to strengthen protective factors against crime and offending.

The Strategy will build on these whole-of-government efforts by investing directly in Victorian communities, who hold the knowledge, skills and experience to design and deliver effective solutions to local issues.

We will measure and evaluate the success of our collective efforts at a community level and across government to identify opportunities for government to strengthen supports, services and data collection across justice, education, employment, and health and wellbeing.

Together, we can help keep Victorian communities safe.

What we heard from community consultation

"We need to break the system and change the outcomes for young people which start in young people feeling unwelcome and excluded."

"It's a whole-of-community responsibility... It's everybody's business to prevent crime."

"We have to trust communities to know what they need, focus on their strengths and support them to thrive."

"There must be holistic interventions across the individual, family and community rather than rigid, siloed...responses."

"Victorians support efforts on prevention and early intervention when it comes to stopping crime."

"Let communities help themselves – seek the voices and input of young people to build on community strengths"

"Communities need to stand together as a collective...to flourish we need to work together"

A joined-up approach to support people and communities

Collaboration across government, key organisations and with communities is the best way to provide individuals with the right supports to address the risk factors for offending and strengthen social recovery outcomes.

People who become involved with the justice system often have diverse and complex needs. It is critical that services and communities are working together to address these needs and provide individuals and communities with the right supports, particularly given the severe impact of COVID-19 on Victorian communities.

The Strategy promotes a shared responsibility across government, councils, community, business and other key sectors to address risk factors for offending, build on successful initiatives that are already underway and support Victoria's recovery from the pandemic.

In doing so, the Strategy builds on existing investment in a number of key reforms across government that support Victorians to lead safe, secure and fulfilling lives (see Figure 1).

The Strategy also complements the Connecting Care reforms, which are a critical part of the government's broader social recovery agenda. These reforms are focused on integrated service delivery to provide Victorians who have complex and intersecting needs with early access to effective services. Both the Strategy and the Connecting Care reforms seek to reduce offending and contact with the justice system by providing early support to individuals and communities.

Another key reform includes the establishment of Respect Victoria, an agency dedicated to the primary prevention of family and gender-based violence, which is a known risk factor for offending, as well as a crime in its own right. The Strategy recognises there are gendered differences in both offending and victimisation, and that cycles of violence have led to the disproportionate representation of victim survivors and perpetrators of family violence in the Victorian justice system.

Figure 1



The Strategy will also support young people who are at risk of offending by intervening early to prevent contact with the justice system. This complements work under the Youth Justice Strategic Plan, so that a range of support is provided across the spectrum of vulnerability to prevent offending and re-offending (see Figure 2).

Victoria Police are also key partners in crime prevention, and the relationships between local police, community members, young people and service providers will be crucial to the implementation of the Strategy. Victoria Police oversee several programs which will assist with the Strategy’s crime prevention activities, such as the Community Liaison Officer Program, Proactive Policing Officers, the Embedded Youth Outreach Program and the Portfolio Reference Groups, which assist engagement with diverse communities.

The Victorian Government’s commitment to Aboriginal self-determination is reflected in the Strategy and will build on existing efforts across government to support multicultural communities, by supporting crime prevention efforts that are culturally responsive and led by communities. The Strategy will also leverage place-based work to engage communities and support at-risk youth, including Regional and Metropolitan Partnerships, as well as forming part of social recovery efforts in the wake of the pandemic to help build stronger communities into the future.

Figure 2



Common risk factors

- / **Experiences of violence, abuse or neglect** – 53 per cent of young people in youth justice were victims of abuse, trauma or neglect as children¹
- / **Family and gendered violence** – 42 per cent of children and young people in youth justice have been exposed to family violence², 87 per cent of female prisoners are victims of sexual, physical or emotional abuse.³
- / **Low school achievement and engagement** – only 4 per cent of Victorian prisoners have completed secondary school⁴, while 68 per cent of young people in custody had been suspended or expelled from school⁵
- / **Alcohol and other drug misuse** – 52 per cent of offenders attributed their offending to use of alcohol and other drugs⁶
- / **Unemployment** – 50 per cent of Victorian prisoners were unemployed prior to entering prison⁷
- / **Areas with entrenched disadvantage are over-represented in offender statistics.**⁸

1. Department of Justice and Community Safety (Vic) 2020, Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2020–2030, p.9. Available at https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/embridge_cache/emshare/original/public/2020/06/89/79b442d3c/Youth-Justice-Strategic-Plan.pdf

2. Department of Justice and Community Safety (Vic) 2020, Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2020–2030, p.9. Available at https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/embridge_cache/emshare/original/public/2020/06/89/79b442d3c/Youth-Justice-Strategic-Plan.pdf

3. South Australian Centre for Economic Studies, Adelaide and Flinders Universities, Evaluation of the Targeted Women's Correctional Response, Final Report, commissioned by Corrections Victoria, Department of Justice and Regulation, Oct 2014.

4. Corrections Victoria, August 2020, Annual Prisoner Statistical Profile 2006–07 to 2018–19, Table 1.13, All prisoners by sex and highest level of education. Available at <https://www.corrections.vic.gov.au/annual-prisoner-statistical-profile-2006-07-to-2018-19>.

5. Department of Justice and Community Safety, September 2019, Youth Parole Board Annual Report 2018–19, p.29.

6. Payne J & Gaffney A 2012. How much crime is drug or alcohol related? Self-reported attributions of police detainees. Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice no. 439. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology.

7. Corrections Victoria, August 2020, Annual Prisoner Statistical Profile 2006–07 to 2018–19, Table 1.14, All prisoners by sex and employment status. Available at <https://www.corrections.vic.gov.au/annual-prisoner-statistical-profile-2006-07-to-2018-19>.

8. See Vinson, T. & Rawsthorne, Margot. & Cooper, Brian Adrien. & Jesuit Social Services. & Catholic Social Services Australia 2007, Dropping off the edge: the distribution of disadvantage in Australia. Richmond, Vic. Jesuit Social Services; Catholic Social Services Australia.

Our approach to preventing crime

The key to tackling the causes of crime lies in local communities and grassroots organisations. This is why supporting and investing in communities is at the centre of our approach to preventing crime.

The Crime Prevention Strategy will complement the Victorian Government's broader social recovery efforts by empowering communities to innovate and address issues at a local level. This Strategy recognises that Victorian communities are strong and resilient and hold the knowledge, skills and experience to design and deliver effective solutions to local issues.

The Strategy is focused on early intervention support for people and communities where there are opportunities to build on community resilience and strengths to tackle local issues and create safer and more connected places to live, work and play.

Key partners

- / community and multicultural organisations
- / Crime Stoppers Victoria
- / local councils
- / Universities, including New York University, Melbourne University and Swinburne University of Technology
- / Neighbourhood Watch Victoria
- / sporting organisations
- / Victoria Police
- / government departments

Working with the community across three action areas

The Strategy will support effective, collaborative efforts to improve outcomes for individuals and communities in Victoria across three interconnected action areas.

Key principles



Community is at the centre of crime prevention efforts



Strengths of individuals, families and communities will be recognised and built upon



Early support will be provided to young Victorians at risk, before they come into contact with the justice system



Crime prevention is a **shared responsibility** between government, communities and individuals



Innovation and evidence will underpin our approach to crime prevention



Culturally safe and inclusive crime prevention approaches

Three action areas

The primary focus of the Strategy is to **empower and invest in communities** to deliver tailored and effective interventions addressing the causes of offending.

This focus will be supported by work to **enhance and connect support to people and communities in need**, including through creating partnerships across private, public and community sectors, and to **build and share the evidence base** on what works to prevent crime.



Measuring the impact of our efforts to prevent crime

We will monitor and evaluate our progress in addressing risk factors for offending across the Victorian Government

Addressing the risk factors for offending requires a collaborative effort across government. The Strategy seeks to achieve progress against four overarching crime prevention outcomes:

1. Victorian communities are more connected, cohesive and engaged in designing and delivering local solutions to prevent crime
2. fewer Victorians come into contact with the criminal justice system
3. more people at risk of offending are connected with earlier, more effective support
4. Victorians are safer and feel safer.

These outcomes are ambitious, comprehensive, and they will help us focus our collective efforts and foster a shared responsibility to prevent crime and keep Victorian communities safe.

The four overarching outcomes will be achieved through:

- / whole-of-government efforts to build protective factors for Victorians, such as education, employment, health and wellbeing and justice services
- / individual crime prevention projects and initiatives,
- / broader crime prevention programs (including our Building Safer Communities Program)
- / place-based efforts to tackle local issues.

Measuring efforts across government

There are a broad range of existing government programs and reforms that address risk factors for offending, such as unemployment and low school achievement and engagement.

We will use a range of indicators from education, employment, justice and health and wellbeing to track whole-of-government progress toward reducing the presence of these risk factors; and to show how these efforts are achieving progress towards the four crime prevention outcomes. For example:

- / whether young people are engaged in employment and education, and how connected young people feel to their school
- / improvement in employment rates, especially for young people, and level of support provided for disadvantaged job seekers

- / provision of support to alleviate homelessness (including access to stable housing)
- / provision of timely mental health support
- / improvements in support for those experiencing family violence and for children in need of protection
- / reduction in rates of victimisation from crime, and increasing the proportion of people who feel safe in their communities.

Measuring the impact of the Crime Prevention Strategy and local initiatives

The impact of our work with communities to deliver crime prevention initiatives at the local level will also be measured and reported on to help us understand how community efforts are contributing to the four Crime Prevention outcomes. These community level measures will demonstrate our progress under each of the Strategy's three Action Areas:

- / Action Area 1 - empower and invest in communities to deliver tailored and effective interventions addressing the causes of offending.
- / Action Area 2 - enhance and connect support to people and communities in need, including through creating partnerships across private, public and community sectors.
- / Action Area 3 - build and share the evidence base on what works to prevent crime.

If our collective efforts are making a positive impact in all three Action Areas, we will see Victorian communities become connected and engaged in delivering local solutions to prevent crime; fewer Victorians in contact with the criminal justice system; more people connected with early and effective support; and communities that feel safer.

By having shared outcomes to measure our collective efforts across government and within our own local communities, we can foster a shared responsibility to prevent crime and keep Victorian communities safe.

Action Area 1

Empower and invest in communities to implement local solutions

To measure progress against the four crime prevention overarching outcomes, we will collect data from across government department and agencies, as well as community-level data.

Action Area 1 aims to equip and work alongside communities to address risk factors for offending.

Measuring our impact – Action Area 1

To measure progress in Action Area 1 we will track indicators such as the number of people engaged in services related to education and employment, the number of relevant offences in communities, partnerships and alliances formed between community stakeholders, and how communities are feeling about crime and safety.

Connected, inclusive communities are safer communities, and local solutions work best.

Community members know their local, social and cultural context and what solutions could work with the right opportunities and support.

That is why we will invest in communities so they can lead the way in developing and implementing solutions to address the root causes of crime.

Communities can be brought together by geographic location or shared characteristics such as culture, age or experience. We recognise the diverse range of communities in Victoria and the range of opportunities for preventing crime.

We will empower and work with communities on crime prevention efforts in two ways:

- / working with specific communities who need the most assistance to prevent crime, and supporting them to design and deliver effective crime prevention initiatives
- / delivering enhanced community crime prevention grants to fund innovative approaches to crime prevention across Victoria.

Work under the Strategy will be focused on communities where there are opportunities to improve community safety and support people who require additional support tailored to the local needs and context.



Building Safer Communities Program

The Building Safer Communities Program (BSC Program) is a renewed approach to crime prevention and builds on the lessons learnt from previous programs and initiatives. The BSC Program is designed to empower and invest in communities to implement local, evidence-based and innovative solutions to address crime prevention issues and improve community safety. The program includes four funding streams:

- / Creating Safer Places
- / Crime Prevention Innovation Fund
- / Empowering Communities
- / Youth Engagement Grants

The Creating Safer Places and Crime Prevention Innovation Fund offer grants of between \$25,000 - \$300,000 which provide Victorian councils, not-for-profit organisations and other stakeholders with the opportunity to apply for funding to undertake crime prevention activities. These may include urban design projects to deter crime and activate public spaces, or partnership projects that deliver and evaluate new and innovative community safety initiatives that address underlying drivers of crime.

The Empowering Communities funding stream delivers targeted grants of \$700,000 to priority communities for community-led crime prevention partnership initiatives. These grants recognise that communities are well placed to deliver effective, innovative and sustainable crime prevention approaches when they have access to resources, expertise and practical tools, and are united by a common goal. The Empowering Communities partnerships also include support to deliver a Building Safer Communities forum to bring together key stakeholders, including local councils, community organisations, community members, local police, youth services, schools and crime prevention experts, to identify local crime issues and discuss how they can be addressed.

The Youth Engagement Grants offer funding up to \$50,000 to small multicultural and Aboriginal clubs and organisations to use cultural connection, sport, arts, music or other creative activities to engage children and young people and support them to make positive life choices, establish strong community connections and prevent contact with police and the justice system.

Find out more about the **Building Safer Communities Program**.

Improving safety at night for women and gender diverse people in the CBD

The City of Melbourne received a \$193,000 Crime Prevention Innovation Fund grant through the Building Safer Communities Program to improve safety for women and gender diverse people visiting the city at night

Project Night Justice will deliver a Night Safety Summit, develop a Night Safety Charter, implement a sexual assault behaviour change and awareness campaign, and a Good Night Out Accreditation program.

The City of Melbourne will work with project partners Victoria Police, Crime Stoppers Victoria, Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia, Melbourne Licensees Forum and the University of Melbourne.

Project Night Justice will help ensure everyone can safely enjoy Melbourne's vibrant night-time economy.



Action Area 2

Enhance and connect support for people and communities in need

This Action Area aims to encourage collaboration and strengthen partnerships across different sectors and communities to improve access to targeted, effective crime prevention supports.

Measuring our impact – Action Area 2

To measure progress in Action Area 2, we will track indicators such as increased awareness of local supports and services in communities, principles of cultural safety and inclusion embedded in the design and delivery of crime prevention initiatives, reduced antisocial behaviour in targeted locations, and increased engagement in pro-social activities, such as sport.

Effective crime prevention requires a joined-up approach between government, industry, services and communities to address the root causes of crime and target the risk factors for offending.

To address the factors that drive crime, we will strengthen supports for families, communities and individuals; work across government to enhance employment and education initiatives; and establish innovative community and industry partnerships.

This work will respond to the needs of Victorian communities, particularly through:

- / establishing partnerships across sectors, such as sports and youth-focused services, to address risk factors and support communities
- / enhancing programs and support for people at risk of involvement with the criminal justice system and piloting innovative approaches and programs
- / supporting community initiatives that address specific risk factors for offending through expertise and resourcing
- / continuing partnerships with Neighbourhood Watch and Crime Stoppers Victoria to build community awareness and connection, and increase community safety.



Working in partnership with African-Australian communities

Young people thrive when they are supported by the right services and feel connected to their families and communities.

We are working in partnership with African-Australian communities in the South-Eastern and Western suburbs of Melbourne to deliver the right support to families to help them manage challenges and connect to culturally-appropriate services. This includes the Empowering Mothers program, which will deliver support to strengthen families and boost protective factors for young people.

This support recognises and builds on the strengths of young people and their families to build connectedness and resilience.

For more information on the African-Australian partnerships visit crimeprevention.vic.gov.au/african-australian-partnerships

Sports Alliance

Sport is a powerful tool to engage young people and build community connection. The Sports Alliance for Crime Prevention brings together leaders in the sports sector to provide advice to government on the role of sport in crime prevention and takes action to support young people.

Through the Alliance, the government has supported projects to engage and support young people through AFL, Football, Basketball, Rugby League and Netball.

For more information on the work of the Alliance and specific projects visit crimeprevention.vic.gov.au/sportsalliance

Partnership projects test new approaches to crime prevention

We have already established partnerships and pilot projects with Victorian communities, sporting organisations, councils and community organisations to test innovative approaches to crime prevention and to inform the development of this strategy. These projects included a gender informed lighting project in Darebin, a community engagement project in Kurunjang, support for young people experiencing challenges through partnerships focusing on employment and education, and intensive support for young people in partnership with Youth Activating Youth.



Action Area 3

Evidence and impact for effective and innovative approaches

This Action Area aims to build a strong evidence-base of best practice approaches to crime prevention.

Measuring our impact – Action Area 3

To measure progress in Action Area 3, we will track indicators such as access to crime prevention resources and support, crime prevention initiatives which demonstrate the use of evidence, evaluation principles embedded in initiatives, and the sharing of resources, tools and findings with communities.

We need to understand crime and its causes to build safer and more connected communities.

Under this Strategy, we will build and share a strong evidence base to support communities and position Victoria as a leader in crime prevention by:

- / delivering action research projects that will test crime prevention solutions to inform policy and program design
- / developing partnerships with international and local research institutions to ensure access to current evidence and international best practice
- / working alongside communities implementing initiatives to build evidence of their effectiveness.

Communities will have access to tools, resources and practical information to help build an understanding of what is working at the local level and to support the implementation and evaluation of their own solutions.



Perceptions of safety research and survey tool

We commissioned research to help communities understand crime and safety issues in their local context.

The Social Cohesion and Pro-Social Responses to Perceptions of Crime: Victorian Report is the result of a partnership between the Victorian Government and the University of Sydney, Monash University and the London School of Economics.

The project interviewed almost 3,000 Victorians across 70 communities and found the most effective way to reduce worry about crime is through pro-social activities that encourage community cohesion and connectedness.

The survey tool used in the research is available for use by local councils and organisations to measure perceptions of crime and safety.

For more information visit crimeprevention.vic.gov.au/perceptions-of-safety-survey

Partnership with New York University

To position Victoria as a leader in crime prevention, we are looking to innovative practice locally, nationally and internationally. This will allow us to build knowledge, evidence and capability to support communities in their crime prevention efforts.

For example, the Department of Justice and Community Safety has partnered with New York University to obtain advice and support on how innovative approaches to community development could apply in Victoria.

This work has resulted in tools, resources and recommendations to support effective development and evaluation of local initiatives based on the 'Neighbourhood Stat' and 'BetaGov' models.

For more information about the work of New York University, including recorded webinars and resources visit crimeprevention.vic.gov.au/nyu-partnership

Acknowledgements

The Crime Prevention Strategy has been developed through a whole-of-community effort.

The Victorian Government would like to acknowledge all those who generously contributed their effort, experience and expertise to the development of the Strategy. The extensive input and feedback from community members and organisations, community safety experts and government agencies has been vital to the development of this Strategy and will be critical to its successful implementation.

Consultations took place at forums, workshops and events in 2019 and 2020, including:

- / The Aboriginal Justice Forum
- / The Justice Partnership Forum
- / Seven regional stakeholder engagement events across Victoria
- / Eleven workshops and focus groups including targeted engagement with young people supported by the Youth Affairs Council Victoria (YACVIC) and another with organisations representing victims of crime
- / Meetings with the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, the Commissioner for Children and Young People, Commissioner for LGBTIQ+ Communities, the Victorian Multicultural Commissioner and the Victims of Crime Commissioner.

Detailed engagement with multicultural communities was also undertaken, with community workshops in Broadmeadows, Dandenong and Footscray as well as focus groups with the Brotherhood of St Laurence, Youth Activating Youth, the Multifaith Advisory Group, the Victorian Multicultural Commission, Settlement Services International and Bendigo Community Health Services.

Crime Prevention Taskforce

A Crime Prevention Taskforce was established and met six times in 2019 and 2020 to provide invaluable advice and feedback on the Strategy's development. The Taskforce included representatives from community services, industry and media:

- / Ahmed Hassan – Director, Youth Activating Youth
- / Azmeena Hussain – Board Director, Football Federation Victoria
- / Antoinette Braybrook – CEO, Djirra
- / Christian Bennett – Head of Government Relations and Industry Affairs, Woolworths
- / Corey Hannett – Director-General, Major Transport Infrastructure Authority
- / Craig Laslett – CEO, Engineering and Services Australia, Lendlease
- / Dave Donaghy – CEO, Melbourne Storm
- / Emma King – CEO, Victorian Council of Social Service
- / Julie Edwards – CEO, Jesuit Social Services
- / Julie Rynski – Chief People Officer, National Australia Bank
- / Lewis Martin – Managing Director, Channel Seven
- / Luke Hilakari – Secretary, Victorian Trades Hall
- / Mike Bainbridge – President, Basketball Victoria
- / Rob Auld – Head of Game Development, Australian Football League (AFL)

The Taskforce also heard from experts and community practitioners including StrEAT, the City of Moonee Valley's Flemington Works team, Berry Street, the Coleman Foundation, the New York Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice and Jobbank.





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