



ACT
Government

Justice and Community Safety

Victim Support ACT

Annual Report 2015-16

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Omissions

The following items are reported in the Annual Report of the ACT Justice and Community Safety Directorate:

- B.4 Risk Management**
- B.5 Internal Audit**
- B.6 Fraud Prevention**
- B.7 Work Health and Safety**
- B.9 Ecologically Sustainable Development**
- C.1 Financial Management Analysis**
- C.2 Financial Statements**
- C.3 Capital Works**
- C.4 Asset Management**
- C.6 Statement of Performance**

Acronyms

- ALRC Australian Law Reform Commission
- CALD Culturally and linguistically diverse
- DVPC Domestic Violence Prevention Council
- FAS Financial Assistance Scheme
- FVIP Family Violence Intervention Program
- HRC Human Rights Commission

A. Transmittal certificate



Mr Simon Corbell MLA
Attorney-General
ACT Legislative Assembly
London Circuit
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Mr Corbell,

I am pleased to submit to you this Annual Report that has been prepared under section 6(1) of the *Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act 2004* and in accordance with the requirements under the Annual Report Directions. It has been prepared in conformity with other legislation applicable to the preparation of the Annual Report by the Victims of Crime Commissioner.

I certify that the attached Annual Report is an honest and accurate account and that all material information on the operations of Victim Support ACT during the period 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016 has been included.

I hereby certify that fraud prevention has been managed in accordance with Public Sector Management Standards, Part 2.

Section 13 of the *Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act 2004* requires that you cause a copy of the Report to be laid before the Legislative Assembly within 3 months of the end of the financial year.

Signed and dated by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Hinchey', written in a cursive style.

John Hinchey
ACT Victims of Crime Commissioner
20/09/2016

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B. Organisation Overview and Performance

B.1 Organisational Overview

Victim Support ACT is an agency within the Justice and Community Safety Directorate that administers a range of services and programs for victims of crime and their families. The agency supports the independent statutory positions of Victims of Crime Commissioner and Domestic Violence Project Coordinator.

The Victims of Crime Commissioner position was established pursuant to section 7 of the *Victims of Crime Act 1994*. As of 1 April 2016 the Victims of Crime Commissioner position was relocated to section 18D of the *Human Rights Commissioner Act 2005*. The functions of the Victims of Crime Commissioner outlined in this Act include exercising the functions for the commission in relation to services for victims of crime and the functions as outlined in the *Domestic Violence Agencies Act 1986* (as the Domestic Violence Project Coordinator), the *Victims of Crime Act 1994* and the *Victims of Crime (Financial Assistance) Act 1983*.

As outlined in the *Victims of Crime Act 1994*, the Victims of Crime Commissioner manages the victims services scheme and as such, is the agency head of Victim Support ACT.

The functions of the Victims of Crime Commissioner are listed in section 11 of the *Victims of Crime Act 1994* and are as follows:

- a) to manage the victims services scheme and any other program for the benefit of victims;
- b) to advocate for the interests of victims;
- c) to advocate for the interests of affected people under the *Mental Health Act 2015*;
- d) to monitor and promote compliance with the governing principles;
- e) to ensure concerns and formal complaints about non-compliance with the governing principles are dealt with promptly and effectively;
- f) to ensure the provision of efficient and effective services for victims;
- g) to consult on and promote reforms to meet the interests of victims;
- h) to develop educational and other programs to promote awareness of the interests of victims;
- i) to distribute information about the operation of this Act and the commissioner's functions;
- j) to ensure that victims receive information and assistance they need in connection with their involvement in the administration of justice;
- k) to encourage and facilitate cooperation between agencies involved in the administration of justice with respect to victims;
- l) to advise the Minister on the matters relating to the interests of victims;
- m) any other function given to the commissioner under this Act or another territory law.

By separate appointment, the Victims of Crime Commissioner also performs the statutory functions of the Domestic Violence Project Coordinator under the *Domestic Violence Agencies Act 1986*. The activities of the Domestic Violence Project Coordinator for 2015-2016 is outlined later in this report.

Victim Support ACT plays an active role in supporting the Victims of Crime Commissioner and the Domestic Violence Project Coordinator to deliver his functions. In accordance with the Government's policy, Victim Support ACT delivers a combination of health services, support services, advocacy services and victims of crime financial assistance services. We play a unique role in the administration of justice in the ACT in this regard, delivering services to victims of crime across a broad mandate of activity.

Committed, dynamic and professional staff deliver the services of Victim Support ACT. We value, support and build staff capability. Our services are further strengthened by implementing innovative operational measures. The strategic plan for 2014-16 sets out how we intend to achieve our mission and goals.

Mission

Victim Support ACT promotes and supports the rights and interests of victims of crime and their families in the ACT. Our mission is to deliver the victims services scheme according to the Victims of Crime Regulation 2000 and to support the community awareness and justice advocacy functions of the Victims of Crime Commissioner.

Vision

Victim Support ACT contributes to the vision of the Justice and Community Safety Directorate for a *fair, safe and peaceful community where people's rights and interests are respected and protected*.

Our Values

Victim Support ACT applies the ACT Public Service values of *respect, integrity, collaboration and innovation* and these values are evident in our work practices and behaviours. We practice these values within our team, first and foremost, thereby building our capacity to reflect these values in our dealings with clients and stakeholders more generally.

Respect

The value of respect is demonstrated within and outside Victim Support ACT by:

- valuing and acknowledging the diversity, experience and perspectives of those with whom we interact;
- valuing and acknowledging the contribution of our colleagues;
- ensuring staff who administer authority do so with a sense of service to others, recognising the inherent talents and equality of Victim Support ACT staff members; and
- relating to colleagues, clients and stakeholders in a fair, decent and professional manner.

Integrity

The value of integrity is demonstrated within and outside Victim Support ACT by:

- being true to ourselves and each other;
- being willing to have honest and professional conversations with each other, even when these conversations are difficult;
- taking responsibility and being accountable for our decisions and actions;
- engaging genuinely with our clients and stakeholders; and
- advocating appropriately for the rights and needs of victims in the ACT.

Collaboration

We work collaboratively by:

- working in partnership with each other, with clients and across agencies;
- recognising and supporting our shared goals within Victim Support ACT;
- recognising and supporting the goals we have in common with other agencies; and
- promoting open communication, discussion and feedback to facilitate problem solving.

Innovation

We seek to be an innovative organisation by:

- looking for ways to continuously improve our services and skills;
- promoting creativity, reflection, flexibility and adaptation;
- responding to changing needs; and
- being open to learning, change, new ideas and multidisciplinary perspectives.

The next year will see a new strategic plan that will align with that of the JACS plan and that of the Human Rights Commission as a whole.

ACT Human Rights Commission restructure

In May 2013 the ACT Government commenced a review of statutory rights protection agencies and community advocacy agencies, with a view to considering options to strengthen the delivery of rights protection services to the ACT community. This was the third Government review of rights protection agencies in the ACT since 2003.

The first review was conducted by the Foundation for Effective Markets and Governance (FEMAG). The FEMAG review investigated the system of statutory oversight and community advocacy operating in the ACT as a whole, with a view to determining whether the existing systems were effective and efficient in improving service delivery and protecting rights of consumers.

The FEMAG report identified a need to consolidate existing complaint bodies to ensure an optimum system for consumers and citizens and to allow flexibility in the use of resources. It noted that a series of small stand-alone agencies would not be able to undertake the challenging tasks expected of them.

In response to the recommendations of the FEMAG review, the Government established the Human Rights Commission, comprising of the Human Rights Commissioner, the Discrimination Commissioner, the Health Services Commissioner, the Disability and Community Services Commissioner and the Children and Young People Commissioner.

The second review occurred in 2009, when KPMG was contracted to determine and report on the extent to which the FEMAG review and its recommendations had been implemented and met. The KPMG review specifically focussed on the recommendations that related to the interaction between rights focused agencies. KPMG found that the specific FEMAG recommendations had been broadly implemented.

The KPMG Report made reference to a proposal previously made by the then Victims of Crime Coordinator to relocate the Coordinator position and Victim Support ACT within the Human Rights Commission, noting that such a move would ultimately strengthen the interests and rights of victims of crime.

At the time, that proposal received limited support. However, it set the agenda for victims interests to be included in any future consideration of a rights protection model for the ACT. It was also in keeping with the ACT Government's position to establish a Human Rights Commission that had the flexibility to introduce additional responsibilities and Commissioners in the future.

These previous reviews set the context for the Government's third review of statutory rights protection agencies, which resulted this year in the establishment of a new Human Rights Commission.

The Government engaged the Nous Group to commence the third review and identified for inclusion in that review, the following protection of rights services:

- The Human Rights Commission (including the Human Rights, Discrimination, Health Services, Disability & Community Services and Children & Young People Commissioners)
- The Public Trustee for the ACT
- The Public Advocate
- Victim Support ACT (including the Victims of Crime Commissioner)
- The Restorative Justice Unit (currently within JACS Directorate).

On 30 January 2014, the Nous Group produced its report which can be accessed at:

http://cdn.justice.act.gov.au/resources/uploads/JACS/PDF/Review_of_Protection_of_Rights_Services.pdf.

The Nous Group recommended a new structure for the Human Rights Commission with a President as head and two generic commissioners to perform a range of statutory oversight functions.

On 30 April 2015 the Attorney-General released a public discussion paper setting out a revised model to that recommended by the Nous Group. That discussion paper is available at http://justice.act.gov.au/protection_of_rights/rights_and_support.

The government received 43 written submissions in addition to representations made during stakeholder forums by the commissioners, agency staff, legal and community organisations and the general community. In response to these submissions, the Government revised the model that was set out in the discussion paper. In summary the revised model proposed:

- a hierarchy of Commissioners, with a President as head of the Human Rights Commission. Other Commissioners would be accountable to, but not supervised by, the President;
- the Commissioners would work in an independent but collegiate manner;
- the retention of designated commissioner titles and functions – recognising the importance of having visible champions with a specific focus and expertise for vulnerable community groups;
- moving complaints handling functions from the President to the Discrimination, Health Services and Disability and Community Services Commissioner;
- vesting responsibility for leadership of overarching systemic advocacy requiring co-ordination or co-operation across the Commission in the President;
- introducing governance and decision making processes similar to those of the Australian Human Rights Commission; and
- a requirement for the commission to produce a corporate governance protocol, operations protocol and a client service charter following consultation with Government and the public.

In addition to the proposed new Human Rights Commission, the public guardian functions previously located in the Public Advocate's office were proposed to be co-located within the office of the Public Trustee.

On 27 October 2015 the Attorney-General, Simon Corbell MLA, announced the Government's decision to establish a new Human Rights Commission in accordance with this model.

On the 9th February 2016, the Protection of Rights (Services) Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 was passed in the Legislative Assembly. The Bill created the position of President of the Commission and brought the Public Advocate and Victims of Crime Commissioner into the Commission. The Bill merged the Public Guardian functions into the Public Trustee.

The new ACT Human Rights Commission commenced operation on the 1st April 2016. The members of the Commission include a President and three Commissioners. Their roles and functions are as follows:

- the president, who is also the human rights commissioner;
- the children and young people commissioner, who is also the public advocate;
- the discrimination, health services, disability and community services commissioner
- the victims of crime commissioner, who is also the domestic violence project coordinator and agency head of Victim Support ACT.

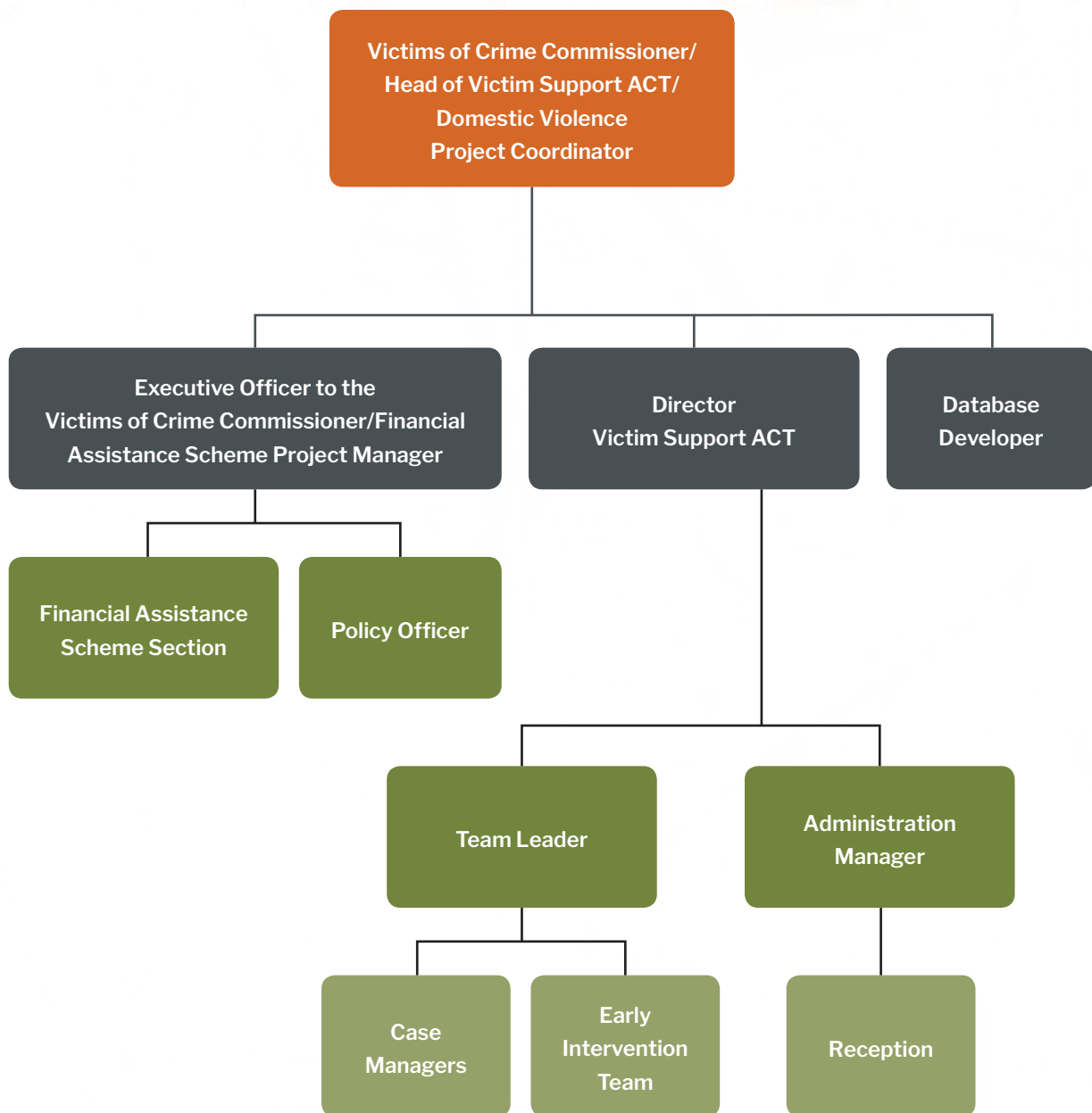
The Commission offers a full range of services including:

- independent complaint handling in relation to a range of service providers including discrimination matters;
- community education and advice to government in regarding human rights obligations;
- advocacy for children, young people and adults experiencing vulnerability; and
- advocacy, information, therapeutic services and support for victims of crime.

Moving Victim Support ACT and the Victims of Crime Commissioner into the Human Rights Commission has benefits for victims of crime. It presents opportunities to improve service delivery by recognising that victims' rights are human rights. It creates an environment where traditional interpretations of what constitutes human rights can be constructively challenged and debated.

Since amalgamating with the Human Rights Commission on the 1st April 2016, Victim Support ACT has worked closely with the Human Rights Commission and the Justice and Community Safety Directorate to prepare for co-location. We look forward to working collaboratively with our colleagues in the new Human Rights Commission to strengthen the delivery of rights protection services to the ACT community.

Organisational Chart



Our priorities for 2015-2016:

- Conduct an internal review of all policies and standard operating procedures around client service models.
- Establish the new financial assistance scheme and raise awareness of victim's rights and entitlements under the new scheme.
- Work to establish the new Human Rights Commission.

B.2 Performance Analysis

B.2.1 Strategic indicator

The strategic indicator for Victim Support ACT is the number of community members made aware of their rights. This strategic indicator is consistent with the Justice and Community Safety Directorate's Strategic Objective 5 – Promotion and Protection of Rights and Interests.

This indicator is measured by the number of information sheets that are provided to community members by Victim Support ACT. The target for 2015-16 was 700.

Table 1: Victim Support ACT performance against strategic indicator 2015-2016

Measure	2015-2016
Target	700
Number sent to clients by VS ACT	394
Number handed out by volunteer program	511
Number provided to other services	0
Actual - Total	905
Variance on target	29%

B.2.2 Performance indicator

The performance indicator (accountability indicator) for Victim Support ACT is the percentage of referrals that are responded to within five working days. This performance indicator is consistent with the Justice and Community Safety Directorate's Accountability Indicators for Output 1.5 – Protection of Rights.

Table 2: Performance against the accountability indicator 2013-2016

Measure	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Target	90%	90%	95%
Actual	98%	100%	99%
Variance on target	9%	11%	4%

B.2.3 Strategic goal 1: build a responsive, accessible and flexible service for all victims of crime

The 2015–2016 financial year has been a busy time for Victim Support ACT, seeing the appointment of the new Team Leader position. A rigorous review of all operational policies and Standard Operating Procedures has been undertaken, which has been a catalyst for a thorough review of operational service systems delivered by Victim Support ACT.

Client Service Delivery

What makes Victim Support ACT unique from other services and health services is the specific and specialised knowledge of particular aspects that affect victims of crime. Victim Support ACT case managers provide a therapeutic approach to assisting victims alongside having the experience of understanding the specific ways that a crime can affect an individual. The relationship with other justice agencies and the knowledge of the justice process and other processes that victims of crime interact with is what attracts people to the service. They approach Victim Support ACT with the expectation that they might get assistance with their therapeutic needs from a health professional but they will also have the benefit of the specialist knowledge of the processes specific to victims of crime.

Table 3 highlights the number of new enquiries responded to by Victim Support ACT and the outcome of those enquiries. Of 1235 new enquiries in 2015-16, 425 people required case management and were recorded as 'registered' clients. Those that required a less involved level of assistance, such as information, referral to more appropriate services or other one-off activities, were not categorised as being 'registered'.

Table 3 also highlights that 508 clients who were registered in previous years continued to receive case management during the 2015-16 reporting year.

Table 3: Enquiries and supports by Victim Support ACT in 2014-15 & 2015-16

Measure	2014-2015	2015-2016
Registered clients		
New clients registered for case management	446	374
Existing clients with new episodes of victimisation	41	51
Existing clients referred more than once	157	228
Unregistered enquiries/referrals		
Client declined service	103	160
Unable to be contacted	108	138
One off activity or referred to alternative service	111	160
Ineligible *	29	45
Enquiry only		
Advice or information only	59	79
Total number of new enquiries/referrals	1054	1235
Ongoing service		
Existing registered clients ongoing service	612	508
Total people referred or provided with service	1666	1743

* The Victims of Crime Regulation 2000 contains eligibility criteria for our services.

Clients who are registered for case management receive ongoing services from Victim Support ACT, including assessment, goal planning, support with resolution of concerns and complaints, court support, advocacy, psycho education, and higher-level advocacy with the Victims of Crime Commissioner as appropriate. Many clients of case management will also receive therapeutic services including counselling and/or physical therapies. Counselling may be provided directly by Victim Support ACT case managers or by external health professionals under the victims services scheme depending on the needs and wants of each individual.

Clients of Victim Support ACT may come to the service in a variety of ways. Table 4 highlights that the majority of referrals to Victim Support ACT are received from police, either directly or through SupportLink. Victim Support ACT will work with people regardless of whether they have reported the crime to police or not. Clients who self referred were the agency's second highest referral source in 2014-15 and 2015-16.

Table 4: Referral sources 2015-16

Referral source	2014-15	2015-16
ACT Policing and SupportLink* referral program	40%	37%
Self	28%	33%
Family	5%	6%
Domestic Violence Crisis Service	8%	10%
Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions	4%	3%
Wraparound	4%	2%
Other	11%	9%

* SupportLink is an online referral tool used by police.

Data is collected from registered clients relating to the time from the crime incident to their referral or first contact with Victim Support ACT.

Table 5: Time from incident to referral 2015-16

Days from incident to first contact or referral	2015-16
Within 1 month	37%
Within 6 months	15%
Within 1 year	10%
Within 2 years	8%
More than 2 years after the incident	30%

Table 5 highlights that people who are harmed by crime often take some time to report the crime that has been committed against them or to seek support to manage the impacts of the crime.

The gender and cultural diversity of victims who were registered clients of Victim Support ACT in 2015-16 are outlined in tables 6 and 7.

Table 6: Client gender distribution 2014-15 & 2015-16

Gender	2014-15	2015-16
Female	65%	70%
Male	35%	30%

Table 7: Cultural diversity of clients 2014-15 & 2015-16

Ethnic Identity	2014-15	2015-16
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	5%	8%
Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background	17%	13%
Neither Aboriginal nor Torres Strait Islander or CALD	70%	74%
Unspecified	8%	5%

Victim Support ACT also seeks to provide support to witnesses and family members of victims of violent crime.

Table 8: Type of victim – 2014-15 & 2015-16

Type of victim	2014-15	2015-16
Primary	73%	79%
Witness	5%	5%
Related	22%	15%

Victim Support ACT captures information about the crime types using the Australian and New Zealand Standard Offence Classification (ANZSOC) see table 9.

Table 9: Offence types – All victims 2015-16

Type of crime	All Victims*
Abduction, harassment and other offences	5%
Acts intended to cause injury - assault	25%
Acts intended to cause injury – domestic violence	37%
Dangerous and negligent acts	0%
Homicide and related offences	4%
Offences against government – breach order	0%
Robbery, extortion and related offences	4%
Sexual assault and related offences	17%
Unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter	3%
Other	5%

* Includes related victims and witnesses

It can be seen that the majority of people making contact with Victim Support ACT are victims of personal crimes primarily assault, domestic violence and sexual offences. A high proportion of these clients knew the person who harmed them. Table 10 indicates that during 2015-16, exactly half of all our clients experienced the crime at the hands of a family member, a current partner or an ex-partner

Table 10: Relationship to Offender 2014-15 & 2015-16

Relationship to Offender	2014-15	2015-16
Family Member	20%	20%
Ex partner	20%	26%
Partner	5%	4%
Known others	26%	21%
Neighbour	3%	4%
Not known	25%	23%
Unspecified	1%	1%

Supporting and Engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims of crime: Reconciliation in Action

During 2015-16, Victim Support ACT staff members continued to participate in and contribute to a number of activities and events in order to strengthen the profile of the agency among the ACT's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Victim Support ACT Reconciliation Working Group activities and events

Victim Support ACT's Reconciliation Working Group, formed in March 2015, continued to organise quarterly events and activities for all Victim Support ACT staff with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander focus.

- In September 2015, an in-house half day workshop on Indigenous Language and Pronunciation facilitated by Doug Marmion, a linguist from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, was arranged and well attended.
- Staff celebrated and reflected on the importance and impact of the National Apology in 2007 over morning tea in February 2016.
- Two staff members attended the Growing Healthy Families community BBQ in April 2016.
- On 1 April 2016, Victim Support ACT merged with the ACT Human Rights Commission (HRC). The Victim Support ACT Reconciliation Working Group now attends the HRC Reconciliation Action Plan meetings to support the reconciliation work of the Commission.
- Reconciliation has been included on the Victim Support ACT monthly team meeting agenda, to facilitate regular discussion within the broader team.
- The group continues to develop a work plan that implements the recommendations from the 'It's All About Trust Report'; to reflect on issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and discuss how we can better build trust, and ensure that we are providing useful and relevant services.
- Victim Support ACT service delivery staff members continue to take the lead in terms of developing the agency's profile in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in the ACT, reflecting on how we go about delivering services and taking the time to seek improvement in this area. This collaborative, bottom up approach is a major step forward for the agency.

NAIDOC Week 2015

- Victim Support ACT staff and volunteers hosted an information stall at the 2015 ACT NAIDOC Committee Family Day. Victim Support ACT information and resources were handed out, and community connections were made.
- A group of staff with their partners went along to a production at the Street Theatre, A Head Full of Love, which explored key issues of mental health, Indigenous health, Aboriginal people in custody and the preservation of tradition.
- Staff members also attended the NAIDOC week ball, and the Aboriginal Hostels Luncheon as part of NAIDOC week celebrations.

National Reconciliation Week 2016

- Six staff members attended the Sorry Day walk together with Human Rights Commission colleagues on 27th May 2016, carrying the Victim Support ACT banner incorporating artwork by Rachelle Kelly, a local Aboriginal artist, to highlight our continuing commitment to reconciliation.
- On 1 June 2016, Victim Support ACT staff hosted an information sharing stall at the Justice and Community Safety directorate BBQ held at Corroboree Park for National Reconciliation Week 2016, which raised awareness of the agency's work. The BBQ was attended by other agencies within JACS as well as other directorate representatives.



John Hinchey and Helen Watchirs at the Sorry Day Walk

Victims of Crime Commissioner in the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Action Plan Champion

The JACS Directorate launched its second Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Action Plan 2016 – 2019 in June 2016. The plan has a focus on better understanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employee’s needs and aspirations in order to provide effective and supportive retention strategies, and develop appropriate mechanisms to build individual capability through personalised plans. The Victims of Crime Commissioner took on the role of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Action Plan champion to support inclusive strategies to employ and retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the directorate. This plan is an opportunity to make a difference and to close the gap. The plan is underpinned by a shared belief that better results will be achieved if we can find more common ground between the culture and expectations of the workplace and the culture and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Side by Side volunteer program

Victim Support ACT contracts Communities@Work to deliver a volunteer program.

The program:

- provides court support to victims of crime who are registered clients of Victim Support ACT;
- assists victims of crime to apply for financial assistance through the ACT Government’s financial assistance scheme;
- provides practical assistance to victims of crime and administrative assistance to the Victims of Crime Commissioner as agreed in writing between parties; and
- conducts a community awareness raising program to promote the interests of victims of crime.

Table 11: Number of people provided with information about the rights of victims by the Side by Side volunteer program

Measure	2014-15	2015-16
Target	500	500
Actual	509	511
Variance on target	2%	2%

Table 12: Number of people provided with 'Protecting your Home' guide

Measure	2014-15	2015-16
Target	500	500
Actual	515	528
Variance on target	3%	6%

This year, 12 volunteers attended the Side by Side training including court orientation.



Staff from Victim Support ACT and Communities@work holding a stall for white ribbon day

Court Support

Side by Side volunteers provide practical support throughout the court process where a victim of crime may be required to attend court to give evidence.

Table 13: Number of persons provided with court support by Side by Side

Measure	2015-2016
Number of clients supported	27
Number of occasions*	41
Number of hours face to face or over the phone	276

* some clients attended court on more than one occasion.

Financial Assistance Scheme

Two Side by Side volunteers have been involved with supporting clients of Victim Support ACT to make applications to the Financial Assistance Scheme in this reporting year. Volunteers have been involved at different stages in the process including:

- assisting people to complete the documentation required to make an application;
- attending out of time hearings at the ACT Magistrate's Court with applicants for support; and
- attending conferences at the ACT Magistrate's Court with applicants for support.

The volunteers have assisted 21 victims of crime with financial assistance applications this reporting period and spent a total of 36.5 hours providing this support.

Table 14: Number of people assisted in preparing applications for financial assistance

Measure	2015-2016
Number of clients supported	21
Number of hours	36.5

Establishment of Victim Support ACT Policy, Standard Operating Procedure and Publication Committee

Victim Support ACT established a Policy, Standard Operating Procedure and Publication Committee in August 2015. The Committee's role is;

- to review existing and develop new policies, standard operating procedures and publications for Victim Support ACT and recommend endorsement to the Victims of Crime Commissioner;
- to provide a feedback forum for Victim Support ACT staff to ensure that the agency has a current suite of policies and related standard operating procedures that provide a framework for effective service delivery which meet legislative requirements;
- to facilitate and support staff within Victim Support ACT to identify the need to review and develop policies, standard operating procedure and publications as services and programs continue to evolve; and
- to monitor the implementation of policies and standard operating procedures.

The functions of the Committee are to:

- maintain a systematic approach to policy, standard operating procedure and publication review and development;
- maintain a policy, standard operating procedure and publication review schedule;
- ensure awareness of ACT Government, Justice and Community Safety Directorate and National policies and initiatives;
- regularly review standard operating procedures and policies; and
- providing input into relevant ACT Government and Justice and Community Safety Directorate policies.

The Committee meets on a monthly basis and also networks closely with other units within JACS, ACT Health and other government agencies to seek expertise, advice and recommendations relating to specific policy and standard operating procedure development and review.

Victim Support ACT have been working with Digital Services team to develop a SharePoint site which will have multiple functions and provide access for policy committee members to develop, review and edit draft policies and standard operating procedures.

Development of Children and Young People Service Model

In conjunction with the work being undertaken by the Policy Committee a review of service systems was undertaken with the first being services provided to children and young people who accessed Victim Support ACT after having experienced crime.

A Consultant specialising in children and young people was engaged by Victim Support ACT in September 2015 to review current practices within Victim Support ACT in order to determine:

- service strengths and vulnerabilities;
- current assessment and therapeutic practice;
- training and support needs of staff;
- protocol and documentation requirements; and
- opportunities for service improvement and interagency collaboration;

The project involved a staged approach to cover the above objectives.

Stage 1

In-depth interviews were conducted over a two-week period in October 2015 with all Victim Support ACT Health Professional Officers. The interview format had a prepared discussion guide with questions to staff relating to:

- current role within the service;
- day-to-day operations;
- case load;
- mix of case management versus therapeutic intervention;
- assessment methods and therapeutic models;
- understanding of trauma informed practice, and how is this conducted within the service;
- clinical support and supervision;
- support needs not currently being met;
- ideas for service improvement; and
- Victim Support ACT partnerships with other agencies.

The information gathered through this process was qualitatively analysed, identifying themes, service strengths and gaps.

Stage 2

Two half-day workshops, facilitated by the Consultant were held to work on developing guiding service principles for working with children and young people that could serve as a framework to guide all interactions and processes. This process involved staff offering their views on what they believed should be the principles of Victim Support ACT. This yielded a lot of positive contributions, and it was important to take time to articulate what these principles would mean in practice, and then clarify each person's understanding of the principles.

The workshops identified six key principles that will guide our work with children and young people.

Principle One: Children and Young People should be safe

In all interactions with Victim Support ACT the immediate and ongoing safety of clients should be given the highest priority.

Principle Two: Clients have strengths and are experts in their own experience

Victim Support ACT will work collaboratively from a strengths-based approach with people who access services and by expecting capacity from the client - supporting young people's goals and interests and active participation.

Principle Three: Supporting and strengthening social attachments are vital

Our priority is the well being of the client however, at times, we need to focus on the primary care giver first so that they can provide support and care for their children and young people.

Principle Four: Provide Trauma Informed Care

In all our interactions with children and young people we recognise the potential impacts of trauma on the child or young person's body, brain, emotions and capacity for self regulation and social attachments, and maximise their sense of choice and control.

Principle Five: Ensuring communication is open and respectful

Assessment processes, actions, decisions and planning should be culturally and age appropriate and actively involve children and young people.

Principle Six: Provide individualised and appropriate care

Refer children and young people to individually appropriate trauma-specific services and interventions including physical, emotional, cognitive and social therapies.

The second aim of the workshops was to begin consideration of using evidence-based assessment tools to ensure thorough and best practice assessment of children and young people and their families when they seek support from Victim Support ACT. Processes and tools utilised by other agencies were distributed and discussed by staff. Staff worked in groups to review assessment tools and see which components of each may be applicable to Victim Support ACT. Assessment tools reviewed included those used by ACT Health in the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and the Child at Risk Health Service, as well as examples from overseas including the TAYS assessment from the UK.

Stage 3

A Children and Young People Working Group was established to develop assessment forms for children aged from 5 to 11 years and from 12 to 18 years.

The Children and Young People Working Group will draft a Service Model that will clearly articulate guiding principles, assessment processes and tools, referral and resources to be used by Victim Support ACT when working with Children and Young People. It is envisaged that this Service Model will be introduced and implemented in the latter part of 2016.

Development of Service Model for Victims of Domestic / Family Violence

The Victims of Crime Regulation 2000 determines eligibility for levels of service for victims of crime under the victims services scheme. The Regulation specifies that eligibility is limited to victims who have experienced an offence against a law in force in the ACT. Level 2 services and above are limited to victims (primary victims, related victims and witnesses) of violent crime.

As of 1 July 2016, the *Victims of Crime (Financial Assistance) Act 2016* will recognise that people who experience domestic and/or family violence are exposed to a range of offences that would not have previously provided the opportunity for them to be eligible for Level 2 and Level 3 Services under the victims services scheme, these offences include, but are not limited to:

- destroying or damaging property
- arson
- forcible entry on land
- offences relating to government premises
- possession of offensive weapons and disabling substances
- offensive behaviour
- burglary
- going equipped with a weapon for theft, etc
- causing bushfires
- threat to cause property damage – fear of death or serious harm
- threat to cause property damage
- possession of thing with intent to damage property damage
- contravention of protection order
- unregistered firearms
- discharge of firearms or possession endangering life
- offences on premises in a territory
- negligent driving
- furious, reckless or dangerous driving
- menacing driving

In response to the legislative changes, Victim Support ACT will amend its service model to expand access to services for victims of domestic and family violence. In 2016-2017 the Working Group will develop a range of Standard Operating Procedures to ensure that all individuals accessing services are provided with consistent service delivery that are underpinned by evidence based and best practice principles to support them regardless of their past and/or current situation. The Working Group will map pathways for appropriate referral options to work with individuals in crisis and those requiring long-term support and/or counselling.

B.2.4 Strategic goal 2: strengthen stakeholder engagement

Victim Support ACT has many established networks and there is a continued focus on developing a broad range of service partnerships. Victim Support ACT aims to improve service delivery to individuals who have experienced crime; extend and develop professional networks which enhance the capacity to deliver quality services, and explore the opportunity to participate and/or lead quality improvement activities.

A new collaborative partnership that began this year was with the Chief Allied Health Office. This partnership will provide greater opportunities for Health Professional Officers at Victim Support ACT to:

- network with multidisciplinary peers and colleagues;
- participate in a range of learning and development activities, including the Clinical Educators Network;
- share information about services and resources;
- enhance Clinical Supervision; and
- explore opportunities for reciprocal rotation placements to increase knowledge around other service delivery areas.

Partnerships were also strengthened with:

- Domestic Violence Crisis Service (DVCS);
- Supportlink;
- Australian Federal Police (AFP);
- Victim Liaison Officers;
- Coronial Counselling Team;
- Relationships Australia; and
- Health Care Consumers Association (HCCA).

National Charter of Victims Rights

In 1996 Australian jurisdictions through the then Standing Committee of Attorneys-General, endorsed a national Charter for Victims' Rights in Australia. The Charter is part of a broader commitment by the Australian community to recognise the needs of victims of violent crime in the criminal justice process and assist them to recover from the physical and emotional impact of crime.

The rights, information, services and practical assistance afforded to victims of violent crime within Australia varies across jurisdictions. Each state and territory has its own principles or charter of rights, service delivery system and dedicated financial assistance scheme to provide support to eligible victims of crime. These services are administered based according to where the crime occurred and the jurisdiction in which a victim may live.

The primary issues relevant to the development of more coordinated service delivery across jurisdictions include:

- complexities of cross-jurisdiction co-operation and collaboration;
- implications of victim mobility for victim assistance; and
- information sharing within approved guidelines between agencies at different levels.

In this context, it is important to ensure that consistent service provision is available to all victims of crime irrespective of where the crime occurred or where they may reside. This will ensure that the rights and interests of victims are appropriately addressed through the criminal justice process.

The on-going work to develop a National Framework of Victims Rights represents the commitment of Australian jurisdictions to improve the national coordination of services to victims of crime to assist their recovery from the impact of crime and minimise re-victimisation in navigating the criminal justice system.

Each state and territory has committed to implementing the national framework and the strategies proposed in the implementation plan. The ACT Victims of Crime Commissioner is a member of the national Law, Crime and Community Safety Council (LCCSC) Victims of Crime Working Group, which will oversee the strategies supporting the national framework and has responsibility for reporting to the NCEOs Group and Ministers on the progress of the plan.

The LCCSC Working Group will continue to meet regularly (at least twice a year) to monitor progress of the strategies as well as identifying and responding to risks and challenges to implementing the framework.

Financial Assistance Scheme

As forecast in last year's Annual Report, the ACT Government this year progressed the development of a more modern and user-friendly victims of crime financial assistance scheme.

A working group, consisting of members from Victim Support ACT, Legislation Policy and Programs, the Government Solicitor's Office, ACT Law Courts and Tribunal, and the ACT Parliamentary Counsel's Office worked to finalise the legislation that will underpin the new model and on the 8th of March 2016 the Bill was passed unanimously in the Legislative Assembly.

In April 2016 the working group was awarded the Director-General Business partnership award. The award recognised the efforts of the working group in relation to working collaboratively.



Members of the working group accepting their award from the Director-General

The objectives of the new scheme are to help victims of crime by establishing a system for giving financial assistance to:

- assist victims of crime to recover from acts of violence;
- contribute to the safety of victims of crime and the prevention of future acts of violence;
- acknowledge the harmful effects of violence; and
- complement other services provided for victims of crime.

The new scheme:

- enhances access to the scheme for victims of crime through improved case management procedures;
- reduces barriers for victims of crime accessing the scheme by separating the scheme from the court system and reducing reliance on legal representation;
- improves transparency of decision-making; and
- responds to concerns about potential conflict arising from the current dual responsibilities of the ACT Government Solicitor to progress applications and represent the Territory as a party in litigation with the applicant.

The new scheme will be administered by the Victims of Crime Commissioner and will commence on 1 July 2016. The Act and its explanatory statement can be accessed at <http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/a/2016-12/default.asp>

Planning and Implementing the new Victims of Crime Financial Assistance Scheme

From September 2015 three Victim Support ACT staff members were tasked with planning for

implementation of the Financial Assistance Scheme.

Two staff members undertook a Project Management course to build their skill set. Following this, with considerable support and advice from the ACT Government Solicitor's Office, the team worked to:

- develop policies and procedures for decision making under the Act;
- prepare templates for all communication with applicants and other relevant parties under the Act;
- develop appropriate website information and resources to provide information about the operation of the new scheme;
- develop information sharing procedures with key stakeholders including ACT Policing and the ACT Law Courts and Tribunal in accordance with the Act;
- develop appropriate procedures with the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal for external review of decisions; and
- develop and deliver training to internal and external stakeholders about the operation of the new scheme.

Funding was also received to develop a database specific for the Financial Assistance Scheme. This work was outsourced to a company that specialises in software development.

Not a wife beater campaign

This is Not a 'Wife Beater' (NAWB) is a Canberra-based campaign that challenges the language, attitudes, stereotypes and behaviours that minimise and condone intimate partner and family violence. NAWB does this by reclaiming the singlets casually referred to as 'wife beaters', renaming them 'respecters', and using them as a symbol to promote respectful relationships and safe and inclusive communities.

The campaign was first launched in 2013 by the Australian National University Women's Department. It was re-launched with the support of the Chief Minister, Domestic Violence Prevention Council, Victim Support ACT and the YWCA.



Staff at Victim support ACT wearing their 'Respecter' singlets as a part of the 'this is not a wife beater campaign'

B.2.5 Strategic goal 3: support the role and function of the Victims of Crime Commissioner and the Domestic Violence Project Coordinator

Public Service Awards

It was a great honour to be nominated, and receive the ACT Public Service for Excellence Leadership Award this year and the Public Service Medal in the Australia Day Honours List 2016. I have been fortunate in working with many fine, dedicated colleagues, since I joined the ACT Public Service in 1987. It is an incredibly supportive work environment and it has given me many rewarding opportunities. I am very proud to be an ACT Public Servant and am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to its strong culture and excellent services it provides to our community.

Domestic Violence Project Coordinator

The functions of the Domestic Violence Project Coordinator are set out in the *Domestic Violence Agencies Act 1986* section 12 (Part 3) and are as follows:

- a) to monitor and promote compliance with the policies of the ACT and Commonwealth governments;
- b) to assist government agencies and non-government organisations involved in –
 - (i) law enforcement; or
 - (ii) the provision of health, education, crisis or welfare services to victims or perpetrators of domestic violence or otherwise relating to the incidence or prevention of domestic violence;to provide services of the highest standard;
- c) to assist and encourage the agencies and organisations referred to in paragraph (b) to provide appropriate educational programs;
- d) to facilitate cooperation among the agencies and organisations referred to in paragraph (b);
- e) to assist in the development and implementation of policies and programs as directed by the Domestic Violence Prevention Council;
- f) to carry out any other functions the council directs.

This year the Domestic Violence Prevention Council (the Council) completed a review into domestic and family violence related deaths in the ACT as requested by the Attorney-General in 2014. A copy of the Council's report following that review can be found here: http://www.cmd.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/864714/DVPC-Review-of-Domestic-and-Family-Violence-Deaths.pdf

The report, *Findings and Recommendations from the Review of Domestic and Family Violence Deaths in the ACT*, was prepared by the Council with extensive assistance from a Principal Research Officer, Ms Emma Henderson, who was based in the office of the Victims of Crime Commissioner (and Domestic Violence Project Coordinator).

The Review analysed 11 domestic and family violence cases, involving 14 deaths that occurred between 2001 and 2012. The cases included in the review were identified using the National Coronial Information System (NCIS) – an internet based data storage and retrieval system for all Australian and New Zealand coronial cases. In order to gain access to the NCIS, the Principal Researcher gained ethics approval that required the research team to ensure that the anonymity of individuals involved in the deaths was protected

The Review identified a range of common themes among the deaths in the ACT and summarised the cases, articulated the key findings and made 28 recommendations. The findings and recommendations from the Review align with the priority areas that were identified in the DVPC report from the Extraordinary Meeting in April 2015.

ACT Domestic and Family Violence Data Collection Project

Nationally, the evidence base for domestic and family violence is to be improved by the creation of a National Data Collection and Reporting Framework, operational by 2022 (*National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*). In line with this, the ACT Attorney-General has tasked the Domestic Violence Prevention Council (DVPC) with developing a framework for improving domestic and family violence data collection in the ACT.

The ACT Framework will address the gaps in our knowledge about the characteristics of victims and perpetrators of family violence and about how the systems that respond to such violence are working. These gaps restrict the government's ability to respond to family violence effectively and to plan for the future (see the Royal Commission into Family Violence 2016, p.41)

The Council has engaged a Project Officer, based within the offices of Victim Support ACT, to undertake research and consultation on domestic and family violence data collection nationally and internationally. The project seeks to:

- identify existing domestic and family violence data in the ACT;
- identify a core set of domestic and family violence indicators for the ACT;
- measure performance against the indicators using existing data; and
- identify gaps and develop a plan to improve data collection.

The Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC), Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and Department of Social Services (DSS) is supportive of this methodology and have expressed interest in the results.

Stage 1 of the Project commenced in March 2016 and, to date, the Project Officer has consulted over 40 stakeholders within ACT government and the community sector. The ABS's *Foundation for a National Data Collection and Reporting Framework for Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence* (2014) provided a basis for exploring existing data collection by the organisations interviewed. No organisation interviewed, to date, collects all of the (ambitious) number of data items recommended by the ABS.

A survey was also developed and disseminated to broader set of ACT community organisations to identify what data is or could be collected. To date we have received 34 completed surveys from 32 organisations and at the time of writing an additional 26 organisations were being engaged to complete the survey.

During 2016-2017, the Council will develop a number of indicators to measure the ACT's response to domestic and family violence. The DVPC proposes to seek input on what the ACT should measure primarily through an extraordinary meeting on data that will be conducted in the latter half of 2016.

The project will produce a report to Government which identifies existing domestic and family violence data in the ACT (from interviews and survey), opportunities for additional data collection and comments on a range of issues including minimum data set, databases, data quality, training and barriers to data collection.

Presentations

This year I participated in the following events to raise awareness about the issues affecting victims of crime:

- 6-7 July 2015, attended the World Society for Victimology Conference in Perth;
- 9 September 2015, delivered a talk to the University of the 3rd Age on domestic violence;
- 7 December 2015, delivered a keynote address at the STOP Domestic Violence Conference Canberra;
- 26 February 2016, gave a presentation to the National Family & Domestic Violence Summit in Sydney;
- 1 March 2016, participated in a Panel Discussion at the ANU for the Circle for Gender Equity;
- 8 March 2016, participated in a Panel Discussion at the Attorney-General's Department for the Women's Network Committee;
- 16 March 2016, gave a presentation to psychiatric registrars at the Adult Mental Health Unit, Canberra Hospital;
- 17 March 2016, spoke at the first National Family Violence Summit held by the Tara Costigan Foundation;
- 22 March 2016, participated in the panel discussion for Canberra CALD Women's Forum;
- 19 May 2016, participated in the panel discussion for Families ACT; and
- 22 June 2016, gave a talk to students at UC.

Social media

In 2015-16 I continued to build and maintain an active twitter presence to promote discussion and highlight important issues affecting victims of crime in the ACT. My consistent social media presence has resulted in a significant increase in the reach of the twitter account.

Issues and Position Papers

I have continued to release Issues and Position papers on issues affecting victims of crime in 2015-16. The first paper was released in July and urged reform to the law with respect to subpoenas to protect the privacy of victims of crime in court proceedings. Victim's health records are often aired in court or disclosed to third parties without their knowledge in compliance with subpoenas.

The second issues paper I released argued that the distress suffered by a victim of crime when being personally cross-examined by their perpetrator in family law proceedings should be addressed to ensure that victims of crime are more adequately protected. I called for Commonwealth government stakeholders to engage in consultation and actively explore a prohibition or other alternative solutions to effectively address this issue.

I will continue to release further papers as issues relevant to victims of crime that require public discussion are identified. Papers are available on our website.

<http://www.victimsupport.act.gov.au/>

Commenting on Law Reform processes

Throughout 2015-16 I have been consulted on numerous proposals for law reform and provided extensive comment and submissions to government on issues affecting victims of crime. I have endeavoured to provide thorough and considered responses to assist in ensuring reforms meet the needs and interests of victims of crime.

Crimes (Domestic and Family Violence) Legislation Amendment Bill 2015

The Crimes (Domestic and Family Violence) Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 was passed in October 2015 and introduced some significant reforms to address long standing issues that have significant impacts on victims of crime in the ACT. The Bill introduced the following reforms:

- a new strangulation offence with a lower threshold than existing offences, recognising the significant impacts of this particular form of personal violence on victims of these offences;
- an expanded definition of domestic violence that specifically recognises that children witnessing violence are also victims;
- an additional category of interim domestic violence order that allows the court to extend the order until related criminal charges are finalised. The amendments provide a more efficient and less onerous process for victims of family violence seeking safety through the civil protection orders system; and
- amendments allowing police to record a family violence complainant's (victim's) statement for use as primary evidence in court proceedings. These reforms allow the court to see the victim immediately after the incident and provide powerful first hand evidence. Similar reforms in NSW have resulted in considerable improvements in conviction rates and guilty pleas. I am hopeful that the introduction evidence in chief recordings will have a similar impact in the ACT.

Amendments to ACT Child Sex Offender laws

In my last annual report I welcomed progress on amendments to strengthen the current *Crimes (Child Sex Offenders) Act 2005* by expanding police powers in relation to search and entry for registered child sex offenders. In September 2015 the Crimes (Child Sex Offenders) Amendment Bill 2015 was passed. The bill aims to prevent further victimisation and protect the community by expanding police powers to verify details or ensure compliance with an offender's obligation under the Act.

Double jeopardy

I have been providing comment and submissions highlighting the need for double jeopardy law reform in the ACT since 2011. In 2015-16 I continued to advocate for reform to bring the ACT into line with national and international law reform in this area and to ensure the community has confidence in our justice system. On 9 June 2016 the Supreme Court Amendment Bill 2016 was passed by the ACT Legislative Assembly. Unfortunately I felt compelled to oppose the reforms as they do not go far enough to address the fundamental issues raised by the unjust application of double jeopardy principles.

I did not support the prospective application of amendments in relation to situations where there is fresh and compelling evidence. Prospective application severely limits the utility of the reforms and may result in the victims who are most affected by serious crimes being deprived of justice. I had also hoped the provisions would include a wider range of offences, and for reforms relating to errors of law in interlocutory decision to be progressed.

I have serious doubts about the value of these amendments as they are not retrospectively applied. Not applying these reforms retrospectively renders them almost meaningless. The premise on which double jeopardy rests is the capacity for technological advances to provide fresh and compelling evidence. The amendments close the door on justice for victims of extremely serious crimes based on an arbitrary commencement date.

Expansion of Restorative Justice

At long last the ACT Restorative Justice scheme has been expanded to adult offenders except those involving family violence or sexual offending. This is a major step forward for restorative justice in the ACT and will be of significant benefit to victims of crime and their families, as well as those responsible for committing crime and their families. I continue to support the proposed additional expansion of the scheme in 2018 that will see all types of offences become eligible to be referred to restorative justice.

Affected Persons Register

In October 2015 the *Mental Health Act 2015* implemented significant reforms to the law in this area, including introducing a new class of forensic mental health order. The introduction of forensic mental health orders is accompanied by an affected person's register that allows relevant information about the forensic mental health offender to be shared with people who have been harmed by the person's conduct.

The Act specifies that the Victims of Crime Commissioner may be involved in supporting an affected person and provide advocacy in relation to the operation of the affected person register. The Act specifically recognises the Commissioner's role with respect to advocacy for the rights and interests of victims of crime. The Victims of Crime Commissioner may appear, give evidence or provide a written submission in a proceeding where there is a registered affected person.

I look forward to continuing to work with the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal to operationalise these provisions.

Justice Reform Strategy – ACT Government Initiative

I continued to participate in the Justice Reform Strategy as an active participant in the advisory group and attended a series of core design workshops focused on a range of key areas for improvement within the criminal justice system. I look forward to providing further input into reforms arising from the work of the Justice Reform Strategy.

Family Violence Reform (ALRC)

In my last annual report I advocated for more focus on progressing the recommendations made in the Australian and New South Wales Law Reform (ALRC) Commissions' *Family Violence - a National Legal Response* [Report 114]. I noted that the ALRC report details an important and courageous law reform agenda that should be progressed by the Australian Government, states and territories.

In September 2015 I contributed to a joint submission with the Domestic Violence Crisis Service on the Consultation paper – Government response to ALRC/NSWLRC report *Family Violence – A National Legal Response* [Report 114]. I have continued to actively participate in progressing these reforms by providing comment on the reforms throughout the law reform process.

I commend the ACT Government for progressing a number of the ALRC report recommendations during this year. The Family Violence Bill 2016 and the Personal Violence Bill 2016 were introduced in June 2016. If passed, the bills will replace the *Domestic Violence and Personal Protection Orders Act 2008*. The Family Violence Bill implements 22 recommendations from the ALRC report and establishes the legal framework for the protection of people from family violence.

The amendments include the following proposed reforms:

- creating a preamble for the Act in accordance with ALRC recommendations pertaining to a common interpretative framework for family violence legislation. The preamble formally recognises common principles in relation to family violence to ensure the Act will be interpreted in a way that is consistent with those principles;
- expanding the definition of family violence to ensure that it specifically includes a wider range of behaviours including economic, emotional and psychological abuse;
- amending the grounds for making orders under the Act to make protections under the Act more accessible to victims of family violence;
- preventing self-represented respondents from personally cross-examining applicants; and
- creating the legal framework to allow recognition of family violence orders made in all other Australian jurisdictions and New Zealand.

The ACT Government put considerable effort into consulting widely before progressing these vital reforms to strengthen the ACT's response to family violence. The recommendations in the ALRC Report are an essential platform for promoting accessibility, fairness and effectiveness in our legal frameworks and it is essential that we continue to progress the remaining recommendations in 2016-17.

Alcohol related violence

During 2015-16 the ACT Government explored possibilities for Liquor reform. As the Victims of Crime Commissioner I have a particular interest in reforms that reduce alcohol related violence. In my role as Victims of Crime Commissioner I have provided support to an unfortunately high number of people who have been seriously affected by alcohol related violence. Frequently these victims are young men, whose injuries have resulted in chronic, disabling conditions. I acknowledge also, the exacerbating influence that alcohol has on violence in domestic settings, within families, against partners and children.

Australia's drinking culture is a major issue that contributes to alcohol related violence. This is an area that the ACT Government should seek to address *in addition* to regulatory and legislative reform.

I have provided submissions in response to the *Issues Paper: addressing alcohol-related harm*, *Proposals for Regulatory Improvements Paper*, and the *White Paper: Building on Liquor Reform*. I also provided input to the Liquor Advisory Board's response to the white paper as a member.

I support restricting the latest licensed time to 3am. There is an array of research that indicates that restricting the hours of alcohol sale is one of the few evidence-based interventions to reduce alcohol-related violence in the night-time economy in Australia. I strongly encourage the Government to act courageously to reduce the incidence of alcohol-related violence in and around bars and nightclubs by implementing this evidence-based policy reform.

I also supported the creation of a requirement for CCTV cameras to be installed in and around licensed premises. Whilst I am not fully convinced of the deterrent effect of CCTV, recent use of footage to identify perpetrators of alcohol-related assaults in the ACT demonstrates that they are a useful tool for holding offenders to account after an incident.

Family Violence Intervention Program Coordinating Committee

The Interagency Family Violence Intervention Program (FVIP) was established in 1998 to address a range of issues including:

- concerns that criminal justice agencies in the ACT traditionally did not treat family, and especially domestic violence, matters seriously;
- concerns that, despite a policy position that domestic violence is a crime, low charge and conviction rates suggested it was being otherwise considered;
- concerns that neither victim safety nor perpetrator accountability were being taken seriously by criminal justice agencies;
- concerns that insufficient attention was being paid to 'reasonable suspicion', evidence gathering, victim safety and arrest options at the time of the incident;
- dilemmas in balancing victim ambivalence about proceeding with responsibilities to uphold the criminal law and protect vulnerable persons;

- concerns that domestic and family violence matters ‘dropped’ too easily from the prosecution process;
- difficulties in proceeding with ambivalent or hostile witnesses;
- difficulties in matching victim services to victim needs at the ‘right’ time;
- the length of time taken for criminal family violence matters to be heard in court and court delays that produce further ‘attrition’ of victims; and
- sentencing options that are ineffective in reducing repeat offending, and insufficient attention paid to compliance with court orders.

The FVIP comprises representatives of the key criminal justice and related agencies in the ACT who have committed to working together cooperatively and effectively to maximise safety and protection for victims of family violence, and to provide opportunities for offender accountability and rehabilitation.

The FVIP is focused on responding to family violence incidents that come to police attention and proceed to prosecution. Partner agencies include:

- ACT Policing;
- Officer of the Director of Public Prosecutions;
- ACT Law Courts and Tribunal;
- ACT Corrective Services;
- Legislation, Policy and Programs, Justice and Community Safety Directorate;
- Division of Women, Youth and Children, Health Directorate;
- Child and Youth Protection Services, Community Services Directorate;
- Victim Support ACT;
- Victims of Crime Commissioner (FVIP Chairperson);
- Canberra Rape Crisis Centre;
- Domestic Violence Crisis Service; and
- Legal Aid ACT.

Case tracking

A case tracking process was established under the FVIP in the 1990s. This process is designed to facilitate interagency collaboration in response to family violence victims and perpetrators where an incident of family violence is being prosecuted. Participating agencies at case tracking are authorised to share information with each other at the meetings through s136 of the *Crimes (Sentencing) Act 2005* (ACT).

S136 applies to any information in relation to an offence (including an alleged offence) in a record of a criminal justice entity, including information about—

- a) a person charged with the offence;
- b) a victim of the offence; and
- c) a person convicted or found guilty of the offence.

Under s136, a criminal justice entity may give the information to another criminal justice entity for the purposes of the other entity.

The FVIP Coordinating Committee has been reviewing its case tracking procedures. Arising from that review was a decision to apply a risk assessment tool to cases brought to case tracking. ACT Policing amended the Tasmanian Police Risk Assessment Tool and conducted a three month pilot of using the tool in an operational context, commencing in May of 2016. The purpose of the tool is two-fold: to improve consistency in front line assessment of risk and to facilitate sharing of the assessed risk with other agencies, at the time or at the weekly case tracking meeting.

Other current strategic priorities of the FVIP are to:

- review data collection and use;
- advocate for a specialist family violence court/magistrate;
- review protection order processes, including service and enforcement;
- advocate for the implementation of the Australian Law Reform Commission and New South Wales Law Reform Commission joint report recommendations; and
- develop a formal relationship with the Domestic Violence Prevention Council.

B.2.6 Strategic goal 4: build and support staff capability

Clinical Educator Network

To build and support staff capability, a Victim Support ACT representative began attending the bi-monthly meeting of the Clinical Educators Network (CEN). The CEN provides a range of opportunities for Victim Support ACT staff to collaborate with other Allied Health professionals and disciplines through training, seminars and workshops. There is a strong focus on information sharing and research to enhance the skill set of employees and students whilst maintaining high standards of care for clients. Attendees have profession specific responsibilities in providing student support and staff supervision.

The aim of the CEN is to facilitate:

- sharing of education and clinical supervision knowledge;
- innovation and inter-professional learning;
- development and evaluation of Allied Health student and trainee initiatives;
- professional development for clinical educators, field managers and Lead Professionals;
- collaboration with other stakeholders to improve education outcomes; and
- promotion of best practice standards to Health Professional staff and case managers.

In 2015, Victim Support ACT staff also attended the 9th Annual Allied Health Symposium.

Other training opportunities extended to staff this year are listed in Table 15.

Health Professional Officer 3 Personal Upgrade Scheme

The Health Professional Officer (HPO3) Personal Upgrade Scheme for the Recognition of Clinical Excellence was introduced by the ACT Government in 2006 and has been administered by the ACT Allied Health Office since 2008. Following a review in 2014, a cross-Directorate working group was implemented with a view to upgrading the scheme, making it more accessible and the application process more streamlined. JACS had two representatives on the working group, one being from Victim Support ACT.

The working group met regularly prior to the scheme re-opening on 30th March 2016. Victim Support ACT has a number of employees at HPO3 level who were provided with information and were encouraged to apply if they met the criteria. Applications closed on June 30th 2016 and will re-open in 2017.

Table 15: Staff training

Training	Participants
Case manager training	
Act Mindfully	1
ANZPPL - Systems Clients and Patients	1
Better Services Design Workshop	2
Building Resilience in the Face of Change	1
Canberra Mental Health 2016	1
Conflict resolution- helping our clients	1
Core Concepts in Working with Children and Adolescents from Refugee Backgrounds	1
DVCS Training	9
Emotionally Focused Therapy	10
Peer Assisted Learning and Supervision	1
Safe and Secure Trauma informed Practice - Children and Young people	3
Single Session Family Consultations	10
Supporting Staff - Transforming Trauma	2
Technology Safe: Women Experiencing Violence	2
General, management and administrative training	
Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training	1
Accidental Counsellor Training	1
Child Protection Training	13
Coaching for Managers	1
De-escalation Training	12
Excel	1
Fraud and Ethics Awareness for Managers	2
HR Masterclass	2

Training	Participants
Introduction to Family Violence	1
JACS Induction	5
Project Management	3
Recruitment and Staff Selection	2
Respect Equity and Diversity	2
Conferences	
AASW National Symposium	3
Domestic Violence Awareness	5
National Symposium Leaders and Change Agents 2015	1
Victims of Crime Conference 2015	2

B.2.7 Strategic goal 5: improve systems and processes

Database updates

The Victim Support ACT client database runs off a Microsoft Access platform. Basic to mid level support is provided by the Finance and Administration Manager with occasional backup from a computer programmer casual employee. Within the client database and the smaller database for human resources, further improvements were made this year, including modifications to:

- increase the protection of confidential data;
- creation of a standalone database to track cases for the Domestic Violence Death Review Project;
- link Victim Support ACT client episodes to ACT major crimes;
- improve search facilities to retrieve client records;
- automate the process of generating letters; and
- improvements to tracking archived records.

Website updates

During 2015-16 the Victim Support ACT website transitioned to the ACT Government single public interface website template. This transition allowed us to make considerable improvements to the content and format of our site, whilst also significantly improving accessibility and ease of navigation. The transition has significantly improved access to information about the agency and has resulted in a steady increase in traffic since going live as well as receiving feedback about its improved performance.

The new website also incorporates content from the Understanding the Criminal Justice System website into the Victims Support ACT website. This more visible location has resulted in a significant increase in the number of people accessing this information about the criminal justice system.

B.3 Scrutiny

During 2015-16, the Victims of Crime Commissioner and Victim Support ACT were not subject to commitments made for action through:

- comment on Auditor-General or Ombudsman reports; or
- Government Response / Submission to a Legislative Assembly Committee report.

B.4 Risk Management

Information (where relevant) regarding risk management is contained in the Annual Report of the ACT Justice and Community Safety Directorate.

B.5 Internal Audit

Information (where relevant) regarding internal audit arrangements are contained in the Annual Report of the ACT Justice and Community Safety Directorate.

B.6 Fraud Prevention

Information (where relevant) regarding fraud prevention activities are contained in the Annual Report of the ACT Justice and Community Safety Directorate.

B.7 Work Health and Safety

Information (where relevant) regarding work health and safety are contained in the Annual Report of the ACT Justice and Community Safety Directorate.

B.8 Human Resources Management

Additional information (where relevant) regarding human resource management is contained in the Annual Report of the ACT Justice and Community Safety Directorate and section B.2.6 of this annual report.

The tables below outline some key information relating to the staffing at Victim Support ACT.

Table 16: Victim Support ACT full-time equivalent (FTE) and headcount by gender 2015-2016

Measure	Female	Male	Total
FTE by gender	17.4	2.2	19.6
Headcount by gender	19	3	22
% of workforce	86%	14%	100%

Table 17: Victim Support ACT headcount by classification and gender 2015-2016

Classification group	Female	Male	Total
Administrative officers	3	1	4
Health professional officers	12	0	12
Senior officers	4	1	5
Statutory office holders	0	1	1
Total	19	3	22

Table 18: Employment category by gender 2015-2016

Employment category	Female	Male	Total
Casual	1	1	2
Permanent full-time	13	1	14
Permanent part-time	3	0	3
Temporary full-time	1	1	2
Temporary part-time	1	0	1
Total	19	3	22

Table 19: Ethnic profile of staff 2015-2016

Measure	Aboriginal &/ or Torres Strait Islander	Culturally & Linguistically Diverse	People with a Disability
Headcount	0	3	0
% of Total Staff	0	14%	0

B.9 Ecologically Sustainable Development

Information (where relevant) regarding ecologically sustainable development is contained in the Annual Report of the ACT Justice and Community Safety Directorate.

C. Financial Management Reporting

C.1 Financial Management Analysis

Information (where relevant) regarding financial management analysis is contained in the Annual Report of the ACT Justice and Community Safety Directorate.

C.2 Financial Statements

Financial statements are contained in the Annual Report of the ACT Justice and Community Safety Directorate.

C.3 Capital Works

Information (where relevant) regarding capital works is contained in the Annual Report of the ACT Justice and Community Safety Directorate.

C.4 Asset Management

Information (where relevant) regarding asset management is contained in the Annual Report of the ACT Justice and Community Safety Directorate.

C.5 Government Contracting

Approved Service Providers

The schedule of fees for approved service providers as of 1 July 2015 can be seen in the table below. The fee schedule for approved providers increased by 5% from 1 July 2015.

Table 20: approved service provider fees from 1 July 2015

Discipline	Rate per hour per unit of service
Psychologist	\$143 per hour ie \$35.75 per 15 minute unit
Counsellor	\$143 per hour ie \$35.75 per 15 minute unit
Social Worker	\$143 per hour ie \$35.75 per 15 minute unit
Physiotherapy – GST free	\$130 per hour ie \$32.50 per 15 minute unit
Massage Therapy	\$96 per hour ie \$24.00 per 15 minute unit
Occupational Therapy	\$130 per hour ie \$32.50 per 15 minute unit
Acupuncture	\$96 per hour ie \$24.00 per 15 minute unit
Chiropractor	By negotiation on case by case basis
Educational Assessment	\$169
Tutoring	\$74 per hour

C.6 Statement of Performance

The annual statement of performance for Victim Support ACT and the Victims of Crime Commissioner is provided in the Annual Report of the Justice and Community Safety Directorate. Additional information relating to the performance of Victim Support ACT and the Victims of Crime Commissioner is available in section *B.2 Performance Analysis* from page 8.

Compliance Statement

The Victims of Crime Commissioner and Victim Support ACT annual report must comply with the 2015 Annual Report Directions (the Directions). The Directions are found at the ACT Legislation Register: <http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/ni/annual/2015.asp>

The Compliance Statement indicates the subsections, under the five Parts of the Directions, that are applicable to Victims of Crime Commissioner and Victim Support ACT annual report and the location of information that satisfies these requirements:

Part 1 – Directions Overview

The requirements under Part 1 of the 2015 Directions relate to the purpose, timing and distribution, and records keeping of annual reports. The Victims of Crime Commissioner and Victim Support ACT annual report complies with all subsections of Part 1 under the Directions.

In compliance with section 13 Feedback, Part 1 of the Directions, contact details for the Victims of Crime Commissioner and Victim Support ACT are provided within the front cover of the annual report to provide readers with the opportunity to provide feedback.

Part 2 – Agency Annual Report Requirements

The requirements within Part 2 of the Directions are mandatory for all agencies and the Victims of Crime Commissioner and Victim Support ACT comply with all subsections. The information that satisfies the requirements of Part 2 is found in the Victims of Crime Commissioner and Victim Support ACT Annual Report as follows:

- A. Transmittal Certificate, see page 3;
- B. Organisational Overview and Performance, inclusive of all subsections, see pages: 5-33;
- C. Financial Management Reporting, inclusive of relevant subsections, see page 33.

Part 3 – Reporting by Exception

The Victims of Crime Commissioner and Victim Support ACT have nil information to report by exception under Part 3 of the Directions for the 2015-16 reporting period.

Part 4 – Agency Specific Annual Report Requirements

No subsections of part 4 of the 2016 Directions are applicable to the Victims of Crime Commissioner and Victim Support ACT.

ACT Public Service Directorate annual reports are found at the following web address: http://www.cmd.act.gov.au/open_government/report/annual_reports.

