

The Victims of Crime Chronicle

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The Chronicle is a quarterly newsletter produced by the Victims of Crime Bureau, a Unit of Victims Services, NSW Attorney General's Department.

Manager's Message

Welcome to the final edition of the Chronicle for 2001.

The Bureau has always worked to establish a greater awareness of our role in regional and rural areas across NSW. This has recently been enhanced by the creation of three Rural Co-ordinator positions. These positions are to be based at Bourke, Batemans Bay and Port Macquarie.

The Rural Co-coordinators will have an office within the Local Courts and have a regional focus. Ms Preeti Kotwal is the first Rural Co-ordinator to be appointed in NSW and is based at Port Macquarie, covering the North Region including towns such as Forster, Kempsey, Tamworth and Manilla.

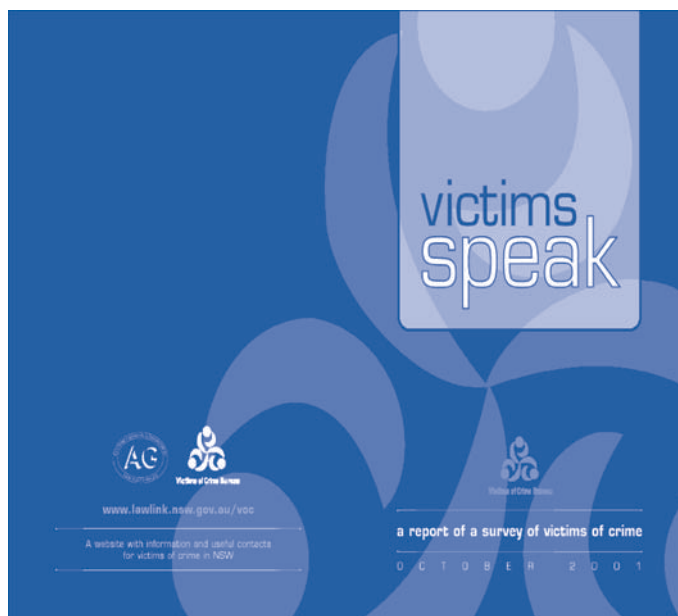
This year the Bureau forged a new partnership with the Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council when a range of government and non-government agencies participated in a forum which focused on the special needs of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander victims of crime. A Report focusing on issues which arose from the forum, such as sharing information, recognising themes and developing strategies for indigenous victims of crime, is now on the VCB website.

In November 2001, NSW Health and the Bureau held an information day for the 17 Victims of Crime Contact Officers in Area Health Services throughout NSW.

The agenda included input about victims' registers, conferencing and the Approved Counselling Scheme.

Participants had an opportunity to access a panel of experts and welcomed the chance to share their knowledge and experiences of providing services to victims of crime.

In October the Bureau published *Victims Speak* which reports on a survey of victims of crime, held on 30 and 31 March 2001. The report identifies a number of interesting themes.



Victims Speak is a report of a survey of victims of crime.

Copies of *Victims Speak* can be obtained by either visiting the Bureau's website or telephoning the Victims of Crime Bureau during business hours on (02) 9374 3005.

Finally, staff at Victims Services wish you a joyous Christmas and look forward to a challenging year ahead in 2002.

Marianne Curtis

Firearms and Violent Crime

According to a Media Release from the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR), 6 June 2001, it appears that the connection between the use of firearms and violent crime has declined in recent years.

Research conducted by BOCSAR found: "Homicides and robberies with firearms have declined over the last few years in New South Wales but non-fatal shooting offences have increased. These are two of the key findings to emerge from a new research study on firearm violence released today [6/6/01] by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research".

The BOCSAR's Media Release, reported, "in 1995 there were nearly 30 homicides involving firearms in New South Wales but last year only about half this number of firearm homicide offences occurred. Robberies involving firearms increased from 677 in 1995 to more than 1,100 in 1997 but fell back to 655 last year.

Non-fatal shooting offences remained relatively stable between 1995 and 1998 but increased from about 50 offences in 1998 to nearly 100 offences last year. The increase in shooting offences involving handguns has been particularly marked, with less than 10 of these offences in 1995 but more than 40 of them last year".

BOCSAR's report also stated that, "despite the growth in shooting offences, their prevalence in Australia remains much lower than that in the United States. The US firearm homicide rate remains more than 13 times higher than that in Australia. Furthermore, the NSW robbery rate, which is the highest among

Australian States and Territories, is only about one-sixth that of the United States".

An earlier Media Release from BOCSAR, reported on 19 April 2001: "Across NSW as a whole, the number of murders, assaults, sexual assaults, indecent assaults (and related sexual offences), robberies, break and enters (involving dwellings), thefts from a retail store, thefts from the person, thefts from a dwelling, fraud and malicious damage to property remained stable".

Further information can be obtained by visiting the website:

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/bocsar Bulletin Number 57, May 2001 - Firearms and Violent Crime in New South Wales.

VICTIMS OF VIOLENT CRIME GRANTS PROGRAM (VOVCGP)

The VOVCGP is operated by the NSW Department of Corrective Services. It is a small annual grants program for one-off projects or resources, which will assist victims of violent crime.

The aim of the Program is for offenders to make reparation to the community by contributing a portion of the profit generated from inmate labour programs to organisations, which support victims of crime.

Applications are called in February/March each year.

For more information, contact Kellie Bland, A/Coordinator Community Funding Programs (02) 9289 1504, or e-mail kellie.bland@dcs.nsw.gov.au

Research into therapeutic methods for assisting victims of crime

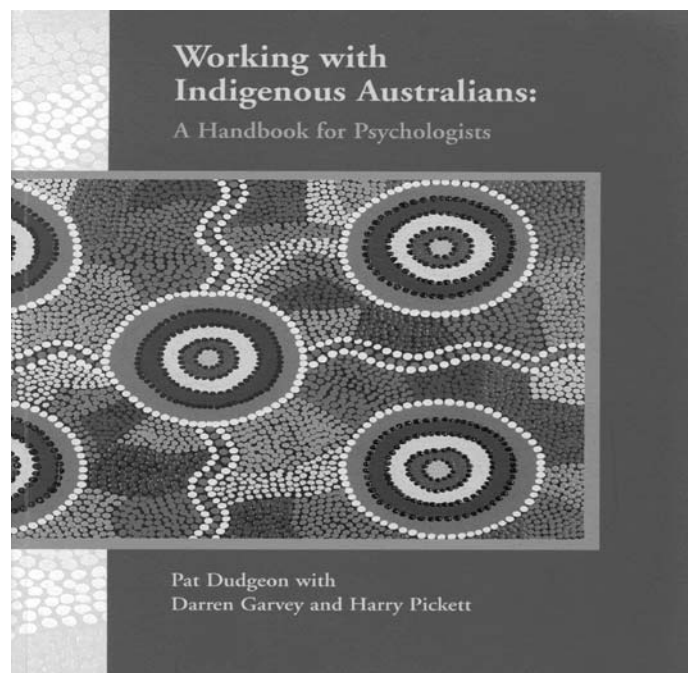
A number of researchers are currently looking at therapeutic options as part of restorative treatment for victims of violent crime. For information on two current research areas of interest to counsellors working with victims of violent crime:

Dr Grant Devilly, Senior Lecturer, Department of Criminology, University of Melbourne. Current issues and research in working with victims of crime. Web: <http://www.crim.unimelb.edu.au/victims>

Dr Richard Bryant, Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, University of NSW has recently published Bryant, R.A., and Harvey, A. G. (2000). Acute Stress Disorder, A Handbook of Theory, Assessment, and Treatment. American Psychological Society, Washington.

Both Dr Bryant and Dr Devilly presented papers on their research and its applications to victims of crime at the Victims Conference in Sydney, May 2001.

Counsellors may find this Handbook of interest



Approved Counsellor availability

From time to time Approved Counsellors may become unavailable, in the short or long term, to have counselling hours approved to see victims of crime under the Scheme.

Approved Counsellors should provide details about unavailability when taking any leave, for change of working hours and days, or change of practice location.

Victims may be disadvantaged and their counselling delayed if Approved Counsellors cannot be contacted. Change in Approved Counsellor availability may be provided to the Bureau in writing by fax on (02) 9374 3020 or by email: vcb@agd.nsw.gov.au

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Counsellors working with Indigenous Australians

Mick Dodson Chairperson, Aboriginal Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies wrote in the Foreword, "*The Handbook tackles the hard issues of human complexity that reflects the reality of life for Indigenous Australians. Not only does it evoke your interest and concern it gives you an in-depth understanding of the issues and the confidence to act on this knowledge*".

Dudgeon, P; Garvey, D; and Pickett, H; (2000): *Working with Indigenous Australians: A Handbook for Psychologists*; Gunada Press, Curtin Indigenous Research Centre, Perth.

The Families & Friends of Missing Persons Unit (FFMPU)



was established in September 2000 and is funded by the New South Wales Government. It is a discrete function of the Victims of Crime Bureau within the Human Rights Program of the NSW Attorney General's Department.

The FFMPU's primary aim is to co-ordinate support services within NSW for the family and friends of missing persons. The FFMPU works closely with both police and non-police tracing organisations. The FFMPU facilitates an Interagency Forum, which brings together government and non-government agencies to ensure that families and friends receive the support and information they require when someone they care about is missing.

Recently the FFMPU contracted Hunter Institute of Mental Health to produce a report into best practice in counselling models relevant to families and friends of missing persons. The Hunter Institute conducted an international literature search as part of their strategy and found a dearth of literature specifically focused on issues for families and friends of missing persons. 'It's the Hope that Hurts' is the first report of its kind in Australia, possibly internationally, identifying best practice in counselling models for this specific client group.

Support and counselling for families and friends of missing persons

Having someone you know go missing can be a distressing and confusing time.

Recently the FFMPU funded Mission Australia to provide a free, 24 hours per day, 7 days per week telephone service for families and friends of missing persons. The service employs trained staff and volunteers who can provide information, referral, support and counselling for the families and friends of missing persons and provides a 'call back' facility that provides telephone support at specific times if required.

To contact the service call 1800 227 772.

For TTY interpreting please ring the Australian Communications Exchange on 133 677 and ask the interpreter to telephone us on 1800 227 772. Community language interpreters can also be provided if required.

For further information regarding the FFMPU contact:

Leonie Jacques, Senior Project Officer - FFMPU
Locked Bag A5010, Sydney South NSW 1235
Tel: (02) 9374 3014
Fax: (02) 9374 3020
email: ljacques@agd.nsw.gov.au

Important Changes to Approved Counselling Scheme

Approved Counselling Scheme annual re-approvals will now be current from 1 January to 31 December of each year. Information about completing working with children check, will be included in the annual re-approvals.