

victims speak



Victims of Crime Bureau

a report of a survey of victims of crime

O C T O B E R 2 0 0 1

VICTIMS SPEAK

A report of a survey of victims of crime 2001

This report was produced by the
Victims of Crime Bureau
Victims Services
NSW Attorney General's Department

ISBN 0 7347 6759 5

Further copies may be obtained from
the Victims of Crime Bureau on
Tel: 02 9374 3005 Email: vcb@agd.nsw.gov.au

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1. Executive Summary

A telephone survey of crime victims was conducted by the Victims of Crime Bureau in partnership with Mission Australia on March 30 and 31, 2001. The intention of the survey was to hear directly from victims about their experiences and the factors that helped them navigate the full range of available government and non-government services.

There are no unexpected findings from the phone-in survey. There were 155 callers, with 108 of these fitting the Victims Rights Act 1996 definition of victim. Another 23 callers identified themselves as victims, being family and friends of victims of crime other than homicide. A further 24 callers elected not to complete the survey, after they made initial contact. There were callers from a reasonable distribution of postcodes, with 46 metropolitan, 24 regional and 34 rural residents.

A key finding was that one fifth of respondents nominated the need for accurate information at all stages of the process through the justice system and their recovery. Some indicated that information had to be reinforced at intervals to make allowances for the effects of trauma immediately following the crime.

Another important finding highlights the need to enhance community contact with victims, in particular in workplaces where employers and colleagues may lack awareness of how to alleviate their traumatic experience. In some caller's circumstances, a more supportive environment at work would have helped the victim in the initial period after the crime.

Counselling was considered useful by most who accessed it, with 90% of these 57 respondents who accessed counselling doing so within one month of the crime. Those victims who did not access counselling were often unclear about the purpose of counselling and more information on counselling may be appropriate.

Those callers who had been involved in the court process found it daunting. However respondents who were assisted with court support reported they found the support useful.

2. Background

An important role of the Victims of Crime Bureau is to ensure people who have been victims of crime have access to appropriate information and services to facilitate their rehabilitation.

Another important role of the Bureau is to assist the Victims Compensation Tribunal in administering the Approved Counselling Scheme. The Scheme was established under Section 21 of the Victims Support and Rehabilitation Act 1996 to provide Approved Counselling to eligible victims of violent crime. The Bureau assists with professional aspects of the Scheme and networks with a range of other government and non-government agencies who also provide a counselling response to victims of crime.

The survey was planned in conjunction with Mission Australia, to hear directly from victims about their experiences and the factors that helped them navigate the full range of available government and non-government services following a crime.

Client surveys in the area of crime victims are complex communication exercises. For ethical reasons, it is not always appropriate to draw upon information agencies may already have about individual clients, to identify a survey sample. It is considered inappropriate practice by some professionals to 'pursue' former clients for surveys, after the therapeutic relationship has ceased.

The survey took the form of a structured interview by telephone, initiated by the client in response to pre-survey publicity. This method is consistent with the current approach to recovery and rehabilitation, which emphasises the client's choice.

A previous survey by phone-in was conducted in 1993 by the (then) Sydney City Mission. Callers at the time highlighted the enduring impact of their experiences of the crime itself and their ordeal after the event. Analysis of the respondents' reports in 1993 suggested there are two sets of activities impacting upon victims after a crime. One is the way they suddenly become clients of the justice system, involved in stages of the judicial process, through the Police, the Courts and related areas. The other, and perhaps more important side of their ordeal is profoundly personal, and concerns how well people recover from the trauma. Factors in this recovery involve readily available information about what to expect in the days, weeks and months to come; early access to counselling; avenues of relief from financial hardship; and support from specially trained Police and Court staff.

Since that report, a number of positive changes have occurred in New South Wales. The Victims Rights Act of 1996 established the Charter of Victims Rights. The Victims of Crime Bureau commenced operations in early 1997. The Bureau works in partnership with Mission Australia to conduct the Victims Support Line, a 24 hour telephone support, information and referral service for victims of crime. There has been a considerable expansion of services, both government and non-government, to victims of crime and significant legislative change.

The Bureau convenes a Victims of Crime Bureau Interagency Forum comprising key government and non-government members involved in victims' services. The information exchange which occurs at the Victims of Crime Bureau Interagency is invaluable in the process of continuous improvement to the systemic responses of support and information services.

The survey by phone-in was an opportunity to check back with victims themselves about their needs, their access to services and ideas they might have about what would have helped them through their experience of victimisation. The technique of self-selected input to the research process is also a way of allowing those clients who may not have contacted a service or support agency to have their say.

3. Definition

For the purposes of the Victims Rights Act 1996, a victim of crime is a person who suffers harm as a direct result of an act committed, or apparently committed, by another person in the course of a criminal offence. A person suffers harm if, as a result of such an act the person suffers actual physical bodily harm, mental illness or nervous shock, or the person's property is deliberately taken, destroyed or damaged. If a person dies as a result of the act concerned, a member of the person's immediate family is also a victim of crime.

It is clear from the strong response to the survey from people who do not fit this definition that defining oneself as a victim may be a somewhat subjective process. Service and support providers need to maintain an awareness that eligibility to certain services may flow from particular circumstances, but that all clients should be treated with courtesy, compassion and respect. Well-informed referrals improve the chances that people can recover fully from negative experiences.

4. Rationale

The Charter of Victims Rights promulgated through the Victims Rights Act 1996 sets out the services and support for victims of crime. The survey by phone-in allows for a timely check on how well victims needs are met by existing information products, based on a sample of clients so highly motivated as to commit time to a telephone-interview.

The specific objectives of the phone-in survey were to:

- support victims by listening to their experiences;
- identify support needs for specific groups of victims, in particular those at risk of long-term debilitation;
- use victims' views on support services they used to improve the way the Bureau delivers services to victims;
- check with victims whether there are gaps in available services & remedies; and
- raise community awareness about victims of crime.

The callers' input gives the Bureau another perspective on the knowledge and understanding in the community, about providers of interagency services to victims. Some of the questions asked about the formal interagency and partnership structures impacting upon services for victims. Although the terminology may not be familiar to the callers, other parts of their survey response indicate that most accessed the relevant agency at an appropriate point in their experience.

The Bureau is committed to ensuring increased access to information about victims services. Another goal of the survey was to supplement existing client feedback to identify new information requirements on rights and needs for those involved with the victim in some way, for example, family and friends, private counsellors, social networks, service clubs and employers.

The Bureau and Mission Australia is working in a pro-active way to enhance the support to victims by facilitating their progress through the array of agencies and services funded to help victims. The Victims of Crime Bureau Interagency Forum will find the callers' comments valuable, representing a self-selected sample of former and current clients.

The strategic goal of obtaining client feedback is to learn directly from individuals about the highly personal and unique effects of victimisation. This has the potential to reduce the level of trauma through our improved understanding of victims' reactions. This learning could also contribute to further connections between reduced victimisation and crime prevention measures.

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5. Literature Review

It is well recognised that for most people, becoming a victim of crime is triggered by a sudden and traumatic incident. The field of victimology has engaged in two key problems. One is the conceptualisation and development of services and support systems which address the needs of victims. The other is the analysis of the complexity of the justice system, where typically the main roles belong to the offender, the prosecutors, the Police and the judiciary (Booth; Crawford and Goodey; Young).

If the justice system is understood as a set of component parts where a victim might have a more visible and legitimate role, the need for detailed information about each component expands. Since its inception, the Victims of Crime Bureau has placed a high priority on ensuring victims of crime have access to timely and relevant information about every aspect of their encounter with the justice system (Curtis; Curtis & McCoy).

The phone-in survey is one strategy among many, for obtaining feedback from clients, about how well their needs were met at all stages of the experience of being a client both of the justice system and the various support services available to victims of crime. Because they rely totally on verbal communication, telephone interviews require that questions be short, to maximise the attention span of the caller (de Vaus). The interpretation of information gathered in the phone-in must take account of the special limitations of this method.

Recent research has added evidence to support the view that the impact of crime upon victims can only be partly understood by classifying the types of crime. The context of crime can contain a set of identifiable factors which increase our knowledge of the needs of victims (Laycock). The victim's reaction to an incident is a unique and personal response. However, increasing our knowledge of both these responses and the various factors making up the context of crime is an approach most likely to lead to successful strategies to improve the chances that victims make a full recovery.

The individual victim (Victim 1) may be experiencing the criminal justice system for the first time. There is some evidence that a previous encounter with people who have some experience of the justice system themselves (Victims 2 and 3), affects - and may even determine - Victim 1's initial behaviour on a range of items, including reporting the crime to Police, or talking to another person about the crime (Greenberg and Ruback). Victims' decision-making is a critical intervention point for service and support.

Current research suggests that if the victim of violent crime counselling begins within one month of the crime it is most effective in the recovery process. (Bryant).

Repeat victimisation is a differentiation of victims according to how many occurrences of crime they have experienced. This characteristic is regarded as an increasingly important aspect to consider, when developing policies, standards and systems for supporting victims. It has been suggested that reporting crime to Police is less likely in cases of repeat victimisation, particularly where victims are disillusioned with agencies' response in previous instances (Pease & Laycock).

An analysis of the International Crime Victim Survey conducted with more than 133,821 citizens aged 15 years or older suggests that repeat victims hold different expectations than one-time victims about what the Police can, or should, do for them. Repeat victims tend to be more fearful of crime, and often live in socially less integrated neighbourhoods (van Dijk).

Feelings of trust and safety have been identified as a key element in social capital (Bullen & Onyx). It has been suggested that victims' recovery and rehabilitation may be maximised where there exists sources of informal support from family, friends and community organisations. Callers to the survey were asked about their membership of community organisations and how much support they obtained from these following the crime.

Court support has been identified as a critical service for victims (Booth 2000, Erez 2000, Herman 1999). Most callers who had been involved in the court process found it daunting. The availability of safe waiting areas separate from the accused has increased since the 1993 survey by the (then) Sydney City Mission. The use of court support volunteers has increased. Overall understanding of the court processes remains an important area for victims support. The video *Your Day in Court* continues to be distributed across New South Wales.

One recent author has commented on the tendency for what he calls 'advocates' of particular social problems to continue to amplify the scope for connection to other areas of policy already receiving a high level of support. In his view, this 'expansion' is needed because supporters may drift away if there is an impression that the problem is solved. To maintain impetus, there is always the need to find new angles on old problems (Best). So while it is recognised that the needs and rights of victims of crime have received much attention, it is imperative to continue to review and improve this important issue.

6. Methodology

An annotated bibliography of current literature in victimology and criminology was prepared in late 2000, prior to the commencement of the phone-in survey project. A small working group comprised of staff from the Victims of Crime Bureau and the Mission Australia Victims Support Line developed the survey questionnaire, exploring key ideas from the literature.

The process to pilot the questionnaire was designed to maximise the input from staff from the Victims Compensation Tribunal and the Victims of Crime Bureau. These staff volunteered to participate in a telephone interview, after creating their own role play case history. This level of autonomy in the volunteers for the pilot resulted in a sample of detailed scenarios against which to trial the survey instrument. It was not feasible to pilot the questionnaire with victims of crime, due to the inappropriately intrusive nature of such a communication.

The pilot found that the proposed interview was a laborious undertaking for both the respondent and the interviewer, and in its draft format, too long. The questionnaire was modified following the pilot to introduce filter questions to some important topic areas being researched, and to reduce the length of the interview.

The training of interviewers for the phone in addressed several issues arising from the unique conditions of a telephone interview. An important aspect of the telephone interview is the adeptness with which the interviewer balances the need to listen sensitively to the caller with the requirement to obtain the specific answers sought through the questionnaire. In view of the possibility that callers may become distressed while recalling and restating the circumstances of their victimisation, it was decided that counselling would be accessible throughout the survey period. The training of interviewers included techniques for separating the role of interviewer from the role of counsellor, for the duration of the survey, to ensure adherence to the procedure designed to ensure that callers who desired counselling would be referred to a designated counsellor.

7. Findings

7.1 DEMOGRAPHICS

The number of calls to the phone-in totalled 155. Of these, 108 fitted the Victims Rights Act definition of victim. This included family members of homicide victims. This report will focus on the core group of 108 victims.

Another 23 defined themselves as victims and were coded in the group family and friends of victims of crime other than homicide. There were 9 callers who commenced the survey but chose to discontinue before sufficient data was collected and a further 15 who called the phone-in line but chose not to answer the survey questions. The information provided by the 23 family and friends of victims of crime other than homicide is described in section 7.13 below under Other Clients.

The gender of callers was predominantly female. For the core group of victims, there were 65 women, 40 men and 3 transgender. The three transgender callers reported particularly difficult experiences with services following the crime. The table below shows callers by age group and gender.

Table 1: Age and gender distribution of respondents

AGE	GENDER			TOTAL	PERCENT
	Female	Transgender	Male		
Under 25	5	0	0	5	5
25-40	27	1	10	38	35
41-55	20	1	17	38	35
Over 55	14	1	12	27	25
TOTAL	66	3	39	108	100

For the separately surveyed group of family and friends of victims of crime other than homicide, there were 19 women and 4 men.

The distribution of metropolitan, rural and regional (for the purposes of this survey, regional is defined as Wollongong /Newcastle) was metropolitan 46, regional 24, rural 34, not stated 4. There were 2 callers of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

background. Five callers said their main language spoken in the home was a language other than English.

Of the 108 callers, 32 reported they had a disability. When asked if the disability was a result of the crime, 13 of these callers indicated their disability was entirely due to or made worse by the crime. The gender distribution of this group was evenly divided, with 6 males and 7 females. Respondents to this question represented a smaller group than those who reported later in the survey that the crime had affected their ability to work. Nine callers who stated that their disability was as a result of the crime also reported that the crime had affected their ability to work.

7.2 TYPE OF CRIME

Respondents were asked to state in their own words what happened. Their reports have been grouped into the following categories.

Table 2: Type of crime

TYPE OF CRIME	NUMBER OF CALLERS	PERCENT
Assault	28	26
Property crime including theft	19	18
Domestic violence	10	9
Armed robbery	10	9
Sexual assault	8	7
Homicide	7	6
Home invasion	6	6
Child sexual assault	6	6
Road trauma	3	3
Other	7	6
Not stated	4	4
TOTAL	108	100

Repeat victimisation is an emerging issue, with half the respondents reporting being victimised more than once. In 50% of the surveys, the offender was known to the victim. This challenges the limited relevance of the 'stranger danger' messages when teaching people about personal safety and security.

Context of crime is an area of increasing interest to researchers and policy makers. In the survey, 'at home' was the highest scoring category, with 46 out of 108 victims' responses. The next highest score was 18 'on the street'. The 'at home' category was evenly split between female and male victims. The ostensibly private context for crime occurring in the home could affect the likelihood of reporting crime to the Police. Most victims were alone with offender at the time of the offence. The table below shows the locations of the crime, in descending order of frequency.

Table 3: Location of crime

LOCATION OF CRIME	NUMBER OF CALLERS	PERCENT
Caller's home	46	43
On the street	18	17
Hotel/club	8	7
At work	8	7
Someone else's home	7	6
In a car	3	3
In a park	3	3
At school	1	1
Other	6	6
Not stated	8	7
TOTAL	108	100

7.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

Respondents were asked whether the crime affected their ability to work.

There was some relationship between existence of a disability and diminished ability to work. Victims appeared not to consider a negative impact upon their ability to work as a disability. Taken together with the question about a disability caused or made worse by the victimisation experience, only a small proportion of those reporting a reduced ability to work also reported a disability.

Twice as many females as males in the group of 63 respondents reported that the crime affected their ability to work. Only 9 of these 63 victims stated that they had a disability as a result of the crime.

Forty-five victims indicated their employer was aware the crime had occurred, and more than half of these were satisfied by the level of support they received from their employers. This was irrespective of whether the workplace was the site of the crime.

7.4 SUPPORT FROM FAMILY AND FRIENDS

The majority of victims sought help from family and friends following the crime. The research into the effects of advice from family and friends upon the victim's disposition to report the crime to Police suggests there is a powerful dynamic operating at this stage of victimisation. This highlights the continuing requirement to consider how best to facilitate the support of family and friends, complementing as it does the effective services from professional counsellors and others.

The strong direct response to the survey from family and friends of victims of crime other than homicide represented a group one quarter the size of the direct victim callers. This highlights the multiplication effect of victimisation. In anticipation of these calls, the Bureau developed a separate specific questionnaire. Whether the Victims Rights Act definition applies in a particular case has certain implications for a person's access to a range of services. Attention to this group of respondents illustrates the need for victim support to extend to those who may be indirectly affected by the crime such as family and friends.

Viewed in this way, family and friends may be seen not only as potential support persons to complement professional counsellors and others, but also as secondary victims with specific support needs themselves. Service and support agencies need to maintain their awareness of the fact that family and friends may have an intense emotional connection to victims. Strategies to support them may be important to consider in the future. Specific information sheets, brochures and groups for family and friends may be useful in this regard.

7.5 SOURCES OF HELP

Callers were asked who they obtained help from, following the crime. There were 85 respondents to this question, with the opportunity to name more than one source of help. The most frequently named source was the Police (38 times or 45% of respondents to this question). Twelve people answered 'no one' or 'nobody' to this question, indicating that some victims continue to retreat to a solitary way of dealing with their experience.

Table 4: Sources of help

SOURCES OF HELP	NUMBER OF VICTIMS	PERCENT
Police	38	45
Counselling*	11	13
General practitioner	9	26
Family	9	11
Clergy/religious	8	9
Support group	6	7
Financial counselling	1	1
No one	12	14

* Respondents did not differentiate between types of counselling or service providers they accessed.

Many victims seek assistance from general practitioners, clergy and religious. It is important to ensure that these groups are informed about appropriate referrals for support, information and counselling where appropriate.

7.6 INFORMATION NEEDS

One fifth of people highlighted this as an important issue. Information is required in a number of different accessible formats and media. The Victims of Crime website is a recent strategy. The booklet *What Now? Information for Victims of Crime in New South Wales* was launched by the Premier in May 2001, for state-wide distribution.

Some respondents reported that increased financial pressure following a crime was important to victims. The sudden onset of financial pressure is an additional dimension to address in a victim's plan for full recovery and rehabilitation.

When asked was there anything else they needed following the crime, but did not receive, 73 respondents answered 'Yes'. Many people listed more than one item. An indicative list of the frequency of key items is shown in the table below.

Table 5: Frequency of reported needs not met following the crime

TYPE OF HELP NEEDED BUT NOT OBTAINED	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
More help and information from Police	26	36
Information	14	19
Counselling*	14	19
Financial help	10	14
Legal services	6	8

* Respondents did not differentiate between types of counselling or service providers they accessed.

7.7 ENHANCING ENCOUNTERS WITH VICTIMS

The importance of anyone who the victims encounter being supportive and sensitive was emphasised. For 65 out of 98 respondents to this question, family and friends were indicated as a major source of support. The importance of information needs of family and friends was highlighted by these responses.

The term 'support' is subjective, and depends to some extent on the different needs and preferences of clients. It is important that all agencies respond to support needs by acknowledging the importance of victims being well informed. This reinforces informed decision making as an important factor in promoting recovery and rehabilitation.

Informal support, through community organisations is an area of emerging interest in victimology. Of the respondents, 43 of 108 belonged to community organisations. However, few respondents indicated these groups assisted them in any way following the crime.

7.8 COUNSELLING AVAILABILITY

A range of government and non-government organisations provide a counselling response to victims of crime. Counselling was considered useful by most who accessed it. The time elapsed was minimal, with nearly 90% of these 57 respondents accessing counselling within one month of the crime. This is a positive finding, in view of Bryant's research. Victims' perceptions of the purpose of counselling varied among the

respondents who gave reasons for not using counselling. These included perceived lack of confidentiality in some locations, and the feeling that counselling would not help the victim.

Of the 44 respondents who did not use counselling and gave reasons, there were 22 women, 20 men and 2 transgender. Included in this group of 44 were almost all the respondents who said they had not spoken to anyone about the victimisation prior to the day they called the survey. There were 17 people who said this was their first time disclosing the crime, with 13 of them never having used counselling. The table below sets out the age and gender distribution of those who did not access counselling following the crime.

Table 6: Demographics of those who did not access counselling

AGE	GENDER			TOTAL	PERCENT
	Female	Transgender	Male		
Under 25	1	0	0	1	3
25-40	10	0	6	16	36
41-55	9	2	12	23	52
Over 55	2	0	2	4	9
TOTAL	22	2	20	44	100

7.9 COURT EXPERIENCE

Of the 45 victims who were aware of a court hearing relating to the crime, more than half attended the court and half of those attending obtained help from a court support service. There are several different schemes of court support available. Respondents did not specify which scheme they were commenting on. Court support is important to many victims where cases go to trial. Contact with perpetrators in any setting has been identified as a source of significant stress for victims.

7.10 VICTIMS OF CRIME BUREAU

This analysis indicates that existing services and supports for victims of crime demonstrate effective implementation of the Charter of Victims Rights. The phone

line is called the Victims Support Line with joint delivery of this service shared between staff and volunteers at Mission Australia and at the Bureau. More respondents were aware of the Bureau than of Victims Support Line. Both these groups were smaller than the number who accessed counselling, suggesting that at the time of the phone-in the actual terminology of the agency was not recalled.

7.11 VICTIMS SUPPORT GROUPS

One-third of callers stated they were aware of victims support groups. Self help groups have an important role to play for those who choose this support at some time during their recovery. One objective of the survey was to give access to the Bureau particularly for those victims who do not typically contact a victims support group. Most callers fit that category.

7.12 VICTIMS' NEEDS

Callers were asked if there was anything they wanted to say at the end of the structured questions. Of the 108 callers, 94 took the opportunity to provide helpful comments about a number of issues. The most common comments related to victims' expectations of the Police and the desirability of them providing more information and support. The next most frequent issue was the need for clear information on what to do following the crime. In 11 cases, victims wanted an increase in the availability of counselling. Court information and support needs were indicated in 8 instances.

7.13 OTHER CLIENTS

As indicated earlier in this report, a group of 23 callers did not fit the legislative definition of victim of crime, but were interested to report to the survey from the perspective of family and friends of victims of crime other than homicide. Twenty callers reported being affected by offences against their child or grandchild. Ages of the victims was not recorded in most cases.

Table 7: Types of crime reported by family and friends of victims other than homicide.

TYPE OF CRIME	NUMBER OF CALLERS	PERCENT
Sexual offences	15	65
Assaults	4	17
Armed robbery	1	4
Missing person	1	4
Comments on services	2	9
TOTAL	23	

7.14 RESPONDENTS IN GENERAL

There are some factors to remember when the results are analysed. Given that the victims themselves initiated the phone call, it is likely that personality traits partly determine the motivation to join the survey. Not everyone is necessarily comfortable with the idea of providing information in this way.

Responses show what victims recall during a phone-interview. Strongest recollections may come to the foreground. Some detail of the victimisation experience may not be reported. This could partly explain the 'not stated/don't know' figures for some survey questions. The phone-in was important as it gave victims who didn't necessarily access support groups or services an opportunity to speak. It gave victims an opportunity to reflect on their experiences and provide information with the benefit of hindsight.

Interpretation of the survey findings must be understood in that context.

8. Strategic issues

The reports from victims bring into sharp focus the need to keep responding appropriately to victims of crime. The survey identified a number of areas for further attention.

It is critical for clients of the justice system that information is consistent at every aspect of a victim's contact with service providers.

Victims of crime express numerous expectations of the Police. It is sometimes suggested that Police, however, communicate with the victim primarily from the perspective of their status as witness to a crime. Since Police are often the first agency to deal with a victim, and may be the only agency aware of the victimisation for some time, it is not surprising that respondents mentioned Police more frequently than other agencies in connection with help following the crime. The survey found that Police were considered the main source of help, while at the same time were regarded as the agency where there was a need for improvement in supporting victims of crime.

Implication for interagency collaboration relates not only to sharing information, but for agencies to prioritise this aspect of service to victims. In dealing with victims of trauma, the useful information probably needs to be reinforced at different stages in the recovery process.

All services need to reach people who may not be attached to community groups. There may also be a need to work with those community groups in terms of enhancing information to victims. A strategy to achieve this would be Bureau presentations at service clubs. A future area of research might be to determine whether people are more or less likely to terminate membership of community groups after being victims of crime.

Discretionary support given by services and agencies outside the usual arena of victim contact is more effective if it includes accurate information. Further research is warranted to identify the main networks involved in discretionary support.

Further research is required to identify indicators that increase the risk of victimisation. It may be that more concerted links exist between successful strategies for crime prevention and rehabilitation after victimisation. There is a need

to identify the extent of common elements between crime prevention and victimisation prevention. Future strategies for victims need to be informed by this research.

The Charter of Victims Rights asserts that all clients are to be treated with courtesy, compassion and respect. For the three transgender respondents, although the crimes were different in each case, the gender-related issues had a particularly traumatic and ongoing impact on their recovery. All agencies need to be aware of the impact of this additional layer of victimisation and the cumulative effects on a victim of crime. The Bureau has a role in facilitating and monitoring Charter compliance. The forthcoming standards of service for implementation of the Charter of Victims Rights are intended to increase the level of sensitivity to the diversity of multiple factors impacting upon victims.

Employer and workplace issues indicate the need to develop a kit for employers about awareness of specific victims of crime issues, particularly from a human resources perspective, of strategies for assisting staff who have been victims of crime, either at work or elsewhere. The Bureau has started working with Clubs NSW to deliver a series of workshops. These workshops have been well received so far, and there is a need to continue this strategy.

Victim blaming continues to be an issue for victims of crime. This highlights the need for continuous education for the police and justice agencies, as well as service providers and the community in general.

There is a need to highlight the purposes and benefits of counselling provided by a range of government and non-government organisations. It is necessary to ensure counselling is available at different periods throughout a victim's rehabilitation process in a range of media, including one-to-one contact, telephone, and on-line. A broad range of counselling services is available and can complement other services as well as the support of family and friends. Of the callers who accessed counselling, 90% did so within one month of the crime.

Preparing to attend court and then the actual court experience can be daunting for many victims. Education about coping strategies for victims may need to recognise the stressful nature of the court experience. In recognition of the importance of the high standards required in this area, the Bureau has published a set of standards for court support. The Various court support services including the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions Witness Assistance Scheme are key stakeholders in this work.

There is a need to continue the integrated approach to delivery of targeted information on victims rights and needs, support, counselling, and assistance at every point of contact with victims and those providing support. In targeting, reference to the gender differences in the survey respondents is required. It may indicate that men's preference in methods for accessing information is a field for further research. Community education for positive attitudinal change towards victims is important. Perhaps the development of a booklet for this purpose is warranted.

The low number of respondents aged 15-24 years is of concern particularly as the crime statistics show a high rate of victimisation by this age group. Targetting youth who are victims of crime needs exploring. Similarly, the low rate of response for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-English speaking background respondents is also of concern, particularly as the crime statistics reflect a high degree of victimisation within these communities. People from culturally diverse backgrounds often have cultural barriers to seeking assistance. Strategies to target these groups in culturally-sensitive ways need to be developed.

9. Conclusion

There is always scope for further improvement. To consolidate the work already undertaken in the Victims of Crime Bureau Interagency Forum, input from callers on specific matters will be used to research the most effective way to address these residual concerns. Specific projects to promote more supportive environments in workplaces and the general community will be developed in consultation with key groups.

The information needs for victims and those coming into informal contact with victims continue to expand, as the Bureau's understanding of particular groups of clients expands. The new booklet *What Now? Information for victims of crime in New South Wales* increases the information resources already available. This new booklet was launched at the victims conference held in May 2001.

These strategic issues will be progressed in consultation with government and non-government agencies and victims' support groups in the Victims of Crime Bureau Interagency Forum and in the Victims Advisory Board.

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Appendix A

VICTIMS QUESTIONNAIRE

Interviewer's Initials _____

Survey Day Fri Sat Time _____

To answer a call:

Good (evening). You have contacted the Victims of Crime Survey.

My first name is _____

1. HAVE YOU BEEN A VICTIM OF CRIME? Yes No

IF YES, GO TO B, THEN QUESTION 4

IF NO, ASK:

2. ARE YOU A RELATIVE OR FRIEND OF A VICTIM? Yes No

IF YES, AND INVOLVED A HOMICIDE VICTIM, GO TO B, THEN QUESTION 3.

IF YES, FOR CASES OTHER THAN HOMICIDE, GO TO THE PINK SURVEY FORM.

IF NO, SAY:

The survey is being conducted so that we can hear directly from victims of crime themselves about their experiences. We are also interested in hearing from the relatives and friends of victims of crime. If you are neither a victim of crime, nor a relative or friend of a victim, I need to re-direct you to the supervisor.

B FOR THE CALLERS WHO SAID YES TO 1 AND 2, SAY:

This survey is confidential. We do not require your name or any information

that will identify you. The survey takes about 20 minutes to complete and involves answering a number of questions.

Before I start the survey, I have two things I'd like to let you know:

It is your choice to answer any questions I ask you. If there are any questions you'd prefer not to answer, or you find you don't wish to continue the survey, please let me know and I will stop at that point.

I'd also like to let you know that as well as the survey, there are counsellors here. If at any point, you would prefer to be speaking to a counsellor, please let me know and I will transfer you to a counsellor.

The survey results will be used to assist in planning further services for victims of crime. We would like to hear your ideas about what would assist victims of crime, and their relatives and friends.

Are you willing to take part in the survey?

Thank you, I will now begin the survey.

FOR RELATIVES OF HOMICIDE VICTIMS - GO TO 3

FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME - SKIP TO 4

FOR RELATIVES AND FRIENDS OF VICTIMS OF CRIME OTHER THAN HOMICIDE, GO TO PINK SURVEY FORM.

3. WHAT IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE VICTIM?

4. HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU BEEN A VICTIM OF CRIME?

1 2 3 +

5. IN THE MOST RECENT INCIDENT WHERE YOU WERE A VICTIM OF CRIME, WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED?

6. WHAT YEAR DID THIS MOST RECENT CRIME HAPPEN? _____

7. HAVE YOU EVER TALKED TO ANYONE ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE AS A VICTIM OF CRIME BEFORE TODAY? Yes No

BE ALERT FOR FIRST-TIME DISCLOSURE.

Say: Are you OK to continue?

Now I need to write down some facts about you.

8. GENDER

Male Female Transgender

9. WHAT AGE GROUP DO YOU BELONG TO?

under 25 25-40 41-55 over 55

10. WHAT IS THE POSTCODE OF THE AREA WHERE YOU LIVE? _____

11. WHAT IS THE MAIN LANGUAGE SPOKEN IN YOUR HOME?

English Other (please specify) _____

12. ARE YOU FROM ABORIGINAL OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BACKGROUND? Yes No

13. DO YOU HAVE ANY DISABILITY? Yes No

PROMPTS: visual impairment, physical disability

IF YES, DO QUESTIONS 14 AND 15

IF NO, SKIP TO QUESTION 16

14. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR DISABILITY PLEASE?

15. IS THE DISABILITY A RESULT OF THE CRIME? Yes No

AT THIS POINT, FOR CALLERS WHO ARE REFERRING TO A CRIME THAT HAPPENED PRIOR TO 1997 (SEE THEIR ANSWER TO QUESTION 6) SKIP TO QUESTION 54 - ABOUT SUPPORT GROUPS.

Now I would like to ask some details of the context:

16. DID YOU KNOW THE OFFENDER(S)? Yes No

17. DID THE CRIME HAPPEN WHILE YOU WERE ALONE WITH THE OFFENDER(S)? Yes No

18. WHERE DID THE CRIME HAPPEN? (TICK ALL THAT APPLY)

- Your home
- At work
- On the street
- Hotel/club
- Other (please specify)
- Someone's else's home
- At school
- In a park
- In a car

19. DID THE CRIME AFFECT YOUR ABILITY TO WORK? Yes No
20. IS YOUR EMPLOYER AWARE THE CRIME HAPPENED TO YOU? Yes No
21. WERE YOU SATISFIED WITH THE LEVEL OF SUPPORT FROM YOUR EMPLOYER? Yes No
22. ARE YOU CURRENTLY WORKING? Yes No

IF NO, GO TO 23.

IF YES, SKIP TO 24.

23. IS THAT AS A RESULT OF THE CRIME? Yes No

Now I am going to ask you about the help you needed after the crime.

24. DID YOU SEEK HELP FROM A FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER FOLLOWING THE CRIME? Yes No
25. DID YOU FEEL YOU NEEDED PROFESSIONAL COUNSELLING FOLLOWING THE CRIME? Yes No Unsure
26. DID YOU SEE A PROFESSIONAL COUNSELLOR? Yes No

IF YES, GO TO 27

IF NO, SKIP TO 29

27. HOW LONG AFTER THE CRIME DID YOU FIRST SEE A PROFESSIONAL COUNSELLOR?
- Less than one month
 - Between one and two months
 - More than two months

28. HOW USEFUL DID YOU FIND THE COUNSELLING?

- Extremely useful
- Moderately useful
- Not useful at all

29. IS THERE ANY REASON WHY YOU DIDN'T SEE A PROFESSIONAL COUNSELLOR? PLEASE GIVE REASON.

30. WERE YOU AWARE OF THE VICTIMS OF CRIME BUREAU? Yes No

31. WERE YOU AWARE OF THE VICTIMS SUPPORT LINE? Yes No

IF YES, GO TO 32

IF NO, SKIP TO 34

32. DID YOU PHONE THE VICTIMS SUPPORT LINE? Yes No

IF YES, GO TO 33

IF NO, SKIP TO 35

33. HOW USEFUL DID YOU FIND THE VICTIMS SUPPORT LINE?

- Extremely useful
- Moderately useful
- Not useful at all

34. WOULD YOU HAVE USED THE LINE, IF YOU HAD KNOWN ABOUT IT? Yes No

IF NO, GO TO 35

IF YES, SKIP TO 36

35. IS THERE ANY REASON WHY YOU WOULD NOT USE THE VICTIMS SUPPORT LINE?
(PLEASE GIVE REASON)

36. WHO DID YOU GET HELP FROM TO ASSIST IN RECOVERING FROM THE CRIME?

PROMPTS: Police
 legal services
 medical services
 clergy/religious
 financial counselling
 advice for helping children and family members
 advice for dealing with the media
 contact with a support group

37. WHAT WAS YOUR MAIN SOURCE OF SUPPORT FOLLOWING THE CRIME?

38. HOW HELPFUL WAS YOUR MAIN SOURCE OF SUPPORT?

- Extremely helpful
- Moderately helpful
- Not helpful at all

39. IS THERE ANY REASON WHY YOU DIDN'T SEEK HELP? PLEASE SPECIFY.

40. WAS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU NEEDED FOLLOWING THE CRIME BUT DID NOT RECEIVE? Yes No

If Yes, go to 41

If No, skip to 42

41. PLEASE STATE WHAT YOU NEEDED.

The next two questions are about organisations helpful to victims of crime.

42. ARE YOU A MEMBER OF ANY OF THESE TYPES OF ORGANISATIONS?

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| local community | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| sporting | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| volunteer group | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| church group | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| any other group - please specify | _____ | |

43. DID YOU RECEIVE SUPPORT FROM ANY OF THESE? Yes No

I am now going to ask you some questions about the crime.

44. WAS/WERE A PERSON OR PERSONS CHARGED WITH THE CRIME? Yes No Don't know

IF YES, GO TO 45

IF NO, SKIP TO 52

45. Did you attend this court hearing? Yes No

IF YES, GO TO 46

IF NO, SKIP TO 52

I want to ask you how you learned about the court processes.

46. DID YOU NEED HELP WITH PREPARATION FOR THIS COURT HEARING? Yes No

47. DID YOU OBTAIN HELP WITH PREPARATION FOR THIS COURT HEARING? Yes No

48. HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE HELP YOU GOT WITH COURT PREPARATION?

- Extremely helpful
- Moderately helpful
- Not helpful at all

I am now going to ask you about the day of the court hearing.

49. DID YOU NEED A COURT SUPPORT PERSON WITH YOU AT THE COURT HEARING? Yes No

IF YES, GO TO 50

IF NO, SKIP TO 52

50. WERE YOU ACCOMPANIED BY A COURT SUPPORT PERSON AT THE COURT HEARING? Yes No

IF YES, GO TO 51

IF NO, SKIP TO 52

51. HOW HELPFUL WAS THE COURT SUPPORT PERSON?

- Extremely helpful
- Moderately helpful
- Not helpful at all

52. DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE CHARTER OF VICTIMS RIGHTS? Yes No

If Yes, go to 53

If No, skip to 54

53. WHEN DID YOU FIND OUT ABOUT THE CHARTER?

- When the crime happened?
- Within the year after the crime?
- More than a year after the crime?

54. DO YOU KNOW ABOUT ANY VICTIMS SUPPORT GROUPS? Yes No

55. HAVE YOU HAD CONTACT WITH ANY VICTIMS SUPPORT GROUPS? Yes No

If No, go to 56

If Yes, skip to 57

56. PLEASE TELL ME IF THERE IS ANY PARTICULAR REASON WHY YOU HAVEN'T.

57. WHICH GROUP(S) HAVE YOU HAD CONTACT WITH?

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Enough is Enough | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Homicide Victims Support Group | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Victims of Crime Assistance League | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Any other group - please state its name _____ | | |

58. IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY ABOUT YOUR NEEDS AS A VICTIM OF CRIME?

That is the end of the interview. Thank you for the information you have provided. It will be used for helping other victims of crime.

If you would like any information in the future or just want to talk further about your experience as a victim of crime, please feel free to contact the Victims Support Line.

If you are calling from the Sydney Metropolitan area the number is 9374 3000.

If you are calling from outside Sydney, the number is 1800 63 30 63.

Appendix B

FAMILY AND FRIENDS QUESTIONNAIRE

For those who are relatives of victims of crime other than homicide.

Interviewer's Initials _____

Survey Day Fri Sat Time _____

If you are a relative of a victim of crime other than homicide, there are a few questions I would like to ask you.

Are you willing to take part in the survey now?

Before I start the survey, I have two things I'd like to let you know:

1. It is your choice to answer any questions I ask you. If there are any questions you'd prefer not to answer, or you find you don't wish to continue the survey, please let me know and I will stop at that point.

2. I'd also like to let you know that as well as the survey, there are counsellors here. If at any point, you would prefer to be speaking to a counsellor, please let me know and I will transfer you to a counsellor.

2. WHAT IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE VICTIM?

3. WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED?

4. WHAT YEAR DID THIS CRIME HAPPEN? _____

5. HAVE YOU EVER TALKED TO ANYONE ABOUT THIS EXPERIENCE BEFORE TODAY? Yes No

BE ALERT FOR FIRST-TIME DISCLOSURE.

**Say: Are you OK to continue?
Now I need to write down some facts about you.**

6. SEX
 Male Female Transgender

7. AGE GROUP
 under 25 25-40 41-55 over 55

8. WHAT IS THE MAIN LANGUAGE SPOKEN IN YOUR HOME?
 English Other (please specify) _____

9. ARE YOU FROM ABORIGINAL OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BACKGROUND? Yes No

10. DO YOU HAVE ANY DISABILITY? Yes No

IF YES, GO TO QUESTION 11

IF NO, SKIP TO QUESTION 12

11. WOULD YOU GIVE ME SOME DETAILS OF THE DISABILITY PLEASE?

12. What is your postcode? _____

13. WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO TELL ME ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE AS THE RELATIVE OF A VICTIM OF CRIME?

14. HAVE YOU HAD CONTACT WITH ANY VICTIMS SUPPORT GROUPS? Yes No

IF YES, GO TO 15

IF NO, GO TO 16

15. WHICH GROUP(S) HAVE YOU HAD CONTACT WITH?

Enough is Enough	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Homicide Victims Support Group	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Victims of Crime Assistance League	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Other - please give details _____		

16. ARE THERE ANY OTHER COMMENTS YOU WOULD LIKE TO MAKE ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE AS THE RELATIVE OF A VICTIM OF CRIME?

That is the end of the interview. Thank you for the information you have provided. It will be used for helping other victims of crime.

If you would like any information in the future or just want to talk further about your experience, please feel free to contact the Victims Support Line.

If you are calling from the Sydney Metropolitan area, the number is 9374 3000.

If you are calling from outside Sydney, the number is 1800 63 30 63.

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