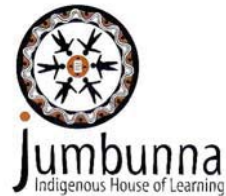


**Wilcannia – Menindee
Bourke – Lightning Ridge:
Different Worlds**

**Lessons for understanding
crime in four NSW Aboriginal communities**

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Aim of pilot studies

- To better understand the factors that contribute to significant variations in rates of Indigenous offending in different areas in NSW
- To identify whether there are particular characteristics or strategies that may have a positive impact on crime rates in Indigenous communities



Methodology

- Qualitative study of two communities with significant Indigenous populations that are geographically and demographically comparable but with contrasting crime rates
- Semi-structured interviews with key community and organisational representatives
- Not pretending to be comprehensive community based project
- Questions covered particular areas but didn't ask about specific factors – different factors emerge in different communities



Case study: Wilcannia

- Population: 596; 67.4% Aboriginal (2006 Census)
- 200km from Broken Hill
- High unemployment, low income, exorbitant cost of living, low educational achievements
- 12 police



Case study: Wilcannia

- Within traditional country of the Barkindji people: along the Darling River from Wentworth to Wilcannia
- People in town camps forcibly removed to mission at Menindee with Nyampa in 1930s, then most returned in Wilcannia in 1950s
- Aboriginal people described as 'traditional' and 'not assimilated' but cultural norms undermined eg respect for elders
- Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people segregated



Case study: Menindee

- Population: 332; 46.7% Aboriginal (2006 Census)
- 110 km from Broken Hill
- Higher unemployment, lower household income, higher educational attainment
- 3 police



Case study: Menindee

- Within traditional Barkindji land
- Some Barkindji people – predominantly Nyampa people who were forcibly moved from Nyampa country to Menindee mission in 1930s. Second move to Murrin Bridge, some families stayed
- Traditional enmity between Barkindji and Nyampa but contemporary, cohesive society
- Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people not segregated



Crime Statistics

NSW Recorded Crime Statistics 2008: Number of Indigenous persons of interest¹ whose place of residence was either postcode 2836, 2879 or 2880, selected offences

	2836 Bourke		2879 Lightning Ridge	
	Indigenous POIs	rate per 100,000 pop	Indigenous POIs	rate per 100,000 pop
Murder	0	0	0	0
Assault ²	93	22682.9	11	6250.0
Sexual offences	5	1219.5	0	0.0
Robbery	1	243.9	0	0.0
Break and enter Motor vehicle theft	29	7073.2	3	1704.5
Stealing ³	26	6341.5	0	0.0
Fraud	9	2195.1	1	568.2
Malicious damage to property	1	243.9	0	0.0
	16	3902.4	4	2272.7
Indigenous population⁴	410		176	

1. Persons of interest (POIs) are alleged offenders or persons who the police suspect have been involved in a criminal incident. Some POIs are formally proceeded against by police and some are not. POI details are recorded by NSW Police Force on the Computerised Operational Policing System (COPS) in connection with a recorded criminal incident. Criminal incidents involving multiple offenders can have more than one associated POI. Correspondingly, no POI information will be recorded for criminal incidents in which there is no known suspect.
2. Includes domestic violence assault, non-domestic violence assault and assault police.
3. Includes steal from motor vehicle, retail store, dwelling, person, stock theft and other theft.
4. Indigenous population data was sourced from the ABS and is from the 2006 census.

Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (j09-8277)



High crime rates: Wilcannia

- Alcohol
- Employment
- Boredom; aimlessness
- Poverty and inequality
- River



Associated issues: Wilcannia

- Mental health problems
- Grief
- Disjointed, inappropriate, remote service delivery
- Over-representation and approach of police
- Impractical and exacerbating sanctions
- Impact of fines
- Incarceration as a rite of passage
- Lack of community ownership of planning; decision-making
- Lack of functional representative organisations
- Breakdown of relationships
- Segregation
- Significant transitory population
- Nowhere to gather if not about alcohol



Lower crime rates: Menindee

- Menindee as law abiding
- Better employment prospects
- Sense of pride, expectation
- Strong school/community relationship
- Under-reporting



Associated issues: Menindee

- Strong women community actors
- Community policing
- Local solutions to local problems
- Few government services
- Refuse intervention unaligned with community vision
- Mentoring/traineeships for high school students
- Succession planning
- Integrated community
- Cohesiveness fragile



Case study: Bourke

- Population: 2,473; 33% Aboriginal (2006 Census)
- 360 km from Dubbo
- High unemployment, low income, high cost of living, low educational achievements
- 36 police



Case study: Bourke

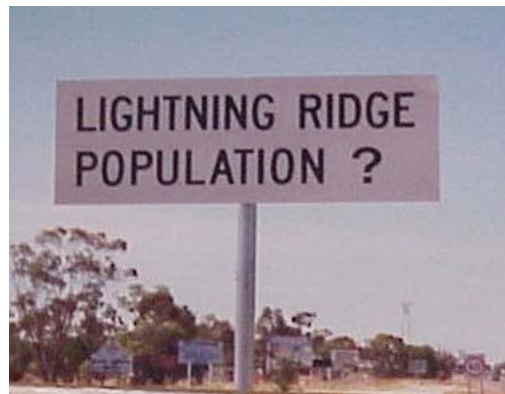
- Traditional country of Ngemba people on Darling River
- Traditional owners in minority – 21 different language groups including including Ngemba, Wangkumara, Murrawari and Barkindji
- Former agricultural prosperity in decline
- Original European settlement was fort
- Influx of Aboriginal people leaving Brewarrina mission to return home but trapped by floods
- Others – employment opportunities
- Fringe camps later converted to reserve



Case study: Lightning Ridge

- Population: 2,602; 21% Aboriginal (2006 Census)
- 351 km from Dubbo; 300 km from Moree
- Slightly lower unemployment, slightly higher income, high cost of living, higher educational achievements
- 10 police





Case study: Lightning Ridge

- Opal mining town – relatively new settlement
- Traditional country of the Yualaraay but many language groups
- Many Aboriginal people settled post 1950s
- Extremely multicultural – approx 60 nationalities
- Not segregated



Crime Statistics

	BOURKE			LIGHTNING RIDGE		
	Indigenous POIs	Population	Rate per 100,000 population	Indigenous POIs	Population	Rate per 100,000 population
Murder	0	0	0	0	0	0
Assault - Domestic Violence	62	817	7,588.70	13	561	2,317.30
Assault - Non DV related	28	817	3,427.20	11	561	1,960.80
Sexual Assault	2	817	244.8	1	561	178.3
Indecent Assault, act of indecency and other sexual offences	0	0	0	0	0	0
Robbery	0	0	0	0	0	0
Break and enter	26	817	3,182.37	10	561	1,937.98
Motor vehicle theft	18	817	2,203.20	1	561	178.3
Steal from motor vehicle	8	817	979.2	0	0	0
Steal from retail store	10	817	1,224.00	5	561	891.3
Steal from dwelling	6	817	734.4	1	561	178.3
Steal from person	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fraud	0	0	0	0	0	0
Malicious damage to property	43	817	5,263.20	3	561	534.8

High crime rates: Bourke

- Alcohol & drugs
- Unemployment
- Boredom; aimlessness
- Legacy of colonisation and dispossession
- Conflict in community
- Intergenerational criminality
- Authority to discipline kids removed
- Over zealous policing



Associated issues: Bourke

- Powerlessness and ongoing marginalisation
- Lack of support for local initiatives
- Racism and segregation
- Child safety
- Land rights and access to land
- Community resilience v government services and regulation
- Failure of juvenile detention and need for alternatives
- Services available but need for holistic service delivery

Low crime rates: Lightning Ridge

- Prosperity (view of outsiders)
- Employment /meaningful activity/specking
- Under reporting
- Frontier – vigilante justice
- Youth development program
- Strong families and supportive parents



Associated issues: Lightning Ridge

- Very few services; no public housing
- Multiculturalism – a positive influence
- Resourceful, self-reliant and ambitious people
- Aboriginal enterprise and ownership
- Low levels of racism
- Little / no segregation
- Positive relationship between school and community
- Elders held in high esteem
- High levels of volunteerism



Anomalies: Lightning Ridge

- High levels of drug and alcohol consumption
- Drug distribution network
- ABS statistics incorrect?
- Invisible Aboriginal population
- High level of mental health issues



Specific criminal justice issues

- Over policing/ use of discretion
- Lack of understanding of processes by Aboriginal people
- Role of Aboriginal liaisons crucial
- External factors eg bus timetables
- Under resourcing and inexperience
- AVOs: crucial but impractical and exacerbating
- Impact of fines/ capacity to pay
- Lack of alternative options: bail conditions, diversionary programs
- Lack of local treatment options
- Juvenile detention and incarceration involves leaving town
- Alcohol related crimes and receiving brief late in process

What has worked?

- Keating Government employment program in Wilcannia
- Alcohol accord in Bourke
- Youth development strategies being deployed by Walgett Shire Council



Closing the Gap: the BIG PICTURE

- Sorry not enough – face up to history and legacies
- Support for community initiatives
- Access to land and land rights
- Aboriginal authority respected
- Reinvigorated cultural authority
- Long term employment strategies
- Educational opportunities with flexible delivery
- Significance of local government
- Community role in determining policies, funding and programs

Closing the Gap: REACTIVE MEASURES

- Increased significance of liaison roles, especially ACLOs
- Local case managers to support fly in professionals
- Local drug and alcohol treatment facilities
- Youth diversionary programs eg Brahminy program
- Safe house/hostel for children and adolescents
- Bail house for juveniles
- Flexible recruitment and tenure
- Cultural awareness training
- Safe and productive activities for kids
- Role of school is critical

