

# ***Title: Victim Services Delivery: Contemporary Police Models<sup>1</sup>***

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## **Abstract**

This paper provides an overview of victim services delivery within police organizations in the US, Canada, Australia and the UK. It is based on extensive interview and documentary research conducted as part of a larger ARC Linkage Project currently in progress with Victoria Police to examine the efficacy of victim service delivery. The paper offers a typology of victim services located within police organizations: "Unit" services offered by dedicated units located within police organizations; "Dedicated Officer" services which utilize police personnel charged with specific responsibility for victims of crime but dispersed throughout the organization, and "Referral" services which utilize front-line police to connect with community-based and government services outside the police organization. The paper will analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the respective models through examples. Particular challenges discussed include: police-civilian relations within police agencies; resource, organizational and delivery constraints; the influence of jurisdictional policing structure; defining which victims receive service delivery and developing victim services for marginalized communities, and the influence of broader government-led victim-oriented policy commitments. The paper will conclude with a discussion of the possibilities and limits of transferring successful models to other jurisdictions.

## **Introduction**

The role and function of police and of policing has undergone significant transformative shifts over the past few decades (see Loader & Walker, 2001; Bowling & Foster, 2002; Segrave & Ratcliffe, 2002). Within liberal democracies such as Australia, this has been reflected in the increasingly diverse, and at times conflicting, roles adopted within various elements of public police agencies- think, for example, of counter terror and riot policing operations at recent events such as the APEC meeting in Sydney in 2006 compared with the promotion of a small, targeted suburban community policing effort in the ACT (see Segrave & Collins: 2005). Recognition of the multiple roles and functions of police is well established and, so too, is the appreciation of the importance of what has been termed 'soft' policing that encompasses the maintenance of positive police and community relationships and the promotion of the effective and timely provision of victim support and referral. This has partly reflected the increased appreciation of the critical role community support plays in police effectiveness. That is, through maintaining positive relationships the community generally, and victims of crime specifically, will be more willing and able to assist police in identifying and responding to both traditional (for example, crimes against the person, property

crimes) and emerging (such as terrorism related offences) criminal activity. Cultivating positive relationships with 'the community' is in practice largely mobilized through individual encounters with police (Sherman 1998: 6) - and it is through being a victim of crime that many members of the public will experience such interactions.

A significant catalyst for the recognition of the community and of the importance of the victim has been the growing influence of the victim movement, which has set in motion a range of critiques of past policing practices (see Edwards, 1999). It was the work of victims and survivors that galvanized communities globally and generated the impetus for the development of victim-oriented policies internationally (see Rock, 2006). In the late 1970s and early 1980s this campaign gained traction, yielding the UN Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power in November 1985 (29 November 1985: A/Res/40/34). The Declaration, which articulated the necessity of treating victims of crime with "compassion" and "dignity", also identified that victims of crime are "entitled to access to the mechanisms of justice and prompt redress". Since the international community adopted this formal commitment, nations across the globe have begun to embrace various statutory and procedural charters, principles and guidelines to improve the experience of all victims of crime. It is within this context that this research project is situated.

International recognition of victims of crime operates largely at the level of rhetoric; it is well recognized that a significant challenge is for this recognition to transform the daily operational realities of the mechanisms of the criminal justice system. The primary interface for victims of crime when engaging with the criminal justice system has traditionally been the police, with whom they interact in the immediacy or aftermath of a criminal event. Since the birth of 'professional policing' in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, police have been the primary agency interacting with victims of crime. It has been noted however, that this interaction has historically been driven primarily by instrumentalist policing priorities where victims of crime were seen as an important *resource* whose information and evidence was critical to crime prevention and investigation (see Hoyle & Young, 2003). Thus while sympathetic treatment of victims of crime may have been encouraged, police obligations lay almost exclusively with the building of cases for the state to pursue against offenders (Hoyle & Young, 2003). In part the 'crisis' in policing and the era of reform around the 1960s/70s lay the foundation for the reconsideration of the victim-police interaction and the recognition that police may have a greater duty and obligation towards victims of crime. The emergence of community policing models and efforts to build positive community-police relationships also generated opportunities for activists to demand police engage with the work of independent support groups, particularly services for female victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. While many policing agencies across Australia shifted towards a 'service' model and then back to a 'force' based organization model (see Finnane, 1999), these developments enabled the practice of policing to be reconsidered and a space to be created for international victim support models to influence policing practices nationally and internationally.

However, while we know much about the importance of victim support, and we continue to hear commitments to supporting victims of crime across Australia and internationally, little is currently known about the delivery of victim services *within* police organizations. And yet the importance of victim interactions with first responders, primarily police and medical personnel, are a key element of the victim experience. The nature of police interactions with victims of crime has been

demonstrated to significantly impact upon victim recovery from trauma, overall satisfaction with the police, and cooperation with the criminal justice system (Foley & Terrill 2008; Tewksbury & West 2001; Lurigio & Rosenbaum 1992). The extent to which police are responsible for providing victim support is an issue that requires further debate and discussion, and is not the central issue we are addressing here. In order to engage in such a discussion, it is necessary to firstly ascertain what is currently in operation within policing organizations within Australia and internationally. Clearly, police organizations have a complex and interdependent relationship with victims of crime, and this impacts upon decisions regarding the delivery of support (Mawby 2007). The research we are reporting on here examines the current operation of the provision of support to victims. As outlined below, there are currently three major typologies of victim support: "Unit" services, "Dedicated Officer" services, and "Referral" services. In this paper we will canvass the structure, strengths and weaknesses of these models, drawing on the extensive interview and documentary research conducted by the research team.

### **The provision of victim support by policing agencies: key typologies**

The typologies we have developed are a useful tool for understanding the plethora of victim support structures within police agencies, both in Australia and internationally. Obviously, as with any typology, it is not intended to be exhaustive. There are various hybrid forms of victim service structure. Certain police organizations, for example, may have dedicated liaison officer positions, while having a specific unit tasked with dealing with victims of specified offences. Nevertheless we believe this typology does provide a valuable explanatory framework - one which allows us to assess both the strengths and weaknesses of the various forms of organization. We will now, with the use of examples garnered from our research, outline the various types of service.

#### *"Unit" services offered by dedicated units located within police organizations;*

Across Australia there are a limited number of dedicated victims unit and/or crime prevention units (which in some cases are connected to victim support) within police organisations. For example, ACT Policing's Crime Prevention Unit has two Victim Liaison Officers who are uniformed officers with a broad mandate to assist ACT policing in adhering to the governing principles prescribed within the *Victims of Crime Act 1994* (Victims of Crime Co-ordinator, 2005). Similarly, in Victoria, there is a Victoria Police Victims Advisory Unit which currently has two liaison officers. However these officers are not mandated to be the primary contact for all victims of crime, but are rather called in to provide assistance on a case-by-case basis and to act as a point of referral. The Victims Advisory Unit is now focused primarily on assisting Victoria Police to fulfill their obligations under the *Victims' Charter Act 2006*. Both of these units operate and are physically located apart from general duties operations. In some cases officers are deployed to that unit, and in Victoria sworn officers work collaboratively with unsworn police personnel. In addition to these broad 'Unit' services there also exist targeted 'Units' specifically focused on crime types. Primarily it is domestic violence and sexual assault and, in some cases, homicide that have specific formal (or informal) 'Units' that are involved in the investigation and prosecution of cases in addition to providing ongoing and extensive victim support. In NSW, for example, the Domestic Violence Liaison Office becomes involved after police are called to a domestic incident and are responsible for ensuring victims are made aware of the services available to them, to follow up on the case (where a case progresses to investigation and/or prosecution) and in some cases to support victims through the criminal justice

process. While this kind of service fits within a 'Unit' service definition, for our purposes the work they undertake fits more accurately within our specifications for the 'dedicated liaison officer' service that we will return to.

What is clear in Australia is that 'Unit' services are not the predominant model within policing organizations – the dedicated units that are currently in operation exist primarily fulfill liaison and referral roles. Taking the lead on 'Unit' model services have been the various Departments of Justice and Attorney-Generals in a number of states who have adopted specific victim units and services to provide comprehensive support to victims of crime. Many of these are linked to the Department of Public Prosecution (DPP) and target victims of crime moving through the criminal justice process. For example, in Western Australia the Court Services Division of the Department of Justice manages the Victim Support Service which offers a confidential service for victims of crime including the provision of counselors and referral to other information and service providers. These units tend to operate in part to either provide or to connect to support services, but also to advocate on behalf of victims. The Victims Assistance Unit in Tasmania, for instance, works under the auspices of the Department of Justice to maintain the Tasmanian Victims Register and provide assistance and advice regarding court processes and outcomes but also identifies its core role as operating as a liaison between government and non-government agencies and promoting victims' rights within the community. Thus within Australia the push for 'Unit' services has been generated by government departments that are seeking to achieve a broad range of goals and to coordinate and oversee the management of victim support service provision. However through broadening our scope to include international models of victims support it is evident that a number of policing approaches working elsewhere do operate with the 'unit' service model.

Unit services are particularly prevalent in Canada and the United States. Indeed, the emphasis on police-based victim services is especially evident in the United States, where the International Association of Chiefs of Police is currently conducting pilot projects in three locations, with the aim of setting benchmark standards and transferable models for the provision of victim services within municipal police agencies (REF). The Canadian province of British Columbia also has a highly developed program of police-based victim services with a central coordinating Association, Police-Victim Services of British Columbia, which provides training in the form of Victim-Service Practitioners Certificate and hosts an annual forum.

An indicative example of a North American 'Unit Service' is the Victim Services Unit located within the London Police Service in Ontario, Canada. London is a city of around 330 000 located around 2 hours drive south of Toronto. In 2007, London Police Service had 578 sworn officers and 188 non-sworn employees (London Police Service, Annual Report, 2007). The Victim Services Unit is staffed by eight permanent staff located within the Uniformed Division. Seven of the eight staff are drawn from social work, psychology and counseling backgrounds, and all have specialized training in trauma and critical incident stress management. Each member of the team has an ongoing specialist portfolio in areas such as domestic violence, addictions, mental health, the elderly and hate crime. Nevertheless they also adopt a generalist approach in taking referrals from front-line officers. The service covers a broad range of offences, with 100% contact with designated crime victims in cases of domestic violence, residential break and enter, hate crime and robbery. While the unit does not provide ongoing counseling services, it does provide debriefings and acts as central point of contact for victims of crime. While the unit is accessible to all members of the community, the majority of referrals

are provided by front-line police. The unit also undertakes initiatives such as the Muslim Family Safety Project in cooperation with other victims' services within the London community.

*"Dedicated Liaison Officer" services which utilize police personnel charged with specific responsibility for victims of crime but dispersed throughout the organization.*

The 'dedicated liaison officer' model has been adopted in every Australian policing organization, reflecting the extent to which some aspects of the late 1980s/early 1990s push towards community policing and police 'service' approaches have become firmly entrenched within contemporary practices. This model differs to the 'Unit' model as it more often involves general duties police officers undertaking a liaison role as an *additional* specialized role for which they receive specific training. Echoing the early discussions of the wider interpretation of 'community policing' as it was adopted and implemented internationally (see for example, Cheurprakobkit, 2002), the dedicated Liaison Officer's role within each policing organization differs considerably and is dependent upon a range of factors. The 'Dedicated Liaison Model' can incorporate liaison with targeted communities (most often those identified as 'at risk' or 'marginalized' communities), liaison based on offence where specific victims groups are the focus (for example, domestic violence liaison officers or victim liaison within specific units or squads such as a Homicide Unit) and more generalist liaison roles that are broadly defined as promoting community-police positive relations. Across Australia the most common liaison officers are targeted at specific communities primarily youth, the gay and lesbian community, migrant/minority communities (with titles including 'multicultural', 'ethnic' 'cross cultural' and 'ethnic community' liaison) and indigenous Australians. Our Australian research highlights that the use of the 'Dedicated Liaison Model' by police organizations varies considerably.

The variability of the work undertaken by members within these liaison positions requires further illustration. For this purpose, we will take the example of Gay and Lesbian liaisons officers who are in place in a number of policing organizations across Australia (specifically, NSW, SA, Tasmania and Victoria). All of these liaison officers are sworn members who are charged with the role of working with the Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual community to promote cooperative and positive police-community relationships. The broad parameters of the role means that Individuals may undertake a range of duties- from assisting a community member when they become a victim of crime, working on crime prevention initiatives though to participating in community events. Critically, such roles are largely dependent upon the individual officer and/or the specific station/area in terms of the resources dedicated towards maintaining and building this relationship. In addition, their work is also dependent on the number of positions- while in NSW there are approximately 100 Gay and Lesbian Liaison officers working across the state, Tasmania has only nine.

The shifts in policing practices and the identification of 'at risk' and 'marginalised' groups in Australia has also given rise to an increased emphasis on the ethnic dimensions of 'multicultural' liaison for police forces across Australia. There are officers devoted to this role across Australia, however the resources dedicated to these roles vary, and again, their role is broadly defined and open to wide interpretation. A recent report by Pickering et al (2007) identified that Multicultural Liaison Officers with Victoria Police "have a wide remit and range of functions" (Pickering et al, 2007: 74). Importantly, liaison roles are not always fulfilled by sworn police members. In states including NSW, the ACT and WA the

dedicated multicultural officer (or officers- in NSW there are approximately 33) is a civilian volunteer. A practice which may reflect an increasing recognition of the challenges police face in connecting with a range of communities and ensuring they provide culturally appropriate services.

These two examples, Gay and Lesbian Community Liaison and Multicultural liaison, point to our general findings on the 'liaison' services. Generally the remit is broad ranging and the resources are limited. What is notable is that policing organizations recognize the importance of the liaison role *existing*, even if that translates into one or two 'liaison' officers for a particular group across the whole organization. In relation to victims of crime, however, the liaison officer is not necessarily a support contact for victims of crime within the target community or for police officers dealing with particular offences or with a victim of crime from a marginalized community group. In some cases they may be called upon to provide support and/or assistance. What was clear from our research was that there is limited oversight of how this works in practice and that the liaison role is not necessarily a role that involves any assistance with the provision of victim support. Primarily in Australia the 'Dedicated Liaison Officer' has been adopted and implemented predominantly within the community policing model of promoting positive relationships between the police and various target groups. It is important to note that in many cases these liaison roles *may* involve working with victims but are not primarily focused on victim support. However, this is not the only model of 'liaison' that operates within Western police organisations.

In the UK the model of Liaison drawn upon for the Police Family Liaison Officers [PLFO] demonstrates the adopted of this role in order to enhance the criminal justice process and outcome for both victims and the police. In 2000 the Association of Chief Police Officers [ACPO] produced a guide for the operation of the Family Liaison Officer model in relation to homicide investigation whereby "the primary function of an FLO in cases of homicide is that of an investigator. In performing this role the officer will offer, give and facilitate support with consideration being given to the needs of the family." (2000: p#). Unlike Australia, these officers are trained to assist in cases of homicide, but are also used by different branches across the UK for other offences such as road death, industrial accidents, and serious hate crime (see Sussex, 2008). The ACPO have also extended the services of PFLOs to include relatives of terror suspects in order to reduce tensions following anti-terror raids but also, it is presumed, to assist in fostering open communication between the police and targeted groups (Oliver, 2006).

It is clear that the Dedicated Liaison model is not only popular, it is widely interpreted in terms of its aim and function. The operation and impact of the Dedicated Liaison Officer model will necessarily vary in its outcomes, depending upon the resources allocated to the position and whether the role is the sole duty of a sworn officer or combined with other operational tasks. Of crucial importance here is how such positions are viewed within the police organization. Thus analysis of community policing has frequently found officers tasked with community liaison activities internally derided as 'hobby bobbies' 'empty holsters' and 'officer friendlies' (Reiner 2000). Consequently, an effective dedicated liaison officer model may require significant cultural transformation within a police organization. As the examples above demonstrate, these issues are largely dependent upon the model of liaison operating within the agency. It is also important to note at this juncture that we have primarily concentrated here upon the official allocation of liaison officers. However, our research with Victoria Police has highlighted that

while there is currently no formal liaison role within the Homicide Unit that operates according to a clearly defined policy framework as the UK Family Liaison Officer role currently operates, there are informal practices that operate within the unit to achieve similar aims. The extent to which individual officers may take on 'liaison-type' roles on a case-by-case basis, both for the purposes of furthering the investigation and/or out of a concern for the welfare of victims, requires further analysis and discussion.

*"Referral" services which utilize front-line police to connect with community-based and government services outside the police organization.*

Referral is the dominant approach to victim support for policing agencies across Australia. The system and process of referral differs in terms of the levels of organization, however as detailed below in many jurisdictions there has been a trend towards incorporating automatic referral through a system of alerts linked to police electronic case reporting systems. There are also differences relating to the extent to which police officers may be accountable for ensuring effectively victim referral to relevant support agencies.

The shift towards systematized referral processes has gradually emerged in Australia in the past decade, with much of the impetus driven by efforts to better respond to domestic violence. Technological advancements have also played a critical role in enhancing the efficiency and consistency of referral process. The ACT adopted an agency-wide referral process that was the first of its kind in Australia that engaged an external non-profit agency, Supportlink, to manage the connection between ACT policing and the Victims Support Scheme. This system has been designed to enable ACT Policing members to work through an electronic form after attending a 'job' to identify areas of need for the victims of crime for Supportlink to then refer accordingly. It has been noted, however, that the monitoring of this process of referral has been limited and the extent to which this has developed into a systematic and formalized operating procedure remains unclear (see Victims of Crime Coordinator, 2005: 15-16). The linkage of the police recording process to victim support has been adopted in SA, WA, Victoria and NSW. For example SA Police have signed an MOU with the SA Victims Support Service to improve referrals by police to support and efforts to achieve this include the introduction of an additional section in their electronic incident/crime report system where police are required to indicate whether they have given victims of crime the Information booklet published by SA Victims Support Service, to provide a reason if they have not done so and to identify if an individual has been referred to a specific support organisation by the officer. Utilising electronic data fields means that reporting process requires Police members to complete these details in order to finalise their report. Again, it is worth noting that the efficiency and success of the implementation of such a scheme requires further research. It is also worth noting that the operation of referral particularly in terms of police members compliance with referral requirements remains heavily focused on crimes that involve 'trauma' and occur less frequently, that is referral for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and other forms of violent crime. For example in SA and ACT there is a comprehensive, interagency model to which considerable resource have been dedicated that focus on providing support to victims of domestic violence (the Domestic Violence Policing (DVP) Model in SA and the Family Violence Intervention Program in the ACT). We will return to this issue later.

The blurred distinction between models of liaison and referral are reflected in the unique model being implemented in South Australia with the the introduction in the late 1990s of a Victim Contact Officer role that involves sworn members whose

charter is to attend to the various needs of victims of crime. Their prime objective is to provide effective support to victims in compliance with the "Declaration of Victims Rights", they are located within police stations and specialist unit (such as the Major Crime Investigation Section and the Major Crash Investigation Unit) and exist to provide direct support to both victims of crime and to police (through a range of tasks from answering victim enquiries to the provision of internal and external training). While this role in part reflects our 'liaison' typology, the focus of support provision for victims of crime is primarily based on the referral model. This marks a distinction from models that require all police to incorporate effective referral into their daily activities that reflects a recognition of the complexity of victims needs and the possibilities of having a number of officers dedicated to this area of service provision. While from our research it was clear that the effective operation of this model presents a number of challenges, it can be identified as an important balancing of the recognition of the complexity of victims needs and finite police resources.

Indeed, optimizing a 'referral' model may require significant transformations of organizational culture. Analogous to the significant organizational efforts required to mobilize effective community policing in Chicago outlined by Skogan (2006), fostering a victim service orientation amongst operational police requires an unambiguous commitment on the part of police managers, in addition to an investment in mechanisms which foster the input and involvement of front-line officers. Activating an effective 'referral' model requires careful implementation to ensure that the promotion of enhanced victim services is not viewed simply as the whim of 'management cops' (Reuss-Ianni & Ianni 1983). It requires the promotion of enhanced victim services as an organization-wide goal worth pursuing by police at all levels of the organizational structure. Additionally, the 'referral' model requires an effective interface between the police and a wide range of external victim service providers. Significant academic attention has recently been given to notions of 'plural policing' (Loader 2000) and 'nodal governance' (Johnston & Shearing 2003). While this work is valuable in describing a changed policing landscape in which the provision of security is dispersed across the policing field, it neglects the equally important way in which the historically important role of policing as a social service (Punch 1979; Wilson 2005) is also increasingly reliant on the interaction of police with numerous external non-security actors both public and private. Moreover, while contemporary terms such as 'third-party policing' (Mazerolle & Ransley 2005) suggest that civilian agencies be co-opted within the broader law-enforcement agenda of police, there is the possibility within an effective 'referral' model of non law-enforcement objectives of victim support agencies being incorporated within the core work of policing.

We would now like to examine an example of the 'referral model' from the United States - that of Mundelein, Illinois, a town with a population of 33 000 40 miles north of Chicago served by a police department of 70 employees, 54 of whom are sworn officers. The MPD has made improving victim services a priority, and is one three locations participating in pilot projects for the IACP. Mundelein Police Department formed a steering committee comprised of members from all areas of the organization in order to initiate change in its response to victims of crime. Identifying information, access, support and continuity as crucial needs, the Department organized focus groups and surveys of victims of crime to provide baseline data. In addition meetings were held with a wide range of victim service providers and other stakeholders. One key finding was that while complete procedures were followed for more serious offences, this was not the case for less serious offences, particularly property crimes. The goal, as the Deputy Chief of

MPD explained, was therefore to 'improve the police response to crime victims, all crime victims - not just serious, but all crime victims'. To achieve this goal, there were changes made to standard operating procedures to encourage officers to provide adequate information and follow-up for all victims of crime. In addition the MPD has made a concerted effort to strengthen links with a wide range of victim services within the Mundelein community. This has included inviting community-based services to participate in forum discussions, and also bringing service providers in to address officers in what is termed "role culturings" where patrol, dispatch and records staff are introduced to community services at a more personal level. In addition there were training initiatives aimed at enhancing responsiveness to victims' needs that included not only front-line officers at all levels, but also civilian staff in communications and records. The Mundelein Police Department also undertakes an ongoing system of evaluation through victim response surveys that are sent out six months after victimization to evaluate the responses of the MPD (Stephens et al 2007). MPD has thus attempted to mobilize a referral model within a broader program of institutional transformation aimed at enhancing services to victims of crime. These efforts have been grounded in a strong commitment to a community policing philosophy.

In the following sections of this paper, we wish to sketch the broad contours of the strengths and difficulties commonly identified within each of the three models of victim service delivery. However before proceeding it is important to make a significant caveat to this discussion. Our examination of victim services within policing agencies makes clear that all models contain the potential to deliver effective victim services. It is evident that there may be specific problems due to the deployment of any given model of victim service. It is also evident that one or other model may be more appropriate within a given jurisdiction due to a range of factors which may include the nature of the community policed, police organizational culture, structures of police governance, the differing statutory obligations towards victims placed upon police agencies and the differing victim service landscapes. Nevertheless, all models are capable of delivering a form of 'victim-centred' policing that can significantly improve the interface between police and victims.

### **Police Culture**

The implementation of effective victim services - regardless of which of our three models is engaged - is inevitably influenced by 'police culture'. The extended academic debate on the formation, characteristics and implications of 'police culture' need not detain us here (see Foster 2003). However, it is important to note that generally the police operate within a paramilitary style organization, where perceptions of core policing tasks continue to be perceived within a crime-fighting law-enforcement paradigm (Reiner 2000). There are important consequences of this for any attempt to introduce or improve victim services within police organizations. In order for police interactions with victims to undergo serious qualitative improvement may involve serious commitment to organizational transformation. As Janet Chan's work (1997; 2003) has demonstrated, transforming police culture is no easy task. The risk, particularly with the referral or dedicated officer model, is that victim service is viewed as an add-on or distraction from the 'real' police task of crime-fighting. Our research reveals several important points in relation to this. An enhanced service for victims of crime, through a referral

model or dedicated officer model, is most likely to be achieved where the organization has already undergone significant cultural transformation through a serious commitment and operationally realizable model of community policing. Where a 'community policing' mentality has become firmly embedded within the operational police culture, there is likely to be far less resistance to an acceptance of victim service as an integrated aspect of the work of policing. It is also apparent that embedding what we may term 'victim-centred' policing has been most completely achieved to date in smaller North American police departments, such as that of Mundelein with 54 operational police. The challenges of effecting such transformations in Australian state-wide police agencies, such as Victoria Police with over 10 000 employees, are significantly greater. 'Police culture' is also of significance for one further reason. The organizational culture will impact upon how operational police interact both with non-sworn personnel within their own organization and with external service providers. It is to that question that we now turn.

### **Police-civilian relations within police agencies**

The relations between sworn and non-sworn personnel within police organizations is a persistent issue in relation to victim services. For 'unit services' an often-encountered issue is how staff, often drawn from social work and counseling professional backgrounds, interact with operational police within a paramilitary organizational structure. As the Director of the Police-Victim Services Association of British Columbia commented 'there's the old guard who think there's no use for any civilians in the police station'. As one supervisor commented 'we're often seen as liberal, hippy, all we want to do is run out and hug trees and wear Birkenstocks, play guitar over the camp fire...hug people and make them feel better types'. Often this mentality can have a strong impact upon the capacity of a "unit" service to operate effectively. In many RCMP programs surveyed by the PVSABC, it was found that victims' services have sometimes been placed outside the operational police zone within police buildings. This spatial segregation limited their interactions with operational police, and their access to information about particular cases. This potentially creates a serious safety issue for victim support staff, who may be called to a high risk residence without adequate background to the possible risks of a call. Moreover, an isolated service is less likely to receive referrals from front-line officers, thus delimiting its capacity to deliver support to those it is intended to assist.

Correspondingly, police-based victim services occupy a distinct, and a sometimes ambivalent, position within their organizations. As the Manager of the London Police Victim Unit in Ontario remarked "we don't want to hurt our relationships that we have with the precinct, but at the same time we have to advocate on behalf of our clients". Thus a police-based victim service is always to some extent subservient to the broader priorities and culture of the Department. As the London, Ontario, manager remarked again 'we are not an equal partner as much as we like to think that we are, and we are never going to be an equal partner, so it's really accepting that they are the ones who will get all the glory if you will, because of who they are". And the Manager of a police service in New Westminster, an inner suburb of Vancouver, also succinctly remarked, 'they are the boss and you have to be very clear whose kingdom you're in'. Nevertheless, police-based victim services may have the capacity to effect organizational change in favour of more 'victim-centred' policing practice. As one supervisor of such a unit remarked "we have a definite impact in those precincts in changing the officers' belief systems and in some cases I really do believe changing their behaviour". For some, however, the

'dedicated officer' model is considerably more appealing, largely because it reduces the potential for a police-based service to become isolated and devalued.

### **Resource, organizational and delivery constraints**

In recognizing the dominant models of victim support, there is no simple argument to be made about the 'best', most efficient or most desirable model. The limited research regarding implementation and victim experiences prevents such conclusions being easily drawn, so too the experiences of police members are also largely absent from the research in this area- from those developing victim policies to those officers working on the ground implementing these models. However, a number of observations based on our research in the current models in operation provide some important insights and considerations.

In the US and Canada there has been considerable investment in police-based victim services. The Denver Police Department, for example, is a police service of 1500 sworn officers and 300 civilian employees. It supports a dedicated Victims Assistance Unit that operates around the clock staffed by 13 full time employees, 4 part-time staff and a dozen volunteers. But the 'Unit' model is expensive, and even some North American police organizations, such as the Mundelein Police Department, who would ideally like to establish a specific Victims Unit are prevented from doing so due to budget constraints.

In Australia, while the provision of timely and appropriate support to victims of crime clearly plays a role in contributing to the efficiency of the operation of the contemporary police role and function, this does not always translate into victim support services being the target for significant resource funding from within the organization. In part the shift towards outcomes-driven policing practices has fostered an environment whereby interagency partnerships are critical to police work, and this is reflected within the victims support field. This is evident in Australia where it is the 'Referral' Model of victim support that is the trend in current efforts to improve victim support processes, as opposed to the 'Unit model' which requires considerably more police resources. The emphasis on measurable outputs and the continued commitment to the professional policing model where the core function of police remains connected to 'fighting crime', means that is largely unlikely that there will be shifts in the economic, political or cultural sphere that will see police organizations take it upon themselves to provide more support to victims of crime. This is also influenced by the structural model of policing that operates within Australia.

### **The influence of jurisdictional policing structure**

Municipal model of policing seems to encourage unit model - it can also lead to innovation at the local level in terms of delivery. Moreover, police often in same department and community for lengthy periods - more opportunity to foster enduring links with external service agencies. Furthermore, stability of personnel can mean that a police-based victim service becomes integrated, accepted and utilized by operational police within the organization who come to appreciate its utility. In London, Ontario for example, the supervisor of the victims services unit proudly commented that "the relationship we have with senior management is just outstanding because that's where it has to come from, but having said that I've been here eighteen years and it wasn't like that when I started'.

In Australia, the state-wide structure of policing means that the challenges in implementing meaningful reform in terms of victim services are much greater. Individual areas and stations have control over the management (to some degree) of their daily operation and in relation to victim support processes this largely translates into broad-based state-wide policy and then variable levels of implementation that are difficult to monitor closely or meaningfully. This is further enhanced with the Liaison Model, as individual officers will vary in their commitment to their additional role and the scope they may have within their station to be proactive and/or to initiate efforts to work more closely with victims. Largely it is the referral model which provides a 'safe' and 'measurable' process for the provision of victim support, but we are witnessing the reduction of victim support to comprise, for the majority of victims of crime, a pamphlet on where support may be accessed. This can result in opportunities missed to foster targeted services and innovation within local stations.

### **Defining which victims receive service delivery and developing victim services for marginalized communities**

In Rock's (2006) analysis of crime victim services in Australia, he noted that the overarching framework of victimisation has been and continues to be trauma-dominated. Across the current support provision landscape, both within the volunteer/non-governmental sector and within state-funded agencies, it is the infrequent and "most severely disturbing offences" that dominate the Australian agenda (Rock, 2006: 291). This, he argues, reflects the history and development of victim services in Australia, emerging largely out of feminist advocacy and campaigning for supporting the victims and survivors of domestic assault and rape, in addition to individual victims of specific crimes, such as family members of homicide victims, coalescing to recognise and provide a community of support (Rock, 2006).

The association of the 'plight' of victimisation with trauma and counselling and its focus on specific 'types' of victimisation (particularly death, dangerous driving, rape, child abuse, sexual & serial assault, 'home invasion' and kidnapping) is also prevalent within policing efforts to provide victim support (Rock, 2006). Mirroring broader developments within the community and in policy making, it is domestic violence and sexual assault that have been the primary areas for innovation in service delivery to victims of crime (see for example, Hickman & Simpson, 2003; Heenan & Murray, 2005). It is also these areas that continue to be the subject of the most intensive and extensive support from police. On the whole, in Australia victims of the most common crimes such as burglary and assault are more likely to receive referrals via a pamphlet rather than any systematic or ongoing support from police or from any other agency.

Some US Police departments have implemented measures to expand their victim services as the result of evaluation. One of the IAPC pilot projects, that in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina, provides an example. The Department conducted surveys of victims which revealed that while police were generally seen as effective in relation to serious violent offences, such as homicide and rape, there were significant dissatisfaction from the victims of non-violent crimes, particularly property offences. In order to address this, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Department revised their Standard Operating Procedures to provide that an assigned officer will follow up with the victim of crime in all criminal cases. Many other police organizations in the US and Canada provide victim services that cover a broad range of offences, including property offences. This does raise the question of

whether a widening of focus to include a broader range of victims of crime would be possible, and desirable, within Australian policing.

### **The influence of broader government-led victim-oriented policy commitments**

While police organisations across Australia have always worked with victims of crime, it has been from Departments of Justice and Attorney-General's and other government agencies that the most recent push has come for developing specific commitments to the provision of service to victims and to recognise the broad range of rights to which victims of crime should be entitled. The ACT was one of the first jurisdictions to legislate a commitment to the provision of a specific range of victim supports. Today the majority of Australian jurisdictions have adopted similar legislation (or are in the process of adopting this legislation) that identify specific obligations that state agencies have with regard to victims of crime and the rights to access to support, participation and compensations that victims of crime may have (see Victorian Department of Justice, 2005). While reports of the progression of victim-oriented commitments and the various frameworks operating across Australia have been produced (see Cook et al, 1999; Victorian Department of Justice, 2005) we are yet to see how these Charters, which have direct relevance to police processes and operations, will impact on police service delivery and the way in which police services work to provide effective victim support. At this early stage it appears the referral model is the preferred modality. That is, police agencies are using these frameworks to ensure that their role remains an interface role rather than a service provision role.

This is not necessarily the result of broader victim policy developments for policing. In London, Ontario, although some form of victim service had existed prior, a major impetus occurred in 1998 when the Ministry of the Attorney-General devised a set of basic standards that all police services were required to meet, one of which was providing services to victims of crime. This reportedly created an environment in which victim services were increasingly prioritized. In many US jurisdictions legislation has also enshrined victims' rights in law, in some instances specifying obligations for law enforcement, such as legislation passed in Colorado in 1992. The State Constitution of Colorado was amended in that year, guaranteeing victims of crime certain rights, but importantly also placing obligations on law enforcement agencies to provide for those rights.

Thus overall policy frameworks may well encourage greater attention towards victims' needs. However the response of policing agencies has clearly been quite diverse across jurisdictions. A risk of charters, and even judiciable legislation, is that it comes to be perceived by policing agencies as purely a matter of compliance. Thus basic requirements are met, but innovative models can remain absent. Internationally, this is shown to not necessarily be the case, where basic requirements have sometimes acted as a catalyst for more expansive programs moving beyond concerns for basic compliance.

### **Conclusion**

Contemporary policy and policing discourses are currently inspired and influenced by notions of 'community', 'security' and 'cooperation' and the possibilities of victim-oriented responses to crime on both the national and international level. We are currently in the midst of an expanding terrain of police service delivery, where there is an opportunity to explore the possibility of reconfiguring victim service delivery. Within the wider community there are questions being asked about the role and limits of police in working with and supporting victims of crime.

What is clear from our research is that the models currently in place have largely operated on a 'commonsense' notion of what victims need and/or what police can do for victims. It is clear that we need to examine more carefully what is currently in place and to consider the possibility that the best model for supporting and working with victims of crime may not yet have been developed. Indeed, this paper is about laying a foundation to begin considering future models.

Our paper highlights some of the challenges that confront police organizations who seek to enhance victim service delivery. The three broad typologies we have outlined all contain their individual strengths and weaknesses. 'Unit' services may seem optimum in some locations. Nevertheless they may also prove resource intensive. Moreover, they could potentially quarantine victim services within police organizations, where they are regarded as a specialist auxiliary service detached from the core work of 'real policing'. 'Dedicated Officer' models may have the benefit of confronting some of the problems incurred by conflicts between sworn and non-sworn personnel within police organizations. However much depends on the status, resources and work profile accorded to these officers within the organization. A 'referral' model may also have much to recommend it. But it too will require significant impetus for change to be realized, in addition to workable mechanisms for effective interagency collaboration. Indeed it is quite possible that hybrid models of victim service delivery by police may be appropriate in particular contexts. In Australia it appears that greater attention is being given to how the criminal justice system generally, and police in particular, interact with victims of crime. This is evident both through the advent of victims charters and through a growing body of research. It is timely, therefore, to ask what the role of police in victim service delivery should actually be, how could this best be delivered and what limits, if any, should be placed on such a service.

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