Reflections on Practice
The First Six Years

The Neighbourhood Justice Centre experience of ‘doing justice locally’
Mission

Doing justice locally; strengthening the City of Yarra communities

Goal 1: Prevent and reduce criminal and other harmful behaviour in the Yarra community

Goal 2: Increase confidence in, and access to, the justice system for the Yarra communities

Goal 3: Strengthen the NJC community justice model and facilitate the transfer of its practices to other courts and communities
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The story of the NJC

The Neighbourhood Justice Centre (NJC), in Collingwood, (Victoria, Australia), opened its doors in 2006 as Australia’s first community court. It was, from the outset, designed to be something of a departure from traditional justice and traditional courts.

While it is certainly a community court, the NJC was envisaged to also be:

- engaging with more than the problems of discrete individuals
- tackling some of the social and structural factors associated with cycles of crime and violence within a strictly defined locale.

(Karp and Clear as cited in Department of Justice 2010: 16)

The establishment of the NJC aligned with goals of the Victorian Department of Justice, as detailed in the Courts Strategic Plan for 2010–2015. The Plan stressed:

- reductions in delays in courts
- demystifying the court system and embedding more community participation and engagement
- integrating court services
- retooling the workforce with a view to designing courts of the future (Department of Justice 2010: 6).

As with many ‘experimental’ models, the NJC’s establishment has been an evolutionary process based on action learning, evidence (gathering and generating) and reflection/evaluation. The action learning rationale stresses, “a style…rather than a specific method” that is characterised by a participatory nature; a strong democratic impulse or respect of human experience and human rights; and a simultaneous contribution to social science (theory) and social change (practice) (Meyer 2004: 453).

It seeks to theorise through practice, in other words, develop a principled practice that is able to respond to lessons learned and to evolve into a better and more robust practice through that process.

This action learning evolution has seen the NJC develop in a very integrated-services manner with novel reporting relationships. There are adjunct government services and partner agencies housed in the NJC building that report formally to other management structures. For example, Community Corrections reports to the Office of Corrections as well as operating as part of the NJC team. This mix of disciplines makes for a unique (and occasionally challenging) workplace arrangement. The organisational structure in Figure 1 illustrates the range of people and disciplines that cooperate within the model of service provision at the NJC.

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1 Odyssey House (Drug and Alcohol); North Yarra Community Health (Counselling); Salvation Army (Personal and Material Aid); Brotherhood of St Laurence (Employment Pathways); New Hope Foundation (Community Settlement); St Vincent’s (Mental Health); Moreland Community Health (Victims' Services); Carlton Fitzroy Financial Counselling Services (Financial Counselling); Homeground (Housing/Homelessness), and; Berry Street (Family Violence)
The action learning approach has also been embedded into the operations of the NJC with staff dedicated to interdisciplinary forums for problem-solving and organisational learning. As an example, there are regular Centre Practice Innovation Group and Reflective Practice meetings that provide the opportunity to:

- collaborate
- develop team approaches to difficult issues
- reflect on what has worked well and what needs further development
- innovate, and to generally ‘contextualise’ the NJC.

The NJC story has resulted in a number of tools and policies that help ‘operationalise’ the philosophical and theoretical principles that drive the centre’s practice, including the articulation of a community justice model approach to justice.
NJC’s community justice model

Community justice considers how justice can operate to improve community life, especially in places with high-levels of crime and disadvantage. While honouring and maintaining “traditional procedural rights and equality before the law, community justice brings important notions of social justice to the criminal justice agenda.” As well as dealing with criminal events, community justice seeks to strengthen communities in order to prevent such events from occurring in the first place.

The NJC’s model of community justice embraces the following key elements:

• **Places, not just cases**
  
  While the same law applies to everyone, there are significant differences between communities. Justice strategies, if they are to be effective, need to be modified for specific neighbourhoods. Community justice selects places where crime is concentrated and where the justice system has a significant impact on community life. It understands that crime and disadvantage are mutually reinforcing. For example, high levels of arrests, convictions and imprisonment can destabilise neighbourhoods that are already disadvantaged, “exacerbating the effects of poverty, broken families, unsupervised youth, and unemployment.”

  Community justice goes beyond traditional justice approaches and attempts to make these communities better places to live and work, by designing strategies to prevent and repair the harm from crime.

  This focus on place does not mean that cases are not important, rather it extends the scope of operation for the justice system. How our criminal justice system handles criminal complaints remains fundamental in assessing the quality of our justice system. Under a community justice approach, the justice system will still apprehend, convict and impose sanctions. But it won’t stop there. It will respond to the underlying causes of an individual’s offending by using problem-solving approaches to address, for example, mental health issues, substance abuse and homelessness in conjunction with local services. In addition, it will seek to improve the community conditions that contributed (e.g. unemployment, poor security on a housing estate, cultural barriers) by working together with relevant partners, to prevent further offending.

• **Strong communities provide the foundations for community safety**

  Community justice emphasises the importance of stable families, good neighbours and friends, and effective community and social groups in providing the foundations for safety in a community, rather than formal systems of social control such as the criminal justice system. Accordingly, community justice works to strengthen the community’s ability to self-regulate and builds partnerships with these groups to respond to safety and justice issues. In many instances this means building partnerships with particularly disadvantaged groups within a high-crime area.

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2 Community Justice, 2010, add authors Clear etc. p.2
3 Community Justice, Ch. 32
• Proactive, not just reactive

Community justice attempts to isolate and overcome the underlying factors that lead to community safety issues. The focus on place allows community justice to be proactive in working to prevent conflict, harm and crime before it occurs, as well as responding effectively to crime after the event.

• The court – beyond traditional roles

In the community justice model, the role of the magistrate extends beyond the traditional judicial process of applying the law to the facts of a case to determine an outcome. While continuing to perform this fundamental judicial function, the NJC court recognises that “the judicial process cannot be quarantined from underlying, interdependent, personal and social issues. A judicial process with no awareness of those underlying issues and unable to fashion outcomes informed by such awareness is likely to be ineffective in contributing to their long-term resolution.”4 These issues may include mental health, substance abuse, family violence, financial, employment and housing considerations. At the NJC, with the assistance of a multi-disciplinary team providing rehabilitative services and other supports, the magistrate’s decision-making is informed by a comprehensive understanding of the underlying issues affecting court participants and the relevant behavioural sciences.

The court is involved in monitoring of and problem-solving with court participants, and linking offenders to appropriate services and treatment. With one magistrate sitting, the court seeks to build consistent, strong relationships with offenders and use its authority to promote offender accountability. Therapeutic outcomes are sought, but the law itself retains its primacy with fundamental legal principles—such as due process—still applied.

Without diminishing the court’s authority, the magistrate applies an ‘ethic of care’ in court to increase participants’ understanding of processes and outcomes and make people feel more comfortable about participating in court. Proceedings are explained in plain language and court participants are encouraged to have their say with more direct interaction with the magistrate than in traditional courts. These approaches are based on procedural justice research that finds that people are more accepting of court outcomes—even if they are not in their favour—if they are satisfied with the court’s process. Being treated with respect, being welcomed and being encouraged to participate in court are all factors contributing to this sense of satisfaction with process. The courtroom design reflects these efforts to create a less intimidating court experience.

5 Solution-Focused Bench Book, Michael S. King, p.31
• **New organisational structures, rather than rigid hierarchies**

The problems community justice seeks to solve are often complex, long-standing and cut across multiple social policy issues. They demand the sharing of knowledge and collective action of multiple organisations working together. Criminal justice agencies traditionally have hierarchical, command structures. Community justice shakes up these organisational structures to allow for maximum discretion and flexibility at the neighbourhood level.

To be responsive to local needs, community justice requires:

• decentralised leadership at the neighbourhood level giving officials enough authority and autonomy to respond quickly to local issues, without being hamstrung by rigid, hierarchies and distant decision-makers. Such officials need the freedom to prioritise local issues and develop problem-solving partnerships and strategies to deal with neighbourhood issues.

• flexible and innovative organisational structures to enable staff to work across agencies on complex safety and justice issues. Effective problem solving requires strong coordination and sharing of ideas across multiple organisations and within agencies. The NJC is structured accordingly. For example, many staff at the NJC have dual reporting lines to a ‘home’ organisation as well as a manager at the NJC. This enables them to keep their technical expertise, networks and access to services within their sector current. Staff may also be on a working group with local government and community groups for particular strategies. Working in such partnerships requires an open culture, putting aside the tendency of traditional criminal justice organisations to protect “turf” in order to focus efforts on an issue.

• **Involving citizens, not just agencies**

Community justice provides opportunities for citizens – not just justice agencies – to influence and be involved in the local administration of justice. Roles for citizens may range from participating in surveys or meetings about local justice issues, volunteering their talents on a specific projector serving as a member of a committee or board.

This emphasis on community involvement is not just a feel-good exercise; seeking out and respecting citizens’ views is in accord with the democratic principles that underpin community justice, as community members are those most affected by justice conditions in a local area. Community justice recognises that local citizens can be key agents in creating stronger, safer communities and strengthening informal mechanisms of social control. Partnering with the community can also improve the effectiveness of justice strategies and can be more resource-efficient and sustainable than approaches which exclude community involvement, especially in times of economic downturn.
About Reflections on Practice

Unless you have the principles with practices, you cannot be sure at all that you will have the same outcomes or successes. There is a whole lot of complexity around the transferring of practice that include the philosophy and not just practice.

Jodi Cornish (Community Engagement Coordinator), May 2011

Supporting the transfer of practice is the primary purpose of Reflections on Practice, and reflects a 2010–2013 strategic priority of the NJC to “strengthen the NJC community justice model and facilitate the transfer of its practices to other courts and communities” (Department of Justice 2010: 12).

The challenge in describing a style of practice to others is that it isn’t as easy as detailing a shopping list of ‘methods’. We have, however, resisted the urge to turn this publication into a recipe book for others and to really explore the principles that drive the work conducted at the NJC. Those principles may seem, to the reader, a bit intangible but we believe that the focus on them, versus more specific methods, will ultimately prove to be more useful.

How? Well, we could certainly say that a lesson from practice at the NJC has been to co-locate the court functions with particular services. But someone interested in establishing a neighbourhood court elsewhere may not be able to do that. Those specific services may not exist or they may be unwilling to co-locate. In that case, the specific method is non-transferable and the lesson is lost.

But the principle (of working in integrative ways) can transfer and in ways that reflect that new court’s particular locale, community, potential partners and context.

In developing Reflections on Practice, the NJC has been purposeful about:

1. Reflecting on practice to date and cataloguing the strengths, challenges and lessons learned since NJC inception
2. Underpinning the practice reflections with robust literature review and evidence
3. Working in a collaborative and detailed way to translate the learnings from practice into a useful guide for other practitioners.

Reflections on Practice is not an organisational or program evaluation nor is it a strategic planning document. We hope it is a useful tool for the NJC and for others interested in restorative and community justice practice.

In terms of navigating this document, Reflections on Practice is organised into four sections:

Section 1: Introduction

Includes the practicalities of the Reflections on Practice such as the purpose and format, how to navigate the document and those responsible for authorship.

Section 2: Core Principles of Practice

Overarching principles of practice are explored to set the scene and link core principles to literature and theory. These principles describe a framework of values by which all of the activity in the organisation operates.
Section 3: Principles in Practice: Case studies and lessons learnt

In this section, specific case studies and stories of practice are discussed. Examples of how the core practice principles have been applied and the lessons learned in that application are detailed.

Section 4: Conclusions and reflections

Reflections on Practice lessons are summarised and final reflections on practice are made. It aims to tie the discussion together and reflects upon the broader lessons from the Centre’s practice as opposed to specific learning outcomes.

The story of Reflections on Practice’s development

How [the concepts] are defined and articulated is going to either be increasingly divisive or potentially a healing process... I think the starting point is that everyone’s viewpoint is considered. And that nothing is ruled out.

Jay Jordens (Neighbourhood Justice Officer), October 2010

Reflections on Practice is the culmination of a half-year reflective practice exercise undertaken by NJC staff. The NJC was interested in capturing its experiences as a fledgling organisation in community justice practice through the development of an innovative guide. Reflections on Practice is designed to enable staff and other agencies to gain insight and guidance on the practice areas related to NJC community justice.

The bulk of the research data has been in the form of semi-structured discussion and narrative gathered through workshops, interviews, focus groups, and literature or practice reviews. The results have been coded and narrative analysed to develop and refine organising themes.

The research methodology took an action, learning and ‘constructivist’ approach, illustrated in:

- the ‘constructed’ research lens (which is underpinned by an assumption that humans are cultural creatures who construct and transfer meaning through practice [Schudson, M. cited in Freire 1998])
- the applied nature of the research (in that a goal is to create useful, authentic and honest materials for others wanting to explore community justice)
- the qualitative research methods (based on normative principles of practice, values, reflections of practitioners and stories of ‘the good, the bad and the ugly’ versus the ‘naive empiricism’ of statistics and indicators [Schudson, M. cited in Freire 1998])
- the desire to actively involve ‘the researched’ in linking theory and practice (by exploring orienting theory and how practice reflects – or doesn’t – that theory, as well as how practice might illuminate new theory or theoretical principles).

Our aim was to achieve a “path of expression” as opposed to just a “path of explanation.” We hope the publication covers meaning and liveliness, involvement and passions of the NJC experience and will be a resource to others (Reason and Hawkins 1988: 79-80).
To this end, Reflections on Practice is the product of all NJC staff, agency partners and clients. The document rests upon their stories and reflections in a direct and immediate sense.

The facilitator for this process was Andrea Cook from Red Road Consulting, overseen by an internal group of ‘champions’. The names of all those involved in this complex writing process are included in Appendix A. Their invaluable contributions, their time and their openness to this reflection process are acknowledged with deep gratitude and thanks.
We have to do things like the experiential learners do. You go in with an orienting theory about how that community works and what the problem looks like and why. You then gain much more experience in the community with these people you’re collaborating with by going out and searching for a lot of data, information that will either confirm that view of the world in those relationships or confuse it. Reflecting upon that information generates new assumptions, new theories, new hypotheses. But you don’t just stop there: you take that knowledge and try to apply it to solve some immediate problems. In other words, you actively experiment with this knowledge…

Reardon 1993, cited in Forester 1999: 199-120

The practice of the Neighbourhood Justice Centre is a story of merging theory and practice. While the ethical and theoretical impulses of those working at the NJC are varied, there are shared principles that have helped shape the centre as an organisation and influence the way people work.

This section will explore some of those critical guiding principles of practice and link them back to the literature on, as Reardon calls it, orienting theory.

Interestingly, the types of principles discussed mirror those described in emerging cultural planning theory and are all aspects of **process, relationship and outcome:**

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**Core principles of practice**

![Figure 2: Process-relationship-outcome principles (source: adapted from LeBaron & Pillay 2006: 197)](image-url)
In Figure 2, the process, relationship and outcome principles can be described as:

**Process** principles are the critical elements of how we did what we did to become who we are at the NJC.

**Relationship** principles describe how we related to each other, how we developed identity as a team and what we stressed in our interactions.

**Outcome** principles describe what we achieved (or still hope to achieve).

Adapted from LeBaron & Pillay 2006: 196-197
Process principles

The principles of process that have been employed at the NJC can be distilled into the following broad approaches:

Integration  Local focus
Adaptation  Deliberation

Integration is central to the NJC practice approach.

The benefits of partnering and integrated practice are extolled in current justice policy in Victoria. But there are concrete challenges associated with turning the words on the page of a strategic plan into actual techniques of practice.

An initial strategy to develop an integrated approach was the design of a building and an organisational structure that enabled the co-location of people who might otherwise be physically separated. Therefore, at the NJC, (unlike other courts) the drug and alcohol counsellors sit alongside the defence lawyers, and Corrections Officers sit next to community engagement workers.

Integration strategies have also focused on developing a more cohesive approach to court phases (such as pre-sentencing and post-sentencing). For example, the NJC community court may continue to be involved in a client’s post-sentencing experience. The involvement may be through magistrate meetings with those on corrections orders to assess how the offender is completing the order, or how the case management is working and whether other interventions could be warranted.

This level of involvement is unusual for a court and serves to provide a continuity of relationship and case management, and greater accountability for the offender towards the court. However, it has also created complexity and some dilemmas, as will be discussed in greater detail in the chapter on stories and lessons from practice.

To minimise dilemmas and complexity of integration a boundary was set on the organisation’s catchment – a local focus. The NJC client base is within the City of Yarra and this enables the centre to work in more complex ways with a more defined and smaller community (compared to the larger courts in Melbourne).

This local neighbourhood focus has been important to the NJC identity and to developing a valued place within and for the local community.

Staff members have repeatedly described the value of acting local as a way to support better relationships and develop continuity for clients and other stakeholders. The local approach also works well in helping clients to acknowledge their community responsibilities.
The NJC local focus reflects a broader integrated local area planning shift by government in planning and service delivery that has been occurring in Australia (see, for example, National General Assembly of Local Governments 2004). This shift has seen planning activities increasingly oriented to precincts (such as, a court precinct within the larger Melbourne metro area) with the work of multiple disciplines brought together around that geographical focus (small and integrated in scope versus large and siloed in scope).

**Deliberation** is the third principle underlying the processes of the NJC and of actively moving from a model of justice that is adversarial towards more collaborative problem solving. This move mirrors shifts in many social science disciplines and is underpinned by a good deal of emerging theory on the subject, as Healey describes:

[We are] moving away from competitive interest bargaining towards collaborative consensus-building and, through such consensus-building practices, organising ideas can be developed and shared which have the capacity to endure, to co-ordinate actions by different agents, and to transform ways or organising and ways of knowing in significant ways, in other words, to build cultures.

*Healey 2006: 30*

At the NJC, this shift has been supported and embedded in the day-to-day ways in which people work. For example, Problem Solving is designed to assist people to address the underlying causes of their offending and obstacles they are experiencing in their progress through the justice system, while providing full protection of their legal rights. An independent facilitator brings together the referred person, their lawyer, their support person(s) and any relevant professionals together in a structured Problem Solving meeting. The referred person speaks about the problem they are facing. Other parties contribute and the discussion leads towards the development of realistic, achievable options to assist the referred person. The options are considered and, where possible, agreed upon by the group.

Similarly, there are mechanisms in place at the NJC to encourage a broader reflection and problem-solving approach to practice and to organisational problems, barriers or hiccups. Examples include regular Centre Practice Innovation Group and Reflective Practice meetings, both of which have terms of reference and a coordinator. These groups are open to people from across the organisation, encouraging inter-disciplinary problem solving.

Around the globe, reflective practice has now been widely accepted and used as an organisational development tool. This development is based on the notion that “reflection is an important human activity in which people recapture their experience, think about it, mull it over and evaluate it. It is this working with experience that is important in learning.” (Boud et al. 1985: 19).
Reflection-on-action and ‘reflection-in-action’ (Schön 1983) are both evident as deliberative practices at the NJC and are held up by the organisation as core values.

Reflection-in-action is the ability of practitioners to ‘think on their feet’ and respond in practice, often intuitively and emotionally, when faced with a professional issue that needs to be attended to directly. The following section will describe the successes and failures of reflection-in-action at the NJC that can be helpful lessons.

Reflection-on-action is the analysis and learning that practitioners do after their practice experiences, focusing on their reactions to problems or opportunities, the reasons for those reactions and the consequences of decisions made.

The significance of this second type of reflection is quite important in the justice context. “The field of criminal justice has been particularly slow in embracing the value of trial and error. In other disciplines… solving problems is seen as an iterative process” (Berman and Fox 2010:2).

Reflecting on success in criminal justice is necessary but so too is reflecting on failure for, as Berman and Fox go on to note, there are “real consequences when we fail to talk about failure. Most obviously, it leads to an environment that stifles innovation. Without a willingness to try new ideas and risk failure, it is impossible to imagine how we are ever going to challenge conventional wisdom or address our most difficult social problems.” (2010:2)

Capture of ‘frank and fearless’ evaluation and reflection has been a central theme and principle not only of the NJC day-to-day practice. It is also one that the NJC wanted to work with in Reflections on Practice specifically. Certainly, there has been success but sometimes failure has been as great a teacher.
Adaptation is the final process stressed by staff at the NJC recognising and accepting that the process doesn’t stay the same over time.

Staff describe a long period of establishment that was very experimental and unstructured and that, as the NJC settled into practice, gave way to more structured processes, as perhaps reflecting the following notion:

The justice system is no different from any other field of human endeavor. Good ideas are not enough – you have to be strategic and figure out how to move the system.

*Berman and Fox 2010: 40*

Our strong narrative in relation to moving the system is around innovation in justice, and in facilitating a wider acceptance of the other process, relationship and outcome themes.

This adaptation around innovation is challenging (as will be explored through practitioner stories in Section 3) but is, ultimately, a core purpose of the NJC. Courts of the future in Victoria will be designed on our innovative practice (Department of Justice 2010: 6).

The adaptation has often meant challenging others to be adaptive and to work in ways they haven’t traditionally worked. It has, on other occasions, meant challenging the organisation itself to learn from experience and to adapt practices to reflect those lessons.
**Relationship principles**

Relationship principles are multifaceted and because of local experience may not be easily replicated or transferred elsewhere. Our approach to the principles of relationship can be categorised as in this diagram:

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<td>Empowering</td>
<td>Expanding / deepening</td>
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In an organisation such as the NJC, there are many **two-way learning** relationships. Some examples of learning relationships are: the service provider-client relationship; the service provider-service provider relationship; and the service provider-political actor relationship.

Each provides new opportunities to learn through knowledge transfer and through the experience of collaboratively acting on an issue or problem. Being mindful of and usefully exploiting these relationship opportunities has emerged as a core principle of practice for NJC staff.

Learning from learning is a vast theoretical topic, but the NJC stresses a value on ‘two-way learning’ that respects the knowledge that different people hold, as described by Freire:

*Education takes place when there are two learners who occupy somewhat different spaces in an ongoing dialogue. But both participants bring knowledge to the relationship, and one of the objects of the pedagogic process is to explore what each knows and what they can teach each other. A second object is to foster reflection on self as actor in the world as consequence of knowing.*

*Freire 1998: 8*

Knowledge and learning needs to be transferred between people. Thus, the value of documenting and sharing the experiences of the NJC development and practice is important in moving the system.

Capturing experience and learning from coworkers, clients and others, is also an expression of **respect** in relationships, which came through as a very strong, orienting principle in our discussions.
Primarily, the notion of respect was described in relation to clients/offenders and it was seen as a point of departure from the more ‘traditional’ parts of the system to be thinking in respectful ways about clients/offenders. And, in some of the narrative, it was admitted that it isn’t always an easy thing to remain respectful of people who offend. Nonetheless, the ways in which the relationships were fostered was seen as an important contributor to the different (and more successful) ways in which the NJC operates.

As an example of how this is embedded in the NJC culture, more than one practitioner spoke about the importance of how the security people greet (as opposed to intimidate) those arriving at the NJC. It is a friendly and helpful greeting and one that helps people orient themselves. It is respectful.

Similar comments were made about how respect shown towards clients affected even the more structured functions such as Registry. This aspect of the NJC style will be explored in greater detail in the following section.

Finally, the value of respect in relationships was seen as one that had benefits in both directions. So, while the respect for clients was commented on as a core principle, a benefit of this was viewed as the development of an on-going and mutual relationship where clients developed a greater respect for (and accountability towards) the NJC and the wider community.

Being respectful generated a greater degree of returned respect from people who had previously been quite disrespectful in some or many of their relationships. This shift in people’s connection to others was cited as very powerful in interrupting offending behavior. Specific stories illustrating this notion of respectful relationships as an agent of change in offending will be explored in more detail in the following section.

Closely related to the principle of respect is that of developing empowering relationships with clients and professionals. Many stories were told of previously adrift clients who seized control of different aspects of their life (be it drug addiction, harmful personal relationships, or criminality) and were supported to change things around for themselves.

Empowerment is not easily described as it rests on quite intangible behaviour change processes and psychology. It is also not easily delivered to people or organisations (as opposed to co-created by people) but it was seen as an important goal at the NJC. It is preferred over taking a more interventionist or clinical model approach to people’s personal, health and criminality issues.
Along with the process principles described earlier, these principles are meant to be healing and to inspire people regarding their skills to achieve their goals for the future. Sometimes, it may even be around inspiring someone to believe that they have a future.

NJC staff refer to the ‘stages of behaviour change’ model as a useful tool. This model depicts different types of empowerment that might happen at different phases of behaviour change.

In the pre-contemplative stage, people are not interested in change and tend to avoid information, discussion or even thought about it. While they may appear resistant, unmotivated, or in denial, empowerment at this stage may be in the form of working with them to identify where ‘rock bottom’ might be for them. At this stage real effort may be required for them to identify what change might look like if ‘rock bottom’ is reached.

People reach the contemplative stage once they start to think about the issue and the possible need to make some changes. Then empowerment becomes a matter of supporting them in recognition of the problem and in the possibility that they can and should do something to improve their lives.

While they may appear to be procrastinators or ambivalent, they are weighing up the pros and cons of any possible behaviour change. They become open to information. Appearing in court may be the trigger for considering change. Empowerment can certainly be in the form of providing information to people at this stage.

As people make a commitment to change, they grapple with any ‘pre-change’ steps they need to sort through (such as the logistics of family care if they plan to go into a residential detox program). This stage is also an information gathering period, marked with more determination and reaffirmation that change needs to happen. The empowerment at this stage may be in lining up solutions to the logistical problems associated with their plan and supporting the reaffirmation process.
As people make their changes (acting on their plan), empowerment takes the form of supporting them in their new life and helping them to sustain motivation. While the chances of relapse and temptation are very strong, there is also openness to receiving help and support. People at this stage are also prone to analyse any behaviour changes to enhance their self-confidence. They may have to make other plans to deal with external pressures or deal with another behaviour issue. This is an explicit stage of empowerment as it works on self-confidence. The person has enacted change and this action is empowering.

In maintaining the change, people are working to consolidate any changes in their behaviour, to maintain the motivation and prevent relapse or temptation. The former behaviour is now seen as no longer desirable and a number of coping strategies have been put in place and are working. The ways in which this is supported are quite different from the pre-contemplative stage. Reminders of progress made and support to stay on the course of change become the prime tools.

Some people, in or after their maintenance stage, go on to become advocates. They become committed to working with their neighbours, family members or the public at large in supporting wider behaviour change. This sort of advocacy plays an important part in helping move other people along the behaviour change path. Advocates need to be encouraged and supported. Organisations such as the NJC are well placed to be a vehicle for this stage of behaviour change and to champion the work of peers helping others in behaviour change.

In applying these staged principles of empowerment, an organisation such as the NJC simultaneously supports broader community (rather than only individual) empowerment, reconciliation and healing.

Finally, a critical relationship principle expressed in this process was one of expanding or deepening relationships with a view to creating a more robust court and organisation. The above discussion of empowerment is one example of how relationships, when worked on actively and thoughtfully, can be expanded and deepened.

So here we will talk about how organisational, professional and cross-disciplinary relationships might be viewed in terms of this principle. This focus is an important discussion point as this reflection has highlighted the challenge that cross-disciplinary work can provoke. It isn’t always easy to partner with other fields and professionals who might have different goals and philosophies about justice. This more internal relationship strengthening and deepening is also a critical one at the NJC.

Patsy Healey, a leading theorist on communicative and deliberative governance, suggests that robust engagement in institutions and decision-making requires that:

1. The institution must recognise the range and variety of stakeholders and the diversity of their cultural reference points, literacies and the complex power relations that exist within and between them;

2. The institution must acknowledge that a good deal of the work of governance happens outside formal agencies and government and should seek to spread power to agents outside of government (while not creating new “bastions of unequal power”);
3. The institution should encourage and provide opportunities for local invention and inventiveness and should facilitate multiple styles or organising and multiple routines rather than imposing a single way of doing things; and

4. The institution should be continually and openly accountable, making available communications/outcomes/process and philosophy/ies and being an active part of critical review and evaluation of these.

Adapted from Healey 2006: 288-289

This is a tall order for contemporary institutions and is rarely seen in practice. It reflects a very idealised end of a spectrum of participation that has seen various incarnations since early expressions were coined nearly half a century ago. Like Arnstein’s ladder of participation, see Figure 4. See also the International Association of Public Participation’s Spectrum of Public Participation, downloadable from http://www.iap2.org.au/sitebuilder/resources/knowledge/asset/files/36/iap2spectrum.pdf.)

In reality, not all of the work of an organisation can be ‘citizen controlled’ (or ‘worker controlled’). Each project will demand a different sort of engagement and participation and part of a reflective practice is assessing how far up the ladder individual projects were able to get and whether the rung was the right one for the project. This is a process of actively expanding, deepening and strengthening relationships.

In most organisations, including the NJC, it isn’t possible for every part of governance to be citizen controlled. But likewise, there is nothing to say that some projects can’t be.
Outcome principles

The principles of outcome that have been employed in the development of the NJC represent principle goals for the organisation and what it hopes to achieve. Again, these principles are complex but we can distil them into the broad goals shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prevention</th>
<th>Restoration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simplification</td>
<td>Serving justice</td>
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A core outcome principle for the NJC is to work in ways that intervene prior to offending in the community and that ultimately support crime prevention and improved perceptions of crime in the community.

To prevent crime we must work with offenders in ways that will interrupt cycles of criminal behaviour and reduce recidivism. Much of the discussion thus far, in relation to the processes and relationships that the NJC attempts to foster with offenders is underpinned by a goal to interrupt existing cycles of offending.

Indeed, many of the clients of the NJC have been chronic recidivists. Steering people away from these patterns including addressing issues such as drug or alcohol abuse, homelessness or untreated mental illness is a central feature of NJC work.

Preventing crime is also a community-wide effort, geared towards improving the social, economic, physical and civic conditions that people enjoy. It is about diverting people who might, in the future, do something criminal away from that choice by strengthening alternatives in the community.

Preventing crime also has a perceptions dimension. There is real value in closing the gap between actual crime in the community and the perception of crime. Perceptions often assume more criminality than there actually is. Work at the NJC does focus on the wider community and on providing information on crime and justice locally so that people will have perceptions that are more informed as a consequence, worry less.

The NJC is explicitly in the business of providing restorative justice. In the 2010–2013 Strategic Framework, this is expressed as follows:

Restoration requires engaging with victims in ways that help them piece together a durable sense of emotional, psychological, physical and, where appropriate, financial wellbeing in the wake of offences committed against them.

*Department of Justice 2010: 15*
Restorative work can also, as was gleaned from the reflection interviews, be applicable to offenders and to the wider community. In a nutshell, it is an outcome principle aimed at healing. It can include notions of stewardship, restitution, transformation and accountability. It is based on a theory of justice that sees crime as an offence against individuals and communities as opposed to against the state (Price 2001).

Restorative justice is evidence-based and not simply a ‘feel good’ exercise. In their review of the evidence in the UK and elsewhere, Sherman and Strang found the following:

• substantially reduced repeat offending for some offenders, but not all
• doubled (or more) the offences brought to justice as diversion from conventional criminal justice
• reduced crime victims’ post-traumatic stress symptoms and related costs
• provided both victims and offenders with more satisfaction with justice than criminal justice
• reduced crime victims’ desire for violent revenge against their offenders
• reduced the costs of criminal justice, when used as diversion from criminal justice
• reduced recidivism more than prison (adults) or as well as prison (youths).

Sherman & Strang 2007: 4

Restorative principles are embedded in a range of practices at the NJC from mediation and problem solving, to specialist Aboriginal services and the ways in which the court itself functions. These different restorative-oriented practices will be highlighted in Section 3.

An important outcome principle, in the view of NJC staff in their reflective practice exercise, has been to simplify the justice system for offenders, victims and the wider community. On several occasions, the term ‘one-stop shop’ was used to describe what was seen as a critical outcome of the NJC experiment. Simplification means that people have less running around to do, that they can more easily navigate the system and that the processes make sense to people.

The importance of demystifying the system is central, again, to the 2010-2013 Strategic Framework and reflects a focus in broader Department of Justice Court Portfolio strategic planning (as cited in Department of Justice 2010: 6).
In practice, this demystification and simplification goal is embedded in a number of the principles already discussed. For example, a driver for service integration is that people have access to the courts and adjunct services in one convenient place. The convenience aids compliance with orders and supports more opportunistic problem solving because various specialists are at hand if needed. Relationship building through community engagement is another example. By sharing information, the community better understands how the NJC works and feels confident about engaging with its services and the court.

Finally, and ultimately perhaps, the NJC is a community court, and an important outcome principle identified is that it serves justice. People need to feel that offences are appropriately dealt with, that victims of crime are supported, that offenders pay for (and hopefully learn from) their crimes and that the wider community has confidence in the system.

Several practitioners noted that the processes and relationships developed at the NJC are actually more onerous for many offenders than traditional processes. It was felt that by refocusing offenders on their accountability to victims, the court, court services and the wider community, that this in itself, was a form of justice. However, practitioners also noted that the processes and relationship focus is often seen as a ‘soft option’ and that perceptions regarding a more ‘holistic’ (versus instrumental) approach can remain stubbornly negative vis a vis the outcome of serving justice.

This negativity stems from the fact the NJC is attempting to apply a new paradigm to the core question of what best serves justice. New paradigms are simply a shift in how we see others, the world, problems, solutions and the future. They are a response to changes in norms, rules of behaviour, innovation, new technologies and other progress. There are great benefits to playing with new paradigms and “those who can anticipate emerging paradigms have an advantage over those who are inflexible” but there are also challenges to that application as “those invested in the old paradigm…often actively resist the new paradigm” (Inayatullah 2007: 211).

That being said, the practitioners across the spectrum of services at the NJC are committed to delivering justice. They are critical players in the criminal justice system.
In this section, we will explore the core principles as they look in practice at the NJC.

The practice areas that will be focused on are broad, but will still give a sense of how the NJC core principles of practice might look in relation to different sorts of integrated activity. For example, when in court, when doing pre-sentencing work, when overseeing a corrections order or doing crime prevention work.

This section will:
1. Bring the stories of NJC practitioners to the fore and provide some direct and verbatim examples of practice, from people who have lived that practice
2. Provide some practice area focus in specific areas such as corrections, legal aid, or drug and alcohol counselling.

It must be noted that in an integrated service such as the NJC, focusing on discrete service provision areas is difficult. Practices can and do knit together in ways that make this differentiation a little false: Corrections is not separated from client services and court processes work in collaborative ways with community engagement activities. Stories from specific areas of practice very often reference other areas of practice in terms of the opportunities that practitioners have felt were valuable to capitalise on as well as in terms of challenges they have had to work through.

Still, this is one way of providing a framework to organise case study material and practitioner lessons. To this end, we will look at the following four elemental practice theme areas:
- community engagement and crime prevention
- courts and alternative dispute resolution
- client services
- corrections.
While integration is a core principle and is also a core practice (meaning that various disciplines work at all stages of justice), we have tried to extract areas of practice where primary focus falls at different parts of that spectrum, as illustrated in Figure 5.

We have also tried to pull out the more unexpected or unusual stories from practice. It is interesting to see how the NJC practice has challenged these practice areas with new approaches and in ways that aren’t already inherent in that sector.

These stories aren’t an exhaustive recounting of practice but we hope the selection of stories will illustrate some important experiences that different practitioners have had and the lessons those experiences hold.

Figure 5: Spectrum of practice at the NJC
Community engagement and crime prevention

Community engagement and crime prevention are specific areas of practice with a number of workers engaged explicitly in these tasks. But it is also an arching ethos that is captured by all workers at the NJC.

The practice of engaging the community broadly can often be a fraught one, even where a strong supporting principle is expressed. This has been true at the NJC, just as it has in other organisations that attempt to try new things. Many staff reflected on this as an evolutionary and learning process – one that was required of an innovative new organisation trying to find its place in the established local environment.

If I reflect on the past four years, the way in which we started out was very broad. We had eight goals that prompted action around getting out there, getting known and looking to do crime prevention in a very broad way. So we looked at crime prevention, for example, in terms of early intervention, working with at risk communities and so on. Pretty much any projects or initiatives with those groups referred back to those aims that were about reducing crime and addressing precursors of crime and reducing harm. So it was very broad brush-stroke.

I think there was a lot of wisdom in that approach because it recognised, early on that we were a new entity in a community that’s got a lot of agencies and organisations with a lot going on. The original manager of community engagement was at every meeting and her approach was very much, “tell us about your safety concerns and problems and the NJC will help facilitate a solution for you?”

Sometimes that was facilitating a solution through funding and sometimes it was about helping to bring the right people to the table. The NJC became known as a place to get things done. It could help with money (and may be seen as a bit of a cash cow) but also would help and be supportive of an initiative.

Morgan Scholz (Crime Prevention Officer), May 2011

That evolution continues, and community engagement and innovation in practice is never done, as illustrated in the shared narrative of three staff members discussing the challenges of community engagement practices. Community engagement is not finished as soon as strong partnerships are developed. As time goes on, there are new audiences and new practices to explore for deepening and strengthening engagement.
In that conversation, there were sub-themes of both the opportunity and creativity that innovative practice can bring – but also how it can be tiring for staff. As one person said: “the energy we need to expend on that and how best to do it is a big step and a big task.” (NJC staff member/Jodi May 2011).

Further, the ability to innovate is often supported or undone by quite functional issues, like internal communications, induction processes, IT capacities and the like. So, the will to innovate is not all that must be attended to as mechanisms that support it are also important and they too evolve and become more sophisticated over time.

**Story 1: Learning, innovating and sharing**

Jodi: Our activities have focused on community in Yarra, service delivery, local engagement, and interagency organisational change and there has been a little bit of transferring practice locally in terms of the work we do with other service providers. But our job now is to transfer practice in a conscious way within the broader justice system. To date we, as a team, have not needed to engage with the department or the courts and the dialogue around therapeutic jurisprudence. It hasn’t been a priority for us and therefore not a target group. So this is a new target audience for us to engage with and has its own unique challenges.

Caroline: I can see why there is a view of the NJC among other courts that says “we don’t understand the language you are speaking and don’t understand what you’re saying”.

Jodi: The need to develop and implement policy and process from scratch has been a definite challenge for the NJC. Internally, the staffing is diverse and not necessarily all here. So internal consultation and communications can be very difficult. Not everyone comes to staff meetings, not everyone is on the same G drive and not everyone accesses the department’s intranet. There is no single place that people go to for information. If we had very strong policies and procedures that people were trained in, then these challenges might be reduced. But we’re still evolving and developing such sophisticated processes.

So we are now reframing the language so that it is in a familiar form, in a form that others use to understand and measure themselves.

Morgan: I guess what we acutely recognise is that this is a critical task in front of us. That is a significant challenge, to engage with the conventional justice system and say “this is the work that we’ve been doing” and make it relevant to them. Supporting others in changing practice also challenges us. We’re excited about that but it is going to take a lot to start to make inroads into that: how we sell ourselves back to our own department and how we can be creative about selling our little package of innovations back to the courts and the justice system broadly.

**Jodi Cornish (Community Engagement Coordinator), Morgan Scholz (Crime Prevention Officer) and Caroline Ottinger (Communications Manager).**
Morgan: My understanding is that when the centre was developed in concept, that was done really rigorously and that the ethos and approach were very well articulated. Then you operationalise that. Initially, there was a great induction in that shared ethos. But then the realisation, when the doors opened, that we didn’t really know where to get stationery and there was no process for that! So everyone had to revert to developing basic internal processes and that took time.

Jodi Cornish and Morgan Scholz
(Community Engagement Coordinator / Crime Prevention Officer), May 2011

The development of these processes has been, arguably, a larger challenge for community engagement and crime prevention than for some other disciplines. Registry and corrections were obliged to transport some external processes with them into their NJC practice. Despite the reflection that processes and protocols are a required element of robust (and better integrated) practice, there is some warning against rigidity, at least where community engagement is concerned:

I’ve come from a more conventional community engagement practice. As an example, at NJC there are minimal protocols and a minimum of bureaucracy. The culture, instead, stresses that you problem solve. You get to know everyone in the centre. You speak to who you need to. You aren’t as constrained by having to follow some protocol about who you can speak with.

Maree Foelz (Project Officer), May 2011

In fact, the lack of structure and rigidity and the air of experimentation and innovation was remarked on as a critical one by many staff members. So, in spite of the need for this innovative practice to be captured, as it occurs and over time, the need to allow the practice to develop in organic ways at the start was a strength of practice, as illustrated in the following:

I think we peaked too early, frankly. I don’t mean that arrogantly. I mean that it came together, the relationships and the purpose of the relationships and the eye on the vision, more easily and in a more cohesive way than certainly I ever dreamed it would. And in a shorter time. So by the end of year two, I reckon we had peaked in terms of our energy, our sense of innovation, understanding about the kinds of relationships needed, the bounce in the community and it was a bit like “hang on, what do we do now?” Unfortunately we did what a lot of organisations’ do and we fell away from the more organic into a more formalised and almost bureaucratic way where we had to plan everything carefully and put lots of project briefs together and set boundaries around everything.

Some of that reflects people’s tolerance for any one mode of working. There’s only so long people can dream and action learn. There has to be a way in which you can come off that and have a break from it. I don’t know that I know how to lead this or that I understood it at the time but in retrospect (and even today, this cropped up) I can see that maybe there needs to be some mix of think/react time and dreaming/creating time.
But, in a sense, we **had** to do the dreamy stuff at the beginning and the alternative, honestly, is a little frightening. We could have nailed down every corner at the beginning and said, “right, we have to know and understand everything we do”. And we would have had stultified service within the first twelve months that would have worked like clockwork in that sense, but wouldn’t have had the goodwill, light and vibrancy. We made hay while the sun shone.

*Kerry Walker (NJC Director), April 2011*

How “the dreamy stuff” was manifest in processes that the NJC adopted are multiple and varied.

They include things like the design of workspaces in ways that have enabled and simplified contacts for staff and for clients. This is illustrated in a client services worker story about how her engagement with clients has changed as a result of how the work areas are designed. As one staff member remarked:

“To come up here has been an amazing benefit. We just go and tap each other on the shoulder – ‘Got a minute? This person has some issues that might benefit from seeing you’ – so it is immediate. You can respond immediately and the person is there. You don’t have to say, ‘well, come back in a few days and you might be able to see this other provider’.

*Linda Masters (Financial Counsellor), April 2011*

As the story continues, a principle of simplification of the system can be read into the tale of how a client might wind up seeing someone like Linda a second time:

The connection remains much more available, as well, because people are often seeing a few different people here and they see you in passing. Clients here will often have complex and chaotic lives. One day they may think “I really want to sort this out now” and they’ll come to see you and you’ll talk through the issues and talk about options. But then, as happens, other parts of life will intervene and they may drop off.

Because they are often seeing other people here though, you have a means for keeping the connection as you might just bump into them. We aren’t going to chase clients so that becomes a really important reminder to people who may have dropped off. They may have missed follow up appointments after seeing you initially but seeing you in the hall when they are seeing another worker will remind them “hey, I really did want to deal with that issue”.

*Linda Masters (Financial Counsellor), April 2011*

This type of opportunistic contact is augmented by much more ‘strategised’ and constructed contact. As mentioned above, the NJC clients may be leading very chaotic or isolated lives and may not trust the process in the slightest. Building trust takes time and patience and can’t really rest on a “protocol” or formula, as the following story illustrates:
Story 2: Trust-building is a process

We had a case conference organised and we were able to support the client by having other community people there. The mediator said afterwards he had never heard that man speak about his life in that way before. He’d had case conferences before but that having a collection of people empowered him to dig deeper in the discussion about what was happening to him and why he was offending.

It’s not uncommon for Aboriginal people to not work well with their own people. One lady we saw must have had a bad experience within the Aboriginal community. When she started here, she just didn’t want to know us. But we kept saying hello, here or out at Billabong or in Smith Street. And then she shifted to wanting us to sit in but not engage directly. And eventually, over time, after all this, she started engaging with and speaking with lawyers and others. Now we’re in on case conferences and more active in her casework. So the trust needed to be built up and the relationship needed to develop and she needed to come to the conclusion that one bad experience didn’t mean all would be negative. We try to replace negative experiences with more positive ones and build trust and say, “yes, I am working in the court and with police and in justice… but it is ok”. So it’s breaking down the barriers and stereotypes and fears.

James Fraser (Koori Justice Worker)

The processes involved are also often intangible and emotionally driven. The investment that people make in their relationships (personal and professional) is another aspect that is difficult to document other than through stories of experience.

It is not easy appearing before the magistrate here by any stretch. It’s actually pretty stressful. There are no short cuts and you have to dot every ‘i’ and cross every ‘t’ and you have to have all the information as he’s got a mind like a steel trap. He knows the client services and Corrections and others who provide information as well. So yes, it is very demanding appearing here.

Part of that also is that we invest our own emotional energy in our clients because we also get to know them well. We don’t just deal with them on one or two occasions.

I have a client who has been in court here more than 20 times over 15 months. And he goes up and down and up and down, in part because he has some very, very serious issues. Unfortunately, he has gone backwards significantly recently and when I had to appear in court and explain to the magistrate that my client wouldn’t be attending as he’d been taken into custody because of his behaviour, I could see the disappointment very clearly on the magistrate’s face. And that’s because he too had been working very hard to get this guy diverted from the revolving door of going in and out of prison and had been trying to get him to a stage where he could satisfy an order and then perhaps move on in his life. So yes, we all invest a lot, emotionally and professionally.

Kaz Gurney (Community Lawyer, Fitzroy Legal Service), May 2011
All staff, however, alluded to the importance of care and respect for others and in the support that working at a local level lent to developing a genuine care for people. Even when a strict process was in place, such as at Registry. Time and again, people remarked on the fact that the people who came into the NJC tended to be people who came in more than once and that the contact with them was more than just one anonymous meeting of strangers and that this created particular conditions for relationship building that wouldn’t necessarily be the case in larger jurisdictions.

Not only did this create emotional investments for staff and workers, it was stressed in a number of people’s reflections that the investment flowed the other way too. Community people had developed an emotional attachment to the NJC arising from it filling a need that couldn’t be met in other places and in providing a way of engaging with the justice system that might not be facilitated elsewhere:

I think, and I just saw it down in court, that in some cases, we seem to be an avenue for the community when nowhere else will hear their case. There was just a matter down in court with a woman who has basically got no grounds for an intervention order and so was sent here. It is a good thing that people have that avenue to go to as we have the time and resources to give those people more attention than they might get elsewhere. So it is filling that need as well.

Jo Staunton (Paralegal, Victorian Legal Aid), May 2011

These smaller investments were often described in terms of people being engaged in a learning relationship with the NJC. One that helped them understand the processes of the court (and other services) and move past their frustrations associated with being involved, in large and small ways, with the system:

Registry is perceived by a lot of people as ‘access’ to justice. It is here that decisions are made around when a matter will be heard in court, whether people will get what they need to get for ‘justice’. People have a lot of demands and expectations of this and often the procedures they have to go through to get what they want are complicated and long-winded.

What I’ve noticed here is that you get difficulties arising from frustration with the processes. But because it is a community place and people do come back time and again, they wind up having very friendly relationships with registrars. There is a funny kind of harmony that emerges. “I know you’re back and you’re frustrated because you still haven’t got what you need to get, but I am here to help you and I will help you as much as I can”.

I have this kind of ‘witness’ role. I have worked in the Yarra area for 20 years and I know a lot of people. So from the day the doors first opened, I had people coming up to me saying “Hey, Jay, how ya goin’? You’re working here?!” And that relationship meant that people would also tell me their stories about their interactions with people. So I’d be in the hall and people would come up and say “that fucking bastard at the counter wouldn’t let me do whatever” and I’d be suggesting they tone down the language or try again! And after time, the stories changed to ones about the people behind the counter being alright and good guys and helping them out.

Jay Jordens (Neighbourhood Justice Officer), April 2011
Story 3: On modelling ‘community’

Damian: It’s not uncommon for people to attend at the Registry counter in an agitated state.

A successful technique we have implemented here is to try and remain calm, which experience has shown, has a calming effect on the agitated client.

Once the client has calmed down, they soon realise that we are here to help them and are not ‘the enemy’.

Q: Is that an active expression of Registry, something that you talk about and imbed in practice, or is it just a more coincidental reflection of the people you have gathered together here, that they are calm people?

Damian: That’s a really good question. When recruiting Registry staff, we are conscious of whether the new staff member will be a good fit for the Registry and for the Centre.

We encourage new staff members to place a greater emphasis on customer service.

Examples of this include: using clients’ first name when known, asking more questions of clients to see if we can assist them by connecting them with the available support services on site. One distinct advantage we have is our workload enables us to spend extra time assisting clients, which is a luxury that is not usually available at other busy courts.

With experience and learning, NJC Registry staffs’ high level of customer service standard has become part of our culture. This makes it easy for new staff members to assimilate into their own practice.

With one of the NJC’s goals being to deliver a high quality customer service, in the rare event that we do not deliver on this, we get pulled up on it by other sections within the Centre.

Jay Jordens (Neighbourhood Justice Officer), Damian James (Senior Registrar)

In some respects (and this was mentioned several times), the goal is a replication of “community” with all its notions of civility and reciprocity. The engagement with community and the creation of a community is an organisational culture choice and this is embedded explicitly (through recruitment and training) and implicitly (through personalities, values and attitudes).

Story 4 continues this narrative, but from a community perspective. Engagement, at the NJC, takes the form of skill building processes amongst community members. The following story is a ‘narrative-in-progress’ of the ways in which a typical community representative has learned about the NJC and the justice system and taken on increasingly complex roles in the functioning of the NJC. It is a story of both empowerment and advocacy (see following page).

The emotional and time commitment invested in the NJC by clients and community can be incredibly life altering for some people. As an outcome, this sort of restorative goal was a fundamentally important one in many stories and one of the key principles that drove people’s work and created joy in what they did.
At Registry a couple of weeks ago I did a double take at a bloke sitting there and went back and said, “hey, you look so well”. It was one of our earliest clients, probably one of the first in court, and it was like looking at a whole new person, like someone had put an entirely new casing on him. He looked well, had put on weight, his eyes were clear, his hair had been cut. He told me he had housing now and was seeing a regular doctor and was on good medication and felt really good. And I said “good for you”. And then I thought, “hang on, you’re standing at registry.”

So I said “is everything good in terms of, you know, the law...?” And he said “I’ve had a couple of set-backs but they are nothing near as serious as before. So yeah, I am good”.

I just found the transformation a marvel. At another court I probably wouldn’t have had the opportunity to see that man again and see his transformation. That is what this local and community focus boils down to. You see that sort of change. It really matters.

Kerry Walker (NJC Director), April 2011
The NJC Court

The NJC Court wears many jurisdictional hats. It is a venue of the Magistrates’ Court of Victoria, the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) and the Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal (VOCAT). Criminal matters form the majority of its work. Other significant streams of work include applications for intervention orders, VOCAT applications, Children’s Court matters, VCAT civil claims and guardianship and administration matters. The NJC Court does not hear contested final hearings.

While the NJC Court does most of the work of a regular court, there are important distinctions about how the NJC Court operates within the community justice model.

The court environment

The NJC demonstrates the importance of architectural design in reinforcing community justice principles. Space, light and openness, well-maintained public areas and community artworks are key features of the building. The layout of the courtroom is similar to that found in many courts, but the large windows in the court and interview rooms, reflect the NJC’s emphasis on transparency of process and making the courtroom environment less intimidating. Also, the Magistrate’s Bench is lower than in most courtrooms.

Clients are welcomed to the NJC through concierge-style security, rather than warning signs and x-ray security scanning. This respectful approach, where the NJC expects the best of clients, extends to other aspects of the way the NJC operates.

The other day a visitor pointed out to me that it was the first court she’d been in the state where the loudspeaker wasn’t used to call the person’s name out. In fact, here the person is approached and told it is time to go in. And what a change that made in the dynamic. It’s small but it was a conscious decision when we started to not use the public address system. That’s one of the reasons we have the concierge function built into security.

Kerry Walker (NJC Director)

One magistrate only

In most urban courts several magistrates are usually involved in hearing a single case before it is finalised. However, at the NJC court, there is only one magistrate, who hears all cases from start to finish. This consistency allows:

- the NJC magistrate to broaden his focus from the offence, to gaining an in-depth understanding of the issues underlying the offending
- clients to be more accountable to the court, and to restoring their lives, as they face the same magistrate each time they attend court
- time savings as the magistrate has a close knowledge of the case
- greater client understanding of the process, and, in turn, satisfaction with how their case is handled
- the magistrate to use his judicial authority in different ways, including using problem-solving approaches and judicial monitoring.
The court working with the community

Aboriginal Hearing Days are an example of how the court has deepened its relationships, not just with individuals, but also with the community. In 2008, the NJC identified a number of concerns in relation to the Koori community, including:

- low attendance rates of Aboriginal clients at the NJC court.
- limited representation from the local Aboriginal legal service for clients, even when clients were in custody.
- Koori community members not accessing the services available through the NJC.

The NJC suspected that these concerns were symptoms of a need to build trust with the local Koori community and to provide more culturally appropriate services. In line with the community justice model, the NJC worked together with the local Koori community to address these issues.

Story 5: Hoping for a different life

There are enormous benefits for the community because if the model is successful, then the offending stops. For the community, the benefits are clear and obvious. And there is benefit for the individual who starts leading a different life and has some hope and that’s really what we’re dealing in…hope for a different life. Otherwise, the trajectory is bleak: greater number and longer terms of imprisonment or other negative consequences of being associated with the justice system. Further and greater isolation from the community and the inability to be a regular member of the community, which leads to more isolation.

That’s what makes it such a positive place to work. I’d find it harder to work in the regular magistrates court now because of those changes I can see when people have longstanding problems whose life you would see as going nowhere and highly unlikely to change. We’re not successful in every case. I’m not Pollyanna or starry eyed, but it is very evident that a lot of people have had their lives changed by their association with the NJC.

Magistrate David Fanning
Aunty Denise Lovett — a staunch advocate for the NJC and a member of the NJC’s Community Liaison Committee — was instrumental in assisting the NJC to work with the local Koori community. The NJC hosted a “community yarn” and BBQ with the Koori community to discuss the reasons they did not attend court. Nearly 50 local Aboriginal community members attended along with local Aboriginal services and the NJC Magistrate and staff — including the Koori Justice Workers.

Suspicion of the justice system and lack of familiarity with the court process emerged as two of the major reasons why Aboriginal clients did not attend the NJC. In addition, as a statewide service, the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) often struggled to provide adequate legal support for clients at all court locations.

It was not feasible to establish a Koori Court, but the NJC and the local Koori community sought to develop a sustainable solution to these issues. Knowing that culturally appropriate support would be available from Koori workers and organisations at the NJC was identified as a key way forward, along with having set days for Aboriginal clients at the NJC, so that VALS could ensure that one of its solicitors could be present.

In response to these discussions, the Aboriginal Hearing Day commenced. On a fixed day each month the NJC court hears all Aboriginal clients’ matters. The Aboriginal Hearing Day assists in coordinating the attendance of external agencies to provide additional support to clients. It provides a more culturally appropriate environment for Aboriginal clients, through the physical design of the court, a free BBQ lunch and culturally appropriate materials. The court also involves the Aboriginal community in its proceedings. For example, as part of the sentencing conversation, the Magistrate invites contributions from community members who are supporting the client. A Koori Justice Worker is always present in court to assist clients and their families.

The Aboriginal Hearing Day has achieved a number of benefits including dramatically increasing attendance rates and reducing warrants for the arrest of Aboriginal clients. It has improved the local Koori community’s understanding of, and confidence in, the criminal justice system. Perhaps most importantly, the Aboriginal Hearing Day has deepened the relationship between the local Koori community and the NJC. As new issues arise, the local Koori community and the NJC can problem solve together, given their open and respectful partnership.
The Aboriginal Hearing Day has provided an excellent opportunity to broaden networks and gain a fuller understanding of the local Koori community. Having matters adjourned to the one day has increased client attendance for both breach hearings and Court Reviews. Given the dates are fixed, it also makes the listing of breach matters for Aboriginal clients more streamlined.

Clients are able to see their case manager in a more relaxed atmosphere. The presence of support workers has provided an excellent opportunity for Community Correctional Services (CCS) to network with Koori organisations and have a yarn about clients in an appropriate manner. This process personalises interactions rather than phoning or emailing which can be limiting. Observing these positive interactions may assist in breaking down clients’ stereotypes of CCS staff – they see us working collaboratively and constructively with the Koori Community.

Elizabeth Swales (Community Correctional Services)

The challenges of integration

Working in integrated ways isn’t without its challenges for the court. Stories were told regarding the sensitive balance that must be found in working collaboratively to solve problems without the court becoming (or being seen as) simply another community service and part of government bureaucracy. In describing the importance of keeping the judiciary separate from government, the following reflections voice a conundrum faced by many people working at the NJC:

In a traditional court environment, everything that occurs in that court is directly associated with the operations of the court. That is clear, that is unequivocal and uncompromising. At the NJC, activities are directly, indirectly or not at all related with what the court may do. So there are different and varied challenges that flow both ways, as a result of the varied relationship that the court has with all those other functions of the NJC.

Does that mean that the court is then compromised or influenced by all those connections and those services? That the court can’t provide that crucially independent, unbiased approach to the delivery of justice? I say “no”. Independence and having a working relationship with services both within the NJC and in the community can co-exist and has proven its worth over the past five years.

Magistrate David Fanning
As advocates for the accused/offender, lawyers involved in this process also highlighted some philosophical and practical issues they need to contend with as a result of applying a model that does bring a range of professionals together to address offending:

In terms of the ethical issues, they are very interesting. Those ethical issues have made me think twice about what we are doing on behalf of a client. It doesn’t mean I necessarily change what I do, but sometimes I do things differently.

For example, we don’t do a lot of bails here but we do some. There is one time that I remember where I followed the advice of a client services person and didn’t apply for bail. Whether I’d do it again, I don’t know.

Q: What prompted your thinking in that case?

The professional involved said that if the person got bail, they’d be in danger of harming themselves. I took their professional advice. It wasn’t necessarily what the client would have said but I accepted the professional expertise.

_Serge Sztrajt (Senior Victorian Legal Aid Lawyer)_

More broadly, a group interview with legal aid lawyers (see the following) highlighted a more fundamental tension associated with elevating root causes into court proceedings and in putting an onus on offenders to tackle the root causes of their offending in addition to simply paying for the crime.
Craig: It is common knowledge that the magistrate here tries to ‘fix’ people. He doesn’t let them off the hook. In another court setting, we could be more focused just on the court outcome and on getting the client in and out as quickly as possible.

Because we have a single magistrate, the approach of that magistrate is key. We have to understand his approach and work with the knowledge of his approach to achieve the best outcome. For that, you have to have that sort of local knowledge to assist your client. Given the therapeutic nature of the set up here it wouldn’t make sense to just let people off lightly. Nor would it make sense to just send them off to prison automatically and not take advantage of the facilities here.

Kaz: The difference is that people don’t just walk in here and have their matter heard, be dealt with and then walk out. They come back. And they come back again.

Craig: Exactly. They may come back but they are not necessarily coming back on new matters. They are often coming back for the same matter and because they are working on issues associated with that matter.

Kaz: Because the underlying issues are given much more importance than occurs in most other courts. And in my view, that does create a tension for most lawyers. Between their ethical obligations to act in the best legal interest of a client – that is, to take instruction and to act on them to achieve the best legal outcome for the client – and achieving the broader objective here of achieving the best social, medical, economic and legal outcomes for a client.

Craig: You’re quite right…

Serge: We’re comfortable with it because that is what the magistrate expects. And that is also part of why the NJC was set up. It was set up to contend with underlying issues and the magistrate is meant to deal with those and we, as lawyers, are part of that.

Ethically, the bottom line is this question: “are people being sentenced because of the crime they committed (and they are), but are they also being sentenced because of the conditions they have?”

Kaz: There is a question beyond that also which is “are they being sentenced on the basis of their response to the services offered?” The person who engages clearly and strongly with services here and demonstrates their efforts to address their underlying issues, are they going to receive a more accommodating sentence than the person who is unable to accept those services, perhaps because of the illnesses they have?

Serge: That is a question that is raised in all the courts that have therapy as a focus. It’s a basic question that I don’t think has been answered anywhere.

Craig Cairney (Lawyer, Victoria Legal Aid), Kaz Gurney (Lawyer, Fitzroy Legal Service) and Serge Sztrajt (Senior Lawyer, Victoria Legal Aid)
In answer to that issue, the interview returned to the question of relationships and trust in the process. Trust that it serves justice and actually works and trust in the other people involved in the process and a commonality of purpose:

Serge: I do agree with Kaz that we all look for the best outcome for clients but what each of us may regard as the best outcome will differ from person to person and that is because we work from different disciplines. And how do we accommodate that?

I think we accommodate it better than most other places because of the relationships. We probably have a better idea about where the other disciplines are coming from and hopefully they have a better idea about where we’re coming from and so in that way it does work towards a better outcome for the client.

Looking wider than criminal matters, the ‘best’ outcomes are ones that are generally mediated between all parties and this can appear to be an impossible goal, given the adversarial lens through which justice is often viewed. An outcome that is mutually appropriate and ‘good’ for parties in intervention orders isn’t necessarily impossible, especially when mediation and appropriate dispute resolution are applied and properly facilitated, as illustrated in Story 7.
**Story 7: Good outcomes as a function of relationship building**

I had a client, a male in his 50s who was seeking an intervention order against his housemate after his housemate assaulted him. This client was very traumatised as during the assault he’d come into contact with his housemate’s blood and his housemate was HIV positive. My client had never dealt with the court system before and was very distressed.

I spent a lot of time with him giving him legal advice and supporting him through the process of seeking an interim intervention order. I stayed by his side in court and was able to guide him through the court process. He was fearful that there would be further trouble from his housemate, but as it turned out his housemate moved out right away, only taking his own items, and cleaned his room before leaving.

In other courts we wouldn’t usually represent an applicant to an intervention order and they would have to apply by themselves for the interim order with some help from Registry. They wouldn’t be as supported and guided through the court process. However, because he was represented, I was able to negotiate with the other side. In the end, they agreed to mutual undertakings rather than an intervention order.

The client thanked me profusely. He was very grateful for the service I’d provided. This happens more in my work at the NJC than it does at other courts.

This situation was significant for me as I had the time to sit with him and support him through the court process. It’s about the level of care we’re able to provide to clients at the NJC. I’d never be able to spend that time and care with a client in another court environment. You’re able to have more of a bond and a connection with a client.

*Julia Love (Lawyer, Victoria Legal Aid)*
Story 8, below, is a continuation of Story 4 and, from a community representative’s perspective, takes this theme to a broader community level. The story, preceded by one of skill-building and a growing self confidence in having a ‘voice’ in justice in Story 4, illustrates the ways in which on-going learning (for professionals, for clients and for the broader community) continues to happen and will continue to influence the ways in which (hopefully) dispute resolution occurs. It is a story of a community representative’s reflections on an imperfect outcome being a driver for her personal desire to influence the system and the options available through the court:

**Story 8: Learning from imperfect outcomes**

A big development in my relationship with the NJC occurred when I served as a witness for a neighbour in court. It was quite confronting to be cross-examined by the magistrate, the policewoman and the lawyer, but I expressed the view that the offender was ready to make real changes in his life and would not benefit from a custodial sentence. This was my heartfelt conviction.

However I also believed that the offender would need lots of support to develop a new, lawful life. An important element was the type of work he would do in the community. If it were something that would offer him a sense of contributing to his community, this could build a positive self-image and sense of worth.

It would need something of this order, I felt, for him to look forward to obtaining paid work in the future and to develop the sense that he was a positive part of society and not bound to living on its criminal margins.

I had thought that as an interested party I may have an opportunity to make some suggestions around the community-based order (CBO) after the magistrate decided to issue the offender with a suspended sentence. This was not so. When I later spoke with the offender he described the community work he was doing as ‘easy’ and seemed to view it with a degree of contempt (it was painting over graffiti at railway stations). This, clearly, was not what I had in mind, when I thought that the community work in the CBO could help the offender to build a new, responsible, positive self-image.

I felt really disappointed with the outcome of intervening as a witness for my neighbour. After the threat of incarceration had passed, his focus on becoming a better man for his children and giving up old habits seemed to dissipate.

When I talked with him about his CBO I realised that Corrections probably have limited options in restorative work orders.

From being a witness I learnt that the suite of therapeutic options for offenders serving a CBO don’t currently exist in the way I had imagined. This limitation has become something I am exploring through NJC’s Community Justice Advisory Group and may potentially do some work on.

This story is not finished. I am still to scope out what work I could do in this area. I hope I’ll be able to contribute something that is useful for the NJC, and who knows, may even be rolled out to other justice settings.

*(Community story)*.
Client services

Client services at NJC are varied but generally relate to supporting clients (offenders and victims) and community members in: housing; substance abuse; financial and emotional problem solving; and planning.

Offenders, for example, often present with multiple issues that contribute to their offending/re-offending and client services are pitched at solving those issues with a view to breaking cycles of criminality. Likewise, victims often have needs associated with the crime perpetrated against them and a role for the NJC is to help victims resolve their issues related to the crime against them. Client services also have a role beyond those specifically related to the court and work with community members who are not offenders or victims of crime.

It is not realistic to discuss the NJC without exploring integration, as a principle, for this was such a central theme to many of the stories told. In many ways, integration became the central challenge to this publication, as was highlighted by this comment:

One of the key tensions is the question: ‘to what extent is this place about the community, and to what extent is it about the court?’ The goal is balance – to ensure that both the community and the court receive due focus.

Part of your task is to be in the middle and balance the picture and to put it on one page, incorporating all the community elements and all the court activities To illustrate the ways in which the NJC does, in fact, integrate these two things.

Jay Jordens (Neighbourhood Justice Officer), April 2011

Integration, then, reflects one of the NJC’s most successful (and reflected upon) principles. There are two points of integrative practice involving client services to explore, given they mark a significant departure to how things often operate in other courts.

The first is the integration that happens between the court and client services in pre-sentencing of offenders. This integration can be a significant change to the ways client service people would generally work, both in terms of the time available and in terms of the accountability to the court for the pre-sentencing interventions that occur, as illustrated in the following case.
Story 9: Pre-sentencing integration of services and court

All the matters that I deal with in the criminal court, where the person pleads guilty, would be finalised very quickly in a standard magistrates court. Here we’d adjourn a matter for a person to be engaged in various services, they are monitored, assisted, encouraged, sometimes cajoled to attend those services and be engaged. So there is judicial support for that process with a view to dealing with the underlying causes of the offending.

And I will give a classic example… A middle aged Vietnamese woman charged with and pleaded guilty to drug trafficking. She has a prior offense for drug trafficking for which she received an eighteen-month sentence in the county court. She was paroled and on release committed this new drug trafficking offense while on parole. So she was in deep trouble. You might expect that in another court that she’d probably be sentenced to a further term of imprisonment for her drug trafficking.

However, it seems to me that if that was to take place, she’d serve her sentence, come out and commit another offense. That’s because, if she doesn’t have an intellectual disability, she certainly has diminished function. She is highly isolated from her family and from the Vietnamese community. She lives in a high drug trafficking area. She has had a gambling problem and may have an on-going gambling problem which is commonly associated with people who traffic heroin. They get into debt and are then approached by drug dealers to encourage them to traffic to pay off the debt. A vicious cycle, gambling, debt, offending…

So what we’re trying to do is actually break that cycle. We go through a process of endeavoring to look at ways we can help – both with her intellectual disability and her disconnect from family.

These are some of the challenges, in the context of quite serious offending, with someone who obviously needs serious help.

Magistrate David Fanning
This integration has its challenges for staff because many have had little or no work experience in a court setting and find themselves on a 'steep learning curve' when they get into practice at the NJC:

My role here as a Koori Justice Worker is a change from what I have been doing, which was out in the community.

When I first came here and was working in a court setting, I was out of my comfort zone. I never thought I'd be talking one on one with a magistrate. I never thought I'd be talking to police officers or prosecutors. As an Aboriginal person, with family members having been involved in the justice system, this was challenging.

Being involved with the court directly has changed my perspective. The NJC has nurtured this change process. I have been able to strengthen links between NJC clients and community members. And this impacts positively on the formal parts of the court process.

James Fraser (Koori Justice Worker), April 2011

This individual experience wasn't an isolated one. The Director explains:

The majority of people who started here had never worked in a court or even been in a court. Many people here can tell interesting stories about their first times in court!

We have a range of services that traditionally worked in the same sphere as each other but in fact had never worked closely with each other and knew very little about the details of each other's work. We had lawyers working with social workers and social workers working with financial counsellors and financial counselors working with psychologists and psychologists working with mediators. It's a very eclectic mix. Their point of contact is this court and this community.

Kerry Walker (NJC Director), April 2011

This sort of experimental learning turned out to be a strength of the NJC and led to new ways of doing things:

Sorting out how they were going to work with each other was important. If I had my time again, I'd change none of that. It was a really dynamic way of seeding the NJC culture and how this place would be.

People had to take individual and professional responsibility for how they would tilt their windmills and how they would respond to each other.

For example, confidentiality (e.g. open plan/case management versus legal strictures on client confidentiality). They worked that out. And quickly worked it out. And that surprised me. I thought things like that would terrify us from day one and they didn’t. They now just seem part of the deal but they do represent significant changes from the ways in which things are usually done.

Kerry Walker (NJC Director), April 2011
For many people involved in client services, these new ways of integrating with the court in matters of sentencing represent a different way of working: a time-sensitive approach that is focused on “influencing the client to influence the court” and in getting an offender stabilised and more capable to complete a corrections order, as illustrated in the following short narrative:

Here, it is very much about shifting motivation and saying to clients “next time you will be in court will be on this date and you are in a position to actually act on sentencing and influence the magistrate on sentencing by what you do. So what is it you would like to do?”

Janette Berry (Drug and Alcohol Counsellor), April 2011

The challenges of integration and new ways of doing things (and the need to build trust in others) also exist for clients and community members.

The relationships between clients and staff and, indeed, ‘the system’ as it operates at the NJC is an evolving one. Many stories were told about a skeptical client who slowly came around, as Story 10 illustrates in typically complicated fashion! In this story, the client doesn’t take up client services for himself but vouches for the NJC to his friend who needs help. This approach opens the door for changes in both men’s lives and is based on a perception that the NJC is trustworthy and helpful:

Story 10: The power of clients vouching for the service

The man in the dock – let’s call him Ben – was a hard, proud and alienated man. At the magistrate’s offer of support and assistance he declared: “I don’t want nothin’. No service, no help, nothin’. No parole, no community work, nothin’. Just give me my sentence, Your Honour”. We were young then, still on our training wheels, and Ben seemed to represent everything difficult we were about to face.

Ben’s lawyer (‘mouthpiece’) ‘vouched’ for me, so ultimately he agreed to see me in the cells. Later, I went to visit him four times in prison while he served his sentence. He seemed more interested in talking than making plans for his release. When he got out of jail, he came to visit
once or twice, and I watched with a feeling of helplessness as the maelstrom of his life took hold once again.

Some months later, Ben came back to the NJC with an old friend in tow, let’s call him Riley. They were wobbly on their legs, bleary-eyed and perspiring. Ben declared straight up: “You know you said you’d help me, well I told you I don’t want that help, but he needs it, he’s in strife, so you help him instead, OK.”

‘Strife’ was an understatement in Riley’s case. His two-score and something charge sheet alongside his offending history put him on the fast train to jail. Everywhere, from the tips of his toes to the top of his coif, there were problems and hardships and unhealed wounds.

Client services swung into action. A long, intense and mighty effort by Riley and his supports at the NJC enabled the impossible: Riley was sentenced to a disposition that allowed him to remain in the community.

Now Corrections chimed in, and the efforts continued, and continued, and to everyone’s surprise, Riley went from strength to strength.

A little while back, Riley was in for a Court Review. Ben and his girlfriend were in court, supporting Riley. No one was wobbly on their feet, or bleary-eyed, or perspiring. When Riley modestly acknowledged he was ‘doing OK’, the Magistrate affirmed him, telling him that was a gross understatement.

After the review, out on the balcony, Riley declared to Ben: “I cried in that court”. He was referring to an earlier review, when he was feeling exhausted and on the brink of ‘losing the plot’ and the emotions overwhelmed him. Then he looked at Ben’s girlfriend and said “Gee, you look beautiful today!” The three of them sauntered off, steady on their feet, Riley back home to his partner and two young kids. As they were leaving, Ben’s girlfriend mentioned that she and Ben were thinking of coming to a group at the NJC, that it sounded good. They have a little baby, and it seems to be motivating them both.

When this story began, Ben unequivocally rejected our offers of help. But then he came back, to get us to help his friend Riley. This was my first experience at the NJC of someone we’ve tried to help ‘vouching’ for us. In responding to Ben’s demands, the NJC opened a door for Riley, and going through that door has enabled him to stay with his young family and work hard on healing some of his old wounds. When someone ‘vouches’ for you, like Ben did for the NJC, you’ve got to cut the mustard. The NJC certainly delivered for Riley. Now the hard man, Ben, seems a little interested in that door. He is making tentative steps to getting some help of his own.

Jay Jordens (Neighbourhood Justice Officer)
Client service support in cases with complex-needs was evident in many of the reflections people had about their work at the NJC. Clients, for example, often had life stories that were routinely described by staff as “sad”, “tragic”, “chaotic”, “complex” and so on.

Many stories showed the complexity in individual client cases. And they also showed the challenges that client services, the court and Corrections staff have in dealing with very entrenched lifestyles, serious illness, traumatic events, addiction, disability and poverty. Additionally, there is rarely just one of these issues at play in a client’s life, as illustrated below:

I have a young client with multiple, complex needs. He had a range of charges in various courts, but these were transferred to the NJC and we consolidated the charges, some of which had been around for a long time.

The magistrate deferred his sentence. This deferral allowed us to prioritise his needs. In other courts, inevitably he would have been processed and imprisoned. At this time my client didn’t engage well with services. He was resistant. He was willing to talk but not to follow through.

During his deferral he had a problem solving meeting. The experience of having so many people around the table, all trying to help him and work with him, rather than telling him what to do, had a real impact. This was profound for him. He realised that maybe there was something he could do to change his situation. From memory he said, ‘I’ve never had so many people put so much into me’. He was sentenced to a community-based order.

He has worked with the Mental Health Worker who supported him through seeking medical treatment. He’s much more stable now. Despite a recent medical diagnosis he has kept it together. Before he would have fallen apart. He’s proactive and motivated now. He wants to engage with the financial counsellor now to do some family financial planning. He’s a devoted dad and recognises the need for structure in his life with time for his kids and partner. This is a big change. Previously his life was in chaos. He’s sustained his improvements.

Julia Love (Case Worker), 2010

The continuum of this complex work happens post-sentencing in the second area of novel integration at the NJC: the nexus between Corrections, client services and the court as reflected in on-going court meetings that occur when an offender is in the Corrections system and this phenomenon will be explored further in the following section.
Corrections

The oversight of post-sentencing occurs through integrated corrections processes at the NJC. Those processes involve all staff to some degree but are more formalised in terms of the roles that Community Corrections and various client services play in ensuring completion of an order and their joint accountabilities back to the magistrate’s court.

From a client services perspective, this coordination is both novel and welcome:

Certainly here, one of the big selling points for me is having Corrections. Not just located here but the processes we have put in place. In other courts you could work with someone on bail, stabilise them, they could get an order and then one of the big frustrations was you’d see them appear again for a breach of that order. There’s no hand over, no exchange of information, no follow up done.

At NJC, with client permission, we do a handover meeting with Corrections. We work out the little indicators that the professionals need to pick up on if the client is losing focus and also to leave the door open for us to be called in again if necessary. And also to demonstrate to the client that we are a team.

Yesterday, for example, I was called in by Corrections to talk to a man who had just jumped off methadone and started to use and reoffend again. I was able to talk to him about this, and about his options. To be able to intervene very quickly like that will hopefully prevent him from reoffending and potentially breaching his order.

Janette Berry (Drug and Alcohol Counsellor), April 2011

A similar sort of story is told from a Corrections perspective. Integrating post-sentencing processes is welcome and novel compared with experiences in other jurisdictions. Though novel, the following story illustrates that this sort of coordination isn’t necessarily taxing or ‘extra’ work. In fact, it just represents what happens (or should happen, ideally) in a corrections setting and a better alignment of intervention principles across the justice spectrum of practice (as illustrated in Figure 5):

One of my biggest frustrations in my work prior to joining the NJC was the unwillingness of community services to engage with my clients. It seemed that if they could find an excuse not to deal with our clients, they would. At the NJC it is totally different.

In Corrections more broadly, for example, we often have clients who are identified as ‘pre-contemplative’ in the stages of change model. They haven’t had treatment or been challenged, often, about their behaviour. So in other courts I have worked in, we spend a lot of time helping people who are on orders to move into a more contemplative stage of change. Here, though, much of that has happened prior to sentencing, at least where their underlying issues are concerned, and that is a huge support to my role. At the NJC their drug use or mental health or other issues that contribute to their offending behaviour is being addressed. Also, they have a pattern of attendance before being sentenced and that is also very helpful.

And they are engaged and there are gateways to accessing services here that work well for changing behaviour.

Elizabeth Swales (Corrections Officer in Charge), April 2011
While correction is standardised in terms of the protocols and procedures it needs to observe, as set out in legislation and by the Office of Community Corrections, the needs of clients, on a case-by-case basis, are a driver for the specific sorts of liaison and coordination that happen between Corrections and client services:

Part of partnering with other agencies is opportunistic and part of it is really scoping out what is available and thinking what services and supports fit the client. With the clients being so varied the more options you have on hand, the better.

And that is changing all the time as well, so it has to be a dynamic process.

*Elizabeth Swales (Corrections Officer in Charge), April 2011*

With partners in place around a client, a problem-solving approach becomes the mechanism to coordinate the ‘best’ outcomes for clients. As issues that arise often involve risk, the involvement of peers in the problem-solving process becomes an important check and balance mechanism:

I do feel bad for some of my decisions, emotionally. For example, a client might want to travel overseas and I am saying “no” and I feel bad for them.

At the end of the day, if I am making a call and I explain the decision clearly to the client so they understand the decision, then I feel more confident.

We take a harm minimising problem-solving approach here and so it would be ridiculous, in that earlier scenario, to send a client who has been trafficking drugs off into a high-risk situation like travelling to Asia.

Decisions are weighed on the merits, using an ethical framework based on core values and principles and a good deal of discussion with colleagues.

*Elizabeth Swales (Corrections Officer in Charge), April 2011*

In the NJC environment, problem-solving occurs more naturally and professionals are more likely to understand the problems of clients. Returning to the notion of being on a steep learning curve, as discussed in the previous section, even sitting alongside Corrections has been an illumination to non-Corrections officers.

Corrections were an entity that was completely unknown to me. I’ve had very few referrals by Corrections in my previous work and they were generally mandated referrals. The open plan has challenged us to work much more cohesively and in a much less ‘us’ and ‘them’ way.

But privacy has been challenging. When you have clients, you don’t want all their issues being heard by all. We do have the pods [private rooms] and that compensates.

*Linda Masters (Financial Counsellor), April 2011*
A negative reaction to Corrections isn’t unusual. A Corrections officer reflects on the stereotypes of the profession and the implied barriers these stereotypes create for more ‘partnered’ work by saying: “others often see Corrections as the hard, ‘social control’ people. We’re not, but that’s how we’re perceived. Not at the NJC but if you go to a dinner party then people are expecting some freak from ‘Prisoner’!”

Elizabeth Swales (Corrections Officer in Charge), April 2011

Finally, these relationships are put in place to serve justice in ways that make the client and workers accountable. An interesting reflection on that accountability is captured in the following story. Neither a client in the justice system nor a professional working in that system can blend into the woodwork:

This is not a place where our clients can hide. It is not a place where they can be anonymous because they are there once and it’s busy and chaotic and they just get the sentence and that’s it.

Here, there is nowhere to hide. If the magistrate thinks there is something not quite right or something that needs addressing, he’ll insist on knowing what’s going on so that he knows who he’s sentencing and so that he can also more appropriately sentence that person.

This accountability applies to staff too. The boundaries are really blurred but in a positive way. At the end of the day, this is still my role and that is still your role but that doesn’t prohibit people from working outside of their roles and in concert with others when needed. And staff can’t hide from their responsibilities to the court and to the client or community.

Elizabeth Swales (Corrections Officer in Charge), April 2011
To conclude, we’ll share the story of ‘Bob’, a client of the NJC. His story illustrates how a team of integrated practitioners, with a focus on both justice outcomes and outcomes for offenders, can impact on a person’s life and support a diversion from criminality. This diversion from criminality is the ultimate goal and is good for workers, for clients and for the wider community.

**Story 11: Serving justice and the client**

At a regular whole-of-NJC staff meeting a police prosecutor working at the centre delivered a presentation on the ROPES youth diversion program and encouraged its use through the court. It is doubtlessly unique to the NJC that the senior magistrate, as well as staff representative of the whole operation, including me a court worker, would regularly attend such staff meetings.

Not long after, Bob, a 14-year-old boy, presented to the NJC court on a minor charge. When he arrived he was extremely nervous and confused about the extent of what he had done and what was going to happen to him. When talking to him, it turned out that he had very little family support at home.

At his court hearing the magistrate recommended Bob for the ROPES youth diversion program. This recommendation was distinctive in that ROPES is most usually used by police as a pre-charge diversion. I decided to go along to see the program in action and to support Bob.

At the beginning of the program Bob was as he appeared when he presented to court: nervous, sitting by himself and avoiding eye contact. For this reason he was selected to give the first demonstration which made him very embarrassed. Bob was then teamed up with his informing officer for the course and his...
self-confidence began to grow as their bond developed. By lunch he was sitting and talking with the other kids, not avoiding them like before. During the day we also spoke at length, one thing I remember is that he told me he really wanted to receive an A grade for his maths test, because if he did his support worker was going to take him to the movies. Another thing that really got through to him was the educational presentation they received on the consequences of criminal behaviour. Bob realised he did not want to live with the burden of a criminal record.

By the end of the program Bob was a different kid. He was excited, talkative and much more confident. For once he had been rewarded for his ability and good behaviour. He told me that he was going to go home and frame the certificate he received for successfully completing the program because he was so happy and proud of his accomplishment.

When he returned to court he immediately asked for me to come and see him. When he saw me he gave me a big hug and told me about the A he received on his maths test and his upcoming trip to the movies. His case was dismissed, but not before he told the magistrate how much he enjoyed the program and the opportunity to undertake it. To me the child had changed significantly in personality and attitude. This confident and happy kid was only a few weeks earlier a nervous wreck who could only give one-word answers.

Bob’s experience was significant for me as I was able to see people from all different areas of the NJC join to make changes in the community. In this story a prosecutor, magistrate and a court worker combined to make a positive change in the life of one child. It would have been all too easy for him to follow the criminal path and mind frame of his older brothers. The NJC came together and made it happen for this kid.
Conclusions and reflections

The model needs to be flexible enough so that it translates to other communities. My practice in Corrections has shifted slightly in every community I have worked in because it has needed to. There is a different feel, a different vibe and attitude. It’s a nuance... it’s not like we’re in a different country but there is a different nuance in culture in different places and that is in addition to the different services available and all the functional stuff.

Elizabeth Swales (Corrections Officer in Charge), April 2011

By way of concluding Reflections on Practice, we’ll attempt to capture the nuances touched on by staff members like the Corrections officer above and focus on critical lessons that these stories of practice have collectively delivered to the NJC and, hopefully, to the reader (who might be in a different locale or agency altogether).

The first reflection to make is on the core principals that were described in Section 2.

Through the various examples of practice that happen at the NJC, a number of principles have emerged that cut across the various disciplines. Those principles are related to place, process, people and purpose and have been captured in the diagram below.

The second reflection to make is on lessons learned in the complicated business of trying to apply principles to the hustle and bustle of a busy organisation. The lessons have been learned as the NJC works to establish itself, its goals, its roles in the community and in the justice system and its processes for supporting staff, clients and community.

The following are eight consolidated lessons learned and an indication of how the lessons have been translated into supporting ‘service principles’ in the operations of the NJC.
Strategic lesson learned: “Relationship building is critical to this practice and is often undervalued in formal circles”

All areas of practice at the NJC have reflected, in this and other processes, on the importance of relationship building across disciplines and out in the community. This set of principles isn’t always articulated in “the industry”, perhaps because it is difficult to quantify as an output or outcome of justice work. We think it needs to be an explicitly stated principle, based on our experiences.

Examples of how this lesson was reflected in NJC practice (our ‘service principles’):

1. We have captured the importance of relationship building (including things like transferring learning, engaging with people, developing partnerships, building trust in us and our organisation) in our most recent Strategic Plan (2010-2013). This helps us articulate more clearly this critical goal of practice to others and to hold us to account to goals we have set about relationship building;

2. Documenting practice relationships is as important as documenting other parts of our process (more quantitative evaluation, for example). Qualitative capture of how, when and why people work together is an important service principle to embed in the reporting that an organisation like NJC does.

A reflection that captures this lesson:

Different managers often have different focuses and I don’t even know if it has been documented, what this ‘process’ is. **I certainly think there needs to be some orientation to this and then ongoing joint meetings to talk about how it works and how it is different.** Some mechanism for ensuring this philosophy gets passed on and isn’t just done ad hoc.

*NJC staff member, Janette Berry (Drug and alcohol counsellor), April 2011*
Strategic lesson learned: “Messy is ok and we have learned a great deal and improved our practice from working on the edge”

It may seem like an odd strategic lesson, but learning from doing and learning from practice can be very dynamic. Accepting that ‘messy is ok’, though, does have implications for the ways in which an organisation operates, the processes that are established and the priority of outcomes.

Examples of how this was reflected in NJC practice (our ‘service principles’):

1. We have embedded ‘reflective practice’ and ‘action learning’ mechanisms into NJC practice. These mechanisms (for example, regular Centre Practice Intervention Group meetings) help staff learn from practice ‘on the go’ and problem solve around what might seem spontaneous or ‘messy’ in practice;

2. We have created a narrative about our early practice that actively stresses the experimental nature of our work and the need for flexibility and creativity in our work. This is how we have described our work to others (as opposed to describing it in an instrumental or rational way);

3. We approach our strategic and service work with a perspective of allowing process, indicators and outcomes and outputs to guide us but not govern us. We value the capacity to take ‘defensible risk’ in improving our services;

4. We recognise the need to occasionally invert traditional practices and challenge expectations regarding outcomes. Advocacy concerning organisational purpose is a role we attach legitimacy to at the NJC.

A reflection that captures this lesson:

When I was drafting the proposal (for a restorative justice framework) there were still many unknown elements. Often project proposals in government are worked out to the last detail and are often very prescriptive. In the NJC environment, we didn’t need to have all the answers up front, as long as we had the structure and fundamentals in place. It was essential that there was enough flexibility to change the project as we learnt more about how it could best work in reality.

Some, who weren’t familiar with the action-learning environment of the NJC, were uncomfortable with the flexibility of the design, but others seemed refreshed by it.

Louise Bassett (Department of Justice Project Officer), 2010
Strategic lesson learned: “The sum is greater than the parts where service integration is concerned”

A key lesson learned about integrating services is that there is value in both co-locating services and in creating links to external providers. Embedding all the functions that the NJC provides into the organisation (having everything run in-house) wouldn’t have been as valuable as the in/out of house model we created. The integration of service response has led to immediacy of service and easily navigable paths for clients, contextual information for the court and greater job satisfaction.

Examples of how this was reflected in NJC practice (our ‘service principles’):

1. We have had to create new service agreements that enable external agency people to be based on-site at the NJC without necessarily being formal NJC staff. We have many “staff” who are actually employees of other agencies and have networks that extend back into those agencies and that is valuable;

2. Mechanisms need to be established that allow people to function as an integrated internal team as well as in ways that keep them connected to their ‘home’ agencies. This may be in the form of complementary IT tools (such as parallel intranets), complementary protocols (for example, allowing assessment tools from external providers influence the internal assessment processes) or in other ways altogether;

3. The integration of services leads to shared assessment and intake tools and a coherent and shared responsibility for client outcomes. Tools have developed organically, collaboratively and in a way that is responsive to this organisation and the needs of our clients.

A reflection that captures this lesson:

Because NJC workers are from a multitude of different agencies, we each have our own avenues back into the community. We’re not just a large conglomerate. If someone comes to me regarding something we can’t or don’t deal with here at NJC, I can send them back to my office (Fitzroy Legal Service). For other agencies, such as mental health, we have a clinician here but we also have access to the fuller service because of the interlinking with other agencies in addition to the co-location function that happens here.

Kaz Gurney (Community Lawyer, Fitzroy Legal Service), May 2011
Strategic lesson learned: “People need to be able to find their way around our organisation and enjoy a sense of welcome”

Our experiences have reinforced the importance of creating a welcoming place for people, even if they are appearing before court or attending to other justice matters. We have seen that calm people are easier to work with. They aren’t as anxious or disruptive. This ultimately serves justice as they are more likely to comply with orders and other interventions and are not pulled between responsibilities (e.g. treatment v child care).

Examples of how this was reflected in NJC practice (our ‘service principles’):

1. We go to clients (the worker greets clients at reception) when they arrive rather than clients having to find the worker. If clients need to wait for a worker, we provide comfortable and hospitable places for them to wait;

2. We provide for the needs of clients coming into the centre (for example, there are two play spaces for children – and for parents to meet with workers while they have their children with them) because we respect that clients may have obligations beyond those they have to the court. We want to avoid having people pulled between responsibilities (e.g. treatment v. child care);

3. Our security personnel provide a concierge function at the NJC and are the first welcome most visitors have. This welcome de-emphasizes the ‘social control’ of security and stresses a welcome function. This is explicitly written into the contract for security personnel who work at the NJC.

A reflection that captures this lesson:

When I go to other agencies and have to talk through glass security and I am given nowhere to sit and no sense of when someone is going to come and speak with me, I feel highly offended and angry. If I feel that as a public servant just going to a government building for a meeting and am not anxious or in trouble or lost, imagine how tough that must be for the client who is anxious and lost and worried?

That’s one of the reasons we have the concierge function built into the role of our security staff – so they can talk to visitors beyond giving a brief instruction.

Kerry Walker (NJC Director), May 2011
Strategic lesson learned: “Philosophical and practical tensions are inevitable and can be a positive and creative force rather than a negative and destructive one”

Bringing people from varied practice, experience, focus and background together will inevitably raise questions for people that can be ethically challenging. This, however, is not unique to a multi-disciplinary workplace and there is a constructive element to these tensions, provided they are met head on and not ignored or minimised.

Examples of how this was reflected in NJC practice (our ‘service principles’):

1. Again, we have embedded ‘reflective practice’ and ‘action learning’ mechanisms into the practice at the NJC. These mechanisms help staff understand the perspectives and drivers for others and to scope ways in which practice from different areas can be integrated;

2. Beyond the formal mechanisms, the more informal culture of the organisation has developed to be one where it is ok, we hope, to say “I don’t know” or “this troubles me” and for that to be a source of discussion and problem-solving as opposed to conflict;

3. Respecting the job done by others and accepting that professional tensions can be positive and necessary. This attitude is one we try to embrace, reflect and protect at the NJC. We do different work and we want people to see that as an opportunity versus a constraint and to work proactively with the tensions that multidisciplinary approaches can prompt.

A reflection that captures this lesson:

The narrative of the NJC is sometimes difficult to get right. What is the NJC? What is community justice? On one hand it is a court, on the other hand it is a community centre. I think it can be a real challenge to explain the NJC because it is so unusual in the sense of having so many services located in the one place. And also in terms of having a community engagement focus. This is unusual for a traditional court.

David Fanning (NJC Magistrate), May 2011
Strategic lesson learned: “Community justice work should provide positive emotional outcomes for workers as well as for community members and clients”

Feeling a passion for the work, its outcomes and the difference it can precipitate in people’s lives is an emotional investment that is important to the sort of work happening at the NJC. It needs to be rewarding, given its challenges, and people need to be able to find an emotional satisfaction in their work.

**Examples of how this was reflected in NJC practice (our ‘service principles’):**

1. We try to attend to the emotional wellbeing of staff through formal mechanisms (like peer supervision, as an example) but also informally through our workplace culture and the things we stress as important at the NJC. This is an on-going project, is never perfect (we know staff don’t feel joyful about everything all the time!) but is something we are conscious of and try to nurture;

2. We work to capture staff reflections on the aspects of their work that they find satisfying; and honour, where we can, people’s stories of what makes work good for them and helps contribute to good outcomes for clients and community;

3. By focusing on the ‘best outcome for clients’ as a driver for work, we see the positive emotional outcomes for staff start to align with the positive emotional outcomes for clients. When clients have positive transformative experiences, this change is reflected in positive transformative experiences for workers.

**A reflection that captures this lesson:**

We use a problem-solving counselling approach and every now and again when you are talking with someone in a supervision session, you see a light go on. Like “oh my gosh” as people start making connections. I always feel that it is such a privilege to watch that.

*After 15 years in Corrections, I think that is the bliss of this job.*

*Elizabeth Swales (Community Corrections Officer in Charge), April 2011*
Facilitating an open, learning and integrated mode of working in justice required that our building and the way it operates be different from a traditional court setting. This meant thinking about how the environment supports and reinforces the principles of our work.

Examples of how this was reflected in NJC practice (our ‘service principles’):

1. An open plan work environment has posed some challenges (for example, in relation to confidentiality and privacy) but has been central to enabling the ways in which staff can integrate their functions;

2. The design of this building, like the design of the service, seeks transparency. People can see what is happening (in offices or in the court room or in mediation rooms) before they actually step through the doors and we have found this helps people feel more comfortable and safe;

3. We have avoided the integration of a lot of ‘social control’ type functions in the building (such as barriers, warning signage, impersonal public address systems) and found that clients and the community respond positively to our expectation they will behave well versus an expectation they will behave poorly.

A reflection that captures this lesson:

I’ve never realised prior to working in this building how important architecture is. It helps calm behaviour enormously. You can see and recognise what and who is around you. Looking into court? Double doors of glass. Looking into interview rooms? Glass. Mediation is done behind glass. I sit behind glass. It is really telling people that we want them to know what happens here and that they are safe. It’s one of the reasons we don’t have a lot of trouble.

Kerry Walker (NJC Director), April 2011
Strategic lesson learned: “Vision should be the driver of our service and our practice”

Establishing and working towards a shared and negotiated vision of our future has been a powerful strategic approach and has highlighted the values that our diverse workplace, clients and community share. It is an ‘appreciative’ way of working as opposed to a ‘problematic’ way of working.

Examples of how this was reflected in NJC practice (our ‘service principles’):

1. The development of Reflections on Practice is an example of the value we place, in an operational sense, on articulating the things that bind us in our work and what it is we are seeking to do in our work;

2. Our commitment to strategic planning (e.g. via the development of documents such as the Strategic Plan 2010-2013) includes deliberative and consultative processes so that we can build our vision from the ground up;

3. We do manage our work and our staff differently from some other organisations. We value processes as well as outcomes and build those into action plans and other parts of our strategic planning.

A reflection that captures this lesson:

Everyone is trying to influence the court, whether it be the prosecution or the defense or those who are providing advice. They all have their own views of what the decision should be or how the decision should be handled and sometimes those views conflict. We try to resolve that and work towards people having a shared understanding but it doesn’t come automatically and it doesn’t come without people having confidence that it’s an open process.

David Fanning (NJC Magistrate), April 2011
References and further reading


Appendix A: Participants

The following are those who participated in the various aspects of engaged research and writing of *Reflections on Practice*.

**Champions’ team**

A number of people at the Neighbourhood Justice Centre signed up to be ‘champions’ for the development of *Reflections on Practice*, acting as ‘go to’ people within the organisation in the targeted consultation and writing phase of the project:

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<td>Kerry Walker</td>
<td>Director</td>
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<td>Cameron Wallace</td>
<td>Client Services Manager</td>
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<td>Lola Langhailer</td>
<td>Program Innovations Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Janette Berry</td>
<td>Client Services, Alcohol and Other Drugs</td>
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<tr>
<td>James Fraser</td>
<td>Koori Justice Worker</td>
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<tr>
<td>Damian James</td>
<td>Registry</td>
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<td>Jay Jordens</td>
<td>Registry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beth Swales</td>
<td>Community Correctional Services</td>
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**Scoping workshop participants**

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<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sheryn Anderson</td>
<td>Programs Innovation Team/Community Engagement</td>
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<td>Janette Berry</td>
<td>Client Services, Alcohol and Other Drugs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Craig Cairney</td>
<td>Lawyer, Victorian Legal Aid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phillip Cartwright</td>
<td>Mental Health Clinician</td>
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<tr>
<td>Krystal Cutajour</td>
<td>Koori Justice Worker</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anita deBlasio</td>
<td>Mediation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carolyn Dryden</td>
<td>Programs Innovation Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sharon Ellis</td>
<td>Salvation Army Chaplain</td>
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<tr>
<td>James Fraser</td>
<td>Koori Justice Worker</td>
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<td>Bev Hare</td>
<td>Community Correctional Services</td>
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<td>Jay Jordens</td>
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<tr>
<td>Linda Masters</td>
<td>Financial Counselor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Allison McAuliffe</td>
<td>Admin and Facilities Assistant</td>
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<td>Cazz Ottinger</td>
<td>Communications Advisor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ross Porter</td>
<td>Court Registrar</td>
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<td>Morgan Scholz</td>
<td>Crime Prevention Officer</td>
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<td>Raoul Siska</td>
<td>Employment Training</td>
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<td>Jo Staunton</td>
<td>Paralegal, Victorian Legal Aid</td>
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<td>Beth Swales</td>
<td>Community Correctional Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Serge Sztrajt</td>
<td>Senior Lawyer, Victorian Legal Aid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cameron Wallace</td>
<td>Acting Director/Client Services Manager</td>
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### Interview/focus group discussion participants

#### Reflections on Practice content focus group session

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#### Registry/court focus group session

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<td>Damian James</td>
<td>Senior Registrar</td>
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<td>Jay Jordens</td>
<td>Neighbourhood Justice Officer</td>
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#### Community justice problem solving interview

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<td>Jay Jordens</td>
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#### Integrated client services (Koori justice) focus group session

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<td>Cameron Wallace</td>
<td>Client Services Manager</td>
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#### Corrections interview session

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<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Swales</td>
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#### Client services innovation interview session

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<tr>
<td>Janette Berry</td>
<td>Client Services, Alcohol and Other Drugs</td>
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#### Koori corrections focus group session

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<td>Elizabeth Swales</td>
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#### Legal services focus group session

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<tr>
<td>Craig Cairney</td>
<td>Lawyer, Victorian Legal Aid</td>
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<td>Kaz Gurney</td>
<td>Lawyer, Fitzroy Legal Service</td>
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<td>Serge Sztrajt</td>
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#### Employment pathways interview session

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<tr>
<td>Raoul Siska</td>
<td>Employment Training</td>
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#### Community engagement and crime prevention focus group session

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<tr>
<td>Morgan Scholz</td>
<td>Senior Project Officer/Crime Prevention</td>
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<td>Maree Foelz</td>
<td>Project Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jodi Cornish</td>
<td>Community Engagement Coordinator</td>
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<td>Cazz Ottininger</td>
<td>Communications Advisor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yvette Clarke</td>
<td>Community Partnership Coordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sheryn Anderson</td>
<td>Community Justice Education Coordinator</td>
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#### Neighbourhood Justice Centre directions/operations overview session

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<td>Kerry Walker</td>
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#### Financial counseling interview session

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<td>Linda Masters</td>
<td>Financial Counselor</td>
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#### Magistrate interview session

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<tr>
<td>David Fanning</td>
<td>Court Magistrate</td>
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## Participants via ‘most significant change’ stories

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<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pam Salmon</td>
<td>Alternative dispute resolution</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maxine Yeates</td>
<td>Supported employment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Louise Bassett</td>
<td>Department of Justice policy officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>Court worker</td>
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<tr>
<td>Julia Love</td>
<td>Community justice worker</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jay Jordens</td>
<td>Community representative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>Community representative</td>
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In 2008 and 2009 the NJC held community information evenings to raise the awareness and understanding of justice initiatives and issues in Yarra. Topics covered included Policing in the Community, Alcohol Issues in Yarra, Mental Health, Financial Assistance, Family Violence and Lore and the Community.
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Victorian Government Department of Justice
Melbourne Victoria Australia, May 2013

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