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A new beginning: resolving conflict peacefully - Pilot program evaluation

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Abstract

This report details key research literature about the interactions between young people from new and emerging migrant and refugee communities and Victoria police. It also presents evaluation findings from the pilot conflict resolution training program - A new beginning: resolving conflict peacefully.

A new beginning: resolving conflict peacefully

Pilot program evaluation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report details key research literature about the interactions between young people from new and emerging migrant and refugee communities and Victoria police. It also presents evaluation findings from the pilot conflict resolution training program- *A new beginning: resolving conflict peacefully*. The program was developed by the Neighbourhood Justice Centre in collaboration with A New Beginning. The pilot program was funded by the Victoria Law Foundation and Eastweb Fund.[2] It was delivered to interested members of The Social Studio[3] over four days in July and August 2012.

Literature review

Information about contacts between young African people and Victoria police comes from four main areas: the community sector, government and advocacy organisations, African-authored reports and academic research. Some reports straddle multiple categories. The reports that have had the highest impact on media reporting and public debate include the community sector reports, 'Boys, do you want to give me some action?'[4] and 'Race or Reason'[5] and Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) reports, 'Rights of Passage'[6] and 'Rights of Passage – two years on'.[7]

Victorian research indicates that young African-background people, in particular men and boys, are vulnerable to frequent interactions with police. Participants in local studies reported limited ability to avoid contact with police, to enforce legal entitlements or make complaints. In addition to verbal abuse, including racial taunts, participants reported physical abuse, including ready use of capsicum spray. Participants also described feeling racially stereotyped and experienced related feelings of anger and hopelessness. While researchers have noted some reports of positive interactions with police, usually liaison officers, participants in a number of studies have described feeling distrustful and fearful of the police.

The body of information available about police contacts with young African people in Victoria indicates a policing and governance problem requiring urgent attention. Negative experiences of contact with police have effects that ripple out to the wider community, undermining confidence in police and feelings of safety in the community.

A variety of programs have emerged in Victoria in response to concerns about people from African communities and contact with, or access to the criminal justice system. Overall, programs targeting civic participation, engagement with support services and legal education of African communities have been piecemeal. Some concerns have been raised about strategies that aim to bring young people into closer contact with police. Consultation and evaluation reports have indicated that close cooperation and co-location of program service providers improves

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[2] Victoria Law Foundation Grant Number S12-014. The evaluation research was not funded by this grant.

[3] The Social Studio aims to empower people from emerging migrant and refugee backgrounds to realise their aspirations and potential through social enterprise.

[4] Bec Smith and Shane Reside, "'Boys, you wanna give me some Action?' Interventions into Policing of Racialised Communities in Melbourne," (Melbourne: Fitzroy Legal Service; Western Suburbs Legal Service Inc; Springvale Monash Legal Service Inc, 2010), 7.

[5] Zrinjka Dolic, "Race or Reason? Police Encounters with Young People in the Flemington Region and Surrounding Areas," (Kensington: Flemington and Kensington Community Legal Centre, 2011), 4.

[6] "Rights of Passage: The experiences of Australian-Sudanese young people," (Melbourne: Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, 2008), 30.

[7] "Rights of Passage - Two Years On," (Melbourne: Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, 2010).

rates of program access and participation. The role of individual workers in forging trusting and cooperative relationships can be crucial to the success of programs. However, very few evaluation reports have been conducted.

Pilot program evaluation

Participants in the pilot conflict resolution training program- *A new beginning: resolving conflict peacefully*- overwhelmingly reported that the program was valuable and enjoyable. All of the participants felt that they had directly benefitted from the program by developing or enhancing conflict resolution skills, improved social relationships and greater knowledge of legal rights and obligations. Many participants also reported indirect benefits such as increased confidence and greater awareness of skills and aptitudes.

The pilot program has had a positive impact on participants and this research indicates that the program benefits have been extended throughout participants' networks. Participants reported that they had shared the contents of the program with family and friends and shared and used some of the conflict resolution techniques with their peers.

Key recommendations

❖ The conflict resolution training program- *A new beginning: resolving conflict peacefully*- should be offered to a new cohort of participants at The Social Studio.

❖ Opportunities to offer the program more widely should be investigated.

❖ Flexible delivery models such as intensive delivery or repeated sessions could be piloted.

INTRODUCTION

The Social Studio

The Social Studio opened in Collingwood, Melbourne in 2009. It is a small and diverse organisation that promotes a model of social inclusion and social justice for people from new and emerging communities. The core purpose of The Social Studio is to empower people from emerging migrant and refugee backgrounds to realise their aspirations and potential through social enterprise, particularly fashion, retail and hospitality[8].

The organisation offers a range of responses to the barriers that people from migrant and refugee backgrounds might face, these responses are broadly categorized as education, employment, engagement and inclusion[9]. More specifically, the Studio offers training (linked to accredited educational courses) in the areas of clothing production, retail and hospitality as well as a wide range of social support initiatives and programs. Social support is a broad category that includes financial counseling, legal advice and events management for example. Staff at the Studio work with a wide variety of people: women and men aged from 15 to over 40 and from a number of different birth countries including Sri Lanka, Somalia, Afghanistan and South Sudan.[10]

One of the key strengths of The Social Studio is that it is both proactive and reactive, responding to known and new issues that affect people from new and emerging communities. These issues are identified through the local Collingwood community, friends and members of the Studio, and related organisations. In this way, concerns have emerged about the interactions between young people from new and emerging migrant and refugee communities and Victoria police. Developing a conflict resolution training program to promote positive social interactions generally was compatible with the holistic, sustainable and ethical model of social enterprise that the Studio is founded upon. Increasing awareness of the causes of conflict and strategies to reduce or avoid experiences of conflict was also thought to reduce the likelihood of negative contacts with the police.

The conflict resolution training program- *A new beginning: resolving conflict peacefully-* was re-developed by the Neighbourhood Justice Centre from an existing program[11]. Young people from The Social Studio and practitioners from a variety of organisations were consulted during the development process. The program aimed to address issues about conflict and conflict resolution generally; it did not focus on conflict in criminal justice settings or with criminal justice institutions or professionals specifically. The pilot program was funded by small grants from the Victoria Law Foundation and Eastweb Fund.

This evaluation of the pilot conflict resolution training program- *A new beginning: resolving conflict peacefully-* was conducted for The Social Studio. The broad aims of the evaluation were threefold:

1. Review and report upon the extant literature on newly arrived young people from African countries.

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[8] "Annual Report 2011-2012," (Collingwood, Victoria: The Social Studio, 2012).

[9] "Education and Training," The Social Studio, http://www.thesocialstudio.org/studio/education-training/.

[10] "Annual Report 2011-2012."

[11] The original program 'A new beginning: resolving conflict peacefully' was developed by David Vincent, a member of the African community in Victoria in partnership with Jay Jordens, Neighbourhood Justice Officer at the Collingwood Neighbourhood Justice Centre. For more information see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jWaeRWZgw58

2. Evaluate and report upon the pilot conflict resolution program- *A new beginning: resolving conflict peacefully-* delivered to interested young people involved in The Social Studio.

3. Make recommendations to The Social Studio about the possibility of repeating, developing and/or expanding the program.

Aim 1: Literature review

The literature review task was designed to speak to the anecdotal concerns that had emerged about the interactions between young people from new and emerging communities and Victoria police. Key questions that were asked of the literature included:

➢ What are the types of information and evidence available about young African people and their interactions with police?

➢ What are the key issues that are raised about the interactions between young African people and the police?

➢ Does the available information provide evidence of a 'problem' in these interactions? Does the extant literature support concerns that have been raised locally in The Social Studio?

➢ Does the literature document any previous/current attempts to use conflict resolution programs to address any concerns about interactions between police and young people? What have been the outcomes?

In the Victorian context, there has been some recognition of tensions between police and young people from African backgrounds- particularly Sudanese people. While the Social Studio works with young people from a variety of countries, and indeed the conflict resolution pilot program was open to everyone involved with the Studio, the specific concerns that have been raised about contact with the police have related more closely to young people from (or presumed to be from) African countries. The literature review has therefore focused attention on the available information about police contacts with people from African countries.

Aim 2: Pilot program evaluation

The second task that is documented in this report was a qualitative evaluation of the pilot conflict resolution program- *A new beginning: resolving conflict peacefully-* delivered to interested young people involved in The Social Studio. The four day program was voluntary and participants did not have to meet any criteria to be involved. All were connected to The Social Studio, although in varying ways. Participants were from a number of different countries including Burma, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, Sierra Leone and Somalia and ages ranged from 17 to 32 years old.

Key questions that were asked of the pilot conflict resolution training program included:

➢ Has program participation changed the ways in which participants respond to conflict?

➢ What are the key skills that have been developed through participation on the conflict resolution training program?

➢ Has the program had a positive impact on participants?

➢ Should the program be offered to new participants?

The report

The next section of this report is a comprehensive literature review; it is structured in response to the four questions detailed above. This is followed by a methodology section that describes the

qualitative evaluation design and the evaluation process. Evaluation findings are presented in the penultimate section of the report; the findings are structured in response to the questions detailed above. Finally, in response to the third aim of this evaluation, a series of recommendations are made about the content and delivery of the conflict resolution training program and the future of the program.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Australia's refugee intake of Sudanese and Somali refugees peaked during the mid 2000s. Since then the Victorian media has been responsible for some very negative portrayals of African, in particular Sudanese and Somali, people.[12] However, while community legal figures and progressive political commentators have criticised Victoria Police for perpetuating harmful stereotypes of African people,[13] many members of the African community have also been quoted voicing their concerns about the experiences and prospects of disenfranchised young people in their communities.[14] Around Australia, young African people have reported ongoing issues with discrimination in many areas of their lives.[15] This literature review primarily focuses on research about experiences with police and notes programmatic responses relevant to that governance sphere in Victoria.[16]

Sources of information

Current research into experiences of African young people's contact with Victoria Police falls into four main categories. In the first category are community sector reports that tend to be more 'activist' than academic or policy oriented. In the second category are government-centred reports from State and Commonwealth advocacy and accountability organisations including the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) and the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC). These two categories have had the most significant impact on public discussions in the last three years. The third category is a small but emerging field of research by members of the African-Australian community. Finally, there is an academic and policy field of research, much of which remains in the proposal, research or writing up stages. This review of the literature identifies key reports and then presents a summary of findings and the main issues that have been raised.

Community sector reports

Three key community sector reports that have documented and responded to the sector's concerns around police-young people contact are the Flemington and Kensington Community Legal Centre (FKCLC) 2011 Report, 'Race or Reason? Police Encounters with Young People in the Flemington Region and Surrounding Areas' (Race or Reason); 'Boys, You Wanna Give Me Some Action?' (the Boys Report) for the Springvale Monash, Fitzroy and Western Suburbs Legal Services published in 2010; and Moonee Valley City Council's 'Creating a Better City for Young People' (the Duff report) published in December 2006. These reports are framed as responses to

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[12] Sophie Black, "The latest hot button issue: scary Sudanese people," (2007), http://www.crikey.com.au/2007/02/21/the-latest-hot-button-issue-scary-sudanese-people/; Joel Windle, "The Racialisation of African Youth in Australia," *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* 14, no. 5 (2008); Kot Monoah, "The 'Sudanese Brawls'," *The Gazelle* (2011), http://ausudmediaproject.wordpress.com/2011/05/23/the-alleged-sudanese-brawls-media-hype-or-a-hate-steer-mongering-by-the-media/; V. Colic-Peisker and F. Tilbury, "Being Black in Australia: a case study of intergroup relations," *Race and Class* 49, no. 4 (2008).

[13] Eg. Tamar Hopkins, "How to Beat Up Sudanese Crime Stats," (2012), http://newmatilda.com/2012/08/23/how-beat-sudanese-crime-stats; Eve Vincent, "Learning from Liep Gony's Murder," *New Matilda* (2010), http://newmatilda.com/2010/04/24.learning-liep-gonys-murder.

[14] Eg. Denise Ryan, "Warning of UK-style riots in alienated pockets of Melbourne," *The Age*, 17 May 2012; Richard Kerbaj, "Warning on African refugee gangs," *The Australian*, 26 December 2006.

[15] "In our own words: African Australians: A review of human rights and social inclusion issues," (Sydney: Australian Human Rights Commission, 2010).

[16] For a more general literature review see Anne Wayne Reiner, "Literature Review: Background paper for African Australians: a review of human rights and social inclusion issues," (Sydney, NSW: Australian Human Rights Commission, 2010).

the complaints and demands of African communities in the area.[17] For example FKCLC commissioned the Race or Reason report in 2009 after Centre statistics showed that of 60 complaints about local police behaviour between 2007 and 2009, 40 were made by African-born young people.[18]

The methods and scope of these three key community sector research projects and other reports represent snap shots of experience but do not include large scale quantitative research that assert that the experiences discussed are representative of *most* young African background people's experiences. On the other hand, it is not necessary to prove that respondents' experiences are typical to note that these reports are indicative of a policing and governance problem requiring urgent attention.

Two of the three key community sector reports have drawn primarily on qualitative surveys and interviews with young people, and some community workers. The Boys Report was produced by community development workers, working out of a number of community legal centres. They interviewed 8 community workers, 30 young people and 1 police officer, across the city of Greater Dandenong, Flemington and Braybrook. The Boys Report focused on young people-police conflict and the goals and effects of current community policing activities.[19] The Duff report, compiled and coordinated by Moonee Valley City Council youth worker Anna Duff surveyed 93 young people, aged between 11 and 20 from Flemington, Ascot Vale and parts of Kensington and North Melbourne about quality of life issues and found that experiences with policing emerged as a key theme.

Conversely, the Race or Reason project was based on quantitative analysis of experiences with police. This study collected survey data from 151 people aged 15-24, including 65 respondents of African descent in Flemington and Kensington and 'surrounding suburbs'.

Government-centred reports

Both the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) report (In Our Own Words, 2010) and the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) report (Rights of Passage, 2008) were framed in terms of 'giving voice' to African-Australian and Sudanese communities and found that policing emerged among those issues at the forefront of communities' concerns.[20] The VEOHRC report was initiated in 2008 (shortly after the death of Noble Park teenager, Liep Gony)[21], and followed up in 2010.[22] The initial research process involved 30 group consultations and 200 individual interviews over a period of a few months while the follow up study involved four consultations attended by 45 young Australian-Sudanese people and separate consultation with community leaders from the Sudanese Community Association of Australia. The AHRC report, 'In Our Own Words' was published in 2010 following a comprehensive 3 year research consultation. Besides raising similar issues around policing in Victoria the AHRC report it is significant for putting these in the context of similar issues for African Australians in other states.[23]

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[17] We note also the Footscray Community Legal Centre Publication, 'Out of Africa and Into Court' which identifies a whole raft of common legal issues experienced by the local African community. Contact with the criminal justice system among African youths is not identified in that report as the most significant legal problem faced by the community.

[18] Dolic, "Race or Reason? Police Encounters with Young People in the Flemington Region and Surrounding Areas," 4.

[19] Reside, "'Boys you wanna give me some action?'," 7.

[20] "Rights of Passage: The experiences of Australian-Sudanese young people," 30.

[21] Norrie Ross, "'Vicious thug who bashed Liep Gony to death with pole loses appeal'," *Herald Sun*, 23 August 2011; Vincent, "Learning from Liep Gony's Murder".

[22] "Rights of Passage - Two Years On."

[23] "In our own words: African Australians: A review of human rights and social inclusion issues," 29.

Another advocacy category report spanning New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and Queensland, 'Young people and Mentoring: the case of Horn of Africa young people' identified perceptions of and/or experiences of discriminatory policing among the challenges to social inclusion facing young people from the Horn of Africa.[24] This research drew on focus groups and consultations across the east coast states and the ACT.

The recently published Office of Police Integrity (OPI) report[25] on the use of stop and search powers is significant since this is an area of conflict repeatedly raised in other reports discussed here. However, this report raises more questions than it answers, suggesting that further research into both young people and police experiences of stop and searches are required.[26]

A final government-centred report, the Multi-cultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN) briefing paper published in November 2011 serves to underline that young people's issues around policing need to be understood in relation to a constellation of other issues affecting their lives. In this report state-based focus groups rated police and legal issues ninth in a list of 14 concerns.[27] 'Racism and discrimination' was rated sixth. The top two issues were 'Education and training' and 'housing and homelessness'. As many have pointed out, these issues are rarely unrelated.

African-Australian community reports
In the emerging category of literature by members of the African-Australian community, concerns about policing have tended to arise in relation to other issues, especially with respect to health outcomes for African communities. One example is a 2008 conference paper presented by then Monash PhD candidate N Wa Mungai.[28] In this paper Mungai, presented findings based on interviews with 29 young men, 10 service providers and 2 focus groups with young men and fathers of young men. While the larger project was concerned with the health impacts of experiences of discrimination this paper qualitatively documents experiences of discrimination.

An earlier example of this approach is a 2000 article 'Refugees Encounter the Legal Justice System in Australia'.[29] This article is structured around a case study involving a negative police interaction that triggered major depressive symptoms and post-traumatic stress disorder in a person with a background of abuse by police in his Horn of African country of origin. Psychologist Deljo concludes, refugees are 'more likely to accept and endure police abuse, less likely to complain about the police and more likely to be severely harmed by police violence.'[30]

While the field of work by African authors is described here as 'emerging' on the basis that this work has seen considerably less exposure through official publishing channels, this is not intended to minimise the work emanating from the Melbourne based African Think Tank Inc, and publications that foreshadow the existing issues such as the 1999 title, 'The Africans in

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[24] Megan Griffiths Pooja Sawrikar, Kristy Muir, "Culturually and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Young people and Mentoring: the case of Horn of Africa young people," (Canberra: National Youth Affairs Research Scheme (NYARS), 2008), Chapter 6.
[25] "Review of Victoria Police use of 'stop and search' powers," (Melbourne: Office of Police Integrity, 2012).
[26] Ibid., 29, 34.
[27] Pooja Sawrikar, "Culturually and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Young people and Mentoring: the case of Horn of Africa young people," 17.
[28] N Wa Mungai, "Young Southern Sudanese men's experience of racism in Melbourne," in *African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific 31st Conference: Building a Common Future – Africa and Australasia* (Melbourne2008).
[29] Azita Khademy Deljo, "Refugees Encounter the Legal Justice System in Australia: A Case Study," *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law* 7, no. 1 (2000).
[30] Ibid., 252.

Australia: expectations and shattered dreams'.[31] Chair of the African Think Tank, Dr Berhan Ahmed is a senior researcher in Forest and Ecosystem science at the University of Melbourne, but has also spoken frequently in the media,[32] at forums[33] and conferences[34] about the social issues facing African communities in Australia. It is not been possible to locate any published refereed papers from these presentations.

Academic research

The most relevant university-based work is a project entitled 'Agencies, Advocates and officers: the social surrounds of Australian-African communities in Victoria'. This work was conducted in collaboration with Victoria Police and focused on the Flemington and Kensington area. The final research findings remain unpublished. However, co-author Bull discussed the project in some detail in a 2010 journal article.[35] The researchers recruited 20 Victoria Police officers and 20 representatives of local community-focused organisations and agencies and sought to map the networks of services and supports around the African-Australian community in Flemington.[36]

A second relevant local study is 'Don't go there: Young People's Perspectives on Community Safety and Policing' published in May 2010.[37] This study, also a collaborative project with Victoria Police, asked two questions particularly pertinent to this report:

- 'What do young people think about police in their local area and how can relationships between young people and police be improved' and;
- 'How can young people and police work together in improving community safety in the Brimbank area?'[38]

Five hundred young people in the Brimbank area were surveyed while an additional 44 participants of Sudanese and Pacific Islander background and a group of 14 drawn from the Brimbank 'general population' participated in focus groups specifically about youth-police consultation mechanisms.[39]

Consistent with the Human Rights Commission observation of similar issues across Australia, there are multiple interstate academic research projects that deal with African communities' experiences with police. Two significant studies are an ARC funded project 'A Conversation on Trust' focused on the relationship between African refugee arrivals and police, using regional Tasmania as a case study[40] and a large Queensland project focused on the experiences of Sudanese refugees with the Queensland criminal justice system in Brisbane, Logan City, Toowoomba and Townsville.[41] 'A conversation on Trust' used both individual interviews and

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[31] Lawrence T Udo-Ekpo, *The Africans in Australia: expectations and shattered dreams* (Henley Beach, South Australia: Seaview Press, 1999).

[32] For example Shane Green, "Africans having to fight against 'history of failure on blackness'," *The Age*, 27 April 2011.

[33] "Maximizing the potential of African-Australian Youth: A Community Model to bolster health and legal support," (African Think Tank, 2009).

[34] Berhan Ahmed, "Report of the African-Australian Community's Initiative Workshop on Issues Affecting the Resettlement of Africans," in *African resettlement in Australia* (Melbourne University, Victoria2007).

[35] Melissa Bull, "Working with Others to Build Cooperation, Confidence and Trust," *Policing* 4, no. 3 (2010).

[36] Ibid., 283.

[37] Michele Grossman and Jenny Sharples, "Don't Go There: Young people's perspectives on community safety and policing," (Melbourne: Victoria University; Victoria Police Region 2 (Westgate), 2010).

[38] Ibid., 56.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Danielle Campbell and Roberta Julian, "A conversation on trust: Community Policing and Refugee Settlement in Regional Australia," (Hobart: Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies, 2009).

[41] Private correspondence with Darren Palmer.

focus groups and organised its findings according to factors identified for 'enabling relationships' between police and refugees from the perspectives of each group. The Queensland study remains forthcoming but involved four stages of analysis, including a nation-wide review of media coverage touching on Sudanese people's experiences in Australia, focus groups and interviews with Queensland Police Service members, a quantitative survey of 390 Sudanese Queenslanders and finally 8 follow up focus groups with Sudanese Queenslanders.[42]

Some further important research, based on analysis of Victoria Police database (LEAP) records was tendered as part of the racial discrimination case, *Haile-Michael and Others v Commissioner of Police and Others* brought in the Supreme Court in Melbourne and settled in February 2013. At the time of writing these reports were not yet publicly available, although the general findings were reported in media coverage of the case and in media releases from the legal team. As part of the terms of settlement Victoria Police have agreed to conduct two inquiries; into police field contacts with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) young people and into police 'multicultural' training. The scope and findings from these inquiries will be relevant to future literature reviews and research.

Key issues

Overall, the Victorian studies discussed above have tended to focus on suburbs in the inner to outer West of Melbourne and in the greater Dandenong region where African migrant settlement has been concentrated. The research findings indicate that young African-background people, in particular men and boys, are vulnerable to frequent interactions with police in which they have limited ability to enforce legal entitlements or control how contact scenarios play out. This key issues section primarily draws on the Duff report, Race or Reason, the Boys Report, In our own words, the two Rights of Passage reports, Don't Go There and Mungai's conference paper as these have provided the most focused data about experiences with police contact in the Melbourne area.

Issue 1: Frequent stops by police and feeling unsafe in public

Young African-background people reported that police stopped them frequently and this corresponded to feelings of unease in public spaces. Being stopped and/or hassled by police in public was raised in every report canvassed.[43] For example in the Race or Reason report 66.6% (n14) of the young African-born men reported being stopped in the previous 30 days, compared to 35.3% (n6) of non-African male respondents.[44] Of the African-born respondents, 30% (n19) responded 'not at all' to a question about feeling confident to walk down the street without worrying about being stopped by police. Only 1.8% (n 1) Australian-born respondent answered in this way.[45]

Professor Gordon's report for the *Haile-Michael* case confirmed this pattern.[46] Gordon's analysis based on police records indicated that of the young men stopped by police in Flemington and North Melbourne, 43% were of African background. In contrast, African-background young men make up only 18% of the total number of young men living in North Melbourne and Flemington. Gordon found that this pattern of disproportionate stopping of African-background

[42] Ibid.

[43] Eg. Sharples, "Don't Go There: Young people's perspectives on community safety and policing," 139; "Rights of Passage: The experiences of Australian-Sudanese young people," 32.

[44] Dolic, "Race or Reason? Police Encounters with Young People in the Flemington Region and Surrounding Areas," 22.

[45] Ibid., 35.

[46] "Daniel Haile-Michael & Ors v Nick Konstantinidis & Ors VID 969 of 2010," in *Summary of Professor Gordon's and Dr Henstridge's First Reports* (Melbourne2013).

young men could not be explained by reference to police targeting of known offenders. Whereas African-background young men had accrued an average offence rate of 7.8, other males of the same age in the area had an average offence rate of 12.3. Finally, police records showed that officers were more likely to record comments using specific phrases including 'gang', 'no reason', 'nil reason', 'move on' and 'negative attitude' from field contacts with African-background young men. This confirmed that in many cases police associated negative stereotypes (such as gang behaviour and 'bad attitudes') with African-background young men but did not have grounds to suspect wrongdoing.

Quotations from the Duff report illustrate some reasons that participants gave for feeling unsafe in public and also indicate the potential for anti-Muslim sentiment to coincide with negative ideas around 'black' and 'African' people:

> Cops stop us all the time and drive on [the basketball] court when we [are] playing (man from Sudanese background, 16, Flemington).[47]

> Been pulled off my bike and harassed cos I'm Muslim. Everyday pulled over and questioned (man from Somali and Ethiopian background, 14, North Melbourne).[48]

> …[E]veryone stares because I'm black and [they] think I'm bad (man from Somali background, 20, Kensington).[49]

> …[Tram] inspectors always walk to the African kids first (man from Somali background, 17, Kensington).[50]

> Got spat on and told to go back to my own country. Just want to live somewhere else. I hate it here (woman from Sudanese background, 16, Flemington).

In multiple reports participants suggested that they were vulnerable to police stops while driving. For example:

> Being stopped randomly by police, you try to go somewhere and you get stopped four or five times in one hour and you haven't done anything. You know, they say, 'Oh random breath test'. Or they just want to check what you have in your car or what you have in your trunk. Asking those kind of stupid questions, you know. You can't go anywhere without [being] worried that you are going to get stopped for something … they see there is someone black in the car and they flash their lights at you.[51]

This kind of experience contains echoes of the documented issue of police profiling of black and Hispanic drivers in the United States.[52]

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[47] Anna Duff, "Creating a Better City for Young People: The needs of young people living in Flemington, North Melbourne, Kensington and Ascot Vale," (Melbourne: Moonee Valley City Council, 2006), 10.
[48] Ibid., 12.
[49] Ibid., 11.
[50] Ibid., 12.
[51] Mungai, "Young Southern Sudanese men's experience of racism in Melbourne."
[52] Richard J Lundman Brian R Kowalski, "Vehicle stops by police for driving while Black: common problems and some tentative solutions," *Journal of Criminal Justice* 35(2007); James Warren, "Driving While Black," *The Atlantic* (2009).

While police and media coverage have tended to talk about large groups of boys walking together as evidence of threatening gang behaviour,[53] one young participant in the Rights of Passage Report, explicitly challenged that logic and explained that he felt safer in a group:

> What's up with them when we hang together as a group. You don't call that a gang, you call that a family man. We [are] a family, we [are] cousins. You walk together, man. You walk by yourself you get murdered. You know, it's just not good. They just like to pick on us. And then they like to call us stuff, like 'gang', but we [are] not [a] gang, you know we like to hang around with each other, because if you hang out on your own … some shit [is going to] happen, you know, like what happened to my friend [Liep Gony], he was hanging around by himself and they just jumped him and stuff.[54]

The same issue remained prevalent in follow up consultations:

> They call us gangs but we're not gangs…some Sudanese, they've got like four, five, six kids … when they hang around, the community call us gangs but we're not, we just hang around together.[55]

The allegation of gang behaviour is symptomatic of a contest of acceptable uses of public spaces and suggests efforts to address allegations of excessive contact between African young people and the criminal justice system will require more than community legal education and adaptation on the part of African background people in Australia. As one participant in Mungai's report argued:

> [Y]eah, incidents happen. People will just stop a group of Sudanese youth and ask them questions. … They [police] see a group of Sudanese together and they think they are a gang. In Sudan we all walk in a group, it is a cultural thing. We walk in a group and this is how we socialize together. In Australia it is different, that is one thing people really have to understand here. Seeing it is a multicultural country, they have to let people stay the way they are.[56]

Issue 2: Interactions with the police

The nature of reported police interactions with African-Australian respondents was frequently aggressive and resulted in negative outcomes for the young person. In the Race or Reason report young African-background men were most likely to report police uses of physical force, threats to use physical force and verbal insults 23.8% (n5) compared to 11.8% (n2) of non-African male respondents.[57] They were also more likely to receive charges or infringements as a result of police contact. Twenty percent reported receiving a summons or infringement, fifteen percent for minor offences, whereas no Australian-born males received summons or charges.[58] This statistic is concerning because it may indicate that young African background people are not receiving the benefits of police discretion to issue cautions or recommend offenders for diversion processes

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[53] Eg. Kerbaj, "Warning on African refugee gangs."; Nino Bucci, "How the 'gangs' of Melbourne have moved police and community groups to search for answers," *The Age*, 18 August 2012.

[54] "Rights of Passage: The experiences of Australian-Sudanese young people," 32.

[55] "Rights of Passage - Two Years On," 12.

[56] Mungai, "Young Southern Sudanese men's experience of racism in Melbourne," 6.

[57] Dolic, "Race or Reason? Police Encounters with Young People in the Flemington Region and Surrounding Areas," 25.

[58] Ibid., 25-26.

that are designed to give people a second chance to avoid accruing a criminal record. This is a proven issue with respect to young Aboriginal people in Victoria.[59]

Multiple anecdotes across the recent reports document concerns about police aggression, including apparently coordinated instances of police violence, excessive and inappropriate uses of capsicum spray and difficulty making complaints about police behaviour.

One of the most controversial and concerning incidents alleged in the Boys report concerns extra-legal violence and coercion by off-duty, out of uniform officers. This incident was described by two different young African participants and a youth worker.[60] In summary, a group of young people were approached by uniformed officers and told to leave the local park by a certain time, warning that they would be back to check at the allotted time. At that time, two officers returned and approached the group. Some young men decided to run from the officers. Others remained seated until one of the officers began to run toward the group with his baton drawn. At this point the group all began to run towards what looked like a group of 'civilians'. However, these 'civilians' turned out to be officers, either completely out of uniform or with their police shirts removed so they were wearing only white singlets. When the group of young African men realized the 'civilians' were actually out-of-uniform officers they ran in a different directions. One out-of-uniform officer grabbed and physically assaulted a 14 year old member of the group. This incident suggests that some officers have acted in an organised way, apparently motivated by a desire to punish or 'teach a lesson' to young people apparently flouting police directions.

Two reports raise concerns about excessive and inappropriate uses of capsicum spray (also called 'OC spray'). One young person speaking to the 2010 'Rights of Passage' consultation suggested experiences of multiple instances of being sprayed:

> I want to talk about how they use capsicum spray – you're going home, they ask for your name, they start swearing at you, you swear back, they're holding capsicum spray, already a minute later you're being pepper sprayed.[61]

A serious capsicum spray incident is also recorded in the 2010-2011 annual Office of Police Integrity (OPI) report.[62] In this case, a report of theft of potato crisps to the value of $10.65 by a person described as 'male, 20 years old, dark black skin' from a service station resulted in an initial police deployment of four officers, directly to nearby residential home. Acting on the description above, police deployed capsicum spray into a small, enclosed bungalow affecting four young people aged 15-18. Ten minutes after the initial notification of the theft, police radioed for back up, reporting 'four sprayed'. Two more vans then attended, bringing total police attendance to 8 officers. A very short time later a young man from inside the house called for an ambulance saying that his brother had 'passed out' and two paramedics subsequently attended. The OPI described this incident as a potential example of racialised 'over-policing' and a human rights abuse but noted there had been no response or indication of disciplinary action taken by Victoria Police in relation to the OPI investigation.[63]

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[59] The Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service conducted a pilot program designed to increase rates of cautioning in 2005 and 2006. Personal communication with Nicole Bluett-Boyd, project worker.
[60] Reside, "'Boys you wanna give me some action?'," 15.
[61] "Rights of Passage - Two Years On," 16.
[62] "Annual Report 2010-2011," (Melbourne: Office of Police Integrity, 2011), 31-32.
[63] Ibid., 32.

Youth workers interviewed for the Boys Report confirmed that they had witnessed provocative and unprofessional behaviour by police and that this impacted their ability to conduct community legal education or facilitate positive attitudes to police. For example:

> If you're in a place of authority you must be behaving appropriately … But I'm not sure if that's in the job description of a police officer? … You know they talk about integrity and all of those things and yet they're out there winding kids up. And they're not all out there winding kids up, I've just got an issue with the ones that do. … I know police that look me in the eye and they can be so polite…and then you get them out on the street and they're like [to the young person] 'Oh what are ya gonna do now? Call [the youth worker]? Go on…' It's so two-faced that I find it very hard to set a positive thing for the kids … I can't go to them and say 'the police are doing their best' and set the kids up to walk straight into another mess.[64]

Social and community worker experiences corroborate young African-background people's allegations of problem police behaviour and indicate that even a minority of young people experiencing conflict with police or a minority of police officers acting inappropriately seriously undermines community policing endeavours designed to facilitate trust and engagement.

Issue 3: Expectations of police, understanding police behaviour
Young research participants presented as actively trying to understand police behaviour, in particular the discrepancies between their experiences and their observations of others' contact with police. The following are two examples from the Boys Report:

> [T]hey [police] wanna prove their dominance over the youth, you know, so that when they grow up they won't act up and stuff. So they try and come and show who's the boss.[65]

> 'I think they just hate black kids … they take advantage cos they think we're kids and we don't know our rights. … [the police think] 'We're just gonna hit 'em.'[66]

The following anecdote from a young person's encounter with a police officer at the local McDonalds demonstrates the young person's attempts to make sense of police behaviour as well as a familiarity between the young person and police officer that indicates frequent contact:[67]

> I asked him, 'Hey [X] what are you doing?' He goes, 'Oh nothing. I'm feeling bored…Boys you wanna give me some action?' You know, 'Commit a crime.' I'm like, 'Are you okay?' … 'Are you joking?' He goes, 'Nah'. He goes, 'Youse run, I'll chase you, we'll do the usual.' And he was joking around…I understand that, but like for a second there I thought, 'oh this guy's dead serious', ya know, he wants something to go down today, they just do it for the thrill of it. They don't do it because they're doing their jobs, ya know. It has nothing to do with their job. For them it's just 'oh we're bored, let's go bash a coupla kids'.

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[64] Reside, "'Boys you wanna give me some action?'," 14.
[65] Ibid., 11.
[66] Ibid., 16.
[67] Ibid., 14.

Numerous anecdotes, including the first capsicum spray quote above suggest that young African background people expect police to target them and they feel that police want to provoke a response from them:

> Yeah, cops do try to intimidate you and try to get you pissed off, try to make you do something ya know so they could charge you…they will bash you if they have to you know. Like they'll bash the crap out of you and if you throw a punch back you know you're gone, there's an assault of a police officer, ya know.[68]

Gender as well as race emerged as a significant variable in the Race or Reason report, where young women were less likely to report first hand contact with police but just as likely to describe negative expectations of police contact by reference to other people in their communities' negative experiences with police.[69] Similarly, two young female participants in the Duff report identified police behaviour as something that made them feel unsafe:

> The police bashing people all the time. Every day they [are] at the flats picking on the boys.[70]

> …[a]t night it's not safe. The police scare me.[71]

There appears to be a consensus that young African women do experience transitional issues in Australia. However young African men tend to be much more visible and therefore vulnerable to conflict with police and other members of the public since they are more likely to gather in public places.[72] In addition there appears to have been a greater disruption to the traditional cultural roles of African-background men which results in dislocation from traditional community supports and difficulties related to adjusting to Australian social, cultural and legal expectations.[73] Further research into the gendered dimensions of young African people's experiences with police may be warranted in light of research that identifies young women, and especially young Aboriginal women, as one of the fastest growing cohorts in the criminal justice system.[74]

Issue 4: Perceptions of racism, feeling stereotyped
A significant theme in young African-background people's stories was feeling that police (and other people) treated them badly because they were black or Muslim. In fact, a significant majority of the Race or Reason respondents, including non-African participants, agreed that police were influenced by a person's race or religion when dealing with members of the public (37.1% n56 'somewhat' and 24.5%, n37 'strongly'). African-born respondents were the most likely to 'strongly agree' (34.4%, n22).[75]

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[68] Ibid.
[69] Dolic, "Race or Reason? Police Encounters with Young People in the Flemington Region and Surrounding Areas," 52-54.
[70] Woman from Somali background, age 16, Flemington: Duff, "Creating a Better City for Young People: The needs of young people living in Flemington, North Melbourne, Kensington and Ascot Vale," 9.
[71] Woman from Sudanese background, 17, Flemington, ibid.
[72] Malcolm Turnbull and Helen Stokes, "Evaluation of the Brimbank Young Men's Project," (Melbourne: Centre for Multicultural Youth, Youth Research Centre, University of Melbourne, 2011), 18.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Chris Cunneen, "Fear: Crime and Punishment," *Dialogue* 29, no. 2 (2010).
[75] Dolic, "Race or Reason? Police Encounters with Young People in the Flemington Region and Surrounding Areas," 38.

Almost half (47.6%, n10) of the African-born male respondents in the Race or Reason report strongly felt that they were stopped by police because of their race[76] and most (73.2% n14) African-born respondents felt that they were treated more harshly than other people by police (compared to 42.6%, n26 of Australian-born respondents).[77] Some respondents explained their most recent contact with police saying, 'because I'm Congolese black African'; 'I am coloured skin – nothing more to say'; 'they [police] come to black people every time something happens'.[78]

Participants in the VHEORC report talked about being treated with an assumption of criminality and participants described antagonistic behaviour from police that including racist name-calling.[79] 'Don't Go There' participants also felt that police unfairly assumed they were trouble makers or in a 'gang' if they wore hip hop style clothes and 'hung out' in public.[80] These issues were also raised in the national AHRC consultation 'In Our Own Words'.[81]

It was common for participants to point out that they saw different standards being applied. For example:

> The most people who get arrested would be at Noble Park. Why? … Because we hang around there, drinking. If you go…[to] Fountain Gate…you will see a lot of white people drinking, doing whatever, smoking and everything. The cops will come and won't do anything. They will just look at them and then walk off. And when the cops come to Noble Park and they see the way we are dressed…they think we are smoking and drinking and after that we will go and start fighting and kill somebody out there. So after that they will come and start asking us where we are going, what we are doing and why we are doing that…And then after that one of them might come and hit someone.[82]

Sudanese background people appear to have a particularly fraught relationship with police. In 'Don't Go There', Sudanese participants specifically complained that Sudanese people are blamed for criminal behaviour more than other African ethnic groups and that Police are unresponsive to Sudanese people who call for help or are the victim/s in a cross-ethnic dispute.[83] This finding is consistent with the survey results from the Queensland study in which 68% (of 390 respondents) felt that Sudanese people were more likely to be suspected of criminal behaviour than other African migrants and refugees.[84] In the AHCR, 'In Our Own Words' report, a Victorian participant explained their impression that Victoria Police's lack of cultural knowledge added to friction:

> It really bothers me that police think all Sudanese people are the same and they all speak the same language…Sudanese. Well there is no Sudanese and ethnic and cultural differences between us are actually really big. Dinkas are different to the Nuer who are different again to the Bari or the Chollo. A bit more of an understanding of that might mean that they don't end up aggravating something or adding to a tension that might be there.[85]

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[76] Ibid., 40-41.
[77] Ibid., 30.
[78] Ibid., 31.
[79] "Rights of Passage: The experiences of Australian-Sudanese young people," 31-33.
[80] Sharples, "Don't Go There: Young people's perspectives on community safety and policing," 131.
[81] "In our own words: African Australians: A review of human rights and social inclusion issues," 29, 157-60.
[82] Mungai, "Young Southern Sudanese men's experience of racism in Melbourne," 7.
[83] Sharples, "Don't Go There: Young people's perspectives on community safety and policing," 139-42.
[84] Personal communication with Darren Palmer.
[85] "In our own words: African Australians: A review of human rights and social inclusion issues," 172.

Another significant complaint articulated by Sudanese participants in the 'Don't Go There' focus groups was that police assumed they would be 'hardened to violence' because of histories of conflict in their country of origin.[86] This is in fact consistent with statements from police leadership and media reporting. A relatively benign example is Child Safety Commissioner Bernie Geary who said of young African-background people in youth justice facilities or prison:

> We need to connect them with education. Some have a predetermined concept of police because of previous trauma.[87]

Much more explicitly associating young Horn of Africa people with war and violence is the following quote from police Commissioner Ken Lay:

> Some of them come from some horrible, horrible war-ravaged areas...Clearly coming from the horn of Africa, it has been ravaged by war for generations and the youngsters coming out of there have known little else and it does take them a long time to transition.[88]

Despite Lay and Geary's apparent appeal for patience and empathy with the situation of people who may have experienced war time violence, the experience of the 'Don't Go There' participants suggest that this kind of rhetoric may also be used to justify harsher and less sympathetic responses to young Sudanese people experiencing violent conflict with police or others in Australia since they may be assumed to be 'hardened' or predisposed to violence and conflict.

Issue 5: Making complaints and police accountability mechanisms
Perceptions of vilification and victimization perpetuated by police results in a lack of confidence in police and an unwillingness to report instances where African background people may be the victims of crime. One respondent to 'In Our Own Words' reported:

> I have had people in my community get attacked but they went to the police station and were asked what they did to provoke it. Why would I go and get that sort of treatment?[89]

Another aspect of this anecdote is the role that word of mouth plays in shaping individuals' expectations of Police. It may only require one negative interaction with a police officer or for a friend or family member to report a negative experience, to undermine trust in the police.

Where research participants have attempted to assert legal rights or to engage police accountability mechanisms they report limited success. Many participants described an escalation of police aggression when they attempted to assert legal entitlements, for example by asking police officers to provide identification during an arbitrary stop.[90] Participants also reported difficulty or reluctance to report alleged instances of police misbehaviour.[91] It appears to be

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[86] Sharples, "Don't Go There: Young people's perspectives on community safety and policing," 139.
[87] Cited in Ryan, "Warning of UK-style riots in alienated pockets of Melbourne."
[88] Megan Levy, "Sudanese brawls were expected," *The Age*, 27 April 2011.
[89] "In our own words: African Australians: A review of human rights and social inclusion issues," 30.
[90] "Rights of Passage: The experiences of Australian-Sudanese young people," 32.
[91] Ibid., 36.

relatively well-accepted within the community legal sector at least,[92] that making a police complaint can be a fraught process. For example, the Boys report alleges a pattern of 'cover charges'[93] being laid in the wake of a complaint.[94]

Issue 6: Erosion of community trust

Young people reported a number of consequences that were associated with increased contact with police, including damage to their reputation with other members of their communities. This is consistent with the wariness of police contact expressed by a participant in the Boys report who explained:[95]

> It's just with the African community thinking you're a criminal or a convict or something you know? That's why most kids don't want to give their names and then they don't want to even be seen with cops. Cos anybody can drive by any time and see you talking to the police, and they'll be like, 'Oh yeah, this guy's talking to the police, he must've done something wrong.[96]

Some participants in the Duff report also described feeling alienated from their own communities.

> The elders of [our] community look at us like we [are] trouble makers (man from Somali background, 17, Flemington);

> Older people don't care. [They] think we are trouble (man from Somali background, 16, Flemington).[97]

Issue 7: Emotional and health impacts of policing practices

Participants reported significant emotional distress around their experiences of feeling racially profiled. African-born male respondents in Race or Reason reported feeling 'scared', 'angry', 'targeted', 'small and dumb' and 'cruelly treated';[98] Mungai argues:

> Stress and subsequent health problems is one outcome of discrimination. The other potential outcome is alienation from the hostile society. This can lead to anti-social behaviour and a chain reaction of greater rejection and discrimination that the indigenous communities in this country know of too well.[99]

Polarization and feelings of disenfranchisement are certainly evident in the following participant quote from the Boys Report:

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[92] See for example "Complaints Against Victoria Police," *The Law Handbook* (Melbourne, Victoria: Fitzroy Legal Service, 2013), http://www.lawhandbook.org.au/fact_sheets/ch35.php.

[93] This refers to charges issued retrospectively to justify the alleged police behaviour. For example, where the complaint was about an unlawful police stop or imprisonment, issuing charges at all might help to suggest that police had an initial reason to stop the young person.

[94] Reside, "'Boys you wanna give me some action?'," 17.

[95] Ibid., 12.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Duff, "Creating a Better City for Young People: The needs of young people living in Flemington, North Melbourne, Kensington and Ascot Vale," 14.

[98] Dolic, "Race or Reason? Police Encounters with Young People in the Flemington Region and Surrounding Areas," 28-29.

[99] Mungai, "Young Southern Sudanese men's experience of racism in Melbourne."

> Young Africans ya know, they chuck rocks [at police]. Why shouldn't they? I could give a hundred reasons why they should. Youse bash us, youse get away with it. We touch youse we get charged. That's the main thing, the law's always gonna be on your side.[100]

Mungai also refers to Ubuntu philosophy to explain why experiences of discrimination would be particularly hurtful for young Sudanese men:

> We are people through other people, meaning that African people realise their potential through being connected to other people rather than just individual achievements.[101]

It is not clear how many young people in Victoria do subscribe culturally to Ubuntu philosophy. However, if young people have been raised to understand their value as people in terms of their place in and connections to their communities, feeling singled out and/or assumed to be criminal will certainly undermine these young people's sense of well-being.

In addition to the immediate emotional consequences described by participants feeling stereotyped and the erosion of trust between police and African community members and between young people and their elders will have far reaching impacts on the wellbeing of the whole of African communities.

Issue 8: Community policing – different perspectives

A controversial and significant part of the Smith and Reside report is their criticism of 'community policing,' a term broadly used to refer to a policing strategy that focuses on developing relationships with the community to facilitate trust in and cooperation with police. This contrasts with the underlying assumption in most academic and policy research that community policing is desirable, if not adequately realized to date.[102] Smith and Reside base their criticisms on the testimonies of participants who described: being hassled by police who knew them by name from participation in community policing activities;[103] charges being laid with respect to an incident that occurred during a community policing activity;[104] and police refusal to engage with kids they identified as 'bad'[105] or community organisations they identified as overly critical of Victoria Police.[106] Participants in community policing programs also suggested that their views were not part of the 'community policing' agenda:[107]

> Participant 13: Ya it [the program] was good, but ya didn't get asked, didn't get to put our opinion, what we know, because we do go to party, we do see what goes on, we do get pulled up by police…

> Participant 12: They didn't get [a] chance to express the negative side.

> Participant 13: We do get pulled up by police and … sometimes they treat us bad.

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[100] Reside, "'Boys you wanna give me some action?'," 30.
[101] Mungai, "Young Southern Sudanese men's experience of racism in Melbourne," 13.
[102] See eg. Bull, "Working with Others to Build Cooperation, Confidence and Trust."; Sharples, "Don't Go There: Young people's perspectives on community safety and policing."; "Rights of Passage: The experiences of Australian-Sudanese young people."; Julian, "A conversation on trust: Community Policing and Refugee Settlement in Regional Australia."
[103] Reside, "'Boys you wanna give me some action?'," 25.
[104] Ibid., 26.
[105] Ibid., 27-28.
[106] Ibid., 26.
[107] Ibid., 24.

This view was also shared by a community worker participant in the Boys Report who said:[108]

> From the beginning the police presence was extremely patchy and I felt that the police did not actually understand, on a real level, that they were there in fact to learn from the young people. I felt that they had paid a bit of lip service to that but fundamentally they believed that young people should just buckle to police authority, and that they as individuals, and representatives of Vic Police were beyond criticism. I did feel that there was that attitude from the beginning and that made me feel quite angry.

Smith and Reside argue that their research participants' reported experiences in relation to community policing activities are symptomatic of an approach that places an onus of moulding the behaviour of young people, without appropriate emphasis on police learning from young people or adjusting their own behaviour.[109] Accordingly, they argue that programs designed to bring police and young people into closer contact such as police organised soccer matches or leadership camps have had negative consequences for young people including pressure on them to cooperate with police investigations. This conclusion (along with the serious allegations of police misconduct) led to criticism of this report, especially from Victoria Police.[110]

Other reports offer some support for these findings. For example the Race or Reason report found that higher levels of contact with police correlated to less trust and less favourable attitudes toward the police.[111] The VHREOC Rights of Passage report also noted participant cynicism about the purpose or outcomes of 'police community engagement' activities;[112] and concrete evidence of 'community policing' forums being used for intelligence gathering.[113]

Despite these issues with community policing strategies multiple reports have recommended further efforts in this vein. The 2008 Rights of Passage report included commendation for initiatives by Victoria Police, including cross-cultural training and multicultural liaison officer programs.[114] Subsequently the 2010 follow up report detailed steps taken by Victoria Police to address the issues raised in the initial report including cultural competency and human rights training through the police academy and efforts to integrate human rights considerations into policy and practice guidelines.[115] However many of the same issues, of feeling targeted and treated more harshly than necessary, were also reported.[116] In the Bull report into the social surrounds of African-Australians in Flemington, the researchers identified a number of organizational factors such as frequent transfers of rank and file members and lack of dedicated resources that have worked against Flemington/Kensington police's ability to incorporate community policing approaches into day to day practice.[117]

Summary of key issues
On the evidence reviewed it appears that intensive policing of areas and groups of young African people may be contributing to public perceptions of disorder, inflaming racial tensions in communities and further alienating African young people from older members of their

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[108] Ibid., 23.
[109] Ibid., 23.
[110] Private conversations with Dandenong Police officer and Helen Yandell of Springvale Monash Legal Service.
[111] Dolic, "Race or Reason? Police Encounters with Young People in the Flemington Region and Surrounding Areas," 42-47.
[112] "Rights of Passage: The experiences of Australian-Sudanese young people," 35.
[113] Ibid., 34.
[114] Ibid.
[115] "Rights of Passage - Two Years On," 14.
[116] Ibid., 16-17.
[117] Bull, "Working with Others to Build Cooperation, Confidence and Trust."

communities. Police profiling is a significant issue because it may be both responsive and causative (affective) in relation to broader community attitudes and media portrayals. As one participant in the Duff report noted, 'that the police come to patrol the place makes me feel that this is an unsafe suburb'.[118]

Until the release of the Gordon research findings in the Haile-Michael case, researchers had not demonstrated through quantitative analysis that police contacts with African-Australian young people were statistically disproportionate to contact with other ethnic groups. The Race or Reason report found that while African-born respondents reported more negative interactions with police and had more contacts in the previous 30 days; police contact over a 12-month period was not more common than for Australian-born respondents.[119] This contrasts with the anecdotal evidence in all of the other noted reports. It also contrasts with recent figures from the Youth Referral and Independent Person's Program (YRIPP) showing that of the culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) young people assisted in police interviews by an independent person, 70% were identified as Sudanese and 12% as 'African'.[120] Finally, Victoria Police media statements in 2012 have also conceded disproportionate contact between young African (in particular Somali and Sudanese) people but justified this by reference to police statistics alleging disproportionate offending by this group.[121]

Police accountability campaigners in Victoria have argued for the introduction of a stop and search receipting system. In England and Wales a similar system introduced after the inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence confirmed that people of African and Caribbean appearance do experience more police stops.[122] Importantly, it has also formed the basis for extended recommendations to strengthen public confidence in police by identifying and minimising stops based on racial stereotypes.[123] This is consistent with multiple American projects on racial profiling that confirm 'black' and Latino young men do experience disproportionate contact with police, not correlating to rates of offending.[124] In Victoria the OPI report into Stop and Search did not support stop and search receipting as an accountability mechanism.[125] Instead, the OPI report, initiated to monitor the statutory scheme for exceptional 'search zones' and other weapon control and public disorder measures introduced in 2009, stated that the OPI had found 'little to suggest that concerns have been realised relating to arbitrary use of powers or the targeting of particular groups'.[126] In fact the report recommended further investigation into whether the community supported randomized searches or searches that 'only intrude upon the privacy, dignity and freedom of movement of those who fit the intelligence schema'.[127] In summary, the

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[118] Man from Somali background, 15, Flemington Duff, "Creating a Better City for Young People: The needs of young people living in Flemington, North Melbourne, Kensington and Ascot Vale," 9. See also, pp 13-16, 'Sense of Community Pride and Belonging'.

[119] Dolic, "Race or Reason? Police Encounters with Young People in the Flemington Region and Surrounding Areas," 52.

[120] The CALD category does not include ATSI young people and makes up 30% of all the young people assisted. Presentation by Susan Hillman Stolz (YRIPP) at Bail Justice Training, 12 November 2012, Melbourne.

[121] Alison Caldwell, "African youth crime a concern in Victoria," in PM, ed. Mark Colvin (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2012); Hagar Cohen, "Background Briefing," ed. Jonathan Green (Melbourne2012).

[122] Paul Quinton Joel Miller, Nick Bland, "Police Stops and Searches: Lessons from A Programme of Research," ed. Policing and Reducing Crime Unit, Police Research Series
(London2000).

[123] Ibid.

[124] Eg. April Fernandez and Jorge Martinez Robert D Crutchfield, "Racial and Ethnic Disparity and Criminal Justice: How Much is Too Much?," Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology 100, no. 3 (2010); Ronald Weitzer, "Racial Discrimination in the Criminal Justice System: Findings and Problems in the Literature," Journal of Criminal Justice 24, no. 4 (1996).

[125] "Review of Victoria Police use of 'stop and search' powers."

[126] Ibid., 6.

[127] Ibid., 7-8.

OPI investigation was dismissive of community concerns and appeared to endorse more 'targeted' uses of intrusive powers against profiled demographics.

A key gap in current research is the failure to adequately explain how young African background people form expectations about police and policing practices. For example in the Race or Reason report the author repeatedly used the term 'hostile' to summarise negative attitudes toward police expressed in the Race or Reason survey. However this does not correlate with the actual findings of that report. However, Dolic's use of the term does coincide with the testimony of one research participant in 'Boys you wanna give me some action':[128]

> Culturally we tend to hang around in big numbers and not only culturally, because it really makes sense that I can hang around with my friends if I live on top of them. I can't invite them to my house, but if I come downstairs, we can really see each other. We saw the flats as our own backyards honestly because we don't have backyards, so coming downstairs, coming together, it was all fun, it was all good, until police started coming around and saying, 'What are you guys up to? What are you doing?' We were like: 'We're not really doing anything other than standing around.' Some of the police didn't like the idea of talking back to them, so suddenly we became … the police told us we were hostile.

The popular idea that African-born youths (and other minority groups prone to conflict with police) hold certain attitudes to police that are inflammatory in conflict scenarios is overdue to be tested by research into the actual attitudes of young African people and the ways these are formed.

Finally, among the recommendations of the various reports discussed, very few focused on young African-background people or the African community as agents for change. The notable exception was the Boys Report which argued that African communities need to be empowered and resourced to act and assert entitlement to public space and freedom from excessive police attention.[129] Recommendations specific to the Policing section of the Rights of Passage VHREOC report focused specifically on renewing commitment to community policing principles and measures and ways that Victoria Police can better comply with the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. This report also charged Springvale Monash Legal Service and other community organisations with providing independent legal education training to young people.[130] The following section provides a short review of current programs targeting young African background people's relationships with police and the criminal justice system in Victoria.

Programs targeting young African-background people in Victoria
There are currently at least two 'African' leadership programs running in Victoria. One is offered through Dandenong Police who have been noted as leaders within Victoria Police in the area of providing cross-cultural training of police members.[131] This training effort has largely been in consultation with the Dinka-speaking Sudanese community.[132] The efforts of the Greater Dandenong police appear to have been motivated in part by the larger numbers of African

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[128] Reside, "'Boys you wanna give me some action?'," 10.
[129] Ibid., 31.
[130] "Rights of Passage: The experiences of Australian-Sudanese young people," 38.
[131] "In our own words: African Australians: A review of human rights and social inclusion issues," 186-89.
[132] Ibid., 189.

(especially Sudanese) people moving into the area and, like the VHEORC report, a response to the death of Liep Gony.[133]

A second leadership program is offered through the African Think Tank. This is a more general program geared to fostering management skills in Melburnians of African background. Despite this more general focus the program is run in partnership with Victoria Police, as well as with Leadership Victoria and The Department of Immigration and Citizenship.[134] A recent graduate of the 2012 program said that he was inspired by the program to want to work with troubled African young people.[135]

The Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) has generally been very active around social inclusion and empowerment of African-background young people. It runs a youth leadership program that, while not specifically targeted, appears to have attracted participation from young African background people. A key program is the Brimbank Young Men's Project, now in its third year.[136] The program targets African background young men, aged 16-25 in the Brimbank and surrounding areas who have had contact with police and experienced difficulty with education, training and employment, as well as other settlement issues.[137] Participants are recruited either through 'assertive outreach' to known hang-out places such as parks in Footscray and St Albans or through referral from other organisations.[138] A positive evaluation report on the initial two year pilot was delivered in June 2011 and the following information about the program was drawn from that report.[139]

The program consisted of 5 components:
- weekly group work in the first year, shifting to fortnightly in the second year.
- provision of life skills information on an individual and largely ad hoc basis;
- mentoring structures between participants and other young people;
- a celebration component, involving participants in event organization activities;
- and an action research component contributed by the researchers responsible for the final evaluation report.[140]

The core activity appears to have been the 'group work' that involved projects such as a video project ('Youthtube') and the creation of a 'working group'. This group organized fortnightly social events and also a three day leadership camp in partnership with Victoria Police. Staff indicated that the mentoring component had not been as successful as they had hoped, that it took longer than expected for participants to trust staff and the program and that when mentoring happened it was relatively informal. Nonetheless, staff indicated that some successful mentoring relationships had been forged.[141]

[133] "Rights of Passage - Two Years On," 14-16.
[134] "African Leadership Development Program," African Think Tank Inc, http://africanthinktank.org/165/; "LV Alumni mentor African community through African ThinkTank project," Leadership Victoria, http://www.leadershipvictoria.org/news/lv-alumni-mentor-african-community-through-african-thinktank-project.
[135] Casey Neill, "Reaching out to lead," *Dandenong Star*, 15 November 2012.
[136] See http://www.cmy.net.au/BrimbankYoungMensProject
[137] Stokes, "Evaluation of the Brimbank Young Men's Project," 10.
[138] Ibid., 16.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Ibid., 10-11.
[141] Ibid., 17.

Rather than directly focusing on pathways into work or study, the program primarily focused on engaging participants and developing a base of trust that could ground effective casework.[142] Positive outcomes reported in interviews and survey data showed that 69% of respondents had been reconnected to education and training and 92% said they had a better idea of what they wanted to do in the future, that they now have someone they can speak to about problems and they are getting along better with other people. 84% said their relationships with family or community had improved. 77% felt better about themselves and 69% had changed feelings about police.[143]

In the evaluation report, program staff indicated that they saw a primary barrier to success and engagement of participants was a feeling of hopelessness and abandonment – a sense that the system had let them down, that nobody cared for them and that there were no options for them.[144] Notable strengths of this project, that directly addressed those feelings of disenfranchisement, were the multiple partnerships and interagency cooperation at both the planning and delivery stages.[145] Program workers were able to draw on the expertise of other organisations and to make effective referrals for intensive case management.[146] This responsiveness to the situation of participants resulted in participants giving high praise for the primary program worker and evaluation process showed that many participants were assisted with concrete support, information and coordinated referrals.[147] Identified areas for program development included participants' ongoing difficulties with accommodation, drugs and alcohol and the desire for more contact hours and ongoing support.[148]

Although not a formal program, one participant in the Boys Report described an effective community organised response to aggressive police patrolling:

> So we got the mothers on our side which was, ya know, I can't thank the African mothers [enough] for what they done for us honestly. The mothers started speaking out, they told the fathers to back off, they know nothing [about] what's going on. The mothers [started] coming [out on the street]. Some of the mums actually sat [outside] for hours just to watch if the police were gonna do something to us. And then we've had times when we [were] standing, playing basketball, and the police car would come and they would park the car, right in the middle of the basketball court and everybody would be stand around. And we're like 'Man, we're playing here'. And they're like, 'I don't care, unless you give all your names up, I'm not gonna move.' So the mums would come and the mums would start screaming at the police and the police are like 'okay what's going on here?' And so diplomatically the police will say, 'Oh calm down we be leaving now.' And so the police would leave and the mums are like, 'We saw that, they started it. They started it and you guys are good boys.' Well, that's what we wanted to hear … so we were really happy about it.[149]

This summary is not a comprehensive report of all programs undertaken in Victoria. It is merely indicative of a variety of approaches taken. Overall, programs targeting civic participation,

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[142] Ibid., 4, 8.
[143] Ibid., 22-23.
[144] Ibid., 19.
[145] Ibid.. 8, 13.
[146] Ibid.. 15, 20.
[147] Ibid., 25.
[148] Ibid., 23-24, 25-26.
[149] Reside, "'Boys you wanna give me some action?'," 30.

engagement with service providers and legal education of African communities have been piecemeal and strategies aimed at bringing young people into closer contact with police ('community policing') have been contested by stakeholders including the Springvale Monash Legal Service. The 'In Our Own Words' report also included extensive consultation about participant preferences for delivery models of training, including community legal education. This report recommended co-location of services, including community legal outreach to improve rates of access and participation.[150] However, of the programs discussed above, only the Brimbank Young Men's Project had been the subject of evaluation research at the time of writing.

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[150] "In our own words: African Australians: A review of human rights and social inclusion issues," 32.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The second part of this research report documents the evaluation methodology and key findings from the pilot conflict resolution program- *A new beginning: resolving conflict peacefully*. A small scale, qualitative evaluation was conducted to explore participants' perceptions of the pilot conflict resolution training program. The pilot program was developed by the Neighbourhood Justice Centre in collaboration with A New Beginning and it was delivered to interested members of the Social Studio.

The program came out of concerns raised amongst the Social Studio community about the challenging situations that young people from new and emerging communities can face when coming into contact with criminal justice agencies and institutions in Yarra. The response was to revise and deliver, with input from young people from new and emerging communities and relevant organisations, a conflict resolution training program to develop:

- ❖ individual and social building blocks of trust, respect and communication
- ❖ conflict resolution skills
- ❖ improved understanding of the broader legal framework for conflict resolution, so that participants can understand their rights and responsibilities, and have a better understanding of how to seek redress through criminal justice and legal organisations.

The program ran for four days during July and August 2012. Attendance at all of the sessions was encouraged but the program did not mandate a particular level of attendance in order to provide the flexibility needed for participants to manage the program in light of various commitments. Each day of the program was organized around a key topic, for example 'the environment of conflict'. Training days were broken down into a series of 10-90 minute activities. The training activities were varied, for example interpreting and discussing images, brainstorming, large group discussion and role playing exercises. Learning opportunities were flexible- the nature and demands of the activities were diverse and this facilitated engagement.

Evaluation aims

The evaluation investigated the effectiveness of the pilot training in achieving a number of goals including:

- ➢ Has program participation changed the ways in which participants respond to conflict?
- ➢ What are the key skills that have been developed through participation on the conflict resolution training program?
- ➢ Has the program had a positive impact on participants?
- ➢ Should the program be offered to new participants?

Design and process

Fifteen people participated in the conflict resolution pilot training program. All of the participants were invited to complete a qualitative survey at the end of the four day pilot program. The survey was designed to collect data about the positive and negative aspects of the training. For example participants were asked to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the program, reflect upon the ways in which they have responded to conflict before the program and how they might respond after the program. Participants were also invited to comment on aspects of the training that could be improved. Open questions were used throughout the survey to provide participants with an opportunity to express, in their own terms, their responses to and

reflections on the program. The surveys were written in English, all participants were able to read and write in English and a staff member from The Social Studio (who was not involved in the delivery of the training) was available to help with any questions about the survey.

Information about the research evaluation was provided on the first page of the survey document. Participants were advised that they did not have to complete the survey at all or that they could choose to respond to some questions but not others. Participants were asked to provide their name if they were willing to participate in a follow up interview. Names have not been included in this report to maintain anonymity.

Eight survey responses were collated and reviewed. Out of eight survey respondents, four were selected for a follow up interview. The selection was made based on willingness to participate in the interview process and diversity of responses in the survey component of the research. The Social Studio contacted four potential interviewees and a time was arranged to attend the studio to conduct all of the interviews. On the day of the interviews three of the four selected interviewees were available. Another program participant was available for interview and was added to the selected and available three interviewees. A total of four program participants were interviewed. The small sample size is relative to the size of the pilot project. One of the key aims of this evaluation is to make a recommendation about the possible expansion of the pilot program.

The interviews were conducted at the Social Studio approximately four weeks after the final program session. The interviews were designed to investigate the 'real world' applicability of the skills that were targeted by the training. Participants were asked to reflect upon the program, to identify the skills that they felt they had developed and to provide any examples of the application of conflict resolution skills pre and post program. Interviewees were reminded that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the research. A plain language statement was provided and discussed by the interviewer. Two of the interviewees declined to be tape recorded.

Observation of two recorded training sessions provided context for the survey and interview responses and deepened the researcher's understanding of the training program. The participant workbook was reviewed with the recorded program sessions at the beginning of the data analysis stage to give insight into the activities that were completed and therefore the reflections offered about the program. Survey and interview data were then thematically analysed. Key findings are presented according to the main research questions in the next section of this report.

FINDINGS

Introduction

This section of the report documents participants' responses to the pilot conflict resolution training program. Eight participants completed a qualitative survey at the end of the program. The survey asked participants to reflect upon what they had learned and how this had impacted on the ways in which they would respond to conflict in the future, to identify positive and negative elements of the program and whether they would recommend the program to others. Four of the people surveyed were then interviewed approximately four weeks after the program had concluded[151]. The main purpose of the interview was to see if and how program participants had applied their new or enhanced skills and knowledge about conflict resolution.

All of the evaluation participants (n8) were positive about the training program and all said that they would recommend the program to others- particularly to young people.

Development of conflict resolution skills

Program participants were asked to reflect upon the conflict resolution skills that they had developed. A range of different skills were identified but the most common response was enhanced communication skills.

> Talk to the person peacefully (Survey respondent 4)

> Good to talk about it. Try to give them time to cool down if they are angry. (Survey respondent 6)

A number of participants also felt that they were better able to recognise the emotional responses of others, and this was important in knowing how to best respond to a situation.

> People have different issues. I used to think about my own problems and now I've learnt about other people's problems and how they handle it and don't handle it. (Survey respondent 6)

In addition to key skills the majority of the program participants reported a deeper understanding of self and others.

> Before approaching the other person I should think first, see what are my intention[s], whether [it] is for peace or to be proven right. Try to see it from the other person's point of view. After that, approach the person and talk things out without being judgmental…(Survey respondent 3).

An appreciation of the broader life history which foreshadows conflict was also demonstrated by one of the participants:

> People and past stories th[at] influence now…in the present (Survey respondent 1)

Similarly, an appreciation of differing value systems was understood to contribute to conflict and conflict resolution:

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[151] A *total* of eight people participated in this evaluation, four participants provided *both* a survey and interview response.

> People view things different[ly] and feel differently about things according [to] their own values. (Survey respondent 3)

Changing responses to conflict

Seven of the participants reported that they would have retreated from, or avoided a situation of conflict before attending the training program. This reaction was due to a lack of confidence in asserting their viewpoint, or not knowing the best way to handle a difficult or uncomfortable situation. Interview participant three for example reported that before the program she struggled to know how best to deal with conflict. Survey respondents made similar remarks:

> I left the community group when I had a problem (Survey respondent 1)

> Would ignore- or speak to caseworker (Survey respondent 4)

> I had no idea and never thought about how to solve the conflict in my life… [I would] leave and don't do anything about it (Survey respondent 7)

A survey participant described internalizing conflict:

> I would ignore them, go home, stress, think too much (Survey respondent 6)

There was substantial evidence amongst this participant cohort that responses to conflict have changed since attending the program, and that the changes had been positive. Interview participant four, for example, discussed experiences of conflict at work and described retreating from difficult situations. This participant felt that she was now more likely to remain calm and to open up dialogue to get to the source of the conflict. Similarly the first interview participant described changes to the way she interacted with her friend:

> One of my friends…she had an argument with her boyfriend or something and she came home, I don't know looking sad but I normally don't recognise if people are looking sad or not and then she had like the down face, 'Cause we used, on the session we played this game we're like recognising people's faces, like saying if they're happy, sad, angry or whatever. So I asked 'is she okay' and that and she just started crying and I was like, oh you can talk to me if you want. This was just yesterday actually, yesterday night. So it's good.
>
> Interviewer: So it's taught you not just about conflict, like resolving conflict but also about recognising conflict as well?
>
> Recognising yeah, yeah.
>
> Interviewer: Before the training what would you have done?
>
> I wouldn't. I wouldn't talk to her, I would just leave her to go to her room and sit there. I don't know I guess 'cause I normally don't talk a lot, I just let people, I don't know, I don't normally walk up to someone and say 'are you okay' or whatever. (Interview participant 1)

Interview participant one also provided an example of how she has changed her response to conflict by using a strategy she had learned about on the program:

> No I'm always quiet, I would never actually talk back to a cop, I get scared and that but this time, I don't know. And I wrote it down, and I never write things down, like if something happens, if I have an argument with someone in the shop or one of the shopkeepers, I never write it down I just try to ignore it 'cause I think that maybe I can't change it or anything, I don't know. But this time, I guess, I don't know I just thought about it and put it in a book (Interview participant 1).

One of the interviewees (participant three) had not had an opportunity to use the skills that she had developed through the program. However, she felt better equipped to deal with conflict should it arise in future. There had been a significant change for this participant too; she reported an ability to objectively analyse conflict and through this process consider how she may have contributed to the conflict situation.

Becoming aware of the possibility of changing behaviours and attitudes was a positive outcome for one participant:

> In my life I have conflict and I never thought about [w]hat I can do in any different way. And how to remove what I had in my heart, I always think of what happen in the past. But now I know what to do and how to do. (Survey respondent 7)

One survey respondent (survey respondent 2) did not report a change in how she would deal with conflict- both pre and post training this participant reported that she would *'Keep myself quiet'*. However she did recognise the potentially negative effects of this strategy: *'when you keep something inside it is not good for your health'*. It was unclear whether this respondent had developed an understanding of the effects of internalizing or retreating from conflict from the program.

Program content

Participants enjoyed a wide range of workshop activities. Role playing was particularly well received but there was also variation in the main aspects of the training that respondents enjoyed most. Broadly, participants enjoyed tasks that were based on self-reflection, or interrogation of their own values, personality or behaviours. Participants also valued hearing a range of opinions and gathering insights from the whole group.

> I particularly liked the discussions part. I like it because you can learn a lot from others you can see how the[y] view things and what their values are and how they think (Survey respondent 3).

> I thought all of the parts were enjoyable…because it was interesting to hear different ideas of how to resolve the conflict (Survey respondent 8)

Elements of the training that provided clear advice, guidance or strategies to respond to conflict in 'real life' were also valued:

> [The] part I enjoyed in the program is how to read someone's face when the[y] look sad, angry or depressed. (Survey respondent 5)

Role play…because they give some ideas, which is helpful (Survey respondent 7)

Understanding criminal justice

Several people reported that they had a better understanding of their legal rights and responsibilities. This was regarded as a particularly valuable outcome of the program.

Interviewer: What kind of stuff did you learn about the law? What type of thing?

Like, if a policeman, I don't know, is talking to you about, like you're in a fight and the policeman comes and they just get you in trouble and they didn't see anything, whether there was any other witnesses and that they just get this person in trouble because they were yelling, but they don't know what actually happened. So your right is to go up and say this person, like the police wasn't there to just accuse me of whatever and you can have your right to say, I don't know, you can ask other witnesses and that to see actually what happened…we read a story about, I don't know a guy getting in a fight and I think the police pushed him and he pushed the police back or something and then he got in trouble for pushing a police but the police is the one that pushed him even though he wasn't touching the police or anything, he was just standing there. (Interview participant 1)

I learned about me having the right to go to court if a police officer physically touch[es] me first. I also learned that forgiving some[one] is really good because life is too short. (Survey respondent 5)

Program work around rights and responsibilities also had indirect benefits. For example one interviewee agreed that she now had increased confidence:

Yeah, it has yeah, like everyone has their rights and that when it comes to whoever is talking to you, you have your right to say why is this, that someone's saying that so yeah….respecting people because everyone's is, I don't know, a human being. We have to respect each other, yeah (Interview participant 1).

Program impact and application

The pilot training program had a range of impacts on participants. Impacts took several forms including indirect benefits from the training such as increased feelings of confidence and empowerment and direct development of conflict resolution strategies and increased understanding of legal rights and responsibilities.

Last week I was at the station and you know how the Police come and ask you for your ID and that? And I gave that them to him and then before he wrote my name down and he was just looking at it he was like 'the x family are really bad' and I'm like 'what, what do you mean?' and I was like 'the x family?' and I just shushed like this and didn't answer him 'cause I don't have any brothers or older sisters to make trouble, they're all like married and that and he just accused me of, accused our family for doing something that we didn't do so I was just like what should I do? I don't know, should I go to the police and tell them? There's not going to be change so I don't know. I thought, I wrote it down in a book, what happened and the date in case you know, like I get in trouble for no reason. He's like, 'x family, wow, you guys are trouble makers in the Sudanese community' so I'm like 'maybe we have the same last name as other family?' So he's like,

when he heard me talking, like talking back to him as, er saying 'maybe it's not my family?' he's like 'oh yeah sorry, maybe it's other family, I made a mistake'. (Interview participant 1)

Several participants reported that they had applied the skills and understanding they had developed to other people's situations of conflict- so they had become 'problem solvers' in their own networks. Program materials offered a platform for discussion at home or with friends. Participants were keen to show other people what they had done; indicating that they thought the materials would be of interest and valuable to others.

> It will be useful for the community. I will show my husband and community leaders the information from the workshop (Survey respondent 1)

The first interview participant later reflected upon the way in which she had talked her friend through a conflict with a partner (see page 31):

> Yes, it has an impact I guess like with my friend feeling bad, that the same day we were, she was okay, like laughing, and we went for a walk and she was alright, she just forgot about it I guess, she never talked about it anymore.

> Interviewer: And how did you feel about that?

> I felt good, yeah 'cause I never actually talked to someone you know if they had a problem I just tried to stay away from them, so they might yell at me or something I just give them their space I guess. But this time I said I'll try it and see what happens (Interview participant 1).

Interview participant 3 reported that she *found the program empowering'.* This was a result of being able to contribute to social relationships, to share knowledge and understanding with friends and family. This feeling was shared by others on the program:

> That I know more about other people I guess. Like there can be other people, older than me or younger than me and they don't know, and I'm like 'I know' and I can tell them sometimes and help other people (Interview participant 1).

> I told my family and I was teaching them- good to tell people- before, when people feel bad it's good to teach them and help them feel better. (Survey respondent 6)

Moving forward

Participants were asked whether they would recommend the program to others. The eight evaluation participants unanimously agreed that they would recommend the program.

> Interviewer: Would you recommend it?

> Yeah, actually. Because people need to know about their laws I guess and stuff like that (Interview participant 1)

Some of the participants identified particular groups of people who might benefit from the program.

> Mostly people that are new to Australia and that, the law thing again 'cause they don't know about the laws at all they can be getting in trouble and they don't know what to do, they just go with it (Interview participant 1).

There was also strong acknowledgment that everyone could benefit from enhancing conflict resolution skills in this way.

> I think everyone, not just younger people because you can find someone young that knows how to handle conflict better than the older one. It depends on the exposure you know to the, for instance someone might, you know with the culture, there is, there could be a good way of solving conflict and a bad way of solving conflict. And if someone has just come from, let's say from Africa, you don't know how to read and all that and you just stick with the culture, there's some you might not know how to solve conflict because you just rely on culture and some bit of the culture that is not really helpful in solving conflict. For instance the culture might favour men more than women and in that way it doesn't really solve anything, you know with the conflict…(Interview participant 2).

> I would recommend to everyone to do this program (Survey respondent 7).

Program reflections

As noted above there was unanimous agreement that the program should be recommend to others. However, two participants generally felt that they were already well equipped to deal with conflict. Survey respondent 4 below was 'unsure' about whether the program had been helpful and found some of the stories upsetting and confronting.

> I don't think it was worth my involvement as I feel comfortable with the way I deal with conflict (Survey respondent 4).

This can be contrasted against the views of participants who felt that most or all of the training was 'new' and added to their understanding and skills set:

> Because I did not know most of them and now I know a lot. And also people need to know about respecting others because people will get along with them. (Survey respondent 5)

> Gave me new ideas about people I didn't know before. Gave me new ideas for how to cope with shame (Survey respondent 6).

> Yeah it was useful actually; it was really good, yeah. 'Cause I didn't know some things, I learned a lot from that. 'Cause I didn't used to like, know more about conflict and all this so it was a good session I guess, yeah (Interview participant 1)

Others recognised that conflict is complex, and having many 'tools' to respond effectively is desirable:

> Sometimes we think we know how to solve conflict but actual[ly] we don't because conflict is a complex issue and we need to keep learning ways of solving conflict (Survey respondent 3)

Survey respondent three, above went on to discuss the negative implications of relying on strategies that have not been interrogated:

> A lot of people have no clue how to solve conflict. They rely on what has been passed on to them from childhood or what they learn from others and they use those techniques to solve their conflict which most of the time doesn't work or makes the conflict worse (Survey respondent 3).

Summary
The conflict resolution training participants reported that they had developed a range of skills. Some of these skills were very closely related to conflict resolution such as recognising the emotional responses of self and others. Other skills were more abstract, such as an enhanced ability to reflect upon their own behaviours and traits. Participants also reported a greater awareness of their own skills and potential.

A range of positive benefits for the participants were discussed, including the skills development noted above and increased confidence and greater knowledge of legal rights and responsibilities. Additionally, benefits were amplified throughout the participants' social networks as knowledge and skills were discussed and applied in interactions with friends and family.

Participants had different starting points in terms of existing conflict resolution skills and differing expectations of the program. However, all of the participants stated that they would recommend the program to others. This indicates that it was sufficiently varied and flexible and was valued by all of the people who participated in this research.

CONCLUSION

This evaluation had three main aims; to report on the existing literature about contacts between newly arrived young people from African countries and police, to evaluate and report on the pilot conflict resolution program- *A new beginning: resolving conflict peacefully* and to make recommendations to The Social Studio about the possibility of repeating, developing and/or expanding the program.

The literature review section of this report demonstrated that there is a significant body of information, from a variety of sources, about the experiences of young people from African countries who come in contact with the police. Taken together these sources highlight a range of serious negative perceptions and experiences of contact with the police from the perspective of young African people in Victoria. Key issues raised include perceptions and experiences of over-policing, feeling unsafe in public spaces, ineffective police accountability mechanisms and erosion of community trust. The literature in this area offers support to the anecdotal concerns raised by The Social Studio community that gave rise to the pilot conflict resolution training program.

The findings section of this report presented the evaluation research participants' views of the conflict resolution training program. The research participants were overwhelmingly positive about the pilot training program; all agreed that they would recommend the program to others. A range of direct benefits were experienced including the development of a deeper understanding of legal rights and new conflict resolution skills. Indirect benefits were also reported such a general increase in confidence. There was evidence that the program benefits were amplified through participants' social networks. The majority of research participants reported that the program had changed the way that they would respond to conflict.

Recommendations
We recommend[152] that The Social Studio:

1. Repeats the conflict resolution training program with a new cohort of interested participants from The Social Studio.

2. Investigates flexible delivery models to maximize full attendance. Examples could be repeated program sessions or an intensive delivery model.

3. Works with program facilitators to develop break-out sessions in the program which should be tailored to the concerns and/or experiences of program participants.

4. Works with program facilitators to produce materials in a variety of languages to enhance accessibility and promote active participation in training sessions.

5. Works with program facilitators to produce materials on legal rights, responsibilities and processes. This information could be included in the participant training workbook.

6. Investigates interest in and scope of a follow up program for participants that have successfully completed '*A new beginning*' training.

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[152] We note that conflict resolution training for communities only addresses part of the puzzle where reported conflict is with Victoria Police or where complaints arise in relation to police handling of inter-community conflict. Further research into conflict-resolution training for police members and investigation into police perspectives on experiences of conflict would be necessary to inform the development of best practice and policy within Victoria Police.

7. Scopes interest in offering the program to participants who are not directly involved in The Social Studio. Examples could include peers and relatives of program participants and members of the local community.

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