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2005 Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards

The annual Australian Crime and Violence Prevention (ACVP) Awards were announced on 10 November 2005. The awards are sponsored by the heads of Australian governments and the members of the Australian and New Zealand Crime Prevention Ministerial Forum as a joint Commonwealth, State and Territory initiative. They recognise and reward outstanding projects that prevent or reduce violence in Australia, to encourage public initiatives and assist governments to identify and develop projects to reduce violence in the community.

The winning projects for 2005 are notable as they include a number of initiatives aimed at improving crime prevention outcomes for Indigenous people. The national award winners were:

Circle Sentencing Nowra (New South Wales)

This program is an alternative sentencing court for adult Aboriginal offenders. Respected members of the Aboriginal community who have a close association or kinship with the offender sit in a circle with the magistrate to discuss the underlying causes of the offender's behaviour in a community setting. Offenders who participate in the program must discuss the circumstances surrounding the offences they have committed. Victims are invited to participate in the process but their involvement is not mandatory. As with a standard sentencing, court legal representation for the offender remains, as do a police prosecutor and other agencies relevant to the sentencing process.

Operation Burglary Countdown (Western Australia)

Operation Burglary Countdown was a pilot burglary reduction project conducted in two hotspot locations in suburban Perth for 12 months. The objectives were to: reduce the incidence of burglary and repeat burglary in the pilot sites; improve the response to burglary by state and local government and the community; and improve community understanding of burglary and the importance of accurate and timely reporting of crime to police. It was based on a multi-agency partnership approach to crime prevention and specifically sought to make a greater impact on the wider community. This was achieved through a series of processes aimed at reducing the offenders' confidence in conducting a successful burglary, making the crime more difficult to commit and making apprehension and conviction more likely.

Shepparton Koori Court (Victoria)

The Koori Court operates as a special sentencing court within a magistrates court but is designed to create an informal atmosphere and allow greater participation by the Koori Community through the Koori Elder and Respected Person, the Aboriginal Justice Worker, Koori offenders and their families. The court aims to reduce perceptions of cultural alienation and tailor sentences to the cultural needs of Koori offenders. It operates by encouraging as many service providers as possible, as well as members of both the Koori and wider community to be involved in both the sentencing process and support assistance programs. The court works with the offender to identify the causal issues facing the offender. It encourages offenders to take ownership of their underlying difficulties and work in partnership with relevant service providers to address the issues concerned.

Further information

Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards <http://www.aic.gov.au/avpa/2005.html>