CHAPTER 17: CARING COMMUNITIES

Key findings of the Committee:

17.1 **The Department of Human Services advised that the client records information system for Statutory Child Protection Services was unable to report with complete accuracy on compliance with all performance measures. The Department is reviewing the suite of child protection performance measures in response to the Ombudsman's report and developing a new regional audit and monitoring system to improve the monitoring and accountability of the child protection program.**

17.2 **Victoria Police has reported that the Safe Streets Task Force (SSTF) has put in place measures to reduce violence in public places. The effectiveness of these measures is evaluated on an ongoing basis, principally through assessing their impact on crime statistics. As at 31 December 2009, there has been a reduction of 8.7 per cent in total street assaults in the area which encompasses the CBD and inner Melbourne compared with the result at the same time in the previous year.**

17.3 **Victoria Police has introduced a new ethics and values training module for new recruits. The outcomes of such training over time should be publicly reported.**

17.4 **The number of reported incidents of vandalism that affected the delivery of train services for 2008-09 was 1,671, compared to 2,252 in 2007-08 a decline of over 25 per cent. Incidents declined across all lines except for a minor increase for Williamstown.**

17.5 **Investment in services to students with disabilities in 2008-09 was $461.1million. 19,115 students were supported by the Program for Students with Disabilities in Victorian government schools. Of this group, 10,693 students attended regular schools, and 8,422 students attended special schools. The Committee looks forward to the early publication of the whole-of-government strategy aimed at establishing a more sustainable service system for children with a disability.**

17.6 **The Committee has recommends that the Department of Justice develop a more systematic process for measuring the performance of the Koori Courts in contributing to reducing the number of Indigenous offenders.**

17.7 **The Victorian Multicultural Commission reported that it had received a less than expected number of applications from ethnic organisations based in regional and rural locations for its community grants program. The target for applications from these groups was 350, and the actual number was 299. It is taking measures to meet this target in future years.**

17.1.   Introduction

Caring Communities is the fourth *Growing Victoria Together* vision examined by the Committee in this year's Financial and Performance Outcomes Report.

This chapter contains outcome-related analysis and comment on selected government activities which support the Caring Communities vision. The Committee asked departments and agencies a range of questions relating to the *Growing Victoria Together* goals of building friendly, confident and safe communities and achieving a fairer society that reduces disadvantage and respects diversity.

17.2.   Building friendly, confident and safe communities

17.2.1   Keeping young people safe

Monitoring Statutory Child Protection Services

In its 2008-09 annual report, the Department of Human Services advised that it was not reporting on the provision of Statutory Child Protection Services using the performance measure 'Compliance with requirement to formally review each child subject to more than two reports in a 12 month period', as due to its complexity, other options for measuring cumulative harm were being assessed.

The Department advised that:[486]

> *...early identification and response to patterns of cumulative harm to children and young people is a critical part of the legislative and practice reforms embedded in the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005. Child protection policies and guidelines have been updated to include the move from single incident response to one more focused on the cumulative effect of harm. All child protection workers have now received training in the new approach.*

> *The Department introduced an output performance measure for 2007-08 to monitor the cumulative harm provisions in the new legislation. In operational terms the cumulative harm measure translates into the requirement to formally review each child subject to more than two consecutive un-investigated reports in a 12 month period.*

> *While the Department believes that this requirement was usually being met operationally in 2007-08 and 2008-09, the client records information system was unable to report with complete accuracy on compliance against the measure.*

> *In response to the recommendation made by the Ombudsman following the investigation into child protection, the Department will be reviewing the suite of child protection performance measures so that a focus on comprehensive investigation of reports is encouraged.*

> *The development of a new regional audit and monitoring system, announced in September 2009 as part of the $77 million boost to child protection, will improve the monitoring and accountability of the child protection program. This is due to be completed in the first half of 2010.*

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486   Department of Human Services, response to the Committee's 2008-09 Financial and Performance Outcomes Questionnaire – Part Two, received 18 February 2010, pp.10–11

The Department also advised the Committee that further actions designed to respond to concerns raised by the Ombudsman and to improve monitoring of performance include:[487]

- *The establishment of a new Child Protection Practice Standards and Compliance Committee made up of experts and an independent chair with expertise in the fields of monitoring and accountability. It will report to the Minister for Community Services through the Secretary and outcomes of the committee's work will be published in the Department of Human Services' annual report.*

- *The establishment of a new area within the Department of Human Services with responsibility for monitoring child protection compliance with statutory obligations and practice.*

- *The creation of executive positions in each region to proactively manage service delivery, demand pressures and workforce matters and increase regional oversight and monitoring of child protection practice.*

The Committee welcomes the Department's advice that it is responding to the Ombudsman's concerns and that it recognises the need to better monitor performance in this critical area, which is at the heart of the GVT Caring Communities vision.

17.2.2   Crime and Policing

Reducing violence in public places

The annual reports of the Department of Justice and Victoria Police indicated that '*Victoria Police strategies, such as the Safe Streets Taskforce, have strengthened the enforcement effort directed at reducing alcohol-fuelled violence in public places.*'[488]

Further to material in their annual reports, Victoria Police and the Department of Justice advised the Committee that:[489]

> *…the Safe Streets Task Force (SSTF), which operates on Friday and Saturday nights from 2000 to 0600 hours, has put the following measures/initiatives in place, all of which are aimed at reducing violence in public places. The effectiveness of these measures is evaluated on an ongoing basis, principally through assessing the impact of such measures on crime statistics.*

> *An SSTF Weekend Risk Matrix has also been developed to effectively roster suitable numbers according to intelligence-based major event and seasonal 'problem' weekends. This allows Victoria Police to maintain a highly visible presence at those times assessed as being at highest risk of anti-social behaviour. It also ensures the available funding is allocated to provide maximum capability when required.*

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487   ibid.

488   Department of Justice, *Annual Report 2008-09*, n.1, October 2009, p.109

489   Department of Justice, response to the Committee's 2008-09 Financial and Performance Outcomes Questionnaire – Part Two, received 9 February 2010, p.16

The Committee was also advised of the use of intelligence-based operations, run in conjunction with SSTF, including:[490]

- *Booze Bus/Traffic Management Units targeting drink driving issues;*

- *The targeting of specific licensed premises with a history of poor behaviour;*

- *The use of Passive Alert Detection (PAD) dogs to target drug use issues;*

- *The Melbourne Embona task force, which targets armed offenders;*

- *A dedicated crime unit to provide more fluid and efficient detection of significant crime incidents occurring in the central entertainment precincts; and*

- *The rostering of a Crime Scene Desk Unit to provide expertise to crime scene processing.*

The Committee welcomed this evidence of concerted and coordinated action of the Victoria Police and sought further information on the effectiveness of these measures.

Victoria Police advised that as at 31 December 2009:[491]

> *...there had been a reduction of 8.7 per cent in total street assaults in Region 1 Division 1 (which encompasses the CBD and inner Melbourne) compared with the result at the same time in the previous year. Selected SSTF (Friday and Saturday nights from 2200 to 0600 hours) performance statistics also demonstrate the results of the increased, high visibility police presence in the Melbourne CBD.*

Table 17.1:   Selected Safer Streets Task Force performance statistics

	2007-08	2008-09
Visits to licensed premises	11,185	29,005
Licensed Premises Incident Reports	760	1,207
Licensing Infringement /General warning and follow up	72	95
Offensive Behaviour/Indecent Language Infringement Notices	254	2,049
Council Penalty Notice – consume alcohol in public	571	2,736
Banning Notices	365	2,043
Persons checked (details taken)	26,768	78,531
Field (public) contacts	1,220	1,758
Vehicles checked	5,919	20,494
Preliminary Breath tests administered	1,681	7,726

Source: Department of Justice, response to the Committee's 2008-09 Financial and Performance Outcomes questionnaire – Part Two, received 9 February 2010, p.17

Given ongoing community concern, the Committee urges Victoria Police to continue their comprehensive intervention program and to continue to monitor closely the effectiveness of the program and its component parts.

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490   ibid.

491   ibid., p.17

Ethics and values training for police

The Victoria Police Annual Report indicates that:[492]

> *...one of the key recommendations of the Integrity System for Police Project which was completed in 2008-09 and will be implemented in 2009-10 with the introduction of ethics and values training to the new recruit force. From July 2009, all new recruits will participate in ethics and values training as part of a two week induction course prior to commencement of the main training program. Eventually, ethics values training will be rolled out to all ranks and classifications within Victoria Police to further reinforce and embed ethical decision making in all aspects of policing.*

In response to the Committee's request for further information, Victoria Police advised that:[493]

> *...the recently (July 2009) revised recruit curriculum, includes an introductory module of ethics and values training. This includes:*

> - *Experienced front line officers speaking on the day to day challenges, routine, discretion and ethical considerations;*
>
> - *Professional Reporting, where recruits receive presentations from the Internal Witness Support Unit and a member who has gone through the process of coming forward to report serious misconduct;*
>
> - *Ethical Standards Department investigators presenting case studies; and*
>
> - *Sessions on Policing a Democratic Community, where public interest issues and organisational expectations are discussed.*

> *The new module has been presented to seven recruit intakes since July 2009 and, improvements, where identified, have been made to content and outcomes.*

The expected outcomes of the program as advised by Victoria Police are:[494]

> - *Reduction in criminality and corruption within Victoria Police;*
>
> - *Encouraging and fostering a Restorative Justice approach, where honest mistakes will be forgiven and managed in a performance context;*
>
> - *Encouraging, supporting and increasing professional reporting of serious misconduct; and*
>
> - *Building resilience in junior police to resist and cope with ethical conflicts that arise in everyday policing and interactions with the community.*

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492   Victoria Police, *2008-09 Annual Report*, October 2009, p.19

493   Victoria Police, response to the Committee's 2008-09 Financial and Performance Outcomes Questionnaire – Part Two*, received 9 February 2010, p.14

494   ibid.

In terms of measuring, Victoria Police advised that:[495]

> *...the Ethical Standards Department has the ability to interrogate a number of databases including the Register of Complaints and Serious Incidents and Discipline (ROCSID) to obtain quantitative data on performance against selected measures. The ethics and values training module has only recently been introduced to recruit training (July 2009), so it is too early for an evaluation to be conducted. Longitudinal studies are currently being planned in conjunction with the Australian Research Centre and partnered by the Office of Police Integrity. Those studies will include provision of qualitative data on the progress of this initiative. Some of the activities the study will undertake include:*
>
> - *Survey of recruits who have undertaken the new ethics and values training and comparing those results to other recently-graduated police who were trained under the old recruit schedule.*
>
> - *Survey and interviews with police who have undertaken the new training and comparing and revisiting the survey or other instruments, at points one year, two years and further into their career to determine if attitudes change; what are the trigger points; are they more resilient; and what changes their ethical attitudes.*
>
> *The overall aim will be to measure cultural change within Victoria Police through a number indicators such as increases in internal reporting, building resilience in police, using restorative justice approaches to correct unwanted behaviours and reductions in criminality and corruption.*
>
> *Cultural change is seen by Victoria Police as a longer term objective that will take a number of years to produce the desired results, whilst other initiatives such as the increased use of the Management Intervention Model are providing promising results in the restorative justice area.*

The Committee is pleased to note that Victoria Police has developed a training program with expected outcomes which are well-defined and have a clearly identified range of quantitative and qualitative measures of performance. The Committee recommends that Victoria Police publicly report on the outcomes of this program.

> **Recommendation 55:** **Victoria Police report to the public on the outcomes of the ethics and values training being introduced to the Force.**

Vandalism on trains

Vandalism on trains causes disruption to services and additional expenditure in preventative measures and repairs. The annual report of the Department of Transport advised that strong regulatory frameworks and programs are in place to improve safety on public transport.

The Committee sought further information on the number of reported incidents of vandalism for 2008-09 compared to 2007-08.

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495   ibid., p.15

The Department advised that:[496]

> *...the Train Operation Performance System (TOPS) records incidents that have impacted passenger service delivery. TOPS data indicates that the number of reported incidents of vandalism that affected the delivery of train services for 2008-09 was 1,671, compared to 2,252 in 2007-08, a reduction of over 25 per cent.*

The following tables detail incidents by type, by line, by time of day and place.

Table 17.2: Vandalism Incidents by Type over 2007-08 and 2008-09

Incident type	2007-08 (incidents)	2007-08 (%)	2008-09 (incidents)	2008-09 (%)
Window damage	932	41.4%	751	44.9%
Graffiti related	579	25.7%	373	22.3%
Other train damage	163	7.2%	138	8.3%
Mirror damage	78	3.5%	61	3.7%
Rock throwing	62	2.8%	35	2.1%
Other	438	19.4%	313	18.7%
Total	**2,252**	**100%**	**1,671**	**100%**

Note: *Statistics are from the TOPS database, which measures incidents, that impact upon service delivery. As such, the percentages quoted above do not directly reflect percentages of vandalism on trains, rather types and percentages of vandalism that impact services.*

Source: *Department of Transport, Response to the Committee's 2008-09 Financial and Performance Outcomes Questionnaire, Part Two, received 25 February 2010, p.31*

Table 17.3: Vandalism Incidents by Train Line over 2007-08 and 2008-09

Line	2007-08 (incidents)	2007-08 (%)	2008-09 (incidents)	2008-09 (%)
Alamein	113	5.00%	79	4.70%
Belgrave	186	8.30%	102	6.10%
Cranboume	115	5.10%	79	4.70%
Craigieburn	126	5.60%	95	5.70%
Epping	157	7.00%	143	8.60%
Frankston	228	10.10%	166	9.90%
Glen Waverley	135	6.00%	87	5.20%
Hurstbridge	232	10.30%	166	9.90%
Lilydale	215	9.50%	156	9.30%
Pakenham	133	5.90%	118	7.10%
Sydenham	107	4.80%	80	4.80%
Sandringham	165	7.30%	127	7.60%
Stony Point	9	0.40%	7	0.40%

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496   Department of Transport, response to the Committee's 2008-09 Financial and Performance Outcomes Questionnaire – Part Two, received 25 February 2010, p.31

Line	2007-08 (incidents)	2007-08 (%)	2008-09 (incidents)	2008-09 (%)
Upfield	93	4.10%	72	4.30%
Werribee	161	7.10%	102	6.10%
Williamstown	49	2.20%	53	3.20%
Other	28	1.20%	39	2.30%
Total	2,252	100%	1,671	100%

Note: Statistics are from the TOPS database, which measures incidents, that impact service delivery. The above table lists lines that were impacted, not necessarily lines on which the vandalism occurred.

Source: Department of Transport, Response to the Committee's 2008-09 Financial and Performance Outcomes Questionnaire, Part Two, received 25 February 2010, pp.31–2

Table 17.4:   Vandalism Incidents by time of day over 2007-08 and 2008-09

Time Band	2007-08 (incidents)	2007-08 (%)	2008-09 (incidents)	2008-09 (%)
Weekdays First train –9.30am	271	12.00%	244	14.60%
Weekdays 9.00am–3.30pm	333	14.80%	228	13.60%
Weekdays 3.30pm–6.30pm	409	18.20%	243	14.50%
Weekdays 6.30pm–last train	445	19.80%	387	23.20%
Saturday	500	22.20%	380	22.70%
Sunday	294	13.10%	189	11.30%

Note: Statistics are from the TOPS database, which measures the time at which incidents are reported.

Source: Department of Transport, Response to the Committee's 2008-09 Financial and Performance Outcomes Questionnaire, Part Two, received 25 February 2010, p.32

Table 17.5:   Vandalism Incidents by location over 2007-08 and 2008-09

Location	2007-08 Incidents	2008-09 Incidents
Metropolitan	2252	1671
Regional	281	221

Source: Department of Transport, Response to the Committee's 2008-09 Financial and Performance Outcomes Questionnaire, Part Two, received 25 February 2010, p.32

The Committee welcomes the large decline in the number of vandalism incidents over a 12 month period and the fact that there has been an absolute decline on all lines except for a minor increase for Williamstown.

The Committee notes that Metro Trains Melbourne (MTM) has advised that it has:[497]

> *...contracts dealing with graffiti, vandalism and cleanliness issues both at stations and on rolling stock costing over $13 million per annum. This also includes measures primarily aimed at the prevention of rolling stock vandalism in train sidings.*

497   ibid., pp.32–3

17.3.   A fairer society that reduces disadvantage and respects diversity

17.3.1   Reducing disadvantage in education

Services to students with disabilities

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development reported that, in relation to the Services to Students output measure, its investment in services to students with disabilities in 2008-09 was $461.1million, compared to a target of $435.6 million.[498]

The Department provided the following financial breakdown of educational services to students with disabilities in 2008-09 in response to the Committee's request:[499]

- *$299m – Allocated to Victorian government regular and special schools via Program for Students with Disabilities individual student funding.*

- *$40m – Allocated to schools providing specialised educational programs for students with hearing impairments, autism spectrum disorders and behavioural disorders.*

- *$37m – Allocated to Victorian government special schools according to special school enrolments and students' stages of learning.*

- *$31m – Allocated to all Victorian government primary and secondary schools via the Language Support Program.*

- *$6m – Allocated to Victorian government special schools to adjust for school complexity and size for schools with low enrolments.*

- *$4m –Specific programs e.g. for students with complex needs, Medical Intervention Support, and delivery of early education programs at special schools for pre school children with disabilities.*

- *$44 million in costs associated with program administration and delivery, including depreciation.*

The Committee noted that in last year's Budget, the Government provided new output funding of $336.5 million over four years ($70.6 million in 2008-09) to the Program for Students with Disabilities.

The Committee ascertained that:[500]

> *...in 2008-09, 19,115 equivalent full time students were supported by the Program for Students with Disabilities in Victorian government schools. Of this group, 10,693 EFT students attended regular schools, and 8,422 EFT students attended special schools. A breakdown by region of student numbers of students with disabilities supported by the PSD is detailed below in the following table.*

498   Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, *Annual Report 2008-09,* October 2009, p.48

499   Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, response to the Committee's 2008-09 Financial and Performance Outcomes Questionnaire – Part Two, received 28 January 2010, pp.1–2

500   ibid., pp.2–3

Table 17.6: Number of students, by region, with disabilities supported by the PSD

Region	Student Numbers (EFT) 2008-09
Barwon South Western	1625
Eastern Metropolitan	3308
Gippsland	1245
Grampians	949
Hume	880
Loddon Mallee	1285
Northern Metropolitan	2945
Southern Metropolitan	3919
Western Metropolitan	2958
Total	**19115**

Source   *Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, response to the Committee's 2008-09 Financial and Performance Outcomes questionnaire – Part Two, received 28 January 2010, p.3*

The Committee sought further information from the Department on the objectives and outcomes of the program. It was advised that the:[501]

> *...objectives for the Program for Students with Disabilities are published in the Program for Students with Disabilities Guidelines, and consist of:*

> (a)   *Student learning – Student potential for growth and development in discipline-based, personal and interpersonal learning and independence in learning is maximised and is consistent with their goals and aspirations.*

> (b)   *Student engagement and wellbeing – Students are motivated and are able to participate fully in their education and wider school life, consistent with their goals and aspirations*

> (c)   *Student pathways and transitions – Students make successful transitions to, throughout and from school, and the pathways selected maximise their potential for growth and development while they attend school and after they leave school.*

> *Information is collected through existing data collections, such as the Department's Attitudes to Schools survey, On Track data collections, and the supplementary school census. In addition, the Department is developing new data collections to facilitate the assessment of outcomes for students supported by the PSD.*

In regard to achievements in 2008-09 against planned expectations, the Department advised the Committee that:[502]

> *...the Program for Students with Disabilities operated within budget in 2008-09 and that parent satisfaction with special education met its 2008-09 target of 85 per cent.*

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501   ibid., pp.3–4

502   ibid., p.4

The Committee notes that in its *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development*, released in September 2008, the Government made a commitment to develop a whole-of-government strategy for children and young people aged 0–18 with a disability or developmental delay.[503] In its report on progress in implementing the Blueprint, *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development*: *One Year On*, the Government advised that it was developing a strategy which aimed to establish a more sustainable service system that improves the wellbeing, development, education, community participation and future economic participation of all Victorian children and young people with a disability or developmental delay and their families.[504]

The Committee welcomes the development of this strategy, and takes this opportunity to emphasise the importance of developing outcome measures which reflect the priorities of the strategy and which are supported by adequate data collection and a reporting regime which provides a regular assessment of the outcomes and identifies areas for further improvement. The Committee looks forward to the early publication of the whole-of-government strategy.

National Partnership Agreements

In its annual report, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development advised that new agreements reached through the COAG process will provide additional resources critical to working towards the Victorian Government's *Growing Victoria Together* targets.

The Department's 2008-09 annual report[505] stated that:

(a) COAG agreed to a series of new national partnership agreements focused on teacher quality, literacy and numeracy, and outcomes in low socio-economic status school communities; and

(b) the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development was signed to improve outcomes for Indigenous children in their early years.

The Committee sought information on how outcomes with regard to low socio-economic status school communities and Indigenous children in their early years are to be measured and reported in future. The Department advised that:[506]

> *On 29 November 2008, the Commonwealth and States and Territories, via COAG, entered into a series of multilateral Smarter Schools National Partnership (NP) Agreements including:*
>
> • *National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality*
>
> • *National Partnership on Low Socioeconomic Status School Communities*
>
> • *National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy.*

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503   Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development,* September 2008, p.22

504   Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development: One Year On,* November 2009, p.10

505   Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, *2008-09 Annual Report*, October 2009, p.3

506   Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, response to the Committee's 2008-09 Financial and Performance Outcomes Questionnaire – Part Two*, received 28 January 2010, pp.26–7

Victoria has developed an integrated approach to the Smarter Schools NPs demonstrated through a single Bilateral Agreement and Victorian Implementation Plan (VIP) covering the three NPs. The VIP will seek to support specific cohorts of students who face additional challenges in improving educational outcomes including Koorie students, students from English as a Second Language (ESL)/ refugee backgrounds and students with disabilities. Different strategies will be embedded within initiatives in the NPs where appropriate to provide tailored support for these specific cohorts. In addition, initiatives in the VIP will also be tailored to students in low SES communities as appropriate.

The VIP commits Victoria to report to the Commonwealth against a number of outcome measures for all participating NP schools. These include:

- *NAPLAN results*

- *Teacher judgments*

- *English Online*

- *Student absence*

- *Staff and student perceptions drawn from staff and student surveys.*

In addition, the Multilateral Agreement on Low SES School Communities commits all jurisdictions to report on:

- *The proportion of Indigenous and Low SES children enrolled in and attending schooling;*

- *Literacy and numeracy achievement of Year 3, 5, 7 and 9 Indigenous and Low SES students in national testing;*

- *The proportion of the 19 year old Indigenous and low SES population having attained at least a Year 12 Certificate or equivalent or AQF Certificate II; and*

- *The proportion of Indigenous students completing Year 10.*

Victoria will report on this data annually in its report to the Commonwealth on the VIP.

17.3.1   Delivering justice

Koori courts

Koori Courts are designed to address Indigenous over-representation in the justice system and reduce alienation within the Court sentencing process by providing a culturally sensitive court environment. Koori Courts have been established in Magistrates' Courts in Broadmeadows, Shepparton, Warrnambool, Mildura, Moe/La Trobe Valley, Bairnsdale and Swan Hill. In addition two Children's Koori Courts operate in Mildura and Melbourne.

In November 2008, a County Koori Court opened at the La Trobe Valley Law Courts as a four-year pilot project. It is the first of its kind in Australia.

In its *2008-09 Annual Report*, the Department of Justice refers to the success of the Koori Courts program. In particular, through the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement, the Department of Justice continued to work closely in partnership with the Koori community to deliver more than 50 programs and projects to reduce over-representation of Koories in all stages of the criminal justice system.[507]

The Department provided the Committee with statistics on the numbers of Koories in the criminal justice system for 2006-07, 2007-08 and 2008-09, categorised between the numbers undertaking community-based orders and the number of prisoners.

Table 17.7: Average Daily Indigenous Prisoner and Community-based Offender Population 2006/07 to 2008/09

	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
	Indigenous	Indigenous	Indigenous
Community-based offenders [a]	305	354	380
Prisoners [b]	222	236	249
Total	**527**	**590**	**629**

Notes:

    (a)   The count of community-based offenders includes both offenders under community-based supervision and offenders on community work only orders.

    (b)   The count of prisoners includes both sentenced and un-sentenced prisoners.

Source: Corrections Victoria Data Warehouse.[508]

The Department further advised the Committee that several evaluations had been undertaken in recent years including a 2005 evaluation of the Koori Courts Pilot Program and a 2009 study of the Children's Koori Court. The former study attested to the success of the pilot program in terms of a recidivism rate much lower than the general level of recidivism, while the latter study was a comprehensive tracking of 62 young Koories.[509]

The Department also advised that:[510]

> *...in 2009 it undertook a comprehensive review of the current court model and how it could be strengthened and expanded in the future. This included an extensive consultation process with stakeholders. A series of recommendations for future development of the program have been presented to the Aboriginal Justice Forum.*

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507   Department of Justice, *2008-09 Annual Report*, October 2009, p.36

508   Department of Justice, response to the Committee's 2008-09 Financial and Performance Outcomes Questionnaire – Part Two, received 9 February 2010, p.31

509   ibid., pp.30–1

510   ibid., p.31

In describing progress against the indicators set out in 2006 *Victorian Indigenous Affairs Framework* (VIAF), the Victorian Government Indigenous Affairs Report 2008-09[511] describes the increased proportion of indigenous adults sentenced to prison as an area of concern, although it also reported improvements in the proportion of Indigenous people who are convicted within two years of their previous conviction and in the number of times Indigenous young people (aged 10–17 years) are processed by police.

The Committee recognises that addressing Indigenous representation in the criminal justice system requires a range of strategies, of which the Koori Courts program is one element. In view of the continued expansion of these Courts, particularly the introduction of the County Koori Court, it is important that clear performance measures are identified and the outcomes of the Koori Court program are evaluated regularly using these measures.

The Committee recommends that the Department of Justice put in place a systematic and rigorous process of measuring the performance of the Koori Courts in contributing to the overall objective of reducing Indigenous representation in the criminal justice system.

Recommendation 56: **The Department of Justice develop a systematic and rigorous process for measuring the performance of the Koori Courts.**

17.3.2   Respecting diversity

Multicultural grants in rural and regional areas

The Committee noted that that the Victorian Multicultural Commission did not meet its target of approving 350 grants to multicultural groups in rural and regional Victoria, and the actual number approved was 299 grants. The VMC explained that the number of regional and rural grants had fallen slightly below expectations due to a less than expected number of applications from organisations based in those areas.[512]

The VMC further advised the Committee that while fewer than planned applications were received and the target was not attained:[513]

> *Since 2005-06 the number of grants approved to organisations from regional and rural locations has increased by approximately 25 per cent (from 240 in 2005-06 to 299 in 2008-09).*
>
> *The Commission held information sessions about the grants program in Morwell, Geelong, Shepparton and Mildura during August 2009 and further information sessions will be held in regional and rural Victoria in 2010 (prior to the opening of the next round of grants). The Commission advised it will continue to encourage applications from groups and organisations in regional and rural Victoria, and places a priority on those applications.*
>
> *As a consequence of the various strategies and factors identified, the VMC anticipates that the target of 350 will be attained in the coming years.*

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511   Department of Planning and Community Development, *Victorian Government Indigenous Affairs Report 2008-09*, November 2009, p.20–1

512   Department of Premier and Cabinet, *2008-09 Annual Report*, October 2009, p.128

513   Department of Premier and Cabinet, response to the Committee's 2008-09 Financial and Performance Outcomes Questionnaire – Part Two, received 2 February 2010, p.3

The Committee considers that there is scope for more detailed reporting by the VMC on the strategic objectives and outcomes of its community grants program.

Although the VMC has nominated separate output measures for metropolitan grants and for rural/regional grants, the Annual Report (which lists all the grant recipients) does not provide a breakdown according to location for the organisations funded under the program. Rural and regional communities are not identified as being a priority for any of the seven categories for which grants are available.

The Committee considers that the VMC should put in place a strategy to ensure that its grant program is targeted to meet the needs of ethnic communities in rural and regional areas. This would assist the VMC to address any issues which might be causing a reduction in the number of grant applications from these communities. Reporting on the location of organisations receiving community grants would support this targeted approach and highlight grant categories in which organisations from rural and regional Victoria were under-represented.

Recommendation 57: **The Victorian Multicultural Commission develop a strategy to ensure that its community grants program meets the needs of ethnic communities in rural and regional areas.**