

# **Victims of Crime Research Agenda 2011-2014**

## **Introduction**

Victims Services, NSW Department of Justice and Attorney General, recognises the importance of evidence-based policy development and service delivery for victims of crime in New South Wales. Research and evaluation provide evidence, ideas and knowledge and new perspectives that are vital for developing and applying innovative policies and processes. The body of evidence, particularly in an Australian context, of what works best for victims of crime is limited. The Victims of Crime Research Agenda aims to stimulate new, high quality research, which directly supports service provision for victims of crime in New South Wales. The Research Agenda will enable a more systematic undertaking and use of research to produce findings that are useful at both policy and operational levels.

The Research Agenda was developed through a targeted consultation process with relevant stakeholders from the government, non-government and academic sectors and a review of the recent literature on victims' issues was conducted. Input was obtained from the Victims of Crime Interagency Forum, which represents a broad spectrum of service providers for victims of crime, and the Victims Advisory Board, with members from the government and non-government sectors. In addition the Victims of Crime Research Agenda Advisory Committee, with members who have experience in research, has been formed to move the Research Agenda forward.

Victims Services is interested in research findings that can inform and support policy development, program design and service delivery. To this end, the priorities identified in the Research Agenda should guide researchers towards applied research, rather than pure research. This will assist Victims Services to draw more readily upon research findings, integrate these into policy development and make a positive difference to supporting victims of crime.

The Research Agenda highlights areas and issues where research is likely to be required but it is not intended to be entirely specific or prescriptive. The Agenda does not preclude researchers from submitting their own ideas for research based on the identified priorities. It is acknowledged that it is not always possible to predict the specific details of the research which will be required as new priorities are identified and new challenges emerge amid changing external environments. The Research Agenda should be viewed as a flexible framework for developing a research evidence base. This Agenda has been developed for a three year timeframe, from 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2014 but it will be reviewed periodically to ensure that it meets the Department's commitment to supporting victims of crime in NSW.

## **Applications Steering Committee**

An Applications Steering Committee will be established with representatives from government and non-government agencies as well as academics and others who have experience researching issues relating to victims of crime.

The Applications Steering Committee will assess and consider each application on its individual merits in the context of the Research Agenda and will need to be satisfied that the research is:

- of a high ethical standard;
- rigorous, valid and accurate;
- timely;
- high-quality; and
- relevant to current and emerging policy and research and community interests relating to victims of crime.

For some proposals the Committee may need to assess the extent to which the researcher is resourced to provide appropriate support to victims who may become distressed at participating in the research. Also, the suitability of the project for external researchers may be assessed if it involves the need to access confidential departmental data and material.

The Committee will monitor the progress of approved research projects and review the results.

### **Ethics Approval**

Applicants proposing to conduct research with human subjects (for example direct interviews with victims of crime) or on ethically sensitive topics must obtain the formal approval of an NH&MRC approved Institutional Human Research Ethics Committee (usually that attached to the institution with which they are affiliated such as their own university or agency), or of the host institution under whose auspices they propose to conduct research where applicable.

## **Identified Priority Areas**

The following have been identified as high priority research areas:

- Victims and court
- Victims not using services
- Victims of non-violent crimes
- Victims with multiple needs

In addition, other identified areas for research are:

- Support to victims
- Long term healing of victims
- Re-victimisation
- Disadvantaged victims
- Victims who are prisoners
- Victims registers
- Restorative justice
- Jury perceptions
- Victims and police
- Victims compensation

## **Cross-cutting Themes**

Victims Services is aware that victims of crime from disadvantaged groups have particular needs that cut across all the identified research categories. Where appropriate, research should include a focus on victims who are:

- Indigenous
- from a non-English speaking background
- from rural and regional NSW
- with a disability and chronic illness
- suffering from mental health issues
- aged
- gay, lesbian and transgender

## **Role of Victims Services**

Victims Services will support the Research Agenda through:

- Acting as a co-researcher in studies
- Directly commissioning high-priority research
- Providing information, data and other knowledge which supports research
- Dissemination of research findings which would include:
  - Completed research papers published on Victims Services website
  - Research briefings with NSW Attorney General

## **Partnerships**

To further support the aims of the Research Agenda, Victims Services will form appropriate partnerships with their colleagues within the Department of Justice and Attorney General and other government departments such as NSW Police Force and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. Victims Services is also interested in forming partnerships with universities and research institutions. These partnerships will provide knowledge sharing, resources and specialist expertise in supporting victims of crime.

## **Victims of Crime Research Agenda Advisory Committee**

The Victims of Crime Research Agenda Advisory Committee consists of academics and others who have experience researching issues relating to victims of crime. The Committee will periodically review this Agenda and provide expert advice on current issues and future directions in the field.