

Media Release

Community members invited to assist Police and Juvenile Justice with young offenders from culturally diverse backgrounds

Research indicates that the re-offending rate of juvenile offenders who went through youth conferencing was 24% lower than the rate for those who went to court (Youth Action and Policy Association safety and crime fact sheet).

The **Community Relations Commission** is calling for volunteers to be part of a new initiative to assist Police and the Department of Juvenile Justice when dealing with young offenders from diverse cultural backgrounds.

A **Community Resource List** of respected community members is being developed by the Commission in consultation with the NSW Police Force and the Department of Juvenile Justice.

The list will contain respected community members from diverse backgrounds who can be called upon to assist NSW Police in giving cautions to young people and to provide advice to convenors preparing youth justice conferences.

The roles and responsibilities of these community members will vary but overall their purpose is to provide advice about relevant cultural issues and play a role in reducing the risk of re-offending by young people and enhancing the young person's links to the community.

The Department of Juvenile Justice and the NSW Police Force play an important role in supporting young offenders and in diverting them away from the court system in order to reduce their re-offending. *The Young Offenders Act 1997* provides alternative processes for dealing with juveniles who commit certain offences. These alternatives are warnings, cautions and youth justice conferencing.

The project is being piloted in the Fairfield, Manly and Kuring-gai areas. These areas were selected based on an analysis of statistics for juvenile offenders and the community groups for which most referrals were made. The pilot will be initially undertaken for a period of 12 months and its continuation and expansion will be determined by an assessment of its effectiveness over that time.

Community members interested in volunteering for the Community Resource List should contact the **Community Relations Commission** on (02) 8255 6795 and request an Information Pack.

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