An Evaluation of The Koori Cognitive Skills Program Pilots

for Corrections Victoria

Final Report

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A full list of persons consulted for this project is provided in Appendix 1.
This report evaluates the Koori Cognitive Skills Program (CSP) for Corrections Victoria. Research has shown that people who get into trouble with the law often have difficulty solving problems in their everyday lives. The Koori CSP has been designed to help Koori prisoners strengthen these skills, to reduce their risk of re-offending. This is important, given that Indigenous people are greatly over-represented in the Victorian correctional system.

The Koori CSP is based on a mainstream program (the McGuire Offence-Focused Problem Solving Program) originally developed in the United Kingdom. The program has been adapted by a Koori registered psychologist to make it more appropriate for Koori men and women in Victoria’s correctional system. It consists of 30 two-hour sessions. All sessions and activities are described in a detailed manual for facilitators.

Between April and August 2005, the Koori CSP has been piloted at three prison locations in Victoria: a group of ten men at Loddon, nine men at Barwon and five women at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (DPFC). There were two facilitators at each location; a non-Koori psychologist who was based at the prison, and a Koori community Elder. Program Support Officers (PSOs) were also involved. At Loddon, the PSOs were prison officers, while at Barwon it was the Indigenous Services Officer and at DPFC it was the Aboriginal Wellbeing Officer who had this role.

This evaluation of those pilot programs has been done by two researchers, one Koori and one non-Koori, within a partnership framework. We looked closely at the three pilot programs, by asking five research questions.

**Our first question was:** To what extent was the Koori CSP run the way it was designed to be run?

Our findings were overall positive. For example attendance rates were very high, averaging 91%. Facilitators said that overall, most sessions were fairly easy to run. Approximately three quarters of all the program's activities were run as per the program manual. Some activities, however, were missed out due to lack of time, and some were run in a different way. There was also some important missing information in the program records kept by the facilitators.

**Our second question was:** To what extent did the participants actually learn the skills that were taught in the program?

Our findings were mixed. A questionnaire that compared participants’ answers before and after the program showed basically no difference. Videotaped material of actual skills practice by the participants in the sessions was not complete enough for us to draw confident conclusions. Based on the limited video material we had, it looked the skills were being demonstrated at a high level even by the middle of the program.
Our third question was: What can we learn about this program from the facilitators?

Our interviews with the facilitators provided a lot of information:

- At all locations, facilitators negotiated their roles with each other and were able to sort out any tensions that arose. They reported that a positive group ‘vibe’ quickly developed between the group members, which was overall stronger in these Koori-specific groups than in the mainstream CSPs they had run before, with mostly non-Koori prisoners. Participants were motivated to be part of the Koori CSP, and were also quite anxious at times about potential threats to their program. All facilitators reported positive endings to the program for participants and some sadness that it was over.

- Cultural activities were generally well-used and appreciated, including talking circles and traditional craft activities. ‘Hands-on’ strategies such as using role plays, discussions, music, videos and pictures were well received. Written work was strongly disliked by all the groups, and was overall counterproductive. Many other ways were suggested. Family violence was a difficult topic for the participants, especially the men. Overall it seemed that the women were better than the men at applying the skills they were learning to real-life situations in their personal lives. There were serious concerns from all facilitators about expecting participants behave differently on the ‘outside’ when there had been no change to support them in their homes and communities. In other words, the program was seen as running a risk of setting the participants up to fail after being released from prison.

- The two days of facilitator training was seen as too short. All facilitators found it very useful to talk with each other before and after each session for planning and debriefing. The Koori facilitators were less likely to use more formal supervision than the non-Koori facilitators, and overall saw it as being less necessary.

Our fourth question was: What can we learn about this program from the prison administration?

We spoke with Programs Managers and Senior Psychologists. All said it had been a very positive experience for the Koori participants, and also a positive opportunity for the prison to address Koori prisoners’ needs. It was especially helpful at Loddon to have prison officers involved as PSOs because it improved relationships and cultural understanding. There was a need for facilitators’ roles to be more clearly defined, and for Koori facilitators to be given more information about prison policies and procedures. Some Koori facilitators also needed to be more consistently available for the program. There were problems getting suitable space for program sessions, and tensions at times between the Koori CSP and other programs such as Industries. There were negative attitudes towards the program by a small number of prison staff that needed to be overcome, and a number of issues about the relationship between the Koori CSP and other Koori-specific programs at the prisons. Many suggestions were offered to help address these issues.
Our final question was: What can we learn about this program from the participants themselves?

While focus groups would have given us the best information, we were limited to questionnaire feedback in this evaluation. About half the questionnaires were not done, due to participants’ dislike of written work. The responses we received, however, were very positive. Participants said the program had been useful for them, enjoyable, well-organised, helpful for their present and future concerns, and would be valuable for helping them not re-offend in the future. More than half also said it would encourage them to do other adapted mainstream programs at the prison.

Based on these findings, a range of recommendations have been made in this report. **Our most important recommendation is that the program continues to be supported by Corrections Victoria, and that it be further improved in a number of ways.** To help Corrections Victoria achieve this, we provided recommendations in ten areas:

- Further adaptation of the material
- Changes to program structure and intensity
- Participant selection issues
- Suggestions for future evaluations
- Preparing the prisons for this program
- Selecting and supporting facilitators
- Supervision arrangements
- Strengthening the program’s connections with other prison-based programs
- Strengthening the program’s connections with programs in the community
- Strengthening communication between the Department of Justice Indigenous Issues Unit and Corrections Victoria.

The final section of this report gives full details of our recommendations in these areas.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report describes the adaptation for Koori prisoners of Corrections Victoria’s Cognitive Skills Program, and provides an evaluation of three pilot programs implemented with Koori women at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre and Koori men at Loddon Prison and Barwon Prison. The adaptation, implementation and evaluation of this program is a very important endeavour, in view of Indigenous over-representation in the Victorian correctional system and the reported inadequacy of mainstream programs to adequately meet Indigenous offenders’ and prisoners’ needs. Overall, our findings indicate that the adaptation of the mainstream CSP was successful, and that the program deserves ongoing support in the correctional system in Victoria.

The Koori Cognitive Skills Program is an offending behaviour program within Corrections Victoria’s Reducing Re-offending Framework. It is adapted from Corrections Victoria’s mainstream Cognitive Skills Program (CSP) and supports the second key objective of the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement: ‘to identify and respond effectively to the needs of Aboriginal people through the development and delivery of culturally appropriate policies, programs and services’. Corrections Victoria’s Cognitive Skills Program is based on James McGuire’s Offence-Focused Problem Solving Program (2000) and comprises a prison-based version of 60 hours and a community-based version of 51 hours, both delivered in sessions by trained and supervised facilitators.

Most evaluations of CSPs have taken place in the United Kingdom and Canada. No outcomes of CSPs have yet been published in Australia, although Corrections Victoria commissioned two evaluations of the Victorian implementation of the CSP by Bartholomew, Carvalho and James in 2004. Evaluation studies have been cautious in finding reduced recidivism and have also found that problems of community re-integration and substance abuse contribute strongly to re-offending. Since Indigenous offenders have more severe needs in these areas than non-Indigenous offenders, benefits of the CSP for Indigenous offenders may be undermined unless these problems are also addressed.

Bartholomew, Carvalho and James’s evaluations found positive achievements and areas for improvement in Corrections Victoria’s CSP. Parallels with overseas evaluations supported the significant adaptation of a mainstream program for delivery to Koori participants. For this pilot, a Koori registered psychologist undertook adaptation of the mainstream CSP, also engaging a male and a female Koori elder to ensure the work met community standards of cultural integrity. Corrections Victoria negotiated terms of reference for the adaptation process with James McGuire, the program’s original author. A wide range of culturally relevant adaptations was made. These are described in Section 2.5. Many parts of the program remained the same.

This evaluation of the Koori CSP was consistent with ethical guidelines for cross-cultural research. It focused on evaluating program integrity, offenders’ skills acquisition, and the perceptions of facilitators, offenders and prison management staff. It was not possible to formally evaluate the cultural integrity of the Koori CSP.

The evaluation methodology is described fully in Section 3. [to be summarised when section complete]
Results

• **Program integrity**
There were ten participants in the group at Loddon, nine at Barwon and five at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (DPFC). Attendance rates for the three pilot groups were high, averaging 91% across the three locations. Adherence to the program manual was high; facilitators followed all or most of their session plan for the majority of sessions, and when combined across all sessions at all three locations, fully completed 73% of the activities specified in the program. Location differences ranged from 65% at Loddon to 84% at DPFC. Reasons for not completing session activities included insufficient time, materials not being provided, and material being seen as inappropriate. There were minimal differences amongst facilitators’ ease of implementing program activities. Overall, facilitators found most sessions ‘quite easy’, or ‘very easy’ to implement; however there were significant missing data at two locations. This reflects a broader difficulty with facilitators not keeping consistent records for the evaluation. The program start was delayed but all locations completed their full 30 sessions by early August 2005.

• **Skills acquisition**
After discussion of its limitations under these circumstances as a very Westernised assessment tool, the Problem Solving Inventory, or PSI (Heppner, 1988) was used before and after the program to assess participants’ acquisition of skills taught in the Koori CSP. There was significant group resistance to this task, and findings were limited by a significant amount of missing data. Overall, the PSI results suggested the participants’ problem solving skills level was in the normative range when compared to counselling centre clients, but somewhat poorer than the general adult population. Results also suggested that the program made no difference and in fact marginally reduced participants’ problem solving skills level. This finding is inconsistent with this report’s findings from qualitative sources, and is considered more likely to reflect a lack of validity for this instrument with a Koori prisoner population than a genuine absence of positive change.

The men’s groups at Barwon and Loddon consented to videotaping of activities where participants practised the skills they were learning. However, the available videotaped material was incomplete. As the women’s group did not consent to videotaping, the facilitators made retrospective ratings. Within these limitations and bearing in mind the small sample size, a high level of skills acquisition was demonstrated, averaging 77% at session 15 and 100% at session 29.

• **Facilitator perspectives**
The facilitation model was slightly different at each location. All groups were co-led by a female non-Indigenous psychologist and a Koori elder gender-matched to the group, with a member of prison staff in the role of Program Support Officer (PSO). Both non-Indigenous and Koori facilitators acknowledged the value of each other’s roles. At all locations, the non-Indigenous facilitator generally drove the group content, while the Koori facilitators managed the group process, and encouraged application of the skills to real life situations. Roles of the facilitators were generally well negotiated and tensions were resolved. Negotiation of such differences is crucial to the success of ventures such as the Koori CSP.

Facilitators reported that a positive group process developed, and participants’ motivation level increased as the program progressed. Circumstances at one location led to initial time being spent building trust between the facilitators and the
group. As participants’ enjoyment of the program increased, so did their anxiety about potential threats to it, requiring facilitators to reassure the group. All facilitators reported positive conclusions to the program for participants and for Program Support Officers.

In terms of program content, culture-specific elements of the program were generally well-used, and facilitators suggested several ways to strengthen this aspect of the program. Role-plays and discussions were seen as useful and culturally appropriate, with some gender differences between groups regarding particular roles. Sensory and physical modes of learning such as using music, pictures and analogies, and also physical exercise, relaxation and the integration of traditional craft activities were well received. Even though the program adaptation had significantly reduced the written component, facilitators overwhelmingly indicated that written work was disliked and could even be counterproductive. Many alternatives were suggested. Regarding the videos used, facilitators agreed that a more appropriate selection could be made. Family violence was a volatile topic, and at the same time facilitators noted the men’s groups’ expressions of respect towards women.

Facilitator feedback suggested that the women were better than the men at applying the skills they were learning to real-life situations in their personal lives, although this may have been a location difference rather than a gender difference. Facilitators raised serious concerns about the appropriateness of the expectation that participants behave differently in their homes and community when there has been no change in those environments.

The non-Indigenous facilitators had run the mainstream CSP once or more prior to the Koori CSP, and were able to compare their experience in the different cultural settings. Comments included the stronger sense of inclusiveness in the Koori groups, a higher level of facilitator self-disclosure and the Koori group process fulfilling a greater range of cultural and gender identity needs than expected from the program content.

The two days of facilitator training was seen as insufficient. All facilitators found pre-session planning and post-session debriefing very useful. Aspects of the supervision structure were seen by the Koori facilitators as unnecessary, and this report suggests some alternatives. Conversely, the non-Indigenous facilitators regarded supervision as important.

- **Prison administration perspectives**

Benefits and difficulties of implementing the pilot CSPs were identified by two Senior Psychologists and one Programs Manager. At all three locations the Koori participants who completed the program were seen to have a sense of achievement and enhanced self-esteem. The program was seen as a benefit to the institution, as an opportunity to raise the profile of Indigenous needs and concerns and to demonstrate cultural responsiveness. Involvement of prison officers as PSOs at one location improved rapport between officers and Koori prisoners, and equipped officers to better negotiate tensions between Koori and non-Koori prisoners.

Difficulties arose in relation to the definition of facilitators’ roles and responsibilities; Koori facilitator availability; the lack of orientation for Indigenous facilitators about prison policies and procedures; lack of clearly defined supervision arrangements; lack
of suitable space for the program sessions; some negative attitudes of prison staff; tension between prison industry and program hours; and the relationship of the Koori CSP to other Koori-specific programs. Section 4.5 proposes a number of solutions to these concerns.

- **Participant perspectives**
  Written feedback was available from two of the pilot locations. The majority of participants who completed the questionnaire rated the program highly on all questions, which were to do with its usefulness, their enjoyment of it and how much they felt it had helped them. There was no reported dissatisfaction with the program. Verbal feedback from each group indicated participants’ sadness about the group finishing, gratitude towards the facilitators and repeated assertions that there was too much written work.

**Discussion**
This section revisits the rationale for establishing both the mainstream CSP and subsequent adaptation of this model into the Koori CSP. Both the new Reducing Re-offending Framework and the Aboriginal Justice Agreement share a common concern about prisoner recidivism rates and look to the Koori CSP as a way of equipping Indigenous prisoners with problem solving skills to cope within the prison system but more importantly when they are released back into the community. Amongst other things, the Evaluation found that though the program had its problem areas, it contained just as many if not a greater number of strengths and useful examples that worked well. It is suggested that these can be built on to address program weaknesses and flaws so that the Koori CSP Mark II adds value to the new Reducing Re-offending Framework and Department of Justice’s Aboriginal Justice Agreement of ‘identifying and responding effectively to the needs of Aboriginal people through the development and delivery of culturally appropriate policies, programs and services (AJA).

**Recommendations**
This evaluation makes a number of recommendations concerning the Koori Cognitive Skills Program. Detailed recommendations are provided in Section 7 of this report. The following summary outlines their scope, it is suggested that the reader considers the recommendations in their entirety as they are very comprehensive.

1. Further adaptation of the model
   - Expand terms of reference
   - Justify changes
   - Document the impact of changes
   - Content changes
2. Program structure and intensity
   - Avoid full-day sessions
   - Add two sessions to program length
3. Participant selection
   - Maintain quite open selection criteria
4. Future assessment and evaluation strategies
   - Devise alternatives to written assessment
   - Use videotape as a standard evaluation tool
   - Include participant focus groups at the middle and end of the program
   - Develop role play tasks as skills review assessment
   - Identify a reliable pre- and post-program measure
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- Reduce the amount of qualitative data gathered from facilitators

5. Preparing the prisons for Koori CSPs
   - Hold planning meetings at each location
   - Provide prison staff with information about the program
   - Offer cultural awareness training for prison staff
   - Consider prison staff as Program Support Officers
   - Ensure all materials are available in advance
   - Consider space requirements

6. Facilitator selection, preparation and training
   - Formalise the selection criteria for Indigenous facilitators
   - Develop duty statements for Indigenous facilitators
   - Arrange coverage for unexpected contingencies
   - Consider using current facilitators to help train new facilitators
   - Provide more training and expand training content: a training schedule is suggested.
   - Include Program Support Officers in facilitator training

7. Supervision arrangements
   - Emphasise the value of supervision
   - Provide more regular professional supervision
   - Clarify the supervisory role of Senior Psychologists including record-keeping
   - Consider a cultural advisor to the Senior Psychologists
   - Assess the supervisory model at program mid-point

8. Strengthen connections between the Koori CSP and other prison-based programs
   - Take into account the timing of other cultural events
   - Schedule the Koori CSP directly after the Aboriginal Cultural Immersion Program
   - Communicate with other Koori-focused prisoner rehabilitation program personnel, in particular drug and alcohol programs and pre-release and transition programs
   - Share information between the Koori CSP and other adapted mainstream programs

9. Strengthen connections between the Koori CSP and programs in the community
   - Seek creative ways to provide follow-up CSP sessions for Koori prisoners in the community upon release

10. Strengthen communication between the Indigenous Issues Unit and Corrections Victoria
    - Report progress on Koori CSPs to Executive Officers of the Regional Justice Advisory Committees.
INTRODUCTION

Policy context

Corrections Victoria’s comprehensive long term management strategy

Over the past five years, Corrections Victoria has been developing a comprehensive long term management strategy (CLMTS). This strategy includes a new Reducing Re-offending Framework, designed to divert offenders from prison and reduce re-offending rates of released prisoners and community-based offenders.

This framework represents the largest diversion and rehabilitation effort undertaken to date in the Victorian Correctional system. It is designed to provide a hierarchy of offending behaviour programs, starting with foundational and motivation-building programs and concluding with more targeted, offence-specific interventions in the areas of substance abuse, sex offending and violence.

The Cognitive Skills Program, or CSP (based on the work of James McGuire in the United Kingdom), is the first mainstream foundational program to be implemented across Victorian Corrections under the Reducing Re-offending Framework. Services began at Community Correctional Service (CCS) locations in April 2002, and at prison locations in April 2003. More recently Corrections Victoria has developed a number of Program Specifications to guide the CSP’s implementation, to ensure program integrity and directly align it with best practice principles of offender rehabilitation. The mainstream CSPs were recently evaluated against these specifications (Bartholomew, Carvalho & James, 2004; see next section for details).

Corrections Victoria has recognized the need to ensure the CSP ‘reaches’ and makes sense to a number of important offender subgroups, including those with learning disabilities, women, and Aboriginal offenders. A range of initiatives have been undertaken to modify the program accordingly.

Specific efforts to make the CSP responsive to the needs of Aboriginal offenders were initiated by the Strategic Services unit of Corrections Victoria in May 2003, starting with an initial scoping task (Jones & Atkinson, 2003). A Reference Group consisting of government and Koori community stakeholders was convened. A comprehensive adaptation process, described in the next section, was then undertaken. Three pilot programs were initiated, one with Koori women at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (DPFC), one at Loddon Prison with men on a minimum-secure classification, and one at Barwon Prison with men on a medium-secure classification. They were implemented between March and July 2005. The present document provides an evaluation of these Koori-specific pilot programs.

The Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA)

The AJA is a key Department of Justice venture aimed at minimising Aboriginal overrepresentation in the criminal justice system. Launched in 2000, it provides a range of mechanisms for partnerships between the Victorian Aboriginal community and government, and supports an array of initiatives. The second of the AJA’s six key strategic objectives is: “To identify and respond effectively to the needs Aboriginal people through the development and delivery of culturally appropriate policies, programs and services” (AJA, Pp…) Clearly this is directly relevant to Corrections...
Victoria’s current work on modifying mainstream programs such as the CSP to meet the needs of Aboriginal offenders.

The evaluation team

There are two members of the evaluation team:

**Graham Atkinson, Atkinson Kerr & Associates (AKA)**

Graham Atkinson, is a senior member of the Victorian Indigenous community, and a clan member of the Yorta Yorta and Dja Dja Wurrung tribes who successfully obtained his Bachelor of Social Work and Bachelor of Arts from Melbourne University in 1977 and 1981 respectively, and graduated with an MBA from RMIT in 1994. Since establishing his own consulting business in 1986, he worked extensively in Indigenous affairs throughout Victoria with Government and community-based organizations. In 2003, Graham joined his business, Yuruga Enterprises, with Stephen Kerr and Associates as a social research and consulting service trading as Atkinson Kerr and Associates. AKA has completed extensive evaluation work for the Government, community and Indigenous service sectors. It recently completed an evaluation of the Aboriginal Women’s Mentoring Pilot for Corrections Victoria (2004) and a statewide evaluation of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement for DoJ (2005). Graham is also chairperson of Native Title Services (Victoria), Dja Dja Wurrung Native Title Claimant Group and Dulin Incorporated Indigenous Youth Mentoring Program.

**Robin Jones, Associate of AKA**

Robin is a registered Clinical Psychologist and a Fellow of the Department of Criminology, University of Melbourne. She has had 15 years’ experience developing, implementing and evaluating criminal justice and offender rehabilitation programs, and has a specialised interest in cross-cultural research and practice. She has worked with number of different communities and ethnic groups, including Maori and Pacific Island peoples in New Zealand, African American and Hispanic communities in the USA, and more recently, Koori communities in Victoria. She has undertaken this work in both government and community-based settings.

In Australia since 2000, Robin has provided consultation, training and technical assistance to a range of criminal justice service providers, principally through Corrections Victoria and the Indigenous Issues Unit of the Department of Justice. This work has included significant contributions to the Aboriginal Adult Residential Diversionary Program, the Aboriginal Cultural Immersion Program, the 2004 Koori Justice Network Conference, the Aboriginal Justice Agreement Review, and the Young Indigenous Men’s SHED (family violence) Program in Gippsland. Cross-cultural and Indigenous work remain her strongest areas of interest, especially social justice initiatives addressing Indigenous over-representation in Victoria’s criminal justice system.

Both members of the evaluation team were also members of a Reference Group convened to oversee the Koori cognitive skills program redevelopment process. This
allowed us to learn about the adaptations to the mainstream program as they were occurring, and comment on them. It also allowed us to get feedback on our own proposed evaluation framework from key Koori and government stakeholders, before undertaking this study.

The evaluation team’s strong commitment to a partnership-based approach has helped ensure that both mainstream government and Koori community perspectives are effectively represented in our findings.

**Terminology**

*Indigenous, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or Koori?*

The terms ‘Indigenous’, ‘Aboriginal’, ‘Torres Strait Islander’ and ‘Koori’ are used interchangeably in this document, depending on context. It is recognized that many Aboriginal people from the south eastern regions often use the term ‘Koori’ instead of the European term ‘Aboriginal’ to refer to themselves as Indigenous people. The term ‘Torres Strait Islander’ refers to those Indigenous people who are descendents of the Torres Straits who now reside in other parts of Australia including Victoria. Like Aboriginal the term ‘Indigenous’ encompasses first nations peoples from a range of tribes across Australia but in the Australian context does not include Indigenous people from other countries. So when we use the terms Aboriginal or Indigenous we include all Indigenous Australians.

**Technical terms & concepts**

A number of technical terms are frequently referred to in this document. The most commonly appearing terms are briefly defined below.

*Cognitive-behavioural therapy/models/approaches (CBT)*

CBT is a framework for understanding human behaviour that underpins many offender rehabilitation programs. CBT assumes that people's behaviour is controlled mainly by their cognitions (thoughts) and emotions. CBT helps people change their behaviours (such as offending) by teaching them to think differently and/or manage their emotions differently in relation to the circumstances they are dealing with.

CBT is also based on learning theory, and social learning theory. *Learning theory* tells us that people's behaviours will increase and get stronger when they are rewarded, or reinforced, and will decrease or cease when they are ignored or punished. *Social learning theory* tells us that people learn how to behave through social experiences such as observing others, imitating, being shown or assisted, practicing, getting feedback, and being rewarded and punished for behaving in particular ways.

*Program integrity*

Program integrity refers to the extent to which a program is being run as it was originally intended. It encompasses many things, such as how closely a program adheres to its underlying theory and principles, how strictly its objectives are implemented, and how tightly or effectively the program is managed.
Program responsivity

Program responsivity refers to how well a program actually ‘reaches’ and makes sense to its intended participants. A highly responsive program is able to adjust to the differing needs and learning styles of its participants, including differences arising from gender, culture, language and disability.

Often there is a tension between program integrity and program responsivity. On one hand there is a risk that adjusting programs to make them more responsive can alter underlying principles and practices in ways that reduce the program’s integrity and allow it to drift from its original design and intentions. On the other hand, there is a risk that adhering too rigidly to a program’s original model can prevent programs from effectively reaching certain subgroups of participants. This is a particular risk if program models are narrowly focused, and/or if participant subgroups differ a lot from the cultural framework within which the original model was developed – an important point that we will return to later in this report.
BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

What are cognitive skills programs all about?
Cognitive skills programs (CSPs) are based on extensive research showing a link between offending behaviour and deficits in skills for dealing effectively with everyday problems. CSPs rest on the assumption that addressing these deficits will reduce recidivism risk (eg. Duggan & Latham 2001; Glud & Travers 2001; McGuire & Hatcher 2001; all cited in Bartholomew, Carvalho & James, 2004).

Most cognitive Skills Programs (CSPs) are based on James McGuire's Offence-Focused Problem Solving Program (2000), developed in the United Kingdom. This program is designed to teach participants a range of skills in problem-solving, self-management, social interaction and values. Learning strategies include modeling, discussion, role play and homework assignments. The CSP especially encourages offenders to practice applying the skills to problems they encounter in their daily lives, including those related to their offending behaviour.

Key authors of the CSP model note that it would be unwise to assume this program will be equally suitable for all offenders. In particular, they caution that it may need modification to be effective with Indigenous people, women, young offenders, persons with disabilities and persons from non-English speaking backgrounds.

The Corrections Victoria cognitive skills program

Corrections Victoria purchased James McGuire's Offence-Focused Problem Solving Program (2000), modified it to suit a mainstream Australian audience, and renamed it the Cognitive Skills Program (CSP). Its basic parameters remain the same as McGuire's original model.

The prison-based version of the CSP is 60 hours in length, usually delivered in two-hour sessions at a rate of two to four sessions per week. The community-based version is 51 hours, and is delivered in a more flexible format. In keeping with international principles of best practice, the CSP is intended for moderate to high risk offenders, and is delivered prior to offence-specific programs, because it provides a strong foundation for further treatment. Therefore, similar to approaches in Canada and the United Kingdom, the CSP in Victoria is a prerequisite for entry into specialized offending behaviour programs that target violence, sex offending and drug and alcohol abuse.

One of the many important issues for maintaining the CSP’s integrity is to standardize its delivery across locations. Training and supervision of facilitators is an important part of this equation. Corrections Victoria’s Program Specifications for the CSP stipulate that facilitators should receive five to eight days of training, including at least two that are activity-based. They should also receive supervision from Senior Psychologists on average every six sessions, plus ongoing internal monitoring.
Evaluations of cognitive skills programs

Outcome evaluations of CSPs

Evaluations of cognitive skills programs are still at an early stage in the literature. Most published evaluation studies have been undertaken in the United Kingdom and Canada. No outcomes have yet been published in Australia. One recent New Zealand evaluation study of the Canadian ‘Straight Thinking’ CSP reported a very modest reduction in recidivism that did not reach statistical significance when prisoners who undertook the program were compared against a control group (New Zealand Department of Corrections website, 2004).

According to Howells, Heseltine, Sarre et al (2004), the most recent evaluations of CSPs in the United Kingdom are somewhat cautious in their findings of reduced recidivism, and this has been particularly the case since the development and use of an accreditation system. This is a curious finding. Given that accreditation standards are designed to safeguard program integrity, higher levels of program integrity would be expected to produce stronger outcomes in areas such as reduced recidivism. This finding underscores the importance of evaluation to establish whether this kind of program is effective with Australian criminal justice populations, before fully embracing the model in Victoria.

The most comprehensive CSP evaluation to date was a Canadian study, undertaken by Porporino & Robinson (1995, in Howells et al 2000). Post-release conviction rates of over 4000 offenders who undertook a prison-based CSP were compared against a waiting list control group. Key findings were as follows:

- Overall reductions in recidivism were quite modest: those who did the CSP were re-convicted at an 11-20% lower rate than those who did not do the program;
- Offenders assessed as high risk showed the least benefit, whereas medium and lower risk offenders showed stronger benefits;
- Offenders assessed as having a moderate intensity of needs showed greatest gains compared to offenders from ‘low’ and ‘high needs’ groups;
- Violent offenders, drug-related offenders and especially sex offenders demonstrated more positive outcomes than offenders convicted of ‘acquisitive’ (e.g. property) crimes’ although some other studies have contradicted this;
- Greater improvements occurred when the program was run in community settings as opposed to prisons;
- Aboriginal (Native American) offenders showed no benefit from participating in the CSP.

The latter finding is very important in the context of the present study. Certainly it suggests that Corrections Victoria is on the right track for seeking to modify and evaluate the CSP for Koori offenders.

Qualitative and process evaluations of CSPs

A study by Clarke, Simmonds & Wydall (2004) examined various program processes and how they were experienced by different stakeholder groups in the implementation of CSPs in the United Kingdom. In addition, interviews were
undertaken with several offenders who subsequently re-offended, and several who desisted from further offending. Relevant findings are as follows:

- A two-week facilitator training course was considered too long, and did not focus enough on directly practicing the delivery of program activities;
- Prisoners and prison staff reported a range of short term benefits for prisoners who completed the CSP, including improved behaviour, more self confidence, better literacy and stronger interpersonal skills;
- The CSP also helped prepare prisoners for other offending behaviour programs;
- There was a lack of institutional support at some locations, with negative consequences including poor morale and retention of staff, and a lower quality of program delivery;
- Program managers had a key role in promoting a rehabilitation-focused culture that was supportive of the CSP;
- Prisoner motivation to change was a key factor in successful program participation;
- Motivation levels and resettlement (community re-integration) issues were key factors determining whether or not people re-offended upon release from prison.

The connections between re-integration issues and re-conviction deserve some exploration in relation to the CSP. From Clarke et al (2004):

> Reconvicted program graduates said the reasons why the programs had not prevented re-offending included resettlement difficulties, addiction problems and failing to appreciate that skills had to be actively applied to everyday problems. In contrast, desisting program graduates... were aware that they had to monitor themselves and apply their skills daily. *They had also established important ‘anchor points’ in the community such as securing accommodation, obtaining a job or a place on a training course and maintaining stable supportive personal relationships* (italics added). This group felt that the programs had worked for them because they had reached a stage in their lives at which they realized they genuinely wanted to change (pp 3).

This passage illustrates a robust mainstream research finding about recidivism: that re-integration and addiction problems contribute strongly to re-offending, and that stable post-release environments contribute to desistance. Clarke et al's findings would suggest that significant re-integration and/or addiction problems can erode or 'undo' the positive impacts of CSPs, including motivation to apply the skills and reduced rates of re-offending.

This finding holds serious implications for Indigenous offenders, since research within and beyond Australia has consistently found that they experience more severe needs in the areas of drug and alcohol addiction and community re-integration than non-Indigenous offenders (eg Jones, Masters, Moulday and Griffiths, 2002). Thus any benefits of the CSP for Indigenous offenders may be undermined unless the substance abuse problems and barriers to community re-integration are also effectively addressed.
For Koori offenders, these findings call for a CSP model that includes a strong practical emphasis on learning to solve real-life re-integration problems, including those related to substance abuse. At a broader level, these findings also call for dedicated transitional, re-integration and substance abuse programs in addition to cognitive skills programs.

Turning now to local evaluations of the CSP model, Corrections Victoria has commissioned two such evaluations of the statewide implementation of the McGuire (2000) CSP model. Undertaken by Bartholomew, Carvalho & James (2004) the findings of these two reports have been condensed into a single document for internal use by Corrections Victoria (Birgden, 2004), and this document has been our primary source.

Bartholomew et al’s evaluations examined the extent to which the CSPs have adhered to the Program Specifications developed by Corrections Victoria, thus providing a valuable external check on program integrity. The findings were detailed and extensive. Below we have summarized those directly relevant to the present study.

Achievements of the mainstream Corrections Victoria CSP:

- The program has been implemented in ways that are largely consistent with best practice principles.
- The majority of staff reported positive attitudes towards the program and felt that most concerns had been dealt with as effectively as possible.
- The participation of prison officers in the groups as Program Support Officers (PSOs) had positive impacts, including breaking down traditional divisions between custodial and treatment staff, and encouraging program participants to practice their skills in the broader prison environment.
- Most staff across Corrections Victoria had received training and education about offender rehabilitation by the time the CSPs were implemented, thus setting a foundation for institutional support for the program.
- Most facilitators were satisfied with the level of clinical supervision they received.

Areas for improvement:

- More information about the Reducing Re-offending Framework in general and the CSP in particular was needed for Corrections Victoria staff; the shift in culture to a rehabilitation model was attempted too quickly and thus there was a lack of full understanding and support in some areas
- A more rapid and consistent flow of information from Head Office was desired by facilitators, including the timely provision of program materials
- There were concerns about role conflicts for facilitators, and a perception that Program Support Officers in the prisons needed a higher level of skills. Program specifications for PSO training were not consistently adhered to
- Problems with the intensity and content of facilitator training were identified, in particular a need for more training on group process issues, and more intensive training for PSOs
- Most facilitators reported deviating from the manual, sometimes in major ways, to contextualize the content, and make it more user-friendly and
strengths-focused. Management staff at Head Office were more likely to be concerned that program integrity was being compromised by these changes, whereas Senior Psychologists at the prison locations were more likely to support the changes, on the grounds of maximizing program responsivity.

- There was a perception that the Adult Parole Board places too much emphasis on the CSP, and that this conflicts with the program specification that participation be voluntary. It was also recognized that currently there are few other statewide offender rehabilitation programs for the Board to refer to. A need was identified for the Board to be given clearer information about the purpose of the CSP and the entry criteria.

**Rationale for modifying the Cognitive Skills Program for Koori prisoners**

In the simplest possible terms, we contend the CSP needs to be modified for Koori offenders because in its existing form, it is unlikely to have the desired impact of reducing recidivism. Two emerging areas of research findings support this contention:

(i) **Mainstream correctional rehabilitation programs based on CBT - of which the CSP is but one - generally produce poorer outcomes for Indigenous compared to non-Indigenous offenders.**

Such findings have begun to emerge in evaluations of CSPs, such as the Porporino & Robinson’s (1995) study reported above. Poorer outcomes have also been suggested in relation to longer-established CBT-based programs, including sex offender treatment, substance abuse programs and alternatives to violence, for Indigenous populations across several different countries. These include Aboriginal offenders in Australia (e.g. Day, 2002; Mals, Howells & Day, 2000), Maori offenders in New Zealand (e.g. Larsen, Hudson, Robertson & Hillman, 1998) and Native American offenders in Canada (e.g. Ellerby & Stonechild, 1998). Not only are Indigenous offenders less likely to enter such programs in the first place; they are also less likely to complete them, more likely to have difficulty relating to the program content, and are overall more likely to re-offend upon release from prison (Jones, Masters, Moulday & Griffiths, 2002, Howells et al 2004).

Collectively these research findings strongly indicate a ‘lack of fit’, or a poor cultural match, between what Indigenous offenders need and what many CBT-based offending behaviour programs offer. This reflects an unintended but strongly evident ethnocentric and assimilationist bias in many mainstream programs. Westernised values and world views are often directly and indirectly imposed, and frequently differ from Indigenous perspectives, belief systems and ways of doing things (Day, 2002). We would also suggest that this lack of fit can be made more extreme by two factors: first is the extent of ‘differentness’ between the particular mainstream culture and the Indigenous culture, which in Victoria, is significant. Second is the extent to which the mainstream program adheres to its own cultural norms and values, or conversely the degree of flexibility it provides for acknowledging other world views. We contend that the efforts to protect the integrity of the mainstream CSP - such as accreditation systems in the United Kingdom - may have made it quite...
rigid in this regard, thus unintentionally increasing rather than decreasing its appropriateness for Indigenous populations.

We recognise that it is important to exercise caution when making generalizations about Indigenous offenders, particularly when much of the research has occurred with overseas Indigenous populations, particularly Canadian Native Americans, rather than local Koori communities. There are, however, some compelling parallels to suggest that the Australian Indigenous experience with the CSP would echo the Canadian Indigenous experience. These include similarities in the historical legacy of dispossession, high levels of Indigenous overrepresentation in the criminal justice system, culture-specific needs that are not recognized by mainstream assessment and treatment processes, and higher levels of Indigenous offender risk and need compared to non-Indigenous offenders (eg Jones, Masters, Griffiths & Moulday, 2002).

(ii) Indigenous outcomes improve when culturally appropriate programs are provided, either through adaptation of mainstream CBT programs, or provision of culture-specific alternatives.

Anecdotal evidence abounds in this area; however empirical research is just beginning to emerge in the literature. Initial outcomes are very promising. Strong research designs are being implemented in the New Zealand correctional system, including several controlled studies comparing outcomes between Indigenous Maori offenders who have either completed mainstream CBT programs, completed Indigenous-focused programs, and/or not undertaken either type of program.

For example, at a 2-4½ year follow-up, Maori prisoners who had undertaken a culturally adapted CBT sex offender program were re-convicted at approximately one third the rate of Maori prisoners who undertook the mainstream version of the program (4.4% versus 13.6%). Both groups did better than Maori offenders who received no program (reconviction rate of 22%). Interestingly, non-Indigenous offenders - who were allowed to attend the Maori culture program if they wished - also did better than those who did mainstream program on its own (New Zealand Department of Corrections website, 2004).

In another evaluation study, recidivism rates were compared between Maori men who completed residential violence prevention program and a control group. The program is based on CBT principles, with a strong emphasis on Maori culture and protocol in its structure and delivery. At a 17-month follow-up, 25% of the treated group had been reconvicted of violent crimes, compared to 42% of the untreated group. At a 6 year follow-up, the equivalent figures were 58% and 78% respectively.

In view of the above findings, when a mainstream program such as CSP is made available to Indigenous offenders as is occurring here in Victoria, there is no question that it needs to be modified; the question is simply how much. Effective modification of the CSP will help reduce inequities that currently exist in the criminal justice system, and will provide a direct opportunity to reduce the recidivism rates of Indigenous prisoners and offenders in Victoria.
Corrections Victoria’s local response

How much modification of mainstream programs will be required in the Victoria Koori context? To guide our local response, important questions needed to be resolved about whether the CSP would require adaptation but not total re-development, or whether an entirely new, Indigenous-specific program needed to be developed and delivered instead.

In 2003, the current evaluation team was engaged to provide a scoping document to provide guidance on this matter (Jones & Atkinson, 2003). On the strength of research findings such as those summarized above, and on close consideration of the existing CSP manual, we recommended that the program be significantly adapted before being delivered to Koori participants. We did not recommend the program be completely re-developed or re-written in its entirety, because many concepts in the CSP are relevant to Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike (e.g. solving problems, negotiating conflicts). The key issue is how these concepts are characterized and delivered.

We also identified a number of features of the mainstream CSP that would be unlikely to transport well across the Australian Indigenous-non-Indigenous cultural divide. These are based on theoretical and empirical evidence in the literature (e.g. Day, 2000;, Howells, Day, Burne & Byrne, 1999), including a survey of Indigenous expert opinion undertaken by Mals, Howells & Day (2000). Summarized as follows, they are rephrased in terms of the kinds of adaptation the program would be likely to need:

Underlying assumptions

- A broader values position that recognises people’s connections to family and community needs to be promoted, rather than assuming that all participants hold an individualistic values orientation
- The cognitive-behavioural orientation needs to be broadened to include affective, spiritual and cultural dimensions
- Individual, family and community strengths need to be emphasized, alongside the existing emphasis on ‘fixing’ individual offenders’ skills deficits

Process issues: how the program is provided

- A greater emphasis on building group safety and trust will be required
- Potentially complex problems that involve family and community will need to be addressed, and in a manner that does not overwhelm participants
- Jargon and technical terms need to be removed, and replaced with informal language that includes Koori-specific concepts, phrases and ‘language words’
- Written work and other teaching strategies that require literacy need to be minimized and replaced with activity-based, experiential, visual and verbal learning strategies that are consistent with Koori tradition
- The program will need to be delivered by Koori facilitators, preferably in a co-facilitation format with Corrections Victoria psychologists.

Content issues: What the program consists of

- The program needs to include an exploration of coping styles. Many Koori offenders will have been raised with coping styles that assist survival in the short term but are destructive or self-defeating in the longer term. Such
coping styles are a response to negative social forces including dispossession, poverty and discrimination

- The program needs to teach persistence as a problem-solving skill, as the current content appears to omit or only minimally address two important, standard components of problem solving: (i) monitoring the success of a chosen solution to a problem and (ii) trying out others if the first is unsuccessful. We contended that these skills may be especially important because Koori offenders are likely to be dealing problems in the ‘real world’ that are particularly complex and challenging, and also because many Koori offenders will have adopted coping styles that put them at risk of giving up prematurely and returning to old patterns of thinking, in turn placing them at a higher risk of re-offending

- The program material needs to be more closely tailored to individual, family and community concerns that are occurring in participants’ real-life circumstances and post-release environments. While the existing manual often encourages the use of examples from participants’ daily lives, few of the prompts or examples bring family concerns into the foreground. Furthermore, as far as we could discern, none of the existing material reflected an understanding of the interplay between individual, family and community problems that often dominate the lives of Koori offenders.

These guidelines provided a starting point for the adaptation of the existing manual, described next.

The adaptation process

A Koori registered psychologist was engaged by Corrections Victoria to undertake the adaptation of the mainstream CSP. She spoke with several Koori community members, seeking their advice and guidance, and engaged two Koori elders to oversee her work and ensure it met Koori community standards of cultural integrity. One elder was male and one was female, reflecting the fact that she was adapting both the women’s and men’s CSP manuals.

The terms of reference for the adaptation process were negotiated with Corrections Victoria and the program’s original author, James McGuire in the United Kingdom. It was stated that the adaptations could alter the style of program delivery (e.g. language, content of examples), but should not alter required sessions, session topics, objectives and key activities. It is noteworthy that the psychologist and her consulting elders indicated that this caused some frustration with preference of more open terms of reference.

The manual was reviewed in its entirety and a wide range of adaptations were made. While a full accounting of the changes are beyond the scope of this report, some key examples are provided below:

- The first session began with the Tindale map showing Australia according to Aboriginal tribal boundaries of land and country, and group members introduced themselves by showing and discussing where they came from. The map was displayed in all sessions thereafter.
- Each session began with a Talking Circle, which included reflection of week since last session.
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- Flags were displayed in each session (Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal)
- A debriefing and thank you were provided at end of each session.
- A Talking Stick was introduced as a tool to assist communication, connection and participation of all group members in discussions and debriefing.
- A traditional, gender-based culturally relevant activity was integrated into the program: inscribing a shield for the men, and basket weaving for the women. It was intended for traditional activities to occur during sessions when appropriate, and between sessions too, if desired.
- Three boxes were provided in the Aboriginal colours of red, black and yellow. Group members were encouraged to write down and ‘post’ details of offences into the red box, worries into the black box and feedback into the yellow box, for use in subsequent group activities.
- Many examples provided in the manual were changed to reflect Aboriginal interests, concerns and community conditions.
- Content of many role plays was changed to reflect issues and concerns more likely to arise in the Aboriginal community.
- Different videos were shown, reflecting Aboriginal content. These included ‘Who’s the Loser’ and ‘Yolongu Boy’.
- Many literacy-based activities were altered to incorporate other modes of learning. For example in one activity group members were encouraged to discuss feelings by selecting coloured sheets of paper where different colours represented different emotions, and then speak about them.
- Other literacy-based activities were kept in, but their content was adapted or extended; for example a new section of ‘cultural burden’ items was added to a mainstream Problem Checklist.
- It was intended that the final session of the program incorporate some elements of a ‘rite of passage’, including a ceremonial burning of the contents of the boxes, and the formal presentation of certificates for graduation.

There were also many parts of the program that were not adapted, and therefore remained the same as the mainstream CSP, particularly in latter program sessions.

The adaptation process took approximately 12 months from the psychologist’s initial engagement to the initiation of the first pilot group. This length of time reflects a number of practical and logistical factors. The psychologist consulted with many Koori people throughout Victoria who had been in contact with the correctional system. Also she has a full time job and a family, and she is the only registered Koori psychologist in Victoria. In situations like this, the number of demands are often immense, and this needed to be taken into account in the time frame of this study.

**Cultural perspectives guiding our evaluation approach**

The Koori adaptation of the CSP could have been evaluated in a range of different ways. We chose to focus on evaluating program integrity, offenders’ skills acquisition, and the perspectives of facilitators, offenders and prison management staff.

This approach is a blend of Indigenous-focused and mainstream approaches to program evaluation. For example, the concept of evaluating program integrity is part
of a very Westernised approach to program development and evaluation, and so too
the concept of pre- and post-testing to evaluate the extent to which specific
cognitive skills have been learned. Both these areas of evaluation will yield
information that is important to the government stakeholders who fund and manage
the CSP, and will help answer questions that are typically asked of programs from
government and mainstream research perspectives. The evaluation strategy also,
however, includes the collection of qualitative information through focus groups and
discussions with key cultural informants, a strategy which is often employed in
Indigenous-focused research. This will supplement the quantitative information and
will also allow us to address at least some of the questions likely to be asked of the
program by Indigenous stakeholders.

Ideally, we would have included more strongly Indigenous-focused evaluation
strategies, such as those currently being employed by Maori researchers in New
Zealand. These include evaluating programs in terms of their cultural integrity (for
example cultural competence/safety of content and delivery), along with detailed,
comprehensive offender feedback. We were unable to evaluate the cultural integrity
of the CSP because criteria relevant to Australian Aboriginal cultural perspectives are
yet to be developed in written form and, as a major undertaking, are beyond the
scope of this study. And we were unable to gather detailed, face-to-face prisoner
feedback because this evaluation was not funded at a level to allow offender focus
groups. Instead we relied on participants’ written feedback and gained as much
information from facilitators as possible, using them as a ‘conduit’ to us for the
participants’ points of view in addition to their own.

Our evaluation approach was also consistent with national guidelines for ethical
conduct in health research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and is
outlined in the Methodology Section next.
**METHODOLOGY**

The evaluation methodology adopted in this report combined several research techniques. These are subsumed under key headings including the subjects/stakeholders that were associated with the program; materials developed by the Evaluation Team to measure program responses; and evaluation procedure used to undertake key research tasks. Integrated with these key areas are the specific phases that the study followed; namely, pre-pilot stage that involved adaptation of the McGuire model to the Koori Cognitive Skills Program (CSP); pilot stage that focused on delivery of the program including feedback on program integrity and responsiveness and if skills acquisition occurred; and post-pilot stage that involved focus group discussion and interviews with program facilitators and relevant prison support staff. By way of introduction, specific tasks that Correction Victoria’s project brief asked Evaluators to fulfill are included in italics below.

*Phase 1 will consider the methodology and development of tools to measure outcomes, including pre- and post- program testing; this phase will coincide with Phase 1 of the redevelopment of the Cognitive Skills Programs for female and male Koori prisoners.*

*Phase 2 will be the testing phase, entailing the administration of selected tools at appropriate points in the piloting of the programs.*

*Phase 3 will entail collating and analysis of the results, and feeding same into the final version of the Cognitive Skills Programs for female and male Koori prisoners.*

1. **Subjects/ Stakeholders**

The study’s target population for the evaluation comprised the following stakeholder groups:

- Indigenous male and female inmates who chose to participate in the three pilots,
- The three non Indigenous facilitators and thee Indigenous facilitators who delivered the training and who also participated in the pre-pilot training phase,
- Program Reference Group comprised Clinical Services Staff from Head Office, Indigenous staff of Indigenous Programs and Strategies Unit, particularly during the pre-pilot phase when the Contractor adapted the McGuire Model.
- Prisoner Support Staff such as non Indigenous Prison Officers who attended training sessions at Loddon and Barwon, Indigenous Liaison Officers (non Indigenous Officers) who attended sessions at Barwon and Social Wellbeing Worker at DPFC who participated in certain training sessions.
- Prison administration included Program Managers and Senior Psychologists that were interviewed in the post-pilot stage for their feedback on noticeable benefits from the program for prisoners and prison institution.

2. **Materials**

The Evaluators prepared their data gathering tools during the pre-pilot Reference Group Meetings. This was done in consultation with Reference Group members (including Clinical Services Branch staff of CV) and Contractor who adapted the Cognitive Skills program for Indigenous female and male prisoners. The Evaluators also participated in Reference Group discussion leading up to the final version of the
Training Program. This also gave the Evaluators useful insights into their recommended adaptations of the McGuire model.

To ensure that all evaluation materials were accessible and manageable, the Evaluators developed an instructional Evaluation Handbook for the Facilitator Team that included all 30 sessions and pre- and post-test tools. After discussion with the Reference Group this handbook was introduced in the Contractors pre-training session with chosen service providers who were particularly trained on the administration of all evaluation tools as part of their record keeping tasks.

The particular data gathering tools, usually in the form of questionnaires, consisted of:

- Pre- and post-program testing. (At beginning and end of program)
- Facilitator Program Feedback Sheets (Weekly during pilot phase)
- Problem Solving Inventory tool (PSI) with supplementary questions added by the Evaluators (Intermittently during pilot phase).
- Guided instructions for Facilitator Videoing of acquisition of core Problem Solving skills (mid point)
- Participant Feedback Forms (Final Session)
- Prison Program Staff Feedback (Post pilot phase)
- CV’s standard Cognitive Skills feedback sheets for Facilitators (Final Session)

Scheduled into the program for Facilitators were recordkeeping deadlines and when these had to be on-forwarded to Evaluators.

3. Procedure

As mentioned earlier the evaluation procedure followed specific stages of the program with an emphasis on the pilot and post-pilot phases. The pilot phase didn’t proceed until the Reference Group was satisfied with the materials developed by the Contractor and Evaluation Team. This could be also described as the implementation or training phase which during this stage the Evaluators relied on Facilitators completing their weekly program feedback sheets and returning other records as required in the handbook.

In the pilot stage the main aim for the Evaluators was to compare the actual activities of each session against intended objectives and activities described in the Course Manual, in order to ascertain “to what extent the pilot program had been delivered as intended?” This is commonly referred to as ‘program integrity’. An associated concept, ‘program responsiveness’, examined “to what extent the program was able to respond to the specific needs of the target group. These are discussed in the Results Section.

In summary the evaluation endeavored to measure particular program areas: program integrity and responsivity, skills acquisition and application. The facilitators, participants and staff associated with the program provided most of the feedback here. Towards the end of the pilot stage and after discussion with Head Office staff it was decided that Prison Management staff would also be interviewed in the post-pilot phase to examine what benefits resulting from the CSP were noticed among participants and for the pilot institutions.
Five key research questions guided the evaluation such as the following:

1. To what extent was the Koori CSP run the way it was designed to be run?
2. To what extent did the participants actually learn the skills that were taught in the program?
3. What can we learn about this program from the facilitators?
4. What can we learn about this program from prison administration?
5. What can we learn from this program from the participants themselves?

**National Guidelines for Ethical Research with ATSI Peoples.**

Our evaluation approach was also consistent with national guidelines for ethical conduct in health research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2003). Potentially relevant to this study are the following:

1. **Responsible inclusion of Indigenous researchers & cultural informants**

   The evaluation team consists of one Koori and one non-Koori researcher, of equal status in the study. We were equally informed of the purposes of the research, funding sources, and intended uses of the data, and equally paid for the work. In addition, cultural informants had a key role in the study.

   We also ensured we could honour the time commitments and standards of quality required for this project. This was based on the understanding that the disadvantaged status of Koori offenders leaves them with more to lose if research is undertaken hastily, and more to gain if it is done well.

2. **Methods to make ethnocentric biases explicit in the work**

   Joint project design, full participation and frequent communication were key research strategies to address this issue. For example we were both clear that the original program had a strong ethnocentric (mainstream) bias prior to adaptation. Therefore we negotiated methods for evaluating the adapted version that would meet the expectations of Koori stakeholders as well as government sponsors.

3. **Unique concerns of consent & safety**

   Feedback on our proposed evaluation approach was gained from the Reference Group and program facilitators, and we revised it to the satisfaction of both Koori and non-Koori stakeholders. Informed consent about participation in the evaluation was gained from the Koori prisoners, and was communicated to them by Koori facilitators in language they could understand. Efforts were made to avoid procedures that would violate ethical or cultural values held by the Victorian Koori community.
iv. Credit and information distribution issues

An ethical cornerstone of cross cultural research is that it bring some tangible benefit to the community being studied. The results of this study will be made available to all stakeholder groups including the offenders. We also sought to meet with the participants directly to describe the findings in person, but funding constraints ruled this out. The study includes recommendations that will help direct ongoing efforts to make other Corrections Victoria’s offending behaviour programs suitable for Koori offenders. Benefits to the community should include increased access to culturally relevant programs and a stronger foundation for reducing recidivism.

Finally, considerations about publishing the study will be negotiated with all key stakeholder groups. There will be no suppression or dilution of the findings to protect political or personal interests, and credit will be appropriately shared.

Data collation, analysis and report preparation.

After systematically collating and analyzing all study data, the Evaluators prepared their draft report for presentation to the Reference Group. Subject to comments and feedback on the Draft Report’s findings these in turn form the Final Report for presentation to Correction’s Victoria.
RESULTS

Section 1: Program Integrity

We evaluated the following elements of program integrity for the Koori CSP: Facilitator compliance with record keeping, group attendance rates, adherence to session plans, completion of individual session activities, reasons for deviations from the manual and/or failure to complete activities, level of difficulty for facilitators in implementing the sessions, and program timing or scheduling.

Facilitator compliance with record-keeping

Records maintained by facilitators were an important source of data for this evaluation. Consultation and training on the evaluation tools were provided for facilitators in the pre-pilot stage, and data collection materials were furnished to them in an evaluation handbook prior to commencement of the programs.

Overall, facilitator compliance with record-keeping was uneven. Also, a significant amount of the data that was collected was forwarded to the evaluation team much later than the established deadlines, and only after prompting from Project Managers at Head Office and/or the evaluation team. This has had a significant impact on the integrity of the data we have reported, resulting either in gaps, or tentative rather than confident conclusions in some areas. It also had an impact on the cost-effectiveness of this project for the evaluators, since a significant amount of time had to be invested in ‘chasing the data’.

Complete or near-complete records were eventually collected in many key areas of this evaluation.

Attendance rates and attrition

To capture program attendance we measured actual numbers attending the sessions against numbers expected or scheduled to attend, represented in Table 1. We also established the reasons for absences.

The results reflected:
- A high attendance rate for the three pilot locations, ranging from 83% at DPFC to 94% at Barwon, and averaging 91%
- Minor absences were attributed to medical or behavioural concerns.

There was very little attrition from the groups. The numbers at Loddon dropped from 13 to 10 in the first few sessions, and there was no attrition from the other two groups.
Evaluation of the Koori Cognitive Skills Program Pilots for Corrections Victoria

Table 1: Program attendance rates at the pilot locations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location and facilitators</th>
<th>Group size</th>
<th>Attendance rate</th>
<th>Reasons for Absence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Loddon</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>No reasons given.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate Andison - NIF</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Berg - IF</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (DPFC)</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>Medical. Placed in management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monica Bragg (later replaced by Kate Andison) - NIF</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daphne Milward - IF</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynn Killeen - PSO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Barwon</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>Unwell. Placed in management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veronica Knox - NIF</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syd Jackson - IF</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Matthews - PSO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MEAN TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Group size is an important variable. Facilitators agreed that an appropriate size for this type of program should be up to 12 participants, and that exceeding these limits may compromise group and program viability. It was also apparent that defining a minimum can create anxiety about the program potentially being discontinued for members of groups that are relatively small to begin with.

Adherence to program manual

In the Evaluation Handbook that each Facilitator received they were asked to report on the extent to which they adhered to their session plans. The results of these are contained in Table 2. Barwon led other locations in its adherence to the plan, reporting that 19 of sessions adhered to the plan, 8 followed most of the plan while 2 followed some of the plan. Barwon like other locations did not indicate it ‘followed none of the plan’.

Table 2: Adherence to Program Manual

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Followed all of plan</th>
<th>Followed most of plan</th>
<th>Followed some of plan</th>
<th>Followed none of plan</th>
<th>Missing data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loddon</td>
<td>7 sessions</td>
<td>16 sessions</td>
<td>7 sessions</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPFC</td>
<td>9 sessions</td>
<td>13 sessions</td>
<td>5 sessions</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3 sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barwon</td>
<td>19 sessions</td>
<td>8 sessions</td>
<td>2 sessions</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>35 sessions</td>
<td>37 sessions</td>
<td>14 sessions</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4 sessions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DPFC and Loddon reported that while just under a third of their sessions followed all of the plan, just on half of the session followed most of the plan and the remainder followed some of the plan.

When all locations are combined the results show a significant majority of sessions followed all or most of the plan.

Completion of individual session activities

We then looked more closely at adherence to session plans by examining facilitators’ adherence to each of the activities prescribed in the sessions. For each of the 30
sessions, facilitators were asked to indicate whether they completed each activity outlined in the manual. Findings are summarized below in Table 3.

Table 3: Completion of individual session activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Fully completed</th>
<th>Partly completed</th>
<th>Not completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LODDON</td>
<td>65% of activities</td>
<td>11% of activities</td>
<td>24% of activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPFC</td>
<td>70% of activities</td>
<td>10% of activities</td>
<td>20% of activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BARWON</td>
<td>84% of activities</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>16% of activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key findings:
- The majority of activities across all locations were fully completed.
- Barwon reported the highest number of fully completed activities and the lowest number of activities not completed.
- Loddon reported a greater number of activities that were not completed.

Reasons why activities were not completed

A detailed account of why particular activities were not completed is provided in Appendix 2, along with specific session numbers. Findings in brief are summarized in Table 3a below.

Table 3a: Reasons for non-completion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Loddon</th>
<th>DPFC</th>
<th>Barwon</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient time</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials not provided</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material considered inappropriate</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did it a different way, eg as a group</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material difficult to understand</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>33</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key findings:
- Insufficient time was the most common reason for not completing activities, followed by ‘materials not provided’ and ‘material considered inappropriate’
- ‘Materials not provided’ referred to issues like videotapes not being provided with the program kit
- DPFC had the lowest rate of activities not completed, and Loddon had the highest.

Level of difficulty experienced by facilitators in implementing the program

Both Indigenous and non Indigenous facilitators were asked to rate the degree of difficulty they faced in implementing the each session. The results are summarized in Table 4.
Table 4: Level of difficulty experienced by facilitators in implementing the sessions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Facilitator</th>
<th>Extremely difficult</th>
<th>Quite Difficult</th>
<th>'In the middle'</th>
<th>Quite Easy</th>
<th>Extremely Easy</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LODDON:</td>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Indigenous</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPFC:</td>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Indigenous</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BARWON:</td>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Indigenous</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean total</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>37.7%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key findings from this table:

- Overall, facilitators experienced most sessions as ‘quite easy’ or ‘very easy’ to implement.
- Facilitators failed to provide just over one third of the data across all sessions, and the great majority of missing data were ratings by two of the three Indigenous facilitators.
- At Barwon, where both facilitators provided almost all the data, there was very little difference between them on how easy or difficult they found the material to implement.
- No sessions were experienced as ‘extremely difficult’ to implement.
- A content analysis of the sessions rated ‘quite difficult’ established the following reasons:
  - ‘Dry’ and ‘boring’ and/or ‘lacking in initiative’ (sessions 1,3 and 6)
  - ‘Irrelevant’ (session 25)
  - Too complex and/or poorly written (sessions 7 and 25)
  - Tensions or resistance in the group arising from the above factors (sessions 6 and 25).
- Reasons for sessions being experienced as ‘quite easy’ and ‘very easy’ included:
  - Talking circles and discussions raised issues that culturally improved the process.
  - Practical ‘hands-on’ exercises such as role plays and brainstorming were preferred to written exercises.
  - Participants enjoyed group process variables, such as social interaction, and sharing each other’s opinions and personal experiences.
Timing and intensity of program

There was quite a bit of slippage in starting the program on time, particularly at the redevelopment drafting stage, but once underway each location adapted their own session timetable. Barwon and DPFC used the regularly format of 2-3 sessions per week, with occasional full day sessions (2 hours morning, 2 hours afternoon). Loddon undertook a larger proportion of full-day sessions. Anecdotally, these were very draining, and facilitators indicated that two hour sessions two to three times a week is preferable when possible. All locations had completed their full 30 sessions by early August.

Section 2: Skills acquisition

This section of the results investigated the extent to which the Koori CSP groups learned the skills that were taught in the program. We collected a combination of psychometric assessment and videotaped role play data.

Psychometric data

Description and rationale for the psychometric instrument

The Problem Solving Inventory (PSI; Heppner, 1988) was used as a pre-and post-program psychometric tool to assess participants’ acquisition of skills taught in the Koori CSP. It is a 33 item self report questionnaire that requires quantitative responses on point Likert scales, anchored at each end where 1 represents ‘strongly agree’ and 6 represents ‘strongly disagree. Sample questions are: ‘I have the ability to solve most problems even though initially no solution is immediately apparent’ (Item 9) and ‘After I have solved a problem, I do not analyse what went right or what went wrong’ (Item 4). As the latter item shows, some of the questions are worded in a manner that is reversed, to discourage response bias.

It was recognized by the evaluation team and the Reference Group that the PSI is a very Westernised assessment instrument which, due to its psychometric properties, could not be altered without affecting its validity and/or reliability. There were extended discussions about whether or not to use it, and the collective decision to include it in the study was made on the following grounds:

- More ecologically valid measures such as role play scenarios were considered even more problematic than a pencil-and-paper measure at the pre-program stage, because participants would be expected to try and publicly demonstrate skills they had not been taught yet. It was felt that this could be damaging on at least two grounds: first, many Koori prisoners will have had negative experiences in the education system, including negative connotations about being ‘tested’ and being perceived to fail. Second, the early stage of program was considered an important time to build trust, cohesion and a sense of safety in the group, and this would be undermined by this kind of activity early in the program. Thus while role play behaviour ratings were integrated into the evaluation at the mid and end-points of the program, there was still a need to capture objective information about participants’ skills levels upon entry to the program.

- There is a legitimate need to establish whether there is any value in using such an instrument as the PSI with a Koori prisoner sample, to guide the
assessment decisions made by others in the future. This is especially important given the tendency of CBT-based programs to somewhat over-rely on self report questionnaires when measuring outcomes, and the paucity of cross-cultural validity and norming studies on many such questionnaires.

- There is a legitimate need for quantitative data in this evaluation, so that our assessment of participants’ skills acquisition is not completely dependent on informed but potentially subjective impressions of facilitators and others.

We also added three questions at the end of the PSI, asking participants to indicate the extent to which they found the questions (i) easy or difficult, (ii) making sense, and (iii) relevant in the context of their own lives. Therefore we provided an immediate opportunity for participants to evaluate the PSI themselves.

**Compliance level and findings**

There was a significant amount of missing data at each site. At Loddon, 70% of questionnaires were available. For Barwon the figure was 50%, and for DPFC, 40% (post-program only). The net result was 14 pre-program and 13 post-program questionnaires that could be scored. Raw data are provided in Appendix 3.

The minimum possible score for the PSI is 33, and the maximum possible is 198. Lower scores indicate better problem solving skills. This questionnaire has not been normed on criminal justice samples. However norms for ‘normal males’ are a mean of 77 and a standard deviation of 22.9, and for male outpatients, a mean of 98 and a standard deviation of 22.5. Our findings are summarized below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Mean PSI scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loddon</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPFC</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barwon</td>
<td>92.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean total</strong></td>
<td><strong>94.2</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results are difficult to interpret. The mean total PSI scores indicate that participants’ problem solving skills became marginally poorer after the program. This counterintuitive result was most evident at Loddon, whereas at Barwon the change in mean scores between pre- and post-program were in the expected direction.

When compared against existing norms, these data indicate that this sample of Koori prisoners have problem-solving skills within the normative range when compared against male outpatients, but somewhat poorer than observed for a non-clinical sample, both before and after undertaking the Koori CSP.

**Participants’ own assessment of the PSI**

As indicated earlier, we provided three supplementary questions to the PSI, to allow the participants to tell us how appropriate this questionnaire was for them. These were: How easy or hard were these questions for you? How much sense did these questions make to you? How relevant were these questions to you and your situation? Participants responded on six-point rating scales, where 1=very hard/no sense/not relevant and 6=very easy/a lot of sense/very relevant. They also added
comments if they wished. We also combined the ratings across all three questions to produce an ‘overall appropriateness score’.

There was a significant amount of missing data, especially at the pre-program stage. Findings are summarized as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Mean ratings Qns 1-3</th>
<th>Combined mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How easy/hard?</td>
<td>How much sense?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loddon</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre:</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post:</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPFC</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre:</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post:</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barwon</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean totals</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key findings:
- The overall appropriateness scores fell at the midpoint on the scale at both the pre- and post-program stages. This indicates the PSI was perceived by participants as moderately easy, as making a moderate amount of sense and as moderately relevant to them.
- Undergoing the program made essentially no difference to the perceived level of appropriateness of the PSI.
- Across all three sites, ratings of the ease or difficulty of the PSI averaged ‘slightly hard’.
- Average ratings for how much sense the questions made fell within the range of ‘slightly easy’ to ‘slightly hard’.
- Similarly, perceived relevance of the questions also averaged within the range of ‘slightly easy’ to ‘slightly hard’.
- It is noteworthy that at least one of the questionnaires that could not be scored had entries that indicated the participant was making a stand against answering any PSI questions at all. Therefore if he and others who took a similar stance had been prepared to answer these three questions about the PSI, the overall findings might have ended up less positive.

Finally, a content analysis of participants’ additional qualitative comments about the PSI indicated the following:
- The women were more likely than the men to provide comments.
- There were 6 positive comments, reflecting that participants found the PSI ‘easy because our mindset has changed’, ‘straightforward’, or ‘relevant to the lifestyle I live’.
- There were 5 negative comments. These participants found the PSI difficult because of the wording, the scaled scoring, or because ‘we can’t deal with outside issues’.

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• There were two mixed comments, reflecting that the PSI questions were ‘relevant but complex’ and ‘relevant for understanding problems but hard for dealing with them’.

**Videotape data**

**Description and rationale**

There are three skills review points in the Koori CSP, at Sessions 15, 22 and 29. All involve structured activities such as role plays, allowing participants to practice the skills they are learning. These sessions offered natural opportunities for the evaluation team to assess the extent of skills acquisition by program participants.

There was consensus from the Reference Group that videotaping would be less intrusive than direct observation of these sessions by the evaluators. Both men’s groups provided their written informed consent for this to occur. The women, however, did not. As a less accurate but workable alternative, facilitators at DPFC undertook retrospective ratings of each participant’s level of skills acquisition, for Session 15 and Sessions 29. These ratings were completed during a focus group with evaluators after the program was completed.

**Compliance and results for the women (n=5)**

The two facilitators and the PSO collectively rated each individual in a yes/partial/no/not applicable format for the demonstration of each skill in Session 15 and Session 29. All five group participants took part in the activities of both sessions, with one exception. In Session 29, one of the women was unable to participate verbally because of a medical problem at the time; however she was present throughout and reportedly offered non-verbal support to her peers. The findings are summarized in Table 7.

**Table 7: Skills acquisition - Women**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Session 15</th>
<th>Session 29</th>
<th>Percentage to fully demonstrate each skill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify problems</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Define problems</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gather information</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize feelings</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generate options</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Means-ends thinking</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anticipate consequences</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make decisions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self management</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social interaction skills</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective taking</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict resolution</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportional totals</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Key points from this table:

- Overall a high level of skills acquisition was demonstrated, averaging 77% at Session 15 and 100% at Session 29.
- At Session 15 the simpler problem solving skills were more likely to be demonstrated than the complex ones.
- By the end of the program participants were able to demonstrate complex skills such as conflict resolution, whereas at the mid-point the level was more likely to be ‘partial’.
- It is noteworthy that at Session 15, even though the more complex skills had not yet been formally taught, partial demonstration was nevertheless recorded for all of them.
- Overall a higher level of skills acquisition was demonstrated at the end of the program than at the midpoint, with 100% for all skills that were recordable.

Cautionary points:

- The sample size is very small; therefore these data are preliminary at best.
- The skills review activities in Session 29 did not allow for all previously taught skills to be demonstrated (indicated by the high number of n/a ratings on the table). Thus there was little data available to establish whether the skills learned at Session 15 were maintained at Session 29.
- The data are based on retrospective ratings rather than being recorded at the time.
- The ratings are subjective; however it was positive to note that the facilitators and the PSO were in complete agreement almost every time.

*Compliance and results for the men (n=8)*

Although the men at Loddon and Barwon gave their consent to have parts of their sessions videotaped for this evaluation, their facilitators complied only partially with the videotaping tasks. No videotaped data was gathered at Loddon. One videotape was provided from Barwon for Session 15, but no comparison videotapes were made at Sessions 22 or 29. Reasons were not given in all instances, but one explanation was that while the videotape instructions were clearly provided in the Evaluation Handbook, those instructions were not also written into the session plan itself. It appears that the Barwon facilitators ‘worked this out’, and the Loddon facilitators did not.

This limits us to providing a ‘snapshot’ of the level of skills acquisition for the Barwon group at the mid-point of the program. By Session 15, the first eight skills had been covered (i.e. all steps of problem solving), but the four more complex skills of self-management, social interaction, perspective taking and conflict resolution had not yet been formally taught.

Upon viewing the videotape, another limitation became evident. It rapidly became clear that it was impossible to track each individual’s demonstration of the various skills, because only some of the group members were visible on camera. Instead, therefore, we estimated the proportion of the group overall to demonstrate each skill, based on a combination of visual cues and sound cues from the videotape. We used the following 5-point scale for these estimations:
Our criterion for a skill being successfully demonstrated was that the participant contributed verbally at least once in ways that either showed the skill directly, or showed a solid understanding of the skill being assessed. Findings are provided in Table 8.

Key points from this table:
- At the midpoint of the program, the overall level of skills acquisition at was between ‘half the group’ (rating of 3) and ‘most of the group’ (rating of 4).
- At least half the group demonstrated familiarity with all the skills for which opportunities were provided on the videotape.
- Even though the more complex skills had not yet been formally taught, a significant degree of demonstration of those skills nevertheless occurred at Session 15.

Cautionary points:
- The sample size was small (n=8 in this session), so the findings are very preliminary.
- Our criterion for scoring ‘yes’ that a skill had been demonstrated by a participant was generous; however given the limitations of the behaviour sample available to us, there was no other way to rate skills acquisition more precisely.

Table 8: Skills acquisition - Men

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Session 15 Group Ratings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify problems</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Define problems</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gather information</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognise feelings</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generate options</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Means-ends thinking</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anticipate consequences</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make decisions</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-management</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social interaction skills</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective taking</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict resolution</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.89</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Group process observations for the men

We also made some process notes on the group and facilitator interactions that were shown on the videotape. A summary of our observations are as follows:
• Humour was used to good advantage, especially between group members
• Group members encouraged each other verbally and non-verbally
• All members of the group took the program content seriously, for example willingly undertaking activities like the stress body map, role plays and discussions
• The psychologist (non-Indigenous facilitator) led all the group content and closely followed the session outline
• The Indigenous facilitator and PSO prompted and cued the participants, and kept the group process moving smoothly
• More active involvement from the Indigenous facilitator would have further improved the group content and process
• Quieter group members could have benefited from more prompting
• For videotaped monitoring and evaluation of sessions in future programs, it will be important to ensure all group members are visible on camera.
Section 3: Facilitator perceptions of the Koori CSP

In this section of the results, we gathered Indigenous and non-Indigenous facilitators’ impressions of the program in four areas: group process, program content, co-facilitation and supervision. We undertook one focus group with the Koori facilitators, one focus group with the two facilitators and the PSO at DPFC, an individual interview with one non-Koori facilitator (who facilitated the program at two sites) and a telephone interview with the other. Follow-up telephone calls were also made to several facilitators to clarify specific points.

Desirable but beyond the scope of this study was feedback from all PSOs. Only the PSO from DPFC was available to meet with us. The PSO from Barwon was invited but did not attend the focus group meeting, and the five PSOs at Loddon would not have been available to meet us without considerable planning and investment of time.

Group process: facilitator perceptions

Participant motivation
Facilitators reported that many of the prisoners initially entered the program due to the desire for a positive Parole hearing later in their sentence. Several others joined the program because they wanted to connect with Koori-specific programs, whether or not they needed it for Parole.

As the program progressed, participants’ motivation to continue the program strengthened and became more internalised. For example late attendance decreased, and at least two of the locations began to find participants turning up early for group and staying around afterwards for more informal discussion.

Facilitators also encouraged group members to be responsible for their own decisions in relation to program engagement. At one location, one group member withdrew from the program as a strategy to ‘make a stand’ about wanting to be moved to a different part of the institution. Program facilitators encouraged him to consider the wisdom of the strategy, and ‘left the door open’ for him to return to the group, but he did not. Rather than trying to convince him to change his mind, facilitators instead tied this incident into the content of the program, so the rest of the group could learn from it in relation to their own problem solving and decision making styles.

Getting started
At all three locations, participants knew each other and were described as ‘close-knit’, ‘established’ or ‘well-functioning’ groups already. For example at DPFC, facilitators reported being able to use the group process almost immediately to constructively confront difficult behaviours if any of the women “stepped out of line”. Trust and rapport were established quickly enough that at least one location, group participants were already sharing personal issues by the second session on problems such as racism, health or family problems. DPFC and Barwon had the added benefit of recently undertaking either the Aboriginal Cultural Immersion Program (ACIP), or a range of similar culture-focused activities.

The start-up at Loddon was more difficult. The CSP started shortly after the ACIP was withdrawn from this location, on account of failing to be consistently provided.
This had very negative effects on the Koori prisoners at this location, including anger, disappointment and cynicism about people following through on promises. Several expressed negativity towards programs in general, both Koori and mainstream, and overall the group members were initially very distrustful of the CSP. They were also angry at the prison administration, and spent a significant amount of time in early sessions ‘venting’ about issues to do with the institution and policy.

The facilitators’ ability to listen to these concerns and actively use the group process to help the men constructively manage their reactions was crucial at this juncture. It helped the non-Indigenous facilitator to gain credibility, and provided the Koori co-facilitator with opportunities to rebuild their trust. This set a solid foundation for moving into the program content, without derailing the program. Nevertheless many participants needed a lot of information and reassurance about the rationale of the program before they felt comfortable with the program and the concept of ‘cognitive skills’.

On the way through: responsivity issues

A consistent theme to emerge from facilitator feedback was that a very warm, accepting and inclusive group process developed at all three locations. This allowed several group members whom might have been excluded or dropped from the mainstream version to engage with the program to varying degrees, and stay involved. Three examples will illustrate:

Frequent reference was made at one location to a participant who initially was quiet, withdrawn and visibly lacking in confidence and self esteem. With consistent encouragement and demonstrations of respect from facilitators and other group members, this participant began actively participating, speaking up and even leading role plays by about the midpoint of the program.

Another participant had a learning disability and 'floated in and out' of the group sessions. Although this participant did not comprehend all aspects of the program nor complete it, a great deal of care was shown by other group members. Facilitators report that the participant was able to experience a sense of belonging and to have a positive group experience, possibly for the first time.

A third participant, who had memory problems due to a past head injury, was also actively included by the group. Difficulties the participant had with the material were tolerated and respected, and again a very positive experience was created for someone whose prior opportunities for connection had been very limited. In the mainstream CSP, stricter selection criteria would have definitely ruled him out.

Facilitators at all three locations also reported a supportive atmosphere for group members with literacy problems, within a broader atmosphere of negativity towards written work in the program. A facilitator or another group member assisted those who were struggling. A majority of group members, regardless of literacy level, expressed a strong dislike of written assignments and preferring other modes of learning and self expression.

A gender difference emerged in the kinds of disclosures and discussions the groups naturally generated. Once trust and respect had been gained in the group, the men were prepared to discuss their offences and problems related to their offending...
(criminogenic needs) such as substance abuse or peer pressures; whereas the women were more prepared to talk about the non-criminogenic needs such as trauma histories and concerns about their children. Many issues related to family and children were raised, such as issues for mothers and grandmothers affected by Stolen Generations. An outcome of these discussions was that the women identified the need to become ‘role models for our children’, and named this as a goal to work towards.

**Anxiety about threats to the program**

At all three locations, as group members’ level of trust and enjoyment of the program increased, so too did their anxiety about potential threats to it. Many had prior experiences of things they valued being taken away. Therefore the more valuable the program became to them, the more anxious they felt about it. All facilitators reported spending a lot of time reassuring group members and quelling rumours. This anxiety was greatly amplified at Loddon due to the recent negative experience with the ACIP. It was also a major concern early in the program at DPFC when there was a change of non-Indigenous facilitator, and a delay that had to be managed by the PSO and Indigenous facilitator on their own.

**Finishing the program**

At all three locations, facilitators reported a moving and positive conclusion to the program. Each group had a ceremony that included the presentation of certificates, shared food and a discussion about what they had gained from the program. The groups at Loddon and Barwon had each engraved a shield during program sessions, and the shields were gifted to the Koori co-facilitators at the end, to acknowledge their gratitude. All three groups expressed the strong wish to see the Koori facilitators again, either in the prison or after release on the outside.

At Loddon, similar reactions were spontaneously offered to the facilitators by several Program Support Officers, one who came to work on his own time to attend the certificate presentations. Their feedback is summed up by the following two comments:

> “The program was one of the best learning curves I have ever experienced”.

> “Many of us were cynical at the start that this program would never work. But now I have seen a different side to the Koori men and it has been a privilege to be part of the change.”

Facilitators also reported that the participants expressed a strong hope that the program continues to be provided for Koori prisoners. At one location the group made plans to keep meeting on an informal basis. Perhaps the strongest message of co-facilitators and participants overall was that the program was very valuable and must continue.
Program content: facilitator perceptions

Culture specific elements
Summarised below are facilitators’ feedback about a number of cultural elements that were built into the program. Those in the first table were already in the CSP manual. The second table describes ‘extras’ that were integrated into the program at the discretion of facilitators.

Table 8: Cultural elements prescribed in the manual

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural elements</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Facilitator comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tindale map</td>
<td>Traditional Aboriginal map of Australia, displayed in all sessions with markers indicating ‘home’ for each participant</td>
<td>Utilised at all locations and considered a useful tool, especially in early sessions while people were getting acquainted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking stick</td>
<td>A traditional communication tool that is passed from speaker to speaker in group contexts</td>
<td>Major differences between locations: DPFC: Accepted as a useful communication tool Loddon: Accepted and used at times Barwon: Inappropriate to some group members as it was not a tradition from their own regions of country: eg emu feather represented bad luck; thus the talking stick was put aside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking circle</td>
<td>Check-in with each group member at start of group: Reflections on their week</td>
<td>Differences between the locations: DPFC: Highly valued as a starting point for sessions; became a valuable source of scenarios for problem solving skills practice Loddon: Discontinued due to time pressure Barwon: No specific comments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The three boxes:</td>
<td>Information for facilitators could be anonymously ‘posted’ into 3 boxes representing the Aboriginal colours</td>
<td>Minimally used at all locations, but considered by all facilitators to be valuable and worth keeping. Strong positive group process took away the need for the boxes, as all participants felt confident to speak freely from very early in the program. When used, examples from boxes needed to be anchored in real life experiences, not hypothetical ones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shield (men’s groups only)</td>
<td>A traditional wooden shield to be carved or inscribed as the group sees fit</td>
<td>Strong positive response. At Loddon a hotwire kit was brought in to assist the engraving, and the Koori facilitator demonstrated the use of the shield. At both locations the final results were considered ‘works of art’. A photo of the shield from Loddon is reproduced with permission in Appendix 4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basket-weaving (women’s group only)</td>
<td>A traditional craft activity to be taught during the program</td>
<td>Not implemented at DPFC: difficulty getting access to materials and an Elder prepared to teach. Instead group members decorated individual boxes (see next table)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceremonial burning</td>
<td>Groups to gather at a fire pit in final session and burn contents of the 3 boxes; a traditional ‘ending’ ceremony</td>
<td>Not implemented at any of the locations: potential breach of prison policy and lack of outdoor infrastructure, and boxes were minimally used in any case.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 9: Additional cultural elements introduced by the facilitators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural elements</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Facilitator comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decorative boxes (DPFC only)</td>
<td>Individual boxes were painted and decorated, and used for storing items of value to them as Aboriginal women</td>
<td>A successful alternative to basket weaving. It included decorating the boxes with traditional items supplied by Koori facilitator such as emu feathers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social barbeque (Loddon only)</td>
<td>(previously described)</td>
<td>(previously described)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language words and concepts (Loddon &amp; Barwon)</td>
<td>Terms and phrases arising directly from Aboriginal languages and culture-specific communication styles</td>
<td>Considered an important part of connecting with the participants in a cultural and personal way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didgeridoos and boomerangs</td>
<td>Traditional artifacts used for music and hunting</td>
<td>Participants had an interest and pride in handling them, discussed whose care they would be placed in between sessions. Provided them opportunities to decorate artifacts and practice and demonstrate respect for culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beads, red cloth for lap-laps and clapsticks (Loddon only)</td>
<td>Beads were in traditional colours; lap-laps are men’s attire for traditional dances; clapsticks are a traditional percussion instrument</td>
<td>(Loddon only): Were appreciated by participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal flags (Loddon &amp; Barwon)</td>
<td>In traditional colours</td>
<td>Appreciated by participants and displayed in most or all sessions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Facilitators also provided a number of further suggestions to further strengthen the cultural dimensions of the program:

For the women:
- A smoke ceremony at the beginning and the end of the program
- More shared activities that all group members can contribute to, both in and out of group time, e.g.:
  - A woven mat on the wall that the women could pin or add things to, or
  - A partially woven mat for the women to complete, or
  - Another kind of collective art/craft project
  - A digging stick that all women would inscribe and work on as the men did with the shields.

For the men:
- Rather than having specific elements (such as the shield) prescribed by the program, CSP groups could be given latitude to consider a range of different traditional elements, and negotiate for themselves which would work best for the particular group. Options could include didgeridoo painting/decorating, group art projects, or writing and recording a group song.

Finally, facilitators at all locations identified the need for a Koori-specific room at each prison, where art, artifacts and samples of Koori prisoners’ work could be...
displayed. Facilitators indicated that such a room would provide a reflective, calming and spiritually significant space, an ideal space to run Koori-focused programs, and an opportunity to bring Koori culture into the prison environment in a tangible way. All facilitators were acutely aware of the existing constraints on space at the institutions, and believed this request would be considered unrealistic. At least one facilitator raised the question of whether, as an alternative, a multi-purpose space could be decorated Koori-style and continue to be used by all who need it, so it would include but not be limited to Koori programs.

**Group activities that worked well**

- **Role plays**
  
  There was a clear consensus among facilitators that role plays were a very useful and culturally appropriate learning tool. The following exercises were flagged as especially successful:
  - A Dark Angel/Good Angel ‘temptation drugs’ exercise
  - Role plays focusing on resisting peer pressure
  - Car accident role play: generated a lot of emotion and engaged participants in life-like perspective-taking
  - Role plays where they took the perspectives of their own children were very powerful.

A gender difference emerged for a Defense Attorney role play. The women were reluctant to adopt the roles of authority figures, so the exercise ‘did not work’ at DPFC. Whereas the men at Barwon reportedly engaged well with the exercise, and the men at Loddon adapted it to a mock parole board hearing instead, and reported very strong responses to the role playing experience, considering it good practice for ‘the real thing’.

- **Discussion topics**

  Positive responses to group discussion were reported at all locations, particularly in relation to the following four areas:

  - Being able to discuss problems that are very specific to the Aboriginal community, such as stolen generation, deaths in custody, health issues and specific family concerns, especially those involving their children. Having a Koori-specific group allowed these discussions to occur without inhibition or shame. Facilitators were clear that these issues would not have been raised or discussed in such depth if the Koori participants were part of a mainstream CSP group.

  - Being able to constructively discuss problems related to being in prison, such as frustration with prison policy and conflicts with prison officers. The program provided opportunities to deal constructively with these matters rather than ‘just complain’.

  - Being able to talk openly about their offences. This was especially important for the men, and facilitators report that the group members offered each other moral support, encouragement and at times humour. At Barwon it also offered opportunities for facilitators to challenge a tendency to ‘glorify’ their offences.

  “We role-played a Mock Parole Board sitting and reflected on resisting pressure and people’s response styles... Practiced alternative ways of responding - this was fantastic!”
  (Indigenous facilitator)

  “Had a really good discussion looking at what the group wanted for their culture / traditions, etc. and what they wanted their children to learn ... they looked at how their [own] behaviours were either working towards this or away from it. We went well over session time with this discussion, but it was well worth it.”
  (Non-Indigenous facilitator)
- Being able to discuss specific skills and strategies being taught in the program, such as forward planning, identifying triggers and monitoring daily hassles. There is an implication here that discussion was much preferred by the groups as an alternative to written learning strategies.

• Visual and sensory modes of learning
Almost any learning strategy that involved several of the five senses was positively received by the group. Facilitators drew particular attention to the following activities:

- **Music:** For one group, an Archie Roach song generated interest in developing a story-telling song as a group. All groups appreciated music as a medium to illustrate points in the program and generate discussion.

- **Pictures:** The ‘body stress map’ worked well for all groups, and also a future time perspectives activity where participants drew pictures or images of where they wanted their lives to be in one, five and ten years.

- **Analogies and symbols:** A stepping stones and stream analogy for the problem solving process worked well. At least one group also found it useful for different colours of paper to represent different emotions, and then practice identifying and expressing different emotions by selecting different colours of paper.

• Physical modes of learning
At least two physically-oriented strategies were integrated into the program, and were well-received:

- **Relaxation exercise:** This was prescribed in the manual and two locations reported very strong positive responses. It was a new concept to most group members.

- **Golf sessions:** At Barwon, the facilitators significantly adapted the content of early problem-solving sessions to make it more active and experiential for the participants, and to use some specialized expertise of the Koori co-facilitator. As an accomplished golfer, he took the group outdoors to learn some basic golf skills in early program sessions. All aspects of the golf lessons were framed in terms of specific problem solving skills from the manual. Both facilitators reported that these sessions were very popular and successful: they increased participants’ enthusiasm for the program, and taught some basic problem solving skills in an active, memorable way.

• Regular verbal summaries
At least one location reported that it was helpful to provide an overview at the beginning of each session that included not only the objectives for the session itself, but an indication of where the session topic fitted into the program overall, and the rationale for learning those particular skills. This reduced resistance from the group, which was initially expressed with questions such as: “Why do we have to do this?” and “What's it got to do with us?”. It also provided many opportunities for verbal repetition and over-learning, as a preferred alternative to written work.
Group activities that did not work well

- **Written work**

  The adaptation of the mainstream manual had already significantly reduced the written expectations of the program, for example by not prescribing written homework assignments. Nevertheless the amount of written work was still considered inappropriately high by facilitators and participants alike. Facilitators provided an overwhelming amount of feedback indicating that written work, at best, was disliked by participants and perceived as a waste of time and, at worst, potentially risked harm to some participants and to the credibility of the program. For example:

  - The **Problem Solving Inventory (PSI)** was disliked by all three groups, to the extent that it was considered by all facilitators (three whom are psychologists) to lack validity with this population. The wording of items was experienced as very confusing, and the Likert scales were difficult for many to understand without each number being anchored by a word. The PSI generated such a negative response at Barwon, participants needed debriefing afterwards. At Loddon, the group initially refused to complete it in the pre-program phase, and a group member wrote a letter of protest to us, the evaluators. That letter and our reply are reproduced in Appendix 5. This group completed the PSI reluctantly at the post-program phase, but according to facilitators still did not perceive it as having any intrinsic value.

  - The **Problem Checklist** was also strongly disliked, despite the fact that a new section of ‘cultural burden’ items had been integrated into it as part of the adaptation of the mainstream version. Feedback included that the checklist was poorly written and inappropriately phrased. Some items were perceived as supporting stereotypes, such as the notion that Aboriginal people are alcoholics. The checklist scoring process put many participants into pass/fail mode of thinking, generating negative associations with school failure for some. For the majority of participants it made no sense that a scored questionnaire did not reflect right or wrong answers. Repeated efforts by non-Indigenous facilitators to clarify this point failed to bring a common understanding. One group member at Loddon even threatened to withdraw from the program after a session that was dominated by completion of the Problem Checklist, because he found the whole process so ‘mainstream’ and demoralising.

  - Negative reactions to written work were not confined to group members who had very low literacy levels. They were also expressed by group members who could read and write well enough to undertake the tasks: they too stated it was not the most useful or appropriate way for them to learn.

  - Negative reactions also were not confined to overly technical written work. A one-page participant evaluation questionnaire, prepared by Corrections Victoria, was also disliked and resisted to varying degrees. This is noteworthy, given that most participants had expressed a strong desire to have input into the program and opportunities to provide feedback about it. When the feedback opportunity...
was a written one, it did not meet their expectations or their needs, and appears to have instead been experienced by them as a chore and irrelevant.

- At all locations, facilitators assisted those in the group with poor literacy. DPFC facilitators reported that no matter how supportive the group was, these tasks still placed unwanted pressure on those with poor literacy to get through written material so as not to delay the other group members.

• Suggested alternatives to paperwork
Facilitators suggested a wide range of alternatives to paperwork. Many are captured in the 'what worked well' section above. Facilitators offered the following additional suggestions:
  - DPFC facilitators assigned practical tasks for the women to apply in their daily lives in prison as an alternative form of homework. For example they each identified a key word that would help them manage situations involving conflict or stress, and successfully cued themselves and each other to use it when needed
  - Art projects to work on in their own time; eg exploring ways to channel or express feelings on canvas
  - More photo language activities
  - More videos, carefully selected for cultural and content relevance
  - A wider range of active methods such as role play
  - More examples based on real life situations that reflect family and community pressures
  - Greater personalization of group materials, eg group photos

A non-Indigenous facilitator also suggested that at a minimum, all the worksheets that are currently part of the program could be made into a book for each group member that they hand in after each session for safekeeping. This would help them organize and keep track of any written materials that have to be retained in the program.

• Other program activities that did not work well
Facilitators at one or more locations identified the following group activities as being especially problematic:
  - Problem definition: distinctions provided in the manual were experienced as obscure and not useful, and also very difficult to write down. At least one location ran it as an open discussion instead
  - "Between the lines" exercise: was experienced as dull in its presentation. More important, the concept itself did not transport well across cultures, because it assumes an individualistic rather than an interdependent sense of identity
  - The "5 w's" (why, where, what etc applied to own offence): was very difficult for the women to understand, as it assumed a high degree of individual responsibility without acknowledging family and community contributions to their offences. Facilitators were quick to caution that this is not to minimize personal responsibility but reflects a need to broaden the model to fully
understand contextual factors that are part of the picture of Indigenous female offending.

Videos - a mixed response
There was general consensus among facilitators that a more appropriate selection of videos could be used in the program. There were some positive comments. For example Yolongu Boy was enjoyed by all the groups, although not perceived by all as being directly relevant to the content of the program.

Who's the Loser led to productive discussions for the women, however there was a stark gender difference: it evoked very negative responses from both men’s groups, and prompted some walk-outs. At both locations, debriefing was necessary afterwards, and some participants continued to raise concerns later. Facilitators agreed that family violence needs to be discussed, but that the video was too confronting for men, or perhaps more suitable for men in the context of a specific family violence program.

There was a general feeling that the program needed to ‘lighten up’ on the content of videos. The Koori facilitator for Barwon suggested strategies such as using clips from football documentaries and TV personalities such as Ernie Dingo to illustrate certain points about cognitive skills, rather than showing full-length movies.

Alternative movie suggestions were Jeddah and Rabbit Proof Fence (for the women), and One Over the Moon (for the men).

Topics that precipitated incidents or personal crises
Family violence was a particularly upsetting and volatile topic for some of the men, even without the Who's the Loser video as a catalyst. When problems related to family violence came up in the groups, facilitators had to use a range of skills to help participants manage strong emotions. There were two reported incidents in the program of participants becoming agitated and in one case voicing suicidal thoughts, and in both situations, personal reactions to family violence problems were at the root of it. Both incidents were very well managed by the facilitators and the other group members, who provided a combination of respect, space, support, safety plans and individual attention.

It is also noteworthy that many of the men objected to examples in the manual where violent incidents were deliberately written in ways that placed blame on victims. At least one facilitator noted that the men in the group frequently expressed respect towards women, including the non-Indigenous female co-facilitator. This suggests some of the attitudes towards women believed to underlie family violence in mainstream programs cannot be assumed to translate across to Koori offenders in the same way.

Relevance and application of the skills to real life situations

Use of real-life situations to learn and practice the skills
In all three groups, problem solving skills were applied to a wide range of real-life situations, including prison-related tensions, transition and reintegration difficulties and resisting negative peer pressure. Examples in the manual helped get the
process started, but from quite an early stage in the program, participants were able to bring relevant personal examples to the table.

Family problems and anxieties were also frequently raised in the groups. At times these problems involved interconnections between family, community, and offending, for example concerns about payback. Family problems had the potential to be overwhelming to the men and the women alike. The women were especially affected by the problems their children were experiencing in their absence, and they often described strong feelings of guilt. The men were especially affected by separation, custody and access concerns, and often described strong feelings of frustration and helplessness.

Facilitator feedback suggests the women overall fared better than the men at being able to apply the skills being taught in the program to their family problems. One young woman was at brink of giving up the program, but the group helped her see that her concerns about her child was one of the problems she is dealing with, and encouraged her to use the skills she is learning in the course to cope better with it. They shared their own experiences and concerns as mothers, and helped her think of ways to deal with the issues at hand.

The men at Barwon were reportedly unable to consistently apply the problem solving framework to family problems they identified. They could work with examples from the manual, and with problems that were less personal such as finding accommodation or a job. They could also discuss family problems in free-ranging discussions, but never raised them as examples to work with as role plays or specific problems for the group to work through. Overall there was a sense of ‘lack of fit’ between the problem solving framework and what they felt they needed in order to address family problems. It appears this was a location difference more than strictly a gender difference, because this pattern was not apparent with the men’s group at Loddon.

Generalisation of the skills to daily life in prison

Facilitators at DPFC noted some very positive examples of women prompting each other to use their skills and handle provocation or conflict differently in the prison environment as a consequence of the program, especially in situations that would previously have carried a high risk of escalating into violence. Similar observations were made with some of the men.

Facilitators at all three locations spoke very highly of the PSOs, since their various full time roles in the prison settings enabled them to help the participants apply the skills they were learning in the program to their everyday lives in the prison environment.
**Evaluation of the Koori Cognitive Skills Program Pilots for Corrections Victoria**

*Perceived relevance of the skills to daily life upon release*

Some serious concerns on this issue were raised at all three locations. Overall, facilitators indicated the program runs a risk of ‘setting [participants] up to fail’, by teaching them to behave differently when their home and community environments have remained the same. They reported that participants expressed considerable frustration and helplessness about the things ‘out there’ that they cannot change which also threaten their ability to apply the skills and stay out of trouble with the law. Facilitators expressed a firm belief that family and community change is necessary to support the participants’ efforts, and that only then will it be realistic to expect the skills to generalize and be maintained.

An additional barrier was identified for the women. The threat of domestic violence was reportedly a common concern for them when planning for their release. It was recognized that for many, the ongoing effects of prior trauma and the realistic fears of further abuse run the risk of ‘blotting out’ what they’ve learned, unless there is solid support from family and community to reinforce the skills and help them find solutions in their real-life, often trauma-laden, situations.

*Suggestions to improve relevance and application of skills*

Facilitators offered the following suggestions to help the CSP address the above concerns:

- Incorporate more program content that acknowledges real-life family and community tensions, and include more preparation for navigating ‘real life’ situations
- Build connections with outside agencies that could support them upon release
- Provide cognitive skills sessions in the community too, for example in the form of ‘booster sessions’
- Make community-based Koori CSPs available to offenders’ family members as well as the offenders themselves
- Consider mentoring as a post-release community support system, where mentors are trained in cognitive skills, and work with both the released prisoners and their families. It was acknowledged that it would be difficult to get mentor coverage in parts of regional Victoria.

*Assessment dilemmas*

The perceived inappropriateness of written work in the program, described above, creates a dilemma about program assessment and evaluation. Pre-program, post-program and process evaluation of participant progress typically relies heavily – though not exclusively – on pencil-and-paper testing in mainstream CBT programs. This is not always because it yields the most valid and reliable data, but because it is most efficient in terms of time and cost.

Clearly in adapted programs such as the Koori CSP, alternative assessment strategies are needed. When we asked facilitators what other strategies they could suggest, they identified the following:

- Videotaping group activities and role plays was considered a viable option, although not at the early, pre-program stage
- 1:1 semi-structured interviews could be undertaken by facilitators early in the program and again at the end, to directly assess cognitive skills and problem solving, but with three caveats:
o Respect, credibility and trust would need to be established first, for example by having non-Koori facilitators sitting in on the ACIP and other Koori programs before the Koori CSP
o The interviews would best be co-led by both facilitators, to ensure the cultural nuances are captured and understood
o The interview format would need to be structured and preferably audiotaped for evaluators, to ensure objectivity.

**Facilitator perceptions of the co-facilitation model**

The facilitation model was slightly different at each location. While all three groups were co-led by a female non-Indigenous psychologist and a Koori elder (gender-matched to the group), each group had a different member of prison staff in the group in the supporting role of Program Support Officer, or PSO. DPFC, utilised the Aboriginal Wellbeing Officer (AWO), and Barwon utilised the Indigenous Services Officer (ISO). The AWO identified as Aboriginal, originally from out of state but has lived in Victoria for many years. The ISO was of New Zealand Maori descent. Both these prison staff had pre-existing positive relationships with the program participants, strong interpersonal skills, and cultural knowledge. They took seriously their role outside the group as well as in it, by helping the participants apply what they were learning in the program to their daily lives in prison.

At Loddon, the PSO role was instead held by prison officers, five whom circulated through the sessions at different times, depending on shift requirements. Most had limited knowledge of Koori culture, and the supporting role in the group gave them an opportunity to gain greater understanding about Aboriginal issues and offender rehabilitation as part of their custodial responsibilities.

**Value of Indigenous facilitator involvement**

There was strong consensus from the non-Indigenous facilitators that the Koori facilitators’ role was indispensible, and made an enormous positive difference to the program. The fact that they were not only Koori, but also respected Elders, brought a high level of respect into the group process, and in the words of one non-Indigenous facilitator, ‘made the program what it was’.

On their own behalf, the Indigenous facilitators added that the program had given them an opportunity to bring their knowledge to a part of their community very much in need, and reap the personal rewards of seeing some positive changes.

Some of the comments illustrated it was not only who the Indigenous facilitators *were* but what they *did* in their interactions with the group members that engendered the respect and positive relationships with participants. For example:

- Two facilitators had other important roles in the prison setting. At both sites, there was a perception that the Koori facilitators’ multiple roles demonstrated commitment to the Koori prisoner population.
- Another facilitator is renown around the nation for his contribution to AFL, and was able to immediately tap into group members’ enthusiasm for sport, and interest them in the discipline that goes with high performance.

“*The Indigenous facilitator’s input into the discussion was valuable for providing historical factual information about Aboriginal culture, as part of ‘gathering information’.*”

(Non-Indigenous facilitator)
One facilitator regularly arrived early to the group sessions and spent time with the group beforehand, taking a personal interest in their other activities and concerns. He also identified family ties with several of group members, and referred to his facilitation role as “part of taking care of family”.

At DPFC the Indigenous facilitator brought local Victorian Koori knowledge to the group (the Aboriginal PSO is originally from out of state). She also reportedly provided a valuable, culture-specific source of support for the PSO as well as the group.

**Value of non-Indigenous facilitator involvement**

There was an implicit acknowledgment from the Indigenous facilitators that the non-Indigenous facilitators’ involvement was also crucial to the program. Important factors included their familiarity with CSP content, their group facilitation experience, their skills for managing difficult or emotionally charged situations in group, and their familiarity with prison policies and procedures. The value of having a non-Indigenous facilitator was illustrated at DPFC, when the AWO and Indigenous facilitator reported finding the ‘gap’ between non-Indigenous facilitators quite anxiety-provoking, and deliberately delayed introducing new program content until a psychologist was involved again.

A key issue for non-Indigenous facilitators was gaining credibility and trust of the group members. Their efforts succeeded, not only in their own perceptions, but also in the perceptions of the Koori co-facilitators. Factors contributing to this included non-Indigenous facilitators actively listening, being up front and humble about needing to learn, inviting feedback from the group on their style, accepting being taught about culture, and being ‘backed up’ and validated by the Koori co-facilitators.

The non-Indigenous facilitators themselves expressed strong feelings about the personal and professional value of having been involved in the Koori CSP. Both indicated they had learned a great deal about Aboriginal culture and the modification of mainstream strategies for delivering programs, and were touched at a personal level by the warmth and inclusiveness of the group once trust had been established. Both also indicated that the improvement in their relationships with the Koori prisoners had continued after the program was over.

**Value of PSO involvement**

In the present evaluation, we were able to gain feedback directly from just one of the PSOs (DPFC). Therefore the information below is based largely on feedback from the facilitators about the PSOs, rather than directly from the PSOs themselves.

At all three sites, the PSO role was perceived to have worked very well. At DPFC and Barwon, their pre-existing relationships with the group members were invaluable. They were able to interpret language words, explain things to the non-Indigenous facilitators they did not understand, and support the input of the Indigenous facilitators.

At Loddon, the PSO role worked quite differently but was also considered a success, despite early concerns from the Indigenous facilitator about the number of different (non-Indigenous) prison officers assuming this role. By about the seventh session, the Indigenous facilitator reported that the PSOs were beginning to approach him
after the groups to express support and enthusiasm for the program. More information on this issue is provided later in feedback from administrative staff at the prisons.

**Negotiating co-facilitation roles and differences in style**

**Decisions about who does what**

At DPFC, facilitators reported that their roles divided quite naturally into the non-Indigenous facilitator directing the content, and the Indigenous facilitator and the PSO reinforcing and giving or eliciting examples to make the material directly relevant to the women’s daily lives. However a change of non-Indigenous facilitator early in the program disrupted the flow and placed significant pressure on the PSO and Koori facilitator. They ran the group on their own until another psychologist became available. Facilitator feedback suggests they negotiated this challenge extremely well, choosing to review program content covered so far, allay concerns, explore cultural matters and deal with day-to-day issues rather than continuing with the program content without the non-Indigenous facilitator to co-facilitate.

At both men’s locations, facilitators experienced some difficulties in early sessions establishing what their roles would be and how best they would work with the group, each other and the material. Examples of the difficulties included:

- A sense of burden for the Indigenous facilitator for trying to teach the non-Indigenous facilitator about Koori culture while at the same time dealing with relatively unfamiliar program material

- A parallel sense of burden for the non-Indigenous facilitator for leading the program content, while at the same time feeling unsure of the cultural dimensions

- Stated or implied criticism of the program by one Indigenous facilitator, suggesting that the program content is irrelevant to Koori people and only worth doing to increase the likelihood of Parole. While the non-Indigenous facilitator concurred that CBT approaches may not be the most effective approach, her belief was that rather than rejecting it outright, the program needed to be philosophically supported by both facilitators and then evaluated to establish its level of cultural appropriateness and suitability. This dynamic caused some ‘splitting’ in the sessions, but occurred less frequently as the program progressed.

**Different perspectives on self-disclosure**

A specific area of difference arose between the facilitators at DPFC and to a lesser extent at Loddon, on the issue of self-disclosure. Cultural, personal and gender differences were evident regarding how much self-disclosure to the group facilitators considered appropriate. For example:

- Overall, the Indigenous facilitators were more comfortable self-disclosing to the groups than the non-Indigenous facilitators, and considered their disclosures appropriate. At times the Koori facilitator encouraged their co-facilitators to self-disclose more than they would have on her own, as a strategy to increase the group’s understanding and respect for her
- Overall the non-Indigenous facilitators were more cautious about self disclosure and were not always confident that their co-facilitators’ disclosures were necessary to the group process; but there were differences between the non-Indigenous facilitators on this matter too.
- Overall it was easier for non-Indigenous facilitators to self-disclose in the men’s groups than in the women’s group.
- One or more of the co-facilitator pairs found these differences in facilitation style relatively easy to discuss, whereas another did not.

Across the three locations, facilitators indicated the following factors helped them negotiate the issues and differences captured above:
- Mutual respect
- Joint session planning and debriefing afterwards
- Talking directly about the differences and realizing this is part of the point of having a co-facilitation approach
- Being prepared to consider different perspectives and ways of doing things, and learn from each other
- Deciding to each play to their strengths in the group
- Being flexible in the moment to deal with group issues.

Different perspectives on the definition of the Koori facilitator’s role
A previously indicated, two of the three Indigenous facilitators have multiple roles in the prison environment. No concerns about multiple roles arose at DPFC, but a range of tensions arose at Loddon. Some may be attributable to personality differences or other factors independent of culture. Other aspects, however, illustrate differences commonly encountered in partnerships between the Indigenous community and government settings. In our view, successful negotiation of such differences is crucial to the success of ventures such as the Koori CSP, and warrant a close examination.

Below we offer two examples of incidents that created tensions, and summarise the divergent perspectives on each. We then outline solutions that were established at the time and/or suggested later by the facilitators.
Example 1

Indigenous facilitator organized a BBQ and a range of other ‘extras’ for the group members early in the program. This is in response to the group’s distrust of the Koori CSP, and their recent negative experience with another Koori program being inconsistently provided and subsequently withdrawn.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indigenous facilitator’s perspective</th>
<th>Non-Indigenous facilitator’s perspective</th>
<th>Programs Manager’s perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Something important was taken from the group so something needed to be put back</td>
<td>- The concept was fine, it filled a vacuum left by the withdrawal of the ACIP. But he alienated himself by deciding to go over the Programs Manager’s head when he encountered resistance</td>
<td>- Indigenous facilitator overstepped his boundaries by providing things for the group in response to institutional matters, rather than adhering to the intended content of the CSP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- BBQ was a gesture providing care to members of his extended family</td>
<td>- He missed an opportunity to get the prison administration on side: non-Indigenous facilitator says she would have helped frame the request in terms of legitimate psychological needs of offenders, but was not included in negotiations</td>
<td>- His desire to respond to the prisoners ‘wants’ was a genuine effort to re-establish the balance that had been lost through the withdrawal of ACIP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Puts into practice the principle that if people are rejected by their own, other sectors of community may welcome them</td>
<td>- Missed an opportunity to demonstrate to the group, through his own behaviour, skills being taught in the program such as means-ends thinking and perspective-taking</td>
<td>- However it was the prison’s role rather than the Koori facilitator’s role to provide for the Koori offenders’ needs beyond the CSP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Did not rely on the institution for resources: offered to pay for the BBQ himself</td>
<td>- His tendency to disclose to the group the resistance he was encountering with the prison administration inadvertently reinforced an ‘us/them’ dynamic that already exists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Unintentionally reinforced an existing perception by non-Indigenous prisoners and some staff that the Kooris get ‘special treatment’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Example 2

Indigenous facilitator actively exercised his various roles as Parole Board member, extended family member and respected community Elder when at the institution in his capacity as facilitator of the Koori CSP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indigenous facilitator’s perspective</th>
<th>Non-Indigenous facilitator’s perspective</th>
<th>Programs Manager’s perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Very familiar with moving back and forth between issues related to different roles, because multiple roles are common in the Koori community</td>
<td>- Indicated the group members did not have a problem with the multiple roles</td>
<td>- Indigenous facilitator blurred his boundaries between his program facilitation role and Parole Board role, creating ambiguity for prisoners and staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Considered it a strength, not a problem; eg a natural extension of his role as facilitator and extended family member to provide something where he can</td>
<td>- However had the Indigenous facilitator chosen to distinguish and defend the boundaries of his various roles, this would not have compromised his positive relationship with the group</td>
<td>- Was being taken advantage of by the men to get them things they wanted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Took pleasure from being able to advocate, provide resources, facilitate connections between people and give information</td>
<td>- Group activities and discussions occurred unrelated to program content occurred (eg family photos being brought in), creating more time pressure; suggested these would have been more appropriate as ACIP activities</td>
<td>- Sometimes made promises without first checking prison policy, and then went ‘all out’ to try and fulfill the promises even if they breached policy, so as not to lose face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Indicated it is a part of his love for his work and his community.</td>
<td>- Group members were asking for favors at an increasing rate; could cause problems such as reinforcing non-Indigenous perceptions of ‘special treatment’</td>
<td>- Unintentionally reinforced non-Indigenous perceptions of ‘special treatment’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Non-Indigenous facilitator was caught between the prison administration expectations and Indigenous facilitator’s expectations, creating an extra burden.</td>
<td>- This in turn increases the risk of inter-racial incidents and violence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Suggested strategies to resolve these differences were:
- to create opportunities for key prison staff such as the Programs Manager and the Senior Psychologist to directly discuss and negotiate roles and boundaries with Indigenous facilitators.
- to ensure Indigenous facilitators are comprehensively briefed on prison policy before undertaking their responsibilities to the Koori CSP.

These matters are explored further in the Recommendations section at the end of this report.

Facilitator training

The facilitators for the Koori CSP received two days of training from the Koori psychologist who adapted the mainstream CSP manual. This included two hours with the evaluation team, to discuss the evaluation tools and strategy. The AWO and ISO from DPFC and Barwon respectively also attended these sessions in the capacity of PSO.

It is noteworthy that this is significantly less training than is mandated for delivery of the mainstream CSP in the prisons, where the program is delivered by trained...
psychologists. Their expected minimum is three days of content training, with an optional further two days on group process for those who need it.

There was consensus amongst all facilitators of the Koori CSP that two days of training on program content was insufficient. Facilitators highlighted not only the need for more time, but for a different use of that time. Key suggestions were:

- The Indigenous facilitators would have benefited from extra training time first, without the non-Indigenous facilitators present. This would have increased their familiarity with CBT approaches in general and the CSP in particular, with no assumption of prior knowledge. (Non-Indigenous facilitators were already very familiar with these areas due to their mainstream clinical responsibilities, and were said to have inadvertently ‘hijacked’ the joint training sessions to some degree).

- Koori facilitators and PSOs needed more information about the ethical requirement that prisoner participation in programs is voluntary, as there was some confusion about whether it should be mandated to increase every Koori prisoner's chances of being granted Parole.

- All facilitators needed more time to practice actually delivering the material and getting feedback from the trainer and each other, eg role playing parts of different sessions.

- Specific opportunities were needed for the co-facilitation pairs to discuss and negotiate effective styles and strategies for working together in the groups. This would include time to discuss cultural differences, such as potentially different levels of self disclosure considered appropriate.

- Two Indigenous facilitators indicated that the sheer amount of material in the program was difficult to absorb in a single block. One suggestion was to split the program and also the training time into two blocks, as follows:
  - First block: Three days training on sessions 1-15 (problem solving) and then delivery of those sessions; then a two week break for the group
  - Second block: Three days training on the more complex skills in sessions 16-30, and then delivery of those sessions to complete the program.

- Facilitators also pointed to the need to increase non-Indigenous facilitators’ knowledge of Aboriginal culture before actually embarking on the Koori CSP. Two suggestions were made:
  - Ensure all non-Indigenous facilitators have undertaken cultural awareness training
  - Non-Indigenous facilitators need to sit in on Koori-specific programs such as the ACIP prior to facilitating the Koori CSP. This would not only familiarise them with cultural processes, but would also improve their rapport and credibility with the Koori prisoners prior to the CSP.

**Facilitator perceptions of supervision**

The supervision structure established for the Koori CSP was as follows:

- The non-Indigenous facilitators would continue to receive oversight from their Programs Managers and individual supervision from their Senior Psychologists at
the locations as usual, and the latter would include the Indigenous co-facilitators if mutually desired
- An indigenous-specific line of supervision would also be available for the Koori facilitators, from the Manager of the Indigenous Policy and Services Unit at Head Office, upon request
- Peer supervision and support would occur frequently through joint session planning and debriefing by each co-facilitation pair, and generally included the PSO
- No formalised supervision structure was put in place for the PSOs, since they attended the groups in a supportive rather than a direct facilitation role.

**Indigenous facilitators’ perspectives on supervision**

All three Indigenous facilitators chose not to join the individual supervision sessions between their non-Indigenous co-facilitators and the Senior Psychologists. They also chose not to utilize the indigenous-specific supervision option, except to clarify some minor procedural issues. They spoke very highly of the joint planning and debriefing with their co-facilitators, and were of one voice that this was sufficient.

We assessed with the Koori facilitators whether a different supervision structure would be acceptable to them, in addition to the peer support. Again they were of one voice that further supervision simply was not needed. We took this further by suggesting the following two alternative supervision options:

**Option 1:** Individual culture-specific supervision offered by the Koori psychologist who adapted the manual. We suggested she would be in a unique position to offer them further guidance and support because of her detailed knowledge of the program content, her cultural connectedness and her psychological training.

**Option 2:** We suggested the Koori psychologist, or others, could offer group-based Koori-specific supervision where the three Koori facilitators could come together, share experiences as peers and get guidance and support from the psychologist.

Again, both were considered unnecessary. One of the Koori facilitators was very clear that she did not view the program as something she herself needed support for, but rather, that she was there to provide support for the Koori participants. A concern was also raised that the women in the group could perceive supervision as a breach of confidentiality.

**Non-Indigenous facilitators’ perspectives on supervision**

The non-Indigenous psychologists held different and less united views. They perceived supervision as very important. Consistent with their training as psychologists, they considered supervision a natural part of their professional development.

One non-Indigenous facilitator utilized individual supervision to discuss group content and process issues. She was of the view that all group facilitators regardless of background could benefit from clinically-oriented supervision too, but cautioned that in the case of the Koori CSP, supervision would require cultural understanding.
The other non-Indigenous facilitator reported using individual supervision less frequently, and mainly to discuss institutional pressures and shore up recognition that running the group is a major added responsibility and commitment. She was of the view that the Koori facilitators should be taken at their word if they say joint planning and debriefing is sufficient to meet their needs.

**Differences in facilitators’ experience of Koori and mainstream CSPs**

In this pilot program both non-Indigenous facilitators had run the mainstream CSP one or more times before. Therefore they were in a strong position to compare their experience as facilitators in the two different types of cultural settings. Three important differences were emphasized by both facilitators:

- A much stronger sense of cohesion, inclusiveness and ‘togetherness’ developed in the Koori groups. Group members demonstrated particularly high levels of support and warmth for each other. Some who might have experienced some isolation in mainstream groups or been excluded altogether at the selection stage (eg due to disabilities) were instead actively supported by their peers.

- There was a higher level of self disclosure by facilitators, as described already. While this was not always comfortable for the non-Indigenous facilitators, it did increase their credibility and rapport with group members.

- Facilitators observed that in the beginning, participant motivation for undertaking the program looked similar for both cultural groups, and was mostly for instrumental reasons such as to get Parole. For the Koori groups, however, the program rapidly began to meet a range of other needs related to their cultural and gender identity, sense of belonging, and sense of community as Koori people in the prison. It is noteworthy that these other needs were being met more by the group process than the actual content of the sessions.
Section 4: Prison Administration perspectives

Information in this section is based on telephone interviews with Senior Psychologists at two sites and the Programs Manager at one site. Summarised below are a number of identified benefits and also some difficulties encountered in implementing the pilot CSPs, followed by constructive suggestions about how those difficulties might be addressed.

Benefits

Benefits to the participants

At all three locations, anecdotal evidence of a positive impact for the Koori prisoners was offered. Those interviewed cautioned that they were not ‘close’ enough to the day-to-day behaviour of the prisoners to comment in detail; however they reported an observed sense of achievement and enhanced self esteem among the Koori participants who completed the program.

Benefits to the institution

At all three sites, the program provided a positive opportunity for the prisons to lift the profile of Indigenous needs and concerns, and demonstrate cultural responsiveness in rehabilitation programs for prisoners.

On the whole the program was good. And it was also a trial.”
(Programs Manager)

The Programs Manager at Loddon emphasised that the involvement of prison officers as PSOs in the groups was a very positive outcome of the program. She identified the following benefits:

- improving rapport between prison officers and Koori prisoners
- increasing prison officers’ cultural awareness and knowledge
- equipping prison officers to more effectively negotiate some of the tensions between Koori and non-Koori prisoners
- breaking down some of the barriers between custodial and program staff
- increasing prison officer support for promoting a rehabilitation-based prison culture.

Difficulties

Definition of facilitators’ roles and responsibilities

• Indigenous facilitators

Many concerns about the definition of Indigenous facilitators’ roles have already been represented in the Facilitator Perspectives section of Results (subsection: ‘Different perspectives on the definition of the Koori facilitator’s role’), and since that incorporated the perspective of the Programs Manager, it will not be repeated here.

Just one further issue was raised by administration staff not already captured, and this was difficulty with Indigenous facilitator availability. At two of the three locations, sessions were not always provided on the same days of the week because of the Indigenous facilitator’s competing commitments to work and community. At one location there were several sessions where the Indigenous facilitator was unable to attend at all. The consequences were numerous:
- It worsened an existing problem with insufficient space for programs and difficulties booking rooms
- It created anxieties for some group members, because the timing of sessions could be unpredictable
- It required other prison administration staff to change their arrangements at short notice so the men could be released from other activities for group sessions
- It reinforced the perception of ‘special treatment’ for Koori prisoners, held by some non-Indigenous prisoners and staff
- It was inordinately time consuming for Programs Managers and/or Senior Psychologists to intervene and assist with the above consequences.

• Non-Indigenous facilitators
This was less of an issue for the prison administration, because non-Indigenous facilitators were already part of the team, had run many programs at the location before, and were well known by staff and prisoners.

Programs Managers and Senior Psychologists spoke very highly of the non-Indigenous facilitators’ work in relation to the Koori CSP. They noted, however, that similar to the impact for themselves, the program frequently made extra demands of the non-Indigenous facilitators and increased their workloads. There was an overall sense that while the program is breaking positive new ground in the prison environment, a large share of possibly unforeseen responsibilities had to be picked up by the non-Indigenous facilitators at the front line level and by the administrators themselves at the more strategic and institutional level.

Institutional information for Indigenous facilitators
While two of the three Indigenous facilitators were familiar with correctional environments through their other work responsibilities, prison administration staff indicated it would be valuable nevertheless to provide all Indigenous facilitators with an orientation on policies and procedures at each location, especially those aspects that relate directly to their role in the Koori CSP. They considered it an unfair expectation for Indigenous facilitators to learn this information along the way in the program. They reported that the lack of orientation also unintentionally risked misunderstandings, policy breaches or mixed messages to the prisoners.

Supervision expectations for Indigenous facilitators
At all locations, prison administration staff identified the need for a more clearly defined supervision arrangement, especially in relation to the Indigenous facilitators. Senior psychologists reported undertaking individual supervision with the non-Indigenous facilitators as usual, but not knowing whether to include the Indigenous facilitators too. At DPFC, invitations were extended to the Indigenous facilitator and the PSO, but were not taken up. At Barwon, the senior psychologist felt it might be intruding to extend the invitation at all. At all three locations, Senior Psychologists and/or Programs Managers indicated experiencing a degree of disconnection from the program, and the desire for a more active role in supporting it.

A dilemma was evident. On the one hand the administration staff did not want to be seen as ‘imposing’ a mainstream Westernised model of supervision on the Indigenous facilitators. On the other hand, they believed they had a great deal to offer, especially given their familiarity with CBT and prison policy and procedure.
There was a sense that joint supervision would provide opportunities for supervisors to further educate the Indigenous facilitators about CBT and the CSP, and would also afford the supervisors themselves more opportunities to learn about program responsivity in relation to Koori prisoners.

**Program space**

Although covered already, the issue of insufficient space for programs in the prisons cannot be emphasized enough. Prison administrators and facilitators alike emphasized that the difficulty of identifying suitable space for the group sessions was inordinately time consuming, and that the final resolutions were often inadequate. For example at DPFC at times they had to use a corner of a very large leisure centre space or the chapel. The Senior Psychologist at DPFC echoed the comments of facilitators by emphasising the need for a Koori-focused ‘safe space’.

**Prison officer attitudes**

Prison administration staff reported that a small but significant minority of prison officers at the locations held cynical views about Koori-specific programs. For example some expressed the belief that the program would never work. Others viewed Koori-specific programs as special treatment that was unfair on the non-Indigenous prisoners. In some cases these attitudes were thought to arise from insufficient information about the program, especially its rationale. For others it was thought to represent a more fundamental underlying lack of cultural awareness and failure to recognise unique and legitimate needs of Koori offenders.

**Tensions between the Koori CSP and prison industries**

Specific to Barwon, a difficulty emerged between the program staff and a work supervisor for Prison Industries. It was reported that some participants tried to exceed the number of program hours they are allocated, at the expense of their industries work hours. This resulted in two participants of the Koori CSP being fired from their industry jobs for failing to complete their required work hours. This in turn led to incidents resulting in one of the men being placed in the management unit.

The Senior Psychologist at Barwon indicated that this situation illustrates a fundamental tension between industries and programs more generally. Program hours and industry hours are in constant competition at this location, because Barwon is a working prison, and prison staff are reportedly somewhat divided on which they believe is more important for prisoner rehabilitation. There is a perception that some prisoners opt for programs purely to get out of work, and there is also a tendency for some prisoners to try and take on too many programs in the hope of an early release. All these factors mitigate against wholehearted support from prison officers of Koori prisoners’ desire to participate in the Koori CSP.

**Relationship to other programs**

The impact upon the Koori CSP of other Koori-specific programs such as the ACIP has already been discussed in the Facilitator Feedback section. Prison administration staff concurred with those concerns, noting that the successful implementation of the ACIP at DPFC united the Koori women positively towards the CSP, whereas the failure of ACIP at Loddon united the Koori men in distrust and hostility that required a lot of work from CSP facilitators to overcome.
Prison administration staff also drew attention more broadly to the need to calendar Koori-focused programs in a more coherent way at the prisons, due to a tendency to have periods of intense Koori programming and then periods of relative ‘famine’. It was noted that the ‘feasts’ could increase inter-racial tensions by triggering perceptions of special treatment, and the ‘famines’ could unintentionally communicate to the Koori prisoners that the institution’s efforts to meet their needs are an optional extra rather than part of core business.

**Proposed solutions**

At all locations, prison administration staff concurred that there was a need for more joint planning and preparation between Head Office, key prison administration staff and facilitators before the program began. Their suggested solutions are summarized below, many which have also contributed to our recommendations at the end of this report.

**Planning meetings prior to program implementation**

One or more meetings at the prison, attended by a head office representative, the Programs Manager, Senior Psychologist and both facilitators. Issues to be discussed at those meetings could include:

- Extent and limits of facilitator’s roles
- Supervisor’s role and expectations
- Local issues likely to have an impact on the program
- Negotiations about the needs of the institution and the needs of the Koori prisoners in relation to the program
- Practical considerations including space.

**Prison orientation training for Indigenous facilitators**

An information and training session for the Indigenous facilitators to inform them of relevant prison policies and procedures was considered important.

**More information about the program for prison staff**

Prison administrators indicated they would have benefitted from more information about the program, perhaps in writing, before implementation. Especially valuable would be the rationale for having a Koori-specific CSP, to assist with culture change and to confront misperceptions of special treatment.

**More cultural awareness training for prison staff**

The Department of Justice culture awareness training program was considered important for all prison staff, but in some cases insufficient on its own. For example one Senior Psychologist indicated that more advanced cultural awareness training would enable her to provide more culturally appropriate supervision for program facilitators.

The prison administration staff were also very supportive of the idea of non-Indigenous facilitators sitting in on the ACIP program prior to implementing the Koori CSP, as an opportunity for cultural learning that would also help them build rapport with the Koori prisoners. One senior psychologist said she would recommend this to all members of her team.
The idea of involving the Indigenous facilitators in the ACIP was also mentioned. At DPFC, the Indigenous facilitator of the CSP had also facilitated the recently-completed ACIP. The continuity of her involvement with the women was considered a real strength at that location.

**Involvement of prison officers in the program as PSOs**

The very positive outcomes at Loddon of involving prison officers directly in the program has already been described in the benefits section above. It was considered imperative that this model continue at that location, in order to accelerate positive culture change. There was no particular pressure to adopt this model at the other two locations, and this appeared to be because it was working very well to engage the AWO or the ISO in this capacity.

**A yearly calendar of Koori programs and activities**

All prison administration staff interviewed indicated that the timing of Koori programs needs to be planned in ways that take into account other programs such as ACIP and Maramali, and existing cultural events and activities on the calendar, such as NAIDOC Week, Sorry Day and Reconciliation Week. Scheduling the ACIP just prior to the Koori CSP was considered a very good idea, so long as the ACIP fulfils its responsibilities.

The main concern was to ensure an even flow of cultural events and activities, so that a ‘feast or famine’ situation could be avoided. Finally, it was thought that this will be easier when more of the mainstream offender rehabilitation programs have been adapted to meet the needs of Indigenous men and women in Victoria’s prisons.
Section 5: Participant perspectives

Participant feedback questionnaire

Participants were asked to complete a program feedback questionnaire at the end of the program, where they rated a number of variables on a five point scale. The completion rate for this questionnaire was 50%. None completed it at Loddon; all five women completed it at DPFC, and seven out of nine completed it at Barwon. Due to the small sample size, only the combined totals are reported.

Table 9: Program Feedback from Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback questions</th>
<th>Ratings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness of program for current problems: 5=very useful, 1= not at all useful</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness for helping with future problems: 5=very useful, 1= not at all useful</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment of the program: 1=a lot, 5=not at all</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How well organized was the program? 1=very well, 5=not at all well</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extent that it will help participants not reoffend: 1=very much, 5=not at all</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much learned overall: 1=a lot, 5=nothing at all</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean total number of participants:</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumulative total (%)</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants were also asked if they would now consider doing other mainstream programs led by Indigenous and non-Indigenous facilitators. Seven said yes, four said no and one was unsure. Finally participants were asked if they thought having done the program would help their chances of getting parole. Eight said yes, three were unsure and one was not applicable due to straight release.

Key findings:
- Just over half the sample rated the program most highly on all questions
- The great majority of participants (87%) gave the program the highest and second highest ratings on all questions
- There was no reported dissatisfaction with the program
- Just over half the sample was now positively oriented towards other (adapted) mainstream programs
- Two thirds believed they had benefited in terms of increasing their chances of parole.

Qualitative comments
Facilitators were asked to record comments from their final discussions with the groups in their last session. Emerging themes were:
- Sadness about the group finishing
- Gratitude towards the facilitators
- Desire to maintain contact with Indigenous facilitators after the program is over
• Repeated assertion that the program contained too much written work
• Desire to see the program continue and be available to more Koori prisoners in the future.

Anecdotal comparison: participant experience of mainstream vs. Koori CSP
Finally, the PSO from DPFC was in a unique position to comment on the feedback from 4-5 women prisoners who had undertaken the mainstream CSP in the past. The contrast between their reported experience and the findings above for the Koori CSP is stark. The PSO reported that:
• Those who finished the mainstream program did so entirely for Parole, not because they felt they were getting any intrinsic value from the program
• They participated little and generally did not talk much in the mainstream groups
• They found the content ‘hard’.

One direct quote recalled by the PSO sums it up: “This is a white man’s idea and it does nothing for me as it is not on Aboriginal people or our culture. Do not tell me to do a white man’s program when what I need is my people’s program” (Koori prisoner, DPFC).
DISCUSSION

The starting point of our discussion here is to revisit the rationale of the CSP to gain a clear understanding why it was considered appropriate for mainstream and Indigenous prisoners. This partly stems from earlier studies which found that people who get into trouble with the law often have difficulty solving problems in their everyday lives. Under its new Reducing Re-offending Framework, Corrections Victoria first rolled out the CSP as a mainstream program but found that Indigenous prisoners were not too responsive to the program offered. Due to the persisting over-representation of Indigenous offenders in the Victorian prison system, Corrections Victoria took the commendable step in cooperation with the Aboriginal Justice Agreement of developing the Koori CSP to help Koori prisoners strengthen or enhance their skills to reduce their risk of re-offending.

Though based on an English mainstream program (the McGuire Offence-Focused Problem Solving Program) the Koori CSP was adapted to match the needs of Indigenous men and women prisoners as an alternative to the mainstream CSP. The Evaluation notes that while certain adaptations were made to course content and delivery style, the core subjects around problem solving skills remained, particularly for the latter program sessions. The Evaluation found this to be a sensible approach and suggests a range of measures to further enhance the program's performance so that it can be continued into the future.

Our literature review of a Canadian study that examined post-release data showed modest reduction in recidivism rates and lends support to the approach that Corrections Victoria has taken to modify and evaluate the CSP for Indigenous offenders.

However, the Evaluation warned that the problem of reintegration of prisoners into their communities and re-offending patterns relies on much more than what the CSP alone can offer and that it may be unrealistic to expect it to solve many of the associated issues of reintegration such as housing, employment and substance abuse and so on. The responsibility of an effective reintegration strategy has to actively engage with the present ‘whole-of-government’ or ‘whole-of-agency’ strategy supported by Corrections Victoria and, in the Indigenous context, driven through the Aboriginal Justice Agreement by Aboriginal Affairs Victoria.

The core task of CSP is to equip prisoners who chose to enter the program with a set of practical problem solving skills aimed at enhancing their capacity to deal with everyday problems more effectively not only for when released from prison but also during their term within the prison system.

This study, however, confined itself to the prison context and not externally which ideally could have been done through follow-up interviews with prisoners released back into their communities. While we recognise that this was not the Evaluation Team’s brief we recommend that it should be the subject of any future evaluation. The key purpose would be to assess the resilience of skills that Indigenous prisoners learned from the CSP in prison and the extent to which these assist prisoners to cope after their release and acts as a deterrent of their re-offending.

The Evaluation chose to focus on program integrity and responsiveness, skills acquisition including and assessment of the perspectives of facilitators, offenders and prison
management staff. This approach captured many useful insights into program strengths and weaknesses; what things worked well and what things didn’t; and also highlights program high and low points. These are summarized below.

**Strengths:**
- Because most participants stuck it out there was a limited to nil attrition rate.
- Adherence to the program manual was high since most followed it according to plan and completed most individual session activities.
- Overall facilitators experienced most sessions as quite easy or very easy to implement because talking circles good cultural match, hands-on exercises as alternative to written material alone.
- No sessions were experienced as extremely difficult to implement.
- As the program progressed prisoner motivation to continue the program strengthened and became internalized.
- A cohesive and inclusive group process developed at all three locations.
- The cultural dimensions of the program played an important role such as talking circles, map of tribal boundaries, and building on oral tradition of sharing stories.

**Weaknesses:**
- Uneven facilitator compliance with record and data requirements.
- This had impact on integrity of data collected and also cost effectiveness of this evaluation as evaluators spent extensive time chasing material up.
- Slippage and time-delay in starting the program.
- Facilitator training in the pre-pilot stage was significantly less that for mainstream CSP.
- Unrealistic to expect Indigenous Facilitators to learn on-the-job but it is important they receive proper orientation to Prison System and CSP’s role in the system.

**What worked well:**
- Group activities that worked well included role plays as hands on learning tool.
- The freedom and opportunity to:
  - Discuss topics of relevance to the Aboriginal community, free of being shamed or embarrassed.
  - Vent feelings about prison life and procedures.
  - Talk about their offences but not to glorify them.
  - Discuss skills and strategies taught in the program.
- In applying the skills to real-life situation participants were able to bring personal examples to the table for discussion.
- It was suggested that women fared better that men on discussing personal example whereas men preferred to work with problems of a less personal nature.
- The training helped participants to handle provocative situations in the daily life of the prison.

**What didn't work well**
• Though planned for the three sites, only one site completed video of skills acquisition session. It would have been useful to make comparisons with other sites, providing a greater set of data to more accurately measure this variable.
• Non completion of PSI sheets by all pilots. Though supplementary questions show the difficulty of using psychometric testing for Indigenous target groups. They may not be culturally sensitive.
• Most participants struggled with the written requirements.
• The message stick idea didn’t take on because participants come from different areas.
• Topics that precipitated incidents of personal crisis such as family violence created a range of unpleasant emotions for the group and facilitators to work on.
• The extent to which skills could be applied post-release could not be measured, though it was felt the program could risk setting participants up to fail if their home and community environments remained the same.
• Family and community change is necessary if participant skills are to be sustained after release.
• It is unrealistic to expect CSP alone to affect this change externally; other agencies must share their responsibilities.

High points:
• All Facilitators reported moving and positive conclusion to program where certificates were presented and shields that participants engraved at Barwon and Loddon were exchanged.
• Golf Lesson by former AFL star at Barwon.
• Acceptance by the participants of training and support staff.

Other positive comments offered:

“May of us were cynical at the start that this program would never work. But now I have seen a different side to the Koori men and it has been a privilege to be part of the change (Prison Officer who participated on program).

The low points:
• Staff changes and changes to training calendar due to the availability of training staff.
• Lingering participant disappointment around the cancellation of earlier Indigenous programs like the ACIP.

It is worth noting that these moments were short-lived and did not undermine the program any further once it gained momentum. It is also noteworthy here that many of these structural problems were situation specific and not necessarily a general prison-wide issue. For instance, the low morale experienced by participants at Loddon was understandable because it was the only site to experience the cancellation of an earlier ACIP program; whereas, the Barwon and DPFC experience was the opposite because of the successful programs run there before the introduction of the CSP.

The Evaluation found that though the program had its problem areas, it contained just as many if not a greater number of strengths and useful examples that worked well. These can be built on to address program weaknesses and flaws so that the
Koori CSP Mark II adds value to the new Reducing Re-offending Framework and Department of Justice’s Aboriginal Justice Agreement of ‘identifying and responding effectively to the needs of Aboriginal people through the development and delivery of culturally appropriate policies, programs and services (AJA).”
CONCLUSION

Though the report recognizes that further work is required to enhance the Koori CSP, it provides overwhelming evidence for the program’s continuation as part of Correction Victoria’s Reducing Re-Offender Framework and Department of Justice’s Aboriginal Justice Agreement not least in adapting and matching justice programs to the specific needs of Indigenous prisoners; and for addressing the over-representation of Indigenous offenders in the criminal justice system. To address the program’s core task of addressing the problem of prisoner recidivism the development work captured in this report must continue to be supported by the Department of Justice, stakeholder Agencies of the Aboriginal Justice Forum and Corrections Victoria.
RECOMMENDATIONS

*Our key recommendation is that the Koori CSP be continued, and further improved in accordance with the specific recommendations below.*

Further adaptation of the model

- Expand the adaptation specialist’s Terms of Reference, and re-engage the Koori psychologist to undertake this work

- Reconvene a reference group in a cumulative knowledge building/capacity building way; eg invite two members of the current facilitator group onto reference group and bring back the Koori psychologist’s own advisers

- Include a group of Koori prisoners who have already undertaken the Koori CSP in the expanded adaptation process, eg by focus groups at one of the pilot locations, facilitated by the Koori psychologist and one of the original program facilitators from that location

- Respond to specific findings in this report that identify the need for additional adaptations. In the interests of increasing program responsivity, and based closely on feedback from the pilots, allow these adaptations to move beyond the current terms of reference where needed. Two caveats are necessary: First, significant changes - such as altered session objectives - must be justified and explained by the Koori psychologist in the expanded adaptation process. Second, facilitators must take extra care to document the impacts of these alterations when the program is actually rolled out, as part of their routine record keeping. This approach takes into account issues of both program integrity and program responsivity: potential threats to the integrity of the original (mainstream) CSP can be averted by assessing whether significant ‘responsivity’ adaptations successfully teach the skills.

- Based on the findings of this report, suggested adaptations to the manual are as follows:
  - Reduce considerably further the paperwork requirements for participants, and substitute for more appropriate activities or materials
  - For the minimal paperwork that needs to remain, provide a bound workbook for participants to work through, and check it closely to eliminate jargon and technical terms
  - Expand the range of alternative modes of learning, eg role plays, pictures, experiential methods, videos, discussions, music, metaphors, storytelling
  - Significantly revise program content for sessions on problem definition, ‘the 5Ws’, and the ‘between the lines’ exercise, and others identified as problematic by participants (eg sessions 1,3,6,7 and 25)
  - Provide shorter, more relevant videos and video clips; also consider using brief video resources as an interlude to ‘lighten up’ the group proceedings
  - Incorporate more program content that acknowledges real-life family and community tensions
  - Identify more acceptable and effective ways to address problems relating to family violence, so that participants do not become overwhelmed by their own reactions to the material
Provide a more targeted approach specifically with the men, to help them apply the skills they are learning in the program directly to their family problems

Include more preparation for community reintegration issues, especially in relation to substance abuse relapse risk, family problems, risk of re-traumatisation (women), peer influences, and barriers to housing, education and employment. This may require substituting or adding some new program objectives

Revise and expand if possible the range of cultural activities, eg smoke ceremony at beginning and end of program; and leave opportunities open for Indigenous facilitators to bring specific areas of cultural knowledge to the program

For some program objectives, especially those that were experienced as problematic to implement, provide options and choices for facilitators rather than always prescribing a specific strategy

Experiment with additional ways to help participants practice their skills in daily prison life, especially strategies that involve peer or PSO support

Build into the program ‘ethos’ a recognition that the group process variables are very important, for example that participants learn a new and positive way of relating to themselves and each other just by being part of the group, whether or not they fully grasp all the cognitive skills concepts

Program structure and intensity

- Two or three two-hour sessions per week is optimal. Full-day sessions should be avoided

- Consider adding approximately two more sessions to the program length, to familiarise participants with the program concept in early sessions, and allow more time to cover the material

- Consider providing a two-week ‘break’ in program content after Session 15, but continue to schedule briefer or less frequent process-oriented sessions throughout this period

Participant selection

- Maintain quite open selection criteria for the program. Since most Koori prisoners will fall within the moderate to high range for both risk and needs, most will be suitable for inclusion. In particular, do not exclude candidates on the grounds of learning disability or illiteracy, since the pilot programs have demonstrated that even if they struggle with some of the content, these participants can still gain a great deal from being part of a positive group process.
Future assessment and evaluation strategies

- Avoid assessment and self-monitoring strategies that involve pencil and paper testing or extensive written work with participants, and do not assume that literate group members will be positively disposed towards these methods. Devise creative alternatives, such as the use of colours, key words, images, symbols, practical exercises etc.

- Use videotaping of key sessions as a standard tool for process evaluations and program integrity checks, or investigate possibility of the supervisor or an evaluation researcher sitting in or screening some sessions. If videotaping is used, ensure the quality of the camera work is high enough to allow all group members to be seen, and tape segments that are long enough to allow all group members the opportunity to demonstrate particular skills.

- Ensure that future process evaluations include focus groups with participants at the end of the program, and ideally also at the midpoint; this was a resource issue for the current evaluation and represented a major ‘gap’ in our data.

- Through supervision, ensure that facilitators keep reliable program records, to allow quality process evaluations to take place with minimal missing data.

- Consider developing a highly structured set of role play tasks for videotaping at the midpoint and at the end of the program, as part of the skills review activities. This would provide an in-vivo mid-and post-program assessment of participants’ skills. Such a strategy was in fact developed by this evaluation team, but was discouraged by the facilitator group on the grounds of being too contrived and potentially placing too much performance pressure on individual participants. Having now seen the strength of the group process and the success of role play techniques in the program, we recommend this strategy be revisited with facilitators and the Reference Group, during the expanded adaptation process.

- It is crucial that a valid, reliable pre- and post-program measure be identified and used in future evaluations of the Koori CSP. This study has demonstrated the difficulties of achieving this in a timely, culturally appropriate way. An alternative option could be to have an evaluation researcher and the Indigenous facilitator undertake semi-structured interviews with each participant before and after the program. The interview protocol could be designed to assess skills levels for all types of cognitive skills to be taught in the program, through a combination of verbal self-report, response to standardized scenarios, role play exercises and examples from their daily lives. It would have the added benefit of increasing Indigenous facilitators’ rapport with participants before the groups begin, and introducing them to clinical assessment techniques.

- Future process and impact evaluations of the Koori CSP could seek ways to reduce the amount of qualitative data gathered from facilitators and prison administration staff, and replace it with less time-intensive multi-choice or graded response questions. The qualitative dimensions of this study have helped identify some of the important constructs that had not yet been named in quantitative research, such as specific reasons for facilitators deviating from the manual, and specific barriers to program implementation that may arise at prison locations. Many of these can now be translated into structured or semi-structured
qualitative tools such as checklists, and this would make subsequent evaluation much more efficient and cost effective for researchers. Clearly the data gathered from the participants themselves would need to remain primarily qualitative, to minimize paperwork.

**Preparing the prisons for Koori CSPs**

- One or more planning meetings need to be convened at each location, prior to program implementation. Invited should be the Project Manager from Clinical or Strategic Services, Head Office (to facilitate the meeting), the non-Indigenous facilitator, the Indigenous facilitator, the Senior Psychologist and/or Programs Manager, a Program Support Officer, and others as appropriate to the location. Objectives would include:
  - Clarifying the extent and limits of facilitator’s roles
  - Clarifying the supervisor’s role, and negotiating a suitable supervision arrangement
  - Identifying and addressing local issues likely to have an impact on the program
  - Resolving problems about timetabling, space and consistency of the program;
  - Organizing a practical orientation to the prison for the Indigenous facilitator, including information and training on prison policy and procedures
  - Explicitly identifying and negotiating differences in values and ‘ways of doing things’, to reduce the likelihood of conflicts between Koori community expectations and the institution’s expectations in relation to the program.

- Provision of information about the Koori CSP for prison officers and prison administration staff is important prior to implementation. This could take the form of written materials and information sessions describing the program and detailing the rationale for it being Koori-specific. This will help accelerate a positive culture change in the prisons, by promoting rehabilitation, confronting misperceptions of special treatment, and encouraging prison staff to see that the program is designed to respond to important unmet needs.

- More cultural awareness training for prison staff is needed. While the 1-day Department of Justice culture awareness training program was considered important for all prison staff, additional targeted training needs were also identified, as follows:
  - Advanced cultural awareness training for Senior Psychologists and Programs Managers, to enable them to provide more culturally appropriate supervision and oversight of program facilitators
  - Experiential cultural learning opportunities for non-Indigenous facilitators and possibly non-Indigenous PSOs, by inviting them into the Aboriginal Cultural Immersion Program (ACIP). This would also help them build rapport with the Koori prisoners prior to initiating the Koori CSP.
  - Involving the Indigenous facilitators in the ACIP if they are available, to provide greater continuity of cultural learning opportunities across programs.
• As the program is rolled out across new prison locations, very serious consideration should be given to involving Prison Officers as PSOs, to accelerate the positive culture change observed at Loddon. There should, however, be flexible; for example at DPFC and Barwon it might have been a mistake to insist on this model because the AWO and the ISO had such positive relationships with the groups already and added a unique set of skills to the program. However in instances where such a strong relationship does not already exist, carefully selected Prison Officers should be given priority for the PSO role.

• Project Managers from Clinical and Strategic Services need to ensure that every single item needed by facilitators to run the program is provided ahead of time, in a Koori CSP kit. The only exception would be culture-specific materials that only the Indigenous facilitators would easily be able to access. Such a kit could include:
  ➢ The Program Manual
  ➢ The evaluation handbook
  ➢ Bound workbooks for participants containing all handouts and written materials
  ➢ The Tindale map
  ➢ The ‘three boxes’
  ➢ Consent forms for videotaping sessions, blank tapes and instructions
  ➢ Graduation certificates for participants (not personalised).

• Prisons to revisit the issue of dedicated Koori space or, as an alternative, a Koori-influenced multipurpose space. Even if this is not currently possible due to infrastructure constraints or other factors, it is an important issue to keep on the agenda and seek to resolve.

**Facilitator selection, preparation and training**

• Formalise the selection criteria for Indigenous facilitators, which could include:
  ➢ Credibility in Koori community, and cultural knowledge and connections
  ➢ Buy-in to the program concept
  ➢ Availability and capacity to commit to the time requirements of the project, including all training days and program sessions
  ➢ Ability to manage multiple or potentially conflicting roles (if evident), in ways that meet the needs of the participants and the needs of the institution
  ➢ Prior experience with offender groups, CBT approaches or offender rehabilitation would be an advantage but not a requirement.

• Duty statements need to be developed by Clinical and Strategic Services for the Indigenous facilitators. It could be undertaken collaboratively, by seeking input from the Koori facilitators who engaged in the pilots

• Have a backfill arrangement to cover for unexpected contingencies. Options could include:
  ➢ Identifying and training two extra Indigenous facilitators, one male and one female, and one non-Indigenous facilitator, for emergency coverage
  ➢ ensuring upon selection that existing facilitators are able to cover for each other across locations at short notice
• seeking an emergency coverage arrangement with one or more of the three Indigenous facilitators who participated in this pilot, since they are now familiar with the program.

• Consider using one or more of Indigenous and non-Indigenous facilitators from the Koori CSP pilots to contribute to subsequent training of new facilitators, alongside the contracted Koori psychologist. This would require some train the trainer workshops at the front end, but would increase Koori community capacity, and would keep a range of stakeholders involved in the program. When local skills level is sufficient, the Koori psychologist could gradually phase out, but could still provide periodic ‘audit checks’ as an integrity measure, either by direct observation or video.

• Provide significantly more hours of training. We recommend that the Koori CSP training requirement match the mainstream specifications, which is 5-8 days.

• Continue to ensure that PSOs are included in the facilitator training. In the case of prison officers, it may not be possible to release them for all eight days; however efforts should be made to ensure that they attend the parts of the training course that will be most likely to help them contribute to positive culture change in the prison environment

• Expand the content and focus of facilitator training, including:
  ➢ Opportunities to discuss and negotiate co-facilitation roles
  ➢ More practice actually delivering the material and learning how to make the co-facilitation pairings ‘work’
  ➢ Videotaping practice, especially parts of sessions that may need to be videotaped for evaluation purposes when the program is actually implemented. For example this could be a specific task for PSOs
  ➢ Targeted training on record-keeping and the importance of it; this is crucial to program integrity and evaluation
  ➢ Some separate Indigenous facilitator training, focusing especially on CBT, CSP, group process, supervision, and navigating the mainstream prison environment
  ➢ Some separate training for non-Indigenous facilitators, including cross cultural awareness and sitting in on ACIP sessions.

• Split the training into 2 blocks: five days of training on introductory matters and sessions 1-15 at start of program, and three days for sessions 16-30 at the midpoint. Here is a suggested training schedule:

• **Block 1 - prior to program (5 days)**

  Days 1 & 2:
  ➢ Orientation for all facilitators together
  ➢ Then Indigenous facilitators receive CBT training and introduction to CSP content, and non-Indigenous facilitators receive cross cultural awareness training
  ➢ Then all facilitators together receive detailed content training, Sessions 1-15

  Days 3-5:
- All facilitators practice delivering parts of every session from sessions 1-15 in pairs, receive feedback, negotiate co-facilitation styles and group process issues, and practice videotaping a segment
- All facilitators receive targeted training on record keeping; project managers could build in an incentive to encourage facilitators to produce ‘perfect records’
- Negotiate supervision arrangements, with an emphasis on uncovering and addressing resistance to supervision that may exist for Indigenous facilitators.

**Block 2 - During a 2-week break at midpoint of program (3 days)**

**Day 6:**
- Structured facilitator group debrief and process evaluation of first half of program, with topics including: issues related to program content, group process, co-facilitation, and supervision; celebrate successes and seek solutions to barriers
- Consider separate debrief groups (Indigenous in one group and non-Indigenous in the other), for part of the time, depending on need.

**Days 7 & 8:**
- All facilitators practice delivering parts of every session from sessions 16-30 in pairs, receive feedback, and practice videotaping a segment
- All facilitators receive further training on record keeping, with a focus on compliance issues arising in the first half of the program.

**Supervision arrangements**

- Discuss in the facilitator training sessions the value of supervision for Indigenous as well as non-Indigenous facilitators, and address any resistance that may exist
- Provide professional supervision for all facilitators as per the specifications for the mainstream CSP: this means joint supervision sessions for facilitators with a Senior Psychologist on average once every six sessions, or more frequently if needed
- Clarify the Senior Psychologists’ supervision role from the beginning, so they can have an active role in the program
- Ensure Senior Psychologists have received some advanced cultural awareness training to enable them to provide the highest standard of supervision to facilitators
- Consider making a senior Koori stakeholder available to the Senior Psychologists as a cultural advisor; for example the Koori psychologist who adapted the program, or one of her own cultural advisors
- As part of the process evaluation at the program’s midpoint, assess with all facilitators the adequacy of this proposed supervision model, and consider an Indigenous-specific additional avenue of supervision *if warranted.*
- Ensure that Senior Psychologists keep records of their supervision sessions with facilitators, so they can be made available for subsequent process evaluations as needed.
Strengthen connections between the Koori CSP and other prison-based programs

- The timing of the Koori CSP needs to take into account other programs such as ACIP and Maramali, and fixed cultural events and activities on the calendar such as NAIDOC Week, Sorry Day and Reconciliation Week. The concern is to ensure an even flow of cultural events and activities, as a ‘feast and famine’ cycle is counterproductive to Indigenous and non-Indigenous prisoners alike.

- It is recommended that the Koori CSP be scheduled directly after the ACIP, to allow facilitators opportunities to sit in on that program before embarking on this one.

- Develop communication with personnel who are developing and implementing other Koori-focused prisoner rehabilitation programs, to share information and ensure the needs being expressed by Koori CSP participants will be picked up at the appropriate time in those other program/s. This is particularly crucial for the following two program types:
  - Koori-specific drug and alcohol programs
  - Pre-release and transition programs.

- Other strategic opportunities to share information and expertise between the Koori CSP and other adapted mainstream programs as they come on line could include:
  - Sharing information between programs at the planning and development stage, so different personnel are not duplicating their efforts
  - Engaging people across programs at the Reference Group level
  - Engaging talented Indigenous facilitators across programs so half-time or full-time Indigenous positions can be created
  - Coming together for cultural awareness and CBT training, and sharing the associated costs
  - Learning from each other’s evaluation findings
  - Sharing dissemination and publication opportunities.

Strengthen connections between the Koori CSP and programs in the community

- Seek creative ways to provide follow-up CSP sessions for Koori prisoners in the community upon release, such as:
  - Designing the community-based Koori CSP in ways that allow paroled prisoners to join a community-based CSP group of Koori offenders for a specific number of spaced ‘booster sessions’.
  - Exploring the possibility of Community Correctional Services providing community-based booster sessions for paroled Koori CSP graduates in their own group (i.e. separate from the community-based Koori CSP), and opening this group up to their family members as well as the released prisoners themselves
  - Offering some of the most successful participants from the prison-based Koori CSP the opportunity to mentor some of their peers upon release from prison, if they come from the same geographic area. This would require significant investment in terms of mentor training, payment and supervision, but would be a strong community capacity-building venture.
Strengthen communication between the Indigenous Issues Unit and Corrections Victoria

- Corrections Victoria’s work on adapting the mainstream CSP to meet the needs of Koori prisoners is directly aligned with one of the key strategic objectives of the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA). Since the Indigenous Issues Unit is the business unit for the Department of Justice responsible for monitoring all AJA initiatives, it is in everyone’s interest to develop a formal dialogue. This could be achieved by having the project managers for the Koori CSP report progress on the Koori CSPs to the local Regional Justice Advisory Committee Executive Officer in each region where the program has been implemented. The Executive Officers would then be able to bring this information to the Aboriginal Justice Forum, which meets at least twice a year, and is the peak body for all Aboriginal justice-related initiatives in Victoria.

- Corrections Victoria could then consider a similar process for other adapted mainstream programs as they come on line.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX 1: PERSONS CONSULTED FOR THIS PROJECT

(Listed alphabetically)

Kate Andison  Psychologist, Clinical Services, Corrections Victoria; non-Indigenous facilitator
Lorraine Beeton  Manager, Indigenous Policy and Services Unit, Corrections Victoria
Jim Berg  Koori community Elder and program facilitator
Monica Bragg  Psychologist, Clinical Services, Corrections Victoria; Non-Indigenous facilitator
Nerissa Broben  Curatorial/Collections Manager, Koori Heritage Trust
Lee Esposito  Senior Psychologist, Clinical Services, Corrections Victoria
Patrick Farrant  Koori community Elder and cultural advisor
Claire Hanrahan  Acting Senior Program Officer, Clinical Services, Corrections Victoria
Syd Jackson  Koori community Elder and program facilitator
Tanya Jones  Registered Psychologist, contractor to Corrections Victoria
Lynn Killeen  Aboriginal Wellbeing Officer, Corrections Victoria; Program Support Officer
Veronica Knox  Psychologist, Clinical Services, Corrections Victoria and Non-Indigenous facilitator
John Matthews  Indigenous Services Officer, Corrections Victoria and Program Support Officer
Daphne Milward  Koori community Elder and program facilitator
Peter Persson  Senior Policy Officer, Strategic Services, Corrections Victoria
Denise Reid  Senior Psychologist, Clinical Services, Corrections Victoria
Lawrence Tawera  National Advisor, Maori Service Development, New Zealand Department of Corrections
### APPENDIX 2: PROGRAM ACTIVITIES NOT COMPLETED, AND REASONS WHY

#### Table 3b: Activities Not Completed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Session No.</th>
<th>Activity Not Completed</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>LODDON</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Initial Self Assessments</td>
<td>Completed in Session 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>P.S. Skills discussion</td>
<td>Completed in Session 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Problem analysis 1</td>
<td>Lots of hostility towards paperwork.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Problem list</td>
<td>Anxiety, then anger in illiterate group members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Problem analysis 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sources of information</td>
<td>Used scenario of Magistrate delivering sentence to examine need to gather info. Activity did not go well - they would not hypothetically put themselves in the Magistrate's place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mood Log</td>
<td>No reason given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Offending behaviour</td>
<td>Not enough time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Joint assessment</td>
<td>Activity done as a group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Application 1: The Knot</td>
<td>Not enough time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Chain reaction</td>
<td>Not enough time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Fire pit and BBQ</td>
<td>No reason given</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Offence Box exercise</td>
<td>No reason given</td>
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<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Assign homework</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Follow up on homework</td>
<td>No home work was given</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Goals &amp; Priorities: group ex.</td>
<td>Handout not appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Consent to videotape</td>
<td>No reason given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Half-smile exercises and assign homework</td>
<td>Reflected on controlled breathing and relative uses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23-26</td>
<td>Assign homework</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>View videotaped 'speeches'</td>
<td>No videotape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Moral dilemma &amp; wider discussion</td>
<td>Not a relevant example, given culture and distrust of police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>'How I act in conflicts'</td>
<td>These exercises simplify content in a negative way and make it confusing. Personal reflections and role plays were instead substituted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DAME PHYLLIS FROST CENTRE</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Remote associations</td>
<td>Difficult to understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Application 1: The Knot</td>
<td>Not enough group members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Chain reaction</td>
<td>Good understanding of concept already</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Fire pit and BBQ</td>
<td>No reason given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Assign homework</td>
<td>Our sessions are quite long and intense - homework would be asking too much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Follow up on homework</td>
<td>No home work was given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Goals &amp; Priorities: group ex.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Problem Solving: group ex.</td>
<td>Too much for one session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Consent to videotape</td>
<td>No reason given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Observe video &amp; identify skills</td>
<td>No videotape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23-26</td>
<td>Assign homework</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>View videotaped 'speeches'</td>
<td>No videotape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>'Do I fight like a shark or reason like an owl?'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BARWON</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Initial Self Assessments</td>
<td>To be included in Session 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Skill of asking questions</td>
<td>To be included in Session 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Homework review</td>
<td>No homework given at this stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mood log</td>
<td>To be done as homework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>‘Nullungah Boy’ &amp; discussion</td>
<td>Next week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>App. 3: Worry Box exercise</td>
<td>Not enough time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Video: ‘Who’s the Loser?’</td>
<td>Next session</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Force field analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Personal objectives</td>
<td>Next Session</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>BARWON cont.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Assign homework</td>
<td>Unsure what homework is applicable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Follow up on homework</td>
<td>Not in manual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Consent to videotape</td>
<td>No reason given</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Assign homework</td>
<td>Did homework together</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Ruminations: Defence Attorney role play</td>
<td>Difficult to understand - activity not clear</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Taking the perspective of an adversary (videotape)</td>
<td>Not in outline</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>View videotape</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8 Talking Circles not undertaken due to continuation of prior sessions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 3: RAW DATA FOR THE PROBLEM SOLVING INVENTORY (PSI)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Pre-program PSI score</th>
<th>Post-program PSI score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barwon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>84</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>102</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>92.4</td>
<td>86.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loddon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>84</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>114</td>
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<td></td>
<td>98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>96.0</td>
<td>112.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPFC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>117</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean total</td>
<td>94.2</td>
<td>100.4</td>
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Supplementary PSI Questions

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<th>Location</th>
<th>Pre-program</th>
<th>Post-program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Qn. 1</td>
<td>Qn. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loddon</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barwon</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 4: THE SHIELD CARVED BY THE LODDON GROUP

Reproduced with permission from the Koori Heritage Trust, Victoria.
APPENDIX 5: LETTER FROM LODDON GROUP AND EVALUATION TEAM’S REPLY

KOORI OFFENCE FOCUSED COGNITIVE SKILLS PROGRAM

[Group Participant]
H.M. Prison Loddon
Locked Bag 3
Castlemaine Vic 3450

Wednesday, May 04, 2005

RE: Questionnaire and other information sheets related to the program

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am a prisoner who has just recently started the ‘Koori Cognitive skills’ program at Loddon Prison. My understanding is the program itself has been changed in a few ways to comply with the needs of the Koori community in prisons. All the Koori guys (prisoners) here at Loddon are very interested in this program and finding other alternatives other than the course of action they have taken throughout their life to end up where they are now (prison).

I strongly feel that a few of the guys will shut themselves off from the program because of the fact the paperwork which is being handed out is inappropriate. Unlike other Cognitive skills Program that has been run, this one is dealing with a community whom have very poor education, along with other problems that may arise during the course.

The reason why I am writing is to put a few things in point form with what I believe may cause unsettling emotions into this course and the fact that all Koori prisoners really want this Program to work.

Points:

• The information being handed out in paper form is too hard for someone with little or no education to understand.
• Uses of words guys don’t understand
• The way each statement is put.

Example:

When I am confronted with a complex problem, I do not bother to develop a strategy to collect information so I can define exactly what the problem is.

• All the paperwork which is to be handed out may be far too much.
The therapist can read all the material out in a group, and even explain what she is reading to the participants. This process has proven to take a lot of time and considering we only get two hours for each group, a lot of time is and will be spent on explaining what things mean.

I don’t know if the information we receive can be broken down into more common English that is readable for a person with basic English skills to understand. I feel this Program will help and give the Koori guys here effective Problem Solving Techniques if they are given the full chance to understand what it is they need to change not only about themselves but their lifestyles.

I have completed Cognitive skills myself and I did receive a lot of information that was very useful in my day to day living especially in prison and having to make decisions with how I should act in certain situations. This is a Program I know the Koori prisoners not only here but all through the Prison System will benefit from, as long as they are not put in a position of wanting to shut off because of the fact they don’t understand something or are given too much in the way of paperwork and are unable to take so much on board at once.

I have talked to the other guys here and this is how they feel. On a personal note I have to say this is the first Program that I’ve seen in which all Koori prisoners are really content on making an effort with putting in so to speak.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully yours,

[Group Participant]
Dear [Group Participant],

Many thanks for your letter. Graham and I will be evaluating the Koori Cognitive Skills program, and from where we stand, the points you make are very relevant and important. Maybe some background can show you where your comments can contribute to the bigger picture.

Graham and I provided suggestions and comments on some of the changes that were made to the mainstream Cognitive Skills Program, to help make it more suitable for the Koori participants. Part of our evaluation has been designed to find out whether these changes have gone far enough. The group facilitators and you guys will be the ones teaching the rest of us about that, based on how you experience the program. We not only welcome this information; we find it useful for our work.

After each session, the facilitators are sending us some written feedback on how the session went. The fact that you are making your feelings known to the facilitators is very important. This is an important ‘pathway’ for you and the group to get your point of view represented in our evaluation of this program. There will also be some opportunities later in the program for you and the rest of the group to give some more detailed feedback on how you think the program is going, its strengths, weaknesses etc.

About the paperwork. The most important thing we can learn is whether (or not) the paperwork is helpful to the group, and why (or why not). As each part of paperwork comes, please keep letting the facilitators know your responses to it. If it is helpful, that will speak for itself because it will contribute to a successful session. If it is not helpful, please keep the feedback coming, through your facilitators. For example, for paperwork so far in the Program, you have indicated:

- some of it uses words the guys don’t understand
- some of it is phrased in a confusing way
- the sheer amount of it may just feel like too much
- explaining what it means is taking up valuable group time.

As mentioned before, this is really useful information for us. Unfortunately because the changes for this ‘cycle’ of the program have already been made, we can not step in right now and make more changes in response to this feedback without creating a lot of delays and uncertainty. For example the team of Koori people who did most of the work on the changes would need to be brought back for more work, money would have to be found to pay them etc. before it could all come back to the group.

However, this does not mean your feedback is ignored. The very purpose of our evaluation is to find out what worked well in this program and what needs to be changed. The end result of our evaluation, hopefully, will be some clear recommendations. And here is one thing we can guarantee: if by the end of the
program, you and the group are still feeling this way about the written work, your concerns will be captured in our recommendations. That means, if further revisions to the program are clearly needed, we will say so. When our evaluation report is finished, we will come in to Loddon and discuss our findings and recommendations with the group. So this will give you the chance to hear exactly what we have said.

Also we’d ask you and the group to please keep an open mind. On the one hand, we recognize exactly what you are saying about how the paperwork is unsettling when many guys in the group have a poor education, and may make them feel like shutting down. On the other hand, as everyone gets more comfortable with the program, some of the paperwork may also become a little more familiar. This is something we can basically find out together as the program runs through.

Finally, thanks again for taking the initiative to raise your concerns. We guess your decision to write a letter is an example of good problem solving! We are pleased to hear that the group members are also contributing. We look forward to meeting you and the other members of the group when the program and the evaluation report are done. Please share the contents of this letter with the others in the group.

Sincerely

Robin Jones
Evaluation consultant

Graham Atkinson
Atkinson, Kerr & Associates
APPENDIX 6: EVALUATION TOOLS

6a: Facilitator Program Feedback Form (Example)

Evaluation Part 1: Group Process Data Collection Sheets for facilitators

Please debrief on the session with your co-facilitator and complete this form together, after each session. Then email it by 5 PM each Friday to Graham Atkinson at yuruga@hotkey.net.au or Robin Jones at rjones@alphalink.com.au. Thank you for your cooperation.

Session number: 1 Date of session: __/__/2005

Location: ______________________________

Facilitator/s:

_____________________________________________________________________

Number of participants who attended:___ Total number scheduled to attend:___

1. Your plan for this session:
If you plan to do anything different in this session than is written in the manual, please describe (eg need to finish something from end of last session). If you plan to implement exactly what the manual says for this session, please leave this section blank.

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

2. How the session actually went:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Fully completed</th>
<th>Partly completed</th>
<th>Not completed</th>
<th>Comments (optional)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Talking circles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outline of program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial self-assessments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving skills discussion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Your impressions of the material in the manual:
Indigenous facilitator: Trying to implement the objectives and activities from the manual for this session was:

☐ Extremely difficult
☐ Quite difficult
☐ ‘In the middle’
☐ Quite easy
☐ Extremely easy
Why? ________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Non-indigenous facilitator: Trying to implement the objectives and activities from the manual for this session was:
☐ Extremely difficult
☐ Quite difficult
☐ ‘In the middle’
☐ Quite easy
☐ Extremely easy

Why? ________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

4. Anything further we need to know?
Please comment further on anything important from this session that has not been captured above, especially things that can help us understand what is working well in the program and what is not.
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

5. Sign off
   Facilitator 1: __________________________
   Facilitator 2: _________________________
6b: Problem Solving Inventory Tool (PSI)

PSI

P. Paul Heppner & Chris H Petersen, 1988

These questions describe some different ways of dealing with problems. Please indicate how much you agree with each statement, by circling the best number on the following scale:

1 strongly agree 2 3 4 5 6 strongly disagree

1. When a solution to a problem was unsuccessful, I do not examine why it did not work

2. When I am confronted with a complex problem, I do not bother to develop a strategy to collect information so I can define exactly what the problem is

3. When my first efforts to solve a problem fail, I become uneasy about my ability to handle the situation

4. After I have solved a problem, I do not analyze what went right or what went wrong

5. I am usually able to think up creative and effective alternatives to solve a problem

6. After I have tried to solve a problem with a certain course of action, I take time and compare the actual outcome to what I thought should have happened.

7. When I have a problem, I think up as many possible ways to handle it as I can until I can’t come up with any more ideas

8. When confronted with a problem, I consistently examine my feelings to find out what is going on in a problem situation.

9. I have the ability to solve most problems even though initially no solution is immediately apparent

10. Many problems I face are too complex for me to solve

11. I make decisions and am happy with them later
1. When confronted with a problem, I tend to do the first thing that I can think of to solve it

2. Sometimes I do not stop and take time to deal with my problems, but just kind of muddle ahead

3. When deciding on an idea or a possible solution to a problem, I do not take the time to consider the chances of each alternative being successful

4. When confronted with a problem, I stop and think about it before deciding on a next step

5. I generally go with the first good idea that comes to my mind

6. When making a decision, I weigh the consequences of each alternative and compare them against each other

7. When I make plans to solve a problem, I am almost certain I can make them work

8. I try to predict the overall result of carrying out a particular course of action

9. When I try to think up possible solutions to a problem, I do not come up with very many alternatives

10. Given enough time and effort, I believe I can solve most problems that confront me

11. When faced with a novel situation I have confidence that I can handle problems that may arise

12. Even though I work on a problem, sometimes I feel like I am groping or wandering, and am not getting down to the real issue

13. I make snap judgments and later regret them

14. I trust my ability to solve new and difficult problems
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 strongly agree</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6 strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>I have a systematic method for comparing alternatives and making decisions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>When confronted with a problem, I do not usually examine what sort of external things my environment may be contributing to my problem</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>When I am confused by a problem, one of the first things I do is survey the situation and consider all the relevant pieces of information</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Sometimes I get so charged up emotionally that I am unable to consider many ways of dealing with my problems</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>After making a decision, the outcome I expected usually matches the actual outcome</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>When confronted with a problem, I am unsure of whether I can handle the situation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>When I become aware of a problem, one of the first things I do is try to find out exactly what the problem is</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Supplementary questions to the PSI
Robin Jones & Graham Atkinson

Please also answer the three questions below, by circling the best number and writing further comments if you wish:

1. How easy or hard were these questions for you?

Very easy 1 2 3 4 5 6 very hard

Comments ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

2. How much sense did these questions make to you?

No sense at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 a lot of sense

Comments ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

3. How relevant were these questions to you and your situation?

Not relevant at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 very relevant

Comments ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Thank you.
6c: Participant Feedback Form

PROGRAM FEEDBACK FORM

Session 30

We want to obtain your views on the program and welcome any feedback you are able to give on it. We will be grateful if you can answer the following questions.

For items 1 to 6, please circle one of the numbers

(1) How useful have you found the program for helping you with your current problems?

very useful 5 4 3 2 1 not at all useful

(2) How useful do you think it will be for helping you in the future?

very useful 5 4 3 2 1 not at all useful

(3) How much have you enjoyed the program?

very much 5 4 3 2 1 not at all

(4) How well organised do you think the program has been?

very well 5 4 3 2 1 not at all well

(5) How much do you think the program can help you to avoid re-offending?

very much 5 4 3 2 1 not at all

(6) Overall, how much do you think you have learned on the program?

learnt a lot 5 4 3 2 1 nothing at all

(7) Having done this program, would you consider doing other mainstream programs that are led by Indigenous and non-Indigenous facilitators? Please circle the best answer:

Yes No Not sure

(8) Do you think having done this program will help your chances of getting Parole? Please circle the best answer:

Yes No Not sure

Thank you.
6d: Prison Program Staff Feedback Form

THE COGNITIVE SKILLS PROGRAM
Prisoner Completion/Participation Form

This prisoner completion/participation form is to be completed by each facilitator, co-facilitator and/or Program Support Officer (PSO) at the conclusion of the 30 sessions of the Cognitive Skills Program. Specifically, it asks facilitators, co-facilitators and/or PSO’s to assess each individual completing the program.

Upon completion, this should be forwarded to Graham Atkinson at yuruga@hotkey.net.au and Robin Jones at rljones@alphalink.com.au and a copy given to the participant’s Case Worker to be placed on the participant’s Individual Management Plan (IMP) file. Copies should be retained in individual participant files at your location.

Please duplicate for each participant in the Cognitive Skills Program.

Participant Name:_______________________________   CRN:________________________

Program Location:_________________________ Date Program Commenced:____________

Did the participant complete the program?  ☐ Yes  ☐ No

If yes, date Completed:____________

If no, reasons for non-completion:

☐ Illness (medical)  ☐ Transfer/Release
☐ Attendance at Court  ☐ Loss of Privileges
☐ Withdrawal  ☐ Withdrawn by facilitator/management
☐ Safety Concerns specify)________________________  ☐ Other (please
1. Please comment on the participant's overall disclosure/discussion or input and sharing of information

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2. Please comment on the participant's general cooperation with other group members across all sessions

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3. Please comment on the participant's overall attitude to learning

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4. Please comment on the participant's development of insight and problem-solving skills

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5. What additional interventions or educational programs would you recommend for this participant? What case management strategies would be appropriate to implement?

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6. Do you have any final comments in relation to this participant?

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6e: Standard Cognitive Skills Program Evaluation Form
(Corrections Victoria)

THE COGNITIVE SKILLS PROGRAM
Program Evaluation Form

This program evaluation form is to be completed by each facilitator, co-facilitator and/or Program Support Officer (PSO) at the conclusion of the 30 sessions of the Cognitive Skills Program. Specifically, it refers to facilitators, co-facilitators and/or PSO’s conclusions about the group’s performance as a whole. This should be forwarded ASAP to your Senior Psychologist or Supervisor and/or your Programs Manager who will forward it to the Manager, Clinical Services. Copies should be retained in a Cognitive Skills program file at your location.

1. Please consider this group as a whole and make brief comments about your perception of the program’s strengths and weaknesses, including comments on the structure of the program, the session content (e.g., topics most/least useful, topics participants' liked/disliked most, etc.), & the applicability of exercises/case studies to those in the group

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2. Are there specific sections, sessions or materials within the program that you would like to comment on (i.e., strengths and weaknesses). If so, please discuss.

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3. Were you provided with sufficient background information and training to facilitate the program? What additional training would you like to see provided?

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4. Do you have any comments regarding the ongoing clinical supervision you obtained throughout the delivery of the program in terms of both process and content (e.g., were you happy with the supervision, are there any changes you would make, etc.)?

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5. Do you have any additional comments in relation to your experience in the group (e.g., co-facilitation issues, Program Support Officer (PSO) issues, group process, etc.)?

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6. Any other comments?

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__________________________________________________________________________

Many thanks for taking the time to complete this form.

Please forward to your Senior Psychologist or Supervisor and/or your Programs
Manager who will forward it to the Manager, Clinical Services. Copies should be
retained in a Cognitive Skills program file at your location.