

Treating the cause of crime more effective than only addressing the crime itself

June 28 2018, by Jess Reid

Researchers from The University of Western Australia's Law School have been studying the feasibility of a justice model that has the potential to improve the effectiveness of crime prevention in Western Australia.

The model would see a Community Justice Centre established which is a one stop shop that includes a court, crime prevention team and key support services located in the same location. The centre would work in partnership with the local community to effectively address the underlying causes of crimes.

With WA Corrective Services spending more than \$900 million last financial year and 39 per cent of imprisoned offenders returning to jail within a two year period, Associate Professor Sarah Murray from UWA's Law School said new approaches were needed using local knowledge and bringing the community into the picture.

"What's of particular concern is that WA has the highest imprisonment rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia," she said.

"We need to partner with local Elders, Aboriginal controlled organisations and key community and government groups to co-design [justice](#) solutions that meet local needs and provide culturally safer justice experiences.

"The centre would house a court but it becomes so much more than that, hosting local events for the community and allowing members of the public to play an active role in creating positive and safe neighbourhoods."

Australia's first Community Justice Centre, the Victorian Neighbourhood Justice Centre, was based on a US model and has been in operation for more than 10 years, reducing the [crime](#) rate in the City of Yarra and improving community wellbeing and cohesion.

"For such centres, imprisonment is one of a suite of options which may be required. However, in other cases, engagement with the criminal justice system is an opportunity for offenders to turn their lives around using community-based options that allow them to undergo drug or alcohol treatment, access mental health services or secure permanent housing or employment.

"Another benefit of a Community Justice Centre is that the court lists, services and [crime prevention](#) activities would be streamlined and tailored to the unique needs of the particular locality, creating more efficient and effective justice outcomes."

The research paper was launched by the Chief Justice of Western Australia, the Hon. Wayne Martin AC, and recommends a Community Justice Centre pilot study for Western Australia.

More information: The report is available online:
www.law.uwa.edu.au/_data/asse...ITY-STUDY-REPORT.pdf

Provided by University of Western Australia

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