



Youth Crime Prevention and Early Intervention Project

Final Evaluation Report

December 2024



**ALLEN + CLARKE
CONSULTING**



The *Allen + Clarke* evaluation team warmly acknowledges the contribution made to this evaluation by all participants, especially the service providers who took part in interviews and shared their experiences about their engagement with the Youth Crime Prevention and Early Intervention Project.

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GLOSSARY

| Term | Definition |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Youth Justice Review and Strategy | The Youth Justice Review and Strategy was an independent review of Victoria's youth justice system conducted by Penny Armytage and Professor James Ogloff AM. |
| CBSS | The Central Brief Storage System (CBSS) is a brief storage and sharing solution maintained by Victoria Police. |
| CCYD | Children's Court Youth Diversion. A program offered by the Children's Court of Victoria, aimed at providing eligible young offenders an opportunity to avoid a criminal record by participating in diversion activities. |
| Charge and Bail | When a young person is formally accused of a crime (charged) but is allowed to be released on bail, meaning they don't have to be held in custody. |
| Children's Court | The Children's Court of Victoria |
| CIU | Criminal Investigation Unit |
| CCYP | Commission for Children and Young People. The CCYP has a range of functions, including providing independent scrutiny and oversight of services for children and young people, particularly those in the out-of-home care, child protection and youth justice systems. |
| CMY | Centre for Multicultural Youth |
| Diversion | Diversion allows young offenders to avoid formal prosecution by participating in alternative rehabilitation programs, counselling, or community service. |
| EYOP | Embedded Youth Outreach Program |
| Fast-track diversion | The fast-track diversion pathway provides shortened timeframes and processes for youth offenders. All fast-track diversions should be heard and finalised within a maximum of 42 days from the point of processing. |
| Headspace | Headspace is Australia's National Youth Mental Health Foundation, providing early intervention mental health services for young people aged 12-25. |
| Intent to Summons | A notification given to a young person that they will need to appear in court for a criminal charge. It is a way of handling minor offences without immediate arrest, focusing on a structured legal response to youth offences. |
| LEAP | Law Enforcement Assistance Program (LEAP) is an online database which stores information about all crimes brought to the notice of police. It also includes details on locations and persons involved and is used for operational policing and statistical and research purposes. |
| Out-of-home care | A temporary, medium- or long-term living arrangement for children and young people who cannot live with one or both parents and who are on statutory care orders or voluntary childcare agreements. |
| PCSMS | A service that allows users to send SMS (text) messages directly from a personal computer (PC) to a mobile phone. |
| PSA | Police Service Area |
| Remand | The practice of holding a person in custody while awaiting a court trial or sentencing. |
| SEIFA | Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas. SEIFA provide summary measures derived from the Australian Census and can help users understand the relative level of social and economic wellbeing of a region. SEIFA uses a broad definition of relative socio-economic disadvantage in terms of people's access to material and social resources and their ability to participate in society. |

| | |
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| SOP | Standard Operating Procedure |
| The YJ Reform Act | <i>Children and Justice Legislation Amendment (Youth Justice Reform) Act 2017</i> |
| TYJI | The Youth Junction Inc. TYJI is a not-for-profit organisation that delivers programs and services aimed at supporting vulnerable young people. It focuses on crime prevention, education, and employment, providing pathways for young people at risk of disengagement or involvement with the justice system. |
| VLA | Victoria Legal Aid |
| Westjustice | Westjustice is a community legal centre in the western suburbs of Melbourne. Westjustice provides free legal advice, education, and representation to vulnerable communities. |
| YCPEIP | Youth Crime Prevention and Early Intervention Program |
| Young adult offender | A person between the ages of 18 and 24 who has committed a crime. |
| Youth offender | A person between the ages of 10 and 17 who has committed a crime. |
| YouthNow | YouthNow provides career, employment, and education support services to young people, primarily in Melbourne's western suburbs. YouthNow offers programs designed to assist young people in gaining skills, training, and employment opportunities, while also delivering services to enhance career development, job readiness, and social inclusion. |
| YCPEIP Youth Portfolio Coordinator | The YCPEIP Youth Portfolio Coordinator is a Victoria Police member who manages cases for young people aged 10 to 17, and receives contact details of young people to make initial contact followed by referral on to support services as requested by young people. They also advise on diversion options for those aged 18 to 24. Key responsibilities include case reviews, coordinating referrals to legal and support services, and ensuring appropriate intervention pathways to reduce reoffending. |
| YouthNow Referral Coordinator | The YouthNow Referral Coordinator is a social worker who manages consented referrals from Victoria Police and refers to external services including housing, financial, alcohol and drug treatment, psychology, employment and other youth programs, and supports young people in contact with the justice system with letters of support for pending court matters. |
| YSAS | The Youth Support and Advocacy Service is a not-for-profit organisation that provides support to young people aged 12 to 25 who are experiencing significant challenges related to alcohol and drug use, mental health, and other social issues. |



Executive Summary

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Background

The Youth Crime Prevention and Early Intervention Program (YCPEIP, also referred to as ‘the program’) is a flexible and innovative model that aims to reduce the rate of offending and re-offending amongst children and young people in the Wyndham and Brimbank Police Service Areas (PSAs). It aims to do this by increasing the rates of cautions, warnings and diversions for children and young people aged 10-24 years old in Brimbank, Wyndham and more recently Melton.

Since its establishment in September 2021, the YCPEIP has sought to evolve to meet changing local needs. YCPEIP was founded by Victoria Police and Westjustice in the Wyndham and Brimbank PSAs, and is now co-led by VLA and Youth Now, and supported by other community services in the western suburbs. Community services supporting YCPEIP include the YSAS, TYJI, CMY and headspace. The project is also supported by the local Magistrates Court, the Children's Court Youth Diversion Program (CCYD), and Court Services Victoria.

YCPEIP has been rolled out in two phases. The first phase, which commenced on program inception, relates to children and young people aged 10-17. The second phase was delayed until November 2023 (in Wyndham) and February 2024 (in Brimbank) and involved the extension of cautions and diversion pathways to eligible 18–24 year olds. Data collected for this report focuses primarily on the first phase of YCPEIP. Outcomes attributed to the YCPEIP in this report relate to the first phase unless stated otherwise.

[Allen + Clarke Consulting](#) (*Allen + Clarke*) was commissioned to undertake an evaluation of the YCPEIP in 2022. This report presents the findings from this evaluation, based on policing and referral data gathered 12 months before the program's implementation and during its first 28 months. It also incorporates insights from key informant interviews with program partners who were involved in the establishment and delivery of the YCPEIP.

The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach, drawing on a range of qualitative and quantitative data sources. The evaluation was guided by the overarching aim of the YCPEIP, which is:

To substantially reduce rates of re-offending amongst young people aged 10-24 in the Melbourne western suburbs through increased cautions, diversions, early referrals to legal and social supports and community legal education.

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess:

- The extent to which YCPEIP met its objectives (as outlined in **Table 1**) across key areas including implementation, police attitudes, policing outcomes, referral outcomes, reoffending, crime prevention and cost-effectiveness.
- The effectiveness of the YCPEIP's partnership approach and collaboration with stakeholders.

- The overall impact of the YCPEIP on youth reoffending, crime, and justice outcomes.
- The degree to which the YCPEIP has delivered cost and resource efficiencies through streamlined case management and reduced contact with the justice system.

1.2 Overview of key findings

Implementation

The YCPEIP has successfully established a robust partnership among police, legal, and youth service providers, united by a shared goal and strong commitment to collaboration. While key activities such as police training and the appointment of the YouthNow Referral Coordinator were delayed, primarily due to the COVID-19 pandemic and resourcing challenges, evidence from policing trends, surveys and interviews suggest that new decision-making frameworks for cautioning have been well integrated. As YCPEIP's community partner, Westjustice has played a central role in embedding and championing YCPEIP.

Policing

The YCPEIP has led to significant changes in police outcomes in Brimbank and Wyndham. Police members have reported increased confidence in issuing cautions and diversions since the commencement of the YCPEIP. Cautioning rates have risen substantially across YCPEIP sites and have remained steady for two years post-implementation. Both Brimbank and Wyndham have experienced a substantial reduction in remand rates from 46.8% and 30.6% pre-program down to 14.2% and 5.3% 23 months post program commencement, respectively. This has tracked with a significant increase in both Brimbank and Wyndham in the use of warnings and cautions (from below 10% prior to the program to above 30% at 23 months post program).¹ At the same time, use of the fast-track diversion pathway remains low, potentially indicating a preference for the application of cautions over diversions among police members. In addition, difficulties in accessing Children's Court listings and other administrative barriers complicate the tracking and management of cases eligible for diversion. This lack of efficiency can result in missed opportunities for timely diversion and rehabilitation.

Referrals

Data shows lower-than-expected referrals being made for youth. Between December 2022 and July 2024, the YouthNow Referral Coordinator received a total of 590 referrals. Of these, 26% (155 referrals) were successfully triaged and referred to youth support and legal services, 61% (334 referrals) resulted in no contact being made, 9% (52 young people) declined further support, and 15 referrals were still being processed at the time of reporting. YCPEIP partners noted that while the YouthNow program's engagement rates, particularly the high non-contact rate, are not ideal, they are consistent with those of other programs working with vulnerable and at-risk youth.

¹ These statistics are based on Victoria Police attendance data and do not account for changes in crime processing outcomes that occur after the initial outcome is recorded at the police station. Consequently, this figure excludes any revisions made to crime outcomes after the young person's first attendance at the station. The evaluation team understands that the rate of cautions applied after the initial attendance is higher. Therefore, the cautioning rates reported here likely underestimate the final number of cautions issued under the YCPEIP program.

Cost Effectiveness

By increasing the proportion of youth offenders who receive cautions instead of prosecutions, the initiative reduces criminal justice processing costs, lessens the administrative burden on police, and eliminates the need for pre-trial remand, court cases, or post-conviction penalties such as detention.

The outcome of applying the cost assumptions outlined in this report to changes in police treatment of youth offenders in Brimbank and Wyndham suggests a central estimate of reduced criminal system costs of \$4.4 million per year, which is 5.1 times greater than the \$859,551 spent on promoting the YCPEIP initiative.

The YCPEIP is also estimated to have reduced youth reoffending among first-time offenders from 54.7% to 30.5%. This equates to an estimated \$4.25 million (with a 95% confidence range from \$0.1 million to \$10.7 million) in additional social cost savings from reduced re-offending. Combining these cost savings from reduced re-offending to the criminal justice system cost reductions implies an estimated annual social cost saving from YCPEIP in Brimbank and Wyndham of \$8.6 million, with a 95% confidence range (from \$1.2 million to \$19.3 million).

1.3 Recommendations

| RECOMMENDATIONS | |
|-----------------|--|
| 1 | Ensure police training is practical and applied Finding time for police training has been a challenge. In line with interview and survey feedback, YCPEIP should consider prioritising training on applied decision-making and practical guidance on when and how to issue youth warning, caution, and diversion over other theoretical content and look to streamline, condense and/or enable self-paced completion. |
| 2 | Provide police greater visibility of youth early intervention and service outcomes Police members felt that they lacked visibility or awareness of available youth services, and the outcomes of referrals made to these services. Victoria Police and youth service partners should consider opportunities to incorporate training on referrals as part of the broader YCPEIP training roll-out. Mechanisms to provide increased visibility to police members on what happens after a referral is made should be considered including ways to share and celebrate success stories (potentially through the newly established YouthNow Referral Coordinator role). |
| 3 | Consider formalising information-sharing agreements to support data sharing and program monitoring between YCPEIP partners It was not possible to assess the extent to which referrals led to service engagement by young people because data is not collected on whether young people followed through on referrals. YCPEIP partners should consider formalising information sharing agreements to enable data sharing between partners for the purpose of tracking youth service engagement outcomes. |

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| 4 | <p>Further embed the YCPEIP partnership</p> <p>The YCPEIP partnership approach has successfully leveraged the skills, knowledge, and perspectives of police, youth, legal and justice services around the shared goal of youth crime prevention. YCPEIP partners have applied the VicHealth Partnership Analysis tool, demonstrating a strong foundation of collaboration. Moving forward, partners should continue to reflect on the elements that have contributed to the partnership's success and explore how these may be replicated in other settings. Ongoing use of the VicHealth tool can support formalised reflection, assessment, and monitoring as the partnership and program evolve.</p> |
| 5 | <p>YCPEIP Youth Portfolio Coordinators review station logs and ensure all youth receive referrals</p> <p>Data shows lower-than-expected referrals being made for youth. To increase youth referrals, it is recommended that the YCPEIP Youth Portfolio Coordinators play a lead role in increasing referrals by confirming all youth processed at the police station are offered a youth referral and all youth charged with an offence or who are likely to have further interactions with the justice system for the matter are referred to a lawyer.</p> |
| 6 | <p>Consider how the YouthNow Referral Coordinator role may support culturally relevant referrals for diverse youth</p> <p>Internal police data shows that YCPEIP clients are culturally diverse. Survey and interview data also indicates strong support from Victoria Police members to offer youth referrals to culturally diverse youth. To ensure referrals are culturally relevant, consider a focus on priority cohorts including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth, youth of African, Māori, and Pasifika backgrounds, or girls and young women with complex needs and options to strengthen referral pathways to culturally relevant supports.</p> |
| 7 | <p>Define what success looks like – set a benchmark for rates of caution/ warning, diversion and referral</p> <p>Warning/caution rates vary significantly between PSAs. While Brimbank and Wyndham have increased significantly from pre-program rates, there is currently no definition or benchmark to determine what 'good looks like'. Consider defining a benchmark or target for rates of youth warning/caution, diversion, and referral to support program monitoring.</p> |
| 8 | <p>Make it easy – reduce the administrative barriers to lodging diversion briefs + train police</p> <p>The police survey indicated one in five police members (20%) were '<i>not confident</i>' in knowing how and when to issue a youth diversion. YCPEIP partners should consider developing a shortened briefing template and providing training to build confidence in issuing diversions.</p> |
| 9 | <p>Confirm a single source of truth for diversion and fast-tracked diversion statistics and address the variance in outgoing and received youth diversions</p> <p>YCPEIP partners together with the Youth Portfolio Coordinators and the Children's Court Youth Diversion Coordinator should develop and agree on the authoritative source and definition for diversion and fast-tracked diversion to enable the collection and reporting of uniform data. For example, partners should consider if 'time-to-resolution' may be a</p> |

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| | more appropriate metric by which to define fast-tracked diversion and the data needed to measure this. |
| 10 | <p>Victoria Police should consider options to improve data integration across the station, LEAP, and referral systems to support tracking of YCPEIP clients</p> <p>Currently, the lack of data integration across referral, station, and police data sets requires that a separate log be maintained by Youth Portfolio Coordinators to manage and track YCPEIP clients. Victoria Police should consider opportunities to improve data integration to reduce the burden on the Youth Portfolio Coordinator role to review and manage YCPEIP cases.</p> |
| 11 | <p>Undertake further research to understand the impact of YCPEIP Phase II</p> <p>Phase II of YCPEIP was delayed until February 2024 and involved the extension of cautions and diversion pathways to eligible 18–24-year-olds. Over half of surveyed police members did not support extending the caution pathway to 18–24-year-olds. At the same time, a general flexibility among members to adopt new approaches and an eagerness to get behind ‘whatever works’ in addressing the challenge of youth crime was observed. Further research should be undertaken to understand the impact of Phase II of YCPEIP.</p> |
| 12 | <p>Expand and embed the use of text messages from police to young people to gain consent to make referrals to support services.</p> <p>The use of text messages to gain consent to refer young people to broader support services was used in Wyndham with high levels of success. This approach should be expanded and replicated to further bolster the impact of YCPEIP.</p> |
| 13 | <p>Invest in research and analysis to gain a greater understanding of the reason youth do not follow through on referrals</p> <p>The drivers of non-engagement for youth referrals should be further explored to understand where the barriers to following through on referrals are and how these can be overcome.</p> |
| 14 | <p>Invest in frameworks to support measuring whether priority cohorts including culturally and linguistically diverse youth are benefiting from YCPEIP</p> <p>Whilst Victoria Police are collecting demographic data relating to young people in their station logs, this is perceptions data and is not currently validated. Victoria Police should invest in developing frameworks to understand whether priority cohorts are benefiting from YCPEIP.</p> |

Overview

Children and young people in Victoria's youth justice system are some of the most vulnerable Victorians. Children and young people from the Northwest Metropolitan region of Victoria are significantly over-represented in the youth justice system, and on remand. It is widely understood that addressing factors that contribute to criminal behaviour can prevent and reduce further offending.

YCPEIP was founded by Victoria Police and Westjustice in the Wyndham and Brimbank PSAs, and is now co-led by VLA and Youth Now, and supported by other community services in the western suburbs. Community services supporting YCPEIP include the YSAS, TYJI, CMY and headspace. The project is also supported by the local Magistrates Court, the Children's Court Youth Diversion Program (CCYD), and Court Services Victoria.

Key components of YCPEIP include:

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| Cross-sector, multi-agency coordination | Training | Case review for consistent application |
| Fast-tracked diversion list | Referrals | Education |
| Revised caution/diversion framework | Youth sergeant portfolio position | |

Since 2022, Allen + Clarke have worked closely with Victoria Police and Westjustice to undertake this evaluation of YCPEIP in relation to its first 28 months of operation. This evaluation is based on the following data sets:



Document review – including program documents, MOU / partnership agreements, training and operational documents, and progress reports.



Pre-post analysis of Victoria Police Law Enforcement Assistance Program (LEAP), police attendance, legal and youth referrals data.



36 stakeholder interviews with frontline police, prosecutors, supervisors, justice, health and broader service partners, and YCPEIP Steering Committee.



Surveys of police members at YCPEIP sites (including 120 pre-program and 63 post-program)



In the short time since its inception, it is clear YCPEIP has made a noticeable impact on the communities it serves.

The YCPEIP has been successfully established through robust **partnerships among police, legal, and youth service providers**, united by a shared goal and strong commitment to collaboration.

Police members have reported **increased confidence in issuing cautions** since the YCPEIP's commencement. **Cautioning rates have seen a substantial rise** across YCPEIP sites and have remained steady two years post-implementation. The initiative is estimated to have **reduced youth reoffending** among first-time offenders from **54.7% to 30.5%** in YCPEIP sites.



Key Findings

Between December 2022 and May 2024, the YouthNow Referral Coordinator received a total of 590 referrals. Of these, **32% (n=189) were successfully triaged** and referred to youth support and legal services, showing the program's ability to connect a portion of youth with essential resources, though there remains room to improve overall referral outcomes.



By increasing the proportion of youth offenders who receive cautions instead of prosecutions, the initiative **reduces criminal justice processing costs**,

lessens the administrative burden on police, and eliminates the need for pre-trial remand, court cases, or post-conviction penalties such as detention. The outcome of applying the cost assumptions outlined in this report to changes in police treatment of youth offenders in Brimbank and Wyndham suggests a central estimate of reduced criminal system costs of **\$4.4 million per year**, which is **5.1 times greater than the \$859,551 spent** on promoting the YCPEIP initiative.

There are also **social cost savings** from reduced re-offending. The central estimate of these social costs savings from lower re-offending is **\$4.25 million**. Combining these cost savings from reduced re-offending to the criminal justice system cost reductions implies an estimated annual social cost saving from YCPEIP in Brimbank and Wyndham of **\$8.6 million, with a 95% confidence range** (from \$1.2 million to \$19.3 million).



Overview

2.0 OVERVIEW

YCPEIP was founded by Victoria Police and Westjustice in the Wyndham and Brimbank PSAs, and is now co-led by VLA and Youth Now, and supported by other community services in the western suburbs. Community services supporting YCPEIP include the YSAS, TYJI, CMY and headspace. The project is also supported by the local Magistrates Court, the Children's Court Youth Diversion Program (CCYD), and Court Services Victoria.

Victoria Police engaged *Allen + Clarke* to undertake an independent evaluation of the YCPEIP pilot to assess the extent to which the YCPEIP has met its objectives and realised efficiency gains.

The evaluation also:

- described and assessed the effectiveness of partnerships between project partners supporting the YCPEIP
- identified recommendations to strengthen the YCPEIP's ongoing implementation and potential scale-up.

This was the first evaluation of the YCPEIP and is intended to provide a benchmark for future evaluations. The evaluation considers key barriers and enablers of the program, what worked well and what can be improved. In consultation with Victoria Police and YCPEIP partners, a set of recommendations to strengthen the ongoing implementation of the program have been developed to ensure the program is positioned for future success.

2.1 The YCPEIP

Program context

Young people in Victoria's youth justice system are some of Victoria's most vulnerable. Some groups are significantly overrepresented, including people who have been a victim of abuse, trauma or neglect; people who have a current child protection case; people with mental health issues; those who have been witnesses to family violence; have a history of drug or alcohol use, live in unsafe or unstable housing and those that present with cognitive difficulties that impact on daily functioning.² For example, the 2020-21 Youth Parole Board Annual Report highlighted that 13.8% of young offenders had been subject to a previous/current child protection order, 66.2% were victims of abuse, trauma or neglect and 43.4% had experienced family violence.³

Children and young people from the Northwest Metropolitan region of Victoria are significantly over-represented in the youth justice system and on remand. Prior to the commencement of the YCPEIP, crime statistics data show that the number of alleged offender incidents by young people aged 10-17 years in Brimbank and Wyndham had reached a historical peak, highlighting the urgent need for intervention (see **Figure 1** below). The region also has very

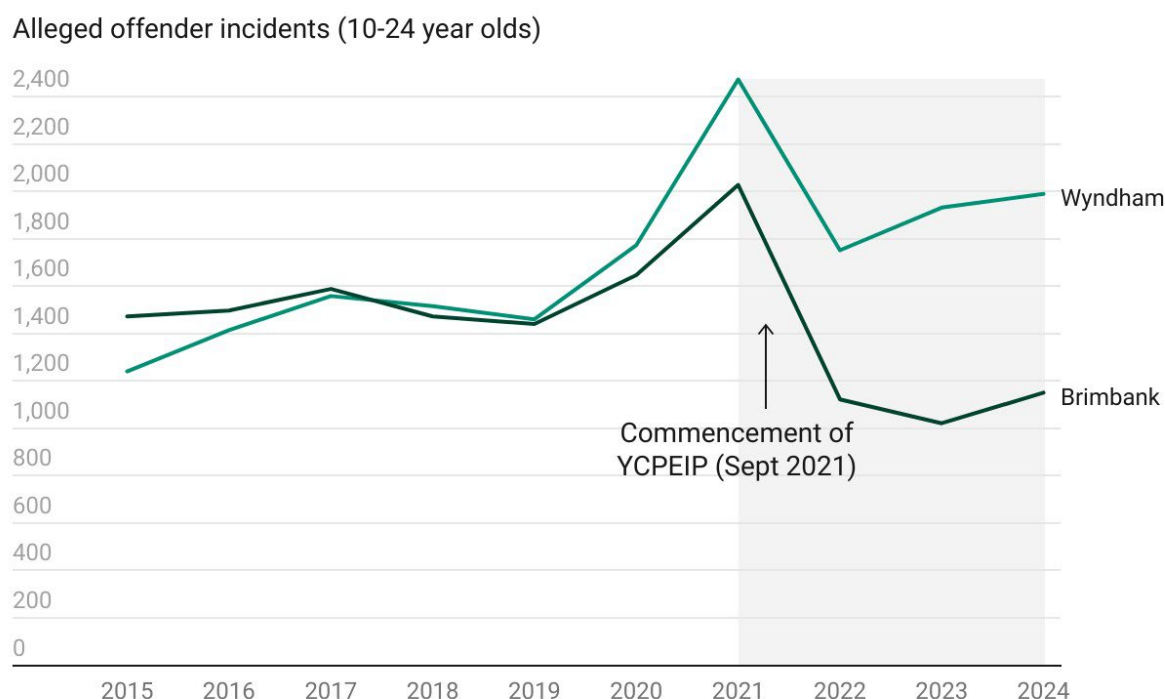
² Department of Justice and Community Safety (2020) Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2020-2030 – The Way Forward, <https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/youth-justice-strategy>

³ Adult Parole Board Victoria (2021), Annual Report 2020-21, <https://www.adultparoleboard.vic.gov.au/publications-and-news/annual-reports>

low rates of warnings, cautions and diversion to this same cohort and compared with other regions.

It is widely understood that addressing factors that contribute to criminal behaviour can prevent and reduce further offending. Currently, in Victoria, most mandated treatment interventions for children and young people are available after they have been charged with serious or repeat offences. Such interventions often arise after children and young people have travelled deeper into the criminal justice system as conditions of Youth Justice supervised bail, a deferred sentence, or a supervised sentencing order (for example, a Youth Supervision Order).

Figure 1. Youth crime incidents in Brimbank and Wyndham



Data source: Crime Statistics Agency Victoria

NB: The peak in offences includes breaches of Chief Health Officer orders in 2020/2021 which are estimated to account for between 22% of criminal incidents in Wyndham and 27% in Brimbank in people aged 10-24 years.

About the YCPEIP

YCPEIP was founded by Victoria Police and Westjustice in the Wyndham and Brimbank PSAs, and is now co-led by VLA and Youth Now, and supported by other community services in the western suburbs. Community services supporting YCPEIP include the YSAS, TYJI, CMY and headspace. The project is also supported by the local Magistrates Court, the Children's Court Youth Diversion Program (CCYD), and Court Services Victoria.

The YCPEIP seeks to reduce crime by diverting eligible children and young people from the criminal justice system, and minimising contact with police and the courts. The program also intends to increase the number of referrals for children and young people who have support needs to agencies that can help address any underlying causes of offending behaviour. Phase I of the roll-out of the YCPEIP, which commenced in September 2021, focused on the 10–17

year old cohort. Phase II commenced in November 2023 in Wyndham and February 2024 in Brimbank, expanding the pilot to the 18–24 year-old cohort.

Phase I involved successfully establishing specialised roles for Victoria Police Youth Crime Coordinators in each of the two PSAs of Wyndham and Brimbank. These officers effectively supported the adoption of modified dispositions, including pre-charge warnings and cautions, and a fast-track process for Youth Diversion at the Children’s Court for those aged 10 to 17.

Phase II expanded these modified pre-charge dispositions and the introduction of fast-track diversion lists to include young people aged 18-24 within the Magistrates Court's jurisdiction. A key innovation in this phase was the introduction of new and altered processes, including expanded criteria for cautions for 18-24 year olds, legal service referrals from the point of arrest, and fast-track diversions. Although this required slightly more effort at the initial stage of arrest and has been limited in its application by police members, it is anticipated this will ultimately reduce the overall workload and improve outcomes for at-risk young people in the long term.

Key components of the YCPEIP

Figure 3 illustrates the comprehensive structure of YCPEIP, highlighting its collaborative approach involving multiple agencies, the critical role of police training, and the targeted interventions aimed at reducing youth crime through revised cautioning frameworks and fast-tracked diversion processes. The figure also highlights the program's focus on ensuring consistent outcomes through dedicated oversight positions and providing essential support services to young people in need. The model of decision-making introduced with the YCPEIP is captured in **Figure 2**.

Figure 2. The YCPEIP Process Map

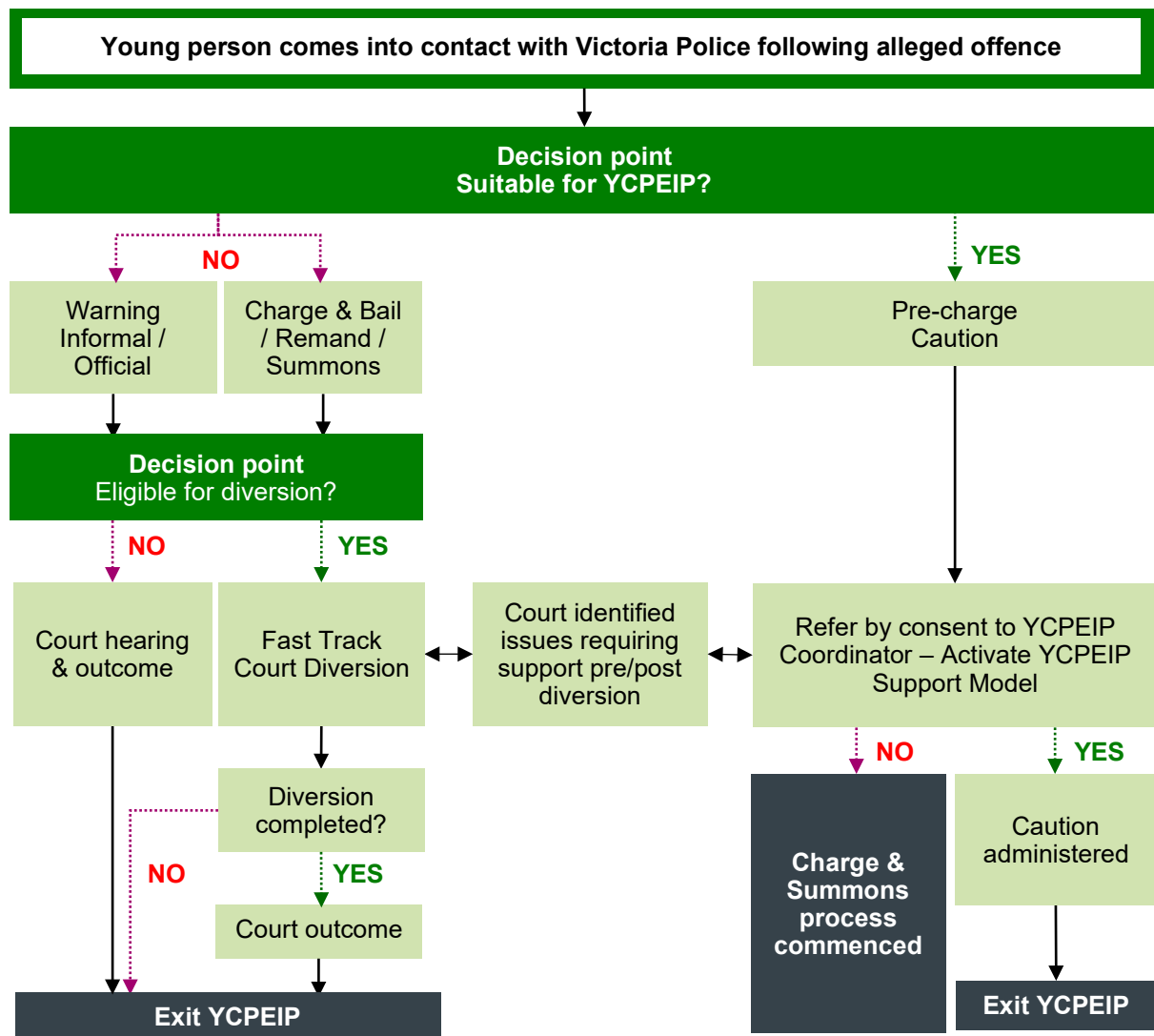


Figure 3. YCPEIP components

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Key components of the YCPEIP Program

Cross-sector multi-agency coordination

The YCPEIP was founded by Westjustice and Victoria Police and is now co-led with VLA and supported by other community services in the western suburbs including the YSAS, TYJI, the CMY, and YouthNow. The YCPEIP steering committee and group is co-chaired by Victoria Police and Westjustice to support strategic planning and implementation of project initiatives.

Victoria Police and Westjustice support collaboration with various agencies to provide integrated support, including mental health services, educational programs, and employment assistance.

Victoria Police Youth Crime Coordinator

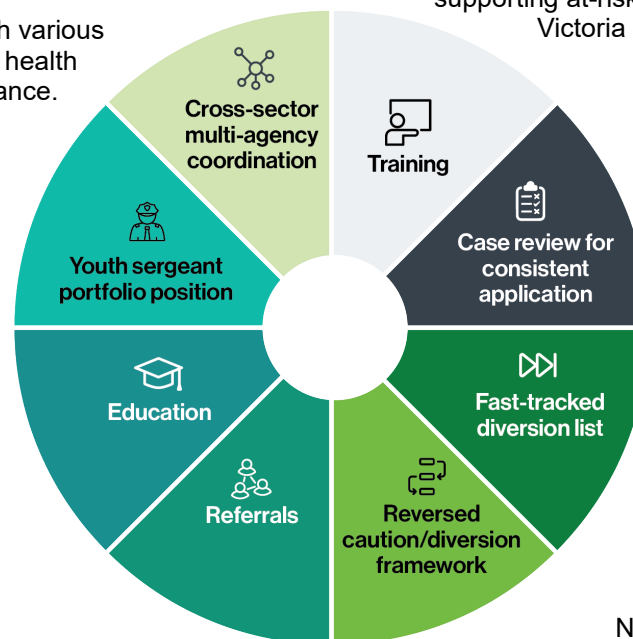
Provides oversight and review of police cases to ensure consistency of outcome. Local champion/advocate and advisory support to members on cautioning and diversion pathways.

Education

Sessions for young people, their families, and the community focus on explaining what constitutes a legal problem, what help is available, and when to seek assistance to prevent more serious legal issues from developing.

Referrals

The YouthNow Referral Coordinator connects young people to appropriate services based on their needs including VLA and Westjustice, various youth service agencies and other legal services.



Training

Police trained about the project including making appropriate referrals, new guidelines for considerations of cautions and diversions, cultural awareness training, and training on policing and supporting at-risk young people. Training is delivered by Westjustice, Victoria Police, YouthNow, YSAS, CMY and Youth Junction.

Case review for consistent application

Case review by the Victoria Police Youth Crime Coordinator to ensure consistent application of caution/diversion framework

Fast-tracked diversion list

Urgent listings for Children's Court Diversion matters to provide shortened timeframes and processes for youth offenders. All fast-track diversions should be heard and finalised within a maximum of 42 days from the point of processing.

Revised caution/diversion framework

New clear framework and support for consideration of cautions and diversions for children and young people.

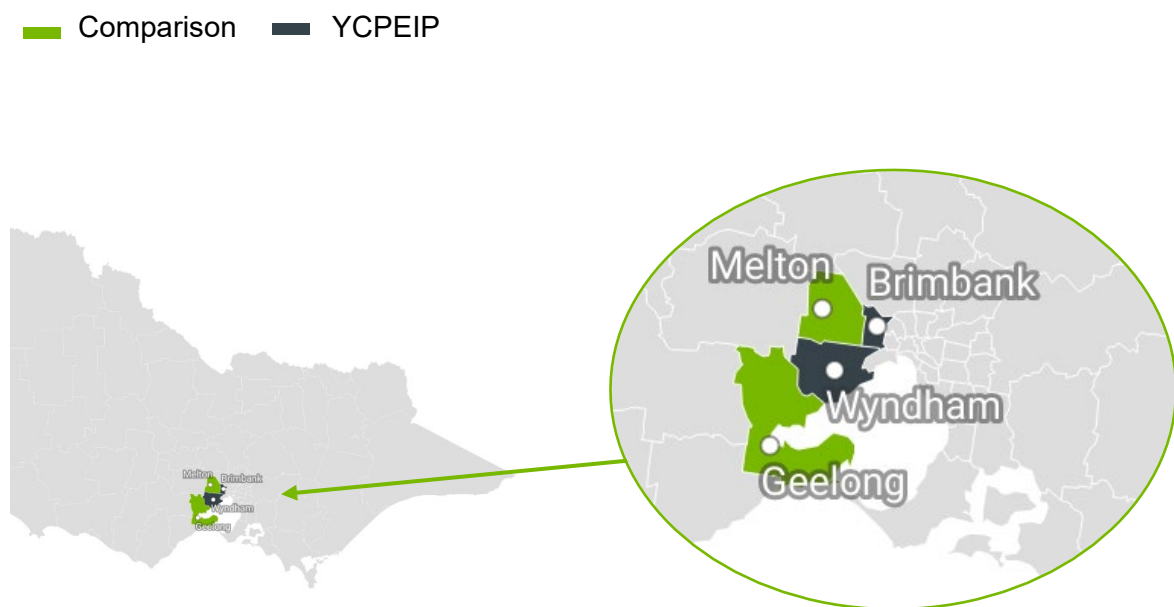
2.2 Overview of the evaluation

Allen + Clarke undertook a process and outcome evaluation of the YCPEIP over three phases from 7 September 2022 to September 2024. The scope of the YCPEIP evaluation was to support evaluative conclusions about the:

- extent to which the YCPEIP has met its objectives (see **Table 1**)
- effectiveness of the YCPEIP partnership approach and collaboration with partners
- overall impact of the YCPEIP on youth re-offending and crime and justice outcomes
- extent to which the YCPEIP has delivered cost and resource efficiencies arising from streamlined case management and reduced contact with the justice system.

To assess the achievement of program objectives, the evaluation team implemented a quasi-experimental design.⁴ This approach compared key indicators pre- and post-program at the YCPEIP PSAs (Wyndham and Brimbank) with Geelong and Melton PSAs where no such youth crime prevention and early intervention program has been implemented (see **Figure 4**).

Figure 4. Map of Police Service Areas



A range of indicators were assessed including warning and cautioning, remand, arrest, intention to summons, diversion, referral to legal and social supports and re-offending. The evaluation team also calculated the cost-efficiency achieved by the program due to lower processing costs as cautions replace the costs of prosecution, remand and detention; and diverted crime due to the reduced probability of re-offending by first-time youth offenders.

⁴ A quasi-experimental design is typically used to estimate the causal impact of an intervention on a target population without random assignment.

2.3 Evaluation of program objectives

Table 1 below provides an overview of the evaluation objectives across key areas including implementation, police attitudes, policing outcomes, referral outcomes, reoffending and crime prevention and cost-effectiveness.

Table 1. Evaluation objectives

| Key area | Objective |
|---|---|
| Implementation | 1. Establish cautioning and pre-court diversionary options for children and young people that are tailored, effective, culturally appropriate and safe. |
| | 2. Establish strong youth-specific decision-making frameworks to enable early police consent to court-based diversion. |
| | 3. Improve collaboration between informants, supervisors, prosecutors, lawyers, and the courts to streamline the processing of children and young people from arrest to final court outcomes. |
| Police attitudes | 4. Increase police member awareness of the unique and intersecting root causes of offending by children and young people; the benefits of early intervention for them; and the pathways available to members when coming into contact with young people 10-24, other than resorting to the formal justice system. |
| Policing outcomes | 5. Increase the use and consistency of pre-charge warnings and cautions for eligible children and young people (aged 10-24) in the Brimbank and Wyndham PSAs. ⁵ |
| Referral outcomes | 6. Increase the volume, quality, and coordination of police referrals to legal, psychosocial support agencies, and education services from the point of first police contact. |
| Reoffending and crime prevention outcomes | 7. Prevent youth crime through the provision of community legal and psychosocial education and information to young people (including young accused as well as victims), their families and broader communities that facilitate earlier access to support to address the root causes of offending. |
| Cost-effectiveness | 8. Evaluate the project to inform potential continuation and expansion including the human and system costs saved. |
| | 9. Reduce delay and system costs through strong case management and collaboration, for example, by regular pre-court conferencing between police, lawyers, youth justice and the courts. |

⁵ Note that this policing outcome initially included a focus on those from communities currently overrepresented in the criminal justice system. These communities include youth in residential care, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth, Australian youth of African, Māori and Pasifika cultural background, and girls and young women with complex needs. However, due to the lack of relevant official data collection on priority cohorts by Victoria Police, this objective has been amended for the purposes of this evaluation.

2.3.1 Data sources

Key sources of data are outlined in **Figure 5**. A program logic was developed by the evaluation team in consultation with YCPEIP partners at the commencement of the evaluation. An overlay of data sources across evaluation objectives is provided at **Figure 6**.

Figure 5. Data sources informing the evaluation

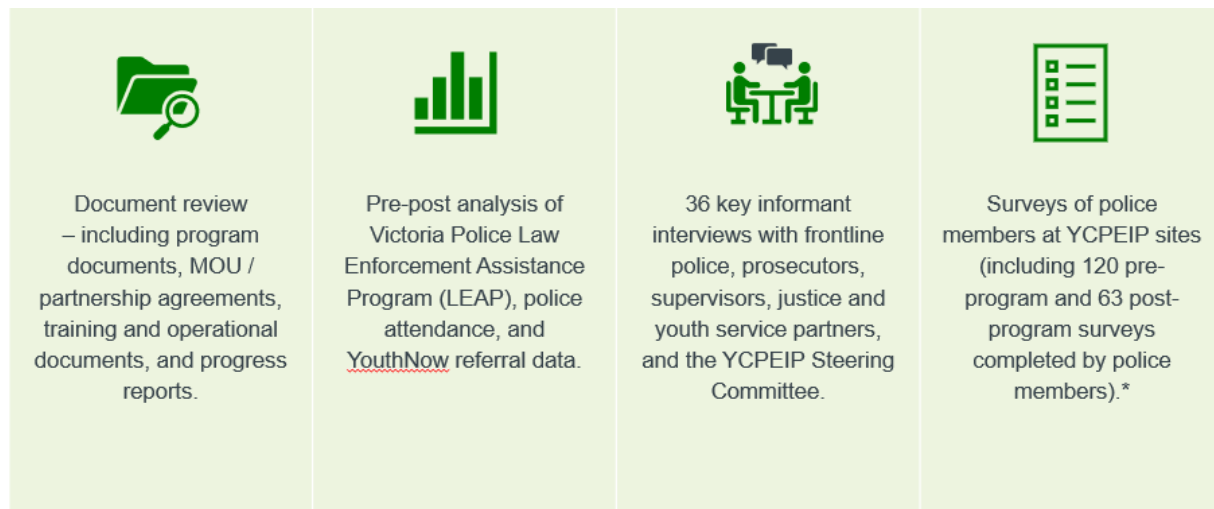
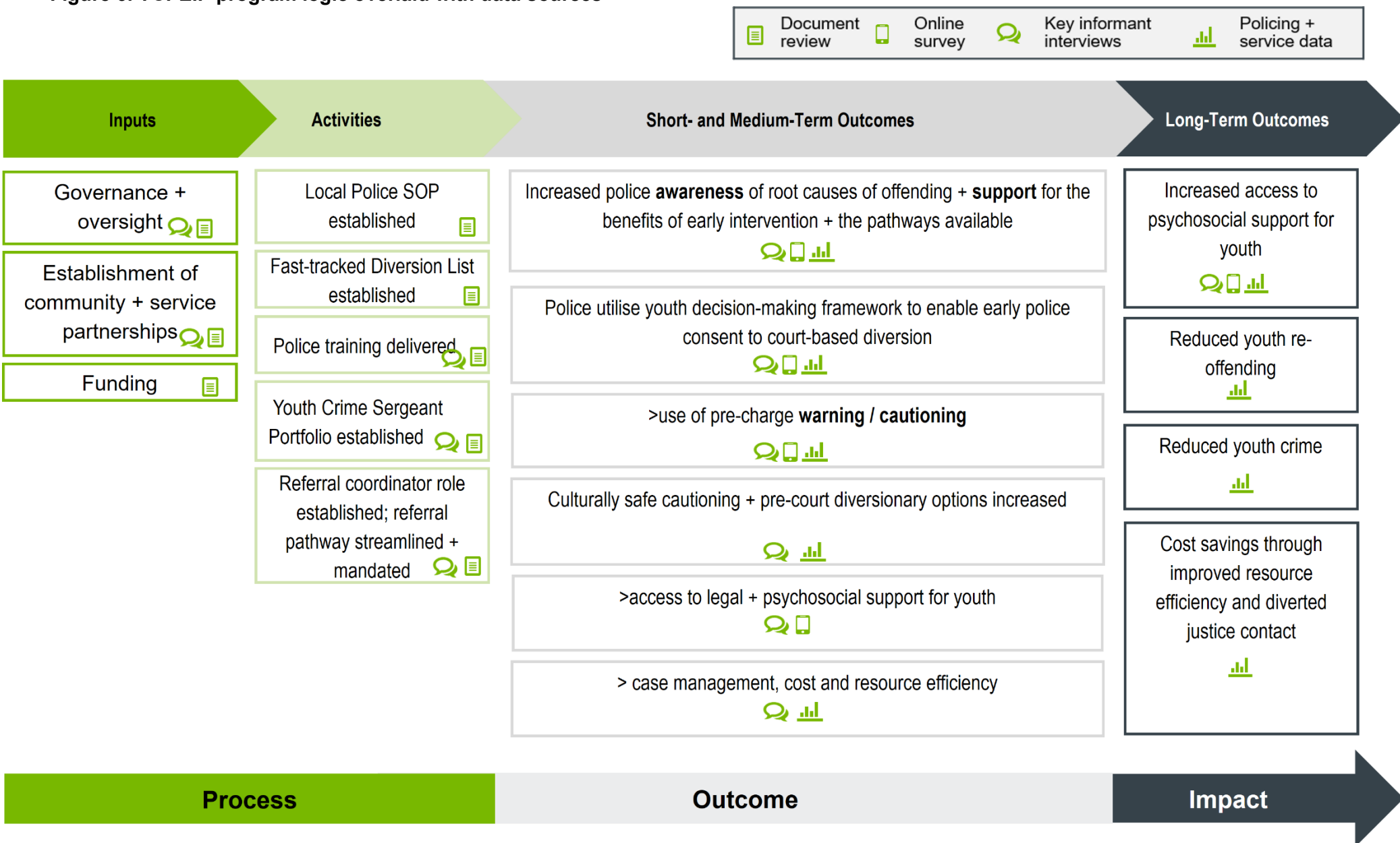


Figure 6. YCPEIP program logic overlaid with data sources



2.3.2 Limitations and Considerations

When interpreting the findings of this evaluation, several key limitations must be considered. Variability in baseline youth crime rates across different PSAs, data disaggregation and privacy constraints, and the inherently dynamic nature of crime trends all posed significant challenges to accurately assessing the program's impact. Additionally, limitations in policing data, the overlapping objectives of other programs occurring in study sites, and the delay in the Phase II pilot launch are noted in addition to other limitations as detailed below.

Variability in Baseline Youth Crime Rates:

There is significant variability in baseline youth crime rates across different PSAs. This variability, combined with small numbers and fluctuating crime and policing trends, poses challenges in confidently detecting the program's impact. For example, a reduction in crime incidents could be attributed to various factors, including population changes, natural variation, broader policy shifts, or specific effects of the YCPEIP. To address this, the evaluation employed a quasi-experimental design, incorporating two comparison sites. By contrasting the program sites with these comparison areas, the evaluation aimed to detect whether observed changes in youth crime rates are due to the YCPEIP or are part of broader trends.

Data Disaggregation and Privacy Constraints:

Due to Victoria Police's privacy protection protocols, the evaluation team was unable to access certain levels of disaggregated data. This limitation restricted the analysis by individual policing units and prevented the comparison of monthly versus annual trends. As a result, this report primarily presents aggregate outcomes for both uniformed police and the Criminal Investigation Unit (CIU). It is important to note that the YCPEIP may have had a different impact on cautioning among uniformed members compared to CIU specialists, who typically manage cases more likely to receive a caution.

The Dynamic Impact of Policing Trends on Evaluation Outcomes

Crime trends are inherently dynamic. For instance, an increase in cautioning may reduce the need for legal referrals or diversion. As such, achieving an increase in cautioning—a key objective of the YCPEIP—might, for example, reduce the demand for legal referral, another program objective. Similarly, high rates of caution may reduce demand for diversion.

Limitations of Policing Data:

The policing data used in the evaluation only reflects the number of offences recorded by police, the nature of those offences, and the subsequent actions taken, such as cautioning arrest, or issuance of a summons. These data do not account for court outcomes and, therefore, do not necessarily reflect the number of offences for which a young person is found guilty.

Impact of Policy Amendments:

In July 2021, a Victoria Police policy amendment removed the requirement for an alleged youth offender to make admissions to be eligible for a caution. This change likely contributed to the observed increase in cautioning and decrease in remand rates in comparison PSAs. The current evaluation used comparison PSAs partly to control for such broader policing and policy changes, which could otherwise inflate the perceived impact of the YCPEIP.

Youth Service Engagement Data Gaps:

A core component of the YCPEIP's theory of change is that youth referrals should lead to increased service support that addresses the root causes of offending. However, due to a lack of data on youth service engagement post-referral, it was not possible to determine whether these referrals resulted in earlier and better support for youth offenders. Moving forward, collecting data on youth service engagement will be crucial to demonstrate this key intervention mechanism.

Overlapping Programs:

The Wyndham PSA also operates the Embedded Youth Outreach Program (EYOP), which similarly refers youth in contact with police to services. The overlapping objectives of the EYOP and YCPEIP, particularly regarding referrals and early intervention, may have reduced the detectable impact of the YCPEIP on referral rates.

Lack of Youth Feedback:

The evaluation did not include feedback from young people who had contact with police in the Brimbank and Wyndham PSAs. This omission limits the understanding of the program's impact from the perspective of those directly affected by it. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this evaluation, as they highlight areas where further data and analysis are necessary to fully understand the program's impact.

Delays to Launch of Phase II Pilot:

The launch of Phase II which involved the extension of cautions and diversion pathways to eligible 18–24 year old offenders was delayed until November 2023 in Wyndham and February 2024 in Brimbank. This limits the observable window of time by which to observe changes in cautioning rates via Crime Statistics Agency data (which is released with 3-month lags) and is reported to March 2024 for this current report. Instead, the evaluation provides indicative statistics based on internal police logs to provide an estimate of cautioning and diversion rates for this cohort.

Lack of Data Relating to Youth in Priority Cohorts:

A key objective of YCPEIP was to improve outcomes for youth in priority cohorts including youth in residential care, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth, Australian youth of African, Māori and Pasifika cultural background, and girls and young women with complex needs. Whilst station logs collected some level of perceptions-based demographic data relating to children and young people, Victoria Police preferences the use of official Crime Statistics Agency data in formal reporting and evaluation. Accordingly, this component of the objective was unable to be evaluated.

Criticism regarding the lack of detailed demographic reporting in youth crime statistics by Victoria's Crime Statistics Agency (CSA) is a recurring issue. One major concern is the limited breakdown of data for specific youth populations, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth, young people of African, Māori, and Pasifika backgrounds, and those in residential care. While CSA data occasionally highlights overrepresentation in certain categories, there is insufficient nuance in reporting. This leaves gaps in understanding how different youth populations are affected by crime.

An audit conducted by the Victorian Auditor-Generals Office of Victoria Police's data found significant gaps in youth crime data, particularly related to Indigenous status and country of

birth. This lack of comprehensive data makes it difficult to evaluate the impact of crime on priority youth cohorts and impedes targeted crime prevention efforts.⁶ More nuanced reporting, including factors like social disadvantage, cultural background, and specific vulnerabilities (e.g., girls and young women with complex needs), would enhance the ability to address systemic issues in youth crime prevention and intervention.⁷

⁶ Victorian Auditor-General's Office. (2018). Crime data. Victorian Auditor-General's Office. <https://www.audit.vic.gov.au/report/crime-data?section=>

⁷ Mills, T., & Furci, A. (2018, March 16). The problem with Victoria's crime rate. The Age. <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/the-problem-with-victoria-s-crime-rate-20180316-p4z4op.html>



Findings

3.0 FINDINGS

3.1 Implementation

Objective 1: Establish cautioning and pre-court diversionary options for children and young people that are tailored, effective, culturally appropriate and safe.

The YCPEIP has made significant strides in establishing cautioning and pre-court diversionary options for children and young people. Through its phased implementation, the program introduced specialised Victoria Police Youth Crime Coordinators who played a crucial role in supporting the adoption of modified dispositions, including pre-charge warnings, cautions, and a fast-track diversion list. These efforts were extended in Phase II to include young people aged 18 to 24, with new processes like expanded criteria for cautions and legal service referrals from the point of arrest.

Despite this, it remains unclear how cautioning and pre-court diversionary options have been tailored to be culturally appropriate and safe. This reflects the YCPEIP's model, which aims to broadly apply cautioning and diversion options whenever young people are eligible, rather than focusing on more specific targeting of particular cohorts in alignment with Objective 1. This suggests that the objective may need to be revised to better align with the program's current approach or to more explicitly address how cultural appropriateness and safety are being addressed.

Objective 2: Establish strong youth-specific decision-making frameworks to enable early police consent to court-based diversion.

The introduction of the 4-Tiered Youth Offender Processing Framework, which includes warnings, official cautions, fast-track diversion, and standard charge pathways, represents a robust youth-specific decision-making framework. This framework has been integrated into police practice, with Victoria Police Youth Crime Coordinators overseeing its application and ensuring that appropriate pathways are selected early in the process.

The role of the Victoria Police Youth Crime Coordinator was central to the YCPEIP's success. The coordinators oversaw all youth crime briefs, warnings, cautions, and diversions for offenders aged 10 to 17, and guidance on the application of diversionary options for those aged 18 to 24. The Coordinator's responsibilities included regular case review and liaison with informants to ensure appropriate pathways were selected from the outset, legal and support service referrals were made, and youth-specific information was collected to support intervention and reduce recidivism.

Further details on the eligibility and decision-making frameworks for the applications of the four-tier framework for youth offenders are available in [Appendix A](#) and [Appendix B](#).

Objective 3: Improve collaboration between informants, supervisors, prosecutors, lawyers, and the courts to streamline the processing of children and young people from arrest to final court outcomes.

The YCPEIP has successfully established partnerships between Victoria Police and community service providers around a shared goal and a strong commitment to working together. Key informant interviews suggested that partners valued the YCPEIP as a forum for a more holistic and systemic view of the challenges and opportunities to address youth crime across traditionally siloed service/sector perspectives.

YCPEIP partners have reported a strong culture of collaboration and knowledge sharing among its members, significantly enhancing the relationships between various organisations and Victoria Police. Networking within the program has allowed partners to gain a deeper understanding of each other's work and achievements, facilitating more open communication and collaboration on different projects.

This collaboration has been particularly impactful in changing cultural attitudes towards outcomes, especially through regular discussions with police in the region aimed at increasing diversionary cases. The creation of multi-partner working groups aimed at supporting communication and collaboration across sectors and breaking down silos has also transformed the nature of relationships within the system, moving away from sometimes historically adversarial interactions. These forums provide a valuable space for open dialogue, allowing partners to better understand Victoria Police's perspectives and find common ground, which has been instrumental in advancing the program's goals.

3.1.1 A sample of what we heard from YCPEIP partners

The YCPEIP has established and nurtured new relationships and reset the dynamic of existing ones. This model of partnership is unique with strong collaboration between Victoria Police and YCPEIP service and sector partners.

“Networking and seeing what others do and how much they achieve has been a benefit including understanding each other's organisations. Lots of sharing going on and when you have the relationships built it's easier to share about other projects too. – **YCPEIP partner agency**

“Collaboration between us and VicPol has helped shift cultural attitudes towards the outcomes. Regular collaboration with police in the region to see how there can be an increase in diversionary cases has been beneficial. – **YCPEIP partner agency**

“There has been a change in the style of relationship because we have forums where we get an opportunity to talk about these issues without it necessarily being around a particular case you're advocating for. Under normal circumstances, before the pilot, you wouldn't necessarily have the same sorts of relationships to leverage off...it's enormously helpful for us to just be able to talk. – **YCPEIP partner agency**

3.1.2 Key learnings

The YCPEIP demonstrates that partnerships are crucial in multi-disciplinary efforts to reduce youth crime. By fostering shared goals, creating effective communication forums, promoting mutual understanding, and shifting cultural attitudes, these partnerships enable a more holistic and collaborative approach to addressing youth crime.

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Additional diversionary options implemented, but opportunities remain: The program has effectively implemented diversionary options, but it remains unclear how cautioning and pre-court diversionary options have been tailored to be culturally appropriate and safe. |
| 2 | Youth coordinators were central to YCPEIP's success: The role of the Victoria Police Youth Crime Coordinators ensured appropriate pathways were selected, service referrals were made, and youth-specific information was collected to support intervention and reduce recidivism. |
| 3 | Collaboration was strong and supported the delivery of positive outcomes: YCPEIP successfully established partnerships with community service providers around a shared goal and a strong commitment to working together, fostering changes in culture and attitudes towards outcomes. |

3.2 Police attitudes

Objective 4: Increase police member awareness of the unique and intersecting root causes of offending by children and young people; the benefits of early intervention for them; and the pathways available to members when coming into contact with young people aged 10-24, other than resort to the formal justice system.

3.2.1 Police training

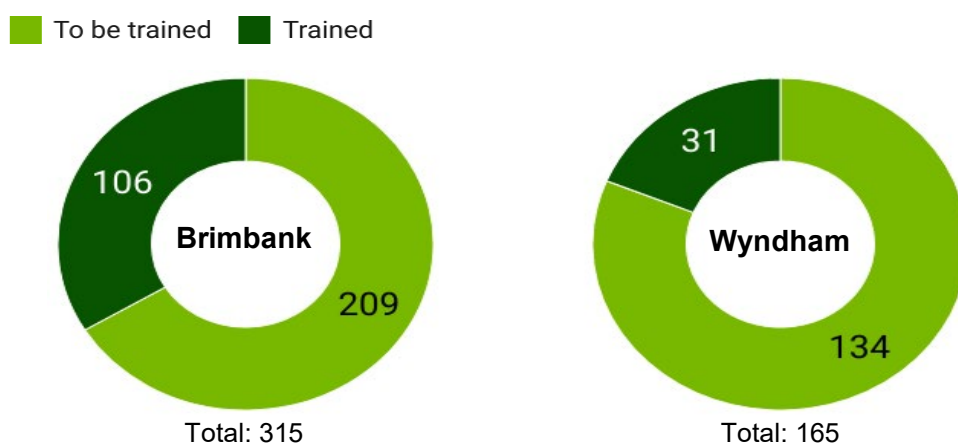
A comprehensive training package was developed by YCPEIP partners including YSAS, Westjustice and CMY to enhance police members' awareness of the unique and intersecting root causes of offending by children and young people. The training aimed to highlight the benefits of early intervention and the alternative pathways available to police members when engaging with young people aged 10 to 24, beyond resorting to the formal justice system. A total of 106 officers (representing 50.7% of all those targeted) in Brimbank and 31 officers in the Wyndham Police Service Area (18.7%) participated in training (see **Figure 7**).

The training was structured around the following key content areas:

- addressing the underlying causes of offending to prevent crime among young people
- strengthening collaboration between informants, supervisors, prosecutors, lawyers, and the courts to streamline the processing of children and young people from arrest to final court outcomes
- educating police members on the application of decision-making frameworks that enable early police consent to court-based diversion, aligning with judicial expectations
- increasing police referrals to support services

- minimising delays by fostering stronger case management and consistent pre-court engagement between police, lawyers, youth justice, and the courts.

Figure 7. YCPEIP police training by PSA

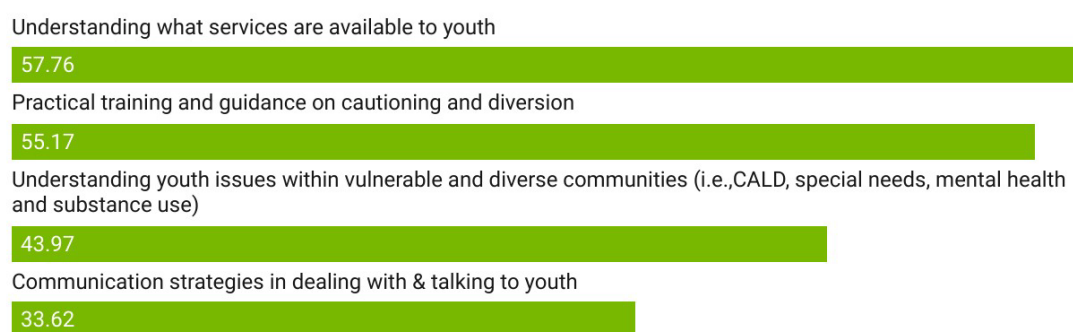


Data source: Station training logs

Police members interviewed expressed strong support for training initiatives, although they noted significant challenges in finding time to participate due to issues with staffing and turnover. There were differing opinions on the ideal depth and format of training provided through YCPEIP, with some partners advocating for a more concise approach. In response, YCPEIP partners are developing a condensed, online training module that police members can complete at their convenience.

Despite these challenges, there was considerable enthusiasm among police for more training, particularly in areas related to youth services and practical guidance on issuing cautions and diversions. To guide content for the module, police members indicated that they are interested in receiving more training on youth policing with a focus on youth services and practical training and guidance on caution and diversion. When asked what content areas police would like more training on, over half (58%) of police survey respondents indicated they would like more training on what services are available to youth and more practical training and guidance on caution and diversion (see **Figure 8**).

Figure 8. Areas police would like more training on



Data source: Police survey

“ The legal side of the training was really good and I think that needs to be delivered a lot more than what it has been. Just to give people an idea of what the justice system is expecting about the disposition of young people and how that looks in the court system. - **Victoria Police member**

“ I think it was really good that we managed to do a train-the-trainer session with all of the Crime Investigation Unit, the detectives right at the start to the buy-in from them have been really good – **Victoria Police member**

“ I think we trained up a good enough percentage over the time when we were getting going that filtered through to the Members that hadn't attended the training. So, through discussions with their peers, I think that worked well obviously and it would have been nice to train everyone for this project. We haven't gotten there for a lot of reasons, mainly resourcing. That said, though we've had really good buy-in from the members. – **Victoria Police member**

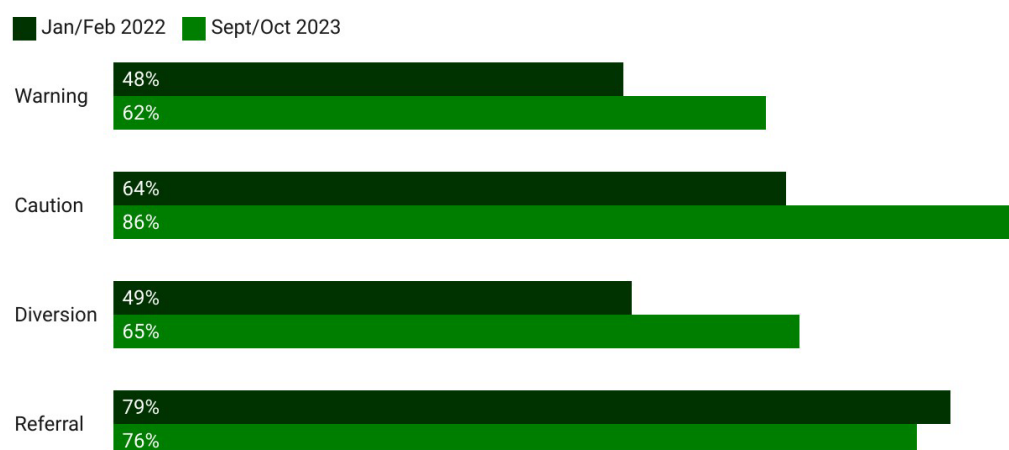
“ We should shorten the training. They don't want to know as much about brain development and youth development, that type of thing. They want to know, what's the process? How do we do it? What are the benefits? So the working group are now putting that together and making a more abridged version. – **Victoria Police member**

“ The training has been pared back. There's been a couple of ad-hoc sessions, but nothing substantial because of resourcing. – **YCPEIP partner agency**

3.2.2 Police confidence in applying diversionary responses

Overall, there has been an increase in police member confidence in issuing warnings, cautions, and diversion to youth offenders between January/February 2022 and September/October 2023 (see **Figure 9**). The most significant increase in confidence was observed in the issuing of cautions, with a rise of nearly 22 percentage points. Confidence in issuing warnings and diversionary options also increased, though to a slightly lesser extent. Police were slightly less confident in knowing when to issue a youth referral, potentially reflecting some uncertainty around recent changes to referral practices. This slight drop, though minor, could indicate a need for further training or support in this area to ensure that referrals remain a strong component of the diversionary approach.

Figure 9. The proportion of police members who feel ‘confident’ or ‘very confident’ in knowing when to issue a warning, caution, diversion or referral



Data source: Police survey.

3.2.3 Police support for diversion for serious crimes

Police members were surveyed on their likelihood of applying a caution or diversion for serious crimes. The survey data showed the level of support for cautioning serious crimes remained consistent at around 36-38% throughout the survey period. However, police demonstrated greater support for diversion, with 60.3% favouring diversion pathways for serious offences (see **Figure 10**). For family violence-related offences, police showed slightly higher support for both caution and diversion, with 62% endorsing caution and 68.2% supporting diversion by the endline survey (**Figure 11**).

Figure 10. Police self-reported likelihood of applying caution and diversion for a young person who has committed a serious crime (e.g. robbery, theft of a motor vehicle, recklessly causing injury etc)



Data source: Police survey

Figure 11. Police self-reported likelihood of applying a caution or diversion for a family violence-related offence.



Data source: Police survey. NB: Sept/Oct 2023 data for the likelihood of applying a diversion for a serious crime is unavailable.

During engagement, there were mixed views about the benefits of the new approach to cautioning under YCPEIP:

“The troops underneath me are the ones who are arresting these people, having to deal with them face-to-face daily. And so, there are, you know, some strong opinions around it. And there are a lot of people who don't agree with the new approach to cautioning under YCPEIP. – **Victoria Police member**

“I feel like there are a lot more cautions being given out, which saves a lot of time for police. – **Victoria Police member**

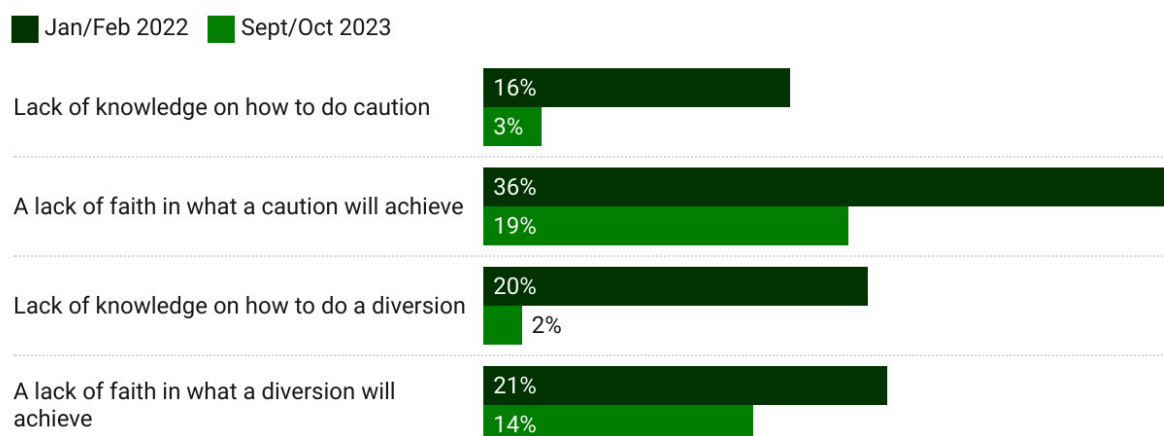
In interviews and open-text survey responses, police members also expressed concerns about balancing community safety and offender accountability with the use of cautioning and diversion, highlighting the complexity of applying these options in serious or sensitive cases.

“I am strongly opposed to youth offenders receiving cautions for serious offences where there is no remorse, and they have previously received cautions. How is a young person held to account if they know that regardless of the offending they will receive a caution? There should be a maximum number of cautions, and no more than one caution per offence theme. — **Police member, Police survey**

3.2.4 Police reported knowledge and support for applying diversionary responses

Survey data indicates that the YCPEIP had a significant positive impact on increasing knowledge among police members regarding how to issue cautions and diversions. While surveys and interviews with police members suggest there is still some scepticism about the effectiveness of these measures, the program has made strides in addressing these concerns, as reflected in the reduction of the percentage of police members who lack faith in cautions and diversions (see **Figure 12**).

Figure 12. Factors influencing police decision-making to not issue a caution or diversion



Data source: Police survey.

There were mixed views about reported knowledge and support for applying diversionary responses. One Victoria Police member indicated that they thought that diversionary practices could be better tailored to the child or young person:

“ I don't think diversion is overly effective, to be honest with you. I would be more in favour if the diversions that are used are relevant to the kids with the issues they've got. I think if their diversion is a half-hour phone call with a practitioner because they have anger issues, I don't see the point. I don't see that as helping them at all. – **Victoria Police member**

There were also workforce concerns raised about fast-tracked diversion:

“ Every different area seems to want their matters fast-tracked before the court and wants things done quickly. Seven or eight years ago there was nothing that was essentially fast-tracked. Then it became family violence. Civil briefs for intervention orders were fast-tracked. Criminal briefs are fast-tracked. And they want them bailed within a certain number of days, and now it's kids that they want fast-tracked. And the problem with doing that is a lot of our members' correspondence involves family violence or it involves kids. So, what it means is that they have got to get things to the court quicker and faster, and there's not enough room to be saying we need to fast-track everything. We can't fast-track it all and I think members get a bit frustrated with that sometimes the problem can be when you're fast-tracking too many things when members have got a lot on, they start to do not quite as good of a job and cut, you know a corner here and there. - **Victoria Police member**

“ There are just a few different areas that are always competing for that member's time and it can just be a difficult challenge. But in all honesty, if we were flush with troops and flush with time, it wouldn't be too much of an issue because a lot of the time these kids' matters are relatively simple. You know, you were talking about minor assaults and shop theft and things like

that. So, they're not overly difficult to do and I think one of the things that members probably get a little bit sort of enthusiastic about is a fast-tracked diversion. The way that some members look at that is, 'If I can knock this over, get it before the court, the person gets a diversion and then it will be done. And then it's off my plate. I don't have to worry about it.' The good thing about fast-tracking things is that it doesn't drag on. So, look, I don't think they have a big issue with the fast-tracking itself, it's just more of a VicPol internal issue that we've got lots of competing areas for the member's time. - Victoria Police member

3.2.5 Key learnings

The evaluation found there is a strong commitment from Victoria Police to receive YCPEIP training. There are opportunities for enhancement to the training program, including on how young people are referred to relevant services, and for practical training on caution and diversion.

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Demonstrated commitment to training: Victoria Police demonstrated strong interest and a commitment to youth crime prevention and early intervention training. |
| 2 | Growing referral knowledge: Victoria Police's understanding, and adoption of, youth referral practices continue to develop. |
| 3 | Ensure training on caution and diversion is practical: Strengthen future training modules on caution and diversion, by including practical training and guidance. |
| 4 | Addressing training continuity and turnover: It is important to design training approaches that are resilient to member turnover. Ensuring regular, accessible training opportunities and creating time and space for members to attend are crucial for maintaining a consistent skill base, even as staff change. |

3.3 Policing outcomes

Objective 5: To increase the use and consistency of pre-charge warnings and cautions for eligible children and young people (10-24) in the Brimbank and Wyndham PSAs.

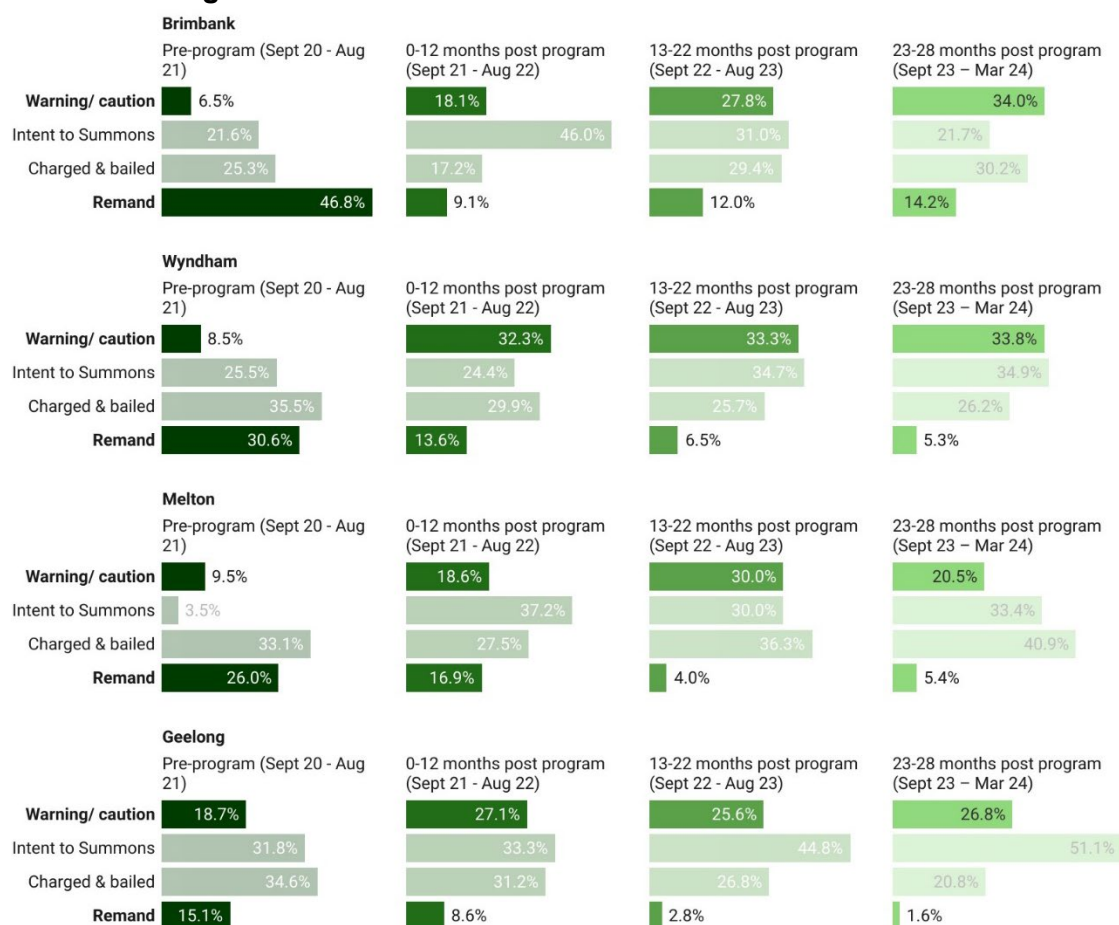
3.3.1 Summary of policing trends (10–17 year olds)

Crime statistics data on alleged youth offender incidents provide insights into the changes in the use of cautions, intent to summons, charge and bail, and remand across Brimbank and Wyndham (program PSAs), and Melton and Geelong (comparison PSAs) over four distinct periods: pre-program (Sept 2020 - Aug 2021) and three post-program periods to March 2024 (see **Figure 13**).

The data shows that the YCPEIP program has led to significant changes in policing outcomes in Brimbank and Wyndham. Both areas experienced a substantial reduction in remand rates and a significant increase in the use of pre-charge options including warnings and cautions. These changes indicate a successful shift towards less punitive and more diversionary options, aligning with the program's objectives.

Melton and Geelong also saw reductions in remand, but the increases in other formal processing outcomes like charge and bail, or intent to summons, suggest that the changes in these areas were less focused on caution and more on reducing time in custody specifically. This contrast highlights the targeted impact of the YCPEIP program in Brimbank and Wyndham, where the shift towards caution has been more pronounced and sustained.

Figure 13. The proportion of youth incidents that result in remand, intent to summons, caution or charge and bail



Data source: Victoria Police attendance data, Crime Statistics Agency Victoria.

Key findings for Brimbank: The number of alleged offender incidents by youth aged 10-17 years in Brimbank indicates a substantial shift away from remand towards more diversionary outcomes such as warnings and cautions.

- **Warnings/Cautions:** The proportion of warnings and cautions increased significantly from 6.5% pre-program to 34% by the last post-program period (23-28 months post-program).
- **Intent to Summons:** Initially, there was a sharp increase in the intent to summons (from 21.6% to 46% in the first 12 months post-program), followed by a decline to 21.7% by the last post-program period.

- **Charge and Bail:** The application of charge and bail fluctuated, starting at 25.3% pre-program, decreasing to 17.2% in the first post-program period, and then rising to 30.2% by the last period.
- **Remand:** The most dramatic change was seen in remand, which dropped significantly from 46.8% pre-program to 9.1% in the first post-program period. However, there was a slight increase in remand rates in subsequent periods, reaching 14.2% by the last period.

Key findings for Wyndham: Wyndham also shows a strong shift towards using cautions over remand. The consistent reduction in remand rates, reaching as low as 5.3%, suggests that the program has been particularly effective in this area.

- **Warnings/Cautions:** There was a significant and consistent increase in warnings and cautions from 8.5% pre-program to 33.8% by the last post-program period.
- **Intent to Summons:** The intent to summons fluctuated, starting at 25.5%, dipping slightly, and then increasing to 34.9% by the last period.
- **Charge and Bail:** This outcome decreased from 35.5% pre-program to 26.2% by the last post-program period.
- **Remand:** Remand rates dropped dramatically from 30.6% pre-program to 5.3% in the last period, showing a clear and sustained reduction.

Key findings for Melton (comparison area): While Melton also experienced a reduction in remand rates, the changes in other outcomes were more mixed. The increase in charged and bailed rates suggests that, while remand was reduced, more young people were still being processed through the formal justice pathways.

Key findings for Geelong (comparison area): Geelong shows a strong reduction in remand rates, similar to the program sites, and an increase in warnings/cautions. However, the rise in intent to summons suggests a shift towards more formal processing without detention.

3.3.2 Summary of policing trends (18–24-year-olds)

Official crime statistics data on 18–24-year-old offenders was not available during the current reporting period. Internal police data from Wyndham monthly YCPEIP reports indicate 107 (14%) of 747 young adult offenders aged 18-24 years old received a warning or caution as part of the Phase II pilot (November 2022 and March 2024). Internal data on the number of young adult offenders in Brimbank were not available at the time of reporting.

3.3.3 Fast-track diversion

The number of young people aged 10-17 years being placed into fast-track diversion remains lower than YCPEIP partners expected. Internal policing data indicates that between November 2021 and March 2024, 88 young people in Brimbank and 74 young people in Wyndham were issued a diversion or fast-track diversion. These findings highlight a potential underutilisation of the diversion process, where the initial decision-making by attending officers is critical. Issues in changing police attendance list options to include diversion as a prompt has hindered officers' consideration of this pathway. Additionally, many cases that ultimately proceed as diversions do not start that way, and these are often not reported back to the YCPEIP Youth

Portfolio Coordinator for statistical purposes. As a result, police and associated services have had to conduct follow-up activities with informants via the Central Brief Storage System (CBSS) to verify which cases had diversions recommended or listed.

A review of internal monthly police reports indicates that fast-track diversion cases often experience delays of between 4 and 8 months between offence and resolution. This may vary between locations. However, this may suggest that intended time efficiency gains have not yet been demonstrated.

Delays with matters identified for possible fast-track diversion suitability in some instances arise where negotiations are needed in relation to seeking withdrawal of some or all of the charges alleged, and the need to default to traditional court process timelines in those cases (e.g. to proceed to summary case conferencing and contest mention).

Broader court demand is likely to have impacted processing timeframes as well. For instance, in the Wyndham monthly YCPEIP progress report for August 2022, it was noted that there were significant scheduling delays in processing a youth offender case. Despite efforts to align the court dates with the fast-track diversion program requirements, the earliest available mention date was not until nearly two months later, and the initial listing did not meet the required 28-day timeframe. This case highlights broader scheduling issues that should be considered in future analysis.

A police member indicated that repeated adjournments may reflect a lack of police resourcing to support pre-court conferencing as well as support among magistrates for fast-track diversion who may be more likely to adjourn the case rather than proceed with a diversionary option contributing to delays in resolution.

“ We’re still not hitting the mark. I might not pick up the file until a couple of weeks later (that comes down to how many resources we are putting into this). Assessments haven’t been made pre-court, we’re still getting a lot of adjournments, pre-court. That was the point of having this process, the fast-track process still needs work. – **Victoria Police member**

3.3.4 The application of cautioning for diverse and at-risk young people

While the data shows a significant increase in warnings and cautions, it does not disaggregate outcomes by specific demographic groups including for example Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth, youth of African, Māori, and Pasifika backgrounds, or girls and young women with complex needs. Official police data is unavailable for release due to the small numbers, risks of potential re-identification and lack of consistent data capture.

Although the data does not provide specific evidence regarding the impact on the targeted overrepresented communities, the general trend of increased cautioning suggests that the program is more likely to be applied to a broader range of young people, including those from communities overrepresented in policing and justice statistics. To fully assess the program's effectiveness for these populations, further disaggregated data would be needed.

3.3.5 Key learnings

The data shows that the YCPEIP has led to significant changes in policing outcomes in Brimbank and Wyndham. Both areas experienced a substantial reduction in remand rates and a significant increase in the use of pre-charge options including warnings and cautions. Victoria Police Youth Crime Coordinators have played a pivotal role in driving internal change. Their influence has been significant in promoting the adoption of new decision-making frameworks for cautioning, which is evident from both policing trends and feedback from interviews. These frameworks have been well integrated into practice, highlighting the program's ability to foster positive change even in the face of delays.

“It's great to have {name}'s role to seek guidance whenever needed. As an Informant, I go to them and check if it's a caution, diversion, charging etc.” -
Victoria Police member

The evaluation, however, also found examples of fast-track diversion cases experiencing delays of between 4 and 8 months between offence and resolution suggesting intended time efficiency gains have not yet been demonstrated.

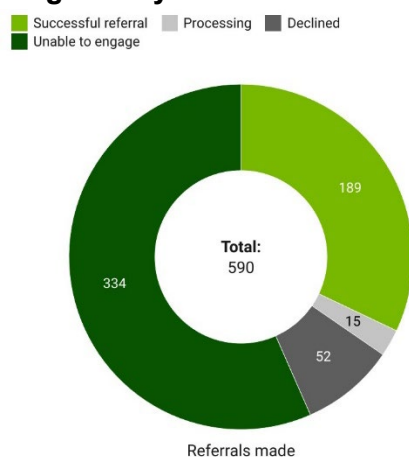
| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | High adoption of cautioning by police members: Significant increase in warnings and cautions suggesting the cautioning framework has been well adopted by police members. The general trend of increased cautioning suggests broader application across different youth populations, but the specific impact on overrepresented communities is unclear. Further disaggregated data would be needed to fully assess the program's effectiveness for targeted groups. |
| 2 | Low utilisation of diversion options: Diversion and fast-tracked diversion are not consistently utilised as initial disposition options during police attendance, leading to fewer young offenders being diverted early in the process. |
| 3 | Delays in case resolutions: A few monthly reports suggest that cases that should benefit from fast-tracked diversion are often subject to multiple adjournments and prolonged timelines, with some cases remaining unresolved for extended periods. This undermines the objective of prompt intervention that is central to the concept of fast-track diversion. |
| 4 | Operational and systemic challenges to monitoring diversion: Administrative barriers complicate the tracking and management of cases eligible for diversion. This lack of efficiency can result in missed opportunities for timely diversion and rehabilitation. |

3.4 Referral outcomes

Objective 6: Increase the volume, quality, and coordination of police referrals to legal, psychosocial support agencies, and education services from the point of first police contact.

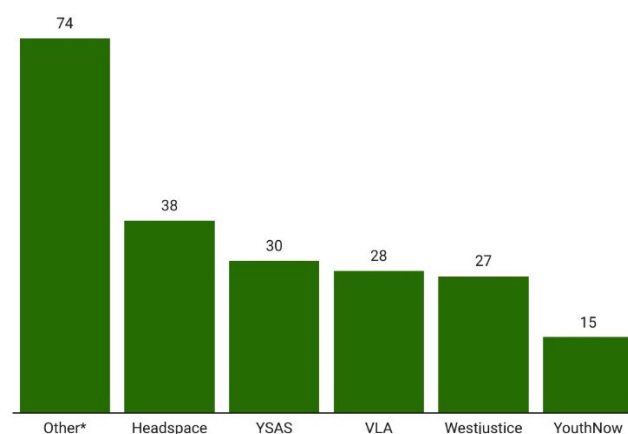
Between December 2022 and July 2024, the YouthNow referral coordinator received 590 referrals from Victoria Police in Wyndham and Brimbank. Out of these, 155 young people (26%) were successfully triaged and referred to various youth support and legal services (see **Figure 14**). The breakdown of these referrals (see **Figure 15**) shows a significant focus on mental health and legal services with Headspace receiving 38 referrals, YSAS 30, and legal services such as Westjustice and VLA receiving 27 and 28 referrals, respectively. YouthNow itself handled 15 referrals, while 74 referrals were made to a variety of other services.

Figure 14. The number of young people triaged for youth service intervention



Data source: YouthNow referral data December 2022 to July 2024.

Figure 15. Referral outcome



Data source: YouthNow referral data, December 2022 to 31 July 2024. NB: A young person may receive more than one referral. *Other includes Centrelink, Anglicare, Berry Street, better futures and other organisations.

Despite this, a large proportion (61%, n=334) of referred young people could not be contacted after six weeks, highlighting challenges in engagement, likely exacerbated by delays in processing and outreach difficulties. Additionally, 52 young people declined further support, and 15 were still in the process of being triaged at the time of reporting.

YCPEIP partners advised that referral engagement rates, particularly its non-contact rate, align with broader trends in programs that work with vulnerable and at-risk youth. While a follow-up procedure is in place, challenges in gaining consent from young people to enable police referral often push follow-ups far beyond the initial police contact.

A key challenge in increasing referrals has been obtaining consent from young people. A survey of police officers indicated that 94% were either "always" or "likely" to offer a referral when appropriate. However, the most common reasons for not making a referral were "lack of consent".

The introduction of SMS to gain consent for referral in Wyndham has shown promise in boosting follow-up and agreement by young people to receive a referral (see **Figure 16**).

Figure 16. Methods used to gain consent to refer young people to the YouthNow Referral Coordinator, Wyndham



Data Source: YouthNow referral data.

Although the use of SMS has improved the initial engagement, broader challenges in coordination between agencies have persisted. YouthNow staff and Victoria police members have reported gaining consent was a key barrier to being able to connect young people to referral services.

“ *The ability to consent the young person to make the referral has been the sticking point for the whole program. We need to have someone to triage consent and refer to appropriate services. But information sharing has been an ongoing barrier to enabling us to refer more young people. The legislation around the privacy act is still a big barrier for us to make referrals. We (police) can't refer them without consent so they're just not getting picked up.* – **Victoria Police staff member**

The creation of a shared database between Victoria Police and referral agencies has been suggested by stakeholders to improve service delivery. Such a system would allow both parties to track the progress and outcomes of each referred individual, ensuring that young people are supported consistently across the service network.

YouthNow staff have also highlighted difficulties in re-enrolling expelled students or finding alternative education pathways, citing school capacity issues and zoning challenges. The lack of formal partnerships with alternative education providers further exacerbates this issue, leaving a critical gap in support for at-risk youth at the caution stage.

“ *There's a fair few young people I'm in communication with whose parents are beside themselves because half the year's gone and their child's not getting any education." Addressing this gap is vital for ensuring that at-risk youth are not left in limbo, potentially increasing their risk of re-offending.* – **YouthNow referral coordinator**

The importance of referrals was emphasised during engagement, however, there is additional work required to ensure that clear and appropriate referrals are made for children and young people. There is also additional work required to ensure that children and young people follow through on referrals and to understand the uptake of referrals made by YCPEIP partners.

“ We haven't nailed the best way to get the referrals coming through consistently without it being a bit labour-intensive, but yeah, so it's an area of ongoing work. – **Quote from partner agency**

“ Last time I checked, we had about 10 referrals and there was a good uptake by young people. A much higher percentage of young people accept the referrals. – **Quote from partner agency**

3.4.1 Key learnings

The evaluation identified material improvements in police referrals to legal, psychosocial support agencies, and education services. However, there are opportunities to better coordinate referrals across agencies and to improve support for young people via tailored engagement strategies.

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Sustained engagement is a critical challenge: Maintaining continuous support for young people remains a major challenge, suggesting a need for more effective follow-up and engagement strategies to ensure long-term outcomes. |
| 2 | Consent processes have improved, but coordination issues persist: While the use of SMS for obtaining consent has enhanced youth participation, ongoing barriers to information sharing between agencies are limiting the effectiveness of referrals and service delivery, pointing to the need for better systems of communication and collaboration. |



CASE STUDY:

Toby

Toby* is a 19-year-old man. He works at Coles earning approximately \$400-\$500 a week collecting trolleys. He has Asperger's Syndrome. One evening, when leaving work, Toby was reversing his car out of a parking space and collided with another parked car. Although he felt he may have hit something, he was not sure, and upon inspecting his vehicle and not finding any damage he got back into his car and drove away.

Toby had in fact collided with another parked car and caused some minor damage. Two months later, Toby received a summons from police in the mail. He was being charged with three separate criminal offences including failing to provide his name and address at the scene of an accident, failing to provide assistance at the scene, and failing to report it to police. As soon as he received this summons Toby spoke to his mum who explained what must have happened and his responsibilities if he is in a collision. Toby self-presented that same day to his local police station. Police interviewed Toby and made a referral to a lawyer for Toby.

After receiving the referral, Westjustice met with Toby and provided him with legal advice about his options. This advice included asking police for a 'caution' in line with Phase II of the YCPEIP pilot, that expanded the types of matters that could be eligible for cautions for young adults. Previously under Victoria Police policy, cautions were limited to minor shop-theft and possession of small quantities of certain drugs.

After negotiating with the informant and the Youth Crime Portfolio Sergeant, Toby was issued a caution. The charges were formally withdrawn at court by Prosecution without the need for Toby or his lawyer to attend. Toby also offered to pay for any damage caused and the police informant contacted the victim who advised that the damage had been repaired at no cost to them and there was no need for Toby to make any payment. The victim was sympathetic to Toby's circumstances and did not oppose him being issued a caution and was grateful for being consulted about the outcome.

When asked about the impact of this outcome Toby said:

“ *I am thankful to be able to get rid of the anxiety of needing to be in the court room and it is nice not having something on my record.* ”

* Not his real name.

** This case study was provided by Westjustice.

3.5 Crime prevention outcomes

Objective 7: Prevent youth crime through the provision of community legal and psychosocial education and information to young people, their families and broader communities that facilitate earlier access to support to address the root causes of offending.

Some community legal and psychosocial education and information have been provided to young people, their families, and the broader community through the YCPEIP program. Westjustice has played a key role in delivering community legal education, both in schools and through social media channels, with a focus on supporting young people to understand their rights when encountering a police officer. This education has been framed around the four C's: Chill, Clarify, Cooperate, and Complain – a set of reminders aimed at guiding young people in police interactions.

Westjustice delivered sessions at Keilor Secondary College, focusing on weapon- and violence-related offences, which included the distribution of the 4Cs cards to help students understand their rights and how to engage with police officers. Although not directly led by YCPEIP, the session aligned with its preventative component and was spearheaded by the Brimbank Council. The broader goals and objectives of YCPEIP were also incorporated into Westjustice's education efforts in high schools, with an emphasis on specific offences and procedural fairness.



Additionally, Westjustice rolled out a series of online messages through Instagram, including posts and reels (@westjusticeclc), covering topics like lawful excuses, police actions related to weapon possession, and available services for young people who commit criminal offences. These posts received positive engagement, with 60 users commenting on their usefulness and sharing them with a wider audience. Further exploration of the social media approach may be warranted, including tracking data to understand if it is reaching the intended audience effectively.

Beyond schools and social media, extensive education was also undertaken with broader community stakeholders, including magistrates, private practitioners, prosecution teams, ministers, and local councillors. For example, presentations were made to the NT Children's Commissioner, who expressed interest in the YCPEIP project. Integrating these diverse outreach efforts strengthens the program's visibility and highlights its preventative and educational components.

3.5.1 Key learnings

The evaluation found young people were more receptive to community legal and psychosocial education and information when received in youth-based environments, such as schools and online platforms.

1

Limited data to evaluate the impact of community prevention:

While several community education events were undertaken to provide legal and psychosocial information to young people, their families, and the broader community, there is limited data available to assess the impact of these initiatives on preventing youth crime or addressing the root causes of offending. Although these events were aimed at facilitating earlier access to support, the absence of comprehensive monitoring and evaluation data means it is difficult to determine the effectiveness of these interventions in reducing offending or addressing underlying factors.

3.6 Cost-effectiveness

Objective 8: Evaluate the project to inform potential continuation and expansion including the human and system costs saved.

Objective 9: Reduce delay and system costs through strong case management and collaboration, for example, by regular pre-court conferencing between police, lawyers, youth justice and the courts.

This section presents estimates of the scale of cost savings generated by the YCPEIP. Two types of cost savings are estimated:

- Cost savings to the criminal justice system due to lower processing costs as cautions replace the costs of prosecuting crimes committed by youth offenders
- The potential for lower costs to society from cautioning reducing the probability of re-offending by first-time youth offenders.

An increase in the proportion of youth offenders cautioned rather than prosecuted will reduce criminal justice processing costs. There will be lower time requirements on police who will not be required to incur the administration costs associated with charging offenders and undertaking post-arrest activities. An incident that results in a caution will also not involve pre-trial remand in custody, court cases or post-conviction penalties.

Such reductions in process costs will free up resources. However, such savings would ultimately prove to be a false economy if an increase in cautioning of youth offenders simply led to a higher incidence of criminal activity. The objective of more active cautioning of young offenders is that the second chance offered to young offenders will encourage a more prudent approach to offending by youth. Indeed a 2017 study indicated that youth cautioned in Victoria

had a 36% likelihood of re-offending within a year, compared to a 48% likelihood for those who were charged.⁸

Initial results from YCPEIP indicate that this pilot has led to a reduction in re-offending by first-time offenders. This impact is illustrated in **Table 2**. When considering cautioning statistics, the proportion of first-time offenders who re-offend within 12 months of their first offence appears to increase with YCPEIP, up from 6% to 21% in Brimbank and from 17% to 22% in Wyndham. However, this simple comparison ignores the impact that an increase in cautioning also reduces the reliance on arresting and charging youth offenders. A key transmission path seems to be that by increasing cautioning, there is a subsequent reduction in the amount of re-offending by youths who would otherwise have been arrested.

Table 2. The proportion of first-time offenders who re-offend within 12 months

| | Pre-program | Post program |
|-----------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| Brimbank | | |
| Arrest | 42.0% | 40.0% |
| (proportion of incidents) | (93.2%) | (74.2%) |
| Caution | 6.0% | 21.0% |
| (proportion of incidents) | (6.0%) | (23.5%) |
| <i>Weighted</i> | 39.8% | 35.4% |
| Wyndham | | |
| Arrest | 69.0% | 31.0% |
| (proportion of incidents) | (89.7%) | (65.9%) |
| Caution | 17.0% | 22.0% |
| (proportion of incidents) | (8.3%) | (32.0%) |
| <i>Weighted</i> | 64.6% | 28.1% |
| Brimbank and Wyndham | | |
| <i>Weighted</i> | 54.7% | 30.5% |

NB: Analysis of re-offending rates in comparison sites was not undertaken due to the subsequent roll out of the YCPEIP into Melton.

Combining arrests and cautions indicates that re-offending by first-time youth offenders declined in Brimbank from 39.8% prior to YCPEIP to 35.4% with YCPEIP, and in Wyndham from 64.6% to 28.1%. The combined impact from both Wyndham and Brimbank was a reduction in re-offending from 54.7% to 30.5%.

However, it would be extreme to attribute all of this decline in re-offending to the implementation of YCPEIP. Indeed, there is evidence of coincident declines in youth re-offending in other PSAs. Given the uncertainties surrounding the scale and ramifications of potential cost savings, Monte Carlo Analysis has been employed to conduct sensitivity tests

⁸ Shirley K (2017) The Cautious Approach: Police cautions and the impact on youth reoffending, Crime Statistics Agency, Brief Number 9

on cost-saving estimates.⁹ In each section below, a range of tables are presented summarising the key variables that Monte Carlo analysis has been applied to, including the central, high, and low spread of the estimated distribution range, along with the Beta (skewness) assumption used to ensure that the average estimate is consistent with the central assumption value.

The strength of the Monte Carlo simulation lies in its ability to explore a wide range of combinations between the different components. For instance, one simulation could effectively assume that some costs are low, but others are high. 20,000 simulations are sufficient to obtain stable results across different samples.

A key implication of undertaking Monte Carlo analysis is that it allows the presentation of the distribution of estimates graphically in the form of a histogram (see [Appendix F](#)). It also enables the provision of 95% confidence intervals for the estimates.

Table 3 presents the key assumptions underpinning estimates of annual cost reductions from the YCPEIP. The low and high assumptions are used to derive Beta distributions for the Monte Carlo analysis, with the Beta (skewness) values derived to ensure that the distribution average equals the central assumption.

⁹ Monte Carlo simulation techniques provide a method for investigating the interactions between multiple areas of uncertainty. A Monte Carlo simulation is a computer-based technique that uses statistical sampling and probability distributions to simulate the effects of uncertain variables on model outcomes. It provides a systematic assessment of the combined effects of multiple sources of risk. The approach adopted in this report simulates 20,000 observations for each varied component assuming random inputs into a Beta distribution. A Beta distribution is selected as it provides scope to constrain the distribution outcomes within plausible bounds (established by the A and B terms) and to allow skewed distributions (established by the relative size of the α and β terms). In practice each alpha term has been set to 1 and then the beta value adjusted (which sets the distribution skewness) to ensure that the resulting distribution mean matches the values used in the central calculations. The resulting distributions are bounded by plausible constraints but also utilise available information about the likely distribution. For example, if the average price of a milkshake is \$10, prices below zero and over \$50 may be excluded as impossible or implausible. But as the average price is \$10, observations of \$8-\$12 would be expected to be more likely than observations of \$38-\$42. So, in this example, A would be set to 0, B to 50, and with α set to 1, a value of 5 would be chosen for β , as this is the value that will generate a sample average of 10.

For the Monte Carlo analysis of the economic impact estimates, the following assumptions have been made:

- $\alpha = 1$
- β = adjusted to ensure that the distribution average equals the central estimate
- A = lower bound of distribution (if not constrained by a zero lower bound, assumed to be lower than the low sensitivity test value by a proportion that is 25% of the gap between the sensitivity low value and the central estimate)
- B = upper bound (typically assumed to be greater than the high sensitivity test value by a proportion that is 25% of the gap between the sensitivity high value and the central estimate).

The assumed distribution considers prior information about the potential distribution and ensures the distribution remains within realistic bounds, avoiding impossible outcomes, like negative costs.

Table 3. Key assumptions underpinning cost reduction calculations

| Variable | Unit | Low | Central | High | Beta (skewness) |
|--|---------------------------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------------|
| Volume assumptions | | | | | |
| Youth incidents | Count | 370 | 459 | 663 | 2.29 |
| Reduction in arrests | % of incidents | 10% | 15% | 17% | 0.48 |
| Increase in cautions | % of incidents | 1% | 11% | 15% | 0.49 |
| Short remand | Reduction, % of incidents | 1% | 9% | 23% | 1.56 |
| | Average days per prisoner | 1 | 7 | 10 | 0.50 |
| Long remand | Reduction, % of incidents | -1% | 7% | 12% | 0.58 |
| | Average days per prisoner | 30 | 60 | 90 | 1.00 |
| Reduction in court appearances | % of incidents | 0% | 13% | 20% | 0.49 |
| Detention period after conviction | Average days per prisoner | 120 | 240 | 480 | 2.00 |
| First time offenders | % of attendance | 35% | 69% | 85% | 0.50 |
| Reduction in reoffending | % of first time offenders | 4% | 24% | 37% | 0.63 |
| Cost assumptions | | | | | |
| Additional cost to police arresting vs caution | \$ per arrest | \$2,598 | \$3,465 | \$4,814 | 1.56 |
| Court costs | \$ per appearance | \$958 | \$1,198 | \$2,396 | 5.00 |
| Detention costs | \$ per person per day | \$326.82 | \$408.53 | \$817.06 | 5.00 |
| Social cost of crime | \$ per reported crime | \$44,600 | \$55,750 | \$111,500 | 5.00 |

3.6.1 Key assumptions and judgements

A range of key assumptions and judgements have been made to inform the estimate of the reduction in social costs generated by YCPEIP. The count of youth incidents is derived from Police Attendance data for Brimbank and Wyndham from September 2020 to August 2023, with 527 representing the annual average over the period.

Arrests are defined as incidents that resulted in individuals being coded by police as:

- charged and bailed
- intent to summons
- remand: bail refused
- remand: bail granted, or
- remand: hearing - direct to court

Short remand is defined as individuals being coded by police as:

- remand: bail granted, or
- remand: hearing - direct to court

Long remand is defined as individuals being coded by police as remand: bail refused.

Court appearance numbers are assumed to include those arrested as well as those coded as intent to summons.

The calculations assume that the reduction in detention periods following conviction will be equivalent to the decline in youths being subject to long periods of remand. Implicitly this assumes that long remand (i.e. being refused bail) is associated with detention-based convictions and that other community-based sentences are reserved for other offenders.

Information on Victorian Government criminal justice costs is derived from the Department of Treasury and Finance Early Intervention and Investment Framework in particular the relevant data relating to police, courts, corrective services and youth justice.¹⁰ The costs to Victoria Police arising from processing arrests are based on information provided by Victoria Police in relation to data analysis from the Embedded Youth Outreach Program (EYOP) and the Early Intervention Investment Framework unit costs for non-family violence offences.

The impact of YCPEIP initiatives is derived by comparing police data before and after implementation in Brimbank and Wyndham and a comparison with police data from Geelong and Melton. In particular, the change in incidents was calculated as:

$$(T_{post} - T_{pre}) - (C_{post} - C_{pre})$$

Where T_{post} is the proportion of total incidents in the treatment areas (Brimbank and Wyndham) post-implementation classified as an incident type (e.g. numbers cautioned), T_{pre} is the equivalent proportion prior to implementation. C_{post} and C_{pre} are equivalent proportion measures the control areas (ie Geelong and Melton). The implication is that all differences in youth outcomes in Brimbank and Wyndham that differ from the trend observed in the comparison PSAs are attributed to YCPEIP. The high and low assumptions are based on the biggest and smallest gaps in outcomes in individual districts.

To illustrate, the number of youths cautioned increased from 7.4% to 29.2% of youth incidents in Brimbank and Wyndham. In Geelong and Melton, the proportion increased from 14.1% to 25.2%. This means that the central estimate of the initiative is calculated as $(29.2\% - 7.4\%) - (25.2\% - 14.1\%) = 21.8\% - 11.1\% = 10.7\%$. The lowest difference was between Brimbank and Melton (1.0%) and the largest was between Wyndham and Geelong (15.4%). These figures were used to inform the bounds of the Monte Carlo distribution analysis.¹¹

The impact of cautioning on reoffending rates is based on the data presented in Table 2, with the central estimate based on the difference between the weighted pre- and post-program re-offending rates in both Brimbank and Wyndham, i.e. a 16% reduction ($= 48\% - 32\%$). The low assumption of 4% is the reported reduction in Brimbank; the high assumption of 37% is the reported reduction in Wyndham.

The saving from lower reoffending is based on 2011 estimates that crime in Victoria had a social cost of \$9.8 billion in 2009/10¹². Based on 312,048 reported crimes that implies an average cost of \$31,498 per reported crime. When inflated into 2022 prices (based on increases in nominal GDP for Victoria), there is an implication of a current social cost of \$55,750 per reported crime. The low/high assumptions for the Monte Carlo analysis are 80% and 200% of this amount respectively, based on a judgement that there is a greater likelihood for estimates to understate than overstate the true social costs of crime. With particular

¹⁰Australian Government Productivity Commission (2024) [pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services](https://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services)

¹¹ Note Victoria Police amended their State-wide cautioning policy in July 2021 to enable more than one caution to be administered. This is thought to have increased the level of cautioning statewide, independent of the YCPEIP in Brimbank and Wyndham.

¹² Smyth R, (2011) Costs of Crime in Victoria, Monash University, Business and Economics Discussion Paper 25/11.

relevance to youth crime prevention programs, although social cost estimates explicitly account for the costs of crime faced by victims, they do not typically account for the lifetime benefits for youths who avoid the consequences of serious early interactions with the criminal justice system.

3.6.2 Cost saving estimates

The outcome of applying the cost assumptions outlined in this report to changes in police treatment of youth offenders in Brimbank and Wyndham suggests a central estimate of reduced criminal system costs of \$4.4 million per year, which is 5.1 times greater than the \$859,551 spent on promoting the YCPEIP initiative.

The largest savings appear to come from reductions in Corrective Service costs, with a potential \$0.9 million saving from lower remand expenses and \$3.1 million from fewer post-conviction detentions. There are also likely to be benefits from freed-up resources for police and courts, equivalent to \$240,000 per year for Police and \$70,000 per year for courts. These cost savings are relatively minor in scale and would not by themselves justify the \$0.9 million invested in the program.

Given the inherent uncertainty about many of the assumptions used in these cost-saving estimates, the Monte Carlo analysis produces a reasonably wide 95% confidence range for the criminal justice system cost impacts. The estimated 95% confidence interval ranges from a cost *increase* of \$0.7 million to a cost saving of \$12.5 million. That there is a possibility that the resulting benefits might not have justified the program costs is plausible but should not detract from the overarching result presented here that cost savings are estimated to have had an 84.5% probability of exceeding program costs.

In addition to these cost savings through reduced operational costs for the criminal justice system, there are also social cost savings from reduced re-offending. The central estimate of these social cost savings from lower re-offending is \$4.25 million (with a 95% confidence range from \$0.1 million to \$10.7 million).

Combining these cost savings from reduced re-offending to the criminal justice system cost reductions implies an estimated annual social cost saving from YCPEIP in Brimbank and Wyndham of \$8.6 million, with a 95% confidence range (from \$1.2 million to \$19.3 million). These Monte Carlo estimates imply a 98.3% probability that social cost savings have exceeded program costs (see **Table 4**).

Table 4. Estimates of annual cost reductions from youth crime prevention initiative in Brimbank and Wyndham, \$m

| | Central | Low | High |
|--|---------|---------|---------|
| Police | \$0.24 | \$0.11 | \$0.42 |
| Remand | \$0.91 | -\$0.15 | \$2.55 |
| Court | \$0.07 | -\$0.01 | \$0.17 |
| Reduced detention | \$3.13 | -\$0.94 | \$10.21 |
| <i>Total correction service cost savings¹</i> | \$4.35 | -\$0.74 | \$12.53 |
| <i>Benefit cost ratios</i> | 5.1 | -0.9 | 14.6 |
| Reduced re-offending | \$4.25 | \$0.14 | \$10.70 |
| <i>Total social cost savings</i> | \$8.60 | \$1.21 | \$19.28 |
| <i>Benefit cost ratios</i> | 10.0 | 1.4 | 22.4 |

NB Columns will not sum due to differing distributions of sub-components. Numbers in Low and High columns represent 95% confidence interval bounds.

3.6.3 Key learnings

The evaluation found that the YCPEIP reduced costs for Victorians, including youth justice detention service and social cost savings. A continuation of the project is likely to build on these savings.

1

YCPEIP initiatives save Victorians money: The YCPEIP has demonstrated significant cost savings by increasing the use of cautions over prosecutions, reducing criminal justice processing costs, administrative burdens, and the need for court cases or detention. The initiative is estimated to save \$4.4 million annually in criminal system costs, a return of 5.1 times the program's investment. Additionally, by reducing youth reoffending, the program generates an estimated \$8.6 million in annual social cost savings for Brimbank and Wyndham.



Conclusion

4.0 CONCLUSION

In the space of only three years, YCPEIP has shown social and economic returns on investment for the communities in the Wyndham and Brimbank Police Service Areas that it was designed to serve. This report has made fourteen recommendations aimed at strengthening and further embedding YCPEIP by focusing on enhancements to the implementation of the existing program, refinement of certain components of the program to expand its reach and scope and improved monitoring and data collection to support further scalability.

Police attitudes towards the YCPEIP have been largely positive, with many officers recognising the program's value in diverting young offenders away from the criminal justice system and towards support services. Evidence indicates that the role of the Victoria Police Youth Crime Coordinators has been critical to the success of YCPEIP. Officers have expressed support for the initiative's focus on early intervention and rehabilitation, acknowledging its potential to reduce long-term offending and improve outcomes for young people. However, some police have raised concerns about community safety, particularly regarding whether diverting certain offenders from prosecution could lead to a perception of leniency or an increase in youth-related crime in the short term. Balancing the program's rehabilitative aims with broader community safety expectations remains a key consideration for law enforcement.

Police have shown a demonstrated commitment to training in relation to YCPEIP and a growing understanding of knowledge in relation to referrals in relation to children and young people. The evaluation highlighted opportunities to refine and adapt the training rolled out to police through YCPEIP to ensure that it is strengthened and further embedded across Victoria Police.

YCPEIP has shown improved collaboration and delivered positive outcomes through the implementation of its key components including multi-agency coordination, the establishment of the YCPEIP Youth Portfolio Coordinator position, and the implementation of a revised caution/diversion framework. Whilst the program has successfully increased the application of pre-charge options including caution, the evaluation also found low utilisation of fast-track diversion options, delays in case resolutions as well as operational and systemic challenges limiting monitoring and follow-up of diversion cases. In addition, the evaluation found opportunities remain to ensure that these options are tailored to priority cohorts.

Material improvements for young people were noted in relation to police referrals however, there is further opportunity to boost the number and timeliness of referrals including through consideration of consent and information-sharing processes between police and youth agencies.

Finally, the YCPEIP has demonstrated significant cost savings. By increasing the use of cautions over prosecutions, reducing criminal justice processing costs, administrative burdens, and the need for court cases or detention, the initiative is estimated to save \$4.4 million annually in criminal system costs, a return of 5.1 times the program's investment. Additionally, by reducing youth reoffending, the program generates an estimated \$8.6 million in annual social cost savings for Brimbank and Wyndham.



Appendices

Appendix A: YCPEIP 4-Tiered Framework

The 4-tiered framework developed by Victoria Police applies to 10–17-year-olds with modification to existing organisational policies and procedures. The framework is based on the principle of minimum intervention and members must not proceed to an action that is more severe unless the preceding action is clearly inappropriate:

1. Warning
2. Caution
3. Fast-track diversion
4. Standard charge process

The presumption is to proceed by warning or caution, unless inappropriate to do so, having regard to:

- the seriousness and context of the alleged offending
- the nature and frequency of any previous offending
- any relevant previous conduct (including positive conduct, or negative)
- the harm caused to the alleged victim or community

If police do not issue a warning or caution, the reason will be recorded, addressing the above considerations. Police must be satisfied it is probable there is sufficient evidence to charge the child with the offence.

TIER 1 WARNINGS & TIER 2 CAUTIONS

Suitability Criteria:

- Child must not deny offence. Where a child provides a 'no comment' interview, they are still eligible
- Still available where the child has previously committed offences, been warned or cautioned
- Can be given for more than one offence and to more than one child at the same time
- Children's Court Diversion Criteria Matrix should be used to guide assessment (generally a score of 3 or lower)

Police Obligation:

- Police must inform the child of the right to speak to lawyer

- Police must explain the meaning and effect of the warning or caution as plainly and simply as possible and in a way which the child will understand.
- Police must notify the child's parents or guardian (in person, verbally or in writing) about a warning or caution, unless this would pose an unacceptable risk to the safety, welfare or wellbeing of the child (*i.e. significant family violence, unwilling to engage with police*).
- Once a warning or caution is issued the child must not be prosecuted for the relevant offence/s.
- The warning or caution must be issued as soon as reasonably practicable but can be issued at any stage in a criminal proceeding.

Restorative practices (*i.e. apologies to victims, program referrals*) may be recommended and are encouraged but are not enforceable for warnings or cautions.

Warnings are the least severe enforcement action that can be taken and aim to minimise youth contact with police and discourage further offending. The youth warning is to be recorded as a field contact. A youth warning:

- Can be issued without consent of the child
- Does not require authorisation of Sergeant or above
- Can be given verbally or in writing at any location
- Will be recorded via Field Contact only
- Must include offence details and consideration made at time of offending
- Must consider attitude of Victim
- Must complete the YCP Warning Notice to the accused & guardian

Caution specific parameters

A caution is a more serious step than a warning, however, is still a pre-charge enforcement option which diverts the child away from the criminal justice system and results in an outcome where the child avoids criminal record. A caution:

- Is available even where a child has previously committed offences, been warned or cautioned.
- Can be given for more than one offence and to more than one child at the same time.
- Does not require authorisation of Sergeant or above.

Where a parent or guardian provides consent within a reasonable time (*14 days as a guide for reasonable time*), unless unreasonable risk is present – must not progress to charge / ITS pathway solely due to unavailability of parents.

A caution is to be recorded on LEAP via VP form L21 which is to be signed by the accused and co-signed by parent, guardian, or alternative representative (*legal or alternative responsible & suitable adult*)

TIER 3 – FAST-TRACK DIVERSION

Where a child is recommended as suitable for diversion, the fast-track diversion pathway provides shortened timeframes and processes for (*reference 1 - Children's Court Diversion Criteria Matrix*) youth offenders.

- Diversion must be appropriate in the circumstances & consider:
 - The availability of suitable diversion programs
 - The impact on any victim and the community
 - The nature, severity and context of the offence
 - Prior criminal history and compliance or otherwise with any previous diversion programs; and
 - Mitigating circumstances, background, family circumstances.
- VP - Children's Court Diversion Criteria Matrix is to be applied.
- Prior convictions will not disqualify a young person from diversion.
- Child is accountable to the court-imposed conditions of any diversion program.

Fast-track diversion process

- Legal referral via VPeR must be made at the time of processing.
- Initial suitability recommendation should be made by Informant at time of processing or the Victoria Police Youth Crime Coordinator (Sgt) on review.
- Preliminary Brief **MUST** be completed and authorised within 7 days & provided to legal representative within 10 days.
- Fast track listing of case via Electronic Mention Diary (EMD) YCEIP Fast Track special listing within 21 days (Sunshine) of processing (28 days Werribee).
- Victoria Police Youth Crime Coordinator (Sgt) to complete pre-court engagement with Prosecutions, Defence and Children's Court Youth Diversion Coordinator (Sunshine / Werribee).

- CCYD Coordinator to complete assessment with young person on application of Victoria Police Youth Crime Coordinator (Sgt) & defence.
- Charge filed at court along with Diversion Notice signed by Informant or Victoria Police Youth Crime Coordinator (Sgt).
- Where unable to complete CCYD assessment or other requirements prior to first listing, matter will be adjourned for diversion hearing a further 21 days from mention.

NOTE: All fast-track diversions should be heard and finalised within a maximum 42 days from point of processing. Where an agreement cannot be met between all parties, police will proceed by standard charge pathway as per current standard operating procedure.

TIER 4 – STANDARD CHARGE & SUMMONS PATHWAYS

This process will be utilised where warning, caution or diversion are deemed inappropriate and/or where an agreement has not been met between prosecutions, defence and the diversion coordinator to allow for the fast-track diversion pathway to proceed.

- Charge filed with court.
- Usual listing of case with court (not fast track).
- Preliminary brief (1372) prepared as per s37 *Criminal Procedure Act* and served on the child.

NOTE: Prosecutions may later consent to diversion if further information observed or deemed appropriate in the circumstances.

PRE-COURT ENGAGEMENT / CONFERENCING

All pre-court engagement and conferencing with defence is to be conducted by the Victoria Police Youth Crime Coordinator with key points to be documented on the Youth Crime Cover Sheet and provided to Prosecutions with the brief where applicable.

Written communications pertaining to disposition (i.e. requests for caution / diversion considerations) are to be directed to the Victoria Police Youth Crime Coordinator PBEA's.

ADMINISTRATION & PROCESS TIMEFRAMES

Youth Offender briefs and processing administration must be prioritised in order to ensure objectives are met of finalising or bringing before the court all youth crime matters for offenders 18-24 within the shortest possible timeframe.

Fast-track diversion – Recommended (10-17 y/o only)

- Preliminary Brief (strictly minimum requirements) submitted for authorisation to Victoria police Youth Crime Coordinator (Sgt) within 7 days.
- Charges issued and fast track listing obtained via EMD within 10 days from processing.
- Disclosure to defence within 10 days of processing.
- CCYD assessment requested and completed prior to first listing 21 days (or closest possible – Werribee) from processing.
- Mention (21 days) – Matter finalised pending diversion compliance or adjourned for diversion listing in further 21 days.

Standard ITS pathways – 10 to 24

- Compliance with VPMs and legislative requirements.

Charge & Bail

- Compliance with VPMs and legislative requirements.

Appendix B: Children's Court Diversion Criteria Matrix

It is noted that the criteria outlined below is directly from ss. 356C & 356F *Children, Youth and Families Act* 2005 (Vic). When assessing a Diversion application, the following 'purposes of diversion', must be considered:

The following purposes of diversion are—

- (a) a child should be diverted away from the criminal justice system where possible and appropriate;
- (b) the risk of stigma being caused to a child by contact with the criminal justice system should be reduced;
- (c) a child should be encouraged to accept responsibility for unlawful behaviour;
- (d) a child's offending should be responded to in a manner that acknowledges the child's needs and assists with rehabilitation;
- (e) a child should be provided with opportunities to strengthen and preserve relationships with family and other persons of importance in the child's life;
- (f) a child should be provided with ongoing pathways to connect with education, training and employment.

A prosecutor must also consider the following matters when determining whether to consent to an adjournment for diversion—

- (a) the availability of suitable diversion programs;
- (b) the impact on the victim (if any);
- (c) the child's failure to complete previous diversion programs (if any);
- (d) the alleged level of involvement of the child in the offending;
- (e) any other matter that the prosecutor considers relevant.

There are 3 specific offence categories that require additional consideration prior to recommending diversion:

1. *Family violence offences* – Careful consideration must be given, after reviewing all relevant information regarding the seriousness of the charge and the circumstances. Prosecutors must contact their Sub-Officer for approval prior to recommending diversion for any family violence matters, after conducting LEAP checks in order to fully inform themselves of the accused's background in relation to family violence.
2. *Firearm offences*. A diversion or withdrawal of charges should not be offered to the accused or their counsel without first consulting with an Inspector or above at the Licensing & Regulation Division – (03) 9247 3231. PBEA – LRD- Diversions-Manager-OIC
3. *Emergency Worker Harm Offences*: Careful consideration must be given, after reviewing all relevant information regarding the seriousness of the charge, its impact on the victim, the intent of the legislation and the

circumstances in which the offending occurred. Prosecutors must seek approval for diversion of emergency worker harm offences from their Work Unit manager who is to ensure an appropriate record is made as to the rationale in support of the decision.

| | | OFFENCE SERIOUSNESS | | |
|--------------------------|-------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| | | 1 MINOR | 2 MEDIUM | 3 MAJOR |
| FUTURE OFFENDING RISK | 3 MAJOR | PROBABLY SUITABLE | PROBABLY SUITABLE | NOT SUITABLE |
| | 2 MEDIUM | PROBABLY SUITABLE | PROBABLY SUITABLE | POSSIBLY SUITABLE |
| | 1 MINOR | SUITABLE | PROBABLY SUITABLE | POSSIBLY SUITABLE |

* ***‘Possibly Suitable’***– In each individual case, it is necessary to look behind the circumstances and apply the ‘purposes of diversion’ along with Table 1 and Table 2 to see whether there are ‘serious concerns’.

Table 1: Offence Seriousness Table

| Rating | Description |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <p>3 MAJOR</p> | <p>As a general rule, the following offences <i>*should</i> be included in the major category:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family violence offences – involving physical violence or serious breaches of IVOs. • Sex offences where the offending was aggressive and/or predatory. • Trafficking Drug of Dependence (above a trafficable quantity). • Any offence attracting a mandatory penalty (e.g. mandatory licence disqualification). • Any offence involving a serious injury where the child is the primary offender. • Any offence incurring ‘vehicle impoundment’ provisions. |
| <p>2 MEDIUM</p> | <p>As a general rule, all other indictable offences should be included in the medium category, as well as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower-level Family Violence offences, including minor breaches of IVOs. |
| <p>1 MINOR</p> | <p>Any Summary Offences (other than those attracting a mandatory penalty).</p> |

****Should*** – In each individual case, it is necessary to look behind the circumstances and apply the ‘purposes of diversion’ to see whether there are ‘serious concerns’.

Table 2: Future Offending Risk Table

| Rating | Description |
|---------------------|---|
| 3 MAJOR | <p>As a general rule, the likelihood of future offending is to be regarded as Major if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the accused has been found guilty by a court within the preceding 2 years. |
| 2 MEDIUM | <p>As a general rule, the likelihood of future offending is to be regarded as Medium if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The accused has been subject to a previous diversion/caution or warnings within 2 years;• The accused has a prior finding of guilt/conviction that is 2 years or older. |
| 1 MINOR | <p>As a general rule, the likelihood of future offending is to be regarded as Minor if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The accused has no court priors. |

Appendix C: YCPEIP Police Member Pre-Training Survey

1. What is your rank?

- ☐ Constable
- ☐ First Constable
- ☐ Senior Constable
- ☐ Leading Senior Constable
- ☐ Sergeant

2. What is your division?

- ☐ ND2
- ☐ ND3

3. How confident are you in knowing when, and how to:

| | Not confident | Somewhat confident | Confident | Very confident |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Issue a warning to a youth offender | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Issue a caution to a youth offender | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Issue a youth diversion | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Complete a youth eReferral or legal referral on LEDR Mk II? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

4. How likely are you to consider a caution for a young person who has committed a serious crime? (e.g. robbery, theft of motor, reckless cause injury?)

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Unlikely
- ☐ Likely
- ☐ Always

5. How likely are you to consider a caution for a young person who has committed a family violence-related offence?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Unlikely
- ☐ Likely
- ☐ Always

6. Which factors influence your decision to not issue a caution to a youth offender? (select all that apply)

- ☐ Lack of knowledge on how to do a caution
- ☐ The offender did not make admissions / acknowledge offending
- ☐ Offender was aged 10-13 years, so doli incapax applies and matter must go to court
- ☐ The offender has had a caution for a different offence in the past
- ☐ The offender has had a caution for the same offence in the past
- ☐ Offender has been before court in the past
- ☐ The offender's attitude was bad
- ☐ The type/seriousness of the offence
- ☐ The impact of offending on victim(s)
- ☐ Offender's risk of reoffending
- ☐ The amount of paperwork/admin involved
- ☐ A lack of faith in what a caution will achieve
- ☐ Parent/ guardian not available or not willing to consent
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

7. How likely are you to consider a diversion for a young person who has committed a serious crime? (e.g., robbery, theft of motor, reckless cause injury?)

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Unlikely
- ☐ Likely
- ☐ Always
- ☐

8. How likely are you to consider a diversion for a young person who has committed a family violence-related offence?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Unlikely
- ☐ Likely
- ☐ Always

9. Which factors influence your decision to not support or recommend a diversion for a youth offender? (select all that apply)

- ☐ Lack of knowledge on how to do a diversion
- ☐ The offender did not make admissions / acknowledge offending
- ☐ Offender was aged 10-13 years, so doli incapax applies and matter must go to court
- ☐ The offender has had a diversion for a different offence in the past
- ☐ The offender has had a diversion for the same offence in the past
- ☐ Offender has been before court in the past
- ☐ The offender's attitude was bad
- ☐ The type/seriousness of the offence

- The impact of offending on victim(s)
- Offender's risk of reoffending
- The amount of paperwork/admin involved
- A lack of faith in what a diversion will achieve
- Parent/ guardian not available or not willing to consent
- Other (please specify): _____

10. How likely are you to offer an eReferral to a youth offender?

- Never
- Unlikely
- Likely
- Always

11. Which factors influence your decision to not offer or complete an eReferral for a youth offender? (select all that apply)

- A lack of understanding of the eReferral system
- Queries around consent for minors
- The offender's bad attitude
- The offender has enough supports in place/ doesn't need one
- The type/seriousness of the offence
- Offender's risk of reoffending
- The amount of paperwork/admin involved
- A lack of knowledge of where the referral actually goes
- A lack of faith in what an eReferral will achieve
- Other (please specify): _____

12. What do you think are the main factors driving youth offending? (select all apply)

- Lack of social and community connection
- Disengagement from education / lack of education pathways
- Falling in with the wrong crowd/ peer influence
- Socio-economic disadvantage
- Lack of youth support services
- Mental health issues
- Substance use issues / drug dependence
- Lack of available & affordable social activities i.e. sporting clubs
- Other (please specify): _____

13. Do you think diversion is effective in reducing youth re-offending, and why?

- Yes: _____
- No: _____
- Maybe, with conditions: _____

14. Should the caution pathway be extended to 18-24-year-old offenders, why and under what conditions?

- Yes: _____
- No: _____
- Maybe, with conditions: _____

15. What do you think could be changed to have a better impact on youth offending?

16. What aspects of youth policing would you like more training or information on?
(select all that apply)

- Communication strategies in dealing with & talking to youth
- Understanding what services are available to youth (internal & external youth services)
- Understanding youth issues within vulnerable and diverse community (i.e., CALD, special needs, mental health and substance use etc)
- Practical training and guidance on cautioning and diversion
- Other (please specify): _____

Appendix D: YCPEIP Police Post-Training Survey

1. What is your rank?

- ☐ Constable
- ☐ First Constable
- ☐ Senior Constable
- ☐ Leading Senior Constable
- ☐ Sergeant Detective Senior Constable
- ☐ Detective Sergeant

2.

a. What is your Police Service Area (PSA)?

- ☐ Wyndham
- ☐ Brimbank

b. How long have you been at this PSA? _____

c. Have you received any formal training on the Youth Crime Prevention and Early Intervention Program (YCPEIP)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If YES, did you find training useful? Why/ why not?

d. In the last 12 months there has been an increase in the rate of youth cautions for your PSA. How do you feel about this trend? Why do you think this has occurred?

The following questions are about how you feel about caution, referral and diversion options for 10- to 17-year-old offenders.

3. How confident are you in knowing when, and how to:

| | Not confident | Somewhat confident | Confident | Very confident |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Issue a warning to a youth offender | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Issue a caution to a youth offender | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

| | Not confident | Somewhat confident | Confident | Very confident |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Issue a youth diversion | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Complete a youth or legal referral? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

4. How likely are you to consider a caution for a young person who has committed a serious crime (e.g. robbery, theft of motor vehicle, recklessly causing injury etc.)?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Unlikely
- ☐ Likely
- ☐ Always

5. How likely are you to consider a caution for a young person who has committed a family violence-related offence?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Unlikely
- ☐ Likely
- ☐ Always

6. Under what circumstances might you recommend a caution for a 14–17-year-old offender?

7. Which factors influence your decision to not issue a caution to a youth offender?
(select all that apply)

- ☐ Lack of knowledge on how to do a caution
- ☐ The offender did not make admissions / acknowledge offending
- ☐ Offender was aged 10-13 years, so doli incapax applies
- ☐ The offender has had a caution for a different offence in the past
- ☐ The offender has had a caution for the same offence in the past
- ☐ The offender has been before court in the past
- ☐ The offender's attitude was bad
- ☐ The type/seriousness of the offence
- ☐ The impact of offending on victim(s)
- ☐ Offender's risk of reoffending
- ☐ The amount of paperwork/admin involved
- ☐ A lack of faith in what a caution will achieve
- ☐ Parent/ guardian not available or not willing to consent
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

8. How likely are you to consider a diversion for a young person who has committed a serious crime (e.g. robbery, theft of motor vehicle, recklessly causing injury etc.)?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Unlikely
- ☐ Likely
- ☐ Always

9. How likely are you to consider a diversion for a young person who has committed a family violence-related offence?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Unlikely
- ☐ Likely
- ☐ Always

10. Which factors influence your decision to not support or recommend a diversion for a youth offender? (select all that apply)

- ☐ Lack of knowledge on how to do a diversion
- ☐ The offender did not make admissions / acknowledge offending
- ☐ Offender was aged 10-13 years, so doli incapax applies
- ☐ The offender has had a diversion for a different offence in the past
- ☐ The offender has had a diversion for the same offence in the past
- ☐ Offender has been before court in the past
- ☐ The offender's attitude was bad
- ☐ The type/seriousness of the offence
- ☐ The impact of offending on victim(s)
- ☐ Offender's risk of reoffending
- ☐ The amount of paperwork/admin involved
- ☐ A lack of faith in what a diversion will achieve
- ☐ Parent/ guardian not available or not willing to consent
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

11. How likely are you to offer an eReferral to a youth offender?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Unlikely
- ☐ Likely
- ☐ Always

12. Which factors influence your decision to not offer or complete an eReferral for a youth offender? (select all that apply)

- ☐ Not knowing where the referral goes or what happens with the referral once it's made
- ☐ Queries around consent for minors

- The offender's bad attitude
- The offender has enough supports in place/ doesn't need one
- The type/seriousness of the offence
- Offender's risk of reoffending
- The amount of paperwork/admin involved
- A lack of knowledge of where the referral actually goes
- A lack of faith in what an eReferral will achieve
- Other (please specify): _____

13. During the last 12 months, have you received any advice or guidance from the Youth Crime Sergeant on caution and diversion options available for eligible youth? If so, how would you describe your experience working with the Youth Crime Sergeant to consider this disposition?

The following questions are about 18–24-year-old offenders.

14. How do you feel about the proposal to expand the caution framework currently applied to 10–17-year-old offenders to 18–24-year-old offenders?

- Strongly support
- Support
- Oppose
- Strongly oppose

15. Under what circumstances might you recommend a caution for an 18–24-year-old offender?

16. Do you think that diversion can be effective in reducing re-offending among eligible 18–24-year-olds offenders?

- Yes
- No

17. Under what circumstances might you recommend a diversion for an 18–24-year-old offender?

Appendix E: Police Survey Data Tables

Note that free text responses have been excluded from survey data to avoid identification of respondents.

Table 5. How confident are you in knowing when, and how, to issue a warning?

| <i>Confidence in knowing when to issue warning</i> | Brimbank | Wyndham | Total |
|---|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Confident | 19 | 15 | 34 |
| Not confident | 14 | 5 | 19 |
| Somewhat confident | 25 | 16 | 41 |
| Very confident | 6 | 16 | 22 |
| Total | 64 | 52 | 116 |

Table 6. How confident are you in knowing when, and how, to issue a caution?

| <i>Confidence in knowing when to issue caution</i> | Brimbank | Wyndham | Total |
|---|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Confident | 25 | 15 | 40 |
| Not confident | 9 | 2 | 11 |
| Somewhat confident | 20 | 10 | 30 |
| Very confident | 9 | 25 | 34 |
| Total | 63 | 52 | 115 |

Table 7. How confident are you in knowing when, and how, to issue a diversion?

| <i>Confidence in knowing when to issue diversion</i> | Brimbank | Wyndham | Total |
|---|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Confident | 21 | 16 | 37 |
| Not confident | 16 | 7 | 23 |

| | | | |
|--------------------|----|----|-----|
| Somewhat confident | 22 | 13 | 35 |
| Very confident | 4 | 16 | 20 |
| Total | 63 | 52 | 115 |

Table 8. How confident are you in knowing when, and how, to issue a referral?

| <i>Confidence in knowing when to issue referral</i> | Brimbank | Wyndham | Total |
|---|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Confident | 29 | 14 | 43 |
| Not confident | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Somewhat confident | 13 | 8 | 21 |
| Very confident | 20 | 29 | 49 |
| Total | 64 | 52 | 116 |

Table 9: How likely are you to consider a caution for a young person who has committed a serious crime (e.g., robbery, theft of motor, reckless cause injury)?

| <i>Likelihood to consider a caution for serious crime</i> | Brimbank | Wyndham | Total |
|---|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Never | 6 | 4 | 10 |
| Always | 0 | 7 | 7 |
| Likely | 14 | 24 | 38 |
| Unlikely | 44 | 17 | 61 |
| Total | 64 | 52 | 116 |

Table 10: How likely are you to consider a caution for a young person who has committed a family violence-related offence?

| <i>Likelihood to consider a caution for family violence</i> | Brimbank | Wyndham | Total |
|---|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Never | 0 | 5 | 5 |

| | | | |
|----------|----|----|-----|
| Always | 25 | 24 | 49 |
| Likely | 10 | 6 | 16 |
| Unlikely | 29 | 17 | 46 |
| Total | 64 | 52 | 116 |

Table 11: Which factors influence your decision to not issue a caution to a youth offender? (Multiple responses allowed).

| <i>Factors influencing decision to issue caution</i> | Brimbank | Wyndham | Total |
|---|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Lack of knowledge on how to do a caution | 12 | 4 | 16 |
| Offender did not make admissions /acknowledge offending | 29 | 16 | 45 |
| Offender was aged 10-13 years, so <i>doli incapax</i> applies and matter must go to court | 9 | 3 | 12 |
| The offender has had a caution for a different offence in the past | 6 | 10 | 16 |
| The offender has had a caution for the same offence in the past | 39 | 32 | 71 |
| Offender has been before court in the past | 16 | 13 | 29 |
| The offender's attitude was bad | 23 | 12 | 35 |
| The type/seriousness of reoffending | 53 | 48 | 101 |
| Offender's risk of reoffending | 35 | 20 | 55 |
| The impact of offending on victim(s) | 41 | 40 | 81 |
| The amount of paperwork/admin involved | - | - | - |
| A lack of faith in what a caution will achieve | 23 | 13 | 36 |
| Parent/guardian not available or not willing to consent | 17 | 10 | 27 |

Table 12: How likely are you to consider a diversion for a young person who has committed a serious crime (e.g., robbery, theft of motor, reckless cause injury)?

| <i>Likelihood to consider a caution for serious crime</i> | Brimbank | Wyndham | Total |
|--|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Never | 0 | 7 | 7 |
| Always | 24 | 32 | 56 |
| Likely | 4 | 3 | 7 |
| Unlikely | 36 | 10 | 46 |
| Total | 64 | 52 | 116 |

Table 13: How likely are you to consider a diversion for a young person who has committed a family violence-related offence?

| <i>Likelihood to consider a diversion for family violence</i> | Brimbank | Wyndham | Total |
|--|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Never | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| Always | 29 | 33 | 62 |
| Likely | 5 | 3 | 8 |
| Unlikely | 29 | 12 | 41 |
| Total | 64 | 52 | 116 |

Table 14: Which factors influence your decision to not issue a diversion to a youth offender? (Multiple responses allowed).

| <i>Factors influencing decision to issue diversion to youth offender</i> | Brimbank | Wyndham | Total |
|---|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Lack of knowledge on how to do a caution | 16 | 4 | 20 |
| Offender did not make admissions /acknowledge offending | 15 | 12 | 27 |
| Offender was aged 10-13 years, so <i>doli incapax</i> applies and matter must go to court | 5 | 2 | 7 |

| | | | |
|---|----|----|----|
| The offender has had a diversion for a different offence in the past | 7 | 11 | 18 |
| The offender has had a diversion for the same offence in the past | 26 | 30 | 56 |
| Offender has been before court in the past | 11 | 15 | 26 |
| The offender's attitude was bad | 18 | 11 | 29 |
| The type/seriousness of reoffending | 46 | 42 | 88 |
| Offender's risk of reoffending | 34 | 24 | 58 |
| The impact of offending on victim(s) | 38 | 30 | 68 |
| The amount of paperwork/admin involved | - | - | - |
| A lack of faith in what a caution will achieve | 14 | 7 | 21 |
| Parent/guardian not available or not willing to consent | 9 | 5 | 14 |

Table 15: How likely are you to offer an eReferral to a youth offender?

| <i>Likelihood to offer an eReferral to youth offender</i> | Brimbank | Wyndham | Total |
|--|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Never | - | - | - |
| Always | 20 | 14 | 34 |
| Likely | 38 | 36 | 74 |
| Unlikely | 6 | 2 | 8 |
| Total | 64 | 52 | 116 |

Table 16: Which factors influence your decision to not offer or complete an eReferral for a youth offender? (Multiple responses allowed).

| <i>Factors influencing decision to not offer eReferral</i> | Brimbank | Wyndham | Total |
|---|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| A lack of understanding of the eReferral system | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Queries around consent for minors | 18 | 10 | 28 |
| The offender's bad attitude | 6 | 1 | 7 |
| The offender has enough supported in place/doesn't need one | 16 | 15 | 31 |
| The type/seriousness of the offence | 6 | 2 | 8 |
| Offender's risk of reoffending | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| The amount of paperwork/admin involved | - | - | - |
| A lack of knowledge of where the referral actually goes | 8 | 1 | 9 |
| A lack of faith in what an eReferral will achieve | 13 | 4 | 17 |

Table 17: What do you think are the main factors driving youth offending? (Multiple responses allowed).

| <i>Factors driving youth offending</i> | Brimbank | Wyndham | Total |
|---|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Lack of social and community connection | 41 | 28 | 69 |
| Disengagement from education/lack of education pathways | 47 | 39 | 86 |
| Falling in with the wrong crowd/peer influence | 61 | 45 | 106 |
| Socio-economic disadvantage | 47 | 33 | 80 |
| Lack of youth support services | 25 | 14 | 39 |
| Mental health issues | 44 | 24 | 68 |

| | | | |
|--|----|----|----|
| Substance use issues/drug dependence | 57 | 35 | 92 |
| Lack of available and affordable social activities, i.e., sporting clubs | 30 | 18 | 48 |

Table 18: Do you think diversion is effective in reducing youth re-offending, and why?

| <i>Effectiveness of diversion in reducing re-offending</i> | Brimbank | Wyndham | Total |
|--|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Yes | 15 | 15 | 30 |
| No | 19 | 11 | 30 |
| Maybe | 29 | 26 | 55 |
| Total | 63 | 52 | 115 |

Table 19: Should the caution pathway be extended to 18–24-year-old offenders, why and under what circumstances?

| <i>Effectiveness of diversion in reducing re-offending</i> | Brimbank | Wyndham | Total |
|--|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Yes | 14 | 5 | 19 |
| No | 34 | 28 | 62 |
| Maybe | 16 | 19 | 35 |
| Total | 64 | 52 | 116 |

Table 20: What aspects of youth policing would you like more training or information on? (Multiple responses allowed).

| <i>Aspects of youth policing where more training/information is required</i> | Brimbank | Wyndham | Total |
|--|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Communication strategies in dealing with, and talking to, youth | 23 | 16 | 39 |

| | | | |
|--|----|----|----|
| Understanding what services are available to youth (internal and external youth services) | 41 | 26 | 67 |
| Understanding youth issues within vulnerable and diverse communities (i.e., CALD, special needs, mental health, substance use etc) | 31 | 20 | 51 |
| Practical training and guidance on cautioning and diversion | 41 | 23 | 64 |

Appendix F: Monte Carlo Estimates

Figure 17. Distribution of correction system cost savings estimates (\$ million, 2021/22 prices)

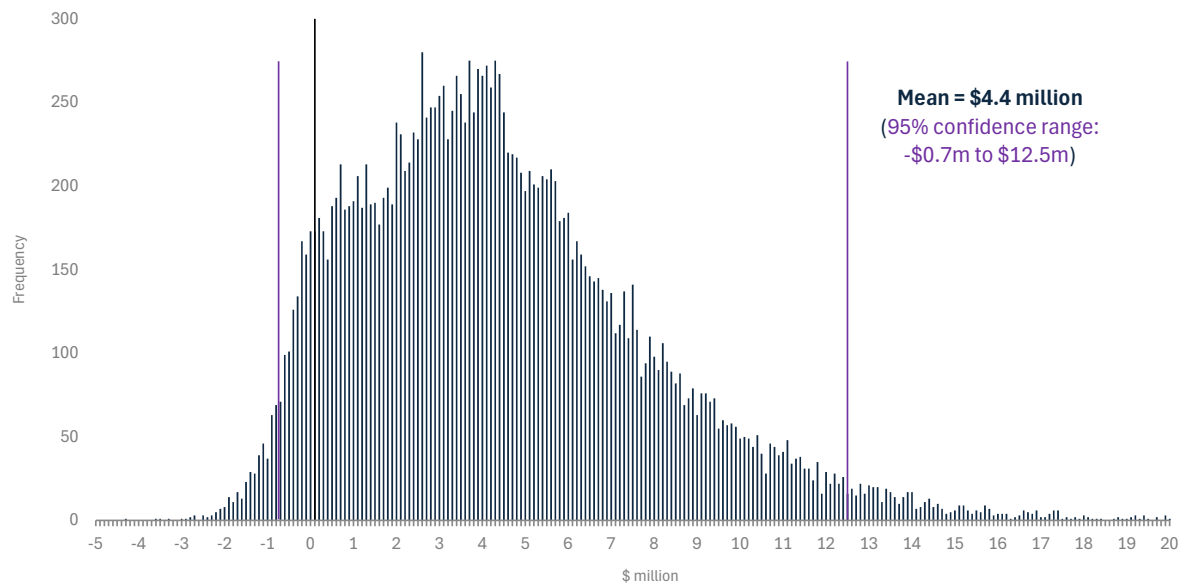
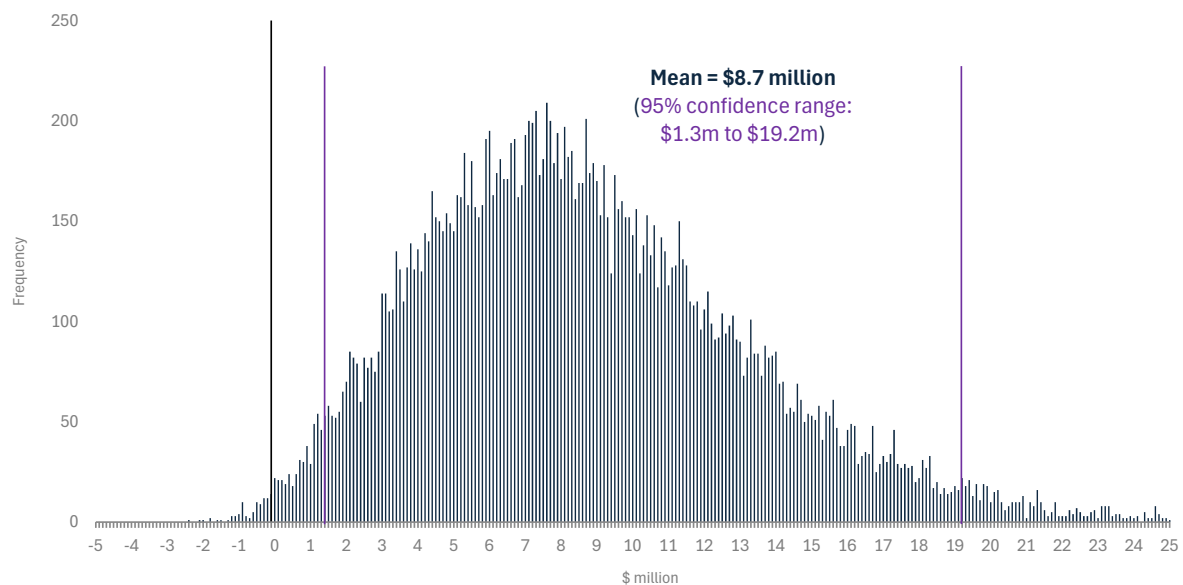


Figure 18. Distribution of annual total social cost savings generated by the Brimbank and Wyndham Youth Crime prevention program (\$ million, 2021/22 prices)





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