



Young people, crime and community safety conference, 25-26 February 2008

Summary report on participant feedback

1 Background

The *Young people, crime and community safety: engagement and early intervention* conference, conducted in partnership with the Australian Institute of Criminology, was held at the RACV Club, Melbourne. It was the most successful of the five conferences conducted by the VSCN to date.

The attendance of 350 far exceeded the numbers attending the four previous VSCN conferences, when 100 or more people attended. A large part of this increase can be attributed to the partnership with the AIC.

2 Participants' ratings

Fifty-six participants returned completed questionnaires, a return rate of approximately 16%.

Overall program: 87.5% of respondents rated the conference program as good or excellent, while 12.5% rated it as satisfactory.

Plenary sessions: The most appreciated plenary session was 'Targeting harmful behaviours through social marketing' with speakers David Chalke and David Healy. The least appreciated was the opening plenary.

Content: 80% of respondents reported that the content was appropriate and thought-provoking. Participants particularly enjoyed the performances of the young people from the Anti-Racism Action Band (ARAB).

Concurrent sessions: 88% thought the concurrent sessions were the right length, although 7% thought they were too short. 82% thought the structure of the concurrent sessions was good, but would have appreciated more time for questions. More workshops would have been appreciated.

Networking opportunities: 91% thought there were adequate networking opportunities.

Venue: 87% reported that the venue was good or excellent, although it was sometimes crowded and often cold. Some of the breakout rooms were reported to be too small.

Catering: This was rated good or excellent by 71% with the major criticism being lack of variety in the offerings.

Cocktail reception: 89% of the 64% of respondents who rated the reception rated it as good or excellent.

4 Suggestions for future conferences

Topics: The many suggestions received included cyber crime, program implementation strategies, rural issues, diversity, youth gangs, family violence, drugs and alcohol, CALD issues, suicide prevention, crime stats, legislative reform, generational change, diversion programs for young people, mental health and offending.

Methods of presentation: Interactive workshops, panel discussions, and small forums were suggested.

Presenters: More young people, fewer academics, Ministers/ CEOs/ industry leaders were requested.

Conclusions

The conference was very well received by participants, with 81% rating it good or excellent. The organisers were praised, with the vast majority rating their organisation as excellent.

The usefulness of the information presented was rated as good or excellent by 100% of respondents. The wide range of topics and people was valued, as were the opportunities for networking.

There were a number of comments around the topics and content of some of the sessions which seems to suggest that attention should be given to improving the match between session titles and content.

Some participants commented on presentations which were not dynamic, or lacked passion. With regard to format, there were suggestions to schedule the panel discussion earlier before some participants had left, despite a scheduled closing time of 4.30 pm to accommodate return travel. Some participants requested more interaction between presenters and audience with extended question times during sessions.

Feedback from the VSCN's 2005 conference included a number of practical suggestions for improvement, eg a 2 day conference, more practitioner presentations, and submitted papers. The organisers of this conference sought to address this feedback.

The partnership with the Australian Institute of Criminology was undoubtedly a key factor in the success of the conference judged by attendance, and also from the very positive comments received.

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