



Youth Referral and Independent Person Program

**AIC Conference Presentation**  
**Sally Reid, YRIPP Program Manager**  
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## What is an Independent Person?

- Section 464(E) of the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic) requires that a parent or guardian be present during police questioning of a young person under 18 years of age
- Where a parent or guardian is unavailable, an 'Independent Person' is required to be in attendance





Youth Referral and Independent Person Program

# Rationale

- Over-representation of young people in justice system
- Concern around numbers of newly arrived and refugee young people coming to police attention
- Early intervention: The first interview with police is an ideal diversionary opportunity
- Consistency of training
- Cultural sensitivity in dealing with young people

# Aims



- To work with and improve the existing system of Independent Person support provided to young people in police custody
- To divert young people, including refugee, newly arrived and Indigenous young people, from progression to higher levels of the criminal justice system, based on culturally appropriate early intervention and diversion support.

# Partnership

## Development and steering of the pilot

- Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues
- Youth Affairs Council of Victoria
- Federation of Community Legal Centres
- Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service
- Victoria Police
- (then) Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs
- Department of Justice (funder)

# History and Expansion

- Pilot commenced in 9 police stations - September 2004
- Pilot funded under *Safer Streets and Homes*, Victoria's Crime and Violence Prevention Strategy 2002-2005
- As of July 2007, \$1m per year for two years towards Statewide expansion
- Expanding to 103 police stations
- Expanding from 80 to 450 volunteers

## Key Achievements

- Strengthened existing IP networks & established new ones where required
- Established 1300 telephone number and rosters for simple, reliable allocation of trained IPs for police interviews with under 18s



# Key Achievements

- Produced multilingual brochures for parents / guardians



- Established referral systems for 'at risk' young people
- Expanded legal advice services in partnerships with Victoria Legal Aid

## Key Achievements

- Over 1,500 young people supported through police interviews (over 30% CLD and 8% Indigenous)
- 100 volunteers currently trained and rostered to attend police interviews
- Around 25% young people referred to support services

# Overcoming the Challenges

- Change management
- Partnership
- Ambiguity of the IP role

## The Next Challenge

- Continuing and improving the standard of service delivery established under the pilot in a Statewide expansion



**For more  
information:**

**<http://www.yripp.org.au>**

**Tel: 9340 3777**

**YRIPP Program Manager - Sally Reid**

**[manager@yripp.org.au](mailto:manager@yripp.org.au)**

**YRIPP Program Administrator – Francesca  
Pagani**

**[admin@yripp.org.au](mailto:admin@yripp.org.au)**