

The Victorian Safe Communities Network hosts its first national conference

The Victorian Safe Communities Network has held its most successful conference to date – the **Young people, crime and community safety** national conference - in Melbourne, Australia, 25-26 February 2008.

The conference, held at the RACV Club's new conference centre, attracted over 350 participants from all around Australia. Its success can be attributed largely to the partnership established with the Australian Institute of Criminology, Australia's national criminology research institute, to conduct the conference. The institute increased the reach of the conference and the numbers of attendees.

Presentations by keynote speakers including the Chief Commissioner of Police for the State of Victoria (Christine Nixon), the President of the Children's Court (Judge Paul Grant), and the Senior Manager for Road Safety at the Transport Accident Commission (David Healy), were supplemented by presentations from a range of community safety professionals, practitioners, researchers and policymakers.

Participants particularly appreciated learning about programs for young people which addressed the issues which local communities struggle to address. These included:

- Sudanese youth justice project (Tim Watson)
- The St Kilda Junction graffiti project (Martin Goffin)
- Drugs and driving in Australia (Dr Jane Mallick)
- Easy does it: working with nightclubs to reduce risk for young people (Lisa Armstrong-Rowe)
- Male adolescents at risk project: an early intervention family violence initiative (Katie Wright)
- Cabrini youth bus (Mark Young)
- Maintaining education of at-risk young people (Bronwyn Harcourt)

One of the highlights of the conference was a performance by members of the Anti Racism Action Band (ARAB) which assists young people at risk to develop positive pathways for the future. The performers (pictured) modelled how, with time and expert assistance, young people can turn their lives around. They even taught the audience how to rap dance!

The other highlight, and an event of great significance to both organisations, was the signing of an agreement of cooperation between the Victorian Safe Communities Network and the Safe Communities Foundation of New Zealand (L-R Dr Carolyn Coggan, Director, SCFNZ, Jan Shield and James Sherry, VSCN Co-Chairs).

The Executive Committee of the VSCN, which was responsible for organising the conference with the AIC, is pictured.

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