THE INALA COMMUNITY AND POLICE

NETWORK: AN EVALUATION

June 1995

Research and Co-ordination Division

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

ALO   Queensland Police Service Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison
             Officer

ATSI   Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

CJC   Criminal Justice Commission

CRISP   Crime Reporting Information System for Police

JAB   Juvenile Aid Bureau

The Network Inala Community and Police Network

NCADA   National Campaign Against Drug Abuse

NDS   National Drug Strategy

PCJC   Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee

QPS   Queensland Police Service

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CHAPTER 1:   INTRODUCTION

The Inala Community and Police Network (the Network) is a community policing project initiated by the Queensland Police Service (QPS) and the Criminal Justice Commission (CJC). It began operations as a three-year pilot project in May 1992.

The Network was established in response to a 1990 CJC investigation into allegations of police misconduct at a licensed function at the Wandarrah Aboriginal Preschool Community Centre, Inala. Although the inquiry concluded that the allegations of misconduct did not meet the standards of proof required for criminal or disciplinary proceedings, several recommendations for improving Aboriginal and police relations in Inala were made. Following the inquiry, the QPS approached the CJC for assistance in developing strategies for improving Aboriginal/police relations, although this focus quickly expanded to general police/community relations. The concept of the Network evolved over several months of discussions and research by the CJC and the QPS.

The Network involves two police officers working full-time out of a "shopfront" in the Inala shopping centre. It provides a range of community and information services, but only has a limited operational role. The main focus of the Network is on providing activities and services to the local community, particularly youth. In addition, a National Drug Strategy (NDS) project is located with the Network and, in practice, operates as part of the Network's activities. The activities of the Network broadly consist of:

- with the assistance of volunteers from the local community, providing advice and information to members of the community about matters as divers as: directions to local businesses; referrals to welfare services; crime prevention information; and policing matters

- organising youth diversionary programs generally through the NDS project, such as camps for "at risk" youth, drug and alcohol education programs and local dances

- liaising with local community agencies to reduce overlap in service provision and to ensure the exchange of information

- patrolling the shopping centre and responding to a limited range of crime committed within the confines of the shopping centre.

This report presents the findings of the CJC's evaluation of the Network at the end of its three-year pilot.

CHAPTER 2:   EVALUATION DESIGN

The key evaluation issues are:

- What types of activities have been run by the Network?

- Have the Network's activities been consistent with its stated objectives?

- Has the Network been adequately resourced?

- What has been the effect of the Network's activities on relations between the police and the community?

- What has been the effect of the Network's activities on community agency relations?

- How do local police view the role of the Network? Has there been a generally positive response by local police to the Network's requests for assistance from other police?

The main data sources used for the evaluation are: surveys of Inala residents, shop owners in the shopping centre and users of the Network's services; interviews with Network staff, local police and representatives of local community organisations; and various documents such as Network records.

CHAPTER 3: OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

This chapter focuses on the types of activities undertaken by the Network. In particular, it examines the extent to which these activities are consistent with the Network's objectives, and assesses the adequacy of the resourcing provided to the Network.

The Network has focused on providing:

- non-policing services to the community to improve community relations with, and perceptions of, the police

- opportunities for non-confrontational contact between the youth in Inala and the police

- forums for liaising with relevant community agencies

- patrols and other services to the shopping centre to assist in reducing disorder, crime and public anxiety about safety within the Inala Civic Centre/Plaza.

This chapter concludes that the Network's activities have been within the scope of its objectives. However, considerable emphasis has been placed on youth activities due to the funding available through the NDS project. The Network's ability to pursue other implementation strategies has been hampered by the lack of adequate resources.

CHAPTER 4: THE NETWORK AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

One of the Network's main aims has been to enhance the relationship between the police and the Inala community by locating the Network in a shopping centre, providing information services to the community, participating in community activities and regular patrolling of the shopping centre. The key findings are:

- Awareness of the Network among Inala residents surveyed was very high.

- Most of the residents surveyed who had been in contact with the Network were satisfied with the Network's services and would be willing to return to the Network for further information or advice.

- Most of the residents surveyed reported that the Network was "good" for people using the shopping centre.

- To a large extent, community-initiated contact with the Network was for information and advice on policing or legal-related issues, rather than for non-policing matters.

- There is some evidence that the Network has improved community perceptions of safety in the shopping centre.

- The level of community involvement in the Network has diminished over the past two years. However the volunteer program, which involves some members of the community in the Network, is still operating.

- Of those surveyed who had been assisted by the Network, around half reported that the Network had improved their opinion of police in general; very few reported that the Network had had a negative impact on their views of the police.

- The Inala community has a somewhat more positive view of the police than residents of Brisbane as a whole.

CHAPTER 5: THE NETWORK, COMMUNITY AGENCY LIAISON AND LOCAL POLICE RELATIONS

This chapter assesses the effect of the Network on community agency relations and the views of local police. The main conclusions are that the Network:

- Has provided a successful community agency liaison role: most community agencies interviewed indicated that they valued the contributions of the Network.

- Has participated in and organised activities and programs which have involved an interagency approach to service delivery.

- Has experienced difficulties in fostering a more positive view among local police of the Network's contributions to policing in Inala. Although many local officers felt that the Network had a role in Inala, there appear to be substantial reservations about some aspects of the Network's operations.

- There has been an unsatisfactory response to the Network's requests for assistance for back-up staff when an officer is on leave.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

The final chapter summarises the main findings of the evaluation and concludes that there is strong justification for the continuation of the Network. However, there are several issues which need to be addressed in order to enhance the operation and effectiveness of the Network. In particular, attention needs to be given to:

- reviewing, re-focusing and narrowing the Network's objectives

- re-evaluating the focus of the Network's activities, particularly the emphasis on youth activities once the NDS funding ceases

- determining the appropriate circumstances under which the Network police officers will perform an operational policing role and defining these circumstances in standing orders

- developing and implementing strategies to:

    ★ make the Management Committee more effective

    ★ integrate the Network into the local Oxley Police District

    ★ educate local officers about the role of functions of the Network

    ★ better utilise volunteers

    ★ provide for greater community input into the Network and its activities

- putting in place liaison mechanisms with particular sections of the community who currently have little or no contact with the Network, or have special needs

- reviewing the resourcing of the Network, including exploring other funding options.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a description of the Inala Community and Police Network (the Network). The chapter also describes the origins of the project, how it is managed, the objectives of the project, and its relationship to the National Drug Strategy (NDS) project. A previous review of the Network is described, followed by an outline of the rationale for the evaluation and the involvement of the Criminal Justice Commission (CJC). The chapter concludes with an outline of the structure of the following chapters.

WHAT IS THE NETWORK?

The Network is a community policing project initiated by the Queensland Police Service (QPS) and the CJC. It began operations as a three-year pilot project on 5 May 1992.

The Network provides a range of services from a "shop front" located in the Plaza section of the Inala shopping centre. The Network is staffed full time by a Sergeant, a Senior Constable, a part-time administration officer and volunteers. In addition, a project officer and assistant are funded by the NDS and the staff work as a team with the Network. A Management Committee comprising representatives of the QPS, the CJC and the University of Queensland is formally responsible for overseeing the broad direction of the Network (see below). Day to day management of the Network is the responsibility of the QPS.

The activities of the Network can be grouped under the following headings:

- *Operational policing.* Police officers from the Network conduct regular patrols of the Inala Civic Centre/Plaza to reduce the incidence of crime and disturbances in the centre. However, Network police officers do not aim to provide an comprehensive operational policing service in the shopping centre; rather, they aim to divert youth from offending through establishing contact with them and referring them to programs run by the Network. The Network deals with a limited range of crime that is committed within the confines of the shopping centre and provides a range of information on community policing initiatives. Other policing matters are referred to the nearby Inala Police Station.

- *Advice and information.* The Network is centrally located in the shopping centre so that members of the community can approach the Network for information and referral to community agencies, local services/businesses and community policing initiatives. The Network deals with an average of 352 inquiries per month. Many of these relate to policing matters, but the Network also provides directions to local services and referrals to government agencies. Volunteers from the local community assist in carrying out this role.

- *Youth diversionary programs.* The Network provides youth diversionary programs, primarily through the NDS project. These programs include camps for "at risk" young people, drug and alcohol education programs in schools, and dances to provide night time entertainment in a drug and alcohol free environment.

- *Community agency liaison.* Network staff attend liaison meetings with a range of community agencies to ensure cooperation between agencies in Inala and reduce overlap in service provision. In addition, the Network provide secretarial support for some of the meetings.

INALA: AN OVERVIEW

The suburb of Inala is approximately 15 kilometres west of Brisbane in the state of Queensland. Following World War II, Inala changed from being a largely rural area to a suburb created to provide affordable housing to war veterans. The suburb also became well established through the construction of public housing available to low income earners. The 1991 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census showed that around 52 per cent of the houses occupied in Inala were owned by the Department of Housing and Local Government. This represents the highest concentration of public housing in Queensland.

The Network is located at the Inala Civic Centre/Plaza, which is the only substantial shopping centre available to a population of over 21,000.[1] Although the Government provided housing, scant attention was paid to the infrastructure to support the burgeoning community. Public transport, both within Inala and to Brisbane, is notoriously inadequate, even though 26 per cent of households do not have vehicles. Many of the people who live in Inala rely on pensions and benefits and the area has one of the lowest rates of income per household in Brisbane. Inala also has one of the highest densities of single parent household families in Brisbane and one of the highest densities of population under 20 years of age. Compared to Brisbane as a whole, there is a high concentration of residents who are of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent, although there appears to have been a slight decline since the 1986 census. There is also a high concentration of residents from South-East Asia.

These figures provide a snap shot of Inala, but they do not represent the whole. While quoting these figures might be expeditious in lobbying for allocation of funding for resources, many residents of Inala object to negative stereotypes of their suburb portrayed in the media: in fact, 81 per cent of Inala residents surveyed for the evaluation of the Network said they were satisfied with living in Inala. Residents identify with particular neighbourhoods and cultural groups within Inala and there is a comparatively high degree of residential stability.

BACKGROUND

The Network was established in response to a CJC investigation into allegations of police misconduct at a licensed function at the Wandarrah Aboriginal Preschool Community Centre at Azalea Street, Inala. The CJC published its findings in its *Report on an Inquiry Into Allegations of Police Misconduct at Inala in November 1990*. The report concluded that the allegations of misconduct did not meet the standards of proof required for criminal or disciplinary proceedings. However, the report made a number of recommendations for improving Aboriginal and police relations in Inala.

Following the release of this report, the QPS approached the Research and Co-ordination Division of the CJC to gain assistance to improve relations between police and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) community in Inala. A series of meetings took place which led to the Research and Co-ordination Division commencing a research project in May 1991. The Division also consulted with some staff and students of the University of Queensland who also assisted with the research. The focus of the first phase of the research project was on identifying the factors that contributed to racial conflict, and on developing a plan of action to reduce racial tensions and the crime rate, particularly juvenile participation in crime.

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1   This figure from the 1991 Census covers the suburbs of Inala, Richlands and Durack.

Although the original complaint to the CJC was initiated by the ATSI community, a wide range of people in the community were consulted by the Research and Co-ordination Division. The purpose of the community consultation was to prepare a report about what the community saw as the salient law and order issues in Inala and their views as to how the QPS could improve relations with the community. However, the report did not isolate the concerns of the ATSI community from those of the general community. Therefore, it is not possible to say whether the recommendations of the report were an accurate reflection *of* the concerns of ATSI people or whether the concerns were *about* the ATSI community.

The major issues that emerged from the research were general community concerns about:

- the high level of juvenile crime in the area, particularly in the Inala Civic Centre/Plaza

- the lack of recreational and leisure programs for young people

- the lack of coordination and poor communication between existing community agencies and organisations.

The idea of setting up the Network evolved over several months. The QPS and the CJC felt that a "drop-in" type centre, staffed by police, would help improve police/community relations in the area. The decision to locate the Network in the Inala Civic Centre/Plaza was based on several considerations. Before the establishment of the Network, the shopping centre was said to be plagued by hooliganism and petty crime. Another consideration was that the shopping centre was a place that most local residents visited regularly and was a useful point of contact where people could be informed about meetings and activities.

When the Network began operations, the focus was on providing youth diversionary programs and on coordination of agencies also involved with youth. The QPS and the CJC agreed in the original proposal that the police officers at the Network would not assume an operational role in policing crime. All matters were to be referred to the Inala Police Station or the Juvenile Aid Bureau (JAB), with whom the Network was to liaise extensively.

MANAGEMENT OF THE NETWORK

The Management Committee is supposed to meet quarterly. It is comprised of representatives from the CJC and QPS representatives consisting of: an Inspector from Metropolitan South Region, a Superintendent who is the District Officer at Oxley and the Network Sergeant. The NDS project officer also attends these meetings on occasion. In addition, representatives from the University of Queensland have maintained their involvement with the project since the research phase of the project and are also on the Management Committee. It was originally intended that the Committee would include a representative from the community, but this did not eventuate.

In 1993 the QPS, in conjunction with the CJC and the University of Queensland, applied for funding from the National Campaign Against Drugs (NCADA), which is now known as NDS. The NDS project is managed by a committee comprised of the same representatives as the Network, except that there is one less representative from the University of Queensland, and the District Officer from Oxley is not technically part of the committee. In practice because of the high degree of overlap in the projects, the agendas of both the Network and the NDS management committees are often combined.

The Management Committee meeting of the Network and the NDS project usually include a brief description or report of the activities undertaken and issues which have arisen since the previous meeting. These meetings may also consider agenda items relating to policy and administrative issues. The NDS Committee regularly reviews the planned youth diversionary programs under the NDS project and considers the appropriateness of the proposed strategies, expenditure and staffing required. Agendas of the meetings also relate to evaluation requirements and applications for continuation of funding for the NDS project.

THE ROLE OF THE QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE

The broad policy of the Network and its direction is the responsibility of the Management Committee, but the day to day management of the Network is the responsibility of the QPS. The suburb of Inala is part of the Metropolitan South Police Region. There are three Districts within the Region and the Network is located within the precinct of the Oxley District. There are four police stations plus the Network within the Oxley District. The station closest to the Network is Inala, followed by Acacia Ridge. The project officer who has responsibility for the Network is an Inspector at the Metropolitan South Regional Office. The Inspector, who reports to the Assistant Commissioner of the Region, is responsible for policy and administrative matters related to the project. However, the Superintendent of the Oxley District is responsible for operational matters which include providing relief staff and liaising with the Network about resources within the District. The implications of this structure for the management and resourcing of the Network are discussed in Chapter 3.

Funding for the Network and staff is allocated from the regional budget although the police officers' positions are now substantively allocated to the District. The Sergeant's position was previously allocated to the Brisbane Central District and the Senior Constable's position was previously allocated to the Oxley District. In effect, then, the Oxley District has gained a position from the Brisbane Central District with which to staff the Network.

The QPS, which has the primary financial responsibility for the Network, pays the wages of the police officers, rent of the Network's premises[2] and related administrative costs. The QPS, through the Management Committee, also manages the financial allocation of the NDS funding. The CJC has provided limited discretionary funds for youth activities and donated a computer, a printer and other office equipment. The CJC has also taken responsibility for undertaking the evaluation of the Network and has paid costs associated with this research.

NETWORK OBJECTIVES

The Network Management Committee decided upon the objectives for the project soon after the project began. At the time, youth diversionary programs were limited to activities which could be run on the modest funds allocated to the project. Programs for youth included activities arranged by community members, police participation arranged by other agencies, and activities which could be arranged with existing QPS resources. Presumably, as a result of there not being specific financing for ongoing programs prior to the NDS project, the Network did not include youth diversionary programs specifically in its objectives. However, this objective was added during the development of the framework for the evaluation of the Network.

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2   Current rent for the Network's premises is $21,070 per annum.

The current objectives for the Network, and the strategies which relate to these objectives, are summarised in Table 1.1.

TABLE 1.1 – OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES OF THE INALA COMMUNITY AND POLICE NETWORK

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES
To provide a visible and accessible police presence in the community	– Information visits to schools and community groups – Non-policing interaction with members of the community – Participation in community activities – Location of Network in the shopping centre – Patrols of shopping centre
To provide an in-depth information and referral service	– Provision of advice and information – Locating the Network in shopping centre
To assist the community in the development and implementation of appropriate initiatives in areas not already, or not adequately provided for	– Community Consultation and Focus Group meetings – Volunteer program
To provide cooperation/support and awareness between community service providers	– Attendance at interagency meetings in which information and planning is shared – Secretariat support for meetings
To support and promote other Police Service initiatives	– To support and initiate proactive police crime prevention initiatives of the QPS (e.g. Neighbourhood Watch, Police and Citizen's Youth Club)
To encourage awareness, cooperation and interaction of Police Service personnel in community policing projects	– Using local police officers to relieve at the Network – Involving police in Network activities
To provide diversionary programs for young people "at risk"	– Appointment of NDS project staff to run diversionary programs – Involvement of Network police officers in activities

Source: Program documentation.

The evaluation of the Network has been constructed around these objectives. Chapter 2 describes which data were collected to assess the extent to which the Network has been able to meet these objectives.

RELATIONSHIP OF THE NATIONAL DRUG STRATEGY PROJECT WITH THE NETWORK

The NDS project operates out of the same premises as the Network and identifies strongly with it. In practice, there is little to distinguish its activities and programs from the Network's non-policing strategies. The NDS project is managed by the QPS and the NDS Management Committee in much the same way that the Network is. However, the objectives of the NDS project have a different focus, namely, to:

- promote police and community interaction in the community problem–solving process in respect to crime reduction and prevention

- provide an in-depth information, educative and referral service

- promote, enhance and foster inter–agency networking

- develop and implement appropriate diversionary activities for "at risk" youth

- coordinate activities targeting drug and alcohol abuse within the community with a view to reducing the incidence of these types of abuses.

The NDS objectives are targeted towards young people and the adults who form their support networks. The project is not directed at reducing drug and alcohol consumption amongst adults in Inala.

PREVIOUS REVIEW OF THE NETWORK

When the Network was originally established, the QPS and the CJC envisaged that the project would run for a trial period of three years. A progress report (referred to as the Inala Briefing Paper) was provided to the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee (PCJC) in November 1993. The main conclusions of the report were that:

- overall, the Network was an innovative project which should continue to be supported; it had achieved much in a short time, despite significant resource constraints

- there was considerable community support for the Network, although more needed to be done to educate the community about its role and functions

- some specific management issues still needed to be resolved, but generally the Network was operating well

- a more comprehensive evaluation should be undertaken during 1995.

THE EVALUATION

This evaluation of the Network has been timed to coincide with the completion of the three-year trial. The broad aims of the evaluation are to:

- monitor and document the implementation and operation of the Network

- monitor, document and assess the extent to which the Network has achieved its objectives, and to identify any other significant outcomes

- assist the future development of the Network

- add to the broader stock of knowledge about community policing initiatives.

The framework for the evaluation of the Network was developed after a workshop held at the CJC in December 1994, which was attended by representatives from the CJC and the QPS, the Network staff, and a Network volunteer. The purpose of the workshop was to define the goals of the Network and the implementation strategies employed to achieve these objectives, and to identify performance indicators to measure progress in relation to each of the objectives.

It was decided that the evaluation of the Network should not include a comprehensive evaluation of the NDS project as it is being evaluated later in the year as part of the NDS funding requirements. However, the inclusion of the objective related to youth diversionary programs in the Network's objectives is an acknowledgment of the NDS project's role in the Network.

The findings of the evaluation are based on data collected from surveys, interviews, QPS records, minutes of meetings and other file documentation. This process is described in more detail in Chapter 2.

THE ROLE OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMISSION

As noted, the specific impetus to the establishment of the Network was the release of a CJC report of allegations of police misconduct. More generally, the CJC's involvement in the development and evaluation of community policing initiatives, such as the Network, derives from sections 23(g)–(h), (k) and 56(3)(f)(ii) and (iii) of the *Criminal Justice Act 1989*. These sections provide as follows:

23. The responsibilities of the Commission include –

(g) monitoring the performance of the Police Service with a view to ensuring that the most appropriate policing methods are being used, consistently with trends in the nature and incidence of crime, and to ensuring the ability of the Police Service to respond to those trends;

(h) providing the Commissioner of the Police Service with policy directives[3] based on the Commission's research, investigation and analysis, including with respect to law enforcement priorities, education and training of police, revised methods of police operation, and the optimum use of law enforcement resources;

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3 To date, the CJC's approach has been to make recommendations, rather than issue directives to the QPS.

(k)   reporting, with a view to advising the Legislative Assembly, on the implementation of the recommendations in the Report of the Commission of Inquiry relating to the administration of criminal justice, and to the Police Service[4];

56.(3) It is the function of the [Research and Co-ordination] Division –

(f)   to review on a continuing basis the effectiveness of programs and methods of the Police Department, in particular in relation to –

. . .

(ii)   community policing;

(iii)   prevention of crime;

STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The remainder of this report is organised as follows:

- Chapter 2 outlines the design of the evaluation, including the key evaluation questions and main data sources

- Chapter 3 looks at the activities of the Network, considers the extent to which they are consistent with the Network's stated objectives, and identifies features of the project that have caused difficulties

- Chapter 4 assesses the impact of the Network's activities on community and community participation in the Network

- Chapter 5 examines the Network's relations with community agencies and the local police

- Chapter 6 summarises the key findings of the evaluation and discusses the future direction and management of the Network.

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4   Mr Fitzgerald QC made several recommendations concerning contemporary community policing initiatives (see CJC 1994 for further information).

CHAPTER 2
EVALUATION DESIGN

This chapter sets out the key questions addressed in the evaluation and describes the data which were collected. The evaluation consists of a *process evaluation* and an *impact evaluation*. The purpose of the process evaluation is to document how the program has operated, including the factors that have facilitated the implementation and operation of the program, as well as any difficulties experienced. The impact evaluation assesses the extent to which the program has achieved its desired outcomes, and, where possible, identifies any unintended consequences of the program.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The evaluation asked the following key questions:

- What types of activities have been run by the Network?

- Have the Network's activities been consistent with its stated objectives?

- Has the Network been adequately resourced?

- What has been the effect of the Network's activities on relations between the police and the community? In particular:

  ★ How widely known and used is the Network?

  ★ How positively is it regarded by the local community?

  ★ Has the Network's presence increased people's feelings of safety in the shopping centre?

  ★ To what extent has the community participated in the Network?

  ★ Has the Network contributed to improved police/community relations in Inala?

- What has been the effect of the Network's activities on community agency relations? In particular:

  ★ How widely is the Network known among local community agencies?

  ★ How much interaction has there been between the Network and the agencies?

  ★ How positively is the Network regarded by the agencies?

- How do local police view the role of the Network? Has there been a generally positive response to the Network's requests for assistance from other police?

The evaluation does not attempt to examine the impact of the Network on crime in the Inala area. Collating reported crime data exclusively relevant to the Network's target group or area would have been a very time-consuming and resource-intensive task. Even if such data had been available, it would have been very difficult to isolate the effect of the Network from the many other factors impacting on crime in Inala.

DATA SOURCES

The main data sources used for the evaluation were:

- contact and occurrence sheets and other Network records

- a community survey

- a service users survey

- a survey of shop owners in the Inala Plaza/Civic Centre

- interviews with police from surrounding stations, Network staff and volunteers

- interviews with representatives from local community organisations

- occurrence sheets from Inala Police Station

- minutes of meetings.

NETWORK RECORDS

Network staff have been recording all enquiries made by the public since the inception of the project, although in May 1994 there was a change in the way this information was collated. Contact sheets were entered into a data base and the data were collated to identify characteristics of the service users and the issues handled by the Network. There were some difficulties with interpreting the data from contact sheets as inconsistencies were noted in computer codes. For instance, sometimes a computer code for a lost or stolen wallet was entered as lost/stolen property rather than lost/stolen wallet. It is not possible to indicate to what extent this affected the quality of the data, although minor discrepancies in approximately five per cent of cases were noted in the contact sheets which were used for contacting service users.[5]

Occurrence sheets are kept routinely by police officers at the Network to record call outs to disturbances and other reports of crime. Occurrence sheets and activity logs compiled by police officers at the Network for a sample period of one month were examined to document the duties of the officers.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

The Community Survey was a sample survey of 300 adult residents drawn from the Inala residential area bounded by Freeman Avenue on the north-west, Rosemary Street, Sycamore Street and Inala Avenue to the east, Lorikeet Street and Boss Road on the south-east and Archerfield Road to the West. Residents from Durack, Richlands and surrounding areas were excluded as residents of Inala were identified as the target group for the project.

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5   For analysis purposes, some categories on the contact sheets were also re-coded.

The survey was designed to examine residents' perceptions of the risk of crime in the Inala Civic Centre/Plaza and to ascertain their knowledge of, and satisfaction with, the Network. The survey also included questions from previous Queensland surveys[6] in relation to attitudes to police and residents' perceptions of their community, so that comparisons could be made with Brisbane residents as a whole. Selection of the respondents within each household was based on a male/female (50:50) quota.

The survey was conducted by telephone by a market research firm in February 1995. The profile of respondents was compared to Australian Bureau of Statistics data for the Inala area, and in most respects the characteristics of survey respondents did not differ markedly from the Australian Bureau of Statistics data.

A copy of the survey instrument is provided in Appendix 1.

SERVICE USERS SURVEY

A sample of persons who had used the services provided by the Network and left a contact telephone number was obtained from the record of contacts kept by Network staff (see above). For the three-month period selected, 98 telephone numbers were available. Of these, 36 "users" of the Network's services were not included in the sample either because:

- they were under the age of 18; or

- they fell into a group of enquiries that was over-represented in the sample; for instance, people reporting lost or stolen wallets only represent a small percentage of the total number of enquiries to the Network, but constituted over 25 per cent of the sample.

One person declined to participate in the survey and a further 15 people were not contactable. This left a sample of 46 survey respondents: 29 females and 17 males.

It should be acknowledged that this sample of service users is not representative of all those who make inquiries at the Network. In any three month period, approximately 1,000 people approach the Network about a range of issues, but telephone numbers are only recorded in about 10 per cent of cases. Telephone numbers are often not recorded because:

- Many people are simply seeking information and directions to a community service or agency. Staff of the Network feel it is intrusive to ask the person to leave a telephone number in such cases. Staff consider that people may be discouraged from using the Network again if they have to leave identifying information with a police organisation.

- Some people, particularly those who do not have a stable home address, cannot provide a telephone number.

Table 2.1 shows the difference in the types of inquiries made by people who left their telephone number and the types of contacts that the Network dealt with in general.

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6   These surveys were the Attitudes to QPS survey (conducted by the CJC in 1993 and 1995) and the Queensland Crime Victims Survey (conducted by the Government Statistician's Office in 1991 with funding support from the CJC).

TABLE 2.1 – TYPES OF MATTERS FOR WHICH SERVICE USERS LEFT TELEPHONE NUMBERS – JULY TO DECEMBER 1994

CATEGORY	SERVICE USERS WHO LEFT TELEPHONE NUMBERS (%) n = 98	TOTAL CONTACTS (%) n = 1000
Community assistance	9	23
Directions	0	19
Domestic matters	4	3
Referrals	2	4
Information received	2	1
Missing person(s)	13	3
Network business	7	15
Police matters	63	32

Source: Contact sheets.

Note: See Appendix 2 for a more detailed breakdown of the numbers of contacts in each category.

As can be seen, people were far more likely to leave their telephone number if they required a response from a police officer, or some other kind of follow up. For example, the vast majority who reported a lost/stolen wallet or purse (a subcategory of police matters) left their phone number in the hope the item would be returned to them. Thus, although lost/stolen wallets and other lost property represented only seven per cent of the contacts made at the Network, they represented 28 per cent of the people who left their telephone number.

The survey was conducted by telephone, during and after office hours between 9 and 16 February 1995. A copy of the survey instrument is provided in Appendix 3.

SHOP OWNERS SURVEY

Shop owners at the Inala Civic Centre and Plaza were surveyed to gauge their perceptions of the Network and the levels of disturbance/crime in the shopping centre. There are 120 shops in the shopping centre. These were surveyed by a research assistant who conducted face to face surveys with the managers of every third shop. Two shop owners declined the offer of participating in the survey, leaving a total of 38 respondents.

A copy of the survey instrument is provided in Appendix 4.

INTERVIEWS WITH LOCAL POLICE, NETWORK STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

A semi–structured interview schedule was used to interview six police officers from three local police stations. The two serving police officers at the Network were interviewed and the Inspector who is in charge of the project at the Regional office was also interviewed. All police officer interviews were audio taped with the consent of the officers concerned. Quotes presented in the report are verbatim quotes. To protect the confidentiality of officers who agreed to participate in interviews, only the general source of the quotations in the text is given.

Unstructured interviews were conducted with the two employees funded through the NDS project, two volunteers and the administrative officer at the Network. The interviewer made notes during these interviews and recorded key information subsequently.

INTERVIEWS WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM LOCAL COMMUNITY AGENCIES

Semi–structured interviews were conducted with 12 representatives of nine community agencies. The interviewer made notes during these interviews and subsequently recorded key information. Community agencies were selected to represent a cross section of groups in the area. The agencies were assured of confidentiality and, therefore, specific comments cannot be attributed to them. Two local high schools, two youth organisations, one welfare organisation and three ATSI organisations were selected from a community directory for the interviews.

MINUTES OF MEETINGS AND OTHER DOCUMENTARY MATERIAL

Researchers had access to minutes of a range of meetings, including: meetings of the QPS, the University of Queensland and the CJC; the Management Committee; Focus Group meetings; and Community Consultation meetings (see Chapter 3). It is acknowledged that the minutes of these meetings sometimes provide an incomplete record of what was discussed. Wherever conclusions are drawn and recommendations made using information gleaned from minutes, other sources of information were also consulted.

File notes and internal memoranda were used to establish the chronology of events at the Network. Occurrence sheets from Inala Police Station were also examined.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Data from the Inala Community Survey, the shop owners survey and the survey of service users were entered into an SPSS data base for analysis. Most of the data presented in the report are frequencies. The reader is cautioned at points in the text where the sample size presents difficulties for drawing conclusions.

A further note of caution should be issued regarding the methodology employed for this evaluation. While considerable resources have been allocated by the CJC to evaluate the Network, these resources did not allow for the inclusion of control groups from other areas and analysis of longitudinal data. This design presents some difficulties in attributing effects directly to the project. However, some assessment of impact has been possible. For instance, the surveys asked respondents to assess whether their perceptions had changed over time. Also, for some questions, the results of the Inala surveys have been compared to similar previous surveys of Brisbane residents.

SUMMARY

The links between the key evaluation questions, measures of performance and data sources are summarised in Table 2.2.

TABLE 2.2 – OVERALL EVALUATION STRATEGY

KEY EVALUATION AREAS	RELEVANT ISSUES	DATA SOURCES
Activities of the Network	• What types of activities have been run by the Network?	Network records Interviews with Network staff Minutes of meetings
	• Have the Network's activities been consistent with its stated objectives?	Interviews with Network staff
Resourcing of the Network	• Has the Network been adequately resourced?	Network records Interviews with Network staff and officers involved with the Network
Effect of the Network on relations with the community	• How widely known is the Network?	Inala Community Survey Shop Owners Survey
	• How positively is the Network regarded by the community?	Inala Community Survey Shop Owners Survey Service Users Survey
	• Has the Network's presence improved feelings of safety in the shopping centre?	Inala Community Survey Shop Owners Survey
	• To what extent has the community participated in the Network?	Inala Community Survey Shop Owners Survey
	• Has the Network helped improve community/police relations in Inala?	Minutes of meetings Interviews with volunteers
Effect of the Network on community agency relations	• How widely known is the Network among local community agencies?	Interviews with community agencies
	• How much interaction is there between the Network and the agencies?	Interviews with community agencies Interviews with Network staff Minutes of meetings
	• How positively is the Network regarded by the agencies?	Interviews with community agencies
Effect of the Network on the views of local police	• How do local police view the role of the Network?	Interviews with local police Interviews with Network staff
	• Has there been a generally positive response to the Network's requests for assistance from other police?	Interviews with local police Interviews with Network staff Occurrence sheets

CHAPTER 3
OVERVIEW OF NETWORK ACTIVITIES

This chapter focuses on what the Network does in order to achieve its stated objectives. In particular, it addresses three questions:

- what types of activities have been undertaken by the Network?

- have these activities been consistent with the Network's stated objectives?

- has the Network been adequately resourced?

THE ACTIVITIES OF THE NETWORK

The activities of the Network fall into the following categories:

- programs in schools

- activities for youth

- services to the Inala Civic Centre/Plaza

- information, referral and lending services

- agency liaison

- activities for gaining community input

- community policing

- other policing duties.

The following description is based on the activity logs and contact sheets kept by Network staff and volunteers. It should be noted that the number of individual activities undertaken by the Network since the inception of the Network is not necessarily a reflection of priority or total time spent on a particular type of activity. For instance, a camp may have taken months to arrange and extend over two days, whereas a visit to a local pre-school may only take a few hours. The activity logs compiled by Network police officers indicate that they spend approximately 29 per cent of their time at work arranging and attending activities and programs for young people. (Appendix 5 provides a detailed list, in chronological order, of the activities organised by Network since its inception.)

PROGRAMS IN SCHOOLS

From the inception of the Network in May 1992 to January 1995 there have been 16 formal activities involving schools. Many of these activities and programs were held in conjunction with local primary and high schools. While some of these activities have been run by the Network police officers, most of the more substantial programs have been initiated by the NDS project officer. Activities initiated by the Network police officers in schools have included holding discussions with children aimed at

motivating them to achieve at sport and academically, talking about safety issues and giving information about policing practices. NDS programs have included adventure camps designed to build interpersonal skills and concern for the well being of peers. The camps have been followed up with drug and alcohol education programs which reinforce these messages. The Network police officers often become involved in the NDS program at both the planning and implementation stage.

An example of a school activity was the participation of students in the planning and organisation of a Richlands State High School dance in 1994. The NDS project officer encouraged groups of students to form committees to organise a dance where drug and alcohol messages were the theme of the evening. Although the activity was organised as a school event, all young people in Inala were invited to attend. Dances are usually held at the Police Citizens Youth Club. Police officers from the Network, the Police Citizens Youth Club and local stations attended to interact with the young people and to provide security.

ACTIVITIES FOR YOUTH

An aim of the Network is to access young people who are "at risk". This includes youth who do not attend school, are usually unemployed and lack formal support mechanisms. Some of these young people are of ATSI descent. Up until January 1995, the Network has run 45 formal activities for this target group separately from school–based programs.

One of the first activities initiated by the Network was a cultural workshop aimed at highlighting Aboriginal culture to young people from all cultural backgrounds in the Inala area. The workshop was designed to involve those who attended in the manufacture and decoration of cultural Aboriginal implements. Ten students from Richlands State High School attended the workshop under the supervision of Network staff and other members of the community. Young people who were considered to be at risk of entering into a pattern of criminal behaviour were selected by the school. Transport was provided using the Police Academy bus, with lunch being provided by Woolworths at Inala Plaza. Participants returned to the Network with boomerangs they had made during this activity, and were briefed about the roles and functions of the Network.

SERVICES TO THE INALA CIVIC CENTRE/PLAZA

The location of the Network within the Inala Civic Centre/Plaza has meant that the Network has attempted to respond to the concerns of the shop keepers and shoppers in the shopping centre, while maintaining an essentially non–operational stance. There is a lot of informal communication between shop owners, shoppers and Network police officers through patrols of the shopping centre. However, the Network has also arranged six formal meetings to get to know people or to discuss issues of concern and it has developed proactive strategies to deal with crime and disturbance in the shopping centre. For instance:

• In August 1992, the Network held a "Youth Against Racism" week at Civic Centre/Plaza aimed at reducing racism in the community in general and at the shopping centre. A series of displays were arranged to highlight the theme of this week. Aboriginal dancers performed and the local Vietnamese community highlighted elements of their culture through various displays. A free sausage sizzle was also arranged for shop keepers and the general public.

- In February 1993, the Network devised what it calls "The Communication Tree", which designates a chain of communication for all shop owners in the centre to be quickly advised of any information which is likely to prevent a crime from occurring or disseminate information related to a disturbance. An officer from the Network calls the first shop owners in the "tree" and each shop owner then has the task of calling two other shop owners.

INFORMATION, REFERRAL AND LENDING SERVICES

Through providing information, referral and lending services, the Network gives the community an opportunity to have contact with the QPS on issues other than the conventional range of policing functions. The volunteers play an active role in dispensing information, referrals and taking care of lending services. Activity logs indicate that Network police officers spend approximately nine per cent of their time providing such referral services to the community.

Members of the community may approach the Network about matters as simple as directions to a shop in the shopping centre or about the RSPCA or a City Council matter. Table 3.1 lists the number of requests for non-policing information, directions and government referrals over a six-month period. These requests represent 39 per cent of the total number of contacts made to the Network's referral service. Over half of these matters were dealt with by volunteers.

TABLE 3.1 – REQUESTS FOR NON-POLICING INFORMATION, DIRECTIONS AND GOVERNMENT REFERRALS – JULY TO DECEMBER 1994

TYPE OF REQUEST	NUMBER OF CONTACTS	AVERAGE NUMBER PER WEEK
Non-Policing Information		
Welfare assistance	33	1.3
Legal information and referrals	65	2.5
Council matters (dogs etc.)	48	1.8
Centre Management referrals	65	2.5
Other	134	5.1
Total	**345**	**13.3**
Directions		
Businesses in the Centre	282	13.3
Directions to Government Departments	97	4.6
Other	17	0.6
Total	**396**	**15.2**
Referrals to Government Departments		
Commonwealth Employment Service	6	0.2
Family Services and AIA	2	0.1
Social Security	8	0.3
Transport Department	72	2.8
Housing Commission	3	0.1
Total	**91**	**3.5**

Source: Network contact sheets.

In 1993 one of the volunteers at the Network began a video lending service to provide the community with access to videos. These are primarily concerned with community issues, such as QPS crime prevention initiatives, safety and services in the community. Since the service began 120 videos have been lent (an average of five per month). In addition, the Network lends an engraver so that people can mark their property to deter theft. The engraver is lent, on average, about six times per month.

AGENCY LIAISON

Through liaison with community agencies the Network endeavours to assist coordination and communication between the many services and agencies in the Inala area. Network police officers and NDS project officers attend regular meetings with youth agencies, interagency forums and ATSI liaison meetings. Network staff also organise workshops for agencies to work on problem solving strategies to deal with community concerns. For example, in May 1994 the Network arranged a workshop for agencies dealing with youth to discuss truancy. The idea of an alternative day program for unemployed youth not attending school was developed and an application was made for funding to run the program. The alternative day program is now operating from a disused library and provides a daily program for "at risk" young people. The NDS project officer who convened the workshop is now on the Management Committee for the program and Network police officers attend activities arranged for these young people.

LIAISON CONDUCTED BY NETWORK POLICE OFFICERS

Network police officers attend one interagency liaison meeting per month, which consists of up to 40 local agencies involved with a broad cross section of the local community. Appendix 6 contains a list of agencies which attend interagency meetings, or which receive minutes of the meetings. A Network volunteer attends the meeting with the police officer and takes minutes and distributes them to all member agencies. Approximately eight per cent of Network police officers' time is spent on agency liaison. In addition, Network police officers attend monthly ATSI Liaison meetings organised by the Superintendent at the Oxley District Police Station.

LIAISON CONDUCTED BY NATIONAL DRUG STRATEGY STAFF

Liaison by the NDS staff is mainly focussed on liaison with agencies involved with youth and, to some extent, agencies involved in the delivery of drug and alcohol services. The NDS staff attend, on average, nine meetings per month. The staff also hold Chairperson and Secretary positions on three committees. NDS staff attend these meetings as representatives of the Network, rather than exclusively representing the NDS project. Information from meetings is shared at weekly Network staff meetings.

ACTIVITIES FOR GAINING COMMUNITY INPUT

Since the Network was established, three main strategies have been used to encourage community participation. These are:

- *Focus Group meetings.* These meetings involved members of the community, representatives of community agencies and a police officer meeting on a fortnightly basis from August 1992 until November 1992 (Figure 3.1). The meetings were intended to act as a management committee for the Network until the QPS and CJC finalised the membership and structure of the committee.

*   *Community Consultation Committee meetings.* These meetings, which were facilitated by regional police officers and staff of the CJC, began just prior to the commencement of the Network. The purpose of the meetings was to obtain information about community concerns that might be useful in the development of the Network's activities. These meetings were continued after the Network started, in order to maintain a mechanism of community input. However, due to declining attendance, the meetings were disbanded in October 1993 (see Chapter 4).

*   *Use of volunteers.* Volunteers from the local community have been involved in providing office support, and organising and attending Network activities.
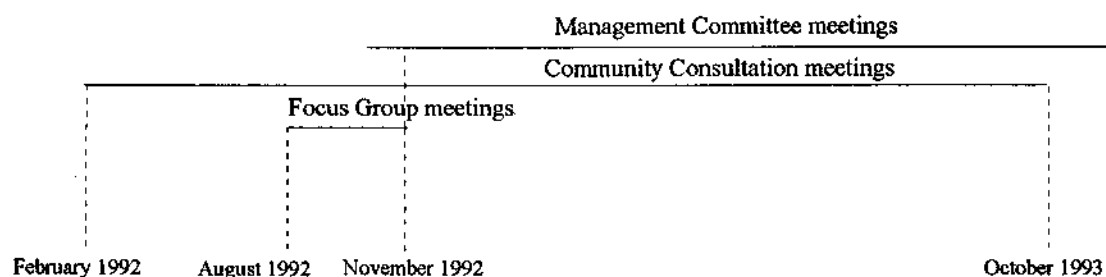

FIGURE 3.1 – TIMELINE OF COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Source: Minutes of meetings.

The ATSI community was involved in the initial stages of the implementation of the project. One of the volunteers was Aboriginal and, later, the Aboriginal Legal Service arranged for an Aboriginal student to undertake a work placement at the Network. A Vietnamese community worker also worked from the office for a few months.

COMMUNITY POLICING

In addition to the other non-policing activities undertaken by the Network, the officers have been involved in 22 community policing initiatives. Community policing covers a range of activities performed by Network police officers which other operational police officers also perform, when time permits. For example, both Network police officers are involved in the Adopt-a-Cop program, and attend meetings of a variety of community groups to give information about proactive policing strategies and safety issues. These officers also attend community activities arranged by organisations and agencies in the local area to provide some policing of an event. The purpose of attending these events is not simply to deal with crime and disturbances, but to give the community an opportunity to interact with police officers.

The Network liaises with agencies and organisations when arranging activities around "theme weeks" to market the QPS's community policing strategies. For example, bike safety week was held during the September/October School holiday period in 1992 and aimed at highlighting the legal requirements of bicycle riders as well as maintenance of bicycles. Young people in attendance received a bicycle inspection by the Department of Transport and had their bikes engraved by the police. A bicycle safety course was subsequently established at the Police Citizens Youth Club. This course included a series of bicycle safety and traffic regulation questions.

OTHER POLICING DUTIES

Other policing duties undertaken by Network police officers include all of the duties which would normally be expected of an operational police officer, such as: responding to crime reports and calls for assistance; patrols of the shopping centre; and attending to administrative duties. Activity logs compiled by the police officers indicate that approximately 54 per cent of their time is spent on policing and administrative duties. The following discussion examines these various policing–related duties in more detail.

PATROLS OF THE INALA CIVIC CENTRE/PLAZA

Patrols by Network police officers differ in emphasis to patrols which are commonly conducted by other police officers. The purpose of these patrols is not only to provide security in the shopping centre, but also to provide an opportunity for members of the community, including shop owners, to speak informally to Network police officers. As previously stated, it was not originally intended that the Network would become fully operational, but it was always envisaged that Network police officers would patrol the shopping centre as a way of becoming familiar with the community. Young people frequently use the centre as a meeting place and this causes some concern to shop keepers who associate groups of young people with crime. As Network police officers often know the names of the young people, the QPS and the CJC decided that regular patrols of the centre would reduce the incidence of crime and help allay shop keepers' anxieties.

On average, Network police officers patrol the shopping centre once per day. In addition, they may be called out to attend to a disturbance or a crime. In these instances, the officers also spend some time walking around the shopping centre, talking to shoppers and shop owners, patrolling the car park looking for signs of suspicious activity, and observing the activities of people in the centre.

CRIME REPORTS AND REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE

Locating the Network in the shopping centre has had the largely unintended effect of encouraging members of the community to turn to the Network when they require operational policing assistance. The Network's approach to dealing with these requests has undergone some subtle changes. Initially, all policing matters were referred to the Inala Police Station, which is a five minute walk from the shopping centre. If a crime had been committed at the shopping centre, Network police officers would handle the immediate situation and call the Inala Police Station to file the crime report and take statements from the complainant(s) and witness(es), if appropriate. More recently, Network police officers have been dealing with specific types of crime reports, although there are no uniform guidelines or standing orders specifying what issues will be dealt with and what will be referred to the Station. Most commonly, Network police officers will respond if a crime or disturbance is taking place or has occurred very recently. Examples of these situations might be a fight between a group of young people, a hand bag being stolen while the complainant was shopping at the centre, or the theft of a vehicle from the car park.

Several considerations determine the action, if any, taken by Network police officers in response to reports of crime. Arresting people at the shopping centre is usually incompatible with the Network's charter to foster relations between police and the community. Clearly, there are times when the officer will be required to apprehend a person in the commission of a crime but, where appropriate, officers will try to resolve the issue without the need for charges to be laid. Second, as the Network is only staffed by two police officers, consideration is given to the time which may be required to investigate the offence and attend at court at some later date. Finally, there are times when a police officer is not

available when a person wants to report a crime: the officers may be attending an activity, on leave, or patrolling in another part of the shopping centre. In such situations, a person requiring assistance will be referred by a volunteer or the administrative officer to the Inala Police Station or to the shopping centre's security guards.

The Network maintains a data base for recording requests for assistance from the public, including a category called "Policing Matters". This category covers reports of stolen vehicles, thefts, assaults and other police related matters such as enquiries about weapons. The Network deals with approximately 22 policing matters per week. An additional four to five matters per week are referred to the police station. The most common code for assistance (other than a broad "Other" code) is "Lost/stolen Property". In an average week, the Network is called out to deal with around six reports of lost/stolen property or wallet/bag, three disturbances involving juveniles and one stolen vehicle. Table 3.2 below indicates the number of contacts in each category of policing assistance from July to December 1994. These contacts represent approximately 28 per cent of the total number of contacts made to the Network in this period.

TABLE 3.2 – CATEGORIES OF POLICING ASSISTANCE
JULY TO DECEMBER 1994

CATEGORY OF ASSISTANCE	NUMBER OF CONTACTS	AVERAGE PER WEEK
Lost/stolen wallet/bag/property	152	5. 8
Juvenile disturbances	74	2. 8
Stealing (other)	40	1. 5
Stolen car	24	0. 9
Complaints against neighbours	19	0. 7
Information received re suspect person(s)	18	0. 7
Protection & Good Behaviour orders	17	0. 7
Weapons enquiries	14	0. 5
Child abuse	11	0. 4
Domestic violence matters/advice	9	0. 3
Information received re drug related matter	8	0. 3
Stolen property located	7	0. 3
Other crime	191	7. 3
Total	**584**	**22.5**

Source: Network contact sheets.

POLICE ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES

Police officers, whether they are located at the Network or at an operational police station, are required to perform a range of administrative duties, including responding to internal memoranda and correspondence, writing reports and dealing with internal requests for information. Network police officers are also required to attend meetings with other members of the QPS and make themselves available for supervision.

SUMMARY

The Network undertakes a range of duties to achieve its objectives. Network police officers spend approximately 30 per cent of their time on duties such as participating in activities and programs for young people and providing information and referral services to shoppers in the Inala Civic Centre/Plaza. The officers only spend eight per cent of their time in liaison meetings with community agencies and groups, but the NDS staff attend significantly more meetings to represent the Network. The police officers spend the remainder of their time performing duties which are similar to those of many other police officers, including operational policing and community policing initiatives such as Adopt-a-Cop. Operational policing includes responding to reports of crimes within the shopping centre and patrols of the shopping centre. Police officers are also required to perform administrative tasks to comply with QPS regulations, such as responding to requests for information and writing reports. Network police officers spend approximately 54 per cent of their time on operational policing and administrative tasks.

HAVE THE NETWORK'S ACTIVITIES BEEN CONSISTENT WITH ITS OBJECTIVES?

The activities of the Network have focussed on providing:

- non-policing services to the community to improve community relations with, and perceptions of, the police

- opportunities for non-confrontational contact between the youth in Inala and the police

- forums for liaising with relevant community agencies

- services to the shopping centre to assist in reducing fears for safety.

On one view, all of these activities fall within the objectives of the Network. However, there are two concerns with the way in which the Network's activities have been developed. First, the activities are not planned in advance within the terms of the objectives, except through the Network's Action Plan which primarily relates to operational matters. Although the activities are within the scope of the objectives, there has been little proactive planning of the best way of achieving those objectives. Part of the reason for this is that the existing objectives are broad and are open to differing interpretations. Further, the objectives do not indicate any areas of priority that should be dealt with. Given that the Network's resources are limited (see below), planning the allocation of time and expenditure is critical to the effective implementation of strategies.

Second, to a large extent the NDS component of the Network has driven the types of activities undertaken by the Network. A large proportion of the Network's focus is on "at risk" youth. As a result, one particular objective has been given priority. Although this is not necessarily a shortcoming, it has arguably detracted attention from some of the other objectives.

RESOURCING OF THE NETWORK

Overall, interviews with police who have worked or have been involved with the Network point to several concerns about the level of resourcing to the Network. These concerns primarily relate to:

- staffing and training

- equipment and accommodation.

STAFFING AND TRAINING

The original proposal for the Network included provision for at least three police officers to be permanently stationed at the Network, but it became clear as the project was implemented that funding would only be made available for two officers. After the NDS funds were secured for a project officer to run youth diversionary programs, staffing should not have presented a problem, given that police officers from the Inala Police Station were supposed to provide relief staff to cover the periods when one officer was on leave or on a rostered day off. However, in practice, relief staff were rarely provided, except when an officer was on recreation leave. This meant that police officers were frequently on duty by themselves when the other officer was on a rostered day off, or rostered at a different time to cover Thursday late night shopping and Saturdays. At the beginning of 1994, a directive was issued for three police stations in the local area to provide back–up on Thursday nights, which is one of the busiest times in the shopping centre. At other times relief staff are rarely provided when there is one Network police officer rostered to work. As a consequence, police officers from other stations do not have the benefit of working with someone who is familiar with the daily operations of the Network. Of even greater concern is that there are occasions when there are no police officers on duty for a whole day and the office may only be staffed by volunteers and, perhaps, the part time administrative officer.

The management of the shopping centre have become annoyed at the Network staff who, because of lack of staff, on occasions have closed the Network at the end of an officer's shift at 4.00 p.m. The shopping centre closes at 5.30 p.m. most weekdays and management have advised Network staff that they are in breach of their lease agreement by not remaining open. A police officer normally works on Thursday nights and on Saturdays. However, the responsibility for keeping the Network open until 5.30 p.m. on the remaining week days is often left to the volunteers. This practice has enabled the Network to maintain its opening hours, but the effectiveness of the volunteers is limited by lack of clarity in their roles and insufficient training (see discussion below). Volunteers refer people to the Inala Police Station which can mean that the volunteers have to deal with frustrated members of the public who approach a policing establishment expecting to find a police officer. This situation often arises when someone has been a victim of a crime and wants an immediate response to his or her complaint.

In addition to insufficient staffing at the Network, police officers have generally not been supported by relevant training. This is a crucial issue as the nature of the work done by the Network requires officers to have special skills. Network staff have said that they require training in conflict resolution, creative problem solving and community consultation, but this has not been provided.

EQUIPMENT AND ACCOMMODATION

The Network is located in a shop which is neither large enough to accommodate the staff, nor professional in appearance. Discarded furniture for the office was donated by the Commonwealth Bank and a coat of paint was provided by the local Lions Club after the Network sustained considerable damage in a break-in. Some of the office equipment has been borrowed from local businesses and the CJC. The Sergeant in charge of the Network has an office fashioned from partitions. Confidential interviews, which are audible in the general office area, are conducted in a partitioned off kitchen area where staff eat their lunch.

Network police officers have indicated that they would like to have on-line access to the QPS mainframe computer system to access records about wanted persons, stolen vehicles and the CRISP reporting system. At present, the Network calls the Inala Police Station several times per day so that someone else can give them information from the computer. The Network has stand-alone computers, but the lack of access to the on-line system creates difficulties for Network staff and is also frustrating for relieving officers, who are used to having access to the QPS computer data base. Network police officers have been advised it is too expensive to bring the Network on-line and that their office is not secure, both in terms of the possibility of a break-in and access to computers by volunteers.

Until recently, the Network did not have any police radios which worked, nor a battery charger to recharge their radio. Police radios are an essential part of officer security so that contact can be maintained with head office or the local station in the event that back-up is required in an emergency. The Network has now been lent a radio and a battery charger as a temporary measure.

In addition, until recently, police officers and volunteers had to use their own cars to transport themselves to activities and QPS meetings. In the case of the volunteers, the use of their own vehicles is not compensated as there is no debit line which allows them to cover the costs of their petrol. In April 1995, the Oxley District Office was donated a vehicle for community policing, which the Network can have access to by prior arrangement. However, the vehicle cannot be used to transport an alleged offender to the watchhouse if an arrest has been made. The Network continues to rely on neighbouring police stations for transport in these circumstances.

SUMMARY

The Network has undertaken a wide range of activities, such as programs in schools, activities for young people, information and referral, agency liaison and policing duties to achieve the stated objectives of the project. These activities have been within the scope of the objectives, but the planning of strategies has not occurred with reference to the objectives and priorities of the Network. In part, this has been due to insufficient resources. Lack of relief staff has meant that there are often times when only one police officer is on duty at the Network. Because work is not prioritised in terms of objectives, Network police officers have largely restricted their duties to responding to requests for assistance from members of the public.

CHAPTER 4
THE NETWORK AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

This chapter examines the impact of the Network on community perceptions and behaviours in Inala. The Network's primary aim was to enhance the relationship between the police and the Inala community: for instance, four of the seven objectives adopted by the Network focus on the community and community-related outcomes. Initiatives designed to improve police/community relations, included locating the Network in the shopping centre, promoting participation by Network staff in community activities, providing information services to the community, and undertaking regular patrolling of the shopping centre to increase contact with, and visibility to, the public.

The Network's impact on police/community relations was expected by Network staff to be evidenced by:

- high levels of community awareness of the Network

- high levels of satisfaction with the Network and its activities

- high levels of non-policing contact with the Network initiated by the community

- increased feelings of safety about using the shopping centre

- high levels of community involvement in the Network

- improved community attitudes towards police in general.

For the purposes of this evaluation, three types of data were used. The first consisted of surveys of Inala residents, users of the Network's referral service and shop owners in the Inala Civic Centre/Plaza. These surveys provided information on the perceptions of various members of the community about policing in Inala, and, more specifically, the work of the Network. The second data source consisted of interviews conducted with police officers stationed at surrounding stations, staff of the Network and representatives of various community agencies. The final data source was records of the Network, detailing information about Network activities.

Difficulties were encountered in assessing the performance of the Network in terms of its relations with the community. Many of the objectives were aimed at changing community perceptions and behaviours. However, due to resource and time constraints, the surveys and interviews were only conducted at one point in time. Consequently, this evaluation relies on retrospective assessments of changes by respondents, rather than using more direct measures.

AWARENESS OF THE NETWORK

A prerequisite for the success of the Network is that residents are aware of the project. Without such awareness they cannot take advantage of the services and activities being offered. In the survey of Inala residents, respondents were asked: 'The police have a shop in the Inala Shopping Centre, called the Community and Police Network. Have you ever seen it or heard anything about it?' Awareness of the Network among respondents was very high, with 91 per cent reporting that they had seen or heard about the Network (Figure 4.1). Of the 27 respondents who had not heard of the Network, only five indicated that it did not 'sound like a service . . . [they] might use'.

There were also other indications in the survey that there was a reasonable level of knowledge of the Network among residents (Figure 4.1). For example, 43 per cent of respondents were able to identify at least one activity of the Network, 34 per cent said that they had been into the Network and 11 per cent reported that they or a family member had been involved in an activity run by the Network. (As the majority of activities run by the Network are aimed at youth and 60 per cent of respondents did not have children under the age of 18 in the household, the lower proportion of respondents reporting involvement in Network activities is not surprising.)
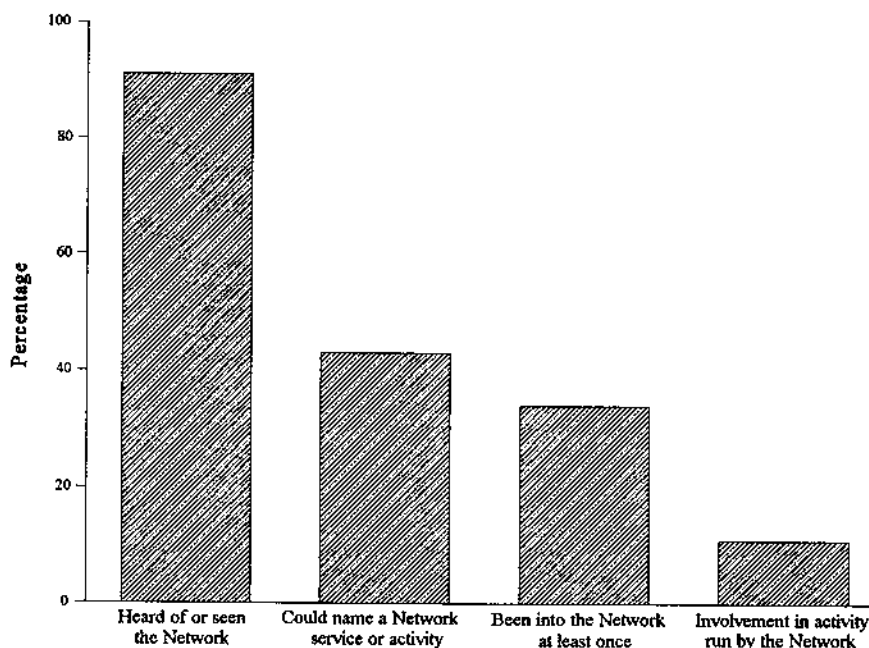

FIGURE 4.1 – AWARENESS OF NETWORK AMONG INALA RESIDENTS

Source: Inala Community Survey.

Notes:

1.   Respondents were asked: 'The police have a shop in the Inala Shopping Centre, called the Community and Police Network. Have you ever seen it or heard anything about it?'; 'Can you name any of the services and activities provided by the Community and Police Network?'; 'How many times have you been into the Community and Police Network?'; 'Have you, or any member of your family, been involved with any of the activities run by the Community and Police Network, such as Cricket in the Hood or the School Holiday program?'

2.   n=300.

There were high levels of awareness among shop owners in the Centre about the Network and its activities. In a survey of 38 shop owners, 97 per cent had heard of the Network and 74 per cent could name at least one service or activity provided by the Network. Not surprisingly, the proportion of respondents who had used, or been involved with, the Network was higher than for Inala residents: 55 per cent of the shop owners surveyed had called the Network for assistance at least once and 32 per cent had either personally attended activities or meetings run by the Network, or sent a staff member.

In summary, these results indicate that the Network is well known and accessible to Inala residents and shop owners in the Centre.

SATISFACTION WITH THE NETWORK

Overall, there were very high levels of satisfaction expressed by respondents who had used the Network. For instance:

*   84 per cent of Network users in the Inala Community Survey and 81 per cent of shop owners surveyed were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the 'information or response' they had received

*   97 per cent of the community survey respondents who had used the Network and 95 per cent of shop owners who had received assistance from the Network reported that they would go back to the Network if they needed information, advice or assistance

*   84 per cent of those respondents in the community survey who had attended activities run by the Network were satisfied with those activities

*   62 per cent of shop owners who had contacted the Network for assistance said that they had received the response they wanted

*   97 per cent of all Inala Community Survey respondents reported that 'having the Community and Police Network in the shopping centre is good for the people who use the centre'

*   anecdotal evidence suggests that members of the community are recommending to others that they approach the Network for assistance:

> But we have a lot of people [who] might come in and say, "Oh yeah, such and such told me to come in and see you" or whatever. And I mean to me that's pretty positive . . . for someone to actually recommend someone to come into a policing establishment because . . . they'll help you. (interviews, Network staff)

SATISFACTION WITH THE REFERRAL SERVICE

The survey of 46 users of the services of the Network provides some assessment of the usefulness of the referral service, although as pointed out in Chapter 2 the sample was not representative of all persons who approached the Network.

Eighty–seven per cent of respondents reported that they were satisfied with the information or response they received from the Network. Further, over 93 per cent found the staff that assisted them to be helpful and 91 per cent said that they would go back to the Network if they needed information, advice or assistance again (Figure 4.2).