

Provide an effective witness protection service

Our performance in 2008–09

We report first on our priorities and challenges in providing an effective witness protection service, our key achievements and our results against performance indicators. We then report in more detail on our work in protecting witnesses, developing witness protection methods and liaising with client law enforcement agencies, and conclude with our outlook for 2009–10.

Priorities and challenges

As described in our *Strategic Plan 2008–12*, in 2008–09 we placed specific emphasis on the following.

Dealing with the impact of advancing technology

Through ongoing consultation and liaison with national and international counterparts, we examined trends in advanced technologies and their potential impact on witness protection. Rapidly advancing technologies present both opportunities and risks in providing a safer and more resource-effective witness protection service.

Building and maintaining relationships with key Queensland agencies

We developed new marketing strategies and tools, including presentations and a DVD, to engage with client law enforcement agencies and promote greater awareness of our services and their potential benefits for those agencies. We also took opportunities to strengthen working relationships with other agencies providing witness protection services.

Key achievements

- We ensured that all of our protected witnesses were kept safe and were able to give evidence in court, maintaining this 100 per cent success rate for the twenty-first successive year. Over 1560 people have been successfully protected since the inception of the program in 1987.
- The evidence given by witnesses protected by the CMC played a key role in prosecutors being able to secure convictions across a wide range of organised and serious crime cases.
- In May, the CMC hosted the annual Australasian Witness Protection Forum in Brisbane, which was attended by representatives from Australia-wide law enforcement agencies and other key external agencies such as the Australian Taxation Office and Centrelink.
- Twenty-one protected persons were provided with court security, directly contributing to successful prosecutions for a number of serious criminal matters.

Results against performance indicators

The data provided in Table 5 enable our performance for 2008–09 to be reviewed in the context of our major targets and estimates for this year, our results over the previous four years, and our expected performance for 2009–10. Data for other details of our performance are provided in Figure 15.

Table 5: Performance 2004–05 to 2008–09, and estimated 2009–10

Key performance indicators	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09		2009–10 (estimate)
					(target or estimate)	(actual)	
Applications for witness protection assessed (persons) ^{ab}	156	89	130	96	100	104	100
Admissions to witness protection program (persons) ^a	70	57	78	42	78	51	78
Percentage of eligible persons offered interim protection within two days of receipt of application ^a	99	100	81	92	95	100	95
Percentage of protected persons whose safety was not compromised ^{ac}	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	100	100	100
Threat assessments conducted for protection operations ^d	n/a	n/a	74	62	70	60	70
Protected witnesses provided with court security ^d	n/a	n/a	39	30	40	21	40
Expenses to achieve strategic goal 'To provide an effective witness protection service'	\$4.1m	\$4.3m	\$4.3m	\$4.4m	\$4.9m	\$5.0m	\$5.1m

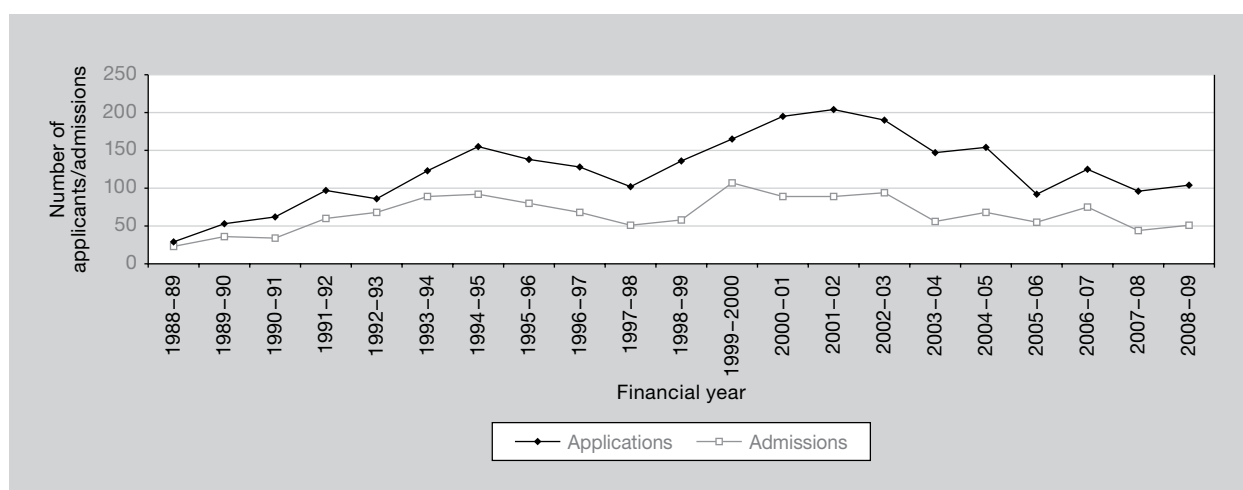
a Service Delivery Statement measure.

b 'Applications' refers to all persons referred for witness protection by law enforcement agencies. While offers of protection are made to all assessed as eligible for the program, some persons may not accept the offer. Thus, 'admissions' refers to persons who are both eligible and accept the offer of protection.

c This indicator was introduced as a Service Delivery Statement measure in 2008–09.

d Strategic Plan performance indicator since 2008–09.

Figure 15. Applications for witness protection compared to final admissions 1988–89 to 2008–09



Witness protection: key activity areas

Protecting witnesses

Through our witness protection program, we protect eligible people who are in danger as a result of assisting a law enforcement agency such as the QPS. The protection provided may include securing witnesses in a safe location on a temporary or permanent basis and providing court security or close personal protection.

The evidence given by our protected witnesses assisted prosecutors in securing convictions in cases that included drug trafficking, production and possession of drugs, robbery, fraud, and serious assault and property offences.

In addition to providing protection to individuals, the CMC also ensures that they receive any necessary professional assistance and guidance. This enables people who enter the program with drug or alcohol addictions or other mental or physical afflictions to address these issues. Many witnesses have been rehabilitated as a direct result of being included in our program.

- This year we received 104 applications for witness protection, exceeding both our estimate for this year and the number of applications received last year.
- Fifty-one persons were admitted into the program, fewer than our estimate for this year but exceeding the number admitted last year.
- All eligible applicants were offered interim protection within two days, exceeding both our estimate for this year and the percentage achieved last year.
- Figure 15 shows the fluctuations in witness protection numbers since 1988–89. Admissions were highest in 2000–01 with applications peaking two years later. Since then, numbers have levelled out to be similar to those in the early 1990s.
- Since use of the witness protection program depends on requests from law enforcement agencies, the CMC has no influence over the number of applications received. However, witness protection staff place a high priority on bringing the program and its potential benefits to the attention of law enforcement agencies.

- Figure 15 also illustrates the typical discrepancy between numbers of applications received and final admissions. This reflects the decisions of individual protectees, since witness protection is undertaken voluntarily. Typically, only about half of those offered protection decide to enter the program.
- We prepared 59 threat assessments for various aspects of witness protection, slightly down from last year.
- We also provided court security in a number of trials where the evidence of a protected witness was considered crucial. Twenty-one protected persons were given court security, directly contributing to successful prosecutions for a number of serious criminal matters.
- In total, 70 persons were protected in 2008–09 (comprising the 51 persons admitted plus those already on the program at the beginning of the year).

Developing witness protection methods

The CMC places a high priority on developing witness protection methods, by providing specialist training, monitoring emerging threats, and liaising with peer organisations in Australasia.

The CMC leads witness protection training in Australasia through our nationally accredited witness protection course, the Advanced Diploma of Public Safety (Police Witness Protection) (the Advanced Diploma). This year, tools to assess workplace competencies were further developed for all Australasian jurisdictions. We secured Western Australia's agreement to the memorandum of understanding (MOU) for recognising prior learning for the Advanced Diploma, and anticipate that other agencies, including Victoria Police, South Australia Police and New South Wales Police, will ratify the MOU in the near future. Achieving uniform competency standards across agencies will increase our capacity to meet cross-jurisdictional threats.

This year our officer in charge of witness protection chaired the Australasian Witness Protection Forum in Brisbane in May. The forum examined trends in advanced technologies and their potential impact on witness protection, and was attended by senior witness protection officers from around the country. Through involvement with the Australia and New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency and key external agencies in Australia and overseas, participants helped to develop responses to the issues and methodologies identified as significant.

Liaison with client law enforcement agencies

We actively marketed our capability and services to senior management and staff of client law enforcement agencies throughout Queensland. This included delivering training in accessing and utilising protection services to QPS detectives and police prosecutors, and making presentations to criminal investigators and regional police commands.

Witness protection: outlook 2009–10

In 2009–10, we expect to:

- offer interim protection to 95 per cent of eligible people within two days, assess 100 applications, and admit 78 new people to the program
- continue to deliver education and marketing presentations to promote witness protection services to client agencies throughout Queensland
- continue to develop MOUs and working relationships with government departments to assist in implementing the *Witness Protection Act 2000*
- liaise with other Australasian witness protection agencies to share information on the methodologies, trends, technologies, legislative developments and other issues likely to impact on managing witnesses.