

SUBMISSION TO THE EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE.

Inquiry into the Adequacy and Appropriateness of Prevention and Treatment Services for Alcohol and Illicit Drug Problems in Western Australia.

I am a Sergeant and the Officer in Charge of Wyndham Police Station.

I have previously served as the Officer in Charge of Balgo Multi Functional Police Facility for 2 ½ years leaving in June 2010; was previously a Detective at Carnarvon Detectives Office for 2 years and also within the Child Abuse Squad. I have also worked at Halls Creek Police Station for 3 years from 1999.

The Wyndham Policing District covers an area of nearly 48,000 square kilometres with a compliment of 10 Police Officers and 2 Aboriginal Police Liaison Officers. Wyndham Police provides 1 Police Officer on a 2 week rotational basis at Oombulgurri Multi Functional Police Facility in line with recommendations from the Sue Gordon Report and the '*Gordon Implementation Program*'.

Wyndham Policing Strategies have identified a number of key issues

- The majority of tasks attended by Police are alcohol related.
- The majority of all offences committed are alcohol related
- Family groups from Wyndham and Oombulgurri Aboriginal Community feuding over historical matters causing community unrest
- Increase in juvenile involvement in antisocial and criminal behaviour
- Limited resources and intervention for juveniles involved in alcohol and illicit drug domestic environments

The causal factors for these issues revolve around;

- Alcohol abuse itself;
- Anti Social Behaviour;
- Domestic and Non Domestic Assaults;

- An influx of adults and juveniles to Wyndham from alcohol restricted outlying communities including Oombulgurri Aboriginal Community;
- Lack of care and supervision of parents affected by alcohol;
- Juvenile offenders not taking advantage of the Education provided;
- Lack of services and availability of resources for juveniles in need of short term and long time care i.e. youth hostel/shelter
- Truancy;
- Unemployment

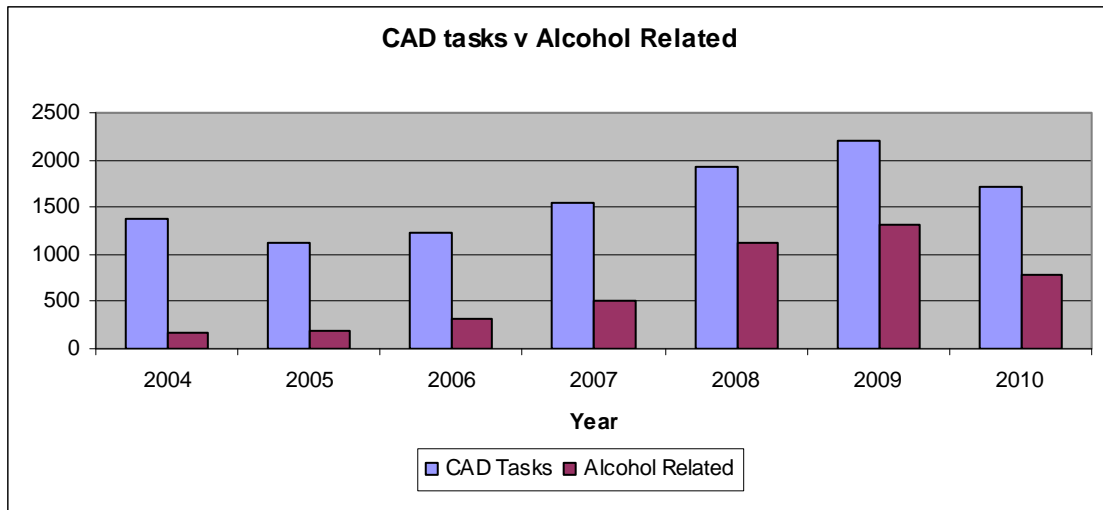
Wyndham Police are regularly exposed at the frontline to issues associated with alcohol and drug abuse together with other broader social concerns. This initial and first stage involvement requires us to assume a lead role in identifying relevant strategies to reduce criminal and antisocial behaviour.

The strategies and protocols employed are developed in consultation with other government and non government agencies to ensure a joint approach is taken to tackle the identified issues.

A strong partnership exists between Wyndham Police and many agencies including Department for Child Protection (DCP), Health, Shire, Education Department, Ngnowar- Aerwah, Joongarri House and many other agencies that are integral in bringing relevant services to people in need.

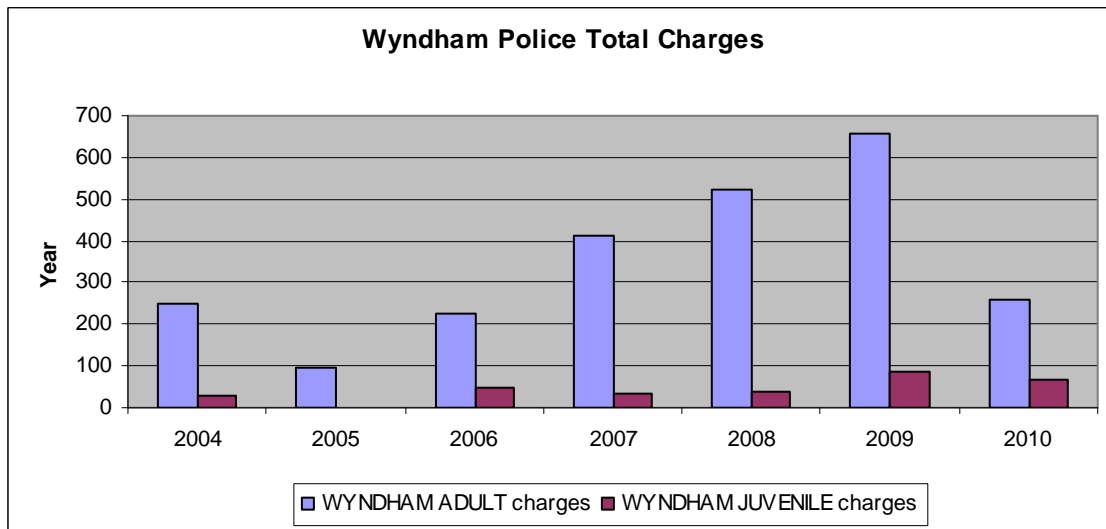
Since 2004 Wyndham Police have experienced an increase in workload as a result of the abuse of alcohol by Wyndham Community residents, itinerant travellers from outlying communities and other community members who have chosen to leave their respective communities and reside within Wyndham.

The following graph depicts the total amount in CAD tasks from 2004 to present.



It must be noted that methods of collecting data involving alcohol related incidents in the earlier years was limited and the figures are not a true representation of the influence of alcohol with police tasking.

The following graph depicts the amount of charged persons by Wyndham Police from 2004 to present.



Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) is utilised for all station tasking, including process service (summonses and restraint orders), RBT actions and escorts of prisoners. Many of these day to day tasks are never going to be alcohol related, which makes the statistics that are alcohol related even more compelling.

OOMBULGURRI ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY

Oombulgurri Aboriginal Community is located approximately 210 kilometres by road from Wyndham and easily accessible by air. Community members regularly charter aircraft to take the 15 minute flight from the community to Wyndham.

In recent years Oombulgurri was subject to a coronial inquest resulting in adverse findings and as a result a permanent police presence is now in place within the community.

Due to the impact of alcohol and certain family groups ruling the community a strong co-ordinated approach to reduce domestic violence, child abuse and antisocial behaviour was taken.

This strong stance was enhanced by imposing Section 175 Liquor Restrictions through the combined efforts of the Drug and Alcohol Office, Police and the Minister for Racing Gaming and Liquor.

Effectively these restrictions prohibit the conveyance, possession or consumption of alcohol within the Oombulgurri Community.

As a result of these restrictions, multiple charges relating to child abuse being preferred on various community members and the loss of control by certain family groups a majority of the community has relocated to Wyndham.

The impact of their relocation is being felt by not only Wyndham Police but also other agencies involved in delivering proactive and reactive programs relating to alcohol and illicit drug abuse.

The following figures indicate the increase of workload to Wyndham Police as a result of Oombulgurri community members relocating to Wyndham.

Oombulgurri Police Tasking/Offences 07/09/08 – 07/11/08

Reported Offences IMS	5
Drunk Detainees	2
Charges	2
Total Tasks	11
Alcohol related	5
Family and Domestic Violence related	6
DV and Alcohol related (combined)	5

Oombulgurri Police Tasking/Offences 08/11/08 – 07/01/09

Reported Offences (police initiated breach bail)	1
Drunk Detainees	NIL
Charges	1
Total Tasks	2
Alcohol related	NIL
Family and Domestic Violence related	NIL
DV and Alcohol related (combined)	NIL

Wyndham Police Tasking/Offences 07/09/08 – 07/11/08

Reported Offences IMS	62
Family/Domestic Violence Incidents	42
Drunk Detainees	6
Charges	136
Total Tasks (CDS)	324
Total Persons in Custody	62
Alcohol related (IMS)	39
DV and Alcohol related (combined)	36

Wyndham Police Tasking/Offences 08/11/08 – 07/01/09

Reported Offences IMS	77
Family/Domestic Violence Incidents	54
Drunk Detainees	8
Charges	152
Total Tasks	410
Total Persons in Custody	101
Alcohol Related Incidents (IMS)	65
DV and Alcohol related (combined)	43

Wyndham Police Tasking/Offences 08/11/09 – 07/01/10

Reported Offences IMS	120
Family/Domestic Violence Incidents	63
Drunk Detainees	
Charges	76
Total Tasks	492
Total Persons in Custody	113
Alcohol Related Incidents (IMS)	77
DV and Alcohol related (combined)	53

ALCOHOL ABUSE

Wyndham Police regularly experience the effects of dealing with alcohol effected people and are also constantly dealing with the greater social effect of this form of drug abuse.

The consumption of alcohol by individuals not only effects the individual that indulges but also the wider family in terms of domestic violence, health problems, child abuse, education and lack of care and responsibility of their children.

Police are more likely to be involved in being reactive to the issues caused by alcohol consumption and liaise closely with various agencies within Wyndham when this issue presents itself.

These agencies include however are not limited to Ngnowar-Aerwah's 'Night Patrol' and 'Sobering Up Shelter'. If children or an incident of domestic violence is

involved then police will liaise with DCP and the East Kimberley Domestic Violence Hub to assist with other relevant services.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic Violence is a serious concern in any community and one that is very evident within the Kimberley and Wyndham. Wyndham Police are regularly involved with incidences of Domestic Violence and take a no tolerance approach with any incidents.

A close relationship exists between Wyndham District Hospital, DCP, Ngnowar-Aerwah and the East Kimberley Domestic Violence Hub. Other agencies that are involved in guiding the outcome are Department of Housing and Department of Justice.

JUVENILE ENGAGEMENT

In many instances the reason for children roaming the streets late at night is as a result of living in a volatile family home and their unwillingness to put themselves in harms way, ultimately culminating in the juvenile offending.

Active involvement between Wyndham Police and DCP occurs to identify, refer and deal with the issue as to why the juveniles are walking around at night. Sometimes the mere Police and DCP involvement spurs the parents into taking more care and control of their child.

To reduce the juvenile offending Wyndham Police play a major role in running various programs such as 'Blue Light Discos', 'Young Men's Group' and regular school visits by both police officers and also Aboriginal Police Liaison Officers.

'Young Men's Group'

The young men's group is a joint program between Wyndham Police and Ngnowar-Aerwah and is co-ordinated by our two Aboriginal Police Liaison Officers.

The group meets on a weekly basis and the programs consists of weekly trips out bush, followed by talking sessions on topics relevant to young men.

It has proven to be an extremely effective mechanism to convey messages of health such as alcohol and drug abuse and provides the opportunity for staff to identify children that may be in need of other relevant services.

This program is not currently funded and is resourced by WA Police and Ngnowar-Aerwah.

'Blue Light Discos'

Wyndham Police co-ordinate regular discos within Wyndham to provide the opportunity for officers to engage with juveniles in a more social environment.

They are staffed by Wyndham Police and Aboriginal Police Liaison Officers. On average approximately 150 juveniles attend and know they will always have an enjoyable time in a safe and controlled environment.

'School Cop'

A new initiative will be implemented by Wyndham Police to have officers regularly attend schools and give talks on various subjects including drug awareness (GURD).

This involvement directly at the school will provide a 'friendly face' to the sometimes confronting image a police officer has with juveniles. Their attendance will also break down any barriers between police and teachers and allow a stronger relationship to develop, enabling communication to occur on various

topics including juveniles deemed to be at risk. Appropriate referrals can then be made and relevant services engaged to ensure the safety and health of the child.

'Truancy Patrol'

Aboriginal Police Liaison Officers attend all schools within Wyndham and liaise with staff to identify truants. Attendance is then made by the school to the students' house to ascertain as to why they are not attending school.

Such a program regularly identifies concerning issues at home which is then reported to police or DCP for investigation if required. Police will engage with the family and identify how to progress with the matter and other agencies that can assist such as counselling programs within Ngnowar-Aerwah are brought into the scenario.

CONCERNING AREAS

'Lack of Programmes for women/girls'

Historically within small towns the pendulum swings towards programs catered towards males causing a further disempowerment to young women.

Currently there are limited programs that are specifically tailored towards young women within Wyndham. This is concerning as the community needs to empower such a demographic to enable successful progress into issues such as health and child abuse.

'Lack of resources and short term accommodation for juveniles'

The continuous cycle of alcohol and drug abuse by some parents places juveniles in an untenable position and resources are required to provide a safe place to stay for short and sometimes extended periods.

Whilst we presently have resources such as 'Night Patrol', 'Sobering Up Shelter' and 'Wyndham Rehabilitation Centre' catered to deal with those who chose to

abuse alcohol and other illicit drugs, we do not have anything that may prevent juveniles from being led into this damaging portion of society.

If Wyndham Police, DCP or other relevant agency identify a child that is in need of care and protection there are currently no hostels or shelters that cater for providing a safe and clean environment to allow 'time out' for that child. The irony with this situation is that there are more reactive resources for people who chose to abuse alcohol or illicit drugs than there are for children who sometimes have no choice of their situation of being neglected.

'Unwillingness to attend available services'

In my very short time at Wyndham I have had discussions with various agencies and effected people who state they are unwilling to participate in various programs or services due to fear of who is working at the relevant areas.

Unfortunately within a small community the victim may be faced with a relative or associate of the offender being employed by the agency that is there to assist. Such a scenario can cause the victim to not engage with the service that can assist with their recovery or progression towards a successful outcome.

CONCLUSION

Policing within Wyndham can be challenging and confronting at time with officers having to deal with a multitude of scenarios whilst taking into consideration many factors.

It is pleasing to see agencies working together to identify their own agency goals and objectives yet committed to achieving set common goals and objectives.

This co-ordinated approach, constant fine tuning of service delivery and adapting to community needs will hopefully ensure a safe and better Wyndham.