

Sheriff/Community Development Officers Initiative

Optimising Value: The Sheriff/CDO Initiative
and the challenges of undertaking evaluation
in remote Aboriginal communities

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Camels in Outback WA and the need for evaluation flexibility

Designing evaluation in remote areas requires planning and flexibility

(your interview space may be populated with camels!)



Introduction – The Sheriff/CDO Initiative

- One of eight short-term strategies on the DCS *‘Reducing Aboriginal Imprisonment Strategy’* (2006).
- Initiative aims to reduce fine default, and increase the use of ‘time to pay’ options, work and development orders, and other alternatives to satisfy fines in remote areas of WA.
- The initiative is targeted at offenders in regional and remote areas of WA who are in fine default, who need fine related services, or are issued a WDO directly from Court.

Background to the Sheriff/CDO Initiative

- Fines are the most frequently used penalty in the justice system of WA
- Initiative was a response to fine related issues in WA
- Fine default – non-payment of fines
- Work and Development Order (WDO) – adult community based order. Court fine converted to community corrections activities

Objectives of the Sheriff/CDO Initiative

- Deliver coordinated justice services
- Improve communication links and increase cross-cultural awareness
- Establish and maintain close working relationships
- Ensure the integrity of the fine as an effective sentencing option
- Reduce fine default related imprisonment by promoting realistic payment plans and community work
- Contribute to reducing recidivism
- Implement a scheme for CenterPay direct debit deduction



The Overall Role of the Sheriff/CDO

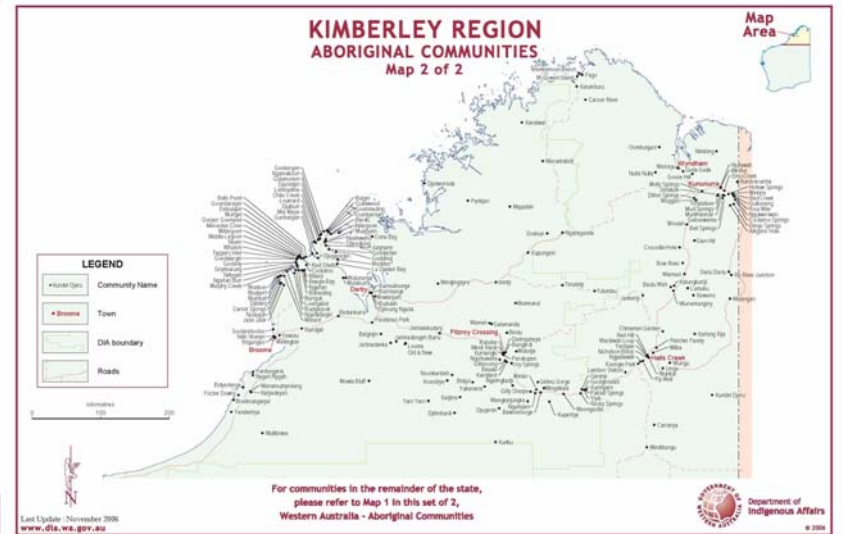
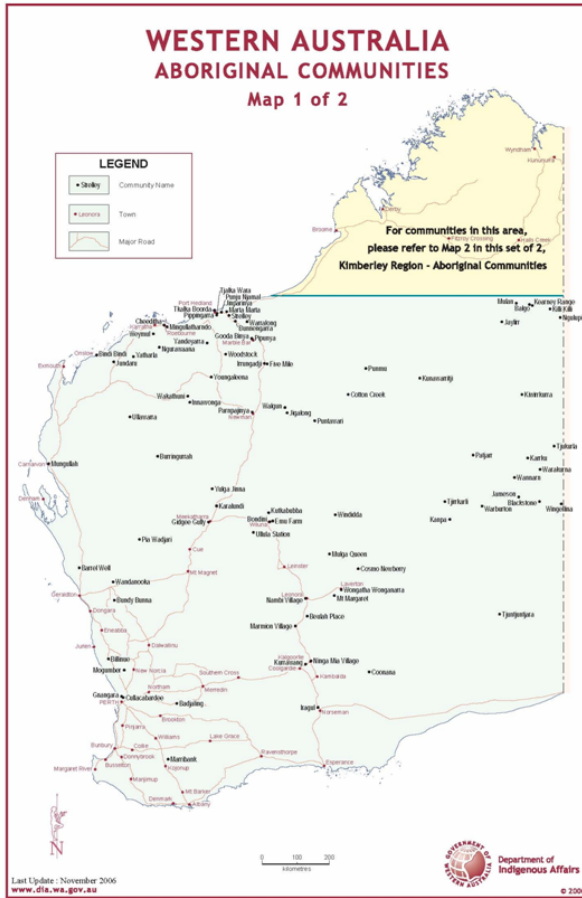
- Providing information on fines enforcement
- Collecting payments for fines
- Advising Courts and releasing authorities on disposition of offenders
- Making arrangements for fines to be paid by instalments
- Serving notices to report for Work and Development Orders
- Arranging and supervising WDOs
- Contributing to the development and implementation of culturally appropriate programs
- Assisting Aboriginal persons in dealing with the justice system and other agencies
- Assisting in the development of other programmes and initiatives to support the rehabilitation, and re-socialisation of offenders

Background to the Sheriff/CDO Evaluation

- Process evaluation to assess implementation and make recommendations for improvement
- 42 interviews with stakeholders
- Visited 23 remote and very remote Aboriginal communities in the four regions of WA – Kimberley, Gascoyne/Midwest, Pilbara, and the Goldfields.



Map Communities in WA



Planning and Undertaking Evaluation in Remote communities

- Communities provide unique contexts but also challenges
- Language
 - Consideration for language is important when working with Aboriginal people in remote areas as English is generally spoken as a second language.
- Culturally Appropriate Data Gathering
 - Face-to-face interviews were conducted as this allowed time for discussions and exploration of the topic.

Planning and Undertaking Evaluation cont...



- Travel/Accessing Participants
 - Access to remote communities is tiring and time consuming
- Ethics
 - Consideration should be given to a standardised and respected code of ethics
- Community Benefit
 - It is important for evaluation to provide benefit to communities

Planning and Undertaking Evaluation cont...

- Community Collaboration and Relationship Building
 - Sheriff/CDOs had spent months and in some cases years developing relationships with the community people
- Prior Community Consultation
 - All communities we visited were contacted in the planning phases
- Project Reference Group
- Conducting Interviews as a Female evaluator

Problems on the Road and the Need for Flexibility

- Weather Conditions
- Lore Activities
- Funerals
- Remote
Communication and
Vehicle Problems



Conclusion

- Remote evaluation is an interesting and stimulating experience
- Unpredictable challenges
- Evaluation planning
- flexibility in evaluation design.
- Consultation with communities
- Communication and language
- Culturally appropriate data gathering
- Respect for participants
- ethical and moral considerations
- Community benefit

Outback WA – Gascoyne/Murchison

