

A multi-stage evaluation of an intervention program aimed to address child sexual abuse in Indigenous communities

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Sexual abuse of children has no cultural
or social boundaries

Indigenous children are 2-7 times more
likely to be sexually abused

Despite higher under-reporting

A multi-stage evaluation of an intervention program aimed to address child sexual abuse in Indigenous communities

Section A- What is Operation RESET?

Section B- The planned evaluation strategy

Section C- The evaluation output

Operation RESET

A community engagement initiative aimed at addressing child sexual abuse in remote Indigenous communities

Joint operation between WA police and Department of child protection

Operation RESET

Three main sites ~ 2009-2011

- Mid-west Gascoyne
- Pilbara
- Goldfields

Each initiative was for approx. 18 months



Operation RESET

Preventing and responding to child sexual abuse must

- be a **shared responsibility**
- address the underlying causes and contextual issues
- enhance children's safety and wellbeing by **empowering** families and communities
- bring together service providers

Core principles

Community engagement

- a proactive, collaborative approach between community and government

Core principles

Acknowledgment of the underlying causes and context of CSA

- health and welfare, housing, education and employment
- significant historical issues, such as the loss of cultural identity, unresolved grief and trauma, and the breakdown of community and family structures that need to be addressed.

Core principles

Capacity Building

- provision of services that strengthen and empower families and communities

Core principles

Whole-of-government approach

- Building capacity relies on the delivery of a whole of government response to crimes of child sexual abuse

Stages of implementation

- Stage 1 - Identification of target communities
- Stage 2 - Compiling the core project team
- Stage 3 - Consultation with community members and service providers
- Stage 4 – Implementation
- **Stage 5: Documentation of activities and outcomes**
- Phase 6: Review of initiatives
- Phase 7: Deployment exit strategy

Planned evaluation strategy

1. Interviews with stakeholders
2. Construction of a scale to measure attitudes to child sexual abuse in remote Indigenous communities
3. Comprehensive data collection of day to day activities of Operation RESET at the first site (Mid-West Gascoyne Region)

Actual evaluation output

Published papers

- Theorising paper (2012)
- Qualitative evaluation using interviews (2015)
- Quantitative evaluation (2015)
- Scale evaluation (2015)
- Indigenous interviews (in prep)

STUDY ONE- Theoretical paper

Mace, G., & Powell, M. B. (2012). A new child protection strategy for Aboriginal communities in Western Australia. *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, 24(2), 273–283.

- Information on core principles
- Stages of implementation
- Evaluation strategy

STUDY ONE

Planned evaluation strategy

- 1- ongoing quality control evaluation
 - Maintaining standards of service delivery
 - Day-to-day level
 - Exchange of information amongst community members and front- line workers
- 2- Formal evaluation
 - Attitude survey
 - In-depth interviews

Study two- interviews

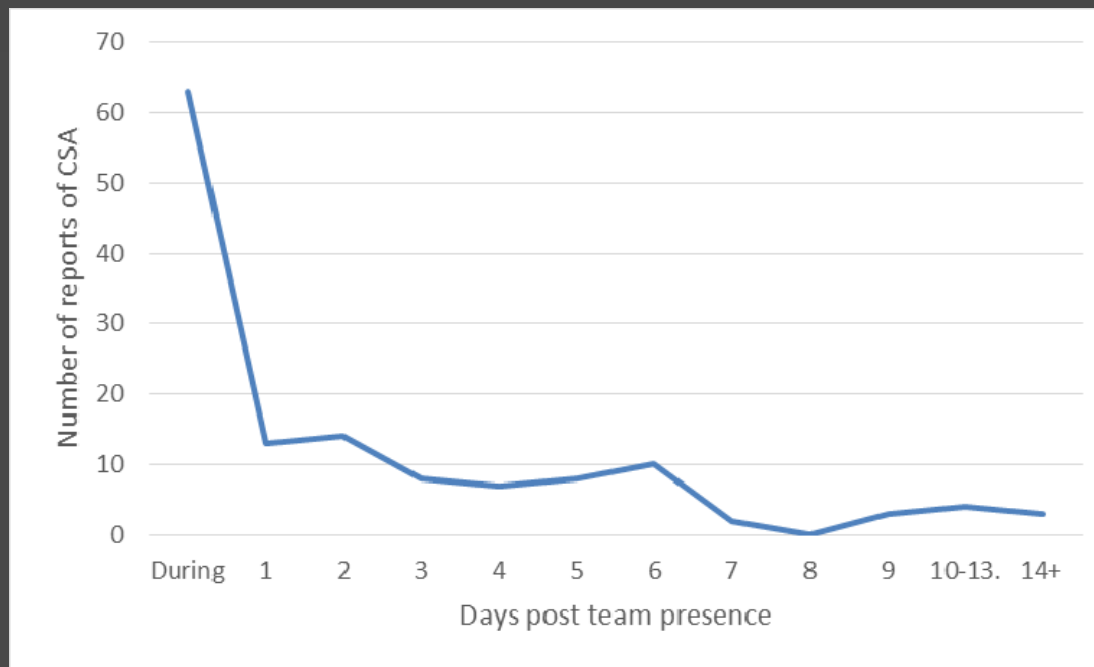
Mace, G., Powell, M. B., & Benson, M. (2015). Evaluation of Operation RESET: An initiative for addressing child sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 48(1), 82–103.

1. **Proactive outreach** (i.e., the model brought specialized services to the people)
2. **Capacity building** (i.e., the model improved skills, competencies, knowledge and abilities of professionals and communities)
3. **Holistic and integrated service provision**
4. **Genuine engagement based on trust**

Study three: Quantitative

Bailey, C., Mace, G., Powell, M., & Benson, M. (2015). Evaluation of a collaborative operation to improve child sexual abuse reporting in Western Australian Indigenous communities. *Criminal Justice and Behaviour*, 42(12), 1303– 1315.

1. Operational data collected by the intervention team



Study three: Quantitative

Reports and arrests from all regions of WA 2007-2012

Mixed between (**intervention**) within (**time**) design

Intervention

- intervention vs non-intervention areas

Time periods

- 18 months prior...
- 18 months during ...
- 18 months post intervention

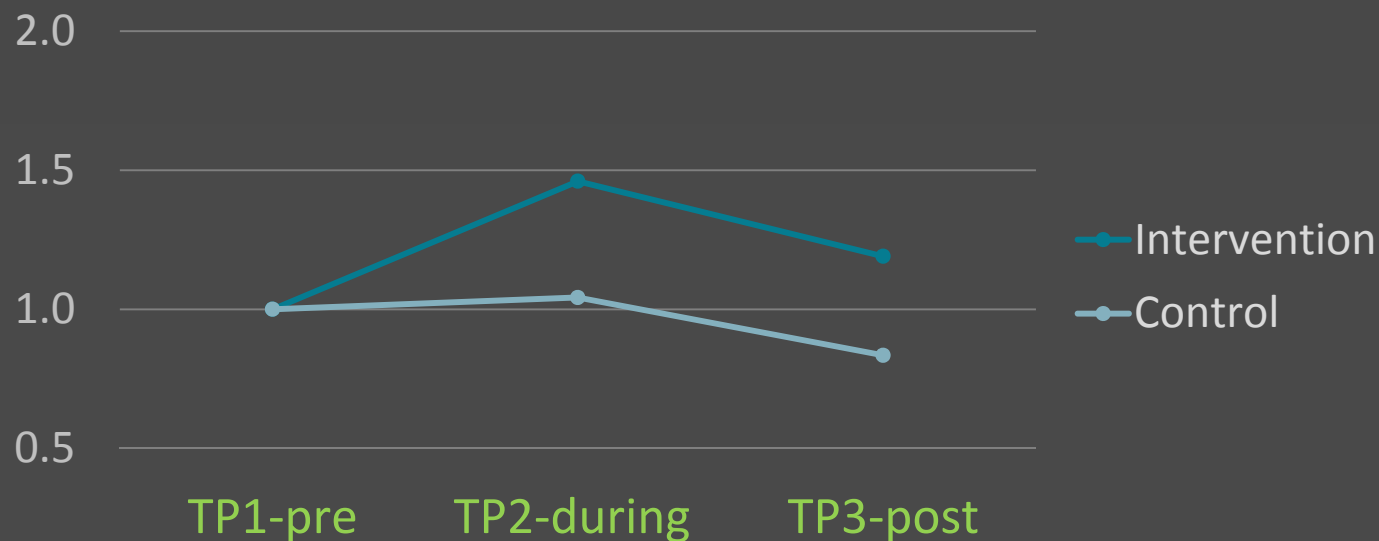
Study three: Quantitative

Based evaluation on the aims of RESET to:

Uncover, respond to and prevent
child sexual abuse

Uncover.....

Reports increased almost 50%

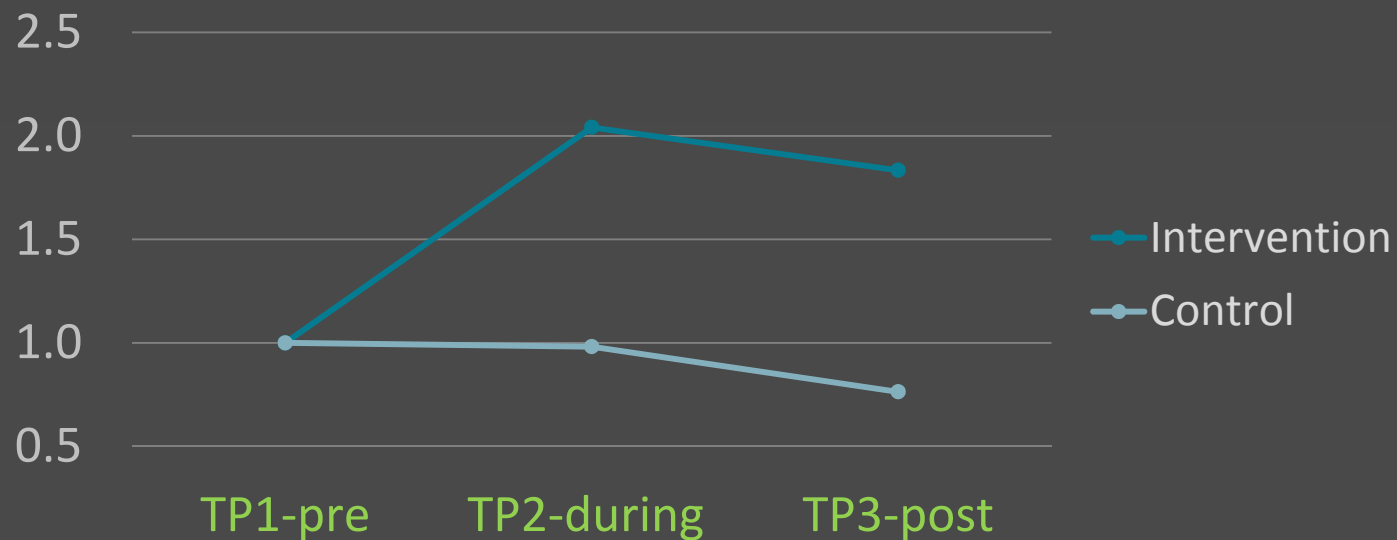


Intervention areas (*Mean difference* = 9.67, *SE* = 2.60, *p* < 0.001)

Non-intervention areas (*Mean difference* = 2.33, *SE* = 2.66, *p* = 0.38)

....respond to....

Arrests increased over 100%

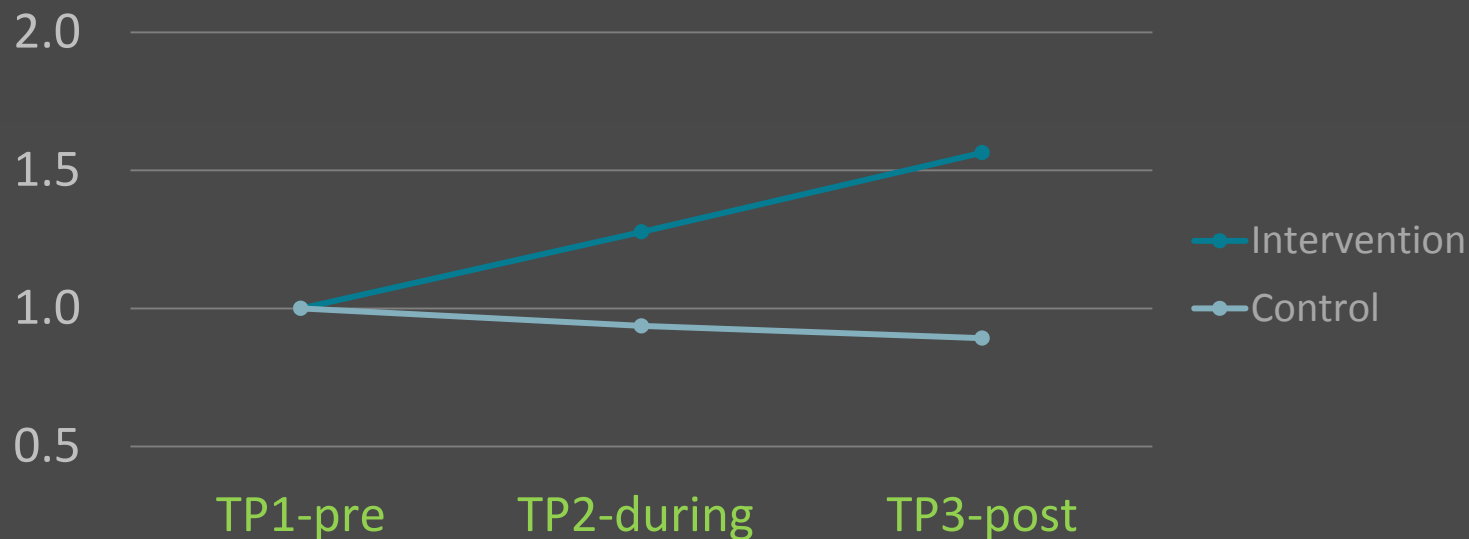


Intervention areas (*Mean difference* = 8.33, *SE* = 3.07, *p* = .007)

Non-intervention areas (*Mean difference* = 0.50, *SE* = 2.29, *p* = 0.83)

....and prevent

Arrest per report rate improved...and then improved more



Intervention by time interaction effect was significant
(Wald χ^2 (2, $N = 24$) = 22.32, $p < 0.001$).

Sentencing rates

At primary RESET site

- First nine months of RESET - 42%
 - 7 out of 12 charged cases proceeded to court - 58%
 - 5 out of 7 cases convicted- 71%
- Second nine months of RESET- 67%
 - 8 out of 12 cases proceeded to court- 67%
 - All of these cases were convicted-100%

STUDY FOUR- QUESTIONNAIRE

Bailey, C., Mace, G., & Powell, M. (2015). Measuring community and service provider attitudes to child sexual abuse in remote Indigenous communities in Western Australia. *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law*, 1–11.

- to evaluate a scale to measure attitudes to child sexual abuse in remote Australian Indigenous communities.

Compared across Indigenous status

And three groups:

- Service providers living outside the community (58%)
- Service providers living within the community (33%)
- Community members living within the community (9%)

STUDY FOUR- QUESTIONNAIRE

Examples of statements, asked on a 10 point
Likert scale for agreement

*In the past year, my understanding of child sexual abuse
has increased*

*Most people in my community are still scared to talk about
child sexual abuse*

*Government don't talk to people in my community about
child sexual abuse*

STUDY FOUR- QUESTIONNAIRE

Evaluation of the scale

- Poor scale reliability
- No matched data pre and post (difficult to collect this)
- Factor analysis revealed four factors from an abridged scale
 1. Entrenched issues
 2. Personal understanding and knowledge
 3. Communication between community and government
 4. Community action

STUDY FOUR- QUESTIONNAIRE

Main outcomes

Item 3: Reports of child sexual abuse in my community are not taken seriously by police and DCP

Service providers (live out)	Mean (SD) = 2.29 (2.21)
Service providers (live in)	Mean (SD) = 2.77 (2.83)
Community members	Mean (SD) = 4.91 (2.55)

$$\chi^2(2, 116) = 3.13, p = .006$$

STUDY FOUR- QUESTIONNAIRE

Main outcomes

Factor 3: Relationship between community and government

- Indigenous respondents much more likely to have concerns

Indigenous Mean (SD) = 4.24(2.79)

Non-Indigenous Mean (SD) = 2.38 (2.40)

$t(116) = .07, p = .003$

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Study five- Indigenous interviews

In preparation: *Indigenous stakeholders' evaluation of Operation RESET, a community engagement initiative to address child sexual abuse in remote Indigenous communities*
(Intended journal: Australian psychologist)

- Thematic analysis
- Two groups- **Indigenous stakeholders**
 - 4 Family members supporting a child who had been abused
 - 5 service providers who lived in the community
- Three main themes:
 - **Communication**
 - **Presence and action**
 - **Working together**

Study five- Indigenous interviews

- Communication
 - proactive engagement with community
 - Reassurance
 - Talking about abuse
 - Being heard and acknowledged

Service provider: “I really liked the way that they came and asked us... ‘who are the right people to speak to?’ ...I just don’t think that there was a person in the community that they didn’t take the time to talk to.”

Family member: “They are very understanding. Just all I can say to that is they listened.”

Study five- Indigenous interviews

- Presence and action
 - Consistency
 - Taking action
 - Enabling disclosure
 - Removal of perpetrators

Service provider: “In the start it was education of the community. They started off with engagement, engagement, engagement and then it moved to support. And when they started getting disclosures and charges, they changed their way of working with the community. They didn’t just get the disclosures and run back to Perth. They were there...working with the family after the disclosure. I don’t think I’ve ever seen that before.”

Study five- Indigenous interviews

- Working together
 - Trust
 - Positive relationships
 - Collective responsibility

The team leader “has got the spiel that he just says over and over about it’s everybody’s responsibility. It’s not just the police, it’s not just DCP, it’s not just the strong women. He spent a lot of time bringing them all together.”

Multi-staged evaluation- key outcomes

- Demonstrated that it IS possible to increase reporting rates
- Better service provision and outcomes are possible
- Exit strategy?

Study five- Indigenous interviews

Looking to the future- interviewees had significant concern about the exit of RESET

The team were “a great presence. I see a difference...as soon as that presence is lost, it will all flare up again.”

Post evaluation....

- Anecdotally....
- After the intervention community members felt discouraged and there was a subsequent loss of trust
- Subsequent issues with perpetrators returning to communities without adequate support services.

Post evaluation....

Other evidence is through **media**

- In one (former intervention) town, there were **four young person suicides in the five months** prior to the media article (ABC: 2016)
- Suggests that there are strong stressors on children, one of which may be exposure to child sexual abuse

Conclusion-

Diverse methodologies in evaluation

Program outcomes

- Community engagement
- High quality service provision
- Whole of government approaches



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