Community-based approaches to sexual offender reintegration

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Acknowledgement of lived experiences of violence

ANROWS acknowledges the lives and experiences of the women and children affected by domestic, family and sexual violence who are represented in this report. We recognise the individual stories of courage, hope and resilience that form the basis of ANROWS research.

Caution: Some people may find parts of this content confronting or distressing. Recommended support services include: 1800 RESPECT – 1800 737 732 and Lifeline – 13 11 14.

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Acronyms

ANROWS	Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety
CMP	Cultural Mentoring Program
CoSA	Circles of Support and Accountability
DPSOA	*Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act 2003* (Qld)
GLM	Good Lives Model
OARS	Offenders Aid and Rehabilitation Services of South Australia
QCS	Queensland Corrective Services
RNR	Risk-needs-reponsivity

Definitions and concepts

Core member An individual who has been incarcerated in relation to sexual offending and around whom a Circle of Support and Accountability is formed following release from prison.

Desistance The cessation of offending behaviour over time.

Good Lives Model An approach to offender rehabilitation that emphasises offender strengths and goals. Its aim is to support the individual to develop and maintain a "good life—both for the individual and the broader community" (Ward, 2002).

Perpetrator An individual who commits acts of domestic, family and/or sexual violence. In the report, this term is used to refer to individuals who have committed sexual offences specifically.

Reintegration The process of rejoining the community after release from prison.

Risk-needs-responivity models An approach to offender rehabilitation that seeks to address offender deficits and risk factors (e.g. antisocial cognition and/or peers) (Bonta & Andrews, 2017).

Sexual offender An individual who has been convicted in relation to one or more criminal offences of a sexual nature.

Sexual violence Any sexual act (including rape and molestation) perpetrated against an individual who has not consented, or cannot consent, to the act.

Victim/survivor of sexual violence An individual who has been the primary target of any type of sexual violence.

Executive summary

Background

Sexual violence against adults (especially women) and children is widespread in Australia (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2018; Price-Robertson, Bromfield, & Vassallo, 2010). Sexual violence refers to any act of a sexual nature (e.g. rape or molestation) perpetrated against an individual who has not consented, or cannot consent, to the act. Numerous adverse consequences of sexual violence have been documented in research (e.g. Walsh, Zwi, Woolfenden, & Shlonsky, 2007). It is therefore unsurprising that sexual offending and those who perpetrate it are a focus of enduring community concern (Bollinger, Seidler, & Kemp, 2012; Devilly & Le Grand, 2015).

During the initial period following the release of high-risk sexual offenders from prison into the community, the risk of reoffending is at its highest (Hanson, Harris, Helmus, & Thornton, 2014). As Hanson et al.'s (2014) research found, the rate of sexual recidivism for high-risk sexual offenders decreases substantially the longer an offender remains offence-free in the community, such that "high-risk sex offenders may not be high risk forever" (p. 2792). Research shows that sexual offenders who receive support during this time are less likely to reoffend (Willis & Grace, 2009). Understanding community-based reintegration programs (i.e. programs that support offenders to re-enter the community and adopt law-abiding lifestyles following a period of incarceration) is therefore vital. However, few programs that provide this support have to date been examined, particularly in the Australian context.

Research aims and questions

The research aimed to contribute towards building an evidence base about community-based reintegration programs in order to inform the development and operation of community-based reintegration programs for sexual offenders, and thus to enhance community safety. It begins to address the gap in knowledge identified above by examining two reintegration programs for high-risk sexual offenders, and by seeking the views of victims/survivors of sexual violence about sexual offender reintegration. Broadly, the research explored how the selected community-based reintegration programs seek to reduce sexual recidivism, and how the needs of victims/survivors of sexual violence can shape such programs.

The two programs selected for the study were:

1. Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) in Adelaide, South Australia
2. the Cultural Mentoring Program (CMP) in Townsville, Queensland.

The CoSA program and the CMP were chosen because they are two of the few community-based programs available in Australia that support sexual offenders to reintegrate into the community following a period of incarceration for sexual violence convictions. Furthermore, both programs are relatively new, and the study aims to provide crucial insights into their operation in the early stages.

As both programs are relatively recently established, and have had small participant numbers to date, the research did not seek to determine their effectiveness by way of measuring sexual recidivism. Instead, the research questions addressed were:

- How do these programs seek to reduce sexual recidivism?
- Which program characteristics are key?
- How can core program tactics be applied more effectively?

Specifically, the research aimed to:

1. examine the CoSA program and CMP with a view to building a foundation for evidence-based practice
2. investigate how participation in these programs might more effectively reduce sexual recidivism among high-risk offenders
3. make evidence-based practical recommendations about reintegration programs of this nature
4. produce a data collection and evaluation framework for each of the programs to enable the programs to be monitored in a sustainable way in the future
5. identify how the needs of women and child victims/survivors of sexual violence could be better met by these two programs.

Methodology

The research adopted a qualitative approach to examine the two programs. Drawing on a multi-layered theoretical framework incorporating elements of both the Good Lives Model (GLM) (Ward, 2002) and risk-need-reponsivity (RNR) model (Bonta & Andrews, 2017), as well as theories of desistance (as outlined in detail in the main body of this report), the project explored how the two programs support offender reintegration and desistance. It also considered how they can do so most effectively and sustainably in the future.

The research project comprised three components:

1. an examination of CoSA in Adelaide, South Australia
2. an examination of the CMP in Townsville, Queensland
3. an exploration of the views of victims/survivors of sexual violence about sexual offender reintegration.

Semi-structured qualitative interviews were undertaken with a number of participant groups, including:

- offenders who were currently involved or had been recently involved in the CoSA program (n=3), and offenders who were currently participating in or had recently participated in the CMP (n=14 interviews with 11 individuals; i.e. three individuals opted to be interviewed twice)
- staff who have played a role in developing, delivering or managing the CoSA program (n=5) or CMP (n=6)
- a range of government, non-government and private stakeholders who work in tandem with either the CoSA program (n=3) or CMP (n=12)
- volunteers involved in the CoSA program (n=7)
- victims/survivors of sexual violence (n=33).

A broadly feminist approach was adopted for the component of the project that explored the views of victims/survivors about the reintegration of sexual offenders. Feminist approaches to research privilege the safety and wellbeing of participants, position participants as experts on their own lives and experiences (Reinharz, 1992; Stanley & Wise, 1993), and give primacy to the frequently overlooked perspectives of victims/survivors. More specifically, a feminist phenomenology, which sought to uncover the meanings that victims/survivors

ascribe to their experiences (Reinharz, 1992), was utilised. Thirty-three victims/survivors participated in qualitative semi-structured interviews for the research. Participants were invited to tell as much of their story of sexual victimisation and resistance as they were comfortable telling, as background to the interview questions. Interviewees were then asked a short series of questions about their needs and views surrounding the period of offender reintegration.

Data from the three components of the study (i.e. findings from explorations of CoSA, findings from explorations of the CMP, and findings from interviews with victims/survivors) were coded deductively (i.e. categorised according to factors known to reduce sexual recidivism) and inductively (i.e. according to new factors that emerged as relevant to preventing sexual recidivism) (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Following this, a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was undertaken, which sought to explore the views, perceptions and/or experiences of participants (Caulfield & Hill, 2014). Furthermore, an exploration of the convergences and divergences across these findings (Caulfield & Hill, 2014; Mason, 2002) was undertaken in light of the theoretical framework.

Key findings

A number of key findings emerged from the interviews with the participant groups described above. These findings are outlined in turn below, and are presented in relation to each of the study's three main components.

Circles of Support and Accountability

The study involved an examination of Australia's first CoSA program, established in 2015, and operated by the Offenders Aid and Rehabilitation Services of South Australia (OARS). CoSA are groups of trained community volunteers who support sexual offenders (usually those who offend against children) to reintegrate into the community after a period of imprisonment, with the twin objectives of reintegrating offenders into the community and reducing the sexual victimisation of children (Richards & McCartan, 2018). The study demonstrates that the CoSA program

successfully undertakes a range of activities with core members (i.e. offender participants in the program) that could reasonably be expected to reduce reoffending, in line with current knowledge about sexual reoffending.

For example, CoSA provide core members with the social support systems that they lack and work to connect core members with other community supports (both welfare service providers and social avenues such as community groups), including family where appropriate. CoSA volunteers work to address core members' justifications of, excuses for and minimisations of their offending. In doing so, they role-model appropriate behaviours and social interactions, by demonstrating socially acceptable language and mores. They actively reduce stressors in core members' lives, including those stressors (e.g. family issues, isolation) that research shows can lead to reoffending (see Bonnar-Kidd, 2010). CoSA volunteers implicitly help core members create Good Lives (Bonta & Andrews, 2017) by supporting them to achieve health, social and other goals. They are strongly future-focused and intent on supporting core members to develop new, law-abiding identities. They support core members to meet their release requirements, which have been imposed to prevent the core member from reoffending. CoSA volunteers also challenge core members' inappropriate thoughts and behaviours (e.g. minimisations of their offending), support them to avoid trigger behaviours, and report any concerns to the program. Addressing these concerns in the circle or by having the relevant core member breached is another critical role of CoSA. Both in helping core members to see the value in adhering to these rules and by supporting them to meet the rules, these circles are undoubtedly contributing to the safety of the community. In supporting core members to avoid technical breaches of these requirements (i.e. those conditions of their release into the community that would not invite criminal justice consequences under other circumstances, such as adhering to a curfew or not consuming alcohol), they may also be contributing towards criminal justice cost savings.

A number of tensions nonetheless exist in the CoSA program in its current iteration, which ought to be resolved as it matures. Chief among these are resolving what makes a "suitable" core member and clarifying the role of paid staff and volunteers. A number of recommendations about the

program's development are proposed in this research report, and focus primarily on expanding the program, increasing volunteer participation, improving volunteer training, improving communications with stakeholders and the community, and securing increased funding and support. In addition, a research, evaluation and data collection framework was developed as part of the current research project in order to support the CoSA program to document its outcomes in future (see Appendix A).

Cultural Mentoring Program

This research shows that much good work is likewise being done in the CMP. The CMP involves the provision of cultural and spiritual support to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander sexual offenders released from prison into the community under Queensland's *Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act 2003* (DPSOA). In this program, Elders provide support to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander DPSOA offenders released into the Townsville area in the form of cultural and spiritual mentorship. The CMP helps participants to accept the value in adhering to the rules that govern their lives in the community, and supports them in culturally appropriate ways to do so. By helping participants to avoid the behaviours and circumstances that give rise to their offending, the program undoubtedly makes an important contribution to the safety of the community. In supporting offenders to avoid technical breaches of their release conditions (i.e. those conditions of their release into the community that would not invite criminal justice consequences under other circumstances, such as adhering to a curfew or not consuming alcohol), the CMP may also contribute to criminal justice cost saving by decreasing the work of the courts and the incidence of returns to prison.

The CMP, which focuses predominantly on "retraditionalisation" (LaFromboise, Trimble, & Mohatt, 1990, cited in Howell, 2008, p. 187)—that is, (re)connecting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individuals with aspects of traditional, pre-colonial culture—likely plays an important role as a gateway program for offenders, readying them to engage with other evidence-based measures (e.g. cognitive-behavioural programming). The program is thus broadly aligned with the GLM, a conceptual approach that is theoretically robust

(Leaming & Willis, 2016) and enjoys emerging empirical support. Moreover, the program's recognition of both the trauma in the life histories of participants and the context of colonisation that shapes this trauma is important for addressing the offending-related needs of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander offenders (see further Richards, 2015).

As with the CoSA program discussed above, however, this study found a number of tensions that exist in the delivery of the CMP, to which attention should be paid as the program develops. In particular, there is a need to resolve the extent to which offenders participating in the CMP ought to divulge their experiences of the program to other service providers to whom they report (e.g. probation and parole officers, psychologists). A number of recommendations from the CMP are put forward in light of the findings, primarily relating to: better data collection and reporting on the program; training for the Elders who deliver the program, especially on the correctional orders of the participants, as well as on ensuring offender accountability; a stronger focus on desistance beyond the life of the program; and the need for enhanced funding support to enable the program to be delivered more consistently and intensively. In addition, a research, evaluation and data collection framework was developed as part of the current research project in order to support the CMP to document its outcomes in future (see Appendix B).

While a number of findings emerged from the research that were common to both the CoSA program and CMP, the objective of the research was not to compare the programs directly. Both programs use community-based approaches to support the reintegration and desistance of individuals who have been incarcerated in relation to sexual offending. However, there are some key differences between the programs that make comparison inappropriate. Chief among these is a difference in focus: as the CMP caters specifically for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander offenders, its focus is specifically on culture, while the focus of the CoSA program is broader, fousing on all aspect of participants' lives. Furthermore, most offenders in the CoSA program had perpetrated sexual offences against children, whereas CMP participants had perpetrated sexual offences against both adults and children.

Victims/survivors of sexual violence

Adult victims/survivors interviewed for this research identified a range of needs that they experienced at the time of a perpetrator's release from prison. These predominantly related to a sense of safety, physical distance from the perpetrator, information about the perpetrator's release, therapeutic support, monitoring of the perpetrator and help for the perpetrator to address offending-related needs. While victims/survivors had highly varied views about the process of offender reintegration, in general they argued in favour of therapeutic interventions and containment for offenders.

Three key points emerged from the interviews with victims/survivors that further current understandings of their views about sexual offender reintegration. First, victims/survivors indicated that offender needs are intertwined with their own needs and the needs of communities more broadly. In other words, victims/survivors rarely characterised offender needs and victim/survivor needs as opposing. Instead, measures[1] to address offenders' behaviour and to reduce the risk that offenders may pose during the difficult transition into the community were characterised by victims/survivors as vital to meet the needs of victims/survivors and the community.

Second, victim/survivor views about sexual offender reintegration are intertwined with views about the related concepts of offender accountability and treatability. For many victims/survivors, it is more palatable to think about offenders' release needs if the offender has already served an appropriate sentence, and if they show some type of remorse and have accepted responsibility for their offending. Thus, reintegration efforts were deemed futile without some form of recognition on the part of the offender that their behaviour was harmful.

Third, victim/survivor views about sexual offender reintegration are largely instrumental (i.e. focused on practical issues) and prospective. Their proposals about offender reintegration measures typically reflect pragmatic concerns about preventing future sexual victimisation rather than a need to punish

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1   For the purposes of this report, the term "measures" is used in a broad sense to refer to the processes and actions taken in community-based approaches to reintegration.

offenders for past offending. This challenges the widely accepted image of the angry, vengeful victim that increasingly underpins policy and practice approaches to dealing with sexual offending (McGlynn & Westmarland, 2018).

Recommendations for policymakers

A number of key implications that will be relevant to criminal justice and related policymakers stem from the findings of this study:

- Community-based approaches to reintegrating individuals who have sexually offended should be more strongly supported. The study builds upon existing evidence that such measures play a unique role in offender reintegration and desistance, and that they complement rather than duplicate statutory offender management measures.

- A stronger focus on desistance and identity-change among offenders should characterise community-based sexual offender reintegration programs. This study provides support for the view that good practice in offender reintegration requires the formation of a law-abiding identity among program participants.

- Reintegration and desistance measures should also be characterised by multiple, diverse and strong links to a wide range of other service providers, including mental health; health and disability; cultural, spiritual and social; educational; employment; and welfare service providers. This study highlights the diverse reintegration and desistance needs of those who have offended sexually, and points to the importance of a multi-pronged approach to meeting these needs.

- Retraditionalisation measures can play a key role in engaging Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individuals in measures designed to support reintegration and desistance. While such measures may not appeal to or be suitable for all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individuals, the incorporation of the unique knowledge and experience of Elders can foster the engagement of some, and should be more widely supported on these grounds. Appropriate, long-term, robust data collection procedures should be in place in relation to all such measures (see further Appendices A and B).

- The views of victims/survivors and/or their advocates should be respectfully and ethically sought and considered in relation to the reintegration of those who have sexually offended.

Recommendations for practitioners and service providers

The findings of this study will also be relevant to a range of criminal justice and related area practitioners and service providers. In addition to those detailed in the main body of this research report, a number of key recommendations emerged:

- Working collaboratively to build and maintain links with a wide range of service providers will better support offender reintegration and desistance.

- Moving beyond a focus on meeting offenders' conditions of release to considering identity transformation is paramount to fostering reintegration and desistance.

- Supporting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander practitioners and service providers (perhaps especially Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander probation and parole officers) to draw on their cultural knowledge and experience will assist with fostering identity change and a (re)connection with traditional culture and identity among offenders.

- Supporting non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander practitioners and service providers (perhaps especially probation and parole officers) to connect Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander clients with Elders to provide cultural and spiritual mentorship, where this is desired, should be encouraged.

- Keeping victims/survivors informed about the release and reintegration processes of offenders will be highly valued by victims/survivors. In particular, such information would empower victims/survivors to make informed decisions about their safety.

Introduction

Sexual violence is widespread in Australia, with one in five women and one in 20 men reporting having experienced sexual violence since the age of 15 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017). Sexual violence against children is also common, with 4–8 percent of boys and 7–12 percent of girls experiencing penetrative abuse and 12–16 percent of boys and 23–36 percent of girls experiencing non-penetrative abuse (Price-Robertson et al., 2010, p. 5). Numerous adverse consequences of sexual violence have been documented in research, from eating disorders and drug and alcohol misuse to parenting difficulties and sexual re-victimisation (Walsh et al., 2007). It is therefore unsurprising that sexual offending and those who perpetrate it are a focus of enduring community concern (Bollinger et al., 2012; Devilly & Le Grand, 2015).

The first few years following the release of high-risk sexual offenders from prison into the community carry the highest risk of reoffending (Hanson et al., 2014), with the risk of recidivism decreasing the longer an offender remains offence-free in the community (Hanson et al., 2014). While research shows that sexual offenders who receive support during this time are less likely to reoffend (Willis & Grace, 2009), few programs that provide this support have been the subject of research, especially in Australia.

The research presented in this report begins to address this gap in knowledge by examining two reintegration programs for high-risk sexual offenders: Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) in Adelaide, South Australia; and the Cultural Mentoring Program (CMP) in Townsville, Queensland. CoSA are groups of trained community volunteers who support sexual offenders (usually those who offend against children) to reintegrate into the community after a period of imprisonment. CoSA have the twin objectives of reintegrating offenders into the community and reducing the sexual victimisation of children (Richards & McCartan, 2018). The CMP involves the provision of cultural and spiritual support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sexual offenders released from prison into the community under Queensland's *Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act* (DPSOA). Offenders released under the DPSOA are subject to strict supervision by Queensland probation and parole officers, including by the use of electronic monitoring, surveillance and case management (Queensland, Department

of Justice and Attorney-General, 2016). In the CMP, Elders provide support to this group of DPSOA offenders released into the Townsville area in the form of cultural and spiritual mentorship, such as by reconnecting them with aspects of their culture (e.g. land, spirituality), in order to foster law-abiding behaviour.

As both programs are relatively newly established, and have had small participant numbers to date, the research did not seek to determine their effectiveness by way of measuring sexual recidivism. Instead, the research questions addressed were:

- How do these programs seek to reduce sexual recidivism?
- Which program characteristics are key?
- How can core program tactics be applied more effectively?

The research was thus primarily an exploration focused on describing program strengths and weaknesses in the context of the existing knowledge base about sexual recidivism. To this end, the study sought to document the program characteristics that are key to supporting the related processes of reintegration and desistance, as well as how core program characteristics can be applied more effectively in future. The study also examined the views of victims/survivors of sexual violence about the reintegration of perpetrators, in recognition of the importance of incorporating the perspectives of victims/survivors into program delivery.

The remainder of this report is divided into six main sections. The first section—the State of knowledge review—provides an overview of current knowledge about CoSA and the reintegration of Indigenous individuals who have sexually offended. While there is a burgeoning literature on CoSA from Canada, the United States and Europe, there is no existing literature on the CMP given this is a localised initiative that arose out of community need. As such, this section of the review draws on a broader body of knowledge about reintegration and desistance programs for Indigenous perpetrators of sexual offences from Australia and comparable colonised nations such as New Zealand and Canada. This section also includes an overview of the theoretical framework adopted for the study. The second section introduces the methodological approach for the study, and describes in detail the recruitment, sampling, data collection and analysis

procedures adopted, as well as including a discussion of the ethical considerations that guided the research. The three substantive sections that follow contain the key findings from each of the three components of the study: CoSA, the CMP, and victim/survivor views about sexual offender reintegration. Each of these sections considers implications stemming from the findings and makes a series of recommendations. Finally, a concluding section considers the higher level implications that flow from the research. Appendices A and B contain evaluation frameworks for the CoSA program and CMP, respectively, to support the future evaluation of these programs as they mature and participant numbers increase.

State of knowledge review

A State of knowledge review was conducted to determine existing knowledge in the field and provide a platform for the current research. The State of knowledge review stems from a wide-ranging search of relevant academic databases (e.g. ProQuest Criminal Justice, EBSCOHost, PsycINFO, PsycEXTRA, Sociological Abstracts, Violence & Abuse Abstracts, Web of Science) for key search terms (e.g. sex*, offen*, Circles of Support and Accountability, reintegrat*, desist*, Aboriginal, First Nations, Indigenous, Māori). Given the limited existing literature on this topic, all literature uncovered as a result of this search was incorporated into the State of knowledge review. A "hand search" for literature was also conducted (i.e. reference lists of original sources were examined and relevant sources were included). While the current research project explored how community-based reintegration programs for sexual offenders operate, this State of knowledge review covers all the available research literature, including a focus on previous evaluations of the efficacy of such programs, in order to comprehensively frame the current study.

Sexual offender treatment and reintegration

Research demonstrates that people commit sexual offences for a variety of reasons (Beech & Ward, 2016; Brouillette-Alaire & Proulx, 2019) and, therefore, there is a need for an individualised approach to the assessment, treatment and management of sexual offenders upon their return to the community (Kemshall & McCartan, 2017). Consequently, research on the effectiveness of treatment programs for sexual offending have produced varied results, with meta-analyses indicating inconsistency in analysis and outcomes and, sometimes, limited effectiveness across the board (Lösel & Schmucker, 2005; Schmucker & Lösel, 2015, 2017). However, what the research does show is that preventing recidivism in sexual offending is about effective risk management in the community and clear multi-agency working (Kemshall & McCartan, 2017). Effective risk management is grounded in placing the ex-offender at the centre of the intervention and considering their psychology, health, and emotional wellbeing, as well as their risk of reoffending (McCartan, Harris, & Prescott, 2019). Therefore, effective risk management is about what works holistically with the individual, takes a person-centered approach and is more than a unilateral, one-size-fits-all model. This understanding of effective risk management is important because it reinforces that social exclusion and poor prosocial functioning are risk factors related to sexual recidivism (Thornton & D'Orazio, 2016) and that responding to these factors, through the use of proactive measures, can lead to a reduction in risk and an increase in desistance (de Vries Robbé, Mann, Maruna, & Thornton, 2015; Farmer, McAlinden, & Maruna, 2015).

Improved emotional wellbeing and social inclusion reinforce the core principles of the GLM and RNR model (see the Theoretical framework section for a full discussion), which frame the basic underpinnings of the majority of sexual offender treatment programs (Carter & Mann, 2016). It must be reiterated that ideas of a "good life", and what RNR is, change for each individual perpetrator, which means that an individualised approach needs to be developed. In turn this means that effective risk management and desistance is linked to individuals' sense of social inclusion, emotional wellbeing and relationship (e.g. interpersonal, community, societal) to others (Harris, 2017), all of which are core parameters of the two reintegration programs that are the focus of this report. These two programs are both supplementary to traditional criminal justice programs (e.g. sexual offender management, probation, corrections). They are not standalone replacement programs, instead acting to support and buffer the sexual offender in a way that enables their social reintegration in a structured, coordinated and safe manner to reduce their risk of reoffending and creating future harm. That is, the programs aim to reduce the negative consequences of the system in order to promote desistance (see Brennan et al., 2019). CoSA and the CMP are rooted in social and emotional wellbeing, the social inclusion of the sexual offender, their prosocial engagement with members of the community, the promotion of effective integration strategies and enablement of effective risk management; therefore, the two programs embed and reflect both GLM and RNR principles. The following sections discuss CoSA and the CMP in more detail, considering how they tie supportive, inclusive and community-based approaches together in the risk management of sexual offenders.

Circles of Support and Accountability

CoSA are groups of approximately 5–7 trained community volunteers who support sexual offenders (usually those who offend against children) to reintegrate into the community after a period of imprisonment (Hannem & Petrunik, 2004; Wilson, Picheca, & Prinzo, 2005). CoSA have twin objectives: to reintegrate those who offend against children into the community, and to reduce the sexual victimisation of children (Correctional Service Canada, 2002; Richards, 2011a). In other words, they aim to promote both the desistance and reintegration of sexual offenders. CoSA have their roots in restorative justice philosophy (Hanvey, Philpot, & Wilson, 2011), where they are seen as "a unique product of the application of restorative principles in the midst of a retributive society" (Hannem, 2011, cited in McCartan, 2016, p. 6).

Since their emergence in Canada in 1994 (Correctional Service Canada, 2002; Hannem & Petrunik, 2004), CoSA have become a feature of the criminal justice landscape in North America (Chouinard & Riddick, 2014; Elliott & Zajac, 2015; Fox, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017), the United Kingdom (McCartan, 2014b, 2016; Nellis, 2009; Thomas, Thompson, & Karstedt, 2014), New Zealand (Lowe, 2017; Lowe, Willis, & Gibson, 2017; van Rensburg, 2012) and western Europe (Höing, Bogaerts, & Vogelvang, 2013, 2015a, 2016; Höing, Vogelvang, & Bogaerts, 2015b; Petrina, Alards, & Höing, 2015). In Australia, CoSA are more recent (and emerging): a small CoSA pilot program was established in Adelaide, South Australia, in 2015 (Richards & McCartan, 2018).

CoSA programs around the globe rely on a variety of different operating models, receive funding from a variety of sources, and have varying relationships to the criminal justice system. For example, while in most cases CoSA commence once an offender has been released from prison, in a small number of cases volunteers meet with the offender prior to his release (see Duwe, 2018). Nonetheless, CoSA programs all operate on the premise that by providing recently released sexual offenders (known as core members) with a circle of community volunteers who provide both practical support and accountability, offenders will be better equipped to lead law-abiding lives in the community. As Almond, Bates and Wilson (2015, p. 27) put it:

The role of the CoSA is to develop interpersonal contact between the core member and the wider community in order to generate the kind of social capital that militates against future offending; core members openly discuss their behaviours and thoughts with the circle volunteers, and are answerable to them for any deviations from their own aspirations to live non-offending lives.

Core members are referred to CoSA programs based on their suitability, which typically involves an assessment of their commitment to desistance, level of risk of recidivism, level of social isolation and willingness to engage with the program (Hanvey et al., 2011; Thomas et al., 2014). Circles typically meet weekly in the first instance, although this may decrease over time, with the circle usually lasting 12–18 months (Hanvey et al., 2011). Circle meetings are not typically structured or formulaic; rather, discussion commonly focuses on the core member's progress against his aims, the struggles that he may be experiencing, and how these might be addressed. Thus discussion may vary widely both within and between cirlces.

Circles dissolve for a variety of reasons. These include, for example, that core members are successfully reintegrated into the community and thus no longer require a CoSA; are reincarcerated in relation to breaches of their statutory conditions or due to concerns raised about their behaviour by volunteers; or opt to stop taking part for a range of practical and personal reasons (see Quaker Peace and Social Witness, 2005, 2008; Richards, 2011b). Importantly, however, in some circumstances, core members with especially profound reintegration needs and limited capacity to meet them remain in a circle for far longer than the 12–18 month period envisioned by the program, placing substantial resource difficulties on CoSA programs (Richards, 2011b).

CoSA are usually managed by a circle coordinator, who is an experienced and paid criminal justice professional (see Figure 1; for a more detailed logic model of CoSA service delivery, see Elliott & Zajac, 2015; Elliott, Zajac, & Meyer, 2013; Höing et al., 2013). In some models, one of the volunteers is appointed as circle coordinator, and in this role acts as the primary liaison point between the paid program staff and the volunteers in any given circle. Volunteers (i.e. the inner circle) report back to the circle coordinator or paid program coordinator about the activities of the circle and

the attitudes, as well as behaviours, of the core member. The circle coordinator may in turn report to statutory authorities (e.g. police, parole—part of the outer circle) if required (see Figure 1). For example, if there is any concern over a risk of a further offence, this is reported to authorities. Such action has resulted on some occasions in an offender being recalled to prison (Bates, Saunders, & Wilson, 2007; Quaker Peace and Social Witness, 2008).

While CoSA volunteers are drawn from a wide range of age groups, and educational, social, cultural and employment backgrounds (Circles South East, 2012; Höing et al., 2015a, 2016; Hough, 2015; Richards, 2011b), many are retirees, individuals from a faith background and/or university students (McCartan, 2016). Volunteer training varies in content and length across the globe (Richards, 2011b), but usually covers topics such as sexual offender typologies, monitoring the offender and volunteer self-care (Circles South East, 2012; Thomas et al., 2014; Wilson, McWhinnie, Picheca, Prinzo, & Cortoni, 2007; Wilson, Picheca, & Prinzo, 2007a). Volunteers are informed about the core member's offending history in order to assist them in identifying thought and behaviour patterns that could otherwise lead to the core member re-offending (Hanvey et al., 2011). A number of studies show that volunteers choose to participate in CoSA for a range of personal reasons (McCartan, 2016), and gain satisfaction from doing so (Höing et al., 2015a; Hough, 2015).

Existing research on the effectiveness of Circles of Support and Accountability

The emerging body of research on CoSA suggests that this approach can be effective in both reducing the incidence of reoffending and reintegrating core members into the community. This section provides an overview of the existing research literature in this regard.

Randomised controlled trials

Randomised controlled trials (RCTs) are typically considered the "gold standard" in evaluation research, as they are able to determine causal inference (Hough, 2010; Wilcox, Hoyle, & Young, 2005). RCTs are, however, difficult to implement in social science research generally, and in relation to CoSA specifically, due to the small numbers of core members, among other issues (Duwe, 2013; Richards, 2011b; Wilcox

et al., 2005). Nonetheless, one RCT has been conducted on CoSA to date. The RCT is part of an ongoing evaluation of the Minnesota Department of Corrections' CoSA program ("MnCoSA"). Initially, Duwe (2013) evaluated the efficacy of MnCoSA by randomly assigning potential core members (i.e. sexual offenders who indicated a desire to participate in a CoSA on their release from prison) into either a CoSA (n=31) or a control group (n=31; total n=62) and measuring the recidivism of the two groups for an average period of 2 years. Members of both groups were categorised as Level 2 or moderate risk offenders (see Duwe, 2013, for a discussion), and were subject to intensive post-release supervision, curfews, electronic monitoring, sexual offender treatment and alcohol and other drug treatment (Duwe, 2013). This study found significant reductions in rearrests, reincarceration for technical violations, and reincarceration generally among the CoSA participants compared with the control group. However, as there was a very low rate of officially recorded sexual recidivism among both CoSA participants and the control group (with no new sexual offences among the CoSA participants and only one among the control group), statistically significant differences in relation to sexual recidivism were not demonstrated (Duwe, 2013).

More recently, however, an update of the MnCoSA RCT (Duwe, 2018) was able to demonstrate statistically significant differences between core members and the control group. In this update, Duwe (2018) replicated the original methodology of the RCT, this time comparing 50 core members with 50 sexual offenders who were not assigned a CoSA and measuring the recidivism of the two groups over an average of 6 years. As before, members of both groups were at moderate risk of offending and most were subject to intensive post-prison supervision (Duwe, 2018). Duwe (2018) found lower rates of recidivism among core members than among the control group for all six measures, which were defined as follows:

1. Rearrest: rearrested for a new offense—misdemeanor, gross misdemeanor, or felony—after release from prison.

2. Sex offense rearrest: rearrested for a new "hands-on" sex offense—gross misdemeanor or felony—after release from prison.

3. Reconviction: reconvicted—misdemeanor, gross misdemeanor, or felony—after release from prison.

4. Sex offense reconviction: reconvicted for a new "hands-

Figure 1: Model of a Circle of Support and Accountability
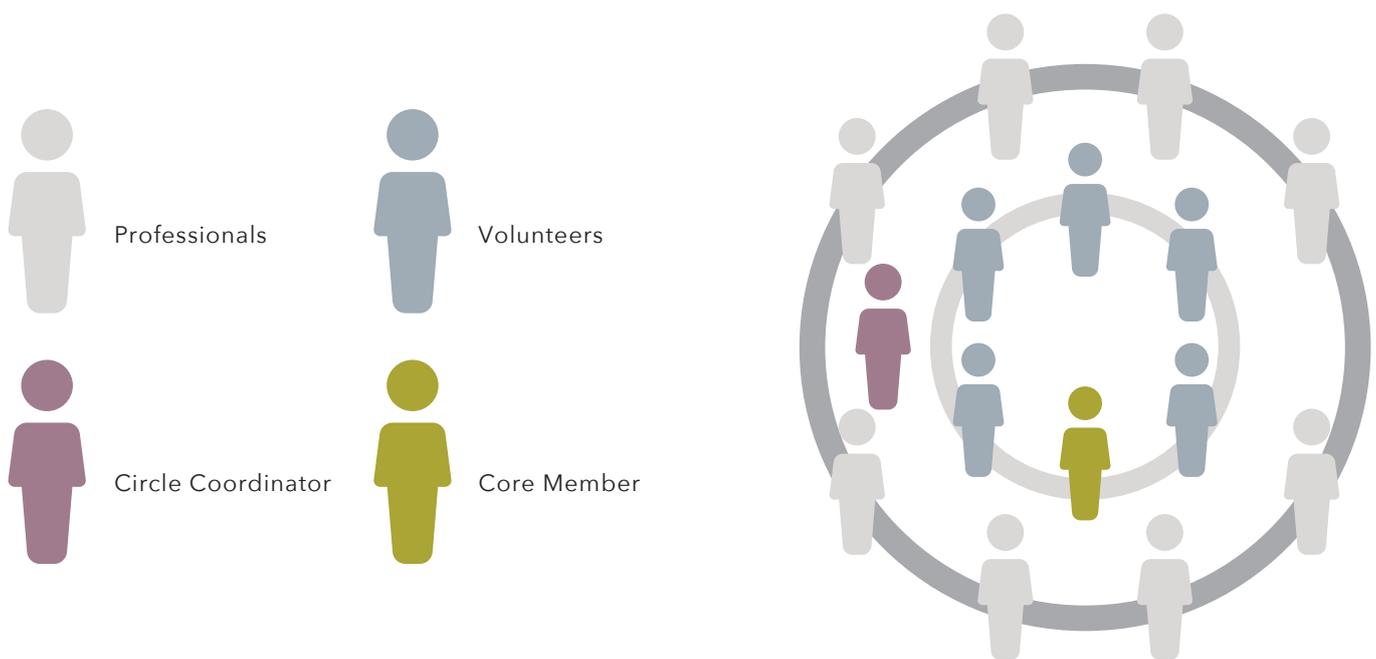
Source: Graphic representation of CoSA model (adapted from Wilson et al., 2005, cited in Bates, Williams, Wilson, & Wilson, 2014, p. 3).

on" sex offense—gross misdemeanor or felony—after release from prison.

5. Resentenced: resentenced to prison for a new felony reconviction after release from prison.

6. Technical violation revocation: returned to prison after having supervised release (i.e. parole) revoked for violating the conditions of supervision (p. 471).

A statistically significant difference in sexual recidivism was found between the CoSA core members and the control group, with only one core member being rearrested for a new sexual offence (2% of the total number of core members) compared with seven in the control group (14% of the total) (Duwe, 2018, p. 475). The rate of rearrest for a new sexual offence was thus 88 percent lower for core members than those in the control group. In terms of reconviction for a new sexual offence, no CoSA core members (0%) were reconvicted compared with four from the control group (8%). As all four of these offenders were subsequently sentenced to prison, the figures for reincarceration in relation to a new sexual offence are identical (0% for core members and 8% for the control group) (Duwe, 2018, p. 475).

Duwe's (2018) study provides both the most rigorous and the most promising evaluation of CoSA to date: it is "the strongest evidence to date the CoSA model can be effective in reducing sexual recidivism" (p. 48). This reduction in sexual recidivism may be even more pronounced than the statistics suggest if we consider that core members are

under more scrutiny than their control group counterparts. Official figures relating to sexual recidivism are likely to be an undercount due to the secretive nature of sexual offending and the difficulties associated with reporting and pursuing sexual offence complaints in the criminal justice system (Falshaw, Friendship, & Bates, 2003). It stands to reason, however, that reoffending by core members is more likely to be detected than that of offenders not participating in a CoSA. Indeed, research from the United Kingdom, discussed further below, demonstrates that circle volunteers can and do detect and report sexual recidivism among core members (McCartan, 2016; McCartan et al., 2014b). As such, the difference between the recidivism rate of core members and the control group identified by Duwe (2018) may be in reality even more pronounced than the statistics allow.

A number of caveats must, however, be borne in mind. Perhaps most significantly, the MnCoSA model has some differences from most other CoSA programs around the globe. In the MnCoSA model, circles commence while a core member is incarcerated, and meet weekly for a number of weeks prior to the core member's release into the community, in order for group cohesion to occur and for the core member to have a network of support already in place prior to release (CoSA operated by the Safer Living Foundation in the United Kingdom are a recent exception, following the MnCoSA model; see Elliott et al., 2017; Kitson-Boyce, 2017). Second, the MnCoSA program relies predominantly on tertiary students as volunteers. While students volunteer in CoSA programs elsewhere (Elliott et al., 2017; Höing

et al., 2015a, 2016; Kitson-Boyce, 2017; Lowe et al., 2017; Thomas et al., 2014), they would not typically comprise the majority of circle volunteers. Finally, MnCoSA is run by the Minnesota Department of Corrections. While it is typical for governments to fund CoSA programs, service delivery is far more commonly undertaken by community-based non-government organisations. Duwe (2018) thus cautions that the results of the MnCoSA RCT may not be generalisable to CoSA elsewhere. Further, Duwe (2018) cautions that the statistical differences between the two groups in terms of sexual recidivism took nearly a decade to emerge, due primarily to the low rates of recidivism in both the CoSA and control groups; therefore, for other CoSA programs, "a great deal of patience is likely needed to see whether its impact on sexual recidivism ever comes to fruition" (p. 480).

Duwe (2018) also argues that the MnCoSA program has managed to reduce sexual recidivism because it targets high-risk offenders, and that differences between the two groups would be unlikely to emerge if CoSA were utilised for lower-risk sexual offenders. This is an important caveat, as while CoSA were originally developed as a response to high-risk offenders, and many programs continue to claim that CoSA are used for this high-risk population (see e.g. Chouinard & Riddick, 2014), in practice it appears that medium- and low-risk offenders are increasingly recruited into CoSA programs (McCartan, Kemshall, Westwood, Solle, et al., 2014). This is understandable in that volunteers may be easier to recruit for lower risk offenders, and organisations new to CoSA may opt to commence operation with lower risk offenders in order to gain experience before focusing on higher risk offenders. However, if CoSA are primarily effective with high-risk sexual offenders, it may be reasonable to assume that CoSA programs should focus on this population of offenders or at least work towards this aim.

Quasi-experimental research

A number of studies adopting quasi-experimental designs have also been undertaken to examine the effectiveness of CoSA in reducing recidivism among core members. Quasi-experimental designs use comparison groups rather than control groups, and are thus not considered true experiments. Rather than assigning offenders into treatment and control groups, quasi-experimental research compares the treatment group with a matched group of offenders. Offenders may

be matched on gender, age, offending history, offending profile, and a range of other variables relevant to their likelihood of reoffending.

Wilson, Picheca and Prinzo's (2005, 2007b) evaluation of the CoSA pilot in South-Central Ontario matched high-risk sexual offenders (n=60) who participated in CoSA with high-risk offenders who did not participate (n=60). The study matched offenders on a range of factors, such as risk level and the length of time the offenders were "at large" in the community. The average follow-up time was 4.5 years. Recidivism was defined as "having a new sexual offense, or having breached a condition imposed by the court" (Wilson et al., 2005, p. ii). Wilson et al.'s (2005, 2007b) evaluation found that recidivism among CoSA core members was statistically significantly lower than for offenders who did not take part in a CoSA. Compared with the matched group of offenders, CoSA core members had: 70 percent less sexual recidivism (5% [n=3] versus 16.7% [n=10]); 57 percent less violent recidivism, including sexual recidivism (15% [n=9] versus 35% [n=21]); and 35 percent less recidivism of any kind, including sexual and violent recidivism (28.3% [n=17] versus 43.4% [n=26]) (Wilson et al., 2005, 2007b).

This study also found that where sexual reoffending did occur, CoSA participants had committed offences of a less serious nature than their counterparts who did not participate in a circle:

> In each of the three instances of sexual recidivism [among CoSA participants] … the new offense was qualitatively less severe or invasive than the offense for which they had most recently served [a] sentence. For instance, the new offense of one of the CoSA members was making an obscene telephone call, while his prior offense was a violent rape. No function of harm reduction was found in the comparison sample; their new offenses were just as violent and invasive as their most recent offense. (Wilson et al., 2005, p. 24)

Wilson, Cortoni and McWhinnie (2009) later replicated Wilson et al.'s (2005) study, this time using data from CoSA programs across Canada, rather than from one geographical area. In this follow-up study, they matched 44 CoSA participants with 44 offenders who did not take part in a CoSA program. The two groups were once again matched on a number of

factors, including risk of reoffending and whether they had participated in sexual offender treatment while imprisoned. The average follow-up time was 35 months. Recidivism was defined as "being charged for or convicted of a new offense" (Wilson et al., 2009, p. 419). The study found that compared with the matched group of offenders, CoSA core members had: 83 percent less sexual recidivism (2.3% [n=1] versus 13.7% [n=6]); 73 percent less violent recidivism (including sexual recidivism) (9.1% [n=4] versus 34.1% [n=15]); and 71 percent less recidivism of any kind (including sexual and violent recidivism) (11.4% [n=5] versus 38.9% [n=17]). It is important to note that CoSA tend to focus on medium- and high-risk offenders as opposed to the full range of sexual offenders, which means that core members are more likely to reoffend. Therefore while the Wilson et al. (2009) study has a reoffending rate above the 7 percent base rate (as discussed by Helmus, Hanson, & Babchishin, 2016; Helmus, Hanson, Thornton, Babchishin, & Harris, 2012), the reoffending rate is still lower than the non-CoSA matched sample.

Bates et al. (2014) compared 71 core members who had participated in a CoSA with Circles South East in the United Kingdom with 71 broadly similar offenders who had been referred to Circles South East but who ultimately had not taken part in a CoSA. The comparison group could be compared directly with the core member group because although they met the criteria for a circle none was available in their geographic location (Bates et al., 2014). The two groups were also matched on risk scores from the Risk Matrix 2000. (It is important to note that the individual's risk scores need to match, as in the United Kingdom CoSA are only used with medium- and high-risk individuals, therefore that balance between and across risk scores needs to be accurate). The average follow-up period for core members was between 7 months and 9.5 years (an average of 53 months); for the comparison group it was slightly longer at 55 months. Bates et al.'s (2014) analysis found statistically significantly higher rates of violent reoffending as well as higher rates of sexual reoffending among the comparison group than the CoSA group, although it must be stated that these higher rates were not necessarily even across all participants. In addition, harm reduction was found among the CoSA core members (i.e. the small number who did reoffend sexually did not commit contact offences but offences of a less serious nature than their previous offending).

Descriptive studies

A number of descriptive studies (i.e. those with no control or comparison group) have also been undertaken to examine the effectiveness of CoSA in reducing reoffending. These are outlined in this section. Fox (2013) evaluated CoSA in Vermont, in the United States. Importantly, while some core members in the Vermont program are sexual offenders, this program also provides CoSA to non-sexual offenders. Fox (2013) found that of 21 core members included in her sample, only one had a new charge laid against them during the period of the research (2010–13). As Fox (2013) argues, while the lack of a comparison group limits the rigour of the study, "the number with a new charge is substantially smaller than would be predicted given the risk categorization of the group under evaluation and the general recidivism rate" (p. 6, fn. 4).

Chouinard and Riddick's (2014) evaluation of CoSA in four sites across Canada (southwest Ontario, Quebec, Regina, and Vancouver/Fraser Valley) likewise found much lower rates of recidivism among core members than would be expected. In this study, the recidivism (sexual and non-sexual) of core members (n=251) was measured while they were participating in a CoSA. Two percent of core members reoffended over a 3-year period, 5.6 percent over a 5-year period, and 9.5 percent over a 10-year period. These rates were then compared with baseline rates of sexual reoffending from seminal longitudinal studies of sexual offenders released into the community (27.8% over 3 years, 22.0% over 5 years, and 28.8% over 10 years). Thus,

> during the period in which core members are involved in a CoSA, the relative reduction in sexual offending is 92.8% over 3 years, 74.5% over 5 years, and 67.0% over 10 years. (Chouinard & Riddick, 2014, p. 10)

Bates, Macrae, Williams and Webb (2012) measured the recidivism of 60 core members involved in CoSA in the Hampshire and Thames Valley (United Kingdom) area over an average time period of 3 years. During the follow-up period, only one core member was reconvicted in relation to a sexual offence. Once again, a harm reduction effect was documented, as the core member's index offence had been sexual abuse of three children, while his new offence was perpetrated online (Bates et al., 2012).

The studies outlined above rely on official data on charges and convictions to measure recidivism. However, it has been well documented that sexual offence against children has one of the highest rates of attrition from the criminal justice process of any offence (Eastwood, Kift, & Grace, 2006). Research on CoSA in the United Kingdom has addressed this issue by considering not only formally documented rearrests and/or reconvictions, but also "pro-offending behaviour" among core members (see Richards, 2011b for a discussion).

In a study undertaken by Quaker Peace and Social Witness (2005) on CoSA in the Thames Valley, none of the 20 core members was reconvicted of a new sexual offence during the study period (April 2002–March 2005). However, eight of the core members demonstrated behaviours that were identified (often by their CoSA volunteers) as pro-offending. For example, one was in possession of inappropriate pornographic material, in which adults were dressed as children, and another developed a relationship with a single mother who had three children under the age of consent (Quaker Peace and Social Witness, 2005). Bates et al.'s (2007) research, also conducted in the Thames Valley, similarly found that while none of the 14 core members involved in a CoSA at the time of their research was convicted of a new sexual offence, a number breached their parole conditions and/or demonstrated "pro-offending" behaviours. For example, one instigated a friendship with the 11-year-old nephew of his neighbour (see Richards, 2011b for a discussion).

Taken together, these studies suggest that while most offenders who participate in a CoSA do not reoffend sexually (at least in the short to medium term), some demonstrate problematic behaviours that might be considered "red flags". As Bates et al. (2007; see also Clarke, Brown, & Völlm, 2015; Nellis, 2009) argue, this might be considered a "success" rather than a "failure" of CoSA:

> These incidents of recidivism … are not necessarily regarded as a "failure" in the way that reconviction for a new sexual offence and the creation of another victim would have to be. … The fact that … core members have been recalled to prison can be seen as evidence of the effectiveness of current public protection procedures of which CoSA forms an active part. (Bates et al., 2007, p. 38)

In terms of sampling, data collection and data analysis, the majority of research into CoSA focuses on white working- and middle-class, middle-aged men who commit contact offences against children. However, it must be stated that these studies have limitations, especially in that the data collected in CoSA studies are typically process—rather than research—driven. The collation of evidence in many of the CoSA studies is for process evaluation proposes (i.e. does the program do what it says it does and who are the participants) and not necessarily for impact/outcome evaluations (i.e. behaviour change, risk reduction). Rather, these evaluations have often relied on post-hoc analysis and therefore have not always been able to address research questions in the most robust way (McCartan et al., 2014b).

Measuring risk reduction

Another way to evaluate the effectiveness of CoSA is to compare individual core members' risk scores at the commencement of their CoSA and again during or at the completion of their CoSA. A number of researchers have utilised this approach. McCartan (2016) analysed data on 27 core members' Dynamic Risk Reviews (DRRs), which were developed through periodically collecting both qualitative and quantitative data from core members and their circle coordinators. The DRR is a 17-point checklist based on four domains of dynamic risk: 1) offence-related sexual interests; 2) pro-offending attitudes; 3) problems in social and emotional functioning; and 4) self-management issues. It is used in sexual offender treatment programs in the UK (Bates & Wager, 2012). McCartan (2016) found that while risk fluctuated over the life of CoSAs, the vast majority of core members were considered to have a reduced risk of offending at the conclusion of their circles than at the commencement. Although four participants had increased risk levels, these individuals were higher risk to begin with and were still part of ongoing management in the community. The aim of the circle was to reduce their risk of reoffending, and while this did not occur, the circle may have contributed to their ongoing risk management in the community.

Bates and Wager (2012) collected data on the DRR of 13 core members at the commencement of their circle and then quarterly until the conclusion of the circle. Each core member therefore had 4–5 DRR scores to assess their risk over 12–15 months. Although this is not a long period, it is the typical

length of a circle in the UK context and should demonstrate an impact, even if minor. The DRR is compiled by volunteers and the circle coordinator of each CoSA meeting without the core member present, usually after a circle; the core member's risk levels are discussed until group consensus is reached for each item on the DRR. Overall, positive reductions in risk were found during the completion of the DRRs, although the authors of the study acknowledge that these may not have been caused solely by core members' participation in a circle and could be attributed to other factors.

Finally, Clarke et al. (2015) discuss a further two studies that measured changes in core members' risk profiles that have not been published. In the first, Earnshaw's (2014, cited in Clarke et al., 2015) research in the UK measured the risk scores (DRRs) of 52 core members at three time points in the life of CoSAs. While a mean reduction of 11 points was found overall, there was considerable variation, with some core members' risk increasing. Höing et al. (2015, cited in Clarke et al., 2015) measured the risk of 13 core members in the Netherlands, but did not find a significant decrease 6–12 months from the commencement of a CoSA.

Summary of findings of recidivism studies

The existing body of international research literature appears promising but does not conclusively show that CoSA reduce sexual recidivism; there is no international benchmark study on the effectiveness of CoSA and any overarching, systematic studies that exist are limited, as outlined above (Clarke et al., 2015). Due to the difficulties of evaluating CoSA (including different CoSA models being implemented in different locations across the globe, small sample sizes, and the expense of undertaking long-term RCTs), there remains a paucity of rigorous research. As Clarke et al.'s (2015, p. 24) review of the research concludes: "there were few statistically significant differences between CMs [core members] and controls in the outcomes reported. However, where there were significant differences, CMs fared better than controls." The lack of statistically significant differences does not mean that CoSA are ineffective, but rather that "we need studies with a sufficiently long follow-up" (Clarke et al., 2015, p. 24; see also Wilson & McWhinnie, 2013) and suggests that we may be using the least effective methodologies to answer the question of CoSA effectiveness correctly. It is also important to recognise that as CoSA increase the surveillance to which

core members are subject, we might expect core members to have higher rates of recidivism (or at least, officially recorded recidivism) than their non-CoSA counterparts. Thus, the existing research, while by no means conclusive, should be considered promising in terms of CoSA's ability to reduce sexual reoffending (Clarke et al., 2015).

Cost-benefit analyses

It is also important to consider the cost implications of CoSA programs, including whether they provide a return on investment, and whether the cost associated with CoSA can be justified. Two studies of this nature have been conducted previously. In the United Kingdom, Elliott and Beech (2012) demonstrated a cost–benefit ratio of £1.04 for every pound spent. In the United States, Duwe (2018) found that every dollar spent on the MnCoSA program generated an approximate benefit of US$3.73, a 273 percent return on investment (see further Chouinard & Riddick, 2014).

Measuring psychosocial outcomes

In light of the difficulties of measuring recidivism outcomes of CoSA, a number of studies have instead sought to measure the impact of CoSA on a range of psychosocial outcomes of core members, such as social connectedness and employment. Since it has been well established that a range of psychosocial factors (e.g. housing, relationships) are related to recidivism, these are important to document when it is difficult to measure recidivism itself (Hanvey et al., 2011).

The existing research on CoSA's capacity to address psychosocial deficits contains a number of studies that have documented improvements in core members' relationships (Bates et al., 2012; Elliott et al., 2017), employment (Bates et al., 2012; Clarke, Warwick, & Völlm, 2017; McCartan et al., 2014b), education (Bates et al., 2012; McCartan et al., 2014b), housing (see e.g. Bates et al., 2007; Clarke et al., 2017), health (Bates et al., 2012), prosocial attitudes (Bates et al., 2012; Höing et al., 2015b), perceptions of social support (Elliott et al., 2017), participation in prosocial activities (McCartan et al., 2014b), emotional regulation (Höing et al., 2015b), and self-esteem (Höing et al., 2015b). Elliott et al. (2017) measured changes in core members' sense of hope and found that taking part in a CoSA program while incarcerated significantly increased core members' goal-setting prior to release. However, none of these studies used a comparison group (Clarke et al.,

2015), so it is not possible to conclude that CoSA caused these changes (see also Elliott & Zajac, 2015 for an overview and critical assessment of the evidence). The effectiveness of CoSA in addressing psychosocial deficits among core members is discussed further in the following section on qualitative research.

Qualitative research

Qualitative research has focused on a diverse range of elements relating to CoSA, from core member experiences (McCartan, 2016; McCartan, Kemshall, Westwood, Cattel, et al., 2014) and volunteer experiences (Höing et al., 2015a; Weaver, 2013) to the dynamics of criminal justice group work (Bellamy & Watson, 2013). A number of qualitative studies also shed light on the role of CoSA in providing prosocial modelling to enable desistance and community reintegration (McCartan, 2016). Fox's (2013, 2014, 2015, 2016) work is the most informative in this context. Fox (2016, p. 72) begins to address a critical gap in understanding by "situating the CoSA model in terms of the theoretical literature on desistance". A number of interrelated explanations for the success of CoSA in reducing reoffending are suggested by Fox's qualitative research.

First, CoSA provide core members with social inclusion and social support. Bohmert, Duwe and Hipple's (2016) research on CoSA in Minneapolis found that core members experienced considerable social support from their volunteers (see also Cesaroni, 2001; Höing et al., 2013). This included provision of both instrumental support (e.g. help with writing job applications) and expressive or emotional support (e.g. listening to a core member). In Bohmert et al.'s (2016, p. 17) study, however, this support did not necessarily translate into a reduction in the incidences of reincarceration: "the support provided was, in many cases, not enough to overcome the substantial stress created by structural barriers [such as unemployment]", and a number of core members in the study returned to prison due to reoffending or technical violations. This seems to suggest that CoSA provide social capital to core members and help them to develop their recovery capital (McCartan & Kemshall, 2017), which in turn helps them desist from offending, or at least reoffend less frequently or less seriously.

Second, CoSA may operate to model prosocial behaviour to core members. Fox (2013, p. 49) argues that "CoSAs work because of the power of normative and normal relationships in facilitating desistance from crime" (see also Fox, 2015). It remains unclear, however, how this might translate into a reduction in the instances of reoffending. Research has indicated that part of the reason why prosocial modelling is effective in CoSA is the motivation of the core members to engage and the supportive relationship between the core members and the volunteers (Clarke et al., 2015; McCartan, 2016). Core members may want the support and recognition of the volunteer and therefore seek to emulate their behaviour; however, this can create issues during the dissolution of the circle, and if the core member comes to believe that volunteers are not genuine "friends".

Third, CoSA are thought to reduce reoffending through providing core members with expectations for their behaviour, and with consequences for failing to meet these expectations. It has been well documented that core members greatly appreciate the fact that their CoSA members are volunteers rather than paid professionals (Fox, 2015; Richards, 2011b), and that "core members are often genuinely moved by the generosity of their CoSA team" (Fox, 2013, p. 42).

Fourth, CoSA seek to reduce the social isolation typically experienced by sexual offenders (Cesaroni, 2001; Höing et al., 2013; Weaver, 2013). In providing core members with a social network, it is envisaged that CoSA will translate into a reduction in reoffending as they ameliorate the isolation of the core member: "the model's logic stems from a belief that isolation creates risk, [and that] reducing isolation reduces risk by creating a sense of belonging." (McNeill, 2014, cited in Fox, 2016, p. 84) However, of potential issue is that the core member can become dependent on the circle, that they do not make new social connections beyond the circle and, therefore, do not integrate well (McCartan, 2016). This raises the question of whether CoSA are providing friendship structures that reduce social isolation, or instead are replacing the lower-level social welfare work that is traditionally performed by state actors such as parole agents.

Finally, it is theorised in the qualitative literature that CoSA encourage and support core members to undertake a process of identity transformation and, in doing so, to adopt prosocial, law-abiding lifestyles: "circles can facilitate identity change that enables offenders' desistance … assisting offenders to construct other, more positive selves." (Fox, 2014, p. 249; see also Fox, 2013). Fox (2015) argues that CoSA communicate to core members that the social distance between "us" and "them" is smaller than they might imagine, that core members "share the same moral space as ordinary citizens"(p. 83). The work of Höing et al. (2015b) in the Netherlands supports this theory to some extent. Höing et al.'s (2015b) longitudinal qualitative research with 17 core members found that most experienced internal (i.e. psychological) changes as a result of their participation in a CoSA. These internal changes (e.g. increased self-insight, self-esteem and social skills) can be considered "steps towards desistance" (Höing et al., 2015b, p. 18). In the UK, research has likewise indicated that core members typically leave their CoSA with improved employment, accommodation, and physical and mental health prospects (Hanvey et al., 2011). Core members report an increase in positivity, self-esteem, prosocial functioning and confidence by the end of the CoSA (Höing et al., 2015b; McCartan, Kemshall, Westwood, Cattel, et al., 2014).

Summary

The research discussed above highlights that CoSA assist in the reintegration of sexual offenders into the community by providing prosocial support, role modelling, a positive platform and grounded assistance (Bates et al., 2007, 2012; Cesaroni, 2001; Duwe, 2013; Kemshall et al., 2014b; McCartan et al., 2014b; Thomas et al., 2014; Wilson et al., 2005, 2007a, 2007b, 2009). It must be stated that although this research indicates that CoSA reintegrate sexual offenders into the community, this is a small snapshot of the ongoing international work and is based on a small number of studies that are not representative of the degree and scale of CoSA work currently taking place. In summary, however, the existing evidence about the capacity of CoSA to reduce the recidivism of those who offend against children is promising if not definitive. The current research project will build on this existing research and contribute to the emerging evidence base about CoSA around the globe.

Cultural Mentoring Program

The CMP involves the provision of cultural and spiritual support to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander sexual offenders released from prison into the community under Queensland's DPSOA. Offenders released under the DPSOA are subject to strict supervision by Queensland probation and parole officers, including the use of electronic monitoring, surveillance and case management (Queensland, Department of Justice and Attorney-General, 2016). As at 30 June 2018, 127 DPSOA offenders were under supervision in the community in Queensland (Queensland Corrective Services, 2018, p. 122); however, statistics on the number of Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander DPSOA offenders in the community are unavailable.

In partnership with other Elders, and community organisations, one primary Elder provides reintegration support to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander DPSOA offenders released into the Townsville area on a fee-for-service basis (i.e. the program is not managed by Queensland Corrective Services [QCS], although QCS may assist in identifying offenders who are eligible to participate). Where possible, this Elder or another Elder will meet with an offender a number of weeks prior to their release from prison. The CMP focuses on providing cultural and spiritual mentorship, such as by reconnecting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander DPSOA offenders with aspects of their culture (e.g. land, spirituality), in order to foster law-abiding behaviour. The Elder also runs a weekly peer support group for the Townsville community, which provides guidance, support and mentorship to men for relationships and healthy living. The peer support group can be attended by any man in the community. While some DPSOA offenders attend the group, this is not mandatory, and the group does not specifically cater to this population.

The CMP aligns broadly with the limited existing knowledge on the successful reintegration of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander prisoners generally, and sexual offenders specifically, which is outlined in the following section.

Research on reintegration and desistance of Indigenous sexual offenders

Very little research has been conducted on desistance and/ or reintegration measures for Indigenous sexual offenders,

in Australia or internationally. While a number of studies review the programs available to Indigenous offenders, and to sexual offenders (e.g. Howells, Heseltine, Sarre, Davey, & Day, 2004), very little has been documented about Indigenous sexual offenders as a combined population.

It is clear, however, that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander offenders generally, and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander sexual offenders specifically, have unique reintegration needs. Very high levels of sexual violence, including child sexual abuse, have been documented in some Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities in Australia (Cripps & McGlade, 2008; O'Brien, 2010; Smallbone, Rayment-McHugh, & Smith, 2013) and among Indigenous peoples in other colonised nations such as the United States and Canada (Ellerby & MacPherson, 2002; Stewart, Hamilton, Wilton, Cousineau, & Varrette, 2014). Due to the enduring impacts of colonisation, including entrenched disadvantage, high rates of unemployment, substance misuse and mental illness, as well as the limited service provision available in some Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander offenders often have more extensive reintegration needs than their non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander counterparts (Heseltine, Day, & Sarre, 2011; Victorian Ombudsman, 2015; Willis & Moore, 2008; see more generally Cripps & McGlade, 2008). These needs may be exacerbated for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander offenders from small and/or remote communities:

> Some [Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander] offenders, particularly those with family violence or sex offences, cannot go back to their communities, or do not want to go back, and can become socially isolated fringe dwellers without a sense of home or place. (Willis & Moore, 2008, pp. 91–92)

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander offenders are thus more likely to be reincarcerated than non-Indigenous offenders (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016), and on average return to prison more quickly than non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander offenders (Willis & Moore, 2008).

Furthermore, the context in which sexual offending occurs may vary between Indigenous and non-Indigenous perpetrators. For example, Indigenous perpetrators are more likely to have been exposed to family disruption and dislocation as a result of colonisation, and Indigenous and non-Indigenous perpetrators may exhibit different cognitive distortions about sexual violence (Ellerby & MacPherson, 2002). These varying antecedents of sexual offending may create different reintegration challenges.

It is therefore widely recognised that reintegration measures ought to be culturally relevant to Indigenous perpetrators (Fox, 2014; Heckbert & Turkington, 2001; Macgregor, 2008; Stewart et al., 2014; Willis & Moore, 2008). As Willis and Moore (2008, p. 81; see also Macgregor, 2008) argue:

> Many programs and services delivered to Indigenous prisoners use a model characterised by its psycho-therapeutic features. This Western-oriented model tends to be individually-based, [and] cognitive-behavioural … Offenders from societies that are traditionally collectivistic may feel there is little to gain from treatment that is based on the individual.

While some research demonstrates that sexual offender treatment (rehabilitation) programs can be effective in reducing recidivism among Indigenous perpetrators (see Macgregor, 2008), these are not (with some exceptions) focused on reintegration. The Tupiq program is one exception. This program, delivered to Inuit sexual offenders in a Canadian prison, seeks to reduce sexual recidivism on perpetrators' release, but includes a focus on release planning as one component (Stewart et al., 2014). The program, for sexual offenders assessed as moderate or high risk on the Static-99 actuarial risk assessment tool, combines evidence-based principles with the cultural traditions of the Inuit people, and is delivered in the Inuit language (Inuktitut) over a period of 18 weeks. An evaluation by Stewart et al. (2014) matched 61 Tupiq program participants with 114 comparison group members. A large majority of both groups were assessed as high risk, with statistical testing not showing any significant differences between the groups in this regard. Lower violent recidivism and general recidivism were found among the program participants than a comparison group of Inuit sexual offenders who had not participated in the Tupiq program. This was the case even though the Tupiq participants were followed up for a median period of approximately 30 months, compared with a median of approximately 20 months for the comparison group. While sexual recidivism was also lower among program participants (4.9% compared with 11.4% among the control group), this did not reach statistical

significance (Stewart et al., 2014). As noted above, small sample sizes, challenges in getting participants to agree to follow-up periods, different cultural values and practices, and low rates of reported sexual recidivism can make finding significant differences in this population a challenge in evaluation research (see Duwe, 2013; Macgregor, 2008).

In summary, little is known about effective reintegration measures for Indigenous sexual offenders. It has been established, however, that Indigenous offenders have unique reintegration needs, and that including cultural content and connection to culture in reintegration programs for Indigenous offenders is good practice. The current research will build on this existing knowledge to consider the efficacy of the CMP in this context.

Victims'/survivors' views of sexual offender reintegration

There is a dearth of literature that specifically examines the views of sexual violence victims/survivors on sexual offender reintegration generally, or on specific reintegration programs. As Spoo et al. (2017, p. 3388) argue, in general terms, "we do not know what those who have been most affected by sex crimes think". However, three interconnected bodies of literature are broadly relevant and help frame the current research. These are outlined in turn below.

The first involves a small number of studies on public opinion about the management of sexual offenders. This literature provides a limited insight into victims'/survivors' views about sexual offender reintegration and supervision/ management in the community by differentiating the views of members of the public who have been victims of crime from those who have not. For example, Brown (1999) surveyed a random sample of 312 adults from Cardiff, Wales, about their attitudes towards the treatment of sexual offenders. While analyses were undertaken to test the influence of a range of demographic variables on attitudes, being or knowing a victim of sexual violence was not found to influence views about sexual offender treatment. Similarly, Willis, Malinen and Johnston (2013) undertook an online survey with a self-selecting sample of New Zealand adults (n=401), 58 percent of whom reported that they were close to someone who had been sexually abused. Again, however, this variable

was not found to influence views about sexual offenders and what ought to be done to manage them in the community. Sahlstrom and Jeglic (2008) conducted a similar survey with 208 undergraduate students from a large urban university in the United States. Once again, however, whether respondents had been the victim of sexual violence did not significantly predict attitudes towards juvenile sexual offenders or their treatment (see also Bowman, 2018; Comartin, Kernsmith, & Kernsmith, 2009; Levenson, Brannon, Fortney, & Baker, 2007).

Payne, Tewksbury and Mustaine (2010) surveyed 746 adult residents of Norfolk and Virginia Beach, Virginia, United States, to examine the influence of a range of demographic and experimental factors in shaping respondents' views on sexual offender rehabilitation. Two victimisation variables were examined: first, whether participants had previously been the victim of fraud; and second, whether participants had previously been the victim of intimidation (specifically, whether they had been physically hit by someone in the past 5 years, been yelled at or threatened in their home, had someone scare them in their home and whether their partner or caretaker had used physical force to get his/her way with them) (Payne et al., 2010, p. 583). The latter was included as research indicates that being intimidated in these ways typically leads to a loss of trust and may therefore reduce an individual's trust in the capacity of sexual offenders to be rehabilitated (Payne et al., 2010). Victimisation experiences of this nature were not, however, found to influence respondents' beliefs about sexual offender rehabilitation (see also Devilly & Le Grand, 2015).

Katz-Schiavone, Levenson and Ackerman (2008) conducted an online survey with 127 community members from 15 large American cities on adherence to myths about sexual violence. Forty-seven percent (n=44) of respondents to the survey reported having "ever" been the victim of sexual violence. A significant difference was found between victims and non-victims in relation to the myth that victims of sexual violence share some of the blame for the abuse, with 45 percent of victims agreeing with this statement, compared to 20 percent of non-victims. While this study does not provide an insight into what victims thought should be done to manage sexual offenders in the community, the results do suggest that victims' views about sexual violence may differ from the views of non-victims in unexpected ways (see generally Draucker, 2001).

Indeed, three studies have revealed victims/survivors of sexual violence to hold more positive and less punitive attitudes towards sexual offenders than the general public (see Harper, Hogue, & Bartels, 2017 for a review). Ferguson and Ireland (2006) surveyed 49 non-psychology undergraduate students (24 males and 25 females with a mean age of 22 years) and 90 professional and quasi-professional staff such as prison officers, psychologists and trainee psychologists working in forensic settings (22 males and 68 females with a mean age of 32 years) about their attitudes towards sexual offenders. Thirty-eight respondents reported that either they or someone close to them had experienced sexual assault. This group viewed sexual offenders more positively than the other participants in the study. Similarly, Nelson, Herlihy and Oescher's (2002) survey of 437 professional counsellors (53.4% of whom reported either being the victim of sexual abuse or being very close to someone who had been the victim of sexual abuse) found this group held more positive attitudes towards sexual offenders than the remainder of the participants. Finally, Spoo et al. (2017) surveyed 1173 undergraduate psychology students and found that those who reported a history of sexual abuse (n=129; 11%) had statistically significantly more positive attitudes towards offenders than those who reported no history of sexual abuse (M = 52.98 and SD = 8.59 compared with M = 55.19 and SD = 9.02; t[860] = −2.418, p = .016). Victims/survivors held more favourable attitudes towards mandatory treatment for perpetrators but were less likely than the general sample to support community notification laws. This most recent study is significant as it focused specifically on those who have experienced sexual violence themselves rather than combining those who have experienced abuse with those who are close to someone who has experienced abuse, as was the case in both Ferguson and Ireland (2006) and Nelson et al. (2002). The surprising finding that victims/survivors of sexual violence hold more positive attitudes towards sexual offenders than those who have not experienced abuse is surmised by all three studies to stem from victims'/survivors' better knowledge of sexual offenders generally, and/or that personally knowing a sexual offender results in victims/survivors having a better-rounded picture of offenders and thus relying less on stereotypes. As Spoo et al. (2017, p. 3397) state:

> When it is considered that most of the victims in our study knew their perpetrators, it is not surprising that their views are more positive overall. While they may abhor

the behavior, the perpetrator is no longer a monster— but rather someone in their family or their community—and thus the relationship is more nuanced.

In summary, this body of literature suggests that whether a respondent has been the victim of crime or violence does not predict their views about sexual offender management and/or treatment. It should be noted, however, that samples in these studies have typically been small and/or unrepresentative.

The second broadly relevant body of literature considers victim/survivor involvement in sexual offender reintegration measures. There is a consensus in this literature that victims/survivors of sexual violence can and should be involved in offender reintegration and management (Center for Sex Offender Management, 2000, 2016, 2018; Herman & Wasserman, 2001; Petersilia, 2009; Seymour, 2001). The US Center for Sex Offender Management (2018, p. 5) even advocates for a "victim-centered approach to sex offender management" premised on addressing the question, "What is best for victims?" The increased involvement of victims/survivors in offender reintegration practices is partly premised on the fact that many victims/survivors of sexual violence (unlike victims of many other types of crimes) are known or even related to the offender, making reintegration measures particularly critical to navigate effectively (National Center for Victims of Crime, 2005). Furthermore, incorporating the perspectives of victims/survivors into the planning and delivery of offender reintegration can strengthen measures that aim to reduce recidivism and foster community safety (National Center for Victims of Crime, 2005). The Center for Sex Offender Management (2018) advocates for victim/survivor involvement on the grounds that as the primary persons affected, victims/survivors should be able to contribute towards offender reintegration and management practices, and that doing so might counter the retraumatisation that victims/survivors often experience by being excluded from the criminal justice process. As members of the broader community, victims/survivors also have a general interest in preventing sexual offenders from reoffending (National Center for Victims of Crime, 2005).

The Center for Sex Offender Management (2018) makes a number of suggestions about how victims/survivors of sexual violence (and/or their advocates) might be included in offender

reintegration and management practices, such as enacting case management processes that include representations of victims'/survivors' voices, addressing the safety of victims/survivors in release and reintegration planning processes, and using a trauma-informed lens to shape all practices.

In some parts of the world, measures have been enacted that enable victims/survivors and their advocates to contribute towards sexual offender reintegration measures. For example, in a number of US states, sexual violence victim/survivor advocates contribute to sexual offender management/supervision teams (Center for Sex Offender Management, 2016). Advocates may, for example, provide a point of liaison between individual victims/survivors and correctional officers, provide information to victims/survivors, and inject the perspectives of victims/survivors into educational initiatives and decisions about offender reintegration (see also Petersilia, 2009; Seymour, 2001).

The third body of literature considers the "justice needs" of sexual violence victims/survivors generally, rather than in relation to reintegration specifically. Considering that justice for victims is a key plank of many politicians' platforms, it is surprising how little is understood about this topic (see Clark, 2015; McGlynn & Westmarland, 2018). Nonetheless, several findings are common to the small number of studies that form this body of literature. When asked about their needs, victims/survivors often report wanting meaningful consequences for offenders; the violence not to recur; the exposure of the offender; an acknowledgement of harm; recognition as victims/survivors; to be treated with dignity; to have a voice in proceedings; prevention and education measures; and help with rebuilding their lives (see further Clark, 2015; Herman, 2005; McGlynn & Westmarland, 2018). In contrast with the stereotype of the vengeful victim (Herman, 2005), survivors often appear to support punitive measures for pragmatic reasons rather than due to a desire for revenge. One participant in McGlynn and Westmarland's (2018) study was adamant that "justice is a guilty conviction" (p. 186) but desired such an outcome "not to see him rot in prison or anything like that, it was just for it not to happen again" (pp. 186–187). Another participant from McGlynn and Westmarland's (2018) study likewise supported the notion that the "only kind of justice is prison" (p. 187), but stated that this was "not for revenge, it's for my own piece [sic] of mind" (p. 187). This finding supports earlier work by

Herman (2005) on the views of victims/survivors of domestic and sexual violence. Herman's (2005) respondents did not, in the main, desire punitive responses to offenders for the sake of punishment alone. Rather, where they sought responses such as incarceration, this was usually for instrumental reasons—that is, because they believed it was necessary to prevent the offender harming another person: "Their priority was safety, for themselves and for others. They preferred to prevent offenders from committing future crimes, rather than to punish them for those already committed." (Herman, 2005, p. 597) Participants in Herman's study, like those in McGlynn and Westmarland's (2018), also desired the exposure of the offender. Again, however, victims'/survivors' motivations were largely premised on the belief that exposure would protect others, and provide an expression of disapproval of the offender's lack of regard for their own dignity, rather than on a desire for revenge (Herman, 2005).

Victims/survivors also commonly report wanting more and better information about the criminal justice process, including about offenders' release from prison (National Center for Victims of Crime, 2005). In the US National Center for Victims of Crime's (2005) study, focus group participants (including a small number of victims/survivors of sexual violence) reported wanting better information for practical reasons (e.g. child visitation arrangements) and other reasons (e.g. participants reported wanting to know whether the offender had participated in treatment and whether he was remorseful). Participants also identified that emotional and psychological support for victims/survivors should accompany any such disclosure of information, as finding out about an offender's release can be a retraumatising experience (see also Herman & Wasserman, 2001; Seymour, 2001).

While demonstrating these important commonalities in terms of victims'/survivors' justice needs, this literature nonetheless foreshadows that victims'/survivors' perspectives on reintegration are likely to be highly diverse and shaped by a range of factors. As Herman and Wasserman (2001, p. 431) claim in relation to victims of all types of crime:

> The precise repercussions of offender reentry depend on many factors. These include the nature and seriousness of the crime; the length of time that has passed since the crime was committed; the personal and economic circumstances of the victim; the victim's relationship, if any, to the offender; the chance of undesired encounters;

any specific dangers posed by the offender's return; the strength of family and social networks; and the extent and quality of community-based support services and resources.

McGlynn and Westmarland's (2018) study makes an important contribution in this context, as they recognise that justice is a process for victims/survivors, and that their perceptions of justice are not fixed and one-dimensional but rather complex, multifaceted and potentially shifting over time. This provides an important backdrop to the current report, with victims'/survivors' perspectives of offender reintegration able to be understood within the framework of what McGlynn and Westmarland (2018, p. 186) have termed "kaleidoscopic justice":

> Kaleidoscopic justice is justice as a continually shifting pattern, constantly refracted through new circumstances and understandings. The variety of patterning resonates with victim-survivors' sense that justice is not linear, but has multiple beginnings and possible endings. Justice is complex, nuanced and a difficult to (pre)determine feeling. Justice is a lived, ongoing and ever-evolving experience and process, rather than an ending or result.

The sole existing study that considers in any detail the needs and views of victims/survivors of sexual violence in relation to reintegration specifically is the US National Center for Victims of Crime's (2005) research, which involved focus groups with 30 victim advocates and victims of crime, including a small number of victims/survivors of sexual violence (the exact number is not reported). The study found that victim/survivor needs in relation to reintegration of offenders vary according to a range of factors (e.g. whether the offender is known to the victim, and the type of crime; see generally Herman & Wasserman, 2001), but identified a number of interrelated needs. Advocates and service providers identified the safety of the victim/survivor; notification about the offender's release, and the offender and the system more broadly; and emotional support and assistance with financial issues as key needs (National Center for Victims of Crime, 2005, p. 7). Victims/survivors themselves emphasised the need for offender rehabilitation and public safety as well as the need for more information (National Center for Victims of Crime, 2005, p. 7). "Safety" referred to the victim/survivor's own safety and the safety of the general public. The National Center for Victims of Crime (2005, p. 12) found that "victim participants showed remarkable concern for the rehabilitation of their offenders, even in the most heinous cases" (although it should be noted that none of the quotes used to support this claim seem to be from victims/survivors of sexual violence). This accords with literature on victims of crime generally (Herman, 2005; Slothower, 2014) and of sexual violence specifically (Herman, 2005; McGlynn & Westmarland, 2018), which demonstrates that a primary concern of victims is that the offender not reoffend (see above). This suggests that victims'/survivors' views about the justice process generally apply to reintegration more specifically.

Theoretical framework

Some confusion exists in the relevant literature about whether the aim of CoSA and similar programs is the rehabilitation of offenders, the reintegration of offenders into the mainstream community, and/or offender desistance. This project worked from the premise that both CoSA and the CMP seek to promote desistance in sexual offenders via reintegration. In other words, while reintegration is often stated as the main goal of social support initiatives for sexual offenders, this project took the view that to reintegrate offenders without achieving desistance would not be a worthy goal or be in line with the programs' aims. Furthermore, while programs such as CoSA are often badged as "rehabilitation", they are better understood as desistance-promoting, as they do not provide a "program" as such (i.e. there is no material delivered in a structured way to participants). As Fox (2014) has argued, rehabilitation can be conceptualised as externally imposed measures (e.g. sexual offender treatment), while desistance is best understood as the internal processes of an offender's journey. Reintegration into the community can be supported by rehabilitation, desistance, or a combination of the two (Fox, 2014). As Göbbels, Ward and Willis (2012, p. 458) argue, the primary aim of successful reintegration is "to lessen the chances of re-offending and, therefore, to protect communities … Re-entry involves recruiting all … the factors that promote desistance after release from prison." The focus of both CoSA and the CMP is on providing a process via which offenders might reintegrate into communities in tandem with building desistant futures through social support and identity transformation. While the programs are not designed to be rehabilitative measures, as Bates et al. (2014, p. 866) have noted, programs such as CoSA may

support and encourage offenders to participate in formal rehabilitative programs. Consequently, a rich theoretical backdrop, involving models from the rehabilitation, desistance and reintegration literatures, was adopted for the current project, as outlined below.

The risk-needs-reponsivity model

Two models dominate current approaches to offender rehabilitation and reintegration in Western criminal justice systems: the RNR model (Bonta & Andrews, 2017) and the GLM (Ward, 2002). The RNR model has been the preferred model for a number of decades (Ward & Stewart, 2003). The principles that underpin this model are outlined below.

- Risk: according to the risk principle, criminal justice interventions should be reserved for offenders who present the highest risk (Harkins & Beech, 2007). This principle thus provides guidance as to *whom* interventions should target, and the intensity of the required treatment (see Bonta & Andrews, 2017).

- Need: the need principle refers to *criminogenic* needs—that is, the factors that research has identified as being most closely associated with recidivism. Non-criminogenic needs are those not directly related to offending, such as low self-esteem and anxiety (see Ogloff & Davis, 2004). Offenders may have both criminogenic and non-criminogenic needs. Their criminogenic needs are those dynamic risk factors that, when addressed, are associated with changes in the probability of recidivism (Bonta & Andrews, 2017). According to Bonta and Andrews (2017, p. 180), non-criminogenic needs are also dynamic (i.e. changeable), but are only weakly associated with changes in levels of recidivism. According to the model, addressing criminogenic offender needs should form the primary focus of criminal justice intervention. This principle thus provides guidance as to *what* interventions should target. The main categories of criminogenic offender need, according to the model, are:
  - history of antisocial behaviour
  - antisocial associates
  - antisocial cognition
  - antisocial personality pattern (e.g. impulsivity, aggression, weak self-control)
  - problematic home life
  - problematic work/school life
  - few interests/leisure activities
  - substance abuse (see generally Andrews, Bonta, & Wormith, 2011; Bonta & Andrews, 2017).

- Responsivity: according to the responsivity principle, offender intervention should be matched to the individual offender and their particular learning style and abilities (Bonta & Andrews, 2017; Harkins & Beech, 2007). This principle thus provides guidance as to *how* interventions should be targeted (Looman & Abracen, 2013, p. 31). The responsivity principle is often divided into general and specific responsivity (Bonta & Andrews, 2017). The former refers to the importance of using cognitive-behavioural interventions, as these have been shown to be the most effective in changing individuals' behaviour (Bonta & Andrews, 2017). The latter refers to the importance of tailoring such interventions to the individual offender (Bonta & Andrews, 2017). For example, factors such as age, mental health, maturity, marital status, personality, intelligence, sensitivity and so on will influence an individual offender's receptivity to particular interventions (Bonta & Andrews, 2017; Looman, Dickie, & Abracen, 2015). In the Australian context, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status might also play a critical role in responsivity (Heseltine et al., 2011) to particular interventions. Further, Looman et al. (2015) posit that in relation to sexual offending for both Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander offenders, specific responsivity factors include psychopathy, motivation, denial/minimisation, intellectual functioning, hostility, personality profile, deviant arousal, and sexual offender type.

There is sound evidence that the RNR model can reduce recidivism among general offender populations (Andrews et al., 2011; Harkins & Beech, 2007; Looman & Abracen, 2013) and sexual offender populations. Hanson, Bourgon, Helmus and Hodgson's (2009) meta-analysis of 23 studies measuring the recidivism outcomes of sexual offender programs found that those based on RNR principles demonstrated the largest reductions in both violent and sexual recidivism (cf. Seewald et al., 2018).

The RNR model has nonetheless been the subject of sustained criticism (Ward, Yates, & Willis, 2012). Perhaps most significantly it has often been criticised for constructing offenders as disembodied bearers of risk rather than as multifaceted, complex human beings. Ward and Brown (2004, cited in Loomen & Abracen, 2013, p.31), argue that the RNR model neglects

> the need to understand the primary human goods associated with the commission of an offense and the need to ensure that these goods are met in more socially acceptable and individually satisfying ways.

Critics of the RNR model also believe that it sees offenders through a deficit lens; in other words, it attempts to target negative attitudes and challenge cognitive distortions rather than working with an offender's strengths and goals (Ward & Stewart, 2003). As Ward and Stewart (2003) argue, in the RNR approach, the focus is on "the *elimination* of negative attitudes, the *reduction* of cognitive distortions, the *extinction* of deviant sexual interests, and the generation of a list of people, activities, and places to *avoid*" (p. 355 emphasis in original). Furthermore, as Fox (2015, p. 86) claims: "Risk management paradigms frame offenders within a context that fortifies an individualistic logic rather than a social one that is more nuanced and salient to lived experience."

The Good Lives Model

The GLM (Ward, 2002), developed as an alternative to the RNR model, is strengths-based and privileges the lived experience of offenders (Ward & Laws, 2010). The GLM "promotes the enhancement of strengths, skills and abilities rather than the suppression of negative behavior, in an attempt to promote a 'good life'" (Ward & Stewart, 2003, cited in Looman & Abracen, 2013, p. 31). The model is premised on the assumption that all individuals will seek out activities or experiences that will provide them with a sense of wellbeing (i.e. "primary human goods"). These "primary human goods" are as follows:

- life (i.e. healthy living and optimal physical functioning, sexual satisfaction)
- knowledge
- excellence in work

- excellence in play
- excellence in agency (i.e. autonomy and self-directedness)
- inner peace (i.e. freedom from emotional turmoil and stress)
- relatedness (e.g. intimate, romantic, and family relationships)
- community
- spirituality (in the broad sense of finding meaning and purpose in life)
- happiness
- creativity (Yates & Willis, 2011, cited in Looman & Abracen, 2013, p. 32).

"Secondary" or "instrumental" human goods are the means via which these primary human goods are acquired or achieved (Barnao, Robertson, & Ward, 2010). These may be either adaptive (i.e. healthy) or maladaptive (i.e. unhealthy). Thus, according to the GLM, offending occurs when an individual adopts maladaptive strategies to achieve primary human goods (see e.g. Connelly & Ward, 2008). The GLM therefore encourages practitioners to work with offenders (including sexual offenders) to develop goals and plans that are personally meaningful, and to strive towards meeting some or all of the primary human goods—that is, towards developing a "good life" (see generally Ward & Gannon, 2006; Willis & Ward, 2011; Wilson & Yates, 2009)—in adaptive (i.e. healthy and law-abiding) ways. The concept of identity is central to this approach. Ward and Stewart (2003), building on Maruna's (2001) work, argue that offenders—sexual or otherwise—need to create an alternative, prosocial identity if they are to stop offending.

Although CoSA emerged prior to the development of the GLM, they are commonly considered to reflect the GLM (McCartan et al., 2014b; Wilson, 2018). However, recent scholarship posits that CoSA and related approaches might be better conceptualised as reflecting elements of both the RNR model and GLM (e.g. Chouinard & Riddick, 2014; Höing et al., 2015b; Thompson, Thomas, & Karstedt, 2017), mirroring a general shift in the literature towards viewing the two models as complementary rather than conflicting (Andrews et al., 2011; Willis, Prescott, & Yates, 2013; Willis & Ward, 2013; Wilson & Yates, 2009). Evidence on the

effectiveness of the GLM in sexual offender treatment is limited, with few rigorous studies having been conducted to date (Netto, Carter, & Bonell, 2014). However, some studies are promising (Harkins, Flak, Beech, & Woodhams, 2016; Willis & Ward, 2011), especially in relation to promoting offender motivation and engagement with treatment (Netto et al., 2014; Willis & Ward, 2013). The GLM is compatible with theories of desistance (discussed below) (Wilson, 2018), as the two share the same theoretical premise about the relationships between human beings and their social world (Ward & Laws, 2010).

In addition to this shift in viewing the two models as complementary rather than conflicting, some recent scholarship on responding to sexual offenders has argued that greater attention be paid to theories of *desistance* (Farmer et al., 2015; Fox, 2015, 2016; Harris, 2016, 2017; Höing et al., 2013, 2015b; Kitson-Boyce, 2017; Lussier, Harris, & McAlinden, 2016). Desistance from crime—especially sexual crime—is notoriously difficult to define and measure (Harris, 2017; Ward & Laws, 2010). Scholars agree that desistance should be conceptualised as a process rather than as a discrete event (Farmer, McAlinden, & Maruna, 2016; Göbbels et al., 2012; Lussier et al., 2016; Maruna, 2001; Ward & Laws, 2010). Accordingly, Maruna (2001, p. 26) defines desistance as "the long-term abstinence from crime among individuals who have previously engaged in persistent patterns of criminal offending" (see also Harris, 2014; Laws & Ward, 2011). As Fox (2016, p. 70) argues, while the concepts of reintegration and desistance have to some extent been muddied, "desistance from crime and genuine community integration are not necessarily the same thing but can be mutually reinforcing". Fox (2016, p. 78; see also Fox, 2015) argues that in contrast with much existing criminological belief, "reintegration is a precursor to desistance, rather than the other way around" (cf. Lussier & McCuish, 2016).

Desistance from offending has been conceptualised in a number of ways (see generally Laub & Sampson, 2001). First, desistance can be seen to occur as a result of *external events* (e.g. ageing), *internal change*, or from some *interaction* between these (Fox, 2016). Second, desistance has been conceptualised as *primary* (i.e. initial behavioural change, periods of desistance), *secondary* (i.e. the result of a change

in identity, perhaps prompted by primary desistance), and *tertiary* (i.e. lasting desistance, coupled with a genuine sense of belonging and integration into prosocial environments) (Fox, 2016; Walker, Bowen, Brown, & Sleath, 2015). While these provide an overarching framework through which to interrogate criminal justice interventions, more specific concepts of desistance—"turning points", "knifing off" and "hooks for change"—provide a more finely grained lens through which to understand CoSA and the CMP.

Turning points refer to life events or changes in circumstances that facilitate offender desistance, or in Walker et al.'s (2015) terms, trigger the desistance process. Turning points are changes in the course of one's life (Laub & Sampson, 1993)—"critical events that create a sense of crisis in offenders and ultimately prompt them to reevaluate their lives and reconstruct their identities" (Ward & Laws, 2010, p. 19). Turning points may include the formation of a new family, new work opportunity or environment, the disintegration of an existing peer network (Carlsson, 2012; Maruna, 2001; see generally Farmer, Beech, & Ward, 2012), and/or participation in a treatment program (Farmer et al., 2012). Shifts such as these serve as catalysts for behavioural change among offenders (Kirk, 2012). According to Sampson and Laub (2016, p. 327), structural or institutional turning points involve, to differing degrees:

- new situations that "knife off" the past from the present
- new situations that provide both supervision and monitoring as well as new opportunities for social support and growth
- new situations that change and structure routine activities
- new situations that provide the opportunity for identity transformation.

Turning points can thus be used by desisting offenders as "hooks for change" (Farmer et al., 2012) and/or provide contexts in which "knifing off" can occur (Laub & Sampson, 2001) (see below for a discussion of these concepts). As turning points may present positive or negative possibilities to an offender (e.g. a marriage may be beneficial, but perhaps not if the new partner shares an offender's propensity to use illegal drugs), and "nothing inherent in a situation makes it

a turning point" (Maruna, 2001, p. 25), they are necessary but not sufficient to promote desistance (Göbbels et al., 2012, p. 455).

While the concept of *knifing off* has become increasingly unclear, and has been drawn on to describe a range of desistant processes (Harris, 2016; Maruna & Roy, 2007; see also Harris, 2014), it is generally thought to refer to an offender "severing bonds to [a] criminal past" (Willis, Levenson, & Ward, 2010). As Harris (2017) understands it, knifing off is observed when an offender conceptualises their life or self in two separate halves: a former (criminal) self/life and a new (non-criminal) self/life (see also Maruna, 2001; Ward & Laws, 2010). Turning points and knifing off are thus related processes: "turning points make it possible for an individual to 'knife off' the (criminal) past from the present" (Göbbels et al., 2012, p. 454). Maruna and Roy (2007, p. 109) explain that a range of things can be knifed off as part of this process: former associations, social roles, stigma and disadvantage. They also note that opportunities to offend are knifed off, in this case:

> One's new situation no longer features the choices featured in the old situation … knifing off puts limits on a person's sense of agency and freedom to choose as he or she pleases. (Maruna & Roy, 2007, p. 109)

Such limits on an offender's opportunities to commit new offences may be self- or externally imposed. For example, an offender may choose to knife off from an antisocial friendship group or may be barred from such associations by his conditions of release (Kras, 2014). Limits also exist along a spectrum; for example, marriage or ageing may somewhat circumscribe the choices available to an offender, whereas prison or military service more profoundly limit such opportunities (Maruna & Roy, 2007).

Finally, the concept of "hooks for change" refers to an offender's own role in capitalising on changes in their environment (Giordano, Cernkovich, & Rudolph, 2002; Schinkel, 2015). Changes may be external, internal or a combination of the two (Giordano, Johnson, Manning, Longmore, & Minter 2015). Here, the emphasis is on the offender's agency and use of that agency—what Giordano et al. (2002, p. 992) refer to as "agentic moves". For example, Giordano et al. (2015)

found that hooks for change for perpetrators of intimate partner violence include the threat of arrest, becoming a parent, and relationship motivations. Offenders may make use of one or multiple hooks for change in their desistance journeys (Giordano et al., 2015).

These frameworks within the desistance literature are not competing or mutually exclusive, but rather provide a rich tapestry of complementary concepts that can aid in understanding offenders' desistance journeys. In summary, "desistance from crime requires behavioral change and those changes are often facilitated by external and internal events in the life of the individual" (Ward & Laws, 2010, p. 13). Perhaps most significantly, while desistance theories focus predominantly on offender agency and their own sense-making about their offending histories, this does not necessarily negate the need for rehabilitation programs. As Ward and Laws (2010) argue, correctional interventions based on the GLM can be consistent with theories of desistance, and appropriate correctional interventions can be used to facilitate and support the development of desistant identities among offenders (see also Göbbels et al., 2012).

With a small number of exceptions, there has been little scholarly attention paid to sexual offender reintegration programs using the lens of desistance (cf. Harris, 2014, 2016, 2017; Harris, Ackerman, & Haley, 2017; McAlinden, Farmer, & Maruna, 2016). Fox (2015) argues that by modelling normative relationships and lives, creating a sense of belonging for offenders, de-labelling the offender, and creating a shared sense of moral space, community members' involvement in the reintegration of sexual offenders can foster the desistance process. More specifically, Kitson-Boyce (2017) argues that the formation of CoSA prior to an offender's release from prison could be considered a "turning point". These related perspectives formed the multi-layered theoretical backdrop to the CoSA and CMP studies. The method for each of these components is explained in detail below.

Methodology

The research project comprised three components:

1. an examination of CoSA in Adelaide, South Australia
2. an examination of the CMP in Townsville, Queensland
3. an exploration of the views of victims/survivors of sexual violence about sexual offender reintegration.

Together, the three components of the project sought to be *exploratory* (i.e. investigating a new area), *descriptive* (i.e. providing "a detailed picture … of what is, how something occurs, or who is involved" [Kraska & Neuman, 2012, p. 22]) and evaluative (i.e. concerned with discovering "what works and how to best accomplish goals" [Kraska & Neuman, 2012, p. 23]). The research was undertaken in line with the constructivist paradigm. In contrast to a positivist epistemological approach, it assumed that reality is not fixed and objective, but rather constructed by those who experience it (Renzetti, 1997).

To this end, the project sought to contribute towards a better understanding of sexual offender reintegration for both Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander offenders with the purpose of preventing sexual reoffending and enhancing women's and children's safety. The research aimed to:

- examine the CoSA program and the CMP with a view to building a foundation for evidence-based practice
- investigate how participation in these programs might more effectively reduce sexual recidivism among high-risk offenders
- make evidence-based practical recommendations about reintegration programs of this nature
- produce a data collection and evaluation framework for each of the programs to enable the programs to be monitored in a sustainable way in the future
- identify how the needs of women and child victims/survivors of sexual violence could be better met by these two programs.

A steering committee—which included Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander representation—was established to oversee the research and provide guidance to the research team throughout the project. The steering committee had representatives from OARS, QCS, Bravehearts Foundation,

and ANROWS; CMP Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander representation was vital to ensuring that the project was undertaken in a culturally sensitive manner. The methodology for each component of the project is outlined in detail in this section.

The methodological design adopted across the three components of the project was cross-sectional and qualitative. Against the theoretical backdrop outlined above, the research sought generally to explore the opinions, beliefs, experiences and knowledges of those involved in the CoSA and CMP as well as victims/survivors of sexual violence in order to develop a "sympathetic understanding and explanation of reality" (Weber, 1949, cited in Bayens & Roberson, 2011, p. 24). The research questions addressed were:

- How do such programs seek to reduce sexual recidivism?
- Which program characteristics are key?
- How can core program tactics be applied more effectively?

The following sections provide an overview of the methodological approach used to undertake the research, including data collection, recruitment, sampling, and data analysis procedures. Following this, the approach utilised to explore the views of victims/survivors of sexual violence is detailed. Finally, the ethical issues relating to all three components of the research are considered.

Circles of Support and Accountability and the Cultural Mentoring Program

Both CoSA and the CMP are designed to be "high-impact, low-volume" (Duwe, 2013, p. 162); in others words, they work intensively with small cohorts of offenders. An experimental research design, involving control groups, would not be appropriate, and would not produce meaningful results at this stage due to the small number of potential participants. Furthermore, the international evidence already demonstrates that programs of this nature—which seek to support sexual offenders to reintegrate into communities—can reduce sexual recidivism (Bates et al., 2007, 2012; Cesaroni, 2001; Duwe, 2013, 2018; McCartan et al., 2014b; Wilson et al., 2005, 2007a, 2007b, 2009).

The research therefore adopted a qualitative approach to interrogate how the two programs deploy factors known to reduce sexual reoffending and promote desistance. For example, it has been documented that creating networks of social support (Levenson & Cotter, 2005), addressing intimacy deficits (Marshall, 2010), and challenging cognitive distortions (Burn & Brown, 2006), among other factors, can reduce sexual recidivism. The examinations of CoSA and the CMP drew on a multi-layered theoretical framework to explore how these two programs address these factors by producing attitudinal and behavioural change among offenders to support their reintegration and desistance, and how they can most effectively do so in sustainable ways in the future. This multi-layered theoretical framework incorporates elements of both the GLM (Ward, 2002) and the RNR (Bonta & Andrews, 2017) model, as well as theories of desistance. While qualitative methods cannot "prove" whether a program works (as they do not involve the random allocation of research participants to treatment and control groups under experimental conditions), this methodological approach is useful for generating knowledge about whether and how criminal justice programs accord with the existing evidence base, and for making recommendations about how they could do so more effectively. While qualitative methods are often considered the "poor cousin" of quantitative—particularly experimental—methods (Richards & Bartels, 2011), qualitative research can provide rich and nuanced insights into the lived experiences of individuals that other methods fail to capture (Hough, 2010; Wilcox et al., 2005). Such research can also provide platform for future, large-scale experimental research. However, data collection frameworks (see Appendices A and B) were developed to support such research in the longer term.

Data collection

Semi-structured qualitative interviews were undertaken with a number of participant groups as follows:

- offenders who were currently or had been recently involved in the CoSA program (n=3), and offenders who were currently participating or had recently participated in the CMP (n=14 interviews with 11 individuals)
- staff who have played a role in developing, delivering or managing the CoSA program (n=5) or CMP (n=6)

- a range of government, non-government and private stakeholders who work in tandem with either the CoSA program (n=3) or CMP (n=12); in the main, this participant group comprised service providers who work with the same clients served by the two programs
- volunteers involved in the CoSA program (n=7).

In relation to the CoSA program only, some participants had played more than one role over the course of their involvement. For example, one staff member had previously been a CoSA volunteer. In these cases, the participant was able to reflect on their broader experiences of the program during the interview. Ideally, research of this nature should include the views of program "dropouts" (i.e. those who commenced but did not complete the program), as this provides a more balanced insight into a program's operation (Hough, 2010; Wilcox et al., 2005). Unfortunately, dropouts were unable to be recruited into the current study in relation to either the CoSA program or CMP as they were either unable to be contacted or did not wish to take part. This should be borne in mind when considering the study's results, as it is a limitation of the current research.

The CMP participants who provided their age ranged between 34–53 years, with a mean age of 42 years. While not all were comfortable discussing their past offending and incarceration histories, most of the men in the sample revealed they had completed multiple and/or lengthy prison sentences, having served 5–18 years in prison as a result of their most recent conviction for sexual offending, with a mean time served of 10 years. Most did not report having been incarcerated previously in relation to sexual offending; however, many had been incarcerated previously, either as young people or adults, for other violent and non-violent crimes.

Interviews were conducted in person in most cases, although some were conducted via telephone for practical reasons such as timing and geographical location. Most interviews were conducted one-on-one, although in a small number of cases, small groups of staff or stakeholders were interviewed as a group. The latter were group interviews rather than focus groups (i.e. participants responded to interview questions in the same way they would in an individual interview, and participants were not required to engage with one another's

responses). Interviews lasted approximately 1 hour on average. Interviews with staff, stakeholders and volunteers were conducted in a range of locations depending on the preferences of the interviewee, including their workplaces or the offices of the CoSA program and CMP.

All interviews with staff, stakeholders, CoSA volunteers and core members in the CoSA program were conducted by the research team. Interviews with offender participants in the CMP were either conducted by a member of the research team or by a male research assistant who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and who was recruited and trained to undertake the interviews based on his cultural skills and knowledge and his extensive experience engaging with the local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community. This was an important component of the research, as it enabled the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander offenders in the CMP to opt to be interviewed by either an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander researcher, depending on their personal preference. As indicated above, three CMP participants opted to be interviewed by both the lead researcher and the research assistant, resulting in 14 interviews with 11 individuals.

In the main, the interviews focused on how the two programs assist the reintegration and desistance processes of the offenders involved in them, irrespective of the participant group. In other words, staff, stakeholders, volunteers and offenders were all asked to reflect on offenders' reintegration and desistance journeys, and the role of either the CoSA program or the CMP in these. The questions were devised to illuminate aspects of the theoretical framework in this regard, and were developed by the research team with input from the project steering committee. For example, offenders were asked whether and how participating in the CoSA program or the CMP caused them to see themselves as separate from their offending, in order to explore the concepts of "turning points" (see Appendices J and F, respectively).

Recruitment and sampling

The sampling methodology utilised could best be described as a combination of purposive sampling (i.e. the individuals who were invited to take part had particular experiences that were relevant to the research) (Gray, 2009) and snowball sampling (i.e. existing participants nominated others who they believed would also be able to make a contribution to the research) (Gray, 2009). As neither the CoSA program or the CMP has been long established in Australia, the research adopted a retrospective and prospective sampling approach. Data were collected on the two programs in relation to both their previous operation and how they operated during the study period. This approach will enable the research to have practical input into shaping the programs and ensuring they work as effectively as possible to reduce sexual recidivism.

A number of different approaches to recruitment were adopted for the study. Staff involved in each program were approached directly by the research team and invited to take part in an interview. They were provided with a copy of the participant information and consent form relating to the project. Relevant stakeholders for each program were identified by staff involved in either program or, on occasion, by another staff member or stakeholder. Stakeholders were then approached by the research team and invited to take part in an interview. Volunteers in the CoSA program were either informed about the research project by program staff and requested to contact the research team if they were interested in taking part, or were approached directly by the research team after their contact details were provided by staff. Core members in the CoSA program were informed about the research by program staff in the first instance. Offenders in the CMP were informed about the research and invited to take part by either CMP program staff or a designated probation and parole officer. In all cases, offenders were verbally informed about the research, and provided with a copy of the participant information and consent form to inform their decision about whether to take part.

A range of challenges was faced in the recruitment process in relation to both the CoSA program and the CMP. The CoSA program did not expand as rapidly during the study period as had been envisaged originally, meaning that only eight core members had participated in the program. As a result, and due also to a number of core members becoming incapacitated by illness and/or moving to another location, a smaller number of core members were able to be interviewed than initially hoped (n=3). Proportionally, however, over one third of core

members were interviewed for the study. The number of volunteers interviewed was also smaller than envisaged at the start of the study. This was due again to the low number of circles commencing. It was also due to crossover among volunteers and staff; that is, some volunteers had been staff members of OARS, or vice versa. While this made for rich interview data being collected from individual participants who had held more than one role in the program, it also resulted in a smaller number of interviewees than planned. Finally, fewer stakeholders were engaged with the program than envisaged, resulting in a low number of participants belonging to this category. A key finding of the current research is that the CoSA program could better equip core members for life in the community by connecting them with a wider range of community supports (see Key findings: Circles of Support and Accountability). As this is currently happening only in a limited manner, and also due to the importance of maintaining core member confidentiality, it was not possible to recruit a larger number of stakeholders as informants into the study.

A smaller-than-envisaged number of participants was also recruited into the CMP study, but for different reasons. We paused the research on a number of occasions out of respect for Sorry Business , a term "used by Aboriginal people across Australia to describe a broad range of practices associated with death, dying and funerals" (Carlson & Frazer, 2015, p. 212). As a corollary, there was less time to recruit individuals who were currently or had been a participant in the CMP. Nonetheless, the interviews conducted elicited rich data from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander participants in the CMP, as well as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff and stakeholders, resulting in a detailed insight into the program.

In addition to the interviews, data on each program were also provided from a number of other sources. For the CMP, basic statistical information on the scope of the program to date, and the current template for collecting data on the CMP was provided to the research team. For the CoSA program, circle meeting minutes were provided to the research team. Circle meeting minutes are forms completed by an appointed volunteer from each individual CoSA, which record information on issues discussed at each circle

meeting. These provide qualitative data on core members' participation and progress within their CoSA. For example, the volunteer is required to record whether and how the core member is making progress towards goals associated with preventing recidivism (e.g. forming prosocial relationships). These minutes have been used in this project to supplement the interview data. The templates for collecting data on each program were used to inform the development of the research, evaluation and data collection frameworks (see Appendices A and B).

Data analysis

All interviews were transcribed verbatim with participants' consent. Where audio recording was not consented to by participants, handwritten notes were taken, then typed into an MS Word document. Interview transcripts and summaries, as well as the other sources of data described above, were entered into qualitative data analysis software program NVivo (Version 12) (Bazeley & Richards, 2000). All data sources were read through multiple times (by the project's principal chief investigator) as a first step in order for familiarisation to occur (Caulfield & Hill, 2014; Grbich, 2013). A process of deductive and inductive coding was then undertaken in NVivo. The data were coded deductively (i.e. categorised according to predetermined themes—in this case, factors already known to reduce sexual recidivism) and inductively (i.e. according to new factors that emerged as relevant to preventing sexual recidivism) (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Following this, a thematic analysis, which sought to explore the views, perceptions and/or experiences of participants (Caulfield & Hill, 2014), as well as convergences and divergences across these (Caulfield & Hill, 2014; Mason, 2002), was undertaken against the theoretical framework outlined above.

Victim/survivor views of sexual offender reintegration

This component of the project was exploratory in nature. Within the context of the current study, exploratory research involves investigating new crime and justice topics, and seeking to uncover new phenomena to enable more precise

research questions to be proposed for future studies (Kraska & Neuman, 2012, p. 20). As little previous research has considered the views of victims/survivors about sexual offender reintegration, exploratory research was deemed the most appropriate approach. As is often the case with exploratory research (Kraska & Neuman, 2012), the methodological approach was qualitative. In other words, rather than seeking to quantify the extent of the issue, the research sought to explore the opinions, beliefs, experiences and knowledge of victims/survivors (Weber, 1949, cited in Bayens & Roberson, 2011, p. 24).

Theoretical framework

A broadly feminist approach was adopted, which asserts that women's lives are an important topic of study (Bright, Ward, & Negi, 2011; Reinharz, 1992). As a corrective to much prior criminological research, feminist scholarship seeks to privilege women's personal experiences (Renzetti, 1997), and positions women as "experts on their own lives" (Stanley & Wise, 1993). This has been the case particularly in relation to sexual offender reintegration, on which almost no prior research exists. Although victims/survivors are heavily impacted by the practices of sexual offender reintegration, their views have not yet been adequately considered. While one previous study (Wager & Wilson, 2017) considers the role of victims/survivors as CoSA volunteers, the perspectives of this group more generally have not yet been canvassed. Feminist research privileges the voices of victims/survivors, supports women to tell their stories on their own terms, and recognises women's expertise (see Reinharz, 1992). Ultimately it has a commitment to fostering social action that will change women's lives for the better (Renzetti, 1997). While a majority of victims/survivors of sexual violence are female, and the overwhelming majority of perpetrators male, the research did not assume that all victim/survivor participants would be female. However, all but one of those who self-selected into the study identified as female.

Data collection

The recruitment of victims/survivors was managed by partner organisation Bravehearts Foundation, a national child protection advocacy and support non-government organisation (Bravehearts Foundation, 2019). As a result, victims/survivors were predominantly located in the south-east Queensland area, although a small number were from other parts of Australia. Information about the research and an invitation to participate was posted to the Bravehearts Foundation Facebook page, which has more than 28,000 followers, between September 2017 and April 2018. The post was linked to a summary of the participant information and consent form (see Appendix K) used for the project. In order to participate in the study, participants had to:

- be aged at least 18 years
- self-identify as a victim/survivor of sexual violence.

Eligible prospective participants were requested to contact the research team if they required further information about participating or wanted to take part in the study. The sampling methodology can thus best be understood as purposive sampling that relied on self-selection. Those who contacted the research team were provided with the full participant information and consent form and given the opportunity to ask questions about the research before agreeing to participate.

In total, 33 victims/survivors of sexual violence participated in the research. Victims/survivors had experienced a wide range of "types" of sexual violence. While victims/survivors were all adults at the time of the research, many had experienced sexual violence as children or as both a child and an adult; their interview responses thus provide insight into the experiences of child and adult victims/survivors. Initially, small focus groups had been proposed in order to generate discussion among victims/survivors about sexual offender reintegration. However, these proved difficult in practical terms and victims/survivors indicated a preference for one-on-one interviews when they contacted the research team. In the main, therefore, interviews were conducted with individual victims/survivors. Interviews were conducted either in person by a member of the research team at a location suitable for the participant (e.g. home, a cafe) or via telephone.

While the use of vignettes—i.e. "short stories about hypothetical characters in specified circumstances, to whose situation the interviewee is invited to respond" (Finch, 1987, cited in Barter

& Renold, 1999, p. 1)—had initially been proposed, it became clear early on in the interview process that these disrupted the flow of interviews and were inappropriate for victims/survivors of sexual violence. A loosely structured interview schedule comprised primarily of open-ended questions was used to guide the interview and elicit rich, qualitative data (see Appendix I). Prompting or follow-up questions were also used to obtain further detail from participants where necessary. In line with a feminist approach to interviewing women (Reinharz, 1992), participants were invited to tell as much of their story of sexual victimisation and resistance as they were comfortable sharing, as background to the interview questions. Interviewees were then asked a short series of questions about their needs surrounding the period of sexual offender reintegration. Open-ended questions were asked in order to allow participants to respond on their own terms and to avoid forcing interviewees to discuss topics that were painful (Reinharz, 1992). In addition, following Jülich (2006), who gave her interviewees a description of restorative justice before seeking their views on this approach, we provided a description of CoSA to each interviewee before eliciting their views about this program. Interviewees were able to ask questions about CoSA to clarify their understanding before stating their views.

Participants were not asked directly about the CMP, as it is not a formal, structured program of the same nature as CoSA. Furthermore, as few victim/survivor interviewees identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, this raised concerns about cultural sensitivity in terms of asking non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander participants about an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander program. While capturing the views of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander victims/survivors about Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander sexual offender reintegration programs ought to form the focus of future research, this was beyond the scope of the current project due to these limitations. Interviews lasted approximately 1 hour on average, and were audio-recorded, with participants' permission.

Data analysis

All interviews were transcribed verbatim and imported into the qualitative analysis software package NVivo (Version 12). Prior to coding, the data were read through multiple times in order for a process of familiarisation to occur (Caulfield & Hill, 2014; Grbich, 2013). A process of inductive coding was then undertaken, in which the interview data were grouped into broad categories as themes emerged. Following this, a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; see also Grbich, 2013) was undertaken by the research team. Thematic analysis is appropriate for research projects that aim to "explore the views, perceptions and/or experiences of groups or individuals, and any differences or similarities in these" (Caulfield & Hill, 2014, p. 183). The steps involved in undertaking a thematic analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006, p. 87) recommendations, which are as follows:

1. familiarising yourself with your data: transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas

2. generating initial codes: coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code

3. searching for themes: collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme

4. reviewing themes: checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts, generating a thematic "map" of the analysis

5. defining and naming themes: ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme

6. producing the report: the final opportunity for analysis; selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Following the approach advocated by Mason (2002), care has been taken to give readers a sense of the frequency with which themes appeared in the dataset. Identifying convergences and divergences in interview data has been identified previously in the literature as good practice (Mason, 2002). This ought not to detract from the main arguments put forward, but rather should be considered a type of "negative case analysis" or "disconfirming evidence" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127). The theoretical context that underpinned the two project components on CoSA and the CMP (described

above) remained relevant in that victims'/survivors' views on perpetrator reintegration were considered against this framework. In addition, in line with feminist framework (Reinharz, 1992), the data analysis was concerned with recognising the diverse voices and perspectives of participants, and facilitating spaces for these to be recognised. Again, therefore, convergences and divergences in the interview data were considered at all times.

Ethics

The research was approved by Queensland University of Technology's (QUT) Human Research Ethics Committee (approval #1600001093). The project component relating to the CMP was also approved by the Queensland Corrective Services Research Committee.

A project of this nature requires that close attention be paid to a range of ethical issues. Chief among these is the confidentiality of participants. As some interviewees have been incarcerated for sexual offending, or volunteer/work with those offenders, or have been affected by sexual violence as a victim/survivor, it was paramount to ensure that participants' identities would remain confidential. As such, participants have not been given pseudonyms in this research report. Rather, all participants are referred to by use of a generic descriptor (e.g. "CMP participant" or "stakeholder"). This is to ensure that no individual participant's story can be pieced together from quoted material used herein. This was also necessary as a number of participants could be considered to be high profile, in that they are well known in their communities. In all instances, the research was guided not only by the advice of the authorising agencies, but by members of the steering committee. The research partners provided advice in advance of the research about how participant confidentiality could best be ensured. In all cases, prospective interviewees were informed in writing and/or verbally about the risks associated with participating (such as becoming distressed), and the confidentiality procedures in place, to enable participants to make informed decisions about taking part.

Maintaining confidentiality also requires researchers avoid, to the extent possible, revealing to program staff which participants have taken part in the study, as this may have repercussions for the individual participant and compromise their confidentiality. In the CMP study, prospective participants were informed about the study from multiple sources, and were given the option of being interviewed by an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander research assistant or a non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander researcher. This meant that prospective participants were able to make informed decisions about whether, where, when and with whom to participate in the research. Input on shaping the interview questions was also provided by members of the project steering committee, and by Elders involved in the delivery of the CMP, to ensure cultural safety.

Informed consent was also ensured by making research project materials reader-friendly, and by verbally explaining to participants the purpose of the research and what participating in the study would mean for each individual. Where appropriate (commonly with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander participants), verbal rather than written consent was obtained. This ensured that participants with limited literacy and/or who may have felt uncomfortable engaging with official paperwork could be informed about the project in a non-threatening manner. Information about confidentiality procedures and post-interview supports (e.g. counselling services) was provided verbally and in writing to participants. Interviewees' understanding of their participation was checked verbally, and all participants were given the opportunity to ask questions about the research. As discussed in the key findings sections below, in some cases staff and/or service providers described participants in the CoSA program and the CMP as having cognitive impairments. Offenders in both programs were, however, deemed able to take part in the research if they could demonstrate an understanding of the research and a willingness to participate in an interview. This approach may have meant that offenders with more than mild (i.e. moderate, severe or profound) cognitive impairments were excluded from the research. However, due to the nature of both programs, it is likely that offenders in the latter categories may not possess the cognitive capabilities to take part in the programs themselves.

Ensuring the wellbeing of all participants was paramount in the study. As some perpetrators of sexual violence have experienced sexual violence themselves, and given the likelihood that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander offenders in the study might have histories of complex trauma, care was

taken to avoid causing distress to this participant group. For example, informed consent was sought from participants. Interviewers informed participants that they were free to withdraw from the research, or to not answer any question they were not comfortable answering. Information about free counselling services was provided to ensure participants had a supportive follow-up contact if required. Ensuring wellbeing was especially important in relation to victims/survivors, as this group was asked to reflect on potentially very distressing events relating to their experiences of sexual victimisation and resistance. As such, a range of measures was adopted to ensure that the wellbeing of victims/survivors was maintained at all times. All prospective participants who contacted the research team were informed about the research, and given the opportunity to ask questions prior to committing to take part in the study. Victims/survivors were able to choose a time, date and location for the interview that was suitable and comfortable for them; some were interviewed by telephone for practical reasons or due to the victim's/survivor's own preference.

Victim/survivor interviewees were informed about post-interview supports in writing and verbally, and were given the option of having a support person present during the interview. At the start of each interview, each participant was invited to share as much of their experience of sexual victimisation by way of background as they were comfortable with. This approach was adopted to give control of the interview to the participant. All interviewees were informed that they could skip a question, take a break or stop the interview at any time. The researchers checked in periodically during the interviews to enquire whether the victim/survivor needed a break. Although some of the victim/survivor interviewees did become emotional during the interviews, as was expected, all wanted to complete the interview, and have their voices and views heard. All interviewees were informed that they were able to withdraw from the research if they wished, and were provided with information about doing so; however, none took this option.

Limitations

A number of limitations should be borne in mind when considering the findings of this research project. Perhaps chief among these is the small sample sizes, especially of perpetrators involved in the CoSA program. As noted above, data saturation was not reached with this population. While qualitative research is typically not generalisable, the small sample size further limits the generalisability of the findings. Moreover, because reaching data saturation was not possible with all participant groups, divergent views may not have been given the appropriate weight in this report. However, again, every effort has been made to report convergences and divergences in the data (Mason, 2002), and to report the breadth of views not only from program participants, but also from staff, volunteers and stakeholders.

As noted above, both programs, and the CoSA program in particular, are relatively newly established. The CoSA program is a first-time pilot program. As a result, the programs are low volume; they work intensively with a small number of participants. The current research nonetheless adopted an exploratory approach and provides a platform from which such evaluation research can be undertaken in future.

Another limitation of the study, as indicated above, is that program dropouts were not able to be recruited into the study. This likely means that the views of participants captured in this report are skewed in favour of those who found the programs useful. Every effort has been made, however, to present the diverse views held by the range of participants in the research.

Key findings: Circles of Support and Accountability

This section presents findings from the examination of CoSA, drawing on interviews with core members, volunteers, staff and stakeholders. After exploring the needs of core members when released from prison and the motivations of volunteers for participating, it considers in depth the operation of the CoSA program in terms of the GLM and RNR frameworks. It then details some of the program's current challenges, and participants' views on how the program could be improved. Finally, this section makes a series of recommendations about the future operation of the CoSA program.

Core member needs on release

It has been well documented that ex-prisoners face significant barriers to reintegration into the community (Grossi, 2017), including difficulties finding appropriate accommodation and employment or other means of income, undertaking administrative tasks (such as obtaining proof of identification), and developing or reconnecting with familial and friendship networks (van Dooren, Claudio, Kinner, & Williams, 2011). For sexual offenders, these challenges are often exacerbated by the community and criminal justice system responses to sexual offending (such as very strict release conditions), which can often result in the breakdown of relationships, barriers to employment and housing (due to having to disclose a criminal record), and stigma (Grossi, 2017; Harris, 2017; Tewksbury & Copes, 2012). This reinforces the relevance of RNR and strengths-based models such as the GLM that work to address the social, emotional and wellbeing needs of the individual as well as the practical aspects of risk management.

The experiences of core members in the current study aligned with these current understandings of ex-prisoner and sexual offender barriers to reintegration, and reflected the experiences of core members from other international CoSA evaluations. CoSA volunteers, stakeholders and staff described a group of men with profound, although varied, needs and barriers to reintegration. One staff member described the situation as follows:

> They face as many challenges [to reintegration] as anybody else in the whole community put together would face. They are very … frightened about being released from prison. They think that everybody knows the nature of their

crime. They are typically people who don't develop good quality, trusting, sustainable relationships. Employment is often out of the question. Housing, all the basics upon release, not being able to get housing. Potential persecution from the community, being named and shamed. These are all fears that many child sex offenders [have], and the barriers that they face.

Other interviewees described the core members with whom they have worked and/or volunteered as having little contact with family or friends; having been ostracised by their social and familial networks; experiencing housing problems and difficulties finding work; and in some cases, having "absolutely nothing" (staff member) in terms of support on their release from prison. The minutes from one circle meeting described a core member who had no familial or social support, having "burned all his bridges", and who was in a difficult housing situation involving ongoing conflict with a neighbour, including having been assaulted by that neighbour.

Core members themselves described a range of challenges associated with transitioning from prison to the community. One, who had been incarcerated for a number of years and has a cognitive impairment, described being very nervous about being released, as he had been in prison for an extended period: "I wouldn't go nowhere much when I first got out." This core member was worried about being discovered by the media, and specifically that his address would be discovered. In addition, a range of practical considerations, from shopping to public transport, made his transition to the community challenging, since "things change". Another core member's challenges were predominantly related to relationships. As his offence had occurred in South Australia while visiting from his permanent home in another state, he was incarcerated in South Australia and had no choice but to remain in that state until his supervision order expired. As such, he reported feeling lonely and having few social or familial supports on which to draw.

Core members, CoSA volunteers and staff did, however, report a range of supports from service providers that were available to core members, including disability, mental health, and alcohol and other drug treatment services. These are discussed in more detail in the following subsections.

Volunteer motivations for participating in Circles of Support and Accountability

As Lowe et al. (2017, n.p.) argue, "understanding the motivation to volunteer is important for developing an effective recruitment strategy to ensure the sustainability of CoSA". Despite this, only a small number of studies have examined the motivations of volunteers to take part in CoSA. Taken together, these studies found that faith and an adherence to the principles of restorative justice are key motivating factors for CoSA volunteers (see generally Farrington, 2015; Hannem, 2011; Silverman & Wilson, 2002; Wilson et al., 2005, 2007a). Almond et al.'s (2015) survey of 160 volunteers involved in CoSA in the United Kingdom found a range of motivations for participation, including professional interest arising from current or intended employment, personal experience as a victim/survivor of sexual abuse, and a personal interest in social and/or criminal justice issues (see further Circles South East, 2012; Lowe et al., 2017).

Thompson et al.'s (2017) research on CoSA volunteers (n=20) from across England and Wales categorised the motivations of volunteers as either "inward" (i.e. benefiting the volunteer by providing work experience, resume-building) or "outward" (i.e. altruistic) (see also Bellamy & Watson, 2013). While a substantial proportion (40%) of volunteers in this study initially cited "inward" motivations for joining a CoSA, Thompson et al. (2017, p. 109) documented a high degree of "motivational drift" over time.

Reflecting much prior research (especially Bellamy & Watson, 2013; Circles South East, 2012; Farrington, 2015; Lowe, 2017; Lowe et al., 2017; Thompson et al., 2017), volunteers in the current study expressed a range of motivations for participating in CoSA. In the main, these could be categorised as inwardly or outwardly focused. In relation to the former category, for example, a number of volunteers explained that volunteering in CoSA represented an opportunity to gain skills that would equip them for future paid work in the criminal justice sector. One volunteer who completed CoSA training but had not yet been placed in a circle described her interest as follows:

I was online looking for volunteer positions. I study criminology so I was interested in finding something criminology based … I'm really interested in reintegration and I thought it would be a good opportunity, because I haven't worked in criminology—I've only studied it—I thought if I could do this I could do anything. I thought it would be a good opportunity to test whether I am capable of helping in this capacity.

More specifically, this volunteer wanted to gain skills in communicating with offenders:

I wanted the skills to objectively talk to offenders … I just wanted a skill set to just be able to communicate efficiently and help them, because if you're not equipped to do that and you go right into a job you're going to be quite shocked. So I want to get some prior experience volunteering and build my skills up.

The non-government stakeholders responsible for recruiting volunteers into the CoSA program reported that many of those who express an interest in volunteering are studying psychology or chaplaincy, and are keen to gain some relevant experience. One prospective volunteer, who was training to become a pastor, had a similar motivation, as expressed by a stakeholder:

His whole theory was, "If I can sit and talk and learn and understand and really hear from a sex offender, I can actually do this with anyone", and he wanted to actually do it as a way of learning almost in himself, as well as supporting, how to really listen to other people … He said, "Well how can I be a great pastor and listen to people if I don't actually hear from everyone".

Other volunteers expressed similar sentiments about their motivations for joining a CoSA:

I had a read and watched, I think, like a Four Corners [actually *Lateline*] episode about it … and I thought, "Oh, that seems quite interesting". And I'm currently in a social work degree at the minute anyway, so I was like, this could all be quite beneficial towards my professional, my resume at some point. And I found it quite interesting and something I've never done. I haven't worked with sex offenders. So, I thought, "Why not?"

Another group of volunteers interviewed for this study, however, reported predominantly outwardly focused reasons for participating in CoSA. One volunteer explained his interest in being a circle member by stating, "I'm a counsellor by training. … So, I've got a natural interest for human life and the nuances of people." Another who had volunteered with a de-radicalisation program for young people in his birth country explained his interest in the CoSA program as follows:

> Those people are offenders right. But they're also like, most people don't like to hear this, but they're also victims because you find out that some people have been raped. But always trying to be a part of that process of getting these people to get back into the society. Yeah, that's what really attracted me to it.

As noted above, some volunteers report that their own experiences of sexual violence are the primary driver of their decision to volunteer with CoSA. Almond et al. (2015) found that 13 of the 160 volunteers they surveyed reported that personal experience as a survivor of sexual abuse was a factor that motivated them to join a CoSA, and Wager and Wilson (2017) estimate that 20–25 percent of CoSA volunteers in the United Kingdom are victims/survivors (see also Richards, 2011b). McCartan's (2016) research found that knowing people who have been victims/survivors of sexual abuse was a motivating factor for some volunteers in applying and working within CoSA. The inclusion of victims/survivors as volunteers in CoSA has been met with some reticence, due to concerns that such a role will retraumatise victims/survivors and/or that victims/survivors may be "drawn into this field in order to resolve their own traumas" (Wager & Wilson, 2017, p. 265; see further McWhinnie & Wilson, n.d.). The only research that has been conducted to date on victims/survivors as volunteers is Wager and Wilson's (2017) study, which involved interviewing 13 CoSA volunteers from Circles South East, five of whom identified as victims/survivors of sexual violence. Wager and Wilson found that despite other volunteers' concern that victims/survivors would be retraumatised by CoSA, this was not the case. The study also found that despite concerns, the victims/survivors they interviewed did not enter into their volunteering role "seeking self-healing or in order to undergo a process of meaning-making. Rather they come to CoSA once they have transitioned from victim to survivor." (Wager & Wilson, 2017, pp. 279–280)

In the current study, the non-government agency responsible for recruiting CoSA volunteers reported that one prospective volunteer had disclosed during the recruitment process that her brother was a victim/survivor of sexual violence. While the interviewee admitted that she was "a bit concerned … because of the brother" (stakeholder), her concerns were alleviated by the fact the prospective volunteer had spoken with her family about the CoSA program, and because she had displayed other strong attributes such as having a good outlook and being keen to learn. Another volunteer described her motivation to contribute to the CoSA program as stemming directly from her own experiences of sexual violence:

> Actually, it's very personal—I wanted to work within the CoSA program because I'm a victim myself. So I can look at it from a way that children need to be kept safe … I think from a victim's point of view, the program was really important, and I could look at the program in a really positive way.

She explained further that her participation is premised on wanting to do something to prevent sexual violence and protect children:

> Being a victim, it's so important to me—that's why I grabbed on to this [CoSA] when it came along, because nothing else is helping … We need to start focusing on something that's going to stop the problem … we need to start concentrating on what we can do to minimise what's happening to children.

As was the case in research by Almond et al. (2015), McCartan (2016) and Circles South East (2012), CoSA volunteers usually gave multiple reasons for their participation in CoSA; often these motivations could be understood as both inwardly and outwardly focused. For example, while one volunteer explained his involvement as an extension of his interest in helping people, he later stated that:

> I thought it was a good opportunity. An opportunity to learn, and an opportunity to perhaps try and make that difference. I just dig what the principles of CoSA was [sic], and that whole idea of supporting an offender.

Here, he identifies benefits to both himself and others that inspired his decision to volunteer with CoSA. Another volunteer likewise described mixed motivations for opting to take part in a number of circles. She stated:

> I said, "Well, if you need any volunteers, I'd be interested" because I'm doing school [tertiary study] part-time and I have some time, and I thought, "You know what, it's time to start putting something back into the community for me." …I'm a really family person and I like support, and nurturing, and sharing. And I just like the whole idea of the way it was all set up.

As discussed later in this research report, recruiting and retaining volunteers is a significant challenge faced by CoSA programs around the globe. Understanding volunteer motivations to take part is therefore critical to fostering effective CoSA programs.

Circles' of Support and Accountability role in reintegration and desistance

The primary focus of the current research was the extent to which the CoSA program reflects factors known to reduce sexual reoffending. The CoSA program was found to reflect both the GLM and the RNR model, although it was rarely explicitly articulated in these terms by those involved. This section demonstrates the program's adherence to each of these models in turn.

Circles of Support and Accountability and the Good Lives Model

As outlined above, the GLM encourages those who work with sexual offenders to develop with them life goals and plans that are personally meaningful and incompatible with offending (Barnao, 2013; Harkins et al., 2016; Willis, Prescott, & Yates, 2013), and thus help them to strive towards creating a "good life" (see generally Ward & Gannon, 2006; Willis, Prescott, & Yates, 2013; Willis & Ward, 2011; Wilson & Yates, 2009). The model is underpinned by the notion of "human goods"—that is, those "states of mind, outcomes, and experiences that are important for all humans to have in their lives" (Willis, Prescott, & Yates, 2013, p. 3). The remainder of this section

examines whether and how interviewees characterised CoSA as meeting each of these human goods in turn.

Life (healthy living and functioning)

The "life" primary good relates to the physical health and safety of the offender, and the goals of pursuing a healthy diet, participating in regular exercise, and managing health problems (Ward & Brown, 2004; Ward & Gannon, 2006; Willis, Prescott, & Yates, 2013). Developing life goals relating to this primary good was a common function of circles operating under the CoSA program. CoSA volunteers reported undertaking a wide range of activities with core members in support of the creation and maintenance of physical health. A number of volunteers described providing support by accompanying core members to medical appointments, as well as assisting core members to manage a range of physical health conditions:

> There were numerous times we took him to [local medical centre] where they do the liver work. He had Hep C [Hepatitis C] so we were trying to get him onto the list where he got the medication. But he needed to get himself into a healthy state before he could do that medication for the 12 weeks. … It was those things that gave him the little bit of hope that "Ok, I might have a chance of becoming healthy again" and he could perhaps see there was more to life.

> We talked to him about his medication … his medical issues. … [One of the core members] was diagnosed with cancer. I actually went to doctor's appointments with him.

> These guys, they're out of prison, they're all on medication, they take it, they don't take it. We were trying to teach them or help them to look after themselves, first and foremost. Sleep, eat, don't mess around with your medication, if you need to go to the doctor, go. If you want one of us to go, we'll go with you.

Other volunteers reported supporting their core members to lose weight, exercise and quit smoking. Minutes from a circle meeting recorded a group discussion about the core member's health goals, and a plan to connect him with community service providers and encourage him to quit

smoking in an effort to support him to attain these goals. As one volunteer recalled, "His New Year resolution was to quit smoking, and he managed to do that for a few weeks, well cut down at least."

Knowledge

The primary good "knowledge" refers to an offender's desire to seek knowledge—about himself and/or others, and/or other topics—and might include participating in formal educational courses or training, informal avenues of knowledge creation (e.g. reading), and participating in treatment programs (Ward & Brown, 2004; Ward & Gannon, 2006; Willis, Prescott, & Yates, 2013). In the current research, this was perhaps the human good least commonly raised by interviewees. Nonetheless, it featured in participants' comments about the CoSA program. Perhaps the key way in which CoSA volunteers encouraged core members to pursue "knowledge" was by supporting them to participate in sexual offender treatment. For many offenders, completing treatment programs is a mandatory condition of release. Core members in the current study expressed resistance to participating in such treatment, primarily as it often involved discussing their offending. For example, one core member explained in his interview that while he "just wants to get on with the future", having to participate in sexual offender treatment constantly "brings up the past" and is stressful. He reported needing the support of his CoSA volunteers during his participation in the treatment program. As discussed in more detail below, it was common for interviewees in the current study to report that they encouraged and supported core members to complete community-based treatment.

Less frequently, CoSA staff and volunteers reported assisting core members with the pursuit of "knowledge" in other ways. For example, minutes from one of the circle meetings note discussion about study options alongside discussion about work and volunteering options for one core member. In another case, a former volunteer reported supporting one core member with "a lot more living skills-based assistance" due to his cognitive impairment. A staff member perhaps best captures the role of a CoSA in supporting core members to undertake secondary human goods (in this case, a barista course) in pursuit of the primary good of "knowledge":

It's a place where they can talk about fears, their dreams,

what they would like to see happen. … [One core member was] just overwhelmed with the idea of going and meeting a CoSA member at a coffee shop. He kept looking over his shoulder, kept being very anxious the first time, but the CoSA member kept saying, "Tell me what you're thinking, why the agitation"—and then steering the conversation somewhere else. In the end this man went and did a barista course because he felt so comfortable in that environment.

Excellence in work

"Excellence in work" refers to the primary human good of striving for mastery in work, and can include advancing in one's paid work, or being employed or volunteering in meaningful work (Ward & Brown, 2004; Ward & Gannon, 2006; Willis, Prescott, & Yates, 2013). Given the small cohort of core members who have participated in the CoSA program to date (n=8), and that many have experienced poor physical health, cognitive impairment, and/or old age, it is unsurprising that this human good did not feature strongly in the interviews. While a number of core members were encouraged by their CoSA to seek volunteering opportunities, this was attempted more commonly in pursuit of other human goods, such as "community", as discussed further below. In one case, however, a core member was supported by his CoSA to undertake meaningful volunteer work as an adaptive strategy towards the primary human good of "excellence in work". This core member described in his interview that he fosters cats through a Royal Society for the Protection and Care of Animals (RSPCA) program, which asks community members to foster pets on a temporary basis for women escaping domestic violence. He described this as stemming from his wish to "give something back to society".

Excellence in play

"Excellence in play" refers to striving for mastery in interests and hobbies, including activities such as sports, arts and crafts, and music (Ward et al., 2012; Willis et al., 2012). As with "excellence in work", it is largely unsurprising, given the cohort of core members, that "excellence in play" did not feature strongly in the interviews undertaken for this project. Core members did initiate and/or develop interests and hobbies with the encouragement and support of CoSA

volunteers. However, in the main these activities were undertaken in pursuit of other primary human goods, as discussed elsewhere in this section.

Excellence in agency (autonomy and self-directedness)

This human good refers to the development of autonomy and independence in an offender, and their desire for and capacity to develop and follow through with life plans (Ward & Gannon, 2006; Willis, Prescott, & Yates, 2013). As might be expected given the nature of CoSA, interviewees frequently noted instances of supporting core members with goal-setting and following through with life plans, albeit with varying degrees of success. As CoSA, in theory, provide support for core members for only a limited time (usually 12–18 months), one of their key goals is that the core member is sufficiently integrated into and supported within the community, as well as sufficiently autonomous, to function independently of the CoSA after its completion. As one staff member put it:

> It certainly seems like the obvious end goal. … You devise a way to come up with a replacement … well, maybe not a complete replacement, but yeah, some sort of a transition into just normal community engagement.

Minutes recorded following CoSA meetings make a number of references to encouraging core members with the development of life plans. However, a number of interviewees noted that these discussions were often driven by the volunteers rather than the core members. As one volunteer, who had taken part in three circles, stated:

> Now, they weren't the ones really that pursued those things. We as a circle were the ones, once they mentioned they might be interested in something, then we all had a discussion about it and we kind of, one person in the circle might have said, you know, "I know this person, or I know a little bit about RSPCA, I'll look into it and when we come back next week we can discuss it and I can give you more information about it". So, we were the ones in these instances that were doing the leg work. And then we passed it on to them. As part of that leg work also, we took into consideration their parole conditions. … And then we would look at it and come back to the table the following week, and have a discussion about it. They are not very motivated to do anything. And so, I guess we

were all in our own ways trying to find something that might motivate them.

Two staff members noted in their interviews that volunteers who "want to rescue" the core member, or have a "saviour complex", can be problematic in CoSA, and described the efforts that the program had made to ensure that volunteers of this nature were not accepted into the program. One staff member also recounted issues with one former volunteer who she believed had "gone over the boundaries" by taking the approach of "if we take charge and make them do things, they'll get better". The staff member described this approach as "not helpful", since "these are grown men we're talking about". Here, staff point to the importance of encouraging autonomy and a sense of self-actualisation among core members, rather than relating to them in ways that will make them reliant on the circle volunteers.

While volunteers' enthusiasm for supporting core members is laudable, it is vital that consideration is also given, as the circle matures, to its inevitable conclusion, and how best to equip the core member to live autonomously without the support of the circle in the long term. To this end, there was some focus placed on helping to link core members with local service providers that may be able to act as supports following the formal completion of a CoSA. One core member, for example, reported that his CoSA had helped him connect with a local organisation to obtain assistance with his anxiety issues. Another likewise had been supported by his CoSA to maintain contact with a local community service that provides social activities for older people. However, other core members were unable to name any services to which they had been connected as part of their CoSA. One volunteer saw the value in doing this, but acknowledged that the program could do a better job in this regard, once it is more established and has better connections to a range of other services.

One staff member described core members whose circles had officially concluded but who remained in contact with CoSA program staff. In one case, a core member had been supported to make some prosocial connections in his community, but:

> He can't seem to altogether let go. So once a fortnight he meets [staff member] in the southern office for a cup

of coffee. He sits there and tells her about his week, and then he asks her if she's had a good week.

In another case, this staff member described a core member whose circle had formally completed but who continued to keep in contact via telephone. As discussed in detail below, having support available at times of crisis is critical for preventing sexual reoffending, and thus this ongoing connection is undoubtedly beneficial for community safety. It does entail ongoing costs to the organisation, however, and these costs should be factored in to any future funding model.

Inner peace (freedom from emotional turmoil and stress)

The risk of a sexual offender reoffending (including after release from prison) does not remain static, but varies over time (Hanson et al., 2014). A number of studies have identified, for example, that periods of acute stress for a sexual offender are also periods of increased risk of sexual recidivism (Burchfield & Mingus, 2014; Cortoni & Marshall, 2001; Hanson & Harris, 1998; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005), and that sexual offenders often use sexual fantasies and sexual acts (whether deviant or not) as a strategy for coping with stress (Cortoni & Marshall, 2001; Marshall, Anderson, & Fernandez, 1999). As Edwards and Hensley (2001, p. 89) explain:

> Sex offenders … do not simply decide to sexually offend, but instead react to one or more emotional triggers that result in a heightened level of anxiety, which in turn can result in a worsening pattern of poor decision-making leading to a relapse event … Often such feelings, if intense enough, can lead even previously treated and well-intentioned offenders toward a pattern of escape and into a cognitively distorted cycle of decision-making that increases their vulnerability toward reoffending.

The importance of dealing with stressors, supporting core members in times of crisis, and working with core members to develop adaptive methods to reduce and cope with stress, and life coping skills (see Hudson, 2005)—or in GLM terms, to develop inner peace—were well understood by the CoSA program. As a staff member explained the premise of the program:

> People who committed child sex offences could, even if they are relatively reintegrated back into the community, [if they] didn't feel that they were at risk and all of a sudden something happened, some crisis in their life that might turn them back to that type of offending, that there was somewhere to go back to quickly to get some help to reduce that likelihood.

Furthermore, a staff member responsible for developing training materials and delivering training to volunteers for the program spoke of a focus on the secondary human goods of "problem-solving, responding to crisis, conflict resolution, [and] emotional regulation".

In practice, interviewees recalled numerous instances in which a circle identified and intervened in a potential crisis situation for a core member. For example, a staff member recounted a situation in one circle, in which the core member had gradually, with the support of his circle, recommenced contact with one of his daughters. This relationship was a source of joy for the core member, but "all of a sudden it stopped". As the staff member explained:

> She didn't return his texts and he was becoming frantic thinking something had happened to her. … And finally, finally, she texts him and said she'd been talking to her older sister who didn't want anything to do with him. And she was now having a child and she thought that maybe it was best that they didn't see each other anymore. He was heartbroken. And all that interaction, that work, we were just watching it disintegrate.

In response to this distressing situation, the core member became disengaged from his CoSA. Nonetheless, the circle took a range of steps to support the core member, including speaking with his correctional officer about organising appropriate counselling, and accompanying the core member to a doctor's appointment in order to obtain a mental health plan. The staff member responsible at the time contacted the core member and "said that we were concerned about him and wanted to know how he was coping", leading the core member to re-engage with his circle.

Another similar example was recounted by the same staff member as follows:

> One core member was coming to the end of his statutory conditions and he desperately wanted to go back to where he was born and lived, but also where the offending happened, and it was a country town. And he was also diagnosed with terminal cancer. And so … we actually assisted him to get housing and then we looked at what supports we could put in place. He was already engaging in his own community here in Adelaide, and some of that was transferrable. There were a couple of things we were able to lock him into. … One of the offshoots of that particular client though was that the circle members kept in contact with him just to make sure that everything was going ok. We didn't want abandonment issues or anything.

This example demonstrates that CoSA program staff are cognisant that ending a CoSA abruptly could itself be a stressor for the core member and thus increase the risk of reoffending. This may be especially the case where cognitive impairment is involved.

Minutes of circle meetings similarly document instances in which CoSA volunteers have identified potential stressors in their core member's life circumstances, and taken appropriate measures, in collaboration with the core member, to deal with these. For example, one set of minutes documents the core member's frustrations at having to meet the strict conditions of his community-based order. This is a commonly documented, if somewhat ironic, consequence of increasingly strict and rigid conditions placed on the release of sexual offenders from prison: while stress has been identified as a risk factor for reoffending (Burchfield & Mingus, 2014), the strict conditions placed on offenders when they are released often cause a great deal of stress (Bonnar-Kidd, 2010; Harris, 2017; Levenson & Cotter, 2005). In this core member's case, circle minutes also documented a range of strategies to deal with this, such as walking, cooking and doing puzzles, that were discussed with the core member. Another set of minutes notes a core member's progress towards his identified goals of practising patience and participating in stress-relieving activities such as taking walks. These same minutes elsewhere note a new source of stress—this time, financial—and note that dealing with this stress would be important for maintaining the stability of the core member over time. Other meeting minutes document a range of potential stressors for core members, such as participating in sexual offender treatment, being isolated over the Christmas period, the transition of the CoSA program from one staff member to another, and conflict with (and physical assault by) a neighbour. In many instances, the minutes accordingly list strategies discussed during the circle to curb these sources of stress. For example, in one instance loneliness and isolation are noted as problems for the core member due to an upcoming 2-week period during which a circle meeting would not be possible. In this case, a list of volunteers who would "check in" with the core member over the telephone during this time was also included. These examples demonstrate the value of CoSA in working with core members to minimise and address stressful life situations, as well as the skill and thoughtfulness of the volunteers. This role of each circle is vital given the research findings about the role of crises in increasing the likelihood of recidivism among sexual offenders.

Core members interviewed for the current study also articulated their experiences of being supported by CoSA volunteers during potentially stressful or crisis situations. One core member stated that he felt he could call his volunteers if he needed to. However, he reported not wanting to do this very frequently because of his concerns that they were too busy. While he sometimes felt he was being "too needy" and "sometimes feels guilty" about calling them, he nonetheless clearly stated that he felt able to call his volunteers in a crisis. Another core member described a great deal of support from his circle in dealing appropriately with his ongoing anxiety issues, particularly relating to social interaction. He had undergone a recent change in his life priorities, with the guidance of his circle, to becoming most focused on his new employment. One of the key positives that he identified about having the support of his circle was that while this shift would previously have caused considerable stress, he now felt better able to cope with this, and more comfortable with the change. In another instance, circle meeting minutes discussed a core member who had expressed considerable distress about his offending. The minutes noted a discussion with the core member in relation to "making a goal about reconciling his regret about his victim by ensuring no further victims". This example again demonstrates the keen focus of circles on minimising potential stressors in core members' lives, creating a lifestyle free from turmoil and, in turn, reducing the likelihood of sexual recidivism.

Relatedness (intimate, romantic and family relationships)

Under the GLM, "relatedness" refers to the development and sharing of close mutual bonds with others, including friends, family and intimate partners (Ward & Brown, 2004; Ward & Gannon, 2006; Willis, Prescott, & Yates, 2013). Supporting core members to build and maintain healthy relationships with friends and family was identified frequently by interviewees as a key function of the CoSA program. Participants often identified core members as socially isolated and in need of prosocial relationships. For some interviewees, this need was even considered to underpin the core member's offending:

> In the men that I've worked with, a lack of connectedness is what has contributed to their offending. So, in my experience, I think CoSA should definitely be about trying to connect them, when it's appropriate, connect them with the community. (Staff member)

> Social isolation is a trait for a lot of sex offenders. (Stakeholder)

Staff members were very clear that assisting the core member to form and sustain healthy relationships was an important goal of the CoSA program:

> Our idea around CoSA is to help them build their own friendships and relationships without just relying on the circle volunteers. … The CoSAs are all about giving the men that are the core members the confidence to build relationships on their own.

> It's about getting to become part of the community. Yeah. My idea is if they do that, then their circle becomes wider and they get to know more people in a different context.

> I think the circle should be the beginning of connection and not the answer to connection.

CoSA volunteers provided numerous examples of their attempts to support core members in this regard. For example, they discussed helping core members to access a range of secondary human goods, including social groups for older people, support groups relating to health issues, volunteer communities, and sporting and leisure groups, and to reconnect in healthy and adaptive ways with family members

(where appropriate). While volunteers for the most part saw this as an important part of their role, one admitted that this goal had not been an explicit part of the circle of which he had been part. For this volunteer, supporting the core member to build relationships beyond the circle itself may be a longer-term aim that comes after trust and relationships have been built among the circle members:

> [Interviewer:] Did you try to get him to be part of other community groups or to make other healthy friendships or strengthen his family relationships, or anything like that?
>
> [Volunteer:] No. I didn't try to do that. I didn't try.
>
> [Interviewer:] Do you think that's something that might have come later in the circle, or was that just not on the agenda?
>
> [Volunteer:] We were really starting to get to know each other. It's a shame I had to leave [to move away]. We were starting to get at that point where we were getting to know each other more and more. I'm thinking if I had stayed longer it might have happened, yeah.

Other volunteers acknowledged the difficulties inherent in attempting to foster prosocial relationships for the core member given the restrictions to which most are subject. One described trying to connect her core member with animal welfare organisations, partly because he had an interest in animals, and partly because working with an animal shelter would not breach his release conditions:

> As a volunteer you had to be kind of smart because working with animals had nothing to do with working with children—there are no children there, so that's a possibility for these people to do volunteer work—and to belong.

Another volunteer likewise recalled similar challenges:

> Another one of them, he really liked [lawn] bowls. So, we looked at different places that he could go and play. There was a lot of restrictions in those kinds of things, because of their parole conditions as well. It was very restrictive as to other things that they could get involved in unless we were there with them. So, that was quite difficult. …

It seemed that every time we looked at something, there was something that stopped it from happening because of the parole conditions. So, that was difficult.

Like the other volunteers, one volunteer participant found this aspect of the CoSA program difficult, "because … all of his conditions and stuff prohibit him from going to public spaces where children [are]". However, she acknowledged that supporting the core member to form healthy relationships outside the circle may simply emerge as a more pressing aim over time: "It's sort of a future, a long-term goal." She continued: "I think the circle is quite flexible and these are all things that can happen but they happen at their own pace. So, it's something we're moving towards."

As a staff member pointed out, the challenge for core members in forming new relationships isn't solely a result of the release conditions to which they are subject, but of the nature of the offending itself:

Of course, the difficulty is—the difficulty of them becoming part of the normal community … is that they may—there's kind of a need for them to be honest with people, as they build relationships. Then, I think it's important for them to build relationships with people who know who they are.

One consequence of this is that core members can rely on the circle members as their primary or even sole source of prosocial relationships. It is undoubtedly an important function of a CoSA to provide such relationships, and volunteers identified this as a key part of their role:

I actually called them [two core members] on Christmas Day from [another country]. To say "Merry Christmas", you know. Yes, there was phone contact … and they had our phone numbers. They had my phone number if they ever wanted to call, at whatever time. And I had theirs. And if I hadn't heard from them and I knew they were upset, there was something on their minds at their meeting, then I would call them mid-week and just see how they were doing. And just chat. Because they didn't have anybody to chat with either.

I guess I just try and help them as much as I can—building a relationship in the sense of like I'm here to support you,

let's go to this doctor's appointment, and if you're anxious you can talk about it—you know, that kind of stuff—just making sure they know I'm a support person for them—a friendly face to see.

One volunteer described a relationship with his core member that appeared mutually beneficial:

We'd talk about our week … so just the talking, talking about various things. Like, we would talk about various topics, from maybe travel to work. … And apart from that we used to go out to coffee, go out to, I went out to the movies with him. He taught me how to bowl. I've never bowled before so, he taught me how to bowl. That was pretty good actually. We had some good times.

A concern here, however, is that core members come to depend on their circle volunteers rather than gradually forming appropriate relationships beyond the circle (see also Blagden, Elliott, & Lievesley, 2018). A staff member identified this as an issue in one circle: "One of the individuals [core members] was becoming, in my opinion, too dependent on the circle as a primary source of support." Circles must inevitably reach a formal conclusion, and it is vital that such a conclusion does not create a situation in which a core member feels abandoned or acutely stressed. In a small number of cases, however, interviewees in the current study raised concerns that core members were depending too heavily on the circle, as the following excerpt from an interview with a volunteer demonstrates:

[Interviewer:] Would you say that as a circle that you tried to help your core member be less socially isolated or less lonely?

[Volunteer:] I guess we do but it's also quite restricted. He's not isolated and he's not lonely, but only within our circle. So, there hasn't been much bridging over into community. I think that's what is lacking. There isn't, his social interaction … might not exist outside of our circle, apart from the volunteers that work with him.

This issue is also reflected in meeting minutes that record a core member's "low point" of the previous week: "We didn't have a CoSA meeting." This suggests that while the core

member enjoys and benefits from circle meetings, he may have become emotionally dependent upon the circle. This is understandable early in the life of a circle but could be a concern in the longer term, and again speaks to the importance of the circle in helping core members to make more lasting connections with family and others outside of the circle.

In the absence of being able to directly assist core members to form bonds with family members, volunteers reported providing general advice and guidance to core members, if not explicitly supporting them to build new, healthy relationships. One described "just sort of giving him our advice, or opinions, on relationships with his family members". One staff member similarly described CoSA volunteers providing guidance to core members about reconnecting with family members. One core member, whose adult daughter had agreed to see him, needed advice on how to communicate with her, and even to practise ordering and sitting in a cafe:

> He wanted help picking out clothing. So, one of the circle volunteers went shopping with him. They went out to coffee a lot, because he hadn't been in a coffee shop for years. Things like that. Sort of that pre-preparation stuff. He talked a lot about, "What will I say?" And they said, "You know, just start by asking your daughter to fill you in on what's happening with her." (Staff member)

For one staff member, similar issues applied to reconnecting core members with family. She stated that reconnecting core members with family should not necessarily be a goal of a CoSA, and that this should only be the case where it is beneficial for both the family member(s) and the core member:

> I had an individual [core member] who was adamant about connecting with his family, and his family didn't really want a bar of him. And he wasn't very happy with that. Whereas, I felt as a volunteer that it was my responsibility to remind him that actually his family are entitled to feel like that. That, you know, he had daughters, he had a partner. They are allowed to be angry at you. They are allowed to be annoyed that their idea of the person that they thought was their father or their partner, you changed that. That shifted. So, they are allowed to feel betrayed.

Of course, CoSA work with individual core members who have profoundly varying needs. Connecting with others may not always be one of these needs, particularly in the early stages of a circle. One core member reported in his interview that rather than helping him connect with others, an important outcome of his CoSA was a newfound enjoyment of his own company. While in the past he "felt needy" and wanted people (especially those he met online) to like and validate him, his volunteers had encouraged him to enjoy his own time and company and to pursue interests (such as cooking) that do not require social contact with others. This core member reported this change in very positive terms and as an important factor in his desistance. This suggests that while, in general terms, connecting core members with others—both on social terms and in terms of linking with local service providers—may be an important goal of CoSA, it is nonetheless vital that circles respond to the unique needs of core members and address the factors associated with their prior offending, whatever these may be.

Community

The concept of "community" in the GLM refers to belonging to groups that share common interests or values; this can be achieved via secondary human goods such as being part of a sporting team or group of volunteers for a common cause (Ward & Brown, 2004; Ward & Gannon, 2006; Willis, Prescott, & Yates, 2013). Following on from the discussion in the previous section on relatedness, CoSA staff and volunteers identified the importance of instilling in core members a sense of belonging and the feeling of being part of a community. Participants in the current study viewed core members as needing to feel accepted, and CoSA as a mechanism via which this might occur. One volunteer, for example, stated that "it was really important for them that they have people [volunteers] who weren't discriminating, who were just accepting who they were", and another simply claimed that "we [all] need to feel like we belong somewhere". A staff member similarly explained CoSA's value in this regard:

> I think simply it gets them continuing contact with the— with one person that is prepared to talk to them and listen to them in a non-judgemental way. Even knowing the history and that not being a secret. I think that that fact allows them to move forward. I think that's so powerful it's not funny.

Interviewees typically construed CoSA as providing this sense of belonging and acceptance to core members. As a volunteer put it:

> We had made a commitment to them and they had made a commitment to us. And that we were there every week and it didn't matter what they were feeling or how they were feeling. That they were accepted and we were kind of like a net for them.

This volunteer saw the sense of belonging and connection that CoSA create for core members as a key way in which CoSA prevent sexual recidivism. She argued:

> I think that bringing them in and making them feel like part of society again would kind of hinder those thoughts. I think. But, I don't think any of them felt as alone as they did when they first came out of prison, after they started with CoSA.

Another volunteer likewise considered fostering a sense of belonging and community as a fundamental purpose of CoSA, which strongly underpinned her own participation:

> Regardless of who you are or what you've done, we all need a sense of belonging somewhere. And that is something for people to grasp—people think these people don't deserve to feel like they belong. I however don't feel that way—and that's why it was possible for me to do the CoSA program. If you don't feel that way you cannot do it, because you're going into being a volunteer for the wrong reasons. I think it was important for the core member—even if they didn't feel a sense of belonging, I think it was important for them to feel that somebody else could feel that about them.

Sentiments such as these are undoubtedly both in line with the ethos of CoSA and well intentioned. As Weaver and McNeill's (2015, cited in Blagden et al., 2018) research demonstrates, creating a sense of "we-ness" can help promote desistance by reinforcing the development of a new prosocial identity. However, it is important for CoSA programs to think beyond the immediate circle and identify other communities that core members can belong to after the inevitable conclusion of each circle—or as a staff member put it, support core members to be "part of their own community". As acknowledged earlier, this need is recognised by CoSA staff and volunteers as a key goal as both individual circles and the CoSA program as a whole mature.

Spirituality (finding meaning and purpose in life)

The GLM conceptualises "spirituality" as the pursuit of meaning and purpose in an individual's life, and the sense of being part of a larger whole (Ward & Brown, 2004; Ward & Gannon, 2006; Willis, Prescott, & Yates, 2013). "Spirituality" thus refers not only to participation in traditional religious activities such as prayer or church, but also to other activities that foster a sense of meaning and purpose, such as volunteering for a cause. As noted earlier in this research report, in the current study, interviewees identified the encouragement of core members to participate in volunteer activities as an important part of circles (at least where this type of activity is considered within the capability of the core member). Staff and volunteers saw a range of potential benefits in giving back to the community via volunteering, including developing core members' sense of community and belonging, enabling them to make enduring social connections, and enhancing their employability.

Further to this, "giving back" by core members was identified as a function of CoSA in some instances. As noted above, one core member explained in his interview that he wanted to "give something back to society", and so was fostering cats through a program in which members of the community temporarily look after animals for women who are escaping domestic violence. Meeting minutes in one circle recorded discussion about another core member giving back to the community by working in a community garden. These minutes suggest that volunteering was a source of pride for the core member, as well as an activity that had begun to shape a positive identity: he reported being known at another community support agency as "the gardener"—that is, becoming known for his volunteering work in the community.

Happiness

The human good of "happiness" under the GLM simply refers to the experience of pleasure, which can be realised through activities such as socialising with friends (Ward & Brown, 2004; Ward & Gannon, 2006; Willis, Prescott, & Yates, 2013).

While participants in the current study rarely spoke explicitly about CoSA as a mechanism for fostering happiness among core members, they frequently implicitly evoked this concept by reference to the friendships and social activities that form a key element of circles. For example, volunteers reported at length on the social activities and social engagement they participated in with core members, from leisure activities such as going to the movies or football, to social interaction such as speaking on the telephone and meeting for coffee.

Creativity

Finally, the primary good of "creativity" in the GLM refers to an individual's desire to try new things, take part in novel activities and/or engage in creative activities such as arts (Ward & Brown, 2004; Ward & Gannon, 2006; Willis, Prescott, & Yates, 2013). While this was among the least-commonly supported of the human goods that comprise the GLM, interviewees in the current study did recount several instances in which a core member had been supported to, as one volunteer put it, "expand their horizons a little". A core member interviewed for this study recalled going kayaking—an activity in which he had not participated since childhood—with a circle volunteer. He had clearly benefited from this activity, recalling with enthusiasm how kayaking had resulted in him "getting muddy" and enabled him to "be a boy again". Another core member likewise described in his interview having recently discovered a new food market that sold fresh and interesting produce from around the world, and wanting to share this with others. He spoke effusively of his delight at discovering this new environment as well as his newfound confidence in being able to share this with a CoSA volunteer.

These examples suggest that discovering new interests and participating in novel activities occurs as a corollary to a core member's participation in CoSA. "Creativity", however, was rarely explicitly identified as a goal of CoSA, and appeared to occur more as a by-product of the social activity that circles provide. It is important to note here again that, more so than other offence types, crimes of a sexual nature usually result in very strict conditions being placed on an offender once he is released into the community. This undoubtedly limits the new activities and experiences in which a core member might participate.

Circles of Support and Accountability and reducing the risk of reoffending (risk-needs-responivity)

As noted earlier, the GLM is not incompatible with the RNR model, and indeed researchers increasingly concede that CoSA ought to be considered as reflecting both of these models (Chouinard & Riddick, 2014; Höing et al., 2015b; McCarten, Kemshall, Westwood, Cattel, et al., 2014; Thompson et al., 2017). As Willis et al. (2013b, p. 5) argue, "Treatment from a GLM perspective aims to assist clients to attain common life goals in prosocial, non-offending ways, while simultaneously targeting risk reduction." This section provides an overview of the ways in which the CoSA program targets risk reduction.

Addressing cognitive distortions and offence-supportive attitudes/beliefs of core members

Cognitive distortions—or "beliefs/attitudes that violate commonly accepted norms of rationality that have been shown to be associated with the onset and maintenance of sexual offending" (Ó Ciardha & Ward, 2013, p. 6)—and attitudes supportive of violence against women and children are correlated with offending (Burn & Brown, 2006; Ward, 2000). For example, Hanson and Harris (2000) found that believing that sexual violence can be justified, showing little remorse or concern for victims, and feeling entitled to express strong sexual desire are variables that differentiate recidivist from non-recidivist sexual offenders.

The current study found that CoSA seek to address cognitive distortions and offence-supportive attitudes among core members. For example, a staff member interviewed for the current research recalled the following incident, in which one core member was challenged about his minimisation of the offending for which he had been convicted. In this case, the core member had been convicted in relation to sexual acts with a minor he had met online, but the core member maintained the victim/survivor had lied about his age. The staff member recalled one volunteer's response to this minimisation as follows:

> [The core member complained] that somebody [the victim/survivor] had lied about their age and she [the volunteer] said, "Just stop right there." It was actually a very good response. And she said, "How old did you

think he was?" [The core member replied,] "Oh, 18, 19". She said, "You're nearly 50 so don't you think that's odd anyway? … Where's the appropriateness in this anyway?"

Volunteers may not always have the required expertise to understand when they are addressing cognitive distortions, nor understand the relative merits of doing so. These key findings, however, look not only at the effects of addressing cognitive distortions specifically, but also of challenging offence-supportive attitudes and beliefs more broadly.

One volunteer recalled that her circle had challenged this same core member about his minimisation of his offending:

[Volunteer:] I think he still thought right to the end that he really didn't do anything wrong.

[Interviewer:] And did you have to challenge that narrative then, as volunteers?

[Volunteer:] We did. We said that he [the victim/survivor] was under age. "You were online, you were in that place. You knew that that's what you wanted to do. And you did. You offended. It broke a law. You were in jail", and all that kind of stuff. … It tempered him a little bit.

Another volunteer likewise described his circle's experiences of challenging the minimising narratives of a core member who had been convicted in relation to child exploitation material offences:

We had sentences like, "I only had depictions on my computer." Well, we'd pull them up on that and say, "When you say, you've only got pictures, you have got pornography, and you've got child pornography. It's not 'only', that's what you've got, and you've got victims." Then he'd say, "Oh, some of it was cartoons" and so we'd remind him that cartoons are still depictions of child pornography, and for every picture, there is a victim. "If you're viewing that, you're perpetuating [the problem]." … It's just not letting them escape or minimise what they've done … cut out those words, like "only".

Often CoSA staff and volunteers had to confront what they frequently described as the "victim mentality" among core members—that is, a belief that they had been or were being treated unfairly by the criminal justice system. For example, a staff member described one core member's frustration at having to reveal his offending history as part of job applications, and his resultant lack of success with obtaining employment. Many interviewees described instances in which a core member's "victim mentality" had been challenged by the circle. For example, one staff member stated,

I've seen a core member get challenged pretty sharply on just a lot of "poor bugger me" kind of narratives, and being down in the dumps. Yeah, I was in the room when that happened—and I squirmed in my chair a little bit, but in the end, it seemed to actually land pretty well. Yeah, it seemed—the message seemed to get through in a way that the core member could swallow it.

A volunteer likewise recalled confronting her core member about his "victim mentality":

I was with him on a social outing. And he said something about being caught and it was just a bit like, it was something that I just had to turn around and say, "You know, you did something wrong, you deserve to be caught." It was just me saying "You weren't exactly in the right. You were doing the wrong things. You had pictures of young girls on your phone. You had the intention to meet up with a young girl."

As has been identified previously, however, it can be difficult for some volunteers to challenge core members about their attitudes and beliefs. For example, Richards (2011b, p. 28) observed CoSA in North America and witnessed a number of instances in which she felt a core member ought to have been challenged by volunteers, but was not. As Richards (2011b) and others (Thomas et al., 2014; Thompson et al., 2017) have noted, volunteers often find it less challenging to provide support to core members than to hold them accountable. This issue was also identified in the current study, with a staff member describing a current CoSA in which:

The volunteers are—they seem to be exceedingly polite probably to a fault and quite reluctant to—well, talk honestly, really, about what they're actually thinking in there. Not wanting to offend the core member, [thinking,] "God I'm treading on eggshells a little bit."

As this staff member noted, it is vital volunteers achieve a balance between their willingness to challenge core members and the importance of not confronting core members in such a way as to dissuade them from continuing in the CoSA program. Moreover, as Kitson-Boyce (2018, p. 59) points out, it is important that CoSA themselves do not become a source of stress for the core member due to "volunteers being too demanding or demonstrating excluding behaviour" (see further Höing et al., 2015b). While this staff member raised the potential problem of volunteers being reluctant to challenge core members, he went on to state that, "to be fair, I would feel much more comfortable with volunteers that are reluctant to pull the trigger than ones that are happy to". As he argues, either extreme in this regard can be problematic. In circles in which volunteers are too reluctant to address the core member's beliefs and attitudes, the situation can arise where "nothing gets said. Then it just becomes a pretty unpleasant circle to be in, then I think the *volunteers* get scared off." (Staff member, emphasis added) This highlights both the need for training that helps volunteers to identify when and how to challenge core members' offence-supportive attitudes and cognitive distortions, and the importance of creating balanced circles in which at least some volunteers are able and willing to undertake the key role of holding core members to account. Of course, this is very difficult given the challenges associated with recruiting volunteers for CoSA in the first instance (Duwe, 2015; Richards, 2011b).

Reporting core members to relevant authorities

A critical function of CoSA is the reporting of core members to the relevant authority in circumstances in which the core member has breached his conditions of release and/or is engaging in problematic behaviours. As McCartan's (2016) research found, core members often have a conflicted attitude towards this aspect of CoSA: on one hand they recognise that reporting breaches is part of a volunteer's role, but on the other hand they recognise this means that volunteers cannot be friends in the true sense of the word (McCartan, 2016). As outlined above, research shows that CoSA often identify pro-offending behaviour among core members, which is subsequently addressed in the CoSA or reported to authorities (Bates et al., 2007; Quaker Peace and Social Witness, 2005, 2008).

In the current study, a small number of instances were reported in which a core member appeared to be engaging in pro-offending behaviour that the CoSA volunteers deemed problematic. In one, a core member showed a volunteer photographs of a child he claimed was his granddaughter on his mobile telephone. The volunteers in this circle reported the incident to CoSA staff and it was subsequently dealt with in collaboration with the core member.

In another case, a volunteer reported an incident in which a core member, whose offending had involved the use of a mobile telephone, had appeared on the social media platform Snapchat. She explained:

> On my phone, I have Snapchat. … Snapchat had invited me to connect with him because it had recognised that there was an account linked to his number. And I saw it, and I was like, "This is a bit weird." … I was like, "I don't think you should really have this app." So, I flagged that with CoSA.

In this instance, the volunteer was encouraged to raise the issue within her circle, and to hold the core member to account. She reported raising the issue at the next meeting, but this not being an effective strategy for dealing with the problem:

> [I said] "This has come up on my phone. Do you have Snapchat?" But … he said, "No, I don't have it. That's really odd." That's pretty much the end of the conversation. I kind of have to say "Ok", to trust him.

She later expressed some frustration about the lack of understanding of social media platforms among older members of the circle, raising an important point that understanding of technology and social media, which are increasingly utilised in the commission of sexual offences, is a vital attribute of CoSA volunteers. Her experience also raises the issue of when a "pro-recidivist" behaviour ought to be reported beyond the circle, and what might instead be effectively dealt with as part of the circle (see further Bates et al., 2007). It also underscores the importance of CoSA volunteers possessing a working knowledge of their core member's release conditions, as discussed in detail in the following section.

Supporting core members to adhere to conditions of release

Core members in the CoSA program are typically subject to strict limitations as a condition of their release into the community, whether as part of their parole or an Extended Supervision Order under the *Criminal Law (High Risk Offenders) Act 2015* (SA). Under this Act, offenders deemed "high risk" can be subject to an Extended Supervision Order for a period of up to 5 years; however, second and subsequent orders can be made, essentially meaning that an offender can be subject to lifetime supervision (see Bartels, Walvisch, & Richards, 2019 for a discussion). This differs from the original Canadian CoSA programs, which emerged specifically to deal with the risk posed by sexual offenders being returned to the community at their Warrant Expiry Date (i.e. having served their entire sentence in prison). Although the primary rationale for detaining offenders for the entirety of their sentence (i.e. without a parole period) is that doing so will increase community safety, an important consequence is that offenders are released "cold" into the community—that is, without any correctional supervision (Hannem & Petrunik, 2004), or as Wilson, McWhinnie and Wilson (2008, p. 26) put it, with "no strings attached". As Wilson et al. (2007a, p. 6) argue, this meant that "paradoxically, these offenders, arguably those in most need of community supervision and professional attention, are those most likely to receive neither".

Due to the increasingly extensive and strict conditions placed on sexual offenders following their release into the community in Australia (Bartels et al., 2019; Freckleton & Keyzer, 2010; Keyzer & Coyle, 2009; Keyzer & O'Toole, 2006) and internationally (Bonnar-Kidd, 2010; Duwe, 2015; Harris, 2017; Levenson & Cotter, 2005)—sometimes retroactively—it is increasingly the case that core members will be under correctional supervision and in a CoSA simultaneously. In relation to the current context in South Australia specifically, core members may or may not be concurrently subject to parole or other correctional orders, as a staff member explains:

> Some would be released with no statutory supervision and oversight because many sex offenders choose to do all of their time in prison and don't apply for parole. But the law has changed here recently such that certain offenders can be classified in a way that there can be a

statutory oversight imposed upon them that's not parole but which can go for their life.

For those core members subject to correctional orders, CoSA has a strong focus on encouraging and supporting their adherence to their conditions. This is an important function of CoSA, as these conditions have been put in place to protect the public by reducing the core member's risk of reoffending. Volunteers, staff and stakeholders interviewed for the current study recounted numerous examples of providing help to core members in this regard, in terms both practical and emotional (i.e. helping core members to come to terms with why they must adhere to strict conditions). As one volunteer stated, a key consideration when the group discussed potential work, volunteering or leisure pursuits with core members was to ensure that these would meet each core members' conditions of release:

> As part of that leg work also, we took into consideration their parole conditions. And [the CoSA Project Officer] knew all of them and all their parole conditions and stuff. So, he would have been able to say right at the beginning, "No, your conditions don't allow you that, but maybe they would allow you this." And then we would look at it and come back to the table the following week, and have a discussion about it.

The following excerpt from another volunteer interview captures both the practical and emotional support provided to core members in this regard:

> Sometimes you have to bring it [release conditions] up because there are places you can't go, like schools. You have to be very mindful, you can't go near schools, you can't go near sports ovals or anything like that. So sometimes these things would come up and they would go, "Well why can't I, why am I getting restricted in what I can do?" You'd really have to be honest and say, "Ok, that was part of your offending, and I'm a volunteer in this program. I'm not the law, but these are the conditions on your papers, and that's just the way it is, these are the consequences that you've got." So sometimes it could be confronting—as a normal person sometimes you had to tell the consequences of their offending and what they don't have rights to any more. Sometimes they would say, "Yeah, but I'm a human being, I've got rights" and

we would have to say, "No, your offending has caused you to lose these rights unfortunately, and we are going to have to work around it and find different solutions, but this is what it is."

A similar example was provided by a CoSA staff member in relation to a core member whose offending had included an online component:

> The police wouldn't give him back his computers. And he [said,] … "They've already looked at my computer. Why?" I happened to be in the office that day and when they [the circle members] were having coffee and everything, they said something to me. And he was getting quite loud that he wanted circle members to go with him to the police to get his computer back. … And so, I sat down with him and I just said, "You're never going to get those back." And I said, "Mate, they haven't discovered the program that's going to unlock some of that stuff in the computer. And they're not giving it back to you until they can be sure there's nothing in the deep web. It's just the way it is. You need to move on." And he was a bit grumpy for the rest of the circle. But he came back the next week and people had rung him to see if he was okay and he'd said that he understood.

Another volunteer described providing guidance and emotional support to his core member specifically in relation to his release condition of not consuming any alcohol. Substance abuse had played a key role in this core member's offending, and while the core member himself stated a desire not to return to drinking, he also confessed struggling with doing so. The volunteer explained, "He would share with us everything that was going on. … He really sometimes felt like getting back to drink and then [didn't know] how to control it. So, we'd share [about] that." Minutes relating to one core member's circle revealed group discussion about how the core member could build on his passion for food and cooking without breaching his release conditions by entering a licensed venue. These examples demonstrate the support that CoSA volunteers can provide in helping core members to adhere to their conditions of release, and in doing so, avoid those risk factors or behavioural triggers (e.g. alcohol consumption) and opportunities (e.g. access to potential victims) that can immediately precede sexual

reoffending (Hanson & Harris, 2000). As one staff member noted, this is particularly important when a core member has an intellectual impairment and may not fully "comprehend the implications of some situations". They also demonstrate the creative attempts by volunteers to encourage core members to pursue positive activities that build towards non-offending prosocial identities, while meeting core members' conditions of release.

Core members themselves clearly identified this aspect of their CoSA as beneficial for them. One gratefully recalled the support his volunteers had provided him when he appeared in court in relation to his supervision order. He also described needing the support that his volunteers provide to cope with participation in sexual offender treatment (see further McCartan, 2016) which, like many sexual offenders (see, for example, Harris, 2017), he experienced as stressful and focused on the past rather than the future. Another core member described the help from his volunteers in meeting his release requirements primarily in terms of avoiding circumstances in which he may come into contact with children. He explained that his volunteers "helped me stay away from the young ones" by providing advice about avoiding circumstances in which he might encounter them. For example, if he sees children at the shops now, "I just bypass them". In this way, the core member believed that participating in a CoSA had helped him to stay out of trouble, and out of prison.

In some cases, volunteers stressed to core members the value that adhering to release conditions has *for core members themselves*, in terms of keeping them out of trouble with the law (as distinct from adhering to their conditions in order to prevent creating future victims). This is an important distinction, as sexual offenders—including those interviewed for the current study—often express concerns about the difficulties of adhering to their often numerous and complex conditions of release, as well as feeling unfairly targeted by authorities and "set up to fail" (Harris, 2017). Minutes from circle meetings identified the strict conditions to which core members must adhere as being a significant source of stress and frustration for them (see also Harris, 2017), and core members described appreciating the support they received from volunteers to meet their conditions and "stay out of trouble" (Core member). A volunteer interviewed for the

current study recalled navigating this issue in the circles in which she participated:

> That came up, it was very clear that yes, the parole conditions might suck for you guys but you did commit a crime and you are paying for it now. And you're out of prison and *this protects not only any children or anybody else around you, but it also protects you. They're there for your safety as well.* … Yes, you've done it, it was your behaviour that caused this. And now the rest of society needs to feel safe, and *you need to feel safe as well.* And [a] perfect case in point is [core member]. The way he reacted as soon as there were any kids around. He couldn't get away fast enough. (Volunteer, emphasis added)

A different volunteer recalled similar group discussion in the CoSA in which he participated:

> So, you had child pornography on your computer, and you watched child pornography. … You know, we'd talk about measures to safeguard [against reoffending]. You know, not having access to the internet and there are other things you could do on the internet, and try avoiding reoffending in that regard, like safety measures. *Keeping them safe, like if they're walking past a school, perhaps they could take a different path.* Not because we were … not [that] we were saying they might reoffend, but … they don't want to be identified as loitering near a school, even if it could be quite benign. (Volunteer, emphasis added)

This presents something of a tension that requires further attention both in the OARS and international CoSA programs. Supporting core members' visions of themselves as being unfairly targeted or persecuted by the criminal justice system could legitimise offenders' minimising narratives about their own offending, and encourage their perception that it was not their own behaviour that got them in trouble with the law, but an unfair criminal justice process. Equally, sexual offenders' commonly held belief that they are unfairly treated by the criminal justice system could be considered legitimate in light of extremely strict, rigid and even retroactive policies and practices to which such offenders are often subject (e.g. lifetime supervision in the South Australian context). A key function of CoSA, however, is to challenge distorted thinking on the part of core members, rather than foster it (see discussion above). Nonetheless, supporting core members to meet their

release requirements (however unfair or unnecessary the core member perceives them to be) is a vital strategy in preventing sexual recidivism. While volunteers often do challenge core members' cognitive distortions and minimising narratives about their offending (see discussion above), this is a tension that requires future unravelling.

In a number of instances, however, volunteers admitted not knowing or not being entirely clear on their core members' conditions of release. For example, when asked about her core member's conditions of release, one volunteer stated:

> I know he's not allowed to see his children. He's not allowed to be anywhere where there are children. [OARS staff member] would be able to clarify that. I may have been told but I've forgotten.

Similarly, another volunteer admitted: "I mean, I didn't know his conditions, but I also just assumed that Snapchat would probably be a bit of a red flag." It is unclear why these volunteers are unable to articulate their core members' conditions of release, since recent meeting minutes revealed that such conditions are outlined as part of the first meeting of a circle. It is possible that it is simply difficult to remember a long list of conditions over time. Nonetheless, this is not ideal; such conditions are in place to prevent the core member reoffending, and a core function of circles ought to be to support core members to adhere to these conditions. It is also vital that volunteers do not inadvertently lead core members to breach their conditions by, for example, meeting the core member somewhere deemed unacceptable by their conditions (such as near a school).

Importantly, volunteers' understanding of release conditions has been identified by a probation and parole officer who delivers part of the program's volunteer training as a key area to address in future. In his interview he stated:

> I think the volunteers need more training and need more of an understanding about parole conditions. I mean it's hard enough for the parolees … because it's not always black and white and conditions are quite complex. So for me the volunteers need more training and insight into parole processes and conditions—I think it's really important so they have an understanding. … I think it should be very clear from the outset what that individual

[core member] is obligated to [do], and the volunteer has an understanding—because some of the conditions are quite complex. (Stakeholder)

Many interviewees noted that circles commonly avoid discussing the core member's offending past, at least in any detail. This makes sense on the surface, as it aligns with the future focus of the GLM and fosters an accepting and supportive environment for the core member. However, it stands to reason that having a detailed understanding of the core member's offending—whether it was intra- or extrafamilial, against adults or children, perpetrated in an institutional or non-institutional context, against girls, boys or both, perpetrated in an online or offline context, whether the core member has paedophilic urges or whether the offending was situational—would help volunteers identify and address trigger behaviours and "red flags". A volunteer claimed that the volunteers in her circle tended not to ask about the core member's offending to avoid making the group awkward. In contrast, a different volunteer stated that the core member himself had "avoided talking about it". Another volunteer similarly claimed of the core member with whom he volunteered:

He never raised it. Never had talked about, he never tried to justify it. Never had him once try to justify it or talk about it. He never talked about it too much … [I] never heard him say why he did it.

Yet another volunteer was only vaguely aware of her own core member's offending: "I think his offence had something to do with possessing some sort of images on his phone."

As one volunteer intimated in his interview, discussing offending is undoubtedly shameful and uncomfortable for core members, but openness with circle volunteers may increase as rapport builds within a circle:

He'd talk about it, he wasn't comfortable, because he'd told his story too many times. But as trust built, he was more comfortable to talk about it, and he did talk about it. But it's never a comfortable thing.

Clearly, there is a balance to be struck here. It is understandable that a core member might not want to constantly rehearse his offending behaviour, and it is important that CoSA do not attempt to duplicate parole and treatment interventions. Nor would doing so be helpful in the context of a core member trying to build a "good life" and develop a law-abiding prosocial identity separate from the offending. However, denial or minimisation of offending is problematic, as this could be a reflection of cognitive distortions that gave rise to the offending in the first place. Furthermore, it is important that volunteers understand the nature of the offending and the circumstances in which it occurred in order to identify "red flags" and slippages into behaviours associated with the offending. It is also important for volunteers to understand how core members rationalise or explain their offending. Rationalisations may vary from "I didn't realise the victim was underage", to "It's only pictures", to "That six year-old seduced me", and these will inform not only the release conditions of a core member but also the "red flags" that volunteers might identify.

An incredibly fine balance must be struck in a CoSA between encouraging and supporting the core member to develop a non-offending prosocial identity, not repeatedly having to go over the offending past (for fear of driving the core member out of the circle and making him feel both persecuted and unable to form a new identity—see Thompson et al., 2017), and not eschewing or minimising the risk of re-offence. As Hanson and Harris (2000) demonstrate, a failure to acknowledge the risk of recidivism on the part of an offender is associated with sexual recidivism. Finding a balance between acknowledging and understanding the offending and moving on from this to forge an offence-free future is vital, and—while undoubtedly challenging—could form the focus of volunteer training in future.

In discussing their efforts to support core members to adhere to their release conditions, CoSA staff and volunteers also revealed strong collaborative relationships with Department for Correctional Services officers. One staff member, for example, recounted a number of instances in which CoSA members consulted with a core member's parole officer in order to best support the core member and reduce his risk of reoffending. In the case of one core member, who had been supported to rebuild a relationship with his adult daughter, but was distressed when his daughter chose not to continue

the relationship, one staff member stated: "We spoke to his correctional officer, we asked them to get some counselling for him."

The same staff member also recalled instances in which parole officers liaised with CoSA members about particular core members' activities in the community. For example:

> We also get feedback, "Just letting you know that 'core member X' has been told he's going to that particular shopping centre too much, we only want him to go twice a week." And we unpack that, "Why do you think that is?" Ok, so that they start to think about their safety procedures as well.

She recalled another instance in which circle members liaised with the parole officer of a core member with a cognitive impairment to make sense of his behaviour, which appeared to present a "red flag":

> The core member that had the intellectual disability, he was with a circle volunteer. They were, he needed some support to go to the doctor's. They were in the doctor's surgery. A woman walked in with three little kids. He became quite agitated. So, the circle member [volunteer] said, because there was quite a long waiting time, "Would you like to leave? Let's go for a walk and we'll come back." … But as he was walking, he was talking about how one looked like one of his victims. And so, the circle member said, "Well, you tell me how you're feeling about that?" [The core member] became concerned enough that [he said], "Let's go get a drink." And she rang the [CoSA] project worker and said, "This is what happened, I'm not terribly sure what's going on." … So, we cancelled the appointment, took him back to the OARS office where the big meeting room is used for the circles anyway. And got him to start unpacking it. And somebody actually rang the correctional officer. And as it turned out, he was terrified. He wasn't having any sexual thoughts, it was nothing like that. He was frightened that if the judge found out that he was round somebody that looked like [his victim], he was going to be in trouble. And it was quite genuine because apparently when he was sentenced, it was a very long sentence, the judge at the time said if you come back before me, I will jail you for life. And that is something like when a child is told something, he's

always remembered that. And he thought that he could be in trouble because that kid looked like one of his victims.

Such collaborative relationships between CoSA and correctional authorities are vital to ensure that core members adhere to their conditions, and in doing so, reduce their risk of reoffending. Importantly, these examples demonstrate that CoSA do not duplicate the role of Department for Correctional Services, but instead contribute towards a holistic, "wraparound" approach to working with the core member. Research indicates that there are often low-level conflicts between professionals and volunteers around training, expertise and knowledge, with professionals being concerned that CoSA is a "lite" version of their programs and volunteers seeing themselves as being able to support core members in a way that busy professionals cannot (McCartan, 2016; McCartan et al., 2014b). The reality is that CoSA complements the work of professional services, rather than duplicating it, and enables risky individuals to gain the holistic support that they need (McCartan, 2016).

In summary, by helping core members to see the value in adhering to the rules that govern their lives in the community, and by supporting them to meet these rules, CoSA undoubtedly make an important contribution to the safety of the community, since this support helps core members avoid the behaviours and circumstances that comprise the "breeding ground" of their offending (e.g. substance abuse). In supporting core members to avoid technical breaches of their release conditions (i.e. those conditions of their release into the community that would not invite criminal justice consequences under other circumstances, such as adhering to a curfew or not consuming alcohol), they may also contribute to criminal justice cost saving by decreasing the work of the courts and the number of returns to prison (see generally Chouinard & Riddick, 2014; Duwe, 2013, 2018; Elliott & Beech, 2012; McCartan, 2016).

Challenges in the Circles of Support and Accountability program

A number of tensions and challenges emerged from the findings outlined above that should be given consideration as the CoSA program matures. These are outlined in turn in this section.

"Suitability" of core members

Chief among the challenges in the CoSA program is the issue of what makes a prospective core member suitable for the CoSA program, and how much weight should be given to this perceived suitability. More specifically, there appears to be a level of confusion about whether a prospective core member needs to demonstrate accountability, remorse, victim empathy and so on as a condition of being accepted into a circle, or whether the circle might help a core member to develop these competencies. Those who make decisions about which offenders to refer into the program and whether to accept a prospective core member into the program had a somewhat rigid idea of who might be suitable. As the following excerpts of an interview with one stakeholder and decision-maker demonstrate, a prospective core member is required to demonstrate some level of accountability, remorse, and willingness to change prior to being considered for the program:

> It's something they need to be motivated to get on board with it. It's not fair to the program, and also taking someone's place by putting someone in there who's resistant. So I'll do a bit of an assessment. … I'm really selective—you want to get the right people who want the supports and who are motivated to be involved.

> They're motivated, remorseful and take responsibility for their offending, want to change, [are] compliant … someone who's got a victim mentality or a sense of entitlement [would not be suitable]. If something doesn't go their way—they're all antisocial attitudes and beliefs which may not have changed.

Staff members recalled instances of unsuitable offenders being put forward for the CoSA program, and explained their unsuitability as follows:

> One was told that we did not believe he was suitable for the program. … Oh, my goodness. He was such a victim. And, it boiled down to the fact that he thought it would look good to the parole board. … I kept saying, keep remembering what the "A" in CoSA is for. If you don't get that letter right, the rest is not going to make a difference. (Staff member)

There wasn't genuine accountability because the individual himself didn't hold himself accountable. So, and there were issues with him, when he was speaking around this notion, and it was with young victims—it wasn't like they were late adolescents, underage individuals. The notion that potentially the child provoked them. That's kind of, sorry to be crass, but that's bullshit. And that kind of [individual] is not an appropriate CoSA member … the group has to challenge accountability and if an individual isn't willing to be held accountable, then CoSA isn't an appropriate support. (Staff member)

This policy of excluding prospective core members who are deemed to lack an appropriate level of accountability was advocated by decision-makers in the current study on the grounds that CoSA would be "pointless" if an offender was not ready or willing to change and be held accountable, and that allowing an offender into CoSA who did not demonstrate these capabilities could be detrimental to the CoSA process:

> It's little indicators that they show a willingness and a motivation to change, and that's all in their talk as well. Their actions match their words. *If they're still talking about "my sentence was harsh" and they're not taking responsibility, and they're not recognising the victim and there's not empathy, then what's the point?* For me, they've not moved on—remorse is another one. (Stakeholder, emphasis added)

One decision-maker went on to clarify his perspective later in the interview:

> I was with one sex offender the other day, they're really resistant, demanding, challenging. There's no way I would put them in CoSA because that can actually have the opposite effect.

These are undoubtedly important considerations. However, taking too rigid an approach may result in CoSA working with only the "low-hanging fruit"—that is, offenders who are likely to desist without support—thus rendering CoSA "pointless" in the opposite way from that envisaged by interviewees. Such an approach also fails to recognise that a key purpose of CoSA is to support core members to develop remorse, empathy and accountability. Desistance

from any type of offending is a process (Laub & Sampson, 2001; Maruna, 2001). The reformation of non-offending identities among offenders is likewise a process or journey rather than a discrete moment in time (Kras, 2014; Maruna, 2001). Excluding offenders from CoSA because they do not yet display accountability may therefore defeat the purpose of the program.

To be clear, decision-makers in the program did acknowledge this challenge, at least after some prompting during the interviews, as the following excerpt from one stakeholder's interview illustrates:

> [Interviewer:] Would it be the case that some of that work could be done in a CoSA—given that there's that focus on accountability—could some of that stuff around remorse, and victim mentality, and taking responsibility be done in a CoSA?
>
> [Stakeholder:] Yes, absolutely. The thing is that normally they should want to do it—it's an ongoing process anyway—if the signs are there at the beginning. … If someone's at a pre-contemplative stage what's the point?
>
> [Interviewer:] So it's not the case that you're waiting for someone to be a model offender—it's that they've indicated they want to start that journey and CoSA might be part of that journey. Would that be a … [fair summary]?
>
> [Stakeholder:] Absolutely. … I'm not looking for the perfect [core member]. … It's not going to be good for everyone—so it's looking at someone who's at the contemplation stage—they're in between or they want to [change].

When asked whether a core member could potentially be helped to develop accountability as part of the CoSA program, one staff member conceded, "that's kind of my opinion. I think there's definitely room to provide accountability … there is potential to provide work there." A different staff member similarly identified "willingness to change" rather than "evidence of change" as a key prerequisite to participation in CoSA, at least when prompted about this:

> [Staff member:] Two of them [prospective core members] were rejected because they weren't quite—one of them I

think was doing it because he thought it would look good to his parole officer. The other was pre-contemplative, he was not ready for change.

> [Interviewer:] Do their offence types factor into that decision-making?
>
> [Staff member:] No. They're all child sex offenders.
>
> [Interviewer:] But what you're looking for is their willingness to engage, and their desire to change?
>
> [Staff member:] Yes.

Here, interviewees implicitly recognise that CoSA ought to support the development of accountability, rather than this being a condition of entry into the program. The above comments suggest that prospective core members must indicate a willingness to change, be remorseful, accountable, and so on, rather than having achieved such changes already. As interviewees identified, it is important to make thoughtful and cautious decisions about which offenders will make suitable core members, especially given the difficulties inherent in recruiting volunteers for this type of work. However, it is also important, particularly as the program matures, that CoSA consider engaging higher risk offenders than those for whom it was designed (Hannem & Petrunik, 2004, 2007; Petrunik, 2002) in order to have the most significant impact on community safety.

The same tension characterises decisions about how to deal with problematic behaviours (e.g. pro-offending attitudes, victim mentality) of core members in existing circles. As noted earlier in this research report, some interviewees reported difficulty knowing when to report a core member to CoSA program staff in relation to problematic attitudes and behaviours, and when to deal with such issues as part of the CoSA group. While it is encouraging that volunteers can detect inappropriate behaviour and feel confident reporting this to program staff, practice guidelines around such decisions would be beneficial for the program in future. In the absence of clear guidelines, the program again runs the risk of only working with the "low-hanging fruit"—i.e.

offenders who are likely to successfully desist anyway. This is largely understandable in an organisation running CoSA for the first time and without the benefit of local support and practice wisdom that most other CoSA programs around the globe have been able to draw on. As noted above, however, in future the program should seek to build capacity around dealing with more difficult, higher risk offenders—precisely those who the CoSA program was developed to contend with (Duwe, 2018; Hannem & Petrunik, 2004, 2007; Petrunik, 2002). While it is vital that core members genuinely volunteer to participate, excluding those whose attitudes or behaviours seem to be problematic risks excluding those on whom CoSA can potentially have the greatest impact. For example, if a core member is excluded for making offence-supportive comments about women, then an important teachable moment has been lost.

Roles of paid staff and volunteers

Internationally, the difficulties associated with recruiting CoSA volunteers often result in paid staff from the program or broader organisation acting as volunteers in circles. This has been the case on some occasions in the OARS program, too. Indeed, the close involvement of paid staff in the circles was a deliberate strategy, as a staff member explained:

> One of the things we did as a risk mitigation strategy is to make sure that we have one, at least one of our professional staff, either acting as a volunteer in each core group, or … because this is the first time this has been done in Australia, we wanted to make sure that we reduced the risk of failure and we felt … that having a staff, an experienced staff member, to in a sense, coordinate, train, monitor, modify the program if it was required, was a really important strategy.

As a consequence of this approach, paid staff were frequently involved in circles as volunteers (i.e. in addition to and separate from their substantive role in the organisation), and the paid, professional coordinator of the CoSA program participated frequently in each circle, although they were not present at every meeting. As a staff member explained, during the period in which he managed the program, he took part in every fourth circle meeting of each individual core member.

This is certainly a laudable approach, particularly given the infancy of the program. However, it may confuse the relationship between core members and "volunteers". The CoSA literature recognises the importance of core members being supported by volunteers rather than paid professionals (Richards, 2011b; Thompson et al., 2017) for a number of interrelated reasons. Volunteers represent the community in a circle, and are thus considered to be better equipped to model prosocial mores than paid criminal justice staff. Offenders also commonly report relationships with criminal justice professionals that are characterised by mistrust, control objectives and even antagonism (Harris, 2017). CoSA, in contrast, provide relationships characterised by equality and collaboration rather than the authority of one party over another. CoSA thus provide a forum in which volunteers can communicate and demonstrate socially acceptable attitudes and behaviours to core members, and in which core members can practise these free from the concern that a misstep in this regard will result in a return to prison. In other words, CoSA play a key role in the re-socialisation of core members that may be missed if paid professionals play too dominant a part. This was amply demonstrated in Thompson et al.'s (2017) research on CoSA in the United Kingdom. Thompson et al. (2017) recount one incident in a circle in which the core member made misogynistic and derogatory comments about single mothers from a particular town:

> Unbeknownst to the core member, one of the volunteers was a single mother from this particular town and responded to the core member by stating: "That's just fucking rude, don't talk to me like that!" The [circle] coordinator reported that this raw response to highly misogynistic attitudes would not be normally received within a professional setting and resulted in the core member apologising to the volunteer in the subsequent meeting and having started to make positive changes to his ways of thinking. (Thompson et al., 2017, p. 156)

The CoSA literature (Fox, 2013; Richards, 2011b; Thompson et al., 2017) also demonstrates that core members appreciate members of the community volunteering their time in circles, and this communicates to core members a sense of value and worth that is critical to their desistance journeys. This sentiment was echoed by volunteers and staff interviewed for

the current study. One staff member saw CoSA as providing "support to [core members'] self-esteem, which I think comes purely from talking to someone who's not a professional and … is actually willing to sit down with you for an hour". A volunteer likewise believed in the power and importance of volunteers in the CoSA process:

> One lady had to travel for 2 hours on the train to do this. I thought that was really good, and at one stage the core member realised that she travelled that far and he was quite taken aback that someone found this to be important enough, at her own expense, to do this—to believe in that—and for him to feel a bit worthy of that.

A number of issues may arise from using paid staff as volunteers and/or including paid staff directly in circles. First, as Thompson et al. (2017, p. 87) noted in their evaluation of CoSA in the United Kingdom, some core members felt "duped or misled" by volunteers who came from criminal justice backgrounds or were currently employed in the criminal justice sector and had not disclosed this. A number of core members who were interviewed questioned how representative of the community criminal justice workers are, particularly in cases where they formed the majority—or even entirety—of the volunteers in an individual circle. As core member "Phil" (a participant in Thompson et al., 2017, p. 87) stated:

> Graham is a prison officer … Geoff … is a probation officer … Then Sandra, she's a prison chaplain … I thought that these volunteers were people at random from the community, but they aren't really 'cos they are all people who are working with offenders.

A related issue is that paid staff who act as volunteers may have an existing professional relationship with a core member that undermines or complicates a new core member-"volunteer" relationship. This scenario may also result in an unhealthy dynamic among volunteers in which a paid professional acting as a volunteer might be looked to as an expert rather than an equal. This in turn could potentially be exploited by a core member. Such an approach could also deny volunteers the opportunity to develop skills and take on a leadership role within the circle, which is critical if they are to continue to participate effectively in circles in the future, and if they are to attain skills development and a sense of satisfaction from having contributed effectively to a circle. As noted above, the heavy use of criminal justice professionals in circles might also undermine the extent to which they reflect the broader community and can thus usefully demonstrate community values to core members.

The inclusion of paid staff as volunteers in the CoSA program need not result in any of these issues, and it is not clear at this early stage whether this approach is disadvantageous. Having a staff member present, particularly in the early developmental stages of the program, may lend a level of oversight to the program that otherwise may not exist. Contemporaneously, it may create a range of issues such as those described above. Certainly, this approach creates a number of tensions that should be more closely examined as the program develops. While staff interviewed for the current study reported that circles now solely comprise volunteers from outside the organisation, it would be valuable to consider employing practice guidelines in this area to guide future circles. Again, the practice wisdom of international CoSA colleagues might helpfully be drawn on in this regard.

Improving the Circles of Support and Accountability program

Participants in the current study were asked how they would improve the CoSA program. While the core members had no recommendations for improvement, suggesting that they were satisfied with the program, stakeholders, volunteers and staff proposed a range of ways in which the program could be enhanced in future. These are discussed in turn below.

Expand the program

Many interviewees saw value in expanding the CoSA program to include larger numbers of circles over time. For example, one staff member claimed that to improve the program, "I'd have CoSAs all through the community and volunteers knocking on the door", and another likewise would "like to have 10 or 12 CoSAs going at any one time". Volunteers also wanted to see the program expand: for one, to include "more volunteers" and for another, to extend beyond the 12-month period at which a circle is supposed to conclude. In her words, "It [reintegration into the community] takes longer than a

year". It is noteworthy that volunteers themselves see value in expanding the program, given that a driver of shorter circles is likely to be a concern about burdening volunteers. Other volunteers did not explicitly recommend that more volunteers were needed, but did note the difficulties associated with being in very small circles. One, for instance, described having to "fly by the seat of our pants" in her very small circle, and explained that without a larger number of volunteer peers, she had been unable to benefit from peer learning, collaborating with others or receiving feedback about her participation: "There isn't anyone else to get other objective opinions [from] and, 'Hey, that was a bit harsh' or 'You were a bit soft' or … So, that's been a challenge."

In the interviewees' narratives, expanding the CoSA program would not only have an enhanced impact on community safety, but would allow for the development of practice wisdom, opportunities for more rigorous evaluation, and the formalisation and standardisation of the program in a way that is not currently feasible. One staff member would like to see in the longer term the establishment of "an entity that kept hold of the core values and set standards and manage[d] the training, and standards around training and development of volunteers … I think that would be a great outcome". Growth of the program is, however, hampered by the need for increased funding and support, and by the need for more volunteers. These are discussed in more depth in the following sections.

Increase volunteer participation

As the comments outlined above begin to suggest, a key—perhaps *the* key—challenge to expanding (or even sustaining) the CoSA program is the difficulty of recruiting volunteers. In one staff member's words, "Getting good volunteers and keeping them is a key challenge for us, I think. Yep, that's the key challenge." Another staff member similarly commented that, "The biggest issue we have is getting suitable volunteers", and stakeholders noted that:

> I think the challenges are just, yeah, not having as many volunteers come through. It'd be nice to obviously have some more come through and it'd be nice to have the resourcing to be able to go out and actively have a bit more time to recruit and target the places where we think it's going to work the best.

These same stakeholders noted that, in particular, more male volunteers would be beneficial. As noted earlier in this research report, it is important that circles comprise volunteers with a range of backgrounds, skills and personality traits. This was articulated by a staff member who stated that a large part of the challenge in terms of volunteer recruitment is "getting that balance right of having some older people, some professionals … and then some youth to be able to give a balance of what the community is made up of". As a volunteer put it, however, "It's very difficult to get volunteers, because we're not talking about plucking roses—it's a difficult thing."

Improve volunteer training

The training delivered to volunteers under the CoSA program has evolved since the program's inception, as would be expected with a new program. Volunteers were, however, virtually unanimous that they could have been better prepared for their role in circles. Specifically, they felt that while the training equipped them with information about sexual offenders, it needed to prepare them more effectively for their role in circles; that is, volunteers felt theoretically informed but lacking in practical skills training. For example, volunteers made the following comments:

> The training was not as in depth as I was hoping. That's something they might want to look at. It didn't really delineate what our roles were. It just gave an overview of what offenders could be like.

> I feel like more interactive [training] would have been helpful—like [learning about the] role, hearing more about prior experiences and how other volunteers have found it. I feel like if they did get a previous volunteer to come in and talk to us about it, that would have been helpful. It was only 4 hours, and I feel like a week-long session of 4-hour blocks would have been more beneficial.

> It was pretty dry and there wasn't a lot of actual practical information, so to speak. In terms of, once you started actually working with the guys. I didn't think it was very applicable. I felt like, as someone who was interested in sex offending and offender intervention, it was fascinating. But in terms of actually becoming practical as a circle

member, I just thought like I knew a whole lot of facts about sex offenders without actually knowing why it was relevant or even feeling necessarily prepared to engage with them on a conversational level.

One volunteer likewise wanted guidance on "ways to bring up accountability, so [as] to hold your participant [core member] accountable". Importantly, she acknowledged that the training did cover "signs to look out for … it was just sort of looking out for the signs". Previous research (Richards, 2011b) has acknowledged, however, that CoSA volunteers may identify these "signs"—that is, moments in which accountability should occur—without knowing how to act on them. This volunteer's comments reflect this concern, and suggest that volunteers need training on practical issues beyond simply identifying problematic behaviours or attitudes in order to maximise CoSA's impact.

A staff member reported that in light of these limitations, the training now has a more explicit focus on developing practical skills among volunteers:

> I focused a little bit more on the fundamentals on what CoSA is in regards to core member eligibility, circle member expectations, how the program is envisaged to work in theory, then some practical tools around as a group, like … relapse prevention, harm minimisation, goal setting, awareness of risk factors, communication strategies that we can use … Problem solving, responding to crisis, conflict resolution, emotional regulation, a few strategies around those few things we'll be working with them around … And the expectations, the code of conduct of a volunteer.

Another staff member agreed that training for volunteers could be improved, and suggested a type of ongoing supervision to support volunteer growth and development over the course of a circle. As other interviewees noted, while more and better training is no doubt required, this is contingent on appropriate resourcing of the program (see discussion further below).

Improve communication with stakeholders

Stakeholders interviewed for the current study spoke highly of the professional relationships that had developed with the CoSA program. As outlined earlier in this research report, these relationships are a strength of the program. Nonetheless, stakeholders reported that communication processes between the program and stakeholders could be improved (as has been found in previous studies—see McCartan, 2016; McCarten, Kemshall, Westwood, Cattel, et al., 2014). For a parole officer who is one of the primary sources of referrals into the program, an insight into how his clients were faring in the program would greatly enhance his capacity to supervise them in the community. He stated:

> [Until recently] anything I've wanted to know about CoSA has come back through the offender when it comes to supervision—how did CoSA go, what did you do blah, blah. More recently now, say the last 5 weeks I've started to get email feedback. … For me, it's not always about reporting the bad things, because we can use anything productive—the bad things yeah, without a doubt—risk—bang, report to the parole board—but some of the good information can be included in some of the progress reports and if we want conditions reduced and things like that—so it's for good and not good.

An explicit mechanism for reporting to a referring parole officer on a core member's progress might therefore be developed to better support the management of sexual offenders in the community and, in turn, enhance community safety.

Representatives of the non-government organisation that undertakes volunteer recruitment for the program likewise favoured more frequent and formal mechanisms of reporting from the CoSA program. This is a particularly important issue; after they have recruited volunteers for the program, no formal feedback mechanism currently exists for them to discover how these volunteers fare. They called this the "missing link" in the process, and claimed:

> Yeah, [information from the program] doesn't come back. Which is, that's the hard part, because we're like, "Oh I'd love to know how they're going" or "I recruited this great person, are they as great as I thought they were?" Knowing that stuff would be awesome.

Receiving this type of feedback would enable the non-government organisation that recruits volunteers to more clearly understand what makes a successful CoSA volunteer, and thereby help them to recruit the most suitable volunteers for the program. Taken together, formalised feedback mechanisms to communicate with program stakeholders will foster a better understanding of the program and support its increased efficacy over time.

Improve public awareness and education

Interestingly, when asked about how the CoSA program could be improved, numerous participants spoke of the broader social context in which the program exists, and strongly supported awareness-raising and public education initiatives that improve community understanding about sexual violence generally, and CoSA specifically. Interviewees spoke of the need to "market the program", change public perceptions, and "raise awareness with communities". In the main, this was put forward as a strategy to secure better public support for the program, as well as to increase volunteer numbers, as the following comments attest:

> There needs to be the word out into society, what this program actually does and what potential good it will do for the community. I think that's what we really need to start concentrating on. We need to make it that society feels more safe with this program—that it's a safety thing … it's for society, and it's for children. I don't think that gets done enough. (Volunteer)

> I think maybe going outside and talk[ing] to people, it's not really about just recruiting [volunteers], we'd be raising awareness and the recruitment will be like the result of it. So that's really necessary. (Stakeholder)

> I'd like to see it more supported. I'd like to see it made more … more awareness around it. Generally, most people will say, "Why the hell would you work with child sex offenders?", and I like the explaining why. You know, I love the whole rationale behind it. … So, why would you not support them, if you're, you know—if you're reducing the likelihood of victims on the other end. Okay, so your way, we're just going to ignore them, and they're going to re-offend. … My way is to support them and stop them

re-offending and you're dissing that. So, I'd like to see it put out there more. (Volunteer)

Public opinion about CoSA is mixed, with studies finding modest support for CoSA programs in Canada (Wilson et al., 2007b), Ireland (McAvoy, 2012) and Europe (Höing, Petrina, Duke, Völlm, & Vogelvang, 2016). Recent research by Richards and McCartan (2018) in the Australian context found that while there is strong community resistance to CoSA, there are also pockets of support for the program, primarily on the grounds that it will prevent future sexual victimisation. This and other research (Harris & Socia, 2014; Imhoff, 2015) indicates, however, that simply informing the public about sexual offender management strategies will not necessarily translate into support for them, since "people *feel* a response before they deliberatively consider the issue" (Harper & Harris, 2016, p. 7, emphasis in original). Instead, the way in which such information is presented has a real impact on how it is received by the public (see especially Lowe, 2017). As Richards and McCartan (2018, p. 412) argue, therefore, "More and better information about the issue … is unlikely to be effective at changing community attitudes in and of itself." More effective strategies for engaging in public discourse about CoSA are considered in the recommendations discussed below.

Increase funding and support

Finally, interviewees in the current study recognised the need for more appropriate, ongoing funding support for the CoSA program. Indeed, all other suggestions for ways to improve the program hinge on the program receiving sufficient financial support. While there is some community resistance to governments funding CoSA programs, such resistance is typically premised on the false belief that public funds have been redirected from victim support initiatives to offender programs or that CoSA are used in place of prison (Richards & McCartan, 2018). Indeed, the international research consistently demonstrates that CoSA programs represent excellent value for money, and in fact produce significant cost savings in the longer term (Chouinard & Riddick, 2014; Duwe, 2013, 2018; Elliott & Beech, 2012). As noted above, Duwe's (2018) research on CoSA in Minnesota found that every dollar spent on the program yielded a cost saving of US$3.73.

Summary and conclusions

This study did not set out to determine whether the CoSA program reduces reoffending; indeed, given the program's infancy and small number of core members, this could not be the study's aim. However, the program staff report that no core member in the program has reoffended or breached conditions of release since the program commenced. This study has instead aimed to provide an insight into how the CoSA program supports core members on their desistance and reintegration journeys, as well as how it might be improved to maximise impact in future.

The study suggests that the CoSA program is successfully undertaking a range of activities with core members that could reasonably be expected to reduce reoffending, in line with current knowledge about reoffending among sexual offenders. It provides core members with social support systems that they clearly lack, working to connect core members with other community supports (both welfare service provisions and social avenues such as community groups), and family where appropriate. Volunteers work, slowly but steadily, to address core members' cognitive distortions and their excuses and justifications for, and minimisations of, their offending. In doing so, they role-model appropriate behaviours and social interactions, and actively reduce stressors in core members' lives—the sorts of stressors that research shows can lead to reoffending (see Bonnar-Kidd, 2010). CoSA volunteers are (implicitly) helping core members create good lives by developing and supporting core members to achieve health, social and other goals. They are strongly future-focused, and focused on supporting core members to develop new, law-abiding identities. They support core members to meet their release requirements, which have been imposed to prevent the core member from reoffending. CoSA volunteers also challenge core members' thoughts and behaviours, support them to avoid trigger behaviours, and report any concerns to the program with the aim of addressing these in the circle or having the core member breached—another critical role of CoSA. Both in helping core members to see the value in adhering to these rules and by supporting them to meet the rules, circles are undoubtedly contributing to the safety of the community. In supporting core members to avoid technical breaches of these requirements, they may also be contributing towards criminal justice cost savings.

Recommendations for CoSA policy makers and practitioners

A number of recommendations to guide the CoSA program in future emerge from the findings detailed in this research report. Chief among these is a recommendation to expand the program (with appropriate funding support), and to develop a more rigorous evaluation based on the framework provided in Appendix A. We also recommend the OARS CoSA program form connections with the international community of practice on CoSA so that it can be informed by existing practice wisdom rather than having to "reinvent the wheel". A wealth of best practice guidance is available, for example, via Circles4EU (Petrina et al., 2015). In addition to these general suggestions, our recommendations fall into three broad categories, outlined below.

Volunteer recruitment and training

- As recruiting and retaining suitable volunteers is a key challenge for CoSA programs, and given that it would be beneficial to recruit diverse volunteers, at least some of whom are strong on performing accountability functions, we recommend CoSA collaborate with experts on volunteering and utilise innovative strategies to boost volunteer numbers and retention.

- Volunteers selected for the program require training that focuses more specifically on core members' conditions of release to improve volunteers' awareness of these conditions. Volunteers also require training on a more practical level—on group processes and on challenging core members when required.

- Improvements are required to record-keeping procedures. Not all circle meeting minutes were made available to the research team, and even completed minutes were often sparse in terms of the amount of detail recorded. This suggests that circle coordinators could better understand the purpose of keeping records and receive training in capturing more fulsome notes.

Circle termination

- Improvements could be made to how and when to terminate circles. The study identified some difficulties with ending

individual circles. For example, one core member insisted on ending his circle as soon as his life felt stable, but needed to return when his employment situation changed and he again needed support. It was certainly positive that the circle was able to reform in a time of crisis. However, ideally, this should not have been required so soon. Instead, circles could better recognise that premature termination may often occur, and could instead transition to less frequent (e.g. monthly) meetings over time. This would make it easy to reform if/when necessary. Additionally, some core members require support that extends beyond 1 year. This is a common occurrence in CoSA programs around the globe, and speaks to the severe challenges of (re)integrating some core members with their often high level of need across multiple life domains. It is critical to recognise that core members will require greatly varying "doses" of, or levels of participation in, CoSA, and that circles must be appropriately funded to recognise that, for some core members, 12 months will not be enough to achieve reintegration and desistance (see McWhinnie & Wilson, n.d.). Indeed, ending a CoSA abruptly after 12 months could actually itself be a stressor for the core member and increase the risk of reoffending. An appropriate ongoing funding model for CoSA needs to appropriately account for this risk, especially where the complicating factor of cognitive impairment is involved.

- Related to the above recommendation, the linking of core members with other service providers could be a more explicit function of the CoSA program. CoSA cannot comprise a core member's entire network, at least in the longer term. Building links with service providers will also better prepare core members for the inevitable conclusion of their circle, and avoid creating a dependency on the circle and therefore a potential stressor when the circle ends.

- Best practice termination might involve the gradual dissolution of a circle, and involve allowing for the circle, or some version of it, to reform in a crisis. The "virtual circle" model described by Thompson et al. (2017) (i.e. maintaining some telephone contact with the core member) might be used in this context.

- Practice guidelines (e.g. Petrina et al., 2015) could be drawn on to guide practice in relation to, first, what makes a suitable core member and, second, when to exclude a core member rather than dealing with them in the circle (for general practice guidelines, see McWhinnie & Wilson, n.d.). We recommend that behaviour constituting a breach of licence conditions—that is, a technical breach rather than a criminal offence— might be best dealt with in the circle.

  o A staged and transparent approach could be used in which the core member is confronted about the behaviour, given options as to how to deal with it, supported to achieve change in relation to the behaviour, and clearly informed of the consequences of not making progress in this regard. For example, if a volunteer becomes aware that a core member has breached his conditions by consuming alcohol, their response could be to communicate to the core member at the next meeting the seriousness of this behaviour and its potential consequences (i.e. return to prison).

  o A range of options to support the core member to deal with the behaviour could be created (e.g. attend Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, be accompanied by a volunteer to Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, attend a treatment program, find alternative ways to relax) in collaboration with the core member. The core member should be informed about the consequences of not adhering to whatever plan is developed collaboratively with him—i.e. that if the circle has reason to believe that he has consumed alcohol again, the circle will be obligated to inform OARS. This type of approach (rather than the immediate exclusion of the core member from the program) gives the core member important opportunities to deal with trigger behaviours in a supported environment, to learn from mistakes, to seek further supports in the community as required, and to understand the consequences of his actions. These are important moments of learning that should not be lost.

Communications

- It is critical to inform key stakeholders and the general community about the purpose and benefits of the CoSA program. Recent research recommends using person-first language when communicating with the general public about sexual offending (i.e. using the terminology "people

who have offended sexually" rather than the comparatively inflammatory label "sex offender") (Willis & Letourneau, 2018). Indeed, Lowe's (2017) research on the effects of language on the community's willingness to consider volunteering with CoSA found that significantly more people would consider volunteering when neutral, non-stigmatising language is used. Richards and McCartan (2018) also recommend incorporating the perspectives of victims/survivors who volunteer in CoSA into communications with the public.

- Explicit mechanisms of communication could be developed between parole officers and the CoSA program, and between the non-government organisation that recruits volunteers for the program and OARS, as avenues to maximise the program's benefits.

Key findings:
Cultural Mentoring Program

As described in the State of knowledge review, the CMP involves the provision of cultural and spiritual support to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander men who have sexually offended and been released from prison into the community under Queensland's DPSOA. In partnership with other Elders in the community, and a range of local community organisations, one primary Elder provides reintegration support to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander DPSOA offenders released into the Townsville area on a fee-for-service basis (i.e. QCS may identify suitable offenders but does not itself manage the program). This geographical context is important to note. Townsville is a regional location in northern Queensland with a mixed Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander population of approximately 180,000. Importantly, for most of the men in the CMP, Townsville is not their home community. Rather, the men are often from very remote mainland or island communities, and are released from prison to Townsville to ensure there is no contact between the men and the victims/survivors or the families of the victim/survivors, and also to ensure that a range of services (e.g. health, mental health, disability, alcohol and drug) are available to support the men in the community.

Where possible, this Elder or another respected male Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander leader affiliated with the CMP will meet with an offender identified by QCS as close as possible to the time of his[2] release from prison. All Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander men released under the DPSOA are informed about the CMP, however, participation in the program is voluntary. The CMP is delivered via six 2-hour, one-on-one mentoring sessions with an Elder, with the option of a further six sessions if required by the participant and approved by QCS. The CMP focuses specifically on providing cultural and spiritual mentorship, such as reconnecting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander men released under the DPSOA with aspects of their culture (e.g. land, spirituality), in order to support their reintegration into the community and foster law-abiding behaviour. The specific mentoring activities provided to each participant vary according to their needs, and the CMP offers an unstructured, individualised response on this basis.

A weekly peer support group is coordinated by the same Elder in the Townsville community, and provides guidance, support and mentorship around relationships and healthy living. The peer support group can be attended by any Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander man in the community, including men receiving one-on-one mentoring as part of the CMP. While the focus of the current research was on the CMP specifically, this context is important to note; the peer support group provides both a pathway into the CMP for some participants and, in some instances, an important avenue of support—and of deepening and continuing cultural learning—following participation in the CMP. In one QCS staff member's words:

> Some of them will then peel off into the [peer support] group only and don't require that additional support, would rather just come to the [peer support] group … as they need to.

To some extent, the content of the two measures is similar, with a shared focus on cultural learning for improving the men's relationships and functioning in the community. Moreover, the men interviewed for this study had often been participants in both the CMP and the peer support group; thus, they sometimes conflated the two in their interviews, frequently speaking in broader terms of the support and assistance they had received from the main Elder across both of these measures.

Although the CMP does not work from an explicit theoretical position, the current research worked from the premise that the CMP seeks to promote desistance via reintegration. The focus of the CMP is on providing a process via which Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander men who have sexually offended might reintegrate into communities in tandem with building desistant futures through cultural connection and identity transformation. The research was interested in particular in exploring how the CMP shaped offenders' narratives about their own identities, and how (re)connecting with culture encouraged and shaped the formation of narratives about past, present and future law-abiding "selves". Rather than having to "knife off" or reject an old self and adopt a new self, this process allows an offender to maintain his sense of identity and adhere to an image of himself as having always been "good"—at least "deep down" (Maruna, 2001, p.87). The

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2   To date, all individuals who are subject to the DPSOA have been male.

process is thus more "self-reconstruction than amputation" (Maruna, 2001, p. 87). Maruna's (2001) notions of "redemption scripts" was especially relevant, as discussed in more detail later in this research report (see also Theoretical framework section above for further detailed discussion).

Finding out about the Cultural Mentoring Program and volunteering to participate

Men subject to the DPSOA who were interviewed as CMP participants mostly recalled hearing about the program from their probation and parole officer in the first instance, although a small number heard about the opportunity from other prisoners while still incarcerated—as one participant put it, "on the grapevine", or in another's words, "[in] prison from other brothers". The men explained their decision to take part in the CMP in a range of ways, with reasons including curiosity about the program, and being excited to meet an Elder from the local area. Others saw the program as an opportunity to receive help with their behaviour and lives. One participant described wanting to "dissect, [and] authenticate" his behaviour and personality and to "separate the chaff from the wheat" in building an understanding of himself, as well as "looking at the betterment" of himself. Another was likewise interested in participating in the CMP because he wanted to get some insight and help, and "not fall back into the same patterns". Other participants explained that the cultural focus of the program was the main drawcard:

> For me, a lot of the courses they run in gaol [and] what Corrective Services wanted me to go to like ATODS [Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Services] and stuff like that, they never been helpful towards me … because how I see it is they [service providers] never been in our shoes because they only learn through textbooks and college, but Brother [Name], he lived the life different experiences we can relate to.

> I find it much easier to understand him and for him to understand me from the cultural side as well.

> It's good to understand Blackfella way, culture and courage.

Staff and stakeholders interviewed for this research similarly believed strongly in the importance of incorporating cultural learning and identity-building into the men's journeys of reintegration and desistance; non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff and stakeholders were acutely aware of their inability to contribute towards this endeavour. As one QCS staff member succinctly put it: "I can't do that." This staff member likewise acknowledged a lack of cultural knowledge on the part of service providers as a key barrier to engaging this population of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander men: "We're Caucasian, firstly, I think that's part of it. And why would we understand? I think firstly that's the barrier." Certainly, this was reflected in both the narratives of the men who had participated in the CMP and the other service providers with whom they interacted. For example, a stakeholder claimed that,

> I find that some of the guys that I'm working with prefer to talk to Uncle [Name] about their feelings than they do to me. I'm a white female. They probably feel more comfortable talking to an Indigenous Elder male than they are going to be talking to me about how they feel.

Similarly, another stakeholder claimed that,

> We simply cannot 'cause we are not Indigenous. We can study it until the cows come home [but] we are not Indigenous, we haven't lived it, we haven't lived in the communities. They connect with Uncle [Name].

One CMP participant was adamant that he is able "to communicate with Uncle [Name] in a way that he would not be able to with a non-Indigenous person"—especially in relation to "emotional and spiritual stuff". One stakeholder's words perhaps most forcefully capture the importance of culture: "Without my culture I wouldn't be here today. I'd be probably dead now." Interestingly, none of the participants in Sullivan's (2012) study of Aboriginal males who had desisted from crime reported desiring involvement in culturally focused programs. As discussed further below, it stands to reason that those who had opted to participate in such a program would express support for this type of measure. Sullivan's (2012) findings may also reflect differences in the sample of respondents, in that participants in her study already had a strong sense of cultural identity. In the current study, participants' sense of themselves as Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander cultural selves was more mixed (see further below).

Barriers to reintegration post-prison

Men in the sample experienced profound barriers to reintegration post-prison. While all individuals who have sexually offended face severe barriers to reintegration, for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander offenders, this is exacerbated by a range of additional challenges. As the men in the CMP sample were predominantly from remote communities, with some having had little experience outside of their home community, attempting to integrate into the Townsville community meant facing language, cultural, familial and geographical barriers—being "a fish out of water" (Stakeholder)—above and beyond those typically faced by non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander ex-prisoners. As a number of stakeholders interviewed for the study explained:

> We've got some that have come from Mornington Island and aren't able to return to Mornington Island, but they've lived there their entire life. Then they've come to an environment like this where they feel even more so a fish out of water, and they've got none of that structure or none of that community to come back to, because they're literally living in another community.

> Most of them want to go home. Most of them miss—all of them miss their families. They miss being on their land. They miss where they grew up. … They feel really quite displaced.

> Every one of them misses their community without a doubt.

Interviewees explained that the men had often been ostracised by their communities as a result of the nature of their offending. As a corollary, the men frequently experienced dislocation from their families, and from cultural activities and identities. For example, men interviewed for the research reported not being allowed to return to their home community for Sorry Business activities, or having to do so accompanied by a surveillance officer—a situation that one CMP participant described as "embarrassing" and making him "feel angry". This participant described an incident in which two of his family members had been killed in an accident in his home community, and he had been unable to return to the

community for Sorry Business. This incident was incredibly distressing for the participant, who reported that it had "been a big thing for me and I really broke down there, because the two [family members] had been very close to me". He explained that he is from a remote Country where "culture is more central", and that in addition to the distress that he feels when deaths in the family occur, not being able to be present for Sorry Business—to "be there for grieving"—causes problems for him, since "we got a lot of cultural rules where we have to be there if a family member dies, and I miss all that and couldn't be home for those type of things".

While many of the men reported wanting to be good family men and to contribute in positive ways in their families, cultures and communities, such desires were commonly thwarted due to the conditions of their release under the DPSOA. As one put it, "because of the Order it makes it difficult to move forward". One of the Elders noted that failing to attend family events such as Sorry Business "is seen [by the community] as avoiding people and avoiding cultural responsibility". An external stakeholder likewise raised concerns about Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander DPSOA offenders not being able to grieve in culturally appropriate ways. It should be noted here, however, that QCS staff did describe efforts through the CMP to enable men in the program to take part in exactly these types of activities. As one staff member explained:

> I guess he'll do anything, you know, if for instance they were quite restricted in their movements. … Then we may, we may, suggest that Uncle [Name] could go with him, because then he's got supervision. So, he may attend with people who, and into places, especially when it comes to Sorry Time as well, to places we wouldn't normally allow. He may attend as a supervisor knowing full well what that person is and is not able to do.

The barriers described above were further exacerbated by impairments to cognitive functioning, which are common among prisoners released under the DPSOA. As a stakeholder explained, low intellectual functioning, including that caused by fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD), often affects this group of men. Stakeholders summarised the issues as follows:

> [Individuals released under the DPSOA] have all had either intellectual disability, limited education, difficulties with

speech, and I think some of that is that transition between the language that they've spoken and then obviously English, as well as alcohol fetal syndrome [FASD].

Their level of understanding is very, very, very minimal, so the guys that I'm working with have an IQ sitting around the 45 mark and 40 is the lowest you can get. … They can't live independently. They don't know how to cook. One of mine consistently is getting food poisoning, because he doesn't understand that green meat … leads to food poisoning. … The level of functioning of the guys that I'm working with is very, very minimal. … One of mine would be lower functioning than a six year-old.

People with cognitive impairments are over-represented in the criminal justice system (Polloway, Patton, Smith, Beyer, & Bailey, 2011; Sturmey & Drieschner, 2014); this is particularly the case for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander offenders (Baldry, McCausland, Dowse, McEntyre, & MacGillivray, 2016; MacGillivray & Baldry, 2013) and for those who sexually offend (van der Put, Asscher, Wissink, & Stams, 2014). In the current study, limited intellectual capacity was repeatedly raised by stakeholders as a key barrier for CMP participants (and those subject to the DPSOA more broadly), as it potentially limits understanding of the conditions that an offender has to meet in order to remain in the community. For other interviewees, impaired intellectual capacity was seen to limit individuals' understanding of their behaviour, and the consequences of harmful behaviour (see also van der Put et al., 2014), as well as the conditions of their release into the community: "Some of those guys that are on those things [orders] also have intellectual disabilities so they can't understand why they can't go back [to their home communities]." (Stakeholder)

The strict conditions of release for men subject to the DPSOA were also frequently raised as presenting another form of reintegration barrier. Staff and stakeholders interviewed were cognisant of the importance of strict supervision of the men due to the nature of their offending and potential risk posed to community safety, but also noted that such strict supervision and conditions can be counterproductive, creating an extreme level of frustration among the men:

Obviously, these men have, they've completed their

sentence. So, this order comes after that [sentence of imprisonment]. As you can imagine that comes with a lot of hostility, when they get out, towards the Department, despite it being [at] the court's discretion. (QCS staff)

They're a lot angrier and lot more resistant because they've done their time. So it's not a personal attack on us but we're seen as the authority even though the Supreme Court has made the order. So that's where that real resistance comes in and whether they actually want to have a life and they see it as very, very restrictive. (Stakeholder)

In turn, the orders were seen as creating an extreme level of boredom among the men subject to the DPSOA. A number of stakeholders explained:

[Under the DPSOA,] they've got nothing but spare time, nothing but idle time.

With these guys, the role of boredom is a big reason why they reoffend, because they're just so bored. You can only go here and here between this hour and this hour.

CMP participants were similarly very clear that they view the strict conditions to which they are subject as an additional barrier to their reintegration. One put his concerns succinctly: "The order makes me feel as though I can't reintegrate." This participant went on to explain in his interview that he "feel[s] disillusioned about the order due to the restrictions and conditions that make me feel emotionally volatile and socially excluded". Another spoke in his interview about the frustration of having to seek approval to speak with members of his own family, and stated that on the order, "my hands are tied". One CMP participant stated his view even more plainly: "We are still in prison."

A further barrier to offenders' reintegration, which is rarely recognised in the literature but which undoubtedly presents a profound challenge, is the trauma that the men themselves have experienced. As a QCS staff member put it, "a lot of them are dealing with some type of trauma". Although there is not a simple relationship between being the victim/survivor of sexual abuse and later becoming a perpetrator (Cossins & Plummer, 2016; Lindsay, Steptoe, & Haut, 2012; Plummer &

Cossins, 2016; Richards, 2011c), victims/survivors of child sexual abuse are overrepresented among perpetrators. Some of the CMP participants interviewed for the current study saw their own experiences—not only of sexual abuse, but of other forms of violence, abuse and neglect—as shaping their later perpetration of sexual violence and/or their lack of understanding about the harmfulness of their actions, with a number revealing histories of childhood abuse during their interviews. One program participant, for example, stated that he "has witnessed a lot of bad things in life, and something bad happened to me too", as well as growing up in a home in which violence was normalised—"growing up thinking it was OK to bash your partner". He explained that this shaped how he viewed his own behaviour:

> I thought it was okay for me because of how I grew up. Even growing up and seeing your parents arguing all the time and you think it's okay to bash women up or take advantage of women and stuff like that. (CMP participant)

Another CMP participant likewise claimed that "I didn't realise I was doing something wrong."

Stakeholders similarly highlighted the role of trauma in both the men's offending histories and the difficulties they face in reintegrating into the community. For example, one referred to "chronic substance abuse [and] chronic sexual abuse" as well as the "horrendous upbringings" experienced by this group of men. Some stakeholders described clients who had been "raped as a child, abused", "severely abused as a child", and pointed out that many of the men have severe histories of institutionalisation. Other stakeholders noted:

> They can't survey a situation and go, well, "that's wrong" because they've all learned that that's wrong. They haven't learned that it's wrong.

> From the time they're on the boob [being breastfed], all they see is how to fight, how to argue, how to drink. They don't see a lot of positive healthy relationships … they witness a lot of domestic violence in the community. Then as they grow up they then start doing that behaviour adding in the drugs and alcohol. … This is intergenerational.

As much as they have been an offender in a situation most of the guys don't have the understanding to know what they're doing is wrong or understanding that—even comprehending. They don't even realise abuse existed because they don't understand it's abuse.

> For some, we have to go right back to basics, right back to basics around what is okay touch, what is not okay touch, what is consent, all of that kind of stuff, because the understanding just isn't there.

As one stakeholder eloquently summarised, "You're dealing with broken people. We get them, they're broke. How do you put the bits back together?"

The men themselves described feeling "nervous" about re-entering the community, and not knowing what to expect when they did so. For example, one CMP participant was relieved to be released from prison "but it was very challenging as I didn't know what to expect". QCS staff members also acknowledged that the reintegration process was a source of fear and anxiety for the men, particularly those who had never before left their home community.

In addition, the men mainly reported having few supports in place when they left prison. Two of the men reported having some family members in the Townsville area, but did not enjoy supportive or healthy relationships with these family members, due to the family members' drug use or the stigma attached to the men's offending. Three CMP participants noted supports through church groups in the community. In the main, however, the men reported having few or no supports in place to assist with their return to the community, at least outside of formal services such as their probation and parole officers. Stakeholders did, however, note that the men receive support from a range of local service providers, such as those providing substance abuse, relationship and sexual offending treatment programs. Probation and parole staff also noted that the men are subject to mandatory psychological treatment, and that QCS provides a range of relevant programs suitable for individuals released under the DPSOA, including substance misuse and relationship programs.

Role of the Cultural Mentoring Program

Despite this service provision environment, participants in the current research in the main saw a gap that could be filled by cultural programming for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander offenders, and believed that the CMP plays an important role in supporting members of this group to forge positive, law-abiding identities. Further, participants believed that engagement in the CMP is beneficial for both the men themselves and the broader community.

For the most part, participants in the current study held firm views that the CMP helps offenders subject to the DPSOA to develop positive, strong, and healthy cultural identities. Interviewees listed a wide range of cultural activities that the men were encouraged and supported to engage with in pursuit of firmer ties to culture, including traditional arts and crafts, involvement in ceremonies (e.g. smoking ceremonies), participation in community events such as the National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) week, and activities that sought to reconnect the men with the land, such as canoeing, traditional cook-ups and bushwalking. One CMP participant, for example, described engaging in a wide range of cultural activities—from bushwalking to fishing, art and learning about the land—as part of the program. Another recalled learning about his tribe and where his people are from as a participant in the CMP.

Interviewees saw such activities as being beneficial for the men involved in the program. For example, a stakeholder stated in relation to one of her clients:

> One of mine was getting quite agitated that he couldn't go walkabout. He really wanted to go walkabout, so spending time with Uncle [Name] and being able to get out a little bit, it just made such a world of difference for him.

Another stakeholder held similar views:

> They are detached from the community. So I think it is very important for them to have that [*sic*] cultural ties. Also because they've done such a significant amount of time in custody they've lost that … attachment to their culture. You know some just want to get out and go to the sea. … So although they can't go back to their community

just yet he [Uncle Name] can tie them in in some ways to their culture, which I think is very important. Even if it's just linking them in with people, who knows this person, who's related to that person and they start making those bonds again to reintegrate them back.

In particular, participants in the CMP as well as staff and stakeholders involved with the program supported its strong focus on family and on creating a sense of belonging for the participants, either through family or other prosocial connections. When asked about their involvement in the mentoring sessions, CMP participants frequently raised the program's focus on family. For example, one program participant recalled that the Elders talked a lot about families, and provided advice about "strong families—to walk away from arguments, to have respect. … You have to show respect." This participant was also taught about his family roots, the importance of family, and to "take notice of family". Another CMP participant similarly recalled being given advice about family matters, and being encouraged to reach out to family. For another, the mentoring sessions focused on "dysfunctional families". For some of the men, the CMP resulted in tangible help with reconnecting with prosocial family members. One reported being happy that he was reconnected with Aunties in Townsville through the Elders' knowledge of and connections in the community, and others likewise reported receiving help (re)connecting with family through their involvement in the CMP. Importantly, interviewees noted that the program has a strong focus on creating appropriate, prosocial connections for the men, and on encouraging healthy, non-violent relationships. In some instances, CMP participants were discouraged from connecting with family due to the family members' drug use. As one stakeholder noted, "If they had a DV [domestic violence] background, Uncle [Name] tries to re-educate them around appropriate ways to engage in relationships, reducing their risks there."

The budding identities described by the men in the program were deeply embedded in history, culture, Country, and kin. For the men in the CMP, a non-offending self was explicitly a cultural one, in which he understood and practised culture, and was recognised within that culture. It was also a connected one: his identity was inextricably linked to that of

others in his family, culture and Country. As one QCS staff member explained:

> [The program is] about identity. A lot of these guys … I found that they really weren't connected to anything, any community, or anyone. So, they didn't know very much about their identity or where they came from and about their family. And I just felt that was a crying shame, when you've been in custody for such a long time. But an Elder can give them … may take them out to the sea, may take them out to the land, depending on what their totem is.

In this context, the CMP sought to support the men to forge new identities in a number of ways. The men spoke about being taken "back to Country", to the extent possible given their strict conditions of release. While in most cases it would be impossible for the men to return to their home communities, Elders in the program attempted to connect them with Country in other ways, such as by taking them bushwalking, kayaking and fishing. Often these activities involved the transfer of cultural knowledge, like that around traditional fishing techniques. Importantly, these activities were not undertaken simply as leisure pursuits, but rather were designed to encourage the men to begin to see themselves as part of something bigger—part of history, of culture, of Country. As a QCS staff member pointed out, when the program's main Elder does not have the knowledge, skills or cultural connections himself, he is often able to link an offender with another Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individual who can assist. One of the men explained that by participating in the program, he was afforded a connection to cultural identity and to earth, land and sea. He explained that he has a spiritual connection to these things—they "heal the heart". Another participant explained that the mentoring he received in the program from one of the Elders "made me realise … he helped me to feel the spiritual way again". He also stated that in the program, "I reconnected inside [in my heart and mind] with my community about my culture."

Such activities were also undertaken in pursuit of developing in the men a sense of belonging, "to say you're not alone and you belong" (Stakeholder) and, in the words of a QCS staff member, to provide "an incentive not to end up back to prison". It is important to note the role of the peer support

group (described above) here, as it provides a wider circle of social support than the CMP alone. As other stakeholders commented:

> I do know he links them with other Uncles and other people who may have ties to their culture, back you know say [in remote Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities]. So then they get those links in back to their community.

> [The program is about] cultural connectedness, bringing them back to their grassroots, taking them out to be on the land, connectedness there.

As stakeholders argued, this type of identity work is important given the cultural disconnection that the men have experienced due to both the effects of colonisation and their interactions with the criminal justice system:

> It gives them a meaningful connection and reconnects them to some level of identity away from a sex offender, because they're in prison, they're in protection, they do the sex offender programs, they come out to the [designated accommodation] Precinct, so they're constantly in this category of being identified as this [a sexual offender], and I think it [the CMP] allows them to re-identify with who they are, their culture.

> With the guys that are under that DPSOA I think because they've lost all connection to their Country, all connection to their culture and they're now living in this environment, I think they're happy … to connect with someone that holds a similar role as far as an Elder. It's the closest they can get in their environment … to what they are [able to access] at home. Then when they talk about the things that they're passionate about—about their culture, about their community—that person they're speaking to understands the value of that, because even if their values are different, from a different community, the thing is they understand how important it is to have that basis for them.

One aspect of this identity work in the program involves evoking the Warrior role. The image or symbol of the Warrior is a key concept in the delivery of the CMP and a key construct in its encouragement of positive, law-abiding

identities among the participants. The Warrior refers to the traditional masculine role in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities—of men who are strong, who are protectors and providers, leaders in their communities, keepers of particular knowledges and teachers of cultural knowledges and practices. As one stakeholder interviewed for this research put it, the CMP

> looks at the Warrior; past Warrior, present and future. So the comparison of each of those and past Warrior, what one would have been doing before they offended as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person or a man … Elders in the CMP use this image of the Warrior to support identity change among the men in the program.

Men interviewed for this study had clearly adopted the image of the Warrior and used this to explain how the program had been beneficial for them post-prison. One described the program preparing him for "becoming a man as Warrior", and others spoke of the Elders in the program teaching them "to be a provider for children and family, the need to become a Warrior", about "becoming to be a Warrior", and "becoming a Warrior again and becoming a father figure in the family". The men spoke of the traditional male role in communities, and their desire to become that Warrior again. The Warrior was clearly identified by the men as a positive model of masculinity, while offending and being in prison was described in negative terms. As one of the men put it: "If you want to be *that man* or *this man*—the Warrior—it's your choice." (Emphasis added)

This image of the Warrior is important to understanding the influence of the CMP on building desistant identities among the men. As Maruna's (2001, p. 87) work on desistance demonstrates, those who successfully desist from crime commonly create identity narratives that allow them to adhere to an image of themselves as having always been "good"—at least "deep down". Offending is therefore constructed as an aberration—an uncharacteristic departure from the "real" self, to which the offender has now returned. This is especially important in the context of sexual offending, given that the forging of a whole new identity is considered dangerous and the failure to see oneself as a potential risk is associated with repeat offending (Hanson & Harris, 2000). In other words, the creation of a self that acknowledges the offending past—

even as an aberration—is preferable to the development of a new self that disavows the offending altogether. In any case, current approaches to treatment and risk management of sexual offenders rarely allow for the complete "knifing off" of an offending past, as the work of Harris (2017) has amply demonstrated. For the most part, the men in the program did not present themselves as new or different selves following their participation in the CMP, but rather as continuing selves who have learned from their past mistakes. For example, one participant claimed that he is "not a different person from the past, but learns from the past". Similarly, another participant expressed clearly that he was "not a different person now". For the latter CMP participant, the reason for this was that "Uncle [Name] says to keep your offending in the back of your mind and learn from it".

These identity narratives reflect the key elements of "redemption scripts" among desisters (see further Farmer et al., 2015), which Maruna (2001, p. 88) argues involves the following key elements:

- the establishment of core beliefs that characterise the person's "true self"
- an optimistic perception of personal control over one's destiny
- the desire to be productive and give something back to society, particularly the next generation.

The narratives of the men in the current study clearly reflect this framework, but with some interesting and important differences. First, in their narratives, the "true self" was not predominantly an individualised one. Rather, the "old me" or "unspoiled identity" (Maruna, 2001, p. 89) is a collective self—the Warrior—a role associated with and a symbol of traditional masculinity, highlighted by the CMP. This reflects the collective nature of Australian Aboriginal cultural identity (McInerney & Ali, 2013). Here, the connection to an uninterrupted good self is a cultural undertaking, extending to encompass not only the men's pre-offending selves but the thousands of strong, pre-colonial Warrior men. It involves returning to the traditional male role—of provider, protector, Warrior (albeit in ways heavily restricted by the conditions to which they are subject under the DPSOA). In the words of a CMP participant: "Mothers and grandmothers now

play the role of father in Indigenous families. We need to get this role back."

The men in the program thus predominantly described their experiences in the program as experiences of *connectivity*, and reported that the CMP assisted them to connect with family, land, Country, culture and spirituality. For some of the men, this was a process of reconnecting, as they had been exposed to and involved in cultural activities as youngsters. For others, it was a process of connecting for the first time; for a third group, who had been exposed to culture both prior to prison and while incarcerated, it was a process of continuing connection. As the Elders who deliver the program noted, some CMP participants have an enduring connection to culture, while others don't, depending on the circumstances of their upbringing. In any case, for the men, forging a law-abiding identity involved some form of imagined connectivity—seeing oneself in context as part of a long history and one of the oldest living cultures on the planet.

Thus, in the CMP culture is positioned as a true (collective) self. While some offenders may seek to blame their perpetration of violence on their culture—declaring, as one stakeholder put it, 'it's my culture!' —this narrative is disavowed by the program, which instead posits traditional culture as the unspoiled ideal to which the men should aspire. This is reflected in the narratives of CMP participants interviewed for the current study. Many of the men not only appeared to possess an optimistic sense of personal control over their own destinies (as per Maruna, 2001), but also positioned their ancestors, families, and/or cultures as unspoiled entities, constructing their true selves as inherently and indelibly connected to them. For example, while one CMP participant acknowledged that he learnt about respect in the CMP, he stressed that such teachings build on what he was taught about respect from a young age. Another went on to discuss cultural knowledge that "has been handed down for those who kept on it and didn't let go", stating "that's who I am—a cultural person—and [this] gives me pride and satisfaction of who I am". Here, the participant presents his traditional culture as continuous, and this connection to an unspoiled, traditional cultural identity is framed as a source of pride. A fellow CMP participant constructed his involvement in the CMP in similar terms. This participant described having

been spiritual as a child, and having "learned spiritual ways as a child". He acknowledged that the CMP "helped me to feel the spiritual way again", and in doing so positions his traditional spirituality as continuous—a fact that may be *built on* in the CMP, but not built from scratch. CMP participants professed respect for the Elders, both in the CMP and more broadly, with one even admitting that the program's main Elder is, "to a certain degree", a role model. However, both these participants were also eager to highlight the role of their own family members in this regard, with one claiming that his own father was his role model "in terms of teaching [him] respect, manners", and the other reporting that he learned to respect women from his mum, not through the CMP. As a stakeholder claimed, therefore, the CMP seeks to connect participants' identities with unspoiled, pre-colonial notions of culture:

> Making sure that they identify with their culture and not how their culture has evolved over the last decade with the alcohol and drug abuse and the paint sniffing. Just reinforcing the traditional values. That "*that's* not our culture, *this* is our culture" and … just educating them around that. (Emphasis added)

Despite, or indeed perhaps because of, these narrative attempts to connect with aspects of traditional culture, men in the current study took fierce ownership of their current and future law-abiding selves. Although they spoke at length about the benefits they received from the CMP, and some believed that the program had been instrumental in their desistance, others were eager to disabuse the interviewers of any notion that the program (or any other intervention, voluntary or otherwise) had prevented or would prevent them from reoffending. Rather, they construed their desistance—both present and future—as a result of their own choices and actions. For example, one participant explained that the CMP wouldn't help to prevent him from reoffending; rather, he would never reoffend now because "I love my freedom and I don't want to jeopardise it". He described being unworried that he might reoffend, because offending was something he chose in the past. By extension, it was something he simply planned not to choose again. Another participant likewise claimed that participating in the CMP wouldn't help to prevent him from reoffending. Rather, his offending occurred because he "made a bad choice" and "wasn't thinking straight". For

this participant, "life is a process. It's about mending your ways, acknowledging your weaknesses." Another conceded that the program "makes you think—but it's up to us [to not reoffend]". Other participants' words closely mirrored this sentiment when they stated that "keeping out of trouble is up to you. Uncle [Name] cannot do this for you", and that the CMP didn't stop him from reoffending, since "it's your choice to walk the road".

Of course, in large part this narrative of desistance may reflect the Elders' message to the men in the program, and their internalisation of it. As previous scholarship (see e.g. Halsey, 2006; Tosouni, 2010) has identified, the subjects of correctional programming often internalise responsibilising messages. At the same time, it likely reflects the well-documented phenomenon of desisters minimising external contributors to their success, and highlighting their own personal agency and contribution in this regard (Harris, 2017; Hundleby, Gfellner, & Racine, 2007; Sullivan, 2012)—or in Maruna's (2001) terms, displaying a sense of optimism about personal control over their own destinies.

In combination, the men's views of themselves as new/old Warriors and as desisters whose success is largely a result of their own actions resulted in many of the men identifying themselves as uniquely well positioned to give back to their families and communities, and particularly to the younger generation. The role of the Warrior as a community leader and as the transmitter of cultural knowledges and practices led many of the men in the current study to discuss their wishes to use their own experiences to help future generations in their communities, or to undertake projects that reflect what Maruna (2001) refers to as "generativity"—in other words, to use their own experiences to help future generations in their communities (see Hundleby et al., 2007, on Canadian Aboriginal women offenders' experiences of generativity). For example, one CMP participant described wanting "help to be a better person". In his words, "Every generation looks to the past one for wisdom and knowledge." He spoke at length about his desire for generativity, claiming, "I made a mistake but now it's time for me to be a leader—to my nieces, nephews, family and community", and later that "I want to be somebody—to my nieces and nephews and the wider community. I want them to think I am a good person and

see changes in me." He also spoke of his desire to "help the younger generation". Indeed, this participant had already embarked on the beginnings of such an undertaking, by sharing knowledge with his nieces and nephews.

A fellow CMP participant described seeing it as his "job" to teach the younger generation about culture, and stated: "Some boys have lost their culture. I have to teach them the didgeridoo." Another similarly wanted to join a dance troupe and share his skills and knowledge, since "most Indigenous people today in cities aren't deeply involved in their culture". Another participant spoke about the role of the CMP in teaching him "to be a provider, to not just [be] helping myself but helping other families"; this participant spoke repeatedly about wanting to help others, and share with them what he had learned in the CMP about "physical, emotional and spiritual and mental wellbeing". Another explained that, following involvement in the CMP, "I do see myself in a different way now", and that while he had a way to go—specifically, "find my own family, stop drinking, stay out of trouble"—he aspired to "be a good role model for kids". A fellow participant described wanting "to help out the younger generation", such as his own niece. When asked in his interview what could be improved about the CMP, this participant's response stressed that the program ought to focus on helping others, particularly the younger generation:

> Right now, a lot of brothers are struggling [with] where they [are] heading and more urgently it's about young kids who are our future, not only here in Townsville, whether they are Indigenous or not.

For this participant, this was especially vital since "young people who offend are crying out for help".

One stakeholder who works with the same population of individuals subject to the DPSOA observed both the will to generativity and, in some cases, its physical application in her clients. She noted that one client's involvement in cultural activities such as traditional art had meant that "now for him it's very important that he passes these skills and traditions and things on to the younger generation and that there's something there for them". Of another client, who had secured a "Work for the Dole" position, the stakeholder noted:

He was coming to his [psychology] sessions and he was saying to me, "You gotta go to this place and look at this, I did this and I trimmed this tree and I did that and I did this" and he was really proud of it and felt he was giving back to the community.

For one Elder, a key purpose of the CMP is that a participant

can be seen as a role model. When he goes home [to his home community] he can talk about what he's learned down here and he can get something going. These young people [CMP participants] are role models, they've been wrong in the past, but they can make change.

A key point about the peer support group must be made in connection to the above discussion of generativity. While not the focus of this study, the peer support group is important in this context as it provides CMP participants with an opportunity to practise generativity. This is especially important given that, while many appear to possess the will for generativity, participants have few outlets for implementing generative projects, given the limitations imposed on them under the DPSOA. As a QCS staff member described in her interview:

They actually go into the [peer support] group and can be vocal about what they've learnt [in the CMP] and share that with newer people coming in, and it might be some young fella that's disrespectful or, you know that sort of thing.

A stakeholder also noted that the peer support group provides an opportunity for such an undertaking:

Each one of the guys that I've been working with have found that the [peer support] group in particular has been quite good. The mentoring of the younger fellows has been beneficial.

Retraditionalisation

A question that might reasonably be asked in light of the above discussion (and, indeed, was raised by one stakeholder interviewed for this research) is how the (re)connecting of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander men with their

culture might lead to a decrease in offending, given that the men in the CMP, by and large, come from remote communities—that is, they had access to cultural activities and knowledge in the first instance. One potential answer to this question is that the CMP seeks to impart and instil prosocial elements of traditional Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultures (e.g. respecting others and earning respect); it does not allow "culture" to be used as an excuse for the perpetration of violence. Rather, it seeks to disabuse participants of any notion that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures support sexual or gendered violence, and supplant any such belief with reference to pre-colonial (i.e. non-violent) notions of culture, providing

a way to see desistance not in terms of conforming to the larger society's view of Aboriginal people, but rather for each to see themselves as an Aboriginal person who is becoming consistent with his "true" culture. (Bracken, Deane, & Morrisette, 2009, p. 74)

This is important to note in light of the many interviewees and CMP participants who viewed sexual offending as learned behaviour and the normalisation of violence in their home communities as a consequence of this. In short, the CMP aims to re-socialise and re-educate participants around traditional elements of culture, as distinct from cultures impacted by colonisation (see generally Bracken et al., 2009). The program's aim might best be understood as "retraditionalisation" (LaFromboise et al., 1990, cited in Howell, 2008, p. 187).

Mitigating life stressors and minimising risk

The CMP has a strong focus on mitigating and managing the emotional distress and life stressors that participants commonly experience, in order to minimise the risk that the men may pose to the community. As a QCS staff member noted, "that's a really important thing, so big emotional situations which occur obviously raise the risk, so that's … probably the most important [aspect of the program]". Moreover, CMP participants commonly raised the emotional support they received through the CMP as one of its key benefits. One spoke of the program's benefit in helping him develop his

self-understanding on an emotional level. Other participants revealed that the program had "helped with emotional stuff", and that it had "helped out mentally, emotionally, and with negativity and stress". As noted above in relation to CoSA, addressing the stressors experienced by individuals who have sexually offended is an important component of risk reduction, given that such stressors appear to be linked to reoffending (see generally Bonnar-Kidd, 2010; Hudson, 2005).

In addition, the CMP has a strong focus on supporting individuals released under the DPSOA to meet the conditions of their release. A QCS staff member stated: "I really think we would have far more contravention [i.e. of orders] without it [the CMP] than with it." Another QCS staff member likewise believed that "at times, it does help with their engagement on the order". As she further explained, having the CMP in place allows probation and parole officers to better support this cohort of offender:

> [Uncle will tell us] what he's been focusing on with them. If he's been having any concerns and if we're asking him to bring up specific things, he'll tell us if he's been able to address that and what their responses have been.

While Elders in the program reported empathising with CMP participants about having to live between two worlds—and two systems of law ("white man's law" and Aboriginal lore)—they sought to instil in participants a strong sense of the importance of abiding by the conditions of their release. In the primary Elder's words, he seeks to instil in the men the notion that, "your Probation and Parole officer is your best friend". This had clearly had an impact on CMP participants interviewed for the current research, as many echoed these sentiments when reflecting on the support provided by the program. For example, CMP participants reported that the program encourages and helps them to meet the conditions of their orders, with one for example describing a focus on having "respect for Probation and Parole and for your order" as well as being honest and trustworthy in broader terms. For another CMP participant, the message of the program was that he must "abide by the rules" of his order, and that "finishing [my] parole order is the number one priority". For a fellow participant, the message was somewhat broader: "Don't get into trouble and that and have drink with old friends. Don't go looking for trouble." A stakeholder believed that because

the men enjoy both the CMP and the broader peer support group (for those men who are a part of both), this provides an incentive to adhere to parole conditions. She described one client who "won't do anything that potentially will take away his permission to engage and be able to go".

Supporting the men to adhere to their order conditions is an important function of the program, as the orders have been imposed to protect the public by reducing each offender's risk of reoffending. Staff, stakeholders and participants in the CMP interviewed for the current study recounted many examples of the program supporting the men subject to the DPSOA to adhere to their conditions, both in practical and emotional terms. As was the case with CoSA, this often meant helping the men to understand why they must adhere to stringent conditions. In the context of the CMP, this often took the form of encouraging the men to accept the imposition of what many refer to as "white man's law". Indeed, a strong alignment with QCS objectives and processes was evident from the interviews, and there was a strong sense from QCS staff that the CMP must mirror QCS organisational philosophy and practice, and from CMP staff and participants that this was the case. As a QCS staff member put it:

> The orders are restrictive and we can't have them [the CMP] advocating … against us. So, we need them to understand that we have a process in place and they can't really question that process, because what we do is because we need to do it [to minimise risk posed by individuals subject to the DPSOA].

While supporting compliance in this way is undoubtedly a key strength of the CMP, building desistant identities beyond this could form a more explicit focus of the program, given that the men will eventually complete their orders, and that these orders are heavily risk-based and deficits-focused. In other words, the larger goal, both of the CMP and corollary services that serve the same population, ought to be law-abiding individuals in the community in the longer-term.

Furthermore, a small number of interviewees expressed concern about specific incidents in which Elders in the CMP had not given sufficient regard to the strict release conditions of the men in the program, and had inadvertently exposed the men to situations in which their conditions may have been

breached. Interviewees stressed the importance therefore of ensuring that Elders in the CMP have a better understanding of the conditions of all participants in the CMP. As stakeholders argued, CMP staff "need a lot more education around clients", since "there's no room for complacency with these guys". This is discussed in more detail in the recommendations section below.

Discussion

Farrall (2009, p. 6) has argued that "research into desistance from crime has, by and large, been colour-blind" (see also Hundleby et al., 2007; Marchetti & Daly, 2017). Certainly, almost no research has considered the desistance of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Australians generally (cf. Marchetti & Daly, 2017; Sullivan, 2012), and none has examined the desistance of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individuals from sexual offending in particular. While the research presented in this report is exploratory, it therefore makes an important contribution towards this under-researched topic.

Much good work is clearly being done in the CMP. While it would be too soon (and the number of participants too few) to test statistically whether the program contributes towards a reduction in reoffending, this qualitative study documents for the first time the value of the CMP. In summary, by helping CMP participants to accept the value in adhering to the rules that govern their lives in the community, and supporting them in culturally appropriate ways to meet these rules and avoid the behaviours and circumstances that give rise to their offending, the program undoubtedly makes an important contribution to the safety of the community. In supporting core members to avoid technical breaches of their release conditions (i.e. those conditions of their release into the community that would not invite criminal justice consequences under other circumstances, such as adhering to a curfew or not consuming alcohol), the program may also contribute to criminal justice cost saving by decreasing the work of the courts and the incidence of returns to prison.

The CMP also adheres broadly to the GLM, which is increasingly the favoured approach to responding to sexual offending. Part of the identity-building facilitated by the program outlined above involved encouraging and supporting the men to find meaning and purpose in life, as reflected in the GLM (discussed in detail earlier in this research report). The GLM acknowledges that what constitutes a "good life" may be socially and culturally constructed (Leaming & Willis, 2016). In the Aotearoa/New Zealand context, Leaming and Willis (2016, p. 66) argue that the GLM is compatible with Māori worldviews:

> Cultural identity may shape how different PHGs [primary human goods] are sought. … For example, a client who strongly identifies as Māori might find spiritual fulfilment through connectedness to their whakapapa [genealogy/ancestors] and to their whenua [land]. The same activities might not be considered as spiritual experiences by clients who do not identify as Māori.

Ward, Day and Casey (2006) similarly argue that as the GLM places a strong focus on the "old" and "new" selves (arguing that only the ways in which human goods are attained changes, rather than the human goods themselves), it is broadly compatible with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people's perspectives, which value the past and its meanings. The CMP is thus broadly aligned with a conceptual approach that is theoretically robust (Leaming & Willis, 2016) and enjoys emerging empirical support. Moreover, its recognition of both the trauma (Bracken et al., 2009; Macklin & Gilbert, 2011) in the life histories of participants and the context of colonisation that shapes this trauma (Day et al., 2008; Hundleby et al., 2007; Jones, Masters, Griffiths, & Moulday, 2002) has been recognised in the literature as important for addressing the offending-related needs of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander offenders (see Richards, 2015, for a discussion).

It is important to note, however, that not all interviewees were convinced of the benefits of the CMP beyond those that extend to the participants themselves; not all were convinced of the capacity of the program in its current form to have a significant impact on reducing sexual recidivism. One stakeholder, for example, acknowledged that there "might be some value in doing this kind of cultural stuff, going back to land, reconnecting with land, learning traditional ways of fishing or the flora or fauna stuff", but conceptualised the

benefits of such activities as being primarily that they "simply take up some of their time in a positive way", and admitted that he was "clutching a little bit at straws" in attempting to articulate any tangible benefit of the program. To be clear, this interviewee identified no negative features or consequences of the CMP, but simply failed to see how it could reduce recidivism. In the stakeholder's words:

> I mean, it gives them something to do that's positive. It gives them something to do that connects them with something else other than their own circle of friends. Does that have some capacity to impact upon sexual offending? I think not.

For this stakeholder, the perceived lack of efficacy was not a failing of the CMP itself, which he acknowledged was broadly positive:

> These guys have got nothing going 24/7. Very little in their life. So it gives them some structure, it gives them somewhere to go, there's camaraderie, there's mateship, they're learning some Indigenous stuff, there's a feed, something to look forward to. All that is good stuff.

Rather, he believed that despite programs such as the CMP, and the numerous other programs to which individuals convicted of sexual offences are subject, preventing reoffending is challenging given the intrinsically difficult population of offenders that it targets:

> They've got nothing but spare time, nothing but idle time. Their ideation is criminal, antisocial, probably to the max. They're angry men, they've got very few skills to bring to bear, they're horny, their sexual outlets are restricted. … I don't ever think you'll ever change some of these guys like that.

Like many other interviewees, this stakeholder also noted the trauma experienced by this group of men as a factor that stymies their attempts at desistance, in addition to the denial and minimisation of offending with which they often present. A related point is that the heavily restrictive nature of the DPSOA must also be taken into account when considering the effectiveness of the CMP. For example, while the literature on desistance generally, and even the meagre literature on desistance of Aboriginal offenders specifically, highlights the critical role of relationships (romantic, familial), parenting and kinship connections (Sullivan, 2012), these are largely denied to individuals subject to the DPSOA.

A number of other interviewees shared this stakeholder's belief that the inherent difficulties of working with the population of men subject to the DPSOA meant that interventions such as the CMP, while undoubtedly well intentioned, would be necessarily limited. In one stakeholder's words: "Does anything benefit DPSOAs? … A lot of them have come from very dysfunctional families and community. … Where do you start? Can anyone benefit?" Others expressed similar views about the inherent limitations of interventions with this group:

> Some of them will change behaviours. Some can't. … Like I've got a person who is a diagnosed psychopath. There's no way of changing that with him. So you know no intervention really is going to be beneficial for him. (Stakeholder)

> Uncle [Name] can only do so much. It comes back to them and their level of wanting to take on board what Uncle [Name] is imparting to them. (Stakeholder)

> Again it comes back to where they're at and whether they're ready to make that change. It really does, because most of the clientele we work with have antisocial personality disorders and are very, very set in their ways. We can give them the skills and tools to change it and we encourage that and we want the best for them, but ultimately they can put their heels in and just show that behaviour no matter who's providing them with that support. (Stakeholder)

> Nothing's going to do anything for them until they take their blindfolds off. I think [Name] tries to work with these people, as we do, but it's pushing shit uphill. They're not ready. (Stakeholder)

> Even CMP staff acknowledged the difficulty of the population of men subject to the DPSOA in this regard: "They're broken already." (Elder)

This need not detract from the value of the CMP, however, with staff and stakeholders generally acknowledging that despite this challenge, the program assists the men engaged in it to head "in the right direction" (Stakeholder). Even the stakeholder most sceptical about the program's capacity to effect change in the men acknowledged that, in his view, it "may enhance self-esteem, self-value, self-worth, and those are all good mitigating factors". Rather, the difficulties inherent in working with this population of offenders meant, for many interviewees, that the CMP can only form one part of a wider and deeper network of services that the men invariably require. A number of stakeholders expressed this view as follows:

> But for me I think we've got to come together. [One measure] is not going to [be enough]. If you all come together it might work but a one-off thing on your own, a lot of it's not going to fix it. It's only going to be a bandaid job.

> I guess he could influence change, but he couldn't do it alone. It's just because of their high-complex needs, I think it's just something that—it would be like pushing a steamroller up a hill.

For another stakeholder, the CMP plays a critical role in engaging this group of men in the first instance, but could only be expected to be one element of a journey to reintegration. As she highlights, the community itself must play a role in such a journey:

> Especially if they're trying to create that reconnection with community … Uncle [Name] is able to do that first part where he can connect with them and get them to come back to the community, but the community has to be more than just one person for it to be effective. (Stakeholder)

Nonetheless, interviewees were virtually unanimous that the CMP could be more effective in and of itself if it were better funded and supported. A common concern in this regard was that the Elders in the CMP were not sufficiently supported to devote more time and effort specifically to the CMP, given the multiple roles that they hold as respected community leaders in the Townsville area and the demands on their time that this inevitably entails. In more prosaic terms,

and in relation to the CMP's main Elder specifically, "he's that bloody busy it's ridiculous" (Stakeholder). A number of staff and stakeholders raised this as a frustration, describing the Elder as being "very sought after", "over-extended" and having "a lot on his plate" (Stakeholder); being "a very busy man" and "heavily engaged in the community with a range of different organisations and projects" (QCS staff member); and "stretched from pillar to post" (Stakeholder).

Most of the CMP participants interviewed for the current study reported, however, that they wanted further one-on-one mentoring sessions through the program. As one stated, he wanted the sessions to continue, and in particular to be available at times of crisis, "when I was falling apart, feeling stressed". While this participant felt he could call on the Elder for support at such times, an explicit mechanism for this would be beneficial, given the link between the experience of stress and crisis and sexual recidivism (Hanson & Bussière, 1998; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005), as discussed in more detail earlier in this research report. Other CMP participants described specifically wanting more mentoring sessions to build cultural knowledge or skills such as painting. For example, one claimed that he would have benefited from more assistance with identifying risk factors or "red flags", such as around "going to parties, alcohol, drugs".

In the main, stakeholders agreed that more sessions would be beneficial for the men and, in turn, for community safety. As one argued: "He needs funding. He needs funding." Another stakeholder concurred that "there would always be a need for resources". It is important to note here that stakeholders' calls for increased funding were made not only with a view to expanding the program's reach, but also to ensuring that the current program can operate effectively. In particular it was noted that consistency is an issue, with Elders not always being available to provide mentorship to CMP participants on a consistent basis or in crisis situations. A number of stakeholders raised this as a problem that they would like to see addressed as a priority. For one, this lack of consistency affects the morale of CMP participants; in another stakeholder's words, "In the end, the guys just go, 'fuck it, why am I even bothering?'" This was seen as particularly important given the life circumstances and practical limitations of perpetrators subject to the DPSOA. As a stakeholder argued:

We just need consistency. Because most of our guys live at our contingency housing, which isn't in town and needs transport. So we have a calendar, we schedule everything so that we know what's going on. Surveillance officers are able to then transport everybody so things run smoothly.

With greater resources, staff and stakeholders felt confident that the CMP could have a more profound influence on participants. For one QCS staff member, this would mean engaging perpetrators in the program earlier—prior to their release from prison where possible—in order to more seamlessly support reintegration. For one stakeholder, greater resources would mean being able to expand the program:

More financial resources, more Elders who are willing to do the same kind of work of what he's doing. Whether that be someone who's a representative from that community can take these boys under their wing and do some cultural stuff, with permission, that makes them feel connected, that would be amazing.

Another stakeholder was adamant that better resourcing would also enable the program to operate in a more culturally appropriate way:

[Ending after six sessions] doesn't fit the Indigenous social, emotional wellbeing model … irrelevant of what the criminal behaviour is … it's social, emotional wellbeing, it's grief and loss. If we understand anything about trauma, that's a significant trigger, yet we're going, "Oh no, he's used up his sessions."

As an important caveat to the above discussion, stakeholders identified that even with increased funding, in order to be most effective the CMP would require better resourcing and support from the broader policy and practice setting that serves individuals subject to the DPSOA: "We just need more engagement and more services, full stop." (Stakeholder) A key component of the problem here is that some non-government services deliberately exclude people subject to the DPSOA from their services. As another stakeholder noted, "A lot of the NGOs will not work with DPSOAs."

Another caveat that must be noted is that while the CMP participants interviewed for this study reported primarily positive experiences with the program, staff and stakeholders reported that not all clients who had engaged with the program held such positive views. This is important to note, since it stands to reason that those participants who volunteered to be interviewed for the research would hold predominantly favourable views of the program. As a stakeholder stated, some of her clients have made negative comments about the CMP to her, and "there's a lot who initially engaged … [but] now they flat out refuse to". It is unclear why this is the case, as the men "never actually say specifically why" and "trying to get anything out of these guys is like pulling teeth anyway". Another stakeholder speculated that the men who have less favourable views of or experiences in the program may be reluctant to provide further details "because if they badmouth him it might get back to him. Then there might be consequences for that." A QCS staff member also conceded that sometimes offenders choose not to engage in the program, and speculated that this "could be because he's [the main Elder] not from their area". This staff member recalled instances in which "they'll just come back to us and say, 'Actually no, we don't want to engage with him because he doesn't come from where we are, or we're Islander, he's not'". A fellow QCS staff member had a similar understanding: "Some of these guys will say, 'I've had a chat to him and he's not—he's not from my Country, I don't connect with him, I don't want to continue.'" A stakeholder had a similar understanding from her experience working with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander DPSOA offenders: "In Townsville there are set family groups and there are certain families that don't get on with others so I do have some guys who go, 'No I'm not going to go see him.'"

While the men interviewed for the current study were clear that engaging with Elders in the program who are not from their Country did not concern them, this is unsurprising, as they had all agreed to participate in the program. One stakeholder who works with the same population of individuals under the DPSOA likewise acknowledged that she sometimes receives poor feedback about the CMP from clients: "Sometimes they are so angry and they call Uncle [Name] all the names under the sun and 'he doesn't understand' and 'what would he know?'" However, in her practice, such views were "definitely the minority". Another stakeholder's clients had not reported any negative views about the program, although, as she

acknowledged, it is unclear whether this was because "they don't have the capacity to give it [negative feedback] or they just generally like it [the program]".

Cultural tensions

While broadly speaking the study identified an alignment between the objectives of QCS and the CMP, as outlined above, a small number of specific tensions appear to exist between the organisational and philosophical imperatives of QCS on the one hand and the nature of the delivery of the CMP on the other. First, those who supervise or provide services to the men subject to the DPSOA placed a strong emphasis on having a detailed understanding of the nature of each client's offending and the circumstances surrounding it. However, the men themselves were very reluctant to discuss their offending histories, particularly with non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female authorities. The primary Elder in the program explained that he does not push men in the CMP to tell him about their offending, at least in the beginning, in order to establish trust and rapport with the men:

> When I first start with them I leave it to them if they want to tell me about their offence. By the end they tell me about their offence. I never push them. As soon as they get that respect and trust within you, they'll open up to you.

The men themselves primarily did not believe that their offending was relevant to the objectives of the CMP; as one participant put it, "He don't ask questions about my offence or what I did. He was only there to put me on my feet in the Blackfella way."

As the following excerpt from one stakeholder's interview suggests, while focusing on the men's future is important, those who work with individuals subject to the DPSOA desire not only an understanding of these clients' offending histories, but also for clients themselves to develop such an understanding:

> [Stakeholder:] They simply refuse to talk about the past, and I'm sitting here going, "Well, we need to understand the past in order to prevent [the same thing] from occurring in the future." [They will argue that] "You're dragging

me back to the past, and I don't want to be dragged back to the past, I want to live in the future, I want to move forward", and it's really, really strong and so I feel that needs to be reviewed.

> [Interviewer:] I guess I can see that, that's a healthy thing of "that was the old me and this is a new me" …

> [Stakeholder:] [But] they're not addressing the issues that created "the old me".

Another stakeholder similarly complained that her clients, after participating in the CMP (and the peer support group more broadly), sometimes adopt the view that "I can't talk to you about that, that's men's business and you're a female." For these stakeholders, having a detailed understanding of the men's histories and current circumstances related to their risk of offending is vital, as is encouraging such insight in the men themselves. In her experience, therefore, characterising some topics as taboo presents a barrier to therapeutic engagement with the men, and "enforces that negative cultural aspect of it". For one stakeholder, this amounts to being dismissive of the men's offending, and minimising its seriousness. Elders in the CMP, however, were adamant that discussing such matters as sexual history with non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female service providers is, in their view, neither appropriate nor helpful:

> For a lot of our people, shame is a big factor. … One of the things they hate when going into Probation and Parole is being asked as a man by a white woman [certain] questions [such as] "How many times a night do you masturbate?" And they just put their head down because they know how disrespectful that is. Every one of them tell me the same thing, they have problem with that one question.

> It's a shame thing. Them sort of questions [have] been asked and answered in men's business. And it's the same thing with women's business. And that's just common sense. They should … be a little bit more sensitive to the questions they need to ask. If you want to get cooperation from those guys, ask them questions they can be comfortable with not questions they can't be comfortable with.

Thus, while a strong alliance between the CMP and the aims of QCS to manage individuals under the DPSOA was demonstrated through the current study, this is one tension that requires further consideration. In relation to this tension, it should be recognised that while the CMP does not focus heavily on confronting participants about their offending, or challenging participants about their histories of sexual violence, it appears to challenge behaviour in broader terms around cultural identity. As one stakeholder put it, the program's overriding message is "this is not who we are". In other words, such activity is undertaken on a cultural level, rather than at an individual level, as is usually the case with programs premised on western cultural norms.

The second tension that arose from the interviews undertaken for this study relates to the program's characterisation of women victims/survivors of sexual violence, and women more broadly. Some CMP participants interviewed for this study volunteered unprompted that the program focuses on developing respect for women. For example, some participants stated that the program teaches them about "respecting women", and a QCS staff member saw this as a strength of the program. One participant noted he'd applied this teaching when relating to his "sisters" (i.e. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women) and cousins he sees in the community, and also that this teaching helps him to reconnect with female family members. However, in the main, the men's narratives could be interpreted as revealing a keener focus on placing responsibility onto women for violence committed against them. For example, a CMP participant stated that the program "tells us about women—[we are told] 'You talk to a woman, she will put you inside [prison].'" This participant's strategy in light of this is simply: "I just don't talk to women." He elaborated that in the program they learn about "pussy power", to "leave the phone alone", and about the importance of being careful in romantic relationships: "[We are taught that] if she's drunk and you're sober …" A fellow CMP participant was less direct on this topic, but did comment in his interview that he was not concerned about reoffending, since while "other offenders can be manipulated by people" this was not the case for him. Although somewhat circumspect, this possibly refers to his perceived inability to be manipulated by women. Another participant was more frank, maintaining his innocence and claiming that "my girlfriend put me in prison—she was playing games. … She did it for compensation."

While denial and minimisation of harm is common among men who have sexually offended (see e.g. Farmer et al., 2016; Harris, 2017), staff and stakeholders interviewed for this study were somewhat apprehensive about the potential for such narratives to be supported via the CMP. A number of staff and stakeholders pointed out that they were concerned that teachings in the CMP might inadvertently shift responsibility onto women for the violence perpetrated against them. As one stakeholder put it:

> There have been times when he has said inappropriate things, like the "power of the pussy". He was telling the blokes, a lot of you get done in again because your missus will ring you and you're not supposed to go [to] her house. He didn't mean it in a sex sense so to speak, yeah. It was more in a, you're going to run back to your woman even though you're not supposed to because of your orders, that sort of stuff.

While this interviewee thus appeared to have a more nuanced grasp on the message than some of the men in the program, she felt it was something that "could be taken the wrong way", and believed that the issue, having previously been raised, had been addressed in the CMP. The current research, however, suggests that there is still some way to go in this regard. Not only did some of the men volunteer explanations of their offending that made recourse to the notion of "pussy power" (as outlined above), but the Elders themselves used the same terminology, as per the following interview excerpts:

> They go back and sleep with the same woman and they find out he's slept with another woman and they put them up on rape charges. They're on these orders not to see their woman. … They come out and the first thing they do is go home. That's what we call the PP, the pussy power. They say they're going to Cairns or seeing someone else and their woman calls the police and says, "Hey Billy's here and he's not meant to be."

> They've been threatened by the woman—"If you don't come see me I'm going out with someone else." And they go back.

Concerns of a similar nature have been raised previously by Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and Canadian First Nations women in relation to Indigenous-

specific programs that seek to address sexual violence. For example, Stewart, Huntley and Blaney (2001) argue that such programs can miss their mark and re-victimise victims/ survivors if gender inequality, shaped by years of oppression, remains unaddressed (see further Cripps & McGlade, 2008). As discussed further below, therefore, this is an aspect of the program that requires resolution. As one stakeholder argued, a component of the program dedicated to understanding the impacts of sexual victimisation may help address the issue.

The above discussion is instructive in light of the extant literature on the role of cultural programming for Indigenous offenders in reintegration and desistance. There has been debate in the research literature about whether treatment programs for Indigenous people who offend should include elements of Indigenous culture (Burgoyne & Tyson, 2013; Richards, 2015). Some scholars (Marie, 2010; Morris & Wood, 2010; Sullivan, 2012) argue against doing so on the grounds that there is little concrete evidence that such approaches reduce (re)offending. However, some research demonstrates that cultural programming can assist Indigenous offenders to aspire to prosocial behaviours. For example, Hodgson and Heckbert (1994, cited in Howell & Yuille, 2004), studied 20 Canadian Aboriginal prisoners and found that almost all (n=19) reported that the use of Elders in programs had helped them desist from crime (see further Howell, 2014). A follow-up study conducted by Heckbert and Turkington (2001) with 68 Canadian Aboriginal desisters found that large proportions considered contact with Elders (72%) and the incorporation of Aboriginal spirituality and ceremony into programs (71%) to have been beneficial (see also Howell & Yuille, 2004; for a general discussion see Richards, 2015).

A recent Australian study by Shepherd, Delgado, Sherwood, & Paradies (2018) likewise suggests that providing cultural programming to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander offenders can reduce recidivism. Shepherd et al. (2018) measured the cultural identity and cultural engagement of 119 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander prisoners in Victoria. They found that cultural engagement (i.e. participation in cultural events and activities, feeling connected to traditional homeland and culture) significantly predicted non-recidivism. Shepherd et al. (2018, p. 55) also found that while cultural identity (i.e. identifying with one's culture but

not necessarily involving oneself in aspects of that culture) did not in and of itself predict non-recidivism, it may have an indirect influence: "It is plausible that a strong Indigenous identity enables greater cultural engagement which in turn lowers recidivism."

Pridemore's (2004) research similarly suggests that some aspects of cultural programming may have an indirect effect on recidivism. Pridemore (2004, p. 58) found that "the impact of tribal culture is not usually direct, but instead appears to operate indirectly by strengthening families and communities and transmitting tribal values". Likewise, Nakhid and Shorter (2014, p. 714) found that among their small cohort (n=4) of Māori male prisoner interviewees, "acknowledging their identity as Māori […] instilled a sense of pride in their culture and made them want to aspire to the positive characteristics of what it meant to be Māori". For this reason, the New Zealand Department of Corrections uses Māori cultural programs "as short motivational programmes to encourage further participation in proven rehabilitation programmes" (New Zealand Controller and Auditor General, 2013, p. 73) rather than as standalone interventions (see also Pridemore, 2004). In other words, cultural programs such as the CMP ought to be considered a form of "assisted desistance" (Marchetti & Daly, 2017, p. 1520) or a "hook for change" (Giordano et al., 2002, p. 1001) or a "catalyst for change" (Howell, 2008, p. 185), as was the case in Marchetti and Daly's (2017) study of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander sentencing courts for domestic violence perpetrators. In Ward et al.'s (2006) terms, such programs may represent a pathway to "treatment readiness". In doing so, they may play a small, but significant, role in addressing Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander overrepresentation in the criminal justice system.

Summary and conclusions

While programs such as the CMP that focus predominantly on retraditionalisation might not provide clear indications of a reduction in recidivism, they likely play an important role as gateway programs for offenders, readying them to engage with other, evidence-based measures. In Hundleby et al.'s (2007) study of the desistance journeys of Canadian Aboriginal women, participants' recognition of their Aboriginal heritage

through retraditionalisation activities such as ceremonies and learning about culture was considered a first step towards desistance. They argue therefore that "the extent to which one's cultural background is explored and integrated into the sense of self may be vitally important to the maintenance of change" (Hundleby et al., 2007, p. 243). This is also likely to be the case with the CMP. As the above discussion foregrounds, the CMP was considered a helpful measure by many service providers who worked with the same group of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander men, providing an entry point for engaging this group of perpetrators.

Recommendations for CMP policymakers and practitioners

While these results are preliminary, they provide a much-needed insight into the role that cultural programs can play post-prison for men who have sexually offended. A number of recommendations flow from the findings, and are outlined below.

Data collection and reporting

- Better data collection and reporting would enhance the program and amplify its impacts. As identified above, clearer communication between the program Elders and QCS could underpin better supports for offenders subject to the DPSOA and, in turn, enhance community safety. Such reporting could be performed verbally rather than in writing to minimise the burden on Elders in the CMP (see the data collection framework developed as part of this project at Appendix B).

Training and education

- Training for the CMP Elders on typical conditions of offenders' orders under the DPSOA would be beneficial in terms of ensuring that CMP participants do not inadvertently breach their conditions of release.
- Training for the CMP Elders on how to avoid offence minimisations and justifications in program delivery would also be beneficial.

- Ideally, Elders from other Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander nations would be able to contribute to the program, to ensure it services a broad range of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultures. As identified above, in some instances it appears that some individuals subject to the DPSOA resist participating in the CMP due to cultural differences between themselves and the program Elders.

Program focus and theoretical alignment

- A stronger focus on desistance beyond the life of the men's orders and on the creation and maintenance of non-offending identities would further strengthen the program. As outlined above, while a focus on meeting the men's conditions of release is laudable, focusing on building law-abiding identities may enhance community safety beyond the life of the program or the men's orders.

Funding

- As with the CoSA program discussed above, better funding would not only enable the CMP to assist and support more individuals over longer periods, but would also help to address shortcomings in the current iteration of the program (e.g. providing Elders with training about the DPSOA to ensure that orders are not inadvertently breached). As discussed above, limited resourcing has affected the ability of the program to be delivered consistently. Furthermore, many CMP participants reported they would benefit from more sessions than are currently typically offered.

Key findings: Victim/survivor views of sexual offender reintegration

As noted earlier, this component of the research examined the views of victims/survivors of sexual violence about sexual offender reintegration broadly, about CoSA specifically, and about the needs of victims/survivors during the release and reintegration of offenders. To maintain cultural appropriateness, victims/survivors were not asked for their views of the CMP. Thirty-three victims/survivors were interviewed for this study. All participants except one were female. Those who provided their age ranged between 20 and more than 70 years. The participants had experienced a broad array of sexual offences, including penetrative and non-penetrative offences; recent and historical offences; intra- and extrafamilial offences; child sexual abuse and sexual violence as adults; and institutional and non-institutional abuse. The violence perpetrated against the participants was overwhelmingly (although not exclusively) perpetrated by males, including fathers, grandfathers, brothers, uncles, cousins (and "step" varieties of these), husbands and partners, neighbours, family friends, peers and acquaintances, those in positions of authority (e.g. church or youth group leaders, music teachers, healthcare practitioners), members of organised child sexual abuse "rings" and strangers. Approximately half had experienced sexual violence perpetrated by more than one perpetrator and/or in more than one scenario. For example, it was common for interviewees to report having been sexually abused as a child and then later raped as an adult in a separate incident, or to have been abused by a family member and then in a care setting such as a foster home.

In most instances, the offender(s) had not been incarcerated in relation to the offending, because the offence had not been reported to police; because reports had not been recorded or pursued by police; or because the perpetrator had passed away, was acquitted or given a non-custodial penalty. Only six victims/survivors had directly experienced the release of their perpetrator from prison, and most were reflecting on what their needs and wishes might have been rather than their own experiences. Given the very low rate of reporting of sexual offences (Bouhours & Daly, 2008), coupled with very high rates of attrition from the criminal justice system (Eastwood et al., 2006; Kelly, Lovett, & Regan, 2005), this is largely unsurprising. However, it should be borne in mind throughout this section.

What are victims'/survivors' needs in relation to sexual offender reintegration?

Victims/survivors were asked what their needs were (or would be) at the time of their offender's release from prison, as well as how they could be best supported during this time. Victims/survivors had remarkably uniform responses to these questions, irrespective of their personal histories of victimisation or whether their perpetrator had been incarcerated and subsequently released from prison. Overwhelmingly, interviewees identified that the release of the perpetrator was a source of immense fear, a potential trigger for distress and anxiety, and a profound disruption to their ongoing efforts to cope in the aftermath of the sexual violence perpetrated against them. Specifically, victims/survivors reported fearing seeing their perpetrator again, and the effects that this would have on their own physical, psychological and emotional wellbeing. For example, they noted:

> When something like that [release from prison] is happening, the survivor of that sort of attack is—will be on edge. They'll be nervous. They'll be—it'll sink them back into what they've gone through.

> It's the fear of the unknown as well and it's the fear of them going into a shop somewhere or a shopping centre and suddenly being confronted. And they don't ever want to be, have any visual, any kind of, they don't ever want to see him again.

> I'm scared that when he's back in the community, that I'm going to regress back into … with having PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder]. Every person that slightly resembles him when I go to the shops, will get me into a panic. How am I going to live with him living in the same town, knowing that I could run into him at the shops?

> I know myself, if they were living near me, how would I cope if I have to see them or whatever, in the supermarket.

> If you knew they were going to move into your suburb, that might be a bit shocking or unsettling to the person [victim/survivor].

Safety was thus identified by victims/survivors as the paramount concern relating to the release of offenders, with most interviewees identifying this as the key issue that needs to be addressed:

> To be safe … I think safety is probably the prime concern and obviously if victims have children, you'd want to make sure that people know that they're going to be safe.

> They need safety. They need to feel safe.

> Survivors' needs? That feeling of safety.

> … to know if the person's out [of prison], that there's no harm going to come to them [the victim/survivor]. They're going to be safe. … The main thing is to make the survivor feel safe.

> To just reassure them that they are safe.

Safety was conceptualised by interviewees both in physical and emotional terms, with victims/survivors reporting a need for everything from locks on their doors and self-defence training to emotional and psychological support (as discussed in more detail below), not only for themselves as the direct victim/survivor, but also for their families and potential future victims. A number of interviewees held particular concerns that because they had reported their perpetrator, there would be repercussions for themselves and/or their family when the offender was released. As one victim/survivor stated:

> They come out of jail angry because of what you've done and that's another fear … that this guy might belt them up, they are frightened for their children's lives that they might single them out and abuse them just to get back at you.

Another interviewee had a similar view: "I came along and stuffed up his life many years after the fact. He had to leave his job or whatever, go into jail."

Victims/survivors interviewed for this study consistently identified the same five measures to ensure the safety of victims/survivors at the time of the release of a perpetrator from prison: physical distance from the perpetrator; information about the perpetrator's release; counselling and therapeutic support for the victim/survivor; monitoring of the offender by authorities; and help for the offender to address offending-related needs. These will be discussed in turn below.

Physical distance from the perpetrator

Victims/survivors clearly and repeatedly identified that, in order to feel safe, they required physical distance from the perpetrator on his release from prison:

> If you're going to reintegrate that person, don't let them be anywhere near the person that they hurt. They have to be a long way away from that person. … They [the victim/survivor] need to know that they're not near them. I think also, in that case, your offender [should only have] a certain amount of suburbs he's allowed to go while he's being reintegrated. So that he's no … still nowhere near them. I think the child or the adult that's being affected needs to know that they can't come anywhere near them.

> Don't release them back into the same suburb as the family. … I would run into him [my perpetrator] quite often when I was younger. That would make me physically sick. So that would be the big one—not to send them back—have a thing that they can't be within a hundred kilometres or whatever of their victim.

> I would like to see that he wasn't in the next town over.

> I wanna know that I'm not going to walk down the street tomorrow and run into that person. … He's [the perpetrator] not allowed to come to where I live either, so that's a good thing.

> I would have liked that real concrete assurance that he wasn't going to come near me.

> I would like to know where they're being released. If they're in a suburb near me, gosh forbid, but you know what I mean, you just don't know. Because you could have moved into an area then they're getting released [into that same area].

For a small number of victims/survivors, a legal order requiring the perpetrator not to come into physical proximity to them was one preferred way of achieving this aim. One victim/survivor, for example, stated:

> I really think there should be restraining orders. Even permanent restraining orders so the perpetrators can't harm any of the victims again, that they need to leave them alone. I think that's to give them a bit more security around them being out in the community.

Another likewise stated that victims/survivors need "a watch order … so that they do not go near this person [the victim/survivor]". For another, such a legal requirement was an "obvious" need of victims/survivors of sexual violence during the offender reintegration period.

Information about the perpetrator's release

Victims/survivors also consistently reported wanting information relating to their perpetrator's release. As one interviewee put it:

> I would like to understand that a little bit more and I think I suppose I want to know what happens, like when they do get out, where do they go, what is the process like?

Others reported wanting to be informed that the perpetrator is going to be released, the date of release, the location to which the perpetrator will be released, and the conditions that the perpetrator must meet in the community (e.g. where they will live, curfews). In one victim/survivor's words, "Where's the halfway house? What suburb did he go to? Is he still going to counselling?" Another describes her experience of her perpetrator's release, and highlights the need to be informed not only about his release conditions, but also about the consequences of him breaching those conditions:

> I feel like I was kept in the dark a bit about his exact parole conditions, what his rights and responsibilities were upon being released. I feel like I would have liked that real concrete assurance that he wasn't going to come near me—because I don't feel like I really got that because at the end of the day, it was in his parole conditions that he wasn't to contact me—because beyond the piece of paper, I couldn't really see what they could do to stop

him approaching me, or what sort of consequences would arise should he try. I would have liked more concrete assurance that he was going to be stopped if he came anywhere near me.

Importantly, victims/survivors in this study went to some length to explain that being informed of the offender's whereabouts should not breach the privacy of the offender or interfere with his reintegration. Rather, being kept abreast of this information is important to victims/survivors as it empowers them to make informed decisions about their own lives and offers them a degree of control over the situation. As one victim/survivor put it, "knowledge is power". Others likewise commented:

> Information is the key. That's empowering the survivors because if you give them the information and you let them know, they can then take that and do with it what they want. That's giving them the power over that abuser.

> For the victim's sake they need to know whether the person is back living in the community. … I do think that they're entitled to know that their offender has been released. Especially if it's [the location of the offender] near them. They could at least have a choice to move away if they want.

For others, being provided with information about their perpetrator's release by the appropriate authorities would ensure that they were informed about this in a safe way, and thus be beneficial for the victim/survivor's emotional and psychological health. As one interviewee argued:

> I just think in terms of their psychological wellbeing of just knowing what's going on, it would be valuable for them to be kept in the loop with that kind of communication … if an offender's going to be released.

Counselling and therapeutic support for the victim/survivor

Victims/survivors were virtually unanimous that therapeutic intervention in the form of counselling or support groups is a key need for them at the time of an offender's release. One interviewee, for example, identified the need for "a lot of

counselling. Just lots of psychological support." Therapeutic intervention is required at this time not in relation to the original experience of victimisation, but to support victims/survivors to navigate and cope with the reintegration process. As noted above, the time of an offender's release into the community can be "triggering" for victims/survivors, compromising their feelings of safety, and thus creates the need for therapeutic support. As one interviewee argued, victims/survivors require:

> A good counsellor … basically I guess it's just feeling that you're safe. That you can talk about how you're feeling because, I think, suddenly you feel unsafe. You feel like you're looking over your shoulder.

Another participant similarly argued that victims/survivors

> need to have the full suite of access to support services for as long as they need. … You just don't know whether it's going to trigger off other things for them, or it brings up issues from before.

Another likewise suggested, "All the psychiatric support should be free for victims, especially if their abusers are being reintegrated. … We need everything that we can get so that we can sleep at night."

Many victims/survivors noted that support in the form of counselling or support groups needs to be affordable and accessible if it is to be of use to victims/survivors at this time. As one participant argued:

> If a survivor managed to get a conviction against someone, the government should, or someone should … help with the survivor's rehab[ilitation]. The amount of money some of us have spent in therapy is phenomenal—on something that's not our fault.

Monitoring of the offender by authorities

Many victims/survivors expressed the need for offenders to be monitored in some way following their release from prison. For a number of interviewees, electronic monitoring via anklets was seen as preferable. As one stated, "I would like to know that they're wearing a tracking device to ensure that they're not going to violate little kids or an adult, or adults again." Other interviewees had less specific suggestions about the type of monitoring and supervision that offenders should be subject to on release from prison, but nonetheless felt strongly that offenders "need close monitoring" once released, and should "be monitored very, very closely". As one participant put it:

> Well, I know that they use the tracking bracelets on some and they have probationary rules … that they have to check in … I guess knowing that as much is being done as possible and no short cuts are being taken.

Help for the offender to address offending-related needs

Finally, victims/survivors expressed a strong desire that offenders receive help to address their offending-related needs once they are released back into the community:

> I think they [victims/survivors] also need to know that there are supports going into place to minimise the person reoffending.

> I think survivors can be a lot less worried about the person having been released if they have accountability, they are medicated, if they are doing the right thing, if they are doing what they need to do as a human being to not be a danger to someone else, I think that's the main thing.

One participant likewise would want "a bit of reassurance that they were going into a program", and others similarly expressed a need for "knowing that they're in a program" and that they're "getting help" respectively.

While these comments suggest that victims/survivors do not have a clear notion of the type of help, support or treatment programming that they would want offenders to receive, they nonetheless demonstrate that help for offenders is likely to be beneficial to victims/survivors also. As one interviewee argued, this would provide "peace of mind" for victims/survivors of sexual violence.

Taken together, victims/survivors interviewed for this study suggested a need to be recognised as legitimate stakeholders

during the period of an offender's release from prison into the community. They articulated a clear need to be kept informed about their perpetrator's release, to be supported throughout this time, and to be empowered to make decisions about their own safety and the safety of their families. Importantly, interviewees expressed a desire for effective policies and practices that equip victims/survivors to deal with an offender's release in a safe manner, and in the least disruptive way possible for themselves and their families.

What are victims'/survivors' views about sexual offender reintegration generally?

Victims/survivors interviewed for this study were asked about their views on what offenders require when they are released from prison into the community. A small number were opposed to the very notion of sexual offenders being released from prison in the first instance and were thus unwilling to recommend measures that might reduce an offender's risk of reoffending after release. For example, one interviewee argued that:

> I think anyone who has been a victim/survivor they would be out of their mind to say yes [to offender reintegration]. … Because the notion is that, either because of expense to the government to keep them locked up or for some sort of romanticised notion of their freedom that's more important than our safety and sanity. … [But] we need to take care of victim/survivor physical safety and their sanity.

When asked whether sexual offenders should be provided with support to reintegrate into the community, another participant responded: "No, I think they should all rot. I don't think they should be given any assistance whatsoever." Two participants likewise raised a preference for capital punishment over offender reintegration. Another interviewee similarly stated:

> I honestly don't think they should be re-released. I think they've given up that right the minute they took that right away from somebody else. I don't think you can. You're always going to have that fear that that temptation is there. Whether they're not allowed to be next to a school or whether they're not allowed to be within so many

metres of a child, or anything like that, I think it's pie-in-the-sky stuff.

In the main, however, victims/survivors were supportive of offender reintegration measures and had a wide range of suggestions about measures that might reduce an offender's risk of reoffending. For most, this stemmed from a pragmatic realisation that offenders will almost all be released into the community, as much as individual victims/survivors may want to see them detained longer. As one interviewee put it, "What's the alternative? We can't keep them in prison forever." Interviewees' views on what should be done to support offenders' transition back into the community and reduce their risk of reoffending ranged from meditation, to social and familial support, to castration. However, for the most part, victims/survivors recommended therapeutic interventions and measures that would constrain the offender's physical freedom in some way. These two areas are discussed below in more detail.

Therapeutic interventions

Victims/survivors expressed a very strong preference for therapeutic interventions for offenders on their release into the community. Indeed, this was the most common recommendation about reducing the risk that offenders might pose during the reintegration period. Most interviewees did not provide specific details about what such interventions would involve, instead simply recommending that offenders are subject to psychological counselling. Some suggested that therapeutic interventions should mirror the types of interventions available via Alcoholics Anonymous or for domestic violence perpetrators. In any case, there was consensus that therapeutic interventions for offenders need to be delivered by suitably qualified professionals, mandatory for offenders, and delivered over extended periods of time post release. As one participant put it, "it would have to be extremely intensive … and it would have to be consistent, for a very, very, very, very, very long time".

Victims/survivors overwhelmingly listed counselling and psychological interventions as well as victim empathy training as offender "needs" to be met before or instead of considering practical supports such as accommodation, social support

and employment. This may be because sexual offenders are often seen as "sick" or as having deep-seated psychological problems, more so than other types of offenders. Indeed, many participants understood sexual offending as an expression of some type of sickness or mental illness on the part of the perpetrator. Research shows that members of the general public often characterise the cause of sexual offending in this way (Richards, 2018). However, victim/survivor views have not been examined. These should form the focus of future research, as it is likely that views on effective interventions with offenders are underpinned by beliefs about the causes of sexual offending.

Containment

A strong theme of containment emerged from the victim/survivor interviewees. When asked what could best ensure that offenders released into the community do not reoffend, victims/survivors frequently suggested measures that restrict offenders' physical freedoms. A number of victims/survivors essentially proposed a type of prison when asked what is needed to manage offenders' release back into the community. For example, one victim/survivor argued,

> I think they would have to be contained in an area like a gaol because once they're on their own, they've already shown they're going to do … so I think they need to be contained, and then basically have the ankle bracelet or have something so they are monitored 24/7—so that they have so much pressure on them that they are too scared to reoffend. … I think somehow they need to be monitored 24/7 so they know … even if it's GPS or something and they're not allowed in certain areas.

A small number of other interviewees made similar suggestions. For example, one victim/survivor interviewed for the research said: "Releasing someone from being incarcerated after doing such things on children, I don't … maybe like a detention centre type thing?" As noted above, victims/survivors also commonly expressed a desire for perpetrators to be required to wear electronic tracking devices once released into the community.

The terminology adopted by victims/survivors often reflected their belief that containment measures need to be implemented on a long-term, or even permanent, basis. For example, interviewees frequently described measures such as electronic monitoring being required on a permanent basis. The following comment from one participant perhaps best captures this sentiment:

> I definitely think that it needs to be quite intensive and quite restrictive, the release and the attempt at rehabilitation. It would have to be a lot psychological, definitely a lot of psychological treatment and then a really long trial period before there was any chance that they would have any sort of liberties.

A key point to note in light of this discussion is that victims'/survivors' proposals about offender reintegration measures typically did not stem from a desire for vengeance, but rather seemed to reflect coolly pragmatic concerns about preventing the future sexual victimisation of victims/survivors, their families and others (discussed in more detail below). For many victim/survivor participants, measures such as electronic anklets, and even continuing detention, were seen as regrettably necessary for sexual offenders rather than what is deserved by this cohort of offenders.

Discussion

Three key points emerge from the data outlined above and provide important context for understanding victims'/survivors' views about CoSA (discussed in the following section). First, offender needs are intertwined with the needs of victims/survivors and communities more broadly. In the main, victims/survivors support sexual offenders getting their needs met and being supported to reintegrate into the community predominantly because this will prevent others being victimised. In other words, victims/survivors rarely characterised offender needs and victim/survivor needs as discrete or opposing. Instead, measures to address offenders' behaviour and to reduce the risk that offenders may pose during the difficult transition into the community were characterised by victims/survivors as vital to meeting the needs of individual victims/survivors and the broader community. Importantly, however, such supports must be matched with services for victims/survivors, who often need help on an ongoing basis (or at particularly difficult times, such as offender release). As noted above, such reintegration

measures were mostly proposed in pragmatic terms rather than being proposed to further penalise offenders.

Second, victim/survivor views about sexual offender reintegration are intertwined with views about the related concepts of offender accountability and treatability. For many victims/survivors, it is more palatable to think about offenders' release needs if the offender has already served an appropriate sentence, and if they show some type of remorse and have accepted responsibility for the offending. For example, when asked in her interview whether she thinks it is important to assist offenders to reintegrate into the community, one participant replied, "Yes, I do. I'm not sure that a 6-year sentence is enough, but yes, I think it is important." Another also reflected on this topic at some length, stating:

> I think the biggest thing for me is with integration and when they're about to come back into society is … [that] they're not serving enough time. So if someone served 26 years … I think it's a little bit easier to take. Whereas with someone coming out after 6 years, you're pretty pissed off that they're coming out in 6 years.

When questioned in her interview whether she felt that punishment would never be sufficiently severe, another interviewee responded, "I think it just has to be a decent punishment." She continued:

> You hear the statistics of the amounts of time that people do and think, "Oh that's ridiculous." They need to be doing decent time and I know as I said before that prison doesn't make a difference but we still need to say, "Ok what happened to you was shitty and it was wrong, it was against the law and we're going to punish him or her and they're going to [serve] a decent amount of time and when they get out then we will put these things in place." But yeah I think giving someone 6 years, or 7 years or 3 years or 18 months is a slap in the face so you've already pissed everyone off. And everyone is already up on the back foot sorta thing 'cause they are like, "Why is he out in the first place? Why is this offender doing a program now where he's going to get all this sorta stuff when he should still be in prison for the next 10 years?" So I think it's that, like I think that amount of time came in, for me I would be a little bit more accepting, "Well they did that amount of time, now they can sort their stuff out and be

monitored" and all that sort of stuff. For me it's all around that time, I think that's the most important thing and then do your programs and stuff.

For other victims/survivors, it was not the length of sentence served by a perpetrator (particularly as most offenders will not serve a prison sentence), but an acceptance of responsibility, demonstration of accountability and/or display of remorse by the offender that shaped their views about offender reintegration. For many victims/survivors, offenders who continued to deny, minimise or eschew responsibility for offending were deemed unsuitable for and incapable of benefiting from reintegration efforts. Victims/survivors were unanimous that if perpetrators do not see anything wrong in what they have done, they cannot change their ways. Thus reintegration efforts were deemed futile without some form of recognition on the part of the offender that their behaviour was harmful, as the following interview excerpts demonstrate:

> I don't know if someone can be rehabilitated or not. Part of me likes to hope that they could be and part of me is very sceptical of whether that is actually possible. I think I'd need to see time and I think I would really like to see, I'd be really pleased to see people, abusers, taking whatever skillset they have and trying to transform that into something that could move women, child protection and empowerment forward. Whether that be volunteering as a cleaner, whether that be, whatever skillset they have. However they can serve. I think that would mean a lot to me.

> If they're a person that has really changed and they're definitely never wanting to violate an adult or a child again, and they mean it, and they're willing to work hard to change their mindset and their behaviour and stuff, then I guess there's no harm in giving them a second chance.

> To me it'd be nice that they've got to show that they want … they can't just walk out and then say, "Here, we're going to give you a house and job and blah blah blah", if there's no belief that they're going to be a better person or a … or if they're gonna reoffend again and all that.

Here, victims/survivors are clear that accountability is distinct from punishment (see Richards, 2017, for a discussion of these

concepts). Even if an offender has pleaded guilty, and even if he has been incarcerated, this does not assure accountability in the eyes of victims/survivors. As the above comments attest, for victims/survivors, accountability means taking responsibility for the offence; admitting that it occurred; recognising the harm caused to victims; acknowledging that the blame lies entirely with the perpetrator; and then making serious and sustained effort to avoid reoffending and to repair harm, whether directly with the victims/survivors or with the broader community.

These and related comments from participants in this study highlight that it is difficult to disentangle victims'/survivors' views about reintegration from their views about whether offenders are deserving of reintegration, and able to be rehabilitated, as well as other aspects of the criminal justice process. For some victims/survivors, if offenders have not served an appropriate sentence, they don't deserve reintegration; if they aren't remorseful or accountable, they aren't capable of changing, rendering reintegration attempts futile. In these narratives, offenders are unable to be rehabilitated and undeserving of reintegration efforts in varying combinations.

Third, victims'/survivors' views about sexual offender reintegration are largely instrumental and prospective. As noted above, a key point to emerge from the data collected from victims/survivors for this study is that victims'/survivors' proposals about offender reintegration measures typically reflect pragmatic concerns about preventing the future sexual victimisation of victims/survivors, their families and others. In the main, victims'/survivors' recommendations about responding to perpetrators of sexual violence are prospective rather than retrospective: they seek first and foremost to prevent future sexual offending rather than to punish offenders for past offending (see also Clark, 2015). This challenges the widely accepted image of the angry, vengeful victim that increasingly underpins policy and practice approaches to dealing with sexual offending. This further suggests that victim/survivor views do not align solely with either the GLM or RNR model of offender reintegration, but rather accord generally with the underpinnings of both models. In short, victims/survivors desire measures that

meaningfully prevent future offending, irrespective of their theoretical orientation.

In sum, victims/survivors hold diverse views about sexual offender reintegration. While this may be unsurprising to those who work in this area, it is important to highlight, since politicians, lawmakers and policymakers seem to believe that there is only one stock character of a victim of sexual violence (McGlynn & Westmarland, 2018): that is, one who is highly emotional, angry, punitive and baying for blood. While a number of the victims/survivors in our study fit this description to an extent, most did not. Rather, victims'/survivors' views about sexual offenders and what ought to be done about them varied substantially. Furthermore, as discussed in more detail below, individual victims/survivors commonly held diverse and even contradictory views about sexual offender reintegration.

What are victims'/survivors' views about Circles of Support and Accountability specifically?

Victims/survivors expressed a range of views about CoSA. A small number expressed some hesitancy about the program. For example, one interviewee was broadly supportive of CoSA but not of the finite period of time over which CoSA usually operate: "It has to be lifelong." Another likewise supported the idea, despite the fact that she believed that in a CoSA offenders receive "special treatment off the back of something so heinous". Another expressed support for CoSA but admitted that as a survivor, she would always feel a level of doubt about perpetrators' ability to change: "[There's] always that little niggling doubt."

However, for the most part, victims/survivors expressed support for the program. For some—even those who believe that sexual offenders are incapable of desisting—this support was premised on a belief that any attempt to reduce sexual victimisation should be implemented:

> Obviously, if something's being done … I mean they can't stay in jail forever, they do get out, so I guess if it helps stop them reoffending then that's gotta be a good thing.

It's certainly better than letting them loose and not giving them anything.

Look, if you can do that, obviously that's gotta be a plus.

At least something is being done.

Some of these victims/survivors were supportive of CoSA inasmuch as the program seeks to prevent future victimisation, but could not be characterised as strongly supportive of CoSA specifically. Others strongly believed that the principles that characterise CoSA—that is, support for offenders to reintegrate, coupled with accountability mechanisms—are precisely what is required to safely facilitate offender release into the community and support desistance. Indeed, some interviewees even described a CoSA-style approach when asked how sexual offenders should be reintegrated, without any prior knowledge of CoSA. When asked in her interview, "What are the top three or four things that you think should be in place to minimise the risk of offenders when they get released?", one participant responded:

[They should be] re-educated. I'd want someone to keep an eye on them. … Maybe that it's not police officers but they're part of the program that … where they're doing the education and that person's responsible to keep an eye on them and make sure they're following … the rules, I suppose. Checking in. And I suppose having some support. So, they feel like, maybe from our side we can call it monitoring, but to them it's, "We're just checking in on you." So … they feel supported maybe. Which would stop, stop them reoffending.

Another interviewee similarly argued the following, regarding the needs of offenders:

… teaching people [offenders] about how to grow confidence and self-esteem. How to network. How to liaise with people. How to be assertive enough. How to engage with others to get their needs met. Find employment, if that's what they need. Safe housing, relationship support, emotional support.

Similarly, after having CoSA explained in the course of her interview, another participant in the research responded, "In a roundabout way, [that's] what I was trying to say."

Some victims/survivors offered an enthusiastic endorsement of CoSA, with a handful even indicating that they would be willing to become involved in CoSA if such an opportunity existed (see Wager & Wilson, 2017, on the important role that victims/survivors play as CoSA volunteers in the UK context; and Richards, 2011b, on this topic more generally). For example, participants stated:

If I was asked to donate to something like that, I'd do it in the blink of an eye. I'd do it because it's a solution—and if they've done it in other countries then our government has a duty of care—if you can send me personally some information about that program, I will personally promote it. I mean, wouldn't that be fantastic—wouldn't it be wonderful?

I see myself in the longer term future maybe even considering looking into helping because … if we can't educate every single child at least something is being done. I think maybe on later down the track.

I think the program is brilliant. I will be a supporter of that.

Those victims/survivors who expressed support for CoSA did so on two main grounds. First, they believe that CoSA can contribute towards ensuring that sexual offenders are provided with the therapeutic and social supports that they require when released from prison. This is perhaps most clearly expressed by one victim/survivor:

I think that's actually a really great idea. And ensuring that not only they meet their requirements of their parole and that sort of thing, but the fact that they have got to make sure that they're meeting health appointments because that obviously means they're meeting those conditions. … It also means that when the day comes that they are moved out of the halfway house, hopefully that … those accountability checkpoints will still be in place. And then it's a way of kind of moving into that next stage. … Obviously if they've got people who know exactly what their triggers are, exactly what their behaviours are, what

their warning signs are, you can sort of keep them on the straight and narrow.

Other victims/survivors made similar comments, including:

I think that sounds pretty good, personally. … A lot of these people, they can lack that support structure, so, I think it could be helpful in getting a little bit of accountability and someone to rely on.

I think that's good because … in a lot of cases, people have no, they haven't had any support throughout their life and so, it's important that they do have support when they come out because otherwise they would just go on offending. So, I think those programs … that would be really good for them to have that accountability. And there's also someone there that can sort of be there for that person.

I think it would only help. … I do feel that humans are very social creatures and I find that having those social networks to support them is always a good thing no matter what, and I feel it would only benefit people. If he doesn't feel like he's left out there's less chance of him lashing out emotionally or physically or whatever. … I think it would be a fantastic program honestly—and I think it could really help reduce recidivism or lashing out I guess.

I think it sounds ideal because of the lack of support that is usually out there. … They have to come back into society so we have to find a way to live with that and that [CoSA] sounds a lot better than just letting them be and they slip back into old ways straight away almost and don't cope with life, so I think it sounds like a great idea actually.

Second, victims/survivors expressed a clear and strong enthusiasm for CoSA because of the increased scrutiny that being in a CoSA inevitably involves for released sexual offenders. Many victims/survivors thus espoused the benefits of CoSA due to the increased monitoring of offenders that volunteers provide:

I think that's a good idea. Anything to monitor them, 'cause I really think that their behaviour should be closely monitored in some way.

If you can just disappear back into the community, no one's watching you and no one knows, you can go back and do whatever you want. But if you know that there's people there you're accountable to and you're being watched …

If they knew that these people were being monitored and that they were safe from them [then victims/survivors would be supportive of CoSA].

It's still kind of a monitoring thing as well, which I appreciate because that is one of my concerns I guess.

Maybe that's the role of that group to, to keep a closer eye on them. … The more eyes, the better. So, maybe just, not just child protection. Not just the police … maybe another group of or body of people keeping an eye on them, would be helpful.

One participant captured both these sentiments—supporting CoSA for both their monitoring capacity and the support they provide sexual offenders—by claiming, "If they've got support and people are watching out for them, and watching over them, I … think it's a good thing."

Another viewed CoSA in similar terms:

It's like a monitoring, but in a nice way. And it may sound altruistic but it's also protecting [the community]. Like you may think, "Oh, we're giving them too much." But I think if you've been incarcerated for a long time and being released, you do need that kind of support. … Because, yeah, it's so easy to reoffend. It's taking care of them, is making sure that they don't hurt someone else. So, I think that's a wonderful, a wonderful thing.

In many cases, however, victims/survivors offered more cautious or contingent support for CoSA. Some reported that they would be supportive of CoSA only if the research from international CoSA programs could prove their efficacy. One victim/survivor, for instance, asked: "How many people are helped by the program, whether it's overseas or not? … Is it getting results?" Another stated:

I would like to see the proof. I would like to see, you know, "We've been doing this in Adelaide for 12 months or 2 years, these are our statistics, these our exact percentage

rates, successful strike rates", and I'm sure anybody would be of [a] mind to do that if the proof was there.

Another participant similarly expressed support for CoSA, as long as research can demonstrate its utility:

> I would think it's good money spent then, if they proved that. Yeah, from that point of view, yes. I would think if you can show that it's working and that they are not reoffending, then I think that's good. No, I think that would work.

In other instances, victims/survivors supported CoSA only in relation to certain categories of sexual offender. A common theme here is that victims/survivors believe that only those offenders committed to behavioural change would benefit from CoSA (see also discussion above). As one victim/survivor put it, "It would have to be judged on whether they really want it." Another expressed a similar sentiment: "If they've got the support … they're in the right headspace, and they're made to feel welcome … yeah, why not? … If they're remorseful and sorry about what they've done … yeah, why not?"

Other victims/survivors deemed CoSA appropriate only for offenders who do not have a fixed sexual preference for children. One participant went into some detail on this topic:

> It depends whether we are talking paedophiles or rapists of adults. I think they're two different kettles of fish, in a way. For rapist of adults I think it's [CoSA] important. … As soon as they start feeling out of control again, whatever that looks like or means for that individual, they can ring up and talk to someone. … I think with paedophiles there is not much going back. From everything I've read, from people I've spoken to in the industry who work with them, rehabilitation is almost impossible. So, it's how to manage that.

Another victim/survivor supported CoSA in relation to those who have perpetrated against adults only:

> I think for me it would if it was an adult program for adults offending [against] adults. Then I think for me it would be something sort of peace of mind that they're doing … they're trying to do something. I don't think a child offending program would really benefit the survivor

because in my eyes I'd think they'd all be congregating about finding the next prey.

While this participant's comment suggests that she has (erroneously) assumed that CoSA involve offenders working in groups together, it nonetheless implicitly echoes the belief that those who offend against children are more resistant to treatment interventions than those who offend against adults. Other interviewees likewise argued that CoSA would not be appropriate for all categories of sexual offender:

> You will get those 25 per cent who just don't give a fuck—and they're the ones we put bracelets on … those repeat offenders, and they need to be on public registers, that's not negotiable. … But if we have any chance of reaching the others and say[ing], "Hey, this is an illness" …

> I would prefer if it was a small percentage of the group who was a one-off offender and there was drugs or alcohol involved which had altered their decision-making at the time. Yes, I think those people would be eligible [for CoSA]. The rest of them no, no … they should just be all locked up somewhere and just leave them there because they can't be rehabilitated.

These interview excerpts demonstrate that in a range of ways, victims/survivors differentiate sexual offenders into categories, depending on the perceived degree of their ability to be rehabilitated. Implicit in some of these comments is the notion that those who offend against children have an innate sexual preference for children that cannot be altered. In contrast, those who offend against adults are perceived as being more amenable to treatment interventions. This suggests some confusion between paedophilia (i.e. an enduring sexual attraction to prepubescent children) and the act of child sexual abuse, which may be committed by those with or without paedophilia (see further Richards, 2011c). One victim/survivor, however, articulated a more nuanced perspective, which implicitly recognises this distinction, arguing that while some sexual offenders are not able to change their sexual preferences, this need not negate interventions such as CoSA. This participant states clearly that she does not believe that sexual offenders can change:

> I'm pretty adamant about sex offenders—the fact that they can't be rehabilitated. They will always have those

feelings, and that's what concerns me the most. When I read they've been rehabilitated and gone back into society—no, no, no, they're not rehabilitated … it's not just something they do, you can't fix it … you can't actually stop a paedophile from having those feelings.

She nonetheless supports CoSA because:

Having someone [volunteers] there they wouldn't have much opportunity to be alone … if they're struggling with whatever this week they can discuss it with someone. Say if they went shopping and the offender got that urge, he can turn to that person and say, "Look, I'm feeling this, can we go?" I think that's really important and you can't lock them up forever.

Here, the participant acknowledges that while sexual attraction to children may not be able to be changed, minimising an offender's opportunity to offend and supporting them in this endeavour could still be beneficial.

Another group of victim/survivor participants expressed support for CoSA in general terms but would want the program to run for a longer time than is typical (i.e. approximately 1 year), or had concerns about ensuring that the influence of CoSA could continue beyond the formal completion of the circle. One victim/survivor interviewed for the research, for example, believed that CoSA "has to be lifelong", and another similarly expressed support for CoSA on the grounds that "it would be an ongoing thing to that person—'til that person pretty much got too old to even do it [offend]". Another was unsure whether the influence of the program would be sustained once it had formally concluded:

I mean I think it's a good program. But I guess ultimately you want them to, once you're gone, the volunteers are gone, you want them [offenders] to be able to keep going in a positive direction.

Another victim/survivor had a similar concern, asking, "Is there any checking in on them occasionally, even after they've come away from that Circle of Support?", and arguing that even after the completion of a CoSA, "they need looking at occasionally … everyone has rights but they've forfeited those rights and they need to be checked in on occasionally. That would be my concern."

These are valid concerns. It has been documented that sexual offenders can reoffend if triggered by a stressful event (Hanson & Bussière, 1998; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005), and it is thus vital that the termination of a CoSA does not inadvertently act as a stressor for the core member. In practice, CoSA often extend beyond the prescribed 12-month period (Richards, 2011b), with meetings gradually becoming less frequent over time as the core member becomes integrated into the community and less reliant on CoSA volunteers. In many cases, as detailed elsewhere in this research report, the formal circle dissolves to leave genuine relationships between the core member and volunteers, and can often be reformed in some fashion at times of crisis for the core member.

It is important to note in light of the above discussion that many victims/survivors appeared conflicted about CoSA, expressing both support for and reservations about the program. Some made seemingly competing comments about CoSA, and appeared to veer back and forth, expressing support for and opposition to CoSA in rapid and repeated succession. Part of one victim/survivor's reaction to learning about CoSA, for example, was:

I think it's a waste of our taxpayers' dollars when they [offenders] should just do the right thing. And it shouldn't happen in the first place. So, we're going to spend millions of dollars on the interventions for these twisted and sick people. So I guess there's that side too. It's kind of like … like I said, it's … I feel as though they've lost their right to anything. But then, then do you just go and leave them just to be stupid and alcoholics and drug F'd [fucked] or whatever? It just becomes someone else's problem.

Another victim/survivor had a similarly mixed response:

I do overall think this is a good thing. Everyone does deserve a good life. And everyone does make mistakes. … But I just, as a survivor, I will always have that little bit of doubt … there will always be just that little bit of doubt. If they've got the support, they're in the right headspace, and they're made to feel welcome, yeah, why not? But it's always hard.

Another participant's views about programs such as CoSA swung wildly from support to opposition. When asked if she

would support such a program, she responded:

> Yes and no. If I want to be really nasty and cranky and be a bitch about it, I could be. Yeah. I could be saying no, but I would like to hope that if they had the support and help they need then … but then on the other [hand] … yeah, that's a … two ends of a scale, I suppose, and it would have to be judged on whether they really want it, maybe. … I don't know, maybe I'm being too nice. Maybe they shouldn't … I don't know. Maybe I'm being too nice about it. We shouldn't waste [resources on offenders] on one end of the scale. Maybe the victims need more support and more help and they're not [getting it] … and these people [offenders] should just rot in jail. … But, then, yeah, I'd like to believe everyone also could have a second chance.

Some victims/survivors initially adopted one position about CoSA, but ultimately expressed a different view later in the interview. One participant's initial response to hearing about CoSA for the first time was:

> I don't think they're [offenders] worthy of it … they should just be all locked up somewhere and just leave them there because they can't be rehabilitated. They shouldn't be forgiven and they shouldn't have another chance.

After further discussion with the interviewer about CoSA, however, particularly about the promising international research on CoSA's efficacy, she recanted a little:

> I think it would be a good thing. Particularly you know they've got a circle of five people, and I'm being broad-minded here and forgetting about the effects that it has on me, but yeah I think that sounds like a great idea.

By the conclusion of her interview, which included a discussion of the inevitability of most sexual offenders' release from prison, this participant claimed that she would even consider volunteering in a CoSA: "I see myself in the longer term future maybe even considering looking into helping."

These excerpts of interviews with victims/survivors might be understood in a number of ways. Perhaps most significantly, they demonstrate the diversity and complexity of victims'/survivors' views on the undoubtedly challenging and confronting topic of sexual offender reintegration. The above excerpts in particular could be evidence of victims/survivors experiencing a type of "cognitive dissonance"—i.e. discomfort that arises from holding competing opinions contemporaneously (see Nicholson & Lutz, 2017). The victim/survivor participants quoted above appear to believe in rational terms that assisting offenders to reintegrate via a process such as CoSA would be beneficial, but in emotional terms that offenders do not deserve such support measures. Finally, these extracts appear to provide support for prior research on public opinion about CoSA (Richards & McCartan, 2018), which found that CoSA lack symbolic value. That is, even when CoSA are supported on the grounds that they may reduce child sexual abuse, they lack expressive value in that "they do not reassure the public by helping to reduce angst and demonstrate that something is being done … [or] solidify moral boundaries by codifying public consensus of right and wrong" (Sample, Evans, & Anderson, 2011, cited in Richards & McCartan, 2018, p. 411).

Summary and conclusions

In summary, while victims/survivors in this study expressed mixed views about CoSA (with some individual victims/survivors even holding mixed and at times competing views), overall they were supportive of this approach to sexual offender reintegration. This is a noteworthy finding, not least because it disrupts and destabilises the angry, vengeful victim of the popular and political imagination (McGlynn & Westmarland, 2018). Indeed, as noted earlier, while victim/survivor interviewees did express anger, they rarely used derogatory language when discussing offenders or expressed support for very punitive policy responses such as the death penalty or permanent incarceration. Instead, in the main, participants suggested pragmatic approaches to sexual offender reintegration and management in the community, with a clear preference for reducing reoffending rather than meting out revenge. This is further noteworthy because victims/survivors of sexual violence appear less resistant to CoSA than the general public. As Richards and McCartan's (2018) research found, much public opposition to CoSA exists due to beliefs that offenders do not deserve help, and that state resources should be directed to victim/survivor support services rather than services for offenders. Yet, as discussed above, victims/survivors largely espoused

the view that resources should be made available to victims/survivors alongside (not in place of) efforts to reintegrate offenders. Thus it appears that public views about what victims/survivors want and need, while undoubtedly well intentioned, also rely on an imagined, vengeful victim that is out of step with reality.

A further issue moving forward is how the views of victims/survivors can be meaningfully considered and/or incorporated into sexual offender reintegration measures. This study lends further support to the value of doing so, subject to not over-burdening victims/survivors. One suggested measure is to ensure meaningful engagement with victim/survivor advocacy groups who have a vested interest in ensuring victim/survivor needs are met (see further Center for Sex Offender Management, 2018; National Center for Victims of Crime, 2005).

Recommendations for policymakers and practitioners

A number of recommendations flow from the findings in this section and are outlined below:

- The views of victims/survivors and/or their advocates should be respectfully sought and considered in relation to the release, reintegration, supervision and management of those who have sexually offended.
- Victims/survivors should be informed about the release and reintegration processes of offenders. Such information would empower victims/survivors to make informed decisions about their safety and the safety of their families.
- If victims'/survivors' needs are to be addressed, sexual offender release, reintegration, supervision and management measures should promote offender accountability.
- Victim/survivor safety, both physical and emotional, ought to be central to such measures.
- Such measures must also be accompanied by support for victims/survivors, as victims/survivors have needs uniquely related to the release and reintegration process.

Conclusion

This research report makes a significant contribution to three areas of criminological knowledge: CoSA; the reintegration and desistance of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individuals who have offended sexually; and the views of victims/survivors on the reintegration of people who have offended sexually. In relation to the latter two topics, it presents the first known empirical examination. Insights from each of these components of the research have been outlined above. General conclusions are presented in the remainder of this section.

In general terms, the research lends further support to considering reintegration and desistance as related processes (see for e.g. Fox, 2015), and to paying attention to the role of programs such as the CMP and CoSA in the creation and maintenance of non-offending identities among participants, rather than pursuing a strict focus on disembodied and decontextualised markers of risk.

Both the CMP and the CoSA program provide participants with opportunities to forge prosocial identities: that is, to be supported in desisting from offending, giving back to families and/or communities, and generally "making good" (as per Maruna, 2001). The programs might thus be considered "turning points" in participants' journeys of desistance (see also Kitson-Boyce, 2017). While neither program provides the type or extent of supervision or monitoring that characterises community-based correctional rehabilitation programming, they do provide opportunities for social support, growth and identity transformation, and can support the restructuring of routine activities. They may, therefore, be considered institutional or structural turning points (as per Sampson & Laub, 2016).

The current research suggests, however, that neither CoSA nor the CMP provide opportunities for participants to "knife off", or sever bonds with an offending past (as per Willis et al., 2010). As Harris (2017) has identified, this is a virtual impossibility for those who have sexually offended in the current social, policy and practice context. People who have sexually harmed others are increasingly seen as being at permanent risk of reoffending, and are rarely afforded opportunities to knife off entirely. Determining whether this is a sound approach is beyond the scope of the current research, but ought to be taken into consideration in future evaluations of such measures.

Both programs do, however, provide opportunities for participants to seize, practise and be supported in capitalising on "hooks for change". Indeed, since they are voluntary programs, participation in CoSA or the CMP may be considered an "agentic move" (Giordano et al., 2002) in and of itself. Moreover, the programs foster participants' aims and acts of generativity (to the extent possible) and act as an audience to their redemption scripts (Maruna, 2001).

Both programs also provide opportunities and encouragement for offenders to connect with other programs, services and supports in the community. As previous research (Levenson & Cotter, 2005) has identified, this is a strength of community-based approaches. Furthermore, both programs operate alongside statutory supervision arrangements (e.g. parole), and support participants to engage with these arrangements. Prior research has found that a relationship of support and trust with correctional supervision officers is a strong predictor of desistance (King, 2014; Morash, Kashy, Smith, & Cobbina, 2015). This is an element of the programs that should be emphasised in future measures of a similar, community-based nature. Moreover, as McCartan et al. (2014a) have identified, it is critical that such measures complement rather than duplicate parole.

The research demonstrates both the RNR model and the GLM in practice, as well as the challenges of implementing these models. Both programs embrace and espouse community-based prosocial integration measures that capitalise on strengths-based approaches, reflecting victims'/survivors' wishes in relation to the reintegration of those convicted of sexual offences. This is important as neither program was designed to be a clinical intervention, but rather to assist prosocial reintegration into the community; in this sense, the inclusion of aspects of RNR and GLM criteria is a secondary outcome. The research, however, does demonstrate that both programs need to further develop strengths-based concepts more squarely in their practice so that they become more than just theoretical underpinning.

Whether such measures decrease reoffending was not the focus of the current study; however, this research suggests that using these approaches to engage those who have sexually offended is likely to support their participation in future programs and measures more explicitly designed to reduce reoffending. With better resourcing and support, both CoSA and the CMP (and programs of a similar nature) could be utilised more effectively to protect the community from sexual violence.

The research also shows that while victims/survivors of sexual violence are commonly assumed to be opposed to such programs, the reality is far more complex. In the main, victims/survivors in this study supported measures that will prevent others being harmed in future, and were largely supportive of pragmatic approaches that assist perpetrators to safely reintegrate into the community after prison. Indeed, victims/survivors of sexual violence strongly favour programs that are future-focused and seek to reduce the risk of sexual reoffending, rather than punitive, backwards-looking measures. Importantly, victims/survivors see their own needs and the needs of offenders and communities not as separate or competing, but connected to one another. As such, they viewed community-based reintegration programs as playing a key role in protecting the community from sexual violence.

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Appendix A:
Research, evaluation and data collection: Circles of Support and Accountability

Context

Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA), in South Australia are relatively new, but have a 25-year international history and reputation (please see the State of knowledge review for references and details). CoSA were developed in the late 1990s in Canada as a way to reintegrate high-risk sexual offenders back into the community, with members of the community being involved in the process; it is a grassroots-level program. The premise of CoSA is that individuals who have been convicted of a sexual offence (the core member) are provided with a circle of 4–5 lay members of the community, all volunteers, who support the core members to reintegrate into the community while holding them accountable for their past and present actions. The circle is overseen by paid coordinators/staff who undertake safeguarding, training and accountability for all members. Although all international versions of CoSA are generically the same, they can, and do, differ on certain, smaller aspects of the process. CoSA in South Australia have developed out of a perceived need in offender management and reintegration identified and supported by some initial funding from the Department of Corrections and delivered through Offenders Aid and Rehabilitation Services of South Australia (OARS); however, this initial, additional funding has ceased and CoSA are now entirely supported by existing OARS infrastructure.

As it is unclear how CoSA funding will be maintained in the long term, it is vital to consider the development of medium- and long-term research evaluation where thought has to be given to the type of data collected, the acceptability of data to funders, what key performance indicators (KPIs) have to be met and the socio-political framing of the issue (i.e. punishment vs rehabilitation, risk vs protectionism). As CoSA programs work with challenging and risky populations that are often perceived negatively by the public and the state as being beyond redemption, it is often difficult to receive sustained funding in times of austerity, especially when the service is seen as an "add-on" to current sexual offender management practices. For instance, CoSA Canada had its funding pulled under the previous government, and Circles UK had funding for national commissioning withdrawn so that the funding could be used elsewhere. As such, appropriate and fit-for-purpose evaluation is central to the continued viability of the OARS CoSA program.

Why does program evaluation matter?

Program evaluation is important because it enables programs to understand if they are being successful at achieving their goals and if they are meeting their KPIs. All programs should be evaluating their performance as an ongoing practice. Program evaluation is an important part of any program because it enables:

* continued program funding
* the justification of good practice
* a clearer understanding of program integrity (especially structure, process and impact)
* an understanding of the service user to enable programs to better work with them
* a better understanding of the process of change, especially cognitive and behavioural change
* an understanding of how different parts of the criminal justice system operate together around the service user and the program
* a better understanding of the role, function and impact of partners in respect to the program.

(For a broader set of readings around the importance of evaluation, see Bamberger, Rugh, & Mabry, 2012; Grant & McNeill, 2015; Pawson & Tilley, 1997; Robson & McCartan, 2016; Tilley & Clarke, 2006; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2006.)

One of the main issues that has plagued CoSA internationally is data collection, data analysis and meeting KPIs. Often the data collected are not fit for purpose and do not meet the expected criteria of the funders and/or validating bodies; therefore, when designing evaluation procedures it is important to consider who the main funders are, what their criteria/KPIs are and how these can be catered to. Previously we stated that the CoSA program in South Australia is in its infancy and that it is the only version of CoSA in Australia; as such, the program needs to develop its own evaluation criteria that take into account local practices, local and national contexts, and past CoSA research (McCartan, 2016; Thomas et al., 2014). In order to see if a program, including CoSA, is successful

and fit for purpose, we need to look across the life of the program and consider how it compares to other programs and services. Therefore program evaluation should consider:

- **What are the KPIs (and how are they determined)?** Identifying the program KPIs is critical and should be done as the first step in evaluation (Parmenter, 2010). A range of questions should be considered when shaping KPIs, such as:
  - What change is the program trying to establish that the offender has demonstrated as a result of participation?
  - Has the offender's risk of reoffending reduced?
  - Has their volume and/or type of criminogenic behaviour changed?
  - Has their health and/or wellbeing improved?
  - All of these are different KPIs that are measured in different ways, and require different tools to measure them. Therefore, the intended outcomes need to be clearly articulated at the start of the evaluation.

- **The cost of the program:** What is the cost of facilitating the program (i.e. accommodation, staffing, security, access, etc.)? Consider hard (money) versus soft (use of office space, sequestered staff, etc.) contributions to the program from stakeholders and/or funders. How much does the program cost to run? What is the cost per participant and does this represent value for money? What are the staff costs and are these costs appropriate? Is there a (social) return on investment for the program? How does the cost–benefit ratio of the program compare to other similar programs? For more information on social return on investment, please see Social Value UK (2012). For more information on cost–benefit analysis, see Broadman, Greenberg, Vinning and Weimar (2018).

- **The service user journey:** This relates to charting changes in the service user across the life of the program, making sure that the program has the same data sources and points being used/monitored before, during and after the program; identifying the main aspects of change; and using different data collection tools to collect and analyse them. In many respects this is the most important, as well as most difficult, KPI to measure, which is why it is so important to get right. There is an ongoing debate about the role of the service user in understanding the reality of the program and if it is fit for purpose. When developing program evaluations, it is always best to consider what the service user voice is, how it is measured, and in what ways it can be used effectively (see User Voice, 2018). This is evidenced by a long history of service user engagement in the realms of healthcare (McLaughlin, 2009; National Health Service England, 2015; Ocloo & Matthews, 2016; Tierney et al., 2016), mental health services (Grundy et al., 2016; Mockford et al., 2016), social work (Beresford, Croft, & Adshead, 2008; Glasby & Beresford, 2006; Social Care Institute for Excellence, 2012; Warren, 2007), and education (Senior, Moores, & Burgess, 2017); however, we rarely see the concept of the service user manifested in the same way within the criminal justice system. In the correctional environment, the clearest example of the service user voice is that of the prisoner (Bernasco, 2010; Clinks, 2011), with it being virtually absent from the managing, treating, and reintegrating of individuals convicted of sexual offences (McCartan, Harris, & Prescott, 2019).

- **The core content of the program:** In many regards this is the most straightforward part of any evaluation, determining if the content of the program is clear and fit for purpose (Agency for Clinical Innovation, 2013; Robson & McCartan, 2016; Vito & Higgins, 2014). The main curriculum and content of the program should be evidence-based and expert-informed, and constantly updated. The program should be reviewed annually to update the content and make sure that its outcomes match core KPIs and that all aspects of the offender's journey are covered.

- **The program environment (internally):** Consider the following: what is the organisation like? Does the organisation have a healthy, supportive working environment? Are all staff appropriately trained, safeguarded and supported by the organisation? In addition, it is vital to identify areas of good practice, areas of practice that require improvement, and staff training needs.

- **The program environment (externally):** What are the funders', stakeholders' and partner organisations' views of the organisation and its programs? This aspect of evaluation is important because it links current organisational and program-related practice to the real world, to professional expectations and KPIs. It is important

for the organisation to be aware of how they are viewed by external colleagues as these views may impact upon future funding and/or collaboration.

Throughout the development of program evaluation it is important to consider the research methodology being used and the research tools being developed and used. Social science research has a number of methodologies available. A mixed methods approach is seen as the most convincing and appropriate way of getting reliable, valid and fit-for-purpose data; however, such an approach is not always possible with every research topic or population. A good place to start is to look at similar programs and the data collection tools used, including international variants of CoSA and other Australian offender reintegration programs. In deciding which research tools you will be using, it is important to recognise that this will also determine the methodology and subsequent data analysis you will be using; in deciding, you are making assumptions about the outcomes that, once collected, cannot necessarily be altered if they are not fit for purpose (e.g. qualitative data can in some cases be converted to quantitative data, but quantitative data cannot be converted to qualitative data). One way to ensure the best research and evaluation decisions are being made is to establish an advisory board to help reflect upon and improve data collection methods. This board would be small, and would comprise researchers and primary stakeholders. The board would help in the development of data collection tools, provide advice on research practice and governance, and also make sure that the evaluation is fit for purpose (i.e. meeting program KPIs).

It is important to consider the potential research outcomes, the population/program being researched and the skills of the individuals collecting the data when deciding upon a methodology. The skill and expertise of staff are critical: it will be the organisation's core staff who collect the data, rather than an external researcher. Therefore, it is important that staff understand why collecting the data is important, what the data collection entails, and can ensure that the data are recorded/stored correctly. Research needs to be embedded in the working culture of organisations so that the collecting and collating of data is seen as a routine part of daily work that all staff are expected to undertake. In this way, it is possible to develop a long-reaching, coherent and extensive data set.

It is important to understand the main drivers of any research or evaluation—in other words, to understand what you need to be able to demonstrate as evidence that your program is working. With regard to the OARS CoSA program, this means being able to demonstrate to stakeholders and (potential) funders that the program is working. The starting point to determining KPIs, as stated above, is an examination of the main issues in the field of practice, the priorities of stakeholders, and the data that the stakeholders collect. The OARS CoSA program should also look to other, international, CoSA projects for guidance on KPIs and how to collect data to measure them. In this context, it is important to note that this not an exact science and not all KPIs may be applicable or able to be measured.

What are the OARS Circles of Support and Accountability program's key performance indicators?

After looking at the corrections literature, policy and outcomes, as well as the CoSA research literature, we have identified the following KPIs that South Australia CoSA should seek to collect data on.

Volunteer recruitment and training

1. Ensure all circle volunteers are appropriately screened before joining a circle.
2. Ensure all volunteers complete CoSA training before joining a circle.
3. Review volunteer training materials on an annual basis to ensure they reflect international CoSA research.
4. Revise, where necessary, volunteer training materials following annual review.
5. Develop and build the correct circle; each circle is unique, so placing the correct group of volunteers together to suit each other and the core member is essential.
6. Ensure continual volunteer safeguarding and care.

Core member recruitment and referral

1. Work with appropriate partners so that they are aware of who is, and is not, appropriate for referral to a circle.

2. Make sure coherent screening tools are used to identify the most appropriate core members.

3. Record data and information, compliant with privacy laws, on each referral so that a clear basis for acceptance/rejection can be developed. This will also form a research/evaluation base.

4. Review screening and referral processes on an ongoing basis.

Circle administration and maintenance

1. Ensure circle messages, strategies and procedures are clearly defined.

2. Ensure all staff, volunteers, stakeholders and core members are aware of all the strategies and procedures that involve them.

3. Ensure there is paperwork to record the details, membership and activities of each circle and all their meetings.

4. Train staff and volunteers on the need for careful, precise and consistent administration.

5. Develop a clear media engagement strategy for all activities (advertising, recruitment, circle failures, etc.).

6. Develop, maintain and update a risk register.

Relationships with external stakeholders

1. Identify and review stakeholders (i.e. police, corrections and relevant social/welfare organisations) on an annual basis.

2. Develop a stakeholder steering group that can input into all activities, practices and policies.

3. Maintain relationships with stakeholders.

4. Ensure communication with stakeholders is ongoing and that data/information gets fed back to them in a way that they understand and can use.

Public protection and risk management

1. Develop and maintain risk management (personal and organisational).

2. Demonstrate how CoSA contribute to desistance in core members.

3. Demonstrate how CoSA contribute to improving public protection.

4. Record and demonstrate successful circle completion as well as when circles collapse.

5. Identify circle failures with core members (dropouts, unacceptable behaviour, reoffending, safeguarding).

Developing a sound financial infrastructure

1. Identify an accurate cost per circle (i.e. per core member).

2. Identify the cost–benefit (i.e. cost of running a circle vs reoffending rates) and social return on investment costs of a circle.

3. Understand what "soft money" contributions are available to circles (i.e. the loan or use of police, probation and prison resources).

Developing and using an evidence base

1. Use national, and international, research evidence and good practice as a cornerstone for all CoSA practice, policies and procedures.

2. Collect data and add to the evidence base.

3. Collect data on each core member and each of their circles, and collect follow-up data post-completion.

4. Publish an annual report on the successes, failures and outcomes of CoSA.

Current data collection and evaluation tools being used by the OARS Circles of Support and Accountability program

In collecting the above data, the OARS CoSA program would be able to evidence its successes and improve upon its challenges more clearly. This would involve a methodological shift since the data currently being collected would not allow for a demonstration of meeting these KPIs. Currently, data are being recorded through the following mechanisms:

1. Circle minutes that the circle coordinator takes, which are an unstructured record of what happens in the circle

meeting, focused around areas of concern and improvement for the core member as well as next steps.

2. CoSA contact record, which charts when CoSA volunteers come into contact with core members and what they do with the core member (e.g. meeting for coffee, talking on the telephone). This is mainly a record-keeping tool that allows for contact within the circle to be charted, but it does not provide insight into these interactions and/or changes with respect to the core member as a consequence of this contact.

3. The CoSA intake/application form, which provides a detailed breakdown of the core member's demographics, offence history, criminogenic needs, employment, volunteering, activities, risks, treatment, what support they would need and why they should receive a circle. This form is lengthy and collects a lot of data in one go, which is beneficial if fully completed at time of first contact.

Existing data collection thus currently occurs at the start of the circle process, is focused on the co-coordinators as the main collectors of data, and is functional/systems based. It would not allow CoSA to demonstrate achievement of the aforementioned KPIs.

Table 1: What key performance indicators do OARS Circles of Support and Accountability collect data on currently?

Key performance indicator	CoSA demonstrates through existing data collection tools (the intake/application form and circle minutes)	CoSA does not demonstrate through existing data collection tools
Volunteer recruitment and training	• Ensure all circle volunteers are appropriately screened before joining a circle • Ensure all volunteers complete CoSA training before joining a circle • Develop and build the correct circle; each circle is unique, so placing the correct group of volunteers together to suit each other and the core member is vital	• Review volunteer training materials on an annual basis to ensure they reflect international CoSA research • Revise, where necessary, volunteer training materials following annual review • Safeguard and care for volunteers on a continual basis
Core member recruitment and referral	• Work with appropriate partners so that they are aware of who is, and is not, appropriate for referral to a circle • Record data and information, compliant with privacy laws, on each referral so that a clear basis for acceptance/rejection can be developed and a research/evaluation base formed	• Make sure coherent screening tools are used to identify the most appropriate core members • Review screening and referral processes on an ongoing basis
Circle administration and maintenance	• Ensure circle messages, strategies and procedures are clearly defined • Ensure all staff, volunteers, stakeholders and core members are aware of all the strategies and procedures that involve them • Ensure there is paperwork to record the details, membership and activities of each circle and all their meetings	• Train staff and volunteers on the need for careful, precise and consistent administration • Develop a clear media engagement strategy for all activities • Develop, maintain and update a risk register
Relationships with external stakeholders	• Maintain relationships with stakeholders	• Identify and review stakeholders on an annual basis • Develop a stakeholder steering group that can input into all activities, practices and policies • Ensure communication with stakeholders is ongoing and that data/information gets fed back to them in a way that they understand and can use

Key performance indicator	CoSA demonstrates through existing data collection tools (the intake/application form and circle minutes)	CoSA does not demonstrate through existing data collection tools
Public protection and risk management	• Develop and maintain risk management (personal and organisational) • Demonstrate how CoSA contribute to desistance in core members • Demonstrate how CoSA contribute to improving public protection • Record and demonstrate successful circle completion as well as when circles collapse • Identify circle failures with core members	
Developing a sound financial infrastructure		• Identify an accurate cost per circle • Identify the cost-benefit and social return on investment costs of a circle • Understand what "soft money" contributions are available to circles
Developing and using an evidence base	• Collect data and add to the evidence base • Collect data on each core member and each of their circles, and collect follow-up data post-completion	• Use national and international research evidence and good practice as a cornerstone for all CoSA practice, policies and procedures • Publish an annual report on the successes, failures and outcomes of CoSA

Figure 2: Evaluation guide for Circles of Support and Accountability projects

FOLLOW-UP	TYPES OF DATA	DATA COLLECTION	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
Pre-circle	• **Personal data** (age, gender, ethnicity, mental health, disability, IQ, sexuality) **(statistics)** • **Criminal justice data** (past and present offences, sentence, treatment, programs) **(statistics)** • **Risk assessments (statistics)** • **Qualitative data** (interviews/testimonials with core member and referring agencies) **(qualitative)**	This would be collated from corrections data, referral forms, referral interviews and other formal avenues	Volunteer recruitment and training
Circle	• **Monitoring core member progress** (monthly and quarterly feedback via core member and volunteer–qualitative, semi-structured, focus on integration, social skills, coping, risk management, challenges, jobs/activities) **(statistics) (qualitative)** • **Monitoring parole/stakeholders views (qualitative)** • **Risk assessments** (chart the changing risk posed by the core member across the life of the circle) **(statistics) (qualitative)** • **Safeguarding with volunteers** (volunteer supervision/check-in) **(qualitative)**	This would be ongoing data collected from official circles, data collection tools, corrections data and conversations with core members/volunteers/ corrections/circle staff	Core member recruitment and referral Circle administration and maintenance
Post-circle	• **End-of-circle interviews** (with core members, parole and volunteers) **(qualitative)** • **End-of-circle report** (structured summary on distance travelled based on core member progress tools; the aim is to identify if the core member has made progress and what next steps need to be taken, and by whom) **(statistics)** • **Risk assessments** (chart the changing risk posed by the core member across the life of the circle) **(statistics)**	This would be ongoing data collected from conversations with core members/volunteers/ corrections/circle staff; it would be quantitative and qualitative, focusing on what worked during the program	Relationships with external stakeholders Public protection and risk management
Follow-up	• **Annual follow-up with core member** (short structured survey/telephone call with core member based on monitoring tool) **(statistics) (qualitative)** • **Annual check-up with parole, police and prison for breaches, recall and/or new offences (statistics) (qualitative)** • **Monitor volume and type of ongoing contact with core member and organisation/volunteers (statistics) (qualitative)** • **Monitor/safeguard volunteers** (number of new circles, dropouts, personal and psychological wellbeing) **(statistics) (qualitative)**	This would be basic and quick, easily accessible data that could be collected from corrections forms, a quick telephone call and ongoing conversations with the program	Development a sound financial infrastructure Developing and using an evidence base

New data collection and evaluation tools to be used by the OARS Circles of Support and Accountability program

In order to provide a robust evidence base, the OARS CoSA program would need to expand and solidify its data collection and evaluation tools. Based on the aforementioned KPIs and the international research surrounding CoSA, we have developed an evaluation framework that CoSA could use (Figure 2). The aim of the evaluation framework is to empower the program to collect the most appropriate and fit-for-purpose data as possible, in a logical way that is straightforward for the coordinators and can be easily analysed, either internally or externally. The coordinators would not need additional training to collect the new data, as it is simply an extension of their current practices. In convincing coordinators of the need to collect the new data, the CoSA program would argue that the new data would make their current workings more robust and improve the organisation's likelihood of securing future funding. All the data collection tools already exist in the international literature (McCartan, 2016) and would only need to be adapted for an Australian context. The new data would include:

- a more robust, detailed and fit-for-purpose referral/intake procedure for all core members

- additional pre-circle interviews with potential core members, to ensure they are aware of processes and potential outcomes

- additional training for stakeholders who refer core members, as well as a detailed procedure for self-referral

- more detailed and better structured monitoring tools (i.e. circle minutes) with core members, volunteers and stakeholders, which would use both quantitative and qualitative data

- clearly structured volunteer support and feedback opportunities (i.e. through the use of a standardised form) throughout the circle on a quarterly basis, upon completion of a circle, and before entry to a new circle

- end-of-circle interviews with core members, volunteers and stakeholders

- a detailed end-of-circle report that would include details on the core member's journey (risk assessment scales, any appropriate psychometrics, qualitative data, etc.), challenges faced, good practice and considerations for the future management of the core member

- ongoing risk assessments at predetermined points across the life of the circle

- long-term follow-up with core members, either through a postal survey or a short telephone interview, on an annual basis post-completion.

We have developed an evaluation guide (see Figure 2) to help the OARS CoSA program start to think about and develop their research and evaluation plan. The chart demonstrates where in the circle different points of data should be collected, what this data is and how it ties into the KPIs.

Conclusion

The aim of this evaluation framework and guide is to assist the OARS CoSA program in developing its own research and evaluation tools to enable it to evidence its outcomes. This is a guide and not a definitive resource, and should be considered the first step towards more robust data collection and evaluation procedures.

Appendix B:
Research, evaluation and data collection: Cultural Mentoring Program

Context

The Cultural Mentoring Program (CMP) was developed and introduced in the mid-2000s to support Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander offenders released from prison into the Townsville community under the *Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act 2003* (Qld). Therefore, the CMP has developed out of a perceived need in offender management and reintegration identified and supported by Queensland Corrective Services (QCS). This means that the CMP came about via a needs-driven, top-down approach. The CMP is intended to support Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander sexual offenders ("mentees") released into the community in the Townsville area, and its aim is to provide them with culturally appropriate mentoring. A number of Elders in the community provide cultural and spiritual support to the men who enter the CMP, with the aim of helping them to reconnect with their local and spiritual communities. The CMP thus aims to cater to the needs of a distinctive group of offenders in their desistance behaviour in a way that mainstream (i.e. non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander-specific) programs cannot.

Since its inception, there has been no sustained or appropriate research or evaluation of the CMP conducted. This lack of an evidence base may become an issue due to limited funding and a need to see value for money, a reduction in risk and an increase in public protection as a consequence of the program. There has been a lack of research conducted internationally on the effectiveness of treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration programs for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander offender communities generally, and for sexual offender subpopulations within these communities specifically. This means that there is not necessarily a broad research pool to draw from, and, regardless, any research would need to account for differences in international experiences. As the CMP works with a marginalised and vulnerable population that is often perceived negatively by the public and the state as being beyond redemption, it is often difficult to receive sustained funding in times of austerity, especially if the service is seen as a cultural "add-on" to current sexual offender management practices. Appropriate and fit-for-purpose data collection and evaluation tools are thus central to the continued viability of the CMP.

Currently there is no research and evaluation of the CMP beyond simple demographics and process data; therefore, the CMP cannot demonstrate its impact on reducing reoffending and achieving successful community (re)integration. This means that the CMP needs to conceptualise and build its own research and evaluation framework based on key performance indicators (KPIs). This is a challenge given the limited Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander sexual offender research base that it is working from.

Why does program evaluation matter?

Program evaluation is important because it enables programs to understand if they are at achieving their goals and if they are meeting their KPIs. All programs should be evaluating their performance as an ongoing practice. Program evaluation is an important part of any program because it enables:

- continued program funding
- the justification of good practice
- a clearer understanding of program integrity (especially in terms of structure, process and impact)
- an understanding of the service user to enable programs to better work with them
- a better understanding of the process of change, especially cognitive and behavioural change
- an understanding of how different parts of the criminal justice system operate together around the service user and the program
- a better understanding of the role, function and impact of partners in respect to the program.

(For a broader set of readings around the importance of evaluation, see Bamberger et al., 2012; Grant & McNeill, 2015; Pawson & Tilley, 1997; Robson & McCartan, 2016; Tilley & Clarke, 2006; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2006.)

When designing data collection and evaluation procedures it is important to consider who the end users are, what their criteria/KPIs are and how these can be catered to. In order

to see if a program, including the CMP, is successful and fit for purpose, we need to look across the life of the program and how the program sits in the criminal justice and related service provision landscapes. Therefore, data collection and program evaluation should consider:

- **What are the KPIs (and how are they determined)?** Identifying the program KPIs is critical and should be done as the first step in evaluation (Parmenter, 2010). A range of questions should be considered when shaping KPIs, such as:

  - What change is the program trying to establish that the offender has demonstrated as a result of participation?

  - Has the offender's risk of reoffending reduced?

  - Has their volume and/or type of criminogenic behaviour changed?

  - Has their health and/or wellbeing improved?

  - All of these are different KPIs that are measured in different ways, and require different tools to measure them. Therefore, the intended outcomes need to be clearly articulated at the start of the evaluation

- **The cost of the program:** What is the cost of facilitating the program (i.e. accommodation, staffing, security, access, etc.)? Consider hard (money) versus soft (use of office space, sequestered staff, etc.) contributions to the program from stakeholders and/or funders. How much does the program cost to run? What is the cost per participant and does this represent value for money? What are the staff costs and are these costs appropriate? Is there a (social) return on investment for the program? How does the cost–benefit ratio of the program compare to other similar programs? For more information on social return on investment, please see Social Value UK (2012); for more information on cost-benefit analysis, see Broadman et al. (2018).

- **The service user journey:** This relates to charting changes in the service user across the life of the program; making sure that the program has the same data sources and points being used/monitored pre-program, during the program and post-program; identifying the main aspects of change; and using different data collection tools to collect and analyse them. In many respects this is the most important, as well as the most difficult, KPI to measure, which is why it is so important to get right. There is an ongoing debate about the role of the service

user in understanding the reality of the program and if it is fit for purpose. When developing program evaluations, it is always best to consider what the service user voice is, how it is measured, and in what ways it can be used effectively (see User Voice, 2018). This is evidenced by a long history of service user engagement in the realms of healthcare (McLaughlin, 2009; National Health Service England, 2015; Ocloo & Matthews, 2016; Tierney et al., 2016), mental health services (Grundy et al., 2016; Mockford et al., 2016), social work (Beresford et al., 2008; Glasby & Beresford, 2006; Social Care Institute for Excellence, 2012; Warren, 2007), and education (Senior et al., 2017); however, we rarely see the concept of the service user manifested in the same way within the criminal justice system. In the correctional environment, the clearest example of the service user voice is that of the prisoner (Bernasco, 2010; Clinks, 2011), with it being virtually absent from the managing, treating, and reintegrating of individuals convicted of sexual offences (McCartan, Harris, & Prescott, 2019).

- **The core content of the program:** In many regards this is the most straightforward part of any evaluation, determining if the content of the program is clear and fit for purpose (Agency for Clinical Innovation, 2013; Robson & McCartan, 2016; Vito & Higgins, 2014). The main curriculum and content of the program should be evidence-based and expert-informed, and should be constantly updated. The program should be reviewed annually to update the content, and make sure that its outcomes match core KPIs and that all aspects of the offender's journey are covered.

- **The program environment (internally):** Consider the following: What is the organisation like? Does the organisation have a healthy, supportive working environment? Are all staff appropriately trained, safeguarded and supported by the organisation? In addition, it is vital to identify areas of good practice, areas of practice that require improvement, and staff training needs.

- **The program environment (externally):** What are the funders', stakeholders' and partner organisations' views of the organisation and its programs? This aspect of evaluation is important because it links current organisational and program-related practice to the real world, to professional expectations and KPIs. It is important for the organisation

to be aware of how they are viewed by external colleagues as these views might impact upon future funding and/or collaboration.

Throughout the development of program evaluation it is important to consider the research methodology being used and the research tools being developed and used. Social science research has a number of methodologies available, with a mixed methods approach being seen as the most convincing and most appropriate way of getting reliable, valid and fit-for-purpose data; however, such an approach is not always possible with every research topic or population. In deciding which research tools you will be using, it is important to recognise that this will also determine the methodology and subsequent data analysis you will be using; in deciding, you are making assumptions about the outcomes that, once collected, cannot necessarily be altered if they are not fit for purpose (e.g. qualitative data can in some cases be converted to quantitative data, but quantitative data cannot be converted to qualitative data). One way to ensure the best research and evaluation decisions are being made is to establish an advisory board to help reflect upon and improve data collection methods. This board would be small, and would comprise researchers and primary stakeholders. The board would help in the development of data collection tools, provide advice on research practice and governance, and also make sure that the evaluation is fit for purpose (i.e. meeting program KPIs).

It is important to consider the potential research outcomes, the population/program being researched and the skills of the individuals collecting the data when deciding upon a methodology. The skill and expertise of the staff are critical: it will be the organisation's core staff who collect the data, rather than an external researcher. Therefore, it is important that staff understand why collecting the data is important, what the data collection entails, and can ensure that the data are recorded/stored correctly. Research needs to be embedded in the working culture of organisations so that the collecting and collating of data is seen as a routine part of daily work that all staff are expected to undertake. In the case of the CMP, it may be appropriate to conduct the research through an action research framework (Robson & McCartan, 2016), which is sensitive to the cultural nature of the project, the roles that narrative and dialogue play in relationship, and

the rich qualitative data that could be obtained. In this way, it is possible to develop a long-reaching, coherent and extensive data set.

What are the Cultural Mentoring Program key performance indicators?

Based on our preliminary evaluation activity, we have identified a number of KPIs on which the CMP should seek to collect data. These are outlined below.

Cultural Mentoring Program mentor recruitment and training

1. Ensure all CMP mentors are appropriately screened before joining.
2. Ensure all CMP mentors complete training.
3. Develop and build the mentor/mentee relationship; each relationship is unique, so placing the correct pair together is essential.
4. Ensure continual CMP mentor safeguarding and care.

Mentee recruitment and referral

1. Work with appropriate partners so that they are aware of who is, and is not, appropriate for referral to the CMP.
2. Make sure coherent screening tools are used to identify the most appropriate mentees.
3. Record data and information, compliant with privacy laws, on each referral so that a clear basis for acceptance/rejection can be developed; this will also form a research/evaluation base.
4. Review screening and referral processes on an ongoing basis.

Administration and maintenance

1. Make sure program messages, strategies and procedures are clearly defined.
2. Make sure that all staff, mentors, mentees and stakeholders are aware of all the strategies and procedures that involve them.

3. Make sure that there is paperwork to record the details, membership and activities of the program.

4. Train staff and mentors on the need for careful, precise and consistent administration.

5. Develop, maintain and update a risk register.

Relationships with external stakeholders

1. Identify and review stakeholders (i.e. police, corrections and relevant social/welfare organisations) on an annual basis.

2. Develop a stakeholder steering group that can input into all activities, practices and policies.

3. Maintain relationships with stakeholders.

4. Ensure communication with stakeholders is ongoing and that data/information gets fed back to them in a way that they understand and can use.

Public protection and risk management

1. Develop and maintain risk management (personal and organisational).

2. Demonstrate how the CMP contributes to desistance in mentees.

3. Demonstrate how the CMP contributes to improving public protection.

4. Record and demonstrate successful and problematic mentoring relationships.

5. Identify failures with mentees (e.g. dropouts, unacceptable behaviour, reoffending, safeguarding).

Developing a sound financial infrastructure

1. Identify an accurate cost per mentoring relationship (i.e. per mentee).

2. Identify the cost–benefit ratio (i.e. cost of mentoring relationship vs reoffending rates) and social return on investment costs.

3. Understand what "soft money" contributions are available to CMP (i.e. the loan or use of police, probation and prison resources; shared facilities).

Developing and using an evidence base

1. Use national and international research evidence and good practice as a cornerstone for all CMP practice, policies and procedures.

2. Collect data and add to the evidence base.

3. Collect data on each mentee and each of their meetings/activities, and collect follow-up data post-completion.

4. Publish an annual report on the successes, failures and outcomes of the CMP.

Current data collection and evaluation tools being used by the Cultural Mentoring Program

In collecting the above data the CMP would be able to demonstrate its successes, as well as the challenges it faces, more clearly. This would involve a methodological shift, because the data currently being collected would not allow a demonstration of meeting the above KPIs. Currently, data are being recorded through the following mechanisms:

1. Demographic and monitoring data, which provides a breakdown of the mentee's demographics; district office; date request received; name of mentor; date of individual sessions; date sessions attended and number of hours per session; number of sessions attended; type of sessions (individual/group); date of invoice; invoice number; invoice amount; comments (e.g. hours remaining/finalised).

2. The mentoring client agreement form, which is a standard form that lays out the structure and format of the mentoring program. Although there is an opportunity for qualitative comments on this form, it is mainly a process document.

Existing data collection therefore occurs primarily at the start of the program, is focused on the staff as the main collectors of data, and is quite functional/systems based. It would not allow the CMP to deliver upon the aforementioned KPIs (see Table 2).

Table 2: What key performance indicators does the Cultural Mentoring Program collect data on currently?

Key performance indicators	CMP demonstrates through existing data collection tools (demographic, monitoring data and mentoring client agreement form)	CMP does not demonstrate through existing data collection tools
CMP mentor recruitment and training	• Ensure all CMP mentors are appropriately screened before joining • Ensure all CMP mentors complete training • Develop and build the mentor/mentee relationship; each relationship is unique, so placing the correct pair together is essential • Ensure continual CMP mentor safeguarding and care	
Mentee recruitment and referral	• Work with appropriate partners so that they are aware of who is, and is not, appropriate for referral to the CMP	• Make sure coherent screening tools are used to identify the most appropriate mentees • Record data and information, compliant with privacy laws, on each referral so that a clear basis for acceptance/rejection can be developed; this will also form a research/evaluation base • Review screening and referral processes on an ongoing basis
Administration and maintenance		• Make sure CMP messages, strategies and procedures are clearly defined • Make sure that all staff, mentors, mentees and stakeholders are aware of all the strategies and procedures that involve them • Make sure that there is paperwork to record the details, membership and activities of the program • Train staff and mentors on the need for careful, precise and consistent administration • Develop, maintain and update a risk register
Relationships with external stakeholders	• Maintain relationships with stakeholders	• Identify and review stakeholders on an annual basis • Develop a stakeholder steering group that can input into all activities, practices and policies • Ensure communication with stakeholders is ongoing and that data/information gets fed back to them in a way that they understand and can use

Key performance indicators	CMP demonstrates through existing data collection tools (demographic, monitoring data and mentoring client agreement form)	CMP does not demonstrate through existing data collection tools
Public protection and risk management		• Develop and maintain risk management (personal and organisational) • Demonstrate how the CMP contributes to desistance in mentees • Demonstrate how the CMP contributes to improving public protection • Record and demonstrate successful and problematic mentoring relationships • Identify failures with mentees
Developing a sound financial infrastructure		• Identify an accurate cost per mentoring relationship (i.e. per mentee) • Identify the cost–benefit ratio and social return on investment costs • Understand what "soft money" contributions are available to CMP
Developing and using an evidence base		• Use national and international research evidence and good practice as a cornerstone for all CMP practice, policies and procedures • Collect data and add to the evidence base • Collect data on each mentee and each of their meetings/activities, and collect follow-up data post-completion • Publish an annual report on the successes, failures and outcomes of the CMP

New data collection and evaluation tools to be used by the Cultural Mentoring Program

In order to provide a robust evidence base, the CMP would need to expand and solidify its data collection and evaluation tools. Based on the aforementioned KPIs and the existing related research, limited as it is, we have developed an evaluation framework that could be used (Figure 2). The aim of the data collection and evaluation framework is to empower the CMP to collect the most appropriate and fit-for-purpose data that they can in a logical way that is straightforward and feasible for the staff and can be easily analysed, internally or externally. Program staff would not need additional training to collect the new data as it simply an extension of their current practices. New data that would need to be collected would include:

- a more robust, detailed and fit-for-purpose referral/intake procedure for all mentees

- additional pre-CMP interviews with the potential mentees so that they are aware of processes and potential outcomes

- additional training for stakeholders and related agencies that refer mentees

- more detailed and better structured monitoring tools (i.e. meeting minutes) for mentor, mentees and stakeholders, which would use both quantitative and quantitative data

- clearly structured mentor support and feedback opportunities (i.e. through the use of a standardised form or interview schedule) throughout the process on a quarterly basis, upon completion of a mentoring relationship and before entry to a new one

- structured mentor support and feedback opportunities throughout the process, upon completion of a mentoring relationship and before entry to a new mentoring relationship

- end-of-mentoring interviews with mentor, mentee, and stakeholders

- a detailed end report which would include details on the mentee's journey (inc. risk assessment scales, any

Figure 3: Evaluation guide for the Cultural Mentoring Program

FOLLOW-UP	TYPES OF DATA	DATA COLLECTION	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
Referral	• **Personal data on the mentee** (age, gender, ethnicity, mental health, disability, IQ, sexuality) **(statistics)** • **Criminal justice data** (past and present offences, sentence, treatment, programs) **(statistics)** • **Information on the reasons for the referral and the process (statistics)** • **Qualitative data** (interviews/testimonials with mentee and referring agencies) **(qualitative)**	This would be collated from corrections data, referral forms, referral interviews and other formal avenues	CMP mentor recruitment and training
Mentoring	• **Monitoring progress** (monthly and quarterly feedback via mentor and mentee–qualitative, semi-structured, focus on integration, social skills, coping, risk management, challenges, jobs/activities) **(statistics) (qualitative)** • **Monitoring parole/stakeholder views (qualitative)** • **Safeguarding with volunteers** (volunteer supervision/check-in) **(qualitative)**	This would be ongoing data collected from official CMP data collection tools, corrections data and conversations with mentees/mentors/corrections	Mentee recruitment and referral Administration and maintenance
Post-Mentoring	• **End-of-mentoring interviews** (with mentee, mentor, corrections and program) **(qualitative)** • **End-of-mentoring report** (structured summary on distance travelled by the mentee, perceptions of their future actions, what next steps need to be taken, and by whom) **(statistics)**	This would be ongoing data collected from conversations with mentees/mentors/corrections; It would be quantitative and qualitative, focusing on what worked during the program.	Relationships with external stakeholders Public protection and risk management
Follow-up	• **Annual follow-up with mentee** (short structured survey/telephone call with mentee based on monitoring criteria) **(statistics) (qualitative)** • **Annual check-up with corrections, police and prison for breaches, recall and/or new offences (statistics) (qualitative)** • **Monitor volume and type of ongoing contact with mentee and mentor (statistics) (qualitative)** • **Monitor/safeguard mentor** (number of new mentees, dropouts, personal and psychological wellbeing) **(statistics) (qualitative)**	This would be basic and quickly, easily accessible data that could be collected from corrections forms, a quick telephone call and ongoing conversations with the program	Development a sound financial infrastructure Developing and using an evidence base

appropriate psychometrics, qualitative data), challenges faced, good practice and considerations for the future management of the mentee

- ongoing risk assessments at pre-ordinated points across the life of the mentoring
- long-term follow up with mentees, either through a postal survey or a short telephone interview, post-completion on an annual basis.

We have developed an evaluation guide (see Figure 3) to help the CMP to start to think about and develop their research and evaluation plan. The chart demonstrates where in the circle different points of data should be collected, what these data are and how they tie into the KPIs.

Conclusion

The aim of this data collection and evaluation framework and guide is to assist the CMP in developing its own research and evaluation tools to enable it to evidence its outcomes. This is a guide and not a definitive resource, and should be considered the first step towards more robust data collection and evaluation procedures.

Appendix C:
Interview schedule—Circles of Support and Accountability staff

Important notes

You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer.

Please do not identify yourself by name on the recording of the interview. This will ensure confidentiality, as the interview recordings and transcriptions of the interview will not contain your name.

Finally, a reminder that you are not under any obligation to participate in this study. You can choose not to take part or withdraw without penalty at any time.

Introductory questions

1. Can you tell me how you found out about CoSA?
2. What is your current role and how does it relate to the CoSA program?
3. How long have you been in your current role? How long have you been involved in CoSA?
4. Can you tell me about the CoSA program?
   ○ What is the perspective of the program towards rehabilitation and integration?
   ○ Which referring organisations do you work with?
   ○ Can people self-refer? If not, why not?
   ○ How many circles are running?
   ○ Have any circles completed?
   ○ How are referrals made into the program/how are decisions made about which core members to form a circle around?
   ○ What are core members' offences?
   ○ What are the typical demographics of core members (e.g. age, sex, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status)?
   ○ How many volunteers are involved? How many have been involved?
   ○ How do you recruit volunteers?
   ○ What have been the main challenges with the program?
   ○ What would you say are its strengths/successes?
   ○ Do core members typically have supports in place when they are released (e.g. family)?
   ○ Does the program work with core members before they are released? How? Could these processes be improved?
5. Does being in a CoSA prevent core members from reoffending do you think? How? *[Key open question]*

Addressing social isolation and intimacy deficits/creating a sense of belonging

6. How would you describe the relationships between core members and CoSA volunteers?
   ○ Is this what the relationship should be like? Why/why not?
7. Do the circles aim to make the core member feel less socially isolated or lonely (e.g. to participate in other community groups [e.g. church, sport, volunteering, social])? How?
8. Do the circles help the core member form healthy relationships (e.g. with family, friends, partners)? How?
9. Do the CoSA help core members to see themselves as part of the community? (Or another community?) How?

Challenging cognitive distortions and addressing offending behaviour

10. Do CoSA volunteers aim to challenge some of the things that core members say or do?
    - How successful are volunteers at doing this?
    - (How) could volunteers be better trained/supported to do so?

Other

11. Apart from CoSA, what helps core members to stop offending?
12. What do you think could be improved about CoSA?
13. Is there anything else you wanted to add about how CoSA help reduce reoffending?
14. Support *vs* accountability or support *and* accountability?
15. How do you record participant data and store it?
16. What does "success" look like to you and how do you measure it?

Demographics (researcher to record if interviewee has not already noted during interview)

- Sex
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status

Appendix D:
Interview schedule—Circles of Support and Accountability stakeholders

Important notes

- You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer.
- Please do not identify yourself by name on the recording of the interview. This will ensure confidentiality, as the interview recordings and transcriptions of the interview will not contain your name.
- Finally, a reminder that you are not under any obligation to participate in this study. You can choose not to take part or withdraw without penalty at any time.

Introductory questions

1. Can you tell me how you found out about CoSA?
2. What is your current role and how does it relate to CoSA?
3. How long have you been in your current role?
4. Can you tell me about your understanding of CoSA?
   - Does your organisation refer offenders into the program? How does this work?
   - (How are referrals made into the program?)
   - What benefits do CoSA have for your organisation? For the offenders? For the community?
   - How are decisions made about which offenders to refer into the program?
5. In your understanding, how do CoSA help offenders prepare to return to the community?
   - What sorts of practical things do help with (e.g. housing, jobs, appointments, shopping)?
   - What sorts of emotional things do help with (e.g. feelings)?
6. Does being in CoSA prevent offenders from reoffending do you think? How? *[Key open question]*

Addressing social isolation and intimacy deficits/creating a sense of belonging

7. How would you describe the relationships between core members and volunteers in CoSA?
   - Is this what the relationship should be like? Why/why not?
8. Do CoSA aim to make offenders feel less socially isolated or lonely (e.g. to participate in other community groups, church, sport, social)? How?
   - How does this benefit your organisation, the offender, the community?
9. Do CoSA help offenders form healthy relationships (e.g. with family, friends, partners)? How?
   - How does this benefit your organisation, the offender, the community?
10. Do CoSA help offenders to see themselves as part of the community? (Or another community?) How?
    - How does this benefit your organisation, the offender, the community?

Challenging cognitive distortions and addressing offending behaviour

11. Do CoSA challenge some of the things that offenders say or do?
    - How?
    - What sorts of things?
    - How does this benefit your organisation, the offender, the community?

Other

12. Apart from CoSA, what helps offenders to stop offending when they are released into the community?

13. What have been the main challenges with the program?

14. What would you say are its strengths/successes?

15. What do you think could be improved about CoSA?

16. Is there anything else you wanted to add about how CoSA help reduce reoffending?

Demographics (researcher to record if interviewee has not already noted during interview)

• Sex

• Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status

Appendix E:
Interview schedule—Circles of Support and Accountability volunteers

Important notes

- During the interview, it is important you do not tell us about the details of any illegal activities that you have been involved in that police are not aware of. If you do this, we will not tell anyone about it and won't write it down on paper, but we are required by law to tell police if they ask for this information.
- You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer.
- Please do not identify yourself by name on the recording of the interview. This will ensure confidentiality, as the interview recordings and transcriptions of the interview will not contain your name.
- Finally, a reminder that you are not under any obligation to participate in this study. You can choose not to take part or withdraw without penalty at any time (although for group interviews, your comments will remain part of the recording and cannot be removed or destroyed).

[Support person to sign a confidentiality agreement before interview]

[If a group interview, confidentiality forms to be signed before interview]

Introductory questions

1. Can you tell me how you found out about CoSA?
2. What made you want to participate in CoSA?
3. How long have you been in your CoSA?
4. How often does your CoSA meet?
5. For how long does the CoSA meet?
6. How many volunteers are in your CoSA?
7. Can you tell me a bit about the supports that core members have in place when they are released from prison?
   - E.g. family, friends, job, church?
8. Are your circles set up prior to the core members' release from prison? Or do they commence once they are back in the community? After how long?
9. What sorts of things do you do with the core member in your CoSA (e.g. meetings, other activities [e.g. coffee, hobbies])?
10. What sorts of practical things do you help the core member with (e.g. housing, jobs, appointments, shopping)?
11. What sorts of emotional things do you help the core member with (e.g. feelings)?
12. Has being in CoSA prevented your core member from reoffending do you think? How? *[Key open question]*

Addressing social isolation and intimacy deficits/creating a sense of belonging

13. How would you describe the relationship between core members and CoSA volunteers?
    - Would you say that CoSA volunteers are good role models for core members?
    - How? Can you give an example?
14. Does your circle seek to make the core member feel less socially isolated or lonely? How?
15. Does your circle seek to help the core member form healthy relationships (e.g. with family, friends, partners)? How?
16. Does your circle aim to get the core member to see himself as part of the community? (Or another community?) How?

17. Does your circle aim to link the core member to other community groups (e.g. church, sport, volunteering, social)? How?

Challenging cognitive distortions and addressing offending behaviour

18. As CoSA volunteers do you challenge some of the things that the core member says or does?
    ○ Can you provide an example?
19. How does your core member make sense of his offending do you think (e.g. "It's only pictures")?
    ○ Do you as volunteers challenge that version of events/excuse/justification? How?
    ○ Does the core member see himself differently as a result? Why/why not?
20. Do you feel that CoSA enables the core member to confront his offending behaviour? How?

Identity transformation/crafting a new self-narrative

21. Does your circle aim to bring about a change in the way the core member views his past behaviour? How? (*Or*: What would you say caused the core member's offending? How does the CoSA address that cause?)
22. Does the CoSA aim to get the core member to see himself as separate from his offending? How?

Other

23. Apart from CoSA, what else prevents core members from offending when they are released into the community?
24. What do you think could be improved about CoSA?

Demographics (researcher to record if interviewee has not already noted during interview)

• Sex
• DOB/age
• Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status
• Index offence(s) of core member (i.e. only in general terms—whether against children/adults; whether extra- or intrafamilial; whether contact or online)
• Time core member incarcerated for index offence(s)
• Core member previously incarcerated for nonsexual offences?
• Core member previously incarcerated for sexual offences?
• Core member currently on a correctional order? What type?
• Did the core member complete sexual offender treatment in prison? In the community?

Appendix F:
Interview schedule—Circles of Support and Accountability offenders

Important notes

- All information will be treated as confidential and will not be shared, with all reports maintaining the anonymity of participants, unless (in the unlikely event) that I am legally required under subpoena and oath to answer specific questions that may include information gained from this research.
- You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer.
- Please do not identify yourself by name on the recording of the interview. This will ensure confidentiality, as the interview recordings and transcriptions of the interview will not contain your name.
- If you reveal any information that suggests that a child or other person is at risk of harm, I will report this information to the authorities.
- Finally, a reminder that you are not under any obligation to participate in this study. You can choose not to take part or withdraw without penalty at any time.

[Support person to sign a confidentiality agreement before interview]

Introductory questions

1. Can you tell me how you found out about CoSA?
2. What made you want to participate in CoSA?
3. What point in your sentence/release did your circle start?
4. How long have you been in your CoSA?
5. How often does your CoSA meet?
6. For how long does the CoSA meet?
7. How many volunteers are in your CoSA?
   - How closely do you identify with them in terms of age, gender etc.?
8. Did you have any other supports in place when you were released?
   - E.g. family, friends, job, church?
   - When you were released from prison what support structures were already in place for you? Either personal, cultural or state-provided?
9. Was a CoSA part of your release planning (if you had any release planning)?
   - I.e. was it discussed/set up prior to your release from prison? Or did it commence once you were back in the community? After how long?
10. What sorts of things do you do with your CoSA?
    - Meetings, other activities (coffee, hobbies)
11. What sorts of practical things do your CoSA help with (e.g. housing, jobs, appointments, shopping)? [External, instrumental support]
12. What sorts of emotional things do your CoSA help with (e.g. feelings)? [Internal, expressive support]
13. What sorts of cultural and/or spiritual things do your CoSA help with (e.g. connecting to land)?
14. Has being in CoSA prevented you from reoffending do you think? How? *[Key open question]*

Addressing social isolation and intimacy deficits/creating a sense of belonging

15. How would you describe the relationship you have with your CoSA volunteers?
    ○ Would you say your CoSA volunteers are good role models for you?
    ○ How? Can you give an example?
16. Does being in a CoSA make you feel less socially isolated or lonely?
    ○ How?
17. Does your CoSA help you identify, form and maintain healthy relationships (e.g. with family, friends, partners)?
    ○ How?
18. Has your CoSA helped you to see yourself as part of the community? (Or another community?)
    ○ How?
19. Has being in a CoSA helped you to participate in other community groups (e.g. church, sport, volunteering, social)?
    ○ How?

Challenging cognitive distortions and addressing offending behaviour

20. Do your CoSA volunteers challenge some of the things that you say or do?
    ○ Can you provide an example?
21. At the time of your offence(s), what did you tell yourself to make it OK (e.g. "It's only pictures")?
    ○ Have your volunteers challenged that version of events/excuse/justification? How?
    ○ Do you see yourself differently as a result? Why/why not?
22. Do you feel that your CoSA has enabled you to confront your offending behaviour? How?

Identity transformation/creating a new self-narrative

23. Has being in a CoSA brought about a change in the way you view your past behaviour?
    ○ How?
    ○ (Or: What would you say caused your offence? How does your CoSA address that cause?)
24. Does your CoSA help you see yourself as separate from your offence?
    ○ How?

Other

25. Apart from CoSA, has anything else helped you to stop offending?
    ○ What?
26. What do you think could be improved about CoSA?
27. Does the wider community know that there is a CoSA in your area? What does the community think about CoSA?

Demographics (researcher to record if interviewee has not already noted during interview)

- Sex
- DOB/age
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Straight Islander status
- Index offence(s) (i.e. only in general terms—whether against children/adults whether extra- or intrafamilial; whether contact or online)
- Time incarcerated for index offence(s)
- Previously incarcerated for nonsexual offences?
- Previously incarcerated for sexual offences?
- Currently on a correctional order? What type?
- Was sex offender treatment completed in prison? In the community?

Appendix G:
Interview schedule—Cultural Mentoring Program staff

Important notes

- You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer.
- Please do not identify yourself by name on the recording of the interview. This will ensure confidentiality, as the interview recordings and transcriptions of the interview will not contain your name.
- Finally, a reminder that you are not under any obligation to participate in this study. You can choose not to take part or withdraw without penalty at any time.

Introductory questions

1. Can you tell me how you found out about the CMP?
2. What is your current role and how does it relate to the CMP?
3. How long have you been in your current role? How long have you been involved in the CMP?
4. Can you tell me about the CMP?
   - How many offenders have been supported?
   - How are referrals made into the program?
   - How are decisions made about which offenders to assist?
   - What are their offences (e.g. against adults, against children, in the family, against strangers)?
   - What are the typical demographics of offenders (e.g. age, sex)?
   - Are they usually from Townsville or somewhere else?
5. How does the program/Elders help offenders prepare to return to the community? What sorts of things did you do to help?
   - What sorts of practical things does it help with (e.g. housing, jobs, appointments, shopping)?
   - What sorts of emotional things does it help with (e.g. feelings)?
   - What sorts of spiritual and cultural things does it help with (e.g. reconnecting with land/country)?
     * Do offenders have supports in place when they are released (e.g. family)?
     * Does the program work with offenders before they are released? How?
     * Could this process be improved?
6. Does being in the CMP prevent offenders from reoffending do you think? How? *[Key open question]*

Addressing social isolation and intimacy deficits/creating a sense of belonging

7. How would you describe the relationships between offenders and Elders in the CMP?
   - Is this what the relationship should be like? Why/why not?
8. Does the program aim to make offenders feel less socially isolated or lonely (e.g. encourage them to participate in other community groups [e.g. church, sport, social, men's group])? How?
9. Does the program help offenders form healthy relationships (e.g. with family, friends, partners)? How?
10. Does the CMP help offenders to see themselves as part of the Townsville community? The Indigenous community? (Or another community?) How?

Challenging cognitive distortions and addressing offending behaviour

11. Does the CMP challenge some of the things that offenders say or do? How?
    - What sorts of things?

Other

12. Apart from the CMP, what helps offenders to stop offending when they are released into the community?
13. What have been the main challenges with the program?
14. What would you say are its strengths/successes?
15. What do you think could be improved about the CMP?
16. Is there anything else you wanted to add about how the CMP helps reduce reoffending?

Demographics (researcher to record if interviewee has not already noted during interview)

- Sex
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status

Appendix H: Interview schedule—Cultural Mentoring Program stakeholders

Important notes

- You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer.
- Please do not identify yourself by name on the recording of the interview. This will ensure confidentiality, as the interview recordings and transcriptions of the interview will not contain your name.
- Finally, a reminder that you are not under any obligation to participate in this study. You can choose not to take part or withdraw without penalty at any time.

Introductory questions

1. Can you tell me how you found out about the CMP?
2. What is your current role and how does it relate to the CMP?
3. How long have you been in your current role?
4. Can you tell me about your understanding of the CMP?
   - Does your organisation refer offenders into the program? How does this work?
   - (How are referrals made into the program?)
   - What benefits does the CMP have for your organisation? For the offenders? For the community?
   - How are decisions made about which offenders to refer into the program?
5. In your understanding, how does the program/Elders help offenders prepare to return to the community?
   - What sorts of practical things does it help with (e.g. housing, jobs, appointments, shopping)?
   - What sorts of emotional things does it help with (e.g. feelings)?
   - What sorts of spiritual and cultural things does it help with (e.g. reconnecting with land/country)?
6. Does being in the CMP prevent offenders from reoffending do you think? How? *[Key open question]*

Addressing social isolation and intimacy deficits/creating a sense of belonging

7. How would you describe the relationships between offenders and Elders in the CMP?
   - Is this what the relationship should be like? Why/why not?
8. Does the program aim to make offenders feel less socially isolated or lonely (e.g. to participate in other community groups, church, sport, social)? How?
   - How does this benefit your organisation, the offender, the community?
9. Does the program help offenders form healthy relationships (e.g. with family, friends, partners)? How?
   - How does this benefit your organisation, the offender, the community?
10. Does the CMP help offenders to see themselves as part of the Townsville community? The Indigenous community? (Or another community?) How?
    - How does this benefit your organisation, the offender, the community?

Challenging cognitive distortions and addressing offending behaviour

11. Does the CMP challenge some of the things that offenders say or do? How?
    ○ What sorts of things?
    ○ How does this benefit your organisation, the offender, the community?

Other

12. Apart from the CMP, what helps offenders to stop offending when they are released into the community?
13. What have been the main challenges with the program?
14. What would you say are its strengths/successes?
15. What do you think could be improved about the CMP?
16. Is there anything else you wanted to add about how the CMP helps reduce reoffending?

Demographics (researcher to record if interviewee has not already noted during interview)

- Sex
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status

Appendix I:
Interview schedule—
Cultural Mentoring Program offenders

Researcher to read to interviewee

- You do not have to participate in this study. You can choose not to take part or can stop at any time.
- You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer.
- All information will be treated as confidential and will not be shared. Your name will not be used in any reports, unless (and in the unlikely event) I am legally required to answer specific questions that may include information gained from this research.
- Please try not to use your own name on the recording of the interview so the recording does not contain your name.
- If you reveal any information that suggests that a child or other person is at risk of harm, I will report this information to the authorities.

[Support person to sign a confidentiality agreement before interview]

Introductory questions

1. Can you tell me how you found out about the CMP? Can you tell me about how Uncle [Name] got in touch with you?
2. What made you want to participate in the CMP?
3. How long have you been in the CMP?
4. Did you have any other supports in place when you were released from prison?
   ○ E.g. family, friends, job, church?
5. Was the CMP discussed/set up prior to your release from prison (i.e. did you have contact with Elders while you were still in prison)?
   ○ Or did it start once you were back in the community? After how long?
6. How did the program/Elders help you prepare to return to the community? What sorts of things did they do to help?
7. What sorts of things do you do in the CMP?
8. What sorts of practical things does it help with (e.g. housing, jobs, appointments, shopping)?
9. What sorts of emotional things does it help with (e.g. feelings)?
10. What sorts of spiritual and cultural things does it help with (e.g. reconnecting with land/country)?
11. Has being in the CMP prevented you from reoffending do you think? How? *[Key open question]*

Addressing social isolation and intimacy deficits/creating a sense of belonging

12. How would you describe the relationship you have with the Elders in the CMP?
    ○ Are they good role models for you?
    ○ How? Can you give an example?
13. Does being in the CMP make you feel less socially isolated or lonely?
    ○ How?
14. Does the CMP help you form healthy relationships (e.g. with family, friends, partners)? How?
15. Has the CMP helped you to see yourself as part of the Townsville community? The Indigenous community? (Or another community?) How?
16. Has being in the CMP helped you to participate in other community groups (e.g. church, sport, social, men's group)? How?

Challenging cognitive distortions and addressing offending behaviour

17. Do the Elders from the CMP challenge some of the things that you say or do?
    ○ Can you provide an example?
18. At the time of your offence(s), what did you tell yourself to make it OK (e.g. "It's only pictures")?
    ○ Have your Elders challenged that version of events/excuse/justification? How?
    ○ Do you see yourself differently as a result? Why/why not?
19. Do you feel that the CMP has enabled you to confront your offending behaviour? How?

Identity transformation/creating a new self-narrative

20. Has being in the CMP brought about a change in the way you view your past behaviour? How? (*Or*: What would you say caused your offence? How does the CMP address that cause?)
21. Does the CMP help you see yourself as separate from your offence? How?

Other

22. Apart from the CMP, has anything else helped you to stop offending? What?
23. What do you think could be improved about the CMP?

Demographics (researcher to record if interviewee has not already noted during interview)

- Sex
- DOB/age
- Index offence(s) (i.e. only in general terms—whether against children/adults; whether extra- or intrafamilial; whether contact or online)
- Time incarcerated for index offence(s)
- Previously incarcerated for nonsexual offences?
- Previously incarcerated for sexual offences?
- Currently on a correctional order? What type?
- Was sexual offender treatment completed in prison? In the community?

Appendix J:
Interview schedule—Victims/survivors

Important notes

- You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer.
- Please do not identify yourself by name on the recording of the interview. This will ensure confidentiality, as the interview recordings and transcriptions of the interview will not contain your name.
- A reminder that you are not under any obligation to participate in this study. You can choose not to take part or withdraw without penalty at any time.

[Support people to sign a confidentiality agreement before interview]

Introductory questions

1. Would you like to start by telling me a bit about your story? (As much as you are willing to share.)

The reintegration process

2. What happened when your offender was released from prison?
3. How did you find out?
4. How did you feel about him being released into the community? What were your main concerns?

Victims'/survivors' needs

5. What were your needs at this time? (How) did they differ from your needs at other points in the process (i.e. was there anything specific to this time around his release)?
6. How were your needs met? Where did your supports come from?
7. How could your needs have been better met at this stage?
8. In general terms do you think survivors' needs could be better addressed at the reintegration/release stage? How?

Perpetrators' needs

9. Do you think it is important that sexual offenders be supported to reintegrate into the community after prison?
   ○ Why/why not?
10. What types of support should he be provided with?
    ○ Why?
11. How could the risk that offenders pose to women and children be minimised in the reintegration process?

Circles of Support and Accountability

12. Have you heard of Circles of Support and Accountability?

    CoSA are groups of trained community volunteers who meet regularly with a sexual offender when he is released from prison over a period of at least a year. The group aims to provide support for the offender (e.g. emotional support, guidance, and practical support [housing, health etc.]). They also hold the offender accountable (e.g. by ensuring he sticks to the conditions of his release). They are a sounding board for the offender if he is struggling with inappropriate sexual thoughts etc.

13. What do think about this sort of program? Would you support it? Why/why not?

Concluding questions

14. Is there anything else you would like to add about the reintegration of sexual offenders?
15. Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix K:
Participant information and consent form for victims/survivors

Queensland University of Technology
Brisbane Australia

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FOR QUT RESEARCH PROJECT
– Victim/survivor interview –

Reintegrating sex offenders
QUT Ethics Approval Number 1600001093

RESEARCH TEAM CONTACTS

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DESCRIPTION

This project aims to evaluate approaches to reintegrating sex offenders into the community. It seeks to understand the motivations, perceptions and experiences of the staff members, volunteers, offenders and victims/survivors who have been involved or have a stake in programs of this nature.

You are invited to participate in this project as a victim/survivor of sexual violence. As such we would like to hear your views on the reintegration of perpetrators of sexual violence, and how reintegration processes meet the needs of victims/survivors.

PARTICIPATION

If you choose to take part, you will be invited to participate in an interview for approximately one and a half hours. If you would like to participate, the interviewer will make a time that is suitable for you.

The researcher will ask you questions about how the needs of victims/survivors could be met during this process of reintegration, and how the reintegration could be approached to reduce the chance of reoffending.

The researcher will take an audio recording of the focus group. Only the researcher and a transcription assistant (bound by a confidentiality agreement) will listen to it.

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. If you do agree to participate you can withdraw at any time, or refuse to answer any question you don't wish to answer.

EXPECTED BENEFITS

It is expected that this project will not benefit you directly. However, it may benefit victims/survivors of sexual violence in the future by providing information about how the reintegration of offenders could better meet their needs.

Participation in the research is voluntary. While your contribution is highly valued, no payment or other type of reward will be offered.

RISKS

You may become distressed discussing sex offender reintegration. However, your wellbeing will be a priority during this research. You can bring a support person with you; if you do, they will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement. At any time during the focus group you can pause or stop. Should you become distressed for any reason during or after the research process, you may choose to contact Lifeline on 13 11 14.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

All comments and responses will be treated confidentially unless required by law. The names of individual persons are not required in any of the responses. Your name (or any other information that might identify you or your family) will not be used in research materials.

The recording will only be used by the research team (including transcription assistants), and only for the purpose of this project. During the project, the recording of your interview, the transcript of the interview, and/or any handwritten notes that the researchers take will be stored securely on a QUT password-protected computer, and a password-protected USB, which will be stored in a locked filing cabinet.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

We would like to ask you to sign a written consent form (enclosed) to confirm your agreement to participate.

QUESTIONS/FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

If have any questions or require further information please contact the researcher listed below.

Kelly Richards   (07) 3138 7125   k1.richards@qut.edu.au

CONCERNS/COMPLAINTS REGARDING THE CONDUCT OF THE PROJECT

QUT is committed to research integrity and the ethical conduct of research projects. However, if you do have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project you may contact the QUT Research Ethics Advisory Team on +61 7 3138 5123 or email ethicscontact@qut.edu.au. The QUT Research Ethics Advisory Team is not connected with the research project and can facilitate a resolution to your concern in an impartial manner.

Thank you for helping with this research project. Please keep this sheet for your information.

QUT Queensland University of Technology
Brisbane Australia

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FOR QUT RESEARCH PROJECT
– Victim/survivor focus group –

Reintegrating sex offenders
QUT Ethics Approval Number 1600001093

RESEARCH TEAM CONTACTS

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STATEMENT OF CONSENT

By signing below, you are indicating that you:

- Have read and understood the information document regarding this project
- Have had any questions answered to your satisfaction
- Understand that if you have any additional questions you can contact the research team

- Understand what taking part in this research means for you
- Understand that you are free to withdraw at any time during the focus group, but that any comments you have already made cannot be removed from the research
- Understand that if you have concerns about the ethical conduct of the project you can contact the Research Ethics Advisory Team on 07 3138 5123 or email ethicscontact@qut.edu.au
- Agree to participate in the project
- Understand that the focus group will be audio-recorded.

Name

_____

Signature

_____

Date

_____

Please return this sheet to the investigator.

ANROWS

ANROWS