

## Submission to the Inquiry on strategies to prevent and reduce criminal activity in Queensland

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Dear Committee,

The following submission is written on behalf of SupportLink National Pty Ltd (SupportLink).

### Background

SupportLink is contracted by the Queensland Police Service (since 2010) to deliver an Integrated Services Framework (ISF) that establishes partnerships and a fully managed referral process between themselves and the social support sector in Queensland.

The purpose of the SupportLink ISF model is to reduce crime and the development of criminal pathways through improved integration of the service system to target and respond to at risk and vulnerable persons. There is strong evidence that the SupportLink model is successfully reducing and preventing crime, through early intervention and enhancing the service system to address the social and economic contributors of crime.

The SupportLink service provides a systemic framework that allows referrers to link the vulnerable to a specialist (and government funded) agency to support unmet need. Consent is obtained from the client and a referral is made via a single egateway, accessible on every police computer in the State.<sup>1</sup>

The model creates consistency and provides front line staff with a user-friendly platform that encourages early and proactive intervention supported by community wide partnerships, technology and centralised quality assurance and management of the framework.

An important aspect of the model is that once a referral is made, service provision is proactively sourced and delivered to the person (48hrs) at their point of need.

More passive models that require people to self navigate the fragmented sector are less effective and lessen the likelihood of clients sourcing assistance to treat the social contributors to criminal and anti social behaviour.

Government staff are often uniquely positioned to offer help<sup>2</sup>. A high percentage of police work (for example) relates to social dysfunction. Matters typically engaged by Police include:

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to police, QAS operate in Greater Brisbane Region, as do approximately 25 schools in South East Queensland. The whole of government trial in Cairns includes the QPS, 15 schools, Probation and Parole, Youth Justice, Ambulance, Health, the Department of Communities Child Safety and Disability Services, Housing, DATSIMA and the Family Responsibilities Commission,

<sup>2</sup> Police, Ambulance, Teachers, Child Safety, Housing, Probation and Parole, Youth Justice, Emergency Departments, Mental Health.

Family violence, parenting issues, youth issues, drug and alcohol misuse, neighbourhood disputes and mental health issues. The SupportLink model provides over 300 different referable issues for Police to transfer (refer) to the social support sector. These matters are the social precursors to the development of criminal pathways, anti-social behaviour and victimisation. In addition, unmet issues commonly cost taxpayers an extraordinary amount of money and drain statutory resources.

To date 320 government agencies and non-government organisations have signed formal agreements with SupportLink to receive referrals for the Queensland public (largely via QPS). Over 8000 police are now registered to make referrals and 97% of these officers have or regularly make referrals. (The sector has been eager to embrace this partnership model via SupportLink as it assists to cement their place within the broader service system, provides a means for them to engage their community members who require early intervention support and makes them more attractive to funders).

Through this model national, state and local service provision is made available to every geographical area in Queensland.

Since 2010 there has been 110,000 referrals made. Police make about 45,000 referrals annually, or one every 11 minutes.

This model is the largest active partnership arrangement within the human services sector in Australia. Moreover, international research would suggest the Integrated Services Framework is the global benchmark in terms of utilising front line government staff to link the vulnerable to support.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the QPS are the most advanced police service in Australia with respect to service integration within the social support sector. The Northern Territory Police are currently mirroring the QPS/SupportLink model as a Territory-wide solution, with full implementation commencing this year.

In 2013 Deloitte undertook an evaluation of this service on behalf of the QPS. The following were key findings of that evaluation:

- Offenders who accepted support were 49% less likely to re-offend than those who declined support (13% v 62%).
- Victims who accepted support were 8% less likely to be re-victimised than those who declined support (28% v 36%).
- SupportLink has reduced Repeat Calls for Service for Youth offenders by 13%, outer regional areas by 41%, remote areas by 33%.
- Domestic Violence is the #1 issue referred by police. SupportLink data was used to identify all individuals that received a Domestic and Family Violence referral. The numbers of repeat calls (pre and post) were then compared.
- There has been a 39% reduction in repeat calls for service to domestic violence incidents.

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<sup>3</sup> 2009 research tour of USA, Canada, UK & Europe.

Aspects of the Enquiry	Comments
Whether you have observed particular trends and type of criminal activity occurring in your particular region or across the State more generally;	No response
What you consider to be the key social and economic contributors to crime;	<p>SupportLink considers the key <b>social contributors</b> to crime to be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Drug &amp; Alcohol misuse.</li> <li>2. Breakdown of family and community structures and standards.</li> <li>3. Cluster public housing and/or poor housing options.</li> </ol> <p><b>Economic contributors</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Unemployment or premature disengagement from education.</li> </ol>
How criminal activity has impacted you, or your community, directly or indirectly, including the social and economic impacts to families, businesses or the community at large;	No response
The effectiveness (including the cost effectiveness) of crime prevention strategies such as:	<p>Police should not be considered as the sole eyes and ears of the community. Crime Prevention is the responsibility of the entire community. Early intervention and the treatment of the social and economic causes of crime is important if we desire long term results.</p> <p>There is a growing body of evidence to support the cost effectiveness of crime prevention strategies. One 1997 study (for example) found that preventing one child from adopting a life of crime saves between \$1.7M &amp; \$2.3M.</p>
Imprisonment;	No response
<p><i>Justice reinvestment is a new approach in tackling the causes of crime and provides a viable option as our prison expansion costs become unsustainable. It re-directs money spent on prisons to community-based initiatives which aim to address the underlying causes of crime, promising to cut crime and save money.</i></p>	<p>Example one: SupportLink believes that justice reinvestment would have greater impact if models could deliver service to all regions.</p> <p>SupportLink is encouraging a court ordered or police diverted (formal) process that orders perpetrators of domestic violence to undertake 5 counselling sessions on anger and violence management.</p> <p>This could be achieved via the existing SupportLink model and the utilisation of Men's Line Queensland to deliver these services by phone. The benefit is that there could be a consistent, proactive and affordable model across the state.</p>

	<p>Example two: There is a percentage of the prison community who complete a period of incarceration with no desire to ever return. They leave prison with hopes of a better life, but are drawn into old behaviours because of the dysfunction they return to in the family home.</p> <p>Wrap around services for the families of prisoners, utilising SupportLink's Shared Support Plan may decrease the level of dysfunction in a home and provide a collective motivation for change. This model is (to our knowledge) untested but could have an impact on recidivism.</p>
<p>Early intervention;</p>	<p>Without doubt the SupportLink model has proven to be a solid contributor to reducing crime in Queensland.</p> <p>See Deloitte evaluation summary above (full evaluation available on request).</p> <p>Improved early intervention reduces crime and the development of criminal pathways. The challenge therefore, is equipping front line staff with a consistent, efficient framework that delivers the required professional assistance to the vulnerable.</p> <p>Whilst the process is embedded within police, this could be further improved with standard KPI's being introduced that would see all officers utilising referral making as a tool within their daily engagement with the community.</p> <p>Providing the same framework to other frontline government staff across the state (whole of government) will provide consistency, the ability to data match to identify high risk families, share appropriate information between agencies, provide greater accountability for funded services, and provide consistent meaningful data to government funders to better inform future funding decisions.</p>
<p>Alternative dispute resolution.</p>	<p>Our experience across various jurisdictions is that there are two considerations in maximising and finding success within alternate dispute resolution models.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establishing the mechanisms for Police to identify and refer disputes for resolution. In Queensland the State Dispute Resolution Services have just partnered with SupportLink and have begun receiving referrals from Police.</li> <li>2. Many resolutions services continue to work to rigid and often less effective models that include disputing parties needing to agree to face to face mediation sessions.</li> </ol> <p>If mediation services were more phone based and utilised shuttle mediation (mediator engaging both parties via phone) and there was more emphasis on delivering an agreed outcome to the dispute, this service would be vastly more effective and be able to be utilised across the state. This would also reduce costs and give access to rural, remote, regional and metro areas.</p>

<p>Whether you consider other models in national and international jurisdictions could be implemented in Queensland and whether you consider they would be more effective;</p>	<p>No response</p>
<p>Experiences or observations of the Queensland criminal justice system, including experiences from victims of sexual violence and/or domestic violence;</p>	<p>The SupportLink model now underpins both the family violence and victims sector by providing a consistent framework that enables police to refer.</p> <p>There has been a significant increase in the numbers of victims receiving assistance via this model since 2010.</p>
<p>Your interactions with the Queensland Police Service, the courts, prosecuting authorities, legal and support services and compensation processes</p>	<p>SupportLink works with various police services across Australia. Our interactions with QPS are very positive. QPS managers across the state seem eager to embrace innovation and collaboration.</p>
<p>Possible strategies to increase collaboration and co-operation between various participants in the criminal justice system</p>	<p>SupportLink is currently in discussions with senior persons across the criminal justice system in Queensland. There seems a strong appetite for further integration between each department and with non-government agencies and toward replication of the QPS/SupportLink model.</p> <p>We would suggest to the Committee that this whole of government/community service integration is achievable and if fully realised would substantially improve the existing service system and crime prevention outcomes.</p>