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National Drug Research Institute

Preventing harmful drug use in Australia

MAKIN TRACKS
Final Evaluation Report



MAKIN TRACKS
Final Evaluation Report

Dennis Gray & Anna Stearne

**National Drug Research Institute
Curtin University of Technology**

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Copies of this Report can be obtained from:

The Administrative Assistant
National Drug Research Institute
Curtin University of Technology
GPO Box U1987
PERTH WA 6845

Telephone: (08) 9266-1600

Facsimile: (08) 9266-1611

E-mail: enquires@ndri.curtin.edu.au

Web: <http://www.curtin.edu.au/curtin/centre/ndri>

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1. INTRODUCTION

On the 23rd August 1999, the Manager of the South Australian State Office of the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care (DHAC – now the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing) informed the Aboriginal Alcohol and Drug Council (ADAC) that it had been successful in its application for funds for the ‘Development of strategies to address and reduce solvent misuse and other drug use in selected Aboriginal communities’. This project was subsequently named *Makin Tracks*, and work on it commenced in October 1999.

The original objectives of the *Makin Tracks* project were to:

- develop a multi-strategy plan for intervention strategies for Aboriginal solvent and other drug misusers in selected Aboriginal communities in South Australia within 3–4 months of the beginning of the project;
- develop individual community strategies for intervention (prevention, early intervention and treatment) in solvent and other drug misuse as soon as possible but within time-frames set by individual communities; and,
- develop a strategic multi-agency plan for intervention with Aboriginal solvent and other drug misusers in the cross-border region during the second year.

These objectives – as well as specific outcomes, performance indicators, and the methods by which these were to be evaluated – were developed as part of the original project proposal and subsequently modified in negotiations between officers from ADAC, DHAC and the project Steering Committee. The strategy for evaluation of the project was developed by the National Drug Research Institute (NDRI) in conjunction with ADAC staff and endorsed by the Steering Committee.

As a result both of the experience of the *Makin Tracks* team and of the on-going project evaluation, the original objectives and performance indicators were modified with the endorsement of the project Steering Committee. In the sections that follow, both the

original objectives and the revised objectives are listed and a report on achievements with regard to each of the performance indicators is provided.

2. EVALUATION METHODS

As indicated previously, the evaluation strategy for the project was developed by ADAC staff members in consultation with staff from NDRI when the original project proposal was prepared. When the grant was made to ADAC, the strategy was reviewed, modified and endorsed by the project Steering Committee. As part of this process, for each objective, desired outcomes and performance indicators were identified and methods were developed for ascertaining whether the objectives had been achieved. In the sections of the report that follow, each objective, outcome and performance indicator is listed and a review of the evidence for its achievement (or otherwise) is presented.

ADAC staff, with advice from the evaluators, developed a sheet to record the daily activities of patrol team members. On this sheet – which was introduced in March 2000 – team members summarised their activities in pursuit of the objectives under seven summary categories, with notes on those activities. These categories were:

- strengthening existing programs/projects – providing support to the staff of other agencies (but also to staff from other ADAC projects) to help improve the planning and delivery of specific services;
- direct involvement with target groups – working directly (either alone or with staff from other agencies) with people at risk of substance misuse;
- community and agency contacts – including promotion of *Makin Tracks* project activities, liaison with representatives of other agencies, and participation in inter-agency meetings and activities;
- project planning and administration – that is, planning and administrative activities related to the operation of the *Makin Tracks* project itself;
- staff development and conference attendance;
- travel, and preparation for travel, to communities; and,
- leave – both recreational and for ‘sorry business’ (bereavement).

Team members submitted these daily activity sheets to ADAC supervisory staff and the evaluators on a monthly basis, along with a monthly summary report that highlighted key activities, successes and any difficulties encountered. These reports were used by ADAC staff to supplement day-to-day monitoring of team activities. Evaluation staff collated these sheets on a quarterly basis and used them to report back to the project Steering Committee on process evaluation issues relating to each of the project outcomes. In this report, where these activities pertain directly to particular objectives, they are included in discussion of those objectives. Where they relate to the general role of team members – for example administrative activities or leave taking – the activities are reported on under the objective of project team establishment.

As well as reviewing the daily activity sheets and monthly reports provided by patrol team members, evaluation staff met regularly with them and ADAC supervisory staff to monitor progress. Evaluation staff also monitored other documentary evidence provided by ADAC staff.

Reporting by ADAC staff and the evaluators to the Steering Committee enabled the activities of the *Makin Tracks* team to be closely monitored and facilitated changes to the original objectives in response to community and/or agency needs and to the operation of the team itself. The most important of these was the change to *Makin Tracks* project objectives made in May 2001, when the second and third of the original objectives were dropped and replaced by a new one – ‘to provide support and/or training and general back-up for substance use workers and organisations’. Outcome measures and performance indicators for this new objective were developed by *Makin Tracks* team members.

Towards the conclusion of the project, two Aboriginal staff members from NDRI conducted a total of 29 key informant interviews with:

- 6 ADAC staff members (five current and one previous);
- 10 Australian, South Australian and local government representatives; and,
- 13 representatives of community organisations from Coober Pedy, Oodnadatta, Port Augusta, Port Lincoln, Whyalla and Yalata.

The structure and questions employed in the key informant interviews were varied to accommodate the different degrees and types of contact that informants had with the project, but focused on eliciting evidence about the extent to which the project objectives had been met. Assessment of outcomes was based on these qualitative data.

One of the things that is not reported upon is the general issue of the impact the *Makin Tracks* project has had upon levels of substance use among Aboriginal people. In the second of the original objectives – the development of individual community intervention strategies – it was planned to monitor levels of use in the relatively small number communities in which it was anticipated such strategies would be developed and implemented. However, when it was realised that this objective was not achievable and it was dropped, so too was the monitoring of substance use levels. In retrospect, the plan to monitor substance misuse levels was overly-ambitious given the level of resources available to team members and the extent to which they would have had to rely on other agencies, such as the police or community organisations, to obtain such data.

The large number of variables that effect levels of substance misuse, the area of South Australia covered and small size of the *Makin Tracks* team mean that any influence on levels of substance misuse arising from the project is likely to be long term and indirect, as the direct impact of supporting other workers and organisations takes effect. Given this, it is also unrealistic to expect ADAC to be able to demonstrate such effect. Rather the impact of the project is best reflected in the performance indicators reported.

3. MAKIN TRACKS PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND THEIR ACHIEVEMENT

Objective 1

Develop a multi-agency plan for intervention strategies for Aboriginal solvent and other drug misusers in selected Aboriginal communities in South Australia within 3–4 months of the beginning of the project.

Outcome 1.1

Cooperation between a range of service providers and the Makin Tracks team in the development and implementation of community strategies to address substance misuse in selected communities.

Performance Indicator 1.1.1

Establishment of a South Australian-based Steering Committee to identify key players in the development of intervention strategies for solvent misusers (within one month of commencement).

This performance indicator was met.

An inaugural meeting of a proposed Steering Committee was held in Alice Springs on the 8th November 1999. In accordance with the original aim of conducting the project over all of South Australia as well as neighbouring parts of the Northern Territory and Western Australia, ADAC attempted to make the Steering Committee as inclusive as possible and issued invitations to a range of relevant organisations. Draft terms of reference for the Committee were presented to those in attendance for discussion. At a subsequent meeting, held in Adelaide on the 3rd March 2000, membership of the Steering Committee was finalised and the terms of reference for the Committee were formally adopted.

The Steering Committee was comprised of representatives from:

- Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council (SA);
- Whyalla Community Health Centre;
- Yalata - Maralinga Health Service (now Tullawon Health Service);
- Umoona Tjutagku Health Service;
- Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, Department of Health and Ageing;

- Drug and Alcohol Services Council (SA);
- Aboriginal Health Council (SA);
- South Australian Police;
- Injartnama Community (NT);
- Ngaanyatjarra Health Services (WA);
- Central Australian Aboriginal Congress;
- Drug and Alcohol Services Council (Alice Springs, NT); and,
- National Drug Research Institute (NDRI) as evaluator.

Two organisations – Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankuntjatjara Women’s Council and Nganampa Health Council – were invited to the inaugural meeting but declined to participate and, after being confirmed as a member at the March meeting, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress did not participate further.

During the course of the project, seven Steering Committee meetings were held – six in Adelaide and one in Coober Pedy to give Committee members a greater insight into project activities and working conditions. Apart from ADAC and NDRI (represented in its role as project evaluator), the organisations that were most actively involved in the Committee were the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and/or the Department of Health and Ageing, the Drug and Alcohol Services Council (SA), and the South Australian Police. Other organisations participated as time and location of the meetings permitted. In the case of Ngaanyatjarra Health Services/Warburton Community and Injartnama Community, participation on the Committee ceased when it was decided to reduce the geographical coverage of the project and participation was of less relevance to them.

A strength of the Steering Committee was the broad range of government and non-government agency representation combined with a strong Aboriginal point of view. As well as representatives from Aboriginal community controlled organisations, key agencies on the committee such as the Drug and Alcohol Services Council and the Department of Health and Ageing had both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal representatives attend meetings. As an Aboriginal representative of a community-controlled organisation commented on the make-up of the Committee:

I think, it has good representation. I think, from the Police representative, right through to other agencies on the committee, I think it's a good selection. I think there were enough Aboriginal people on there to reflect an Aboriginal point of view. And to be aware about some of the issues, and to give advice about some of the issues when going out into the community.

Table 1: Attendance at *Makin Tracks* Steering Committee meetings by organisational representatives

Organisation	3/3/2000	17/5/2000	4/12/00	7/5/01	13/12/01	21/5/02	8/10/02	Total attended
Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü	7
Drug and Alcohol Services Council (SA);	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü	7
National Drug Research Institute	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü	7
OATSIH/Department of Health and Ageing	ü		ü	ü	ü	ü	ü	6
South Australian Police	ü		ü	ü	ü	ü	ü	6
Aboriginal Health Council (SA)	ü		ü	ü		ü		3
Drug and Alcohol Services Association (NT)	ü		ü	ü				3
Tullawon Health Service				ü	ü	ü		3
Whyalla Community Health Centre	ü	ü						2
Aboriginal Services Division, Dept of Human Services (SA)		ü				ü		2
Umoona Tjutagku Health Service				ü				1
Ngaanyatjarra Health Services/Warburton Community (WA)		ü						1
Injartnama Community (NT)		ü						1

The Steering Committee members provided comment upon, and endorsed, modifications to the objectives of the project and to various project documents – including the protocols for involvement in communities, project officer intervention strategies, and reporting data sheets. Committee members also provided advice on the targeting of communities and liaison with other agencies, kept the *Makin Tracks* team abreast of issues of relevance to the project, and were generally supportive of the

team's activities. Commenting upon the advice provided by the Committee and the receptivity of the *Makin Tracks* team to it, one Committee member stated:

... What I was suggesting was ways that they could work collaboratively with DASC (Drug and Alcohol Services Council) staff in the outlying areas, so I would make suggestions about linking up and working together wherever they could and that was taken up – so on that basis, yes (the advice I provided was taken up).

Performance Indicator 1.1.2

Completed intervention strategy plan.

This performance indicator was met.

ADAC staff members in general, and the *Makin Tracks* team members in particular, brought a considerable degree of experience of substance misuse interventions to the project. Building on this, the team developed a plan that included background information on the project, outlined the kind of assistance that the team was able to provide and set out the steps for implementation. The plan included an attachment that provided specific examples of the activities that team members might undertake under the headings:

- facilitate community discussions;
- run community education/awareness programs;
- training programs;
- community development; and,
- support community initiatives.

An updated version of the plan was endorsed by the project Steering Committee at a meeting in Coober Pedy on 7th May 2001 – with positive comments being made by Committee members about its potential usefulness for similar projects elsewhere.

The intervention strategy plan was important, not only because it provided a blueprint for action by the team, but because it clearly specified the range of activities in which team members could engage – thus not creating unrealistic expectations among community members or representatives of community organisations.

Performance Indicator 1.1.3

Commitments from the relevant agencies and service providers to cooperate in the implementation of the project.

This performance indicator was met.

It was initially proposed by the *Makin Tracks* team that formal agreements be signed between ADAC and other key service provider agencies. However, the other agencies declined to enter written agreements. At a Steering Committee meeting in Adelaide on 4th December 2000, representatives of both the Drug and Alcohol Services Council (DASC) and the South Australian Police indicated that their participation on the Steering Committee was evidence of their agencies' commitment to the project. The support of these agencies was further evidenced by joint project related activities with ADAC. Such support was essential to the success of the project because the team was small and resources limited. A commitment to working together enabled better use of available resources and had a synergistic effect. Evidence of this was the way in which team members worked with staff from DASC and the 'Blue House' (a youth recreational centre run by Tullawon Health Service at Yalata) to provide services and assistance in program development. This willingness on the part the *Makin Tracks* team and other agencies to work collaboratively was a strength of the project. A representative of one agency said:

(Makin Tracks) ... is successful because they're willing to work with other agencies. They're not trying to do it alone, they do realise that if they tag on to another agency they're better off [sport and recreation officer, Port Augusta].

Outcome 1.2

A strategic policy and resource base to assist individual community plans.

Performance Indicator 1.2.1

Establishment of a mobile patrol to assist communities to intervene (prevention, early intervention and treatment) in solvent and other drug misuse.

This performance indicator was met.

Establishment of a well functioning mobile patrol was essential for the implementation of most aspects of the project objectives. The patrol was established and vehicles purchased in the first year of the project's operation. The original two-person team consisted of Mr Doug Walker and Mr Paul Elliot. After undergoing a period of

induction and language training, Mr Elliot resigned for family reasons and in February 2000 was replaced by Mr Graham (Louie) Harradine. Messers Walker and Harradine stayed with the project until the end of the 2000–2001 financial year – when both resigned for family reasons. They were replaced in the second quarter of the 2001–2002 financial year by Mr Jimmy Perry and Mr David (Mindi) Crombie. Mr Perry remained with the project from that time until its completion. Mr Crombie resigned in February 2002 and was replaced by Ms Sarah Betts in April that year. However, she resigned in June and was replaced at the end of September 2002 by Mr Paul Elliot (one of the original team members).

The high staff turnover and the time lost through recruiting new staff had an impact on the number of days that team members were actually employed (see Table 2). This was particularly the case over the two quarters from July to December 2001 and the July to September quarter 2002. In those periods, no-one worked in the July–September quarter 2001 (one person was employed for 14 days but was on leave during that time) and in the other two quarters one or both workers were employed for little more than half the available working days. However, during these periods, other ADAC staff maintained regular contact with community-based workers so that they did not feel abandoned. The turnover of staff affected both individual workers and the communities with which they were working. As the Director of ADAC noted:

Each time when someone's moved on it meant the other person had a lot of other pressure put on them, because they got to pick up ... (the workload of the person who had left). It also meant that ... (we could not fulfil the expectations of) groups like Yalata who signed a community agreement with us, thinking that somebody would be staying over there, and we couldn't fulfil that.

The turnover of staff was relatively high and all resignations occurred because of the strain of long periods of intensive work in the field and the strains placed on family relationships by such long absences. As two members of the Steering Committee members said:

The workers kept leaving – which is a big problem with the continuity of the project. It's hard work to drive and spend so much time away, and it's hard to expect people to do that.
and,

Table 2: Period of employment and number of days worked per employee by quarter, October '99 to September '03

Employee	Oct-Dec 99	Jan-Mar 00	Apr-Jun 00	Jul-Sep 00	Oct-Dec 00	Jan-Mar 01	Apr-Jun 01	Jul-Sep 01	Oct-Dec 01	Jan-Mar 02	Apr-Jun 02	Jul-Sep 02	Oct-Dec 02	Jan-Mar 03	Apr-Jun 03	Jul-Sep 03	Total
Doug Walker	*	*	63	71	50	51	63	14									312
Paul Elliot	*	*										3	62	63	67	65	260
Louie Haradine		*	66	65	58	49	61										299
Jimmy Perry									37	68	68	63	63	64	65	58	484
David Crombie									35	29							64
Sarah Betts											62						62
Total days worked	129	136	108	100	124	14	72	95	130	66	125	127	132	123			1481

* Not recorded for evaluation purposes

I think the major hurdle in the beginning was to expect staff to be able to stay on the road for long periods of time, and make relationship with communities and then sustain them. ... I think that was something that was recognised by the organisation; that you're not going to get someone who's able to do that consistently for the time.

This problem was recognised and, in the second phase of the project, was partly addressed by having staff make more frequent visits of shorter duration to some communities. In the case of Mr Elliot's intensive work at Yalata, the problem was also addressed by making arrangements for his partner to accompany him on his stays there.

In Table 3 (page 15), the percentages of working days spent by patrol team members on various categories of activity are reported. The four major categories of these activities are presented graphically in Figure 1 (and for all categories of activity in the Appendix to this report). As Figure 1 illustrates, there were clearly two phases to the project in terms of activity. One reason for the differences between these phases was the change of project objectives agreed to by the Steering Committee at its May 2001 meeting. In the first phase of the project, the emphasis was on the original objective of developing individual community strategies for intervention. In the second phase, the emphasis was on the newer objective of providing support and/or training and general back-up for organisations, and workers providing substance misuse services in selected communities. Another reason for the difference between the phases was the change in personnel. In the second phase, the personnel were either younger and/or had less involvement or status in traditional 'Law business' – factors that enabled them to be more involved in 'hands-on' activities with young people.

Project planning and administration

In the early stages, 'project planning and administrative activities' primarily involved the development of the *Makin Tracks* intervention strategies, but also included routine activities such as: development and gathering of resources; planning of field trips; attendance at regular ADAC staff and Steering Committee meetings; and routine reporting of activities. In the first phase of the project these activities accounted for about 27 per cent of workdays, but in the second phase were reduced to about 18 per cent. In the first phase of the project, much of the time spent on routine administrative

activities was enforced by the dependence of team members on the readiness of communities to develop their own intervention plans and strategies. As a consequence of the new project objective developed in May 2001, staff took a more proactive approach to the strengthening existing programs/project and to being directly involved with target groups – thus more productively spending time that had been devoted to administrative activities.

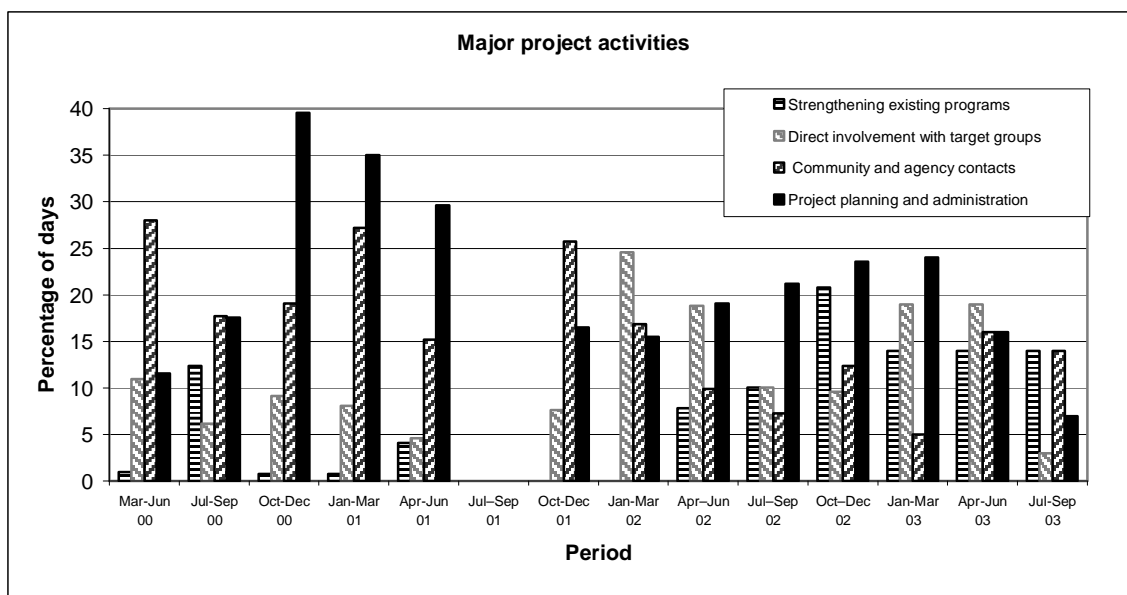


Figure 1: Percentage of staff time spent on major project activities, Mar–Jun '00 to Jul–Sep '03

Table 3: Percentage of working days spent by Makin Tracks staff on project activities by quarter, March-June '00 to July-September '03

Activity	Mar-Jun 00 n=129 %	Jul-Sep 00 n=136 %	Oct-Dec 00 n=108 %	Jan-Mar 01 n=100 %	Apr-Jun 01 n=124 %	Jul-Sep 01 n=14 %	Oct-Dec 01 n=72 %	Jan-Mar 02 n=95 %	Apr-Jun 02 n=130 %	Jul-Sep 02 n=72 %	Oct-Dec 02 n=125 %	Jan-Mar 03 n=127 %	Apr-Jun 03 n=132 %	Jul-Sep 03 n=123 %	Total 1364 %
Strengthening existing programs	1	12	1	1	4	0	0	0	8	10	21	114	14	24	8
Direct involvement with target groups	11	6	9	8	5	0	8	25	19	10	10	19	19	3	12
Community contacts	28	18	19	27	15	0	26	17	10	7	12	5	16	14	16
Travel/Travel prep & maintenance	35	23	19	14	17	0	25	24	23	11	23	25	15	24	21
Admin/Project planning	12	18	40	35	30	0	17	15	19	21	24	24	16	7	22
Staff dev/Conference attendance	7	5	3	5	1	0	23	11	6	24	8	0	9	4	7
Leave/Sorry business	5	19	9	10	28	100	3	8	15	16	3	13	11	24	13

Commenting on the time spent on project planning and administration (as well as travel and travel preparation), one of the team members said:

One of the main things to remember is that while we're doing the ongoing work based on the objectives (of the project), there's a lot of preparation time involved.

Community and agency contacts

A variety of activities was included in the category 'community and agency contacts'. These activities related to several of the performance outcomes and performance indicators and included: marketing of the program; development of community strategies; and provision of training resources and support to staff and members of other agencies and community organisations. Workdays spent on these activities declined from about 21 per cent in the first phase of the project to about 13 per cent in the second. The reduction was a result of a significant decline in community strategy development and the need to promote the project, which was partly offset by an accompanying increase in the provision of support to other community workers.

Performance Indicator 1.2.2

Production of acceptable and appropriate resource materials for use at the community level.

This indicator was met.

The role of *Makin Tracks* team members in resource development has essentially been supportive of the efforts of others. As part of a related project, ADAC staff developed *Petrol Sniffing and Other Solvents: A Resource Kit for Aboriginal Communities*.¹ This became an integral tool in the *Makin Tracks* project. Over 1300 copies of the kit have been distributed nationally and team members promoted it, were involved in workshops on its use (in Adelaide, Port Augusta, Broken Hill, Dareton, Balranald, Melbourne, Dubbo, Bourke and Perth), and were involved in the development of a training video on use of the manual. *Makin Tracks* team members also contributed to the development of a training manual for front-line substance misuse workers that was developed by ADAC.²

In conjunction with DASC, ADAC staff jointly produced information cards on cannabis and other drugs, a pamphlet on volatile substances and a hepatitis C prevention poster and calendar. Team members also assisted students from Warriappendi High School to design and produce their own pamphlets on cannabis, alcohol and tobacco that were subsequently launched by the Premier of South Australia as part of a broader prevention program. Regionally, *Makin Tracks* team members provided assistance to staff from the Plaza Youth Centre in Whyalla to develop a booklet on the dangers of solvent use and assisted staff from the Aboriginal Liaison Unit at Port Augusta Hospital with the production of videos highlighting substance misuse issues that were screened on local television.

Commenting on the largely supportive role of *Makin Tracks* team members in these activities, an ADAC staff member said:

Looking at the range of skills people have it's a big ask for the *Makin Tracks* guys (to be involved in these activities). *Makin Tracks* have input into the training frontline workers package. They've assisted with the development of a lot of projects and resources but aren't the prime movers in the production, for a number of reasons. You can't expect people to do the travelling at the same time as creating resources; the skills of the workers are limited.

The acceptability and appropriateness of the resources produced with the assistance of *Makin Tracks* team members is evidenced by the widespread demand for them by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous organisations providing substance misuse services to Indigenous people.

Performance Indicator 1.2.3

Completed intervention strategy protocols – which can be used or modified for use in particular communities.

This performance indicator was met.

The *Makin Tracks* project team developed a document entitled 'Project Officer Intervention Strategies' which outlined eight key intervention strategies and specific activities to be undertaken to achieve them. They also developed a set of protocols that clearly set out what the team would, and would not do, to assist communities. These were based on community development principles and were incorporated into a brochure developed to publicise the project.

Performance Indicator 1.2.4

Positive responses to resource materials and intervention strategies by community members, health care providers and others.

This indicator was met.

On the 30th June 2001 ADAC received a Ted Noffs' Award – a national award for exceptional work in the drug and alcohol field – for the *Petrol Sniffing and Other Solvents* resource kit. The positive response to this resource was also reflected in the high level of demand which necessitated a re-printing of the kit. It was also reflected in the large number of requests for workshops on the kit and the fact that a video on its use had to be developed because ADAC staff – including *Makin Tracks* team members – could not meet the high level of demand for workshops.

Positive responses to the *Makin Tracks* intervention strategies were reflected in invitations to team members to contribute to an increasing range of activities such as youth activities in Yalata, support for a group from Yalata to attend a football carnival at Finke in the Northern Territory, and support for a men's camp conducted in conjunction with Port Lincoln Health Aboriginal Services and Nunkuwarrin Yunti health service.

Objective 2:

Develop individual community strategies for intervention (prevention, early intervention and treatment) in solvent and other drug misuse as soon as possible but within time-frames set by individual communities.

Outcome 2.1

Individual community strategies for intervention in solvent and other drug misuse.

Outcome 2.2

A transfer of skills to the community, with an umbrella support, so that intervention plans are sustainable with limited government funding.

Outcome 2.3

Lessen the requirement for crisis funding to address solvent and other drug misuse, by having community intervention strategies in place.

Partial progress was made towards meeting this objective. However, as the project progressed it became clear to ADAC staff and *Makin Tracks* Steering Committee

members that the objective was inappropriate. By January 2000, formal agreements to develop intervention strategies had been signed with Yalata-Maralinga Health Service (now Tullawon Health Service), Port Lincoln Aboriginal Health Service, Point Pearce Aboriginal Community and the Dunjiba Aboriginal Community. Despite these agreements being signed, the reality is that most Aboriginal community organisations do not work within such structured frameworks and it was perceived to be unlikely that communities would develop the formal intervention strategies initially envisaged. Nevertheless, agreement of other communities to be involved in the *Makin Tracks* project was informally evidenced by their participation rather than the signing of formal agreements.

When the *Makin Tracks* project was established, it was envisaged that most of the team's work would be undertaken in discrete Aboriginal communities. However, as the project developed, work was increasingly undertaken in towns (such as Whyalla and Port Lincoln) where there was no single agency representing the whole community with which formal agreements could be made. At the same time, the focus within the project changed to providing increased support to community workers and to established services and programs. Reflecting these changed circumstances, this objective was acknowledged as not being relevant to the project and what became Objective 3 'revised' (see below) was developed by ADAC staff.

Objective 3 (original)

Develop a strategic multi-agency plan for the treatment of Aboriginal solvent and other drug misusers in the cross-border region during the second year.

This was the third objective of the original *Makin Tracks* project. Members of the *Makin Tracks* team took initial steps towards the objective by visiting Mutitjulu in the Northern Territory at the end of 1999–2000 and Warburton at the beginning of 2000–2001. One of the Steering Committee members also undertook some preliminary investigations into possible structures for implementing such a plan. However, soon after this, an inter-governmental committee was established to develop a tripartite agreement on approaches to substance misuse in the cross-border region – a move that precluded ADAC from taking the lead role in this area. Furthermore – as previously

indicated – in the light of experience gained by the *Makin Tracks* patrol team, the Steering Committee endorsed an implementation strategy focusing on providing more intensive support to fewer communities in closer proximity to Adelaide. These developments thus rendered this objective inappropriate and it was dropped.

Objective 3 (revised)

Provide support and/or training and general back-up for organisations and workers providing substance misuse services in selected communities.

As indicated above, this new project objective and the associated outcome measures and performance indicators were included during the 2000–2001 financial year.

Outcome 3.1

Skilled and trained substance misuse workers working in rural and remote locations where in the normal course of events, access to such people would not generally be available.

Performance Indicator 3.1.1

Skill and qualifications of the project officers employed.

This performance indicator was met.

As indicated previously, over the life of the project, a total of six people were employed as patrol team members on the *Makin Tracks* project. These workers had earned a variety of qualifications and had a wide range of experience that they took to the communities to which they provided assistance. Of those most recently employed, Mr Perry held a Certificate III in Aboriginal Primary Health Care and had five years experience as an Aboriginal health worker before joining the team. Mr Elliot held: a Certificate IV in Aboriginal Primary Health Care (Hospital Liaison and Drug and Alcohol Misuse); Certificate IV Community Services; Certificate IV Youth Work; Certificate III Aboriginal Community Management; and was an Accredited Workplace Trainer/Assessor. Prior to joining the *Makin Tracks* team he had worked for 20 years in Aboriginal health – including the in areas of substance misuse, primary and community health, and education and training.

Former project officers also had a range of qualifications and experience. In addition to working in Aboriginal health and welfare, Mr Walker held a Graduate Diploma in

Counselling and Human Services. Mr Harradine held a Certificate in Aboriginal Community Management and worked for ADAC developing drug and alcohol resources for prisoners prior to joining the *Makin Tracks* team. Ms Betts – the only female to work as *Makin Tracks* team member – held a Certificate IV in Aboriginal Primary Health Care and previously worked as an Aboriginal primary health worker and as a drug and alcohol worker.

The experience and skills of all team members contributed greatly to the *Makin Tracks* project – as the following examples illustrate. Mr Elliot’s qualifications and experience in primary health care, youth work and workplace training had direct application at Yalata, where he assisted in the development of a substance misuse program for young people and in the training of a community-based substance misuse worker. Mr Perry’s primary health care experience was directly applied in the development and delivery of drug and alcohol education sessions for school students, community groups, and prisoners in which – through the sharing of personal experiences – participants were able to discuss substance misuse issues. Mr Harradine was able to draw on his personal experiences of substance misuse and incarceration when he addressed issues of volatile substance misuse within the youth program at Whyalla. The community-based worker said of Mr Harradine:

Louie (Mr Harradine) spoke to ... (Whyalla youth worker) with the older group about deep experiences. It’s good to have someone to talk to who has had experiences like himself in the past. (He was) involved, you know, in drug and criminal activity then to come out and (it was) real positive and kids really look up at him.

In addition to application of these skills to the field work, other ADAC staff acknowledged the importance of experienced project officers in developing and collecting quality resources for regional and remote communities. For example, their experience – particularly Mr Walker’s understanding of the problems faced by communities when confronted by petrol and other volatile substance inhalation – made a vital contribution to the development of *Petrol Sniffing and Other Solvents: A Resource Kit for Aboriginal Communities*, and to the subsequent development of workshops and a training video.

Despite the skills brought by the team members to the project and the positive way in which they were applied, there were some limitations on what they could do because of the range of activities in which they were required to be involved. Commenting on this and ways of working around it, the *Makin Tracks* project manager said:

If you look at the job description it's a big ask for one person to have all those skills – education and teaching skills, resource development, administration skills – no matter who you appoint to the position it's a big ask to do this sort of work. ... We've been developing and refining the project over the last few years. The work we do is always dependent on the abilities of the workers – and the personalities of those working with us. This is because we're a small team. It'd be different if we had more staff – then you could go with strengths of the workers and do a lot more; but because of the size of the project staff we're dictated (to) strongly by the abilities of the workers. We're reliant on what they're capable of.

Outcome 3.2

Increased effectiveness and skills of workers and organisations.

Performance Indicator 3.2.1

Training programs delivered, greater range of programs being delivered.

This performance indicator has been met.

The shortage of skilled substance misuse workers in rural and remote Aboriginal communities, its impact on the quality of service delivery, and the need to address it has been identified in several reports.³ The issue was neatly summarised by one of the *Makin Tracks* team members who said:

We get people out in the communities who wouldn't normally have had training. They're often just locals who want to help. They won't admit that they need training or help. We provide them with support that they wouldn't normally get – particularly because of their isolation. We've been given the opportunities to work along side these people and help them to develop their programs. People like ... (a drug and alcohol worker) who was given the job because he didn't drink.

The training provided by *Makin Tracks* team members was dependent upon the needs of particular workers and communities. It included both group and individual training sessions and both formal and informal modes of delivery. All *Makin Tracks* project officers assumed responsibility for different training tasks in accordance with their individual strengths and availability. Formal training workshops during the 2002–2003 financial year included:

- a review of solvents workshop;
- hepatitis C workshops in Mobilong prison and at the Parks Health Service;

- police drug diversion workshops in places including Adelaide, Ceduna, Port Lincoln, Mount Gambier, Narracourt, Clare, Murray Bridge, Mount Barker, and Port Augusta; and,
- general drug and alcohol education workshops with students at Warriappendi and Fremont-Elizabeth City high schools and in the Wiltja Secondary Education Program at Woodville High School in Adelaide, solvent and petrol sniffing education with Plaza Youth in Whyalla, and community members in Indulkana, Mimili, Umuwa, Ernabella, Amata, Yulara, Areyonga and Papunya.

The most commonly held of these training sessions – police drug diversion workshops – was a result of collaboration that grew from South Australian Police and DASC involvement on the *Makin Tracks* Steering Committee.

Often, the training provided was informal – as was much of the intensive on-going support provided by Mr Elliot for the substance misuse workers and the Blue House Project at Yalata. One team member stressed the importance of such informal training stating:

You have to design the program, provide on-the-job training, then sit down and find out what the problems or gaps in knowledge are – then fill it all in.

Counselling is just yarning with a purpose.

The workshops, training programs and one-on-one assistance provided by *Makin Tracks* staff helped to empower substance misuse workers in regional and remote communities. For example, at Yalata – where the community had previously experienced difficulty employing and retaining a community-based worker for the substance misuse program – the current worker stated:

The fella that was here left, and the job was open for a while. I said I'd take it if Jimmy and Paul would help me. ... It's hard to get someone who's skilled and qualified and willing to work in remote areas. It's pretty much them being the lecturer and me being the student.

The activities of *Makin Tracks* team members at Port Lincoln provides another example of the informal training and support given to community-based workers. The substance

misuse worker there had limited experience and knowledge in the area and felt the contact with the *Makin Tracks* team was of great benefit. He stated:

When I met Doug [*Makin Tracks* project officer], I wanted to know how I should do things – even though I can deal with drugs and alcohol because of my own family experiences. But how do I address this as a worker? Doug sort of gave me a kick start on how to approach my people in the counselling type role. I still reflect back on his words now, and I've been working here for three years. I met Doug in my first few months of working here. It made an impact on my work.

Performance Indicator 3.2.2

Amount of time spent by project officers in rural and remote communities.

This performance indicator was met.

Over the course of the project, the *Makin Tracks* team spent a total of 576 working days (40 per cent of all days they were employed) in a total of 31 rural and remote communities (see Table 4).

As indicated previously, the system of keeping daily activity sheets was introduced in March 2000. From then until June 2001, the mobile patrol members concentrated their efforts in six locations – Dunjiba/Oodnadatta (where they spent 82 days), Coober Pedy (21 days), Whyalla (32 days), Point Pearce/Wardang (29 days), Port Augusta (29 days), and Yalata (21 days). They also spent another 67 days in 11 other locations. A total of 131 days was spent in travel, or preparation for travel, to these locations. After consideration of the team's activities, at its May 2001 meeting, the project Steering Committee decided that the mobile patrol should focus its activities on a smaller number of communities. This decision was made for several reasons including: a need to provide greater levels of support to communities and/or agencies; to reduce the proportion of time spent travelling; and to reduce the periods in which patrol staff were separated from their families.

Table 4: Person-days spent by Makin Tracks staff in community locations by quarter, March–June '00 to July–September '03

Location	Mar–Jun '00	Jul–Sep '00	Oct–Dec '00	Jan–Mar '01	Apr–Jun '01	Jul–Sep '01	Oct–Dec '01	Jan–Mar '02	Apr–Jun '02	Jul–Sep '02	Oct–Dec '02	Jan–Mar '03	Apr–Jun '03	Jul–Sep '03	Total
Yalata	2	17			2		7	14	19	10	23	31	44	13	182
Dunjiba/Oodnadatta	24	13	13	25	7		1					1			84
Port Lincoln	1	3	3				2	20	21	1		1	1		53
Pt Augusta	17	6	4	1	1		1	7		2	3	2			44
Whyalla	3			25	4			1					1		34
Point Pearce/Wardang	1	3	15	1	9							1	1		30
Cooper Pedy	5		5	9	2		1	1	2	3	3	1	2		24
Ceduna/Kooriba	1	3	2	1	2		3	2		1	2	1			23
Alice Springs	3	2	9	3						1	2				20
Murray Bridge/Kaiparin		4	1		1		1	1	2		6	1	1		16
Riverland/Berri		2	4		2						1		2		11
Copley/Nepabunna	7														7
Port Pirie	1	3			1		1					1			7
Murtjulu	4											3			7
Umuiwai/Ernabella										3		4			7
Camp Coorong			3												3
Amata												3			3
Indulkana												3			3
Mt Barker											2				2
Mt Gambier											2				2
Mt Serle					2										2
Areyonga												2			2
Papunya												2			2
Ernabella												1			1
Fregon												1			1
Leigh Creek												1			1
Mimili												1			1
Raukkan												1			1
Clare											1				1
Narracourt											1				1
Warburton		1													1
Total days	69	57	57	65	33		17	45	44	20	44	60	52	13	576
No of communities	12	11	9	7	11		8	6	4	6	10	18	7	1	31
Median	3	3	4	3	2		1	4.5	10.5	2.5	2	1	1	13	3
% of working days	43	26	58	72	34		25	52	38	36	36	53	43	13	40

As a result of this decision, as illustrated in Table 4, community visits became focused on two communities in particular – Yalata (where staff spent a total of 161 days) and Port Lincoln (46 days). Overall, from October 2001 to the end of the project, there was also a small reduction in the average number of communities visited each quarter – although the average was boosted by an increase in a number of short-term visits to several communities in the October–December 2002 and January–March 2003 quarters when team members were involved in police drug diversion workshops and school health promotion visits.

In the period from September 2001 to the end of the project, the median number of days spent in each community rose from 3.0 to 4.4. This was accompanied by a decrease in the percentage of working days spent in localities outside Adelaide – from 47 per cent to 37 per cent. Nevertheless, despite the decrease after September 2001, the amount of time spent in communities was spent more productively. This is reflected in Table 3 (page 15) which shows a significant increase in the percentage of days spent providing ‘hands-on’ assistance to, and the strengthening of, existing programs within communities. This increase was largely at the expense of a reduction in administrative work – some of which had previously been undertaken while staff were in the field.

The decision to focus on fewer communities did not – as anticipated – lead to a reduction in the amount of time spent travelling or preparing to travel. In the period from the commencement of the project to June 2000, the team travelled extensively to promote awareness of the *Makin Tracks* program. As noted previously, workload data were not collected in the early stages of the project, but this higher level of travelling is reflected in the data for the April–June quarter of 2000 in Table 3. In the following four quarters, the percentage of travel-related work time levelled off at about 20 per cent and from October 2001 to the end of the project remained at that level. As indicated, one of the reasons for the decision to focus on fewer communities was to reduce the amount of time spent in travelling and travel preparation. However, this anticipated saving did not eventuate because of the distance from Adelaide of communities in which team members were working – such as Yalata – and the fact that more visits of shorter duration were made to the smaller number of communities (rather than visits of the same or longer duration). The reality of conducting a project such as this is that it is

probably not possible to reduce the proportion of workload time spent on travel-related activities.

Although team members put considerable effort into planning their field trips, it is important to note that access to communities, the amount of time spent in them, and what can be achieved is often beyond their control. As one of them commented:

The team's very dependent on the community and if they can't access it because of sorry business things and weather. ... We can't be out on the road for 90 percent of the time.

As indicated previously, in the period from March 2000 to June 2001, the localities that were the focus of activity were Dunjiba/Oodnadatta, Whyalla, Port Augusta, Point Pearce/Wardang, and Yalata. However, in the period from October 2001 the focus was on Yalata and Port Lincoln. In part, this reflects the willingness of communities to be involved in the program, but it also partly reflects the areas in which the patrol team members employed up until June 2001 had extensive family/kinship networks. Such networks are important and cannot be overlooked in projects such as this because their presence can facilitate the engagement of particular communities.

Outcome 3.3

Development of new programs and initiatives in selected communities.

Performance Indicator 3.3.1

Number of new programs or program improvements made as a result of Makin Tracks interventions.

This performance indicator was met – although the focus was on improvements to existing programs rather than the development of new programs.

Two aspects of patrol team members' activities (summarised in Table 3) relate to this particular outcome – strengthening of existing programs and direct involvement with target groups. The first of these categories included those activities where team members provided support and assistance to the staff of other agencies or members of community organisations in the implementation of existing substance misuse intervention projects and related activities. With the change in project objectives in May 2001, this became a much more important focus of activity in the second phase of

the project. Over the first phase of the project, this accounted for about four per cent of team workload, but in the second phase accounted for 24 per cent of activity.

At Yalata, Mr Elliot provided regular assistance to the community-based worker, who had no previous experience in the area of substance misuse. Having direct access to Mr Elliot's knowledge and expertise was of great benefit to the program. As the worker said:

I've had a more formal role since meeting Jimmy [Perry] and Paul [Elliot]. I work in the youth program, which is now the drug and alcohol program. They come out and help write up and give direction to the programs that are running in the community.

The second category of activities – direct involvement with target groups – involved patrol team members in initiating or assisting the staff of other agencies to provide direct intervention services (prevention, early intervention and treatment) for those at risk of developing, or who already experience, substance misuse problems. Again, this became an area of increased focus in the second phase of the project. In the first phase of the project, this area of activity accounted for about eight per cent of the team workload. In the second phase there was some fluctuation in the amount of time allocated to these activities – which was, in part, a function of what was happening in particular locations at particular times. However, over the second phase of the project these activities almost doubled and accounted for about 14 per cent of activity.

In addition to school drug education sessions the *Makin Tracks* project officers had direct involvement with community-based target groups. Due to the nature of the work – perceived by some as 'just helping out' – this often goes unseen or unremembered. Examples of this style of work were exemplified in Yalata by the assistance Mr Perry provided when he took young boys to a football carnival at Finke River and talked through the substance misuse issues concerning them, and by the assistance Mr Elliot provided when he went fishing and hunting with groups of men and talked informally about substance misuse.

Outcome 3.4

Provision of material and non-material resources to selected communities, organisations and workers.

Performance Indicator 3.4.1

Quantity and quality of resources developed and distributed to communities, organisations and workers.

This performance indicator was met.

The contribution of *Makin Tracks* team members to the production of resources has been discussed under performance indicator 1.2.2. Here, the focus is upon the distribution of resources and the response to them.

As well as producing their own materials, *Makin Tracks* team members gathered and reviewed materials of relevance to the project and its objectives from other sources. *Makin Tracks* team members, and other ADAC staff members, have developed an extensive collection of such materials and these were distributed as part of the team's activities. These include: posters on Indigenous health issues, substance misuse and hepatitis C; wallet cards and pamphlets on volatile substances, tobacco, yarrdi (marijuana) and muthun (alcohol); and, videos on substance misuse issues, including volatile substance misuse. As indicated previously, as well as providing resources, team members also provided training and education in their use.

The willingness of community-based workers to obtain and use resources provided by the *Makin Tracks* team is an indication of the relevance and worth of the resources. All community-based workers interviewed said that they used the resources commented positively on their value.

Some resources are used like the wallet cards, pamphlets, and general information. We hand them out. We've seen others handing them out. Some of their stuff is used in the cross-cultural training [project officer, Aboriginal Health Unit, Port Augusta].

I've used a lot of them (resources), we use them when we've done workshops with the kids, and we use some of the posters. And a lot of the community members come in and grab a lot of the posters and that [substance misuse officer, Port Lincoln].

Everything is a success. Any resources provided to the communities should be seen as positive – and hopefully useful. There are links with this project and other projects that ADAC run like the drug diversion. Drug diversion provides and creates strong links with and to other agencies as well [Steering Committee member].

For some workers in remote areas, the only resources they have were provided by the *Makin Tracks* team. One such worker said:

Yeah, we've contacted them for stuff. We're often forgotten about as a service because of the isolation. I think that they're doing a great job [substance misuse worker, Coober Pedy].

Outcome 3.5

Social/emotional support for workers, especially for substance misuse workers working in isolation.

Performance Indicator 3.5.1

Length and intensity of contact with substance misuse workers in isolated settings.

This performance indicator was met.

As indicated in the discussion of Performance Indicator 3.2.2, over the life of the project, *Makin Tracks* team members spent 40 per cent of all working days in rural and remote communities. In total, they spent 182 days in Yalata, 84 in Dunjiba/Oodnadatta, 30 in Coober Pedy, 23 in Ceduna/Koonibba, and periods from one to seven days in other remote locations (see Table 4).

The intensity of support provided by *Makin Tracks* team members is exemplified by that provided to the community based worker in Yalata by Mr Elliot in the 112 days he spent there. Not only did provide direct help in the development of the Yalata substance misuse program, he provided training and social support. As the worker said:

Since yarning with Paul [Elliot] he has taught me counselling methods drug and alcohol stuff. ... I'd find it much harder to do this if I didn't have help and assistance.

As indicated previously, this substance misuse worker was only willing to take the position if he had support from *Makin Tracks* staff, and that support was instrumental in his decision to stay in the position:

I'll stay so long as they'll have me.

Similar support was provided at Port Lincoln, where Mr Perry spent 53 days working with a worker from the Aboriginal Medical Service's Men's Health Program, and Whyalla, where Messers Harradine and Walker spent 34 days and provided assistance to a community-based worker dealing with an outbreak of inhalant misuse. In Port Lincoln, Mr Perry acted as a 'sounding-board' and used his network of contacts to help

the worker organise men's camps. The community worker at Whyalla said of the assistance he received:

I wasn't aware of paint (sniffing) I'd never dealt with paint sniffers. So I phoned the Drug and Alcohol Council and I spoke to Louie and Doug. 'I've been asked to work with these groups of kids and we need these sorts of things for community'. I needed some information on how to run these programs for young people. Also, we need to make community aware, community awareness stuff. He (Louie) came down to help me. Louie helped me to establish a group; we put together the inhalants booklet.

Performance Indicator 3.5.2

Positive responses by community members, health care providers and others to the work of the Makin Tracks team.

This performance indicator was met.

Generally, among those we interviewed, the *Makin Tracks* project was well received. The comments of those interviewees based in Adelaide, while generally favourable to the project tended to be qualified. However, at the regional and local levels – where the activities of the team were focused – the comments were overwhelmingly enthusiastic. Importantly, the qualifications made to comments of the success of the project tended to be not about the project itself, but about the broader context in which it operated. For example, the need for the expansion of more broadly based interventions to address substance misuse and the need for additional funds to implement related intervention projects. Such comments included:

We need to address the housing issues in Coober Pedy, before we address the drug and alcohol issues [Department of Human Services officer].

The only way things are going to changes, is if the environment changes, if you make environmental changes. The (Steering) Committee, the team didn't have capacity to do that, but they could sit down and talk with kids, they could sit around a camp fire, or at a little function somewhere and talk about the dangers [Aboriginal health service representative].

Whilst what they do does build some capacity within individuals and families in communities through knowledge, it's only if you have the resources to apply that knowledge that you have a powerful impact [SA Government officer].

The positive comments made were closely linked to the services provided and to issues covered under the other performance indicators. In particular, they centred on the following.

- The positive relationships *Makin Tracks* project workers had established with young people at risk:

Role models are important and this project (ie. these workers) is spreading the message [Aboriginal community worker, Port Augusta].

They (young people in the community) relate to Paul and Jimmy really well – because they interact with them. ... when they come, people are waiting for them [Aboriginal recreation officer, Yalata].

- Training and support for community workers:

We have this thing (the petrol sniffing resource manual) sitting out on cupboard here, and no-one has shown us how to use it. So we got them up, we got Andrew (Biven from ADAC) and Jimmy. They showed us how to go through and use the package properly. [Aboriginal health service representative, Port Augusta].

We (Jimmy and I) are learning from each other. They (*Makin Tracks* staff) made it handy for me to, because I used to do a lot of that (community education) myself, not in depths as the way Jimmy go about it, so we are learning from one another [sports development officer, Port Augusta].

- Provision of resources:

I think that some of what's been done from the ADAC side has increased some sectors' knowledge of what's available in the way of materials, that gives providers information [SA Government officer].

We use the resources from ADAC for field days, the inhalant workshops, one day workshops in the school with the police. Louie was really good for resources he always had things [youth worker Whyalla].

- Creating links and networks between organisations:

They were concerned about doing the work and contacts properly – and developed good communication networks [project officer, Port Augusta].

Makin Tracks has made a major difference in the broader network of agencies. It's important to assess how we are always progressing and moving on. It's helped us to formalise and stabilise connections. The connection didn't exist about 5 years ago [youth worker, Port Lincoln].

- Raising community awareness of alcohol and other drug issues:

In terms of awareness ... (it's had an impact) in terms of awareness there are a lot more kids now talking about drug and alcohol issues [Aboriginal health service representative].

We need to make community aware – community awareness stuff. He (Louie) came down to help me. Louie helped me to establish a group, we put together the inhalants booklet. ... So we put that together and sold it for \$10, and the community sort of reflected on that because it was the only thing available. ... Louie and Doug came down and taught the young people about drugs and gave us some good information [youth worker Whyalla].

- Assistance with the running of programs:

Doug helped with lots of stuff. He helped. He spoke with the kids and the teachers. He did some educational stuff. He did some counselling with the kids who were having trouble – particularly when they had grief issues. It was important for them to speak to someone [youth worker, Dunjiba].

Makin Tracks has done talks at the school about drug and alcohol. They've provided guidance and assistance for me. If I needed the help I could call them to come back here and help me out. Having a contact to talk too is really helpful – Doug help us set up the program and showed us the ways that we can improve our program [substance misuse worker, Coober Pedy].

In line with these positive comments there was general agreement that the project should be re-funded – although one Committee Member thought this should be linked to a wider review of services.

... the program should be re-funded for sure. It's a good project that just needs to be linked to other projects and given a long term recurring budget to help them to do their work, and I suppose and maybe a couple more workers to lift or to lessen the load [Aboriginal health service representative].

We need to ensure that *Makin Tracks* and all the programs on solvents are funded on-going at least four years and until we have addressed a lot of issues [alcohol worker, Coober Pedy].

There was also a view that the project should be expanded.

As far as I'm concerned, it (*Makin Tracks*) has been successful. The sad part about it is ... two people trying to do the work where there should be more people involved [sports development officer, Port Augusta].

There's a need for more people to do this sort of work ... The area that's being covered is hard for just two people. People like Jimmy are working hard [sports and recreation officer, Coober Pedy].

4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The *Makin Tracks* project team met the first of its objectives – the development of a multi-agency plan for intervention strategies for Aboriginal solvent and other drug misusers in selected communities in South Australia. This processual objective included establishment of a Steering Committee, development of an intervention strategy plan, obtaining commitments of cooperation from other agencies, and establishment of a resource base for the project (including most importantly the establishment of a mobile patrol). Monitoring data show that, despite the constraints under which it operated, the project team maintained a high level of output – including servicing communities over a large area of South Australia.

By January 2000, the *Makin Tracks* team had signed formal agreements to develop intervention strategies with five community organisations and had made informal agreements with several others. In doing so, the team had partially met the second of the original objectives – the development of individual community strategies for intervention in conjunction with particular communities. However, by this stage it had become obvious that the objective was not appropriate due to circumstances within the communities not initially envisaged. Accordingly, in May 2001, ADAC staff and the Steering Committee made a decision to drop this objective. At the same time, due to changed circumstances, ADAC staff and the Steering Committee also decided that the third of the original objectives – development of a multi-agency intervention plan in the ‘cross-border region’ or ‘tri-state region’ – should also be dropped.

At the time the original second and third objectives were dropped, a new third objective was introduced based on the needs of communities and the response of *Makin Tracks* team members to those needs. This new objective – the provision of support and/or training and general back-up for organisations and workers providing substance misuse services in selected communities. The qualitative evidence we have gathered shows that this new objective has been met and is the main contribution of *Makin Tracks* to

addressing substance misuse in Aboriginal communities. For those concerned with the 'big picture', immediate impact of the project on the extent of substance misuse among some sections of the Aboriginal community may appear to be limited. However, as a representative of an Aboriginal community organisation said:

Its (*Makin Tracks*) achievements may be appear minimal, but in at a community level these changes are substantial.

As well as the specific outcomes of the project, several important elements of the conduct of this project stand out and have implications for the way in which other Aboriginal substance misuse interventions are implemented. The first of these was the establishment, at the commencement of the project, of clearly defined objectives and performance indicators – based on Aboriginal community needs identified by ADAC, an Aboriginal community-controlled service organisation. The absence of ambiguity in these enabled the *Makin Tracks* team members to see clearly: where they were going; what they were expected to achieve; and, as they spent time in the field, short-comings with the original objectives.

The second important element of the project was responsiveness to needs 'on-the-ground'. On the basis of information provided by the *Makin Tracks* team workers themselves, the information available through wider involvement of ADAC with the Aboriginal community-controlled organisations it represents, and information from the monitoring system ADAC staff were able to identify changing circumstances and perceptions of community need and respond to them. This meant that *Makin Tracks* resources were utilised in the most appropriate manner and that unrealistic objective were not pursued simply because they were in the original project plan.

The third important element of the project was the willingness of ADAC supervisory staff and *Makin Tracks* team members to work with the evaluators to put in place a relatively simple system for monitoring team activities based on the clear objectives established at the commencement of the project. This system provided a fairly comprehensive overview of team activities, enabled identification of areas of activity in which service delivery could be enhanced, and contributed to identification of the emerging needs of communities and community workers. Thus, it provided part of the

basis on which ADAC and the *Makin Tracks* team were able to respond to community needs.

The fourth important element of the *Makin Tracks* project was the collaborative way in which the project was conducted and its synergy with other intervention projects. The project was conducted within an existing substance misuse organisation which had the broader infrastructure to support it and workers employed to do it. The project enhanced other interventions being conducted by ADAC and, in turn, was enhanced by them. Importantly – as envisaged in both the second of the original objectives and the new objective that was introduced – the project enhanced interventions being conducted by other agencies.

The fifth important element of the project was capacity building. We have previously identified the small proportion of funds available to Aboriginal community organisations to provide staff development and training.^{3, 4} However, ADAC has had a policy of providing such opportunities and has done so as part of the *Makin Tracks* project.⁵ As well, the *Makin Tracks* project has made an important contribution to enhancing the skills of workers in organisations in rural and remote locations – workers who often have little opportunity to develop their skills.

The sixth important element of the project was the awareness of Aboriginal cultures and its implications for the project. Aspects of Aboriginal Culture, such as status within a community and kinship linkages, or lack there of, have the potential to provide obstacles to the implementation of intervention projects. However, intimate awareness of Aboriginal Culture – an awareness possessed by few non-Aboriginal workers – enables recognition of potential obstacles and provides the opportunity to avoid them or turn them to positive use.

In summary, the *Makin Tracks* project has been important both for the achievement of its objectives and for the light it sheds on elements that contribute to the successful implementation of Aboriginal substance misuse projects in general.

5. APPENDIX: PERCENTAGE OF PROJECT STAFF TIME SPENT ON KEY ACTIVITIES

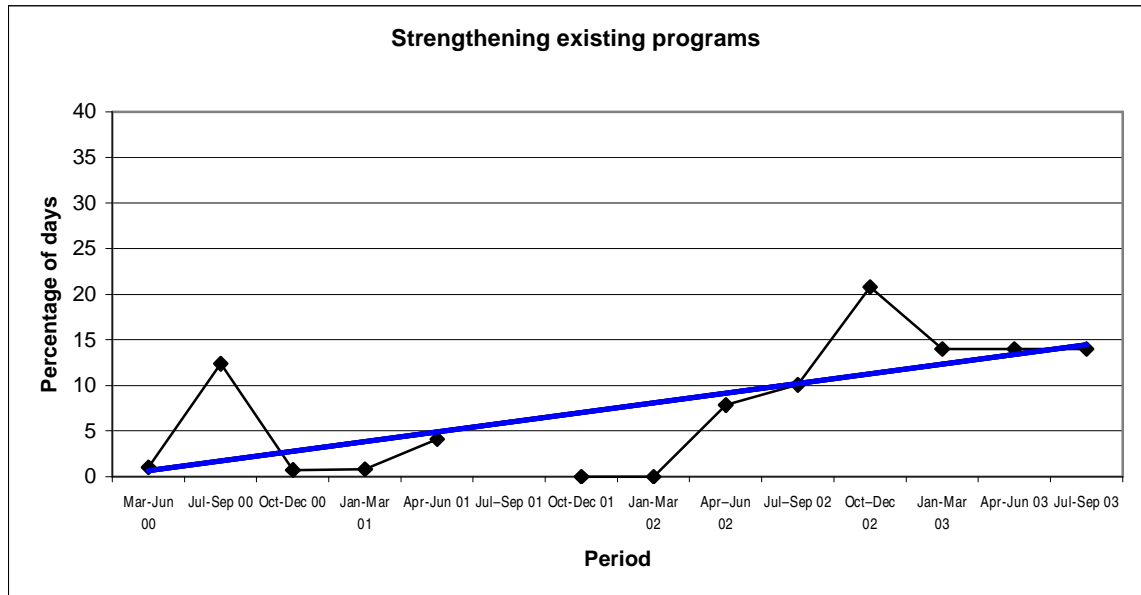


Figure A1: Percentage of work-days spent strengthening existing programs, by quarter, March–June 2000 to July–September 2003

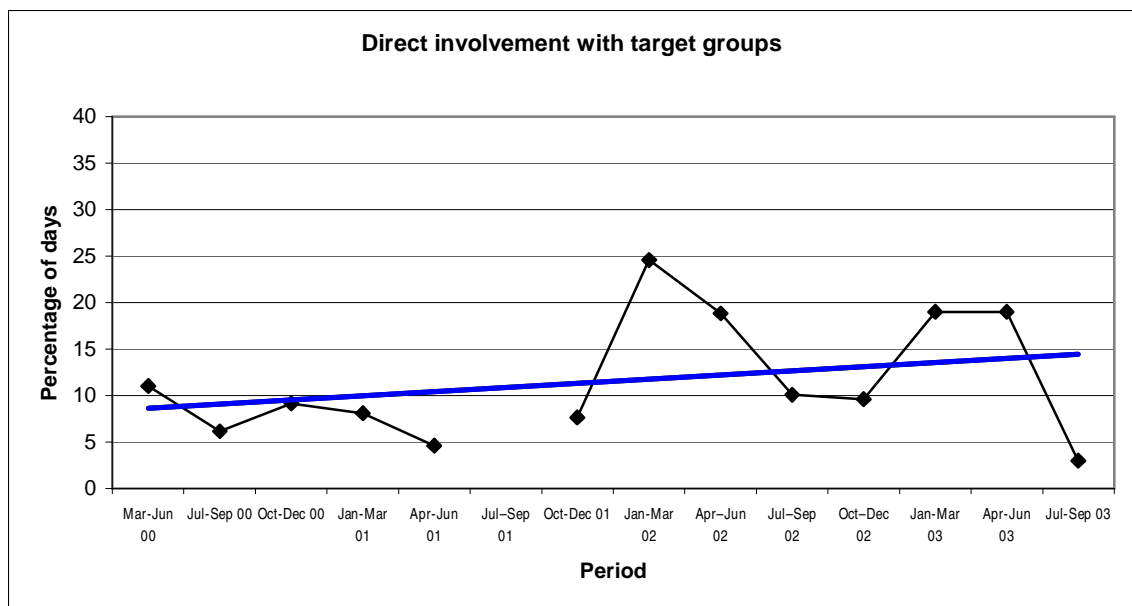


Figure A2: Percentage of staff work-days spent in direct involvement with target groups, by quarter, March–June 2000 to July–September 2003

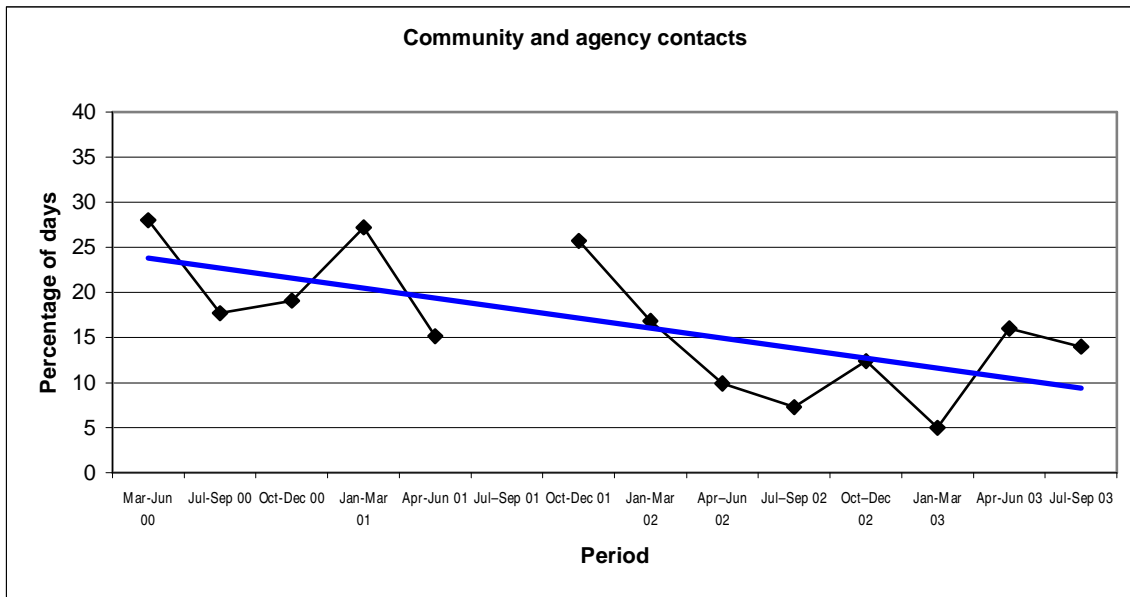


Figure A3: Percentage of staff work-days spent in contact with community and agency representatives, by quarter, March–June 2000 to July–September 2003

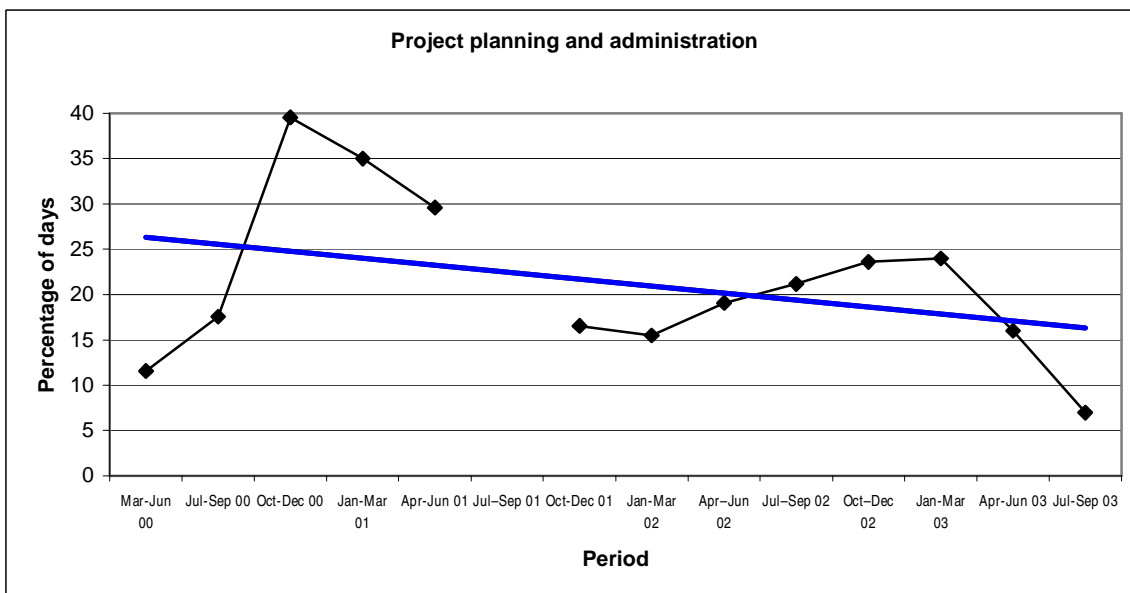


Figure A4: Percentage of staff work-days spent on project planning and administration, by quarter, March–June 2000 to July–September 2003

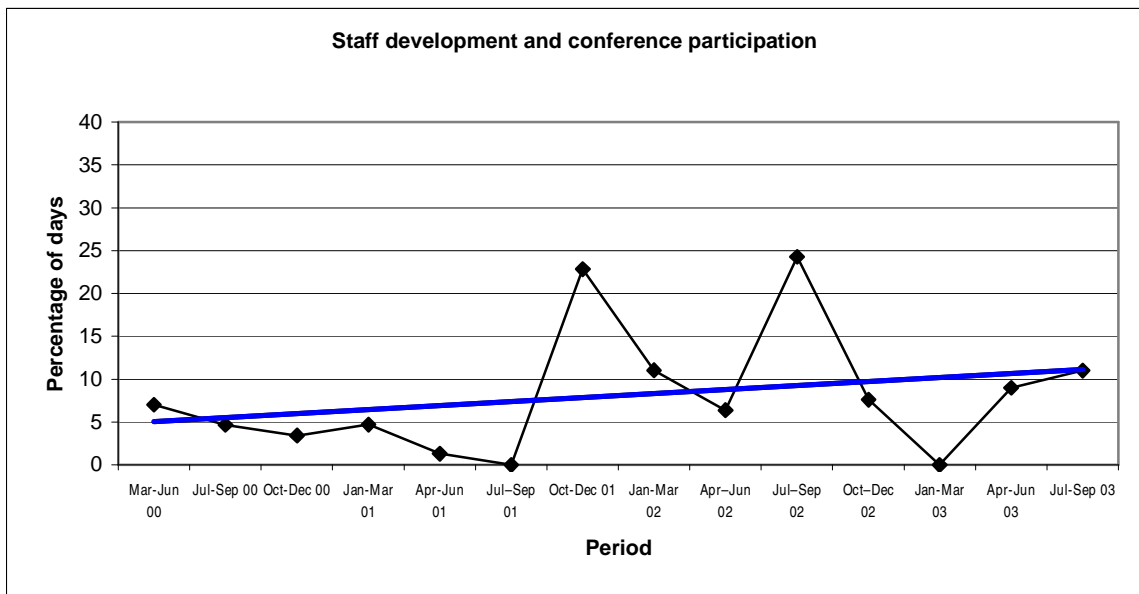


Figure A5: Percentage of staff work-days spent on staff development and conference participation, by quarter, March–June 2000 to July–September 2003

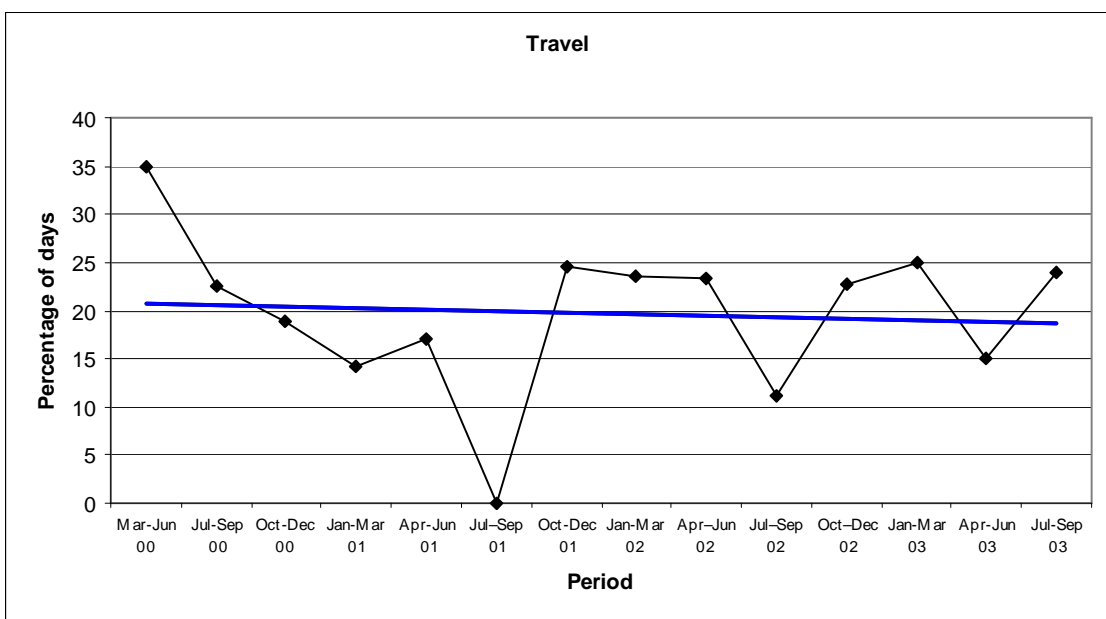


Figure A6: Percentage of staff work-days spent on travel, travel preparation and vehicle maintenance, by quarter, March–June 2000 to July–September 2003

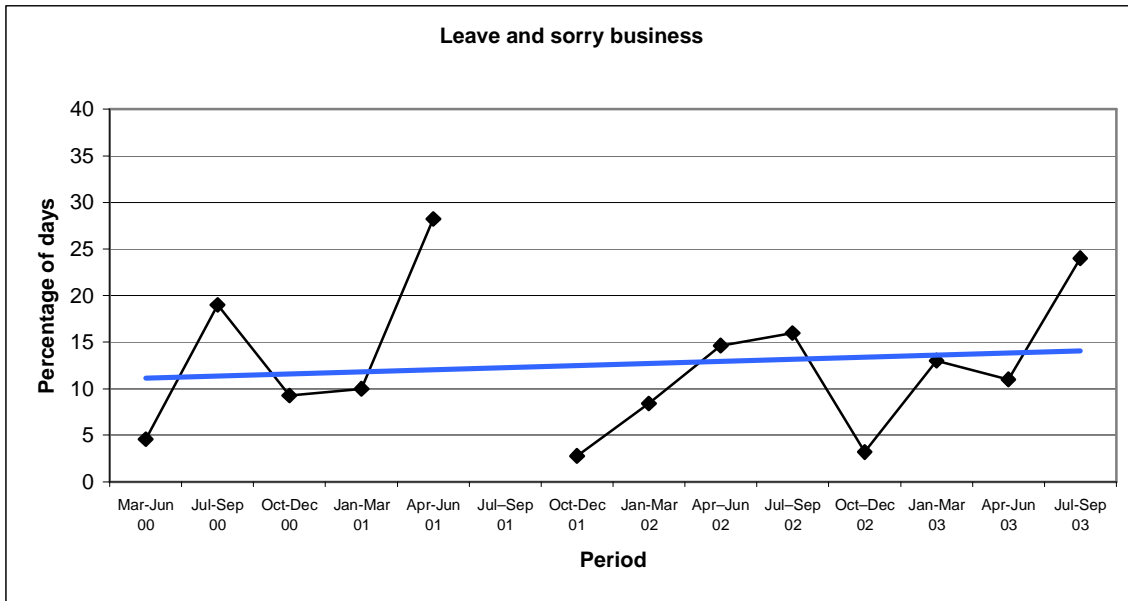


Figure A7: Percentage of staff work-days spent on leave or attending 'sorry-business', by quarter, March–June 2000 to July–September 2003

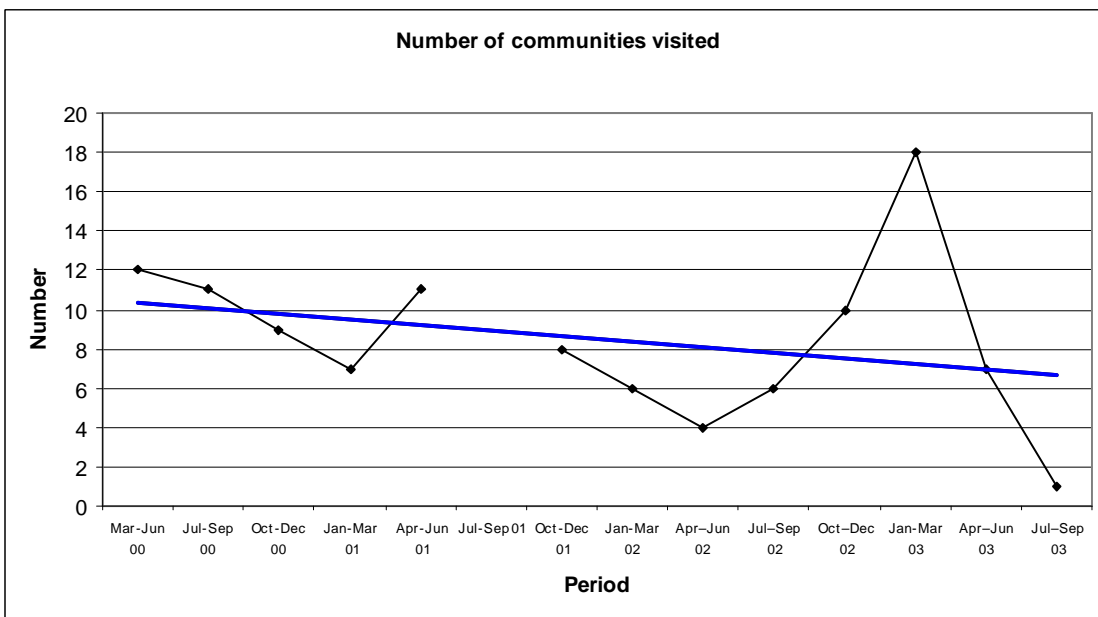


Figure A8: Percentage of patrol staff working days spent in communities, by quarter, March–June 2000 to July–September 2003

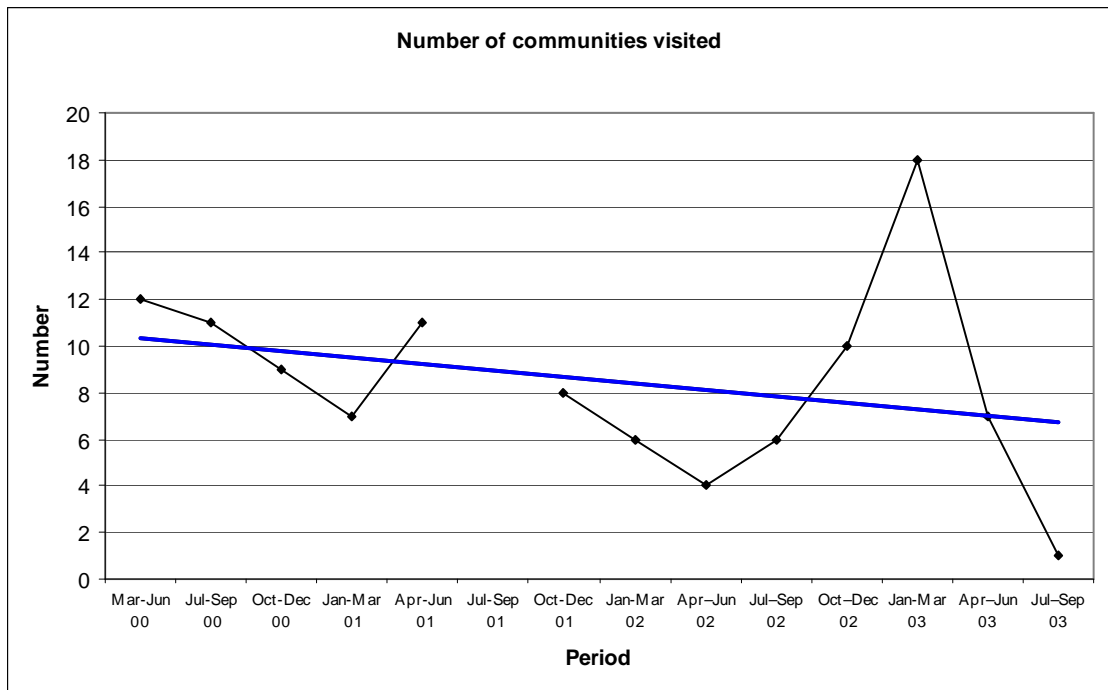


Figure A9: Number of communities visited by patrol staff, by quarter, March–June 2000 to July–September 2003

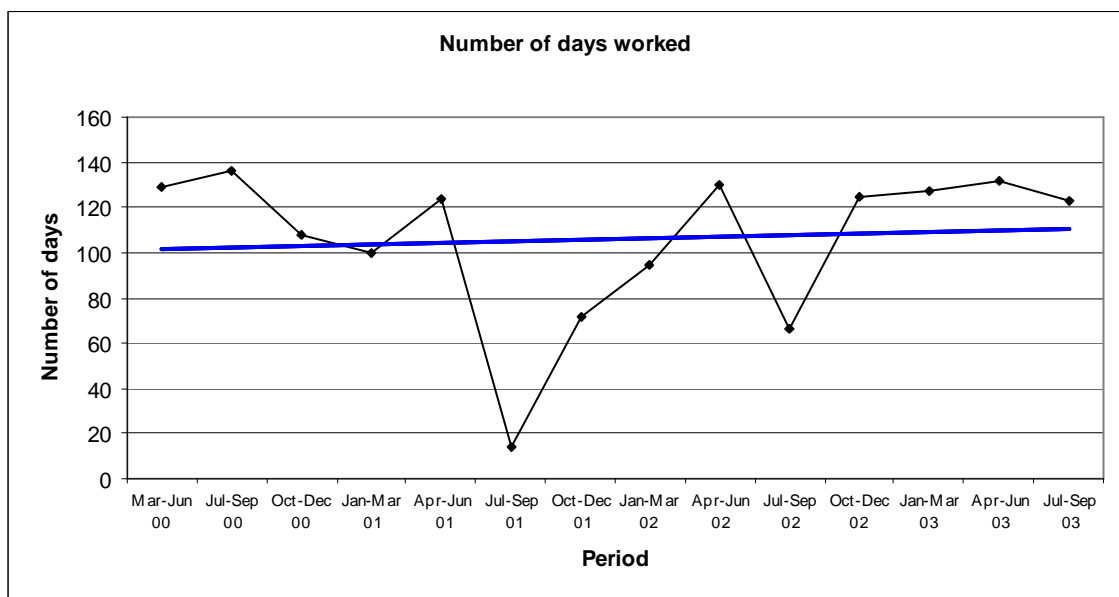


Figure A10: Number of days worked per quarter by patrol staff, March–June 2000 to July–September 2003

6. References

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