What is the Criminal Justice Support Network (CJSN)?
The CJSN is a disability advocacy service of the Intellectual Disability Rights Service (IDRS) which provides support for people with an intellectual disability (ID) who are in contact with the criminal justice system in NSW. The CJSN improves outcomes for people with an ID by helping them to understand and navigate the police and court systems and to access diversionary options.

What is the scope of the evaluation?
This mixed methods study provides a detailed case study and cost-benefit analysis of CJSN support services, in terms of criminal justice costs to the NSW State Government. The evaluation:

- compares finalised court outcomes for CJSN clients with a matched group of people with ID who were not supported by the CJSN
- examines differences in breaches of Apprehended Violence Orders (AVOs) and related court outcomes for CJSN clients compared to people with ID who did not receive CJSN support
- uses matched case studies comparing the supported pathway of a CJSN client with the unsupported pathway of a comparison person

What did we find?
- For modest operating costs of $822,000 per annum, CJSN support generates:
  - $1.64 million per annum in custodial sentences avoided
  - $43,000 per annum in supervised orders avoided
  - $359,000 per annum in AVO breaches avoided
- Overall, every $1 invested in CJSN returns $2.5 in cost savings to the justice system
- CJSN clients are three times as likely as people who did not receive CJSN support to be diverted under Section 32 of the Mental Health (Forensic Provisions) Act, 1990 (NSW)
- CJSN clients who are diverted under Section 32 are better supported and connected with appropriate services
Comparative case study

‘Byron’ is a young man with ID and a range of coexisting diagnoses with a history of neglect, abuse, trauma and isolation. He has been in out-of-home-care and the juvenile justice system and had been living in a disability group home run by an NGO. At age 20, following two incidents with other residents resulting in AVOs, Byron was moved into a caravan park with limited support. His aggression worsened in this environment where he became destructive, overdosed on medication and received another AVO for threatening a young woman on social media. Byron was in frequent contact with the police. The CJSN was contacted by the NGO at the time of Byron’s second AVO.

Byron and the matched comparison person who is not a client of the CJSN both have ID and similar complex needs. Both experienced neglect and trauma as a child and had been in out-of-home-care and in the juvenile justice system. At age 20 Byron was referred to CJSN at which point his trajectory began to diverge from the comparator who did not receive appropriate support. Evidence from linked administrative data for the comparison person is used to detail an unsupported pathway vs Byron’s actual supported pathway over 2 years from age 20.

Comparison of unsupported and CJSN supported pathways over 2 years

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Unsupported pathway</th>
<th>Supported pathway</th>
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<tr>
<td>Increasing contact with the criminal justice system and no specialist support:</td>
<td>CJSN support staff and volunteers develop trusting relationship with Byron:</td>
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<td>❖ Not supported by CJSN.</td>
<td>❖ Several changes in Legal Aid solicitors before IDRS legal team involved but 22 instances of consistent support provided by CJSN at police station and in court over 2 years: briefing lawyers, gathering reports from services, arranging psychological assessment.</td>
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<td>❖ 32 police incidents as a person of interest.</td>
<td>❖ 1st matter: s32 order on condition of compliance with treatment plan. CJSN involve specialist disability service provider who have the skills and knowledge to support Byron. They arrange for him to have his own apartment in an appropriate location.</td>
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<td>❖ 19 charges of assault, theft, drug possession and breach of justice orders.</td>
<td>❖ 2nd matter: no conviction as has appropriate support.</td>
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<td>❖ 5 court cases for 17 offences, resulting in 16 convictions and 4 custodial episodes.</td>
<td>❖ 3rd matter: 12 month good behaviour bond.</td>
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<td>❖ Represented by 5 different Legal Aid solicitors who have very little time to spend with him before each court appearance.</td>
<td>❖ No contact with police after first matter finalised.</td>
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<td>❖ Virtually no reference to his intellectual disability in police notes or other case history.</td>
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Unsupported: Total cost $185,143  
Supported Total cost $35,536

Unsupported: $83,158 Police  
$67,561 Defence counsel (Legal Aid)  
$26,180 Local court  
$8,244 Corrective services (custody)

Supported: $12,056 Police  
$4,946 Defence counsel (IDRS)  
$4,111 Local court  
$7,149 CJSN support  
$11,220 Psychological assessment

What is our conclusion?

The CJSN produces significant economic and social benefits by providing appropriate support for people with intellectual disability in the criminal justice system.