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Speech delivered by Adam Graycar:

"Local Government's effective community responses"

at the conference 'Reducing criminality: partnerships and best practice', Perth, 31 July to 1 August 2000

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AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF CRIMINOLOGY



Local Government's Effective Community Responses

Reducing Criminality: Partnerships and Best Practice

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Adam Graycar

Director

Australian Institute of Criminology

GPO Box 2944, Canberra 2601

phone: 02 6260 9205

fax: 02 6260 9203

e-mail: adam.graycar@aic.gov.au

The challenge before us is to find the right set of interventions to prevent criminal behaviour among young people, and prevent that behaviour becoming a lifelong activity. The two main strategies are on the one hand to reduce the supply of motivated offenders, and on the other to make crime more difficult to commit.

In exploring these strategies we confront policy and practice agendas of considerable complexity. We also find ourselves confronted by boundaries, which on the surface can be easily mapped, but which, in reality sometimes appear convoluted and unconquerable.

⇒ To deal with the first objective, reducing the supply of motivated offenders, I could outline a catalogue of policies relating to intervening in the lives of individuals, families, schools and communities, and in particular at the important transition points. At the other end of the spectrum, but dealing with the same issue of reducing the supply of motivated offenders, the institutions of diversion and incarceration also play a role.

⇒ To deal with the second objective, we can unpack the conjunction of criminal opportunities, and test policies about designing for safety, community policing, protective behaviours and so on, within a context of situational crime prevention and a legal framework.

Crime is the result of complex changes in economic, social and cultural factors such as unemployment, dysfunctional families, child abuse, poor education, community breakdown, economic inequality and substance abuse. If crime prevention is to succeed it should focus on broad social outcomes, for example reducing social exclusion. Compelling evidence suggests that those who feel excluded from participation in community life are more likely to offend against that community. Addressing this sense of exclusion can reduce the risk of offending.

Crime prevention is guided by strategic intentions and approaches but is ultimately defined by results. The hard strategic framework involves policies to prevent crime, improve safety and reduce disorder while recognising that there is no one single, definable cause of crime. While the financial costs involved with crime are staggering, significant human costs are also involved, for example, the effects on young people with reduced life options and the impact on the next generation.

The issues I want to deal with today are issues of domain. We have to understand clearly what it is we wish to achieve, and even more clearly to understand the domains within which the protective and preventive behaviour occur. In simple terms the criminal justice domain plays only a

small part in crime prevention and preventing the supply of motivated offenders.

The most successful crime prevention agency is the family. It is in families that violent and aggressive behaviour is learned and practised, and it is in the family that it is most commonly mitigated and prevented. The family instils many values, but its primary role is not crime prevention. We have a domain issue also when we examine the role of education, sport, child care, public housing and other significant social institutions. They all have a prime purpose that has very little to do with delinquency, yet their impact on potential delinquents can be enormous. Understanding how to get the most out of the justice domain, and how to build supportive partnerships with other domains is the difficult task confronting us. It is both a conceptual and strategic issue --having good theories and ideas and the ability to turn policy into practice.

The domain that I want to focus on today is that of Local Government.

Local Government performs many functions in our society, and we could debate long and hard what it is that is Local Government's core business. It has moved on a lot from the three Rs, road, rates and rubbish, and crime prevention sits somewhere in the list of activities - sometimes up there in lights, and at other times as a by product from the social and physical capital formation process.

There is a task for us all in strengthening social capital, and in so doing identifying protective factors in building a strong social base. The strengthening of social capital will give us outcomes such as

- Improved feelings of confidence, pride and safety within communities
- Enhanced access to employment and training opportunities
- An increase in average levels of education
- Accessible and relevant local services.

If we can find the domains to deliver these then we are on the way to a safety culture, built on a basis of strong social inclusion.

Crime prevention strategies have been found to be most successful and sustainable in the context of an improved social and economic environment which involves a range of social institutions.

However, we have to realise that it all starts very early, and it is here that we must take note of the important work done on identifying *Pathways to Prevention*. This is the name of a significant report written by Professor Ross Homel from Griffith University, in conjunction with several eminent

colleagues. The report identified Risk Factors and Protective Factors, which were discussed yesterday.

Pathways to Prevention exemplifies developmental prevention and community prevention as means towards reducing criminality. It is comprehensive and moves across many domains. Another strategic approach is through situational crime prevention which I am going to focus on today.

Situational prevention refers to interventions designed to reduce the opportunities for crime and to increase the risk and difficulty of offending.

The three principal tenets involve:

- increasing the effort
- increasing the risks
- reducing the rewards

Let me give you a simple international example of each. I'm sure you can think of examples in your own area.

Examples of lateral thought

- Kerb-crawling was a significant nuisance in Finsbury Park, North London. A road closure scheme, diverting traffic from the area, did the trick. Effort for the prostitutes to find their "tricks" and for punters to find prostitutes increased. Expected displacement did not occur (*increasing the effort.*)
- Purse-snatching was a big problem in Birmingham markets. Aisles were then widened making it easier for shoppers to notice thefts. Risk (or perceived risk) to offenders was thus increased, and a very substantial fall in the rates of theft followed (*increasing the risk.*)
- Immediately cleaning graffiti off underground trains in New York deprived the "artists" of the reward of seeing their works on show. They stopped doing it (*reducing the rewards.*)

The general strategy is to set out to make the crime too difficult to commit, mostly by closing off opportunities, and also not making the activity worthwhile.

This involves great skill in design, and in planning. It involves the very fabric of our urban design, and the creation of harmonious patterns of human interaction. At another level it involves things such as: better locks; screens; security cameras etc.

Increasing the effort involves hardening targets. This can be done at various levels. One way is to use our design skills to make access and egress much more difficult. If there are 10 ways to leave a housing development or a cul-de sac, that's a lot less effort than if there are only two! Designing location can increase

the effort for crime to be committed. Deflecting the offenders by locating a business near like businesses, or by being near public transport may increase the effort. There are planning decisions about the design of space, the configuration of public places, and the siting of buildings.

Another level is to do things such as installing bandit screens, using toughened glass, tamper-proof locks; it involves access control, such as locking gates, parking lot barriers, PIN numbers, ID badges. Let me give one simple example of increasing the effort. An up market boutique had tens of thousands of dollars worth of dresses ready to be lifted off the racks by a thief, but the staff had every second hanger facing the other direction. Not only did this increase the effort, it increased the time required to complete the theft, and the theft failed.

Increasing the risks can be part of a planner's work. It involves planning for surveillance through good design. This can include everything from lighting design to shrub management, and screening and surveillance - as well as things like having alarms, police and security patrols, having more staff like caretakers on the site, car park attendants - anything that makes it more risky for a villain to go about his (or her) business.

Reducing the rewards involves making it less worthwhile, reducing the amount of cash around (time delay safes), transacting more business using EFPTOS or plastic, marking property, PIN numbers for radios etc.

There is always the displacement effect to consider. It has been argued that by reducing an offender's opportunity to commit crime in a certain place or certain time simply causes the criminal to go elsewhere to offend. This is not always the case.

However we look at it, decisions about where to put a street light, a stop sign, a speed hump, a highway or a back alley, a new housing development, or even decisions about whether to open a school or close a school all have criminogenic implications.

For our crime prevention activities to work however, they must be evidence based and built on knowledge derived from research. Our crime prevention activities, wherever they take place, should be accountable, and their impacts subject to rigorous assessment. I can't stress too much the importance of investing in research so that we really know, rather than just have gut feelings, about what works, what doesn't and what's promising.

In seeking to reduce crime the following points must be remembered:

- The police alone cannot control crime and disorder
- No single agency can control crime and disorder

- Agencies with a contribution to reducing crime and disorder need to work in partnership
- Evidence-based problem-solving approaches promise the most effective approach to reducing crime and disorder
- Problems of crime and disorder are complex, and there are therefore no panaceas
- Crime and disorder problems need to be understood in their ***local contexts*** and strategies need thus to be ***locally tailored***.

Many of these activities firmly involve Local Government, and give that domain a significant role in part of the criminality reduction process. Local government can be a catalyst for change and a vehicle for the establishment of partnerships with other key agencies. Through its role in local planning, environmental management, economic development, urban design, and community service provision, local government is close to the community and influences many of the things that matter to determining how people live.

Australia is one of the safest countries in the world. Australians can go about their daily lives with little chance of their becoming the target of a criminal attack. But it does happen - and the prospect that it might happen worries a lot of people. And although most of Australia is comparatively safe, the incidence of crime is much greater than it was 20 years ago. Criminal activity hurts and outrages people, and costs the community billions of dollars.

This is the pattern of crime as reported to the police, **Australia wide**, in 1998.

Crimes in Order	Number 1998	Trend 1995-1998
General theft	565,214	Slight rise (+15%)
Unlawful Entry/ Burglary	435,670	Slight rise (+13%)
Assault	132,967	Sharp rise (+30.7%)
Motor Vehicle Theft	131,572	Up & down (+3.5%)
Robbery	23,778	Sharp rise (+63.3%)
Sexual Assault	14,568	Up & down (+11%)
Homicide	333	Decline (-6.5%)

Source: Derived from ABS Recorded Crime

We know that many crimes are not reported to police. We know that many instances of disorder are never considered serious enough to get into the statistics - yet a lot of disorder, graffiti and vandalism upset irritate and offend a lot of people.

When we look at the bigger picture we know that most places have no crime, and most crime is highly concentrated in a relatively small number of places. Some shops have no robberies, while a few have lots. A few entertainment venues have a lot of problems, most have none. Even in high burglary neighbourhoods most residences have no burglaries, while a few suffer from repeat burglaries – again and again. Understanding clustering and repeat victimisation and crime ‘hot spots’ is very important in developing preventive measures. Blocking criminal opportunities takes place by understanding place – its design and layout – and strategies that are appropriate for houses, flats, shops, warehouses, factories, public transport, parks, pubs etc.

I could spend the rest of my time rattling off statistics, but I won't - you can find lots of crime statistics on our website www.aic.gov.au.

Today I want to outline a 4 step process for Local Government for designing out crime. It is based on a UK Home Office report (Crime Detection and Prevention Series - paper 91, 1998) It involves:

1. Local audit of crime and disorder
2. Local consultation based on the audit
3. Formulation of local strategic priorities, and target setting
4. Monitoring and evaluation

1 Audit of crime and disorder

The purpose of a local audit is to help set strategic priorities. A local audit should capture realistically the patterns of crime and disorder experienced within the local community. It should also analyse them in ways which will inform an effective set of strategies - remember, facts never speak for themselves - they need interpretation.

At the Australian Institute of Criminology we are working on LGA crime mapping. We are planning maps of LGAs using both crime rates and what we have called a Crime Concentration Index (CCI). We can compare CCIs in towns with CCIs for adjoining districts, and CCIs statewide.

The Crime Concentration Indexes (CCIs) look at the share of a specific type of crime in the total crime within an area, irrespective of whether the region has a small or high number of crime occurrences. CCIs tell us how concentrated is the incidence of a type of crime in an area, and are calculated relative to a reference region (eg state, statistical division, statistical subdivision, police district). In this way CCIs from different regions are directly comparable, and tell us about where crime problems tend to concentrate.

Some offences occur more in some LGAs than in others. Higher CCIs mean that a particular offence represents a higher share of the total crime in the LGA,

therefore local authorities need to focus more on preventing incidents associated with that particular offence.

This is not static and whether an offence dominates the crime picture of an LGA depends not only on what happens there but also on what occurs in neighbouring LGAs. If the CCI for nonresidential break and enter is more of a problem in one LGA and there is also a higher concentration of drug offences in that LGA it might suggest an open drug market.

There is quite a difference when studying metropolitan and rural LGAs. There is the perception that rural communities are different from urban ones in terms of crime. There is also a perception that crime is increasing in rural areas. Official statistics based on crime recorded by police show that rural areas tend to have higher prevalence of violent offences than urban areas, whilst recording lower prevalence of property offences. Our Crime Concentration Index shows that this is not always the case.

In developing data, we would have to move beyond official reports of crime and include calls for police assistance in dealing with sub-criminal and non-criminal incidents. Other data from Local Government sources, such as on vandalism and environmental health are important.

A rich data source might, for example include the following categories

- Incidents, victims and offenders
- Incidence, prevalence and concentration
- Time, place and movement
- Households, persons and area
- Signs, sights and measurements
- Criminals, targets and crime methods

I can provide more information on each of these categories. We should always remember that official statistics can be complemented by local sample surveys and focus groups. The bad news is that these are not cheap, but local educational institutions can often be used. In a recent report I did for a university I recommended that a formal part of the coursework for social sciences students would be some local community survey work.

The most valuable tool, however, is the use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to help paint a graphic picture of crime and disorder. Provided that police keep detailed local information this can be grid referenced and displayed in map format. A great deal of information on crime levels, trends and hotspots can be conveyed very efficiently.

An integral part of the audit will summarise and assess how resources are currently devoted to crime reduction. For example, the City of Greater

Dandenong has a fine Community Safety Action Plan which lists in great detail activities and resources.

2 Consultation

Consultation is about information sharing and the generation of ideas. It is about keeping faith with the community, and bringing stakeholders together. It is about identifying the interests within the community and constructing a web of inclusion.

You don't need me to tell you that in consulting, it should be made clear that there are not unlimited resources, and that there is a limit to what can be seen as realistic. Trade-offs between alternatives will have to be made, and it will not be possible to respond to everybody's priorities, and not all pet projects will get a hearing. Consultation can be done through one to one or group networking, through public meetings, focus groups or other research methods.

3 Formulation of local strategic priorities, and target setting

A lot of Australian Local Governments have developed crime and safety strategies. The Australian Institute of Criminology is in the process of collecting these and making them available on our website.

The Community Safety Action Plan of the City of Greater Dandenong has as its vision

To create a safe, healthy and enjoyable environment for the City of Greater Dandenong, through a partnership involving Police, Council, agencies and the community.

It follows this with 8 key objectives.

1. To develop and monitor Council policies, strategies, business plans and service provision to reflect community safety issues
2. To promote a safe physical environment that encourages community participation and use of public spaces
3. To facilitate community safety awareness in Council and the Greater Dandenong community
4. To undertake research and data collection on community safety
5. To commit resources to community safety
6. To foster partnerships locally and at the State and Federal Government level
7. To facilitate community information sharing
8. To evaluate the City of Greater Dandenong Community Safety Policy and Community Safety Action Plan in December 1997.

The City of Gosnells in Western Australia has a Safe Cities Initiative, and its Strategic Plan aims:

*To secure a better, safe, City in which to live and work, and to facilitate a sustainable future for all: and
To create a proud, positive and harmonious community which provides opportunities for all*

The objectives of the Community Safety Plan are:

1. To develop strategies at the individual, community and social planning levels to improve safety and security in the City.
2. To establish a community based approach to address the issue of crime in our community.
3. To foster strategic alliances at local, State and Commonwealth government levels to develop, resource and implement integrated community safety strategies.
4. To facilitate an awareness of community safety and security in the community.
5. To ensure that community safety issues are considered in all planning, environmental management, economic development and community service provision decisions.

The real substance lies less in the formulation of general statements that in the primary objectives which are identified as priorities.

There are various ways of expressing crime reduction priorities

- In terms of **geographic area**: ⇒ “to reduce crime in specific locations”;
- By **crime type**: ⇒ “to reduce residential burglary”;
- By **victim characteristics**: ⇒ “to reduce crimes against small businesses”;
and
- By **offender characteristics**: ⇒ “to reduce drug-related crime”.

Priority setting is an intensely political process - the priorities of parents of school children may be different from those of shopkeepers. Those of elderly people different to those of national supermarkets or fast food outlets.

If we have a **burglary** strategy, for example, it could be shaped as a strategic priority for one or more of the following reasons

- It represents a significant proportion of the totality of crime;
- It represents a larger proportion of crime than in comparable areas;

- Burglary rates are higher than in comparable areas;
- Burglary is increasing faster than other crimes, or faster than in comparable areas;
- It imposes high costs on victims, who may belong to especially vulnerable groups;
- It is a source of public anxiety; and
- There is something we can do about it.

Partnerships

Responsibility for putting into place the necessary means to prevent crime is usually beyond the scope of any one agency or sector, and least of all, the criminal justice system. Successful crime prevention therefore requires a fundamental change in the way governments do things. The broader community must be encouraged to accept ownership of, and show leadership in community safety and crime prevention.

This in turn requires a whole of government and whole of community approach, which is about breaking down barriers and cooperating to achieve negotiated, shared outcomes of mutual benefit. These agreed outcomes must be built into the business plans of all relevant agencies in both the government and private sectors. It is not about altering or diverting the core business of these agencies but creating a recognition that community safety outcomes have a value in their own right in improving core business results.

A key development in urban crime prevention is the promotion of partnerships among stakeholders. The traditional way of thinking about crime prevention – with the police as the only preventers of crime and the courts as the first stop rather than the last resort – just doesn't work well enough. This, as you would realise is not to diminish the outstanding work of the police and the courts. It is simply a recognition of the increasing complexity of life as we near the end of the twentieth century and the need to find all-rounded responses to complicated problems.

Well developed partnerships can boast of very good track records in addressing crime. I could cite examples till the cows come home. Partnerships are worth pursuing and our efforts at crime prevention could include a **partnership blueprint** in the early planning stages. The International Centre for the Prevention of Crime, located in Montreal, did something along these lines and there is scope to adapt the Centre's framework to help us ensure that we include all the relevant players at each stage of our action plan. What I have in mind is something along these lines.

4 Monitoring and evaluation

It is poor social policy to plan and execute programs without provision for their evaluation, and regular monitoring for feedback purposes. We need to have a process for checking to see if the organisation or partnership is doing what it plans to do. We need to measure inputs, processes and outcomes against preset targets.

Here is one example that can be monitored and evaluated. The focus here is burglary against businesses in a shopping block:

Aim

To reduce property crime against businesses in a designated block.

Crime reduction objective

To reduce burglary by 50%.

Examples of target outputs and outcomes

Output

- Locks to be replaced on 100% of shops
- Security alarms to be fitted

Outcome

- Achieve a 50% reduction in burglary

Performance indicators

- Burglary rates recorded by police
- Crime survey of burglary incidents
- Burglary attempts recorded
- Claims to insurance companies
- Expenditure on crime prevention measures.

Similar targets can be set and monitored in areas as diverse as

- Reduced fear of crime in city streets at night
- Reduced fear of crime in open spaces
- Encouraging women to report domestic violence
- Reducing drug-related harm among teenagers
- Reducing vandalism and graffiti, etc. etc.

For our crime prevention activities to work however, they must be evidence based and built on knowledge derived from research. Our crime prevention activities, wherever they take place, should be accountable, and their impacts subject to rigorous assessment. I can't stress too much the importance of investing in research so that we really know, rather than just have gut feelings, about what works, what doesn't and what's promising.

5 Conclusion

The key to the success for the reduction of crime in our neighbourhoods will be achieving broad community agreement that good social relations - the politics of inclusion coupled with good urban design is a feasible target for most of you here today.

To achieve community safety, and blend it with community ownership and responsibility, Local Governments' greatest challenge is to develop inclusive frameworks or community safety plans which describe the priority issues of most concern to the community and the shared outcomes which need to be achieved.

Community safety plans should document the community safety needs and priorities of the local community; develop policies and strategies based on local partnerships; develop financial and marketing strategies to effectively implement the plan; and incorporate an evaluation framework to measure the outcomes.

Organisations like the Australian Institute of Criminology can play a significant role in assisting Local Government to build the knowledge base and assess the strategies that are relevant in local areas.

In conclusion, the key to the success for an inclusive safety strategy will be achieving broad community agreement to the need to move cooperatively down a new path. It must make the community aware that it is very costly to maintain large criminal justice systems, including police, courts and prisons. Economically and socially, new strategies are required which are innovative and outcome-oriented, and which provide a more coordinated government and community approach. New approaches must build on local and international experience, be backed by research evidence, and involve the wider community and the private sector.

We all have a role to play in building the partnerships to meet the emerging challenges for community safety. The safest communities are not those with the most police and prisons but those with the strongest community structures, including socialising institutions, families, and economic opportunities.

Those opportunities exist and can be moulded. Human beings, who are almost unique in having the ability to learn from the experience of others, are also remarkable for their apparent disinclination to do so, but I am sure that does not apply to those of us here today.