

# AIC *Crime reduction matters*



10 February 2004, no. 19  
ISSN 1448-1383

## Why local government has a major role in crime prevention

Local government is increasingly seen to be a key player in the development and implementation of community level crime prevention programs. Across Australia, virtually all government crime prevention agencies include local government in the development and delivery of their respective crime prevention strategies.

Pressure for a greater involvement by local authorities has come from both central and local government, as well as local communities. This reflects a growing recognition that local authorities are well placed to lead community crime prevention initiatives. Some of the reasons for this include:

- Research shows that a great deal of crime is very local in nature (e.g. domestic burglary, anti-social behaviour, and certain forms of violence). There is also growing evidence about the effectiveness of locally organised crime prevention action (e.g. burglary reduction programs in the UK, responses to disorder at major events in different parts of Australia, and local gun control initiatives in the USA).
- Local government is frequently well placed to coordinate and manage crime prevention responses across the community. For example, local government often has existing community consultative mechanisms that can easily be utilised in the problem solving process, which is so important for effective crime prevention action.
- There is an increasing community expectation that local government will assume some level of responsibility for initiating or directing action for crime issues that are seen to be affecting local amenity and quality of life. In this sense, the local authority is the level of democratic process closest to, and reflective of, the needs of communities.
- Local government frequently has the most appropriate management infrastructure and skill base for delivering the multi-agency programs that are often required. Typical services provided by local government that may be relevant to the crime prevention process include: environmental design; land use and zoning (including the establishment of alcohol free zones); waste management; provision of street lighting; public events management; local human services; and community recreational services.

However, not all local government authorities will have an equal capacity to provide a leadership and coordination role. As such, it highlights the continuing obligation of central government as well as other agencies and the business sector, to fulfil their roles in the crime prevention partnership by assisting and supporting local government through the provision of appropriate and adequate technical support and other resources such as funding, skills development, access to necessary research and data, and policy guidance.

### *Further reading:*

Margaret Shaw (2001) *The role of local government in community safety* International Centre for Crime Prevention <http://www.crime-prevention-intl.org/english/publications/index.html#rolelocalgov>

