New South Wales:  
Crime Prevention Directions for the Future 

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Crime Prevention Initiatives: The First Phase of Crime Prevention  
Between 1980 and 1991, a number of specific crime prevention initiatives have taken place in New South Wales. Schemes such as Neighbourhood Watch, Safety House and Community Consultative Committees commenced operation across New South Wales with commendable success. Various initiatives, designed to improve security in government and private premises, were also developed. Citizens were given advice on better locking devices or on how to improve their personal or home security-mostly by an ever-increasing private security industry. These strategies could be seen as the first phase of crime prevention.

Deterrence Policies: The Second Phase of Crime Prevention  
The second phase of crime prevention could be described as law and order crime prevention policies. These policies have focussed on the deterrence and punishment of criminal activities. The success of these policies can be shown by the increases in arrest rates and prisoners levels, and the decrease in rates of reported crime. In this regard, the government has, among other things:

• strengthened police presence by increasing the number of police and by deploying more police to the street;
• enhanced police powers; and
• increased penalties in order to make the punishment fit the crime.
While it is still too early to evaluate the impact of these measures on the incidence of crime, there can be no doubt that the community has supported and applauded the government’s ‘get tough’ policy. The law and order policies clearly have the support of the public, however better value in terms of costs and results may be attained by a concerted effort in the prevention of crime by the government and the community. The rationale for this view is based on certain fundamental features of crime:

- most crime is against property not people. In New South Wales, almost 80 per cent of recorded crime in 1987/88 fell into the property category (New South Wales 1987/88);
- most crime is not carried out by professional criminals, nor is it carefully planned;
- most crime is opportunistic; and
- a small number of offenders account for a disproportionate amount of crime.

In recognition of these issues, major developments have occurred both in Australia and overseas. The approach for the future in New South Wales draws heavily on these local and international experiences.

Developments in Crime Prevention

Between 1980 and 1991, the USA, UK, Netherlands, France, South Australia and Western Australia have focussed attention on the need to:

- coordinate and instigate crime prevention initiatives within government;
- assess the impact of government policies on housing, education and economic development on crime;
- find ways to reduce opportunities for crime to occur;
- establish diversion programs for adults and children;
- reduce the costs of incarceration; and
- involve communities and business in practical crime prevention initiatives.

United States of America

Amongst many other initiatives, the notion of problem-oriented policing has been adopted by targeting specific locations and issues in an effort to reduce the incidence of crime. The principle underlying the problem-oriented policing approach is that a small number of locations and issues generate the majority of crime. Studies in Boston and Minneapolis suggest that 5 per cent
of the cities’ locations generate approximately 65 per cent of calls for service to police. Results from cities that have adopted the problem-oriented policing approach confirm that calls for service to police are reduced, along with crime rates (Eck & Spelman 1987, p. 31).

**United Kingdom**

Lord Scarman (1981)-in his report on the Brixton riots in England-recommended amongst other things that the 'lot' of the people living in the Brixton community needed to improve. He recommended that considerable attention should be paid to improving employment opportunities, education, health services, recreation facilities, transport and coordination of services. Lord Scarman reasoned that, by doing this, the government would reduce the need to respond to crime by preventing crime from happening in the first place. Lord Scarman also recommended a strategic redirection for policing with emphasis on education and training. The changes in policing recommended by Lord Scarman were adopted upon the appointment of Commissioner Newman to the London Metropolitan Police.

In 1983, the Thatcher Government established a Ministerial Council on Crime Prevention. This committee-chaired by the Home Secretary and representing many government departments—is responsible for the coordination of government crime prevention initiatives, monitoring annual Crime Prevention Plans, and setting the strategic direction for crime prevention. The crime prevention initiatives saw the establishment of Local Crime Prevention Councils and the appointment to local government of over 100 Architecture (Crime Prevention) Liaison Officers. In the 1990s, the Council’s major issues are focussed on assessing how levels of violence, education, the media and families impact to reduce or encourage crime. Various government departments have also targeted specific areas of crime prevention strategy:

- **Department of Environment**: improved housing estate management; development of the British Standards Guide for Building Against Crime BS8220; instituted a National Health and Building Certificate requirement that mandates new houses meet minimum standards of security and design or certificate is not issued; created 7,000 jobs implementing crime prevention initiatives with tasks such as fitting locks and peep holes for the elderly and handicapped; youth initiatives; and the counselling of crime victims.
- **Department of Health**: reduction of violence against staff, and research into community-based treatment of juvenile offenders.
- **Department of Trade and Industry**: enforce trading laws at flea-markets; sponsor designing out crime initiatives; payment of concierges in tower blocks; and pre-recruitment support for those wishing to join the Police Force.
- **Department of Transport**: increased numbers of police; help point booths; alarm panels; better lighting in car parks; and the
development of a British Standard on Vehicle Security and Enforcement.

- **Department of Education**: school crime prevention workshops; $10 million for management education for principals (crime reduction through better management); appointment of Police School Liaison Officers; research on ways to teach self discipline and leadership in youth and social development (United Kingdom 1989).

**France**

In 1982, in response to a rising crime problem in many French cities, the President of France established a National Crime Prevention Council. Chaired by the President, the council is comprised of a governing board of eighty members—thirty-five mayors, five members of parliament, fifteen representatives of government departments, twenty-five citizens and an executive bureau of fourteen permanent staff. The council is responsible for the strategy, policy and finances of the crime prevention programs whilst the permanent bureau manages the Crime Prevention Fund and maintains continuity. This crime prevention program became known as the Bonnemaison Model.

Most of the council's activities have been directed at juvenile crime. A review committee—chaired by Gilbert Bonnemaison—proposed the formation of departmental delinquency councils, responsible at local community level, for development of programs to prevent and deal with youth crime problems.

A National Delinquency Fund—financed by a state grant, a para fiscal tax on the turnover of large stores, and a levy of 3-5 per cent on the payment of claims following thefts—covers the cost of operating the community work schemes and a prevention policy. The Fund provided 42 million francs for prevention programs in 1987 (France 1989).

**Crime Prevention in New South Wales**

In 1987 the New South Wales Police Service altered its strategic direction to a community-based policing philosophy. This redirection encompassed cultural, management and operational innovations and its main aims are as follows:

- to restructure policing to provide local accountability and control; and
- to encourage the community to become involved in its own protection through beat policing, problem-oriented policing and community consultation.

This strategic redirection occurred with the recognition that policing objectives could only be fully accomplished with the involvement of the community. Within this new direction, a number of innovative crime prevention initiatives have taken place:
• development of a Street Safe Program in response to a number of attacks on members of the Gay and Lesbian community;
• redirection of the Neighbourhood Watch Program;
• expansion of the Protective Behaviours and Safety House Programs, amongst many others.

Apart from policing, recent experiments with Waverley and Fairfield Councils show enormous potential to expand involvement of local government in crime prevention.

**Definition of a Future Direction: The Third Phase of Crime Prevention**

The New South Wales Police Board has supported a discussion paper to the New South Wales Government that tries to define the third stage of crime prevention. The discussion paper-structurally, financially, and from a policy perspective-defines a future direction for crime prevention. The general objectives of the approach presented in the discussion paper are:

• coordinate, consolidate and integrate government initiatives which prevent and discourage crime;
• encourage and support individuals, families, community organisations and local governments who are willing to engage in crime prevention initiatives; and
• achieve a progressive reduction in the incidence of crime.

Amongst many other benefits, the following expected benefits of this approach have been identified from experience both overseas and in Australia:

• transfer of the problem from the state and its institutions to the community;
• small scale projects will be identified and carried out at community level;
• central funding of achievable community identified projects;
• crime prevention will be seen as a problem with which the community can identify and deal;
• reduced pressure on the political system to have solution;
• community ownership of problems more likely if the structures are correct, for example, community identification through local community Crime Prevention Councils and the State Citizens Crime Prevention Advisory Council;
• governments can provide support to community-generated projects;
• government departments and institutions can take an active role in setting standards, for example, environmental design, buildings, open space and lighting;
• coordination of across department action is encouraged; and
• reduced costs.

Crime Prevention Issues
Adoption of the proposed Crime Prevention Plan in New South Wales offers a range of possible crime prevention solutions presently not effectively addressed. Using the examples of the offence of ‘break and enter’ the envisaged change in direction can be illustrated:

Engineer solutions

• Car door locks/steering locks;
• speed cameras.

A prevention strategy to incorporate engineer solutions could be establishing standards for new housing, for example, British Standard Guide for Building Against Crime or the development of a plan to make present housing stock crime resistant.

Environmental design improvements

• Design of housing;
• shopping centres/car parks;
• governmental buildings, for example, schools, hospitals, housing commission sub-divisions;
• Architecture Liaison Officer;
• new sub-divisions;
• crime impact statement for new developments; and
• development of crime assessment criteria.

A prevention strategy which incorporates environmental design improvement would see wide dissemination of advice on placement of shrubs, access to homes, setting guidelines for the density of developments, parks layout and lighting requirements.

People

• Juvenile offenders diversion programs;
• recidivists;
• dangerous offenders;
• childcare;
• parenting program;
• rear reduction; and
• victims.

A prevention strategy aimed specifically at people would divert at least 80 per cent of both adults and juveniles prior to entry into the criminal justice system. Resources could be directed at those most likely to continue to commit crime. Greater community responsibility/satisfaction/involvement to ensure that justice is done by being involved in the process. Victim satisfaction would increase by involvement in determining the outcome.

Locations

• Hotels;
• cinemas;
• streets;
• specific addresses;
• business; and
• identified crime prone locations.

A ‘location’ prevention strategy recognises that a small number of locations generate most police problems. Nomination and the application of problem solving skills and community/inter-agency support is extremely successful in solving this problem.

Hotels are often the major problem location. The substance (alcohol) reduces the inhibition to offending, often the hotel becomes the planning location and, finally, can provide the venue for the sale of the stolen property. Police and licensing authorities would develop broad strategies to reduce crimes related to specific establishments.

Substances

• Illegal substances;
• alcohol; and
• legal drugs.

Drunkenness has been an offence for over 200 years. Initially, people who committed break and enter crimes when drunk were seen as having diminished responsibility for their actions. Because of policies related to random breath testing (RBT), attitudes have changed to recognise that consumption of alcohol is a critical component in the commission of an offence.

A prevention strategy would be to target the substance itself, at the location of sale and with the individual, for example, the Ending Offending
Program incorporated in the National Health Policy on Alcohol in Australia (Australia 1989). Harm reduction should be interpreted to include crime and antisocial behaviour. The prevention strategy would also recognise that the misuse/abuse of alcohol contributes to over 60 per cent of police work.

**Economic**

- Poverty;
- homelessness and unemployment;
- unemployment initiatives, for example, the Wilcannia Economic Development;

A prevention strategy for economic crime problems would give recognition to the correlation between specific social and economic indicators and poverty giving us an index of prediction for crime (such as lots of poor people = lots of crime). This prediction index would be used as a planning device.

**Systems**

- Criminal justice system; and
- juvenile justice system.

**Regulation**

- Regulate a minimum standard of security for new housing; and
- require people to fit adequate security devices to their premises by passing legislation at local and state government levels.

**Crime Prevention and the Criminal Justice System**

The present criminal justice system does not directly aim to prevent crime from taking place. It prefers to deal with crime as it occurs and attempts to prevent those convicted of crime from re-offending. Individuals generally begin criminal careers when they are in their youth and either grow out of this behaviour or continue into their late-twenties and early-thirties. This is evidenced by the fact that many adult prison inmates are ‘graduates’ from juvenile detention centres.

The ability of the present criminal justice system to prevent crime is limited by its isolation from the community which it serves. Crime is not primarily prevented by police, courts and prisons but rather by the fabric of social connections between people, their community and their physical environment. The criminal justice system also acts to isolate victims and offenders. In a sense, the criminal justice system steals the dispute by allowing lawyers and courts to intervene and take control. In many cases these disputes should be dealt with by way of meditation and conciliation within a more economic and effective system.

Alienation or disconnectedness provides the basis for breach of social norms. For any criminal justice system to actively engage in crime prevention,
it must begin by addressing the needs of juveniles and encourage communities to deal with juvenile crime. An emphasis should also be placed on the importance of not discounting this responsibility to the police and courts. Children must be clearly confronted with the consequences of their crime.

The present New South Wales juvenile criminal justice system does not effectively prevent or reduce the involvement of children and young people in criminal behaviour, nor does it provide justice to the victim. The juvenile criminal justice system does not adequately provide for reparation or restitution, does not hand down decisions that act to shame or rehabilitate young offenders, does not involve the offender's family in the process, and is expensive in its operation.

Police intervention is heavily reliant on putting young people before the court. The courts effectively exclude the victim and the victim's family, and the offender and the offender's family from having any part in the court process. The options available to the court when determining sentence are limited and do not assist in putting right the wrong that has been done. Young offenders who are incarcerated by the court and isolated from their family and community are more likely to re-offend upon release than those who are dealt with by other means.

The notion for changing the juvenile criminal justice system rests in the context of preventing crime by empowering the community to deal with crime-beginning with juvenile crime-it when it occurs. This notion reflects a belief that there is a need to develop a system which empowers local communities to effectively deal with juvenile crime. Young offenders should be forced to accept responsibility for their actions, whilst victims should have the right to confront the offender and to have a role in determining what action should be taken to right the wrong. The young offender's family should be actively involved in determining the outcome of police intervention, whilst police will be encouraged to resolve disputes without recourse to the courts. The courts must be seen as a last resort and should be used only for those cases that cannot be resolved in the community. The proposed new system must be aware of the limitations of courts and prisons in crime prevention, and should be structured to encourage the community to be the primary agent in dealing with the majority of juvenile criminals.

Conclusion

By using information available on what contributes to crime, it is possible to alter and remove the underlying fundamental causes of crime. Bringing about changes to the environment, systems and structures impacting on people's behaviour will thus hopefully reduce the possibility of crime occurring.

References