

Supplementary questions

NSW Council for Civil Liberties

- Can you comment on the impact of media reporting on public perception of youth crime trends? Some stakeholders have told us that government should focus on public education and awareness to address concerns about community safety. What are your thoughts on this?
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ANSWER

Mainstream media reporting has a significant impact on the public perception of youth crime trends.

The media have a responsibility to inform the community – truthfully – and to educate the community by commentary and the reporting of controversy – but to do that also in a fact-based manner and by balancing competing material assertions. Media sensationalism, the promotion of conflict, reporting only on bad news rather than accurately informing the community in a truthful and balanced way all contribute to the false impression left with the community.

The media fuel the rhetoric of politicians which drives the public perception that there is an increase in youth crime. That leads to public expectations and acceptance of the degrading treatment of youth offenders which hampers reintegration into the community and thus worsens community safety.

Many media articles describe it as a 'crisis' <https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/truecrimeaustralia/police-courts-nsw/not-enough-cops-to-stop-it-warning-on-youth-crime-crisis/news-story/4311ef1651e0be6c143b21718e2a2f4d>.

The BOCSAR statistics do not show that to be true: https://bocsar.nsw.gov.au/documents/publications/rcs/rcs-quarterly/2024q3/NSW_Recorded_Crime_Sep_2024.pdf.

Media outlets profit from the culture of fear that they create.

Government does not have to adopt and promote the media slant. That may provide political capital at times; but government's obligation should be to faithfully represent the community and not allow it to be misled. Government should take care to truthfully inform the community and advise what steps it is taking to address issues that exist, rather than misconceptions promoted by the media.