

## INTRODUCTION

### BACKGROUND TO THE INQUIRY

In April 1993, the then Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs, the Hon Virginia Chadwick, M.L.C. referred an Inquiry into Youth Violence to the Standing Committee on Social Issues. In September 1993, the Committee released an Issues Paper on Youth Violence that served as the basis for gathering further information on youth violence, including the preparation of submissions.

With the prorogation of Parliament in December 1994, the Committee was dissolved and the Youth Violence Inquiry suspended. However, in May 1995, the new Parliament re-referred the Inquiry to the re-constituted Social Issues Committee. The Terms of Reference of the Inquiry are:

*That the Standing Committee on Social Issues:*

- *collect and analyse data on the occurrences of youth violence, including violent incidents in schools, and its underlying causes;*
- *examine the policies, actions, research, and proposals of relevant Government Agencies and the impact of racial tension, unemployment, family breakdown, media portrayal of violence and any other relevant factors in relation to youth violence; and*
- *make recommendations to the New South Wales Parliament to assist all relevant Government Agencies to develop the most effective strategies to deal with youth violence.*

The scope of the Terms of Reference has demanded a thorough and detailed analysis of youth violence in New South Wales.

During the course of the Inquiry the Committee received 65 submissions, heard formal evidence from 142 witnesses, and met with an additional 170 persons during visits to schools and informal briefings.

Submissions were provided from a range of organisations and individuals, and were concerned with an extensive number of issues associated with youth violence. The NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research provided the Committee with substantial and relevant data.

Evidence for the Inquiry was taken at Parliament House and a number of locations throughout the state. Community organisations and individuals, including young people, gave the Committee considerable insight into the issue of youth violence. Officers from a number of government departments, including the Department of School Education, the Police Service, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Department of Corrective Services, and the Department of Community Services also provided invaluable information to the Committee.

During the course of the Inquiry, the Committee also heard evidence in Lismore, Broken Hill, Wellington, Dubbo and Wagga Wagga. The Committee spoke with a range of people in these rural centres, including police officers, school teachers, students, parents, psychologists, youth workers and young people.

The Committee visited a total of ten schools and alternative education facilities to gain a first hand knowledge of the concerns and experiences of students and staffs. The Committee invariably found that schools were responding to their problems by introducing positive, proactive strategies, and perceived a strong sense of school and personal pride and self-esteem. Meeting representatives of the Hurstville Youth and Town Centre Project left the Committee with the belief that communities are also beginning to respond to the problems underlying youth violence in appropriate ways. The young offenders the Committee met at Cobham Juvenile Justice Centre gave Members a particular insight into the experiences of young people coming into contact with the justice system.

### **DEFINING "YOUTH"**

Defining what actually constitutes "youth" is not necessarily a straightforward exercise. There is no single age-related definition of youth. The criminal justice system distinguishes between "juvenile" offenders who are aged 10 to 17 years inclusive, and "adult" offenders who are 18 years of age or older. The *Youth Advisory Council Act 1989*, which established a Council to advise the New South Wales Government on matters of concern to youth, defines youth as those aged 12 to 24 years inclusive. This definition is also used by the United Nations.

For the purpose of the Inquiry, youth are defined as **those aged 10 to 24 years inclusive**.

Where appropriate, the paper distinguishes between those aged 10 to 17 years inclusive and those aged 18 to 24 years inclusive.

### **DEFINING "VIOLENCE"**

As the Committee noted in its Issues Paper on Youth Violence, defining violence is particularly problematic. There are number of components which can make up a definition of violence. These include whether or not the violence:

- is threatened and/or actual;
- is planned or spontaneous;
- is verbal, psychological (for example, deliberately excluding an individual from a group) and/or physical in nature;
- is directed at another person and/or at self, and/or at property;
- has negative psychological (including emotional) and/or physical effects;

It has also been suggested that violence is a social construct to some extent in that value judgments are involved in determining whether some behaviours constitute violence.

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For the purposes of this Inquiry, violence is defined as **threatened or actual, psychological, sexual or physical behaviour by one person directed at another person (or self) resulting in psychological or physical harm to that other person (or self).**

## **SCOPE OF THE REPORT**

As noted above, the scope of the Terms of Reference has necessitated a detailed and thorough examination of many issues relevant to youth violence. At the outset, the Committee determined that the Inquiry should not address youth violence in a cursory or brief way. The significance of the issue, as well as the level of public concern and interest, has required the Committee to conduct an in-depth and thorough Inquiry.

Underlying the Report are a number of principles and findings. These are that:

- Official data on the incidence of youth violence should be read with caution;
- while violent incidents occur on school grounds, the risk of being assaulted outside school premises is substantially higher;
- media reports and political statements on youth violence are often exaggerated and can create unreasonable fear in the community;
- bullying is a far more serious aspect of youth violence than has been recognised in the past;
- the term "gang" is often erroneously used to denote any group of young people;
- young people can be both the perpetrators and the victims of violence;
- the experience of violence in the family is one of the most important factors contributing to youth violence;
- alcohol is a primary factor linked to violent behaviour;
- young people have the same rights to access and use of public space as any other group in the community;
- the needs of young people should be considered in planning decisions to contribute to the safety and enjoyment of the entire community;
- prevention must be the first response to an effective policy on youth violence;
- programs that reduce the exposure of young people to violence, increase opportunities for them to contribute to their community and be financially secure, and provide appropriate recreation and leisure options can all contribute to reducing youth violence;

- schools should function as models of co-operative, tolerant and non-violent communities;
- police and local communities must develop appropriate strategies to deal with potential, perceived and/or actual locations in which violent activity occurs;
- where an incident of violence is categorised as "minor", diversion from the criminal justice system should be the first response;
- young people who commit violent offences should be accountable for their deeds;
- the multiplicity of problems of young violent offenders must be addressed and effective prevention strategies developed to break the cycle of recidivism.

## **STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT**

The Report contains thirteen chapters. Chapter One discusses theoretical approaches to explaining violent behaviour. It examines individual and psychological aspects of violence and the social and cultural aspects of violence. A number of alternative approaches to the prevention of crime and violence are also discussed. Chapter One presents information on crime prevention projects in a number of international and Australian jurisdictions.

Chapter Two is essentially a statistical profile of the incidence and characteristics of youth violence. The data are drawn from court statistics, police records, Juvenile Justice Centres and prisons. This chapter also identifies the limitations of the various data sources and the incomparability of data sets of recorded crime for 1990 to 1993, and data for 1994-95.

Also contained in Chapter Two is a discussion of a number of discernible characteristics of the violent offending of young people, including the location of offending, the gender of alleged perpetrators, the extent to which weapons are involved, the ethnicity of youth in detention and evidence relating to gang violence and violence against homosexuals and lesbians.

Chapter Three examines the incidence and characteristics of school-related violence. The chapter examines data from a number of different sources, including the Department of School Education, police statistics, surveys and research papers as well as evidence presented to the Committee. The chapter reveals that bullying and sexual harassment remain of serious concern in schools, and discusses issues such as racism and victimisation.

Chapter Four examines the relationship between the family unit and violence among young people. Issues such as child abuse, discipline and physical punishment, family pressures and family breakdown are discussed. The chapter also examines a range of programs which are attempting to constructively assist families in crisis, or assist in the development of parenting skills. The chapter also explores issues relating to the effect of adverse social and economic pressures on parents which may lead to inadequate support for children.

Chapter Five investigates the link between socio-economic status and levels of violent crime. The issue of unemployment in relation to youth violence is examined as are corollary issues of employment and job training, and alternative means of support for young people. The chapter

also examines issues of homelessness and youth violence and reviews programs such as the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program and the Young Homeless Allowance scheme.

Chapter Six examines the use of public space by young people as a recreational outlet, and a range of facilities and recreational options that should be made available to young people. The impact of sport on the lives of young people and issues such as the recreational use of alcohol, the link between alcohol, drugs and violence and strategies for harm minimisation are discussed.

Chapter Seven explores the relationship between violence in the media and youth violence. The chapter discusses the debate surrounding the influence of media violence on violent behaviour among young people. A number of effects of television and film violence, including desensitisation to violence, the modelling of values, and copy-cat acts of violence are considered. Chapter Seven also examines strategies for addressing film, video and television violence. Violence in a number of other media are also considered, including video and computer games, and issues relating to game parlours, computer bulletin boards and the internet, virtual reality and music.

Chapter Eight introduces the Committee's review on the Department of School Education's policies and actions on violence. A number of issues are considered, including the role and nature of schools, their relationship to the community and parents, and reactive and proactive strategies to manage violence. The contributions of staff and students in confronting violence, and Departmental responses to violence and violent students, are also examined.

Chapter Nine investigates a range of anti-violence initiatives and programs that are being developed or have already been introduced in individual schools, regions or throughout the school education system. Issues relating to the school curriculum are also considered.

Chapter Ten examines the responses of the Department of School Education to specific forms of violence in schools. Factors underlying school violence are also discussed. Initiatives targeting sex-based harassment, bullying and racism are considered.

In Chapter Eleven, the Committee examines the role of the police in relation to youth violence. Issues considered include police powers and the use and misuse of the Summary Offences Act. Factors relating to dealing with young people from ethnic communities and Aboriginal young people are also examined. A range of policy responses relevant to youth violence are considered, including police training, and the issue of police harassment and violence against young people is considered.

In Chapter Twelve the Committee considers issues relevant to young offenders once they are apprehended and processed through the juvenile justice or criminal justice systems. Penalties and deterrence, community based sentencing options, and counselling programs for violent offenders are examined.

Chapter Thirteen examines the role of a range of Government agencies whose services and policies impact upon young people and youth violence. The Committee considers the role of the Department of Community Services in areas such as assisting young people in care and

supported accommodation; and the Departments of Health, Housing and Transport. The chapter also considers the Area Assistance Scheme, responsibility for Youth Affairs, and the role of community education in combating youth violence.

There are 181 recommendations arising from the Committee's deliberations, from which the Committee has drawn 7 key recommendations.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THEORIES OF VIOLENCE AND PREVENTION APPROACHES

This Chapter discusses theoretical approaches to explaining violent behaviour. It examines individual and psychological aspects of violence and the social and cultural aspects of our society. A number of alternative approaches to the prevention of crime and violence are also discussed. This Chapter also presents information on crime prevention projects in a number of international and Australian jurisdictions to illustrate the variety of approaches to prevention.

#### 1.1 THEORIES OF CAUSATION

The Committee heard evidence from a range of witnesses discussing the causes of violent behaviour in young people. Theoretical perspectives ranged from examining individual pathologies or deviancies to examining factors in the social environment.

The Committee does not feel it appropriate to comment on the importance or relevance of the range of academic approaches to the issue of youth violence, as this is beyond the scope of this Inquiry. While the Committee believes a brief presentation of this information may be helpful to some readers, it does not consider that nominating a preferred theoretical approach is of decisive significance in attempting to reduce the level of violence in our community.

The Committee recognises the scope for the community and Government to deal with violence at both the individual and social level, and the Committee's recommendations deal with interventions at both these levels.

This section briefly discusses intra-individual, social psychological, and social-cultural theories. The Committee is indebted to Vaughan Bowie, Lecturer in the Department of Youth Work and Justice Studies at the University of Western Sydney, Macarthur, for presenting causal theories of violence in this conceptual framework (Submission 51).

##### 1.1.1 Intra-individual Theories

These theories see aggression as arising from within the individual.

For example, the **Psychopathology** theory suggests violence comes from something intrinsic to the individual such as a psychiatric or emotional disorder. A small proportion of people with certain types of emotional disorders may carry out violent acts. Such disorders may include some types of schizophrenia, acute functional psychosis and so called psychopathic personalities. However, the incidence of violence by psychologically disturbed people is below the incidence of the general public.

Other approaches within this category include **Alcohol and Drug Induced Aggression; Genetic, Biological or Instinctual Theories; and Excitation-transfer Theory.**

### 1.1.2 Social Psychological Theories

Within this school of thought, violence and aggression are seen as arising from the effects of social interactions.

A number of witnesses contended that violence cannot be viewed in isolation from the life experiences of young people:

*We ... believe that any violence committed by young people is a direct response to the violence against them generally by society, and this violence can range from coming from a war-torn country, domestic violence, the justice system, being excluded from employment, violence in the media, violent video games, lack of income or access to income, and the list goes on (Hirsch Evidence, 01.11.93).*

The **Social Learning Theory** suggests that people learn violent behaviour through peers, the family or the media. Such behaviour is learnt through participation in, observation of, or fantasy surrounding violent situations, and is reinforced by a variety of rewards and avoidance of punishment.

Other social-psychological theories view peoples' motivations as coming from the concepts, meanings and expectations they give to themselves and their social environment.

Young people may become violent if their integrity, family honour, sense of masculinity, territory or friends are threatened. Violence may also be attractive because it gives young people a sense of potency and status (Bessant Evidence, 28.07.94).

Other approaches include viewing violence in terms of **Boredom and Thrill Seeking; Symbolic Interaction Theory; Frustration Aggression Theory; Self Attitude Theory; Exchange Theory; Attribution Theory; and De-individuation Theory.**

### 1.1.3 Socio-cultural Theories

**Socio-cultural theories** such as the **Structural Theory** provide a "macro-level" analysis by assuming that violence is connected to the way society is structured and the sense of disadvantage experienced by certain groups. Such a sense of disadvantage may lead to attempts to change society by violence or the expression of anger, frustration and alienation through violent acts.

Other approaches include the sub-culture of **Violence Hypothesis; Functional Theory; Conflict Theory; Resource Theory; and General Systems Theory.**

### 1.1.4 Power and Gender

The fact that violence is an overwhelmingly male phenomenon suggests that constructions of gender may contribute to behavioural choices.



The Committee was informed that this approach discusses stages of boys' development which involve demonstrations of strength:

*[being a man] means to be potent and to demonstrate self-worth in physical ways (Bessant Evidence, 29.07.94).*

The masculine stereotype suggests that males must be strong, and the only emotion they may express with cultural approval is anger:

*So long as our culture continues to reinforce this stereotype in males in the media, on the sports field, in the classroom, in the boardroom and in the bedroom we will continue to have this problem (Jeffcoat Evidence, 10.02.94).*

The Committee considers gender to be fundamental in discussing youth violence. The issue of the construction of masculinity, and strategies to address the resultant attributes and behaviour of boys and young men are further addressed in Section 10.3.

#### **1.1.5 Conclusion: Problem of Causation**

Different theories of violence can be seen to be related. Structural factors such as unemployment may thwart goals and lead to depression or frustration. This frustration may then lead to aggression and violence which draws on learned behaviour.

A psychiatrist informed the Committee that a number of theories may be relevant to youth violence, since there are qualitative differences between fights in the playground and violent crimes using weapons (Wever Evidence, 26.04.94).

Another witness suggested that all the factors involved in incidents of violence must be considered, rather than focusing on a single cause. Family breakdown may expose a child to abuse or physical violence; a lifestyle which includes drug and alcohol abuse may lead to crime and violence; and racial tension in the community may cause fights among some groups. Violent behaviour in an individual may be the result of a complex pattern of interaction. The Committee heard that an intervention strategy would require a therapist to consider the individual factors within a child; factors within the immediate family; within the child's school, within the peer group and then broader social factors:

*as clinicians .... We cannot change social issues, but perhaps we can change the microcosm a child belongs in and perhaps set up situations where they learn more adaptive behaviours over a period of time (Wever Evidence, 26.04.94).*

The Co-ordinator of South Sydney Youth Services highlighted two causal areas in evidence to the Committee: the experience of personal trauma or family problems, and social and cultural alienation. Personal trauma can contribute to problems of self-esteem and self-confidence, and be exacerbated by sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and drug and alcohol abuse. Social and cultural alienation stems from young people not having a place in the community, with their

views and attitudes not taken into account:

*the major reason that [young offenders] continue to offend is that they are not connected to their community, that they feel that they don't belong, and if you don't belong, then you don't have to be responsible* (Brown Evidence, 25.10.93).

One witness informed the Committee of the results of an international review of community based options which found little evidence that clinical or treatment based programs and services have any significant long-term impact or effect on young people's offending. The programs which are the most likely to have an impact are those that deal with the world that young people must relate to, such as employment or advocacy programs (Alder Evidence, 29.07.94).

The Committee believes violence is a complex problem, and recognises that psychological factors have some impact on aggression. However, the Committee has concerns about the social climate in which young people are developing and recognises that factors such as family violence and unemployment may alienate young people and lead to destructive behaviours directed both against property and other people. The Committee therefore believes that it is important to ameliorate social conditions which alienate our young people, while recognising that strategies to change the behaviour of violent individuals are also important.

## **1.2 APPROACHES TO CRIME PREVENTION**

Just as there are a variety of ways to conceptualise youth violence, there are various ways to attempt to address the problem. Broadly, intervention can occur at the individual, the environmental, or the social level.

### **1.2.1 Intervention at the Individual Level**

A child and adolescent psychiatrist suggested to the Committee that since aggression is related to development and, in his opinion, does not commence in adolescence, one of the key issues in preventing youth violence and aggression is early identification and intervention with children (Wever Evidence, 26.04.94).

Research from the United States suggests that aggression at the age of eight years is the best predictor of aggression at age 19 years, irrespective of IQ, social class or parents' aggressiveness. The same research suggested that the role model provided by violent parents was a common factor in the background of many violent children, and a lower level of intelligence limits behavioural options (Submission 31).

Although cognitive factors are not the only elements underlying aggression, a growing body of work has demonstrated their significance in mediating broad patterns of behaviour. Cognitive factors have been found to be modifiable through direct intervention programs that lead to significant reductions in the related behaviour. The work in aggression replacement training by Arnold Goldstein and colleagues, as well as Dan Olweus' intervention against bullying in Norway, illustrate the importance of building cognitive skills (Wilson-Brewer *et al*, 1991:6).

Interventions which focus on negative sanctions for delinquent or criminal behaviour also attempt to modify behaviour. However, punitive sentencing options may serve to alienate and further marginalise young offenders, who may also learn further criminal behaviour while in detention. The Committee recognises the importance of interventions at the individual level, through both the justice and welfare systems, but believes that care must be taken to ensure such interventions provide opportunities for behavioural change rather than stigmatising, labelling and stereotyping young people and their families. The goal is change, not blame.

### **1.2.2 Environmental Intervention**

This approach to crime prevention attempts to minimise the risk of crime by environmental modifications, such as increased security and improved lighting in public places. However, while this approach may reduce some areas of risk, it is possible that a displacement effect may result, with the risk transferred to other areas. If homes, buildings and cars are made secure, offenders who aim to gather money through crime may turn to robbery and assault to meet their objectives. The Senior Children's magistrate raised this point in evidence to the Committee:

*There was a clamp down on car theft .... If people are doing things for kicks, do they now go out and wander around the streets at night looking for someone to mug rather than taking someone's car? (Blackmore Evidence, 28.07.94).*

The Committee recognises that by reducing the opportunities for crime through environmental modifications in specific public areas, for example through bright lighting and increased surveillance, those young people who use these areas may be perceived as a threat. This may result from their increased visibility, coupled with heightened community consciousness of safety issues. However, the Committee acknowledges that local communities may have concerns about particular areas in which violent crimes occur or in which citizens feel unsafe, and that steps should be taken to ensure such areas are made safe for the use of the entire community. The completion of community safety audits is a key recommendation discussed in Section 11.3.5.

The Committee believes that while environmental modification may reduce the opportunities for certain crimes, adequate attention must also be paid to improving the status of young people and the social conditions which they face.

### **1.2.3 From Individual Control to Social Development**

It has been suggested that the issue of youth crime cannot be divorced from other social factors affecting young people, such as the restructuring of our economy in the last two decades and increased youth unemployment. At the political level, the disproportionate significance given to dealing with young offenders in the law and order debate also affects young people's status in society. Some commentators contend that any effective youth crime prevention strategy should aim to remove the issue from the law and order debate and seek the

integration of young people through educational, employment and community involvement rather than exclusion via criminalisation (Coventry *et al*, 1992:5).

These two alternative approaches may be termed "individual control" and "social development" approaches. The individual control approach focuses on the individual, whereas the central theme of the social development approach is situational improvement through education and cooperation (Semmens, 1990:23). Examples of different strategies for addressing delinquency and crime prevention under the two approaches are provided in Table One below.

**Table One**  
**Examples of Primary Prevention Strategies under Individual Control and Social Development Models**

<b>Social institution</b>	<b>Individual control</b>	<b>Social development</b>
Family	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify "at risk" families and offer counselling and welfare benefits.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Family support:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- guaranteed minimum income</li> <li>- housing</li> <li>- health</li> <li>- child care</li> <li>- legal aid</li> <li>- equal access to education.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
Peers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Diversion from court programs.</li> <li>2. Separation of "troublesome" youths.</li> <li>3. Curfew.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Encourage youth contribution to their local community - interesting things to do with people of all ages.</li> <li>2. Recognise youth cooperative initiatives.</li> </ol>
School	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Hierarchy of disciplinary sanctions.</li> <li>2. Privileges conditional upon good behaviour.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish code of behaviour for and by teachers, students and parents.</li> </ol>

(Semmens, 1990:23)

Another individual control approach at the school level would be remedial education or behaviour modification programs; at the family level, parent training would also be relevant. The Committee believes that there are potential benefits from both approaches, and recognises the need for an integrated approach to the problem of youth violence.

The National Centre for Socio-Legal Studies (NCSLS) suggests the potential of prevention approaches lies in a variety of 'micro-interventions' such as:

- temporary access to low skilled industrial work;
- development of literacy and communication skills;
- development of participant confidence and the enhancement of self awareness, personal autonomy and decision making;
- providing youth sector resources to previously overlooked local communities;
- providing temporary access to otherwise denied leisure activities;
- individualised counselling, casework and advocacy; and
- creation of temporary employment for some community members as project workers (Coventry *et al*, 1992:11).

The importance of including young people through participatory strategies integrating young people in mainstream community life was stressed to the Committee. It was suggested that:

*This involves a willingness to use youth competence, to involve young people in the provision of teaching and health service and other kinds of caring roles (Polk Evidence, 29.07.94).*

However, programs may not benefit all groups of young people. The Committee heard that youth programs, whether they be young offender programs, employment programs, or housing programs are predominantly developed for young males:

*We want young women to have access to this range of services but we cannot simply leave the program the same and drop young women in, because there are particular aspects, interactions and problems that emerge (Alder Evidence, 29.07.94).*

The particular needs of various groups should be recognised when programs are developed, with appropriate attempts made to address these needs.

The Committee believes that programs that reduce the exposure of young people to violence; increase opportunities for them to contribute to their community and be financially secure; and provide appropriate recreation and leisure options can all contribute to reduction in youth violence. These issues are further addressed in subsequent chapters of this report.

### **1.3 GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY RESPONSES TO CRIME PREVENTION**

In a number of jurisdictions, both overseas and within Australia, crime prevention plans have been developed which involve a co-operative approach between government agencies and local communities. This section refers to several projects which adopt a variety of theoretical

approaches to the problem of violence and combine a number of approaches to crime prevention. This review is not intended as a comprehensive evaluation of international or Australian crime prevention approaches. Limited information is available to the Committee on the success of various schemes in reducing violent behaviour by young people, and indeed any such evaluations would face methodological limitations. However, the Committee believes that the range of responses to crime prevention illustrate the importance of comprehensive and integrated prevention strategies.

### **1.3.1 The Netherlands: Society and Crime Plan**

Since 1985, the Netherlands Ministry of Justice has been embarking on pilot projects in crime prevention involving extensive community participation.

Subsidies have been granted to approximately 80 municipalities for some 250 crime prevention projects of varying kinds. In the majority of the municipalities local crime prevention steering committees have been formed (Netherlands Ministry of Justice, 1990:19).

Citizens are encouraged to improve their own neighbourhoods. Examples of this approach include the appointment of neighbourhood caretakers to carry out supervisory duties, and involving the residents in the upkeep of public gardens and playgrounds. Other pilot projects target school failure and retention, and the diversion of minor offenders such as vandals from the court system (Junger-Tas, 1989).

The ultimate objective of the Society and Crime policy plan was to curb crime. Since 1985 the sharp annual rises in the incidence of crime appear to have been reduced, and crime among juveniles is decreasing (Netherlands Ministry of Justice, 1990:23).

### **1.3.2 France: Bonnemaison Scheme**

The system of youth crime prevention in France, known as the "Bonnemaison Scheme", relies heavily on the support and initiatives of local councils and the local community. "Bonnemaison" grew out of the direct response by the French Government to the dramatic rise in juvenile crime during the summer of 1981 in the disadvantaged areas of Lyons and Marseilles.

Among the immediate approaches taken by the government to the escalation in crime was the establishment of camps and holiday activities over the summer period for young people who did not have any appropriate leisure or recreational alternatives.

An inquiry into ways of tackling the underlying problems associated with juvenile offending rates in France followed and the chair of that inquiry, Gilbert Bonnemaison, proposed that a three tiered system of crime prevention committees be set up. In 1983, these committees came into effect.

The three committees are represented at all levels of French government. The Conseils Communaux are the local crime prevention committees and operate in individual towns and cities throughout France.

Among the programs undertaken by local crime prevention committees are:

*training programs and job-finding schemes for disadvantaged young people; the encouragement of unemployed young people to devise and claim for grants for sporting, theatrical, educational and recreational projects; the employment of young trainees in schemes to reduce bullying and violence in schools; and schemes to help young drug users, to provide supportive accommodation for them and to divert their energies away from self-destructive activities into such directions as theatrical and sporting interests (King, 1987:42).*

As well as these programs and the holiday programs, the Bonnemaïson system has seen the establishment of a number of youth centres throughout France providing a facility for young people to raise concerns about employment, training and accommodation, with experts in those areas from the local community.

In terms of the effectiveness of the Bonnemaïson system, Mr William Corneloup, a representative of Gilbert Bonnemaïson, commented in the press that French crime had fallen by 20% through the adoption of the system (Male, 1991). The Bonnemaïson system offers an example of how local initiatives, with the support of government at all levels, can be effective in the area of juvenile crime prevention.

### **1.3.3 Britain**

#### **■ Crime Concern**

"Crime Concern" is Britain's national crime prevention development organisation. It is an independent, non-profit body, part-funded by government, which recognises the need to sponsor joint community projects between agencies, law enforcers, residents and industry. The majority of Crime Concern's funding comes from industry sources. Crime Concern aims to reduce crime and create safer communities, and seeks to achieve this in three ways: by providing a developmental and consultancy service to towns and cities (it has worked in over 60 areas); by developing innovative approaches to crime prevention; and by promoting more and better crime prevention through conferences, seminars and publications (Bright, 1993).

#### **■ Safer Slough Enterprise (SSE)**

In 1992 Thames Valley Police joined forces with Slough Borough Council to set up the Safer Slough Enterprise (SSE). It encompasses statutory and voluntary agencies, industry and the community, and aims to reduce crime and the fear of crime, and improve public safety.

SSE has two main projects: the Town Centre Scheme and a Motor Project. The former aims to improve the central shopping area and multi-storey car parks of the town, and install closed-circuit television. The Motor Project aims to divert young offenders away from auto-crime through legitimate involvement with vehicles.

Other projects include Mobile Watch, a form of Neighbourhood Watch on wheels, and Business Watch, which operates on a large industrial estate with the participation of about two-thirds of the firms. To supplement this target hardening approach, a long-term project, *You're OK! I'm OK!*, aims to raise children's self-esteem and encourage them to respect other people and their property from an early age (Nash, 1994).

#### **1.3.4 Safer Australia Program**

On 18 May 1995, the Prime Minister launched the Justice Statement, which describes the Government's strategy to make justice more accessible for all Australians. Central to the justice system reforms is the establishment of the Safer Australia program. The primary aim of Safer Australia will be to improve crime prevention at the community level throughout Australia. The program will focus on assisting local communities as well as public and private sector organisations by identifying and developing effective solutions to crime problems and the fear of crime.

The program will be managed by a new body, the Safer Australia Board, which will report to the Minister for Justice. The Board will be a small, high profile group of eminent Australians drawn from a variety of professional, community and cultural backgrounds. It will provide a crucial link between the police, the media, the corporate and community sectors and the three levels of government.

#### **1.3.5 Victoria: Vicsafe and Safer Communities Project**

Vicsafe refers to police-community partnerships aimed at crime prevention and community safety. Since 1991, over 90 Police Community Consultative Committees (PCCCs) have been established in Victoria. A number of locally based crime prevention and community safety initiatives have been undertaken by PCCCs involving police and other government and non-government agencies in a partnership approach to crime prevention and safety issues within their local community. These include:

- the Mall Outpost for support of young people (Geelong);
- development of family violence resource kits (Caulfield); and
- establishment of a "Residents at Risk" Register (Springvale/Knox) (Victoria Police, 1993:8-9).

The "Safer Communities Project", funded by the Department of Justice, has enabled Community Development Officers to be appointed to undertake pilots in seven municipalities. The Community Development Officers worked for twelve months with the PCCCs and were able to provide the committees with the skills and support for development of comprehensive local crime analysis and strategy plans.



The Richmond Committee, through its crime analysis and strategy plan, was able to encourage the City of Richmond to incorporate community safety into its structure, thereby providing an avenue for council employees and the general community to have safety issues addressed more positively by local government (Byrne *et al*, 1994).

### **1.3.6 Queensland: Youth and Community Combined Action Program (YACCA)**

YACCA aims to prevent those young people most marginalised from social support structures and networks becoming involved in the juvenile justice system by providing them with opportunities to play a valued role in community life.

In the 20 areas targeted, all sectors of the community - young people, parents, schools, churches, community organisations, government agencies, businesses - have been brought together to develop co-ordinated, multi-agency responses to local needs.

The diverse activities and services provided by projects reflect the unique conditions and needs of their communities, and range from basketball and an Aboriginal family history research project, to family counselling and community theatre projects.

Projects undertaken by schools include wilderness camps with disadvantaged young people; organisation of work experience placements for truants; employment of a youth worker within a school; a work transition program for students 'at risk', linking with the CES and TAFE Skillshare; and a music program combining recreation and skills development.

In addition, a number of grants have been made available through the mainstream Youth Organisations Task Force established under YACCA to initiate and implement collaborative projects.

Projects to date include:

- a low cost basketball project supported by the Scouts, the Police Citizens Youth Club and a local sporting association.
- a project to give urban young people an opportunity to form a Surf Lifesaving club and to access Surf Lifesaving programs and events (McLuckie and Marcesi, 1994).

### **1.3.7 Crime Prevention in New South Wales**

A range of initiatives that apply multi-faceted approaches to crime prevention have been established in New South Wales. While this section discusses several initiatives, it is not intended as a comprehensive overview of community responses to crime. Other initiatives, including the Youth and the Law Project and the Community Youth Development Taskforce, are discussed in subsequent chapters.

■ **Residents in Safer Environments (RISE)**

The RISE community crime prevention project is a partnership between the NRMA, the Fairfield Community Resources Centre and local residents. RISE is one of several initiatives through which the NRMA has sought to demonstrate a corporate response to a wide range of social issues such as crime and environmental issues, particularly as they relate to motor vehicles.

The RISE initiative seeks to identify and address the social factors which can contribute to crime, and is based on the observation that most of those who participate in criminal activity are from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds. The project offers resources to a population of about 1200 people who live on Department of Housing estates.

To date, residents have agreed to fund youth activities through Positive Directions, an after school tuition program for students with learning difficulties who are at risk of leaving school early, as well as an ongoing program of after school non-competitive recreational activities. In addition, there is an informal basketball competition for 12 to 24 year olds and a touch football team being sponsored.

Other initiatives to provide support for families include a play group established and run by local young mothers, and a language school for Australian born children of Arabic speakers.

Community relations activities which aim to strengthen a sense of cohesion include market days, a Spring Fair, Christmas parties organised by and for estate and other local residents, a Latin Women's group, and sewing and screen printing classes. A bartering system is being trialled and subsidised bus trips are organised for both outings and shopping expeditions (Miller, 1994).

The Committee supports the development, extension and further innovation of such projects by relevant agencies.

■ **Enough is Enough**

The Committee heard evidence from the President of the Enough is Enough movement, the father of a murder victim. The mission of Enough is Enough is to encourage individuals to accept responsibility for eliminating violence from their lives, and encourage the community to embrace the concept of reform by education, and understand the alternatives to violence. Representatives of the movement have visited schools, universities, and community groups and associations. Anti-violence committees have subsequently been established in a number of schools. The group is also involved in police crime prevention workshops, and the development of school programs on parenting skills, responsibilities and personal development and anti-violence modules.

The Committee heard that the movement aims to reduce people's apathy towards violence:

*If [children] start signing a commitment, ... then wearing [a] badge, hopefully with pride, we can start having peer groups set up amongst kids about anti-violence instead of violence .... We will make a difference because enough is enough (Marslew Evidence, 08.08.95).*

#### 1.4 CONCLUSIONS AND FINDINGS

- While a range of theoretical approaches may be useful in conceptualising violence, they are not of decisive significance in attempting to reduce the level of violence in our community. Violence cannot be viewed in isolation from the life experiences of young people and young people may learn violent behaviour through peers, the family and the media.
- Gender is fundamental in examining youth violence.
- The Committee has concerns about the social climate in which young people are developing and recognises that structural factors such as unemployment may alienate young people and lead to destructive behaviours directed both against property and other people.
- The Committee recognises the scope for the community and Government to deal with violence at both the individual and social level, and the Committee's recommendations deal with interventions at both these levels.
- **Programs that reduce the exposure of young people to violence; increase opportunities for them to contribute to their community and be financially secure; and provide appropriate recreation and leisure options can all contribute to reducing youth violence.**

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