

# Chapter Seven

## Local Government and Crime Prevention

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### 7.1 Introduction

In Australia's three tier system of government local government has the most direct and regular contact with citizens in their daily life. An effective council not only provides basic services but can also do much to improve the quality of life in a local community. It should not be surprising that public concern about crime should lead to expectations of a greater role for local government in making communities safer.

In Canterbury City Council in Sydney's inner west a random community survey of 800 households in 1997 rated law and order as the highest priority for council to address over 28 other issues.<sup>1</sup> In Southern Sydney two law enforcement officers were employed by Hurstville Council in response to ratepayer concern about safety in public areas.<sup>2</sup> As the committee has seen at first hand, councils in Ballina, Lismore, Byron Bay and Moree have led the way in developing comprehensive crime prevention plans in response to local concerns.

From the inquiry to date it is apparent that local government is one of the areas of most growth and dynamism in crime prevention activity. Through submissions, hearings and visits the committee has had contact with 15 councils, urban and rural, but this is only a sample of activity happening all over New South Wales. The Local Government and Shires Associations, in a 1999 survey of its 177 members, found that 48% had a Community Safety or Crime Prevention Advisory Committee and 20% had a formal crime prevention plan.<sup>3</sup>

Local government is increasingly being expected to play a key role in crime prevention, a challenge to which many councils have responded. In this chapter the committee raises several questions to better understand this role.

- Should crime prevention be a responsibility imposed upon all councils?
- What models of crime prevention are appropriate for councils and what are inappropriate?

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<sup>1</sup> *Evidence*, 1/10/99, Andy Sammut.

<sup>2</sup> *Evidence*, 6/10/99, Beverly Giergel.

<sup>3</sup> *Submission*, 14/9/99, Local Government and Shires Association, p 3.

- Which agencies can support councils in this role, and is this support being provided?
- How can the involvement of councils in crime prevention through social support be enhanced?

## **7.2 Responsibility of local government to prevent crime**

The committee believes all councils have a responsibility to contribute to improving the safety of its residents. In areas where crime is a concern for ratepayers, preventing crime should be a major concern of councils. However, the response to this concern will vary greatly from area to area, and councils need to understand and communicate to their constituency where their responsibility ends and where that of other levels of government, or private citizens, begins. All councils need to consider what, if any, role they should play in crime prevention within their area.

Although all councils should start from the principle that they do have a responsibility to prevent crime, the committee does not support a mandatory crime prevention role for local government. In the United Kingdom councils have a mandatory crime prevention role prescribed in legislation.<sup>4</sup> The committee did not receive any evidence strongly supporting a mandatory role. Mr Peter Homel, from the Attorney General's Crime Prevention Division, said:

Local government authorities in England have access to a higher level of service provision. They are responsible for health and education services and so forth. This is different from the situation with our local governments. So we have to be cognisant to understand the different structure of government here.<sup>5</sup>

The Local Government and Shires Associations were very strong in their opposition to a mandatory role:

Central governments need to avoid the mistake of viewing crime prevention as a universal local government function. The best result will be to continue to use legal frameworks which allow local government to respond where it is a local issue. Crime prevention strategies and crime prevention planning should not be made mandatory.<sup>6</sup>

In considering their role many councils will decide that crime within their locality is not a sufficiently serious concern of local residents to warrant attention above other competing concerns. Others will decide that the

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<sup>4</sup> Bright J *Turning the Tide* 1997 Demos, London.

<sup>5</sup> *Evidence*, 17/6/99, Peter Homel.

<sup>6</sup> *Submission*, 14/9/99, Local Government and Shires Association, p 18.

crime problems they experience cannot be addressed by local government – white collar crime and (arguably) domestic violence are examples. To impose a mandatory crime prevention function on local government is not desirable because of the great diversity in the problems faced by local councils and their capacity to respond. The point has also been forcibly made to the committee by the Local Government and Shires Associations that new functions should not be added to local government when many councils are already struggling to fund their current functions.<sup>7</sup>

**Recommendation 11**

**The committee recommends that the Department of Local Government urge all local councils to consider their responsibility for preventing crime within their area. The committee recommends this be formalised by requiring councils to report in their annual report or their Social Plan on the decisions they have made regarding the need for crime prevention within their area. In making this recommendation, however, the committee does not support councils being given a mandatory crime prevention function.**

When considering their crime prevention responsibilities, local councils in areas with high crime rates should consider issues of possible legal liability as a relevant consideration. Under the *Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)* local councils have the power to issue and enforce orders which prohibit activities that place members of the public at risk of injury.<sup>8</sup> Development and planning instruments which consider structural safety in building requirements increasingly give consideration to safety aspects such as lighting and visibility in public areas, or what is known as Crime Prevention by Environmental Design. If Australian jurisdictions follow developments in the United States, councils may in the future see themselves subject to actions for breach of duty of care for not adopting crime prevention measures. This could occur if the failure to adopt crime prevention strategies common to similar areas is a substantial contributing factor to a crime occurring.<sup>9</sup>

Aside from the duty of care issue, recent legislation has meant that councils will of necessity have to have an increased role in child protection. The submission from the Local Government and Shires Associations lists the following legislation of which their members need to be aware:

- the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* places a duty of mandatory reporting of suspected abuse for council employees working with children;

<sup>7</sup> Submission, 14/9/99, Local Government and Shires Associations, pp 17-18.

<sup>8</sup> eg s630, s631, s632, s642 and enforcement provisions such as s679.

<sup>9</sup> Attorney General's Department (NSW) *Crime Prevention Resource manual* pp 10-11.

- the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998* requires screening to be used before employing a person in child related work (the position of councils with regard to screening has yet to be determined), and the *Child Protection (Prohibited Employment) Act 1998* which makes it an offence to employ a person who has been convicted of a serious sex offence under certain circumstances; and
- the *Ombudsman Amendment (Child Protection and Community Services) Act 1998*, requires a council General Manager to notify the Ombudsman of any child abuse allegation against an employee.<sup>10</sup>

Councils not providing formal child care services should not be complacent: even a library employee may be covered by some of these provisions, and no council in New South Wales is without a library.<sup>11</sup>

All local councils should consider their crime prevention role; the committee examines below the prevention strategies appropriate to this role.

### 7.3 Appropriate and inappropriate roles for local government crime prevention

To make generalisations about the role of local council's in crime prevention it is useful to return to the models of crime prevention used in Chapter Two. The table below sets out these roles:

Model	Examples	Level of involvement	Partners/funding sources*	New Developments
Early intervention	Early childhood centres; preschools; after hours care; family support	Varies greatly; significant numbers of councils involved	NSW Health; Department of Community Services; Department of Education and Training; non-government welfare sector	Families First Program
Community Development	Neighbourhood centres and the services they operate	Very high; majority of councils	Department of community Services; non-government welfare sector; Department of Urban Affairs and Planning; Housing Department	Place management initiative; Schools as Community Centres project; "communitybuilders" project
Situational/	Street	High	Department of	

<sup>10</sup> *Submission*, 14/9/99, Local Government and Shires Associations, pp 6-7.

<sup>11</sup> *Submission*, 14/9/99, Local Government and Shires Associations, p 6.

Environmental	lighting; car parks and public land management		Urban Affairs and Planning; Housing Department; private businesses	
Law enforcement	Security officers; joint operations with police	High level of interaction with Police; low but increasing level of contribution by local councils to law enforcement	NSW Police Service; private security firms	Council demands for increased policing

\*for all models the Crime Prevention Division of the NSW Attorney General's Department is a potential partner, but this is addressed in detail later in this chapter.

### 7.3.1 Early intervention/developmental crime prevention

Local councils provide services and facilities at each developmental stage, from birth to adulthood. Not all councils provide all of these services and some provide none at all. Council facilities in many areas provide a crucial intervention from the first weeks of birth. This is through early childhood centres and immunisation clinics. Through visits to these centres risk factors can be detected from the first few weeks after birth. Parents can be linked to professional services ranging from counselling for postnatal depression to weight loss and illness in their child. Early childhood centres are able to detect health problems, and report suspected cases of abuse or neglect. Nursing staff for these clinics are usually funded by NSW Health.

From the age of two onwards the nature of the potential intervention changes. Local councils are a major provider of child care through local council run preschools. These preschools employ staff trained to detect risk factors in children and refer parents or carers to appropriate services. Special needs workers are employed to assist with disabilities such as Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder or hearing problems which may otherwise be the beginnings of later patterns of problematic behaviour. Children are prepared for the transition to school. Councils also manage the family day care program where carers are licensed to use their homes for child care purposes.

Increasingly in recent years councils have provided supervised out of hours care for school age students with working parents. This is a significant strategy given the research findings by Weatherburn and Lind (see Chapter Four) on the importance of lack of supervision and offending during later teenage years.

Local councils also have a major role in the provision of youth work services targeted at young teens and above. These services vary enormously in their structure, staffing and sources of funding, and during the inquiry the

committee has received submissions on many different models of service provision.

Throughout the different stages of childhood, councils are also closely linked to family support services which provide a range of assistance to families from counselling and crisis support to parent education and preventative work. Council activities such as playgroups are often the referral points for such services. With other developmental needs the council also has a role, providing home and community care services for those with disabilities.

The potential for local councils to contribute to crime prevention through early intervention is very large indeed. However, based on the evidence received to date the committee does not believe this role is being used to the fullest, for the following reasons:

- many councils do not provide some or any of the services referred to above;
- other levels of government do not fund local government to provide interventions at the level required; and
- crime prevention is not made an explicit aim of the services.

The Local Government and Shires Associations in their 1999 Community Planning and Services Audit of their members found that currently NSW councils provide:

- over 400 child care services across New South Wales, with 32% of councils providing long day care services, 22% running preschools, a similar percentage providing out of school hours care and 32% managing family day care schemes;
- almost 150 child health centres, with 58% of councils providing this service; and
- sixty youth services, with 32% of councils providing youth centres.<sup>12</sup>

This is by no means a picture of comprehensive provision of early intervention services. The figures on early childhood centres are a particular concern. As with any other local council service, each council determines which services it provides as part of its Management Plan and other strategic planning processes. Councils in an area well served by private and

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<sup>12</sup>

*Submission, 14/9/99, Local Government and Shires Associations, p 6.*

community based child care centres, or with an ageing population, may see no value in establishing preschools. Other councils may wish to provide such services but lack the resources because of limited rate revenue or pressing demands in other service areas.

It is important that policymakers do not make assumptions about the level of service provided by local councils overall on the basis of what some councils provide. It is equally important that government agencies which fund early intervention programs adequately fund local councils for this role where it is required. In this respect the committee is optimistic about the potential opportunities provided by the Families First program (see Chapter Six). The Families First plan for the North Coast shown to the committee follows a full audit of services in the areas where the program is to be introduced, including identification of gaps. The committee believes councils should liaise at a peak level with government agencies to ensure the current role and potential of local government to contribute to early intervention is recognised during the roll out of Families First.

**Recommendation 12**

**The committee recommends The Cabinet Office liaise with the Local Government and Shires Associations to ensure the current role and potential future role of local government in early intervention be fully recognised in the rolling out of the Families First program.**

### **7.3.2 Community development**

A local council is very well placed to pursue community development models of crime prevention. Councils are close to their communities and have a major impact on the quality of life within those communities. The committee has seen during this inquiry the way forward thinking and energetic councils can strengthen their local community while finding solutions to local crime problems. Other councils remain reactive, looking for the lead from sources external to their area. The research of Professor Tony Vinson (see Chapter Four) on the concentration of poverty in local areas indicates how important it is that social problems be approached at the local level. Councils which can assist their residents feel a greater attachment to their local area will reduce crime and produce many other improvements in the quality of life.

The key to effective community development is for council to facilitate partnerships within its area. The committee has been impressed by how a council such as Ballina works effectively with many local government agencies and the local Aboriginal community. Byron Shire Council is also an example of how a community can create private sector partnerships to

manage alcohol and entertainment related violence and petty crime during major events.<sup>13</sup> Government departments such as Urban Affairs and Planning and Housing can sometimes initiate community development, as has occurred in the redevelopment of public housing estate in Claymore.<sup>14</sup> In Waterloo a department of a university has assisted in revitalising a very disadvantaged inner city community.<sup>15</sup> Private business can also contribute, as the committee witnessed during its visit to an Aboriginal employment program in Moree run by the local cotton industry.

Any consideration of local government community development must consider the fundamental role played by neighbourhood centres. Usually based in a community centre, hall or other council facility, they provide a focal point for referral and a wide range of services and programs. Many of the early intervention programs referred to above operate from neighbourhood centres. Services such as emergency assistance and financial counselling are also frequently available. Cultural and sports programs run by councils often use the neighbourhood centre facilities, as do many non-government services in the local community. The peak body for neighbourhood centres in New South Wales, the Local Community Services Association, states there are over 300 centres across New South Wales, and describes their role as:

[to] play a community development role in their localities. They are run by local people, and focus on local issues which are important to residents and particularly those disadvantaged from resources and power. While the overall budget for these organisations is more than \$65 million, they also harness large numbers of volunteers and uncounted community resources...Neighbourhood centres are therefore in a good position to provide social support services which help to build social capital. Social capital has the capacity to provide the informal “services” which enable people to deal with the developmental life stages and crises which they face. This is fundamentally a prevention function across all areas of government responsibility, including ... crime.<sup>16</sup>

As an example, a submission from Canterbury City Council describes just three of the many programs run from their neighbourhood centre at Riverwood:

- a youth service which provided recreational and employment programs with assistance and professional interventions for youth in the nearby public housing estate;

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<sup>13</sup> Ballina, Byron and Lismore Shires Regional Crime Prevention Forum, 5 August 1999, p 40.

<sup>14</sup> “It takes a Village” Good Weekend p40-45, Sydney Morning Herald 5 June 1999.

<sup>15</sup> *Evidence*, 25/10/99, Professor T Vinson.

<sup>16</sup> *Submission*, 1998, Local Community Services Association, p 1.

- a family support service which assisted 171 families in 1997 with domestic violence support, housing advocacy, child care placements, counselling and other interventions; and
- a community support program which assisted disabled and aged residents with housing and other assistance.<sup>17</sup>

Canterbury has used the co-location of services within its neighbourhood centres to target joint programs at particular groups, such as non English speaking background youth.<sup>18</sup>

A census of neighbourhood centres in 1996 found that in one week across New South Wales they provided:

- 26,500 information and referral contacts;
- 7,000 face to face interviews and counselling services; and
- 1,450 home visits.<sup>19</sup>

Closely related to the role of neighbourhood centres is that of family support services, which frequently operate out of neighbourhood centres. These services form an independent network to that of local councils, and are considered in Chapter Six of this report.

Council's role in community development does not begin and end with neighbourhood centres. Most of the crime prevention activity undertaken by councils can build a community. The model of crime prevention planning promoted by the Crime Prevention Division of the Attorney General's Department is also very much based on building partnerships and creating more cohesive communities.

The services which operate from local council's neighbourhood centres receive funding from many diverse sources, including local councils themselves. However the core funding for these comes from the Department of Community Services Community Services Grants Program. This funding source has failed to keep pace with the demands placed upon it or the add on costs of employing staff (see Chapter Six). An injection of \$10 million over four years from 1995 has been the only substantial increase since 1988. For family support services alone NCOSS estimates an extra \$30 million over three years is required to meet current demands.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *Submission*, 16/11/98, Canterbury City Council, pp 9-10.

<sup>18</sup> *Submission*, 9/9/99, Canterbury City Council.

<sup>19</sup> *Submission*, 1998, Local Community Services Association, Appendix.

<sup>20</sup> *Evidence*, 6/10/99, Mr G Moore, NCOSS.

Every indication from State government agencies during this inquiry has been that the current plans revolve around how to more closely target funding for family support rather than increase it.<sup>21</sup> The Families First program provides the only new source of funding of any significance. Local councils will therefore have to examine innovative ways of achieving their community development aims. While many of these services may require increased funding the prospects of substantial injections of ongoing funding from State government appears remote.

There are however three initiatives of State government which may have an important community development role at a local level, and each are in their early stages. The first is the Schools as Community Centres program, which uses the local primary school to link families with other community services, playing a mediating role similar to that played by neighbourhood centres. This program is discussed above in Chapter Six. However the reason for discussing it here is that it offers local government an opportunity to liaise with the agencies involved so as to meet some of the gaps caused by the lack of funding available for new or existing community development.

**Recommendation 13**

**The committee recommends the Departments of Education and Training and the Department of Community Services meet with the Local Government and Shires Associations to discuss ways of co-operating with expansion of the Schools as Community Centres project as a means of overcoming funding constraints on expansion of neighbourhood centres.**

The second project with a local community development focus is the place management project promoted by the Premier's Department. The third initiative is the "communitybuilders" project, also run by the Premier's Department. Both these programs are discussed later in this chapter.

### 7.3.3 Situational/environmental programs

Crime Prevention by Environmental Design has become a common activity of local councils. It is the area of crime prevention where councils appear to be most aware of the contribution they can make. The Crime Prevention Division of the Attorney General's Department produces a resource manual on crime prevention which includes detailed tables on strategies used and case studies of successful local government activity.<sup>22</sup> (Manual Chapter 8)

Councils' role in this form of prevention includes:

<sup>21</sup> For eg see *Evidence*, 6/10/99, Ms T Milne, DOCS.

<sup>22</sup> Manual Chapter 8.

- providing infrastructure such as street lighting, seating and youth facilities such as skateboard rinks;
- responsibility for urban design and planning;
- management of public land; and
- traffic management (such as changing traffic flow to encourage more pedestrians).

Development Control Plans, Local Environmental Plans and Local Approval Policies are all able to be used by councils to make buildings and larger spaces safer and less attractive to criminal activity.

There is a body of literature that has demonstrated that limited expenditure by councils on anti-graffiti campaigns, improved street lighting or agreements with licensed premises can have benefits in economic and social terms greatly exceeding the original investment.<sup>23</sup> However, a single strategy not forming part of a co-ordinated plan is likely to displace crime to a nearby location rather than reduce it overall.<sup>24</sup> For instance clearing away trees from a park used for under-age drinking may transfer the activity to an area with less visibility. Ideally a council should prepare a formal crime prevention plan, but at the very least strategies which combine several forms of crime prevention should be used to avoid this displacement effect.

A sophisticated example of this type of crime prevention was provided in a submission to the inquiry by Sutherland Council.<sup>25</sup> Examples of the approach taken in Sutherland include:

- the Rights of Passage project to reduce crime in public spaces in a large commercial shopping area in Miranda. A joint project between a youth group and the Council to create sporting and artistic activities led to changes to development control plans and local environmental plans by council; and
- conducting Safety Audits of problem areas such as parks and shopping centre car parks which bring together all stakeholders to develop plans for improvements required.

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<sup>23</sup> Farrington D and Welsh B “Value for Money? A Review of the Costs and Benefits of Situational Crime Prevention” *British Journal of Criminology* Summer 1999 Vol 39 pp 345-368.

<sup>24</sup> Attorney General’s Department (NSW) *Crime Prevention: resource manual* p 74.

<sup>25</sup> *Submission*, 13/9/99, Sutherland Shire Council.

Situational crime prevention is particularly suited to partnerships with non-government agencies and businesses, which in turn can build up a local community and contribute to other forms of prevention. One of the most important partners councils should consider are the owners of licensed premises from which alcohol is served. Research has demonstrated that controlling alcohol sales can significantly reduce assaults, offensive behaviour and malicious damage to property.<sup>26</sup> The Kings Cross place management project has produced a pamphlet explaining the Accord reached between South Sydney Council, various State government agencies and businesses regarding sales of alcohol in the area.<sup>27</sup> There are many other examples councils can draw from of this type of project.<sup>28</sup>

### 7.3.4 Law enforcement

This inquiry is not concerned directly with crime prevention through law enforcement. However the difficulties of promoting alternative forms of crime prevention were brought home to the committee strongly by submissions and evidence from the Local Government and Shires Associations. The opening to their submission argued:

The Associations advocate that it is important to recognise there is concern about the resources for policing as a crime prevention method. Police Service resources throughout country New South Wales are a matter of increasing concern to country councils. The Associations believe any review of crime prevention should be holistic, examining not only crime prevention through social support.. but also examining the role of traditional policing.<sup>29</sup>

The Associations urge the Parliament, the Government and the Police Commissioner to examine carefully the concerns of country communities about Police matters and direct appropriate resourcing to these concerns..<sup>30</sup>

The committee recognises the Associations have a responsibility to reflect the concerns of their members, and that there are special issues for rural areas. For instance the committee heard evidence from a councillor from Forbes that being in a police area command region of some 26,000 square km meant that frequently the town was left without any police presence for several hours at a time whenever its two police were called to another area.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Stevenson R J, Impact of Alcohol Sales on Violent Crime, Property Destruction and Public Disorder, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, 1996.

<sup>27</sup> Available from Premier's Department Special Projects Division.

<sup>28</sup> see "Preventing Alcohol Related Injuries" Homel R in O'Malley and Sutton *Crime Prevention in Australia* 1997 Federation Press.

<sup>29</sup> *Submission*, 14/9/99, Local Government and Shires Associations, p 1.

<sup>30</sup> *Submission*, 14/9/99, Local Government and Shires Associations, p 5.

<sup>31</sup> *Evidence*, 6/10/99, Ms P Miller.

However the committee is concerned that the strongest reaction from the Associations' membership to an inquiry examining alternative forms of crime prevention is to call for more police resources. The committee has visited Moree, arguably one of the rural towns with the most serious crime problems in New South Wales, and seen how a combination of methods of crime prevention has successfully reduced the crime rate by up to 40% without any major increase in police resources for particular common offences.

The committee does not deny that some country areas may lack adequate police resources, and that there may be anomalies between different towns. However the committee does not accept that crime prevention by police has been ignored by governments in favour of other forms of crime prevention; in fact quite the reverse. Inquiries such as this are important so as to balance the overwhelming attention given in public debate to law and order approaches.

A consequence of the unwillingness of councils to consider alternatives to complement traditional law enforcement has been the disturbing trend of some councils to attempt to take on a law enforcement role themselves. It is reported that four Sydney councils have employed special constables to deal with minor law enforcement issues.<sup>32</sup> The Associations estimate that 11 of their members are currently spending over \$3 million on traditional policing,<sup>33</sup> including operating 24 hour cameras, security guards and dogs.

Not only is this an inappropriate role for councils to undertake, it is potentially a bottomless pit for ratepayers. State governments across Australia have already shown that there is an insatiable demand for more police; it seems highly dangerous for councils to begin to go down this path. It is also ineffective: as a councillor from one of the councils which had used special constables explained:

I understand since the appointment not one ticket has been written out. ...To put two uniform police in one area of the city does not address the problem [of crime in the council area] and does not involve the community.<sup>34</sup>

In the same hearing it was also mentioned that Rockdale Council was abandoning its experiment in using sniffer dogs to combat the drug trade, partly on the recommendation of local police.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> SMH 12/10/99.

<sup>33</sup> *Submission*, 14/9/99, Local Government and Shires Associations, p 8.

<sup>34</sup> *Evidence*, 6/10/99, Ms B Giergel, Local Government and Shires Associations.

<sup>35</sup> *Evidence*, 6/10/99, Ms B Giergel, Local Government and Shires Associations.

**Recommendation 14**

**The committee recommends that the Department of Local Government urge local councils to cease current attempts to supplement police resources by funding their own law enforcement. The committee further recommends promotional campaigns by the Crime Prevention Division of the NSW Attorney General's Department include reminders of the cost and ineffectiveness of councils undertaking this law enforcement role.**

This should not be seen as discouraging a close working relationship between the police and local councils – quite the opposite. Partnerships work best when the respective parties bring their own unique contribution to the arrangement rather than try to take each other's role. This is certainly the case in two of the rural councils visited by the committee (discussed below). An example of how a city council worked constructively with the police in preventing crime is the project by Canterbury City Council to prevent street prostitution on a major road in the council area:

Canterbury City Council formed a committee which included council and police staff. Police pursued a policy of arresting clients and sex workers while the Council ran a media campaign in the local press which including publishing photographs of clients. Council also employed a street cleaner to collect used condoms and the estimated 63,000 needles discarded annually, and negotiated a relocation of a needle exchange from the street to a nearby hospital. Street prostitution has now been virtually removed from the area, and no client charged has re-offended.<sup>36</sup>

**7.4 Crime Prevention Division, Attorney General's Department**

The committee has been particularly impressed during this inquiry by the effectiveness of the Crime Prevention Division of the NSW Attorney General's Department. This is an opinion widely shared by many of the people with whom the committee has spoken:

Interaction with the Division has made a significant difference over the past four years – the education and development role it has played and the funding resources it has, have been very important from the local government perspective.<sup>37</sup>

The Attorney General's Department has been exceptionally helpful in helping us to develop our community safety program...They have provided assistance in

<sup>36</sup> Hatzistergos J "Paper for Partnerships in Crime Prevention Conference" 26 February 1998, Canterbury Council website -

[www.canterbury.nsw.gov.au/council/comm\\_prot/speech-feb98.htm](http://www.canterbury.nsw.gov.au/council/comm_prot/speech-feb98.htm)

<sup>37</sup> Submission, 14/9/99, Local Government and Shires Associations, p 17.

developing our strategy and the program. They have produced some excellent materials on the role of local government in community safety and crime prevention, and they have done some very good work in terms of providing us with guidance about the way the community safety plans can be developed.<sup>38</sup>

We have been impressed with some of the approaches taken over the past 12 months. It was good to see the linking of local crime prevention plans and strategies to the implementation of the Parental Responsibilities legislation.<sup>39</sup>

The Crime Prevention Division was established within the Attorney General's Department in 1995 as the NSW Government's key agency for strategic policy advice on the prevention of crime. Its role is to co-ordinate efforts to reduce crime and establish an integrated approach to crime prevention between government, community and private sector agencies. The Division has focussed on local government as the most appropriate means to encourage crime prevention across the state.<sup>40</sup> Reaching rural shires posed a particular problem for a Sydney based government agency with no regional representation. The Division has therefore taken a problem solving consultancy approach designed to strengthen the capacity of local communities to effectively deal with local crime issues on an ongoing basis.

From the work the committee has observed in Ballina, Lismore, Byron Bay, Moree, Bega and Canterbury this consultancy approach has proved very effective. Local communities have been empowered to develop their own solutions to local crime problems. The intervention and sensitive facilitation of Division staff has meant that these solutions have often been very different from the typical law enforcement model.

The committee heard an example of this problem solving approach in Ballina where there had been major concern about damage to property and vandalism on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. This was attributed to young people, even by the young people who were consulted as part of the consultation process. However, the Division's crime prevention planning officer also spoke with owners of local pubs, and it soon became apparent that the damage followed a path typically followed by *adult* patrons leaving their premises after closing time. A plan to address this was worked out and the problem was virtually eradicated within a few weeks.<sup>41</sup>

More than 40 regional councils have indicated that they intend to develop local crime prevention plans with the Division's assistance and 16 councils

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<sup>38</sup> *Evidence*, 6/10/99, Mr A Sammut, Canterbury City Council.

<sup>39</sup> *Evidence*, 6/10/99, Ms M Perkins, NCOSS.

<sup>40</sup> Safer Towns and Cities paper, 1999 Shipway and Homel P, Attorney General's Department.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

have already begun.<sup>42</sup> The process varies depending upon the size of the problem and the time and resources which the council wishes to provide to crime prevention.

The key to the process is always the development of a local “crime profile” based upon consultations with all the different segments of the community. This is usually a very brief document which tries to describe the crime problems of the area in a way with which all the community can agree. In many ways the process in producing this document is the most important part of changing the way councils look at crime prevention issues. As described by the Division’s Senior Project Officer:

So you need to identify local issues and build up what we call a crime profile report – a better name for which would be the story of what is happening in the community. So you have got the full story. You then have agreed issues. Ideally, you will also have a common language, around which you can talk about crime. You are looking, in particular, for hidden knowledge; or you are exploring assumed common knowledge.<sup>43</sup>

Aside from the consultancy approach which facilitates this initial crime profile, a crucial part of the Division’s role is providing councils with additional financial resources to implement their crime prevention plans. At times, such as in Moree, this has also involved the Division negotiating support funding from other departments. The funding takes four different forms depending on the nature of involvement with local councils:

1. Innovative Project Grants: these are fund projects that have not previously been trialed in New South Wales. An example is the production of a manual on how local councils can develop youth crime prevention policies, developed by Ashfield council and a regional organisation.
2. Specific Project Grants: these are for projects nominated by the Division. This is used as a “carrot” to councils to develop crime prevention plans. Examples include the House of Hope at Merimbula to develop programs to reduce sexual assault and domestic violence among young people as both perpetrators and victims; and the Aboriginal Night patrols at Kempsey.
3. Safer Towns and Cities Project Grants which operate under the *Children’s (Protection and Parental Responsibility) Act 1997*. The Division funds councils to begin preparation for a Safer Community Compact.

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<sup>42</sup> *Submission 14/9/99, Local Government and Shires Associations p 14, Homel and Shipway.*

<sup>43</sup> Mr Chris Shipway at Ballina Regional conference, Record of Proceedings, p 19.

The funding typically provides for a project officer to work with the whole of the local community to establish crime prevention needs, prepare a plan and develop strategies arising from that plan. To date at least nine councils have received these grants.<sup>44</sup>

4. Operational Area Grants: these are only available to councils that have an operational area established under Part 3 of the *Children's (Protection and Parental Responsibility) Act 1997*. To date these have consisted of four councils: Ballina, Moree, Orange and Coonamble. Grants have funded the Miyay Birray Youth Service StreetBeat project for 12 months and the Ballina StreetBeat project for 12 months.

There are two issues raised in relation to the Division which the committee believes require consideration. These are:

- the need for increased resources for the Division; and
- that to date the projects funded are on a non-recurrent basis.

Both are raised by the Local Government and Shires Associations in their submission:

..it is clear that the funding that councils have been seeking is not adequate. Local Government's view of the principal issues for the Crime Prevention Division are the capacity of the grants funds to keep pace with demand and the capacity of the Division's project officers to adequately support this rapid growth in community initiatives. It has been estimated that the Division needs a fund of approximately \$2.5 million per year as opposed to the current fund of \$1.2 million per year. The other aspect of this part of the equation is that all funding is non-recurrent. Many of the initiatives may be unsustainable, when the non-recurrent funding runs out.<sup>45</sup>

The NSW Council for Social Service also referred to the second issue of ongoing funding in its evidence:

At the end of the day we have to do more than run one-off projects; we have to ensure that the lessons gleaned from those projects find their way into mainstream funding and regulation.<sup>46</sup>

The committee does not have sufficient understanding of the current demands on the Division to put an exact figure on its funding needs. It is hard to believe the Division will be able to extend its coverage of local councils in New South Wales without an influx of funds. However the committee has not seen any evaluation of the demands on the Division and

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<sup>44</sup> *Submission*, 14/9/99, Local Government and Shires Associations, p 16

<sup>45</sup> *Submission*, 14/9/99, Local Government and Shires Associations, p 20.

<sup>46</sup> *Evidence*, 6/10/99, Ms M Perkins.

its ability to respond. The committee is cautious about recommending any increase in funding unless the need and extent of the increase required has been demonstrated by a formal assessment or evaluation.

If an analysis is undertaken which argues the need for increased funding, this funding should not be borne solely by the Attorney General's Department, as many other agencies will benefit from the successful crime prevention and safer communities which result. The Premier's Department is perhaps the best placed to negotiate ways in which the Crime Division can have its resources increased, given the Premier's Department current push for 'whole of government approaches' to social policy through its Strategic Projects Division.

**Recommendation 15**

**The committee recommends that an assessment be made of the future funding needs of the Crime Prevention Division and its ability to meet the demand on grants funding and staff generated by increasing interest in crime prevention by local government.**

**If additional funding is required the committee also recommends that the Premier's Department seek other agencies, other than the Attorney General's Department, to contribute to any funding increases.**

A different aspect of the funding issue is to what extent local councils can themselves obtain funding from other sources for their crime prevention projects. There is a very diverse source of funds available for one-off projects available from State and Federal government agencies, the philanthropic sector and increasingly the private sector. The main barrier to this funding is knowing what sources are available, and the time required to apply for funding.

One attempt to bridge this gap is the "communitybuilders" project of the Premier's Department ([www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au](http://www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au)); another is a clearinghouse and resource centre being established by Philanthropy Australia. The communitybuilders program seeks to share information and make available published resources to individuals and organisations involved in locally based community development. Philanthropy Australia is the peak body for private foundations and trusts, and has been funded by the Federal government to establish a clearinghouse to assist applicants obtain grant funding from the philanthropic sector.

This approach of widening the funding sources for crime prevention is consistent with the partnership building approach the Crime Prevention Division is seeking to develop. The Division may however need to facilitate a communication strategy to ensure local councils are aware of funding

sources available. The Local Government and Shires Associations is an obvious partner.

**Recommendation 16**

**The committee recommends the Crime Prevention Division liaise with the Local Government and Shires Associations to develop a formal mechanism for improving access to information on grant funding for crime prevention projects by local communities, including councils.**

**To facilitate this the committee recommends the Division and the Associations meet with those responsible for the Communitybuilders project in the Premier's Department and also the NSW Office of Philanthropy Australia. The aim of this should be to ensure local crime prevention is funded from a more diverse range of sources than the Division's limited grant funds.**

Regarding ongoing funding of projects by the Division the committee takes no firm view. The StreetBeat projects it has seen at Moree and Ballina appear to be worthy of continued funding beyond the immediate 12 month period, but this will depend upon evaluations being conducted as to their outcomes. If it is demonstrated that the projects deserve ongoing funding, arguments could be had as to whether the Crime Prevention Division could hand over responsibility to another agency. Other projects funded are very much in the way of a one-off, and should not require funding once their purpose is served. The Division's activities are very different from that of say, the Families First program, where long term funding of many early intervention programs is essential to gaining the ultimate benefits.

The committee sees an ongoing funding role as to an extent undermining the problem solving consultancy approach of the Division. The Division should not become a routine administrator of regular programs, as this can create funding recipients who become entrenched regardless of their actual effectiveness. Despite this there are well founded concerns that projects should not be funded as a one-off without any follow-up or exit strategy. As stated by the Director of NCOSS in evidence to the committee:<sup>47</sup>

At the end of the day we have to do more than run one-off projects; we have to ensure that the lessons gleaned from those projects find their way into mainstream funding and regulation.

To address concerns about the need for ongoing funding the Division should identify which projects have potential to be effective beyond the life of the initial grant. For these projects a transition plan needs to be

<sup>47</sup>

*Evidence 6/10/99, Mr G Moore.*

developed with local councils to ensure that ongoing funding is obtained from sources external to the Division.

**Recommendation 17**

**The committee recommends the Crime Prevention Division continues its practice of funding projects on a non-recurrent basis; however for suitable projects it should conduct evaluations as to their value as ongoing activities. If project evaluations do demonstrate the need for ongoing funding the Division should develop transition plans to ensure the continued support of the projects from relevant agencies.**

The Crime Prevention Division is an example of a relatively modest investment by the State government in a program which is making a major practical improvement to the quality of life in many diverse areas throughout New South Wales.

## **7.5 Children (Protection and Parental Responsibility) Act**

One of the most surprising aspects of the committee's inquiry to date has been the way in which the *Children (Protection and Parental Responsibility) Act 1997* has been implemented in the two areas visited, Ballina and Moree. The State Coalition government passed the *Children (Parental Responsibility) Act 1994* in response to calls from the community for the police to be given powers to escort children from public places at night to their parents or other safe place.

The powers of the Act were trialed in Gosford and in Orange with what was largely regarded as an unsatisfactory results. In 1995 the incoming ALP government established an interdepartmental committee to review the operation of the Act. Youth advocates heavily criticised the Act as imposing a draconian curfew on young people. The government repealed the previous legislation and replaced it with the *Children (Protection and Parental Responsibility) Act 1997*.

The new Act contains many of the powers of the previous legislation for police to remove children from public places where a young person is believed by the police to be at risk, this being defined by s19(3) of the Act. The significant difference from the previous Act is however in Part 3, which provides for local councils to apply for the powers to apply in their area. The declaration of limited operational areas for the Act is made by approval of the Attorney General under Part 3 s14(2). However the Act then states:

s14(3) The Attorney General must not make an order declaring an area (or portion of an area) to be an operational area unless the Attorney General is

satisfied that adequate crime prevention or youth support initiatives will be available in the area before the order takes effect.

- (4) In considering a request under subsection (1) to declare an area (or portion of an area) to be an operational area, the Attorney General is to have regard to the following:
- (a) whether the council has adequately informed and consulted with the local community concerned, including young people and the Aboriginal community, and the views expressed,
  - (b) the extent and nature of crime in the area
  - (c) the nature of any crime prevention or youth support initiatives that have been undertaken in the area, including whether any local crime prevention plan or safer community compact is in force...
  - (d) The effect of making the declaration on young people in the area..
  - (e) The practicality of applying Division 2 ... including (but not limited to) any advice given by the Commissioner of Police relating to the operational capacity of police to carry out functions under the Division in the area
  - (f) Without limiting paragraph (e), whether appropriate arrangements have been made to cater for the needs of young people who are removed from public places in the area.. and who are not able to be taken home, including culturally appropriate arrangements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people
  - (g) Whether the council has undertaken steps to include young people's needs in its local planning processes.
- (5) The Attorney General is to consult with the Minister for Community Services and the Minister for Police before declaring an area (or a portion of an area) to be an operational area.

The Act has been skilfully drafted as a means to an end, that end being to encourage improved crime prevention planning by local councils. It provides a legislative mandate for the work of the Crime Prevention Division with local councils. Councils wishing to apply for Parental Responsibility powers are required to consider the needs of the whole community, including young people and the Aboriginal community. In Ballina and arguably in Moree the operation of the Act appears to have contributed to the community feeling safer without the need for any increase in police numbers.

In making the observations below the committee is aware that a report commissioned by the Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee has recently been released which recommends the abolition of the Act.<sup>48</sup> The AJAC report was prepared by two community legal centres, one of which is

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<sup>48</sup> *A Fraction More Power: Evaluation of the Impact of the Children (Protection and Parental Responsibility Act) on Aboriginal People in Moree and Ballina* Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council 1999.

reported to have initiated an action in the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Tribunal on the basis of the report's findings.<sup>49</sup> It should however be noted:

- the AJAC report found that the operation of the Act was supported by the Aboriginal community in Ballina; and
- the report found mixed response to the implementation of the Act in Moree among the Aboriginal community, with some supporters and others strongly opposing.

### 7.5.1 Ballina

In Ballina the council initially applied for the powers under the Act because of public concerns about antisocial behaviour in the centre of town, with front page headlines in the local paper such as "Gang kids rule the night".<sup>50</sup> Arguably the fear of crime was a bigger issue than the nature of the crimes committed. There was a problem with property damage, street offences and break and enter, and other minor crime.

A community forum was held in 1997 at which 450 people attended. As a result of this forum the council formed a crime prevention committee council. The committee was chaired by the manager of the towns youth services, who was also a local councillor. The committee included the local State member Don Page MP, representatives of young people, senior citizens and the Aboriginal community.

With assistance from the Crime Prevention Division a crime prevention plan was developed in consultation with the community, local agencies and external experts. The plan contained a two page crime profile, a safety audit of high crime areas and 21 strategies aimed at preventing crime in the town. Following this, approval was received by the Attorney General for Ballina to become the first area to be declared an operational area under the new Act as at 1 January 1999.

This allowed the Council to receive funding of \$70,000 under the Crime Prevention Division's Operational Areas Grant Program to operate the StreetBeat project, one of the 21 strategies in the crime prevention plan, for a 12 month period from January 1999. StreetBeat consists of a minibus and funding for two part time youth workers including an Aboriginal person, to staff a night time service up until midnight.

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<sup>49</sup> "Street Purges of Children Challenged *Sydney Morning Herald* 16/11/99.

<sup>50</sup> Northern Star, 19/10/96.

During crime prevention planning it was thought that if police patrolled the streets at night it was likely to lead to confrontations, as well as requiring the purchase of an extra patrol car. Instead, the youth workers employed by StreetBeat are able to recommend young people return home and offer transport back. The youth workers make it clear that if the young people refuse the transport police may have to come past later and exercise their powers under the Act. To date this has only happened five times in six months, despite 749 “incidents” recorded by the service. (An “incident” refers to a recorded contact with a young person; not all contacts involve a request to leave).

StreetBeat workers liaise with police but use their own discretion as to which children they consider “at risk” for the purposes of the Act. Increasingly the police contact StreetBeat if they receive a report of disturbances involving young people rather than providing the initial intervention. The level of direct law enforcement directed against young people has declined while the crime problem, both perceived and actual, is reported by both police and citizens to have declined significantly.

Police at Ballina advised the committee that between January to August only 13 cautions have been issued and only two offences involving young people have been brought to the courts. The Department of Community Services manager at Ballina also expressed enthusiasm for the way the Act had been implemented in the area, and said that earlier reservations about the potential drain on his agency’s resources had not been realised.

### 7.5.2 Moree

Moree is a very different town from Ballina. The committee during its visit was taken on a tour of all sections of town by a local Aboriginal leader, and was particularly struck by the level of socio-economic deprivation in South Moree. During the summer of late 1997 the social problems boiled over, with demonstrations of 600 people protesting about a youth crime wave which was reported to include knifepoint robberies of shopkeepers by young teenagers, stoning of cars<sup>51</sup> and bashings.<sup>52</sup> The protest group, calling themselves the Street Reclaimers, urged the local council and police to apply for powers under the *Parental Responsibility Act* as a way of dispersing what were reported to be groups of over 70 young children at a time gathering in the centre of town on many nights to cause disturbances.

As with Ballina the local council applied under the new Act and underwent the same crime prevention planning exercise. Again the operational area for the Act was only one of many strategies undertaken, which included:

<sup>51</sup> “Town in Fear of Unruly Teenagers” SMH 24/12/97 p 7.

<sup>52</sup> “Tensions rising in troubled towns” SMH 17/1/98 pp 1,8 - 9.

- a “Time Out” facility set up for children to attend who were suspended from school;
- regular briefings of police officers by local Aboriginal leaders through a local Aboriginal consultative committee;
- the Premier’s Department, Moree Plains Shire Council and several other agencies have contributed to a place manager to work throughout the local area (see 7.6 below); and
- the Gwydir Valley Cotton Growers Association established an Aboriginal employment strategy which has not only placed 75 locals in work in its first 18 months but is also acting as a placement agency for other employers in town.

It is not clear to the committee how much of this activity was generated as a result of the crime prevention planning exercise imposed by the *Parental Responsibility Act*. As with Ballina, Moree received funding from the Crime Prevention Division to run a night bus service. This was run by Mirray Birray Aboriginal Community Resources centre, and as with Ballina it is intended as a way to reduce antisocial activity by young people at night without adopting a heavy law enforcement approach.

Figures provided to the committee by the Barwon Local Area Command indicate the parental responsibility powers have had to be used much more frequently than in Ballina. Police returned young people to their homes or a safe place on 95 occasions during the six months from 1 Jan 1999. This reflects the much more difficult crime problem present in Moree compared to Ballina.

Since the Act has been in operation there have been significant reductions in crime, as the following figures for Moree indicate:

### **Moree - Crime comparison pre- and post-Parental Responsibility Act Jan-July**

<b>Incidents</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>Variance %</b>
Assault	169	214	Down 21%
Break/enter	314	558	Down 36%
Robbery	26	27	Down 3.7%
Stealing	357	519	Down 31%
Malicious Damage	338	419	Down 19%

Source: Crime Management Unit, Moree, 6 August 1999

To what extent these figures can be attributed to the impact of the *Parental Responsibility Act* is unclear. As Chapter Three of this report indicates, fluctuations in crime statistics need to be interpreted cautiously.

Perhaps more significant, given the tensions in the town in 1997, is that the Moree Street Reclaimers have disbanded. The committee met with the former head of the group who said she believed that the crime problem had improved significantly as a result of the efforts by State government agencies and Moree Plains Shire Council.

The committee sees the key to the apparent success of the Act in Ballina and Moree as the result of a holistic crime prevention planning exercise. The StreetBeat services are a visible demonstration of crime prevention, but it is only one of many strategies introduced. The notable feature of both towns is that crime prevention planning has involved all the key parts of the community, including young people and Aboriginal communities, and that it has lessened the need for heavy law enforcement directed at young people.<sup>53</sup>

The committee understands that every local government area has its own unique crime problems, and the Parental Responsibility Act is not an answer to every problem. Indeed, the legislatively mandated consultation structure is designed to ensure that councils properly consider alternatives to declaration of an operational area. However the committee is concerned at the lack of interest in using the Act, because the Act is one way to draw local councils into holistic crime prevention planning. Orange Council and Coonamble Shire are the only other councils to have areas declared and only Tamworth is said to be expressing interest in applying.<sup>54</sup>

Given the strong message given to the committee that councils across New South Wales see a need for increased police resources, it would not appear this lack of interest is due to a lack of perceived crime problems. Instead it could be for reasons such as:

- crime prevention planning has revealed the Act is not necessary in their area (eg other strategies can be used with less resources required; the crime problem does not involve young people);
- the council is unwilling to go through the consultation and crime prevention planning process;

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<sup>53</sup> Although we note the findings of the AJAC report referred to earlier which indicate young people in Moree have perceived unfair treatment from the police using powers under the Act.

<sup>54</sup> *Submission*, 14/9/99, Local Government and Shires Associations, p 16.

- local police or Department of Community Services District officers have advised against the use of the Act when consulted by council; and
- councils and their communities are not aware of the changes made in 1997 and perceive the Act as a hardline law and order measure.

The last two points are of most concern to the committee. Police and Community Services staff in Ballina were initially reluctant for the council to proceed with applying: the police anticipated having to purchase a new patrol car and the Department of Community Services did not believe they had sufficient staff to supervise children unable to be returned to their home. The committee was advised that initial interest by Forbes Shire council was strongly discouraged by police and Community Services for the same reason.<sup>55</sup> The experience in Ballina and Moree was that the Act has reduced, or at least redirected, the demands on the police and had minimal impact on Department of Community Services Staff.

The committee was advised by a senior Department of Community Services manager that joint protocols with the police have been issued to all area managers.<sup>56</sup> The committee remains concerned that there may be unnecessarily negative perceptions of the Act within the Department at district officer level. Likewise the committee is not clear whether local councils across the State are sufficiently aware of the success of the Act to date. For that reason there is the need for a communications strategy to widely promote the experience of Moree and Ballina to encourage greater interest in use of the Act.

#### **Recommendation 18**

**The committee recommends that the Crime Prevention Division discuss with the Local Government and Shires Associations a strategy to communicate the success of the application of *Children (Protection and Parental Responsibility) Act 1997* in Ballina and Moree. This strategy should be targeted at three groups: local councils, particularly in rural areas; Department of Community Services Area managers and District Officers; and Police Local Area Commands. In communicating with Community Services and Police the emphasis should be that the Act has to date reduced the need for frontline law enforcement in Ballina and Moree.**

<sup>55</sup> Evidence, 6/10/99, Ms P Miller, Local Government and Shires Associations.

<sup>56</sup> Evidence, 6/10/99, Department of Community Services.

## 7.6 Place management

Place management as a concept is not specific to local government: it is a way of governing differently at all levels. To date the most important experiments have involved local government very closely. Mr John Mant introduced the concept into Australian policy debates in the mid 1990s<sup>57</sup> and the concept has received national attention through the writings of Mark Latham MP<sup>58</sup>. The NSW Premier's Department has trialed place management projects in three areas which have a high level of social problems, including crime.

The core idea of place management is that policymakers should appoint a specific "place manager" who is accountable for outcomes in a specific geographic area. This is in contrast to having departments such as planning or engineering that focus on their technical specialisation as an input. These departments are characterised as "silos" operating independently of each other and often duplicating resources directed at the same problems. As described by Mr Mant in evidence to the committee:

In the case of the main street of a country town, is the engineer responsible for the buildings, the way the street functions, the late night security, how signs are hung ...[or] should it be the local town planner or the clerk? Actually it is all of them... because they all have a particular task to perform, no one of them will allow any other to be in charge of outcomes.

In that sort of structure no-one can take responsibility for a complex outcome... Everyone is involved but no-one is responsible for anything. That is what place management is all about. ..We need someone to take responsibility to fix the problems in Kings Cross, but to whom do we go in the existing organisations?<sup>59</sup>

A place manager is appointed with a responsibility for a broad outcome. In crime prevention terms the outcome would be "community safety", and the place manager would be able to use any of the resources available (police, town planning, social services) to achieve this outcome. This approach is argued to avoid the answer to problems being driven by a particular profession or input:

Kings Cross is a classic example. With a group of about 80 people I did a strategic planning session... One of the issues raised was the amount of petty crime on the street, particularly vandalising cars, smashing windows, stealing things from car seats, and so on. The general approach from everyone is: We need more coppers

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<sup>57</sup> see Stewart-Weeks M "Place Management: Fad or Future?" Institute of Public Administration Australia (NSW Division) August 1998 p 26.

<sup>58</sup> Latham M "Civilising Global Capital" 1998 Allen and Unwin pp 214-220 etc.

<sup>59</sup> Evidence, 1/10/99, Mr J Mant.

on the beat, law enforcement and crime prevention. We should chop off their hands!

When place managers came in and began to understand the place, what was happening and all the different communities at work they found that a large number of petty crimes were being committed by the kids from three families from the Woolloomooloo housing commission estate. This is doing something about the Woolloomooloo housing area and the three families, and finding something for those kids to do other than going up to Kings Cross and smashing car windows. It is crime prevention, but it is not law enforcement.<sup>60</sup>

The Premier's Department through its Strategic Projects Division has established place management pilot projects in Cabramatta, Kings Cross and Moree. All three areas have high crime rates. The committee has received information on these projects and is impressed by the range of projects undertaken. For instance newsletters on the Cabramatta Project which describe the joint Premier's Department/Fairfield Council initiative describe over 15 projects targeting crime directly through police operations and indirectly through employment and urban planning. A brochure on the Kings Cross Licensing Accord outlines how partnerships have been built between business and government agencies to reduce alcohol related crime.

The committee has also seen at first hand how the place manager at Moree has worked closely with Moree Plains Shire Council and local communities. A great deal of effort is being undertaken to assist the management and financial reporting of diverse Aboriginal organisations in Moree and locally managed government initiatives such as the Nardoola bail hostel. The leadership in town appeared to be working cohesively towards shared goals, and crime rates had declined significantly in most categories. It is not clear to the committee as to what extent this is attributable to place management or the many other factors at work in the council, Police and the Department of Community Services, or to external contributions such as the work of the Crime Prevention Division.

This highlights one problem for place management: the extent to which the contribution of the place manager to outcomes can be evaluated. A related weakness is the extent that the role of place manager duplicates the role of local councillors and local MPs, who are after all ultimately accountable to complex outcomes by those whom they represent, as John Mant agreed:

[in one of the pilot areas] everyone now goes to the place manager because he is on the spot, he is full time, he is in the organisation and therefore probably more effective, and he gets quicker action than the member of Parliament or the local councillor.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Evidence*, 1/10/99, Mr J Mant.

The place management projects in Kings Cross and Cabramatta are currently being evaluated by an external consultant. Subject to anything discovered during these evaluations the committee believes place management should continue to be trialed because it appears to stimulate innovative crime prevention projects and because it provides a focus for central agencies to provide resources to areas in need:

When you have only two or three [place management projects] in a State government area, they do get a disproportionate amount of resources because they are the only ones.<sup>62</sup>

The importance of this is dramatically illustrated in Professor Tony Vinson's report *Unequal in Life* (see Chapter Four), showing the concentration of poverty in a limited number of severely disadvantaged locations. Place management is a means for concentrating efforts on locations instead of State wide programs. The ability of State government authorities to co-ordinate on crime prevention is also very limited given the experience of this inquiry, so place management may be an answer to gaining better focus on State government activities in specific locations.

The committee is, however, yet to be convinced that place management is unique or a panacea for local councils looking for crime prevention solutions. The example quoted above of finding an alternative solution to petty crime in Kings Cross could have equally been reached by the crime prevention planning process undertaken throughout New South Wales by the Crime Prevention Division. Appointing a place manager may be a way for the State government to resolve complex crime problems where a community is unwilling to undertake crime prevention planning. The key is to approach crime prevention as a problem open to many solutions: place management is one process to achieve this goal.<sup>63</sup>

## **7.7 Communicating crime prevention to local government**

Reference has been made earlier in this chapter to concerns that the majority of local government perceive crime prevention largely in terms of needing more police; and to possible misconceptions by councils as to the Parental Responsibility Act. Both these raise the issue of the need for a communications strategy to raise awareness of the potential for crime prevention. This was raised by the Local Government and Shires Association in its evidence:

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<sup>62</sup> *Evidence*, 1/10/99, Mr J Mant, p 13.

<sup>63</sup> the committee recognises that place management can be used to argue for a radical restructure of public service delivery, as has been argued by Mant and Latham. It has been considered here only in the context of crime prevention by local government.

Evaluation is very important, and what can be learned in evaluation is very important, but ultimately communicating what is going on is of paramount importance. This document [the submission] is something of a sample of what a whole range of councils are doing. I chair that committee, but much of this was news to me when I read it, and it was news to some of our community service people.<sup>64</sup>

The committee believes a communications strategy is needed which at the very least makes councils aware of what other councils in New South Wales are doing in crime prevention, particularly those who have been assisted by the Crime Prevention Division. This could also involve a sharing of any evaluations conducted so as to broaden knowledge of what has worked and what has not. An ongoing mechanism for sharing this information will then need to be implemented.

The agency to drive this strategy would appear to be the Crime Prevention Division, in close consultation with the Local Government and Shires Associations. However it should also involve other agencies which have an interest, particularly the Premier's Department and the Police. A strategy which emphasised alternatives to crime prevention through law enforcement would have added credibility with councils if the Police were supporting the same argument.

**Recommendation 19**

**The committee recommends that the Crime Prevention Division in close consultation with the Local Government and Shires Association, the Premier's Department and the NSW Police Service develop and implement a communications strategy which shares knowledge about the crime prevention activity of councils across New South Wales. This strategy should include sharing information about evaluations conducted so as to broaden knowledge of "what works and what doesn't." This strategy should include a mechanism to allow this sharing of information to continue as an ongoing process.**

At a more ambitious level a communications strategy could also be developed to raise awareness among councils of experience across Australia and internationally on effective crime prevention, particularly crime prevention through social support:

They [local councils] should use evidence based crime prevention strategies and work from the knowledge of the sorts of things that have come before this committee before – that is what works, what is promising and what does not work. I cannot stress that too much. People will constantly come up with ideas that do not work, that have been shown over and over again through scientific scrutiny

<sup>64</sup>

*Evidence*, 6/10/99, Ms B Giergel, Local Government and Shires Associations.

not to work. There is a need for communication of information, and strong communication at that.<sup>65</sup>

The committee is encouraged by its own experience in bringing two expert speakers from the United State to its conference in October 1998. The work that these two experts spoke about has been quoted in many of the submissions received to date, including those submitted by government agencies. The Local Government and Shires Associations have used the Professor Larry Sherman study on “What Works; What Doesn’t; What’s Promising” to produce a table which identifies which crime prevention roles are appropriate for local government and which are outside its scope.

Again, the Crime Prevention Division is best placed to drive such a strategy, in consultation with the other key players referred to above.

**Recommendation 20**

**The committee recommends the Crime Prevention Division consider, either as part of or in addition to the strategy referred to above, a communications strategy aimed at local government which highlights work in Australia and overseas on successful and unsuccessful programs. The aim of this would be to deepen the knowledge base of local government on crime prevention.**

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*Evidence, 6/10/99, Mr N Baum, Local Government and Shires Associations.*