



Safer streets: Preventing crime in our communities

March 2011



Safer streets - preventing crime in our communities

Preventing crime from occurring in the first place is one of the many ways our Government supports communities in their work to make their streets safer and residents more secure.

New South Wales already has the strongest sentencing regime in Australia. Our courts are more likely to send serious offenders to prison than the courts are in any other State.

While we maintain a tough approach to apprehending, punishing and deterring criminals, we also recognise that prevention is better than a cure, and that is especially so when it comes to crime.

Crime exacts a heavy toll on victims and the community both in economic and personal terms.

Preventing crime is a collaborative effort and the Government cannot combat it alone. In fact, crime is largely a local phenomenon, and local communities can be empowered to keep control of their neighbourhood.

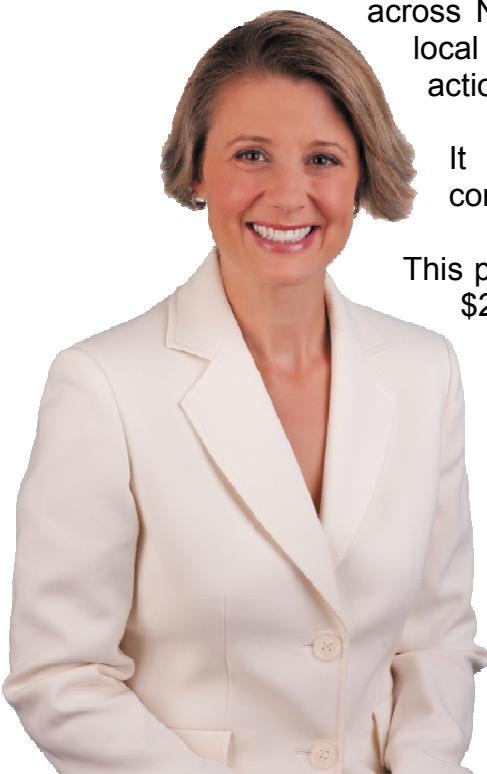
That is why, if re-elected the Government will increase its focus on supporting local communities by giving them the tools they need to fight crime at a grassroots level.

A major initiative will be the implementation of Safer Towns and Suburbs Partnerships across NSW. These partnerships will involve the Police engaging with local communities to identify the priority crimes that need targeting, actions to solve the crimes, and targets.

It is my hope that by working together, we can make our community a much safer and secure one in which to live.

This package with \$6.7 million of new funding will complement almost \$2 million allocated for community-based crime prevention projects in 2010-11.

Working together, we will have safer streets and better communities.



Kristina Leneally

What this policy means for you

We're already providing more resources for Police to help them prevent crime.

This policy means a collaborative approach to crime prevention that prioritises partnerships with local communities.

It will reduce the costs to taxpayers of dealing with crime such as court costs, incarceration costs, costs to the health system, compensation costs, and insurance costs.

Our policy will provide more resources for local crime prevention leading to less crime in towns and suburbs. It will lead to the development of innovative and practical solutions that actually prevent and deal with the root causes of crime.

All this means that everyone in our community has less chance of becoming a victim of crime and having to endure the personal and financial costs that occur as a result.

ACTIONS:

Provide a \$5 million CCTV Fund for local communities to fight crime

- Establish a \$5 million fund for local councils to apply for the purchase of CCTV cameras and systems to tackle specific crimes and target hotspots where it is demonstrated that CCTV cameras will help in combating those crimes – the State Government will contribute three quarters of the cost allowing local councils to leverage funds for these systems

Provide recurrent funding to the Crime Stoppers Hotline

- Ensure Crime Stoppers can continue to gather intelligence on criminal activity from the community and effectively implement crime prevention strategies and campaigns across the State by providing \$800,000 over the next term

Implement Safer Town and Suburbs Partnerships

- Implement Safer Towns and Suburbs Partnerships across NSW in 80 separate police local area commands - these partnerships will involve the Police engaging with local communities to identify the priority crimes that need targeting, and developing actions to solve those crimes

Preventing crime through better design to our physical environment

- Increase funding by \$900,000 to the Designing Out Crime Research Centre at University of Technology, Sydney to develop designs that alter the physical environment in order to prevent crime - this will complement previous support of \$2.25 million to the centre, bringing total NSW Government support to \$3.15 million

- Establish a plan for designing out crime and maximise its use in our crime prevention work - this includes special plantings, graffiti resistant open spaces and vandalism proof garbage bins and equipment

Labor and crime prevention

The Keneally Government believes when it comes to crime - prevention is always better than a cure.

An increased focus on crime prevention now saves significant costs from being incurred later.

The cost of any crime to the Government and the community is significant. We will do whatever we can to prevent crime, and consider our spending on crime prevention as money and resources well spent.

Costs to be prevented by good crime prevention practices include court costs, the costs of incarceration, physical and psychological costs to victims, costs to the health system, compensation costs and insurance costs.

But we understand that preventing crime is not something we can do alone.

The experts who work every day on crime prevention tell us the best way to prevent crime is to partner with the community.

Ken Marslew of anti-violence group *Enough is Enough* summed it up best when he said:

'Governments on their own will not change the way we deal with violence and its prevention. Strategies need to be worked out... Partnerships encouraged at all levels... We all need to work together'¹

That is why an improved collaborative approach to crime prevention is at the heart of this policy.

¹ In a paper presented to at the conference 'Partnerships in Crime Prevention' (25-27 February 1998).

Our challenges

Reducing crime is a significant challenge; one that requires action to be taken at all levels.

An effective way to reduce crime is to deter criminals by instituting tough penalties and sentences.

And in NSW crime rates are falling or stable in 17 out of 17 of the major crime categories.

But more can always be done to bring crime rates down further.

The Government has a strong record of being tough on criminals through increased police numbers and the severity of prison sentences.

It is just as important to prevent crime in the first place so that people and society do not have to endure its consequences.

Our challenge is that while ultimately the Government is responsible for combating crime, solutions need to come from the local community to be truly effective.

The initiatives outlined in this policy address these challenges.

Our Record

LABOR

- Allocated almost \$2 million for community based crime prevention projects this financial year.
- Recently, the Department of Justice and Attorney General and the NSW Police Force fitted more than 12,000 cars with theft resistant number plate screws at targeted hotspot locations and distributed 5,000 vehicle security kits to members of the public.
- Provided 127 police officers to the PCYC including 105 Youth Case Managers attached to clubs across the state. These officers are responsible for developing and delivering youth crime prevention and youth support programs.

OPPOSITION

- No policy. The Shadow Attorney General has said that “hard-line sentencing and prison policies had failed”, but has not provided a single policy on crime prevention since.

Provide a \$5 million CCTV Fund for local communities to fight crime

Local Government will be able to access financial assistance from a new dedicated CCTV fund for the purchase of CCTV cameras and systems. This will help local communities and businesses prevent crime and give local police the evidence they need to solve crimes.

The use of CCTV technology has become increasingly popular to address crime and community safety issues. CCTV is used in public places around Australia and overseas to take advantage of the best technology available, and to reduce the fear of street crime. The evidence is that it can be an effective strategy in preventing crime at a local level, as part of a range of crime prevention strategies.

CCTV cameras can:

- Provide a surveillance function that may deter people from committing crimes in the area in which it is used.
- Signify to the public that an area with CCTV is a safe place and encourage more people to come to that area – meaning that crime is less likely to happen as there are more potential witnesses.
- Act as a prompt to remind people to take other security measures such as locking their car.

Research conducted for the Australian Parliament notes CCTV to have had a largely positive impact on the investigation of crime. With the scope and nature of CCTV surveillance continually expanding, footage from sources as diverse as traffic cameras, Automatic Teller Machines, shopping malls, transport hubs, and carparks is increasingly being used as evidence and to assist investigations, particularly to track the last known movements of homicide and abduction victims.

The new dedicated CCTV fund will enable local communities to partake in these benefits by enabling Local Government to apply for 75 per cent of the capital cost of installing new CCTV cameras and systems.

The 75 per cent cost to Local Government will ensure as many councils as possible are able to share in the fund and will demonstrate a commitment on their part to the ongoing use of the CCTV cameras and systems. It is estimated the fund will support the purchase of over 300 cameras.

Local Government will need to make a business case to the Crime Prevention Commission that they can monitor the camera footage, that they are strategically located, will assist in combating a specific crime or crimes, and will be used in conjunction with other proven crime prevention strategies.

ACTION:

- Establish a \$5 million fund for local councils to apply for the purchase of CCTV cameras and systems to tackle specific crimes and target hotspots where it is demonstrated that CCTV cameras will help in combating those crimes – the State Government will contribute three quarters of the cost allowing local councils to leverage funds for these systems

Provide recurrent funding the Crime Stoppers Hotline

CrimeStoppers NSW is a non profit organisation that is an important contact point for Police intelligence gathering from the community.

Since 2005, CrimeStoppers NSW has achieved a 54 per cent increase in the number of contacts (i.e. telephone calls and emails from the community providing intelligence) received by the NSW Police Force.

In 2009 information provided to CrimeStoppers NSW resulted in 298 arrests, 1375 charges laid, \$12.5 million worth of drugs seized and \$5.7 million worth of property recovered.

To ensure CrimeStoppers can continue its crucial work, a re-elected Keneally Government will provide the organisation with recurrent funding of \$200,000 a year during the next term.

A fixed funding stream will ensure the continuation of CrimeStoppers as a valuable contact point between the community and the NSW Police Force to provide intelligence necessary for solving and preventing crimes.

ACTION:

- Ensure Crime Stoppers can continue to gather intelligence on criminal activity from the community and effectively implement crime prevention strategies and campaigns across the State by providing \$800,000 over the next term

Implement Safer Town and Suburbs Partnerships

The Keneally Government will establish Safer Towns and Suburbs Partnerships across NSW. Partnerships will be established in each of the 80 Police Local Area Commands. These partnerships will involve the Police with the community identifying priority crime categories to target.

We will replace the existing Crime Prevention Partnerships that covers 16 Local Area Commands with this new and expanded program. The new program will give the police the power to decide what crime categories they will target. This is instead of the current program under which participating Local Area Commands to target the same categories – which are currently - assaults, steal from motor vehicle and robbery.

Examples of other crime categories that could selected are alcohol related assaults, graffiti, malicious damage, motor vehicle theft, break and enter, and domestic violence related assaults.

We believe that Police should be given the flexibility to select and target those crimes that are of concern to them and the local community they serve. Local police will take the lead in setting the targets for each crime type. An example of a target could be reducing incidents of “motor vehicle theft” by 10 per cent within 12 months. Police and the Crime Prevention Division of the Department of Justice and the Attorney General will then coordinate action with state government agencies, local government and businesses to drive down crime for these targeted crimes.

This whole of government approach will benefit the community and local businesses by driving down crime in the area. This approach also has the advantage of being able to address crime problems before they escalate and will help to avoid areas becoming associated with certain crimes.

ACTION:

- Implement Safer Towns and Suburbs Partnerships across NSW in 80 separate police local area commands - these partnerships will involve the Police engaging with local communities to identify the priority crimes that need targeting, and developing actions to solve those crimes

Preventing crime through better design to our physical environment

Designing out crime is a crime prevention strategy that aims to reduce the opportunities for crime through the design and management of the built and landscaped environment.

It has been proven that proper design and effective use of the built environment can lead to a reduction in the fear and incidence of crime and an improvement in the quality of life for the community.

NSW Labor will establish a plan which maximises the use of the strategy in our crime prevention work.

The Designing Out Crime Research Centre (**DOCRC**) has been established at UTS pursuant to an existing partnership between the Government and the University.

In association with Department of Justice and Attorney General, the Designing out Crime Research Centre leads the development of clever, simple and well-targeted design interventions aimed to discourage opportunistic crime for the NSW Government.

Already, DOCRC has produced a number of successful design solutions such as bomb-resistant bins for NSW railway platforms and bus seating that discourages vandalism. A feature of the bin is a transparent exterior so that Police officers can quickly and easily identify the contents.

To date, the NSW Government has already committed a total of \$2,250,000 in funding to the DOCRC to 2013. The NSW Government will provide a further \$900,000 to the DOCRC to 2015 to enable its crucial work.

ACTION:

- Increase funding by \$900,000 to the Designing Out Crime Research Centre at University of Technology, Sydney to develop designs that alter the physical environment in order to prevent crime - this will complement previous support of \$2.25 million to the centre, bringing total NSW Government support to \$3.15 million
- Establish a plan for designing out crime and maximise its use in our crime prevention work - this includes special plantings, graffiti resistant open spaces and vandalism proof garbage bins and equipment



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