



# Police Federation of Australia

The National Voice of Policing

Level 1, 21 Murray Crescent  
GRIFFITH ACT 2603

29 October 2009

Submission No. 41

(Youth Violence)

A.O.C. Date: 29/10/2009

Committee Secretary  
House of Representatives Standing Committee  
on Family, Community, Housing and Youth  
PO Box 600021  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

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Dear Committee Members

## **Inquiry into the impact of violence on young Australians**

The Police Federation of Australia (PFA), representing the country's 52,000 police officers, is pleased to contribute to your Inquiry.

There are a number of other organizations and groups which are able to provide valuable research and statistical and anecdotal information on the impact of violence on young Australians, including as victims of violence.

We propose instead to focus our submission on your final Term of Reference:

- **Strategies to reduce violence and its impact on young Australians.**

Much of the law enforcement effort at Commonwealth, State and Territory levels is concentrated on dealing with violence through the criminal justice system.

Although continuing efforts at addressing the problem through the criminal justice system are important, we consider that the greatest new gains for

young Australians are likely to come from fresh and concerted action on community policing and crime prevention.

Crime prevention focused on young Australians, including Indigenous young people, is a powerful means of breaking the cycle of youth violence and offending and re-offending.

### **Essential partners in crime prevention**

Australia's police officers witness the effects of violence on young Australians first hand on a daily basis.

Police forces – the Australian Federal Police and State and Territory Police – are, in our view, best placed to lead and partner with local government and local community organisations to drive effective crime prevention in Australia.

This is in contrast to the crime prevention grants program run by the former Australian Government which generally bypassed police forces which were generally not an integral partner in the projects which were funded. On this point, the Committee may be able to access the 2007 report to the Attorney-General's Department which resulted from an evaluation of the previous program to determine lessons for the future.

It is also notable that local governments around Australia have progressively increased their involvement in community security and crime prevention services over the last decade, principally to address problems of juvenile crime.<sup>1</sup> It is vital that police forces and all three levels of government, including local government, work together effectively in reducing crime affecting young people.

In Indigenous communities, the same integral involvement of Indigenous community leaders would be essential partners in crime prevention initiatives.

### **A winning model for effective crime prevention–COPS**

The PFA proposes a new **Australian Crime Prevention–Innovative Grants Program** based on the successful United States model–the **Community Oriented Policing Services–COPS**, which commenced under President Bill Clinton in 1994 and is being re-invigorated by President Barak Obama in 2009 as part of the US stimulus program to address the Global Financial Crisis.

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<sup>1</sup> *At the Crossroads*, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics, Finance and Public Administration Inquiry into Local Government and Cost Shifting, October 2003.

In the COPS literature on Problem Solving Partnerships, Chief Darrel Stephens of the Charlotte – Mecklenburg Police Department said,

*“Problem – solving without partnerships risks overlooking the most pressing community concerns. Thus, the partnership between police and the communities they service is essential for implementing a successful program in community policing”.*

The much publicized “*Broken Windows*” article by James Wilson and George Kelling first appeared in the US in March 1982 and soon became cited as the bible by urban crime fighters. Whilst there have been many interpretations of this theory, Wilson and Kelling essentially echoed the problem-oriented policing theory’s call for law enforcers to work with community members in planning well thought out initiatives.

In his 2001 publication, *What Causes Crime?*, Don Weatherburn of the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics identified a number of areas that impact on crime. He points out that many things can make a crime-prone individual, including family factors, school performance, truancy, poverty and unemployment. Poor parenting is also a significant factor in developing crime-prone individuals. The argument is, therefore, that the promotion of programs aimed at changing parental behavior could have a very positive impact on crime reduction. Likewise funding of employment programs is also likely to impact on crime, as are serious attempts to address issues of poverty and lack of education.

In a major report to the United States Congress by the National Institute of Justice in 1998, *Preventing Crime: What Works? What Doesn’t? What’s Promising?*, the issue of federal (US) funding for crime reduction was considered.

The report, which was updated in 2002, reflected on the primary role of the government in funding crime prevention projects. They pointed out that the projects were most effective when targeted at those areas where **youth violence is highly concentrated**. The report showed that not only should funding be targeted at trouble spots, but it should also be placed in the context of a multi-agency approach. Programs, they argued, need to be innovative and developed at the local level. The report stated:

*A much larger part of the national crime prevention portfolio must be invested in rigorous testing of innovative programs, in order to identify the active ingredients of locally successful programs that can be recommended for adoption in similar high-crime urban settings nation-wide.*

The report also pointed out that –

*Most crime prevention results from informal and formal practices and programs located in seven ‘institutional’ settings. These institutions appear to be “interdependent” at the local level, in that*

*events in one of these institutions can affect events in others that in turn can affect the local crime rate.*

The seven 'institutions' identified in the report are:

- Communities
- Families
- Schools
- Labor markets
- Places (specific premises)
- Police and
- the Criminal justice system.

It is clear from the report that federal involvement can be most useful in funding programs that bring together all (or combinations of) the seven 'institutions'.

The PFA believes that the same applies in the Australian context. Federal funding to undertake crime prevention programs through local initiatives will have a significant impact. Local police know the needs of their particular community, but often have difficulty in undertaking programs in their communities through lack of funds. Creative and innovative projects that bring together as many of the seven 'institutions' as possible with local police and the local community, we argue, would be an excellent use of federal government funding and a significant way of reducing the impact of violence on young Australians.

In our submission to the House of Representatives 2003 Inquiry into Local Government and Cost Shifting, we raised the United States *Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act* (VCCA) enacted in 1994 with strong bipartisan support. It was originally introduced following President Clinton's 1994 pledge to the American people to add 100,000 community police officers to that nation's streets.

VCCA was viewed as the most comprehensive piece of Federal crime control legislation in US history. It authorized \$8.8 billion over six years for grants to add an additional 100,000 community policing officers to the nation's streets and advance community policing nationwide. The body charged with fulfilling the mission of adding the extra police was the US Department of Justice "Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office".

In July this year Vice President Joe Biden and Attorney General Eric Holder announced grants to law enforcement under the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009*.

Vice President Biden said 'A big part of the Recovery Act is about building communities – making them as strong as they can be, allowing every American family to live a better life than the one they are leading now. And we can't achieve the goal of stronger communities without supporting those

who keep our streets safe.’ The Recovery Act Grants will be administered by the (COPS) Office.

COPS operates as a national, multi-million dollar grants program with a number of streams of funding, the common feature being that the funds go to frontline police for community-based initiatives delivered in partnership with local government and local communities.

For example, the new funds for COPS, under the President’s *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act 2009*, includes \$4 billion to enhance state, local and tribal law enforcement efforts on a wide range of fronts including to:

- combat violence against women;
- fight Internet crimes against children;
- improve access to justice;
- support victims of violence;
- strengthen law enforcement in border regions;
- boost law enforcement in high intensity drug trafficking areas; and
- assist the states and local and tribal law enforcement agencies by \$1 billion of additional funding over three years to hire 4,699 new police officers.

In reference to the COPS plan, Paul F Evans, Commissioner of the Boston Police Department said,

*In most police departments, including Boston’s, annual budgets are primarily expended on salaries and other basic operating costs such as maintaining vehicles and facilities and purchasing equipment.*

*It is difficult for innovation to be nurtured under those circumstances.*

*Since 1994, we have used federal grants to give the police and our community and criminal justice partners critically needed resources to reduce and prevent crime and fear.*

*This investment has yielded innovative efforts that have provided tremendous reductions in crime in our neighbourhoods and have been replicated around the world.*

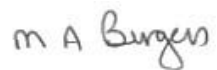
The Police Federation proposes that Australia formulate a national policy on supplementing and assisting local policing initiatives with federal government funding using the US COPS program as the example and operational model.

We believe that the Australian Government needs a holistic view of policing across this country to ensure the security of our nation and its communities.

One key means of achieving this is through the development of a federally funded innovative grants program for local community policing initiatives.

We would be pleased to expand on our proposal at the hearings of your Committee.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "m A Burgess". The signature is written in a cursive, lowercase style.

Mark Burgess  
Chief Executive Officer