

Crime Reduction and Prevention Initiatives within Local Communities

Introduction

- 3.1 Crime in local communities, which often takes the form of low-level or 'street' crime, can have considerable social and economic impacts. Residents may not feel safe, and businesses and property values can be significantly affected.¹ As noted in Chapter 2, tourism, an industry upon which the economies of many local communities rely, can be particularly vulnerable.²
- 3.2 This Chapter considers initiatives that local communities have undertaken to reduce and prevent crime in their areas. The Committee received a considerable amount of evidence on this issue from local councils and from local non-government organisations and individuals.

1 Mr Bob Baldwin MP, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 June 2004, pp. 1718, 1764; Mr John Stephens, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 June 2004, p. 1746; Great Lakes Council, *Submission 87*, p. 1; Mr Kevin Lean, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 June 2004, p. 1771.

2 Mr John Stephens, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 June 2004, p. 1746. See also Mrs Judy Payne and Mr Ken Sheather, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 June 2004, p. 1762.

Local councils

- 3.3 Local councils vary across the landscape, with perhaps the most important distinction being that between metropolitan and rural councils. Metropolitan councils are generally characterised by high population density and are often required to provide high levels of planning advice and urban services. Rural and regional councils tend to have lower population densities and can face issues such as geographical isolation and high rates of unemployment.
- 3.4 The Committee learned that the focus of many local councils has expanded well beyond the traditional roles of revenue collection, planning, and urban service provision. While these roles are still performed, many local councils also directly engage with their communities in areas such as community development, environmental issues, and community education.³ This has not been a homogenous development; a comparison of metropolitan and rural councils again, for example, will often reveal significant differences of focus in keeping with the varied nature of their communities.
- 3.5 This broadening of focus by local councils has also extended to crime reduction and prevention. The Committee's attention was drawn to a number of widespread crime reduction and prevention initiatives undertaken by local councils.

Widespread initiatives

Crime prevention plans

- 3.6 Many (if not all) local councils in Australia have compiled community safety or crime prevention plans, a number of which were provided to the Committee.⁴ The plans submitted were varied as to their content, but all shared the common theme of accepting that councils can have a role in crime prevention and aiming to maintain low rates of crime in their local communities. Some plans identified specific mechanisms

3 Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (SSROC), *Submission 56*, pp. 3-4. Local government functions in the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory, which have no local council bodies, are carried out by the Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory Governments.

4 SSROC, for example, submitted crime prevention plans from 11 of its member councils. See *Submission 56*, pp. 7-18. LGov NSW (formerly the Local Government and Shires Association of NSW) drew the Committee's attention to the NSW Attorney-General's Department website, which lists crime prevention plans for some local councils in NSW. See *Submission 57*, pp. 14-15.

to achieve increased safety and security within their communities while others were more general in their aims. Examples of the varied nature of initiatives within crime prevention plans include:

- Community Safety Committees (Canterbury, Hurstville, Marrickville, Rockdale, Woollahra and Sutherland City Councils);
- women's safety initiatives (Botany, Woollahra, Canterbury City Councils);
- donation of personal security alarms to isolated elderly people (Botany City Council);
- youth holiday and after school programs (Canterbury City Council);
- car park audits (Canterbury and Rockdale City Councils);
- Community Safety Audits (Canterbury, Hurstville, Kogarah, Randwick, Marrickville City Councils); and
- graffiti projects (Canterbury, Hurstville and Rockdale City Councils).⁵

3.7 Fairfield City Council's crime prevention plan sets out four key aims: reduced fear of crime and improved public awareness of crime prevention; increased interagency partnerships and collaboration; improved physical environment and infrastructure systems; and support for community development programs.⁶ Specific programs which have developed from the plan include:

- a 'Safe Families' domestic violence education program;
- a business crime prevention handbook;
- a 'Women and the Elderly Street Safety' project;
- a Mayor's Crime Prevention Action Group;
- the Fairfield Drug Action Team;
- a graffiti removal program;
- a 'Family Connections' early childhood intervention project;
- a 'Managing Your Anger' project for youth; and

5 SSROC, *Submission 56*, pp. 7-18.

6 Fairfield City Council, *Submission 115*, p. 2.

- a community garden.⁷

Consultative committees

- 3.8 Another widespread initiative undertaken by many local councils is the formation of consultative committees to focus on crime prevention strategies. The role and composition of these committees varies and is dependent both on the structure of the local government and the particular needs of the local community, but common functions include consultation with the community on crime prevention strategies, implementation of these strategies, and liaison with State and Federal Government agencies. Some committees, particularly in metropolitan areas, have formed subcommittees to perform detailed analyses of particular crime-related issues affecting the community.
- 3.9 In the Northern Territory, consultative committees report back to the Northern Territory Government on crime prevention initiatives undertaken by local communities in order to keep the Government in touch with the communities, particularly those in remote areas. The committees also nominate local projects for grants consideration by the Northern Territory Office of Crime Prevention.⁸ The Office describes the involvement of the local community in crime prevention as a 'local solutions to local problems' approach.⁹
- 3.10 Consultative committees have also been established in metropolitan areas. Moreland City Council in Victoria, for example, has established the Moreland Health, Safety and Wellbeing Leadership Group. The Group, which represents an integrated approach to crime prevention, functions to:
- enable progress towards improving safety, health and wellbeing in Moreland. The group receives reports and recommendations from expertise networks, working groups and the community. It oversees programs and members of the Leadership Group direct/ redirect planning and resources within their own organisations, as appropriate, to enable progress to occur.¹⁰
- 3.11 Other examples of consultative committees include the Darwin City Council Community Safety and Security Advisory Committee; the

7 *Exhibit 38*, pp. 11-18.

8 Ms Jenne Roberts, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 June 2003, p. 1144.

9 Ms Jenne Roberts, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 June 2003, p. 1144.

10 Moreland City Council, *Submission 41*, p. 3.

Thamarrurr Regional Council; and Canterbury City Council's Community Safety Committee.

Crime prevention through environmental design

3.12 Crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) was central to many of the submissions received by the Committee from local councils. CPTED can be defined as the prevention of property crime by 'manipulating the design of individual dwellings, and their relationship to one another and to the surrounding neighbourhood'.¹¹ Local councils have utilised this principle to improve community safety by implementing measures such as improving the layout of community facilities. Sutherland Shire Council, for example, has positioned the local skate ramp in a very high profile position where there is a large volume of passing traffic.¹²

3.13 Other CPTED measures include increasing lighting in parks and car parks,¹³ controlling access to some public areas,¹⁴ and training staff in urban design. In the case of the latter, the New South Wales police provides *Safer by Design* training. Some of the topics covered by this training include:

criminology, crime prevention and town planning; historical and contemporary applications of CPTED; the identification of crime risk in architectural plans and drawings; lighting, fear and crime; crime risk management and CPTED applications; councils, design safety and the law.¹⁵

Closed-circuit television

3.14 Closed-circuit television (CCTV) is an initiative that is becoming quite popular with local councils. CCTV refers to:

11 Geason, S and Wilson, P, *Designing Out Crime: Crime prevention through environmental design*, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra, 1989, p. 2. This publication can be found at: <http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/crimprev/cpted/cpted.pdf>.

12 Mr David Ackroyd, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 October 2002, pp. 327-328.

13 Canterbury City Council, *Submission 31*, p. 14; Ald. Cecil Black, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 June 2003, p. 1215.

14 Ald. Cecil Black, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 June 2003, p. 1215.

15 LGov NSW, *Submission 57*, p. 16.

visual surveillance systems established in the main by local government authorities in cooperation with police to monitor public spaces such as malls and major thoroughfares.¹⁶

- 3.15 The Committee heard that, in one local council area, there was a disjunction between CCTV and policing, with an initial rise in drug arrests after the introduction of CCTV but a subsequent tailing-off of the arrest rate due to the relocation of drug dealers and insufficient police resources.¹⁷ However, another account in relation to the same area claimed that CCTV has reduced crime levels in the area and improved community perceptions of safety.¹⁸
- 3.16 Along with the more widespread initiatives, the Committee received evidence on specific crime reduction and prevention initiatives being undertaken by a range of local councils.

Specific initiatives

Enhancing community safety – Marrickville Council, New South Wales

- 3.17 Marrickville Council indicated to the Committee that it has focused on fostering community cohesion and harm prevention as two key strategies for enhancing the safety of its local community:

Firstly, we are looking at a wide range of community strengthening activities, like creating a sense of neighbourliness and belonging. Secondly, we are looking at community harm prevention, which includes making our public spaces safer.¹⁹

Neighbourhood Community Centres – Canterbury City Council, New South Wales

- 3.18 Canterbury City Council highlighted the use of Neighbourhood Community Centres within New South Wales. These Centres ‘provide neighbourhood information services and develop a range of

16 Wilson, D and Sutton, A, ‘Open-street CCTV in Australia’, Australian Institute of Criminology, *Trends and issues in crime and criminal justice* No. 271. This publication can be found at: <http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/tandi2/tandi271.pdf>.

17 Cabramatta Chamber of Commerce Inc, *Submission 44*, pp. 9-10; Cr Maria Heggie, *Transcript of Evidence*, 9 October 2002, p. 185.

18 Fairfield City Council, *Submission 115*, p. 1.

19 Ms Linda Livingstone, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 October 2002, p. 326.

programs relevant to local needs'.²⁰ Services provided by the Centres include:

- information, advice and referral;
- family support and counselling;
- aged, disability and child services;
- education and training;
- youth services; and
- community development.²¹

3.19 The Canterbury City Council highlighted the Riverwood Community Centre, which has assisted 26 of an identified population of 35 unemployed youths either enter the workforce or undertake further study. The Centre has also helped several drug-addicted individuals become drug-free and obtain employment.²²

3.20 An important aspect of the Neighbourhood Community Centres is that they target those already involved in criminal behaviour and attempt to reduce the incidence and fear of crime within the community. Centres must also demonstrate that programs are effective in reducing crime in order for funding to continue.²³

Safe Communities Coalition – Forster, New South Wales

3.21 The Committee's attention was drawn to the Great Lakes Council's Safe Communities Coalition, which has been established to implement strategies for a safer community through partnerships with the community and community organisations. The Coalition is comprised of a number of task forces, including a Crime Prevention Task Force. The Crime Prevention Task Force is currently in the process of developing a crime prevention plan and is actively seeking input from the local community.²⁴

20 Canterbury City Council, *Submission 31*, p. 23.

21 Canterbury City Council, *Submission 31*, p. 26.

22 Canterbury City Council, *Submission 31*, p. 28.

23 Canterbury City Council, *Submission 31*, p. 27.

24 Some examples of initiatives being undertaken in the Forster area by local non-government organisations and individuals are detailed at paragraphs 3.47 – 3.49 below.

Western Australian councils

- 3.22 The Western Australia Local Government Association (WALGA) informed the Committee of a range of initiatives being undertaken by local councils across Western Australia. These include:
- security patrols and audits;
 - community surveillance services in conjunction with the Western Australian police force;
 - adoption of urban planning practices such as CPTED;
 - provision of street lighting;
 - graffiti management;
 - early intervention for youth at risk;
 - education and awareness raising programs for seniors and other vulnerable community members; and
 - support for Indigenous patrols.²⁵
- 3.23 WALGA indicated that local councils across Western Australia are estimated to be spending in excess of \$15 million on crime prevention and community safety-related issues.²⁶

SafeCity – City of Gosnells, Western Australia

- 3.24 The City of Gosnells detailed its SafeCity initiative, which is a crime prevention project on a large scale. The initiative is the result of a community survey and consultation which found that the issues of greatest concern to community members were security and safety. According to City of Gosnells, SafeCity is unique in that it addresses ‘crime prevention from a community based holistic approach’.²⁷ Relying heavily on partnerships with other organisations, the initiative is a comprehensive program with many sub-elements including:
- a youth/children component;
 - a ‘Safer Seniors’ program;
 - ‘People In Parks’ events;

25 Western Australia Local Government Association (WALGA), *Submission 78*, p. 1.

26 WALGA, *Submission 78*, p. 1.

27 City of Gosnells, *Submission 68*, p. 4.

- an 'Anti-Graffiti Campaign';
 - a 'Safety and Security for people with disabilities' program;
 - an awards component;
 - Neighbourhood Watch;
 - Indigenous Community Liaison Officers; and
 - a 'SafeCity Urban Design Strategy' based on CPTED.²⁸
- 3.25 In conjunction with the police, the City has also recently instituted a 'Dob in a Hoon' campaign which allows residents to 'identify antisocial behaviour' and 'forward information through widely circulated leaflets and by emailing local police directly'.²⁹ The City has also established an 'eWatch' initiative with the police through which residents can relay information by e-mail.³⁰
- 3.26 The Committee is particularly impressed by the 'Safer Seniors' program, which provides workshops for seniors in order to 'give them skills to improve their own safety and security'. The program also provides free Home Safety Audits for seniors to enable them 'to make informed choices about their safety and security needs at home'.³¹ The Committee is of the view that the Commonwealth should work with State and Territory governments to institute a comparable program on a national basis.

Recommendation 7

- 3.27 **The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth work with State and Territory governments to investigate ways to institute a program comparable to the City of Gosnells Safer Seniors program on a national basis.**

28 City of Gosnells, *Submission 68*, pp. 5-7.

29 Cr Patricia Morris, *Transcript of Evidence*, 1 July 2004, p. 1813.

30 Cr Patricia Morris, *Transcript of Evidence*, 1 July 2004, p. 1813.

31 City of Gosnells, *Submission 68*, p. 4.

Community education, graffiti removal, and youth programs – Whyalla City Council, South Australia

- 3.28 Whyalla City Council has implemented a number of measures to prevent crime in the Whyalla area. These include:
- education programs relating to community safety and substance abuse;
 - a graffiti removal service involving volunteers and a photographic library of graffiti to assist in tracking down offenders; and
 - ‘Plaza Youth Centre Programs’ focusing on young people at risk and the prevention of re-offending.³²
- 3.29 The Council also has undertaken a study to identify strategic directions for the development of local crime prevention programs.³³

Western Desert Workshop – Office of Crime Prevention, Northern Territory

- 3.30 The Northern Territory Office of Crime Prevention outlined its Western Desert Workshop initiative which aims to raise awareness of petrol sniffing and its consequences within two Indigenous communities.³⁴ Funding has been obtained for a project officer, an indigenous musician and a producer to run workshops with young people in the communities during school holidays when petrol sniffing is at its most prevalent. The purpose of these workshops will be to assist young people to:
- explore through music their feelings, their response to the situation that they find themselves in and their reasoning for why they are involved in petrol sniffing.³⁵
- 3.31 The workshops also aim to produce CDs of rap music. In addition, older members of the communities have been engaged in creating paintings about the effects of petrol sniffing within the communities. Once both sides have completed their projects, it is planned that a formal exchange of what has been produced will take place.

32 *Exhibit 4*, p. 22.

33 *Exhibit 4*, p. 27.

34 Ms Jenne Roberts, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 June 2003, p. 1148.

35 Ms Jenne Roberts, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 June 2003, p. 1148.

Methods of developing initiatives

- 3.32 The methods by which local councils develop and implement crime reduction and prevention initiatives are varied and include community consultation, partnerships with other organisations, and funding arrangements with both State and Federal Governments.

Community consultation

- 3.33 Local councils are careful to consult the local community in the development of crime reduction and prevention strategies. In addition to the consultative committees mechanism noted above, consultation can take many forms including forums, summits,³⁶ and surveys.³⁷

Partnerships

- 3.34 Several submissions indicated that local councils are aided in their work by the use of partnerships.³⁸ The Committee heard of various approaches being used including partnerships with State government agencies, judicial bodies, and community organisations.³⁹ The development of partnerships with government agencies was given particular emphasis. The City of Gosnells, for example, maintains that crime prevention cannot be the sole responsibility of one organisation or group. Accordingly, for its SafeCity Initiative, the City has actively encouraged its staff to develop and foster relationships with its partners. This has led to the development of partnerships with various Western Australian State Government agencies including the police force, the Department of Justice, the Department for Community Development, and Fire and Emergency Services. Partnerships have also been developed between the City and non-government organisations such as Rotary, the Drug and Alcohol Council, Gosnells District Neighbourhood Watch, Noongar Enterprise

36 Canterbury City Council has had open-ended consultations in the form of summits for community safety and youth and a community safety survey. See *Submission 31*, p. 10. Sutherland Shire Council, Mr David Ackroyd, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 October 2002, p. 326; and SSROC, *Submission 56*, p. 4, have also had in place some community and organisational consultation.

37 Moreland City Council, *Submission 41*, p. 4; and the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, *Submission 62*, p. 2.

38 Moreland City Council, *Submission 41*, pp. 2, 3; Canterbury City Council, *Submission 31*, pp. 8, 13, 15, 18, 19.

39 WALGA, *Submission 78*, p. 2; Moreland City Council, *Submission 41*, p. 3; City of Gosnells, *Submission 68*, p. 1

Aboriginal Corporation, and Perth Employment and Enterprise Development Corporation.⁴⁰

- 3.35 Another example is the Sutherland Shire Council, where community police officers with limited powers work effectively alongside the regular police force to help in the provision of a visible presence of authority in the community. A similar concept has been applied in Geraldton, where police have been partnered with services provided by community organisations,⁴¹ and in Indigenous communities such as the Tiwi Islands, where community-based police officers are utilised to assist with policing duties.⁴²
- 3.36 A number of local councils were of the view that the Federal Government should play a greater role in supporting the role of local councils. It was suggested that this could be achieved by the Federal Government working with the States/Territories and local councils to ensure that the work of local councils is performed effectively and with adequate resources.⁴³ It was also suggested that the Federal Government should 'continue to support and promote models of best practice amongst councils that promote local partnerships'.⁴⁴

Funding arrangements

- 3.37 Funding for crime reduction and prevention initiatives is available in the form of rate revenue collected from residents and specific contributions from the State and Federal Governments. Funding adequacy, however, emerged as a real and persistent issue for local councils. Many local councils are of the view that the level of funding they receive is inadequate for effective service provision.⁴⁵
- 3.38 A number of local councils indicated to the Committee that State government funding is inadequate for the requirements of many primary crime prevention initiatives and that, consequently, further funding assistance from the Commonwealth is required.⁴⁶ One suggestion was that the Commonwealth provide matching grants for

40 City of Gosnells, *Submission 68*, pp. 5-6.

41 Mrs Merrilyn Green, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 November 2002, p. 432.

42 Supt. Don Fry, *Transcript of Evidence*, 13 June 2003, p. 1225.

43 Cr. Peter Woods, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 October 2002, p. 367; Mr Andrew Sammut, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 October 2002, p. 322.

44 Mr Andrew Sammut, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 October 2002, p. 322.

45 See for example Moreland City Council, *Submission 41*, p.3.

46 Moreland City Council, *Submission 41*, p. 3; WALGA, *Submission 78*, pp. 2-3.

the development of social infrastructure such as the building and maintenance of community/youth centres.⁴⁷

- 3.39 The Committee notes that the National Community Crime Prevention Program (NCCPP), recently launched by the Commonwealth Government, will make funding available on a national basis in the form of grants to local communities for the development of crime prevention projects. The NCCPP will make \$4 million available each year for the community grants.⁴⁸

The Committee's assessment

- 3.40 For the Committee, the various initiatives detailed above reveal that local councils are not only actively involved in crime reduction and prevention in their local communities, but that they are well-placed to do so. A number of aspects of local councils indicate their suitability for playing a significant part in local crime reduction and prevention:

- understanding of the local community and the issues which affect residents;
- awareness of the specific needs of the local community;
- forefront of service delivery in the local community; and
- staffing by committed members of the local community who have an interest in the success of the organisation.

- 3.41 Research also indicates that crime is very local in nature and that effective consultation mechanisms are often in place between local communities and local councils.⁴⁹ Indeed, as the Australian Institute of Criminology notes, local communities have come to expect that local councils will play a role in crime prevention.⁵⁰ The Institute also notes that the involvement of local councils in crime reduction and prevention is recognised by other levels of government:

47 Canterbury City Council, *Submission 31*, p. 2.

48 Further information on the NCCPP can be obtained at: <http://www.crimeprevention.gov.au> or by contacting the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department.

49 Australian Institute of Criminology, *AIC Crime Reduction Matters*, No.19. This publication can be found at: <http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/crm/crm019.pdf>.

50 Australian Institute of Criminology, *AIC Crime Reduction Matters*, No.19.

Across Australia, virtually all government crime prevention agencies include local government in the development and delivery of their respective crime prevention strategies.⁵¹

- 3.42 The Committee is of the view that a national study of the effectiveness of local council initiatives, to be conducted by the Australian Institute of Criminology, would provide an important information resource for crime reduction and prevention at the local community level.

Recommendation 8

- 3.43 The Committee recommends that the Australian Institute of Criminology conduct a comparative study of the effectiveness of local council initiatives for the reduction and prevention of crime.**

Local non-government organisations and individuals

- 3.44 Along with local councils, local non-government organisations and individuals are also strongly engaged in developing crime reduction and prevention initiatives within their local communities. The Committee received evidence on a number of initiatives being undertaken in this area.

Night patrol – Western Australia, the Northern Territory, and the Tiwi Islands

- 3.45 Night patrol is an initiative whereby a transportation service is operated to assist individuals (especially those who are intoxicated) to reach home or a ‘sobering-up’ shelter. Patrols are usually operated by non-government organisations but local councils can also be involved. The initiative appears to have been particularly effective in local communities with high Indigenous populations. One example is the Geraldton Streetwork Aboriginal Corporation, which runs a late evening bus service for youth to ‘get them home and keep them from getting into trouble when they have finished going to the movies or a nightclub’.⁵² The bus is staffed by supervisors and a member of the

51 Australian Institute of Criminology, *AIC Crime Reduction Matters*, No.19.

52 Observation by Chairman, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 November 2002, p. 431.

Indigenous Youth Council. Similar operations are run in Palmerston and Darwin in the Northern Territory,⁵³ and in the Tiwi Islands.⁵⁴

Community education – Tiwi Islands

3.46 The Xavier Community Education Centre on the Tiwi Islands has a range of initiatives in place to improve education within its local community and help address the issue of anti-social behaviour. Classes are set up ‘as a football club’ and are run for ‘five hours and twenty minutes a day divided up into four quarters’⁵⁵ to build on the strong Australian Rules football culture in the Tiwi Islands and help maintain student attention for realistic periods of time. The Centre also runs an entertainment room where students can go after school. The room is equipped with a pool table, electronic gaming equipment and a DVD viewing area.⁵⁶ This latter has proved an effective learning tool especially in the afternoons when it is difficult to complete work. It is hoped that the Centre will eventually house an internet café and a community library.

Graffiti removal and working with youth – Forster, New South Wales

3.47 The Committee heard evidence from Mr Ted Bickford, who is a member of the Tuncurry Neighbourhood Watch Committee in the Forster area. Mr Bickford also runs, on an entirely voluntary basis, a graffiti clean-up operation in the Tuncurry-Forster area with a council-supplied vehicle. Initially removing graffiti as it appeared with his own equipment and transport, Mr Bickford subsequently engaged with the youth in the area and involved them in amenities projects such as the provision of shade trees and seating at a popular skate park. Mr Bickford has also enlisted the help of young people on a voluntary basis, including Indigenous youth, to monitor, report and keep the area free of graffiti. Mr Bickford believes that, by instilling a sense of pride and helping to build self-esteem, he has helped to keep areas free of graffiti, some for over two years.⁵⁷

53 Ms Jenne Roberts, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 June 2003, p. 1149.

54 Supt. Don Fry, *Transcript of Evidence*, 13 June 2003, pp. 1256-1257.

55 Mr Brian Clancy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 13 June 2003, p. 1238.

56 Mr Brian Clancy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 13 June 2003, p. 1238.

57 Mr Edgar Bickford, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 June 2004, pp. 1752-1754.

Indigenous education – Forster, New South Wales

3.48 The Committee also heard evidence regarding the work of the Forster Aboriginal Land Council. The Council has developed an alternative education program aimed at Indigenous children who are suspended from the mainstream school system, especially those who are suspended for a period of weeks. Ms Donna Hall, Chairperson of the Council, informed the Committee that there are no alternative solutions in the area, which results in children becoming bored and engaging in anti-social behaviour.⁵⁸ Ms Hall has found that the children who are engaging in such behaviour are not:

just 10- to 17-year-olds. In the last couple of years I am now realising those kids are as young as 7, 8 and 9 but they are not recorded in any statistical data with the police because of their ages.⁵⁹

3.49 Components of the alternative education program include:

- a youth worker working with young boys on activities such as boxing, surfing, and other sport;
- using the youth centre for activities such as playing games, playing pool, and get-togethers;
- youth discos for those aged 8-12; and
- possible provision of a tutor for suspended children in order to prevent them getting further behind in their studies.⁶⁰

Funding issues

3.50 Along with local councils, funding is a constant issue for local non-government organisations. Such organisations seek funding in the form of grants and tenders for projects but feel that the level of funding which they receive is inadequate to effectively provide the services which they provide to the community.⁶¹

58 Ms Donna Hall, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 June 2004, p. 1755.

59 Ms Donna Hall, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 June 2004, pp. 1755-1756. Ms Hall is also the Aboriginal Education Officer at the local high school.

60 Ms Donna Hall, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 June 2004, pp. 1756, 1758.

61 For example see Moreland City Council, *Submission 41*, p. 6; and Canterbury City Council, *Submission 31*, p. 2.

- 3.51 The Committee notes again that the recently-launched NCCPP will make funding available on a national basis in the form of grants to local communities for the development of crime prevention projects.

The Committee's assessment

- 3.52 The Committee commends the local non-government organisations and individuals outlined above for their dedication and resourcefulness in seeking to reduce and prevent crime in their local communities. It is clear that the initiatives of such organisations can make a real difference on the ground, particularly in the area of youth education and care.

Conclusion

- 3.53 The Committee applauds local councils and local non-government organisations and individuals for actively engaging with their local communities on the issue of crime reduction and prevention. The Committee is encouraged by the variety and scope of initiatives in this area, particularly given that such initiatives are often undertaken in the face of restricted funding and resources.
- 3.54 The Committee believes that information-sharing, in the form of a database, amongst local councils and local non-government organisations regarding successful initiatives would be of great benefit in progressing crime reduction and prevention at the local community level. It is the Committee's view that the Commonwealth Government should assist in facilitating the development of this database. This could be undertaken as part of the NCCPP.

Recommendation 9

- 3.55 **The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government facilitate the development of a database by local councils and local non-government organisations and individuals detailing successful strategies for the reduction and prevention of crime in local communities. The Committee envisages that this could be done as an extension of the National Community Crime Prevention Program.**

3.56 The Committee also received clear evidence from number of quarters that police resources are inadequate in local communities and that, consequently, more resources are needed. Specific concerns were raised as to:

- police staffing levels;
- adequacy of funding;
- lack of sufficient vehicle and technological support;
- the need for 24-hour policing; and
- the adequacy of the current local area command structure.⁶²

3.57 The Committee is of the view that a greater level of resources needs to be made available to police servicing local communities.

Recommendation 10

3.58 The Committee recommends that a greater level of resources be made available to police servicing local communities, with the Commonwealth seeking a commitment from the States and Territories at the relevant Council of Australian Governments meeting.

62 Great Lakes Council, *Submission 87*, p. 1 and p. 3; Mr Sean Brennan, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 June 2004, p. 1710; Cr Sally Dover, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 June 2004, pp. 1708, 1711; Mr Ronald Swan, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 June 2004, p. 1711; Mr Peter Mason, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 June 2004, p. 1714; Mr Leonard Anderson, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 June 2004, pp. 1715, 1717; Supt. Charles Haggett, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 June 2004, p. 1729; Mr Kevin Austwick, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 June 2004, p. 1768. See also Mr Phillip Gunnell, *Submission 27*, p. 2; Country Women's Association of New South Wales; *Submission 30*, p. 4; Dr Russell Smith, *Transcript of Evidence*, 9 September 2002, p. 45; Mr Stephen Ogders, *Transcript of Evidence*, 9 October 2002, p. 203; Mr Malcolm Smith, *Transcript of Evidence*, 18 November 2002, p. 451.