Moreland City Council

Submission by Moreland Council on the Inquiry into Crime in the Community: victims, offenders and fear of crime

(August 2002)

Please forward any comments and feedback to

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Moreland Council welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry into Crime in the Community: Victims, Offenders and Fear of Crime.

As a local authority, Moreland Council plays a key role in community safety and crime prevention through its planning, advocacy, service provision and enforcement .responsibilities. Over the last five years Moreland Council has investigated and strengthened its leadership role in community safety and crime prevention, and strengthened its partnership approaches with other State and local agencies to achieve positive change locally.

The Importance of Addressing Crime and Safety within the Social Context

Council takes guidance in its community safety and crime prevention role from Australian and International authorities including the World Health Organisation generally, the World Health Organisation Collaborating Centre on Community Safety, the National Public Health Partnership, Australian Institute of Family Studies and the Victorian Department of Justice, Crime Prevention Victoria.

Council bases its approach on the principle, endorsed by these authorities, that safety and crime issues need to be dealt within the local social context and from a social model of health perspective. [1]

Crime and safety in local communities cannot, and should not, be dealt with in isolation but needs to be addressed within the context of individual and community wellbeing generally. [2]

Crime and safety effect, and are effected by, a range of interrelated determinants including social and economic circumstances, employment status , early life experiences, social exclusion and social support, housing , access to health services, education, recreation, the physical environment, transport, social participation, political participation, access to information, family relationships and personal health and wellbeing. [3]

> **Recommendation 1: That crime and safety issues are addressed within the local social, economic and environmental context, and from a perspective based on good practice around social models of health and wellbeing.**

' No Single Answer' - the Moreland Community Safety Plan 2001- 2004

Council has identified a clear role in crime prevention and has developed a crime prevention plan as a key component of its overall approach to community safety, health and wellbeing. This is documented in ' *No Single Answer' - the Moreland Community Safety Plan 2001- 2004* (attached) .

' *No Single Answer' - the Moreland Community Safety Plan 2001- 2004* comprises five documents:
◊   Document 1: Moreland Community Safety Policy Framework and Principles
◊   Document 2: Moreland Injury Prevention Plan 2001- 2004
◊   Document 3: Moreland Crime Prevention Plan 2001- 2004
◊   Document 4: Moreland Road Safety Plan 2001- 2004
◊   Document 5: Moreland Drug and Alcohol Plan 2001- 2004

Together these documents outline the principles and policy perspective of Council and present the way forward and the responsibilities and actions Council and its partners undertake for improving community safety in the City of Moreland.

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[1] Social Determinants of Health : The Solid Facts, edited by Richard Wilkinson and Michael Marmot for WHO 1998
[2] Environments for Health - Promoting Health and Wellbeing through Built, Social, Economic and Natural Environments, Dept Human Services, Sept 2001
[3]   Safer Cities and Shires, Victorian Dept of Justice

The comprehensive planning process and the ongoing implementation, of *'No Single Answer' - the Moreland Community Safety Plan 2001- 2004* has been achieved through the leadership of Moreland Council supported through partnerships with other agencies and with funding from the Victorian Department of Justice, Crime Prevention Victoria, Safer Cities and Shires program .

The title, *'No Single Answer',* emphasises that crime prevention, as with other areas of health and wellbeing, are affected by many determinants and need to be dealt with in the social context and through a holistic and integrated approach.

The Importance of Partnership: The Moreland Health, Safety and Wellbeing Leadership Group.

This holistic and integrated approach is achieved through partnership approaches under the leadership of Local government. As the sphere of government closest to local issues, and as the agency with a broad mandate on health and wellbeing issues, Local Government is the appropriate agency to lead and facilitate effective partnerships and meaningful planning at the local level around community safety and crime prevention.

'No Single Answer' - the Moreland Community Safety Plan 2001- 2004 is overseen in development and implementation by the Moreland Health, Safety and Wellbeing Leadership Group.

Council facilitates the Leadership Group. The group meets monthly, and has membership comprising senior managers of Council (Portfolio Councillor, Chief Executive Officer, Director Social Development) and senior managers of relevant State authorities (Victoria Police Inspector for Moreland, Regional Directors/ Senior Managers of Dept Education, Employment and Youth Affairs, Dept Human Services, Dept Infrastructure, VicRoads, Moreland Community Health Service, Northern Region Migrant Resource Centre, Fire Services, Public Health Services and Divisions of General Practitioners.

Outcomes of these meetings are made available as public documents through inclusion in Council minutes and key issues are promoted through local media and community networks.

The primary role of the Leadership Group is 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 oversights programs and members of the Leadership Group direct/ redirect planning and resources within their own organisations, as appropriate, to enable progress to occur.

In addition, Local Priority Policing (LPP) was initiated by Victorian Government policy in 2001 and developed locally in Moreland through the Moreland Health, Safety and Wellbeing Leadership Group.

While Local Government is the appropriate sphere of Government and agency to coordinate and facilitate these approaches, sustaining them to achieve positive change requires resource inputs from all spheres of Government and an 'All of Government' partnership at the State level.

Positive local outcomes need to be developed and supported through integrated local contribution from other spheres of Government at all stages including strategic planning, staff training, programmatic resources, research and coordination and communication resources.

Recommendation 2: That the State Government ensure sustainability of community safety and crime prevention approaches through effective ' All of Government' integration.

Recommendation 3: That Federal and State funding provide adequate resources to support Local Government and other local partners to facilitate effective partnerships, meaningful planning and achieve positive change related to community safety and crime prevention at the local level.

Thorough Research and Consultation

All Council policies and actions are consistent with local need which is identified through thorough community consultation and research. In addition to regular surveys and face-to-face consultations funded by Council, over the last three years, Council has undertaken the Local Safety Survey annually.

The Local Safety Survey is a survey of residents jointly funded and coordinated by Crime Prevention Victoria and undertaken in all local government areas in Victoria which provides a valuable benchmarking tool on community safety and crime issues.

The Local Safety Survey has been undertaken annually over the last three years and has proved to be a necessary and an effective planning tool for Council and its community partners to monitor the level of crime, the perceptions of crime and for the identification of specific areas where the community feels unsafe or where a safety issue may be emerging. Repetition of a consistent survey annually enables monitoring of trends and the effectiveness of programs.

In 2001 the Victorian Government, Crime Prevention Victoria withdrew support for this research program.

It is important that local planning is based on thorough and accurate research and research that has consistency and credibility for all partners. It is important that research is undertaken annually as the local safety and crime circumstances and issues can change rapidly. Council strongly advocates that funding is restored for an annual Local Safety Survey coordinated through Crime Prevention Victoria.

Recommendation 4: That funding is restored for an annual Local Safety Survey in Victoria coordinated through Crime Prevention Victoria.

The Role of Community Building in Crime Prevention

Some pockets of Moreland have a history of high crime rates, associated personal and community stress including fear of crime, which are related to levels of socio-economic disadvantage.

Over the last two years Council has been active in community strengthening projects targeted at two pocket communities in the City. While a thorough research report is still to be finalised, preliminary anecdotal evidence suggests there has been remarkable impact in turning these communities around through the community strengthening policies and programs that have been implemented so far.

Local evidence to date suggests community strengthening and re-building is an effective model for addressing crime and its associated problems within the social context and in an integrated way which takes account of other social factors affecting personal and community wellbeing.

Council would be keen to see further resources directed from Federal and State authorities into community strengthening and community re-building policies and programs.

Recommendation 5: That further resources are directed from Federal and State authorities into community strengthening and re-building policies and programs.