

Applied Crime Prevention Case Studies – Local Government Crime Prevention Planning

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Introduction

Applying crime prevention knowledge and techniques in a real world context can be challenging. Numerous difficulties can emerge that are not always identified in crime prevention texts. The following case study provides opportunities to work through a series of steps relevant to applied crime prevention work.

The Role of Local Government in Crime Prevention

There is considerable international literature that highlights the important role that local governments can assume in the prevention of crime. Reflecting and building on this literature, I propose the following key roles for local government in the prevention of crime:

- Governance and leadership – local government is in a strong position to coordinate service delivery, show leadership and to lobby higher levels of government for resources, legislative change and coordinated responses to crime.
- Planning and design – the consent authority role of local government shapes the built environment. Crime can be designed out or minimised through planning controls that consider crime prevention.
- Amenity and maintenance – local government is responsible for maintaining local amenities. Well maintained areas suggest a level of capable guardianship that can help to prevent crime and encourage use.
- Social and community – local government provides numerous social and community services. These services can support people with diverse and complex needs and help to build social capital.
- Economic activity – local economic activity (especially in regional and rural areas) can have a significant impact on local community members. Local government can facilitate, support and regulate (where necessary) local economic activity, including the late night economy.

The Local Government Area

Much crime prevention work is coordinated at the local level. In Australia, this means within and across a local government area (LGA). LGAs range in size and need. Some will have significant populations centralised in a small geographical area, while others will have a small population dispersed over many thousands of square kilometres. Some will experience high crime, while others will experience low levels of crime. All LGAs will have their own unique characteristics that shape the nature of crime in the area and enable particular crime prevention strategies.

Table 1: Socio-demographic data taken from the most recent census.

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|-------|
| Total Area | 104 square kilometres | |
| Total Population | 179,893 | |
| Country of Birth | Australia | 41.5% |
| Main Language Spoken at Home | English Only | 27.5% |
| | Vietnamese | 17% |
| | Arabic | 6.4% |
| | Cantonese | 5.6% |
| | Spanish | 4.3% |
| Unemployment Rate | 10.5% (Double the national rate) | |
| Income | The median individual and household incomes are approximately half of the national levels. | |

Table 2: Recorded crime data for the last 10 years

| Offence | Year 9 | Year 8 | Year 7 | Year 6 | Year 5 | Year 4 | Year 3 | Year 2 | Year 1 | Current Year |
|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------------|
| Murder | 5 | 6 | 3 | 13 | 7 | 2 | 6 | 3 | 7 | 4 |
| Attempted Murder | 20 | 9 | 18 | 13 | 18 | 9 | 10 | 3 | 10 | 5 |
| Assault – domestic violence related | 493 | 511 | 518 | 592 | 800 | 764 | 773 | 788 | 689 | 756 |
| Assault – Non-domestic violence related | 958 | 1054 | 1058 | 1136 | 1043 | 957 | 956 | 908 | 946 | 921 |
| Sexual assault | 81 | 70 | 81 | 90 | 79 | 98 | 95 | 85 | 80 | 69 |

Table 2: continued...

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Indecent assault, act of indecency and other sexual offences | 97 | 103 | 95 | 106 | 101 | 193 | 107 | 104 | 96 | 90 |
| Robbery without a weapon | 424 | 343 | 393 | 425 | 250 | 253 | 185 | 153 | 177 | 164 |
| Robbery with a firearm | 86 | 67 | 43 | 96 | 48 | 48 | 51 | 41 | 48 | 38 |
| Robbery with a weapon not a firearm | 330 | 292 | 353 | 387 | 177 | 180 | 134 | 123 | 122 | 89 |
| Harassment, threatening behaviour and private nuisance | 293 | 389 | 413 | 411 | 512 | 514 | 522 | 564 | 629 | 618 |
| Break and enter – dwelling | 3365 | 2638 | 2940 | 2815 | 2043 | 1608 | 1420 | 1458 | 1235 | 1461 |
| Break and enter – non-dwelling | 1372 | 1268 | 1269 | 1636 | 1038 | 1059 | 802 | 551 | 477 | 438 |
| Motor vehicle theft | 2662 | 2286 | 2454 | 2312 | 1610 | 1263 | 1167 | 919 | 946 | 896 |
| Steal from motor vehicle | 1698 | 1943 | 2218 | 2311 | 1839 | 1436 | 1318 | 1339 | 1396 | 1335 |
| Steal from retail store | 591 | 588 | 657 | 545 | 499 | 582 | 509 | 436 | 457 | 492 |
| Steal from dwelling | 457 | 529 | 475 | 499 | 411 | 354 | 318 | 303 | 255 | 296 |
| Steal from person | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 462 | 465 | 358 | 268 | 223 | 217 |
| Fraud | 874 | 1048 | 1037 | 1226 | 1567 | 1294 | 1271 | 1193 | 1189 | 930 |
| Arson | 201 | 185 | 224 | 272 | 231 | 177 | 156 | 201 | 207 | 177 |
| Malicious damage to property | 1687 | 1943 | 2008 | 2090 | 1819 | 1783 | 1856 | 1773 | 1956 | 1865 |

Developing a Local Crime Prevention Plan

Crime prevention plans can be developed by local government. These plans help to coordinate local crime prevention activities, to assist in lobbying for extra resources and in prioritising local crime problems for specific attention. The legislative and policy framework of the jurisdiction will often dictate what is required to develop a local crime prevention plan and the content of the plan. Despite these differences, the following are a small number of steps that would generally be followed:

1. Review existing and previous crime prevention plans and associated plans
2. Review local crime data (including police data, where available)
3. Consult with key stakeholders (which might involve community groups, government agencies, local government personnel, etc.)
4. Prioritise the key crime problems for attention
5. Develop strategies to tackle key crime problems and allocate responsibilities for associated tasks
6. Develop and implement the crime prevention plan
7. Evaluate the impact of the plan

Exercise

1. Review the relevant legislation and policies in your jurisdiction and identify the key features pertinent to developing a local crime prevention plan.
2. Explain how you would use the crime data provided here and highlight what further crime data you would seek. Also identify the challenges that you might encounter in accessing this data.
3. How would you prioritise the crime problems to be addressed in the crime prevention plan?
4. How will you address the geographical size of the LGA in developing the crime prevention plan?
5. Develop a consultation schedule, identifying agencies and individuals to be consulted, methods of consultation and challenges for each consultation. Make mention of how you will address the issues of cultural and linguistic diversity in your consultations.
6. How will you ensure that the crime prevention plan reflects the broad interests of the elected officials?
7. What ongoing measures will be required to ensure that the crime prevention plan is effectively implemented?
8. How will you evaluate the effectiveness of the crime prevention plan?

