

The Role of Local Government in Crime Prevention Pt 2

Prepared by Garner Clancey

The following table provides an expansive overview of what role local government can play in the prevention of crime. From this table, it is apparent that a whole-of-council response to crime prevention is critical, given the numerous areas of local government with key responsibilities for aspects of crime prevention.

Function	Objectives	Examples
Planning / Design	Local government has responsibility for aspects of the planning system. Through approval of development applications and establishing local design guidelines (i.e. Development Control Plans and Local Environmental Plans), considerable influence can be brought to bear on the built environment. Plans should incorporate crime prevention through environment design principles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce a specific Development Control Plan on crime prevention. • Train relevant council staff in crime prevention through environmental design. • Develop a Memorandum of Understanding with the Local Area Command (NSW Police) regarding procedures for vetting development assessments.
Amenity / Maintenance	Local government assumes a key role in the provision and maintenance of diverse local amenities. The provision of local infrastructure can help promote a sense of community and increase interaction between local residents. Effective maintenance of these amenities and the local area more generally will help prevent the decline of particular locations. It is generally accepted that rubbish and damage to property contribute to further degradation and crime.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain local areas, through rubbish removal, rapid repair of damage and regular clean ups. • Initiate a rapid graffiti removal policy, including assistance to local businesses and residents. • Conduct a risk assessment on council properties and implement appropriate strategies to reduce malicious damage. • Seek to utilize art to reduce potential malicious damage to property.

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<p>Social / Community</p>	<p>Commonwealth and state government's are responsible for the provision of key social, educational, welfare and health services. However, local government contribute to many of these services. Various community services that are managed and/or supported by local government contribute significantly to the quality of life of local residents. Furthermore, community building activities are frequently sponsored and initiated by local government.</p> <p>Through this relationship with local residents, local government also acquires significant insights into the needs of residents. This information can be used to lobby other tiers of government and to respond to specific concerns, including fear of crime.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop relevant social policies and plans. • Provide social programs and services, including child care facilities, libraries and programs for young people / elderly / etc. • Fund and conduct local community building activities, including markets, arts and cultural performances, sporting activities, etc. • Respond to emerging social needs through the coordination of the delivery of local services.
<p>Economic</p>	<p>The economic conditions of an area can have significant consequences for local residents. Employment opportunities close to home and the quality of local amenities and infrastructure are just two positive consequences of a strong local economy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work cooperatively with local business groups to maximize opportunities for economic improvement. • Lobby relevant tiers of government to stimulate local economic growth. • Coordination of the night time economy and establishment of Liquor Accords to prevent alcohol-related crime.

<p>Governance</p>	<p>The practices of local government will contribute to perceptions of good governance. Corrupt or inept local government practices might contribute to perceptions of permissiveness in an area. Such a milieu could be conducive to criminality more generally. Consequently, the overall performance of local government is important in building trust in the state and for promoting responsible government and business activities.</p> <p>Furthermore, local government assumes a significant role in the governance of crime prevention. Local government can be effective in coordinating crime prevention strategies through their coordination and management of local advisory groups. Information gathered from these advisory groups and resident panels can then be utilised to inform the work of various sections of local government.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eradicate local government corruption and mal-administration. • Establish, manage and review the operation of crime prevention advisory committees. • Provide opportunities for local residents and visitors to the area to voice their concerns about crime and the fear of crime. • Develop clear plans for the prevention of crime and ensure that these plans are integrated into other administrative functions. • Promote involvement of senior local government personnel in crime prevention. • Maintain good relationships with key stakeholders, including police, corrections, housing, health, education, transport, welfare and business representatives.
<p>Media / Perceptions of Crime</p>	<p>Negative crime stories are frequently run in local (and other) media. These stories can in part contribute to fear of crime. Local government can take an active role in combating these perceptions of crime. Through coordinated responses to stories arising periodically about crime and the promotion of various activities associated with crime prevention, negative perceptions of areas (and communities) can be challenged.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop media policies that result in rapid response to stories about local crime. This might involve participation of senior local government personnel or elected members, police, local business and community leaders. • Promote preventative strategies adopted in the local area. • Coordinate an annual campaign highlighting particular areas / issues being targeted. For example, behaviour of school students moving to and from school might be targeted at the commencement of the school year; licensed premises and alcohol-related crime might be targeted at the commencement of summer; graffiti reporting and removal campaigns be conducted twice yearly; illegal parking might receive specific attention periodically; etc. Through coordinated campaigns to address these common issues, regular stories could be run depicting these coordinated responses.