

P.D. Day To The Australian Crime Seminar on Crime Planning on October, 1978.

P.D. Day, LL.B., Dip. TCP, MRAP, Head, Department of
Regional and Town Planning, University of Queensland).

Whatever the omissions of the Vancouver Conference or the Club of Rome to which reference has been made, I have no doubts about whatever about the connection between good planning and crime prevention.

Let's canvass at least some of the many things that good planning could achieve in this field. In particular I would like to say something about neighbourhoods, about schools and community centres, about dangerous traffic situations, about the motor car, about the uninhabited city centre, about public involvement and, not least, about the size of cities.

The easy way out of course is to clamour for more police, which means more taxes. Yet our materialistic society is strangely reluctant to pay more taxes to ensure the protection of its material possessions. We want our 'tax revolts' and our cake.

Let's have more police by all means, but they can't be everywhere at once. We can make the job very much easier for them. In many ways the community can be its own watchdog — neighbours can sometimes be the best policemen.

This leads directly to the planning of our streets and neighbourhoods.

Planners for years have been urging that a great deal of road space in Brisbane — and in most other cities for that matter — is simply unnecessary. This is a direct economic cost. But a gridiron system of intersecting streets which does not discriminate and assumes that all streets should be potentially capable of carrying buses and through traffic is not only wasteful. It destroys any sense of neighbourhood.

What I am leading to of course is the simple proposition that cul-de-sacs and residential streets don't have to carry through traffic, don't offer a ready escape route for thieves and prowling strangers, and by their very nature generate a neighbourliness which is an immense

protection. Streets, in other words, which are not barren thoroughfares for speeding vehicles but safe places for people, and especially for children.

A lot of existing streets could be converted to cul-de-sacs by closing off intersections, both in the interests of road safety and in the interests of crime prevention.

The concept can of course be carried a good deal further in new areas by exploiting to the full the possibilities of the Group Titles Act — administered by our host Department and the first legislation of its kind in Australia — which enables the creation of cluster-type subdivisions with the houses grouped around a private roadway and sharing common landscaped open space.

Let me emphasize that I am talking about the concept of 'defensible space' — I am most certainly **not** advocating gun-carrying citizens or vigilantes.

There are other ways, too, in which, through lack of planning, we have created dormitory suburbs rather than communities where people belong and care. In particular, far too many schools, which ought to be the focal point of their community, have been located after the event, either on high cost residential land or on some residual area away from the centre of the community.

If we are concerned about idle adolescents, all too susceptible to alienation from society, then we should be planning our school sites in advance — at less cost — and getting better value from school buildings and their playing fields seven days a week by locating them at the heart of our neighbourhood communities and using them for sporting groups, hobbies, clubs, community associations and social occasions.

As for ill-planned traffic situations and congestion, accidents and injuries are an obvious economic cost. But what about the lawlessness and the aggressions that these situations generate? Situations where requirements of the law are contradicted by the physical design and give rise to confusion, frustration, anger and anti-social fury at authority which is all too often contagious and likely to carry over into other areas of behaviour.

When you come to think of it, it would be interesting indeed to calculate the total cost of motor-car-associated crime — unlawful use, theft, culpable driving, leading in turn to injury and death and ambulance and hospital costs, not to mention loss of productivity and expensive litigation from which only the lawyers are the real beneficiaries. And the latest thing in the US, according to this morning's press, is assault by car.

Yet we are creating, at grave cost to the natural environment, scattered urban settlements which are utterly dependent upon the motor-car.

One must defer to the behavioural scientists and criminologists when it comes to proving the casual relationship between these things, but it is difficult to avoid the suspicion that the seeds of a great deal of anti-social behaviour are sown in the vast areas of urban sprawl — where community facilities inevitably lag behind demand, where distance precludes access to recreation and cultural facilities, and isolation breeds idleness and discontent. Better planning could ensure more compact communities which could afford to sustain more community facilities and more accessible facilities — and reduce dependence upon the motor-car. Banning the motor-car of course is out of the question, but we ought to know what the car is really costing us.

It's a sobering thought to contemplate the conflict between conviviality and the car. The choice with which a motor-car-dependent urban society confronts us is not a happy one. We can either curtail our conviviality, or we can combine the two in a criminally lethal combination.

In the central city, intelligent planning could do a lot to avoid the security problems which arise when the tremendous public and private investment in the city becomes a museum after dark, uninhabited and lifeless, because no-one lives there any more.

Throughout our urban areas excessive segregation of residential, commercial and industrial uses and the concentration of activities in big institutions is leaving the city uninhabited by night and the suburbs uninhabited by day. Both are vulnerable.

And, apart from what better planning, or rather what planning instead of non-planning, could achieve, the actual processes of planning have a bearing upon what we are talking about.

Properly organised town planning — as distinct from bureaucratically imposed planning — involves citizen participation in the planning process, in the setting of goals and objectives and the formulation of plans to achieve them. This in turn means involvement rather than detachment and alienation, and involvement in a common purpose is likely to generate civic pride and a respect for people and property. In other words, the processes of properly conducted planning, as well as the end results, can contribute to a healthy social environment.

I have concentrated on aspects of planning which have direct economic consequences because in my view economic savings are the strongest justification for a greater public investment in town planning.

I have not mentioned the less tangible things like parks and gardens and landscaping and the aesthetic considerations which some people misguidedly seem to think that town planning is all about. Yet let's not dismiss these things in the present context. An aesthetically pleasing urban environment — like carpets on the pub floor — is likely to generate pride and respect, whereas anti-social attitudes are very likely to be compounded by a mean and nasty environment which invites disrespect and irresponsibility.

But, having said all these things — and there are innumerable variations on the themes I have all too briefly touched on — I think we come sooner or later to probably the most fundamental question of all, **the relationship between crime and city size.**

There is a great deal of persuasive evidence of a clear correlation between city size and socio-economic segregation, between city size and industrial militancy, between city size and the incidence of drug addiction, and between city size and per capita crime rates across a wide spectrum of criminal offences. This is an area where we desperately need the up-to-date Australian statistics that Bill Clifford has foreshadowed.

A couple of years ago I recall a dramatic headline in the 'Courier-Mail': 'Brisbane — big enough for bombs'. An ominous commentary upon a city growing beyond a human scale.

There is world-wide evidence that on economic, sociological and environmental grounds, and, indeed, in terms of sheer administrative manageability, the million mark is somewhere near the upper limit of tolerable city size.

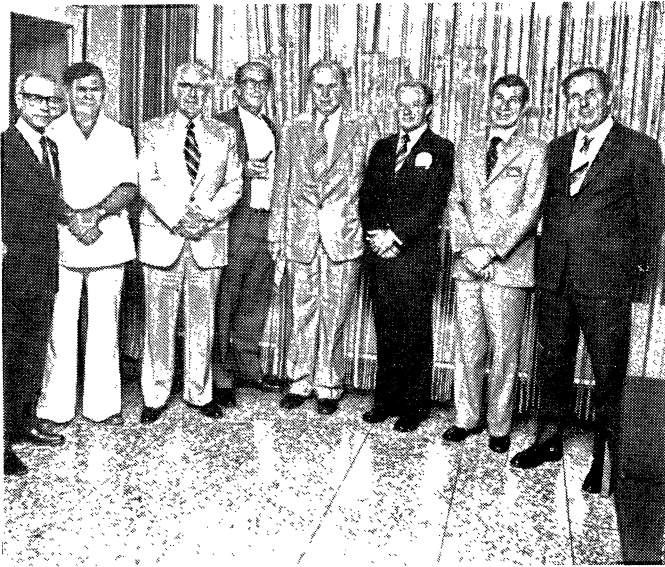
If this is so, then time is rapidly running out for Brisbane. Over the past decade some two-thirds of Queensland's growth has been allowed to concentrate increasingly down here in the south-eastern corner of the state. Effective regional planning is imperative if this trend is to be reversed and we are to avoid the cost consequences of excessive centralisation in an impersonal metropolitan agglomeration in which 'men lose their feeling of responsibility for their fellow men' — a phrase which I owe to one of Bill Clifford's colleagues.

Perhaps I am anticipating this afternoon's proceedings. But, as I see it, this seminar affords a striking opportunity to demonstrate the need for planning action, i.e. by clearly identifying some of the reasons for better planning.

The planning solutions exist. We on the planning side are well enough aware of them. What is needed is convincing evidence — hard economic evidence — that the planning solutions should be implemented.

You people on the criminology and law enforcement side could contribute a great deal of the necessary evidence.

Rational urban and regional planning policies, not only here but throughout Australia, need to be founded, not on planners' exhortations, but on hard facts. What makes this seminar so valuable is that you people in the criminology field could make a major contribution to assembling the facts that are needed as a basis for rational planning policies — and firm governmental commitment to them. Maybe we ought to get together more often.



Delegates at Q'ld. Branch A.C.P.C. Seminar — 24th October, 1978. L to R: The Hon. Mr Justice M.B. Hoare, C.M.G. (Q'ld Branch chairman); Mr R.D. McShane (National Treasurer); Mr F.D. Hayes (National Vice President); Mr P.D. Day; Mr W. Clifford; Mr F. Albiets (Seminar Convenor); P.C. Senior Sgt. R.J. Redmond (Q'ld Branch Hon. Secretary); and National President, the Hon. Mr Justice J.H. Muirhead.