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# CRIME PREVENTION TODAY

## An Australian Looks At The English Situation

(A resume of an address to the Victorian Branch in October 1980)

Notwithstanding the larger population of England, formal crime prevention activity there is substantially greater than it is in Australia. Most notably, each of the 43 English Police Forces has its own Crime Prevention Section, generally staffed by officers who have completed courses at the Crime Prevention College operated by the British Home Office. The Home Office also maintains a fairly high-powered Standing Committee on Crime Prevention, and there are over 200 (citizen's) Crime Prevention Panels throughout the country. These are established to stimulate information and heighten public awareness about the topic. Recently the National Westminster Bank has made available \$50,000 to these panels to run programmes. Current panel programmes include such activities as school competitions, provision of first-day covers and lapel badges and, an "Adopt A Phone Box" campaign where students check particular phone boxes daily to monitor (or prevent) vandalism.

The panels' emphasis on *education* that is apparent from these few examples of programmes, is equally obvious in officially initiated activities. Most English police forces have small units as in Australian Police Forces which conduct lectures at schools, advise local businesses on security and produce literature for the public. However they seem to be more active than our local forces. The Cambridgeshire Police for instance welcome visitors to Cambridge through brochures that warn them about possible offences. And amongst their documents for local householders are those which outline hints with respect to securing one's home, an "anti-theft check", questionnaire, and a handy "serial number" form to be completed for valuable items of property. (See figures 1 and 2) Central Government mainly through the Home Office, provides lavish publicity material "free of charge to approved organisation".

The posters reproduced herewith are part of the current range of free multi-coloured literature available. (See figures 3 & 4) It can be seen that they are professional and eye-catching advertisements. Their message is quite clear and their educational value high. In addition to such posters, various pamphlets and associated film or T.V. commercials have been produced by the Home Office and bookmarks, stickers, mock id cards and pamphlets have been specially produced for children.

However there are two main problems associated with this sort of educative campaign. Firstly, it can be *counter productive* in three ways:

1. It can alarm people about the possibility of crime, or indeed confirm their suspicion about its occurrence.
2. It can educate "ignorant" would-be offenders, by explicitly showing methods of committing, say, car theft or theft from retailers.
3. It can stereotype offenders thus causing reinforcement of the belief that offenders can somehow be readily identified. Thus reinforcing the belief that that nice well-dressed person couldn't possibly be an offender. (Note however, that at least as far as the posters go, the offender is always out of focus to avoid this last problem).

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Secondly evaluation of educative campaigns has shown that they're *not effective in changing behaviour*, though they do seem to bring about modification of attitude. For example, an English campaign to alert people to preventing car theft, affected neither drivers' propensity to lock their cars, nor the incidence of car theft. It did however apparently alert people to the problem. And an anti-vandalism campaign (involving \$2 million worth of T.V. time) produced no discernible effect in the number of incidents of criminal damage in the viewing area.

But these educative programmes are only part of primary crime prevention techniques as outlined by Brantingham and Faust (1976). A modified form of their typology which fits Australian conditions follows:

### Primary Crime Prevention

1. Educative programmes
2. Situational or Environmentally-focused activity. (of which more later)
3. Programmes for general social and physical well being (ie provision of decent housing, schools, recreation facilities etc)

### Secondary Crime Prevention

1. Early identification of troublesome persons (ie delinquency prediction studies)
2. Individual intervention (through for example probation or remedial teaching)
3. Neighbourhood programmes (eg. drop-in centres, youth clubs etc)

### Tertiary Crime Prevention

1. Reform (including straightforward punishment)
2. "Rehabilitation" (or changing offenders for the better in some way or other)
3. Incapacitation (ie keeping offenders incarcerated thus preventing their offending for at least that period)

This paper is concerned only with primary crime prevention and educative programmes have already been mentioned. General social programmes are plainly too far-reaching for serious consideration as crime-prevention activities alone, which leaves situational or environmentally focussed programmes. And it is these, which in England are seen as being the most useful avenue for further work.

If one accepts the rather simplistic notion that crime is a function of both motivation and opportunity, crime prevention strategies should be able to be directed against each of those components. But *motivation* is virtually impossible to control. This is quite apparent from consideration of personal features of the offender that Clarke (1980) suggests contribute to motivation.

They are:

- i) the offender's immediate motive (to show solidarity, to get money etc)
- ii) his mood (depressed, euphoric etc)
- iii) his moral judgement about the act and his neutralisation of that,
- iv) his extent of criminal knowledge and perception of the opportunity
- v) his assessment of both the risk of being caught and the likely consequences, and
- vi) his sobriety at the time.

Of these (v) is the only one where a preventive effort might

appear useful. That is, increasing the (real) risk of being detected could bring some reduction in offending. Studies relating to offenders' apparent desire not to be seen indicate that there are three groups of people whose presence is particularly concerning to them.

These are:

- i) police or security personnel
- ii) residents "defending" their own territory. (That is, groups like "Neighbourhood Watches"
- iii) a heterogeneous group with some occupational responsibility including public transport staff, car park attendants, receptionists, school caretakers, apartment doormen etc. (The question of whether a "policing" responsibility is part of e.g. a tram conductor's duties is a troublesome one)

It is hard to see how these groups in particular could be subject to any further training or briefing to increase the offenders' perception of likelihood of capture. But constant reminding of the potential threat they present to law breakers is probably the major weapon. What is certain is that increased surveillance certainly has an effect on the occurrence of crime. The study of installation of closed circuit television cameras in the London Underground in 1975 is an example of such a programme. In that study the incidence of assaults and personal robberies occurring in Underground stations where CCTV had been installed, showed a considerable decrease. However the immediately more likely area for crime prevention seems to be that relating to *opportunity reduction* through physical means. And this involves two main areas, environmental design and target-hardening. But before discussing those the problem of *displacement* has to be considered.

It is argued that reducing opportunities for crime may displace that crime in any of four major ways, rather than preventing crime in toto. Thus,

- i) crime may be displaced over *time*. That is, making crime difficult or more risky to commit in the evenings may simply displace offenders' activities to, say, afternoons.
- ii) criminals *tactics* may change, so that because installing alarms in commercial premises makes burglary more difficult, ex-burglars may become smash-grab offenders.
- iii) criminal *targets* may change. The clamp down on crime in the New York subway in 1975 had the effect of sending offenders onto the buses. When the subway campaign concluded, offenders returned to their old target.
- iv) the *location* of crime may change so that concerted action in say, one suburb may simply displace crime to another often adjoining, suburb. This phenomenon seems particularly frequent in shopping areas where increased retail security hardware in one shop drives shoplifters, not away from the shopping area, but simply away from that shop into neighbouring ones.

It is important for the issue of displacement to be faced by those encouraging situational crime prevention activity.

But it is hard for such enthusiasts to undeniably dispense with such criticism. Nevertheless there are some strong indicators for continued work in the situational area.

With respect to the environmental approach, the formative work is Oscar Newman's "Defensible Space" (1972). In that theory "zones of territorial influence" can be developed through architectural design. Thus street closures, private gardens in State housing and so forth can be used to encourage increased surveillance. Newman's concept has received much attention — a lot of which has been negative-arising from various attempts to assess it.

In an ongoing study in the town of Widnes in England, the concept of defensible space has been broadened somewhat and some changes have been noted. Firstly more crime is becoming known to the police, possibly because there is a higher level of policing in the area as part of the study. As a particular instance, more street lights, presumably damaged by vandals, are being replaced by the local Council. But this does not indicate an

increase in this behaviour, rather it appears the repairs to damaged lights are now completed more quickly thereby increasing the number of available targets again. Having such a sympathetic council means residents of the area have generally higher morale than is found in other areas. But the extent to which this is a function of the special architectural design, rather than knowing they're part of an ongoing study into which various resources are being poured is a moot point. Other studies investigating the defensible space concept have not been particularly encouraging (see for instance Wilson 1978). And the trend today is to widen the architectural approach and develop preventive programmes under the broader heading of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design. (CPTED)

The second physical approach to reducing crime is that of *target hardening*. While displacement is certainly an issue in this area, there is no doubt that time-lock safes in banks, stronger coin boxes in phone booths, steering locks on cars, dead-latch locks on doors and so forth have prevented offences occurring. One of the obvious objections to this approach is the concern that a fortress society will develop. And increased security in shops say, can have the effect of aggravating, if not outraging, innocent shoppers. But more serious than this is the possibility of displacing a potential property offender into the personal-crime area. Most notably increased bank security might displace a bank robber into the hostage-taking mode in his attempt to gain cash. Obviously the trend to tighter physical security has to be evaluated in the light of its impact on the social fabric as a whole.

Where then does this leave crime prevention activities for the future? A Dutch worker in this area lists drunken driving, sexual assault, vandalism and shoplifting as the four offences with highest priority for preventive action according to a set of criteria developed in the Dutch Department of Justice (Vader, 1979). It is interesting that these four would certainly be seen in Australia as "serious" offences for which something ought to be done, and directing prevention programmes towards specific offence types seems a most useful way to proceed.

For each of the above offences there is scope for using the situational approach. We in Australia should be thinking of specific programmes to try and reduce offending. And the Australian Crime Prevention Council should be in the forefront of work in this regard.

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THE SKI BARN  
77 QUEEN STREET,  
BRISBANE.

# HOT DOG

Thermal underwear  
for active people.  
PHONE: 229 1158



# CAMBRIDGESHIRE CONSTABULARY

## CRIME PREVENTION FOR HOME AND FAMILY

These hints apply when you leave your house for an hour, a day, a week, or just securing it for the night.

1. Lock all doors, windows and fanlights.
2. Do *not* leave your key in a 'concealed' place — under the mat, or hanging from a string behind the letter box.
3. Take your keys with you.
4. Leave a key with your neighbour and ask him to take an interest in your home when you are away.
5. Do not advertise your absence by leaving notes for the tradesmen on the front door, or in milk bottles.
6. Lock up ladders and tools which may assist the burglar.
7. *At night:*—
  - (a) Never leave your ground transom windows open.
  - (b) Do not leave money or valuables about — take them to your bedroom.
8. When going away, cancel newspapers, bread and milk supplies, and shut off gas, electricity and water.
9. When going away on holiday notify the Police and furnish them with a keyholder's name and your away address. (Good neighbour scheme).
10. Mow your lawn just before you go away on holiday.
11. Don't switch off all the lights if you leave the house at night. Thieves usually avoid a house with a light on; best place to keep a light burning is in one of the rooms, rather than the hall.
12. Don't leave outer doors unlocked or the windows of unoccupied rooms open in the evening when you gather round the T.V. set, with the family.
13. Don't rely on spring locks for outer doors. Fit deadlocks at least BS 3621/63 and make sure that your windows have stout catches. Don't delay fitting a new outer door lock if one of your keys gets lost or stolen.
14. Don't panic if you return home and find difficulty in opening the door, thieves may have broken in and jammed it. Quickly and quietly inform the Police.
15. Don't fail to use a safety chain on the front door when you answer it at night — especially if you are a woman.
16. Don't invite anyone into your home unless you know who he is. Satisfy yourself about the credentials of strangers claiming to be meter readers, agents, window cleaners and so on, before admitting them.
17. Moving house — this may happen only a few times in a lifetime, but when you do it remember to fit new locks on all outside doors. If not, you have no idea who holds a duplicate key and could get in. Make sure from the start that the locks are by reputable makers, and at least a security BS 3621\*/63 (Kite Mark).
18. Don't leave your handbag or wallet on a shop counter while examining goods nor carry it in an open shopping bag.
19. Don't leave valuable property visible in your car, even if the doors are locked. Safest place is locked out of sight in the boot. Never leave the ignition keys in a car. At night leave the car in a lighted area.
20. Don't shrug your shoulders and hurry on when you notice something suspicious. A good citizen gets in touch with the Police immediately, somebody might do the same service for you one day.

FIGURE 2

# Watch out!

There's a thief  
about



If you see anything suspicious, dial 999

## By the time you have read this poster your pocket might have been picked



Watchout...

# You'll pay for crime!

The cost of crime runs into millions.  
And we all have to pay - through taxes, rates  
insurance...

If you see anything suspicious,  
call the police.

You could prevent a crime -  
and save us all some money!

## Suddenly it comes home to you



vandalism - it's a crime

## Suddenly it's not so funny




vandalism - it's a crime

*"Why are they  
talking to  
my mummy?"*

## IT'S A SHOPLIFTING SHAME

FIGURE 3

# WHO'S RIDING YOUR BIKE?




Bicycles are an easy target for thieves - they're easy to take, and easy to get rid of.

Keep a note of the make, model and frame number and, if you leave it unattended, always lock it.

Watch out...

# WHO'S WORKING IN YOUR OFFICE?



Make sure it's not the thief! Handbags, purses, wallets and valuables left lying around in office or in coat pockets are an open invitation.

Always keep them with you, or lock them safely away.

Watch out...

# WHO'S CALLING AT YOUR HOME?

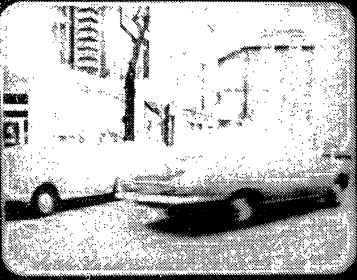


An open window, an unlocked door... classic invitations to the burglar. But so are windows which are only closed with a simple latch.

Be secure: fit good quality locks on doors and windows.

Watch out...

# WHO'S DRIVING YOUR CAR?




If you call it a taxi and haven't put a meter in it, it's easy to be stolen.

Fit a meter and you'll deter most car thieves if you leave it unattended.

Watch out...

# WHO'S KNOCKING AT YOUR DOOR?




Could be it's just the milkman. But it might be a con-man or burglar instead.

Play safe, before opening the door.

Watch out...

# WHO'S ENJOYING YOUR XMAS?



It's a gift for the thief if you leave doors and windows unlocked.

Don't let him do his Xmas shopping in your car or home.

Watch out...

FIGURE 4