

The Beat Goes On Policing for Crime Prevention

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 'New York Miracle'—a remarkable drop (over 60%) in crime during the 1990s—has been credited by some to the dramatic change in the policing policies of the New York Police Department. They built these policies around the Broken Windows theory of crime, which argues there is a connection between disorder and crime. But at the heart of the revamp were some very practical, specific policies that research elsewhere in the United States and internationally has shown are effective:

- **Deterrence by increased police presence:** A perceived increase in the likelihood of getting caught by police can deter some offenders from engaging in criminal activity.
- **Patrolling crime hotspots:** A high proportion of crimes are committed in a small area, which can be reduced by police 'making proactive, medium length stops at these locations on a random, intermittent basis'.
- **Targeted arrests:** A large proportion of crimes are also committed by a small number of criminals, so by aiming to take repeat offenders off the street and out of circulation, the crime rate may be reduced.

There have been some positive initiatives in Australia following on from this overseas research, but they have not been supported by an increase in resources, namely more police. In Australia, the number of police has failed to keep pace with the escalating crime rate over the past 40 years and has fallen from 225 officers to just 60 officers per 1,000 serious reported crimes.

The ideal solution would be to increase Australia's police numbers to their former strength. However, this would require over 110,000 more police nationwide and would cost billions—not entirely feasible under current government budget constraints. More police do need to be part of crime prevention policies, but we propose that Australia trial an initiative from the United Kingdom that may make the increase in police more viable.

In 2002, the United Kingdom Home Office introduced Police Community Support Officers (CSOs). They provide a visible authority presence in the community and directly assist local police with order-maintenance and low level crime. They are under the control of, and are accountable to, the police service and have the potential to significantly aid crime prevention.

Two key crime prevention policing policies thus emerge from the review of overseas experience:

- (1) Australia needs to be looking at a highly visible police presence, particularly in crime hotspots, coupled with targeted arrests; and
- (2) Australia needs to provide police with the resources to implement preventative policing, including more police and a trial of CSOs.

‘Broken Windows’ argued that it is important to pay attention to the little things like disorder and incivility.

Introduction

The role of police has grown beyond the traditional police officer on the beat. Policing now involves use of detailed intelligence, statistics and technology, consultation with the community, and many more things too numerous to list. This has led to an evolution of the policing profession that incorporates many different styles and methods of policing. Buzzwords such as ‘zero-tolerance’, Broken Windows, intelligence-led policing, problem-orientated policing, and Community Policing are used interchangeably for they are all part of the modern police officer’s crime prevention role. While there are some common aspects, they are different methods and styles of policing and have different roles to play in crime prevention.

This paper focuses primarily on Broken Windows policing and intelligence-led policing. Broken Windows often incorporates intelligence, namely using technology to identify crime hotspots and targeting offenders, and is also often called ‘zero-tolerance’. However, the original authors of Broken Windows, and the most prominent police and political figures that have used the theory would dispute this connection. ‘Zero-tolerance’ may concentrate on the little disorders, but generally involves a blanket crackdown on all crimes without allowing for police discretion. Broken Windows proponents argue that police discretion is key to the style of policing that fits the Broken Windows philosophy.

To see both the difference and the interconnection between the various forms of policing, the theory that has driven so much of recent police initiatives should be the starting point.

Some Key Aspects of Different Types of Policing (not mutually exclusive)



Broken Windows

As the crime rate in many western countries, including Australia, rose to record high levels in an extraordinarily short period during the 1960s and 1970s, disorder, also called ‘soft crime’, was often overlooked as policymakers concentrated on the larger problem of serious crime. Innovations in the technology used by police—two way radio and ‘000’ rapid response dispatch systems—meant that limited public resources could be directly channelled to the pressing problems of growing numbers of burglaries, robberies, assaults, and the like. Minor vandalism, public drunkenness, or vagrancy were treated as inconsequential in areas that needed to combat problems of rising crime.

But in 1982 an article called ‘Broken Windows’ by James Q. Wilson and George Kelling changed that focus, albeit slowly.¹ The article argued that it is important to pay attention to the little things like disorder and incivility. Using the analogy of a broken window, it concluded that if the little disorders are left unchecked—the broken window is not repaired—it sends a signal to the community that no-one is in control of the area. Residents retreat indoors for fear of the uncontrolled environment and the streets are left to the criminals, allowing crime to flourish. ‘Broken Windows’ brought attention back to the damage that disorder can cause. By the 1990s,

researchers and policymakers were recognising the need to address disorder, as articulated by criminologist Wesley Skogan:

Disorder not only sparks concern and fear of crime among neighbourhood residents; it may actually increase the level of serious crime. Disorder erodes what control neighbourhood residents can maintain over local events and conditions. It drives out those for whom stable community life is important, and discourages people with similar values from moving in. It threatens house prices and discourages investment. In short, disorder is an instrument of destabilization and neighbourhood decline.²

The emergence of disorder and incivility is an indication that informal social controls are breaking down. One remedy to this problem lies within the hands of the community. The social norms that govern community life stem from the socialisation of citizens. In previous work we illustrated how the bottom-up approach of clarifying norms—instilling citizens with a sense of civility—is key to maintaining social order.³ However, as we also discussed, there is a role for public policy in reinforcing social rules. The most famous example of policy solutions to Broken Windows appeared in New York City.

The 'New York Miracle'

In the 1990s the Broken Windows theory of crime was championed by then New York City Mayor, Rudolf Giuliani. His belief in the theory became a key driving force behind the policies he would develop for both the police and city wide initiatives.⁴

What became known as the 'New York Miracle'—a remarkable drop (over 60%) in crime during the 1990s—has been credited by some to the dramatic change in the policing policies of the city. Its supporters argue that if others want to see such a drop in crime, they too should implement Broken Windows policing like the New York Police Department (NYPD) did.

Critics have rightly pointed to other non-police factors that contributed to the drop in New York's crime rate. The change in the drug market, a booming economy, and a decline in the number of young males (the most crime-prone demographic) undoubtedly all played a part in the 'miracle'. However, crime, as with most social phenomena, has many causes and thus also many solutions. Police are only part of the answer, but an important one.

William Bratton, the first Police Commissioner appointed by Giuliani, used Broken Windows as the cornerstone of initiatives introduced in the NYPD. He expanded on the theory to argue that individuals who are prepared to commit serious crimes will also disregard laws regulating everyday interactions. In other words, a person that is prepared to commit burglary will probably not be concerned with paying their subway fare. Often referred to as the introduction of 'zero-tolerance', these ideas were put into practice with the decision to clamp down on petty crimes and incivilities.

Bratton first put this theory into practice while head of the New York City Transit Police between 1990 and 1992. He found that by targeting fare evaders he was catching criminals with outstanding warrants, which cut subway crime substantially. When he took over the NYPD, he expanded this to a city wide practice by targeting minor crimes in an attempt to net the more serious criminals. When, for instance, people were stopped for fare evasion or were found to be illegally carrying a weapon (namely guns) under stop and search procedures, criminal background checks were automatically done. Larger numbers of offenders with outstanding warrants were located and arrested under this policy. Monitoring petty offences allowed the police to identify offenders they had otherwise been unable to locate.

On a larger scale, further clampdowns on general disorder and incivility were put into practice under Giuliani's 'Quality of Life Initiatives'. This included targeting jaywalkers and speeding cab-drivers, and the re-zoning of sex-shops. In Giuliani's eyes it was an attempt to instil civility in New York in order to send the clear message to criminals that the authorities were in control.⁵

Crime has many causes and thus also many solutions. Police are only a part of the answer, but an important one.

Increased police presence has an important role in deterring offenders from committing crimes in the first place.

While the technology in the 1970s may have removed police from the beat initially, it was another technological advancement that allowed police to return to the streets in New York. This was the introduction of CompStat, a system for tracking and monitoring crime. To identify the areas where clampdowns would be introduced, statistics were used to map the highest levels of disorder and crime. Once identified, these areas (known as hotspots—to be discussed further below) became the focus of police attention and police were deployed before disorder and crime escalated.

It was not just the ability to track crime quickly that was the hallmark of the CompStat system, but the way police management used this information to increase authority and accountability amongst officers. The changes to the NYPD were built around a decentralised command structure. Responsibility for results fell on the precinct commanders, who had been given the flexibility to address local problems in their own way. The decentralisation divided New York into 76 separate police departments, but with an overall unified set of objectives. Bratton explains that as commissioner he ‘set the macro-level goal of crime reduction and enhancing quality of life, but let the precinct commanding officers manage at the micro-level by determining how best to do this’.⁶

Precinct commanders could be regularly and rapidly held accountable for the criminal activity and disorder in their areas at the twice weekly CompStat meetings held by the NYPD executive management. CompStat was built on four premises: (1) timely accurate intelligence data; (2) rapid response of resources; (3) effective tactics; and (4) relentless follow-up and assessment, which were all epitomised by the meeting process. Precinct commanders were expected to review their area statistics and explain what was being done to achieve crime reduction. Commanders faced executive scrutiny and intense questioning until all members of the meeting were satisfied the necessary tactics were being put in place.

Proponents have argued that this accountability meant that police were direct stakeholders in crime prevention and had further incentives to ensure their streets were safe. Critics, on the other hand, have argued that the pressure to maintain order led to unnecessary, heavy-handed tactics by the police.

Despite the criticisms of New York’s Broken Windows policing, research has shown that there are several elements of smart policing worth noting. It may have been a general theory of the connection between disorder and crime that drove New York’s initiatives, but some of the very practical specific policies research from elsewhere in the United States and internationally has shown are effective.

Deterrence in police presence

Broken Windows policing required that large numbers of officers return to the beat. The NYPD became a highly visible, proactive police force, which was the first step in crime prevention.

Police play an important role in the criminal justice system by solving crime and catching criminals. But increased police presence also has an important role in deterring offenders from committing crimes in the first place.

Nobel Prize winning economist Gary Becker was one of the first academics to look at crime within a rational choice paradigm. It is assumed that ‘a person commits an offence if the expected utility to him exceeds the utility he could get by using his time and other resources at other activities’.⁷ The choice to commit an offence is therefore influenced by perceived risk and return calculations. A perceived increase in the likelihood of getting caught by police would deter some offenders from engaging in criminal activity.

It is understood that not all offences are rational choices⁸ and that different offenders will weigh risks and benefits in different ways. Nevertheless, according to the rational choice perspective, at the margins more individuals will be deterred from engaging in criminal behaviour if the chances of being apprehended by police are increased: ‘We can reduce crime in our community by increasing the probability of capture and conviction.’⁹

Hotspots, part of intelligence-led policing

One of the paramount aspects of successful crime prevention by police, built on deterrence and police presence, is the targeting of policing in areas with a high concentration of crime, referred to as hotspots. In New York, the CompStat system allowed police to identify hotspots and target their order-maintenance activities to these areas. Research has shown that such a 'location oriented approach appears to be the most effective and most practical means for enhancing the deterrent effects of preventive patrol'.¹⁰

Reporting on the findings of a trial of hotspot policing in Minneapolis, criminologist Lawrence Sherman and David Weisburd found that there was a 'significant relative difference' in the amount of disorder and crime in the areas that had been subject to targeted police patrols. While crime had risen in both control and experimental areas during the year of the trial, the increase was far less in the hotspot areas patrolled by police.

While such conclusions may seem to be mere commonsense, police have traditionally stretched their patrols over much larger areas. The conventional patrol beat was organised on the premise that 'crime could happen anywhere and that the entire beat must be patrolled'.¹¹ This fairly random patrol by police may have some deterrent effect, but for maximum deterrence it is necessary to concentrate resources in areas with the highest density of offences. Completely random patrols could result in police presence in areas that would not affect the potential offenders' risk perceptions.

Further research by criminologist Christopher Koper assessed the length of time police should remain in a hotspot.¹² By examining how long until disorder and crime reappeared once police left a hotspot, Koper found the longer police stayed in a hotspot the longer disorder was minimised, up to a point. After about 15 minutes, there was no greater lasting deterrence by prolonged police presence. Koper thus concluded that the optimal length for police presence is about 14 to 15 minutes. He argued that 'police can maximise crime and disorder reduction at hotspots by making proactive, medium length stops at these locations on a random, intermittent basis . . . In this way, police can maximise deterrence and perhaps minimise the amount of unnecessary time they spend at hotspots.'¹³

The longer police stayed in a hotspot, the longer the disorder was minimised, up to a point.

Does crime simply move elsewhere?

One of the major arguments against putting further limited resources into policing of crime hotspots is the theory of displacement. According to the theory, deterring crime in one particular area will only move, or displace, it elsewhere. The criminals will just commit the crimes in a different neighbourhood.

Criminologists Derek Cornish and Ronald Clarke have argued that, from a rational choice perspective, displacement of crime is not inevitable. Crimes are committed when the interaction of factors influencing the decision to break the law (what they term choice structuring properties), such as motive, opportunity, rewards, costs, and so on, make the crime attractive. These factors change with different situations and thus a crime that may seem worth the risk or beneficial in one instance or in one place, may not appear so at a different time or place.¹⁴ Other areas may not have the environmental features (for example, poor street lighting, high concentration or easy access to targets) that make hotspots conducive to crime and therefore will not attract the crime that is prevented by targeted patrol.

The underlying argument of displacement also assumes that 'a fixed supply of criminals is seeking outlets for the fixed number of crimes they are predestined to commit'.¹⁵ Cornish and Clarke argue that this is flawed because 'if frustrated from committing a particular crime, the offender is not compelled to seek out another crime nor even a non-criminal solution'.¹⁶ Rather, they 'may simply desist from any further action at all, rationalizing his [sic] loss of income (for example) in various ways: "It was good while it lasted."¹⁷

In what Lawrence Sherman describes as the strongest statistical study of displacement from increased patrol, it was found that the level of displacement was less than the reduction in crime.¹⁸ In other words, even if some crime does move

Community Policing

Around the same time that research into hotspots was being conducted, Community Policing (CP) came to the fore as a key concept in crime prevention. CP was so touted that in 1994 the US Federal Government provided \$9 billion in grants for the hiring of extra officers and the implementation of CP programmes.¹

There is an inherent problem in determining what programmes can be classified as Community Policing. Almost all the authors who have written on the subject agree that the concept is vague and ill-defined. For some it is a philosophy, others a style of policing, and for others a series of programmes. Some say it means being tough on crime but others believe it is about being soft.² Some commentators say that such confusion is inevitable because CP is all about tailoring policing solutions to local problems and needs.³ Despite the confusion, there is now a growing consensus about the components that various incarnations of CP have in common:

- 'solving underlying problems that link seemingly unrelated incidents of crime and disorder instead of responding to them one by one;
- de-emphasising routine patrol and rapid response as primary crime fighting tools;
- involving the communities being policed as partners in identifying problems and planning or even executing responses;
- preventing crime through strategies for socialising children and youth and for making high crime places safer;
- changing organisations to support the other goals'.⁴

Despite the high profile, there is quite mixed evidence on the ability of CP to reduce crime. An extensive literature review on CP research by Lawrence Sherman found that some CP initiatives are promising but others appear to have little impact on the crime rate. To cite two examples, research by criminologist Wesley Skogan in the 1980s of two relatively well organised and well publicised neighbourhood watch type groups concluded that they had failed to impact on crime and disorder.⁵ In one area, the group may have been counterproductive as it appears they may have 'spread concern and enhanced levels of fear'.⁶ In other areas, evidence suggests that door-to-door visits by the police have strong potential benefits, with a reduction in crime where this was introduced. Door-knocking can be used to directly seek information, provide prevention advice to residents, or simply establish contact to enable future communications.⁷

While the efficacy of CP for crime prevention is not always apparent, CP can aid in increasing police legitimacy, which in itself is a useful prevention tool. In studies that reviewed perceptions of police following CP programmes, there was consistent evidence that CP resulted in a more favourable view of police.⁸ One study found a strong correlation between positive views of police and citizens' willingness to obey the law.⁹

One of the major points to note from the research on CP is that just because some initiatives are effective in crime prevention this does not mean all CP programmes are worth the money being invested in them. Whether extensive resources are allocated to CP should be reviewed carefully, depending largely on what incarnation of CP is being utilised. The benefits of a Community Policing policy that research has shown to be little more than public relations should be seriously weighed against the costs.

Problem-orientated policing

Problem-orientated policing centres around intelligence and problem identification, concentrating on specific problems and finding specific solutions to address them. For example, a problem-orientated strategy would identify intoxication as a problem in licenced areas that have high levels of alcohol-related crime and would seek to enforce licensing laws to restrict alcohol consumption as opposed to perhaps traditional policing which would simply deal with each offence as it occurs.

Research into problem-orientated policing has been largely problem specific research (such as guns or prostitution) so an overarching statement on its efficacy would be misleading. However, it would be fair to argue that the contribution of problem-orientated policing has potential to be positive depending on the methods employed. It is important to bear in mind that while this paper concentrates on general policing policies that can impact on crime, there are also often specific solutions to specific crime problems that have to be assessed on an individual basis.

¹ Jeffrey A. Roth and Joseph F. Ryan, 'The Cops Program after 4 Years - National Evaluation' (Washington: National Institute of Justice, 2000), 1.

² William J. Bratton, 'Crime is Down in New York City: Blame the Police', in *Zero Tolerance: Policing a Free Society* ed. Norman Dennis (London: IEA Health and Welfare Unit, 1998), 32.

³ Roth and Ryan, 'The Cops Program after 4 Years - National Evaluation', 4.

⁴ As above.

⁵ Wesley Skogan, *Disorder and Decline: Crime and the Spiral of Decay in American Neighborhoods* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 125-127.

⁶ As above, 152.

⁷ Lawrence W. Sherman, 'Policing for Crime Prevention', citing Mary Ann Wycoff, Antony Pate, Wesley Skogan, and Lawrence Sherman, *Citizen Contact Patrol in Houston* (Police Foundation: Washington DC 1985); Antony Pate and Wesley Skogan, *Coordinated Community Policing: The Newark Experience* (Police Foundation: Washington DC 1985); Gloria Laycock, 'Operation Identification, or the Power of Publicity?', *Security Journal*, 2 (1991), 67-72.

⁸ Sherman, 'Policing for Crime Prevention', 8/34.

⁹ Tom Tyler, *Why People Obey the Law* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1990).

elsewhere, increased police presence appears to prevent some offences from being committed.

Targeted arrests, further intelligence-led policing

The conclusions about hotspots do not address the content of policing, but rather its visibility and how this affects the risk and return calculations of potential offenders. There is also something to be learnt from the content of what was done in New York.

We have already seen that concentration on places can impact on crime. So too can concentration on certain individuals. As with the logic behind hotspots, that a high proportion of crimes are committed in a small area, it has been shown that a large proportion of crimes are committed by a small number of offenders.¹⁹ Therefore, aiming to get those criminals off the street may positively affect the crime rate by taking repeat offenders out of circulation.²⁰

A study in the United Kingdom aimed at known, suspected, and potential burglars found that after targeting these individuals for arrest, burglary rates fell by 62% in the target neighbourhood with lesser drops in neighbouring areas.²¹ Similarly, a review by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research found that after implementing targeted arrests in NSW, there was drop in break and enter offences.²²

There is a potential problem with targeted arrests though. Targeting individuals, particularly those 'at risk' rather than known offenders, is closely connected to profiling. This has been abolished in many police departments after complaints of 'institutional racism' and the potential violation of civil liberties. It is an important reminder about the political and social context that surrounds any policing policy. What may be effective may not be acceptable to some groups in the larger community; there is a difficult trade-off between effective policing and civil liberties, and it is one that should be openly discussed by politicians rather than ignored and left to the police to handle.

In New York they were able to net repeat offenders by policing soft crimes. This strategy was exceptionally effective given that they had a large number of offenders with outstanding warrants in the city. There was a highly criminal population on the streets and these people were caught when the police toughened up on minor offences. But other cities in other countries do not have this same problem and the same strategy may not prove so effective elsewhere. Adapted to local circumstances, however, it does seem that Broken Windows strategies can bring positive results outside the US.

In Middlesbrough in the UK, for example, Ray Mallon, a former police officer and now mayor, introduced Broken Windows policing, including Active Intelligence Mapping, to identify hotspots. The result has been a significant drop in crime: 18% in 12 months, with a 40% drop in burglary. Prior to moving to Middlesbrough, Mallon reduced crime in Hartlepool by 50% in 2½ years with similar strategies. His solutions are not identical to New York's, but are built on the same theories and implemented with local solutions.

Preventative policing, Aussie style

In the mid to late 1990s, when the US was experiencing (as were many other western countries) its massive drop in crime, Australia was heading down a different path. Both Australian Bureau of Statistics figures and crime victim surveys show that serious crime continued to rise in Australia between 1993 and 2000. Yet, the most recent crime statistics show that in 2002, crime began to drop.²³ It will be a few years before we can say whether this is the start of an American-style decline in crime, but it is not too early to examine any similarities in circumstances leading up to such a drop.

As with New York, the role of the police should not be overemphasised—it is only part of the puzzle. Australia has benefited from a relatively resilient economy in the past few years, which means that there is a viable, non-criminal economic alternative (namely jobs) for potential offenders to acquire money. Also, a change in the drug markets since 2000, specifically a heroin shortage, has meant that the cost of using drugs has increased. A 'tipping point' may have been reached where the cost and risk of committing more crimes to fund a drug habit are perceived as too great by some users. Important

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work has yet to be done to look in depth at how these factors have affected the crime rate. Initial conclusions would suggest that they have played a significant role. But this does not mean that changes in policing have not also played a crucial part in reducing crime. A smarter police force can complement the effects of the other factors to provide a stronger deterrent against crime, so it is important to examine what our police have been doing.

In recent years, Australian police have been implementing initiatives aimed at preventing crime. A review of Police Service websites and annual reports shows a declared commitment to many of the concepts discussed already. Community Policing appears to be a key focus, along with discussion of intelligence-led policing. Listed below are some examples:

Community Policing

- ‘Police Liaison Officers’ in Queensland act as a contact between community (particularly indigenous communities) and police ‘to foster co-operation and understanding’.²⁴
- ‘Crime Prevention Officers’ in Victoria act as a liaison between police and community, providing advice and suggesting remedies to problems in their local area.²⁵
- Police Community Consultative Committees (PCCCs) were created in Victoria to establish partnerships between the police and community. They are designed to allow community members to make an input on police initiatives and provide police with a forum to facilitate the development of practical local initiatives.²⁶
- New South Wales promotes community involvement through Neighbourhood Watch, the Safety House Programme, and Police and Community Youth Clubs.²⁷

Intelligence-led policing

- In New South Wales, Operation Viking in 2002-03, following on from City Safe in 1998, focused on hotspots through a highly visible police presence in combination with targeted arrests.
- The Western Australian Police Service strategic plan for 2001-2006 states that ‘consensus places our focus clearly on the “downstream end” of the continuum especially through targeting known hotspots and recidivist offenders. This recognises that our main role in preventing crime is through providing a highly focused, visible presence to deter criminal activity, including the use of intelligence-led policing to improve targeted strategies’.²⁸
- The South Australia Police Crime Reduction Section includes in their approaches to a Crime Reduction Strategy: ‘intelligence supported targeting of criminal/offences’ and ‘reducing criminal opportunities through environmental design and directed patrolling’.²⁹
- NSW had implemented Operation Crime Review panels, similar to CompStat meetings, in 1998, but the formality of the process has since been abandoned.³⁰

There are some positive initiatives included in this list—for example, the move to hotspot policing—that strongly correlate to lower crime rates in those areas. But there is an overarching problem with the way they have been embraced. These policing policies in Australia have not been supported by an increase in resources, namely more police, which could enable a much greater reduction in crime. Intelligence-led initiatives may be built on smart policing, but to sustain them they require more officers. Otherwise, all we are achieving is removing police from other areas where they are needed. Concentrating a significant amount of police resources on crime prevention not only requires more police officers on the street, but also extra resources for intelligence gathering and statistical analysis.

The size of New York’s police force was increased by 10,000 officers (a 25% increase) prior to the implementation of Broken Windows. In Australia, the number of police has failed to keep pace with the escalating crime rate for the past 40 years. The strength

of our police force has fallen from 225 officers per 1,000 serious reported crimes to just 60 officers per 1,000 serious reported crimes.³¹

Furthermore, across the country in the US, the Federal Government injected billions of dollars into law enforcement for recruitment of additional officers (see box on 'Community Policing'). In Australia, the Commonwealth government has not made any such contribution, and the funding of police is still left largely to the individual state budgets. Australian police may be trying to learn from their overseas counterparts, but lack the resources to do this properly.

In an ideal world, the solution to Australia's lack of resources would be to increase the police numbers to their former strength. Unfortunately, that would require over 110,000 more police nationwide and would cost billions—even to add 1,000 police has been estimated to cost \$77 million.³² Budget constraints on all levels of government mean that this solution is not entirely viable. More police do need to be part of crime prevention policies, but we propose that Australia can also learn from overseas experience in finding policies that make the increase in police more viable.

Police Community Support Officers (CSOs)

Much of the innovation in policing discussed so far has come out of the United States. But the United Kingdom has put forth one of the more interesting policy initiatives of the last few years. In 2002 the Home Office introduced Police Community Support Officers (CSOs). CSOs provide a visible authority presence in the community and directly assist local police with order-maintenance policing. They are similar to a special constable but their role has more direct objectives and parameters.

Home Secretary David Blunket describes the role of CSOs as complementary to the work of police officers.

They focus on low level crime and anti-social and nuisance behaviour, which all too often undermine public confidence and make people's lives a misery. The CSOs . . . [are] a vital resource in providing high visibility patrols and freeing up officers to tackle more serious crime.³³

CSOs are more than just local authority enforcement officers, such as council rangers or traffic officers. They are under the control of the police service and are accountable under the same general guidelines as police and within the authority of the local command structure. Their connection to the service allows them to be deployed, according to policing intelligence, to areas with disorder problems.

It is up to the local police chief to decide how the CSOs are deployed and what powers they will be allowed to use. National legislation has limited the extent of their powers in UK. They do not have the power to arrest, but can detain an individual for up to half an hour while the police arrive. They carry radios so they can remain in contact with police and can be provided with police support when necessary. They can issue on-the-spot fines (currently being employed in some parts of Australia by the police) for basic public nuisances and request the details of an individual for police follow-up. They also have the power to confiscate alcohol and tobacco from young and intoxicated persons. Essentially, they have the powers to address the quality of life disorders that are of concern to the community.

The CSOs have the potential to significantly aid the job of the police force in crime prevention. The research discussed already demonstrates that police presence in hotspots can impact on disorder and crime. However, Lawrence Sherman argues that one of the problems with patrolling police hotspots is the potential for police boredom. His findings suggest that the longer police stay in a hotspot the less likely it is that they will need to use police powers. While 'this is good for the community' it 'can be boring for police'.³⁴ Hotspot patrol is aimed at crime prevention, but Sherman argues 'most police would prefer to catch criminals after crime has already occurred and the harm has been done. Prevention lacks glamour; apprehensions offer the excitement of the chase'.³⁵ The CSOs could concentrate on what would be considered by some officers to be the more mundane order-maintenance functions.

CSOs have the potential to significantly aid the job of the police force in crime prevention.

It could be more cost effective in alleviating the workload of the police to invest in a mixture of CSOs and extra police officers.

In a recent Senate Inquiry into crime in the community, criminologist Pat Mayhew commented that you 'you do not need to pay for a policeman [sic]; you need to pay for somebody in a uniform . . . What people want is somebody who appears to be in a position to be able to do something if something goes wrong'.³⁶ She added the caveat that the remark was in part facetious, but with an underlying important point. When the average citizen comments on the desire to have more police on the beat it is generally to deal with the disorder and incivility that simply requires a figure of authority, not a fully trained police officer. The cost of a police officer is expensive. It is not just the salary, but the extensive training and professional development that we must invest in to ensure that we have equipped the officers with the capacity to deal with serious crime. A CSO's salary in the UK is £2,000 to £4,000 (\$5,000 to \$10,000 in Australian dollars). This is less than a starting constable and they are put through three weeks of training³⁷ compared to a 30 week initial training period (followed by another 74 weeks on the job training/probation).

Some criticisms of CSOs

There are valid concerns about the CSOs. Opposition politicians and police federations argued that the role was an inadequate way of meeting the need for more police. They are right—CSOs could not replace police. A previous *Issue Analysis* paper, 'The Thinning Blue Line', clearly demonstrated that our police numbers are insufficient. However, our police are being asked to fulfil more roles than previously while combating more crime than ever before. We cannot afford realistically to return to the police/crime ratio of 1964, and it could be more cost effective in alleviating the workload of the police to invest in a mixture of CSOs and extra police officers (and thereby getting more persons in total) rather than just calling for more police. The less expensive CSOs could help with the presence and order-maintenance the public desire and the extra officers could assist in combating serious crime.

There were also concerns that the CSOs would lack real authority due to their limited powers, and that the community would not find the CSO presence a deterrent. There is potential for this to happen if the connection between the CSOs and police is lost. However, with a strong association to police, a serious enforcement and back up by police of CSO fines, detentions, and quick response to radio calls for assistance there is the capacity to send the message that CSOs have legitimate authority. This close relationship is also important for conveying to the public that the police are still present in an area and that they wish to continue having a connection to the community. But it should be clear, to both police and public that the CSOs are to assist police, not replace police on the streets.

Another criticism made against the CSO role was the concerns over the type of individuals who would be attracted to a 'hobby bobby' role: local busybodies who would become too full of their own self-importance with a bit of power, or those who wanted to be police but would not meet the criteria. This is a concern with any position of authority and comes down to the recruitment process and supervision provided by the local police chiefs.

The first CSOs were deployed in London last September. Their impact on crime and public perception, and assistance to police has yet to be fully reviewed. This is information that Australian policymakers should be watching closely. It is too early to call for a full scale introduction of CSOs in Australia, but not too early to be thinking about how an Australian version could assist the local police. A limited trial of CSOs in some areas of Australia is worth serious consideration.

Conclusion

American research has shown that one of the most effective uses of police resources for crime prevention is high visibility at crime hotspots. It has also been demonstrated that targeted arrests and problem-orientated policing are all part of police best practice.

To reconcile this demand for high visibility and targeted policing with the fact that the police force is at nearly a quarter of the strength (relative to crime) it was 40 years

ago, it is necessary to find others ways to provide extra support to the force. Initiatives currently being deployed in the UK, such the introduction of Community Support Officers, have the potential to address public concerns about order-maintenance while freeing up police to tackle more serious crime. In partnership, police and CSOs may be able to provide a cohesive crime prevention and Community Policing model that is feasible under current limited government expenditure.

Two key crime prevention policing policies emerge from the review of overseas experience: (1) Australia needs to be looking at a highly visible police presence, particularly in crime hotspots, coupled with targeted arrests; and (2) Australia needs to provide police with the resources to implement preventative policing, including more police and trialing of CSOs.

The task of police and policymakers is to assess how to put these practices into place. This includes learning from overseas experience, adapting it to the Australian context (including the appropriate trials and research locally), and supporting policies with adequate police and support officer numbers.

Endnotes

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- ³ See Nicole Billante and Peter Saunders, *Six Questions About Civility* (Sydney: The Centre for Independent Studies, 2002).
- ⁴ Rudolph Giuliani, *The Next Phase of Quality of Life: Creating a More Civil Society* [Archives of Rudolph Giuliani - NYC Mayor's website] (24 February 1998 [cited 27 May 2002]) available from www.nyc.gov/html/rwg/html/98a/quality.html.
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- ⁷ Gary Becker, 'Crime and Punishment: An Economic Approach', *Journal of Political Economy* 76 (1968), 176.
- ⁸ Drug related crimes are often cited as an example of non-rational offending, with some validity. However, while the influence of drugs can skew perceptions of risk and return, it is incorrect to remove rationality and choice altogether from such crimes. See Derek B. Cornish and Ronald V. Clarke, 'Understanding Crime Displacement: An Application of Rational Choice Theory', *Criminology* 25:4 (1987), 933-947, for a discussion of the greater presence of rational-choice in drug markets than is normally assumed.
- ⁹ Cathy Buchanan and Peter Hartley, *The Economic Theory of Crime* (Sydney: The Centre for Independent Studies, 1992), 63.
- ¹⁰ Christopher Koper, 'Just Enough Police Presence: Reducing Crime and Disorderly Behavior by Optimizing Patrol Time in Crime Hot Spots', *Justice Quarterly* 12:4 (1995), 650.
- ¹¹ Lawrence Sherman and David Weisburd, 'General Deterrent Effects of Police Patrol in Crime "Hot Spots": A Randomized, Controlled Trial', *Justice Quarterly* 12:4 (1995), 629.
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- ¹³ Koper, 'Just Enough Police Presence', 668.
- ¹⁴ Cornish and Clarke, 'Understanding Crime Displacement', 933-947.
- ¹⁵ Sherman and Weisburd, 'General Deterrent Effects', 629.
- ¹⁶ Cornish and Clarke, 'Understanding Crime Displacement', 934.
- ¹⁷ As above.
- ¹⁸ S.J. Press, *Some Effects of an Increase in Police Manpower in the 20th Precinct of New York City* (New York City: Rand Institute, 1971) cited in Lawrence W. Sherman, 'Policing for Crime Prevention', in *Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising*, prepared for the National Institute of Justice by Lawrence W. Sherman, Denise Gottfredson, Doris MacKenzie, John Eck, Peter Reuter, and Shawn Bushway (Washington DC: National Institute of Justice 1998), 8/1-65.
- ¹⁹ David P. Farrington, 'Criminal Career Research in the United Kingdom', *British Journal of Criminology* 32:4 (Autumn 1992), 521-536.
- ²⁰ Marilyn Chilvers and Don Weatherburn, 'Do Targeted Arrests Reduce Crime?', *Crime and*

- Justice Bulletin*, Paper 63 (Sydney: Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, 2001), 2.
- ²¹ G. Farrell, S. Chenery and K. Pease, *Consolidating Police Crackdowns: Findings from an anti-burglary project*, Police Research Series, Paper 113, (London: Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate, 1998) as cited in Chilvers and Weatherburn, *Do Targeted Arrests Reduce Crime?*, 3.
- ²² Chilvers and Weatherburn, *Do Targeted Arrests Reduce Crime?*
- ²³ Robbery decreased by 21%, motor vehicle theft decreased by 19%, unlawful entry with intent decreased 9%, homicide and related offences decreased by 9%
- ²⁴ Queensland Police Service website: www.police.qld.gov.au/pr/join/plo.shtml
- ²⁵ Victoria Police website: www.police.vic.gov.au/showcontentpage.cfm?contentpageid=2277
- ²⁶ Victoria Police website: www.police.vic.gov.au/showcontentpage.cfm?contentpageid=8246
- ²⁷ NSW Police website: www.police.nsw.gov.au/prevention/community.cfm
- ²⁸ Western Australian Police Service, *Strategic Plan 2001-2006* (Perth: Western Australian Police Service, 2001), 7, <http://www.police.wa.gov.au/AboutUs/pdf/StrategicPlan.pdf>.
- ²⁹ South Australia Police website, www.sapolice.sa.gov.au/crime/crime_reduction_section/crime_reduction.shtml
- ³⁰ It is unclear whether the more informal system that has replaced it requires the same review and accountability of police strategies.
- ³¹ Nicole Billante, 'The Thinning Blue Line', *Issue Analysis* No. 31 (Sydney: The Centre for Independent Studies, 2002).
- ³² Billante, 'The Thinning Blue Line', as based on calculations by Don Weatherburn, *Does Australia Have a Law and Order Problem?: Public Lecture to Mark Appointment as Adjunct Professor* (Sydney: UNSW School of Social Science and Policy, 2002).
- ³³ Home Office, 'New Community Support Officers Boost', *Home Office Press Releases* (2 May 2003), www.homeoffice.gov.uk/n_story.asp?item_id=465.
- ³⁴ Sherman and Weisburd, 'General Deterrent Effects', 646, (see n.11).
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- ³⁶ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, *Official Committee Hansard: Crime in the Community Senate Inquiry*, 19 Sept 2002, REPS LCA 167
- ³⁷ Understandably there are concerns about the short length of this training. It would not be unreasonable to suggest a slightly longer training period to ensure CSOs are comfortable with the potential conflicts they could encounter.

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ISSN: 1440 6306
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