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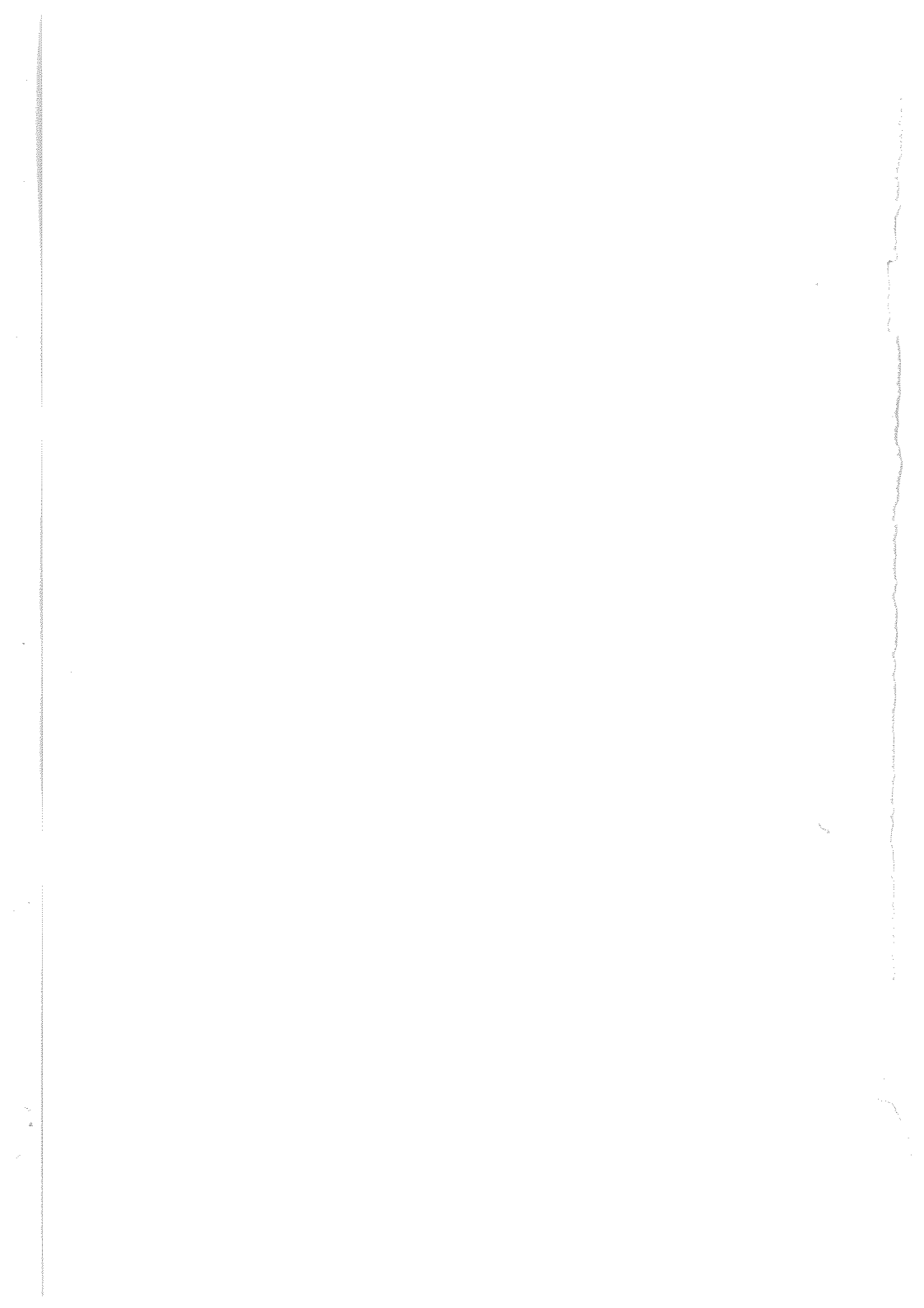
Preventative Policing

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Preventative Policing

Introduction

The crime rate in many western countries rose to record high levels in an extraordinarily short period during the 1960s and 1970s. In the mid to late 1990s, this pattern changed, particularly in the United States, where crime rates fell dramatically—upwards of 60% in some cities.

Australia's story is a little different. Although the crime rate here followed the overseas pattern and rose rapidly in the 1960s and 1970s, unlike the rest of the Western world, Australia did not see any significant drop in its crime during the 1990s. Both Australian Bureau of Statistics figures and crime victim surveys show that serious crime continued to rise in Australia between 1993 and 2000. Indeed, the International Crime Victim Survey of 17 countries shows Australians are more at risk than the citizens of most other developed countries. Australia ranks second highest overall (behind England and Wales) on the rate of victimisation, and scores higher than any other country on so-called 'contact crimes' such as robbery and assault.¹

So, with crime rates in Australia remaining extraordinarily high, is there anything we can learn from what happened overseas? On both a theoretical level (the theory of Broken Windows) and a direct policy level (particularly policing styles and resources), Australian policy makers should be taking heed.

Broken Windows

During the 1960s and 1970s, disorder, also called 'soft crime', was often overlooked as policymakers concentrated on the larger problem of rising 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.² 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 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.³

The emergence of disorder and incivility is an indication that informal social controls are breaking down. One remedy to this problem lies in 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.⁴ 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.⁵

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 for 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, criminals with outstanding warrants were being caught, cutting 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 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 carried out. 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 rezoning 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.⁶

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) 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'.⁷

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) persistent 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 have also proven to be 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'.⁸ 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 or the likelihood of punishment once caught would deter some offenders from engaging in criminal activity.

Becker points out that increasing the likelihood of getting caught is more cost effective than using punishment to deter. Cathy Buchanan and Peter Hartley argue that the deterrent effect is dependent on whether the offender is more risk-averse (deterred more by the chance of getting caught) or risk-loving (deterred more by the severity of punishment).⁹ In their 1997 Australian study, Philip Bodman and Cameron Maultby found that whether the chance of getting caught and/or the severity of punishment had a greater deterrent effect is dependent on the crime, but overall policing had a 'significant negative, deterrent effect for all crime categories considered'.¹⁰

It is understood that not all offences are rational choices¹¹ 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.'¹²

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'.¹³

Reporting on the findings of a trial of hotspot policing in Minneapolis, criminologists Lawrence Sherman and David Weisburd found that there was a 'significant relative difference' in the amount of disorder and crime in 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.¹⁴

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'.¹⁵ 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.¹⁶ 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.'¹⁷

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.¹⁸ 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 same incidence of crime.

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'.¹⁹ 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'.²⁰ 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."²¹

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.²² In other words, even if some crime does move 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.²³ Therefore, aiming to get those criminals off the street may positively affect the crime rate by taking repeat offenders out of circulation.²⁴

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.²⁵ 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.²⁶

There is a potential problem with targeted arrests however. 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 of 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 United States.

In Middlesbrough in the United Kingdom, 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 two and a half 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.

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.²⁷

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.²⁸ Some commentators say that such confusion is inevitable because CP is all about tailoring policing solutions to local problems and needs.²⁹ 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'.³⁰

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. 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.³¹ In one area, the group may have been counterproductive as it appears they may have 'spread concern and enhanced levels of fear'.³² 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 communication.³³

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.³⁴ One study found a strong correlation between positive views of police and citizens' willingness to obey the law.³⁵

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 or not 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 licensed 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 (such as guns or prostitution) so an overarching statement on its effectiveness 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 largely 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.

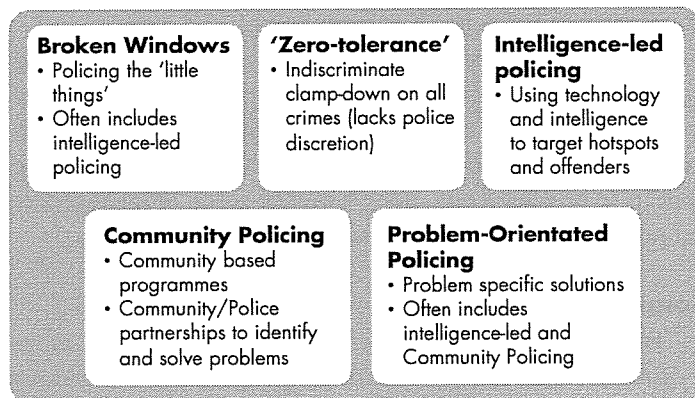
Different aspects of preventative policing

While the labels that describe each of these policing styles are often used interchangeably, for they are all part of the modern police officer's crime prevention role, they are different in their own right. Each use different methods and have different roles to play in crime prevention.

For example, 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. Likewise, while William Bratton argues that his policing methods were based on CP, they in fact show few elements of the aspects of CP described above.

Key Aspects of Different Types of Policing

(not mutually exclusive)



Preventative policing, Aussie style

As described above, in the mid to late 1990s, when the United States was experiencing (as were many other western countries) a massive drop in crime, Australia's crime rate was steadily increasing. On a positive note however, the most recent crime statistics show that in 2002, crime began to drop.³⁶ It will be a few years before we can determine 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, meaning 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 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'.³⁷

- 'Crime Prevention Officers' in Victoria act as a liaison between police and community, providing advice and suggesting remedies to problems in their local area.³⁸
- 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 comment on police initiatives and provide police with a forum to facilitate the development of practical local initiatives.³⁹
- New South Wales promotes community involvement through Neighbourhood Watch, the Safety House Programme, and Police and Community Youth Clubs.⁴⁰

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.'⁴¹
- 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'.⁴²
- NSW had implemented Operation Crime Review panels, similar to CompStat meetings, in 1998, but the formality of the process has since been abandoned.⁴³

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.

Australia's thinning blue line

We are told by our politicians that we are pouring more resources into fighting crime than ever before—greater numbers of police, housing more prisoners, and higher budgets. And yes, they are correct; this is what the statistics tell us. We now have around 21 police per 10,000 people (up from roughly 14), we have doubled our prison population, and crime and justice expenditure has increased (adjusted for inflation) from around \$100 per person in 1970 to \$320 per person in 2001.⁴⁴ But this is not all that the statistics are telling us.

Across Australia, the number of police per 10,000 people has risen by about 37% between 1964 and 2000.⁴⁵ The ratio of police to persons varies by state, but with the exclusion of the Northern Territory, all states and the ACT have similar policing levels and have followed similar patterns in increasing their police forces.⁴⁶

The statistics tell us that this increase does not appear to be significant enough to combat the rise of crime over the same period. The growth rate of serious crime outstripped the increase in police over tenfold.

A comparison of police and serious crime per head of population demonstrates to some extent the disparity

Figure 1. Police and Recorded Serious Crime per head of population

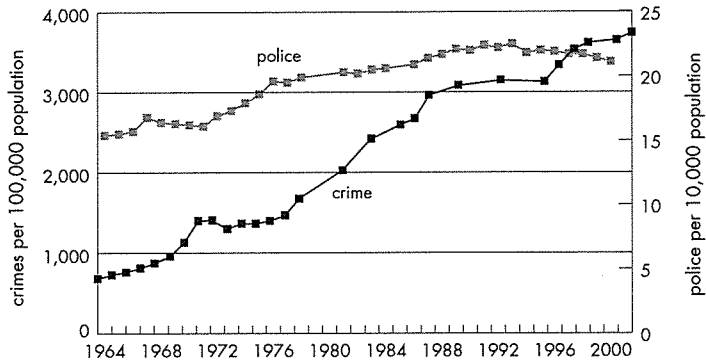
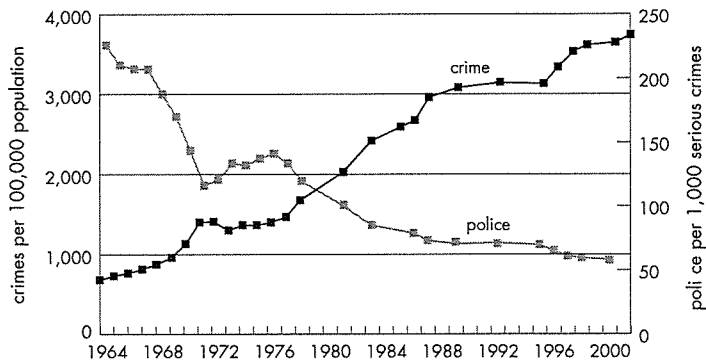


Figure 2. Police and Reported Serious Crime per crime and per head of population



Police Source: ABS, *Year Book Australia*, various years.

Crime Sources: AIC *Sourcebook*, NSW Recorded Crime, Victoria Police *Crime Statistics*, Crime and Justice in SA, Queensland Police *Statistical Review*, ABS *Year Book Queensland*, Western Australia Police Service Statistics, ABS *Year Book WA*, Tasmania Police *Annual Reports*, AFP *Annual Reports*, NT Police *Annual Reports*. (See Statistical sources, p.31)

between the increases (see Figure 1). As crime has continued to rise, police numbers have plateaued since the 1980s.

It is when police numbers are expressed as a ratio to serious crime (referred to as the strength of the police force henceforth) instead of per population that the problem with police numbers becomes clear (see Figure 2). As crime per head of population has been on the rise since the 1960s we have failed to provide equivalent police numbers. In 1964 there were some 225 police officers per 1,000 serious crimes. In 2000 this number fell to just under 60. This is not even taking into account the minor offences that police deal with on a daily basis (a function that as discussed earlier is equally vital in combating crime).

Measuring police effectiveness

The numbers of crimes that are solved by police (referred to as cleared crimes) are often used as a means of examining police effectiveness. This is a crude measure of police work, as there are also strong arguments to be made for the effect police have on public perceptions of crime, fear of crime, feeling of public safety, and disorder and incivility, all of which cannot be captured in clear-up rates. However, when looking at the direct effect that police can have on deterring criminals, clear-up rates are an appropriate measure as they assess the likelihood that an offender will be apprehended by police.

As the strength of the police force was declining and crime rates were escalating in the 1960s and 1970s, clear-up rates suffered. While the raw number of crimes cleared has steadily increased since 1964, the percent of crimes cleared⁴⁷ fell to a low of around 15% in the mid-1980s and has only recently begun to improve.

The pattern of clear-up rates closely followed the drop in the strength of the police force until the late 1980s. This seems to indicate that as police strength declined there was a direct consequence on the effectiveness and ability of police to

Figure 3. Serious Crimes Reported and Cleared

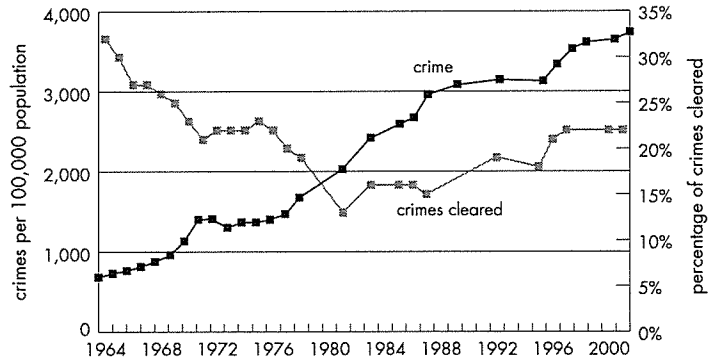
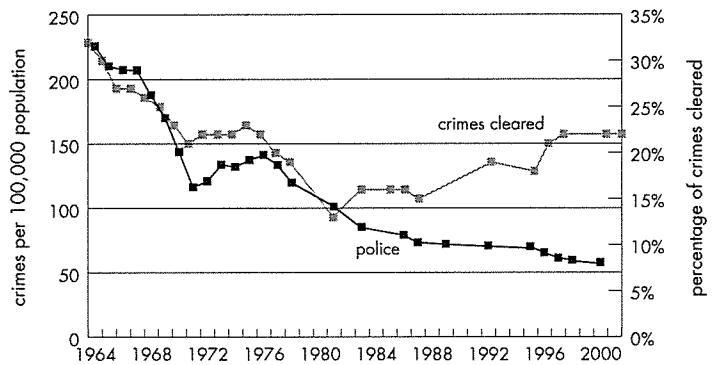


Figure 4. Police and Serious Crimes Cleared



Police Source: ABS, *Year Book Australia*, various years.

Crime Sources: AIC *Sourcebook*, NSW Recorded Crime, Victoria Police *Crime Statistics*, Crime and Justice in SA, Queensland Police *Statistical Review*, ABS *Year Book Queensland*, Western Australia Police Service Statistics, ABS *Year Book WA*, Tasmania Police *Annual Reports*, AFP *Annual Reports*, NT Police *Annual Reports*. (See Statistical sources, p.31)

catch criminals. More recently however, despite no alteration in police strength, clear-up rates have improved (a reflection perhaps of the initiatives described earlier).

What crimes are being cleared?

The drop from 32% to 22% does not look that significant at first glance. Clear-up rates have always been low, so is the drop really much cause for concern? When the statistics are broken down further, the story is startling. The clear-up rates for violent crimes against the person (homicide, rape, assault, and robbery) were 74% in 1964 and have fallen to around 62% in 2001. This is a drop of about 16%. Clear-up rates for robbery are the lowest for crimes against the person at 31% in 1964 to 27% in 2001, a drop of 13%.

Property crimes account for the most significant fall in clear-up rates. There has been a 60% drop in property crime clear-up rates since 1964. Break and enter/burglaries cleared have fallen from 31% to 10% and motor vehicle thefts cleared from 23% to 13%.

This means thieves are the ones benefiting from the decline in the strength of the police force. In his recent article 'Law and Order Blues', Don Weatherburn, Director of the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, summarises that '[t]he high rates of property crime in Australia are sometimes dismissed on the grounds that most people are insured and suffer no actual material loss.'⁴⁸ This argument may be a pragmatic one, but it overlooks the effect that property offences can have on the community.

The effect of rising crime

At the heart of liberal democracies is the notion of property rights. To disregard the escalating number of property crimes and failure to apprehend the offenders is an affront to the core values that underpin the rule of law. One of the primary roles of government is to protect its citizens from breaches of the law. Police, as agents of the state, must uphold laws or risk

the rule of law falling into disrepute, especially given that the public consistently rank break and enter as the crime of most concern.⁴⁹

All crime, including property crime, has an impact on social cohesion. As Francis Fukuyama argues, trust is an essential element for the smooth functioning of society. Crime by its very nature breaks the mutual trust on which social cohesion and social capital are founded. Fukuyama points to the abandonment of inner cities for the suburbs in the United States and subsequent economic and racial divides in American cities. Simple acts, such as parents teaching their children to be distrustful of strangers, are evidence of the negative impact of rising crime on society.⁵⁰

A major study on fear of crime in Australia found that perceptions of crime, and consequent fear of becoming a victim of crime, has led to several groups, such as women and the elderly, changing their behaviour in response to perceived crime levels. This included avoiding certain places or not going out alone after dark.⁵¹ Such changes in behaviour tie in closely to the Broken Windows theory of crime, because it leaves the streets to the criminals. There is no room in the theory for concentrating on crimes that may be pragmatically viewed as doing more harm than others, for all crime in the end is harmful to society.

Do we need more police?

In a time of high crime, when our clear-up rates are relatively low and the ratio of police per crime means that they are at nearly a quarter of their capacity compared to what they were in the 1960s, is the answer to fighting crime an increase in the number of police? The answer is yes. We certainly appear to need more police to apprehend the perpetrators of a growing number of crimes.

The size of New York's police force was increased by 10,000 officers (a 25% increase) prior to the implementation of Broken Windows. Furthermore, across the country in the

United States, the Federal Government injected billions of dollars into law enforcement for recruitment of additional officers. 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 simply increase the police numbers to their former strength. This 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.⁵² 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.⁵³

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 the United Kingdom. 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 underaged 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 affect 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'.⁵⁴ 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'.⁵⁵ The CSOs could concentrate on what would be considered by some officers to be the more mundane order-maintenance functions.

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.'⁵⁶ 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 necessarily 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 training⁵⁷ 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 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 with a bit of power who would become too full of their own self-importance, or those who wanted to be police but could 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 other ways to provide extra support to the force. Initiatives currently being deployed in the United Kingdom, such as 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.

Statistical appendix

It is difficult to compile longitudinal reported crime rates for Australia due to a lack of standard classification for offences. Each state has historically had its own classification for offences so what may be included as assault in one state may not be in another. However, in 1964, the first attempts were made to report on national recorded crime statistics for the offences of homicide, serious assault, robbery, rape, breaking and entering, and motor vehicle theft.

These offences have been the basis for the statistics used in this paper, as reported in annual reports of the state and territory police. While there are concerns about the comparability of the statistics between states, the data are still able to show us a general trend in recorded crime over time. Furthermore, recorded crime statistics should always be read with caution given problems arising from changes in police recording practices or in victims' willingness to report offences to the police.

This caveat applies to the exact figures used for this paper, but the overall trends are consistent with previously published accounts of Australia's crime rates.

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Preventative Policing

Nicole Billante

The crime rate in Australia rose rapidly in the 1960s and 1970s and, unlike other western countries, it has risen steadily over the past decade. The number of 'contact crimes', such as robbery and assault is the highest in the industrialised world. Over the past 30 years, the growth rate of serious crime has outstripped the increase in police tenfold.

In this companion paper to *Six Questions About Civility* (2002), Nicole Billante explores ways to combat the problem of rising crime in Australia, looking particularly at the initiatives carried out in New York in the 1990s. Under Mayor Rudolf Giuliani, the policy of cracking down on petty crimes (e.g. graffiti) and incivilities (e.g. littering) contributed to a radical decrease in the crime rate. The concept was an explicit attempt to put into practice what is known as the 'Broken Windows' theory of crime. Its basic insight is that to tackle the big problems like crime it is important to pay attention to the little issues.

In Australia, such preventative policing is now being implemented to combat rising crime through methods such as the targeting of crime 'hotspots' (areas which are more conducive to crime) and targeted arrests (focussing on known suspected individuals) as well as problem-oriented policing (targeting certain crimes such as burglary). Billante concludes by considering how to reconcile this demand for high police visibility with limited current and future resources.

Nicole Billante is a former Research Assistant at The Centre for Independent Studies and author of *Six Questions About Civility* (2002).



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