



DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

# REPORTING CRIME IN THE MELBOURNE CBD

**Street of  
failed dreams**

**Grim walk down  
our mean street**



**PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA**  
**DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE**

Reporting crime in the  
Melbourne Central Business District

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Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee  
Reporting Crime in the Melbourne Central Business District  
DCPC, Parliament of Victoria.

The Committee records its appreciation to Ms Chantel Churchus, Honours student in Criminology, University of Melbourne. Ms Churchus undertook a detailed content analysis of newspaper crime reportage in the Melbourne Central Business District 1995-2000 whilst on a supervised field placement with the Committee. Her contribution to this report is greatly appreciated.

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# **Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee**

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## **Functions of the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee**

The Victorian Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee is constituted under the *Parliamentary Committees Act 1968*, as amended.

*Parliamentary Committees Act 1968*

Section 4 EF.

*To inquire into, consider and report to the Parliament on any proposal, matter or thing concerned with the illicit use of drugs (including the manufacture, supply or distribution of drugs for such use) or the level or causes of crime or violent behaviour, if the Committee is required or permitted so to do by or under this Act.*

## **Terms of Reference**

Received from the Legislative Council

1 March 2000

That pursuant to the *Parliamentary Committees Act 1968*, the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee be required to inquire into, consider and report on the following:

The incidence of crime in Victoria and to report every six months to the Parliament on levels of crime, areas of emerging concern and (where suitable) options for crime reduction or control'.

# Chairman's Foreword

Melbourne is a city of contradiction. While its beauty and atmosphere cannot be understated, an uneasy perception has evolved in recent years that the city is unsafe.

This report, the third in a series of crime trends reports to the parliament, presents a comprehensive overview of the extent of crime in the city and gives details of the responses to this by government and community sectors. It also compares community perceptions regarding criminal activity in the city with the official recorded crime statistics and examines the role the media plays in contributing to public perceptions.

For the purposes of this report, the examination area includes Melbourne's Central Business District, Docklands, Southbank (including Crown Casino) and parts of East and West Melbourne. The examination of media reporting of crime is confined to the print media, and to Victoria's two largest daily newspapers.

The Committee advertised and invited submissions from many diverse public and community agencies. It also examined initiatives from the City of Melbourne, Victoria Police and other organisations to determine their effectiveness.

Unfortunately the Committee concluded that overall crime in the CBD had increased progressively over the last five years. It must be noted, however, that crime in the CBD accounts for a small proportion of crime in the whole state.

Offences of particular note include drug offences, robbery and theft. Due to the demographics of the CBD, these offences are more prevalent than in other parts of the state. A contributing factor to the increase in the level of some offences in the CBD may be that intensive policing activities were conducted during the examination period.

Such policing activities may have led to greater media reporting of crime in the CBD, which strongly influences public perception. However, there was noticeable disparity between the type of offences that were most prevalent in the city and those which gained frequent media coverage. Clearly the media will report on issues that are considered most newsworthy. For example, the offence of Homicide, although a very small proportion of overall officially recorded crime, is considerably more reported on by the media than other offences comprising a much higher percentage of overall crime. Public order offences, such as begging, also form a very small proportion of overall recorded crime, but feature heavily in media reporting.

Conversely, Theft offences are by far the most common offences committed in the CBD but these receive minimal media coverage. While the Committee can appreciate the motives behind the media's reporting, it notes how such reporting compares to official crime statistics and the influence the media has in contributing to community perceptions about levels and types of crime.

Overall, the Committee notes that public perception is a critical factor when determining whether the CBD is considered safe or otherwise. The Committee, however, makes no comments whether such perception is accurate. The Committee simply puts forward the evidence and asks the reader to interpret the findings on the basis of the information contained within the report.

**Cameron Boardman MP**  
**Chairman**

# Executive Summary

The Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee received from the Legislative Council a reference to inquire into crime trends in Victoria. This included consideration of both the incidence and level of crime, as well as the areas of emerging concern. One such concern identified by the Committee has been the level of crime within the Melbourne Central Business District. Of particular concern has been the perception that crime in the Melbourne CBD is increasing at a dramatic and disproportionate rate. These issues form the basis for this Report.

## **Part A – Introduction**

Chapters 1 and 2 discuss the framework within which this Inquiry was undertaken. They outline the history and background of the Inquiry, introducing its key themes and providing an overview of the research process.

Chapter 3 provides a demographic profile of the Melbourne CBD. It gives some emphasis to the consistent growth in all sectors of city activity, an indication of the continued attraction of the CBD as an area of residential, commercial and leisure activity.

Chapter 4 discusses the longstanding tendency for criminal activity to be concentrated within the urban environment. Drawing upon criminological research, it provides an academic explanation for this disproportionate concentration. Reference is made to a number of historical newspaper reports of crime and antisocial activity in the Melbourne CBD. These both illustrate academic explanations and underline the fact that crime has long been a feature of the urban environment that is the Melbourne CBD.

## **Part B – The Official Picture: What Recorded Crime Statistics Say**

The chapters in this section provide a detailed analysis of the nature and extent of crime in the Melbourne CBD from 1995–2000. They do so by drawing directly on Victoria Police crime statistics.

Chapter 5 provides a brief introduction to the use of Victoria Police crime statistics. It notes the use of counting rules and offence rates and addresses specific issues that need to be understood when interpreting Victoria Police crime statistics.

Chapter 6 measures the extent to which crime trends in the Melbourne CBD differ from those for Victoria as a whole. It draws attention to the three key findings:

- ◆ That the number of offences committed in the Melbourne CBD is increasing at a proportionately greater rate than the state as a whole;
- ◆ That crime in the Melbourne CBD represents, on average, less than 5 per cent of crime committed throughout the state; and

- ◆ That the nature of crime trends in the Melbourne CBD differs markedly from the rest of the state. This is a reflection of the demographic and functional characteristics that make the CBD unique.

Chapter 7 provides an analysis of statistical details of crime committed in the Melbourne CBD. Particular attention is paid to changes in the commission of certain offences and to the geographic location of criminal activity in the CBD. A steady growth of criminal activity is noted. Much of this growth is shown to be the consequence of a rise in drug-related crime and in crimes against property. Interestingly, while drug-related crime has increased significantly, it remains a very minor proportion of criminal activity within the CBD. However, contrary to popular perceptions, crimes against property comprise the vast majority of criminal offences committed in the Melbourne CBD.

A disproportionate amount of criminal activity is located in areas such as Bourke and Flinders Streets. The reasons for this apparent concentration are discussed, with emphasis given to the nature and extent of activity in these areas.

## **Part C – Responses to Crime in the Melbourne Central Business District**

Part C provides an analysis of responses and reactions to criminal activity in the Melbourne CBD. It explores crime prevention techniques as well as the perceptions of crime held by the general public.

Chapter 8 notes the responses of authorities and stakeholders concerned to prevent or contain criminal activity in the Melbourne CBD. Particular attention is given to the promising collaborative approach favoured by organisations such as the Melbourne City Council.

Chapter 9 draws upon a significant amount of survey material to outline public perceptions of crime and safety in the Melbourne CBD. This allows comparison with recorded crime statistics – a comparison that suggests disparity between the level and nature of crime experienced and perceptions of the level and nature of crime occurring in the Melbourne CBD. The chapter concludes that many individuals are basing their perceptions on sources of information outside their personal experience.

Chapter 10 is drawn almost exclusively from the testimony of expert witnesses who appeared at public hearings held by the Committee. This testimony addresses the significant influence of media reporting on the wider community.

## **Part D – Crime Reporting**

Part D analyses media reporting of crime in greater depth.

Chapter 11 provides an introduction to media reporting of crime. It does so in recognition of the media's role as one of the key players through which the community learns about crime in the community.



Chapter 12 outlines the results of a comprehensive analysis of print media reports of crime in the Melbourne CBD. Areas of analysis include (but are not restricted to):

- ◆ The types of crime that are reported;
- ◆ When crimes are reported;
- ◆ Offences and themes in crime news reports; and
- ◆ Where crimes are being committed.

Chapter 13 compares the levels of crime reporting with the level of crime committed in the Melbourne CBD. Some disparity is observed as a consequence of this comparison, although a number of explanatory reasons are suggested. This section of the Report is restricted to an account of the 'mechanics' of crime reporting. While it analyses how much reporting newspapers do, it does not analyse 'how' crime is reported, or the impact these reports may have on community perceptions.

## **Part E – Future Directions**

This section summarises the main themes of this Inquiry and suggests strategies, where appropriate, for future reform.

Chapter 14 commences with a brief appraisal of crime in the Melbourne CBD, contrasting media reports of crime and official crime statistics. It outlines methods by which the recording and dissemination of crime statistics might be improved and concludes with a summary of approaches and strategies aimed at promoting community well-being and safety in the Melbourne CBD.

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# PART A: Introduction

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## 1. Scope of the Inquiry – History and Background

On 1 March 2000 the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee received from the Legislative Council a reference to inquire into:

The incidence of crime in Victoria and to report every six months to the Parliament on levels of crime, areas of emerging concern and (where suitable) options for crime reduction or control.

This Report is the third in a series of crime trend reports presented to the Parliament of Victoria. It provides an investigation into the nature and extent of crime in the Melbourne CBD (including parts of West Melbourne, Docklands and Southbank) from 1995 to 2000, identifies emerging crime trends and examines media reporting of the level of crime and public disorder in the Melbourne CBD.

### ***Crime out of Control?: The relationship between crime recording and crime reporting***

For the past decade there has been serious concerns with perceived escalating levels of crime and disorder in the Melbourne CBD. Locations such as King, Russell, Swanston, Bourke, Spencer and Flinders Streets have been identified as areas of particular concern requiring urgent action by the appropriate authorities. As a result, the City of Melbourne, Victoria Police and other agencies have developed a range of policies, initiatives and programs to address these concerns and make the City of Melbourne a safer place.

Despite these initiatives, there has been ongoing reporting in the media of increasing levels of crime and public disorder, including as recently as November 2000, in the Melbourne CBD.<sup>1</sup> Various newspaper articles focussed on the number of homeless and drug-affected persons in Swanston St and its surrounds, for example: 'SHAME OF OUR CITY', 'Grim walk down our mean street'.<sup>2</sup> Others reported cases of violence, such as an incident in which two

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1 Indeed some commentators have argued that the series of articles on homelessness, begging and other 'street crime' amounted to a concerted campaign by the *Herald Sun* to demonise the homeless: 'respond[ing] to fears and uncertainty arising from the increased visibility of poverty, homelessness and drug use in the city' (see Don, Jedjud & Smith 2001, p. 14.).

2 See for example, Rachael Hodder, 'SHAME OF OUR CITY', *Herald Sun*, 21 November 2000, p. 1; Rachael Hodder, 'Grim walk down our mean street', *Herald Sun*, 21 November 2000, p. 5; John Hamilton, 'Welcome to a dirty old town', *Herald Sun*, 22 November 2000, p. 5.



men armed with a knife and a machete attacked another man in front of a Bourke St café. It was emphasised, with concern, that this occurred during a busy lunchtime.<sup>3</sup> A further report also suggested that a three-month operation to clean up this area of the city by Victoria Police had little if any effect ('Melbourne's disgrace').<sup>4</sup>

A leading article referring to the Swanston Street area as a haven for drug addicts, beggars and stand-over merchants, the long-term homeless and petty thieves<sup>5</sup> stated that traders wanted the City of Melbourne to take serious action, while a Melbourne City Councillor called for a greater police presence in the area. The street was described as 'a ghetto of fast-food chains and discount shops where Melburnians are afraid to walk at night and tourists stay away'.<sup>6</sup>

In other articles the *Herald Sun* juxtaposed stories of the experience of New York City's 'turn around,' as a result of zero tolerance policing policy, implying that the situation in Melbourne is analogous.<sup>7</sup> The then Lord Mayor, Peter Costigan, responded to these articles by stating that despite 'some unpleasant and heartbreaking sights'<sup>8</sup> in Melbourne, there were not as many as there were 50, 20 or even two years ago. He disputed the analogy with New York by pointing out that 'the tough approach in New York followed crime reaching such an horrendous level that Melbourne is like a monastery by comparison'.<sup>9</sup> Mr. Costigan explained that reported crime was down more than 12 per cent in the past year, with a 33 per cent drop in robberies, a 24 per cent drop in burglaries and a 16 per cent reduction in shoplifting. He also acknowledged that there had been an increase in the number of homeless people coming into the city. He believed this was caused by 'a decline in cheap housing, partly caused by social policies of governments and partly because the city, state and the business community have not done enough to cater for the homeless'.<sup>10</sup>

It was these conflicting views as typified by the Melbourne City Council and the *Herald Sun* that prompted the Committee to direct its investigation along two main paths. The first was to ascertain the nature and prevalence of crime in the Melbourne CBD and surrounding area and its threat to people's personal safety. The second was to examine how newspapers report crime in the Melbourne CBD.

In undertaking this Inquiry the Committee was cognisant of the tension apparent between the need for freedom of the press, accurate reporting and the use of artistic licence. It also acknowledges that many journalists cover crime (news) responsibly and with integrity.

While some research has been conducted by organisations including the Melbourne City Council and the Community Council Against Violence into specific problem areas such as nightclub-related violence in King Street, there hasn't been any independent formal review

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3 Paul Anderson, 'Bloody knife attack stuns lunch crowd', *Herald Sun*, 21 November 2000, p. 4.

4 'Melbourne's disgrace', *Herald Sun*, 22 November 2000, editorial p. 18.

5 Rachael Hodder, 'SHAME OF OUR CITY', *Herald Sun*, 21 November 2000, p. 1.

6 *ibid.*, p. 2.

7 John Hamilton, 'Welcome to a dirty old town', *Herald Sun*, 22 November 2000, p. 5.

Andrew Bolt, 'Like New York, we must reclaim the streets from beggars, drunks and pushers', *Herald Sun*, 23 November 2000, p. 8.

Michelle Rose & Christine Jackman, 'The New York lesson', *Herald Sun*, 24 November 2000, p. 19.

8 Peter Costigan, 'A stroll on the mild side', *Herald Sun*, 24 November 2000, p. 21.

9 *ibid.*

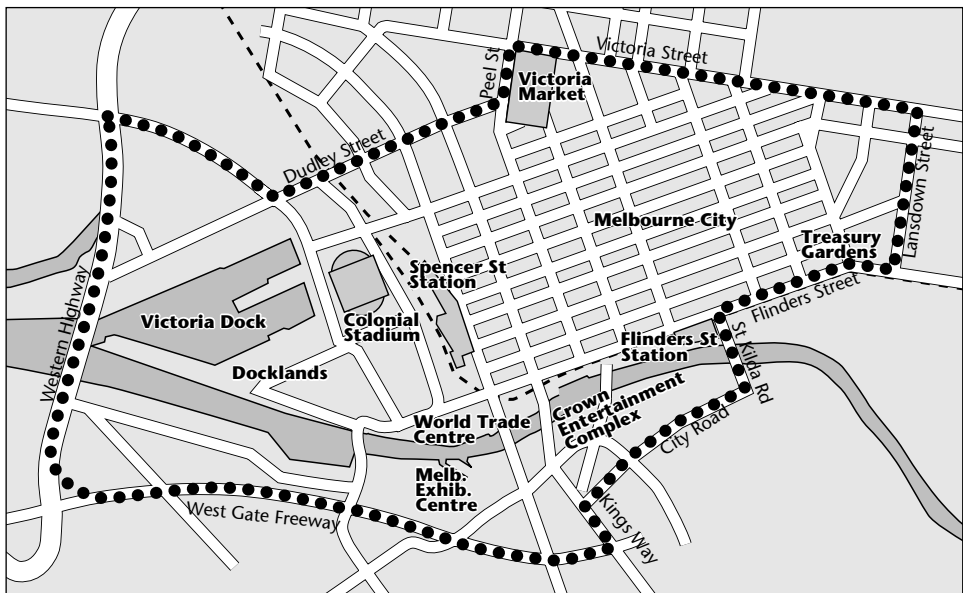
10 *ibid.*

of the nature and extent of crime in the Melbourne CBD undertaken. Nor has there been any analysis of official crime data over time to identify any emerging trends. It is therefore timely that the Committee conducts an independent inquiry into these matters to provide the Parliament with accurate, impartial advice in relation to the nature and extent of crime and disorder in the Melbourne CBD, Docklands, Southbank and selected areas of East and West Melbourne

### ***Area to be studied***

Traditionally the area considered to be the Melbourne Central Business District has fallen within what is referred to as the Hoddle Grid, which includes the area bounded by Spring, Spencer, Victoria and Flinders Streets. However, in recent years the area considered to be the Melbourne CBD has extended across the Yarra River to include Southbank, as well as into parts of East and West Melbourne. The Committee has decided that in undertaking this Inquiry, Southbank and parts of East and West Melbourne will be included. Figure 1.1 details the exact area to be investigated. This area for the Report will be referred to hereinafter as the Melbourne Central Business District (Melbourne CBD).

**Figure 1.1: Area to be investigated**



## 2. The Inquiry Process

The Committee has embarked upon an extensive research process in order to

- ◆ Examine the nature and extent of crime in the Melbourne CBD, Docklands, Southbank and selected areas of East and West Melbourne from 1 January 1995 to 31 December 2000.
- ◆ Identify any emerging crime trends in the Melbourne CBD, Docklands, Southbank and selected areas of East and West Melbourne.
- ◆ Provide insight into the print media's portrayal of crime-related issues during this period.
- ◆ Determine the potential effect that media portrayals of crime levels in the city may have on the community's perceptions of levels of local crime and safety.
- ◆ Examine the various strategies that government and non-government organisations have implemented to counter and prevent crime and promote safety in the area.

In conducting the Inquiry, the Committee has undertaken an extensive review of the literature on crime and safety in the Melbourne CBD and comparable cities, crime perception studies and media reportage of crime. The Committee has sought to canvass the issues and receive input from as many individuals, agencies and organisations with a stake or interest in the issue as possible. As part of this process the Committee has called for and received submissions from the community, sought expert opinion, spoken to key stakeholders and held public hearings. A detailed analysis of official crime statistics recorded by Victoria police has been undertaken along with an examination of *The Age* and *Herald Sun's* reportage of crime in the Melbourne CBD.

### ***Written submissions***

Calls for written submissions were published on 14 April 2001 in the *Herald Sun*, 21 April and 1 May 2001 in *The Age*, and 17 April in the *Melbourne Leader*. Print media and radio interest also alerted the public to the Inquiry. Letters inviting submissions to the Inquiry were sent to key agencies in Victoria. In all, the Committee received 10 submissions.<sup>11</sup>

### ***Public Hearings***

The Committee conducted Public Hearings on 28 May 2001 and heard evidence from 12 witnesses.<sup>12</sup> These Hearings provided the opportunity for key stakeholders and interested individuals to present their views on crime trends and safety issues in the Melbourne CBD and comment upon the impact of newspaper reporting of crime, crime rates and personal safety issues within the Melbourne CBD.

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<sup>11</sup> For a list of submissions received by the Committee see Appendix 1.

<sup>12</sup> For a list of witnesses appearing at Public Hearings see Appendix 2.

### ***Additional witnesses***

In order to gain expert opinion and complement the material gained from other sources, the Committee invited expert witnesses to address it regarding a range of pertinent matters and issues.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Local visits and inspections***

The Committee made a number of site visits/inspections and held meetings with key organisations during both this Inquiry and the Committee's Inquiry into Public Drunkenness.<sup>14</sup> These visits provided opportunities for the Committee to observe crime prevention strategies in the Melbourne CBD and experience at first-hand problems arising for crime control and prevention strategies. Members also individually observed the 'trouble zones' to ascertain for themselves the degree to which these areas presented an actual threat to the community's safety or created the perception that this could be the case.

### ***Analysis of Victoria Police official crime statistics***

An analysis of official crime statistics recorded by Victoria Police for the Melbourne CBD from 1995–2000 was undertaken. The methodology used for this aspect of the research is detailed in Appendix 4. This study utilised unit record data from the Victoria Police Law Enforcement Assistance Program (LEAP) database. While it is acknowledged that official crime statistics have their limitations,<sup>15</sup> they are the best available time series measure available.

### ***A review of newspaper reportage of crime in the Melbourne CBD***

A detailed content analysis of newspaper crime reportage in the Melbourne CBD, Melbourne West, Southbank and the Docklands was conducted.<sup>16</sup> This analysis reviewed all copies of *The Age* and *Herald Sun* newspapers between 1 January 1995 and 31 December 2000.<sup>17</sup> The Committee also conducted a comparative analysis between the above newspaper crime coverage and the official Victoria Police crime statistics for the same period.

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13 Dr John Fitzgerald, Senior Lecturer, Criminology Department, The University of Melbourne and Christine Nixon, Chief Commissioner, Victoria Police who spoke to the Committee on a range of pertinent issues.

14 These visits, while undertaken for the Public Drunkenness Inquiry, were directly relevant to the current inquiry.

15 A detailed examination of the problems with Official Statistics is provided in the Committee's first report to the Parliament in *Benchmarking Crime Trend Data 1995/1996 to 1999/2000*.

16 Due to the large number of newspaper articles analysed and cited in this Report, references to them are presented as footnotes rather than references in the text. The exception to this is Chapter 4 'Crime in the City', in which newspaper articles from earlier last century and more recently are juxtaposed to highlight the ongoing nature of the concerns expressed by the media. Publication details, particularly the year of publication, are therefore a necessary component of this discussion.

17 The detailed methodology for this aspect of the research is provided in Appendix 3.

# 3. City of Melbourne CBD – A Demographic Profile

Melbourne is a wonderfully diverse '24-hour-city' with a thriving community made up of residents, workers, students and visitors of all ages and incomes. It is a vibrant, exciting and attractive city that offers visitors and residents an environment in which to be entertained and seek leisure. Restaurants, bars and nightclubs, theatres, events and festivals are all components of Melbourne's cultural activity.

(Wellington Lee, Melbourne City Councillor 2000, p. 10)

## **The City of Melbourne**

The City of Melbourne is Victoria's premier municipality and the state's focus for business, international trade, arts, and entertainment and sporting activities. As the seat of State Government, the headquarters of numerous Victorian, national and international companies, and the location of many Commonwealth agencies, it is the central decision-making and coordination point for metropolitan Melbourne and Victoria. Within just 36 square kilometres, the greater City of Melbourne is home to over 50,000 people, a population that grows, on average, to approximately 567,000 day-users and 124,000 night-users (City of Melbourne 2000a; City of Melbourne 2001a)

### ***The Melbourne CBD***

The Melbourne Central Business District (Melbourne CBD) covers an area of just 2.52 square kilometres within the City of Melbourne. Despite its relatively contained size, the Melbourne CBD is the heartland of Melbourne's economic, social and cultural activity. And, despite an all too common focus on negative aspects of inner-urban life, there is much to suggest that the Melbourne CBD is a thriving metropolitan environment. Indeed, the consistent growth experienced in each of the city's business, retail, entertainment and residential sectors speaks far more of the Melbourne CBD's character than the selective focus of its critics.

### ***Retailing***

The Melbourne CBD is the state's largest retailing centre. In 1997, the Melbourne CBD retail sector employed 15,686 people, occupying 539,628 square metres of floor-space and fuelling the state economy through an estimated annual turnover of \$2 billion (City of Melbourne 1999a). This contribution is continually expanding. The retail sector experienced five per cent growth in both floor-space and employment between 1997 and 2000 (City of Melbourne n.d.a).

### **Business**

The Property and Business Services industry is the largest employer within the Melbourne CBD, accounting for some 24.7 per cent of employees in the CBD and Southbank areas, and having expanded by some 51 per cent in the three years to 2000 (City of Melbourne n.d.b). The second largest employer is the Finance and Insurance industry with a 17.9 per cent employment share, representing in excess of 36,000 jobs (City of Melbourne n.d.a).

The largest employer in Southbank is the Culture and Recreation industry reflecting the presence of organisations such as the Casino, the Arts Centre and National Gallery. In 1997, this industry employed 9,855 people, providing 40.7 per cent of all employment in Southbank (City of Melbourne n.d.a).

### **Residents**

Perhaps the area of most growth has been the residential sector. Table 3.1 shows a steady growth, most marked in the year to 30 June 2000.

**Table 3.1: Residential population in the Melbourne CBD 1997–2000**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Residential Population</b>
31 December 1997	4,100 persons
30 June 1998	4,800 persons
30 June 1999	5,439 persons
30 June 2000	7,615 persons

Source: City of Melbourne March 1999–December 2000, *Capital City Index*, nos. 9, 10, 11 & 12

Accommodation within the Melbourne CBD has become a highly sought after commodity, an inevitable consequence of the convenience and variety the city lifestyle has to offer. The constant increase in residential numbers has directly enhanced the city's image. It has brought to life areas that were once deserted, particularly at night, and promoted a sense of security through the increased numbers and, consequently, presence of people on the city streets.

A considerable proportion of the city's population is composed of a diverse and dynamic student population. According to Census estimates, approximately 25 per cent of the City of Melbourne's population is made up of students (City of Melbourne 2000b). A large number of these students are international students, 16,906 of whom were enrolled in educational institutions within the City of Melbourne in 1998 (City of Melbourne 2000b). In fact, more than a quarter of the city's population is made up of people aged 13–24 years and just under half were born overseas (City of Melbourne n.d.c).

The increasing attraction of the Melbourne CBD as a home address has necessitated a corresponding increase in the construction of residential accommodation and the conversion of existing commercial properties to residential accommodation. In a bid to stimulate such construction the City of Melbourne initiated the Postcode 3000 Project, a wide-ranging set of initiatives designed to facilitate and support residential development in the Melbourne CBD. Financial incentives have been provided for such residential developments, including fee relief, performance based refunds on permit fees for planning subdivision, building approvals and site services for residential developments (City of

Melbourne n.d.b). These measures have encouraged the addition of 3,700 residential apartments in the three years to 2000 (City of Melbourne n.d.a).

### ***Tourists, students and shoppers***

As Melbourne's economic, social and cultural centre, the population of the Melbourne CBD swells considerably each day. On an average day there are an estimated 360,000 visitors to the Melbourne CBD (City of Melbourne 2000b). In 1999, the primary reported reasons for visiting the Melbourne CBD were work (54%), shopping (11%), dining (11%) and recreation (6%) (City of Melbourne 2001a).

In addition, the City of Melbourne states that an estimated 14,000 international tourists visit the City of Melbourne every day, along with 14,000 tourists from regional Victoria and a further 11,000 from interstate (City of Melbourne 2001a). The greater majority of these could be expected to include the Melbourne CBD in their itinerary. In 1995 Melbourne was acclaimed as the world's most livable city after topping a survey of the 100 largest cities in the world. The survey, conducted by the Washington based Population Crisis Centre, rated cities based on ten crucial criteria: crime and safety, food costs, living space, housing, communications, education, public health, peace and quiet, traffic congestion and clean air (McGregor & Jiminez 1995).

### ***Young people***

Young people have a significant presence within the Melbourne CBD, being drawn to entertainment venues and the general vibrancy of the urban environment. Of the nearly 500,000 young people who visit the city each week, 22 per cent do so to shop, 20 per cent to eat and drink and 8 per cent 'just to hang out' (City of Melbourne n.d.c). Prior to its relocation to Alexandra gardens in 2001, the city skate park in the centre of the Melbourne CBD attracted more than 160,000 young people each year (City of Melbourne n.d.c). The Melbourne City Council funds a variety of projects and programmes for young people, investing approximately \$2 million each year (City of Melbourne n.d.c).

### ***Entertainment***

The industry mix of the retail/entertainment sector of the Melbourne CBD has undergone considerable change in recent times. Much of this change has revolved around the enhancement of entertainment facilities. Banks, utilities and public authorities have been replaced by hotels, cafes, restaurants and the performing arts as significant occupiers of city space (City of Melbourne 2001). The capacity of cafes and restaurants, for example, has increased by 29 per cent between 1997 and 2000 (from 54,819 seats to 70,867). Similarly, there was a 79 per cent increase in the capacity of bars and nightclubs, (from 11,250 in 1997 to 20,125 in 2000) (City of Melbourne n.d.a). In the 1999 'Bar of the Year' awards, five of Melbourne's top ten bars were located in the Melbourne CBD (City of Melbourne 2000b).

The most popular entertainment attraction within the city is the Crown Casino complex. Encompassing over 40 restaurants, cafes and bars and an extensive, and exclusive, retail shopping strip, the entertainment options include nightclubs, cinemas, gaming and live music. The complex is located in the Southbank precinct along the south bank of the Yarra River. The Southbank precinct is itself a popular attraction drawing many visitors to its

variety of restaurants and shops. The commercial success of the area is exemplified by its 100 per cent tenant occupancy (City of Melbourne 1999b).

There are approximately 96 events, festivals and parades in the city streets annually. Local festivals such as Moomba have become established family events that attract thousands to their various activities. International festivals such as the Melbourne Festival (Australia's premier annual arts festival), the Melbourne International Film Festival and the Melbourne International Comedy Festival are further examples of the vibrant cultural events that define the Melbourne social calendar.

## **Conclusion**

The Melbourne Central Business District reflects a rich variety of commercial, cultural and residential influences. Despite the urban environment continuing its sprawl ever outward, the continued, indeed increasing, attraction of these influences is exemplified by the continued expansion of all sectors operating within the Melbourne CBD. There is little to suggest this growth will falter. On the contrary, the swelling of the Melbourne CBD's population is a daily testament to the existence of facilities, opportunities and events that define a much valued and appreciated urban environment.



## 4. Crime in the City

### **Ruffianism: Again in the city**<sup>18</sup>

The necessity for stern measures to combat the present outbreak of violent lawlessness should now be fully appreciated by a public which has to run the risks of being waylaid in the open street, and is not even secure from unprovoked assault within doors. Since we first called attention to the epidemic of brutal crime and its encouragement by lenient sentences...scarcely a day has passed without the occurrence of an outrage committed in circumstances which demonstrate the supreme contempt of the offenders for the law.

(Unknown author, *The Age*, 31 January 1899, p. 1.)

### **Our Crime Plague**

We suffer now from an epidemic of violence and theft that none of us could have imagined just a generation ago... For years we've known in our bones something is wrong – that we've never been so unsafe... We've let our police forces run down. We've relaxed our laws. And we now jail fewer people for every 100 crimes. Our foolishness has been matched only by our smugness and our refusal to look at the evidence of our failure.

(Andrew Bolt, *Herald Sun*, 24 September 2001, p. 19.)

There are many things that attract individuals to the urban environment of the central city. The pace of life, the range of activity offered and the mix of old-world charm and contemporary sophistication all differentiate the city from the sterility of the suburban shopping complex or the 'sameness' of the residential suburb. However, these same characteristics may also raise safety concerns, presenting challenges to those who seek to address issues of crime and safety at a strategic level. As the two introductory quotes demonstrate, crime in the Melbourne CBD is a longstanding and recurring phenomenon. However, in recent times crime and safety have been increasingly identified by a growing section of the community as issues that require a comprehensive and determined response.

Criminologists have discussed the urban tendency towards crime for decades, offering a number of explanations (Flango & Serbenou 1976; Schichor, Decker & O'Brien 1979; Larson 1984). Throughout history, social observers such as Thomas Jefferson and Jean-Jacques Rousseau have argued that a connection exists between cities and 'immoral behaviour' (in Glaeser & Sacerdote 1999). Despite such speculation, there is little evidence to suggest that the expansion of the urban environment has led to an increase in the incidence or intensity of criminal activity.

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<sup>18</sup> Title given in *The Age Index 1894–99*. Title does not appear on actual newspaper page.

Criminological research has found Australia to be a less violent society at the end of the twentieth century than at the end of the nineteenth century (Indermaur 2000; Graycar 2001). This finding contradicts increases in the level of police recorded crime, particularly for offences such as assault. This may, however, have more to do with an increasing sensitivity to violence rather than the true level of crime (Indermaur 2000). Crimes of assault involving child abuse or domestic violence, for example, were more likely to be regarded as private matters throughout much of the last century, yet were firmly within the criminal justice sphere by the end of the twentieth century (Graycar 2001). And, as Indermaur (2000) notes, when we begin from a figure which under-estimates the true extent of assault, any observed increase is likely to be the product of an increased willingness to report these crimes, and of the capacity of the police to record them. Despite police figures recording a five-fold increase in rates of serious assault between 1973–74 and 1988–89, victimisation surveys<sup>19</sup> found no increase from 1975 to 1993 (Indermaur 2000). If, however, homicide is considered – an unequivocally violent crime, subject to official record keeping for a long time – little change is observed. In 1915, in Australia, the homicide rate was 1.8 per 100,000 population. In 1998, it was 1.6 per 100,000 (Graycar 2001).<sup>20</sup>

Although the growth of the city has not necessarily been matched by a similar growth in violent crime, the fact remains that a disproportionate amount of criminal activity occurs within the urban environment. Most criminal acts require, at a minimum, the convergence of victims and offenders in time and space. This means that crime will almost always occur in a social and physical context (Miethe & McDowall 1993). Consequently, urban centres provide the context in which certain types of criminal activity are likely to occur. Theories of ‘criminal opportunity’ suggest that a number of factors make the urban environment an area of higher crime concentration. Routine activities of daily life, for example, are said to provide the opportunity for crime by increasing the supply of attractive crime targets, decreasing the level of protection, and increasing the exposure and proximity of potential victims to motivated offenders (Miethe & McDowall 1993; Kennedy & Forde 1990; Miethe & Meier 1990). Glaeser and Sacerdote (1999) note that the city provides a much larger stream of potential victims than a more sparsely used area, allowing street criminals to essentially sit and wait for prospective victims to come into sight. That this has long been the case is illustrated by the following quotes from newspaper reports of the early 1900s.

### **Bag snatching in the city**

Miss Ethel Britton and a friend were walking up Collins street at a quarter-past 8. When at the corner of Albert place, a little lane that runs down towards Little Collins street, they noticed four young men standing in the shadow. As they passed one of these men snatched Miss Britton’s handbag and fur boa, and the four ran down the lane. Miss Britton and her friend pursued them, but they escaped. The handbag was torn from her arm with such violence that the straps were wrenched off (Unknown author, *The Argus*, 5 May 1910, p. 8).

19 Victimisation surveys are general surveys in which participants are asked if they have been the victim of particular crimes.

20 While there appears to have been remarkable stability in the twentieth century, homicide rates were much higher during the first one hundred years of settlement and only fell to ‘current’ levels after 1880.

### **Visitor Loses Race Winnings**

A sum of £65 which he had won at the Moonee Valley races on Saturday afternoon was stolen from George A. Garratt of Faithful street, Wangaratta, by two men. After the races, Garratt had dinner in the city, and went to a theatre. He booked a room at a city coffee palace, and then went to Spencer street railway station for his baggage. Returning along Bourke street about 12.15 am, Garratt was approached by two men who had alighted from a motor-car which stopped at the kerb several yards ahead. Garratt was suddenly seized without any warning and was robbed of his money by one of the men. His two assailants then jumped into the motor-car, which drove away at a fast speed (The Argus, 28 May 1934, p. 10).

The presence of potential victims, such as those of the above articles, could be considered to render concentrated urban areas susceptible to higher rates of theft. This is further exacerbated by the considerable number of alternative crime 'targets' in the form of vehicles and commercial and retail establishments:

### **Window smashed: Bangles stolen**

Wrapping a piece of blue-metal in a sheet of paper, a thief hurled it through the window of a jewellery shop...at the corner of Little Collins street and Howey place, at 9 am yesterday. He snatched a tray of gold bangles from the window and escaped (The Argus, 28 May 1934, p. 10).

### **Cleaner's premises broken into**

A thief forced open the door of the premises of Mr W.H. Houghton, dry cleaner, Flinders street, city, early on Sunday morning and stole all the suits and dresses which had been left there to be cleaned. Only a few hats and collars remained (The Argus, 28 May 1934, p. 10).

Glaeser and Sacerdote (1999) go so far as to suggest that density 'creates' crime by creating proximity between wealthy potential victims and potential criminal. Indeed, Borooah and Carcach (1997) note that the risk of becoming a victim of crime (for both personal and property type offences) is considerably less for residents of rural areas than for their urban counterparts.

Likewise, contextual factors, such as the general movement of people within inner-urban areas, increase the susceptibility of these areas to criminal activity. This 'mobility' is related to the number of places available for public activity. For example, if an area is characterised by shopping districts, restaurants, parks and business activity, much as inner-urban areas are, then there will inevitably be a great deal of activity occurring. Not only does such activity attract 'motivated offenders' drawn by the 'criminal opportunities' afforded, but it also limits the potential for social cohesion and informal control that accompanies this cohesion (Miethe & McDowall 1993). In residential areas, individuals are able to form a greater attachment to both an area and those within it. Individuals are more likely to know their neighbours and there is less likely to be the constant flux of 'strangers' that prevent such bonds being formed. Bursik and Grasmick (1993, p. 16) refer to such dynamics as the primary level of social control, 'achieved through the allocation or withdrawal of

sentiment, social support and mutual esteem'. In the absence of such controls there is less constraint over antisocial behaviour such as that described in the following 1943 newspaper report.

### **Fierce brawl in city halts traffic: Mounted police called out**

All traffic was stopped: soldiers, sailors, airmen and civilians fought fiercely; and 60 civil and service police, including mounted troopers and crews of 7 patrol cars intervened in one of Melbourne's worst brawls, which occurred in Flinders st, between Elizabeth and Swanston sts, soon after 6 pm on Saturday... A crowd of more 3,500 greatly hampered police. The brawl began from a series of minor fights... As police moved the crowd towards the centre entrance of Flinders st station, the fighters merged and the situation became hopeless for the Provost corps and civil police on duty. Reinforcements were sent for and when they arrived the crowd was almost uncontrollable. Police showed great tact by urging the crowd to keep moving but some police had to use batons for self-protection. In trying to arrest a civilian, Const Farmer had his uniform slashed with a knife. Helmets were knocked off several other policemen, and trampled on by the crowd. When some servicemen and civilians were arrested and placed in a prison van which had brought police reinforcements, the crowd threatened to overturn the vehicle. The crowd was dispersed by police cars driving through the crowd, and mounted troopers, used for the first time for 10 years to quell a street disturbance, kept the people on the move (Unknown author, *The Argus* 15 February 1943, p. 3).

Certainly, researchers such as Lupton (1999) have found agreement among survey respondents that cities had become more dangerous as a consequence of increasing alienation and loss of community spirit. In addition, the extent of concentrated activity affords a certain degree of protection insofar as it makes the detection of certain crimes difficult for law enforcement authorities to detect. A high-volume, yet visibly discrete, street drug trade is a prime example of a criminal activity being somewhat camouflaged beneath the veneer of urban street life. Indeed, Glaeser and Sacerdote (1999) argue that a lower probability of arrest and a lower probability of recognition are features of the urban life.

The concentration of entertainment venues has been suggested as a further factor that impacts upon the level of antisocial behaviour and related crime within the urban environment. A study conducted by Roncek and Maier (1991) reported that the number of entertainment venues on residential city blocks had a positive and statistically significant effect on the amount of crime and incivility in an area. This is partially related to the level of activity that occurs in such areas and the anonymity that this affords potential perpetrators of criminal activity. However, the tendency towards antisocial behaviour in and around entertainment venues is doubtless compounded when alcohol is involved.

The relationship between alcohol, social disorder and criminal activity has been well documented in the report of the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee's Inquiry into Public Drunkenness 2001 (see also Pernanen 1998; Chong 1998; DiLulio 1996). Graycar (2001), for example, noted that alcohol-related crime was the predominant cause of criminal justice involvement in Australia in 1900 and remains a major component of

criminal activity in Australia today. In respect of alcohol-related social disorder, the main offenders have been found to be young males (Makkai 1998; Williams 2000).

### **Stabbing cases: Melee in Lonsdale street**

James Stewart ... John Johnson ... and Robert Grant... all labourers, were stabbed on Saturday night, during a fight in Lonsdale street and taken to the Melbourne Hospital for treatment. Charles Clunes, who was with the three men, stated to Detective Murray that the party had been drinking in the Niagara Hotel, from which they emerged at half past 11 o'clock, and walked up Lonsdale street on their way home. In a right-of-way between Elizabeth street and Swanston street they saw five men, who were using obscene language. Stewart walked into the right-of-way, and remonstrated with these men who answered him insultingly. An argument ensued, followed by a fight in which the nine men joined (Author unknown, *The Argus*, 25 April 1910, p. 4).

The use of the city as a central meeting point for youth has also been suggested as a cause of incivility and offensive behaviour. Polk and White (1999) talk of the 'so-called mall problem.' In doing so, they note how extended shopping hours and marketing strategies have expanded consumer activity through all hours of day and night. For those young people seeking to occupy their spare time, these centres of retail activity provide a point of congregation for low cost entertainment and recreation, and have done so for a long time, as shown by the following 1956 newspaper report.

### **Bodgies ordered to quit store**

A policeman visited a city store this afternoon, and ordered out 12 bodgies and widgies who have been using the music counter as 'gang headquarters'. Officials of the store said: "They come in nearly every lunch hour, and abuse and jostle customers, block passageways and sometimes throw fire-crackers" (Unknown author, *The Herald* 11 June 1956, p. 3).

The extension of retail hours into the night has been accompanied by the presence of groups of young people late into the night. This has heightened fears about the safety of certain areas and the potential for personal harm. These fears are related to two factors: a general fear of increased antisocial activity at night; and research that highlights young males as the most likely perpetrators of personal assault crimes (Cameron 2000; Booroah & Carcach 1997). The following article illustrates both points.

### **Avoid city square at night, says policeman**

Melbourne's city square had become a late-night battleground for gangs of teenagers, a policeman who patrols the city said yesterday. He warned the public to stay away from the square at night... Recently, about 40 youths fighting in the square spilled into Swanston street while more than 200 looked on. "They cut off the traffic, fighting between the cars, and hit pedestrians"... Many of the youths were unemployed and milled around the square at all times of the day and night, drinking and quarrelling with each other and bystanders... He said that all night pinball parlors contributed to the problem of juveniles loitering in the city in the early hours of the morning. "You have to kick them out of town to get them to go home. I can't see why these places shouldn't have to close at 2 am at the latest" (Barbara Fin, *The Age*, 23 January 1982, p. 3).

Because of both the real and imagined potential for antisocial activity, those areas of the Melbourne CBD where youth congregate in large numbers tend to be viewed suspiciously or with fear. The Russell and Bourke Streets district, dotted with amusement parlours, cinemas and fast food restaurants, is one such area. Again, the association of such areas with antisocial activity is far from a recent development.

### **Fun parlors menace to our children**

Police are worried about fun parlors – not because of the peepshows and other forms of entertainment offered there, but because of the bad company they can lead youngsters into... A policeman said, "These places are a menace to the morals of children. Day after day we find in these haunts children who have 'played the wag'. We can't do much about the 18 and 19-year-olds. From the fun parlors they drift to the housey schools and so on until they lose the urge to make a decent living. They meet hoboes and small-time crooks and make bad friends. The worst feature of the fun parlors is the mixture of ages. Nine and 10-year-olds take their example from the 16-year-olds. The 19-year-olds emulate the 28-year-olds. It is not a good thing and parents should realise it" (Staff reporter, *The Herald*, 15 March 1952, p. 5).

Furthermore, a number of people come to the central city to access services offered by agencies within and on the inner-suburban outskirts of the city's boundaries. Outreach services on the city streets, emergency welfare agencies, both in the Melbourne CBD and in neighbouring Collingwood, Fitzroy and Richmond, and the above-noted anonymity afforded by the human traffic make the central city a locus for the homeless, destitute and drug affected. While this is not to associate such individuals with criminal activity, there *has* long been a tendency, on the part of certain sections of the community, to make this association.

### **Melbourne's homeless men**

You can see them queuing up for a free bowl of soup or a sandwich at any one of half a dozen voluntary agencies in North Melbourne, Fitzroy and the city itself. Or shuffling along a city street, pausing to inspect the contents of the rubbish bins. Or lying drunk beside a drained spirit bottle in a park or a back lane. Or lined up in the City Court staring dazedly at the magistrate, all too aware of the imminence of yet another term inside Pentridge. They are just some of Melbourne's Skid Row alcoholics (David Bornstein, *The Herald*, 28 March 1967, 'Weekend Magazine').

Crime is, and has always been, an inevitable feature of the inner-urban environment. Where there exists such a concentration of human industry at all hours of the day (and night) there will invariably be antisocial behaviour. The question that must be asked is: To what extent do perceptions of the city as a 'hot spot' of criminal activity and antisocial behaviour match the reality in the Melbourne Central Business District? Although crime has been identified as a recurring problem, is it a problem beyond control?



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# PART B: The Official Picture: What Recorded Crime Statistics Say

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## 5. Interpreting Victoria Police Statistics

The purpose of this Report is to examine the nature and extent of crime in the Melbourne CBD from 1995–2000, identify emerging crime trends and examine the extent of media reporting of the level of crime and public disorder in the Melbourne CBD. This Part of the Report provides a detailed analysis of Victoria Police crime statistics for the Melbourne CBD from 1995–2000 and compares crime in the Melbourne city with crime occurring in the rest of Victoria. The study utilised unit record data from the Victorian Police Law Enforcement Assistance Program (LEAP) database. Appendix 3 gives details of the methodology used for this aspect of the research. While the Committee acknowledges that official crime statistics have their limitations, it appreciates that they are the best available time series measure currently available for a study such as this.

### **Official Crime Statistics: A Cautionary Note**

The problems and limitations of official crime statistics are well documented. However, it is important to revisit those issues regarding uses and limitations that are particularly relevant to an understanding of the crime statistics presented in this Report. For a full discussion of crime measurement techniques and problems see the Committee's Report, *Benchmarking Crime Trend Data 1995–1996 to 1999–2000*.

Crime statistics, whether official or unofficial, are not and can not be a complete and accurate enumeration of criminal offending behaviour. At best they are an approximation of the nature and extent of crime. Crime statistics represent merely the 'known' aspect of crime as opposed to what criminologists refer to as 'the dark figure of crime', or the proportion that remains unknown. That being said, not all known crime will necessarily be included in official crime statistics as:

- ◆ Not all crime that comes to the attention of police will be officially recorded;
- ◆ Not all crime that has come to the attention of victims or other members of the public is reported to police;
- ◆ Not all crime detected by police will necessarily be recorded.



Furthermore, it is important to note the impact that the operational priorities of the Victoria Police have upon recorded crime statistics. An operational response to crime in a specific area, for example, the King Street nightclub precinct of the Melbourne CBD, may well deter criminal activity. However, the presence of significant numbers of police will also increase the likelihood that criminal activity will be detected and recorded in crime statistics. As Superintendent Tony Warren informed the Committee, 'By increasing police presence, you increase the crime statistics' (Superintendent A.J. Warren, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May, 2001 p.16). This increase may encourage the perception that crime is out of control. Conversely, whilst an area without a significant police presence may record low levels of crime, this may not reflect the actual level of criminal activity being committed.

A second effect of police operations in specific areas is the potential for crime displacement. An operational 'blitz' on crime in one area may simply drive criminal activity into other areas. Although recorded crime will decline in the area being targeted, this does not necessarily reflect a decline in overall criminal activity. Rather, it could be the consequence of such activity shifting in an attempt to avoid detection. This has been demonstrated in an Australian context by Maher and Dixon (1999). They found that the success of police crackdowns on drug markets in Cabramatta simply displaced these markets, along with the accompanying threats to public health and community safety, to neighbouring suburbs.

Both these factors further emphasise the need for caution when interpreting police statistics.

### ***Interpreting Victoria Police Statistics***

In addition to the general concerns raised in the criminological literature and by the Committee in relation to the limitations of official crime statistics, there are a number of specific issues that need to be understood when interpreting Victoria Police statistics.

- ◆ There are over 4,000 individual statutory and common law offences recorded on the Victoria Police Law Enforcement Assistance Program (LEAP) database. These have been grouped into 27 broad offence categories.<sup>21</sup> These categories have been further subdivided into four general classes: Crime Against the Person, Crime Against Property, Drug Offences and Other Crime (Victoria Police 2001b, p. 5).
- ◆ Victoria Police offence statistical recording and reporting categories do not necessarily conform to legal offence definitions.<sup>22</sup>
- ◆ An extremely important point to recognise is that *only the most serious offence* in a distinct course of criminal conduct is recorded in official statistics, even though multiple charges may be laid for the one incident. For example, if an offender carrying a firearm commits an armed robbery and assaults a staff member, only the armed robbery is recorded although the offender would be charged with armed robbery, assault and possession of a firearm. An offender who is in possession and admits using an illicit drug will have only the possession, the more serious offence, counted in

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21 See Appendix 4.

22 For example, offence categories outlined in Appendix 4 do not necessarily reflect crimes chargeable under the *Crimes Act 1958* or other current legislation.

official statistics although he or she would be charged with both offences (Victoria Police, 2001b, p. 5).

- ◆ The LEAP figures include all crimes, family incidents and missing persons, brought to police attention in the financial year, *regardless of when the offence actually occurred*. Offences are only included in the statistics when a crime report has been completed (Victoria Police, 2001b, p. 5).
- ◆ Recorded crime can also reflect changes in community or business procedures. For example, reporting rates for a number of theft, burglary and other offences are clearly influenced by insurance company regulations requiring a police report of the offence before a claim is paid (Walker 1994, p. 10; Mukherjee 1996, p. 77).

Many companies are reluctant to report fraud offences committed against them to police, preferring to either handle the investigation in-house, or to engage another private company with specialist skills to investigate. The AIC reports that the *1999 KPMG Fraud Survey*, found that 33.3 per cent of organisations surveyed failed to report frauds committed against them to police, preferring to deal with the matter internally or by dismissing the internal offender (Smith 1999, p. 3).

- ◆ Operational decisions made by police have a direct effect on recorded crime statistics (New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research 2000, p. 1). Police periodically conduct blitz operations against certain offences such as jay walking, drug possession, street begging and prostitution offences, which can drive the figures up for those particular offences.
- ◆ There are periodical changes to offence and counting categories, legal definitions of offences and changes to regional boundaries, which effect the comparability of crime statistics (Mukherjee 1996, p. 77). Extreme care must be taken to ensure comparisons of crime statistics over time or between jurisdictions are made using like statistics.
- ◆ Rises in the crime rate do not necessarily reflect an increase in actual crime. They could be a reflection of increased public confidence in police which means that the public are less fearful of making a report to police or more confident that police will be able to solve their case. It could also reflect increased public awareness of the importance of reporting offences to police and/or less community tolerance towards crime (Carcach 1997). Indermaur also suggests that rises in the crime rate could be the result of a range of factors that he labels 'police productivity'. These factors include increased police numbers, improvements in technology, record keeping and data base management (Indermaur 1996, p. 4).

## Issues in understanding the data

### *Victoria Police counting rules*

Before proceeding to the chapters discussing official crime statistics it is important to have an understanding of the different counting rules used in collating the data cited in this Report.

Victoria Police uses different counting rules for different offences.

- ◆ For all crime against the person and most property crime, the counting unit is the number of principal victims for each separate occurrence of the offence. For example, if three offenders assault two persons – two offences are recorded.
- ◆ For offences against statutes, the number of alleged offenders is the counting unit. For example, if three persons are found in possession of heroin – three offences of possess heroin are counted.
- ◆ For a small number of infrequent offences such as piracy – the incident becomes the counting unit (Victoria Police 2001b, p. 5).

Counting of offences can also vary according to time and location over the course of the criminal conduct. For example, if an offender presents three valueless cheques to a teller then only one offence will be recorded. If, however, the cheques were presented at different times or at different branches, then three offences would be recorded (Victoria Police 2001b, p. 5).

### ***Offence rates per 100,000 population***

Offence rates<sup>23</sup> are not used in this Report. The City of Melbourne has a relatively small resident population but a very large non-resident population during working and leisure hours. To establish the rates for offences recorded in 'A' District, the relatively large number of offences that are recorded within 'A' District are divided by the relatively small resident population estimates which produces a higher rate for this area than would be the case for a more densely populated area. We can assume that residents from other districts are committing a certain number of offences, which are recorded in 'A' District. This has the possible effect of artificially raising the crime rates in the city while lowering the crime rates of the offenders' home districts.

### ***Additional limitations with the LEAP data utilised in this study***

The data obtained from Victoria Police required considerable cleaning. Often the specific street location of the offence was not provided. If streets were provided then sometimes there were no specific street numbers. Often it was difficult to ascertain if an offence occurred inside the property at the specific address or outside on the pavement. The Committee has already placed on the public record its concerns regarding LEAP's propensity to provide data that is inaccurate.<sup>24</sup>

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23 Offence rates are produced by dividing the number of recorded offences by the estimated resident population and multiplying the result by 100,000. The population figures are derived from Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates of *resident* population as at 31 December, which is the mid-point of the period under review. This figure is taken as a convenient representative estimate of the population.

24 See the Committee's second report to the Parliament, *Inquiry into Crime Trends Second Report*.

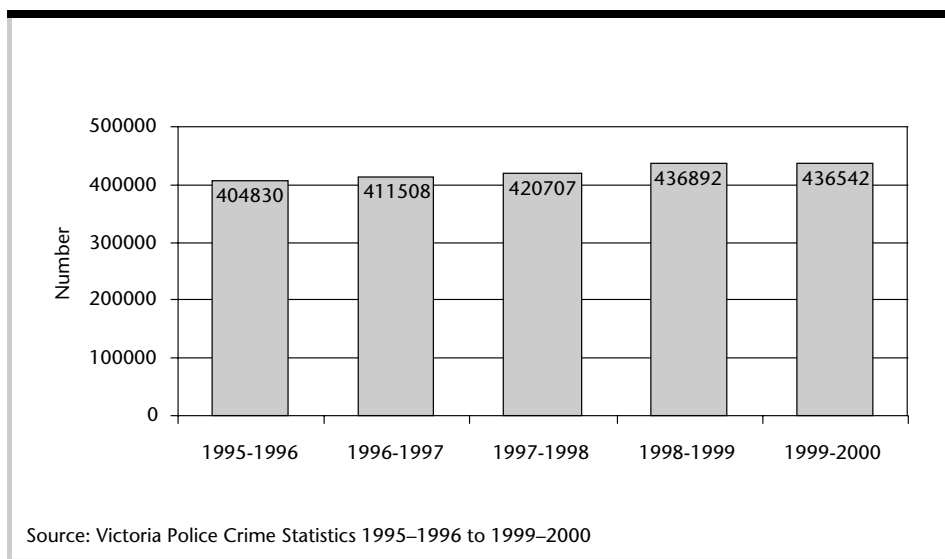
## 6. How Crime in the Melbourne CBD Compares with the Rest of the State

An important step in understanding crime trends in the Melbourne CBD is to measure the extent to which they differ from those for Victoria as a whole. Do they reflect state-wide trends? Or does the unique demographic, functional and economic make-up of the Melbourne CBD create crime trends which differ markedly from the rest of the state?

The following discussion identifies the proportion of state-wide crime occurring in the Melbourne CBD. It notes how this proportion has changed by tracking changes in recorded crime statistics for the Melbourne CBD and comparing these to changes observed on a state-wide basis. The chapter will also examine whether certain offences are over or under-represented in the Melbourne CBD when compared to state-wide crime figures.<sup>25</sup>

### Comparing crime in the Melbourne CBD to crime across the state

**Figure 6.1: Victorian crime statistics 1995/1996 to 1999/2000**

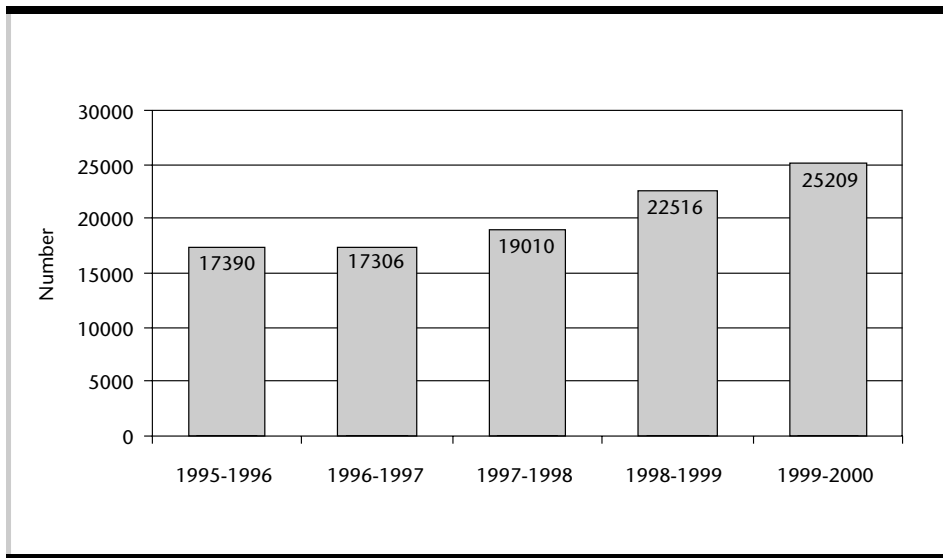


There have been in excess of 404,000 offences recorded in Victoria each financial year since 1995-1996. In the financial year 1995-1996 Victoria Police recorded 404,830 offences, while by 1999-2000 the number had risen to 436,542. Figure 6.1 shows that there have

<sup>25</sup> Crime statistics in this chapter are provided on a financial year basis. Financial year figures were used in this section of the report to enable comparisons to be made between Melbourne CBD figures and Victoria Police state-wide statistics, the latter being published on a financial year basis. (Note, therefore, that these figures will differ to the calendar year figures used throughout the rest of the Report.)

been steady increases in the number of offences being recorded in Victoria between 1995–1996 to 1998–1999 with a very slight reduction in 1999–2000.

**Figure 6.2: Melbourne CBD crime statistics 1995/1996 to 1999/2000**



Likewise, there has been an increase in recorded crime statistics for the Melbourne CBD between the financial years 1995–1996 to 1999–2000. Although crime fell from 17,390 recorded offences in 1995–96 to 17,306 in 1996–97, this was followed by three years of steady growth with reported crime rising to 25,209 in 1999–2000.

**Figure 6.3: Recorded crime in the selected CDB area as a percentage of total recorded crime in Victoria per year 1995/1996 to 1999/2000**

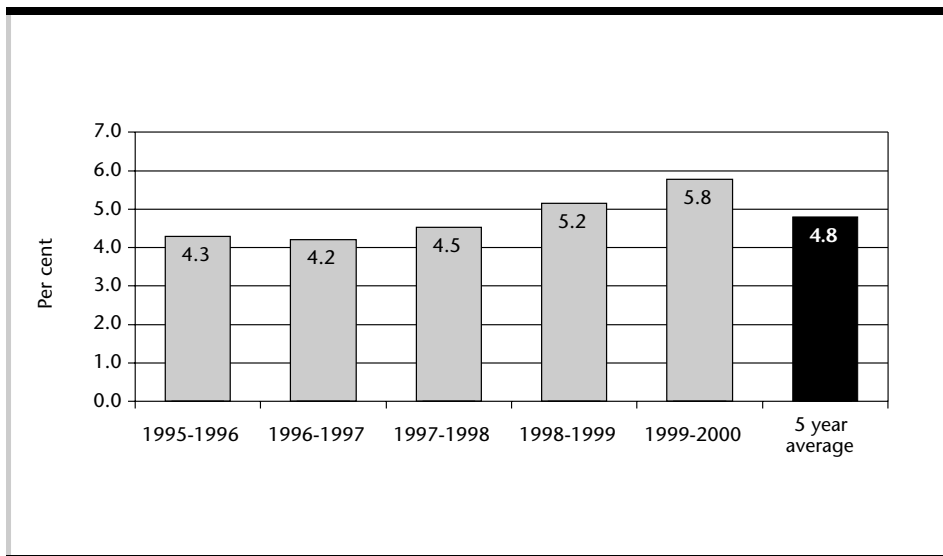
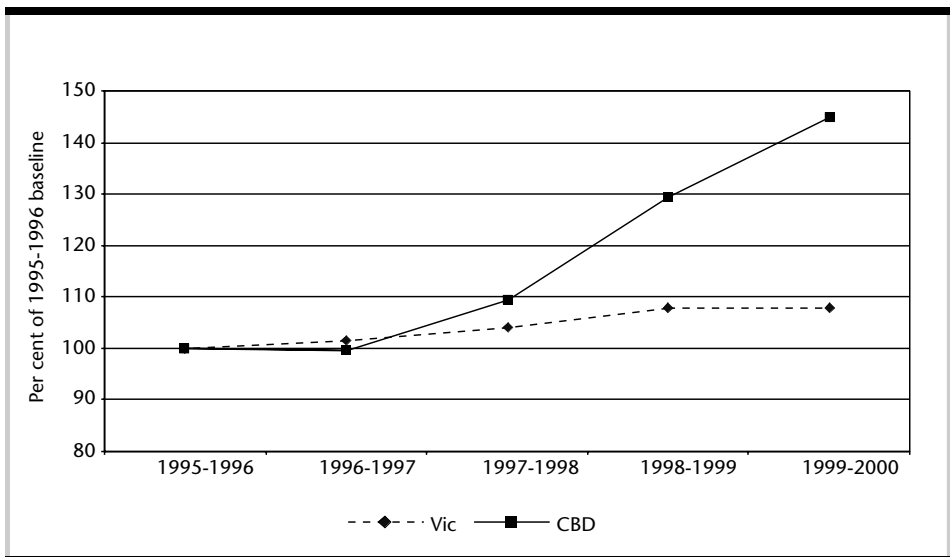


Figure 6.3 shows that between 4.2 and 5.8 per cent of all crime recorded in Victoria, for each year in the period 1995–1996 to 1999–2000, occurred in the Melbourne CBD. In the

five years reviewed, an average of 4.8 per cent of all crime in Victoria was recorded in the Melbourne CBD. What this means is that only around 1 in every 20 recorded crimes is occurring in the Melbourne CBD. In the years between 1995–1996 and 1997–1998 the proportions were stable at just over 4 per cent. Between 1997–1998 and 1999–2000, however, there has been a steady increase in the proportion of Victorian crime committed in the Melbourne CBD.<sup>26</sup>

The primary reason for the increased proportion of offences in the Melbourne CBD is that crime in the CBD is increasing at a faster rate than crime throughout Victoria. As Figure 6.4 demonstrates, criminal activity has increased by approximately 44 per cent between the years of 1995–96 and 1999–2000. By comparison, crime across the state increased by less than 10 per cent.

**Figure 6.4: Cumulative increase in crime statistics 1995–2000**

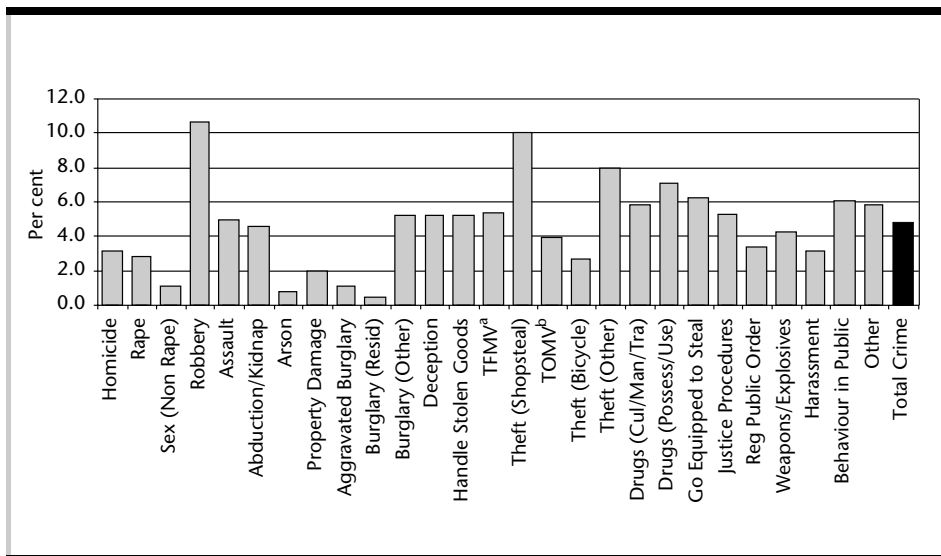


### Comparing specific offences in the Melbourne CBD to offences across the state

When the figures for overall recorded crime are divided into individual offence categories, a number of interesting patterns become apparent. Figure 6.5 examines a number of individual offences recorded over the five financial years 1995–1996 to 1999–2000. It charts just what percentage of each offence was committed in the Melbourne CBD.

<sup>26</sup> The following chapter will show that this increase can be attributed, in part, to the establishment of new entertainment venues, including the Crown Complex and the Docklands football arena, as well as to increases in the number of serious drug offences being recorded in the CBD.

**Figure 6.5: Melbourne CBD offences as a proportion of crime in Victoria. Average over five years 1995/1996 to 1999/2000**



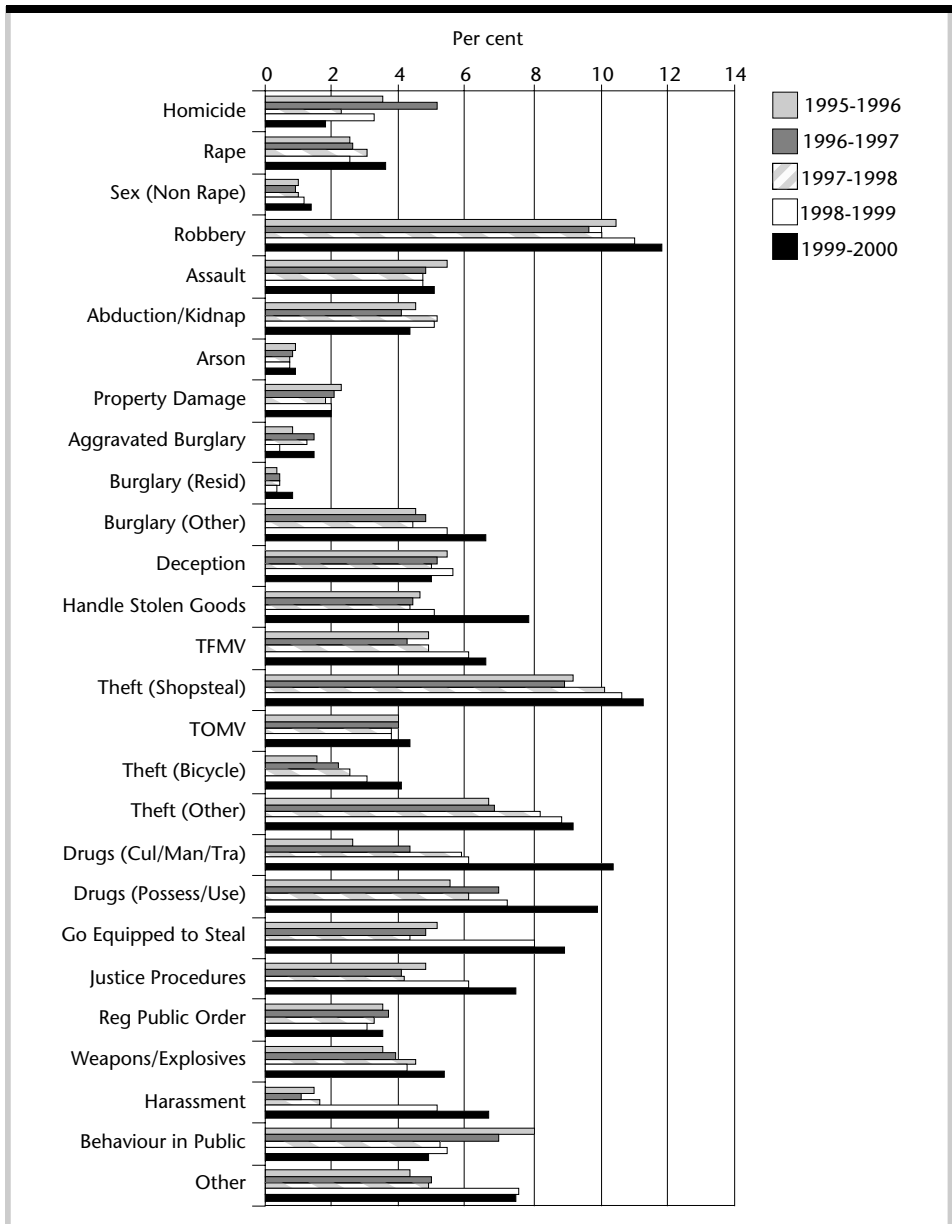
a Theft from Motor Vehicle

b Theft of Motor Vehicle

Effectively, Figure 6.5 provides details of the offence categories that are both more and less likely to occur in the CBD than other parts of the state. There are a number of offences which appear to be over-represented in the Melbourne CBD. These offences had average percentage differences of more than one standard deviation above the average for total crime. They are Robbery, Theft (Shopsteal) and Theft (Other). There are also offences, which appear to be under-represented. These were, Sex (Non-Rape), Arson, Property Damage, Aggravated Burglary and Residential Burglary. These offences had average percentage differences of more than one standard deviation below the average for total crime. The remaining offences were within one standard deviation of the percentage for total crime.

Over the period of review, there have been some significant changes in the proportions of particular offences recorded in the Melbourne CBD. However, these changes are masked in the five-year averages presented in Figure 6.5. Figure 6.6 details the annual proportions of Melbourne CBD crime for each of the offence categories.

**Figure 6.6: Melbourne CBD offences as a proportion of crime in Victoria 1995/1996 to 1999/2000**



The most striking change in the annual offence category proportions is in the Drug (Cultivate, Manufacture, Traffick) category. While Figure 6.5 shows that on average 5.86 per cent of all drug (cultivate, manufacture, traffick) offences were recorded in the CBD over the five years, Figure 6.6 shows that this average has not been uniform.

Although the proportion of Victorian offences committed within the boundaries of the Melbourne CBD increased modestly (from 4.3 per cent to 5.8 per cent) in the four years from 1995–1996 to 1999–2000, some offences displayed changes that were far from moderate.



## Selected offences – Serious Drug offences and Behaviour in public offences

Serious Drug offences and Behaviour in public offences have been chosen for further analysis for the reason that they both change markedly as a proportion of total state-wide drug and behavioural offences in the period under review. Consequently they also demonstrate the manner in which crime trends within the Melbourne CBD sometimes differ from those throughout the state.<sup>27</sup>

**Figure 6.7: Selected offences: CBD as a percentage of Victorian total 1995/1996 to 1999/2000**

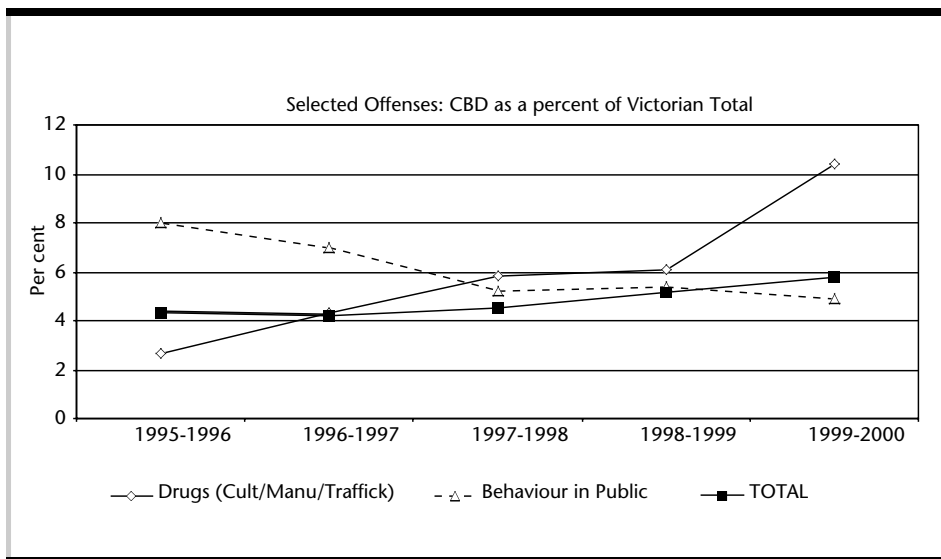


Figure 6.7 shows a steady annual increase in the proportion of the state’s serious drug offences occurring in the Melbourne CBD. In 1995–1996, serious drug offences were under-represented compared to that proportion of total state crime that was recorded in the Melbourne CBD. In that year only about one serious drug offence in every 40 was recorded in the CBD. In 1996–1997 the proportion of serious drug offences recorded in the Melbourne CBD matched the proportion of total crime in the area. By 1999–2000 the proportion of serious drug offences being recorded in the Melbourne CBD increased to the point where around one in every ten serious drug offences was recorded in the CBD.

Alternatively, there was a noticeable decline in the proportion of ‘Behaviour in public’ offences being recorded in the Melbourne CBD over the same period. In 1995–1996 some 8 per cent (1 in every 12.5) of state-wide Behaviour in public offences were recorded in the CBD. By 1999–2000 this had declined to just under 5 per cent or 1 in 20 offences.

27 ‘Serious Drug offences’ refers to offences that are in the police category of Drugs (Cultivate, Manufacture and Traffic). ‘Behaviour in public’ is a police category for offences that cause public disturbance. The most common offences that fit within this category are: ‘Behaving in an offensive manner in a public place’; Using indecent language in a public place’; ‘Being drunk in a public place’; and ‘Using threatening language in a public place’.

The changes charted above reflect a number of changes in relation to crime trends in the Melbourne CBD. The high proportion of Behaviour in public offences occurred at the same time as the King Street nightclub precinct was experiencing significant problems in respect of public drunkenness and offensive behaviour. Interestingly, efforts to counter this problem, such as the Westend project noted in Chapter 8, coincided with the above-noted decline in behavioural offences. Additionally, this decline may indicate a change in policing policy, given that behavioural offences are largely initiated at the discretion of police.

Conversely, the surge in drug-related offences after 1996–97 must be considered in light of a dramatically increased heroin supply throughout the state and the location of one of the resulting drug markets within the Melbourne CBD. As noted in Chapter 4 the activity and pace of the inner-city environment make it particularly susceptible to a street based drug trade.

## **Conclusion**

What this chapter has shown is that the amount of crime committed within the boundaries of the Melbourne CBD represents a relatively small part of criminal activity taking place throughout Victoria. However, it has drawn attention to the fact that the number of offences is increasing at a proportionally greater rate in the Melbourne CBD than the state as a whole. The chapter also effectively demonstrated that crime trends within the CBD differ quite markedly from the rest of the state. This is partially a reflection of the demographic and functional characteristics that make the CBD unique.

# 7. Trends in Total Crime and Selected Offences in the Melbourne CBD Over Time

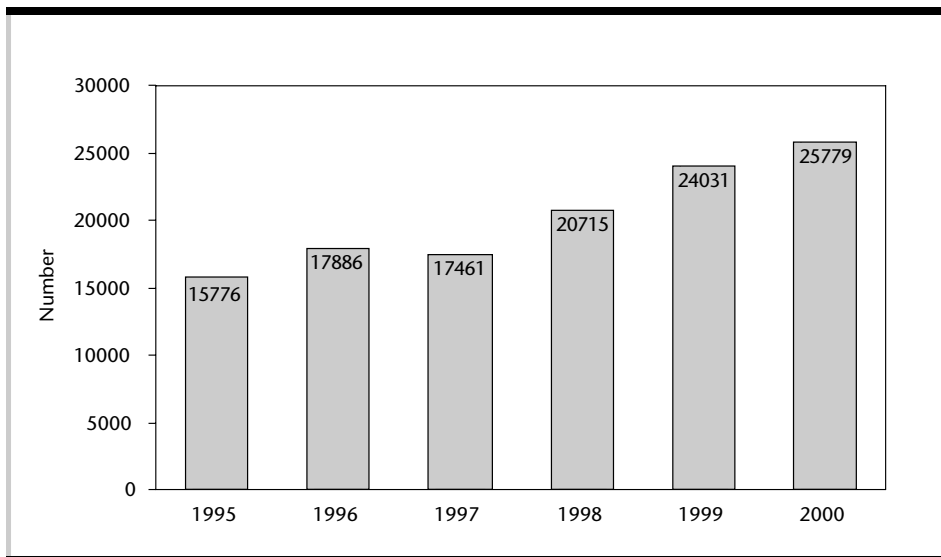
This chapter provides a detailed analysis of Victoria Police crime statistics for the Melbourne CBD, for the period January 1995 to December 2000.

Statistical details are given and discussed for the total number of offences committed, using four general classifications of crime: Crime against the Person, Crime against Property, Drug offences and Other offences. Statistical details and discussion then follow for specific offences within these four broad classifications and specific locations where crime is committed.

## Total crime

Figure 7.1 below shows that there has been an overall increase in recorded crime in the Melbourne CBD between 1995 and 2000.

**Figure 7.1: Total recorded crime in the Melbourne CBD per year 1995–2000**



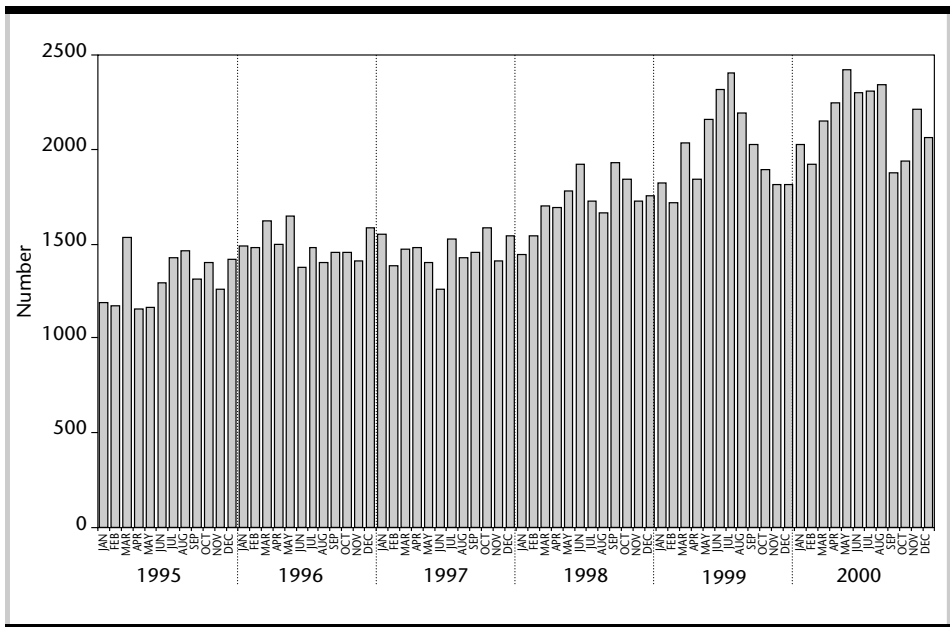
Note: Total number of crimes = 121, 648

In 1995 there were 15,776 offences recorded in the Melbourne CBD area. By 2000 there were 25,779. This represents an increase of 10,003 offences since 1995, although the upward trend has not been uniform. Between 1996 and 1997 there was a decrease in the

number of crimes recorded in the Melbourne CBD. Since 1997, however, recorded crime has increased each year. In the three years from 1997 to 1999 this increase was quite pronounced.

Figure 7.2 provides additional detail of changes in recorded crime by analysing the monthly distribution of offences for the period in question. On average there were 1,689.5 offences recorded in the CBD for each month from January 1995 to December 2000. The lowest monthly total was in April 1995 when 1,153 offences were recorded, while the highest was in May 2000 with 2,422 recorded offences. Figure 10.2 shows that there are two distinct periods in the monthly crime figures, with March 1998 marking the point of change between them. From January 1995 to February 1998, the average monthly total was 1,424. In comparison, the average monthly total for the period March 1998 to December 2000 was 1,986.

**Figure 7.2: Total recorded crime in the Melbourne CBD per month 1995–2000**

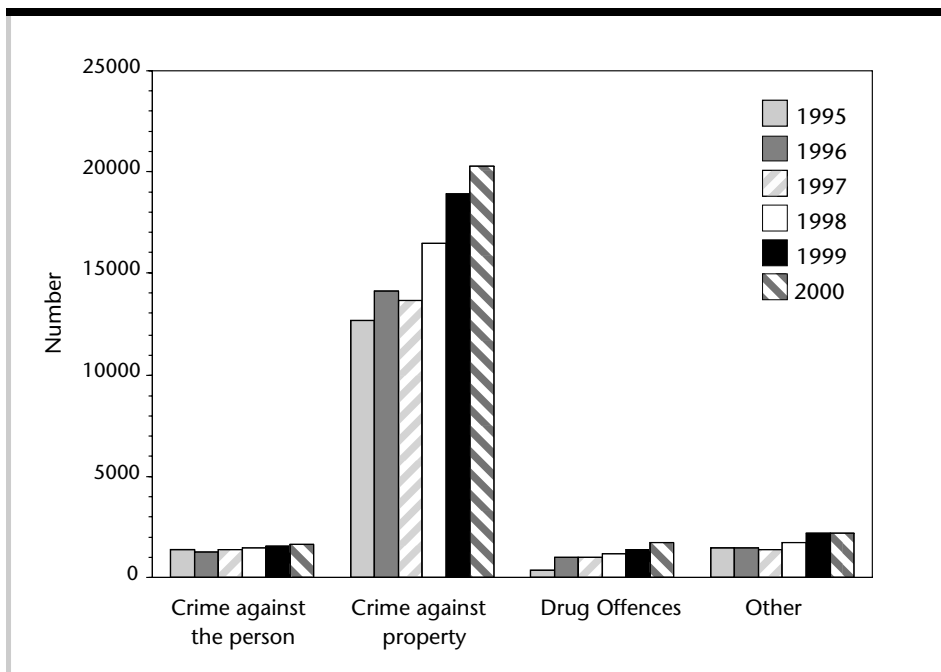


Note: Total number of crimes = 121, 648

## Criminal offences occurring in the Melbourne CBD

The following section examines crime in the Melbourne CBD within the four classifications of Crime against the person, Crime against property, Drug offences and Other crime.

**Figure 7.3: Frequency of each of the four general classifications of crime by year 1995–2000**

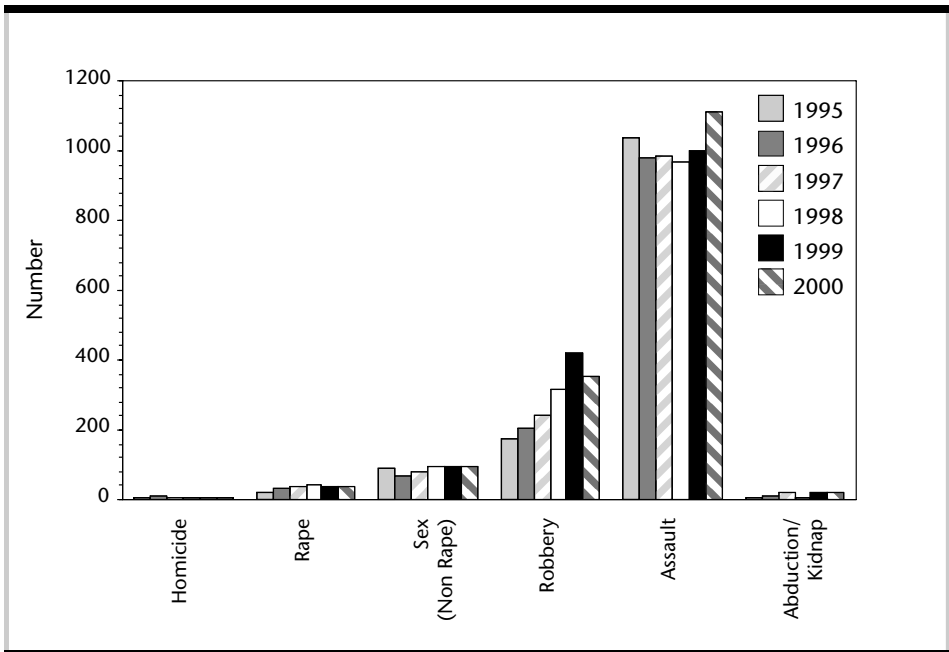


Note: Total number of crimes = 121, 648

In the six years under review Crimes against property represented 79.1 per cent of all crime, Crime against the person – 7.1 per cent of crime, Drug offences 5.4 per cent of crime and Other offences – 8.4 per cent of crime.

### ***Crime against the Person***

There has been an overall increase in the number of crimes against the person between 1995 and 2000 – from 1,307 in 1996 to 1,626 in 2000. The vast majority of these offences are assaults (71.2%) and robberies (19.2%). Sex (Non-Rape) offences accounted for 5.9 per cent, Rape (2.4%), Abduction/Kidnap (1%) and Homicide (0.3%). Crimes against the person accounted for 7.1 per cent of all offences overall.

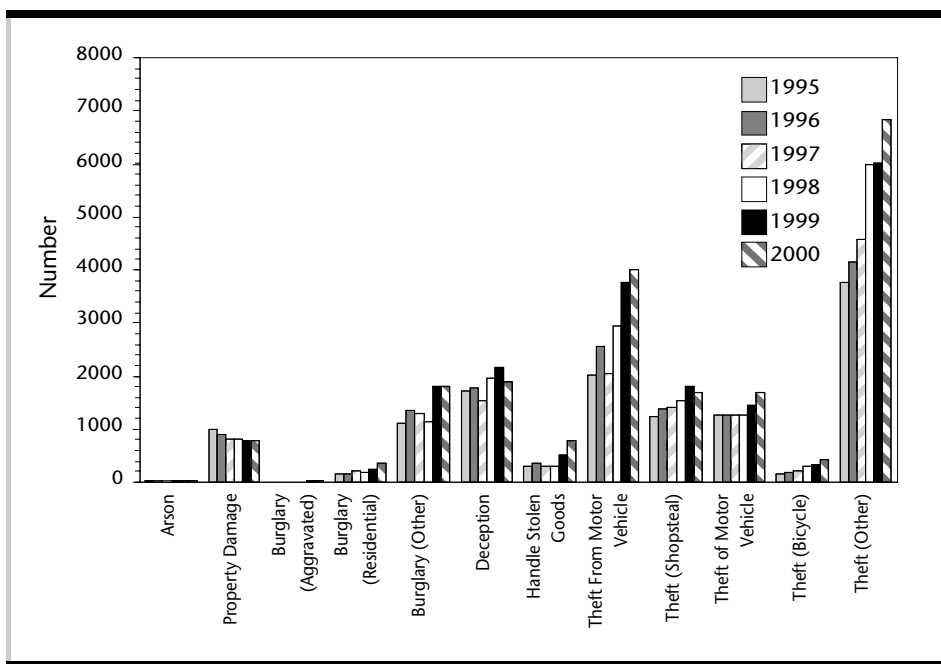
**Figure 7.4: Crimes against the Person by year 1995–2000**

### ***Crime against Property***

Property-related crime has also increased over the years 1995–2000. This group accounts for the greater part of recorded crime in the Melbourne CBD (83.6%). The Theft (Other)<sup>28</sup> category made up the largest portion of this group at 32.2 per cent, followed by Theft from Motor Vehicle (17.9%), Deception (11.7%) and Theft (Shopsteal) (9.6%). Aggravated Burglary represented just 0.1 per cent of all offences against property overall.

28 The category of Theft (Other) comprises ten offences including the offence of 'Theft', stealing of mail from the post and the stealing of Commonwealth property.

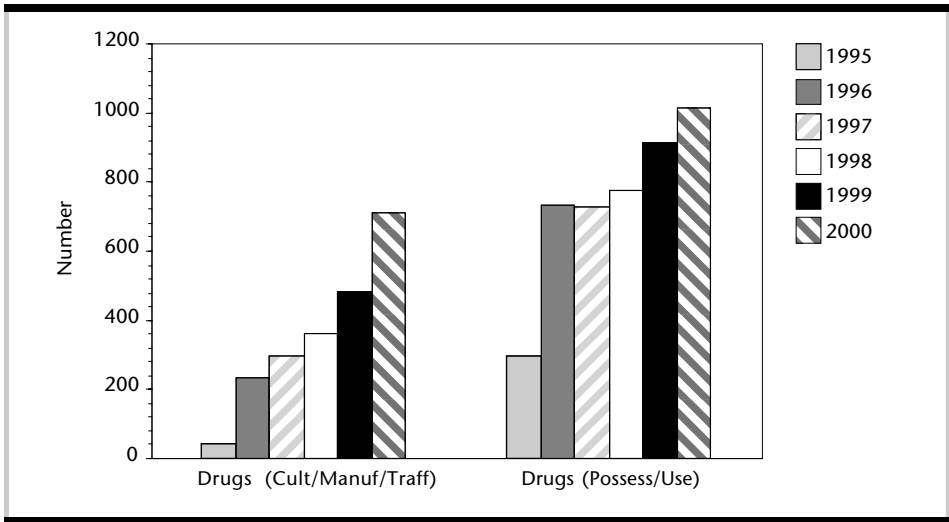
**Figure 7.5: Crime against Property by year 1995–2000**



**Drug Offences**

During the period 1995–2000 there have been significant increases in the number of drug offences recorded in the Melbourne CBD area each year. These offences have increased five-fold from 344 in 1995 to 1,724 in 2000. The most significant single year increase was between 1995 and 1996 when the number rose from 344 to 968. The Drugs (Possess, Use) category accounted for 68.1 per cent of all drug offences, while 31.9 per cent of drug offences were for the more serious cultivating, manufacturing and trafficking offences. In 1995 drug offences accounted for 2.1 per cent of all offences recorded in the Melbourne CBD but by 2000 this had risen to 6.7 per cent. Overall, drug offences accounted for 5.6 per cent of all recorded crime for the six years from 1995 to 2000.

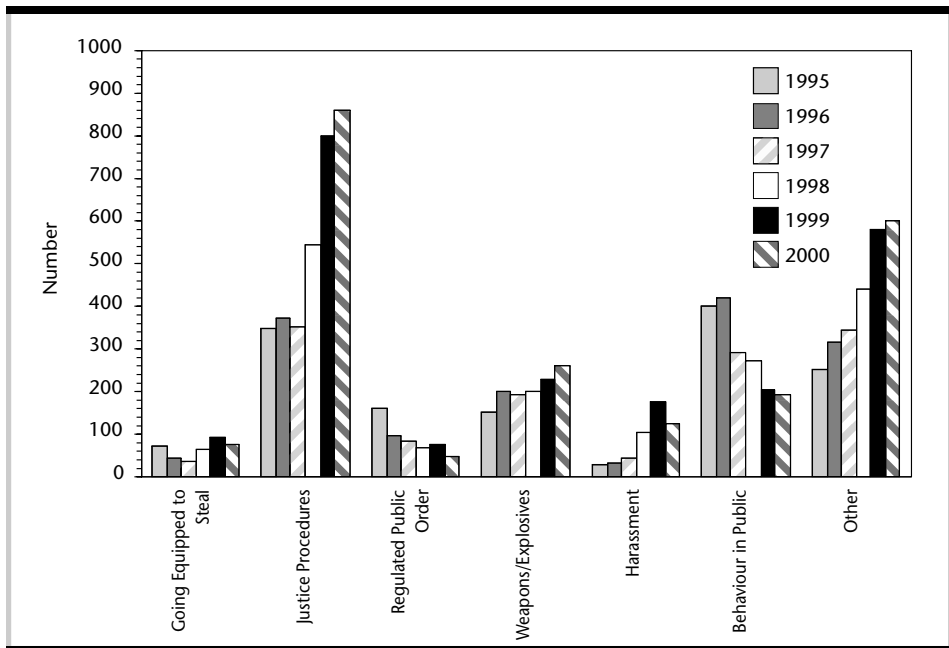
**Figure 7.6: Drug Offences by year 1995–2000**



**Other Crime**

The remainder of offences committed in the Melbourne CBD could be grouped into a 'catch-all' category of 'Other crime.'<sup>29</sup>

**Figure 7.7: Other Crime by year 1995–2000**



The most common offences within this category were 'Justice procedures' (31.7 %)<sup>30</sup> and 'Behaviour in public' offences (18.2%).

<sup>29</sup> The category of Other includes Unlawfully on premises, Tamper with motor vehicle, Licensed Motor Car Trader fail to make entries in dealings book, Interfere with motor vehicle, Beg alms, Going equipped to steal, Bomb hoax–make statement/convey information and Travel without a valid ticket.



## Frequency of specific offences in the Melbourne CBD?

Tables 7.1 and 7.2 detail the nature and extent of crime in the Melbourne CBD for the period under investigation. Table 7.1 represents total recorded crime figures when examined as specific offences. This allows an appreciation of which crimes are most frequently recorded in the Melbourne CBD and, conversely, which crimes are, statistically, the most infrequent. Table 7.2 provides further detail in the form of an annual analysis of specific crimes. This allows any trends in the commission of such crimes to be observed.

The information contained within these tables is of considerable importance to the Committee's Inquiry. Ultimately, it provides an objective benchmark of crime in the Melbourne CBD and one means by which the claims made by media and other commentators can be evaluated.

**Table 7.1: Frequency distribution of recorded offences by offence category 1995–2000**

	Frequency	Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Theft (Other)	31339	25.8	25.8
Theft from Motor Vehicle	17330	14.2	40.0
Deception	11041	9.1	49.1
Theft (Shopsteal)	9030	7.4	56.5
Burglary (Other)	8511	7.0	63.5
Theft of Motor Vehicle	8194	6.7	70.2
Assault	6080	5.0	75.2
Property Damage	5069	4.2	79.4
Drugs (Possess/Use)	4457	3.7	83.1
Justice Procedures	3285	2.7	85.8
Handle Stolen Goods	2575	2.1	87.9
Other	2536	2.1	90.0
Drugs (Cult/Manuf/Traff)	2132	1.8	91.7
Behaviour in Public	1779	1.5	93.2
Robbery	1711	1.4	94.6
Theft (Bicycle)	1572	1.3	95.9
Burglary (Residential)	1287	1.1	96.9
Weapons/Explosives	1235	1.0	98.0
Regulated Public Order	534	.4	98.4
Sex (Non-Rape)	517	.4	98.8
Harassment	509	.4	99.2
Going Equipped to Steal	382	.3	99.6
Rape	207	.2	99.7
Arson	169	.1	99.9
Abduction/Kidnap	85	.1	99.9
Burglary (Aggravated)	51	.0	100.0
Homicide	31	.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>121,648</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

30 'Justice procedures' is a broad category incorporating 110 different judicial procedural offences, the most common of which are: Breach of intervention order; Resist police/resist arrest; Breach of a suspended sentence order; and Failure to meet bail requirements.

Table 7.1 shows that the three most commonly recorded offences in the Melbourne CBD for the years 1995–2000 were: Theft (Other)<sup>31</sup> at 25.8 per cent of all offences, Theft from Motor Vehicle (14.2%) and Deception (9.1%). Together these offence categories account for just under half (49.1%) of all recorded crime in the Melbourne CBD.

**Table 7.2: Number of offences per year by offence category 1995–2000**

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Total
Homicide	3	10	5	3	5	5	31
Rape	20	33	38	40	38	38	207
Sex (Non-Rape)	87	70	80	93	93	94	517
Robbery	176	205	244	314	419	353	1711
Assault	1038	978	985	967	999	1113	6080
Abduction/Kidnap	4	11	20	7	20	23	85
Arson	35	30	24	29	32	19	169
Property Damage	983	896	816	822	781	771	5069
Burglary (Aggravated)	1	3	4	7	17	19	51
Burglary (Residential)	147	151	222	174	246	347	1287
Burglary (Other)	1116	1344	1303	1129	1801	1818	8511
Deception	1722	1761	1545	1950	2160	1903	11041
Handle Stolen Goods	293	370	296	311	512	793	2575
Theft From Motor Vehicle	2027	2571	2032	2937	3769	3994	17330
Theft (Shopsteal)	1220	1382	1428	1537	1792	1671	9030
Theft of Motor Vehicle	1268	1265	1257	1264	1444	1696	8194
Theft (Bicycle)	136	186	212	301	328	409	1572
Theft (Other)	3745	4164	4579	6000	6023	6828	31339
Drugs (Cult/Manuf/Traff)	45	233	299	360	484	711	2132
Drugs (Possess/Use)	299	735	726	773	911	1013	4457
Going Equipped to Steal	72	45	36	63	91	75	382
Justice Procedures	349	374	353	546	801	862	3285
Regulated Public Order	159	98	83	70	75	49	534
Weapons/Explosives	151	202	194	199	228	261	1235
Harassment	29	31	43	106	176	124	509
Behaviour in Public	399	421	292	271	205	191	1779
Other	252	317	345	442	581	599	2536
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,776</b>	<b>17,886</b>	<b>17,461</b>	<b>20,715</b>	<b>24,031</b>	<b>25,779</b>	<b>121,648</b>

Perhaps the most significant finding of Table 7.2 was that Theft (Other) is consistently Melbourne CBD's biggest crime problem, in terms of numbers. In fact these were the most commonly recorded offences in the Melbourne CBD for each of the six years under review. In the six-year period, 1995–2000, there were 31,339 recorded 'other thefts' in the Melbourne CBD. This represents an average of just over 5,000 'other thefts' per year. Theft (Other) offences have risen every year since 1995, when there were 3,745 offences recorded, to 6,828 in 2000.

31 The Theft (Other) category represents ten offences, including the stealing of mail from the post and the stealing of Commonwealth property. However, the offence of 'Theft' comprises the greater majority of offences within this category. In 1999–2000 the single offence of 'Theft' represented 99.86 per cent of the 'Theft (Other)' category (Victoria Police, 2001).

The second most commonly recorded offence was Theft from Motor Vehicle with 17,330 (14.2%) offences being recorded between 1995 and 2000.

Deception offences were consistently the third most commonly recorded in the Melbourne CBD between 1995 and 2000 with 11,041 offences (9.1 %). Two of the 93 different individual offences in the Deception category, 'Obtain property by deception' (71.3%) and 'Obtain financial advantage by deception' (17.2%) made up 88.5 per cent of all Deception offences.

The least recorded offences were Abduction/Kidnap (85 offences overall or 1 every 26 days), Aggravated Burglary (51 over 6 years or 1 every 42 days) and Homicides (31 in 6 years or 1 every 73 days).

## **Changes in offence categories over the years 1995–2000**

A number of offence categories recorded annual increases in each of the six years from 1995 to 2000 in the Melbourne CBD. These included Aggravated Burglary, Theft of Bicycle, Theft (Other), Drugs (Cultivate, Manufacture, Traffic) and 'Other' offences. While the offence that recorded the most marked increase was Aggravated Burglary, this was due in large part to a change in the definition of the offence.<sup>32</sup>

Perhaps the most notable change, and one that has received a great deal of media attention in recent years, has been a 16-fold increase in the number of Drugs (Cultivate, Manufacture, Traffic) offences recorded in the Melbourne CBD between 1995 and 2000. There were 45 of these offences recorded in 1995 (or 1 offence recorded every 8 days) and 711 in 2000 (or almost 2 a day). The vast majority of these offences (80.7%) were for trafficking heroin.

Other offences showing four or five years of successive growth were: Rape, Sex (Non-Rape), Robbery, Handle Stolen Goods, Theft from Motor Vehicle, Theft (Shopsteal), Theft of Motor Vehicle, Drugs (Possess, Use), Justice Procedures, Weapons/Explosives and Harassment. Each of these offence categories showed overall increases between 1995 and 2000.

Three offence categories, Property Damage, Behaviour in Public and Regulated Public Order, however, showed downward trends over the years. In 1995 there were 983 Property Damage offences while in 2000 there were 771. Regulated Public Order offences have shown the greatest rate of decrease from a high of 159 recorded offences in 1995 to 49 in 2000. Similarly, Behaviour in Public offences dropped from a high of 412 in 1996 to 191 in 2000.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the decrease in Behaviour in Public and Regulated Public Order offences is of some significance. These offences are generally detected by Police rather than reported to police by members of the public. These offence categories are particularly prone to police policy changes and experience significant change as a consequence of police campaigns or blitzes. It appears that policing policies have changed

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32 In September 1997 the definition of 'Aggravated Burglary' was broadened. An amendment was made to the *Crimes Act 1958* which extended the offence to include situations where:

'...at the time of entering the building or part of the building a person was then present in the building or part of the building and he or she knew that a person was then so present and was reckless as to whether or not a person was so present (*Crimes Act 1958* s.77.1 (b)).

This may have contributed to the increases in the 1998–2000 figures.

over the years regarding the enforcement of offences within these offence categories. The decline in these offences also coincided with previously noted responses to such antisocial activity, initiated by concerned authorities.

It is interesting to note the relatively unchanged trend in assaults across time. Despite a major campaign to address the issue of assault in or near licensed premises in the King Street nightclub precinct, and the reported success of this campaign, assaults continued to occur in the Melbourne CBD on a similar scale. It would appear that such offences have been displaced to other locations.

The remaining seven offences, Homicide, Abduction/Kidnap, Arson, Burglary (Residential), Burglary (Other), Deception and Going Equipped to Steal, showed fluctuations in their figures over the six-year period.

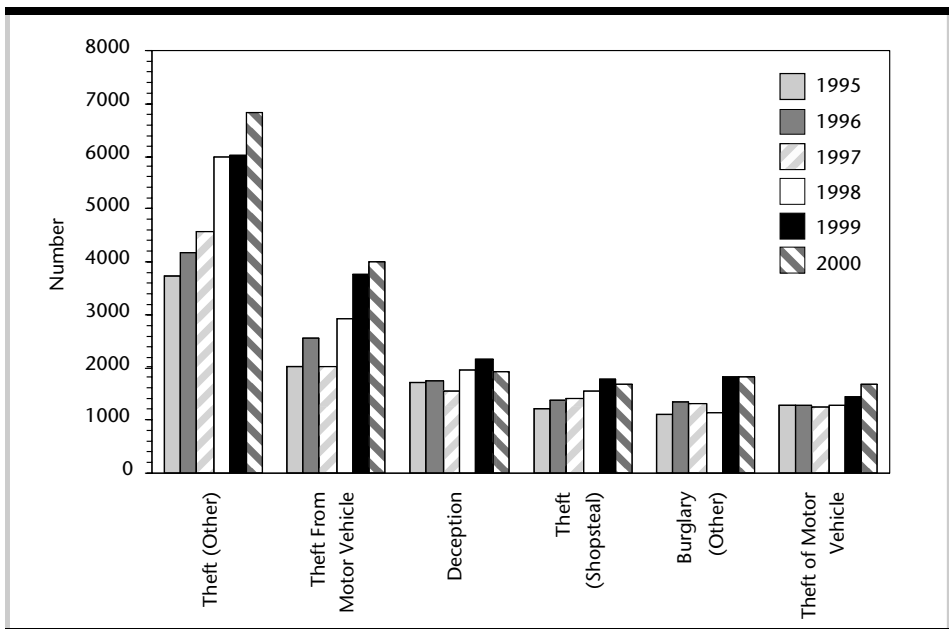
## Selected offences

The following section will further explore the offences committed most frequently in the Melbourne CBD, as well as those that increased most dramatically across the period under investigation.

### *Most prevalent crime*

The six most prevalent crimes committed in the Melbourne CBD were those classified as crimes against property. This finding presents an interesting contrast to the public perceptions of crime reported in Part C of the Report.

**Figure 7.8: Frequency of the six most prevalent categories of crimes in the Melbourne CBD by year 1995–2000**



As Figure 7.8 shows, each of the six most prevalent categories of crime increased between 1995 and 2000. The increase, however, was not uniform. In fact, offences of Deception and

Theft (Shopsteal) decreased from 1999 to 2000. Theft (Other), including such offences as the stealing of mail, is overwhelmingly the most commonly recorded category of offence committed in the Melbourne CBD. This is one category that did represent a steady increase in each of the years of the Committee's analysis.

Interestingly, increases in minor property crime coincided with a dramatic increase in drug-related offences in the Melbourne CBD. This suggests the commission of offences to acquire the means by which to pay for drugs. Indeed, Superintendent Tony Warren, then officer in Charge of Victoria Police District A, noted:

In the City area we have suffered significant increases in thefts from motor cars, particularly in regard to mobile telephones which are the latest form of barter in the drug scene (T. Warren, Annual Police Summary 1995/96, unpublished report for the City of Melbourne).

Thefts from motor vehicles declined in 1997 following a targeted police campaign. However, they rose dramatically in subsequent years.

### ***Drug Offences***<sup>33</sup>

The numbers of 'serious' drug offences (cultivation / manufacture / trafficking) recorded in the Melbourne CBD increased significantly between 1995 and 2000. In 1995 there were only 45 serious drug offences in the Melbourne CBD. By 2000 this had increased to 711. These increases were driven primarily by the large upsurge in heroin trafficking offences. In 1995, there were only 9 heroin trafficking offences recorded in the Melbourne CBD. In 1996, there were 186. Less dramatic increases were recorded in each subsequent year to 2000 when there were 577 recorded heroin trafficking offences.

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33 While this section explores the dramatic rise in drug-related offences committed in the Melbourne CBD between 1995 and 2000, it is important to emphasise the fact that drug-related offences comprised only a small proportion of total crime committed in the Melbourne CBD. For a statistical analysis of crime committed throughout the period of investigation, see Table 7.1.

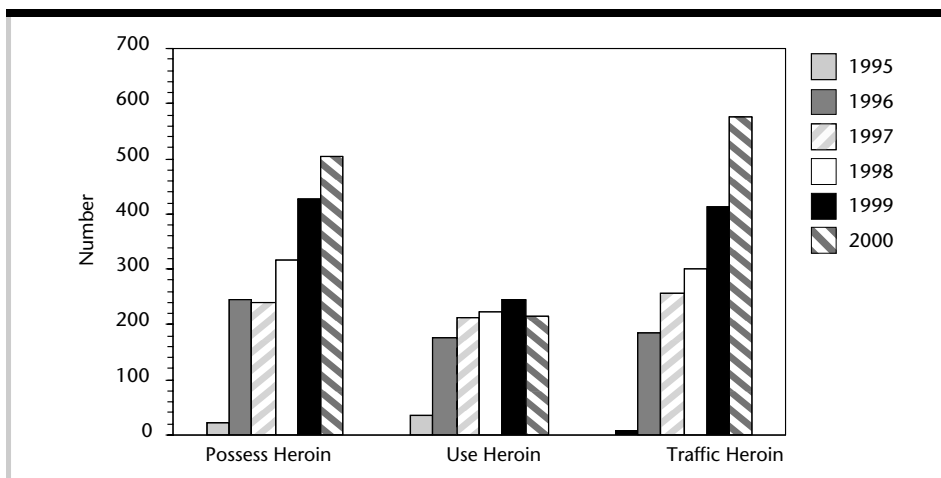
**Table 7.3: Number of serious drug offences committed in the Melbourne CBD (by offence type) 1995–2000**

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Total
Knowingly Conc Import Proh Imp (Drug)				1			1
Traffic Heroin	9	186	256	301	413	577	1742
Traffic Cocaine	2	1	1	2	7	9	22
Traffic Cannabis	12	17	22	19	21	28	119
Traffic Hashish		1				1	2
Cultivate Narcotic Plant Cannabis	4	2	1	1			8
Traffic Amphetamine	11	17	7	18	12	44	109
Traffic Ecstasy		1		5	11	23	40
Traffic Drug of Dependence – LSD				2	3	3	8
Traffic Other Drug of Dependence	7	8	12	9	9	18	63
Prescribed Supply or Sell Drug of Dependence						1	1
Traffic Drug of Dependence					1	1	2
Traffic Drug of Dependence – Hallucinogen				1			1
Possess Substance – Manufacture Drug of Dependence to Traffic				1	2	2	5
Possess Material – Manufacture Drug of Dependence to Traffic						1	1
Unauth Supply Drug of Dependence to Child					1		1
Possess Equip-Manufacture Drug of Dependence to Traffic					2	1	3
Cultivate Narcotic Plant – Cannabis					2	2	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>484</b>	<b>711</b>	<b>2132</b>

As shown in Table 7.3, there was very little change in respect of other ‘serious’ drug offences between 1995 and 2000. In fact heroin trafficking offences have dominated the serious drug offence category from 1996. Since 1997 these offences have accounted for over 80 per cent of all serious drug offences. Overall, 81.7 per cent of serious drug offences were for heroin trafficking.

As Figure 7.9 demonstrates, the increase in heroin trafficking offences was matched by a similar increase in recorded offences for heroin possession, underlining 1995 to 1996 as *the* period in which the Melbourne CBD experienced the initial surge in heroin-related activity.

**Figure 7.9: Number of selected heroin-related offences per year 1995–2000**



The most striking trend observable in Figure 7.9 is the relatively stable number of recorded heroin use offences between 1996 and 2000.

### Where is crime occurring?

Of the six areas that the Melbourne CBD was divided into for this study, five showed an increase in crime over the years 1995–2000. The following discussion looks at the rate of specific offences in these areas, and then at the rate of offences in specific streets within these areas.

**Table 7.4: Number of recorded offences by area per year 1995–2000**

	Area						Total
	Melbourne City	East Melbourne	West Melbourne	World Trade Centre	Southbank	Docklands	
1995	14000	413	254	630	416	63	15776
1996	15895	667	248	556	442	78	17886
1997	15203	548	276	277	1086	71	17461
1998	17622	634	254	120	2031	54	20715
1999	20638	797	268	128	2121	79	24031
2000	21785	653	324	116	2740	161	25779
<b>Total</b>	<b>105,143</b>	<b>3,712</b>	<b>1,624</b>	<b>1,827</b>	<b>8,836</b>	<b>506</b>	<b>121,648</b>

Table 7.4 shows the distribution of the recorded offences for each of six different postcode areas for the years 1995–2000. It demonstrates the noted rise in overall crime in five of the six areas of the Melbourne CBD. Melbourne City (3000 postcode) crime trends mirror the overall crime trends described in Figure 7.1. They showed the same slight reduction between 1996 and 1997 followed by the four years of steady growth since 1997. Southbank was the only area to show continued growth, experiencing a six-fold increase over a six-year period. This could be explained, in part, by the ever-increasing concentration of all-night entertainment venues in the area.

In contrast, the above table shows that East Melbourne, West Melbourne and Docklands experienced fluctuations in the number of offences recorded in the six years under review.

The World Trade Centre was the one area in which recorded crime decreased between 1995 and 2000. This was probably due to the relocation of the Crown Casino from the World Trade Centre to its permanent location at Southbank in 1997. In the same year, the number of offences recorded in the World Trade Centre area halved while the number of recorded offences at Southbank more than doubled.

**Table 7.5: Percentage of recorded offences by area per year 1995–2000**

	Area					
	Melbourne City	East Melbourne	West Melbourne	World Trade Centre	Southbank	Docklands
1997	87.1	3.1	1.6	1.6	6.2	.4
1998	85.1	3.1	1.2	.6	9.8	.3
1999	85.9	3.3	1.1	.5	8.8	.3
2000	84.5	2.5	1.3	.4	10.6	.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>86.4</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>.4</b>

The vast majority of crime recorded in the area under investigation studied for this report is recorded in the Melbourne City area. Given that the city is the hub of activity in the CBD, such a high proportion of crime is expected. Indeed, Melbourne City accounted for 86.4 per cent of all recorded offences in the area under review. However, the proportion of crime attributable to Melbourne City has gradually declined, while Southbank has increasingly been the site of criminal activity in the Melbourne CBD. The number of offences committed in the Southbank area increased by nearly 600 per cent between 1995 and 2000. Southbank is now second behind Melbourne City in respect of the amount of crime recorded in the Melbourne CBD (10.6%). Docklands is the location of only 0.4 per cent of all crime recorded in the Melbourne CBD, which is perhaps to be expected given that it is a relatively undeveloped area at present.

To determine more specific locations of crime occurrence within the Melbourne CBD the Committee also analysed the data relating crimes to specific streets. Table 7.6 below gives details of the number and percentage of recorded crimes occurring in the 20 Melbourne CBD streets which experienced the most crimes during the study period.

Over the 1995–2000 period, Bourke Street recorded the highest number of crimes (17,174) with 13.4 per cent of total crimes in the Melbourne CBD and Flinders Street was the site of 11.2 per cent of recorded crime, making it the second highest street for criminal offences (14, 358). The levels of crime occurrence in other major Melbourne CBD streets included 6.1 per cent in Swanston Street (5th highest recording), 3.8% in Russell Street (7th highest recording) and 1.8 per cent in King Street (17th highest recording).



**Table 7.6: Top 20 streets for all offences 1995–2000**

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Bourke	17,174	13.4	13.4
Flinders	14,358	11.2	24.5
Lonsdale	9,539	7.4	31.9
Collins	8,837	6.9	38.8
Swanston	7,860	6.1	44.9
Elizabeth	7,428	5.8	50.7
Russell	4,855	3.8	54.5
La Trobe	4,241	3.3	57.8
Whiteman	3,873	3.0	60.8
Little Bourke	3,362	2.6	63.4
William	3,190	2.5	65.9
Spencer	3,154	2.5	68.3
Flinders Lane	3,049	2.4	70.7
Little Collins	3,014	2.3	73.0
Queen	2,578	2.0	75.0
Exhibition	2,524	2.0	77.0
King	2,263	1.8	78.8
Little Lonsdale	1,928	1.5	80.3
Siddeley	1,854	1.4	81.7
Spring	1,368	1.1	82.8

***Location of most frequently occurring crime***

The following tables show the location of the most prevalent crimes occurring in the Melbourne CBD. Whilst they demonstrate that crime is spread throughout the city it is important to note that certain crimes appear to be concentrated in particular areas.

**Table 7.7: Location of Theft (Other)**

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Bourke	4892	15.6	15.6
Swanston	3508	11.2	26.8
Collins	3065	9.8	36.6
Flinders	2496	8.0	44.5
Elizabeth	2484	7.9	52.5
Lonsdale	2071	6.6	59.1
Whiteman	1585	5.1	64.1
La Trobe	877	2.8	66.9
Siddeley	856	2.7	69.7
Russell	853	2.7	72.4

Table 7.7 shows the top ten street locations for the commission of Theft (Other) offences. Not surprisingly, these crimes occur most frequently in the main retail and commercial thoroughfares of the Melbourne Central Business District. Bourke Street in particular is the location of the major department stores. The 257 other locations within the area under analysis accounted for the remaining 27.6 per cent of Theft (Other) offences.

**Table 7.8: Location of Theft from Motor Vehicle**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Per cent</b>	<b>Cumulative Per cent</b>
Flinders	1553	9.0	9.0
Lonsdale	1227	7.1	16.0
Collins	927	5.3	21.4
Little Lonsdale	925	5.3	26.7
Little Collins	748	4.3	31.0
Flinders Lane	721	4.2	35.2
Exhibition	674	3.9	39.1
La Trobe	642	3.7	42.8
Russell	618	3.6	46.4
Bourke	591	3.4	49.8

Table 7.8 shows the top ten street locations for Theft from Motor Vehicle offences. Given the large numbers of cars throughout all areas of the Melbourne CBD, these offences are distributed more evenly than Theft (Other) offences. It would be expected that a significant proportion of thefts from motor vehicles occur in quiet streets and lanes so as to avoid detection. Indeed, the streets listed in the Table above account for less than half of thefts from motor vehicles. However, the sheer volume of cars in areas such as Flinders and Lonsdale streets provides opportunities for thieves, particularly during the evening.

**Table 7.9: Location of Deception offences**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Per cent</b>	<b>Cumulative Per cent</b>
Flinders	1914	17.3	17.3
Bourke	1731	15.7	33.0
Elizabeth	1402	12.7	45.7
Collins	1390	12.6	58.3
Lonsdale	598	5.4	63.7
Swanston	545	4.9	68.7
Exhibition	330	3.0	71.6
Queen	308	2.8	74.4
William	304	2.8	77.2
Whiteman	230	2.1	79.3

Table 7.9 shows the top ten street locations for deception offences. These are largely concentrated in commercial areas.

**Table 7.10: Location of Theft (Shopsteal) offences**

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Bourke	3529	39.1	39.1
Lonsdale	2182	24.2	63.2
La Trobe	1027	11.4	74.6
Swanston	960	10.6	85.2
Elizabeth	597	6.6	91.9
Collins	212	2.3	94.2
Flinders	149	1.7	95.9
Little Bourke	60	0.7	96.5
Little Collins	58	0.6	97.2
Whiteman	42	0.5	97.6

Table 7.10 shows the top ten street locations for Theft (Shopsteal) offences. As would be expected, these offences are overwhelmingly concentrated in the retail sector of the Melbourne CBD. Indeed, the remaining 257 locations throughout the area accounted for just 2.4 per cent of Theft (Shopsteal) offences.

**Table 7.11: Location of Burglary (Other) offences**

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Collins	1301	15.3	15.3
Bourke	805	9.5	24.7
Queen	698	8.2	32.9
Lonsdale	616	7.2	40.2
Swanston	484	5.7	45.9
Elizabeth	447	5.3	51.1
Flinders Lane	372	4.4	55.5
Flinders	368	4.3	59.8
La Trobe	356	4.2	64.0
Little Collins	316	3.7	67.7

Table 7.11 shows the top ten street locations for Burglary (Other) offences. These are concentrated in areas characterised by a higher proportion of both corporate offices and residential areas.

**Table 7.12: Location of Motor Vehicle Thefts**

	Number	Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Flinders	745	9.1	9.1
Whiteman	568	6.9	16.0
Lonsdale	516	6.3	22.3
Little Lonsdale	397	4.8	27.2
Spencer	335	4.1	31.3
Flinders Lane	277	3.4	34.6
Little Collins	264	3.2	37.9
King	237	2.9	40.7
Queen	231	2.8	43.6
Russell	226	2.8	46.3

Table 7.12 shows the top ten street locations for Motor Vehicle Thefts. This is similar to Table 7.8 in that there is a more even distribution of offences throughout the area. Over 50 per cent of motor vehicle thefts occurred in locations other than those listed. As with Thefts from Motor Vehicles, Theft of Motor Vehicles could be expected to occur in quieter locations where an offender is less likely to be seen. It should also be noted that many of these offences occur in car parks located on the streets listed.

### ***Where were drug offences committed in the Melbourne CBD?***

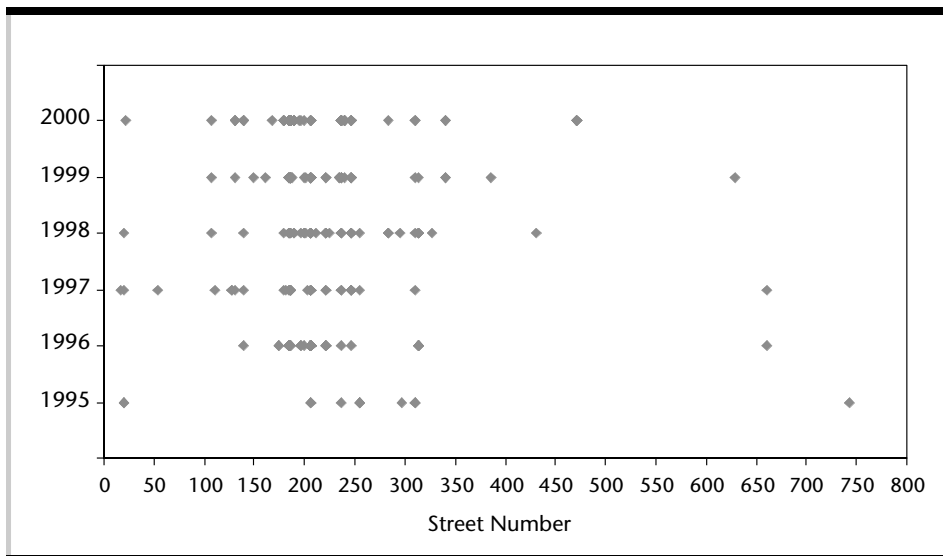
The majority of serious drug offences committed in the period of analysis appeared to take place in Bourke Street and Russell Street, as shown in Table 7.13. Both of these streets are of considerable length, running the breadth of the Melbourne CBD. Consequently, it would be inaccurate to suggest that that drug offences occurred in equal measure along the whole of Russell and Bourke streets.

**Table 7.13: Top 20 streets for Drug (Cultivate, Manufacture, Traffic) offences 1995–2000**

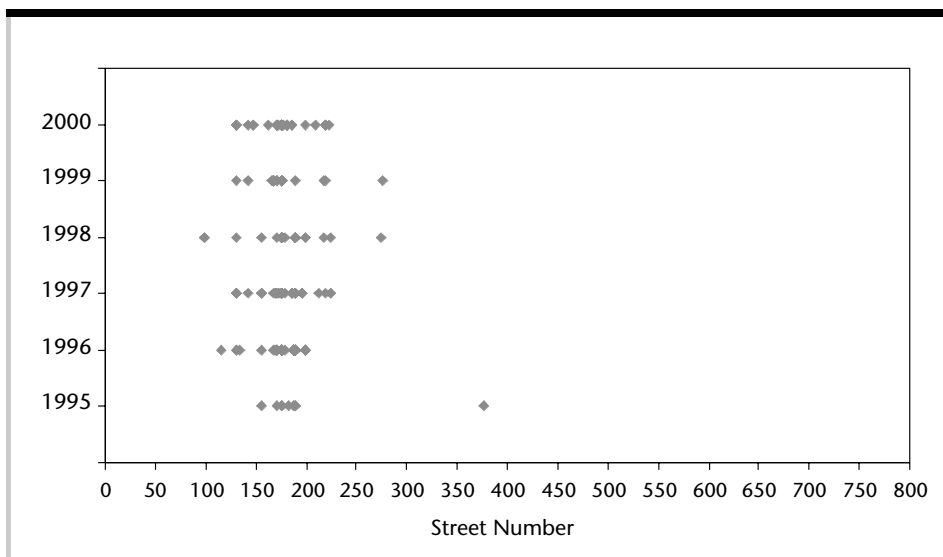
	Frequency	Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Bourke	606	28.4	28.4
Russell	590	27.7	56.1
Flinders	412	19.3	75.4
Little Bourke	138	6.5	81.9
Swanston	64	3.0	84.9
Lonsdale	51	2.4	87.3
No street name entered	27	1.3	88.6
Little Collins	25	1.2	89.7
Elizabeth	21	1.0	90.7
Mid City	17	.8	91.5
Spencer	17	.8	92.3
Waratah	14	.7	93.0
La Trobe	12	.6	93.5
Collins	10	.5	94.0
Whiteman	10	.5	94.5
King	8	.4	94.8
St Kilda	7	.3	95.2
Heffernan	7	.3	95.5
Bullens	7	.3	95.8
Little Lonsdale	6	.3	96.1

Figure 7.10 below reveals the concentration of drug offences within a certain section of Bourke Street and Russell Street. While the concentration is such that individual offences cannot be distinguished, it provides an indication of how illicit drug activity was largely confined to a relatively small area.

**Figure 7.10a: Street number for serious drug offences in Bourke Street 1995–2000**



**Figure 7.10b: Street number for serious drug offences in Russell Street 1995–2000**



The above Figure shows a strong clustering of offences between street numbers 120 to 260 Bourke Street and 140 to 230 Russell Street. It would appear therefore that drug activity was concentrated around the Bourke and Russell Street intersection (the intersection of these streets incorporates between 174 and 180 Bourke Street and between 148 and 160 Russell Street). This supports the perception that this area was a particular problem location for these offences between 1995 and 2000. However, it is important to emphasise that data related to street numbers is far from authoritative in the case of drug-related offences. In only 18.2 per cent of drug offence cases recorded in Russell and Bourke streets was a street

number entered. While this allows a reasonable sample upon which to base an indicative distribution of street numbers, it is by no means a comprehensive sample.

When analysis turns to offences concerned specifically with the traffic, possession and use of heroin, the same pattern of streets emerges.

**Table 7.14: Trafficking of heroin: The top ten streets for recorded offences**

	<b>Number of Offences</b>	<b>Per cent</b>	<b>Cumulative Per cent</b>
Bourke	580	33.3	33.3
Russell	570	32.7	66.0
Flinders	181	10.4	76.4
Little Bourke	133	7.6	84.0
Swanston	55	3.2	87.2
Lonsdale	43	2.5	89.7
Little Collins	23	1.3	91.0
Midcity	17	1.0	92.0
Spencer	13	.7	92.7
Waratah	13	.7	93.4

The majority of serious heroin offences occurred overwhelmingly in Bourke and Russell Streets. It is important to note that these figures represent a concentration of drug activity within a small area of Russell and Bourke Streets. Such activity does not take place along the full length of either of these streets.

**Table 7.15: Possession of heroin: The top ten streets for recorded offences**

	<b>Number of Offences</b>	<b>Per cent</b>	<b>Cumulative Per cent</b>
Bourke	434	24.7	24.7
Russell	378	21.5	46.2
Flinders	199	11.3	57.5
Little Bourke	142	8.1	65.6
Lonsdale	80	4.6	70.1
Swanston	67	3.8	73.9
Spencer	42	2.4	76.3
Celestial	36	2.0	78.4
Elizabeth	33	1.9	80.3
Little Collins	22	1.3	81.5

As might be expected, those areas where heroin is being sold are also the areas that record the greater majority of offences for heroin possession. However, the proportion of 'possession' offences is not as substantial as 'trafficking' offences – an explanation for this might be that a number of people who have purchased drugs in this precinct are in another area by the time they are apprehended.

**Table 7.16: Use of heroin: The top ten streets for recorded offences**

	Number of Offences	Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Flinders	398	35.9	35.9
Bourke	181	16.3	52.3
Russell	140	12.6	64.9
Lonsdale	56	5.1	69.9
Little Bourke	39	3.5	73.5
Swanston	36	3.2	76.7
Spencer	27	2.4	79.2
La Trobe	17	1.5	80.7
Elizabeth	17	1.5	82.2
A'Beckett	16	1.4	83.6

Table 7.16 lists the top ten streets in which heroin use offences were recorded by police. These streets correspond closely with those identified by Melbourne University criminologist Dr. John Fitzgerald who briefed the Committee in relation to his study of injecting drug use in public places, including the Melbourne CBD. Dr Fitzgerald identified Bourke Street, Elizabeth Street, Swanston Street, Little Bourke Street, Russell Street, Lonsdale Street, Flinders Street, Flinders Lane and surrounding lanes and alley-ways as being popular sites for the injection of heroin.<sup>34</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter has provided a statistical overview of total recorded crime committed in the Melbourne CBD. It has also noted the steady growth of recorded crime over the period. Much of this increase is linked to the rise in drug-related crime and crimes against property. However drug offences continue to represent a minor proportion of total crime committed in the Melbourne CBD. Indeed, contrary to popular perceptions, minor property crimes, such as theft from a motor vehicle, comprise the majority of inner-city crime.

Criminal activity occurs across the whole of the Melbourne CBD. Changes in the distribution of crime across the period of the Committee's analysis appear related to changes in the character of the city. The relocation of the Crown Casino to the Southbank precinct and the corresponding rise in crime in that area is the most obvious case in point. Those areas of the City that appear to suffer a disproportionate amount of crime, such as Bourke and Flinders streets, contain a mix of commercial and entertainment venues that attract a constant flow of people to the area. It is therefore not surprising that this level of criminal activity is produced.

<sup>34</sup> It should be noted that Dr Fitzgerald has recently advised the Committee that his research has shown that this trend has changed during 2001.

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# PART C: Responses to Crime in the Melbourne Central Business District

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## 8. Responses to Crime and Safety Concerns by Government and Non-Government Organisations

There are many things that make cities vital, interesting and attractive to be in – the pace and peak hour; the crowds and diversity of people; the anonymity; the wide range of activities; the sophistication and the seediness; the after-hours night life and special events.

These aspects differentiate us from the sterility of a shopping mall, but they can also promote a perceived lack of safety. Within the form and character of a city, it is inevitable that safety issues emerge and lead to many challenges for those trying to manage it.

(Wellington Lee, Melbourne City Councillor 2000, p. 10).

The management of crime and safety issues within Melbourne’s Central Business District is a challenge that has invited a response from a variety of interests representing state and local government and non-government organisations. Indeed, the stakeholders involved have actively demonstrated a willingness to work together through a variety of forums, accords and agreements. This has allowed a broad range of resources and expertise to be focussed towards the achievement of a safer city.<sup>35</sup>

### **Collaborative initiatives to address crime and safety issues**

Over the last 15 years, the issue of crime and safety has assumed an unprecedented importance for those entrusted with the administration of the Melbourne CBD. This sense of priority emerged largely as a countermeasure to the increasingly negative perception of

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<sup>34</sup> It is important to recognise that this chapter does not present an exhaustive list of responses to crime and safety. Many private organisations and businesses operating within the Melbourne CBD have ‘in-house’ policies and programmes designed to deter criminal activity and maximise safety.



the Melbourne CBD that grew, in part, out of media reportage concerning the King Street nightclub precinct.

By the mid-1990s, King Street had earned a public reputation for alcohol-related violence and antisocial behaviour (Scovell 2000). Such was the intensity of the media focus, that the very commercial viability of the area was reportedly threatened by the widely perceived presence of random street violence (Scovell 2000). The concern to address these perceptions was shared by the Melbourne City Council, the Victoria Police and local business owners. Ultimately, this common purpose provided the impetus for a number of collaborative projects. The following examples are indicative of the manner in which a constructive dialogue has developed between those who have sought to reduce crime and improve the level of safety within the Melbourne CBD.

### ***The Safe City Taxi Ranks Programme***

Given the perception of danger to personal safety, especially within the King Street precinct, taxi drivers were reluctant to enter the Melbourne CBD at night, creating difficulties for those looking to access safe transport out of the city. In response, nightclub licensees, Victoria Police, Pro-Tect Security Services, the Victorian Taxi Directorate and the Melbourne City Council established a secure and highly visible taxi rank in Collins Street in the west of the Melbourne CBD in April 1995 (City of Melbourne 2001c). The programme has been a success to the point that it has increased to incorporate seven ranks (four staffed by security personnel), serving an estimated 175 customers per weekend (City of Melbourne 2001c).

A number of safety measures have been incorporated into the programme since its inception. Taxi customers are requested to provide identification to encourage a sense of safety for drivers. Taxi cabs' registration numbers are also noted. Police foot patrols regularly monitor the ranks and each rank is also covered by camera surveillance (City of Melbourne 2001c). In the course of an earlier Inquiry, Mr Drew Pingo, a Law Enforcement Inspector with the Victorian Taxi Directorate, told the Committee that the programme had contributed to a safer atmosphere in the Melbourne CBD for both drivers and patrons:

It certainly improved the situation. It provides better lighting in the area. The drivers feel happier about going there, they know the mater is under camera surveillance. The camera surveillance itself would probably influence as a preventative measure or partially ensure that people are behaving themselves (Drew Pingo 2001, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, Inquiry into Public Drunkenness, p. 122).

However, despite the above successes, evidence presented to the Committee suggested that there was still some difficulty convincing taxi drivers to collect fares from within the Melbourne CBD. Ms Anne Malloch, the City Safety Project Officer for the City of Melbourne, informed the Committee that there was still a major lack of services in the city and that the average wait for a taxi in the city late at night was two and a half hours (Malloch, in conversation with Committee staff, 4 July). An evaluation of the Safe City Taxi Ranks programme was undertaken in late August 2001. The results were expected in late September and should indicate the worth of actively expanding the programme and promoting its safety aspects to those drivers who continue to see the city environment as one to be avoided late at night.

### ***The City Safety Forum***

Following these initial collaborative measures, the City Safety Forum (then the Safe City Executive Committee) was established in mid-1995 as a formal means of gathering concerned stakeholders to address issues of safety. The Forum includes representatives from the Melbourne City Council, the Victoria Police, the Australian Hotels Association, the Victorian Nightclub Association, the Public Transport Corporation, the Liquor Licensing Commission, the Department of Justice, Victorian Community Council Against Violence and the Residents 3000 Committee. The merit of this formal meeting arrangement is reflected by the Forum's continued operation as a high level source of strategic advice on crime and safety issues.

A number of working groups have been established to coordinate this advice including the following:<sup>36</sup>

- ◆ **Central Business District and Community Consultative Committee** – This Committee provides a regular channel of communication between the police and community on general safety and crime issues in the City of Melbourne.
- ◆ **Safe City Transport and Parking Working Group** – The Safe City Transport and Parking Working Group was formed to monitor and promote the operation of the Safe City Taxi Ranks and consider further issues relating to the provision of late night transport. Membership of the Working Group includes representation from:
  - Department of Infrastructure;
  - Victoria Police;
  - The Taxi Directorate;
  - Victorian Taxi Association;
  - Private security industry (Pro-Tect Security Industries);
  - Nightclub owners; and
  - City of Melbourne.

In addition to its role as a representative of the Safe City Transport Working Group, the Department of Infrastructure (Transport) provides a late night bus service, which combines with the Safe City Taxi Ranks to provide access to late night transport. The nine NightRider buses provide early morning (12.30 a.m. to 4.30 a.m.) transport from the central City to outer suburban points over weekends and special events nights. The service carries between 1,000 and 2,000 customers each weekend (City of Melbourne 2001c).

- ◆ **City Licensing Forum** – A regular forum for increased liaison and communication between city licensees, the City of Melbourne, Victoria Police, Liquor Licensing Victoria and the Australian Hotels Association. The forum seeks to promote increased awareness of the issues that affect licensed premises and the improved resolution of these issues.
- ◆ **Street Issues Working Group** – The Street Issues Working Group focuses on a range of street issues including drugs, begging, bag snatching and homelessness. Membership includes a range of representatives from management of key agencies and research organisations.

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<sup>36</sup> Unless otherwise noted, information as to the following working groups is from City of Melbourne, *Safe City Initiatives in the City of Melbourne, 2000c*.

- ◆ **Marketing Safety Working Group** – Established to focus on how positive elements of the city might be marketed. The membership of the group consists of marketing specialists from within the City of Melbourne and from private organisations.

### ***The Westend Project***<sup>37</sup>

One of the first projects overseen by the forum was known as the Westend Project, an initiative to which the Council allocated \$5 million over a three-year period (Ms Anne Malloch, City of Melbourne, in conversation with Committee staff, 4 July 2001). Issues and problems were grouped under five areas: urban design; traffic and by-laws; venue management; policing; and transport. Each concern was appointed a task force responsible for the development of specific goals and the design of strategies to meet these goals (Australian Institute of Criminology web site, accessed 3 April 2001). The immediate response was an improved police presence, including a mobile police van funded by nightclub proprietors and the Council (Scovell 2000). This increased security was further bolstered by the Council's installation of surveillance cameras and better lighting along King Street (Scovell 2000). For their part, the nightclub proprietors accepted a greater responsibility for the management of venues and the training of security personnel, as noted in respect of the Accord developed (outlined below).

In 1996, the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) undertook an evaluation of the safety and crime prevention programmes in the west of the Melbourne CBD. Reporting such improvements as a dramatic reduction in violent incidents, improved training and standards of behaviour for security personnel, and the more responsible serving of alcohol, the AIC concluded: 'A valuable long-term contribution to violence prevention has been the demonstrated effectiveness of community mobilisation' (Australian Institute of Criminology web site, accessed 3 April 2001). The Westend project was a particularly successful example of such mobilisation and set the tone for subsequent approaches that would be initiated under the City of Melbourne's Safe City Strategies.

### ***Melbourne City Licensees' Accord***

One of the most significant outcomes in this respect was the development and adoption of a Licensees Accord in December 1996, an initiative that was largely the work of the Melbourne City Licensing Forum. The aims of the Accord, developed by nightclub proprietors in conjunction with Victoria Police, the Liquor Licensing Commission and the Melbourne City Council, are:

- Responsible provision and serving of alcohol;
- Training staff in harm minimisation procedures;
- Focus on quality of entertainment provided for patrons;
- Encouraging responsible behaviour by patrons, and discouraging anti-social behaviour; and
- Providing safe and secure premises for patrons (City of Melbourne 2000d, p. 2).

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37 Following a recommendation of the Victorian Community Council Against Violence, a Westend Good Neighbourhood Forum was established in 1990 to address issues of violence in and around licensed premises. It ceased following a safety audit conducted after a period of 16 months.

Given that the focus of the Committee's Inquiry is on the years 1995–2000, we are more concerned with the Westend project of the mid-1990s.

Outcomes of the Accord reflect the quality of the continuing partnership of the stakeholders and include:

- ◆ Regular access of Accord members to information sessions focussing on issues such as security management, drug issues, emergency planning and legal liability for licensees. These sessions are conducted through the City Licensing Forum;
- ◆ Venues are appraised regularly by police who recommend the Accord across the state as a 'state-of-the-art' agreement between nightclub owners and authorities;
- ◆ 70 per cent of Melbourne's nightclubs have lodged emergency management plans with the Victoria Police Displan Office;
- ◆ Superior management of venues (City of Melbourne 2000d).

The Nightclub Owners Association is proud of the Accord's achievements, noting that a safe venue, properly managed and patron-friendly is imperative for the nightclubs' financial survival (P. Iwaniuk, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May 2001). An initial accord membership of 12 venues had swelled to 32 at the time of writing (City of Melbourne 2000d).

## **Partnerships and programmes initiated by the Melbourne City Council**

### ***A Strategy for a Safe City***

*A Strategy for a Safe City* is indicative of the collaborative approach to community safety in the Melbourne CBD. The three-year strategy was undertaken in 1996, with the broad objective of reducing intentional injury as opposed to fulfilling specific operational objectives (City of Melbourne 1999a). Through the strategy, the Council, in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, made the following commitments:

- A broad and cooperative approach to community safety;
- Safe streets and neighbourhoods;
- Safe transport in the city;
- Well planned business development and appropriate controls;
- Activities and special events that are safe and enjoyable for all;
- Reduction of criminal and anti-social behaviour (City of Melbourne 1999a, p. 27).

The State Government's subsequent launch of the *Vicsafe* programme further coordinated community safety efforts by providing a state-wide framework through which the State Government could work with and fund local councils while encouraging them to take a leadership role.<sup>38</sup> The Melbourne City Council had already demonstrated a willingness to

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38 *Vicsafe* is the Victorian Government's community safety and crime prevention strategy. Described by the Department of Justice as a shift to longer-term, larger-scale planning, *Vicsafe* provides a state-wide conceptual framework through which the State Government can work in partnership with local government, non-government agencies and the community to develop a strategic approach to issues of crime and safety.

The Safer Cities and Shires programme, initiated in September 1997, falls within the framework of *Vicsafe* and is one means by which the local government is encouraged to take a leadership role in community safety and crime prevention. The focus of the programme is largely upon enhancing the capacity of local government to create and sustain the partnerships that are needed to address crime and safety issues that are often outside of the control of any one organisation.

work with others and, in the three years that followed the initiation of *A Strategy for a Safe City*, introduced a range of programmes, several in partnership with community agencies.

The success of the strategy was illustrated by the release of the *Strategy for a Safe City 2000–2002*, reflecting the results of an extensive community consultation process and providing the framework for Council and community activities for the next three years (City of Melbourne 2000e). It also allowed the Council the opportunity to reaffirm its leadership role in respect of community safety.

Council recognises the leadership role it has to play in maintaining and enhancing a safe city. Council fosters and develops relationships with other groups and agencies and other municipalities to promote resource sharing and partnerships... Council must develop and provide services that respond to the needs of the community, and has an important role to play in coordinating services provided by other organisations (City of Melbourne 2000e, p. 14).

The following examples provide some indication of the proactive nature of the programmes and partnerships undertaken throughout the course of the first strategy.

### **The Alcove Lighting Scheme and improvements to city lighting**

Introduced in early 1996, the Alcove Lighting Scheme was a Council initiative that saw the provision of free sensor lights to building owners. Such lights were to be installed in alcoves, laneways and recessed doorways in a bid to reduce the antisocial behaviour in these areas (City of Melbourne 2000c). The scheme represents a partnership insofar as business and property owners are obliged to pay for the installation and running costs of the lights. The fact that over 200 lights have been distributed since 1996 is indicative of the willingness of the latter to do so (City of Melbourne 2000e).

In 1998 the Council installed an innovative new light pole in King Street, produced by the Council's Industrial Designer, Ian Dryden (Vodanovich 1998). Originally the lighting of footpaths along King Street had been achieved by the spill of light from road lighting, resulting in dark pockets. The new system incorporated a joint pole and a bright white metal halide light thrown over both roadway and pathway, creating a lighter and consequently safer environment (Vodanovich 1998).

In December 2000 the City of Melbourne adopted a new \$8.7 million Lighting Strategy to make the city lighter and brighter (City of Melbourne 2000f). Key recommendations of the strategy included:

- Changing all City lighting from the current yellow (sodium) and blue (mercury vapour) lighting to more effective 'white light';
- More after-hours illumination of shop windows to enhance city safety and vitality in retail areas;
- Change all emphasis of lighting from street lighting for cars to include consideration for pedestrians;
- Investigate the relationship between lighting energy consumption and personal safety (City of Melbourne 2000f).

### **The Safe City Cameras Program**

The Safe City Cameras Program began in February 1997 with the installation of ten cameras along King Street to address the antisocial behaviour referred to above. Since then a further 11 cameras have been installed across the Melbourne CBD in areas of known illicit activity or where a perception exists that the area is unsafe (City of Melbourne 2000c). Cameras are monitored 24 hours a day by a contracted private security company who informs police of any observed illegal activity (City of Melbourne 2000g).

The cameras are a high cost item. \$1,033,334 had been spent on installation costs to June 2000 (City of Melbourne, 2000g). The annual monitoring costs for the 24 hour a day, 7-day a week service, are \$218,400 and the annual maintenance budget is \$108, 949.

The stated aims of the Program are to:

- Aid in the provision of a safer physical environment;
- Reduce levels of crime;
- Aid in crime detection (City of Melbourne 2000g, p. 1).

Speaking about how the Program sought to achieve these aims, Melbourne City Councillor, and chair of the City Safety Forum, Mr David Risstrom told the Committee:

I would say that security cameras provide an insurance and incentive against wrongdoing. Individuals are less likely to consider committing a crime if they feel they are more likely to be intercepted. It is also the case that an individual who considers committing a crime may say, 'If I commit the crime I am more likely to be caught doing it and successfully prosecuted' (David Risstrom, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May 2001, pp. 33–34).

Between July and September 1998, the first comprehensive evaluation of the Program was undertaken by independent consultants KPMG Management Consulting in a bid to ascertain whether the Program was meeting its stated objectives (City of Melbourne 2000g). The evaluation found that within existing arrangements the Safe City Cameras Program was not meeting its stated aims to a high degree (City of Melbourne 2000g).

KPMG noted that the program had not had a significant impact on improving the public's perception of safety (City of Melbourne, 2000g). Both a visible police presence and the use of effective lighting were found to be more effective in this respect. In respect of the Program's aim of deterring potential offenders, the evaluation stated that no accurate data existed upon which to base such an assessment. It noted that anecdotal evidence, though far from conclusive, suggested the modification, rather than the deterrence, of offender behaviour.

However, a common commitment to the improvement of the Program has been demonstrated since this evaluation was completed. This has been demonstrated in the following ways (City of Melbourne 2000g):

- ◆ The City of Melbourne has worked in partnership with the police and private security representatives to facilitate a more efficient police response to observed incidents;
- ◆ New, more prominent signage has been installed in all areas where cameras are located;

- ◆ A computer crime mapping system is being established in partnership with police; and
- ◆ A comprehensive review has been undertaken of all data collection methods utilised to collect information regarding the effectiveness of the Program and 'substantial improvements have been made to the Safe City Cameras Computer Management System.'

The Department of Justice 'Crime Prevention Victoria' (CPV) Program provided funding to the City of Melbourne to reassess the effectiveness of the Program. This assessment commenced in mid-2001 (M. Bourne, Director of Crime Prevention Victoria, correspondence to Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee, 22 June 2001). The Committee also notes academic concerns raised in respect of the efficacy of closed circuit cameras as a crime prevention measure. Consequently, the Committee supports the further assessment of the Safe City Cameras Program.<sup>39</sup>

### **The Bourke/Russell Street Development Strategy**

This project was initiated in 1998, following the increasing identification of the Bourke/Russell Street area as a venue for illicit drug activity and associated crime. The Council sought to minimise the impact of this activity by developing practical strategies, in partnership with other agencies and businesses, to improve the image of the area. In order to understand and address the problems there, the City of Melbourne consulted owners of property and operators of local businesses, Victoria Police, the Uptown Precinct Association, Melbourne CBD residents and visitors to the area (City of Melbourne 1999c). Research was undertaken on a variety of factors including pedestrian movements, reported crime, and property ownership and use. Based on this analysis, a development strategy was proposed, having the following aims:

- To improve the streetscape in respect of lighting and signage;
- To encourage legitimate street activity, such as kerbside cafes;
- To work with local business to improve management and cleanliness of the surrounding streets and amenities;
- To work with car park operators to ensure their venues are safe;
- To improve the overall quality of business in the area;
- To develop a positive image and sense of place for the Bourke/Russell Street areas (City of Melbourne 1999c, pp. 8–9).

A number of these aims have since been addressed by measures initiated under the auspices of *A Strategy for a Safe City*, such as the Safe City Car Parks Accreditation Scheme detailed below. Others have received attention through the Council's Drugs Action Plan, a framework for a raft of further initiatives noted later in this section.

### **The Safe City Car Parks Accreditation Scheme**

The Safe City Car Parks Accreditation Scheme is a joint initiative of the Melbourne City Council and Victoria Police, and was developed in conjunction with the Victorian Parking

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39 For example: Nieto, M. 1997, *Public Video Surveillance: Is it an Effective Crime Prevention Tool?* at [www.library.ca.gov/CRB/97/05/cr97-005.html](http://www.library.ca.gov/CRB/97/05/cr97-005.html); Davies, S. 1997, *Ten Reasons Why Public CCTV Schemes are Bad* at <http://merlin.legend.org.uk/%7brs/cctv/tenreasons.html>; Powell, K., Sanderson, M. & Foster, R. 1998, *Closed Circuit Television Surveillance: Application and Effectiveness in Inner Adelaide*.

Industry Association (Department of Justice 1999). The scheme was launched in 1999 to recognise and reward both best practice and improvements to the operational management of city car parks in respect of safety and security (City of Melbourne 2000e). It followed on from the 1998 launch of planning guidelines for the design of safe and effective car parks – guidelines developed with experts from the RACV, the Victoria Police Crime Prevention Unit and the Victorian Road Traffic Authority (Ms Anne Malloch, City of Melbourne, in conversation with Committee staff, 4 July 2001). To demonstrate a direct ‘before and after’ comparison, utilising these best practice guidelines, the City of Melbourne refurbished a level of the Council House Car Park in Little Collins Street. This was completed in May 1999 (City of Melbourne 2000e).

Every off-street public car park in the City of Melbourne is eligible to participate in the Accreditation Scheme. Those that do are independently assessed using stringent safety criteria before being given a ‘star rating’ from state-of-the-art (4 stars), through to satisfactory (3 stars), acceptable (2 stars) and needing improvement (1 star) (Department of Justice 1999). An integrated marketing and communications strategy provided attractive incentives to car park operators and owners to implement improvements to their services (Local Government Managers Australia web site, accessed 14 May 2001).

The success of this scheme was acknowledged by a Victorian Community Safety and Crime Prevention Award in the category of ‘Planning and Urban Design’ in 1999 (Department of Justice 1999, Victorian Community Safety and Crime Prevention Awards). By 2000, the scheme had succeeded in raising the safety standards in 29 car parks throughout the city (Local Government Managers Australia web site, accessed 14 May 2001). Through the implementation of this scheme and the resulting increase in safety standards for car parks, the likelihood of car theft, theft from cars, accidental injury and crimes against the person is reduced.

### **The Drugs Action Plan: ‘Reducing the Harm’**

In response to growing concerns about drugs in the city and associated health and safety concerns, the City of Melbourne developed a *Drugs Action Plan* in September 1997 (City of Melbourne 2000e). A plan implemented within the broad framework of the *Strategy for a Safe City*, the *Drugs Action Plan* was a further example of the Council’s commitment to lead and coordinate efforts to maximise safety within the Melbourne CBD. Resulting from this plan were the following significant programmes.

### **The Safe City Neighbourhood Officers**

Since 1997, City of Melbourne has employed two Neighbourhood Safety Officers to liaise with police, traders, residents and Council departments on issues of drug use and trafficking. Averaging 200 contacts a month, the officers address such issues as syringe disposal, drug use, lighting, begging and homelessness (City of Melbourne 2000e). They also provide training and advice to business owners and residents regarding the disposal of syringes and the handling of contaminated products (City of Melbourne 2000e).

### **The Amusement Centre Accord**

The Amusement Centre Accord was developed in April 1998 in response to the concentration of illicit drug activity around Russell Street’s amusement arcades. This



initiative was undertaken in partnership between the Council, the Victoria Police and the Amusement Centre Industry. Membership of the Accord effectively signifies the agreement of an amusement centre's operators to comply with a set of service standards (City of Melbourne 2000e). Conditions of membership are reviewed on a yearly basis by a team consisting of members drawn from each of the stakeholders. If a Centre does not meet the specified criteria, it has three opportunities to redeem itself before further association with the Accord is denied (City of Melbourne 2000e).

Perhaps the greatest benefit of the Accord has been the maintenance of a continuous contact between law enforcement officers and venue management, ensuring each party is aware of developments in respect of drug activity occurring in and around the amusement centres.

### **Business Responding to Illegal Drugs (BRID)**

BRID was launched in January 2000, as the initiative of a workgroup that included members from the Melbourne City Council and Victoria Police, as well as industry representation from amusement arcades, cinemas, car parks, and retail and food outlets. This group developed a number of practical strategies through which business owners could respond to drug issues in their immediate proximity (City of Melbourne 2000h). The results were compiled into the *BRID (Business Responding to Illegal Drugs) Handbook*. The handbook is a comprehensive resource for those who often find themselves unwillingly caught in the midst of drug activity, as it addresses a broad range of issues from management techniques for dealing with aggressive customers to issues of shop design to deter illicit activity.

### **Information dissemination**

As a further element of the *Drugs Action Plan*, the Council has sought to ensure that the members of the community concerned are as informed as possible in respect of local drug issues. Activities undertaken by the Council in this regard have included:

- ◆ The establishment of the **Lord Mayor's Drug Advisory Group** to act as a sounding board for contemporary drugs issues. The Council's consideration, and rejection in May 2000, of the Wesley Mission's plans for a supervised injecting facility provides a case in point;<sup>40</sup>
- ◆ The development of **Safe City Watch Cards**, distributed to businesses as an emergency reference about who to contact and what to do in drug-related situations;
- ◆ The development of a **Drug Services Information Card** to provide information on health, counselling, withdrawal and other support;
- ◆ The holding of three **Community Drugs Forums** in March 1998. The themes for the forums were: 'Reducing the Harm', 'The Communication Gap – Young People and Illegal Drugs' and 'New Approaches to Responding to Illegal Drugs';
- ◆ The **Don't Drop Out Programme**. Three information cards developed to improve the welfare and health of drug users. The cards provide information on preventing overdose, controlling infection, and contacting support services; and

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40 'Mission unaccomplished', *The Age*, 17 June 2000, News Extra p. 1.

- ◆ The **Sharp Safe Public Toilet Project** which involves the installation of posters in city public toilets promoting awareness about appropriate needle disposal and the management of overdose situations (City of Melbourne 1999c, 2000e).

## **Issues of evaluation**

Many of the initiatives discussed above have proven difficult to evaluate. This is not so much the consequence of a lack of desire to undertake such an evaluation, but rather the result of several initiatives having been implemented simultaneously. By tackling the issue of emergent crime and related concerns of public safety in such a comprehensive manner, Council officers have found it difficult to attribute particular successes to specific projects (Ms Anne Malloch, City of Melbourne, in conversation with Committee staff, 22 August 2001). In an attempt to improve the monitoring of its initiatives, the Council is currently involved in a lengthy process to develop a set of safety indicators for evaluative purposes.

Regardless of these issues, the effective nature of coordinated and professional partnerships as a means of countering crime and of improving safety has been confirmed in the eyes of Council members. As Heather Scovell, Group Manager of the City of Melbourne's Community Services, explained:

At the City of Melbourne we take [partnerships] as an absolute given and we now have relationships of sufficient history and maturity to work together within different cultures' perspectives. And we have political and economic imperatives enabling us to spend a minimum time negotiating roles and responsibilities, and forming solid credibility for establishing new relationships. We feel we've gone beyond the feel-good partnerships that a city can have when trying to establish relationships on an issue, and it's now a fundamental self interest in these partnerships that brings people to the table to work with us, because it is in their interests to do that.

These relationships are formalised in a network of groups to provide coordination and advice to council, including a high level city safety forum for strategic thinking, and a series of working groups on practical actions relating to various activities of the City (Scovell 2000, p. 20).

The above section illustrates the manner in which collaboration between the Council and other concerned stakeholders has continued as a valued means of ensuring that local issues receive a comprehensive response from those organisations and authorities best placed to offer such a response. Certainly community partnerships have become an almost institutionalised means of addressing crime and safety issues in the years since the Westend project.

## **Independent agency initiatives**

### ***Victoria Police***

In addition to the numerous initiatives undertaken in partnership with other agencies, the Victoria Police have launched a number of law enforcement initiatives to reduce the level of crime and increase safety in the Melbourne CBD. These operations have targeted:

- Thefts of and from motor cars, including Crown Casino car parks;

- Crimes against the person around the Yarra River and on the Southbank precinct;
- Assaults on the public transport system;
- Crimes around licensed premises (Victoria Police, Submission to the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Investigation into Crime Trends and Perceptions in the CBD, May 2001).

In 1995/96, Victoria Police sought to counter theft from motor cars at the time when the offence represented the most significant state-wide crime increase. A number of preventative campaigns focussed on problem areas in the CBD, such as car parks and smaller streets (for example, Lt Lonsdale Street). These included the 'Look, Lock and Leave' campaign that deployed large numbers of police on foot and bicycle patrol so as to deter potential offenders and educate the public about anti-theft strategies (Superintendent A. Warren 1996, p. 1).<sup>41</sup>

In response to the increasing incidence of assault in public places, such as the King Street precinct in the Melbourne CBD, the Victoria Police launched Operation CABOOL in March 1995. This represented a state-wide objective with the common mission:

To impact on the rising trend of assaults, as well as identifying issues which may contribute to the incidence of assaults in an area, by a combination of increased visible police presence, community interaction and core policing activities (Chief Commissioner Neil Comrie 1997).

By the time Operation CABOOL finished in September 1995, the trend in assaults in public places had been reduced by 16 per cent. A further 3.6 per cent reduction had been achieved by 30 June 1996 (Chief Commissioner Neil Comrie 1997). In 1996, Operation CABOOL was awarded a Certificate of Merit in the Australian Violence Prevention Awards sponsored by the Australian Institute of Criminology (Chief Commissioner Neil Comrie 1997).

The major ongoing police operation in the Melbourne CBD has been Operation Leader, initiated with the specific aim of reducing reported crime within Postcode 3000 and increasing public perceptions of safety (Victoria Police 2001). The main thrust of the operation has been the targeting of illicit drug activity and associated crime by uniformed and plain-clothes police, particularly in the Bourke/Russell Street area of the Melbourne CBD (Victoria Police 2001).

The police have maintained a significant presence in the Melbourne CBD since January 1999. Superintendent Tony Warren, Officer in charge of Division 1, Region 1, detailed the extent of this presence in public hearings held by the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee:

We would normally have between five and six mobile patrols from the Melbourne City police station, and usually two vehicles on patrol from the city patrol group. We would normally have a presence of Operation Leader patrols, both uniform and plain-clothes, which is normally two sergeants and ten personnel on one shift per day. We would

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41 The Committee did not receive any information about more recent initiatives implemented to address the continuing problem of theft from motor vehicles in the Melbourne CBD. Nonetheless, the Committee acknowledges that Victoria Police would continue to accord a proportionate amount of attention to such a prolific offence.

have regular foot patrols... In recent times, we have also been able to increase the police presence at sporting events such as those at the MCG and Colonial Stadium. Most of these are now voluntary duty personnel, so they do not come off our day-to-day resource listing...so we have been able to get more people back onto the street (Superintendent T. Warren 2001, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, Melbourne, 28 May, p. 12).

However, Superintendent Warren did comment that there was an over-reliance on trainee officers for city law enforcement. Trainee officers leave the police academy to join the Victoria Police city patrol group for a period of up to one month where they are given training in traffic control, community interaction and foot patrol (Superintendent A. Warren 2001). Superintendent Warren noted:

I would dearly love to have a larger core of experienced personnel within the CBD. One of the difficulties I have is that as members build up their experience they are transferred out and replaced by trainee personnel (Superintendent T. Warren 2001, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, Melbourne, 28 May, p. 13).

Despite the need for more experienced personnel, the Victoria Police submission to the Committee reported a positive impact of police presence and activity on crime and antisocial behaviour (Victoria Police 2001). In March 2001, police statistics reported a reduction in total crime within Postcode 3000 by 1.6 per cent over the previous 12 months (Victoria Police 2001).

### ***Youth Substance Abuse Service***

The Youth Substance Abuse Service (YSAS) is a consortium of St Vincent's Hospital, Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre, Jesuit Social Services and the Centre for Adolescent Health. An important element of YSAS's work is youth outreach. YSAS provides outreach within the Melbourne CBD Monday through to Saturday, with extra shifts on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights (YSAS 2001). On each shift, two outreach workers and a primary health care nurse practitioner encounter significant numbers of drug-affected young people and attempt to provide primary health support and access to treatment and support agencies if required or requested (YSAS 2001). The latter may include:

- ◆ Assessment of a young person's general/emotional/mental health and follow up with referrals;
- ◆ Wound care, vein care;
- ◆ Immunisation for Hepatitis A and B;
- ◆ Prescription of symptomatic medication for withdrawal symptoms, antibiotics and contraceptive pills;
- ◆ Education concerning harm reduction techniques; and
- ◆ Supportive management of young people on methadone maintenance and/or methadone-assisted withdrawal by being able to adjust doses with a prescribed range or by adjusting the time frame for the reduction of dosage in response to a young person's individual needs.

YSAS operates on the principle that a respectful, supportive and empathetic relationship with an outreach worker is an important part of drug and alcohol treatment. The essential aim of outreach workers is to facilitate a change in the problematic drug use of young clients through this relationship and through a continuum of care (YSAS, 'Outreach teams' web site).

### ***Hanover Welfare Services, The Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul***

The three major providers of crisis accommodation in inner-Melbourne have undertaken a significant trial to build pathways out of homelessness and drug dependency for those of their inner-city clients who suffer from the consequences of such conditions (YSAS, 'Outreach teams' web site). Funded by the Victorian State Government, the trial will seek to establish clear links between crisis accommodation services and forms of drug treatment services. This would include access to drug treatment services appropriate to the particular needs of people who are homeless as well as strategies to build self-esteem, establish relationships, rebuild community networks and provide access to employment and training (Nicholson 2001).

## **Issues of support versus law enforcement**

Strategies like those of YSAS and the welfare consortium, described above, recognise that much of the antisocial activity observed within the Melbourne CBD, such as that of drug-affected individuals or of young people begging, is the activity of vulnerable individuals whose cause is best served through support. As David Murray, CEO of YSAS informed the Committee:

Since the onset of deinstitutionalisation over the last 15 years or so, or perhaps longer, the number of people with mental illness in institutions has diminished considerably. That means they are more out and about, and many of those who are wandering around the city may be behaving in strange ways or ways which may cause comment, but they are not in any way a risk to anyone. Because we work with young people we also suggest – and our workers report this consistently – that young people in many cases are using a variety of drugs to conceal underlying mental illness...

In addition, the general lack of emergency accommodation leads to people sleeping out in various locations around the CBD. Although they might appear to be somewhat different from people walking around the streets as they can be quite disturbing to look at – the nature of sleeping out means you're a bit dirty and dishevelled – we again suggest they present minimal risk to people.

From discussions with young people our workers have come to the view that young people have chosen begging as a socially acceptable way of earning an income rather than engaging in more negative behaviour such as theft. Although begging might be somewhat intrusive and perhaps uncomfortable for some people in the streets, it is not as uncomfortable as the alternatives, so it may be that an increased police blitz on that type of behaviour may introduce an unanticipated outcome of people using more extreme measures. Connected with that is the point that if people who are commonly on the streets are dispersed by police activity, it is likely that they will be replaced by others who may be less known and perhaps more difficult to manage than the ones

they replaced (David Murray 2001, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May, p. 2).

As the above comments illustrate, it was the view of organisations such as YSAS that the *causes* of begging, drug use and homelessness must be addressed if the visible presence of such activity is to be reduced, as opposed to simply displaced. Indeed, this is a point conceded by Victoria Police whose operational guidelines direct officers to engage in strategies that are consistent with principles of harm minimisation and that enable drug users to be 'diverted' to treatment programmes and support agencies, as opposed to the criminal justice system (Superintendent T. Warren 2001).

## **Crime Prevention Victoria: Building on existing initiatives**

In mid-2001, Crime Prevention Victoria (CPV) outlined a plan to form a Ministerial Forum to act as a task force on the issue of crime in the Melbourne CBD (Department of Justice 2001). The Forum's stated intention was an examination of issues such as surveillance cameras and police booths. A further priority was to investigate how the task force could:

contribute to a positive view of the CBD and alleviate the negativity that has resulted from the media sensationalism that has surrounded the debate of crime, begging and vagrancy in the CBD (Department of Justice 2001, p. 1).

The proposed Forum would operate in partnership with the Melbourne City Council. With the support of the CPV, the Melbourne City Council would conduct in-depth focus groups with the various groups that use the Melbourne CBD for different purposes (Department of Justice 2001). Key stakeholder consultation sessions with the Victorian Local Government Association, Victorian Multicultural Commission and the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria are envisaged, as well as with the City's business precinct groups and small business community (Department of Justice 2001).

Following consultation with stakeholders, and with the City Safety Forum and Victoria Police, the Ministerial Forum would develop:

A strategic planning and program delivery framework aimed at increasing the quality of life outcomes for identified high risk groups (Department of Justice 2001, p. 2).

The primary aim would be the mapping of existing programmes and the identification of service gaps so as to improve the effectiveness of state and local government services in relation to local needs (Department of Justice 2001).

## **Conclusion**

The Committee acknowledges the emergence of strategic crime and safety initiatives as a response to the publicity accorded crime and safety issues. For example, the Melbourne City Council moved to curtail antisocial activity in the King Street nightclub precinct following a particularly intensive media campaign that brought the issue sharply into public focus. Similarly, the Drugs Action Plan, developed in September 1997, and the Council's response in 1999 to the issue of begging, came after the issues had been the subject of sustained media campaigns and a subsequent surge of community concern.

To some extent the media sets the agenda for policy development in response to issues of crime and safety. Local authorities and organisations are confined to a reactive role, working to address issues as they are raised. This is not meant as a criticism of authorities such as the Council, whose intention undoubtedly is to make the city environment as safe as possible. However, the ability to take a proactive response to crime is hampered by a lack of independently compiled and easily accessible crime figures. Until these figures are available, the ability to establish and proactively respond to crime trend data will be restricted.

Despite the lack of access to current and objectively compiled crime figures, organisations such as the Melbourne City Council have worked within the limits of their strategic knowledge to implement a range of initiatives and operations that have sought to reduce crime and maximise safety in the Melbourne CBD. A number of these have proven quite effective. The success of the Westend project, in particular, demonstrates that seemingly intractable problems can be addressed through the formation of meaningful partnerships and collaborative undertakings by key stakeholders.

It is the Committee's view that community safety and crime reduction are clearly beyond the scope of any one agency or organisation acting in isolation. These are issues that require a range of coordinated responses aimed at different aspects of often complex social problems.

# 9. Community Perceptions of Crime in the Melbourne CBD

Community perceptions of crime and the threat it poses to personal safety in a particular area provide a valuable insight into the impact of crime, real or imagined, on members of the community as they go about their daily lives. Both the Melbourne City Council and the Victorian Department of Justice have been particularly proactive in attempting to gauge the perceptions of those who visit, live or work in the Melbourne CBD. In recent years these authorities have measured community perceptions by engaging consultants to conduct a series of demographically representative social surveys and focus group discussions. Reports detailing the findings have been made available to the Committee.<sup>42</sup> This has allowed the Committee access to the most recent measures of community perceptions about the nature and extent of crime in the Melbourne CBD. The following reports of these surveys are the most recent and comprehensive.

## Social survey reports

### *Newton Wayman Chong – Perceptions of safety: A research report (May 2001)*

The City of Melbourne commissioned consultants Newton Wayman Chong (NWC) to conduct research to establish and measure safety concerns in the Melbourne CBD. Five different population groups were surveyed:

- ◆ Traders;
- ◆ Residents of the Melbourne CBD;
- ◆ Residents of the City of Melbourne;
- ◆ Visitors to the Melbourne CBD in the previous six months; and
- ◆ Individuals randomly interviewed at various locations across the City.

Surveys were conducted in late March and April 2001 and the resulting data compared with that from a similarly structured survey conducted in 1999.

The studies conducted by NWC provide the most detailed research in this field. The following studies noted below were less comprehensive and proved to be of less value to the Committee's investigations.

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42 It is important to acknowledge that the greater part of information regarding community perceptions of crime and safety in the Melbourne CBD was provided by the Melbourne City Council. Attempts by the Committee to access alternative sources of information revealed a distinct lack of research into this subject.



### ***IMIS Integrated Management Information Systems – Retail Core Visit Monitoring and Market Research Program (January 2001)***

In October 1999 the City of Melbourne appointed IMIS to develop, implement and operate a Visit Monitoring System for the retail core of the Melbourne CBD. Part of this function involved a 'City Perceptions Monitor' survey conducted on a weekly basis with groups of visitors throughout the retail core (IMIS 2001). The results from the latter surveys are used below.

### ***Sweeney Research – Melbourne City Perceptions Monitor, July to December 2000 (January 2001)***

In June 1999, Sweeney Research conducted the inaugural City Perceptions Study for the City of Melbourne. The study sought to measure public perceptions in respect of the Melbourne CBD's strengths and weaknesses. It did so by interviewing Melburnians who visited the city (Sweeney Research 2001). Following the June 1999 benchmark study, Sweeney Research has continued to gather data on a quarterly basis.

### ***AMR: Quantum Harris – Safe City Qualitative Research (August 1998)***

In 1998, the City of Melbourne commissioned AMR: Quantum Harris to conduct a series of focus group discussions to provide an understanding and assessment of community perceptions of safety in the City of Melbourne. Groups were composed of those who lived in, worked in, or visited the city, either regularly or as tourists (AMR: Quantum Harris 1998). An additional group consisting of the parents of children aged 13–18 years who visited the Melbourne CBD regularly was also included in these discussions (AMR: Quantum Harris 1998).

### ***Department of Justice – Local Safety Survey for the City of Melbourne (1999–2001)***

This information is based on the telephone polling of 100 City of Melbourne residents. The results of these surveys are benchmarked against results of surveys conducted in both the general metropolitan area and across the whole state.

## **Limitations of the perception studies reviewed**

Before drawing on the relevant findings of the above surveys it is important to acknowledge their limitations as accurate measures of community perceptions. The Committee was particularly disappointed to note that the above studies only canvassed the opinions of individuals who continued to either visit or reside in the Melbourne CBD. If the views of those who refuse to visit the CBD because they perceive it to be a dangerous place are excluded, it could be argued that the results of these perception studies may be susceptible to bias.

**Some studies also relied on such limited numbers of participants that they might be justifiably dismissed as statistically insignificant. AMR: Quantum Harris researchers surveyed less than 70 persons, with these persons being then divided into a further seven categories (AMR: Quantum Harris 1998). The perceptions of the ten young people interviewed by AMR: Quantum Harris, for example, cannot be considered an accurate representation of the views of all young persons. A further limitation of the surveys was that they were 'stuck in the moment', failing to track what influenced**

**perceptions to change over time. This ultimately forced the Committee to consider the broader environment within which these changes were taking place.**

The questions asked of participants also posed a number of methodological problems. They were often vague and called for a degree of self-interpretation. This raises questions about the validity of the results. This issue is discussed further later in this chapter, in relation to the studies of NWC. Additionally, when measuring experiences of crime, the NWC study asked respondents to report crime experienced by others within their household, again raising issues of accuracy and interpretation. Such issues mean that the survey results contained within this section of the Committee's report must be viewed with a degree of caution.

Nonetheless, until such methodological issues are addressed in subsequent studies those studies referenced within the following section remain the best available indication of community views regarding crime in inner Melbourne. As well as drawing on the findings of those studies, the following section will, where appropriate, refer to written submissions and evidence presented at public hearings held during the course of the Committee's Inquiry.

## **How serious is crime in the Melbourne CBD?**

While the Melbourne CBD is generally considered to be a safe environment by those who responded to research surveys, a contradictory perception exists that the level of crime within the area is a significant cause for concern. The following two opinions, a sample of many accessed by the Committee during its Inquiry, support this research finding that community perceptions are 'in the balance'.

As a private citizen who lives in and frequents Melbourne – that is, visits the city several times a week other than for work – I am utterly satisfied that I feel perfectly safe in the city of Melbourne. I have never been subjected to any violence – I have never experienced at first hand anything of the kind that is regularly reported in the newspapers. As a parent of teenagers it does not alarm me if there are kids hanging around pinball parlours; I would be astonished if they didn't! The argument that Melbourne is undergoing some kind of law and order crisis baffles and occasionally amuses me (Jon Faine, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May 2001, p. 22).

I am a former Melbourne resident who has been living overseas for the past ten years. On my annual returns I often wander the streets of the city to browse the book and music stores, drink coffee and generally relax. But Melbourne is far from the relaxing environment it used to be. Drug dealing, taking and begging are now ubiquitous. Just a few days of observation will allow you to come to that conclusion. On my last return I was totally shocked by the incidence of begging and groups and individuals verbally abusing each other around the city (Matt, 'Your Say', @theage.com.au, 23 February 2001).

An overwhelming majority of those surveyed by NWC classified Melbourne as a safe city. Across each of the categories<sup>43</sup> no fewer than 80 per cent of respondents reported feeling

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43 Traders; Residents of the Melbourne CBD; Residents of the City of Melbourne; Visitors to the Melbourne CBD over the previous six months and individuals randomly interviewed at various locations throughout the Melbourne CBD.

safe more often than not when in the Melbourne CBD (NWC 2001). When compared to other cities, focus groups ranked Melbourne behind only Canberra as Australia's safest city (AMR: Quantum Harris 1998). Interestingly, AMR: Quantum Harris reported that those living in the Melbourne CBD, along with frequent visitors such as city-based workers, tended to feel safer than those who visited less (AMR: Quantum Harris 1998). In other words, those who perceived a greater sense of personal danger often had a less intimate involvement with the inner city and were basing their perceptions on sources of information outside their own personal experience. Of the group who felt *least* safe in the city, only 23 per cent of those non-Melbourne residents surveyed within the Melbourne CBD reported having actually seen a crime committed in the previous six-month period (NWC 2001).

However, while few participants expressed concerns about their own personal safety, a substantial majority saw crime in the Melbourne CBD as constituting a problem of some significance. Local Safety Surveys conducted in 2000 found that 67 per cent of residents within the City of Melbourne saw crime as a 'great' or 'moderate' problem in their locality (compared to 52 per cent for the state) (Department of Justice 2000).<sup>44</sup> That individuals did not see the Melbourne CBD as an unsafe environment for themselves *personally*, yet thought the area was subject to a considerable amount of criminal activity, further supports the suggestion that perceptions of crime are influenced by information received through mediums other than personal experience.

NWC reported that the most commonly reported crime *actually experienced* by residents was the somewhat nebulous category of 'harassment or threat' reported by 26 per cent of residents in 2001 (NWC 2001, p. 30). In the absence of any definition provided by the study's authors, the category of harassment was left to respondents to interpret.<sup>45</sup> Consequently, one could make the assumption that such a category includes incidents in which no crime is actually committed; for example feeling 'harassed' by the presence of beggars or threatened by the sight of a group of unruly youths.<sup>46</sup> While a significant proportion of traders also reported being subjected to harassment and threat (32%), the most common crime experienced by this group was 'burglary from your business' (39%). However, the seriousness of this problem is somewhat obscured by the lack of any comparison with the reported incidence of shop burglary, effectively shoplifting, in major retail sectors across the state. In any event, these figures suggest that the perception of crime as a 'great' or 'moderate' problem held by a considerable proportion of survey participants did not necessarily match the crime experienced by them.

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44 It is important to add the qualification that the City of Melbourne incorporates a number of areas outside of the Melbourne CBD.

45 The actual question asked of participants was: 'I am going to read out a list of crimes. For each one, I would like you to tell me if you or anyone in your household has experienced the crime in the CBD in the last 6 months? Firstly, have you or anyone in your household experienced harassment or threat?'

46 While begging may technically constitute a crime (*Vagrancy Act 1966* (Sec.7(1))) and harassment and/or threat may be interpreted within the ambit of the 'obscene, indecent, threatening language and behaviour' of the *Summary Offences Act 1966* (Sec.17(1)), there was no clarification of the question in this regard.

This is interesting insofar as what is thought of as a crime and what is officially defined as a crime by means of legislation are often poles apart.

Indeed law enforcement authorities themselves seldom interpret harassment in this manner. Of 2,176 'harassment offences' recorded by Victoria Police in 1999/2000, the greater majority were for Federal telecommunications offences or for the state offence of stalking (*Crimes Act 1958* (Sec.21a)).

In terms of crime *actually observed*, 57 per cent of Melbourne CBD residents and 47 per cent of traders reported having witnessed a crime over the course of a specified six-month period (NWC 2001). Overwhelmingly, the crimes observed involved the sale and use of drugs (NWC 2001). However, the sense of general safety reported elsewhere in this section suggests a lack of any significant personal threat attached to these observations. David Murray of the Youth Substance Abuse Service (YSAS) indirectly supported this observation when he noted that violent behaviour in the Melbourne CBD was generally confined within certain groups:

It could be within the drug-using culture that there will be older, more sophisticated drug users who will stand over younger less-sophisticated ones, but that will not necessarily spill out into being a problem for the rest of the community (David Murray, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May 2001, p. 5).

Most encouraging for those agencies that have sought to respond to issues of crime and safety in the Melbourne CBD has been the growing perception that crime *is* being addressed and that the safety of the city *is* improving. In the initial study conducted by NWC in 1999, 37 per cent of Melbourne CBD traders perceived the city as having declined in terms of safety over the previous six months. Only 9 per cent saw any improvement in safety standards over the same period (NWC 2001). However by 2001, 20 per cent of traders felt the city was safer than six months earlier (NWC 2001). The resident surveys conducted by NWC recorded similar results. In 2001, 20 per cent of residents felt the city had become more dangerous over the previous six months. This figure, however, had decreased from 40 per cent in 1999. In contrast, 22 per cent felt the city had been made safer, an increase of 9 per cent on the 1999 figures (NWC 2001).

Peter Iwaniuk, President of the Nightclub Owners Association and owner of a number of clubs throughout the Melbourne CBD, informed the Committee that:

My years of experience have shown me that basically there is evolution... From my position of operating my businesses, the evidence in front of me from running all of these clubs indicates to me that things are getting much better. I have a big investment in the city, which allows me to view ongoing community behaviour... I believe a lot of people use the city safely and are happy to come to the city. They feel very safe in the city (Peter Iwaniuk, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May 2001).

The 2001 Local Safety Survey also indicated an improvement: 59 per cent of city residents believing crime was a problem in their area (down from the 67% recorded in 2000). This was substantially closer to the 54 per cent of respondents across the state who believed that crime was a problem in their own local area (Department of Justice 2001). AMR: Quantum Harris research was more emphatic, reporting that focus group participants were 'almost all' of the belief that Melbourne is now a safer city than it once was (AMR: Quantum Harris 1998, p. 20).

In the various studies conducted, participants nominated a number of initiatives as having contributed to an increased level of safety within the inner city. These included an increased police presence, bright lighting, safe city cameras and secure taxi ranks (NWC 2001; AMR Quantum Harris 1998). A general increase in the amount of activity on the city's streets was

also highlighted as a beneficial development in respect of community safety. Rosalin Sadler of The Flinders Quarter Residents Association wrote to the Committee, noting:

The increase in residential numbers has directly led to a perception of safer streets. Flinders Lane was [once] a somewhat threatening environment and it is reasonably alive now, and safe. There is no doubt that the constant increase in residential numbers is the way to civilise this or any other city (R. Sadler, Letter to the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee, 11 May 2001).

Such results constitute a significant affirmation of the time and resources invested in these projects by the stakeholders concerned.

### ***Which crimes cause particular concern?***

Drugs were overwhelmingly perceived to be *the* crime and safety issue for individuals visiting, working and living in the Melbourne CBD. Certainly drugs and related issues appear to have become more prominent and sharply defined over the last few years. In the 1998 AMR: Quantum Harris study, the rather vague 'evidence of drugs' was reported as being a factor that made people feel unsafe in the city (AMR: Quantum Harris 2001, p. 18). By 2001, drug-related issues clearly dominated the responses of those surveyed as to factors that made them feel unsafe (NWC 2001).<sup>47</sup> Similarly, Sweeney Research reported an overall upward trend in concern over drugs in the 18 months to December 2000 (Sweeney Research 2001). Surveys conducted by the IMIS group also fitted this trend, with 'drugs/crime' nominated as the least liked element of the City of Melbourne. Given the visibility of the street trade in drugs, it was not surprising that people who spent the most time in the city were those who saw drugs as a bigger issue (37% of residents, 24% of Melbourne CBD workers and students, and 14% of those who lived within 10kms) (Sweeney Research 2001). It is worth mentioning that the largest group of individuals who saw drug use as the most negative aspect of the Melbourne CBD was the same group who felt *safest* in the city.

Despite this lack of personal threat, crimes involving knives and syringes were also found to be of particular concern for those frequenting the Melbourne CBD. Certainly the extent to which crimes involving these weapons were thought to be a problem was significantly higher in the city (36%) than in the rest of the state (25%) (Department of Justice 2001).

Interestingly, other common factors that encouraged the perception of the Melbourne CBD as being unsafe had no actual connection to crime. For example,

The presence of 'undesirables', namely groups of people hanging around and beggars / street kids / homeless people and drunken people were also major areas of concern across all respondent groups (Newton Wayman Chong (NWC) 2001, p. iii).

A significant proportion of those surveyed were prepared to name 'Asian gangs' as a factor that made them feel unsafe (NWC 2001, p. iii). This of course begs the question as to why these particular groups of people were perceived as endangering the personal safety of the broader community, particularly given the relatively low rates of personal assault actually

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47 When questioned as to 'What are the factors that make you feel unsafe in the CBD?', the most frequent responses were: 'Drug taking / usage' (46 % of traders, 38% of Melbourne CBD residents, 36% of City of Melbourne (CoM) residents, 36% of non-CoM residents) and 'drug dealing' (42% of traders, 38% of Melbourne CBD residents, 33% of CoM residents and 33% of non-CoM residents).

experienced. Across all groups represented in the Melbourne CBD, approximately 9.5 per cent reported that they, or somebody in their household, had been the victim of 'a form' of assault (NWC 2001, pp. 13, 30, 47, 63). This fear of certain 'groups of people' provided a significant contrast with the tendency for respondents to highlight increased activity as a factor that increased city safety. 'Gangs of people / Asian gangs / teenage gangs' were nominated by 37 per cent of traders as making them feel unsafe. However, 15 per cent suggested a 'lack of people' made them feel less safe (NWC 2001, p. 45).

### ***Which areas of the Melbourne CBD cause particular concern?***

The areas within the Melbourne CBD that caused individuals particular concern were understandably those same areas where the above-mentioned activities were perceived to occur. The most significant reason for feeling unsafe in a given area was the presence of drug-related activity. There was reported to be a clear link existing between drug problems and the area encompassing Russell and Bourke streets (NWC 2001). Likewise, gangs of people and the presence of beggars were factors that influenced the public's perception of a particular area's supposed safety. Table 9.1 shows the findings of the NWC study, which was the most comprehensive study in respect of areas of concern.

**Table 9.1: Three most frequently mentioned areas of the city avoided due to safety concerns (by respondent group)**

<b>Three Areas Most Nominated By Respondent Group</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
<b>Traders</b>	
Russell Street	27
Bourke Street	27
Corner Russell and Bourke Streets	22
<b>City of Melbourne residents living in CBD</b>	
Russell Street	40
Corner Russell and Bourke Streets	25
Alleyways/Laneways	17
<b>City of Melbourne residents not living in CBD</b>	
Russell Street	30
Bourke Street	27
Swanston Walk	26
<b>Non City of Melbourne Residents</b>	
Flinders Street Station	22
Russell Street	20
Swanston Walk	20
<b>Random Interview Respondents</b>	
Russell Street	22
Alleyways/Laneways	18
Corner Russell and Bourke Streets	15

Source: Newton Wayman Chong 2001, *Perceptions of Safety: A Research Report*, pp. ii–iii.

Flinders Street railway station was also nominated as an area of some concern by those individuals who had less cause to use this central transport facility and did so infrequently. Of those who neither worked nor lived in the Melbourne CBD, Flinders street station was *the* area perceived as most unsafe (NWC 2001). This suggests that a lack of familiarity with

what is a traditional meeting venue for young people may be at least partially responsible for these perceptions. Only 3 per cent of traders – those who would be expected to have more frequent experience of this area – nominated Flinders Street station as an area of the Melbourne CBD in which they felt most unsafe (NWC 2001).

Interestingly, the areas considered unsafe have changed in the public's perception over time. When AMR: Quantum Harris undertook its initial focus group research in 1998, King Street was clearly perceived to be the most unsafe area in the city (AMR: Quantum Harris 1998). By March/April 2001, King Street was no longer seen as especially unsafe, ranked towards the middle of a list of some 20 nominated 'unsafe' areas by respondents to the NWC surveys (NWC 2001). Mr Iwaniuk spoke of this evolution when addressing the Committee:

It [King Street] is now the centre of the city. People have no problems. That negative thing about King Street being a terrible place to go is all gone. People don't care about that old news. They are in there. You only have to drive through; you have the aquarium, the Rialto and lots and lots of restaurants popping up. It really is a great spot (Peter Iwaniuk, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May 2001, p. 56).

Such changes are a positive reflection on the implementation of crime prevention initiatives such as those noted in the previous chapter. However, it is important to recognise that other factors may also have played a role. Most notably, there may have been a change in the nature and type of crime occurring in the area, or, indeed, on the nature of crime reporting in respect of the area in question.

## **Consequences of community perceptions?**

A further issue to be considered in relation to perceptions of crime is that of the impact that a negative public perception has upon the functioning of the Melbourne CBD. City populations, researchers have noted, are sensitive to crime (Adams 1998). Once an area has an unsafe reputation, business investment, families and tourists may tend to turn away.

Mr Piper informed the Committee that 'the average person's concern for their personal space and personal wellbeing' was affecting the performance of the retail sector in the Melbourne CBD (Timothy Piper, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May 2001, p. 10). The witness informed the Committee that, as a consequence of 'drugs and crime in the city', the Melbourne CBD had experienced a reduction in the percentage of metropolitan retail spending from approximately 11 per cent to 7 per cent (p. 10). Those businesses within areas perceived to be most unsafe have reported a significant downturn in trade. In 1999, fast food franchise 'Hungry Jacks', reported a 60 per cent drop in sales from its Russell Street/Bourke street outlet over the preceding three to four years (City of Melbourne 1999a).

In contrast, while nightclub owner Peter Iwaniuk expressed similar sentiments as to the damaging impact of negative perceptions, he attributed the creation of this perception to media reports rather than the actual existence of drugs and crime:

Quite honestly, the media destroyed the street... It was not as bad as what it was made out to be. Sure, the odd incident would happen, but the media used to blow it out of

proportion, and that has the ability to destroy a city or a precinct very easily. ...[A]nd it just continually pounded and pounded the King Street area and gave it its bad name (Peter Iwaniuk, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May 2001, p. 56).

In reality, there appears to have been very little research conducted that seeks to explore the consequences of a negative media perception of the Melbourne CBD. Under further questioning from Committee members as to the factors that may have contributed to the retail downturn in the Melbourne CBD, for example the existence of major regional shopping centres such as Chadstone, Mr Piper admitted that there was an absence of any strong market research, ultimately concluding:

I think we all look for an easy scapegoat and we all look for some reason to say that the government should be able to fix this or the police should be there in greater numbers (Timothy Piper, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May 2001, p. 10).

In fact, surveys conducted by Sweeney Research found that for those who neither lived nor worked within the Melbourne CBD the major negative associated with the city was not drugs or beggars, but a lack of parking (Sweeney Research 2001).

Until more in-depth market research is conducted or, at the least, until perception monitors take account of those unwilling to visit the city, our understanding of the impact that public perceptions are having upon the functioning of the area as a retail and commercial capital will be severely limited. Melbourne City Council began monitoring the number of visits to the retail core of the Melbourne CBD in November 1999. While this information is of limited use to the Committee, given the absence of any data prior to this date, it will doubtless provide useful information for future studies.

## **Conclusion**

Methodological issues aside, the perception measures considered above suggest a significant disparity between the level and nature of crime actually experienced and perceptions of the level and nature of crime throughout the Melbourne CBD. Similarly, there were notable differences observed in the perceptions of danger held by those who used the city frequently and those who did not. What these differences seemed to entail was that those with a more intimate association with the Melbourne CBD felt it to be significantly safer than did infrequent visitors. This supports the notion that personal experience is perhaps a secondary influence in the formation of perceptions of crime and safety. From where, then, are those who are infrequent visitors to the city gathering their evidence? Also of interest in respect of information sources is the remarkable consensus as to just which areas of the Melbourne CBD present the greatest threat to personal safety. If such a large proportion of individuals are wary of Russell Street, for example, they will be less prepared to frequent the area and will therefore be more likely to be basing their perceptions on information received from an outside source rather than on their own personal experience. In this case the Committee must turn its attention to the sources of information upon which the public's perceptions are based.



# 10. Community Perceptions and Media Representations

Research findings highlight that, for some people, the fact that they have merely heard that some areas are unsafe has led them to feeling unsafe in these areas. Others hold personal fears for their safety, particularly in relation to assault and physical violence. This is even though very few of these people have been assaulted or robbed.

The media play an important role in this, and negative media coverage has been consistently identified as the major challenge we face in effectively influencing the perceptions of people about the degree to which they are safe in the city.

(Wellington Lee, Melbourne City Councillor 2000, p. 12)

Surveys and focus group research indicate that personal experience of crime plays a limited role in the development of perceptions of the extent and nature of crime in the Melbourne CBD. From where, then, have the general public drawn the information upon which they have based the popular perception that the Melbourne CBD is an environment characterised by a high incidence of crime?

It could be argued that for certain issues the media is *the* primary source of information outside of the bounds of direct experience. Criminal activity is one such issue, something few people experience with any degree of regularity but something encountered on a daily basis through the media. In this sense the media plays an important role in shaping public opinion, a conclusion consistently reached by the ever-expanding body of research into media influence on public opinion (Teece & Makkai 2000; Hall et. al. 1978). This influence stems largely from the media's control of information as it flows from primary and authoritative sources of information to the general public (Hall, et. al. 1978). The ability of media organisations to impart an opinion on the quality and validity of this information, either through editorialising or simply through the language used by reporters, can be particularly influential. Superintendent Tony Warren, the Victoria Police officer responsible for Police Division 1, Section 1, which includes the Melbourne CBD, provided a specific example of the media's influence in this regard:

Our media liaison unit is pretty professional...and often puts out positive spins on different stories. There was a recent media release about police increasing their patrols leading up to the Olympic Games. The crime department assisted us by moving in and doing a different targeted style of approach to Operation Leader and they decided to put out a media release at the corner of Russell and Little Bourke streets. [However], the spin of the story was not that the police numbers were necessarily increasing but that not more than about 100 metres away from where the release was being staged there was a drug deal going on, so it just put that negative spin back on to it

(Superintendent A.J. Warren, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May 2001, p. 16).

Group Manager for Community Services for the City of Melbourne, Ms Heather Scovell, informed the Committee about the Council's difficulties with the media's representation of crime in the Melbourne CBD and the Council's efforts to handle safety issues in a positive manner:

Late last year the newspapers ran a number of articles about begging and there was significant concern about begging in the city. Our constituents came to us asking for assistance from Council in dealing with the issue. The issue was picked up quite strongly by the media and run with quite emotive language. When Council decided to undertake some research on the issue and look at some services for people who might be in need on the street — and we have a book called the Helping Out Booklet, which gives information about services — it was reported very much as cleaning up the city and as an attack on city begging. Whereas really it was approached very much from the angle of, 'Let us understand the issue, let us deal with it, and what are the sorts of things we need to do to build the city confidence in managing the issue?' (Heather Scovell, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May 2001, p. 31).

While such reports may not necessarily change the public's opinion on issues such as begging, they do play a role in setting the parameters of public opinion. The issue is not seen as one of people who may need shelter, food or some other system of support, rather it is seen as a crime problem requiring a law enforcement response.

Ironically, by setting the boundaries of public discourse, the media itself can serve to create identities for individuals whose activities are reported within a certain structural format. For example, researchers have long taken account of the 'media reports promoting negative images of youth street activities' (Perrone & White 2000, p. 1) and the manner in which illegal and/or predatory criminal activities have been disproportionately attributed to young people (Sercombe 1997). Not only does this encourage a perception of young people as a threat, particularly when they congregate in groups, but it structures a role such groups are expected to fulfil. As David Murray, Chief Executive Officer, Youth Substance Abuse Service (YSAS) informed the Committee:

One of the common themes we identify with the young people we have been working with is that of social exclusion and marginalisation. Connected to that is the sense of not belonging and being excluded and in some way different from others. The more publicity there is of the nature we are talking about, the more it tends to confirm an identity for them that they are in some way pariahs in the community (David Murray, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May 2001, p. 5).

The public's perception of threat only furthers this confirmation. As Bernie Geary, Director of Programs at Jesuit Social Services, told the Committee:

An older person like myself who is walking down the street and sees a group of young people very often crosses the road to go around them, but in doing so creates a perception in the minds of the young people which alienates them. It can be the case with the young people who are just a little rowdy, as many are, that the perception of

alienation is created because of older people feeling fearful (Bernie Geary, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May 2001, p. 41).

In this respect, the *manner* in which the media reports on crime and safety can make a considerable impact on the interpretation of these issues. Indeed, even in circumstances where an individual *has* experienced an isolated incident of criminal activity, external sources of information may encourage the perception that this incident is both common and characteristic of an entire area. Or alternatively, an unkempt youth might be perceived as a potential threat to one's personal safety. As Councillor David Risstrom noted:

Those who simply get their information from the media alone may associate what is created in the media with what they see when they come to the city and therefore view the city inaccurately (Councillor David Risstrom, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May 2001, p. 56).

In the course of the Committee's Inquiry, several authoritative witnesses were prepared to argue that the media's reporting of crime in the Melbourne CBD was both irresponsible and inaccurate. Indeed a significant consensus became apparent, with several witnesses noting the tendency of certain media organisations to exaggerate the level of crime and violence in the Melbourne CBD. It is telling to note that this view was expressed by both the City of Melbourne and Victoria Police, custodians of the 'official' statistics on crime in the Melbourne CBD. Councillor Risstrom stated:

I know from a personal perspective, being on the police and community consultative committee, that there is often a disparity between the actual facts and the reporting of incidents around the city... I make the point that those who engage in the intellectual work necessary to understand that crime rates are decreasing, those who would understand all the work that is being done, would understand that the crime rates are not accurately represented in the media (Councillor David Risstrom, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May 2001, p. 56).

Superintendent Tony Warren was similarly dismissive of the media's coverage:

The police activity, presence and cooperative approach to crime in the CBD has resulted in some success in lowering levels of crime and disorder. On this basis, Victoria Police would reject the media view of crime and disorder being out of control in Melbourne's CBD (Superintendent A.J. Warren, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May 2001, p. 12).

These views received further support from those with professional knowledge and personal experience of the illicit activity that can and does sometimes occur on the city's streets. Father Peter Norden, Director of Jesuit Social Services (JSS), noted the tendency for perceptions of crime to rise or fall independent of actual changes in the level of crime being committed:

I think the media is a very important shaper of public attitudes and the perception of danger in the city is largely shaped by what is in fact sometimes an opportunistic media defining a problem narrowly as a serious criminal problem (Father Peter Norden, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May 2001, p. 40).

David Murray of YSAS offered the following observation:

The first point — and you probably hear this from others — is that we believe the level of violence in the CBD has been exaggerated, particularly in the way in which the *Herald Sun* treats the issue of people in the city who may appear to be different. Our workers are in and around the city all the time, particularly in the evenings and nights, and do not report that they feel at risk in those locations. The media coverage, particularly from the newspapers, seems to us to be divisive and ultimately disrespectful of people who are suffering a whole range of the social and personal problems, particularly mental illness (David Murray, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May 2001, p. 2).

It is important to emphasise that the above statements were not in any way intended to deny the existence of crime in the Melbourne CBD. Indeed Bernie Geary acknowledged how an increased inner-city street trade in heroin had brought with it an increased incidence of petty crime committed by 'desperately addicted' young people (Geary 2001, p. 40).

What Mr Geary questioned was whether the perception of crime encouraged by certain media reports, and the threat it poses to the general public, is a reasonable reflection of reality.

It is likewise important to emphasise that the Committee is not suggesting, nor did it encounter any evidence to suggest, that the media is acting in concert to exaggerate the problem for its own ends. Certainly the Committee acknowledges the point made by Mr Jon Faine that 'there is not one media but there are many' (Faine 2001, p. 20). Different media organisations have different editorial policies and practices in deciding what news to report and how to report it. In a written submission to the Committee, the editor of the *Melbourne Leader*, a community newspaper, highlighted the differences between the local print media and the metropolitan dailies:

Community newspapers differ to daily newspapers because we are free, have a weekly circulation and are very parochial to our readers. This also makes us more accountable to our local communities – reader loyalty and respect is hard to build up, but can be very easy to lose if we are seen to be unfair, inaccurate or unnecessarily sensational... (Laeta Antonysen, written Submission to the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee, Inquiry into Crime Trends and Perceptions in the Melbourne CBD, 17 May 2001, p. 2).

As radio commentator Terry Laidler (1997, p. 105) has noted in the past:

What we're really talking about is a whole range of organisations, institutions and people doing a whole range of different things, with very specific mediums... I don't picture a dark room somewhere where the magnates get together and smoke their cigars while deciding what the media will treat and what they will ignore.

In fact, in contrast to a conspiratorial media agenda through which the content of the daily news is dictated, media organisations are often merely reporting the views of others who may be pushing a certain point in order to meet their own agenda. As Bernie Geary noted:

I suppose the media has not, over the past 15 years in Melbourne, found it difficult to get hold of public figures and organisations that will actually contribute to the sensationalism of inner-urban drug wars, strife, gangland stuff and so on. It has never been a problem for the media to get hold of people who may work in the field or on its fringes to contribute to that, so I suppose we do not necessarily need to blame the media for it. Sometimes the media is only a tool (Bernie Geary, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May 2001, p. 41).

Superintendent Warren provided a strong example of how minority interests can 'manipulate' the media so as to get their views across and how the media, in turn, can allow themselves be used in such a way, to get a story.

I think there has been a push by certain sectors of the retailing area in particular to have an increase in police presence in the city. They would like the police presence to go back to an era when there were police on every point, when they were doing point duty, and have the visible police presence in the city increased. They believe that by promoting the criminal activity in the CBD the police will be increased in numbers (Supt. A.J. Warren, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May 2001, p. 12).

This was later confirmed by Mr Timothy Piper, Executive Director of the Australian Retailers Association of Victoria. Mr Piper acknowledged that a campaign was being waged by a minority group of traders who were using willing media outlets to promote the level of crime in the Melbourne CBD so as to gain an increased police presence (Piper 2001). Indeed, such activity often does have an indirect impact on the crime and safety issues of a particular area. Father Peter Norden noted:

Where there is publicity leading to political pressure, which then leads to a police response, you will often see an increase in crime [rates] because there is a greater degree of surveillance. But the criminal activity may well occur more quietly elsewhere without the same attention (Father Peter Norden, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May 2001, p. 41).

Regardless of their source, certain media organisations have elected to publicise such accounts without critical analysis and, all too often, without substantiating the allegations through more authoritative sources. As Councillor Ristrom stated:

We find that the media tends to rely on too few vocal spokespeople to obtain their information and that well-organised, accessible safety data would not only better inform the media but also provide an accurate picture of safety in the city for all (Councillor David Ristrom, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May 2001, p. 56).

Instead, by simply presenting what may well be minority views as mainstream, these organisations have allowed misleading accounts of important issues to circulate. In effect, the media focus has been upon negative aspects of crime in the Melbourne CBD and there appeared to be a distinct reluctance to compromise this focus. Superintendent Warren told the Committee:

I have never been contacted by the media for a positive spin on crime in the City of Melbourne... No one has ever approached me on the positives within the CBD and the activity we are doing (Supt. A.J. Warren, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May 2001, p. 16).

Those who had succeeded in addressing representatives of the media as to the positive aspects of Melbourne's CBD, such as Mr Peter Iwaniuk, Nightclub Owners Association, complained of such comments being 'buried in the back pages' (Iwaniuk 2001, p. 56). Others, such as Mr Piper, noted that the worth of any positive comments made were outweighed by the sheer number of negative comments (Piper, 2001).

The reason appears to be commercial self-interest. The Committee heard evidence from a number of witnesses who argued that the media reported in the manner that they did because it 'sells newspapers.' Superintendent Warren summed up the reality of this commercial imperative:

I think that saying Melbourne is one of the safest cities in the world does not sell too many newspapers, but saying that street begging is out of control and that we have lost the plot in Melbourne will sell newspapers. I suppose we are into reality TV, reality radio and reality newspapers to some extent. That is just what sells papers. No one is really interested in the better picture; they are always looking at the darker side of the coin (Supt. A.J. Warren, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May 2001, p. 14).

Commentator Jon Faine provided a blunt observation:

With commercial media, whether it is newspaper sales, audience figures for commercial radio or ratings figures for TV, it is entirely about bums on seats; that is the only consideration. The executives who are hired, the talent that is hired – everybody is measured only by how many members of audience unit they deliver per timeslot. That is the sole criteria by which they succeed or fail, by which their personal contracts are reviewed or not renewed, and by which their careers rise and fall. Their remuneration is exactly covered by how much audience they deliver or how many papers they sell (Jon Faine, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May 2001, p. 20).

However, if it is commercially beneficial for the news media to publicise accounts of violent or sensational crimes, then we must come full circle and acknowledge that any exaggerated perception of crime is linked to the public appetite for the reporting of such crime. As Garland (1990, p. 239) has noted:

Our capacity to enjoy crime – at least in the form of crime stories – leads the media to highlight the most vicious, horror-laden tales, which in turn serve to enhance the fears which crime evokes. The linked emotions of fascination and fear thus reinforce each other through the medium of crime news and crime thrillers.

Ultimately, responsible journalistic practice becomes the issue. A position of such influence should temper the commercial motivations of certain organisations and, consequently, the willingness to satisfy the more 'voyeuristic' demands of human curiosity.

The Committee notes the reluctance of media spokespersons to expand upon these issues or to provide any alternative explanation for the manner in which crime is reported, despite specific invitation to do so.

Mr Neil Mitchell of Radio 3AW, in response to the Committee's invitation to attend, noted:

In my experience, committees investigating news organisations and journalistic judgements are not a healthy concept. While I understand the motives behind your request to appear [before the Committee], I am uncomfortable with the implications and indeed the premise, which seem to be that the reporting is wrong (Neil Mitchell, Letter to Committee, 2 May 2001).

Given the submissions of those who did respond to the Committee's inquiries, it seems that there is good cause for this defensiveness. An exaggerated emphasis upon certain issues, such as violent crime, was reported to have had a notable impact on widespread perceptions of crime. The economic imperative thought to drive much of this exaggeration is little justification when one considers its effects. Indeed, few responsible adults would allow their children access to potentially damaging films merely because they were demanded. As Teece and Makkai (2000) have noted, formal guidelines on the reporting of controversial subjects such as suicide and mental illness have been collaboratively drawn up by the media and government agencies. The same, they argue, should be done for drugs and crime reporting:

Guidelines on reporting drugs and crime could encourage journalists to refrain from either glamorising or trivialising drugs and crime, to check the reliability of the sources, and to consult experts as appropriate. Most importantly, guidelines would emphasise the media's duty to report drugs and crime in a manner that takes account of the public interest. Such guidelines would encourage news professionals to show greater concern for their work's impact on popular, and ultimately political, discourse about drugs and crime in deciding which events become news (Teece & Makkai 2001, p. 6).

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# PART D: Crime Reporting and the Print Media

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## 11. Print Media Reporting of Crime in the Melbourne CBD: An Introduction

Thus far this report has looked at crime in the Melbourne CBD as it actually is reported through police statistics. It also has looked at ways in which individuals and organisations such as the City of Melbourne have responded to crime occurring within the city's boundaries.

This Part switches its attention to one of the key players in the way in which crime is perceived in society – the media. In both its print and visual forms the media plays an extremely influential and powerful role in creating perceptions of crime in any community.

This Part will concentrate upon the print media only. It will look at crime news articles over the period 1995–2000 in *The Age* and *Herald Sun*.

The opening chapter, 'Newspaper Reporting of Crime in the Melbourne CBD – A Content Analysis', will focus upon the *content* of the articles of the newspapers in the area of crime for the specified period.

Some features of the content analysis located in Chapter 12 include (but are not restricted to):

- ◆ The types of crime that are reported;
- ◆ When they are reported;
- ◆ A specific section on drug-related crime;
- ◆ A section on the representation of youth in the media; and
- ◆ The media as 'policymaker'.

This chapter is followed by 'How does Media Reporting Correspond to Officially Recorded Crime', an analysis that compares the official data available with regard to crime in the Melbourne CBD with the data taken from the print media content analysis. The aim of this examination is to discover whether there is a difference between the levels and type of crime as collated in the official data and what the newspapers report as 'crime news'.



# 12. Newspaper Reporting of Crime in the Melbourne CBD – A Content Analysis

The media play a significant role in informing and shaping popular perceptions of crime and social deviance. For the majority of Australians, knowledge about criminal activity within the community does not stem from first-hand experience of offending or victimisation, nor does it come from academic research. For most people this comes as second-hand knowledge and is transmitted through sources such as the daily newspaper or nightly news broadcast. As such, the images produced and articulated through the printed media permeate popular consciousness and influence societal perceptions of crime in a way that is largely beyond the scope of other sources of information on crime such as police, policy advisors or academics. As Bessant (1997, p. 23) points out, 'The enormous communicative power, the reach of the media and its capacity to influence community ideas and perceptions is unprecedented'. While examining official crime statistics provides us with a picture of crime that is officially recorded by police, a consideration of print media provides an important comparative base in order to understand the construction of crime and to separate images of crime from reality.

The aim of this research is to examine the ways in which the mainstream print media report on crime and related issues in the Melbourne CBD, in order to compare the reportage with officially recorded crime. For the purposes of this Inquiry, crime reports selected for the sample included all stories relating to specific criminal acts, policing or drug-related activity within the Melbourne CBD and any feature pieces on crime and related issues within the geographical confines of the study.

## Collecting the data

The major Victorian newspapers *The Age* and the *Herald Sun* were selected as sources of the sample of articles because of their large circulation and demographic representation. Given that these two newspapers cater to different audience demographics, the selection of both provided a comparison of how different media organisations report on crime issues. All articles concerning crime and drugs in the Melbourne CBD, between 1 January 1995 and 31 December 2000, were collected for analysis. Articles were collected for the sample if they mentioned a specific crime and geographical location within the boundaries set for the study or if they were related to general crime issues within the Melbourne CBD. A total of 601 articles were collected for the sample – 347 of those were published in the *Herald Sun* and 254 in *The Age*. These included routine reports, in-depth features, editorial/opinion pieces and expert opinion pieces.

A multi-method collection process was used in order to collect the most representative sample possible. The clipping service from the Alcohol and Other Drugs Council of Australia (ADCA) was consulted, together with the clipping service from the Melbourne City Council (MCC). The vast majority of articles, however, were collected using the electronic databases (CD-ROM) and microfilm collections housed at the Victorian Parliamentary Library. The collection process involved the following:

- ◆ Initial keyword searches were carried out on the electronic database for both *The Age* and *Herald Sun* for each year of the period 1995–2000.
- ◆ Additional articles were collected from Microfilm collections housed at the Parliamentary Library.

The articles were then categorised and entered into a *Microsoft Excel* database recording all details for a content analysis. Details recorded for each article included the date, the day of the week, the page number, the type of article, and any sources used including statistical sources. Information regarding the major themes of each article, any drugs mentioned and policy suggestions made were also recorded.

## Limitations

The sample does not claim to be an exhaustive collection of articles published in the print media concerning crime in the Melbourne CBD. In particular, time constraints of the study did not allow for an examination of local newspapers, which would have provided an interesting comparison between local reporting and the reporting of the mainstream press. In addition, the sample is restricted to the print media and excludes other forms of media such as television news and radio.

## Crime in the news

The number of reports published on crime in the Melbourne CBD between 1995 and 2000 can be seen in the following table.

**Table 12.1: Number of articles per year 1995–2000, by newspaper**

Year	<i>Herald Sun</i>	<i>The Age</i>	Total
1995	65 (54.6)	54 (45.4)	119
1996	64 (62.1)	39 (37.9)	103
1997	64 (55.7)	51 (44.3)	115
1998	43 (51.8)	40 (48.2)	83
1999	61 (67.0)	30 (33.0)	91
2000	50 (55.6)	40 (44.4)	90
<b>Total</b>	<b>347 (57.7)</b>	<b>254 (42.3)</b>	<b>601</b>

Note: Percentage in parentheses

The *Herald Sun* consistently published a larger percentage of articles on crime in the Melbourne CBD than did *The Age*. This was particularly the case in 1999 when articles from the *Herald Sun* constituted 67.0 per cent of total reports.

Across the entire period, the *Herald Sun* published 57.7 per cent of all articles in the sample and *The Age* published 42.3 per cent. In 1998, however, *The Age* published just under half of the total number of reports (48.2%).

The peak year for reporting on crime in the Melbourne CBD was 1995, with a total of 119 articles – 65 from the *Herald Sun* and 54 from *The Age*. Conversely, 1998 was the year with the least number of reports (n=83).

In addition to the examination of annual figures on crime reporting, analysis was also made on a monthly and daily basis, from which some interesting patterns emerge.

## When is crime reported?

### Monthly distribution of articles

There has been little, if any, academic analysis of trends in the monthly distribution of articles reporting criminal activity. The Committee undertook an analysis of the sample used in order to understand whether any discernible trend existed.

**Figure 12.1: Number of articles within the *Herald Sun* and *The Age* by months 1995–2000**

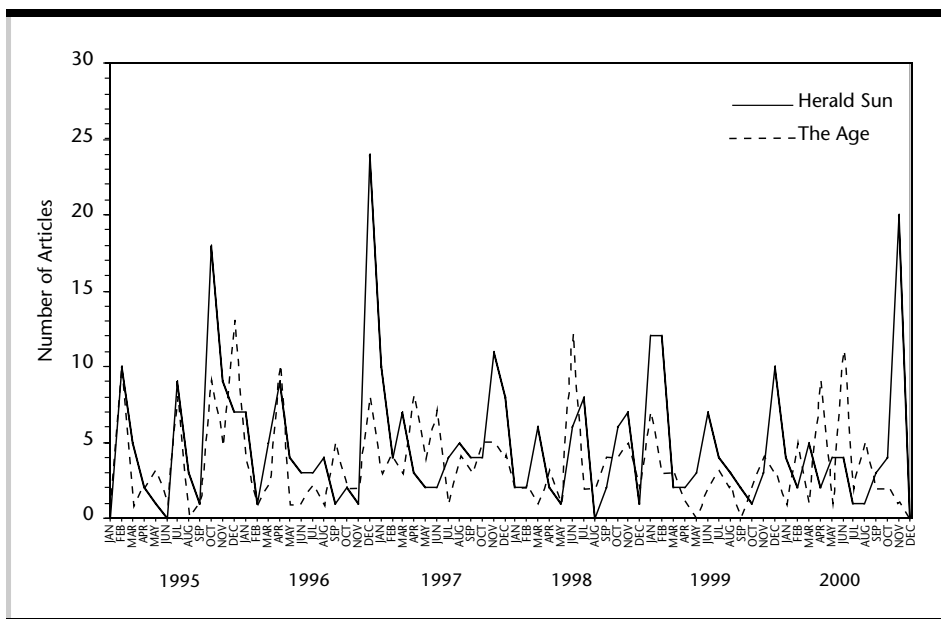


Figure 12.1 illustrates the spread of reporting across the months for the two papers collectively. As it shows, crime reporting was spread across all months, with the highest percentage of articles occurring in December 1996 and no articles appearing in December 2000.

The greatest percentage of articles on crime in the *Herald Sun* per month was 6.9 per cent in December 1996 (n=24). Although the top month for reporting varied with each year of the study, the last three months of the year and the first two months of the year emerged as popular months for reporting.<sup>48</sup>

48 There were a number of months in which there were no *Herald Sun* reports on crime in the CBD. These were January 1995, June 1995, August 1998 and December 2000. All follow or are followed by a month with a relatively high proportion of articles.

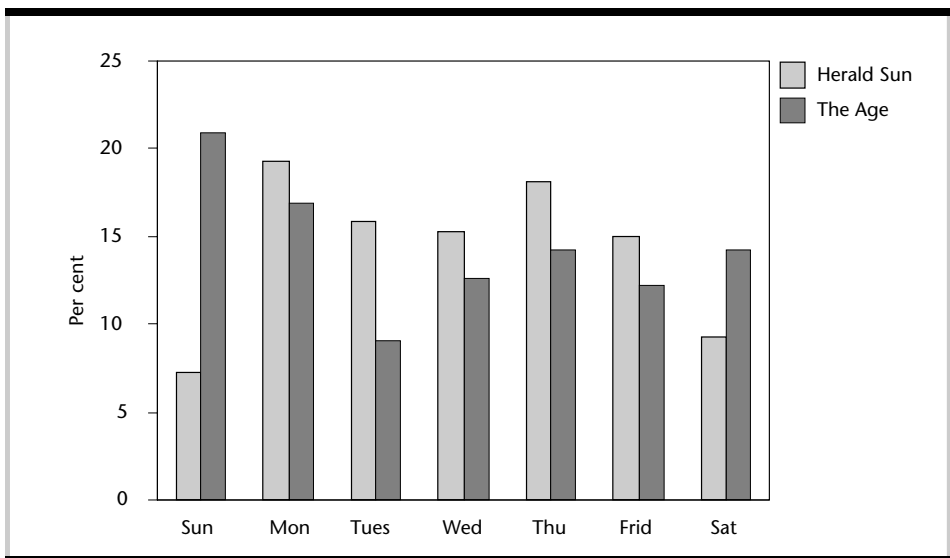
For *The Age*, December 1995 was the month with the highest proportion of articles on crime, with 5.1 per cent (n=13). Unlike the *Herald Sun*, the months of *The Age's* highest percentage of reportage on crime in the Melbourne CBD were April and June. Furthermore, while December 1996 was the month with the greatest number of reports in the *Herald Sun* (6.9%) it was a lower reporting month for *The Age* (3.1%).<sup>49</sup>

### **Day of week articles appeared**

Similar to the monthly distribution of articles, there has been little analysis undertaken as to whether reports of criminal activity are more likely to feature on some days of the week rather than others. The analysis undertaken by the Committee revealed some interesting findings in this regard.

There was a spread in reporting on crime in the Melbourne CBD across the week. Overall, Monday emerged as the day with the greatest number of reports, however the high reportage days for each paper differed quite markedly.

**Figure 12.2: Reporting by day of week for *The Age* and *Herald Sun* 1995–2000**



Of the total crime reports for *The Age*, 20.9 per cent were published on Sundays (n=53), representing a particularly high reportage of crime stories by *The Sunday Age*. Only 7.2 per cent of crime reports in the *Herald Sun* appeared in its Sunday paper (n=25). Monday was the peak day for the *Herald Sun*, with 19.3 per cent of crime reports (n=67).

### **Type of articles**

Our analysis shows that both daily newspapers use different types of reportage in covering crime stories. For example, with regard to crimes such as drug trafficking and begging it is common to have, in any given period, a 'straightforward' narrative or report of the actual crime, possibly a feature pertaining to the more general themes of drug use in the city (this may or may not form part of a series over an extended period of time), an opinion piece, a

<sup>49</sup> As with the *Herald Sun*, there were some months that *The Age* did not report on crime in the CBD. These were August 1995, May 1999, September 1999 and December 2000.

'your say' or vox populi piece and, if the issue is perceived of as sufficiently serious, an editorial.

The articles collected for the content analysis were organised into four main categories:

1. routine reports,
2. in-depth articles,
3. editorial/opinion pieces, and
4. expert opinion pieces – articles written by academics or key researchers in the area.<sup>50</sup>

Table 12.2 illustrates the percentage of reports in each category.

**Table 12.2: Percentage of each type of article 1995–2000, by newspaper** <sup>51</sup>

<b>Year</b>	<b><i>Herald Sun</i></b>	<b><i>The Age</i></b>	<b>Combined</b>
Routine	73.5	69.3	71.7
In depth	19.6	14.6	17.5
Editorial/opinion	5.2	13.0	8.5
Expert opinion	0.6	1.6	1.0
Other	1.2	1.6	1.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

### ***Routine reports***

Routine report made up the vast majority of reports collected over the period. These included day-to-day reports on crime and related issues in the Melbourne CBD, including news briefs and general news items. There were a total of 431 routine articles representing 71.7 per cent of the sample. In the six years under review, routine articles represented 73.5 per cent of all reports appearing in the *Herald Sun* (n=255) and 69.3 per cent of reports published in *The Age* (n=176).

### ***In-depth reports***

In-depth articles included stories that covered an issue in a number of reports on the one day, within a particular newspaper. It was not uncommon for the in-depth reports to run as a series of features over consecutive days. The in-depth report was the second highest category with 19.6 per cent of articles published in the *Herald Sun* (n=68) and 14.6 per cent of articles published in *The Age* (n=37).

### ***Editorial/opinion articles***

*The Age* had a greater number of editorial/opinion pieces (n=33) than the *Herald Sun* (n=18). Only 5.2 per cent of reports in the *Herald Sun* were editorial/opinion pieces, compared to 13 per cent in *The Age*.

<sup>50</sup> In addition, there was the category of 'Other' that included reports from sections of the paper like 'Weekend Focus' in the *Herald Sun* or 'Good Weekend' in *The Age*.

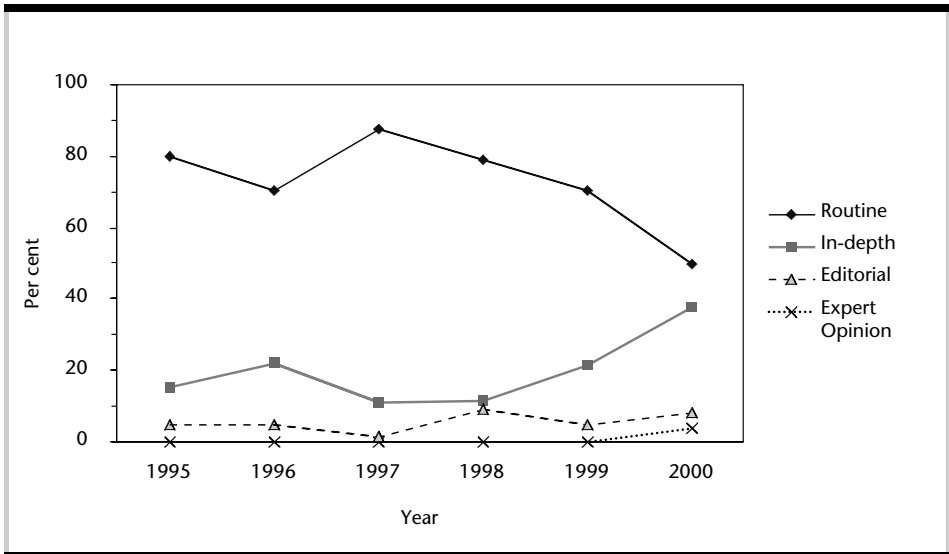
<sup>51</sup> Percentages have been rounded to the first decimal place. In some cases totals will not add up to 100. This will also apply to subsequent tables.

### Expert opinion pieces

A total of four articles written by experts appeared in *The Age* and only two appeared in the *Herald Sun* between 1995 and 2000.

Figures 12.3 and 12.4 show the trend of reporting for each of the newspapers over the period.

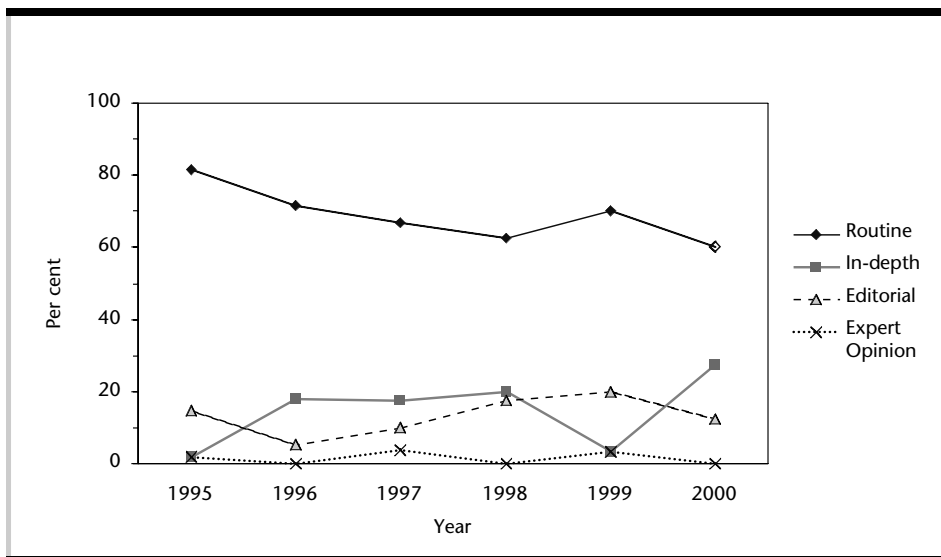
**Figure 12.3: Type of article per year 1995–2000 for the *Herald Sun***



There was a change over time in the type of reporting on crime in the Melbourne CBD and surrounds. For the *Herald Sun*, the percentage of routine reports steadily declined between 1997 and 2000, while the number of in-depth features increased. In 1995, routine reports made up 80 per cent of crime reportage for the *Herald Sun*, dropping to 50 per cent by 2000. Conversely, in-depth reports comprised 15.4 per cent of the total number of crime reports in 1995 and 37.3 per cent in 2000. Editorial/opinion pieces fluctuated over time, moving from 4.6 per cent to 8.0 per cent of total crime reports by 2000.

These findings demonstrate that while there may not have been an overall increase in the number of crime news articles over the period,<sup>52</sup> given the growth in the number of in-depth reports and the decline in routine articles it could be argued that in fact increasing attention has been given to crime in the CBD by both Victorian daily newspapers.

**Figure 12.4: Type of article per year 1995–2000 for *The Age***



Note: ‘Other’ category deleted (each newspaper only had four articles in the ‘other’ category over the six years so they have not been included in the chart).

Echoing the trend in the *Herald Sun*, the number of routine articles appearing in *The Age* declined as a percentage of total crime reportage (from 81.5% in 1995 to 60% in 2000) and the percentage of in-depth reports increased (1.9% in 1995 to 27.5% in 2000).

The number of editorial/opinion pieces in *The Age* fluctuated during 1995 and 2000, reaching the highest percentage (20%) of total reports in 1999. In summary, there was a change over time in the type of reporting on crime in the Melbourne CBD in both newspapers, with the number of routine reports declining and the number of in-depth features rising as a proportion of the total. *The Age* was the paper most likely to publish articles written by experts, with such pieces appearing irregularly across the period.

In commenting on the type of articles used in the period reviewed it is interesting to note that the use of editorials in particular is an effective way of presenting authoritative opinions on matters pertaining to crime. Furthermore, the editorial is one of the features of the newspaper in which subjectivity is ‘licensed’. Editorials and opinion pieces serve the function not only of expressing particular viewpoints held by the newspaper, but also of making the rest of the news appear objective and impartial.

It is interesting to note a recent development that has been incorporated in both the *Herald Sun* and *The Age* with regard to the reporting of crime. Both newspapers now publish ‘Crime Stoppers’ style pages. These are called ‘Victoria’s most wanted’ in the *Herald Sun* and ‘Crime watch’ in *The Age*.

Both newspapers display the Victoria Police’s Crime Stoppers telephone number prominently. In addition, the *Herald Sun* page is divided into a number of features. These include the ‘Crime of the Week’, ‘Target Crimes of the Week’, a ‘Wanted’ column, an ‘Unsolved’ column and a statistical ‘Update’ in which a tally of arrests made, drugs seized, charges laid and an ‘arrest of the week’ is outlined. Most editions also carry either computer

images or actual photographs of suspected criminals. *The Age's* 'Crime watch' column is much less extensive. It usually consists of one small paragraph emblazoned with the Victoria Police logo and is located in a side column of the 'Today' section of the newspaper.<sup>53</sup>

### **Location of articles within the newspaper**

An area of similarity between the two newspapers under analysis was the prominence accorded articles addressing crime in the Melbourne CBD. In effect, the location of an article provides an indication of the editorial importance attached to it. The Committee's content analysis revealed a considerable commonality between the two papers, reflecting a particular level of prioritisation. Page one, effectively the 'sales pitch' of a newspaper, had the second highest number of total reports, with 55 articles.<sup>54</sup>

Alternatively, as noted by Daly, crime 'stories may 'pop up' throughout the body of a newspaper, taking the reader by surprise (Daly 1995, p. 9). Indeed, for both newspapers, page three was the page on which the majority of articles appeared, 'hitting' the reader as they turned the cover page – 9.5 per cent of the *Herald Sun's* crime reports (n=33) and 17.3 per cent (n=44) of *The Age's* were placed on page three. Otherwise, crime-related reports were scattered throughout the respective publications, the layout of *The Age* generally confining crime reports to the first 15 pages while the tabloid style of the *Herald Sun* allowed the placement of articles throughout the first 30 pages.

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53 See, for example, Carriere and Ericson (1989). This study is Canadian. Indeed much of the academic research on Crime Stoppers type reporting is Canadian or American. The inclusion of Crime Stoppers type columns is part of a world-wide phenomenon to use the print (and television) media to assist police in crime solving and crime prevention.

54 This large number can be partially attributed to the number of 'lead-ins' to stories that appear on page one pointing to a story inside the paper. For *The Age*, 32 reports first appeared on page one. This was compared with 23 *Herald Sun* reports. It is worth noting that the *Herald Sun* is less inclined to use 'lead-ins' than *The Age*.



**Table 12.3: Percentage of articles by the page that articles first appeared 1995–2000, by newspaper**

<b>Page</b>	<b><i>Herald Sun</i></b>	<b><i>The Age</i></b>
1	6.6	12.6
2	4.6	7.1
3	9.5	17.3
4	6.6	10.6
5	7.5	6.7
6	1.2	6.7
7	6.3	6.7
8	0.6	4.3
9	7.2	5.1
10	3.5	2.0
11	5.8	2.8
12	7.2	1.6
13	2.9	0.8
14	3.2	1.2
15	4.6	1.6
16	2.0	0.8
17	0.9	0.8
18	3.2	0.4
19	1.7	0.8
20	0.3	1.2
21	2.6	0.0
22	1.7	0.0
23	0.9	0.0
24	1.7	0.4
25	1.2	0.0
26	1.2	0.0
27	1.2	0.0
28	1.4	0.0
29	0.6	0.0
30	0.9	0.0
33	0.9	0.0
34	0.0	0.4
35	0.3	0.0
40	0.3	0.0
Other Sections	0.0	8.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Note: Table 12.3 includes 346 articles in the *Herald Sun* and 254 in *The Age*. There were 21 articles in 'Other Sections' of *The Age* (News Extra, Metro, Today).

## **A note on sources**

The media use a variety of sources on a daily basis for their reports on crime in the Melbourne CBD. A study carried out by Teece and Makkai of the Australian Institute of Criminology (2000) on print media reporting of drugs and crime across Australia between 1995 and 1998 found that over three-quarters of the articles in their study used 'official

sources', such as police, courts, politicians and local government (2000, p. 3). Similarly, our research showed that 75.1 per cent of reports relied on 'official sources' (see Table 12.4). Research has illustrated that the media focus on such sources because of time constraints and the easy availability of official sources like the police (Grabosky & Wilson 1989; Israel 1998).

**Table 12.4: Percentage of articles with sources of information mentioned 1995–2000, by newspaper**

Source of Information	<i>Herald Sun</i>	<i>The Age</i>
Police	49.0	35.7
Research	5.2	9.6
Court	3.8	7.4
Retail	6.4	5.2
Political	9.9	10.0
City of Melbourne	13.6	20.4
Community	12.2	11.7
Other	0.0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

**Note:** There were a number of reports that used multiple sources. These articles were included in the count for each source mentioned. For example, a report using police and court sources would have been counted as one article in both sections.

The most frequently used source for both newspapers was the police – in 49.0 per cent of *Herald Sun* articles and 35.7 per cent of articles in *The Age*. The Melbourne City Council was the second most frequently consulted source, followed by community sources (youth workers, drug and alcohol workers and church leaders).

There was a considerable divergence in the use of research sources: research and/or researchers were used in 9.6 per cent of reports in *The Age* and 5.2 per cent of articles in the *Herald Sun*. While *The Age* made greater use of research sources, the *Herald Sun* used a greater proportion of police, retail and community sources.

**Table 12.5: Percentage of articles using statistical sources in *The Age* and *Herald Sun* 1995–2000**

Statistical Source	<i>Herald Sun</i>	<i>The Age</i>
None	89.9	85.8
Police	9.5	12.2
Research	0.3	2.0
Other	0.3	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

**Note:** Statistical sources shown in Table 12.5 are compiled from the first statistical source mentioned in each article in *The Age* and *Herald Sun*.<sup>8</sup>

8 *The Age* had one article that used police as a first statistical source and research as a second. There were no articles in the *Herald Sun* that used a second statistical source.

The above table reveals some divergence between the two newspapers in the use of statistics. The main difference worth noting was in the use of research statistics. Only 0.3 per cent of *Herald Sun* reports used figures from research as compared to 2.0 per cent of articles in *The Age*.

## Use of visual material by the media

The use of visual material in newspaper articles is also worth considering. As our analysis of the theory of media reporting has noted, visual imagery and the use of visual or graphic shorthand (synedochal representation) may have a significant influence on the impact of an article – a bloody face, for example, to complement a feature on a growing incidence of assault, a picture of a syringe to represent drug crime. The media made considerable use of photographs, maps, logos and diagrams in their reportage of crime in the Melbourne CBD. As Table 12.6 illustrates, this use was analysed in relation to the reporting of different types of crime.

**Table 12.6: Percentage of articles using visual material in reporting by theme or article 1995–2000**

Theme	No Picture	Photo	Chart	Map	Photo & Map	Map & Chart	Photo & Chart
<b><i>Herald Sun</i></b>							
Drug trafficking	63.6	36.4					
Drug use	47.5	40.0	7.5	2.5	2.5		
Drug violence	25.0	75.0					
Drug deviance	33.3	66.7					
Begging related	70.0	20.0		10.0			
Major general crime story	49.4	48.3		1.1	1.1		
Minor general crime story	64.1	25.6	5.1			2.6	2.6
Nightclub violence	60.7	39.3					
Homicide	33.3	66.7					
Combination of above themes	39.7	55.6	1.6	3.2			
Other	44.6	48.2	1.8	5.4			
<b>Total</b>	<b>49.6</b>	<b>45.0</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>0.3</b>
<b><i>The Age</i></b>							
Drug trafficking	63.6	36.4					
Drug use	43.3	53.3			3.3		
Drug violence	50.0	50.0					
Drug deviance		100.0					
Begging related	42.9	57.1					
Major general crime story	64.8	29.6	1.9	1.9	1.9		
Minor general crime story	47.4	42.1	10.5				
Nightclub violence	65.4	34.6					
Homicide	35.7	64.3					
Combination of above themes	40.4	55.8	1.9	1.9			
Other	52.8	47.2					
<b>Total</b>	<b>51.6</b>	<b>45.3</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>0.8</b>		

Pictures were used in 51.4 per cent of all *Herald Sun* articles and 48.4 per cent of articles in *The Age*. Photographs were the only pictures used in 45.3 per cent of reports in *The Age* and 45 per cent of reports for the *Herald Sun*.

Articles that were drug-related made much use of photographs in both papers. Photographs were used alone in 36.4 per cent of both the *Herald Sun* and *The Age's* drug-trafficking articles. They were also used extensively in both newspapers in articles on drug use and drug violence (40% and 75% respectively in the *Herald Sun* and 53.3% and 50% respectively in *The Age*).

Maps and charts were used more often in the *Herald Sun* than in *The Age*. Charts were used in 2 per cent of all reports for the *Herald Sun* and 1.6 per cent of all articles in *The Age*.

## Offences and themes in crime news stories

In the interest of a comprehensive content analysis, it is necessary to distinguish between themes and offences. Offences, by definition, constitute the commission of a crime. Themes have a broader sweep, covering crime related issues and situations which may be perceived as having a potential for criminal activities.

### Offences

**Figure 12.5: Frequency of media reporting of offence categories 1995–2000**

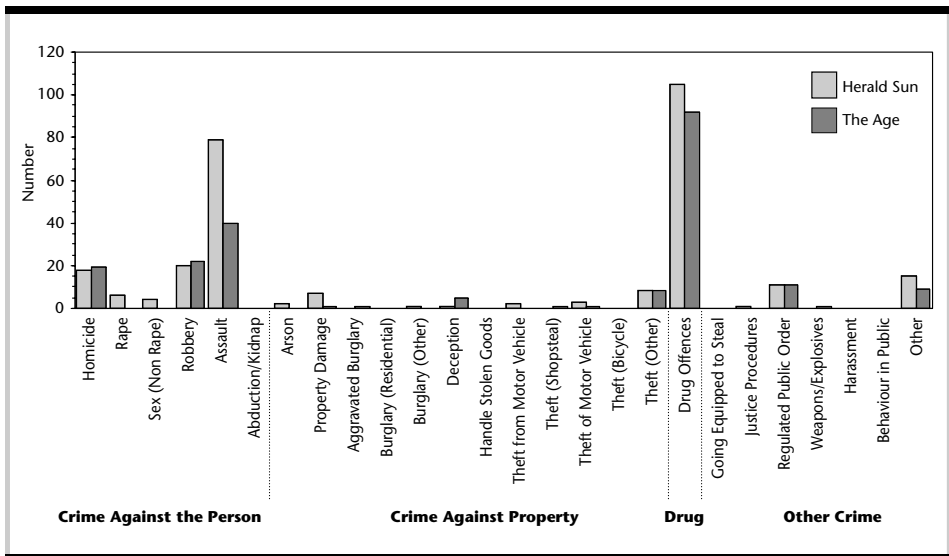


Figure 12.5 shows that the *Herald Sun* and *The Age* are more likely to report drug crime and crime against the person than they are crime against property. The offences of Theft (Other), Theft from Motor Vehicle, Deception, Theft (Shopsteal) receive proportionally very little media attention while Drug offences, Assault, Homicide Robbery and Regulated public order offences receive a disproportionately high amount of media reporting. Drug and assault offences received the highest proportion of coverage in each of the two newspapers at 46.7 per cent of all specific crime articles in *The Age* and 37.1 per cent for the *Herald Sun*.

A more detailed analysis of the reporting of selected offences is presented in Chapter 13.

### ***Themes***

A number of the issues that arose in articles relating to crime and safety in the CBD were less about an actual offence and more about a perceived risk or lack of safety. 'Homelessness' for example, is not in itself a crime. However, as noted in Chapter 10, the visible presence of homeless persons is something that may cause considerable concern to the broader community.

The sample was coded according to 12 different themes:

1. drug trafficking,
2. drug use,
3. drug violence,
4. drug deviance,
5. begging,
6. begging social deviance,
7. begging deception,
8. begging homelessness,
9. major general crime story,
10. minor general crime story,
11. nightclub violence, and
12. other

Various new themes arose out of the initial 14 themes and were included in the analysis under the category 'Combination of above themes'. For example, articles that reported on 'drug trafficking and use' or 'drug use and begging' were combined in this category.

The articles from the two newspapers were analysed separately for comparison.

**Table 12.7: Percentage of articles with various themes per year 1995–2000, by newspaper**

Theme	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Overall (%)	Overall (No. of Articles)
<b><i>Herald Sun</i></b>								
Drug trafficking	3.1	3.1	3.1	2.3		8.0	3.2	11
Drug use	4.6	3.1	7.8	14.0	29.5	12.0	11.5	40
Drug violence	1.5		1.6		3.3		1.2	4
Drug deviance				2.3	3.3		0.9	3
Begging related	1.5	7.8		2.3	3.3	2.0	2.9	10
Major general crime story	16.9	42.2	26.6	37.2	23.0	16.0	26.8	93
Minor general crime story	9.2	7.8	18.8	18.6	8.2	6.0	11.2	39
Nightclub violence	29.2	7.8	4.7			2.0	8.1	28
Combination of Above Themes	16.9	9.4	18.8	14.0	19.7	32.0	18.2	63
Other	16.9	18.8	18.8	9.3	9.8	22.0	16.1	56
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>347</b>
<b><i>The Age</i></b>								
Drug trafficking	5.6	2.6	7.8	5.0		2.5	4.3	11
Drug use	3.7	2.6	3.9	7.5	23.3	37.5	11.8	30
Drug violence			3.9	2.5		2.5	1.6	4
Drug deviance				2.5			0.4	1
Begging related	1.9	2.6	2.0		3.3	7.5	2.8	7
Major general crime story	13.0	56.4	23.5	42.5	13.3	15.0	26.8	68
Minor general crime story	7.4		9.8	10.0	10.0	7.5	7.5	19
Nightclub violence	42.6	5.1	2.0				10.2	26
Combination of Above Themes	7.4	15.4	31.4	20.0	30.0	22.5	20.5	52
Other	18.5	15.4	15.7	10.0	20.0	5.0	14.2	36
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>254</b>

As Table 12.7 shows, the leading theme for both the newspapers over the period studied was the 'major general crime story', with 26.8 per cent of *Herald Sun* articles (n=93) and 26.8 per cent of articles in *The Age* (n=68) in this category. Included in the category of 'major general crime story' were crimes against the person such as homicide, assault and sexual assault, armed robbery and thefts worth over \$10,000.

In 1995, 'nightclub violence' was the most reported theme for both *The Age* (42.6%) and the *Herald Sun* (29.2%). In 1996, 1997 and 1998, 'Major general crime story' was the most frequent theme in the *Herald Sun* crime reports, as it was for *The Age* in 1996 and 1998.

Progressively, however, drug-related categories and the 'combination of above themes' category increased as percentages of the total number of reports.

### **Drug issues top the crime news stories**

Over half of the articles in the sample mentioned drugs (53.1%). Heroin was the illicit drug given most attention in the media reporting on crime in the Melbourne CBD. For each year of the period 1995–2000 heroin emerged as the most mentioned illicit drug in both newspapers (see Tables 12.8 and 12.9). A total of 30.1 per cent of articles mentioned heroin

exclusively; 0.5 per cent of articles were exclusively concerned with amphetamine use (n=3); and 0.2 per cent of articles mentioned cannabis exclusively (n=1). Alcohol was the drug focussed on in 8.5 per cent of articles (n=51).

**Table 12.8: Percentage of articles mentioning drugs 1995–2000, by newspaper**

<b>Drugs Mentioned</b>	<b><i>Herald Sun</i></b>	<b><i>The Age</i></b>	<b>Combined</b>
No drugs mentioned	51.6	40.6	46.9
Alcohol	7.5	9.8	8.5
Cannabis	0.0	0.4	0.2
Heroin	25.6	36.2	30.1
Amphetamines	0.3	0.8	0.5
Not specified	12.4	10.6	11.6
Combinations of above drugs	2.6	1.6	2.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

The high representation of heroin in the sample can be attributed to a number of factors. On the one hand, the existence of a visible street heroin market within the Melbourne CBD (chiefly operating along Bourke and Russell Streets) will impact on the number of articles reporting on the heroin trade, while drugs not traded on the visible street market will be given less attention. On the other hand, the apparent focus on heroin may be the result of public perceptions concerning heroin use and the 'demonisation' of the drug. The number of in-depth features that focussed on heroin use indicated the emphasis that the media place on heroin-related issues as a major social problem.

A sizeable number of articles did not specify a drug but talked generally about 'the drug trade', 'the drug menace' or the 'street drug market'. These reports made up 11.6 per cent of the sample (n=70). At times this group of articles implied a link to heroin by talking about the 'street drug trade' but failed to specifically state that heroin was the drug of concern.

Table 12.9 shows the spread of articles that mentioned drugs across the years 1995–2000.

**Table 12.9: Percentage of articles mentioning drugs, by years 1995–2000**

Drugs Mentioned	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Total
<i>Herald Sun</i>							
No drugs	61.5	71.9	53.1	55.8	29.5	34.0	51.6
Alcohol	24.6	9.4	4.7		1.6		7.5
Cannabis							
Heroin	4.6	10.9	20.3	37.2	52.5	36.0	25.6
Amphetamines					1.6		0.3
Not specified	3.1	6.3	18.8	7.0	11.5	30.0	12.4
Combinations of drugs	6.2	1.6	3.1		3.3		2.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<i>The Age</i>							
No drugs	48.1	64.1	31.4	37.5	30.0	30.0	40.6
Alcohol	33.3	2.6	5.9	5.0	3.3		9.8
Cannabis							
Heroin	11.1	15.4	41.2	40.0	60.0	62.5	36.2
Amphetamines			2.0			2.5	0.8
Not specified	3.7	15.4	17.6	15.0	6.7	5.0	10.6
Combinations of drugs	3.7		2.0	2.5			1.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

The year with the greatest coverage of heroin issues for *The Age* (62.5%) was 2000 (n=25), while the highest percentage (52.5%) for the *Herald Sun* was in 1999 (n=32).

Drawing on the work of Teece and Makkai (2000) in their study at The Australian Institute of Criminology, the sample was analysed for connections made within the articles between drugs and crime. The codes used in the study by Teece and Makkai (2000) were adopted for the current sample of articles (see Table 12.10).

**Table 12.10: Percentage of articles with reported connections between drugs and crime 1995–2000, by newspaper**

Drug Crime Connection	<i>Herald Sun</i>	<i>The Age</i>	Combined
Link, Pharmacological	11.9	11.9	11.9
Link, Economic/compulsive	15.5	10.6	13.2
Link, Trafficking/violence	3.0	3.3	3.1
Link, Trafficking/economic/compulsive	3.6	0	1.9
Link, Trafficking/violence/economic/compulsive	0.6	0.7	0.6
No Link, Drug trafficking	7.7	15.9	11.6
No Link Posited	50.6	46.4	48.6
No Link, Link posited - not specified	7.1	11.3	9.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Before analysing the results, a brief explanation of the connections used in the analysis is useful.

- ◆ The pharmacological link – this implies that the effects of the drug caused the user to commit crime.



- ◆ The economic-compulsive link – used for articles asserting drug users commit crime to finance drug use.
- ◆ The trafficking violence link – associates trafficking with violence.
- ◆ Trafficking/economic-compulsive link – articles which viewed drug trafficking as an important criminal enterprise.

In effect, these connections reveal how reporting of drug-related activities often moves beyond concerns with drugs and associates their use with further criminal activity.

Just under half of the articles that mentioned drugs did not explicitly link drugs with other forms of crime. Where specific links were proposed between drugs and criminal activity, the main link posited was the economic-compulsive link – in 15.5 per cent of *Herald Sun* articles and 10.6 per cent of *The Age* articles that mentioned drugs. Heroin was the drug most likely to be reported in relation to the economic-compulsive link. Of the 42 articles that made the economic-compulsive crime connection, 32 mentioned heroin.

### **Youth, crime and the media or youth crime and the media?**

Youth crime has been a major public concern within Australia, and the media have been known to give juvenile offending a high profile (Bessant & Hill 1997; Cunneen & White 1995). Within the sample, youth were mentioned in 164 articles (27.4%) relating to a range of criminal activities and behaviours.

The newspapers were similar in the number of crime reports that gave attention to young people. The majority of reports on crime in the Melbourne CBD did not mention youth. Table 12.11 illustrates how young people were represented in relation to the themes of the articles.

**Table 12.11: Percentage of articles with youth representation across themes 1995–2000**

Theme	Youth Mentioned
<b><i>Herald Sun</i></b>	
Drug trafficking	18.2
Drug use	40.0
Drug violence	50.0
Drug deviance	33.3
Begging related	30.0
Major general crime story	10.3
Minor general crime story	25.6
Nightclub violence	28.6
Combination of themes	49.2
Other	17.9
<b><i>The Age</i></b>	
Drug trafficking	27.3
Drug use	30.0
Drug violence	75.0
Drug deviance	0.0
Begging related	57.1
Major general crime story	9.3
Minor general crime story	26.3
Nightclub violence	23.1
Combination of themes	48.1
Other	33.3

However, it is important to emphasise that the above figures are not necessarily an accurate reflection of the media's representation of youth. Research suggests that the relationship between youth and crime is often implied rather than directly linked (see Bessant & Hil 1997). For instance, the manner in which young people are portrayed may imply a tendency towards antisocial and/or criminal behaviour, without directly identifying such behaviour. Such news reports are not included in this study. Furthermore, news stories where youth are predominantly the victims of crime are not reported on to any significant degree. A study of this type does not have the time nor means to quantify implied representations of youth. Nonetheless, the Committee's content analysis did reveal certain trends. There were a number of themes in which youth were highly represented. All articles in the *Herald Sun* that reported on begging and homelessness mentioned youth. Similarly, *The Age* mentioned young people in a significant proportion of its reports on both homelessness and begging.

Youth were similarly well represented in drug-related reports. Several references were made to youth in relation to drug use and drug trafficking. Within the *Herald Sun*, 40 per cent of articles on drug use and 18.2 per cent of drug trafficking stories made reference to young people. The numbers in *The Age* were higher for drug trafficking and drug violence stories, with 27.3 per cent of trafficking stories mentioning youth and 75 per cent of drug violence articles referring to young people.

## Crime hot spots? Geographic localities mentioned in articles

As shown in Chapter 7, there was a concentration of reported criminal offences in certain locations throughout the Melbourne CBD. This led the Committee to consider whether a similar concentration was replicated in the newspaper sample under analysis.

There were a number of specific locations mentioned in the newspaper sample. These included individual streets, commercial areas like shopping malls, businesses and the casino, together with public amenities such as railway stations, parks and gardens. Given the broad range of locations mentioned, the final analysis combined various localities into eight distinct groups in order to gain a picture of the areas targeted in reporting. These are illustrated in Table 12.12.

**Table 12.12: Percentage of articles with locations mentioned 1995–2000, by newspaper**

<b>Location</b>	<b><i>Herald Sun</i></b>	<b><i>The Age</i></b>	<b>Combined</b>
Commercial Area	6.9	7.1	7.0
General CBD	35.2	30.7	33.3
Multiple Streets Mentioned	12.4	13.4	12.8
One Street Mentioned	38.6	39.8	39.1
Other	1.7	1.6	1.7
Outdoor Public Area	1.4	1.2	1.3
Proposed Safe Injection Area	0.9	5.1	2.7
Railway Station	2.9	1.2	2.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

When grouped together, articles that cited a specific street were the most prominent (39.1%). Within this group, however, was a wide range of city streets. Of these, four streets emerged as the most frequently mentioned. These were King (n=89), Swanston (n=46), Russell (n=31) and Bourke (n=16). Numerous streets were mentioned within the one article in 12.8 per cent of the sample, with Bourke and Russell making up 36.4 per cent of the multiple streets group. The vast majority of reports that mentioned these two streets were drug-related.

**Table 12.13: Number of newspaper articles with streets mentioned 1995–2000<sup>55</sup>**

Location	Multiple Streets Mentioned	One Street Mentioned	Overall
Bourke	44	16	60
Collins	10	5	15
Elizabeth	6	4	10
Exhibition	2	1	3
Flinders	10	4	14
Flinders Lane		3	3
Franklin		1	1
King	12	89	101
La Trobe	2		2
Little Bourke	3	8	11
Little Collins		2	2
Lonsdale	6	3	9
Queen	1	1	2
Russell	35	31	66
Spencer	6	3	9
Spring	1	11	12
Swanston	10	46	56
William	1	1	2

Nearly all articles in the 'Multiple Streets Mentioned' category involve the mention of two streets. Bourke and Russell streets had the highest number of multiple street mentions with 44 and 35 articles respectively. There were 28 articles that jointly mentioned Bourke and Russell Streets.

There were eight further street locations that were not included in Table 12.8. These were: Alexandra Ave; Donaldson Lane; Geddes Lane; Highlander Lane; Little Exhibition St; Market Lane; North Wharf Rd; and St Kilda Rd. These were each mentioned in a single article over the period 1995 to 2000.

A significant percentage of crime reports did not mention specific streets or locations within the Melbourne CBD, instead referring to the CBD in general terms (33.1%). This is a significant finding because it indicates that while reports do appear to target some specific localities they often generalise the Melbourne CBD as a problem area.

There was some change over time in the locations targeted by the media, with King Street being prominent in reports in 1995, due to the focus on nightclub violence, and Russell, Bourke and Swanston streets becoming the areas of reportage concern in later years in relation to the drug trade.

55 Unless specified, all locations are streets. While some articles did not specify a street they did specify a location. Table 12.13 did not include these locations in the frequency of mentions. Most locations had very few mentions or were not specific to one street. Notable exceptions were the 11 mentions of Flinders Street Station, 1 mention of Spencer Street Station, and the 15 mentions of the proposed Wesley Central Mission safe injection room in Lonsdale Street. These three locations were not included in the frequencies listed in Table 12.13 for Flinders Street, Spencer Street and Lonsdale Street.

## The media as policy maker?

There has been much research into the impact of media reporting on shaping and informing public discourse on crime policy. Traditionally, researchers have argued that the media play a considerable role in shaping criminal justice policy. However Chan (1995, p. 25) suggests that ‘...we sometimes overestimate the power of the media in shaping rather than reinforcing pre-existing public perceptions of crime’. The sample of 601 articles was analysed to ascertain how regularly and what types of policy suggestions were put forward by journalists.

**Table 12.14: Percentage of articles making policy suggestions 1995–2000, by newspaper and type of article**

Type of article	Policy suggestion made
<i>Herald Sun</i>	
Routine	13.3
In-depth	29.4
Editorial/opinion	44.4
Expert opinion	
Other	
All Articles	17.9
<i>The Age</i>	
Routine	9.7
In-depth	5.4
Editorial/opinion	42.4
Expert opinion	50.0
Other	25.0
All Articles	14.2

As seen in Table 12.14, relatively few reports on crime in the Melbourne CBD made policy suggestions during the five-year period studied. A total of 17.9 per cent of articles in the *Herald Sun* and 14.2 per cent in *The Age* included policy suggestions. The broad range of policy suggestions that were made stretched from law and order approaches calling for increased police numbers to suggestions for increased services for drug users and homeless youth.

Policy suggestions tended to be associated with particular types of reports. The majority of policy suggestions were made in editorial and opinion pieces. Of the 18 editorial/opinion articles in the *Herald Sun*, 44.4 per cent of those made policy suggestions, as did 42.4 per cent of editorial/opinion articles in *The Age*. Articles written by key researchers were also more likely to make a policy suggestion. Of the four articles by key researchers in *The Age*, 50 per cent made policy suggestions.

Interestingly, 29.4 per cent of in-depth reports in the *Herald Sun* made policy suggestions but only 5.4 per cent of in-depth articles in *The Age* did so. This was surprising, as it would be expected that in-depth features would be the arena for policy suggestions to be put

forward. However, as editorial/opinion pieces often ran on the same days as in-depth features, policy suggestions would have been made in the former.

## Conclusion

The Victorian media gave considerable attention to crime and related issues in the Melbourne CBD between 1995 and 2000. While the two newspapers used in this analysis represent different news organisations with different target audiences and organisational goals, their reporting of crime in the Melbourne CBD had much in common.

- ◆ In both *The Age* and *Herald Sun*, increasing attention was given to crime issues in the Melbourne CBD over the period 1995–2000, as illustrated through the growth in the number of in-depth reports and the decline in routine articles.
- ◆ There was a change in the types of crime reported in both papers. While nightclub violence was the most reported crime in 1995 for both the *Herald Sun* and *The Age*, by 2000 the focus on drug-related issues increased, particularly in *The Age*.
- ◆ The ‘major general crime story’ consistently made up a noteworthy proportion of reports for both papers.
- ◆ The reporting in both papers targeted similar locations. Single streets were the most reported locality in *The Age* and *Herald Sun*, followed by articles mentioning the Melbourne CBD as a whole.
- ◆ The specific streets targeted in reporting also changed over time. King Street was a popular location for reports on nightclub violence in 1995. From 1996–2000, however, increased attention was given to drug activity in Bourke, Russell and Swanston Streets.
- ◆ Young people were present in similar proportions of reports in both papers.
- ◆ The two papers diverged in the connections they made between drugs and crime. The pharmacological link was the most popular connection for *The Age* and the economic-compulsive link was the most reported in *Herald Sun* articles.

What became clear through this content analysis of the two Victorian daily newspapers was the degree of similarity between their reporting on crime in the Melbourne CBD. While there was some divergence in relation to the months of the year and day of the week that articles appeared, there were strong parallels in the content of reporting. *The Age* and *Herald Sun* displayed a number of important commonalities in the types of crime and locations targeted and the overall tone of reporting.

Criminal activity within the community is and will continue to be an important component of media reporting. As Chan asserts, ‘...anything related to crime, deviance and illegality is automatically newsworthy’ (1995, p. 28).

# 13. How does Media Reporting Correspond to Officially Recorded Crime?

## Overview

To date this Report has examined the nature and extent of crime in the Melbourne CBD recorded by Victoria Police from January 1995 to December 2000 and has analysed the content of newspaper reporting of crime by *The Age* and *Herald Sun* during the same period. The purpose of this chapter is to explore how well the reporting of crime by these newspapers corresponds to officially recorded crime statistics in the Melbourne CBD during this six-year period.

The Committee acknowledges that not all crime is newsworthy and that media outlets will report criminal activity that will generate the most public interest.<sup>56</sup> This is the reason why more serious crime may be mentioned in greater volume than what the actual statistics state.

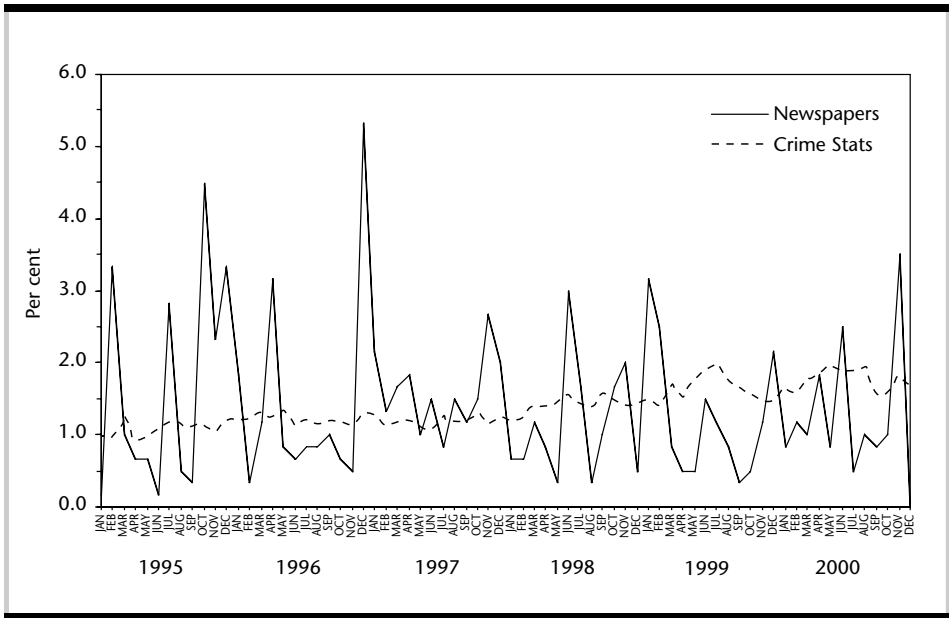
When a comparison is made of the percentage distributions of total recorded crime and media reporting of all crime in the Melbourne CBD for each month from January 1995 to December 2000 some patterns for discussion emerge. Figure 13.1 shows the periods in which crime in the Melbourne CBD was proportionally reported in the two newspapers under review. Higher levels of media reporting of recorded crime occurred in 44 of the 72 months studied (61%) and media crime-related stories were greater than the officially recorded crime statistics in 28 months of the study period.

Figure 13.1 shows three periods in which the two newspapers reported the amount of crime occurring in excess of the statistics for at least four consecutive months. These were the periods October 1995–January 1996, December 1996–April 1997 and August 1997–December 1997.

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<sup>56</sup> See below, pp. 109, 112-3

**Figure 13.1: Total recorded crime compared to media reporting per month 1995–2000**



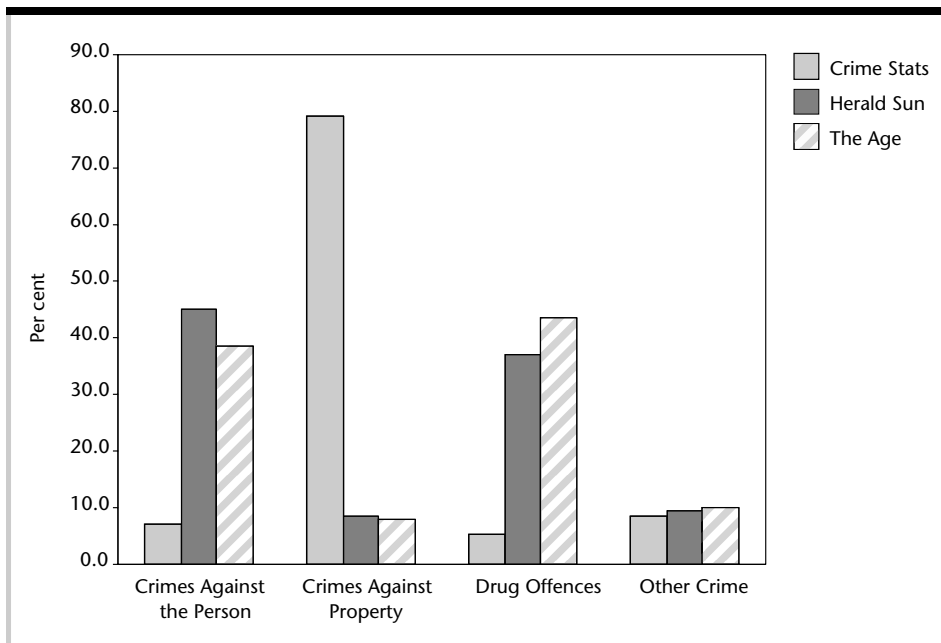
### Comparisons within general crime categories

The frequency distribution of crimes reported in the print media is quite different to the actual distribution of offences recorded by police. Figure 13.2 compares the percentage of offences occurring within the four general crime categories used by police<sup>57</sup> with the percentage of newspaper reporting of these offences by *The Age* and the *Herald Sun*.

57 A list of offences that fall within each of these categories is provided in Appendix 4.



**Figure 13.2: Comparison of crime statistics and newspaper reporting of crime 1995–2000**



*Crimes Against Property:* These constitute 79% of all officially recorded crime committed in the Melbourne CBD. Media reporting of these offences represented 8.5% for the *Herald Sun* and 8.1% for *The Age*.

*Crimes Against the Person:* These represent 7.1% of officially recorded crime occurring in the Melbourne CBD. They make up 44.9% of crime reporting in the *Herald Sun* and 38.4% in *The Age*.

*Drug Offences:* While these crimes represent 5.4% of officially recorded crime occurring in the Melbourne CBD they constitute 37.1% of the *Herald Sun*'s reporting of crime and 43.6% of *The Age*'s.

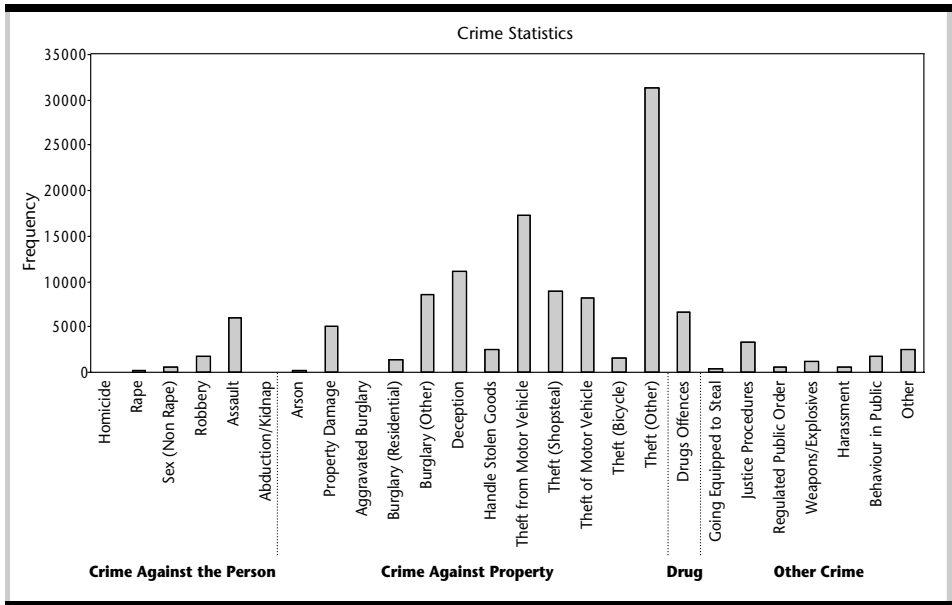
*Other Crime:* In this category the two newspapers' proportion of coverage is close to the officially recorded percentage of offences (officially recorded crime 8.4%, *Herald Sun* 9.5%, and *The Age* 10%).

### Comparisons within more specific offence categories

The two Figures below show the portrait of crime that is recorded by police in the Melbourne CBD (Figure 13.3) and the impression you would get if you were guided by newspaper reports alone (Figure 13.4).<sup>58</sup> These Figures present the frequency distribution of individual offence categories.

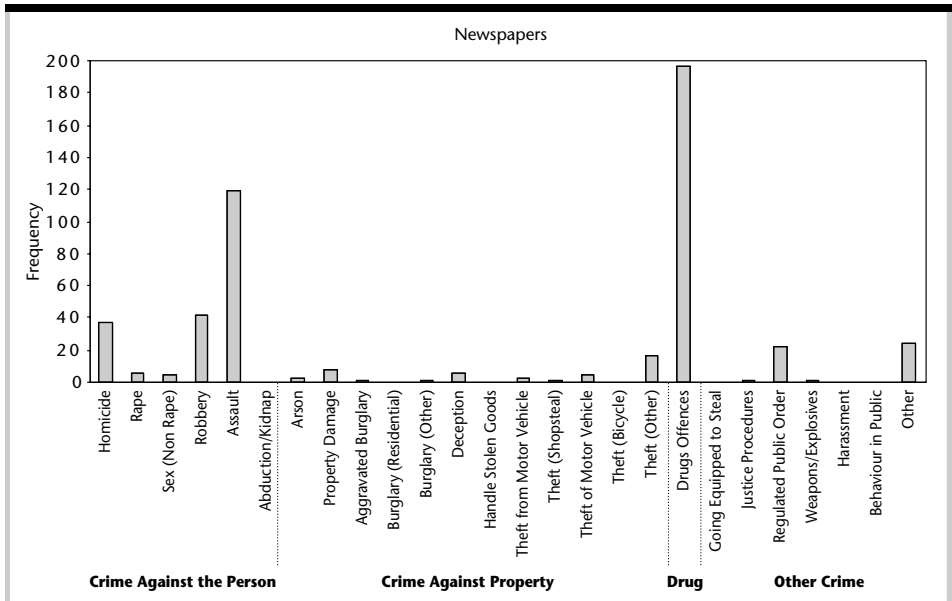
58 These categories represent the principal crime theme mentioned in the article. In a number of cases, multiple offences were mentioned in the articles. The offences that were secondary to the main offences written about will not be captured in the analysis. For example, in a number of articles about assaults at nightclubs, the offender may also have been charged with drunkenness offences, however for the purpose of this analysis the article will be classified as an article about an assault.

**Figure 13.3: Frequency of officially recorded offence categories 1995–2000**



Note: The Victoria Police crime statistical categories of Drugs (Cultivate, Manufacture, Traffic) and Drugs (Possess, Use) have been combined into the category Drug Offences. This is because many newspaper articles mentioned both drug trafficking and other drug-related offences.

**Figure 13.4: Frequency of media reporting of offence categories 1995–2000**



The most frequently recorded crimes in the Melbourne CBD, as illustrated in Figure 13.3, are Theft (Other)(26%), Theft from Motor Vehicle (13%), Burglary (8%), Theft (Shopsteal) (8%), Obtaining Property by Deception (7%) and Theft of Motor Vehicle (6%).

Figure 13.4 shows that these most commonly recorded offences receive proportionally very little media attention. On the other hand, less frequently recorded offences such as Homicide, Regulated Public Order offences, Drug offences, Robbery and Assault offences receive a disproportionately high amount of media reporting. Drug and Assault offences received the highest proportion of coverage in each of the two newspapers, with 46.7 per cent of all specific crime articles in *The Age* and 37.1 per cent in the *Herald Sun* focussing on these offences.

While Figures 13.3 and 13.4 demonstrate that the frequency distribution of crimes reported in the newspaper media is quite different to the actual distribution of offences as recorded by police, this is not so surprising since the most commonly occurring offences are relatively minor offences. Without minimising the seriousness of these offences, they are not as newsworthy as the major categories of crime featured in newspaper reports. If a homicide and a minor theft occur on the same day, the homicide will be well covered in the media and the minor theft will probably not be reported. This is not a complaint against the media, since it would be unreasonable to expect otherwise.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that the image of Melbourne CBD crime that one gets from newspaper reports is not an accurate representation of the range of crimes that are occurring. Newsworthy types of crime rather than the most frequently committed offences are the main focus of the two newspapers' crime coverage.

Tables 13.1 and 13.2 and the accompanying discussion take a closer look at which offences are most newsworthy and so receive a disproportionate amount of media coverage compared with recorded levels of offending and, conversely, which are less newsworthy and are therefore under-represented.

**Table 13.1: Comparison of the incidence of reported crime with the number of newspaper articles by Police category of crime 1995–2000**

Police Category of Crime	% of all Crimes <sup>a</sup>	% of all Newspaper articles <sup>b</sup>	Ratio: % of newspaper articles divided by % of crimes <sup>c</sup>
Homicide	0.03 <sup>d</sup>	7.49	293.91
Regulated Public Order	0.44	4.45	10.15
Drug Offences*	5.42	39.88	7.36
Rape	0.17	1.21	7.14
Robbery	1.41	8.50	6.04
Burglary (Aggravated)	0.04	0.20	4.83
Assault	5.00	24.09	4.82
Arson	0.14	0.40	2.91
Other	2.08	4.86	2.33
Sex (Non Rape)	0.42	0.81	1.91
Property Damage	4.17	1.62	0.39
Weapons/Explosives	1.02	0.20	0.20
Deception	9.08	1.21	0.13
Theft (Other)	25.76	3.24	0.13
Theft of Motor Vehicle	6.74	0.81	0.12
Justice Procedures	2.70	0.20	0.07
Burglary (Other)	7.00	0.20	0.03
Theft From Motor Vehicle	14.25	0.40	0.03
Theft (Shopsteal)	7.42	0.20	0.03
Abduction/Kidnap	0.07	-	-
Burglary (Residential)	1.06	-	-
Handle Stolen Goods	2.12	-	-
Theft (Bicycle)	1.29	-	-
Going Equipped to Steal	0.31	-	-
Harassment	0.42	-	-
Behaviour in Public	1.46	-	-

**Notes:**

- a The per cent of crimes for each crime type is expressed as a percentage of all crimes reported in the crime statistics. The per cent of crimes was calculated on all 121,648 crimes reported in the crime statistics over the period 1995–2000.
- b The per cent of newspaper articles for each crime type is expressed as a percentage of all newspaper articles about crime in the Melbourne CBD. This was calculated on the total of 494 articles that could be classified according to the police crime categories. There were another 107 articles that could not be classified (mostly general crime stories)
- c The ratio was the per cent crime articles divided by the per cent of crimes reported in the crime statistics. A ratio of one indicates an equal reporting of the crime category in the crime statistics and in the newspapers. A number greater than one indicates over-reporting of the crime category in the newspapers and less than one indicates under-reporting.
- d For an explanation of the high ratio of newspaper reporting see Table 13.2 and related note.

**Note:** It would be expected if a crime category is reported in the newspapers in the same relative proportions as in the crime statistics, then one would be in the last column of Table 13.1. Numbers above one indicates over-reporting of the crime category in the newspaper and numbers less than one indicate under-reporting by the newspapers.

\* In analysing the newspapers a number of articles on drugs were found to report on both minor and serious offences. In the interests of accuracy, offences have been combined into the Police classification, Drug Offences.

**Table 13.2: Ratio<sup>a</sup> of the percentage of newspaper articles on crime divided by the percentage of reported crimes in the crime statistics by Police category of crime 1995–2000**

Police Category of Crime <sup>b</sup>	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Overall
Homicide <sup>c</sup>		609.30	189.79	113.20			293.91
Regulated Public Order	8.84	10.03	9.15		12.17	7.52	10.15
Drug Offences*	5.90	2.64	7.78	8.69	10.47	11.11	7.36
Rape			24.97	8.49			7.14
Robbery		6.71	7.78	15.14	4.36	5.22	6.04
Burglary (Aggravated)					17.89		4.83
Assault	10.38	4.02	2.50	1.76	2.44	1.32	4.82
Arson		6.55	7.91				2.91
Other	1.86	4.34	1.10	2.30	2.62	2.46	2.33
Sex (non-rape)				3.65	6.54	3.92	1.91
Property Damage	0.16	0.44	0.23	0.41	1.17		0.39
Weapons/Explosives	1.03						0.20
Deception	0.27	0.33					0.13
Theft (Other)	0.04	0.05	0.25	0.23	0.05	0.16	0.13
Theft of Motor Vehicle				0.54	0.42		0.12
Justice Procedures			0.54				0.07
Burglary (Other)		0.15					0.03
Theft From Motor Vehicle			0.19				0.03
Theft (Shopsteal)	0.13						0.03
Abduction/kidnap							
Burglary (Residential)							
Handle stolen goods							
Theft of Bicycle							
Going equipped to steal							
Harassment							
Behaviour in Public							
<b>Total Number of Crimes</b>	<b>15776</b>	<b>17886</b>	<b>17461</b>	<b>20715</b>	<b>24031</b>	<b>25779</b>	<b>121648</b>
<b>Total Number of Newspaper Articles</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>494</b>

a The ratio was the percentage of crime articles divided by the percentage of crimes reported in the crime statistics. A ratio of one indicates an equal representation of the crime category in the crime statistics and in the newspapers. A number greater than one indicates over-reporting of the crime category in the newspapers and less than one indicates under-reporting.

b Crime types listed in order of the highest ratio overall (the last column).

c The great majority of newspaper stories related to homicide are clustered into three time periods: April 1996, December 1996, and June 1997. These represent three quite dramatically depicted murder stories. These are respectively, the drug related murder of two men in a luxury apartment in Spring street, the murder of diamond merchants in the Century Building in Swanston Street, and the 'drive-by execution' of a person walking along King Street.

Note: Empty cells indicates there were no newspapers articles for that category in that year.

\* Refers to offences within the class of Drug Offences: cultivate/manufacture/traffic, possession and use.

As the two Tables above show, the most reported crime in terms of the newspapers' coverage is Drug offences, being the focus of close to 40% of the crime articles despite these offences constituting 5 per cent of all crimes. A drug offence is 1.5 times more likely to be reported than aggravated burglary offences, 3.5 times more likely than a sexual assault (non rape) offence, 70 times more likely than a motor vehicle offence, 200 times more likely than theft from a motor vehicle. Drug offences and Rape offences are likely to be reported at the same rate.

Table 13.2 shows that the reporting of Drug Offences has doubled in relation to the actual number of offences since 1995. In 2000, Drug Offences are twice as likely to be reported than they were in 1995.

Assault is the second most reported crime covered by the press, but unlike Drug Offence crimes the level of reporting has been dropping from a very high 61.7 per cent in 1995 to just 1.4 per cent in 2000. Assaults were ten times more likely to be reported in 1995 than they were in 2000. Homicide is the next highest reported crime, accounting for 7.5% of newspaper articles but only 0.03% of all recorded crimes (31 homicides out 121,648 crimes). The articles on Homicide were almost 300<sup>59</sup> times greater than the percentage of Homicide offences recorded. Given the seriousness of this crime and the infrequency of occurrence it is not surprising that this offence is over-reported by the media, as it would generate considerable public interest. Interestingly, a majority of the reports relate to the multiple reporting of one particular incident in 1996. There were 37 newspaper articles on homicide over the period and 31 of these were in 1996.

Crimes against property, particularly Theft, are the most under-reported crimes and the level of under-reporting has, in general, remained fairly constant over the 1995–2000 period.

Whilst regulated public order offences<sup>60</sup> are reported at ten times their occurrence they represent only 0.4 per cent of all recorder crime. The majority of articles reporting these offences relate to prostitution and sex offences.

However, as discussed in the content analysis in Chapter 12 and illustrated in Figure 12.5, there is also variation in the extent to which the *Herald Sun* and *The Age* newspapers report on different offence types. Proportionally the *Herald Sun* tended to report more on Homicide, Rape, Sex (Non-rape), Assault, Arson and Crimes Against Property offences than did *The Age*. *The Age*, however, ran proportionately more stories on Robbery, Drug Offences, Deception, Theft and Regulated Public Order offences than did the *Herald Sun*.

## Offences identified by the media as being newsworthy

### What makes some stories newsworthy and others not?

Sercombe, drawing from the work of Bell (1991), proposes a number of factors as to why crime news is so popular among the reading public.<sup>61</sup>

59 This large ratio reflects the over reporting of homicides but it is accentuated by the very low incidence of homicides in the crime statistics.

60 See Appendix 4 for a list of offences that fall within this category.

61 Market research conducted for the *West Australian* indicates that crime and law and order news usually takes first or second place in the index of most popular issues (Sercombe 1997, p. 47).

[C]rime news fits the criteria of negativity: it is concerned with conflict, with deviance, with damage and injury, sometimes death. Crime news works in terms of recency, of proximity,<sup>62</sup> of unexpectedness, it can often be cast in terms of already-understood stereotypes (consonance), is usually clear cut, so meets the test of unambiguity.<sup>63</sup> It is at the same time both local and dramatic, familiar and exotic... [a]nd crime stories, because they involve individuals rather than faceless corporations, lend themselves to personalisation.<sup>64</sup> There are no problems with the attribution of sources, nor with the facticity of accounts of events: crime news is subject to official processes which cover both of these criteria (Sercombe 1997, p. 47).<sup>65</sup>

A simpler answer to the above question is that crime 'sells'; that is, crime stories are the ones about which the public is interested, for whatever reason.<sup>66</sup>

What crimes then do the *Herald Sun* and *The Age* consider most newsworthy and how is this construction of 'newsworthiness' changing? These issues will be examined through analysis of the types of crime which are the most frequently mentioned in the newspapers' reporting of crime stories in the Melbourne CBD.

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62 Sometimes referred to as *periodicity*. Sercombe argues that events that correspond in time to the period of production, particularly events that are completed in one day, 'have a much better chance of being reported than events that extend over a longer period. Crime reports have no problem here. Even if the crime itself has had a long history, the arrest and court process fall neatly into the newspaper's requirement for periodicity' (Sercombe 1997, p. 48).

63 Or *simplification*. Crime stories can usually be recognised as such and are unambiguous.

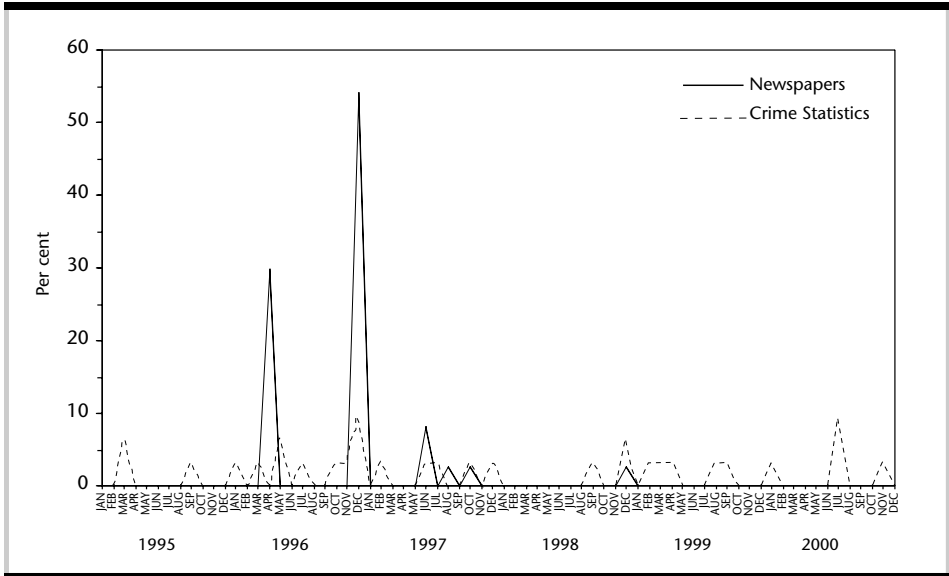
64 Lorman states that this refers to 'portraying the events in terms of the key people involved' (p. 172). It could also be extended to include cases where the journalist or writer of the article becomes a subject of the article. For example, there are numerous examples where the journalist places himself or herself at the centre of the story – walking the 'mean streets' of Melbourne.

65 Daly argues the 'acceptable' crime story 'centres on why crime is increasing or why things are getting worse: it is simple to understand, dramatic and personalised' (Daly 1995, p. 16). See also Ericson, Baranek & Chan (1987).

66 An analysis of the 'psychology' of the reading public with regard to crime and crime news, i.e why crime news sells, is beyond the scope of this report. For an interesting discussion of this issue, however, see Bell 1991.

## Homicide

**Figure 13.5: Percentage of newspaper articles reporting homicide compared to recorded crime statistics of Homicide by month 1995–2000**



Note: Over six years a total of 31 homicides were recorded in crime statistics and there were 37 articles in the two newspapers about homicide.

The graph in Figure 13.5 demonstrates quite markedly the print media's interest in stories pertaining to homicide. Not only is there an over-representation of newspaper stories on homicide as compared to the actual offences committed, two other aspects of crime news reporting in this area are significant.

First, nearly all of the reports in both newspapers feature *murder*. Murder is merely one type of homicide in terms of legal classification. (The category of homicide also includes the offences of attempted murder, manslaughter, culpable driving and failure to stop/assist at an accident resulting in death and abortion.)

Second, the great majority of newspaper stories featured in *The Age* and the *Herald Sun* over the period in question are clustered into three time periods: April 1996, December 1996 and June 1997. These represent three quite dramatically depicted murder stories. These are respectively, the drug related murder of two men in a luxury apartment in Spring street, the murder of diamond merchants in the Century Building in Swanston Street, and the 'drive-by execution' of a person walking along King Street.<sup>67</sup> The two murder stories reported in 1996, for example, accounted for more coverage and print space over a given period than any other single crime story, This is despite the fact that the category of homicide accounts for only 0.02% of recorded crime over the relevant period.<sup>68</sup>

67 For a list of the relevant stories appearing in *The Age* and the *Herald Sun*, see Appendix 5.

68 The media reporting of Homicide category offences was 198 times greater than the number of recorded homicide offences (37 for the period 1995–2000). Even these figures don't fully present this representation, given that nearly all of the homicide cases reported in the media were murders and the category of Homicide includes in addition, manslaughter, attempts and culpable driving charges.



These differences can, at least in part, be explained by the very nature of crime news itself, what Hall et al. term ‘the special status of violence as a news value’.<sup>69</sup>

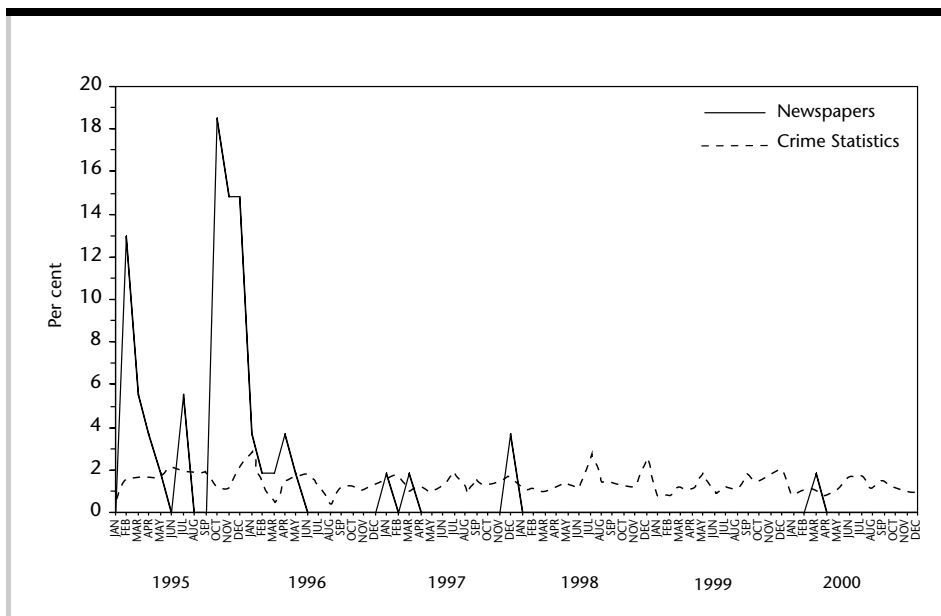
Conversely, the great majority of crimes such as thefts of various types, if reported at all, are reported in routine and mundane ways. Theft is *not* robbery. By its very legal definition it is not associated with violence or its threat. It is therefore neither exciting nor newsworthy.

Hall et al. argue that much of crime news is routine and brief because the majority of crime is itself routine:

Crime is understood as a permanent and recurrent phenomenon, and hence much of it is surveyed by the media in an equally routinised manner. Shuttleworth, in his study of the reporting of violence in the Daily Mirror [United Kingdom], has noted the very different kinds of presentation used, depending on the nature of the violence being treated. He commented especially on the relatively small space, and the impersonal and abbreviated manner in which many ‘mundane’ forms of crime are reported...The reporting at greater length, of certain dramatic instances of crime, then, arises from and stands out against the background of this routinised treatment of crime (Hall et al. 1978, p. 66).

**Nightclub violence**

**Figure 13.6: Frequency of newspaper articles on nightclub violence compared to crime statistics on Assault at Licensed Premises 1995–2000**



69 ‘Any crime can be lifted into news visibility if violence becomes associated with it, since violence is perhaps the supreme example of the news value “negative consequences”. Violence represents a basic violation of the person; the greatest personal crime is murder, bettered only by the murder of a law-enforcement agent, a policeman. Violence is also the ultimate crime against property, and against the state. It thus represents a fundamental rupture in the social order. The use of violence marks the distinction between those who are fundamentally *of* society and those who are *outside* it. It is coterminous with the boundary of “society” itself’ (Hall et al. 1978, pp. 67–68). (Emphases in original)

Figure 13.6, which compares the frequency of newspaper articles on nightclub violence to crime statistics on 'Assault at Licensed Premises', needs also to be read in conjunction with Figure 13.7. Figure 13.7 concerns the percentage of newspaper articles reporting crime at King Street compared to recorded crime statistics at that location. Reading these graphs together is useful because most newspaper coverage of nightclub violence in the relevant period (1995–2000) concerned events in the entertainment zone of King Street.

One can observe from Figure 13.6 that while the recorded levels of crime at licensed premises remains relatively stable for the relevant period, the newspaper coverage of nightclub violence is reported predominantly in 1995 and to a lesser extent 1996. After 1996, for the most part, King Street ceases to be a location that the newspapers focus upon, at least in terms of its reputation for violence.

Throughout February and March of 1995 there are many individual accounts of assaults in and around King Street nightclubs and entertainment venues in both the *Herald Sun* and *The Age*. Such accounts of violence result in follow-on features articles and editorials deploring the violent nature of King Street. These types of reportage are included in our tally of newspaper articles and contribute to the relatively high levels of stories reported in this period. Many stories in July 1995 can be attributed to articles that are based on the police crime statistics, and particularly those pertaining to King Street, which were released that month.

It is reasonable to assume that the large percentage of newspaper articles on King Street during the last three months of 1995, is attributable to a concerted campaign by both newspapers against the upsurge, or at least perceived upsurge, of violent incidents occurring in King Street, particularly in October and November.

For example, in October 1995 there are several accounts of crime incidents occurring in the troubled street that month and coverage of court cases resulting from violent incidents earlier in that year. In addition, during October and November in both the *Herald Sun* and *The Age* there are series features pertaining to King Street violence. Such series reporting usually consists of a major or lead story on an aspect of violence in King Street accompanied by a number of related or subsidiary stories on similar themes. The *Herald Sun* feature 'King's Crossroads' is an example of this.<sup>70</sup> Although there is a decrease in the number of such articles presented in December 1995, they are still considerable. This is attributable to both the flow on and derivative effect of the series reporting in October and November, as well as a number of violent nightclub incidents occurring during the Christmas 'silly season'. This last factor also seems to be the reason for a similar, if lesser, rise in numbers of stories for December 1997.

Finally, the slight number of stories reported on King Street violence for March 2000 is largely attributable to the reports of a trial of a defendant for a violent assault occurring in December 1995.

The falling away of reporting on King Street violence after 1996 seems, at least in part, explicable by the fact that crime prevention and safe city measures introduced by the City of Melbourne are perceived by both newspapers as having drastically decreased the amount of violence in King Street. In fact, editorials in both newspapers testify to this success. It can

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70 Jim Tennyson, 'King's Crossroads', *Herald Sun*, 7 October 1995, pp. 17-.

also be explained in part by the fact that from approximately 1996 the focus of both newspapers' reporting on CBD crime turns to other subjects (drugs) and other locations (Russell Street, Swanston Street).

As Table 13.3 makes clear, assaults at licensed premises in King Street dropped considerably from the high of 51 recorded offences in 1995. There was a 60 per cent reduction in assault figures from 1995 to 1996. Since then, there have been fewer than 20 assaults at King Street licensed premises per year.

**Table 13.3: Number of Assaults at Licensed Premises in King Street per year**

Year	Number of Assaults
1995	51
1996	21
1997	9
1998	14
1999	8
2000	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>119</b>

At first glance, the decline in recorded assaults could explain the corresponding decline in reports on nightclub violence. However, it is important to acknowledge that across the Melbourne CBD the decline in assaults in licensed premises has been neither as dramatic nor as uniform.

**Table 13.4: Assaults at Licensed Premises in Melbourne CBD per year**

Year	Number of Assaults	Percentage of Assaults
1995	197	19.7
1996	161	16.1
1997	166	16.6
1998	174	17.4
1999	160	16.0
2000	142	14.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>100.0</b>

As Table 13.4 confirms, a substantial number of assaults continued to be perpetrated on licensed premises. However, the decline in such assaults in the King Street area implies that another area of the Melbourne CBD has experienced an increase in such activity.

**Table 13.5: Assaults at Licensed Premises per year by postcode area**

Year	Number of Assaults						Total
	Melbourne City	East Melbourne	West Melbourne	World Trade Centre	Southbank	Docklands	
1995	152		1	43	1		197
1996	128		5	20	8		161
1997	109			17	40		166
1998	100			5	69		174
1999	84	4		5	67		160
2000	80		1	6	48	7	142
<b>Total</b>	<b>653</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1000</b>

Table 13.5 shows a shift in the assault on licensed premises away from Melbourne City and the World Trade Centre to Southbank. The number of assaults in the Melbourne City area (which includes King St) has been in steady decline over the period 1995 to 2000. Similarly, assaults at licensed premises at the World Trade Centre decreased dramatically between 1995 and 2000, with the most significant drop being between 1995 and 1996. The subsequent decline in numbers for this area can be attributed to the closure of the temporary casino at the World Trade Centre in 1997. The opening of the Crown complex in late 1997 explains the increases in assaults at Southbank. Similarly the opening of the Docklands stadium in 2000 with licensed facilities accounts for the first assault at licensed premises figures being posted in 2000.

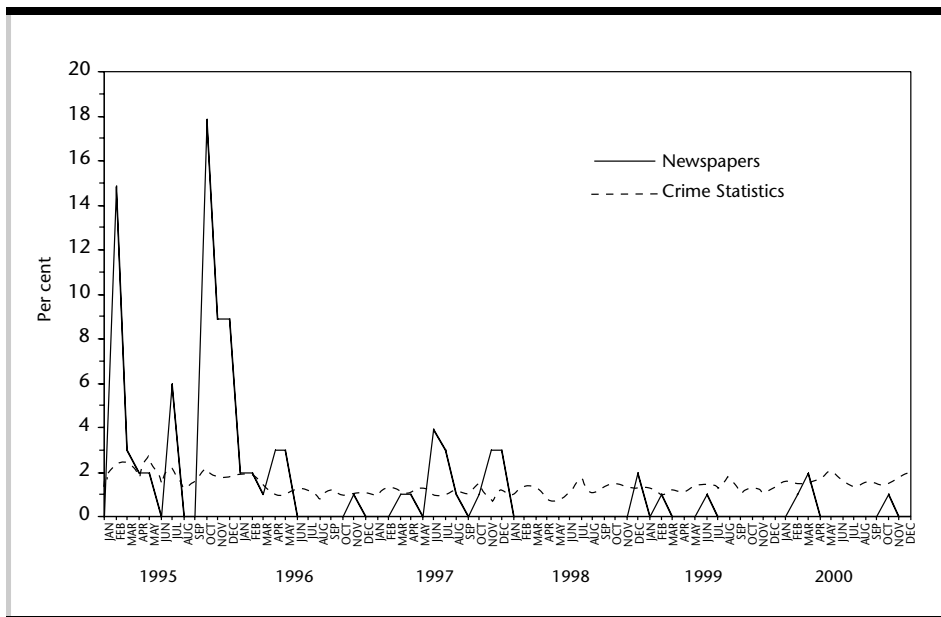
These figures suggest that while the issue of nightclub violence in King Street was seen as a newsworthy issue by the print media, similar violence perpetrated within the Southbank complex was not.

### King Street

As stated in the analysis of nightclub violence above, Figure 13.7 concerns the percentage of newspaper articles reporting crime at King Street compared to recorded crime statistics at that location. This reporting tends to peter out after mid-1996 as the area is perceived to be much safer due to crime prevention initiatives introduced by the City of Melbourne and the switch in focus by the print media to Bourke and Russell streets and later to Swanston Street. The rise in coverage in mid-1997 is mostly attributable to an 'execution style' murder occurring in King Street in June of that year.

Figure 13.7 shows very clearly that the over-representation in crime reporting for the period October 1995–January 1996, identified in Figure 13.6, can be attributed to the dramatic over-representation of reporting of nightclub violence in the King Street area over this period. This was the period in which there was a strong media campaign to reduce the level of assaults and other violence in and around Melbourne's nightclubs particularly in King Street.

**Figure 13.7: Percentage of newspaper articles reporting crime at King Street compared to recorded crime statistics at that location by month 1995–2000**



Note: Over six years a total of 2,287 crimes at King Street were recorded in crime statistics and there were 101 articles in the two newspapers about crime in this street.

What is interesting about the above Figure is that, despite the reported decline in assaults in the King Street area, the level of total reported crime has remained relatively consistent over the period. What has changed is the nature of criminal activity in the area. Figure 13.8 shows that while offences falling within the classification of Crimes against the Person have dropped, there has been substantial increase in Crimes against Property over the same period.

**Figure 13.8: Frequency of the four general police categories of crime at King Street by year, 1995–2000**

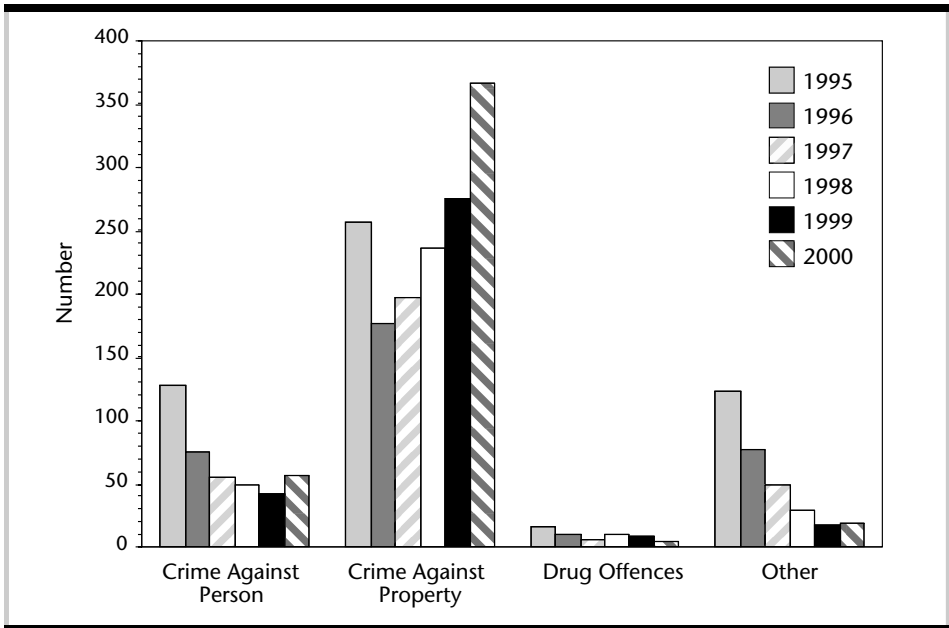


Table 13.6 provides further detail of the changes over time in each of the specific police crime categories. While Assaults and Behaviour in Public offences have decreased, there has been a significant increase in the number of Thefts from Motor Vehicle, Theft (Other) and Theft of Motor Vehicle offences.

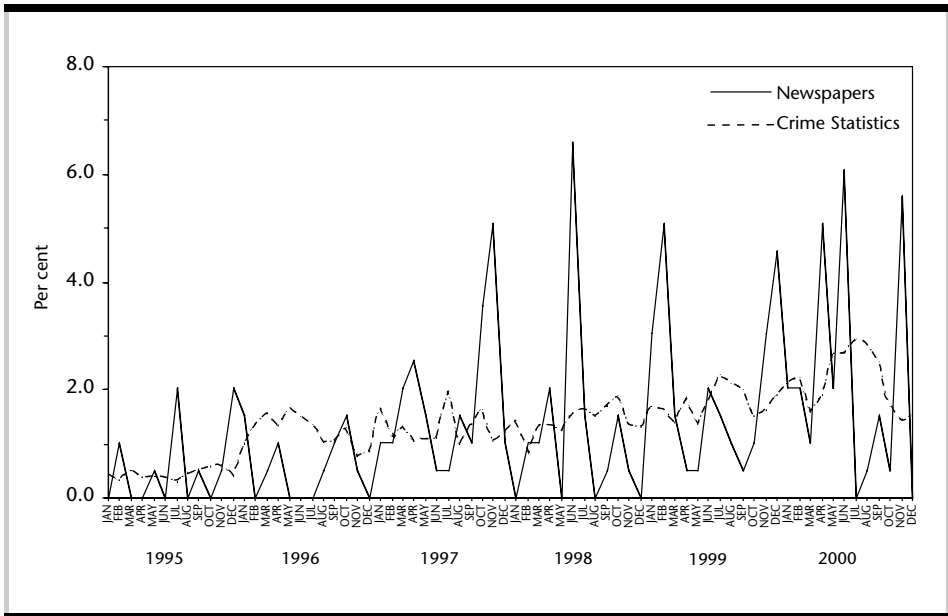
**Table 13.6: Number of crimes recorded in King Street for each specific police crime category**

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Total
Homicide			3		1		4
Rape			2	1	2	2	7
Sex (Non Rape)	3	5		1	2		11
Robbery	2	3	4	7	7	4	27
Assault	123	68	46	41	30	49	357
Abduction/Kidnap						1	1
Arson	1		1				2
Property Damage	38	22	22	27	18	28	155
Burglary (Aggravated)					1		1
Burglary (Residential)	5	5	5	10	3	11	39
Burglary (Other)	23	28	27	48	33	39	198
Deception	27	13	23	15	12	17	107
Handle Stolen Goods	2	2	1		6	2	13
Theft From Motor Vehicle	40	30	24	51	91	91	327
Theft (Shopsteal)		1		1			2
Theft of Motor Vehicle	41	17	26	36	47	70	237
Theft (Bicycle)	1	1	2	1	1	6	12
Theft (Other)	78	58	66	47	64	103	416
Drugs (Cult/Manuf/Traff)	1	2		4	1		8
Drugs (Possess/Use)	15	8	6	6	8	4	47
Going Equipped to Steal	1				6		7
Justice Procedures	28	16	12	7	2	4	69
Regulated Public Order	14	4	3	1		1	23
Weapons/Explosives	9	5	4	2	1	1	22
Harassment			2	1	2	1	6
Behaviour in Public	66	52	26	16	4	6	170
Other	5		3	2	3	6	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>2287</b>

***Drug-related crime***

The class of Drug Offences, comprising the offence categories of Drug (Cultivate/Manufacture/Traffic) and Drug (Possess/Use), was the most commonly reported offence category accounting for 37.5 per cent of all the articles relating to crime in the Melbourne CBD reported in the *Herald Sun* and *The Age* between January 1995 and December 2000.

**Figure 13.9: Percentage of newspaper articles reporting drug-related crime compared to recorded crime statistics of Drug offences by month 1995–2000**



**Note:** Over six years a total of 6,589 drug-related crimes were recorded in crime statistics and there were 197 newspaper articles about drug-related crimes.

It is clear from Figure 13.9 that drug-related crime (including drug use and drug trafficking) exponentially increases both in terms of actual crime and its reportage over the period 1995–2000, particularly from 1998 onwards.

In terms of the newspaper reporting, the peaks generally represent concerted and sustained campaigns by the newspapers about and against drug use and the ‘drug trade’ in the central city. These campaigns fall into two main groupings: from approximately 1997–1999 the focus is on Russell and Bourke streets (The Golden Elbow) and from 1999–2000 it is on Swanston Street. These cut-off dates are arbitrary and there is some overlap between the two.

From late 1997 to 2000 drug stories are constantly featured in both newspapers. These may be concerned with trafficking, dealing, using or drug use associated with violence. Such stories may be straightforward reports of crimes committed, news narratives, features and/or editorials. While stories from 1995–1996 for the most part could be termed ‘individual’ accounts of drug crimes, from 1997 onwards both papers regularly present series features on drug crime in the central city. The *Herald Sun*’s INSIGHT features are good examples of this phenomenon. These series reports usually contain numerous stories of the same type within a relatively short span of time, often over a week. These series and the newspaper campaigns associated with them can help explain the various peaks of reporting over the period in question. Sometimes the series will be triggered by a particularly newsworthy event pertaining to drugs or crime. For example, the high number of stories on drug related themes in November 1998 can be attributed to the activities of a ‘syringe



bandit’ doing a series of robberies in the CBD during this period. Frequently series reports are accompanied by lengthy opinion pieces and/or an editorial.

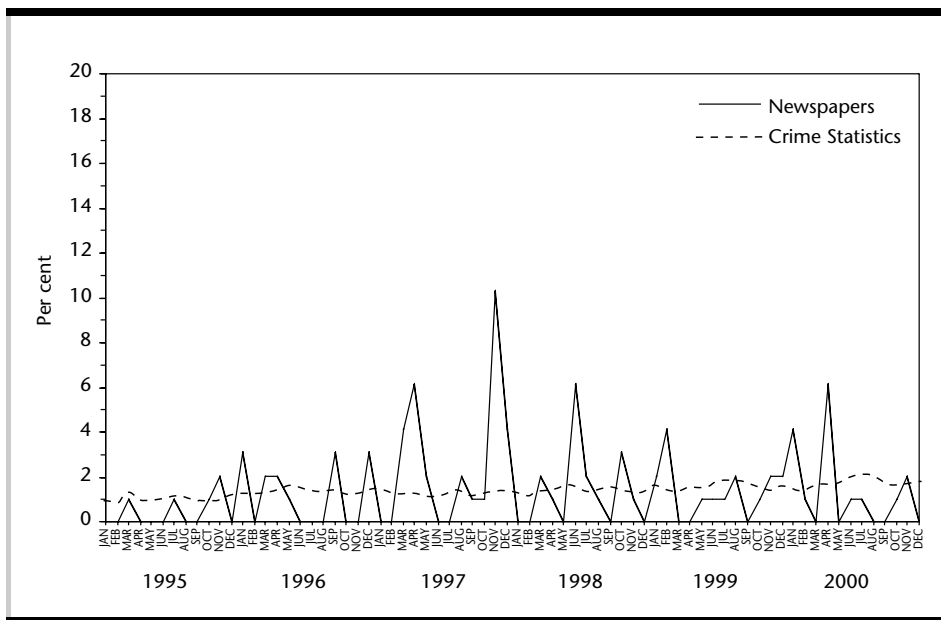
Series reporting is evident in both newspapers and coincides with the periodic rise in newspaper reporting graphically represented in Figure 13.9. For example, the *Herald Sun* had in-depth series reports on drugs in the CBD in October 1997, June 1998, November 1998, February 1999, November 1999 and June 2000. *The Age* had similar features in April–May 1997, October 1997, June 1998, December 1999, February 2000, April 2000 and November 2000.

It is useful to compare the following Figure 13.10 concerning crimes occurring in the Russell/Bourke Street area with Figure 13.9 representing drug-related crime. There is clearly overlap between the two, as nearly all the stories concerning crime occurring in Bourke and Russell streets also concern drugs or drug-related violence.

**Bourke and Russell Streets**

From 1997, both newspapers commence major features series on drugs in the ‘Golden Elbow’, the colloquial term given to this central city location. The peaks shown in Figure 13.10 generally represent series reporting of the problems associated with the area, many of which appear in the *Sunday Age*. For example, the peak in November 1997 represents a featured series in the *Sunday Age* (‘Russell Street – Worst Street in Melbourne?’)<sup>71</sup> that comments on the problems associated with drugs in the Russell/Bourke Street environs.

**Figure 13.10: Percentage of newspaper articles reporting crime at Bourke and Russell Streets compared to recorded crime statistics at these locations by month 1995–2000**



Note: Over six years a total of 21,265 crimes at Bourke and Russell Streets were recorded in crime statistics

71 ‘Russell Street: The worst street in Melbourne?’, *The Sunday Age*, 9 November 1997, p.1.

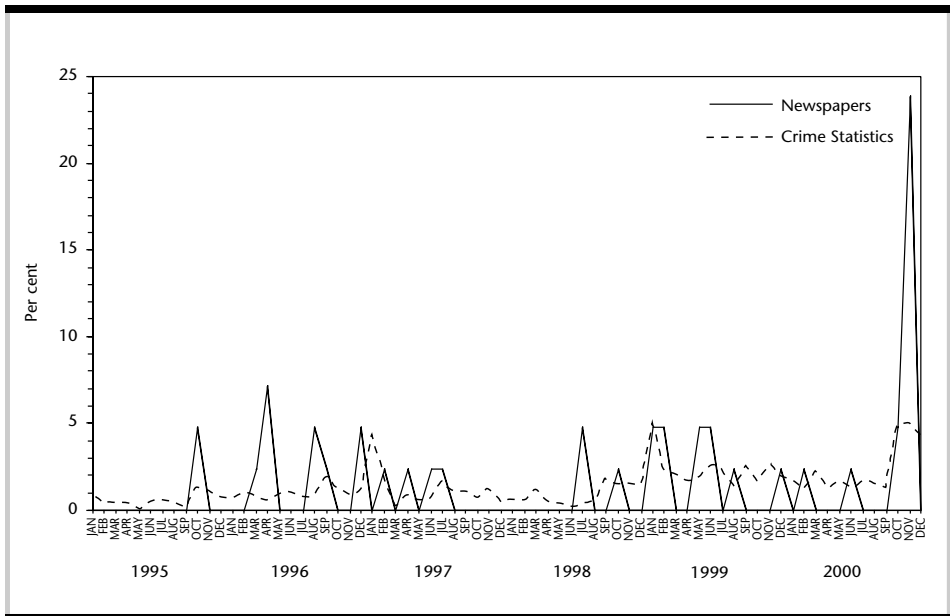
and there were 97 newspaper articles about crime at these streets.

Figure 13.10 shows that the level of crime at Bourke and Russell Streets was fairly static over the period 1995 to 2000, but the number of articles mentioning these streets seems to wildly fluctuate. Bourke Street had 16,590 crimes and Russell Street had 4,675 crimes during the six-year period. Bourke had by far the highest number of crimes for any street, with 13.6% of all crimes and Russell Street was the seventh highest street for criminal offences. The relative proportions of the four general crime categories (Crimes Against the Person, Crimes Against Property, Drug Offences and Other Crimes) for Bourke Street were similar to the overall pattern for crimes in the study. Russell Street, however, had a relatively high proportion of drug-related crimes. The overall average for drug-related crimes was 5.4 per cent but at Russell Street 26.3 per cent were drug-related. There were more articles (66) mentioning Russell Street than any other street except King Street. Bourke, with mentions in 60 articles, was the third highest.

### ***Begging***

Figure 13.11 below provides a comparison of the number of reported begging offences and newspaper reporting of begging in the Melbourne CBD over the period 1995–2000. It is interesting to note the increase in official recorded begging offences in the Christmas holiday season. While newspaper reporting tended to fluctuate over this period there was an unprecedented reporting of Beg alms offences in the later months of 2000. It is important to note that, despite these seasonal fluctuations, Beg alms offences comprised just 0.8 per cent of all recorded crime over the period of analysis.

**Figure 13.11: Percentage of newspaper articles reporting begging compared to recorded crime statistics for Beg alms by month 1995–2000**



As the recorded crime statistics show in Table 13.7, there was a large increase in the number of recorded beg alms offences from 1995 to 1996 and then again from 1998 to 1999. These

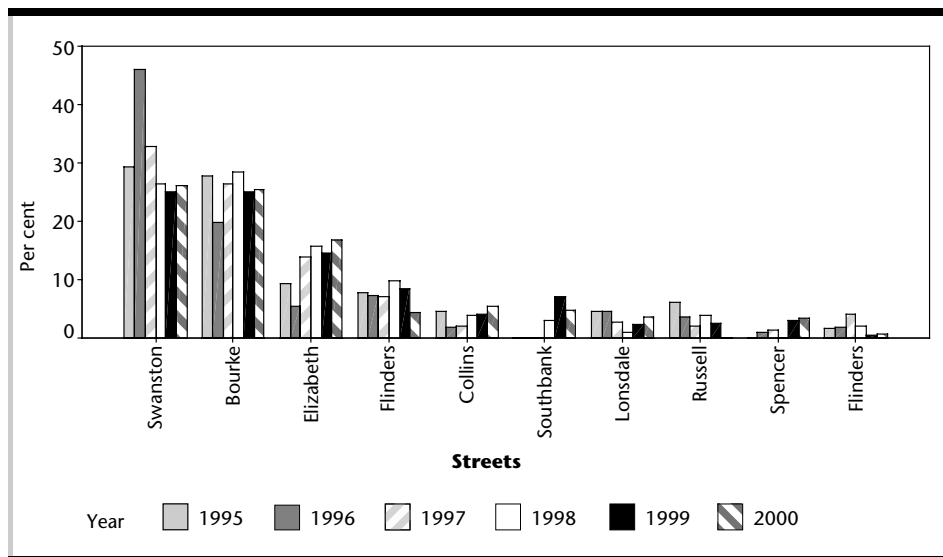
figures are interesting for two reasons. First, it is important to remember that the offence of ‘Beg alms’ is an offence that is processed largely at the discretion of the police. Second, the increases in reported begging offences coincided with newspaper interest in begging activity.

**Table 13.7: Beg alms offences by year 1995–2000**

Year	Number of Offences	Percentage of Offences
1995	65	6.7
1996	111	11.5
1997	144	14.9
1998	102	10.5
1999	273	28.2
2000	272	28.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>967</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Also of interest is the manner in which newspaper reports chose to focus upon Swanston Street as the centre of illicit begging activity. In 2000, the *Herald Sun* ran a campaign against begging activity in Swanston Street. However, as shown in Figure 13.12 below, there was very little difference between recorded begging activity in that street and in the amount of recorded activity in Bourke Street. In fact, in 1999 there had been more begging offences recorded in Bourke Street than any other street in the Melbourne CBD.

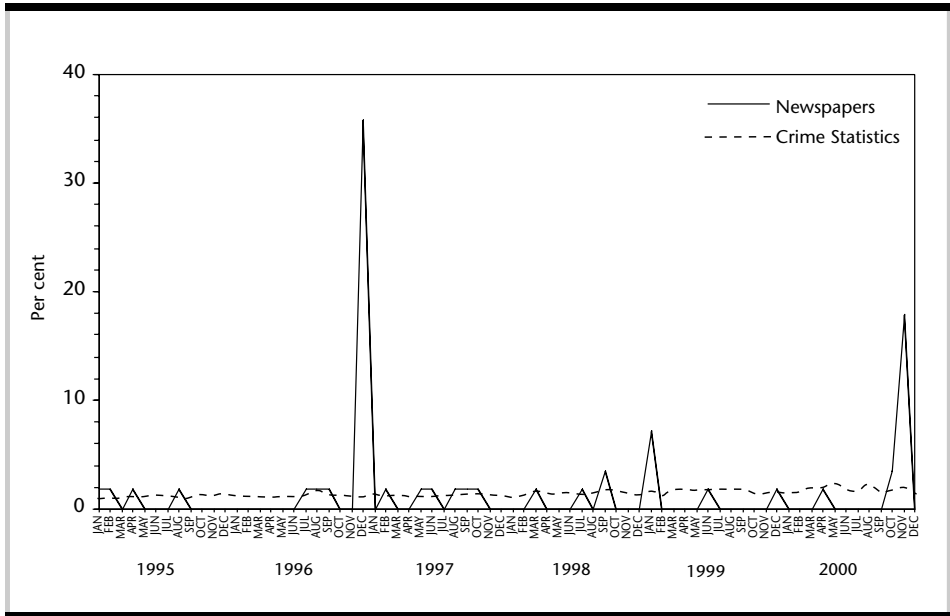
**Figure 13.12: Top 10 streets for Beg alms offences 1995–2000, per cent per year**



**Swanston Street**

Figure 13.13 shows that while the level of ‘actual crime’ occurring in Swanston street over the period in question is remarkably stable, three distinct peaks in crime news reporting are observable.

**Figure 13.13: Percentage of newspaper articles reporting crime at Swanston Street compared to recorded crime statistics at that location by month 1995–2000**



**Note:** Over six years a total of 7,961 crimes at Swanston Street were recorded in crime statistics and there were 56 newspaper articles about crime at Swanston Street.

The first of these peak periods in crime news reporting is in December 1996 and is attributable to the murder of diamond merchants in a Swanston Street office building during that month (see 'Homicide' section above). These stories appeared in both the *Herald Sun* and *The Age*.

The *Herald Sun* is largely responsible for the second and third peaks that occur in January 1999 and November 2000. The stories in these clusters nearly all represent part of a media campaign by the *Herald Sun* against begging, drugs and associated disorder occurring in Swanston Street and its environs. The stories on begging were particularly prevalent during this period, as can be seen in Figure 13.11. These types of stories usually fall under series headlines such as 'Street of Shame'.

## Conclusion

Comparisons made with the official Police statistics show that the print media studied in this Report proportionally under and over-reported certain types of crime in the Melbourne CBD.

Property offences, such as Theft, comprising the highest proportion of offences recorded in the CBD, are under-reported by the two newspapers studied. This may be because such crimes are less newsworthy in the views of the newspapers. Conversely, crimes such as Homicide, Assault and Drug Offences are proportionally over-reported in the print media coverage. It would seem that these are considered by the media to be much more

newsworthy than those offences which have the highest rate of occurrence in the Melbourne CBD.

Newsworthiness, then, appears to be a stronger force behind much of the print media's reporting of crime stories, rather than a desire to reflect accurately the types and rates of offences occurring. This generally accords with the academic literature on the theory of media reporting.

Shifts in the types and locations of crime on which the newspapers focus also suggest that newsworthiness drives a search for new 'angles' to reporting crime in the CBD, rather than reflects an increase in the rate of a specific offence or an increase in crime at a certain location. This is exemplified by the extremely high proportion of media crime stories concentrating on King Street during 1995–1996, despite the crime rate there staying fairly constant, then a shift in media focus to portray Russell Street as the major crime area in the CBD, although this street rates seventh on the official list of crime locations.

The comparative statistics explored above suggest that targeted media campaigns focussed upon certain offences and activities, as well as the areas in which these were most prominent. The 'Clean up our streets' campaign against begging and other so-called 'antisocial' activities in Swanston Street is one notable example. However, as Chapter 10 of this Report identified, there was a tendency for these campaigns to target marginalised persons, such as the homeless, as the perpetrators of certain offences. Consequently, in some cases, the over-reporting of these offences in newspaper campaigns created a climate of fear and suspicion towards such individuals.

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## Part E: Future Directions

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### 14. Crime in the Melbourne CBD: Issues for consideration

This Inquiry has sought to examine the nexus between '*real*' levels of crime occurring in the Melbourne CBD and the *perception* of what levels and type of crime are occurring in the metropolis. The Committee has put inverted commas around the term '*real*' because the measuring of crime and the use of statistics and statistical analysis is an inexact science. Nonetheless, allowing for this inexactitude, the Committee is concerned that there seems to be such a divergence between the level and type of crime as officially recorded in police data and the messages promoted by the media. These messages both directly and indirectly suggest that not only is crime rampant and rising in the central city (and elsewhere) but that Melbourne is increasingly an unsafe place to live, work and visit.

This concluding chapter summarises the main themes of this Inquiry and suggests strategies, where appropriate, for future reform.

The chapter commences with a brief appraisal of crime in the Melbourne CBD, contrasting media reports of crime and official crime statistics. It will then look at methods through which the official collation, recording and dissemination of crime statistics might be improved before finally concluding with a summary of a variety of general approaches aimed at promoting community well-being and safety in the Melbourne CBD.

#### **Crime in the Melbourne Central Business District**

While crime in the Melbourne CBD continues to comprise a very small proportion of crime committed throughout the state, it has escalated at a greater rate than the state-wide average

The greater proportion of criminal activity in the Melbourne CBD is property-related crime, often of a minor nature (Theft, Theft from Motor Vehicle, and Theft (Shopsteal)). This is not to down-play the impact these crimes have, but rather to contrast the actual commission of crime in the Melbourne CBD with the perception of crime that could be derived from print media sources. While the most frequently recorded crimes in the Melbourne CBD received very little media coverage, less frequently recorded offences such as Homicide, Drug Offences and Assaults received a disproportionately high amount of attention.

A number of informed commentators spoke of the influence media attention has had in relation to public perceptions of crime in the Melbourne Central Business District. Inevitably, the disproportionate media attention allocated to those serious crimes judged to be 'newsworthy' has nurtured the perception that such crime is particularly prevalent within the Melbourne CBD. The means by which this perception might be countered is significantly compromised by a lack of accessible data that might provide a contrasting image. Additionally, this lack of data means that media campaigns have provided the motivation for many community responses to issues of crime and safety. Such responses are consequently restricted to a reactive as opposed to a proactive approach.

## **Ongoing research and the availability of crime statistics**

As the above discussion implies, a further issue of importance that arose in the course of the Committee's Inquiry was the difficulties encountered in accessing information that was both comprehensive and independent in respect of crime trends and community perceptions of crime. Such information is crucial to the development of policies and practices that aim to reduce crime and increase community safety.

In respect of community perception studies, Gordon Edgar, a planner with the Melbourne City Council's Strategic Research Branch, flagged the difficulties inherent in the conduct of such studies:

When we started off the benchmarking project a lot of people said there's too many things you can't measure, you can't put everything into numbers, people are going to misinterpret statistics and all that. So we always bear in mind that statement as a sort of guideline, because a lot of people do criticise trying to measure things. You come up with all sorts of difficulties like you can't compare between countries, as with apples and oranges and all the rest of it. But if you don't try and measure things, somebody else will... (Edgar, 2000, pp. 85–86).

While this is a considered assessment of the difficulties that accompany the commission of perception surveys, it offered little explanation for the elementary gaps in those studies conducted. As Timothy Piper (Executive Director of the Australian Retailers Association Victoria) noted, the studies conducted failed to consider the perceptions of the people who shop outside of the Melbourne CBD.

They have the choice of going to a regional area such as Chadstone or Highpoint, or coming into the city. [Regardless of] whether the city is safer in terms of statistics, it is what they read on the front page of the *Herald Sun* that they remember most. So I think there is no doubt that while the city is improving its image – and we must continue to do that – the perception is still out there with too many consumers that we have a problem (T. Piper, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May 2001, p. 9).

In addition to ensuring that a representative population sample is consulted, future studies must ensure that questions asked of respondents are well defined. The importance of applying the exact research methodology over time should also be noted, as it is necessary if emerging trends are to be observed. Finally, it is important to reiterate the apparent lack of independent research into community perceptions of crime in the Melbourne CBD. The

greater part of information provided to the Committee was commissioned and controlled by Melbourne City Council. The control of this data by an organisation concerned to preserve a positive image of the city may cause some to question the findings they present.

There have been similar questions of access and independence raised in relation to official crime statistics recorded by the police. The Committee has experienced a certain degree of reluctance on the part of the Victoria Police to release up-to-date crime statistics (Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee 2001).

Christine Nixon, the recently appointed Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police, acknowledged the difficulties encountered by Committee members when attempting to access crime data:

I think it is the behaviour of police organisations... The process of keeping crime statistics secret is quite common. Whether or not Victoria Police did it [prevented access to statistics] for reasons of wanting to protect the information I cannot say, but it is a common practice in policing and it is a common practice in politics to encourage police not to release that information (C. Nixon, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 11 September 2001, p. 61).

In addition, criminologist Professor Arie Freiberg of Melbourne University has also acknowledged the current difficulties, calling for the establishment of a well-resourced, independent research bureau to collect and disseminate criminal justice statistics:

We should have an agency with a standard reporting and checking system so you have good police, corrections and courts data, which is all then double-checked for accuracy by someone who hasn't got an axe to grind.<sup>72</sup>

Indeed, the availability of accurate, objective information may comprise an important step in addressing a number of those issues raised above. As Councillor Risstrom noted in public hearings held by the Committee:

The beginning of that improvement will have to be an understanding about providing information that is reliable, easy to translate and available to the media to use so that if an organisation chooses, in its editorial meetings, to take a particular approach, it is not so difficult for them to establish whether their prejudice is correct or not. If they can check their information with a phone call, a fax or an Internet source and see that they are going to run a story that is completely contradictory to what is shown to be the truth, they are less likely to run that story (D. Risstrom, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May 2001, p. 33).

The Committee intends to investigate the feasibility and desirability of the establishment of an independent crime statistics unit as part of its ongoing Inquiry into the Incidence of Crime.

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72 Quoted in G. Wilkinson, 'MPs focus on crime', *Herald Sun*, 4 September 2000, p. 14.



## **Future issues for consideration**

Throughout the course of the Committee's Inquiry, a number of associated issues were raised in relation to crime and safety in the Melbourne Central Business District. There was a particular concern, for example, to address the reported perceptions that the Melbourne CBD was the site of criminal activity and was unsafe as a consequence of the presence of marginalised persons. Drawing on evidence provided to the Committee, the following section represents some of the more notable suggestions offered by relevant authorities and community stakeholders.

### ***Development of partnerships***

The benefit of a partnership-oriented approach to crime and safety issues was constantly raised in evidence presented to the Committee. The willingness to enter into partnerships was primarily based on the acknowledgement that an effective response to issues of crime and safety required a collaborative approach. In effect, stakeholders accepted the notion that the Melbourne CBD was comprised of an aggregate of interests, each with differing areas of responsibility and expertise. If these were to be brought to bear on a common problem, then it was seen as necessary for the stakeholders concerned to work together in order to best direct their combined resources.<sup>73</sup> As Heather Scovell, Group Manager of the City of Melbourne's Community Services, noted:

At the City of Melbourne, we take [partnerships] as an absolute given and we now have relationships of sufficient history and maturity to work together within different cultures' perspectives. And we have political and economic imperatives enabling us to spend a minimum time negotiating roles and responsibilities...

Relationships are formalised in a network of groups to provide coordination and advice to Council, including a high level city safety forum for strategic thinking, and a series of working groups on practical actions relating to various activities of the City (Scovell 2001, p. 20).

The Council's leadership role in formulating partnerships and cooperative approaches was recognised as a proactive approach to be encouraged as 'best practice.' Penelope Coombs, Managing Director of Sydney's People for Places and Spaces, noted:

As a Government, I think they [Melbourne City Council] need to be congratulated, because they took on the full role of local government. They acted as facilitators, they were catalysts and initiators, they were point of liaison, they were researchers and planners, they were coordinators of services, they were project managers and they were information and promotion agencies (Coombs 2000, p. 61).

### ***Law enforcement responses***

A particularly important partner with regard to strategies of crime prevention is, of course, the police. Indeed, the role of the police in respect of crime and safety in the Melbourne CBD was acknowledged as both difficult and deserving of praise. However, concerns were raised regarding the response of law enforcement authorities to certain types of behaviour.

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73 For a discussion of the development of a partnership based approach to crime and safety issues in the Melbourne CBD, see Chapter 8.

Some, such as the Youth Substance Abuse Service (YSAS), acknowledged the pressures upon police to take a traditional law enforcement approach to activities such as begging. The media campaign to 'clean' the city streets of 'undesirable' activity, for example, exerted considerable pressure. Further pressure was forthcoming from the CBD's retail sector. Timothy Piper, Executive Director of the Australian Retailers Association of Victoria, spoke of the need for 'a greater police presence' on the city streets. Many retailers, he noted, were in favour of 'zero tolerance in the city' (T. Piper 2001, p. 6). A conflict therefore currently exists between the care and containment approach of community policing and the periodic 'blitzes' of a traditional law enforcement nature.

However, there appeared to have been no consideration of the potential consequences of traditional law enforcement activities by those calling for their intensification. As YSAS submitted to the Committee:

The effect of the campaign against begging has been to criminalise these behaviours, by increasing the use of infringements and criminal prosecutions by the police. Not surprisingly, strategies involving fines for people involved in begging and homelessness have done more harm than good. Increasing the financial burden of unpaid fines eventually results in court appearances, additional fines and criminal sanctions...

People subjected to criminal process due to drug use or begging related activities become increasingly entrenched in criminal process and subculture rather than integrated with wider community support structures and processes. The needs that contributed to the activities in the first place often remain unmet (YSAS Submission to the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee 2001, p. 4).

YSAS argued instead that a 'community policing' model would produce better outcomes in relation to safety in the so-called hot spots in the Melbourne CBD.<sup>74</sup> YSAS envisaged a model whereby a core of specially trained officers, with a demonstrated capacity to manage difficult street behaviours, be stationed in the CBD so as to provide a distinct presence. This, it was suggested, would allow less emphasis to be placed on the arrest and processing of petty offenders in favour of *managing* 'undesirable' activity (YSAS 2001, p. 10). Management would ideally involve liaison with service providers to assist the homeless, mentally ill or drug-affected on the city's streets. In addition, such a unit would serve to provide retailers, entertainment providers and members of the public with access to specialist police who are practiced in engaging with people exhibiting problematic behaviour (YSAS 2001, p. 10).

This endorsement of community policing is shared by a number of those at a strategic level within the Victoria Police. In April 2000, Sergeant Richard Koo of the Victoria Police Crime

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74 In discussing the concept of community policing, Sarre comments:

'It can be agreed by most observers that the term signifies an emphasis on foot patrols (beat policing) and community service... Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, community based policing shifts the philosophy of policing away from reactive models towards proactive models of operation after a process of community consultation.'

(R. Sarre, 'The state of community based policing in Australia: Some emerging themes', in *Australian Policing: Contemporary Issues*, eds D. Chappell & P. Wilson, Butterworths, Sydney, 1996, p. 30.)

For a more in-depth discussion of community policing in an Australian context, see: S. McKillop & J. Vernon (eds), *The Police and the Community*, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra 1991; P. Lewis, & C. Davids, *Community Oriented Policing* (Study Guide), Deakin University, Geelong, 1998.

Prevention Unit told the WHO Safe Communities International Symposium at Melbourne Town Hall:

We at the Victoria Police have traditionally been seen as the reactive or law enforcement arm of crime and crime prevention. In isolation, this is no longer valid. To be relevant to our local communities, we must recognise that our position within society is changing and that we need to act proactively. This is a critical element of modern policing.

Local priority policing is basically the embracing of community based policing philosophies (Koo 2000, p. 40).

Superintendent Tony Warren likewise acknowledged the necessity of good community relations:

I think we work very strongly with the community. We meet with them on a regular basis and it is just a matter of our people being aware that the community wants to see them... I try to get my personnel to go into the shops, the food markets and those locations and introduce themselves and let them [the broader community] know they are around, but I think that sometimes people do not see that we are doing it. I am hoping that with those community liaisons we have, we will be informed if they are not happy with something and/or if we can improve it in any way. We are only too happy to blend in with them (Superintendent A.J. Warren, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May 2001, p. 17).

In fact, in 1996 the Melbourne police division was awarded the Melbourne City Business Award for outstanding cooperation with the community and the number of liaisons in which it was involved (Warren 2001, p. 15).

Nonetheless, Superintendent Warren acknowledged that a core of more experienced officers based in the CBD would better allow a community policing strategy to be fulfilled. Committee Member, Mr Richard Wynne, raised the suggestion that a mentor program between older and more experienced police personnel and younger officers might enable the latter to develop a better relationship with the young people throughout the CBD. Superintendent Warren replied: 'I would dearly love to have a larger core of experienced personnel within the CBD' (Warren 2001, p. 13).

This, however, would require a shift in the personnel management policies of the Victoria Police. At present the Melbourne CBD serves as the initial posting for graduates from the Victorian Police Academy. It is this posting that provides, in Superintendent Warren's word, training in 'community interaction' (p. 13). At public hearings held by the Committee, David Murray of YSAS articulated the difficulties that this current personnel practice presented in respect of community policing objectives:

Younger police, who are closer to graduating and earning their spurs as police, are obviously more focussed on the traditional policing role of observing, arresting and charging and so on, than being very proactive. Older police, who are perhaps more experienced, are more able to see that there needs to be balance (D. Murray, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May 2001, p. 4).

### ***The need for adequate service provision***

As noted in Chapter 10 much of the so-called 'antisocial' activity observed in the Melbourne CBD is often the activity of vulnerable individuals whose cause may be better served by support services as opposed to the intervention of law enforcement. Indeed, the increasingly visible presence of homeless and marginalised individuals in the Melbourne CBD is arguably an indication of the need for additional services in the area. Encouragingly, local government has supported the need for further action. Heather Scovell acknowledged it was necessary for the Council to provide for the needs of *all* those who used the central city:

The City of Melbourne seeks to be an inclusive city...one that does not further disenfranchise the homeless and the disadvantaged, and a city where the aged and disabled are welcome and comfortable. The city seeks to accommodate the interests of all these groups. This approach is seen to be fundamental to sustainable community safety in keeping a balance in the population in the city and promoting a culture of acceptance. This approach also requires that measures are taken to properly address the needs and interests of these different groups (Scovell 2000, p. 22).

Evidence presented to the Committee suggested that the needs of two groups, in particular, were in urgent need of address. These were the young and homeless and the young and mentally ill.<sup>75</sup> There is a considerable body of research in support of this evidence.<sup>76</sup> Most recently, a 1999 survey of Melbourne's inner city crisis accommodation services reported that 65 per cent of people seeking shelter in these services could not be accommodated (Victorian Homelessness Strategy 2001). The following excerpt from the YSAS submission gives details of the needs of the young and homeless persons with whom they work on a daily basis.

Young people in homeless and drug-related lifestyles [in] the city area frequently talk about their need for places where they can feel safe. Dangers arising from peers in other support groups, older and stronger individuals and some police are real and significant. It is ironic that whilst 'crackdowns' on young street users are driven by perceptions of the risk that they represent for other city users, it is the young people themselves that are most exposed to dangers from their environment and who are placed at more risk because of those initiatives.

Improved accommodation options are required for young people and young adults at risk on the streets at night, for whom established refuge and SAAP services are generally inaccessible and inflexible. Places need to be available at short notice, flexible in accepting partners and supportive peer relationships, and realistic in terms of consistency of commitment and follow up...

In retrospect, the emphasis placed on safe injecting rooms as a primary response to drug use in the CBD appears to have been misplaced... It may have been more

75 It should be stressed that these were not the only groups in need of further service provision. However, they arguably comprise the most visible of the marginalised groups on Melbourne's streets. They are also the group that consequently seems to attract the most publicity.

76 See for example: Victorian Homelessness Strategy Ministerial Advisory Committee, *Building Solutions for Individuals and Families who Experience Homelessness*, Melbourne, DHS, April 2001; A. Hunter, *Uncomfortably Numb. Young People and Drugs: An Integrated Response*, St Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne, 1996.

productive to focus on providing primary health care, accommodation and other 'holistic' support services relevant to drug users and others needing improved access to these services. These services could be used to provide places of safety for those involved (YSAS 2001, p. 6).

Father Peter Norden of Jesuit Social Services spoke to the Committee about the lack of sufficient services for young people with mental health problems. He noted how the present failure to meet the needs of these individuals was indirectly increasing rates of illicit drug use among the young and vulnerable.

We see that there is a growing phenomenon, from both the experience of our own programs and also the broader experience of the community, that young people are not using or getting adequate access to mental health services in the community, and are alternatively self-medicating as a way of dealing with that pre-existing illness (Fr. P. Norden, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May 2001, p. 40).

His colleague, Bernie Geary (Director of Programs, Jesuit Social Services) added further to this observation, noting:

We have a situation where young homeless people with mental illness are presenting to hospitals in late evenings and during day times, are being given cups of coffee, and being sent off again. Young homeless people are presenting to refuges, and because of their presentation and maybe because of their history, they are not receiving beds. We are in a situation where the only beds that have been increased in the past 10 years have been in prisons... Our prisons are full of young, mentally ill addicted people (B. Geary, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May 2001, pp. 40–41).

A further issue of concern was how the lack of available support services was impacting upon attempts by police to divert persons in 'genuine need' to a welfare agency for assistance. Superintendent Tony Warren noted that often diversion was not a viable option given the lack of available places:

If there was any issue that we would look at, it would be the ability for us to refer people in need to an agency and know that they will receive some sort of assistance. The biggest difficulty for most of our personnel is that if there are any rehabilitation programs in place, and they identify needs, there is a significant [waiting] period before those people can get assistance (Superintendent A. Warren, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May 2001, p.15).

Until adequate support services are in place or, alternatively, until structural issues of poverty and marginalisation receive due attention, those who endure the consequences will remain a visible presence on the city streets where they will continue to contribute to perceptions of increased crime and antisocial behaviour.

## ***Education strategies***

### **Promotion of the Melbourne CBD**

As the local governing body responsible for the administration of the Melbourne CBD, the Melbourne City Council explicitly acknowledged its role in the promotion of the city as a safe, yet exciting place.

Such promotion is, of course, vital to the city's continued sustainability, its economic infrastructure and its 'livability'. As Councilor Risstrom noted to the Committee:

As you know, the city of Melbourne depends very much on its image to attract business residents, visitors and tourists. For us, the critical thing is not only to be safe, but also to be seen to be safe (Councillor D. Risstrom, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee Public Hearings, 28 May 2001, p. 31).

Given the over-reporting of crime-related news in the print media, the need to educate the broader public as to the relative safety of Melbourne is consequently of paramount importance. The City of Melbourne has formulated a relatively detailed strategy to market Melbourne as a safe city (City of Melbourne 1999d). This noted some areas requiring further development, including the need for a planned distribution strategy for brochures and written materials to support and communicate safety initiatives to target audiences (City of Melbourne 1999d). Consideration was also given to how the mass media might provide a useful tool in the promotion of Melbourne as a safe city. The benefits that could be expected to result for all sectors of the city environment should be impressed upon media representatives.

### **Increasing community awareness**

A number of witnesses spoke of the need to respond to the community fears and uncertainty arising from the increased visibility of poverty, homelessness and drug use in the city. Indeed, perception surveys referred to by the Committee had consistently reported that a major concern of the broader public in respect of the CBD was:

[T]he presence of undesirables, namely groups of people hanging around and beggars, streets kids/homeless people (Newton Wayman Chong (NWC) 2001, p. iii).

There was a general belief expressed to the Committee that media campaigns to 'clean the streets' of beggars and the homeless had exacerbated the unease experienced by the general public when in the vicinity of such marginalised individuals. In short, and for the purposes of this section, it should be noted that such media campaigns promoted the perception that those persons behaving strangely on the city streets, or those who simply appeared dirty or disheveled, presented a potential threat to the broader community. This has been shown to be at odds with the experiences of those who engage with such vulnerable individuals in a professional capacity.<sup>77</sup> It is the considerable variance between the imagined threat of danger and the reality of the situation that underlines the need for a committed public education campaign. Service providers, continually frustrated by the 'demonisation' of those they work with, have urged that decisive action be taken. Hanover Welfare Services, for one, recommended that:

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<sup>77</sup> For a further discussion, see Chapter 10.

The City of Melbourne should consider the development of targeted strategies to increase awareness and understanding within the community about the extent and nature of begging (Hanover Welfare Services 2001, p. 25).

Of course, it is important that any public education campaign move beyond issues of begging and aim to raise public awareness of the plight of the homeless and mentally ill.

## **Conclusion**

Criminal activity is a reality of life in the Melbourne Central Business District. Indeed, the level of crime in the Melbourne CBD has increased and community fears of crime have increased with it. However, the escalation of community concern may have, at least in part, occurred as a consequence of the emphasis on certain types of criminal and antisocial activity. In this sense, the community's perceptions do not necessarily reflect an understanding of the nature or level of crime in the Melbourne CBD. As this chapter has demonstrated, a number of strategies exist by which both crime and the community's perceptions of crime might be addressed.

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# Appendices

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## Appendix 1 – List of Submissions

### Submissions from organisations

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Ms Rosalin Sadler	President	Flinders Quarter Association Inc.
Mr Carlo Colosimo	Proprietor	Lounge
Ms Laeta Antonysen	Editor	Melbourne Leader
Mr Peter B. Nancarrow	Deputy Commissioner (Policy and Standards)	Victoria Police
Mr David Murray (YSAS)	Chief Executive Officer	Youth Substance Abuse Services
Ms Heather Scovell	Group Manager Community Services	Melbourne City Council
Mr Michael Bourne	Director	Crime Prevention Victoria – Department of Justice
Mr David Riley	Acting Chief Executive	Tourism Victoria

### Submissions from individuals

<b>Name</b>
Mr Raymond Hoser
Mr Bill Holyoake



## Appendix 2 – List of Witnesses

### Witnesses appearing at Public Hearings – 28 May 2001

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Mr David Murray	Chief Executive Officer	Youth Substance Abuse Service (YSAS)
Ms Helena Jedjud	Case Worker	Youth Substance Abuse Service (YSAS)
Mr Tony Warren	Superintendent	Victoria Police
Mr Tim Piper	Executive Director	Australian Retailers Association
Victoria		
Ms Lisa Hurley	Marketing Officer	Australian Retailers Association
Victoria		
Mr David Risstrom	Councillor	City of Melbourne
Ms Heather Scovell	Group Manager Community Service	City of Melbourne
Mr Peter Norden	Director of Jesuit Social Services	Jesuit Social Service
Mr Bernie Geary	Director of Programmes	Jesuit Social Service
Mr Peter Iwaniuk	President	Nightclub Owner's Association
Mr William Albon	Secretary	Nightclub Owner's Association
Mr Jon Faine		Not representing an organisation

### *Expert witnesses who addressed the Committee*

Ms. Christine Nixon,	Chief Commissioner,	Victoria Police.
Dr John Fitzgerald,	Senior Lecturer, Criminology Department,	The University of Melbourne.

## Appendix 3 – Methodology

This report utilises unit record data from the Victoria Police Law Enforcement Assistance Program (LEAP) database.

The Committee obtained LEAP Unit Record Data for the postcodes:

- ◆ 3000
- ◆ 3002
- ◆ 3003
- ◆ 3006
- ◆ 3008.

The initial data files, which contained 151,004 Records, were delivered in Excel databases on CD-ROM.

The Excel data files were imported into an SPSS v10 database. Frequency Distributions were run on the raw data file on the variables: 'streets' (street name) and 'loc\_text' (location text) to correct any spelling errors and ensure consistency in location descriptors.

Descriptive labels, where available, taken from the Victoria Police Annual Crime Statistics Report, were entered into the database, for the offence codes under the variable 'offa' (offence codes). The offence codes were unchanged.

Once the Committee had determined the area to be included in this investigation, a number of the records were culled relating to offences that were recorded on streets that fell outside this area.

A final frequency distribution was run for the variable 'streets' (street name) and the individual streets were checked against the *Melway Street Directory* to ensure that they fell within the required area. Where street names were clearly outside the area, they were crossed off the list, and the records relating to those streets were deleted. Where street names fell within the desired area, the type of street, ie. lane, road, alley etc., was noted against the name on the list to be checked against the variable 'street\_t' (street type) in the database.

Once this list was finalised, SPSS was programmed to select only those street names that were clearly outside the area under investigation and these records were deleted. The 7,745 records that did not have a street name listed were retained.

The next phase was to delete parts of streets that fell outside the area of investigation.

The *Melway Street Directory* was used to determine, where possible, the street numbers that fell outside the border of the area. The SPSS program was programmed to select those records for which the street numbers clearly fell outside the area under investigation. The records relating to the streets on the borders of the area were then examined against a number of other variables including Melway (Melway reference), remark (Remarks about the offence), loc\_text (location text) for information that specifically places the location outside the area under consideration, and these records were deleted. This information was

closely checked against the *White Pages* telephone book and the *Melway Street Directory*. In the absence of such exclusionary information, the records were retained.

Investigation of the data revealed that the records relating to Postcode 3005 (World Trade Centre) had been allocated to the Melbourne 3000 postcode for police purposes. For this study, at the request of the Committee, these records were re-coded to the 3005 postcode. Other inaccuracies in postcode allocation were corrected when identified.

The final stage of the data cleaning process involved checking that the individual offences corresponded correctly with the offence category groups published by Victoria Police. In a small percentage of cases the offence categories in the data supplied by Victoria Police were incorrect. These were corrected.

At the conclusion of the data cleaning process, 128,633 offences recorded by police between 1 July 1994 and 31 December 2000 formed the database. While most data analysis contained in this Report is presented on a calendar year basis, from January 1995 to December 2000, Chapter 6 of the Report, 'How Crime in the Melbourne CBD Compares with the Rest of the State', uses financial year data. This variation was necessary because the Victorian data for this analysis was drawn from crime statistics recorded by Victoria Police on a financial year basis – from 1995/1996 to 1999/2000.<sup>78</sup> The Committee's database for this analysis therefore included the last six months of data from 1994 and excluded the last six months of the 2000 data.

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<sup>78</sup> These statistics are published annually by Victoria Police in an annual publication, *Victoria Police Crime Statistics*.

## Appendix 4 – Offence Categories Used by LEAP

There are more than 4,000 individual statutory and common law offences recorded in LEAP.<sup>2</sup> The Victoria Police then group these offences into 27 offence categories. These categories are then presented in four general classes: Crime Against the Person, Crime Against Property, Drug Offences and Other Crime (Victoria Police 2001b, p. 6). Details of the offence categories occurring within these four main classes of crime are given below.

### **Crime Against the Person**

#### ***Homicide***

Includes murder, attempted murder, manslaughter, culpable driving, failure to stop/assist at an accident resulting in death and abortion.

#### ***Rape***

Includes buggery with a person under 14, and buggery.

#### ***Sex (non-rape)***

Includes Indecent assault, Wilful and obscene exposure in public, Indecent act with child under 16, Sexual penetration person 10–16, Incest and Gross indecency.

#### ***Robbery***

Includes Armed robbery, Robbery and Assault with intent to rob.

#### ***Assault***

Includes Unlawful assault, Intentionally cause injury, Recklessly cause injury, Assault police, Assault with weapon/instrument and Make threats to kill.

#### ***Kidnap/Abduction***

Includes False imprisonment, Abduction for the act of sexual penetration, Kidnap and Unlawful and injurious imprisonment.

### **Crime Against Property**

#### ***Arson***

Includes Criminal damage by fire (Arson), Criminal damage (intentionally damage/destroy), Set fire to litter receptacle and Light/use fire and destroy/damage property.

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2 Victoria Police offence statistical recording and reporting categories do not necessarily conform to legal definitions. See Chapter 5

### ***Property Damage***

Includes Criminal damage, Wilful damage/injure property, Possess article for criminal damage, and Kill homing pigeon offences. In 1996/1997 Victoria Police changed the offence category from Criminal Damage to Property Damage.

### ***Burglary (Aggravated)***

Includes Aggravated burglary, Aggravated burglary–person present, Aggravated burglary–offensive weapon and Aggravated burglary–firearm.

### ***Burglary (Residential)***

Burglary, Enter Building to commit offence–assault.

### ***Burglary (Other)***

Burglary.

### ***Deception***

Includes Obtain property by deception, Obtain financial advantage by deception and Make false document offences (these are the most commonly recorded).

### ***Handle Stolen Goods***

Includes Handle/receive/retain stolen, Unlawful possession and Possess property being proceeds of crime offences (these are the most commonly recorded).

### ***Theft from Motor Vehicle***

Theft from motor vehicle.

### ***Theft (Shopsteal)***

Theft from shop, attempted theft from shop.

### ***Theft of Motor Vehicle***

Theft of motor vehicle.

### ***Theft of Bicycle***

Theft of bicycle.

### ***Theft (Other)***

The Theft (Other) category comprises ten offences including the stealing of mail from the post and the stealing of Commonwealth property. However, the single offence of 'Theft' represents the overwhelming proportion of offences in the Theft (Other) category.

## **Drug Offences**

### ***Drug (Cultivate, Manufacture, Traffic)***

Includes Traffic heroin, Traffic cannabis and Traffic amphetamines.

### ***Drug (Possess, Use)***

Includes Possess of heroin, Use of heroin, Possess amphetamines, Use of amphetamines.

## **Other Crime**

### ***Going Equipped to Steal***

#### ***Justice Procedures***

Includes Breach of intervention, Resist police/resist arrest, and Fail to answer bail.

#### ***Regulated Public Order***

Includes offences concerned with liquor (i.e. underage drinking), pornography, gambling and prostitution.

#### ***Weapons Explosives***

Includes Possess regulated weapon, Posses/carry/use unlicensed gun, Possess a dangerous article and Prohibited person possess a firearm.

#### ***Harassment***

Includes Use phone service to menace/harass/offend, Stalk another person, Use telecommunications service to menace, Use telecommunications service to harass and Knowingly interfere with facility.

#### ***Behaviour in Public***

Includes Behave in an offensive manner in a public place, Use indecent language in a public place, Drunk in a public place and Loiter with intent to commit an indictable offence.

#### ***Other Offences***

Includes Unlawfully on premises, Tamper with motor vehicle, Licensed Motor Car Trader fail to make entries in dealings book, Interfere with motor vehicle, Beg alms, Bomb hoax-make statement/convey information and Travel without a valid ticket (these are among the most common offences).

# Appendix 5 – Homicide Stories Appearing in *The Age* and *Herald Sun*

## 1. Spring Street Murders – April 1996

Peter Mickelburgh, 'Executed: Drugs link in double murder', *Herald Sun*, 17 April 1996, p. 1.

Michael Gleeson, Craig Binnie & Tanya Giles, 'Death in room 601', *Herald Sun*, 20 April 1996, p. 3.

Peter Mickelburgh & Craig Binnie, 'Murder bodies named', *Herald Sun*, 20 April 1996, p. 4;

Wayne Jones, 'Drug plot theory on killings', *Sunday Herald Sun*, 21 April 1996, p. 5.

Gabrielle Costa & Jason Koutsoukis, 'Two bodies found in upmarket apartment', *The Age*, 16 April 1996, p. 1;

Jason Koutsoukis, 'Apartment murders were executions – police', *The Age*, 17 April 1996, p. 3;

Jason Koutsoukis, 'Police name apartment murder victim', *The Age*, 18 April 1996, p. 4;

John Silvester, 'Slain man's heroin haul', *The Sunday Age*, 21 April 1996, p. 1.

## 2. Century Building Murders – December 1996

Michelle Coffey, Simon Pristel & Tanya Giles, 'Survivors of the killing fields' *Herald Sun*, 5 December 1996, p. 5.

Michelle Coffey, Bruce Brammall & Tim Stoney, 'Death strikes in the city's heart', *Herald Sun*, 5 December 1996, p. 2.

John Hamilton, 'Shots send a ripple of fear', *Herald Sun*, 5 December 1996, p. 4.

Family's trek from hell', *Herald Sun*, 6 December 1996.

Michael Gleeson, 'Flowers a sad farewell', *Herald Sun*, 6 December 1996, p. 4

Sarah Dolan, 'Police tell of row over debt', *Herald Sun*, 6 December 1996, p. 4.

Tanya Giles, 'Sad farewell', *Herald Sun*, 18 December 1996, p. 1.

David Adams, Gerard Ryle & Gabrielle Costa, 'Arrest over shooting of gem dealers', *The Age*, 5 December 1996, p. 1.

Sushila Das, 'Swanston St jeweller accused of shootings', *The Age*, 6 December 1996, p. 1.

Gabrielle Costa & Sandra McKay, 'Bullets shatter family's dream', *The Age*, 5 December 1996, p. 4;

David Adams, 'Family fled 'hell' for peaceful life in Australia', *The Age*, 6 December 1996, p. 6.

'The high risks of a deadly business', *The Age*, 5 December 1996, p. 4.

'Killings reminiscent of '78 deaths', *The Age*, 5 December 1996, p. 4.

Anthony Black, 'Man 'executed' in nightclub district', *Herald Sun*, 29 June 1997, p. 2.

Geoff Wilkinson, 'Eleven hours of violence – Streets of savagery', *Herald Sun*, 1 July 1997, p. 19.



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