



PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

**Inquiry into Locally Based Approaches to Community
Safety and Crime Prevention**

**Transcripts of Evidence
2012**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DANDENONG — 30 MAY 2011	6
INSPECTOR C. ALLEN, INSPECTOR, GREATER DANDENONG POLICE SERVICE AREA,	6
INSPECTOR B. WEMYSS, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INSPECTOR, GREATER DANDENONG POLICE SERVICE AREA, AND	6
SERGEANT J. HERRECH, SERGEANT/SUPERVISOR, PROACTIVE PROGRAMS UNIT, SOUTHERN METROPOLITAN REGION, VICTORIA POLICE;	6
MR W. EAMES, MANAGER, COMMUNITY PROGRAMS, YOUTH SUPPORT AND ADVOCACY SERVICE;	6
MS I. CALVERT, SECRETARY, THREE SEAS STEERING COMMITTEE/THE DOCK; AND	6
MR T. AGOUT, REPRESENTATIVE FROM SUDANESE YOUTH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.....	6
DANDENONG — 30 MAY 2011	22
COUNCILLOR R. BLADES, MAYOR,	22
MR M. DOUBLEDAY, DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY SERVICES,	22
MS L. ROBSON, MANAGER, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, AND	22
MR K. VAN BOXTEL, MANAGER, REVITALISING CENTRAL DANDENONG,	22
MR B. CARINS, ACTING COORDINATOR, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, CITY OF GREATER DANDENONG.....	22
MS F. COTTIER, ACTING MANAGER, CONSUMER, ENFORCEMENT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES, SOUTHERN METROPOLITAN REGION, DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE.	22
DANDENONG — 30 MAY 2011	38
MR B. JAMES, PRESIDENT,	38
MR C. ANDERSON, SECRETARY,	38
MS K. ANDERSON, MEMBER, AND	38
MR R. VERNON, MEMBER, DANDENONG NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH;	38
MR J. LAIDLAW, MEMBER, NOBLE PARK COMMUNITY ACTION FORUM,	38
FRANKSTON — 30 MAY 2011	50
COUNCILLOR K. BOLAM, MAYOR,	50
MS J. HOMEWOOD, MANAGER, GENERAL DEVELOPMENT, AND.....	50
MR S. DICKSON, MANAGER, COMPLIANCE AND SAFETY, CITY OF FRANKSTON;.....	50
INSPECTOR B. SHARP, MANAGER, OPERATION SUPPORT, AND	50
LEADING SENIOR CONSTABLE R. BLOOMFIELD, YOUTH RESOURCE OFFICE, FRANKSTON, VICTORIA POLICE;	50
MR S. RUTH, DIRECTOR, COMPLEX SERVICES, PENINSULA HEALTH;	50
MR M. WHITBY, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, CITY LIFE, FRANKSTON;	50
MR G. SHAW, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR FRANKSTON; AND	50
MR M. BERRY, ELECTORATE OFFICER.	50
MELBOURNE — 27 JUNE 2011	80
MR A. BRIDSON, STATE PRESIDENT,	80
MR B. SAMUEL, SECRETARY,.....	80
DET. INSP. M. KING, CHIEF COMMISSIONER’S REPRESENTATIVE, COMMUNITY CRIME PREVENTION APPOINTMENT, AND	80
MR B. HORMAN, IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT,.....	80
NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH VICTORIA INC. BOARD OF MANAGEMENT.	80
MELBOURNE — 27 JUNE 2011	90
MS M. MCPHERSON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, AND	90
MR P. SCHIER, SENIOR POLICY OFFICER, VICTORIAN LOCAL GOVERNANCE ASSOCIATION.	90

GEELONG — 8 AUGUST 2011.....	98
COUNCILLOR J. FARRELL,	98
MS J. MCMAHON, GENERAL MANAGER, COMMUNITY SERVICES,	98
MR S. BENTLEY, PLACE MANAGER, AND	98
MS L. ARMSTRONG-ROWE, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICER.	98
MR J. FRAME, CHAIRPERSON, LOCAL SAFETY COMMITTEE; CITY OF GREATER GEELONG;.....	98
INSPECTOR C. PEERS, LIQUOR LICENSING DIVISION; AND	98
INSPECTOR G. THOMPSON, OPERATIONS SUPPORT MANAGER, NUMBER 1 DIVISION, VICTORIA POLICE;	98
DR D. PALMER, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, DEAKIN UNIVERSITY; AND.....	98
MR D. HOLROYD, PRESIDENT, GEELONG NIGHTLIFE ASSOCIATION.....	98
GEELONG — 8 AUGUST 2011.....	126
MS K. OKOTEL, COMMUNITY LAWYER, BARWON COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE;.....	126
MS R. ROTHERHAM, DIVISION CO-ORDINATOR, NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH, GREATER GEELONG AND SURF COAST COMMITTEE,	126
MR S. FISHER, QUALITY ASSURANCE OFFICER, GEELONG TAXI NETWORK;	126
MS J. LONZARICH, CHAIRPERSON, GEELONG SOUTH PUBLIC TENANT GROUP; AND	126
MR F. COVILL, COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE, GEELONG LOCAL SAFETY COMMITTEE.....	126
MELBOURNE — 9 AUGUST 2011.....	138
DR. R. WALKER, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR / HEALTH PROMOTION COURSE COORDINATOR,.....	138
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND BIOSCIENCES, LA TROBE UNIVERSITY;	138
MR J. THEXTON; AND.....	138
MR R. FOGLIA.	138
MELBOURNE — 9 AUGUST 2011.....	150
PROFESSOR R. HOMEL, FOUNDATION PROFESSOR OF CRIMINOLOGY AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE, GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY.	150
MELBOURNE — 9 AUGUST 2011.....	158
MR D. GRIGGS, MANAGER, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND WELLBEING, CITY OF MELBOURNE; AND	158
MAJOR B. NOTTLE, EXPERIENCE MANAGER, SALVATION ARMY.....	158
MELBOURNE — 9 AUGUST 2011.....	182
MR P. BIRD, STATE DIRECTOR, VICTORIA, MISSION AUSTRALIA.	182
MELBOURNE — 9 AUGUST 2011.....	194
DR L. BEYER, SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PLANNER,	194
CR J. DONOVAN, COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE AND	194
MS P. NEIL, YOUTH DEVELOPMENT UNIT COORDINATOR,.....	194
DETECTIVE SERGEANT S. BRUNDELL, MACEDON RANGES CRIME INVESTIGATION UNIT REPRESENTATIVE, GISBOURNE POLICE AND.....	194
SERGEANT G. NEIL, TRAFFIC, OFFICER-IN-CHARGE, MACEDON RANGES TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT UNIT, GISBOURNE POLICE, MACEDON RANGES LOCAL SAFETY COMMITTEE.	194
MELBOURNE — 10 AUGUST 2011.....	208
MS J. SHIELD, SECRETARY, AND	208
INSPECTOR A. DEW, POLICE LIAISON OFFICER, VICTORIAN SAFE COMMUNITIES NETWORK INC.	208
MELBOURNE — 10 AUGUST 2011.....	224
MR P. WHEATLEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,	224
MR R. MILLER, CHAIR, AND.....	224
LEADING SENIOR CONSTABLE M. MUDIE, FACILITATOR, OPERATION NEWSTART VICTORIA.....	224
MELBOURNE — 10 AUGUST 2011.....	238
MS J. EDWARDS, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, AND	238
MS C. NEVILLE, STRATEGIC ADVISER, JESUIT SOCIAL SERVICES.	238

MELBOURNE — 10 AUGUST 2011.....	250
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR J. TOUMBOUROU, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER / ASSOCIATE DEAN (PARTNERSHIPS), FACULTY OF HEALTH, DEAKIN UNIVERSITY; COMMUNITIES THAT CARE LTD.	250
MELBOURNE — 10 AUGUST 2011.....	262
MR J. POCOCK, DIRECTOR, PUBLIC POLICY AND PRACTICE DEVELOPMENT, AND	262
MR D. HALL, SENIOR MANAGER, SAFE AND CARING COMMUNITIES, BERRY STREET.....	262
MELBOURNE — 10 AUGUST 2011.....	274
CR A. CLARKE, MAYOR, AND	274
MR R. GOEMAN, ACTING MANAGER, COMMUNITY PLANNING AND ADVOCACY, CITY OF YARRA.	274
SYDNEY — 19 SEPTEMBER 2011	286
MR B. THOMAS, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR-GENERAL, CRIME PREVENTION AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMS; AND.....	286
DR T. MATRUGLIO, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, CRIME PREVENTION DIVISION, DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND ATTORNEY-GENERAL;.....	286
ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER C. YORK, NORTHERN REGION COMMANDER, AND	286
SUPT COMMANDER H. BEGG, OPERATIONS PROGRAMS, SYDNEY,NEW SOUTH WALES POLICE SERVICE.....	286
SYDNEY—19 SEPTEMBER 2011	310
ADJUNCT LECTURER G. CLANCEY, SYDNEY INSTITUTE OF CRIMINOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY	310
SYDNEY—19 SEPTEMBER 2011	320
PROFESSOR D. WEATHERBURN, DIRECTOR, NEW SOUTH WALES BUREAU OF CRIME STATISTICS AND RESEARCH.	320
SYDNEY—19 SEPTEMBER 2011	332
ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER C. YORK, NORTHERN REGION COMMANDER, AND	332
SUPT COMMANDER H. BEGG, OPERATIONS PROGRAMS, SYDNEY,	332
CHIEF INSPECTOR J. MAXWELL, HUMAN RESOURCES, SOUTH WEST SYDNEY, AND	332
INSPECTOR L. KENNEDY, PROJECT OFFICER CUSTOMER SERVICE AND PROGRAMS, SYDNEY METROPOLITAN,NEW SOUTH WALES POLICE SERVICE.	332
SYDNEY — 19 SEPTEMBER 2011	346
MS M. SOUTHWELL, CHAIRPERSON, NEW SOUTH WALES LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMUNITY SAFETY AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE, AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICER, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, BANKSTOWN CITY COUNCIL; AND.....	346
MR J. MAYNARD, SENIOR PROJECT COORDINATOR, SAFE CITY, CITY OF SYDNEY.	346
SYDNEY — 19 SEPTEMBER 2011	358
MR R. WATSON, DEPUTY DIRECTOR; AND.....	358
DR O. CAMACHO-DUARTE, POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOW,.....	358
DESIGNING OUT CRIME RESEARCH CENTRE, UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, SYDNEY	358
BALLARAT — 18 OCTOBER 2011	366
MR P. APPLETON, ACTING DIRECTOR, PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES;.....	366
COUNCILLOR D. HUDSON, PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES PORTFOLIO COUNCILLOR, AND CHAIRPERSON, COMMUNITY SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE;	366
COUNCILLOR J. PHILIPS, PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES PORTFOLIO COUNCILLOR; AND.....	366
COUNCILLOR C. BROMFIELD, COUNCILLOR, AND DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON, COMMUNITY SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE. CITY OF BALLARAT;.....	366
MS J. KING, DIRECTOR, STUDENT CONNECT, UNIVERSITY OF BALLARAT.	366

BALLARAT—18 OCTOBER 2011	378
MR L. FLORENCE, CHAIRPERSON, AND.....	378
MR D. FISHER, MEMBER, NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH, BALLARAT PSA.	378
MELBOURNE — 24 OCTOBER 2011	386
MR A. BRIDSON, CHAIRPERSON, NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH VICTORIA INC; AND	386
SUPERINTENDENT T. DE RIDDER, STRATEGIC SERVICES SUPERINTENDENT, CHIEF COMMISSIONER’S REPRESENTATIVE, NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH VICTORIA INC. BOARD OF MANAGEMENT.....	386
MELBOURNE — 27 FEBRUARY 2012.....	400
MS JULIANNE BRENNAN, DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY CRIME PREVENTION, DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE.	400
MELBOURNE — 16 APRIL 2012.....	416
DEPUTY COMMISSIONER T. CARTWRIGHT, CRIME AND OPERATION SUPPORT, OFFICE OF CHIEF COMMISSIONER,.....	416
SUPERINTENDENT P. BRIGHAM, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DIVISION, MEDIA AND CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT AND.....	416
INSPECTOR T. LANGDON, SAFER COMMUNITIES UNIT, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DIVISION, MEDIA AND CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT, VICTORIA POLICE.....	416

DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Locally Based Approaches to Community Safety and Crime Prevention

Dandenong — 30 May 2011

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Witnesses

Inspector C. Allen, Inspector, Greater Dandenong Police Service Area, Victoria Police.

Inspector B. Wemyss, Community Engagement Inspector, Greater Dandenong Police Service Area, Victoria police

Sergeant J. Herrech, Sergeant/Supervisor, Proactive Programs Unit, Southern Metropolitan Region, Victoria Police;

Mr W. Eames, Manager, Community Programs, Youth Support and Advocacy Service;

Ms I. Calvert, Secretary, Three Seas Steering Committee/The Dock; and

Mr T. Agout, Representative from Sudanese Youth Leadership Development Program.

The CHAIR—Before I start, because this is a joint parliamentary committee public hearing, there is a need to make you aware of some of the rules around this public hearing today. I would like to welcome you all to the public hearing of the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975 and further subject to the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, the Defamation Act 2005 and, where applicable, the provisions of reciprocal legislation in other Australian states and territories. Any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. There is a requirement to receive the guide for witnesses presenting evidence to parliamentary committees. It has been made available at the door. We are recording the evidence and will provide a proof version of the *Hansard* transcript at the earliest opportunity and you can correct it as appropriate. Obviously today, we would like you, those of you who have indicated, to make a verbal submission to us and hopefully an opportunity to perhaps ask some questions as we go through. Is that clear to everyone, and is everyone happy to present under those circumstances? Good. We will invite Inspector Charles Allen to make a presentation to us. You have been given the reference into the Inquiry into Locally Based Approaches to Community Safety and Crime Prevention and we look forward to hearing from you. Thank you, Inspector.

Insp. ALLEN—Can I thank the team for their attendance today. We would like to present a short overview of our approach to community safety and crime prevention. It is not my intention to talk about policing operations or policing responses which obviously are and will remain one of our primary functions for Victoria Police, but obviously be assured that Greater Dandenong Police provide that traditional policing response to service calls and expend considerable resources on wide-ranging targeted operations around public order, street offending, drugs, alcohol, weapons, shop stealing, road policing, prostitution. The focus of these operations is also a contributor to improving perceptions of safety, as well as prevention and detection.

The intention today is to present to you our proactive approaches. Victoria Police is acutely aware that responding is treating the symptoms of problems, and to impact on the problems we first of all need to have a full understanding of what the problems are. Often the problem or the solution to the problem may generally sit outside what is viewed as a traditional policing response and we may not have primacy for that problem. However, we understand our role as important social capital to work with our community partners and partner organisations dealing with social problems.

Overheads shown.

Insp. ALLEN—The first slide that I have started with is a press photograph that was captured in Noble Park shortly after the death of a young man, Liep Gony, on Noble Park railway station. For me this photograph had a huge impact. I do not want to see the expressions like those on the faces of our young people. Many of our projects and programs are focused on young people within the Greater Dandenong community. We can loosely categorise the programs and projects that we are involved in into capacity building programs or inclusion programs. Today we would like to spend a bit of time to introduce you to a few of those projects and programs.

Assertive Youth Outreach Service: key partners in Assertive Youth Outreach Service are YSAS—Victorian Multicultural Commission, Victoria Police and City of Greater Dandenong. Two youth workers within this project have had over 1,500 contacts on the street. The focus of the project has been reconnecting young people, predominantly from emerging communities. A number of unusual parts of the project, certainly the outreach service has been in out-of-hours times when there has been the greatest service delivery

need; secondly, the outreach workers have been out-posted at both the Springvale and Dandenong police stations; somewhat unusual for youth workers and police officers to have such a collaboration, but it has provided the opportunity for live information exchange and to build understanding about each other's roles.

The strength and the success of this service has been the strength of relationships between the service providers. The partners meet regularly as a steering committee and the service has been favourably evaluated by Melbourne University researchers and was also a shortlisted nomination for the National Drug and Alcohol Awards. Warren Eames from YSAS sits with us as a partner. Warren, are there any other comments you wanted to make in relation to the Assertive Youth Outreach Service?

Mr EAMES—I would emphasise the strength of the relationship between youth services and police, both routine and formal communications but also a fantastic, more informal relationship building which I think has benefited both sectors in terms of understanding the imperatives of each service. The real key to this, apart from Assertive Outreach, the late night work that has occurred has been the case finding approach and engaging and integrating mainstream services for this group for a whole range of outcomes in terms of not only social but also primary health, family engagement and support around involvement with the legal system as well.

Insp. ALLEN—There have been quite a number of blockers along the way that has been the strength of the partnerships that have got us through the blockers.

Mr EAMES—Yes, absolutely.

Insp. ALLEN—The Sudanese Youth Leadership Development Program: this is a capacity building project which was led by Victoria Police. Once again this project was supported by City of Greater Dandenong, the local advisory group and also Rotary. Tito Agout is sitting here as one of the program participants and I thought it was fitting to hear from Tito as to his impressions of the program.

Mr AGOUT—We have this program that has been organised by Inspector Bruce and we have Charlie and other members of Victoria Police. We have some speakers from other organisations. It was really a good program for us because we do learn about leadership styles. We also learn about police roles and how we could become leaders in our communities and how we can be connecting police with our youth. The program shows the police roles and how young people can be related with the police and how they can be involved in the police force. Me personally I have learned a lot in this program and I have learned about the police force, and it did give me the confidence how to become a leader too and how I could help the communities with Victoria Police and other communities, because the program teaches us how we could become leaders and how we can go out there and become leaders to other communities too, and it gives you a chance to get all the communities together, and through the course of the partnership with Victoria Police—because before the program I did not know Bruce, I did not know Charlie and I did not know—at the moment he is an inspector but he used to be an acting inspector. He is called Russell.

It was a good opportunity for me to meet them, and through that I became interested to become a police officer and I was working and I told them and they were happy to help me too towards that. The course was really good for me personally and I did learn a lot from it and I think the young boys learn a lot from it too. If they were here they would have talked and they would never stop talking about it.

Insp. ALLEN—Thank you, Tito. Bruce, I would invite you to comment. That was a project that you had to give birth to.

Insp. WEMYSS—Yes, it is interesting. Charlie mentioned earlier that some of the things that we will talk about today are maybe not traditional policing roles, and this was one where we found an opportunity to meet with young people. This program was designed by the young people. Tito has been fairly generous in saying that the police put it together. What we did is bring a whole lot of young people that were picked by their own community to sit down with us and design a program that would benefit them and they had some ownership. The group of boys that were chosen—and not every one of them did the program—they helped us develop the program and as a result of that we have a series of young people now within the local community that we would class as people we can go to, as young people, to give us advice and guidance on issues affecting youth, particularly in this case, the Sudanese program, we are looking at Sudanese youth.

This is an interchangeable program. It would be a matter of sitting down with any particular culture and saying, 'What are the needs? What are the things you need to learn more about as a potential leader in your community?' We would sit there and help develop that. I said before that it is not a traditional role for us to present this course. I was not in a position where I could present everything. I am not an expert on employment issues. We had people coming in to talk about those things. We called it an employment readiness session where young people could come in and work with local service providers in preparing themselves for employment. We had people come in and talk about public speaking from toastmasters. We had local council representatives come in and talk about issues that related to council business—applying for grants, funding for projects.

One thing that Tito did not mention, that I will mention, is that as a result of this project we now go into phase 2 and these boys will be putting together a project—and Tito mentioned—Bringing the Community Together. They hope to bring together a sports inclusion project that brings all of the new and emerging communities together in a series of sports clinics. I will look to these boys to be the leaders in developing that project. It will not be my project, it will be theirs, with some guidance and assistance from me.

To briefly comment on some of the outcomes that I have seen already, I am told by a couple of the boys in the group that nearly all of the boys—and we had about a dozen regular attendees—have aligned themselves towards employment which is very pleasing for me. The other thing is the amazing change in the relationship, the building of the trust and the relationship between the police and the young people. We recently had a situation where there was an incident on the street involving a young person who was intoxicated and laying in the street, quite a dangerous situation. We were able to assist where police attended, obviously concerned about his welfare. In attending, the first officer on the scene felt that he needed support and he called for back-up. In the meantime, two young Sudanese boys—when I say 'young' I mean 'youth'—were walking along the street in Noble Park see this incident occurring. They walk over to the police officer and ask if he needs assistance; he does. The Sudanese male is actually on the road. They work with the police officer, remove him from the road, try and talk to him about his welfare et cetera in assisting the police. Unfortunately, in that instance the individual was refusing to cooperate and was taken and put in the cells for four hours or so to sober up.

However, as the two youth walked away they turned to this police officer and said, 'Do you know Inspector Bruce?' James, the member involved, said, 'Yes, I do.' They said, 'We're doing the leadership program with him.' For me that was very humbling, but if that is what it has done, it has built a relationship to the point where we are able to say that these young people took a leadership role for their community in that instance. That is a

fantastic outcome in itself. That is anecdotal, we are still very early in the piece. We have not done a full evaluation of what we have achieved yet. That will occur but this program was completed in April. It has only just been completed. We see this as something that we would like to add to and work with other communities. It may not necessarily be a matter for police rolling out a program like this, but it might be a matter of bringing other organisations together. That is my challenge, to see if we can ask them to lead this without input where it needs to be. There may be further questions later. I do not want to hold the process up.

Insp. ALLEN—Thank you. Three Seas is an organisation focusing on drawing together the Pacific Islander community. Isabel Calvert is the secretary of the steering committee of Three Seas and The Dock project, which is an exciting project.

Ms CALVERT—I will have to rethink my presentation as I did not quite understand what this inquiry was about. You have a copy of the written version and I will leave that for you to read and I will speak off the cuff now. Building on what Bruce has said about Victoria Police initiating projects with specific communities to address crime prevention issues. This also happened with the Pacific Island community and the Maori community in south-east Dandenong. A number of backyard rugby programs were initiated in 2008 and ongoing now. They had varying degrees of success over those years. They tended to be somewhat ad hoc approaches to support to the Pacific Island community, building on the kind of physical attributes of Pacific Islanders who were basically very sporty, big people. This has been a useful thing to engage the community.

The thing that I will pick up from Bruce's comments earlier is that the next step in this has been to try to get sustainability in these programs by having more community engaged in it and achieve community ownership of these activities. This is where we are at now and we are facing a real challenge. What distinguishes the Maori, New Zealand and Pacific Island population from, say, the Sudanese population, the African population, Aboriginals and refugees, is that Maori and Pacific Islanders and New Zealanders have no access to welfare funding when they arrive from New Zealand. There is a two-year stand-down period before anybody can access welfare services. In that two-year period, for some disadvantaged members of that New Zealand community, it is an absolutely critical time. They are finding themselves in dire straits in that two-year period. They tend to jump on a downward spiral, disadvantage after disadvantage piles up and they end up on a downward spiral. This is why we have ended up seeing something like 15 per cent of the juvenile population in detention being of Maori and Pacific Island descent. That is 1.6 per cent of the Victorian population is Pacific Island and Maori descent, 15 per cent in the juvenile detention system. You can check that with Justice Michael Bourke, chairman of the Parole Board.

The Aboriginal population is smaller in detention than the Maori and Pacific Island population. The African population is smaller than the Maori and Pacific Island population. There is nothing inherently different about Maori and Pacific Island people. We are not more criminally inclined and therefore ending up in the juvenile justice system. There is something that is going wrong that is causing juveniles of the Maori and Pacific Island population to end up in detention. Part of that problem is that there is no access to welfare support when they first arrive in country and they get on this downward spiral. Families do not have access to housing allowance, for example, so they are, firstly, disadvantaged economically, they are disadvantaged educationally. If they can they are picking up lower paid jobs, and they are working two or three jobs to pay their rental accommodation and they have no support to do that. All of their money is going in to getting food on the table and paying for accommodation. It is not paying for school fees, it is not paying for extra things for school camp or footy boots or other sorts of things. We

are getting issues of social exclusion in schools and social exclusion in the community because of that.

A lot of the issues are linked to the change in immigration and welfare policy in February 2001 which has caused a change in the way that New Zealanders arrive in Australia. Now people on a New Zealand passport arrive here and do not have access to welfare. There was some confusion about the application of that policy, that some agencies in Australia were rejecting applications for job opportunities from New Zealand passport holders because they thought they were not eligible for employment in Australia. That in fact is incorrect. The Victorian Human Rights Commission has challenged this. I think the Queensland and New Zealand Human Rights Commissions have also challenged this. This had led to a turnaround in some policies. I think Victoria Police recruitment has also changed as a result of a challenge in the courts around this. I know the fire service in Victoria has had to change their recruitment policy because of a challenge in the courts around the application of that policy.

One of the implications of this change in immigration and welfare policy has been about recruitment of Maori and Pacific Islanders and New Zealanders generally into positions. That has an impact on the kinds of people that we are able to get into welfare services and other service agencies in specific areas. In south-east Dandenong we really need to have some Maori and Pacific Islanders in Victoria Police in that organisation. In Ararat there is another problem, and in north-west Melbourne where there is another problem, and some places in Queensland and some places in New South Wales. We have been unable to do that because there has been a confusion about this change in policy in 2001 both for recruitment into government agencies and for welfare purposes.

The New Zealand population, and the Maori and Pacific Island population in particular who are disadvantaged, get lost in the statistics because they come into Australia under a New Zealand passport. While we have the African community which is quite obviously African and in need; we have refugee communities which are obvious and in need. The disadvantaged Maori and Pacific Island population are not identified because they come into the country under a New Zealand passport. As a result of that, disadvantaged Maori and Pacific Islanders are not seen as priority groups for funding purposes, for grants or for agency priorities and strategies. We do not see, for example, that Maori and Pacific Island issues in specific areas are a focus necessarily of the Justice Department activities or of Victoria Police in various places. It comes about by accident more than anything else.

Another consequence of that is that we as a community cannot access a whole range of funding opportunities. There are 312 grants opportunities on the website at the moment from Australia federal funding and Victoria state funding. Our organisation would be eligible for three of those opportunities only. Unfortunately we have missed the deadline for all of those. We cannot apply for anything in this financial year. There are very limited other opportunities to apply for support. That is a bit of a backdrop to talk about the challenges that are faced by the Maori and Pacific Islander population. The result of these challenges is that we are getting many more juveniles in our detention system than should be there.

To talk a little bit about The Dock: The Dock is a place based in 176 Stud Road. It is a building that has been given to us rent-free for the next 12 months. We cannot afford to use that and we cannot afford to have projects run out of it because we cannot open the doors because of the costs involved in running that place. This is a place that is critically needed for the Pacific Island community. They need a place where the 14 countries of the Pacific Island community and New Zealand can come together and collectively pool their

resources, community and human resources, to address youth issues in the region. We cannot open it because we do not have the funding to open it.

Three Seas is an organisation that has been registered. We received our registration papers two weeks ago. This is an organisation which seeks to act as an umbrella for all of those 14 communities to pull the intellectual and human resources of the community to try to develop some kind of ownership for the initiatives that have been developed in various agencies. We have to be able to drive these initiatives forward ourselves. We know that. Sustainability comes from the community itself owning these activities. This is a real challenge for us and we cannot get off the first step because we cannot get the doors of the building open.

You have my paper and it sets it out a bit more broadly. You also have a submission that was sent to the Prime Ministers of Australia and New Zealand on the human rights issues surrounding the application of the change of immigration policy in 2001. I am not sure that that helped very much and it did not really answer your question.

Insp. ALLEN—It addressed the key issues that community ownership is building capacity so the community can take ownership, creating structures that are sustainable to continue that. It is consistent with what we are saying and certainly across agencies we identified untrackable issues within the South Pacific Islander community.

The CHAIR—Inspector, I do not want to interrupt because I know we will lose the flow. I am sure our committee has questions and I do want to bring up a couple of points that you have raised but unfortunately I was not able to give all of the committee the paper that you gave me prior to the meeting, but I will make sure they get it. You have raised a couple of issues I would like to get back to you with. It would be easier to allow you to do the presentation fully and then obviously our committee can draw out some questions because if we continually interrupt we will lose the flow.

Insp. ALLEN—Absolutely.

The CHAIR—If you are happy and our committee is happy we will remain silent, and then raise some questions out of the presentation.

Insp. ALLEN—Yes, and I am conscious of time and there is not much more to go. I have to declare a conflict here as the vice-president of this club. First of all it is a great example of a community to take an ownership and developing a sustainable solution. The Blue Light Boxing Club is obviously an example of a sports inclusion project and also a hobbyhorse of mine. The Greater Dandenong Blue Light Boxing Club is in its 16th year. It has been possible because of a partnership with Victoria Police, City of Greater Dandenong and the community. It is currently maintaining a membership of 160 participants, making it the largest boxing club in Victoria.

The focus is not on producing boxers, which is very different to most boxing clubs, the focus is on providing a low cost venue for young people to train in a safe disciplined environment. The club's longevity is a result of the commitment of police and the community and the volunteers that have opened the doors four nights per week for the past 15 years. I acknowledge the commitment from Dean Hedge, who is an apology here today, Hal Donerzine and Kerry Whitrod who are the heart of the club, Dean being the founding club member. The club provides a unique opportunity for young people to connect with police and other community members through the medium of boxing. It attracts all ages, genders and cultures. Predominant membership are young people, 10 years up, from our emerging communities.

We have spoken to a few of the projects and programs and there are many more but we have done what we can with the time we have had. The success is on partnering between agencies to finding the problems and working together. This photograph demonstrates the strength of this model. It is a group, once again, of our young Sudanese leaders. They are pictured here with Erinma Bell MBE. Erinma Bell applied the same principles in Moss Side in Manchester, United Kingdom. By bringing together community and partner agencies she was able to reduce an endemic gun crime issue by 92 per cent. She was awarded an MBE for her work and recognised by the Prime Minister at the time, Gordon Brown. She is pictured here in Noble Park on the opening night of our leadership development program where she spoke to our young leaders and inspired our young leaders with her story. She is the result of a collaboration with Rotary and she presented at a number of Rotary clubs while she was here and as a result of those presentations a number of our young leaders were inducted into RYLA, a Rotary leadership program. She notes that this approach is slow and results are often difficult to measure, particularly in the short term. It took Erinma some eight years to achieve her results.

Greater Dandenong is producing some very encouraging results. I will not refer to crime statistics because I realise they are rather unpopular at the particular point in time, but the national survey of community, satisfaction with policing data is very encouraging. In the last five quarters we have driven up perceptions of safety during the day around public transport by 12 percentage points which we are very excited about. Perceptions of safety around public transport at night are somewhat light, but having said that they are 10 per cent higher than are some other local government areas which is encouraging. That is the end of our formal presentation. Thank you very much. We are more than happy to take questions.

The CHAIR—Thanks very much, Inspector. Warren or Joe, do you want to add anything.

Insp. ALLEN—Sorry, Joey, I did not give you an opportunity.

Sgt. HERRECH—That is fine, no problem.

The CHAIR—Warren, do you want to elaborate on anything specifically?

Mr EAMES—Yes, sure. One of the challenges that we faced in maximising our program has been—there has been a number of challenges, but one of the greatest challenges has been finding a way to address need in a broad range of areas with a diversity of cultural groups. It is fair to acknowledge that most of our activities have been working around the Sudanese community with this specific Assertive Youth Outreach Service. More generally I would echo some of the things you have spoken about with Maori and Pacific New Zealanders in general, but our drug treatment service has a disproportionate representation from Pacific Islander people which is probably a reflection of some of the things you have been speaking about with difficulties around welfare payments and involvement in the legal system. A lot of people who access our service are mandated through community based audits.

In terms of the Assertive Youth Outreach Service, I think one of the greatest challenges has been the recruitment of staff that have a broad range of skills which means skills in community development, skills in case management, who also have the capacity or the preparedness to be pounding the pavement at midnight in some scary places, I suppose. That has been one of our challenges. They are not insurmountable challenges by any means but the idea that we need to continually build our partnerships, our relationships with interested stake-holders from the community and from other agencies, and obviously

the police, is paramount, it is crucial. That is probably the point I would emphasise, to really make that a tangible transaction. We are talking about people and from a YSAS perspective we talk about harm reduction. We acknowledge that these programs are not a silver bullet, are not going to fix these problems, but we do have some real capacity to engage a section of the target group that we are talking about and reduce problems for those people as individuals and also reduce the intensity of the problem for local community as well.

The CHAIR—Now, I might invite the committee to ask questions of the speakers, bearing in mind we only have perhaps 20 minutes—questions brief and the answers briefer might enable us to get through it.

Mr SCHEFFER—I have a question about a matter that Charles opened up. I jotted these down because I did not quite understand what they were and I want to ask you if you can explain them a bit. You talk about a case finding approach and then you talk about integrating with the mainstream in the program that you are developing with Tito. I do not understand what those terms mean. Also can you give an example or a case study of what you do. I understand the principles that you have described but I do not have a clear view of what you do day to day. That is one part of the question. The other part is, you talked about the sports clinics and you talked about the Blue Light Boxing. I saw the images and most of them are young men. I want to know where women sit in this.

Insp. ALLEN—Certainly. The first question was more problem identification was where I launched off from.

Mr EAMES—Charlie, it was me who used that terminology, 'case finding'. What we mean by 'case finding'—and we have spoken about Assertive Outreach. What that is is a process of identifying local areas where groups of vulnerable young people might be congregating and engaging in high-risk activities. The Assertive Outreach approach is for our youth workers to become involved in that space. It is a high-risk activity.

Mr SCHEFFER—That is what I mean. What do you do there? You say 'to become engaged in that space'.

Mr EAMES—Yes.

Mr SCHEFFER—Do you go there at night? Do you knock on doors? How do you transact that?

Mr EAMES—Yes, that is what has happened. Those relationships can only be built—you cannot insert yourself into a space there and introduce yourself as a youth worker who is going to start providing services. It is a matter of taking the long-term view. It might mean routinely turning up to a train station or to a local park where young people are engaging, becoming involved with some of the other existing groups and taking a relationship based approach. After a dozen visits it might be that that youth worker is suddenly becoming recognised. In terms of the personnel who are delivering that work, we have been lucky enough to recruit from within communities. We have had Sudanese workers who have not only been delivering services but have had involvement with the community anyway. There is a capacity to leverage off those existing relationships.

In terms of case finding—and this is where the skill of Assertive Outreach work comes in—it is a capacity to make assessments of needs for individuals: build the relationship with the young person, identify what the problems might be—they might be around problematic substance use; they might be around problematic legal circumstances—and in terms of the case finding, then being able to deliver or construct an intervention or a

response. To ask what that looks like, that means then engaging people, making appointments, physically transporting people. It might mean going around to people's houses and having half a dozen missed appointments until the penny drops for the young person that, 'Okay, this service could actually be useful in my life,' and in terms of integrating, once that relationship has built, we help the young person with a legal issue, attend court with them. We might go about getting that infection or that sore or that injury, we might be engaging people or integrating people into mainstream health services; linking people into day programs that are typically mainstream programs that are not culturally specific programs. Does that answer your question?

Mr SCHEFFER—Yes, absolutely. The issue of women?

Insp. WEMYSS—I might take a spot there, Charles. This was raised when we approached local council for funding for this initial pilot of this leadership program that we developed. This was certainly raised. There was no mention at any stage of females on our application at that point. I made no apology for that because the way we engage with these young people in the first place was through sport and through their soccer involvement in the local area. That led us to being able to engage with a fairly large group. What I did say is that once this program was under way and we could have a look at what we had achieved and what the outcomes were and where we could improve it, we would commit to doing further programs with not only young women but other cultures as well.

We have undertaken to—and I have got meetings this month and next month—talk with local migrant resource centres et cetera to identify key players with a predominant female audience to be part of future programs in this space, not only the Sudanese community. We will look at other communities as well that we see emerging in the Dandenong area. That is looking at it from a leadership program point of view but it is something that has been raised and we are looking at progressing that further as we go.

Insp. ALLEN—The local advisory group that provided the seed funding for the program were very conscious of this issue and with other funding applications. There have been other gender specific applications to the local advisory group. One that springs to mind was the Afghan women volleyball team. It is an issue that the local advisory group are aware of. It is an issue that we are aware of with the leadership program, hence the reason we have had commenced conversations with the South-Eastern Migrant Resource Centre about sourcing our next cohort of emerging leaders.

Mr BATTIN—Inspector Allen, some of the programs—and obviously this one here with the leadership program—they appear to have great grounding and a good program to push forward with. One of the things I identified—and Joe may even want to add to this—it becomes an issue with staffing, it becomes an issue with how you keep these programs. New programs come on board and the world evolves, but what do you have in place within this region to continue some of these programs that are very good, or expand them? The obvious answer is more staff but do you have a forward plan for these programs that you can expand them when they are successful?

Insp. WEMYSS—Certainly I would never base my plans on expecting to get more staff because, as you know, that is on a wish list really. This was a pilot. We took a leadership role in coordinating this but we need to now work with local service providers, doing what they do so well, but maybe with us inputting where we need to. One of the sessions that we run is the role of Victoria Police. That is one of the clear sessions that runs over this 10-week program. Another session that we run is issues around conflict resolution with police may well have some input into. We do not necessarily have to be coordinating these programs ongoing. I see this as a role for the local migrant resource

centres and AIMS and others to be running these programs but with our input. Clearly, we will present ourselves for sessions but we will not be necessarily coordinating it into the future. That is where my meetings are going over the next few months, to try and develop that relationship. We stepped in to create and coordinate this program because we saw a need to develop the relationship between police and young Sudanese youth in the area, and to give them the support they sought. That is the first point.

But, yes, I totally concur with you, we cannot continue—I cannot continue in my role to coordinate these programs because it could become a full-time role and I have a lot more on my plate than that. I totally agree with you on that, Brad, and that is what I am working towards; building—we call it co-production—these relationships with the service providers to try and have them take a leadership role in some of this but with our support. Clearly we will be presenting at some of those sessions because they are important to us as well.

Insp. ALLEN—If I can add quickly, the program itself is part of addressing that particular issue. It is about capacity building so the likes of Tito can take leadership for sustainable solutions within his community. The whole feeling behind The Dock is being able to capacity build so the community can take responsibility sustainably for community issues.

Ms CALVERT—Can I add that that is the difference about Three Seas rather than The Dock. The Dock is basically case management and it takes a case based approach that the protective projects will intervene in particular areas, but Three Seas is an organisation that takes a community development approach. We are trying to build the capacity of the community—failing miserably at this point, I have to say—to be able to apply for grants, to run projects itself, to lead this organisation and lead the community in a cohesive way. As I say, it is facing real challenges at the moment, but it did grow out of the Victoria Police initial involvement. That is the next step. After Victoria Police has initiated these projects, have some momentum behind it to move towards handing them over to a community group, there has been a gap in the bridge there. We need to fill that gap at the moment because we are really struggling, to be honest, but that is the plan.

Insp. ALLEN—Bruce talked briefly to the project that the first cohort are undertaking. It is their project that we will walk beside and coach which is their first step, their first project towards addressing an issue that they have recognised as a community group.

Mr BATTIN—You both said there that the ideas of these is the police get involved, start the programs and then they go across in a community group to continue them with police involvement. Is there a plan or a process in place and you said at the moment it's not working. Is there something in place now where these groups are meeting with the police more regularly, whether it is through your agency or your group, Joey, to get that going? I am speaking from experience. You see some of these programs, they are fantastic and they do fall over, and part of it is that you feel ownership and then you do not want to pass it off, and then when it does, there was the lack of communication between them. Is there a process in place—I can ask you, Joey—with your department now with a lot of these community groups to continue the programs with a smaller involvement from yourselves?

Sgt. HERRECH—Absolutely. To give you a background, I have been in the proactive unit for nine years and something that is a resounding success of the initiation and evolution of programs is to initiate and be heavily involved in the initial phases and the infancy and then slowly evolve that project to hand over to a service provider

generally, but also to the community after that empowerment process. One of the things that we highlighted as a risk that when you do commit to the handover, that unless there is someone who is as highly committed as the people that were involved in the inception of this program that it will fall over. Sadly sometimes it has been an issue for us, that things have fallen over for a few reasons: there is no longer a need; as things develop socially there is no longer a need and the problems do not exist as they did years before, but it can relate to the staffing and the people involved.

What we do again to minimise risk or mitigate is be heavily involved in the inception and then slowly but surely wean ourselves away. If we do see a point where we need to step back in again, we do step back in again. It is literally a matter of sitting down, roundtabling certain things and setting out roles and responsibilities and then everyone has a clear idea where they stand. With Isabel I think it is about time that we do that, is it down and roundtable this clearly to find whose role and responsibility it is and say, 'Right, the police are no longer involved in this particular area.' For us that is the most logical thing to do right now.

Ms CALVERT—I agree entirely.

Mr McCURDY—I was interested in that same question but broader to the panel about what is not working. Obviously the leadership program is starting to head down that track, it is working well. Is there anything you can put your finger on that says clearly we need to steer away from these areas that we have tried in the past?

Sgt. HERRECH—We have had some issues in the past. We have had a theme of wanting to involve community leaders and elders in certain issues, I would say, as an example with the Sudanese community. What was happening in the past is, yes, in the early stages of the intake and settlement process that was a fantastic avenue for us to approach some of the social issues, settlement issues and the like. However, as time went on and the identity of the young people was more of a prevalent issue, the elders were starting to lose their empowerment over the young people, and the young people were starting to develop empowerment. What we had to do was realign how we approach particular issues, and some of them were no longer involving the elders when we needed to speak to the younger people and get the issues straight from the horse's mouth, for want of a better term.

Now, in 2011, we find it is much more logical for us to go directly to the source of where we need to gain information, and certainly not to disrespect the culture and that inter-generational relationship but we find more success in going directly to an issue; not generating a negative image of the Sudanese but if it is to do with women's domestic violence issues we will go directly to the women. We will empower them with education and information that they can make choice rather than making it a broader sense approach.

Mr AGOUT—Something to add for this leadership program that we did. At the end of the leadership course we all got a certificate that showed we had done this course. Within that we are going to do a program which we are going to run shortly, and this program is going to be dealing with sport. There is young people, young children out there in this community that they do not get the opportunity to go to one of the soccer clubs, maybe because of the money. They do not have fees to do that. We are going to run this program in Dandenong shortly. It is really good because we are going to go across all these communities. It is not only going to be for the Sudanese community, it is going to be for all the communities in the Greater Dandenong area. We are all going to come together. Their children will have the opportunity to play soccer and they might get to one of the teams because we have three teams which is Dandenong Eagles, Nile Stars and Super

Stars. These children when they get an opportunity to come to this program and show their skills they might get to one of these soccer teams and play and that is a chance for them to get to a bigger club. That is a challenge for us because we have to act as a leader. Bruce is going to sit back and see what we have learnt from the program and how we are going to put it in real life.

We are going to be the leaders. We will run that program and look after the children. It will be a chance for the elders in the communities to come together and talk. We need to have a relationship between the communities but because we are young, we met in a club and we have a relationship, but we see our parents, they do not have the relationship, like, between Sudanese parents and Afghan parents. As young people we met in the street, we met at the club so we have that relationship. We need that relationship to be with our parents too. We need to build one community, not a Sudanese community or an Afghan community, but one community as Australians. That is our aim and that is what we will learn from the course.

The CHAIR—Thanks, Tito, a very worthy aim. Congratulations too, I can see the enthusiasm and passion in what you are doing. Great stuff. In fact I come from quite a large Sudanese community in Colac. Because of the manufacturing industries down there it created almost a new community and some of that work has been done down there as well. Can I quickly ask a question—and I will invite the rest of the committee because we still have a bit of time. I want to broaden it out a bit and I think we are getting to the nuts and bolts about who takes responsibility in some of these programs, if it is not Victoria Police or other agencies that initiate where to from there. We are speaking with local government in the next session and obviously they will have a part to play in that process.

The minister in giving us reference to the committee is looking at broadly how communities engage in safety programs but how, more importantly, we as a committee make recommendations to the minister to be able to legislate certain activities in relation to providing these safety programs. They have been somewhat specific in the Sudanese community in some of this discussion this morning, and that is good. Pacific Islanders have their own specific problems, and it is not only Pacific Islands. As I understand, the Centrelink requirements now for New Zealand is the same across all New Zealanders. They cannot give any support for that period, two years. We will be struggling to change what is a federal piece of legislation to accommodate a specific small group. My view at the time is that given the legislation of 2001 that if they are coming to Australia on the basis they might receive welfare in a shorter time frame than what is legislated, it is probably important to make sure before they make that decision to come to Australia that there will be difficulties in providing support welfare for a period of time under federal legislation. That has been well transferred to those people making that decision. I am not sure how we overcome that but I noted that. In a past life I have been involved in the same problems with another group that was not able to access support systems that came from New Zealand.

I wanted to ask, perhaps while you are here, the Neighbourhood Watch programs that have been successful in the past are something that we are looking at as a specific program. I would like to hear some comments from the police particularly in, are they still working in Dandenong, have they been relegated to something that was good at the time but not meeting the outcomes that we are looking for now? Are there programs, generalistic or holistic programs now that have been used instead of? Could you make some comments on that?

Insp. ALLEN—I am happy to bounce the ball on that and let Bruce answer that.

Insp. WEMYSS—Under my supervision regime I have Neighbourhood Watch coordinator who works within my office at Dandenong. She is a police senior constable. The feedback I am getting through that representative is that we are in a transition stage. We are moving the traditional role of policing within the Neighbourhood Watch model away from being a provider of stats and more about working with the community to identify where the growth needs are; getting feedback from the community on where we can assist in improving community safety through their eyes. We cover the whole of Casey, Cardinia and Dandenong. Some of those committees are working towards that direction, and others are still looking for the leadership from the police. They are still looking for police to take a lead in that role. Without being too generalistic I would say that in some areas it is working quite well and they are taking up this challenge to move into a new area where they can provide that feedback, and others are still looking for those stats, they are still looking for us to take leadership.

If my representative is on leave, the community goes quiet and it is reinvigorated when she comes back. Others are busily working away behind the scenes when she is there and when she is not. It is clearly not working everywhere to the point where we may see one or two of those committees in danger of not continuing. I would say there are others I know that are working towards that new model. It is a bit of a mixed bag, is what I would put up.

Sgt. HERRECH—It has evolved slightly in that now the orders have been reshuffled to align with police service areas, any council city areas. The City of Greater Dandenong is one, a Neighbourhood Watch area. The City of Cardinia or Cardinia shire is another service area. Casey is another service area. What they effectively did is amalgamate all the smaller groups and create a larger group, and invite township planning committees and township safety committees into those groups as well. There was a little bit more feedback and networking, so to speak. They were able to get a few more resources and people who could add value to the Neighbourhood Watch program. As Bruce was saying, where it is working, it is working extremely well because they are generating some fantastic issues, whether they be advising people on home safety, which we are looking at possibly putting up key players within the network through some of our security auditing programs, that they can effectively disseminate that information. That is still something we are thinking about doing.

Insp. ALLEN—If I could talk on a local level as the police service area manager, the Greater Dandenong Neighbourhood Watch committee is in the process of rebuilding, redefining their role, as one committee for the local government area. They have kicked off on some active participation in proactive programs. One that springs to mind is the Elder P Program. That is supported by the City of Greater Dandenong. Also at the last meeting we had a representation from Neighbourhood Watch on our Greater Dandenong local safety committee, and the safety committee is very much a strategic group looking at the five, 10 year plus view on safety issues for Greater Dandenong; not only actual safety but perceptions of safety. It is well supported by the VicUrban, obviously a stake-holder and interested in perceptions of safety in Dandenong.

Neighbourhood Watch now have participation in that group, buying into the strategic vision. We see Neighbourhood Watch as one of the active arms of making the strategy real as to where we want to take it. The other group I wanted to mention was the local advisory group. I mentioned that throughout other points of the presentation, once again it is supported and administered by the City of Greater Dandenong. The local advisory group was funded under the connections group of projects which is almost ending its life but what the local advisory group did is, it has brought all of the service providers, whether it is the not-for-profit local government or government sector, around the table to

discuss issues and discuss funding applications for the projects. There was some money under that group to provide seed funding for projects. That has been of benefit to get around the same table for joint discussions. That disconnect between the broader sector has been an issue in the past.

Mr BATTIN—Bruce, I know you have got southern metropolitan region. With the changes obviously with Neighbourhood Watch it has different effects in different areas. I am not sure if that has been taken into consideration but like in Cardinia, by having it centralised, you are saying, with the one response or one Cardinia precinct, people in Emerald do not really care what goes on in Lakeside. People in Lakeside do not care what goes on in Bayles. In Dandenong it might be a bit different.

Insp. ALLEN—It is the same.

Mr BATTIN—Down there it does have a big range. Is that something that is taken into consideration? I know there are a couple of branches down there during that stage of changing have dropped off because they felt like, 'Well, we don't really want to go to a meeting to help out Emerald,' and whether we like that or not, that is the way it is.

Insp. WEMYSS—I know that some of those areas have looked at maintaining their local safety community committees for that purpose. They still maintain their local contact. It is an issue that we have to consider as to how we work through that. I can understand in Greater Dandenong it is not as big an issue as it might be in a more regional area or a country area. The bigger issue for us is trying to get people to work with a new model more generally and have them actually have some input into how we might move forward with proactive strategies, whether it be presently on the ground helping us out at particular projects, or whether it be our eyes and ears giving us feedback on what the issues are for the community out there that we can take into account when we do our tasking and coordination and work out what we are going to task our police to do, because at the end of the day we do want to hear what their concerns and their perceptions of safety are. If we are off doing this thing and people are feeling unsafe walking down the street, and we are off targeting thefts from cars, or thefts of cars from railway stations, then we need to know that and that is where we want to take a lot of this stuff.

Sgt. HERRECH—One of the suggestions was if they wanted to maintain their own little group, say, in Bayles that they sent one representative to the greater meeting and that they could feed in and out.

Insp. WEMYSS—Yes. Those are things that we have to take on board and thanks for raising it. I will raise it with my representative when I see her.

Mr SCHEFFER—One last thing: I understand the submission process closes today. However, I have checked with Sandy, and with the agreement of the committee, we would be prepared to be flexible, but I would be particularly interested, Isabel, if you could perhaps put in a short submission rehearsing some of the matters you have raised and then we can have a look at that and maybe a recommendation could come out of that to assist in resolving some of those issues.

Ms CALVERT—The paper I passed to you is my submission—

Mr SCHEFFER—I am sorry, I had forgotten that because we had not received it at this point. Thank you.

Ms CALVERT—Thank you for that opportunity.

The CHAIR—Thank you all very much. I appreciate your time, your presentation and your involvement, Inspector Allen, I appreciate that. Submissions do close today. We are meeting with Mayor Roz Blades after morning tea and getting the local government perspective. We are having a short public forum. I am not sure what that will bring but it is a great opportunity to be here in Dandenong this morning and in Frankston this afternoon. Hopefully after this session today we can have a greater understanding of the issues to get around this neck of the woods.

Witnesses withdrew.

Hearing suspended.

DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Locally Based Approaches to Community Safety and Crime Prevention

Dandenong — 30 May 2011

Members

Mr S. Ramsay
Mr B. Battin

Mr J. Scheffer
Mr T. McCurdy

Chair: Mr S. Ramsay
Deputy Chair: Mr J. Scheffer

Staff

Executive Officer: Ms S. Cook
Senior Legal Research Officer: Mr P. Johnston
Acting Committee Administrative Officer: Ms. D. Woof

Witnesses

Councillor R. Blades, Mayor,

Mr M. Doubleday, Director, Community Services,

Ms L. Robson, Manager, Community Engagement, and

Mr K. Van Boxtel, Manager, Revitalising Central Dandenong,

Mr B. Carins, Acting Coordinator, Community Development, City of Greater Dandenong

Ms F. Cottier, Acting Manager, Consumer, Enforcement and Community Services, Southern Metropolitan Region, Department of Justice.

The CHAIR—I would like to welcome you all to the public hearing of the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee. I think you have been provided with the reference, the reference we are dealing with today. I will not go over that again. I am obliged to tell you that all evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975 and further subject to the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, the Defamation Act 2005 and, where applicable, the provisions of reciprocal legislation in other Australian states and territories. Any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. I ask if you all received the guide for witnesses presenting evidence to parliamentary committees which I think was at the table as you came in. If you not your head I can be reaffirmed that we are covered and you are covered. We are recording the evidence and will provide a proof version of the *Hansard* transcript at the earliest opportunity and you can correct it as appropriate. Obviously we encourage you to make this morning a verbal submission but as said at the previous committee meeting there is that opportunity—a very small window of opportunity—if you wish to put a written submission in, as they close at 5 o'clock tonight. Mayor Blades it is over to you to introduce your representatives here today.

COUNCILLOR BLADES—Thank you very much. I would like to introduce Mark Doubleday, our director of community services on my left; Lee Robson is our manager of community engagement on my right; Kevin Van Boxtel, who is the manager of Revitalising Central Dandenong; Brenda Carins is here, acting coordinator for community development; Franceyn Cottier is from the Department of Justice. Welcome to Gail Guest as well who is a member of the Noble Park Community Action Forum.

Before we start I want to give you a brief overview about the fact that I have been involved in community safety and education in City of Springvale and this council since about 1980. I am chair of the Alcohol and Other Drugs Network which you will be hearing about. I am vice chair of the Noble Park Community Action Forum which you will also be hearing about. I am vice chair of the Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau and we run a federally funded Youth Links Program for hard end use. To demonstrate some of my credits in terms of community safety while you are here—

The CHAIR—Before you go on can I also ask Lee, for the record, if he would introduce himself as well. I am sorry I missed him in the first round.

Mr TARLARMIS—Lee Tarlarmis, member of the Legislative Council for the south-eastern metropolitan region.

COUNCILLOR BLADES—Former public officer of Noble Park Community Action Forum.

The CHAIR—I am sure he has plenty of past tags attached to his name. We do welcome Lee here because I know he has also been an active participant in drugs and crime.

COUNCILLOR BLADES—He has.

The CHAIR—Thanks, Roz.

COUNCILLOR BLADES—I might now move on to Mark.

Mr DOUBLEDAY—My role is to give a brief overview. There are two developments that council have made in the last 18 months; one is the extensive community consultation that it undertook to develop a Community Vision Plan, Imagine 2030, and also to develop a Health and Wellbeing Plan which is a legislative requirement

of all local government in Victoria. The interesting thing that came out of that, and it was extensive consultation that was undertaken, taking account of cultural diversity. Specific focus groups were allowed to allow particular groups to be able to make their message. In both plans, community safety has been acknowledged by council as a key issue in two respects: perception and reality. That is an important point that I am sure you would be well aware of.

Both of these plans are regarded as municipal plans. They are not only council, they are municipal wide. They are orientated towards building a partnership approach with the community sector and the state or Commonwealth and other authorities or institutions to build a framework of collaboration, that any approach around community safety—or addressing it in both perception or reality—does require, in council's view, that particular approach. Both of these plans effectively embed that as council's commitment to be a facilitator, a coordinator, a compiler of information, not a police person, although I will talk about that in a minute. But council has made a very firm commitment in acknowledging some very particular issues that exist in this municipality.

To move to some highlights—and Brendan and Lee are going to talk about some very specific information in a minute. But council's role, as I have indicated, is now moving towards looking at a place management or a place concept that we are in fact many neighbourhoods within a municipality. You would have heard that before, I am sure. The process of dealing with the neighbourhood approach, at the village level, is particularly important. We are in the process of developing for advice to council what that would mean in policy terms, and that is a process that is going to unfold and is again a part of the planning process that came out of the planning process for both of these plans.

Local government and this council is particularly unique with some of its focus. It has a spread of service areas, such as youth services, family support services—we are one of the few councils that has a family welfare service—an extensive community development unit, a focus on community events, as well as other areas, such as urban design. In the social sphere we have quite a commitment of resources that the intention is they are intervention and prevention orientated, developmental, and seeking to engage with local community with particular demographics in a way that addresses particularly the perception through the various areas that they look at.

It is worth remembering that the Community Wellbeing Plan has a social, economic, natural and built environment focus which is a premise of the way it has been developed. Some of the highlights that are worth reflecting on, several years ago, Noble Park was a case in point or example that was subject to considerable press in 2007 following the death or the murder of Liep Gony, the young Sudanese man, to the point where the perception around that community was it was pretty much a dangerous place. The reality is that was not the case. Council's response to that though has been to invest quite significantly in the Noble Park community, a near \$22 million reinvention of the Noble Park aquatic facility into more than a pool; a community facility that has aquatic facilities at its heart that has community space, a meeting and function room around it built into Ross Reserve. It is intended to revitalise not only the perception but also the reality of community safety, as well as health and wellbeing in that community. The council has made considerable fiscal commitments with its resources to address particular issues.

Another area of interest that is worth highlighting is CCTV closed-circuit television. Council committed quite a considerable sum of money, nearly three years ago, to undertake a pilot of Menzies Avenue Community Centre. That pilot is coming to an end with a very strong partnership approach with Victoria Police and others. The results from that are indicating that there is a drop in graffiti and a perception of antisocial behaviour.

The challenge of that is that that has been predominantly a local government, ratepayer budget funded approach. We have not been successful and there are very few programs available for local government to seek assistance in that area. I do note that the current government has put in place in this budget a commitment, an area for local government to apply. Projects, such as closed-circuit TV are very expensive. They are not a silver bullet but it is one aspect where if the ingredients in the approach is done right, if I can use that term, there are demonstrated results to be had.

The other commitment that arises out of the planning process is a commitment to finalise development of the community's safety plan which will be built on the framework of both the Health and Wellbeing Plan and Imagine 2030, which again will have a place approach, a collaborative and developmental approach.

Overheads shown.

Mr VAN BOXTEL—I manage the Revitalising Central Dandenong project. I will give you a quick overview of the project. It involves state government, local government, so VicUrban essentially on behalf of the state government, through the Department of Planning and Community Development are charged with investing \$290 of expenditure into central Dandenong. The central area there, which is about 170 hectares, has been declared as a project area. The orange section in the centre of that image, which is around the railway station, is essentially the seven hectares of land that the government has purchased and will be slowly redeveloped over the next 20-year period.

The project itself is really about re-establishing central Dandenong as the capital of the south-east. You can see there the three key objectives. The first one is to attract private sector investment as a flow-on effect of that government investment, \$1 billion over that 20-year period; to strengthen our base in terms of economic and social sustainability in the longer term—and this is a long-term initiative, it is not a short-term initiative—and to improve the overall amenity and urban environment of the city centre itself. That is something I will highlight through some of the projects that I will show you slides of.

Recapping then, there has been four major infrastructure projects: Lonsdale Street, Stockmans Bridge, City Street, Station Plaza and the Station North precinct. The two key targets there at the bottom of the slide probably worth mentioning: the 4,000 new homes that are expected to be attracted to the city centre—that is city centre living, not on the periphery, but people living within the core area that is currently retail and commercial office space stock—and the creation of 5,000 new jobs which is essentially a 50 per cent increase on our current base of about 10,000 jobs in the city centre.

Mr SCHEFFER—Did you tell us what SNURP stands for?

Mr VAN BOXTEL—Sorry, SNURP was the Station North Upgrade and Realignment Project. It is basically a realignment of roads to allow a better bus connectivity in and out of the railway station as part of the project. Some of the past and current projects that I will mention quickly. The Drum Theatre was one of our earliest initiatives which was a shared project through council and state government at the time, but setting the scene and introducing a very high standard facility into our community that could be accessed both for professional shows but also for community use. At the moment that is attracting about 200 shows a year in excess of 100,000 people. So it is bringing people back into the city centre in large numbers.

The Dandenong Market, the city has recently invested \$26 million doing a major upgrade of the market. The key focus of that again is building on our cultural diversity, giving the local communities the ability to sell their wares and to support people coming in to our

city centre. I think the current figures are around 90-odd thousand people per month that visit the market. Again it is about activity generation within the city centre.

Stockmans Bridge again is about accessibility. It is about giving people in the western part of our city, easy access into the city centre. That new bridge provides a key gateway into the city centre. Some of the artwork on that bridge reflects the former use of that land as saleyards which is currently being redeveloped—and I will come to that in a moment—as a residential precinct.

The main street, basically the whole main street has been redeveloped from Clow Street, through to Foster Street, from building line to building line. It is really about creating a quality space that the community can have access to. It is about very high quality, it is about good design. The space itself, the plantings et cetera, there are safety aspects that have been put into the thinking behind that space. There is low shrubbery or there are high trees. There is a lot of vegetation in the middle zone, so to speak. There is a very high quality and high standard of public lighting. As part of council's lighting strategy we have what is called a White Light Policy. That has been rolled out here in the city centre to create an inviting environment of a night-time. Over time we expect the nature of the shops that front onto that street to change and to make use of that new quality space that has been created. We are creating a broader spectrum of hours in which that main street can function with people in that area.

The government services office, is the first new building to go into the acquisition area where VicUrban have purchased their land—about 14½ thousand square metres of floor space and about five major government tenants going in there, including the Department of Justice and the Department of Human Services. Again that is about that employment base building in the city centre, creating more activity, more local jobs. It is also about the ground plane being very active and interactive with the street environment. You can see on that particular image there, you have a lot of glass, transparency. That is reflected through our planning scheme where we have what is called design development overlay. Any new development that occurs at street level it has to achieve 80 per cent transparency to the street. There is good surveillance from within buildings to the external street environment. That is reflected in this particular building and it will be reflected in future buildings as they come on line within this precinct.

The pop-up park: because quite a bit of land has been purchased but it has not all been developed immediately—it is going to take some time for this land to be eventually taken up by the property market—there is some temporary use of some of that land occurring. This particular initiative is a public park that essentially the community can use for a number of years until such time as a development comes along that needs to access that particular site. Rather than leaving a vacant parcel of land there which may be quite difficult to manage, it has been put to a temporary use for community activation.

City Street and Station Plaza, that is the last major infrastructure project which is under construction at the moment. It provides a new gateway into our city for pedestrians. As you get off the train station this is the environment you will move into, Station North Plaza, which is the image at the bottom of that slide, and then you will move along City Street to our main street where the Drum Theatre is located down on Lonsdale Street. A high quality pedestrian environment, really emphasising the use of public space by our community.

The Civic Centre project, the last key one I will quickly mention, is essentially another key catalyst for that precinct. We are looking at building a new library and council offices on the main street with a new civic square and that will finish that connection from the

station down to the main street, and ultimately then you have choices to either progress through to our shopping area or through to the market.

Metro Village I touched on previously, the old saleyards land, about 27 hectares is located on the south side of the railway line. The saleyards or stockyards were being used up until about 1998 and that vacant land has been sitting there for a number of years. A strategy was developed to convert all of that land to residential use. You can see some of the images there. Grenda's have also relocated their bus depot to that side of the road, but the balance of the area is residential. We are up to stage 7 now. That is selling quite well. We have had a very good uptake in terms of people purchasing property in that precinct.

The last slide I would like to quickly touch on is City Vitality. Through this whole process of the city changing through infrastructure works and through new investment in private land, council has continued to run, over the last three to four years, a very strong program that is geared around our community. Some of the images you see there, like the Little India cultural precinct, the Afghan Bazaar cultural precinct, we run food tours, floral displays. At the moment we are just about to get to our nocturnal night walk which is an activity we hold once a year where we get people coming into the city centre at night and walking through that environment. Some people have not necessarily experienced that previously and it is about getting people comfortable with that space at a different time to when they would normally enter of their own accord.

There is a lot of work that happens through both council and VicUrban that is geared towards activation and use of our public realm and public streets. Again I can go into those in a bit more detail if they are specific areas of interest during the question and answer session. That is probably as much as I wanted to quickly touch on.

Mr CARINS—I am going to give a brief overview on some key stats in relation to crime and safety. Prior to going into that, as Kevin has indicated, that there are many strengths to this particular area. However, unfortunately what I will be focusing are some of the little weak spots. I would not like you to leave today with the impression that everything is doom and gloom in this city. As you have seen, there are many strengths. I have the job of telling you some bad news, unfortunately, so here we go—in relation to crime stats and figures like that, some of which you would be aware of. In terms of our research and the social research we have done it clearly indicates that the total level of crime in Greater Dandenong remains consistently higher than the Victorian and Melbourne averages. Crime rates across all the major offence areas, which includes drug offences, property offences and against the person, are also higher in this LGA compared to Victoria and metro Melbourne.

Similar to many other areas across Melbourne, police statistics relating to recorded offences in Greater Dandenong for the period over the last decade show a significant rise in violent offences of which nearly half were related to family incidences, or otherwise known as family violence. In the last decade, Greater Dandenong has experienced an increase in violent crime incidents—where they are recorded as violent crime incidents by police stats—within the family, as well as outside the family. I will talk about that a bit more in a moment. Outside the family, talking about things like harassment and public offences. Where we have had an increase in violent crime incidents and reported incidents within the family which has occurred across the wider metro area in fact, Greater Dandenong has experienced both an increase in incidents within the family, as well as outside, and is one of the few areas in Victoria where this trend has occurred.

Delving briefly into a little bit of the crime stats and considering some of the crime rates, in relation to recorded offences for drug and property crimes, they have stabilised in the

past five years. This time 10 years ago they were quite high. In the period from about 2000 to 2005 they came down significantly and they have stabilised in line with state trends over the past five years. However, the rate of crimes against the person—and when I talk about crimes against the person, these are serious things like homicides, rapes, robberies, assaults—has been in this LGA on an upward trend. The rate of offences against a person in Greater Dandenong remains the third highest in metro Melbourne after the City of Melbourne and the City of Yarra. The rates of family violence and child abuse are also relatively high in Greater Dandenong and the level of police attendance and family violence incidents is the second-highest in Melbourne. The rate of child abuse substantiations is the highest in this whole region. Yes, it has been my grim task to set some not very pleasant figures but that is what the research and figures are telling us recently.

We also look at, in terms of perceptions of safety, how local residents are feeling about how safe or not safe, as the case may be. The most recent survey that we have relates to 2007. Again some of these figures are worth indicating to you. More than 80 per cent of residents in this survey held fears for their safety at night on trains, at stations and public carparks. Concerns for personal safety are up to three times more widespread among women and older people. Concerns amongst residents for their safety at night in Greater Dandenong were the highest in Victoria. Also—and Lee will refer to this briefly—Greater Dandenong has a number of what we refer to as crime hot spots. A hot spot is an area where a complex or ongoing mix of antisocial behaviour occurs that contributes to low levels of perceived or actual safety. Central Dandenong does appear to be one of those, as well as Springvale and Noble Park. You will hear in relation to a number of strategies that have been undertaken in trying to address those particular issues.

A couple of other points I would like to make in terms of crime rates and some research and stats here. I will quickly refer to family violence, road safety and public transport which appear to be some of our key priority or focus areas. With respect to family violence many of us in this room would know that it is a hidden issue. It is often concealed behind many other problems, social problems, such as homelessness, alcohol and drug problems, gambling et cetera. Unfortunately, the research indicates that 80 per cent of physical assaults against women occur in the home. In 2009-10, the latest year for which figures are available, the rate of police call-outs to violent disputes in homes within Greater Dandenong was the second-highest in Melbourne.

I will say a few words about road safety. In the six years to 2009, the rate of serious road accidents within Greater Dandenong rose to a level which was almost twice the metro rate. In 2009, the rate of serious road injuries in Greater Dandenong was the highest in metro Melbourne outside of the CBD.

Finally, some information in relation to public transport which is a key community concern. Travelling on and access to safe public transport is a key community safety issue for many residents. The threat of violence at train stations and on trains, particularly for young people, women and particular cultural groups is an ongoing concern. The Dandenong railway station in particular, I have to say, does have a poor reputation for safety. There are a number of measures in place to try and address that. That is all I would like to say. I hope I have not painted too grim a picture. I would like to emphasise again that the city does have many strengths, but I have had to emphasise some of the areas where there are a few concerns today.

Ms ROBSON—Whilst you have heard some issues about Greater Dandenong, with every issue comes opportunity, and this council has been particularly proactive in not only listening to its community but developing a range of partnership and programs to

respond to those needs as expressed by our community. The issue that we might have faced, say, 10 years ago was street drugs, drugs dealing, those things. We no longer see that. There has been a huge improvement in the areas around Springvale and Dandenong regarding street drugs. We are very pleased to see that that emphasis has moved away from drugs. That has certainly had a positive impact on not only perceptions of place but perceptions of safety in that time.

This council has been particularly proactive in looking at trying to address those poor perceptions of safety and to turn them around, and that is why it has invested \$185,000 in developing a pilot CCTV project in one of our neighbourhood activity shopping centres. That process has been particularly important for us because it has allowed us to see how a community can respond to the installation of cameras, to consultation and to involvement by that community in developing a community safety response. What we have seen in Dandenong North, in the area around a shopping centre and a public hall, is a huge improvement in the removal of graffiti and in public behaviour and in perceptions of that area. We are currently doing a survey in the street and of residents in that area. We do not yet have full results of the perceived improvements in that area, but from the empirical evidence from the number of crimes, police call-outs and graffiti, we believe there has been a positive improvement.

The research from other councils about CCTV indicates that when CCTV is used as part of a suite of community safety activities it can have some positive outcomes. This council has now funded, partly, the development of CCTV around the Dandenong railway station and potentially around the Noble Park railway station. We are working very actively with Victoria Police and with other agencies, such as Metro Trains, to look at not only letting people know that that is there, that there are fresh eyes looking at what is happening in the area, but to have a suite of activities that try and promote legitimate use of any public space in that area.

Another campaign which has been particularly successful was what we call the 'no drinking in public' campaign in Noble Park and we have trialled it there. We have some evidence that people drinking in public was a concern for the wider community. It was not a good look. Often it had the effect of making people perhaps not feel so good about the public space that they were in. Along with partners in Noble Park we developed this campaign where there was extensive signage, we worked with all licensees in the area and we worked cooperatively with the police and with our local laws officers to run what we call the Three E campaign—it was education, it was enforcement and it was also what we call an engineering. There were some infrastructure changes. That campaign was really successful in that there were about 200 people spoken to about having open containers of alcohol over a one-month period.

Part of the education component is that fines were not issued to those people, they were given warnings. There was signage up in many places, including stencils on the footpath, because people do tend to look down. Four infringement notices were issued eventually for people who were repeat offenders. We did some surveying in that community at the end of that month period and found that both traders and general shoppers in the area felt that the area had improved because they knew that there was action happening in that area to monitor public behaviour in public spaces.

This council has also been particularly proactive in having community consultative structures. The Alcohol and Other Drugs network, which our mayor has referred to, is a group of agencies and officers who looks at what are the key issues in our community about alcohol and other drugs, having a bit of an ear to the ground, advising council but also initiating some projects and that 'no drinking' campaign came out of the ADAN

network. ADAN has also identified that in terms of alcohol and other drugs, with the decline of street drugs, that alcohol is more likely to be the issue that we need to focus on in the shorter term. One of the initiatives that is locally to flow from that, and to link in with Kevin's presentation about central Dandenong, is that central Dandenong is still going through a period of change. We do not yet have the planning applications that are coming across our desk for bars and hotels in the revitalised area.

In readiness for that this council is going down a path of preparing an alcohol management framework which will set up some planning triggers and some guidelines about, 'If you come to us wanting to develop a bar or a licensed venue in central Dandenong, what are the sorts of things that council will require you to do to make sure that we are not developing an economy which is detrimental to the wider community benefit but still guarantees good economic development and encourages business?' Of course, that is a fine line. We are seeing the nightclub areas of King Street and Chapel Street have had some hard learnings about that. We have heeded that message and we will be proactively looking at getting this in place before we have a series of planning applications which council may have to deal with on an ad hoc basis. It is looking more holistically at what needs to occur there.

Council also has a Community Safety Committee. It is an advisory committee of council which is based very much on partnership with the Department of Justice, with Victoria Police, with the Migrant Resource Centre and with council. It looks at key issues across the municipality. One of the focuses of this committee has been the area around central Dandenong and the railway station. In the time that I have worked with council, which is about 18 months, there has been some significant improvements, in not only the perception but the reality of that area.

The committee has been able to develop this partnership approach. What we see now around the railway station is the police and their designated area, which they may have spoken about in their earlier presentation, regarding being able to exclude people who have offended from the area. We have also seen with VicUrban as a partner develop a positive public space in the pop-up park. Not only is it staffed but it is programmed to encourage a legitimate use of public space which is very important. With a new infrastructure it is important to set a new agenda for how people behave in that space.

Council will be following this up with CCTV. There has been the Assertive Youth Outreach Program in the area. There has been extensive contact with traders. This is where some of the Little India food tours happen. Again there is more legitimate use in this public space. We have engaged Metro in discussions and we have had some community safety sessions down at the station to hand out freebies to people to try and engage people in conversation about their station being a vital and active place. We believe there has been real developments and that has been achieved through being the leader of a partnership approach to community safety and embedding this in a place based approach, that it looks at the place as a whole.

The design of public space is, I believe, one that you are interested in, and we have been exploring some options through using art and engagement as a way of involving communities in planning spaces that they will ultimately use. The use public space—or the illegitimate use of public space—is often an issue for planners. There is an area in Noble Park, for example, around the railway station which has been developed as a very small urban park—and I use the word 'park' in its broader sense—called the Noble Park Civic Space. There has been an extensive process of consultation with community groups. Over 30 different community groups were consulted extensively, often in community languages about what vision did they have for this space; how were they going to use this

space. It was recorded both digitally and with drawings and we believe the space that is now being designed reflects what the community wants, and ultimately the design of that space, because it has had some buy-in, we hope, will result in a space that people can feel a sense of ownership with and, therefore, any risk of behaviour that is not particularly conducive to the community good will be lessened.

These processes, of course, take time. They take resources and they take commitment. That is something that council has been very pleased to be associated with. I might leave it there and perhaps throw it back to the committee.

COUNCILLOR BLADES—That is our presentation, Mr Chair, and we will leave it to the members of your panel to ask questions.

The CHAIR—Thanks very much. That was a good cross-section. It is important for us to have an understanding of the statistics in relation to drugs and crime, particularly in this region, and also obviously some of the work that has been done with the Community Engagement Program. I thought it was a good balance of representations to give us an idea of what is happening in this part of the city. I would invite our committee members now to raise any questions they wish.

Mr SCHEFFER—My question is to both Kevin and Lee. It relates to the design of the development that both of you talked about in different ways. We understand the process of community engagement and being cognisant and aware of the impacts on community safety. Distilling that in, what would you say the lessons are that come out? What are some of the do's and don'ts about good design that will promote positive uses of the spaces that you create?

Mr VAN BOXTEL—One of the important challenges is to make sure you separate out public from private space and that there are clear distinctions between the two. You do not have areas that there is uncertainty about, who has rights of ownership over, and by that I mean if you look at some of our public streets—

Mr SCHEFFER—What is an example of that?

Mr VAN BOXTEL—Like the government services building, for example, making sure that the entries to that building are at the street and you do not have pockets, areas that sit in that are not going to be used at night because the building is not operational at night and then there is uncertainty as to who controls that space and who the right manager of a particular space is, and making sure that is understood and that things are being done to address particular issues that might arise.

Ms ROBSON—Could I add to that, that I think there are about four points that are pretty important that we have learnt: the first one is visibility, having activity where people can see it with passive surveillance as they pass by; the second one is activating a space, making sure that there is legitimate activity, and sometimes councils need to program activities to make sure that occurs early on, right from the outset; the third one is reducing what I call territorialism, not allowing a particular group to colonise a space but by making it clear that it is available to everyone, and again that sometimes requires programming; the fourth one is all of those elements of good design—making sure an area is well lit, that there are no obstructions, that there is seating located in a place where people can legitimately sit and spend some time, that there are toilets well designed with the doors facing the streets. All of those principles about environmental design are important.

I think the important one is 'not just build it and they will come', but build it and make sure people know it is available by structuring and programming that space to make sure that the right uses happen at times when you need it to happen.

Mr SCHEFFER—Take a station that a number of you have talked about as being a site of problems, and then you talk about making sure that there is not territorial control. How do you deal with that both in the design end and then how do you break it up when or if it starts swarming?

Ms ROBSON—The design end is all important because about 80 per cent of the heavy lifting has to be done at the design stage. It is very hard to retrofit something afterwards. What we have seen in central Dandenong is a wonderful opportunity to reinvent some public spaces. We have a taxi rank, for example, which is right out opposite the station and street level, yes, it will have a CCTV camera but it is also readily visible. We have a pop-up park which has a program manager in there. It is not only a park which is available for anyone, we have someone programming all sorts of activities in there from a variety of people. When I say 'we', it is not necessarily council that is doing that but from a community point of view.

We have also had youth workers working in the area with specific groups. Some of the traders have expressed concern about that, and we have been proactively engaging the traders to make sure that any issues they may have can be dealt with either by the youth workers or by the police. I will not pretend that some of the behaviour perhaps has not been displaced, but in terms of Dandenong railway station setting a scene to be a new gateway to the city, that is probably something we can live with for the moment in that new space demands a new way of looking at it. The infrastructure sets the tone and the program is a very positive way of encouraging activity in that area.

There will be a marketing campaign, there will be lots of activities around the station where people can have a free cup of coffee or get some free samples from the market. It is really trying to energise a space, coupling it with the infrastructure changes.

Mr McCURDY—To the mayor and Mark, I am interested in this perception versus reality. It is only an opinion I am looking for, that if you had extra resources to do something, in terms of 100 per cent, is it fifty-fifty, is it 20-80? Where would you see extra resources need to go?

COUNCILLOR BLADES—I would think that we would like extra resources at our railway stations. A big problem for place based youth in Springvale, Noble Park and Dandenong for all the CADs, youth cannot move about on the weekend in Greater Dandenong because of an extremely difficult transport situation, and having the place based service at Noble Park where people can come by train, and where we are going to be able to add 58 jobs and having the facility open all year round. In terms of resources, public transport is a huge issue for the whole city but especially so for migrant families and migrant youth.

Mr McCURDY—Making those places safer will then help the perception as well for the rest of the community.

COUNCILLOR BLADES—In terms of Dandenong station I have written to the CEO of Metro asking for him to have a discussion with us because the perception of Dandenong is something we are very keen to change. We have changed the perception of Springvale from Heroin City to a vibrant Chinese area. We are hoping to put in a night market to get people there. We have changed the perception of Springvale, but it is very difficult to change the perception of Dandenong. We have people getting off the train at

Dandenong at night that are inebriated. We need the public transport to work in terms of buses, and we need Metro to act in terms of their resources; not so much protective service officers but some utility people. Recently, and on the weekend, I was told by a resident and his 15-year-old son went to the toilet at Dandenong station and he was mugged. In the future that family is going to use Hallam station. If those people are coming from Dandenong station to Dandenong park and into the RCD, it is going to be very difficult for us or take longer for us to change that perception.

Mr DOUBLEDAY—Roz is referring to the Noble Park More Than Just a Pool Project, which is a seasonal pool that is open three months of the year. Once the project is finished in December it will be all year round, and the 58 jobs the mayor is referring to is instead of employing 13 people for that short period of time, it will become an all year round activity, on the edge of the activity centre. Investing in a space that becomes vibrant where it is normal and okay to be seen to be moving around that environment and it is lit and it has activity, out of that \$22 million I think we received \$7 million from the Commonwealth and we received half a million from the state government. The rest of it is ratepayers funding. The heavy lifting starts with the infrastructure, as Lee has referred to. That is where council municipal budgets are the most under stress in terms of, we have a bunch of old stuff, we do not want it any more. We want to fix it and reinvent it. To do that, given that most of it was funded in the post-war period when Commonwealth and state money—particularly Commonwealth—was available for that.

But those assets have now fallen to local government. They have done their 40, 50-year history. The Noble Park pool, for example, is 40 years old, and reinventing it not only as a physical but as a vibrant place, we can do the planning. We know how to talk to a community and we know how to listen to people's ideas and views. We are very good at it. What we struggle with is the physical investment, knowing full well that if we get that right it will change the perception. CCTV, our estimate for the Dandenong station area, is around about half a million dollars to put in the required number of cameras with VicPol agreeing to have a back to base capacity, but half a million dollars from the municipal budget in its capital works program.

Again it is a physical issue but it can have an enormous perception outcome. In a softer term, not so physical, would be—we think the development of an alcohol management plan for the central Dandenong area is particularly important. Is that a municipal responsibility? Yes, there are planning scheme implications but again we need the assistance from database management, that state government collected data can be shared with us in an informed way, that alcohol or liquor sale outlets and data of complete incidents around that are recorded, and the planning information, instead of being dispersed, can in fact be looked at and the reality be converted into—this is where the hot spots are, this is where we know the issues are. An alcohol management plan that can have an impact on our planning scheme can in fact then allow us, with the state government, to show leadership which will impact on perception, but in reality also change the way in which concentrations of liquor sales, and gathering and socialisation and, unfortunately, the attendant antisocial behaviour that can go with it can be managed differently. You wanted a comment but they are the sorts of examples where we could go.

Mr BATTIN—Referring back to your crime statistics I want to obviously get a positive out of it. The increase in family violence in Dandenong, I know a lot of people see as a negative. The Dandenong police were the first of the Victoria Police to have a dedicated family violence vehicle. That was a pilot in 2004-05 and that would have seen an increase which was a positive. We do not want to see any crime in an ideal world, but the positive was it gave a facility for the locals to get involved and see what was going on, and it gave people the confidence that if they called there was a response. I wanted to put

that in there because I do not want everyone to walk away with a negative feeling from Dandenong with local crime. As a former police officer we did a very good job with those around there. I will give a positive on that one.

But my question is around another area. As a local police officer we did have big issues, and you said in there you put some CCTV cameras in Menzies Road, at the shopping area, and that was an area of significance at the time. You said there has been some improvement through there with graffiti. What other community based or infrastructure based items have you put in there to prevent crime or the drug and alcohol issues that were there, not only the cameras.

Mr DOUBLEDAY—The Menzies Avenue Hall area is a classic example of a 40-year-old piece of infrastructure that was built as a hall for hire. It has some other facilities around it. Ideally, if we had a magic wand, we would turn that into a community hub, and it would have a preschool, maternal and child health, it would have things that brings mums and bubs, brings people for all sorts of activities where they can interact, and it brings vibrancy and life to the site. Rather than a CCTV as a, 'as it is, don't do it', change the 'as it is' to something that is vibrant. That takes some resources to do. It is on our plan to in fact look at that. Converting a hall for hire into a multipurpose facility, similar to what we have done at Lightwood Road with bringing child care, preschool, maternal and child health, toy library, specialist services into one facility which brings to that area—it was not particularly a problem area, but it brings normality, it brings a perception of safety. That takes some planning and it takes some infrastructure beyond what we have.

Mr BATTIN—I am in Gembrook and we have Berwick, Pakenham and very fast growing areas. What I gather from what you are saying there, urban design is essential for crime prevention overall, and you talk about those properties. Let's go back 40 years, when they put in the Menzies Avenue Hall, the idea of that was a community hub. It was a hall for hire but for its time it was a community centre. However, obviously, that has changed now. What would you do if you were looking at the future if you had that—we are in the greenfield site, we have the greenfield site—to make sure that in 40 years time these facilities are not seen as the hall for hire or something in the past? Is there a progression plan for that 40 years of not only building infrastructure now, but putting a plan in place that it can progress through the growth—if you have 10 families a day moving in there—for that growth for now, but also in 40 years time when there are 30,000 extra people there, to make sure it does not end up an area like that, what would you put in place there?

Mr DOUBLEDAY—As Lee indicated, the front end is in the design, no hidden corners, no dead spots, ensure there is vibrancy. A building, at the end of the day, is a building. It is about how it is managed and it is about the people engagement community—what sort of interactive process, what encouragement around programs. It is the social and the physical, it is the built and the social engagement. We have to ensure the design takes consideration of what we know around—if you put dead corners and alleyways then we are going to have some problems, but also make sure that there is relevancy of programs. People want to go there. They want to go there because there is something of intrinsic value, and the way the message, the perception, the ambience, the gut feeling is, it is a good place to go. 'I get good things there. I interact, I meet, I do things,' and it creates a vibrancy.

Ms ROBSON—One of the things we have seen some success with is linking with schools and linking with retail. Facilities where people go about their daily life seem to be good locations to have other community facilities. Across Victoria there are some examples of quite unlikely pairings of community facilities that might be

inter-generational type activities. But anything that gives activity over 12 to 18 hours a day is enabling legitimate use of a space which encourages that sense of community vitality, and more of a general community ownership rather than a specific group ownership.

COUNCILLOR BLADES—But importantly what goes on in the space has to be relevant. There are 156 nationalities in the City of Greater Dandenong now. We know that with the services that we are providing the city that that is likely to be the continued demographic. However you put it on a site, the programs you run have to be relevant to what is happening in that specific area at that time. That is what councils and governments need to do. They need to make sure that what they do is relevant, that if you have young people using it right now you would be putting in Wi-Fi. Who knows what technology is going to tell you in 40 years but it needs to be relevant to what is happening at the time, and that forward thinking needs to be about looking at the demographic we have now and the migration patterns and systems and who and how and age groups we are going to have living around Menzies Avenue, Springvale or Noble Park in 40 years time and what they will need. It is not really what you put on the greenfield site, it is that you put it on the greenfield site and that you continually make it relevant and not fall behind the trends.

The CHAIR—Thank you. We do have a public forum at 12. I thank Brendan for his frankness. I do not see why we should hide the reality of statistics that were provided to us. We have to have that information provided on the basis for our recommendations in the future. We have been fairly specific about Dandenong, some of the work that council is doing in relation to their public assets and looking at ways to reduce the potential crime and drug activity. I would like to get a more holistic answer in relation to community safety programs that council and VicPol are working together on. I use the words Neighbourhood Watch, only because it is named in our reference, as a past program or still being used in certain parts, as a community engaged program. I would like some comments from you about what program—if that is not it—or another program or like program that VicPol and the council are working together with to have the community engaged.

The other thing I will raise with you—I am glad education came up. I was waiting and waiting. I had a discussion with Gail about it because when I spoke with the minister about this reference, some of the discussion we had initially was about how do we change the culture of our young to have the respect and the values that are brought through the education system—she said primary, and I am talking about kindergarten—about what activities are being done in the school system to start imparting some of the values that we have at our age, or my age. I use an example where we had respect for police and we had respect for elders and we had certain social values that held through for the rest of our life. It would appear that that is all starting to disappear for a range of reasons which I am not going to identify this morning, but do we and should we prioritise some of that respect and values back into the school system?

Planning, we talked about from your perspective, but I am more interested in it from the housing perspective. Is part of the perennial problem about lack of space—I will get well away from you, the suburb. We will talk about Hoppers Crossing where we have a significant development running out to the west and we virtually have houses on houses on houses without a bit of greenery anywhere. Is that maybe the cause of some of the issues about where young people go? Do they have space? Do they have environment—trees, green—something to associate themselves with a value of where they are. I will perhaps ask you to make comment on that, and certainly much shorter than the question posed, if you do not mind.

Mr DOUBLEDAY—Whilst Lee is doing some notes on what she is going to say in response to that, thank you for saying what you said about the demographic and data. You would have noticed a little bit of agitation over here about how we handle that.

The CHAIR—Mark, I did raise it for a purpose because I could see you were agitated about it.

Mr DOUBLEDAY—Yes, thank you very much.

The CHAIR—But it is important for us to have an understanding. We will ask the same in Frankston, and we will in Geelong and Ballarat.

Mr DOUBLEDAY—Council does publish that information. It is something that the councillors particularly—and we have a mayor this year in Councillor Blades that is very keen to ensure that the perception issue is managed aggressively.

The CHAIR—When we initially had discussions—I think Johan brought it up, or Sean, who is an apology this morning—it was about what you see in relation to how media are providing the statistical information and the reality, and that might well be part of your response.

Mr DOUBLEDAY—Yes, I agree entirely. We are not blindsided by the hard reality of our figures. However, council does not behave in a cowering way in relation to that. I would not be a director if I did not listen to what councillors say in terms of, we know the reality but we also want proactive programs. Simon, thanks very much for your question because we are going to give Lee a chance to say something about that.

Ms ROBSON—To refer to your question about, say, Neighbourhood Watch or other activities that involve the community, Neighbourhood Watch has recently become involved with council's Community Safety Advisory Committee. That is a way they can feed into the wider discussion about issues in the area. Neighbourhood Watch has been through a reinvention, and it has taken a little while but I believe they will be speaking with you next in the public forum and I will let them cover that off.

The Community Safety Committee has also had quite a focus on media—we have a couple of media people from both VicUrban and council on that committee—because it is of great concern to council that often the media, especially the daily press, do represent this area in a negative light, and the bad news is 'sell' stuff. It is often quite difficult for us to get the good news stories out there. We are working extremely hard to sell every good news story we can. Local press is much more receptive to that than the daily press. It is very powerful and it is an issue that we are really concerned about and trying to work very proactively.

Regarding teaching social values in schools and those issues, I am probably not the best person to comment on that extensively. We do a little bit of work with schools. We have a Young Leaders Program we run through our Youth Services area. We have developed a party safe kit for schools and young people to talk about, having safe parties, with their parents. It is another proactive program we have done in conjunction with the police. In terms of young people having meeting places where they can gather, that has been part of my previous comments about the use of public space, and also to not have public areas as places for drinking or antisocial behaviour but for good, solid community based activity.

The CHAIR—Thanks, Lee. Alcohol was mentioned a number of times. Would you see fit to recommend or advocate a restriction on access to alcohol in certain places, if you want to get down to the nuts and bolts?

Ms ROBSON—This council has been very proactive in pushing forward the recent planning changes that the state government has already implemented about requiring bottle shops to have planning permits. That for us has been a significant achievement. It allows us to have a greater control over the density of outlets. We know that most alcohol is purchased through bottle shops. I do not think the situation in Greater Dandenong with alcohol is very different to any other locality in Victoria. There are many similarities. It is a local issue though that we are desperately trying to manage at the local level.

The CHAIR—All right. Thank you very much, Mayor, and the team for your presentations this morning. I appreciate the effort you have gone through. Please feel welcome to join the forum or I am sure you have other things to deal with. The invitation is open.

COUNCILLOR BLADES—Thank you for your time.

Witnesses withdrew.

DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

**Inquiry into Locally Based Approaches to Community Safety and Crime
Prevention**

Dandenong — 30 May 2011

Members

Mr S. Ramsay
Mr B. Battin

Mr J. Scheffer
Mr T. McCurdy

Chair: Mr S. Ramsay
Deputy Chair: Mr J. Scheffer

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Executive Officer: Ms S. Cook
Senior Legal Research Officer: Mr P. Johnston
Acting Committee Administrative Officer: Ms. D. Woof

Witnesses

Mr B. James, President,
Mr C. Anderson, Secretary,
Ms K. Anderson, Member, and
Mr R. Vernon, Member, Dandenong Neighbourhood Watch.

Mr J. Laidlaw, Member, Noble Park Community Action Forum,
Ms G. Guest, Resident.

The CHAIR—If I could ask you to your seats, please. I appreciate we said we would start this forum at 12. Thank you for your understanding, we are running a bit late. We have to move on to Frankston for a similar type forum this afternoon at 2 o'clock. Time is against us. I would like to welcome you all here. I appreciate the effort that you have made to attend. We look forward to hearing from you. This is a joint parliamentary committee, the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee of which I chair.

As background, the minister gave us a reference to this committee to look at Locally Based Approaches for Community Safety and Crime Prevention and we have made a call for submissions advertising through the papers and through word of mouth, which close tonight. There is still an opportunity to provide a submission to the committee on that reference. We will accept that until 5 o'clock. We have, by looking at the cards, representatives from the Leader. Press are in the room and I understand you have all signed the appropriate papers in relation to the rules of this forum. I have a list of speakers and my understanding is they have been given their instructions in relation to statements.

We have a list of speakers and I would ask you if you could keep them reasonably brief. These are statements and we appreciate that. The committee may like you to question you on your statement. Bearing in mind we have scheduled three-quarters of an hour for this session. Hopefully we can use that time to allow you all to make statements and allow the committee to investigate further if they wish. In order I have Bruce James who, I understand, is the president of the Dandenong Neighbourhood Watch. The floor is yours.

Mr JAMES—I will be brief anyway. My wife and I have been associated with Neighbourhood Watch since 1987 when it was under the office of Neighbourhood Watch in Victoria and we have been going strong for that time. Then things started to wear off a little bit. I am not talking about the public. There were areas where you had—how can I put it—people that come from different countries where they did not like the police in any shape or form. When we went around knocking on the doors and they said, 'Neighbourhood Watch, associated with the police,' boom. That was the reaction that you received. Then people started to fall out a little bit and then the PSA became involved. You are in Gembrook but you will not come under Casey?

Mr BATTIN—Neighbourhood Watch, we are actually Cardinia and Yarra Ranges.

Mr JAMES—Yes, that is right. Now, you have the three groups, Cardinia, Casey and Dandenong. Each group now has their own PSA which operates, not only for one little area but the whole of the Dandenong area, the same with Casey and the same with Cardinia. Since then they have become very much involved in the community safety on the council and with the police. A few weeks ago, Neighbourhood Watch was represented at the Dandenong station, handing out pamphlets while the police were there doing their check. The feedback we received was, 'Thank God you're here.' They were quite happy to have us there, and the people were starting to get notice, pamphlets going out, that Neighbourhood Watch still exists. I have some of my committee members here, and the work we have been doing, we are getting back on track, and I will keep it that short. Thank you.

The CHAIR—I am fairly new at this. I am wondering from an interactive point of view I might refer to my vice-chair. Are you happy to take questions as each makes a statement so that it is fresh in our mind?

Mr SCHEFFER—Yes, that is fine.

The CHAIR—I will perhaps invite the committee members to ask questions.

Mr SCHEFFER—How many members do you have?

Mr JAMES—In the PSA or the Neighbourhood Watch altogether?

Mr SCHEFFER—Your Neighbourhood Watch group.

Mr JAMES—About 58 to 60 members at this stage—active members.

Mr SCHEFFER—What would you say the age range is?

Mr JAMES—Well, the youngest member, I think, is about 24, and the oldest member is around about 75 to 80.

Mr SCHEFFER—What would most be? In what group?

Mr JAMES—I would say it would be the 40 to 50. We are mainly trying to get the younger people in now which is very difficult at times.

The CHAIR—I want to be clear—I have Craig as secretary of the same group.

Mr JAMES—That is right.

The CHAIR—Kim, where are you in this group?

Ms ANDERSON—I am under Neighbourhood Watch, Greater Dandenong, but I am under our own little group of DAN9 that is running as an individual group.

The CHAIR—Do you all have separate statements to make or are you working in unison?

Mr ANDERSON—Probably adding to what—whether you have something—

Ms ANDERSON—Mine is completely different.

The CHAIR—All right, Kim, we will isolate you and maybe stick Craig and Bruce together and allow the committee members to ask some questions. Craig, did you want to add to the statement?

Mr ANDERSON—Yes. I think the hardest part with Neighbourhood Watch is trying to reach everyone in the community and let them know that Neighbourhood Watch is still alive because most people thought when it changed in June last year that it died away, it was going to end. Trying to get the help that is needed to get it out—and that might be something as small as The Journal or something like that or whether we can get community announcements, television stations or media groups used to allow for non-profit organisations like Neighbourhood Watch. If you get the word out that it is still alive then people may very well seek it out because things are happening throughout the whole community. It is not only one area or one suburb. Every street has something going on in it. It is relevant to every street in Victoria or Australia for that matter. We are only getting things together where we will be able to be mobile and go wherever, and work with the police and get the police to let us know what crimes are going on in an area, and then try and base our focus on that crime in that area.

The only thing we are really lacking at the moment is some paraphernalia that Neighbourhood Watch used to have. It might have a police symbol on it that says, based on a scam or burglaries, how to protect yourself from being a victim of crime in any way, shape or form. We do not have enough printed literature to be able to give out to people, and it is expensive to get it printed. Whether the government can look at either printing or

putting together something that we can then draw from and get that information. If you have 158,000 people in Dandenong, to try and print 158,000 when you are only getting moneys coming from the community, it is very hard to take all your money, plus. We have applied for a local council grant and we are now going to apply for a fascia grant, I think it is called, and see if we can get some money there and get some things done.

The CHAIR—You made the comment that VicPol said, 'Thank God you're here,' when you went to Dandenong station.

Mr JAMES—They were quite happy to have us there.

The CHAIR—I would like to know what they meant by that; secondly, if I can direct it to Craig, what information are you providing? Bruce, what do the police mean by that? Are they suggesting that Neighbourhood Watch has not been active, has not been visible, and it is good now that—

Mr JAMES—I will put it this way: when the Neighbourhood Watch started years ago we used to have police coordinators, they were helping us. About three or four years at the Dandenong police station we did not have a police coordinator to help us. There was a bit of a lapse between the police and Neighbourhood Watch at that stage because in my opinion we did not get the help that we should have. Then we got onto a couple of sergeants up there, spoke to them, who were in the community business, and then we did get a coordinator, she is a very good girl. She has helped us tremendously now under the PSA system. The police and the Neighbourhood Watch are now getting back to the degree that they should have been. That is my opinion. That is when they said, more or less, 'Thank God you're here, because we're hoping to get interaction with the police more so now than before.' It is the same now as the community forum here today with the council, we are getting involved in that too from that angle as well. Neighbourhood Watch, the police and the council are getting together to help one another.

Mr ANDERSON—The communication between the police and Neighbourhood Watch was severed—whether it was severed purposely or things grew away. The police change and people change jobs within the police force and you lose that contact. You might get an email back saying, 'I'm no longer there. You'll have to try and contact this person.' If the police had an officer that was community based that gave a reference point with the police, whether they might have an issue or they may be doing a program, like the Dandenong City Safe, then they can contact us and then we can organise to be there with them because I think it is important the police, the police rely on the community but we also rely on the police for information that we can then put into a newsletter and then get out to the people. Police statistics are important. It used to be that there were two burglaries in a street, that is not necessarily required, but if you could have a breakdown where, for instance, 'In Noble Park there were 84 crimes this month,' and this is a slight breakdown of what is happening. Even the community can look at, 'Burglaries are up. I must make sure everything is okay around the house,' and they are protected as well as they can.

Mr BATTIN—I think Neighbourhood Watch is perceived as an older person's group and that is a perception out in the community. What are your views then on ways to improve that, whether it is via reinvigorating the logo, a change of the theme of how you want to do a newsletter, getting away from the street to more of a crime prevention? What things, from your point of view, would assist in reinvigorating?

Mr ANDERSON—I think the literature is one thing because you can talk as much as you want or to try and interrupt people while they are walking along the street or wherever you are. If you have something you can give them that they can take away and read, rather than if you do not have that, you have to try and explain it all each time, each person. That is where we are lacking in our resources.

Mr BATTIN—I will point to the logo of Neighbourhood Watch, to reinvigorate it—

Mr ANDERSON—It is worldwide known. Apparently Neighbourhood Watch Victoria has had some interest from as far away as England in being able to use that logo. If it is that well known you do not want to change that.

Mr BATTIN—That is all right. No doubt in Cardinia—because Cardinia is a bit different to Dandenong in as far as space, it is a long way from one branch to another.

Mr ANDERSON—Geographically.

Mr BATTIN—What they are doing is Neighbourhood Watch is getting involved more with other local community groups.

Mr ANDERSON—For sure.

Mr BATTIN—How do you see that as an advantage for the group—even yourselves—to get other groups involved in yours?

Mr ANDERSON—We go to the Noble Park Drug Action Committee meetings. We have interest from a person—Aloysius at the Cyrene Centre. He is coming along to our public forum. We are trying to—not only us getting involved in theirs, but them getting involved in ours as well, and try and work together in that way, that they may have a program going on somewhere and maybe we can assist them and try and work together. The council has been fairly good that way, especially Noble Park. We get agendas and minutes for what is going on.

Mr VERNON—Another area—we have a newsletter and we print for the city of Dandenong 8,000 and there are 138,000 residents, whatever it is, and we have to go around to different politicians or community groups and ask them to print out a newsletter for us and then we have to distribute those 8,000. As you said, it is pretty hard to do and it is all voluntary. If we could look for a way of getting it printed and find out some way of how can distribute them as well, but we are only doing 8,000 which is a very small percentage of the City of Greater Dandenong because it is all left up to volunteers and it is left up to Sandown Racecourse to print them for us at a local school and all that type of stuff. We get paper donated from them and everything. But if we could find a way where there is a central point of getting 10,000 or 20,000 printed and we could find some way to distribute them, that is a problem for us.

Mr ANDERSON—We are on Facebook, and I spoke to Sarah from The Journal. Neighbourhood Watch has a sponsorship or something through The Journal or The Weekly, and we wondered whether we could get them to put it in with the newspaper because it is not advertising, it is a community based newsletter. That way we could get it to everyone and not have to try and footslog to stick them in letterboxes or what have you.

Mr McCURDY—You spoke about the lack of respect for the police, and I think that happens in many groups.

Mr JAMES—Yes, I know; not only Neighbourhood Watch, I know that.

Mr McCURDY—That is right. Do you see the police, or the lack of involvement with the police with Neighbourhood Watch now, is it the fact that it was the organisational skills, or it is the fact that they were the police that were supporting it?

Mr JAMES—I think the police are more involved in Neighbourhood Watch now than they were. As I say, you can read in the report that there was quite a while when we did not have a police coordinator.

Mr McCURDY—That is what I am saying, it is the coordination of it is what you were looking for, particularly from the police?

Mr JAMES—I am not condemning the police for that. It is just that without the assistance of a coordinator between the police and Neighbourhood Watch, you are missing out on a lot of things. The coordinator is the link. If you have a coordinator that can liaise between Neighbourhood Watch and the police, you have it running smoothly. If you have somebody there that is not quite interested, you are losing the gap between Neighbourhood Watch and the police. Now, to me, it is running perfectly.

Mr ANDERSON—To add on, we had a police officer come to a meeting who was willing to give us the police statistics. She had to go away and find out whether that was okay by her senior sergeant, and that is okay, but I cannot get an answer from her. I cannot get her to even call me. That is where the communication breakdown happens.

Mr SCHEFFER—I am interested to know, what is the message that you want to give the community, and how is it in their interests to respond and join Neighbourhood Watch?

Mr ANDERSON—Crime affects everyone and you need somebody within a street because communities talk within themselves all the time, but if you can get people speaking about it, maybe they do not become active members but they are actively looking out for their neighbours, which is all Neighbourhood Watch is. If your neighbour has gone away and a strange car comes into the street, then somebody sees it and goes, 'I might note that down.'

Mr SCHEFFER—Do you think that makes communities more alarmed so the perception of crime increases beyond the level that it is, or do you think it calms the community down to a point where they have a realistic assessment of crime? We have talked about that a lot in the committee about perception and reality. What role do you think Neighbourhood Watch plays in that dynamic?

Mr ANDERSON—It gives people the tools for what they have to look out for. It lets them know what to look out for because the criminals are shifty buggers and they will do anything to try and get around, for example, the elderly being scammed when somebody comes to the door. Maybe we can give them the confidence to say, 'No, sorry, I do not want to be a part of it,' or by email, they are two steps ahead of us and we are trying to catch up to them. The communities can reference back to us. They can call me any time they want. They can contact us, come to a public forum and air their issues. If we cannot answer it, we can go away and find out the relevant information they need to be given. We become like a reference point for the community. If you have somebody in each street that is looking out, then if my neighbour is looking out for me while I am away, which has happened, then you go away feeling safe if you leave your house that somebody in the area is watching out, and probably them the same.

Mr SCHEFFER—How does Neighbourhood Watch train itself to understand what is happening with crime? How do you inform yourselves about what is happening,

that when you talk to people in the community you are able to say things to them that are both true and that make sense to people?

Mr ANDERSON—That is where the literature helps. You can read the literature but then you are telling them exactly the same thing as you are giving them, to let them know. It is all about what to watch out for. What are the things to look out for; you know something is not as it should be.

The CHAIR—Thanks, Craig. We had better get these statements out; the people that have nominated to make statement, to make them. I want to take this opportunity while you are all here to say that it has been suggested to us, not in Dandenong but other areas, that the police involvement in Neighbourhood Watch programs have been diluted over time. Bruce referred to that. The question we are looking at is, should they be involved to the degree that they were originally or should local councils take up more responsibility in running some of these community safety programs like Neighbourhood Watch because they have a dedicated resource, or they could have if government saw fit to provide so.

Down the track, once we get the statements out of the way, I would enjoy getting a feeling of who does have ultimate responsibility in providing the community safety programs out there and how are they to be driven. You always need drivers in these programs. It has been suggested to us by some that maybe local councils need to take a more active role in providing that resource, and it provides a better network, given their structure, rather than VicPol who tend to provide some of the more semi-retired officers that do it on a part-time basis and it starts to lose its way after a while. Bear that in mind as we move through the statements. Kim, would you like to make a statement.

Ms ANDERSON—I am here today in reference Greater Dandenong Council regarding the CCTV in Menzies Avenue, Dandenong North. Roughly two years ago, Greater Dandenong Council put CCTV on the Menzies Avenue Hall, plus the Senior Citizens. For crime prevention we had drug dealings, hoons, graffiti on the shops et cetera. My problem is I live in the community and the behaviour regarding drinking, hoons, smashing of bottles and drug dealing has not stopped. In that area is also the community park. We have a group of male and female toilets on the outside of Menzies Hall which is where the drinking and all this bad behaviour is happening. These people are also bringing in young children to associate with this bad behaviour, but my argument is if any one of the parents in the community at the park want to use these toilets there is no way these parents can take their children safely to the toilets on the outside of the hall. There is CCTV and I do not understand why (a) they may not be monitored or (b) someone is monitoring and letting this wash over their head and not ringing police.

The community, on a lot of occasions, have rang the police. The police do come and tell them to move on, but as soon as the police go, they are back. Around Menzies Avenue, in that area, is a lot of elderly residents in community housing. The strip between Menzies Hall and the Seniors, the elderly people walk through their and they are continually abused, sworn at by these gangs of people that are hanging around the toilet. I think, 'What is council doing, and police?' It is disgusting.

The CHAIR—Thank you, Kim. We might invite the mayor, given she is here, to respond from a council point of view.

COUNCILLOR BLADES—I am happy to take note of that.

Mr BATTIN—So you know, with CCTV, they are a tool. They are not the be-all and end-all. They are a tool used by the police. Not a lot of them are used to detect crime,

they are used for a prevention measure and an item after for investigation purposes. The issues down in Menzies, I know the council is working very hard on those and a lot of those would need to be taken up with them, and also it is matter of keeping informing the police. That is probably the only real answer from this side.

Ms ANDERSON—My problem is though, council has spent all these thousands upon thousands of dollars to put these cameras up. As far as we are concerned, the cameras are facing the shops and stopping community crime and whatever. Two days ago the shops were targeted again with graffiti and everything. Now, you cannot tell me that they have a camera pointing directly on (a) the bakery and (b) the chemist right next door, because they were the two shops that were targeted.

The CHAIR—Thank you. The mayor has noted that.

Ms ANDERSON—Thank you.

COUNCILLOR BLADES—You are most welcome to come and have a chat to me. I will give you a card and we can make a time. I will come down to Menzies and have a look at this.

Ms ANDERSON—Thank you very much.

The CHAIR—I will ask Mr Reg Vernon to make a statement if he wishes.

Mr VERNON—Yes, it was on Neighbourhood Watch. I am relatively new to the area. I have been here about four or five years now, whereas Bruce has been here a lot longer. With the new set-up I think it will work, but before we had all these little pockets all over the place and they all worked individually but now we have been brought under the council and under the police PSA as an umbrella. I think it will work but we do need a lot of assistance, as Craig said, with literature and stuff like that. We were hoping to get granted marquees where we set up in shopping centres, and a trailer where we can go around to different fetes and community activities and present there. That is going to work okay, but getting the message out there to the whole community, that is our real problem, especially in the City of Greater Dandenong which is fairly multicultural, and a lot of people think we are a vigilante police group or something like that sometimes. There are a lot of elderly people in the area who really appreciate Neighbourhood Watch and that is as it should be, because we all put our hands up to look out for our elderly citizens, and we should look into Neighbourhood Watch and get it up and going again. That is all I have to say.

The CHAIR—Thanks, Reg. We have noted the literature issue. There was, from my understanding, an increase in funding for Neighbourhood Watch in the last budget announcement. I will refer that back to the respective minister to find out exactly what the criteria is in relation to the funding. In fact we are meeting your president in two weeks and he might best be able to tell us how that will be distributed. Jim, you wish to make a statement?

Mr LAIDLAW—Yes, I am a member of the Noble Park Community Action Forum. I wanted to make the committee aware of our existence and what we do. We are a group of Noble Park citizens who get involved in community affairs. The committee emanated from a committee called the Noble Park and Keysborough Drug Action Committee which has been going for about 15 years. They were kind enough to help Noble Park out with their centenary celebrations and we joined them. The committee now has been formed into the Noble Park Community Action Forum. We do all sorts of things—and drugs and crime prevention is certainly a part of that, which is a carryover

from the previous committee. We have a syringe disposal program which has been ongoing now for many years. We recently had a very successful community safety forum which was a forum of police, council and Neighbourhood Watch. It was a public forum where people came along. From that various things were put forward. We also have planned in the near future a community youth forum. These are the things that the committee does. Its purpose is to look after the community of Noble Park.

The CHAIR—Thank you, Jim. Everyone has made a statement that wanted to make a statement? I want to make sure we have not missed anyone. I will then open it up for the committee if they want to ask any questions. While we have this little lull for a second, that question I posed to you in relation to some of the drivers, whether it is Neighbourhood Watch or something else, do you still see VicPol as the important driver in these programs, or do you see a need for local government to take some more responsibility or resource to drive and help it?

Mr ANDERSON—I think the community needs to work not hand in hand but alongside the police—it is a very important link—and also council. We are happy to link up with any community group, any council function, any police function and spread the word as much as we can. Whether it is the Drug Action Committee, or any multicultural committee they can align themselves with us, or we will align ourselves with them, because the hardest part is sometimes you get foreign ethnicities or something, they see you as police or as someone who is going to report on them. It is very hard to get your foot in the door. There are a couple of multicultural police officers where we can use them to then try and get our foot into those communities.

Once you get a foot there—and whether that is through the council or whatever—to try and get in amongst that group and get them, or people from there, involved in it so they can spread it within their community, and it is coming from someone of the same group, whether it be Sudanese or whatever. I think they will take it from somebody from their group rather than Neighbourhood Watch, whether you are an Aussie or whatever, but to try and get your foot in that door, you get it shut in your face. But police, council, everyone has a role in community safety.

Mr VERNON—With the crime prevention from the Police Department, I think with Neighbourhood Watch and crime prevention with the police working hand in hand with them; same with the drug people, all working together, we need some information from the police at times. They help us with My Place on their website. We get information from that which we put into our newsletters, because a lot of people do not have internet. I think working with the police and the council and all these community groups it will work great.

The CHAIR—Who does all their coordination? I am trying to get a feeling. We had representatives from the Sudanese community here this morning, going through leadership and mentoring programs. They will obviously become leaders of their communities, and what a great tap-in to start that Neighbourhood Watch ethic that is there. But I am still a little bit lost about—who is to bring it all together? You have little groups doing things all over the place.

Mr ANDERSON—That is the hardest part. We may be able to do that through the council. The council could be a resource for us, but we have only been going one year at this. We have got a committee going, we are trying to roll something out but we do not know where we are going to end up at the moment. We are trying to align ourselves with anyone that we can that is a community group by going to their meetings and letting them know what we are about, and then hopefully that coming back to us. That has worked

through the Noble Park Drug Action Committee. We went to one of their public forums, and a person named Aloysius attended from the Cyrene Centre. He rung me up and asked to be involved in Neighbourhood Watch. That is the way we can draw off Noble Park Drug Action. You have to draw off each other. You cannot go and say, 'I'm Neighbourhood Watch, get involved.'

Mr BATTIN—One of the issues that was raised was the issues with cultural background and differences and breaking down these barriers that are there. The council has had (1) obviously issues with other community groups where this is concerned and (2) do they have a practice in place now where they identify these issues and barriers to work getting through them, or plans or processes to get through them? You have one of the highest multicultural—

COUNCILLOR BLADES—In terms of the multicultural community at Greater Dandenong, in some groups we would go through their churches. We cannot deal with multicultural groups depending upon what level they are educationally the same. For instance, we would deal with Vietnamese differently. I always suggest though that this council and other organisations should be wary of the fact of having Vietnamese Neighbourhood Watches or Sudanese Neighbourhood Watches. What the city is looking for is integration.

Mr BATTIN—Just a Neighbourhood Watch.

COUNCILLOR BLADES—A Neighbourhood Watch with everybody involved in it, but to involve everybody, there is a different methodology involving every group and that is how we do at council.

Mr BATTIN—It is probably something councils would get more involved in—

COUNCILLOR BLADES—156 different nationalities, as we have mentioned, we also have the City of Greater Dandenong Interfaith Network. Some things we are able to do in an interfaith way. I have been dealing with a couple of quite difficult issues in an interfaith way, rather than in a political way. We do quite well with that. Some community groups in Greater Dandenong have those contacts and we have the abilities and the trust of these groups to provide you with that information. But I would suggest every group must be approached in a culturally appropriate way.

Mr ANDERSON—That is where we can draw off the council as in, how do you do it and how do you go about it.

The CHAIR—Thank you for that. It is making it a little bit more of an issue because we do not have you marked—

Councillor BLADES—Sorry.

THE CHAIR—And we cannot quite pick up what you are saying on Hansard, in case the discussion goes much broader than that. This room is being occupied at 1 o'clock and, Gail, I would ask you to be quick, thanks.

Ms GUEST—I will be quick. I was talking off mic before and saying schools around here are being regenerated and now the idea is that they are not paid to 12. They are certainly having maternal health centres and kindergartens and play groups integrated into their programs. Teaching now is starting to get to the village approach, that every child belongs to the village. That is where we are losing out now. As I was saying to Johan before, a few years ago I went to Papunya and that never worked when the government brought in all the tribes from the different desert areas because they had to get

through all the elders, and the elders did not agree. If we can learn from that and try and have an approach where we do have community leaders that pull it all together under an umbrella that it works and that any money that is distributed, is distributed and used widely, because I think we all go at this at different tacks and the community level of involvement is lost. It has certainly changed in the 40 years that I have lived here.

My daughter lives in the country now, and when I go down and I see the parents or the carers standing outside kinder, they do not even talk to one another. Whereas when we were parents at kinder, we all chatted, we had play dates, as they now call them. We knew our neighbours. Now, nobody knows anybody. Nobody wants to get involved any more. That is what we have to combat. Now, we combat that with 160 different nationalities, I am not quite sure, but we need to have a model that rolls out and can be used, if not in the state, nationally. We need to get back to this village mentality where people do care for one another, and that is where we stop the crime and we stop the drugs. I know myself in the last week I have seen things here that I never thought I would see, and I have been absolutely shocked. Getting it to the right place has only been because I know that I can network through people like Lee and Roz and get to the right places, and a lot of people do not have that.

I do not know whether that helps, but I certainly appreciate the work that all of these individual people do in their own communities and their wider hobbies and interests. If we can draw on that strength this community and this council could be made a model to be rolled out everywhere, because I know the rest of the nation does look at the Greater City of Dandenong because of the way we live in harmony with all the different cultures that we live with.

The CHAIR—Thank you for that contribution, Gail, and thank you all very much for your contributions.

Ms GUEST—Thank you.

THE CHAIR—Obviously this will be a large part of the discussion of the committee, we have it on record, and the submissions that have come before us. Thank you for your time. I will close the public hearing.

Committee adjourned.

DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Locally Based Approaches to Community Safety and Crime Prevention

Frankston — 30 May 2011

Members

Mr S. Ramsay
Mr B. Battin
Mr S. Leane

Mr J. Scheffer
Mr T. McCurdy

Chair: Mr S. Ramsay
Deputy Chair: Mr J. Scheffer

Staff

Executive Officer: Ms S. Cook
Senior Legal Research Officer: Mr P. Johnston
Acting Committee Administrative Officer: Ms. D. Woof

Witnesses

Councillor K. Bolam, Mayor,
Ms J. Homewood, Manager, General Development, and
Mr S. Dickson, Manager, Compliance and Safety, City of Frankston;

Inspector B. Sharp, Manager, Operation Support, and
Leading Senior Constable R. Bloomfield, Youth Resource Office, Frankston,
Victoria Police;

Mr S. Ruth, Director, Complex Services, Peninsula Health;
Mr M. Whitby, Chief Executive officer, City Life, Frankston;
Mr G. Shaw, Member of Parliament for Frankston; and
Mr M. Berry, Electorate Officer.

The CHAIR—This is a joint parliamentary committee for Drugs and Crime Prevention. I do need to go through a process where you fully understand the rules around the recording of the conversation we are having on this table. Initially I would like to welcome you all to this public hearing of the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975 and further subject to the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, the Defamation Act 2005 and, where applicable, the provisions of reciprocal legislation in other Australian states and territories. Any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. I understand you have all received the guide for witnesses presenting evidence to parliamentary committees. We are recording the evidence and will provide a proof version of the *Hansard* transcript at the earliest opportunity and you can correct it as appropriate.

As you appreciate, today is the last day of submissions taken before the committee on this reference. At the outcome of this meeting, if any of you feel we have not covered the subject enough to your satisfaction there is an opportunity to provide a written submission to Sandy as we are going, which is probably the best way to do it, because it will not proceed in time for post. I understand there are people here, other than the committee, and representatives from the council. I note that Geoff Shaw, the local member for parliament is here. Thank you, Geoff, for making the time available. As we did in Dandenong—and again I apologise, we are running late, but we had a very successful session with Dandenong this morning and we certainly hope that Frankston will be similar this afternoon. Thank you, Mayor.

Councillor BOLAM—Thank you. On behalf of the city I do thank the committee for attending here at Frankston today. I made the comment before, I do not think we have had as many politicians in this room at the same time ever; a bit of a milestone today. I too have some staff from Frankston city here, and I do note we do have some external stakeholders.

Frankston City Council faces antisocial problems no different to that of any other municipality in Victoria. The difference between Frankston and the other municipalities, if any, is that our antisocial problems are somewhat more pronounced in the metro media. We have put together a submission which goes into quite some detail on how we see ourselves as a municipality within Victoria when it comes to crime and antisocial behaviour, but it also brings forth classical examples that you would hear from other councils, such as the perceived cost-shift of crime prevention responsibilities through other tiers of government, state government, for example. I am hoping we can have an honest conversation today but also address some of those issues which this city has taken the lead on.

For instance, last year we had the successful City Safe Officer trial which had council requiring security guards to take on local by-laws responsibilities. We have taken the lead on hoon driving in this state. We have proposed alternative legislation which I believe is in the upper house right now. As a council we have taken an active lead in advocating for better provisions for rooming houses. There is also CCTV technology which we have worked with the federal government to roll out funding wise and we are hoping to pursue funding from the state government this year as well. Frankston City Council is leading the way when it comes to crime prevention in Victoria, but there are things that can be done better on a state level and we are hoping to work with this new government and all their parliamentarians to have greater results for the region and for Frankston.

The CHAIR—I have not forgotten Victoria Police. I would ask you to introduce yourselves.

Ldg Snr Const. BLOOMFIELD—Renee Bloomfield, leading senior constable, Youth Resource Office, Frankston Police.

Insp. SHARP—Inspector Bryan Sharp. I am in charge of what is called Operation Support at Frankston, which sits over the Sex Offences and Divisional Information Unit, plus the units of crime prevention and Neighbourhood Watch. My role covers across the municipalities of both Frankston and Mornington Peninsula. I am sitting in today for Superintendent Wayne Taylor. Wayne is the divisional manager for both those areas. He sits right across both municipalities. That is my role.

The CHAIR—Thanks, Brian. I have on my list—and I assume all of these people want to make some statement or presentation to the committee but I want to make sure we cover everyone off because we do have a public hearing at 3.30. We did find in Dandenong that time was cut a bit short. We did get through everyone being able to make a statement, but it was an important part of that process this morning. I am hoping—I am not sure how active the public forum part will be but I want to make sure that everyone here is tabled and speaks that wants to speak and then move into the public hearing with enough time to have those people heard. Kristopher, I have you on top of the list. Did you wish to make any further statements in relation to Frankston?

Councillor BOLAM—Chairman, at this point I might refer on to Jane Homewood, our general manager for development, and Steve Dickson, our manager for safety compliance at Frankston City. Jane and Steve, do you have any comments you wish to put forward?

Ms HOMEWOOD—Would you like to put some time frames?

The CHAIR—I have Renee, Simon and Mark. They are the only ones I have on the list. Simon has to go at three. If Jane and Steven, on behalf of the Frankston Council, speak, and then Simon you can—

Mr RUTH—I was not aware that I had to speak but I will respond to anything if I need to before I leave.

The CHAIR—All right. The opportunity is there.

Ms HOMEWOOD—I will start at the very broad and strategic issue. We are very thrilled that the government has recently awarded \$5 million to Frankston to do a business case about how we can revitalise and regenerate Frankston. As you are probably aware, we have one of the worst rates of tertiary retention within our municipality and we have—it is in the top six crime rates. The police will check those stats for me. But from a high level strategic point of view we are really keen to broaden the demographic of Frankston. While we need to meet the needs of all our community members, we have a disproportionate representation of people that have significant challenges in the community. For us, the revitalisation of Frankston to introduce more white collar jobs, to increase the tertiary opportunity within our municipality so people have choices is very important. That is a bit strategic to come off but as you would be aware we need to have a multi-pronged approach. What do we do with what is happening on the streets at the moment?

As Kris said, we get a disproportionate attraction of media. If there is an incident in South Yarra, they say it was on the Frankston line. So we have some perceptions to overcome, including we have real problems on our streets. In no way am I denying that. We have issues of an over-representation—Steve can go into the stats but there are incidents on the street as a result of too much alcohol consumption, the impact of drugs on our street. From

a strategic point of view and the work I have done on the development of cities, the revitalisation and the increase of white collar jobs, student accommodation, getting greater economic viability is critically important.

I wanted to start at that very high level because the commitment that the state government has made to our municipality is really important. We have now done figures that start to say that if we invest in Frankston, this savings to the state and federal government are significant by having those education opportunities for finding pathways from schools. We would like you to think at that very strategic level, of course, as well as addressing the issues on the street. Steve will probably go through the things that our councillors are particularly concerned about. Hooning is a really key issue. We have a community forum, and I think over 100 people attended that, saying that it is having an impact on their day-to-day lives and feeling safe in their municipality.

Graffiti is an ongoing issue. We have a contract and we are spending \$350,000 of ratepayers money to clean up graffiti which is an enormous burden on our ratepayers dollars. The other key issue, which is a very complex issue—and I am sure Peninsula Health will have some comments—about the impact of illegal drug users and pharmacotherapy and what impact that is having on our streets. We had an academic come down from Sydney University, Garner Clancy. One of our problems is—and that happens when you have a low market value—we have a concentration within our CAD of support services. Whether it is City Life which is doing a very good job, or the needle exchange, or \$2 shops, they are all congregated in the one area which means that our city is becoming quite unappealing for other members of the community.

What we have found with our central shopping area, Bayside, is as we have had those facilities sit on the edge of their facility, they have started turning their backs on the street which means that our streets are quite unsafe. We are doing some work on that. We are working with Bayside, but that is the reality of a city where you have depressed property values. Again that goes back to why we need to work both at the immediate level but how we are going to regenerate and get greater investment into our city from private development. As part of our business case we will be focusing on how we can most easily attract a new kind of development into the city, and we were thrilled that council approved a new 13-storey development up here on Davey Street.

As I said, we need to attract a greater number of uses. We have been working very hard to try and get Swinburne here, rather than at Dandenong, to offer that tertiary mix. Then we have Chisholm who provide TAFE courses, then leading into a mid-range tertiary offer and start to provide pathways, that our young people are gainfully educated and employed into the future. Geoff, did you want to say anything more on that?

Mr SHAW—One thing, on the hooning, council have brought this up a number of times, that we are doing something with the hooning, we have to acknowledge that.

Ms HOMEWOOD—Absolutely.

Mr SHAW—Before what you were talking about was past legislation.

Ms HOMEWOOD—Yes.

Mr DICKSON—Certainly we have had a good relationship and I will bring that up in some of my comments.

Councillor BOLAM—I absolutely agree that we do have good relationships but the resolution passed in that chamber is that we continue to advocate for a firmer, more proactive approach, and that is the council's decision.

Mr DICKSON—Thank you. Yes, thank you, Geoff, and I will get to those comments in my general comments. Council has put a submission in. I think we put an extensive response in to your questions. I will not go over all those comments, but I felt it was appropriate to comment that community safety and crime prevention is in council's top five priorities which is probably not the case in many councils across Victoria, perhaps certainly for those members coming from country regions. I have recently come up from Gippsland and I was down at Wellington. It is different coming from the country to the city. Council has put it as a top five priority because the community expects that it should be.

That then puts pressure on our councillors to expect that officers need to be responding to community concerns. Jane has touched on some of these comments. There is that expectation of what council's role is in community safety and crime prevention. That brings that whole dimension of cost shifting, but not the least of which often community have concerns which council is asked to respond and often council is requested to provide a response, and officers would advise, 'Have you been to the police on that?' 'Yes, we've been to the police, and the police have been unable to resolve my issue. They have other priorities and they haven't responded in time.' That is a challenge for council to determine what is our legal role in community safety and crime prevention.

There has to be a line at some point. What is local government's responsibility, and what is the police responsibility. If we do some research legally that could be made very clear, but I think councils are being pushed further and further to do things that maybe they should not be doing; that it is probably best done by the police. In Frankston that has been addressed, and as the mayor indicated recently, I have been here about 11 months. Council put eight security guards on the street, called City Safe Officer Program, and then an additional two patrolling in vehicles with 360 degree CCTV monitors. Council put 10 security guards into the streets to try and determine whether in fact that would make an impact.

I suggest it certainly did make an impact. As I talked to members of the community, a lot of community members thought it was a great initiative. We did some research work on that. We did a trial evaluation before the trial started, at the mid point, and then at the end of that six-month period. That data indicated that the community—and it was right up in the high 70 per cent—said that was a great initiative for council to undertake. That alone says something for our community. They think it is a good thing for council to be doing, to put security guards on the street, whereas as council you may consider, 'Is that right? Is that really what council should be doing, running a private police force?' I would suggest that it is not, but the community are wanting that. That is the dilemma that council is dealing with.

The cost of that trial was \$328,000 and that is straight contract payments. The cost to set it up and maintain it from an office—and we had council officers maintaining it—would be way above that. The actual real cost would have been well over \$400,000.

Ms HOMEWOOD—Can I add to that. What was interesting is that people outside of the CAD thought that the CAD was much safer, but people within the CAD, where the guards were, thought there was virtually no change, which is about this issue we have of dealing with perceptions.

Mr DICKSON—Perception is a real challenge for us.

Mr SCHEFFER—Say that again. What was that?

Ms HOMEWOOD—We did some community surveys about perceptions of safety. People that were outside the CAD, within the Frankston municipality but were not visiting the CAD, said that safety had significantly improved. People within the CAD, so where the community safety officers were, registered virtually no change. We can get you those stats but I think it was .07 per cent.

Mr DICKSON—In addition to that, council also has a separate program running I call the Ambassador Program. That is an additional four officers—and these are direct employees of council—and that program has been running since 2006. In essence these also are officers who are in a uniform type approach, who patrol the streets and their main focus is on enforcing council's local laws and are trying to encourage and sponsor good community behaviour. They would be addressing people consuming alcohol in the streets, people engaging in antisocial behaviour, aggressive or otherwise, trying to respond to perhaps drug-related activities in the streets.

The challenge with these officers to run any enforcement role, our officers do not have any continuum force, and in approaching any person who is engaged in any inappropriate behaviour, the people do not cooperate, they do not give name and address details. Legally we cannot take any action on the people, and obviously by the time we go to the police on matters which are considered of a low level, certainly in the police's priority, it makes it very difficult for council to deal with these issues. There is that perception in the community—

Mr LEANE—Is this a trial?

Mr DICKSON—No, this is not, this is a permanent program. The trial was from 1 September and it concluded at the end of February this year. The Ambassador Program has been in its present form since 2006 and that is ongoing even today.

The CHAIR—In your presentation you talk about the safety programs that you are involved in as well.

Mr DICKSON—The other safety programs?

The CHAIR—The Ambassador Program, the by-laws officers or—

Mr DICKSON—We have by-laws officers separate.

The CHAIR—As well?

Mr DICKSON—We have a by-laws department, we have an animal management department, the rangers and such. The ambassadors is a specific group of people, four people. They are authorised under the local laws, but they patrol the CAD—central activities district—for the sole purpose of addressing activities related to people behaviour. That may be consumption of alcohol. We have a smoke-free area in the CAD area. They look after that. They will look after bringing dogs into the CAD area—

The CHAIR—I understand that, but that is not a community engagement program, is it? That is specific personnel at council doing certain activities. I mean, are there community programs where there is community engagement in relation to crime prevention?

Mr DICKSON—Yes, there are.

The CHAIR—If you could cover that off.

Mr DICKSON—That is not in my area, but we also have our social services area, and they engage with the community. They are developing local area plans. That goes through and identifies—and this is perhaps more in the residential areas but also back in the central business areas—concerns that the community have about crime. A lot of information is brought back to my department to guide me in the activities we need to be engaged in. It is a holistic approach across council to this issue.

Ms HOMEWOOD—In regard to that matter, as an outsider—I was not brought up in Frankston, which gives me a different perception—one of the greater shocks I had is that out in those Langwarrin areas there are young children, 13 and 14-year-olds at night, drunk, drug affected out in the bush not supervised. I have teenagers, and my teenagers are not perfect, but that—and perhaps the police might like to comment—for me is not what is happening in my neighbourhood. If you talk to the local residents and through the local area it is quite a common occurrence. It is not abnormal. That is quite common for a number of young people in our municipality.

The CHAIR—Thank you.

Mr DICKSON—It is a broad thing. Jane's comments are fairly relevant. Whether Frankston is far worse than other municipalities—and it is perception there. Having said that though—and the police could comment on this—Frankston police station was listed as one of the busiest police stations in Victoria. That is the reason, recently with new allocation of police members, Frankston received 35. That was based on the justification that they were a very busy police station and we are hopeful we receive an additional number of police next year. The main issues for the police here, I meet on a fortnightly basis with senior members of the police force. I had a meeting earlier today. Domestic violence is a matter, certainly in this local community, and that is not something that council can specifically get involved in but we are looking at what role we can have because it is a big issue for our community, but predominantly our antisocial behaviour is a No. 1 issue, and more often than not that is alcohol related. Perhaps harder drug use is an issue for us but alcohol is the major issue that we are dealing with. Alcohol seems to be at the basis of all issues that we deal with.

Council is currently developing a community safety strategy which will address obviously community safety but also crime prevention. We are preparing that strategy conjointly with the Department of Justice and with the Department of Planning and Community Development. We have other groups sitting on a steering committee which is representatives from a hospital, and a broader community sector. We are trying to tackle the issue of safety, and what it is, as a local government authority, we can become engaged in and how we can support other community groups in our community, and the police, in providing a good outcome for this community.

The approaches we are looking at doing—and I will get on to specific issues in a moment—we are trying to tackle through this strategy the concept of rather than having a reactive strategy, a lot of the work that my department seems to get engaged in is reacting to specific individuals who are impacted on by crime or behaviour. We are also trying to look at the more proactive approach and what we can do through our education system to try and address it. Graffiti is something that young people seem to get involved in. There have been some positive examples in our community where local primary schools have come up with an innovative idea to try and stop their school being vandalised and

graffitied on the weekend. There is good learning in that which I would like to see expanded across communities and not only within the boundaries of a school. We think there are some educating strategies.

I know I have had this discussion with Geoff about the consequences of crime. We have people constantly doing graffiti. We are spending, as Jane said, many hundreds of thousands of dollars cleaning this problem up. The police are saying to me that from a police perspective, graffiti is improving in Frankston. Six months ago we were getting about 56 reports of graffiti on a monthly basis. That has dropped down to about 18. You would think that we have fixed graffiti but what has happened is people are not reporting graffiti to the police any more, it is not a crime any more, it is simply a maintenance activity for council. The community rings council and we go and clean it up. I do not think in the longer term that is a sustainable position to be in. Consequences, we think, are important. There are no consequences, is the position we are starting to consider, for young people being involved in graffiti or vandalism. That is part of the challenge.

We think there needs to be some accountability for young people if they are caught undertaking some of these crimes, and it is something we would like to explore further. I know the government have not agreed to this position but certainly it is a discussion we are having where perhaps there should be some responsibilities for young people performing things which have a cost impact on the community. An example may be if a young person seeks to go to university, a tax file number is created and they have a HECS debt, and they know for the balance of having an education, in the longer term they repay that debt back to society. Perhaps a similar thing could apply with people who engage in graffiti. If they are caught and convicted of that, they need to pay that back. These are some of the ideas that council are exploring.

Specific areas are hooning, that we are dealing with. We have discussed that. Council are keen to try and come up with tougher legislation. Currently councillors will be meeting in fact this week to refine a package of legislation that we think will complement the current state government position. We have met with Geoff Shaw and we are trying to come up with something we think the state government will be supporting. We know that the new coalition government are keen to encourage a stronger position on hooning. Council, as I said, is working on graffiti. That is a major concern for council. Alcohol is a major issue for us in this community, linked with antisocial behaviour and, I would argue, linked with youth issues. It is a real challenge with youth. We were all young and we all did things when we were young, but it would appear though that some youth behaviour—and I know it is a minor sector, and it is very difficult to categorise youth because I think youth can get a bad name from a very minor percentage. There is some really good youth in our community. I meet with some of these good youth and they have some great ideas. Through a youth council we are trying to work with them about coming up with what they think would be appropriate strategies because a lot of youth do not like what they see happening either. We need to try and tap into some of their thinking.

Pharmacotherapy is an interesting position for council. Right opposite the Frankston railway station we have several pharmacotherapy outlets, and for those that know this community, Young Street is a particular area of concern for council. It does seem to attract a higher than normal allocation of antisocial behaviour. There is a perception—I do not know whether it is a perception or not but a lot of the pharmacists and doctors in that area do not believe that it is drug related, the behaviour in these streets, and point the finger at mental health issues; about youth having around the streets unemployed. Everyone points at each other about what is the real concern. But certainly pharmacotherapy has a prime focus in this community. It seems, because we are on a train line, a lot of people from other communities come to Frankston to receive this treatment

and, of course, bringing with it the perception that there is a lot of other concerning activities related to it.

Council, however, does have a very positive relationship with its police. As I said, we have a range of meetings with the police on a frequent basis and I think it is really for council to get clarity about what local government's role should be to assist the police rather than assuming higher and higher levels of responsibility and cost shifting in these areas. My final comment would be—Jane has commented—we think environmental design, linked with education and consequences, is a very positive outcome for crime prevention. We need to get greater activity into our retail areas, and areas where we are having these problems, and come up with better designed strategies. Thank you.

The CHAIR—Thanks, Steve. I think the mayor wanted to say something.

Councillor BOLAM—Very briefly. There was a mention before, a very light reference to police numbers in Frankston. One of the reasons why we initiated the security guard trial was to highlight the policing deficiency we have in Frankston, police number wise. In February this year, the commissioner attended Frankston and announced that Frankston would receive 35 additional police officers, which is great for the area. However, none of that 35 will respond to proactive policing, having coppers on the street in prominent public places. The commissioner made mention that the next allotment would cover proactive policing. While we are very grateful for the 35 we have, the highest in the state, we have been told that the next allocation will respond to proactive policing. The council naturally is very keen to see that next allocation go towards those very tasks. I thought it was important to mention that because it is more or less the very reason why we are pushing so hard on safety. The public tell us there are not enough police on the street in our city centre and in our neighbourhoods.

You also asked before, Chairman, what council is doing in terms of direct interactions with the public. In our budget this year we have made provision for six additional new outreach workers. We have three wards in our municipality and the idea is we would have two outreach workers per ward. That will nicely complement that aspect of crime prevention and engagement with the public. Steve did a great job outlining what our many initiatives are, but two other initiatives we are pursuing: one is a glass free CAD. We are trying to get a memorandum of understanding signed between council and the major clubs and pubs in the CAD. Out of the 12 in the CAD we have had nine sign. We are almost there. I am pretty sure that will be a Victorian first as well.

Steve also touched on the no smoking zone in the CAD, the first of its kind in Victoria. That has been operating since November. Council recently decided to continue that initiative indefinitely. We are also looking at some expansion areas which are due to be considered shortly within the chamber. That is quite exciting. We also operate a safe taxi rank. If you drive out back onto Eastlink later you will see there is a rank on the corner here and council has a MoU with the local taxi company and local clubs and pubs which compels them to provide security guards to man that safety taxi rank on a Friday and Saturday night.

We also have an anti-monkey bike local law in place which, on the second offence, if you are caught with a monkey bike we crush the monkey bike. I am pretty sure that is a Victorian first as well. Finally, Steve touched on the pharmacotherapy arrangement in Frankston. It has been a concern for my colleagues for quite some time. The belief of my colleagues there is no less saturation of pharmacotherapy outlets in our Frankston CAD. I think there is four to six on count. While we understand the need basis, there is concern within the business communities, having those facilities, in the sense of which it has

significant human traffic. The council is also very disappointed in the state budget. There was a funding announcement for a needle exchange program which would be a kerbside program. Two municipalities have been earmarked for the trial in that program. Frankston is one and Footscray is the other. We certainly understand and recognise the need basis but we have not been consulted. Politicians within the municipality have not been consulted, the council has not been consulted, Peninsula Health has not been consulted, no-one has been consulted. That is an issue within itself. As a council we are trying to lobby the minister to shed a bit more light on that proposal. Thank you, Chairman.

The CHAIR—Traditionally, in the last meeting, we waited until all the presentations were made and then asked the committee to ask questions. Given that is quite a succinct presentation from council, we might open it up to the committee members before we move to Victoria Police. I know Mr Battin wants to say a few words but there were two issues: the Road Safety Amendment Bill, which is the hoon legislation that is coming before the houses. You will appreciate it does tighten up and we are alert on that, significantly with consultation with police. Work is being done with NW about that. Alcohol was a theme we heard this morning in Dandenong. While we all recognise there is a problem it is exactly what we do about it, and my guess, as part of our brief, is to make recommendations to parliament about reduction in drugs and crime. I posed the question this morning, and I will do it again. Is there anyone brave enough to suggest maybe we restrict access to alcohol in certain areas, in certain spots and certain retail outlets that will have a positive impact to the abuse of alcohol. We have already trialled, if you remember last year, certain key areas in the CBD in Melbourne and came under a fair bit of fire, I have to say, from different sources. It might be a question the police might like to respond to because we have heard this morning that restricting access to alcohol in certain outlets would be a positive outcome. I raise that through the presentation.

Again defining—that is not to suggest to narrow it, but our reference was clear in that we need to look at it—the question about community engagement safety programs, and Neighbourhood Watch was identified in the reference. Obviously we would like some reference to Neighbourhood Watch activity in the Frankston area, if there is one; there might not be. But while there might be something of similar ilk that you might like to make comment on that we can have some record of those community programs that are working or perhaps adapted to a more relevant time frame. I would ask you if you could refer to that at some point during the discussion this afternoon.

Mr BATTIN—The first point I might ask in relation to—you named a lot of programs there. If we could get some more information on those, rather than go through all of those now and explain every one of them, as much information as we can.

Councillor BOLAM—We can do that.

Mr BATTIN—The second point, you say there are 35 new police coming down here and they are not proactive, they are reactive. I would probably argue that—and I am from the police force previously—I do not believe any commissioner would have that right to say—and I think the local members would be able to tell you that every police officer does something proactive. I would like to hear from Brian, if that is all right. If you have 35 new staff in your area would some of these proactive measures go to assist the council in relieving what they are doing at the moment with their security costs down there?

Insp. SHARP—Simon Overland made it quite clear that they were specifically for response at this stage. However, we made a determination at the local level we wanted to increase our capacity from a proactive point of view and put together a proactive unit.

What we can do, which we are looking at doing, is siphoning off, for want of a better term, current positions. They want to measure the difference of having these extra police in the area in terms of response times and those sorts of things. If we can get a position at Frankston we will put that into our proactive units. They will be proactive. Some of the information I have heard today, frankly, is not right. To be honest, it is not even close.

The CHAIR—Sorry, I will cut you off at the pass. We want to hear both sides of the story but I thought the committee might like to refer questions, particularly to council, and I will give you plenty of time to respond.

Insp. SHARP—My apologies. I will not need that long.

Mr SCHEFFER—I wanted to ask a question about the community safety strategy that you said you were embarking on with the Department of Justice. I have had a look at the submission you put in, and both the submission and your remarks clearly focus on the extreme problematic issues that you have and they are obviously exercising you a great deal. What I wanted to look at was what some of the positives were. I do not want to be Pollyanna about this but what are the things that you are doing that are part of community building, as distinct from those things you have talked about which are about how you prevent some of the things happening that are problems in the community. As I was looking through, for example, on page 9 you talk about, 'Our community, your space,' which comes under the Community Renewal. There was an art project, for example. You said you were looking at alternative funding because it was unsuccessful. That is about the only thing I found in here that is looking forward. I wanted you to make some remarks in the context of that strategy, how you are going about that and are you going to include some of those things. You mentioned urban design, a really critical issue, and that is a part of your background. Could you expand on that a bit for us.

Ms HOMEWOOD—Council does a lot of work in literacy, in terms of working with parents and children, getting the right foundations in place for a prosperous future. Within the community safety strategy we are working very closely with Heidi Dickson from DPC who has a whole of life perspective on safety. We are doing a lot of research. We are very keen to understand what are the causes of the antisocial behaviour or the particular crime that is occurring in Frankston and focusing on what is the right role of the council in responding to those things. We are at the beginning of that strategy and we are not at the point where I can say in terms of community capacity building, community services does a lot of that work. We will be integrating with them. The start of that is through the local area planning of going out to the community and understanding what is the future community that you want, and how do we work with you to create that.

Mr DICKSON—The challenge we have is, when it comes to crime prevention matters, a lot of community are not wanting to get involved. With a lot of communities—and it gets back to the comment about Neighbourhood Watch, we do have a Neighbourhood Watch. In fact council is assisting at the moment—we met with the mayor and Neighbourhood Watch people a few months back and we are trying to work out with the Neighbourhood Watch programs what can we do to increase the membership. They are gradually dwindling. There has been an older sector of the community that has set it up and they have been running it for many years. They are not able to attract more people in. That is part of this issue across the community, volunteerism is a struggle for local governments. Some of the community meetings—and Jane is right—we are at the early stage of our strategy. The challenge is getting the community partnerships right. That will be a key aspect of our strategy, to ensure that we have the right people around the table.

We already do a lot of meetings, have a lot of meetings with different community groups all tackling the same issue about crime-related matters. Part of the strategy outcome that we are envisaging at this stage—and I know that council is keen to pursue it—out of this strategy will be a requirement for council to seek membership or accreditation of the World Health Organization Safer City Centre Program. Some of you may have heard of that, I am not sure. There is a program that provides a very robust structure about how council would have to demonstrate that it is working in partnership with its community, that has identified gaps in its safety type initiatives. It is more holistic than perhaps crime prevention, it is a broader process across all sectors. That is a process—you are talking about how to connect with the community—that will bring all that together.

Councillor BOLAM—Are you looking for positive or critical feedback from the Neighbourhood Watch groups?

The CHAIR—Either.

Councillor BOLAM—If I can say very briefly that I met with the Neighbourhood Watch groups on a regular basis and I went to a meeting in Seaford a fortnight ago. One comment that was being made by the members at that meeting is the amalgamation of Neighbourhood Watch groups has made it a lot more difficult for them to get newsletters out. Distribution has been made very difficult. One option they are looking at right now is they are utilising a local website to get their message across. But, of course, that does not cover the general populous. Also they are looking at stamping a number on bins which is a new idea. I have not heard that one before. That would require council funding.

Ms HOMEWOOD—Council has been very keen for us to work with Rotary in regards to graffiti so we are rolling out a program of Adopt a Park, and we are also looking at strategies of working with young people, as Steve said, to try and get them engaged earlier, rather than following and catching them for doing the graffiti, engaging them in public art at the front end of the project.

Mr DICKSON—In fact, adding to Jane's comment earlier about the research we have done in developing the strategy, there has been a whole range across economic social. But we have done a piece of research with RMIT. We have asked RMIT to go away—and they have come back to us now—with what is happening internationally about crime prevention. We have asked them to go around the world and find out what similar authorities to local government or perhaps state government levels in other countries around the world, what are they doing about the same issues. It does not matter which country you go to, we all have similar problems. It might be manifest in different ways, there might be different groups, but we are all dealing with similar things. We are trying to bring some international thinking into our strategies, and let's get the best of the best throughout the world and look at how we may adapt that to our local problems.

Mr LEANE—I take it you were talking about the methadone programs in Young Street?

Councillor BOLAM—That is right.

Mr LEANE—You said the council may think there are maybe too many of the chemists involved in that program. Have you had a look at the scope, if that can be geographically moved? Obviously to have that many programs and if they are being fully utilised it means the geographical area must suit the people that are under it. What is the scope to move it elsewhere, or move some part of it elsewhere?

Councillor BOLAM—That would be very desirable if we had one central location. That would be much more acceptable to the public. The problem we have is, I do not know any other municipality with four to six outlets in it for an area of our size. I have been told that each clinic or each outlet has a quota of people they can accept and we happen to have four to six outlets here in Frankston. I understand there is an argument about there might be a need base from within the population, but I look at it more from a regional perspective. If you look at it from a regional perspective, Frankston well and truly has more outlets than any other municipality within the south-east region.

Mr LEANE—The other thing I was going to ask is, the trial of the security guards, one of the things you said was the perception of Frankston and safety, and Frankston getting a bad rap in the *Herald Sun* which we do not disagree with you on. You did the trial, then you surveyed the same people that were the triggers to ask you to get these security guards into this particular part of Frankston and they said their perception of it is that it has not changed, nothing has really changed, or maybe a small percentage. Does that mean the trial failed?

Ms HOMEWOOD—No, I do not think so. We did not target people, we did a representative survey. What was interesting is that people in the CAD, the feedback was, there was virtually no change to their perceptions of safety within the CAD. People that do not visit the CAD said there was significant improvement which says to you that they think 'security guards', therefore they think 'safer', but in reality, on the ground, the people using the CAD said that there was not a lot of change, there was a slight improvement.

Mr LEANE—It did not fail as far as people's perceptions out of reaches of the municipality but as far as the public directly affected—

Ms HOMEWOOD—It is telling us how important media is in managing perceptions, but the reality on the ground is that people do not feel—what was it, 70 per cent of people?

Mr DICKSON—78 per cent. It is pretty high. It was not a control group. We did not use the same control group through it, it was street intercept surveys.

Mr SCHEFFER—You said before you spent \$328,00 on that.

Councillor BOLAM—\$380,000, including the vehicle.

Mr SCHEFFER—In that order, but that would not have been only to change the perception, it would have been to get a material outcome.

Ms HOMEWOOD—It was.

Mr SCHEFFER—What were the other measures that you used to assess the success of that expenditure in that initiative?

Ms HOMEWOOD—We did not measure and we do not have access to the change in crime within the CAD.

Mr SCHEFFER—Right.

Ms HOMEWOOD—Of course, if you have more people on the street reporting crime then in fact that data might tell you.

Councillor BOLAM—Exactly.

Ms HOMEWOOD—We did get a commitment from the police for an additional 35 police. We thought that was a pretty good outcome.

Councillor BOLAM—Can I say on behalf of the councillors that was No. 1. Politically that trial was created to demonstrate a need base for more police.

Mr SCHEFFER—That was a campaign?

Councillor BOLAM—Exactly. Any antisocial behaviour reduction we did achieve in the interim, during that trial, we obviously appreciated as well. But, No. 1 it was a campaign to get more police into the area.

Mr DICKSON—We are jumping back a little bit with this pharmacotherapy but to add to some of the comments that the mayor made, some of the reasons for the community's concerns, obviously having a concentration in these premises, in an area which is the major transport hub for this town—the train station is across the road, and in fact a lot of school children come and go, waiting for buses right outside the front door to these premises. There are school children waiting, with people coming and going. From a parent's perspective, is that the ideal location?

The CHAIR—Thank you. I flag that Simon has to go and he said he was not ready to say anything. I am going to take it on face value, Simon, what whatever you say is going to be very short, given that you have to go.

Mr RUTH—Yes, thank you. I wrote some quick notes here. Peninsula Health, we come from a completely different perspective when it comes to community safety. A healthy community is a safe community, and community safety for us is about community building and consumer participation and engaging the community in solving their own problems. Peter Norden spoke on the radio this morning and he said, 'Money going into justice is money coming away from health,' and there is a finite government budget and I think that is interesting in this discussion. Child protection is an issue for us; family violence is an issue for us; drink-driving, Frankston is in the top three catchments for recidivist drink-drinking in Victoria—Dandenong and Geelong being the other two. We have worked with the Magistrates Court to develop a unique program for Frankston about tackling recidivist drink-driving. There are large numbers of people who are repeat offenders here.

Frankston has over the years run a few great projects around community safety. There was one a number of years ago called the Frankston City Outreach Project which predates the Ambassadors, and part of it probably led to the Ambassador development. It was funded through local drug strategy money, and council and Dandells, the shopping centre, put in money. We ran the project and we put a worker into the city of Frankston and that worker went out and spoke to the people on the streets. There was a large perception at the time that Frankston had gangs of young people roaming the streets and that was a problem. This worker went out and spoke to the gangs of young people about why they were on the streets of Frankston and they said, 'Don't you read the local papers, it's not safe to come to Frankston unless you're in a gang because there's gangs of young people on the street.'

What we were finding repeatedly in the media there is this perception of Frankston being unsafe, and that is perpetuated again and again in the local media as well. The focus on safety makes people think Frankston is unsafe. When you repeatedly talk to the media about making Frankston safer, people think, 'Why do you have to make Frankston safer?' That is what we were finding in that project. The other thing in that project was, there was injecting drug use happening in the shopping centre. The habit at the time was security guards dragging an injecting drug user out of the shopping centre, and there was punching

and there was screaming. We worked with the shopping centre at the time to get security, to isolate the toilet, to send people away from the toilet and then speak to the person as they were leaving and saying, 'If we catch you doing this again you'll be barred from the shopping centre.'

Those activities show you have a decrease in that visible violence and aggression and it does not affect as many people around you. During that time in that project it had been five or six years since the heroin surge in Frankston. Frankston, like most other transport hubs, has a heroin issue. Back in the days, in the late 90s, we did have people dying on the streets, as did Box Hill, Broadmeadows, Ringwood, Footscray and in the city, and all those other catchments. Five or six years later people still remembered that. They still remembered a day they saw somebody die on the street and they are still pretty traumatised by that. That had a strong impact on their view of safety as well. Speaking to people in town about safety, they still remember that thing that happened, that violent assault. I mean, there was a violent assault that was covered on the news about three or four months ago. It was videoed in Frankston. That type of thing has an impact on people.

We run a great little needle exchange here, Sharps. We have the highest return rate in the state. It operates as a virtual community centre. The state target is 50 per cent of needles returned. The state averages 30 per cent. We have over a 95 per cent return rate for that service. That has probably been part of why we have been selected to be a 24-hour needle exchange because we do run a very good needle exchange here locally. It is not the only needle exchange in Frankston. Council runs two needle exchanges, Peninsula Health runs another needle exchange and there are a number of pharmacies that also run needle exchanges as well. It is a good service and even though we were not consulted, we would be more than happy to run a 24-hour needle exchange, but we would do that in consultation with our partners. Our understanding is that it would be mobile and we would be told by government what the dollars are and how they want to see that running and what the catchment will be. But the goal of a needle exchange is to prevent blood borne virus, and to make the community safe, and to have far more people through drug treatment. Having a 24-hour service would mean we could do all of those even more.

The Pharmacotherapy Accord is another great activity that Frankston undertakes where it engages drug users themselves about how they want to see these services developed. Drug users do not want to have to come into the Frankston CAD to pick up their methadone either. They would like to go to their local pharmacy. Anything that occur to get more pharmacies dispensing methadone across the entire city and across the Mornington Peninsula is a good thing. I have worked at Frankston now for 10 years. Over that time we have gone from six prescribers to two. We lost five, we picked up one and we have one still remaining. Both of those prescribers are in Young Street, as is our needle exchange. There are a number of pharmacies that dispense the Mornington Peninsula but there are only those two prescribers and you would have to come into Frankston to see them. Our methadone rates are no higher than any other city in Melbourne. There is concentration of pharmacies in shopping centres all over Melbourne.

Illicit drug use, I do not think it is any worse than at any other transport hub in Melbourne, but alcohol is an ongoing issue for us. I do sit on the Liquor Control Advisory Council which is a Department of Justice committee that does look at the way alcohol is dispensed. The new government is looking at some changes to legislation to allow council to engage more around where alcohol outlets are created. Frankston Council and Peninsula Health a few years ago did try to stop an alcohol vendor being set up next to one of our mental health facilities, and at the time that was protected under competition law and we failed in VCAT to cease that. I think some of that legislation is changing recently.

School Focused Youth Service is a great opportunity to work with young people around community safety, and Frankston Youth Council which is another great opportunity to engage young people about making the community safer. The number of youth workers, council should be congratulated on what they are doing in the youth area. In five and 10 years time I will see a huge difference, particularly with young people, as we have communities such as Karringal and Langwarrin which everybody is having babies at the same time, and they are all going to have teenagers at the same time. Anyone who moved into Broadmeadows in the late 60s and early 70s knows what it is like when every house has three teenagers in it. Council is doing a great job there. I will stop there.

Councillor BOLAM—Simon, can you clarify: you said that council runs three needle exchange programs.

Mr RUTH—If you still do. There is one here in this building, and there is one at the Youth Resource Centre.

Mr DICKSON—There is not one in this building.

Mr RUTH—Not any more? Council has run two needle exchanges. There used to be one run from this building and there is one that operates at the Youth Resource Centre. Frankston Integrated Health Centre has a needle exchange; Hastings has one; Rosebud has one; Mornington Shire runs a couple, and a number of pharmacies also run them. But the main, the big one, of course, is Sharps.

Councillor BOLAM—Thank you.

The CHAIR—Yes, thank you. Victoria Police.

Insp. SHARP—I will have Renee formally present shortly. I would like to cover a couple of things that were raised today. First and foremost I think Simon has covered, certainly from a youth perspective—he certainly has our support on his analogies and what he has come out with, particularly about the needle exchanges and Young Street. You would turn the area into a ghetto if you concentrate all those things into the one area. From our point of view—and I have worked in a lot of different areas—you could probably cross Frankston out and write Dandenong, Werribee or Geelong. I am sure if you go to enough places you will hear the same theme time and time again, particularly when you have a transport hub at the end of the CBD, you are going to have problems.

In terms of drugs, you know we are near the top. I know we are probably not the best people at the moment to be talking about statistics but the Drug Harm Index, there are other neighbouring suburbs and municipalities that are a lot higher than Frankston; same with youth and family violence. Clearly it is an issue and it is clearly one we have to stay on top of, but other areas and other municipalities where you would have discussed this earlier today, Mr Battin told me you have been to Dandenong, No. 3 Division, some of their areas, one of them where I live, have enormous family violence issues. You are on the radar but certainly not up there. Everybody feels we are the worst. We always say, 'We're the poor cousins, we're badly done by. There's not enough of us,' and I think it is the same with the people here today. It is a self-perpetuating myth with Frankston a lot of the time. It appears that a lot of the crimes that happen here are high profile ones and they get regurgitated time and time again. It seems to be the big ticket items that happen in Frankston. Simon pointed out someone always remembers what happened with a dead body, and there has been some very high profile murders in the area.

But overall, in terms of how this municipality lies against like municipalities—the Dandenongs, the Geelongs, the Werribees—you are not in particularly bad shape. It

always can be better but not in particularly bad shape. The other thing I wanted to mention—and Kris you would be aware of this—is that the lobbying in relation to the members and the security agents had no bearing at all on Simon Overland's decision to give you 35 more police. I was present at a breakfast with you not long ago where it was said to you then, and we know that they were pencilled in for Frankston a long time ago. The police perspective of the security guards was that it was a failure. It gave us another eight people to look after. Their returns were virtually zero, other than maybe a little bit of public perception of people that were not in the area that said they were doing a great job but were not in Frankston to see it anyway. In terms of penalty notices, it was zero. Arrests were zero. From our perspective we did not find that overly helpful.

You talked about liquor. They do run a very proactive Liquor Accord down here with the council. There is a 2 a.m. lockout for all licensed premises. Once you are in you cannot get out after two and go to another one, which alleviated a number of the problems down where the four hotels are where people would have the free pot. As soon as you were in the door you would get a free pot and you could bounce from pub to pub all night and get free drinks. That has been quite a success. My predecessor Ron Cook put that in place with council a number of years ago and it has been very successful. There is also a designated area as well where people that are found offending are not allowed in to a certain area around the CBD, and it was helped very much by Liquor Licensing Victoria. Sue—her surname escapes me, she is not there now—assisted us with that.

In terms of packaged liquor outlets, they are 100 per cent behind you. The availability, every street corner, it is there. Certainly if we could reduce that. I do not know how we would go about that. VCAT overturned the decision in the city over the one that trades 24 hours. We certainly do not have 24-hour trading here but it seems you can access it pretty much wherever you want, whenever you want. That is all I wanted to cover, to clear up a few perceptions, and I totally understand, we are in the same boat. I do not live here, I live over in Casey and I know that Casey has a lot of issues. I was in charge of Narre Warren and these are exactly the same discussions we had with Casey Council. That does not mean we should not address them but we also need to understand we are not on our own here, particularly if you have transport hubs at the end of the line. Again you will always hear 'the Dandenong line' even if it happens at Carnegie; same as you hear 'the Frankston line' even if it happens up the road. It is part of the territory.

One thing we have found is that in terms of the public perception of Frankston, a lot of it is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Many of the people we deal with thrive on this—'Frankghanistan' they like to call it. It is the uncivilised world. A lot of them love it. It is a lot of work for us as police, and council, and the other social areas that you want to instil that Frankston is a pretty positive place to be. It is not all doom and gloom which we sometimes have painted to us. I am going to hand over to Renee Bloomfield. Renee is our youth resource officer and she is very experienced in that area.

Ldg Snr Const. BLOOMFIELD—Perhaps in opening my presentation today I would like to explain to the committee and other persons present that I have held 21 new experience operations in Victoria Police and over the last five years the role of youth resource officer. As well as doing that role I have undertaken a graduate diploma in adolescent health and welfare with Melbourne University. Five years ago we looked at the role of youth resource officer and said, 'What contributes to youth crime? What are the causal factors? What are the issues that impact upon youth being antisocial and contribute to community behaviour?' We looked at documents, such as the World Health Organization social determinants of health, also much of the Australian Institute of Criminology Research done by Ross Homel and his associates. We also looked then at some of the issues that pertained particularly to Frankston and we had documents that had

been undertaken by the Frankston Partnership which is the executive committee of Frankston Police, Frankston Council, Department of Justice, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, DPCD and I think the Brotherhood of St Laurence.

They undertook a research paper that looked at both census data, qualitative feedback, crime statistics, and what it showed was the marginalisation for Frankston youth in terms of education attainment, DHS reporting, family violence, young single parenting and so forth. What we are starting to understand from a policing perspective is that youth and crime is very complex and as articulated by Ross Homel from the AIC, in order to take preventative strategy to that it needs to be multifaceted. It needs to be able to look at many of the risk factors. For example, if a young person presents as an offender, there is probably drug and alcohol issues and perhaps family violence. Rather than respond to one issue, be equipped to respond to many.

With that knowledge built into what we do at Frankston Police in regards to early intervention and prevention strategies, we have developed two programs that I will present today, and the future direction of Frankston Police is to explain a further two strategies which are currently being developed. I am aware that the committee has some information regarding our Frankston Police and Community Youth Assist Program. To recap on that, in 2007 Frankston Police developed a strategy to intervene in addressing youth crime issues. The program strove to prevent the onset of criminal behaviours but also interrupt recidivism which is repeat offending; at the same time addressing other health and positive outcomes for young people, that is young people's transitions to education, health supports et cetera, their transitions were also positive.

We looked at the social determinants of health and what we discovered was that we needed to take a collaborative community approach to address many of these complex issues. With that a steering committee was established that links with over 20 community support agencies in Frankston—Frankston Council being one of them and PenDAP which is another one of the organisations represented here today. The strategy was equipped to deal with any youth issue that came before us. Victoria Police explored our traditional and contemporary measures of policing to ensure that we do provide positive outcomes for young people.

We looked at modernising justice in line with the Attorney-General's justice statement, and demonstrated that through therapeutic jurisprudence principles in addressing the causal factors that are presenting with risk and criminal behaviour. What it looks like is a young person that presents at risk—and we defined 'at risk' as either an offender, someone displaying antisocial behaviour, disadvantaged or victim—was invited to come into the police station, have a consultation with my role, the YRO. In that consultation it was discussed, what are the risks in one of the protective factors, and from there a tailored program, a tailored intervention strategy was provided for the young person and the parent. It is important to engage with the parent. All the research corroborated, with the support of a caring parent or guardian, the health outcomes for young people are greatly increased.

Over the four-year journey we have linked with 450 young people identified at risk in the Frankston Police service area and we tracked at the micro level there, health and wellbeing outcomes, their transitions to employment, re-employment courses, and their crime recidivism rate. At the time the statistics were measured there was a less than five per cent recidivism rate per individual, and the health and wellbeing outcomes were very positive.

This strategy was further evaluated, this part of the government pilot, Better Youth Services Pilot. Under this framework is the document underpinning that pilot. Frankston was selected as a pilot site, along with Wyndham and Bendigo. Frankston was selected because it had demonstrated in the past its community engagement and its positive relationships. I think that is something to highlight. This strategy was one of the very positive recommendations that went back to the state secretaries from the evaluation that was conducted. It was further suggested that it be templated across the state. Melbourne University evaluated the strategy also in 2009 independently, and further made very positive recommendations that it be templated throughout the state. In 2009 it received the police award for National Crime and Violence Prevention Award.

What we saw late 2010, August, was the Department of Human Services received \$22 million funding to implement an identical model. The only integral difference is the policing role had been diminished from linking one to one with the young person. That was taken up by an agency. In Frankston it is YSAS, now renamed as Youth Support Service, not Youth Substance Abuse Service.

Mr SCHEFFER—Is that a good thing or a bad thing?

Ldg Snr Const. BLOOMFIELD—I think it is a very positive that that model has been replicated and it is now going to be implemented across eight pilot sites in Victoria. Victoria Police is a partner to that strategy and, as such, when we meet a young person who is at risk we can initiate the referral process. Then it is further taken up by, in our area, YSAS who consult with the young person and the parent. The framework is identical. To demonstrate to the committee what work we have done, that program in Frankston will now cease and the new model will now take its place.

The second strategy that is currently implemented in place, which hopefully will be of particular interest to this committee, is one which looks at intervention strategy to address the issues of antisocial risk-taking behaviour. Risk-taking behaviour for adolescents, we determine that as substance use. We look at both the consequences of criminal behaviour and victimisation that go hand in hand with that. This strategy brings together 12 secondary colleges across our police service area for an annual event. All year 9 students attend. It is approximately 2,000 year 9 students attend Monash University for a half-day forum. Whilst they are there they have presentations from a range of organisations and they are listed on the sheet here to show you the collaborative partnership we have adopted. We have Monash University; Peninsula Drug and Alcohol Program, PenDAP; Youth Substance Abuse Service, YSAS; Head Space Peninsula, which is a focus on mental health; Department of Education is a partner; Chisholm Institute; Metropolitan Ambulance Service; Crimestoppers; Frankston Council Youth Research Centre, as well as Community Renewal; and our police band.

It is an interactive day. We utilise a range of different teaching to engage the young people. As well as some didactic lectures, there are interactive components, there are visual displays, there is entertainment. The ambos get down on the ground and show them how to save a life. There are very positive responses from this particular initiative. It has recently been evaluated. Most of the theoretical policy and context is written into the document which is about 50 pages. It levers off the Victorian Alcohol Prevention Council, their particular priorities; it also levers off the Fifth Australasian Drug Conference that was held in February 2010. The closing remarks of all the commissions nationally said:

Young people need to have some education. Young people need to know the harms and the significant risk to themselves, both victimisation and offending, and to take a collaborative approach in addressing that.

Some of the recommendations that come out of this strategy said it should be templated across the state. It runs at absolutely almost zero dollars. For an annual event to seat 2,000 people, the cost is less than \$2,000 per year to run it. Everyone donates their time in kind at no cost to the schools. Without legislative amendment to the age of drinking and so forth; closing times of licensed premises, which is unlikely to occur and again was articulated in that drug strategy conference. The prevention angle is what seems to be encouraged in support at this point in time. The evaluation would be available to you, if you are interested. It is quite a body of work. It looks at both qualitative and quantitative results and student survey comments. That is that initiative. I am aware of the time, I will keep moving on.

The two further initiatives are ones that are currently being developed, the future direction for the Frankston Police. It has been mentioned earlier today it is the graffiti strategy. Again these are initiatives all of Frankston Police, Youth Resource Office. This strategy provides a sentencing option or disposition for the magistrate where a young person is found guilty of the offence of graffiti. What it would require the young person to do is have a paint-out session on council owned lands. It is not to be in front of a lot of people to humiliate them. It is not to be on private premises. It would also include a lecture and individual tailored responses to their individual needs. It provides that therapeutic response to it. To date this strategy is partnered by Frankston Council, Frankston Magistrates and Department of Justice. The OH and S issues have all been tidied up, for want of a better word, and covered off, which is very pleasing.

We unfortunately have had some discussion with Legal Aid who find that this response for young people is too punitive and we will be consulting with them in early June, in a week or two, to have more discussions about the relevance of this strategy. Again it is underpinned by much research, and in the hard copies I bring some of that to the front.

Mr SCHEFFER—You do not think it is too punitive?

Ldg Snr Const. BLOOMFIELD—No, I do not think so. A COAG survey of the community members suggest that young people should be responsible and should be painting out, to be aware of their actions. It is not only a punitive measure, it is coupled with that one to one therapeutic intervention, all of their needs. I think that is important that it is offered. Again it has been agreed by all of our partners that it is an appropriate response. We are having some negativity from Legal Aid. That opens a bigger question about the current diversion system being Ropes. Does it present a block to any other sentencing disposition that comes into play that may be aligned to the actual type of offending behaviour.

Mr LEANE—Do you need a change of legislation for the magistrates to be able to—

Ldg Snr Const. BLOOMFIELD—No. It can currently be a sentencing disposition that a magistrate can bring before the court. However, there may be some resentment from Legal Aid representing the defendant to say, 'Look, we appeal that because we think our young person should attend the Ropes Program,' which in essence is not aligned to the type of offending. It is not a tailored one to one response. This may be positive in having conversations about Children's Court sentencing dispositions and being able to invoke a range of options that align specifically to types of offending to prevent young people to reoffending and increase their health and wellbeing outcomes. That is where that strategy is sitting.

The last strategy today is a strategy regarding adolescent family violence. The aim of this model is to align an appropriate intervention to adolescent perpetrators of family violence, not only to the young person but also to their family, there are adolescents living in a home. How this strategy came about, I had a discussion with PenDAP—Peninsula Drug and Alcohol Program—manager, Jo Howard, who has done comprehensive research in regards to adolescent family violence. Her research has been recognised at a national crime prevention level and she has explored a US model called Step Up which is a 20-week therapeutic one to one program with young people and their parent or guardian.

What we would like to see is that this particular intervention would be aligned to young people pre-court, pre-police involvement, a referral pathway from the community, from schools, from parents, also a referral pathway from police. A young person might have committed a burglary and the youth support service that would be available to them may discuss and find that the young person is aggressive and have an opportunity to refer them for that particular need, and also as a response of an intervention order at court. It has a three-way pathway in. I think that is essential that there are three different ways. It is a little bit too late once they are always an offender to say, 'Let's get that young person help.' My experience with the Youth Assist Program is they will present as a burglar but tell me that they are aggressive and they have hurt mum. I think, 'What a shame.' Currently we have nothing specific that we can link into. You have to offend, regarding an assault, before you are eligible for the Grip Program. This is specific to adolescent family violence.

This partnership would be a Frankston Police, Peninsula Drug and Alcohol strategy. It would involve the Department of Justice. Currently we have consulted with the Victoria Police Executive Committee. It is a statewide steering committee on police service sector partnerships. Frankston Police PSA manager, the superintendent, a family violence coordinator, Insp. Bruce Wemyss, who is a community engagement inspector from Dandenong, who I think you met earlier today, and we have had discussions with the Director of Justice in regards to funding. We are hoping this strategy will get a little bit more support and then be able to be implemented in the Frankston PSA as a pilot program.

The CHAIR—Thank you. I am happy to extend this part of the engagement as long as we do not have people waiting for a public forum. I understand we do not and that is good news for us. Do you have anything to say, Mark?

Mr WHITBY—No, thank you, not at the moment.

The CHAIR—There is an opportunity for the committee to ask Renee or Brian any questions.

Mr McCURDY—Renee, on your youth resource officer tag, is that a locally based program or is that something that is rolled out throughout other regions as well, your role?

Ldg Snr Const. BLOOMFIELD—The youth resource officers, there are approximately 80 across Victoria Police and we are based at most 24-hour large police stations. Across the southern metropolitan, from here down to Rosebud, Hastings and Mornington, there is approximately eight of us. Most police stations would have one resource for a 24-hour police station.

Mr BATTIN—Just two things: the graffiti one, do you have parent involvement in any of those programs as they go through for the young offenders; secondly, more about recording, and how or what you do to record what drugs are being used, how they

are using, are they continuing to use them after the program and is there an ability there for the police department to do that?

Ldg Snr Const. BLOOMFIELD—The Youth Forum, which is a strategy that links with 2,000 young people a year, brings them together, in the evaluation of that, one of the recommendations is that Victoria Police at the local level and at a strategic higher level, state intelligence level, record and measure youth drug use at the micro level. Once a young person offends, the type of drug, the type of substance, and then records further recidivism. Two things have come out of that. Firstly, we get an understanding and a trend analysis of what drugs are being used and by who, be it alcohol, cannabis, or the tablet form use of drugs; secondly, it would also, I would hate to think, focus Victoria Police on enforcement, to police young people and drugs and substance use, as opposed to, 'There's a party, we've been called. We don't have the resources.' If it is tasked, it might align more resources to do that. It is twofold. A Drug Harm Index currently does not measure down to that micro level and gives any analysis on trends, types and use, particularly by youth.

The second question, every strategy here, bar the Youth Forum, links with a parent or a guardian. They are voluntary programs. They are not mandated like DHS. We have had very good success. I would say probably 99.9 per cent of young people's parents have engaged voluntarily which is a nice mark of parents and the community wanting to be involved in what we are doing. I think it is positive.

Mr SCHEFFER—When we started this session Jane and Steven spoke about the overlap between the expectations on Frankston Council in policing and crime prevention space. You talked about cost shifting and one thing and another, and then you talked about the security guards and we had a bit of a conversation on that. Now we have heard from the police—Brian's comments we will let sit, but coming to Renee's very comprehensive account of a number of strategies that are being followed, from a complete novice I would think have obviously a lot of community connections in the overlap. I hear what you are saying from your end. Where does this come together? How do you see the role of local government in terms of your work? Where is the overlap? How do you see it in terms of what we have had Renee step us through? I am at sixes and sevens about where this is all at.

Ldg Snr Const. BLOOMFIELD—The Office for Youth coordinated and facilitated the Better Youth Services Pilot. It was in some of their remarks, and also the consultants, that Frankston Police had bridged the relationships with so many organisations. It is further articulated by Melbourne University in the Youth Assist Program evaluation that the partnerships developed are so very positive that they are to be highlighted and commended. I am not sure if you are aware of all those partnerships and—

Ms HOMEWOOD—Yes. Can I comment. The gap is—and Kris as a councillor might pick it up—that clearly there are a number of positive partnership approaches that deal with some of the foundation issues, but the reality for our community, who then go to our councillors, is that on the street for our residents there are a number of ongoing concerns, whether it is hooning, whether it is coming into the CAD—and I hear what has been said, and Mark talked about it. I have lived in Kings Cross. I walk through our CAD and there is a significant amount of inappropriate behaviour; not different to Geelong, not different to Footscray, but as you walk through the street I observe drug dealing, people overdosing from drugs, people using the street as a toilet. They are the kind of things that our councillors get phoned up about and say, 'What are you doing?' There is a lot of really good, innovative work being done—

Mr SCHEFFER—Are you saying those things are policing issues? I understand people come to—

Ms HOMEWOOD—That is right. What Kris is saying is what we are really hoping to do in our community safety strategy—and we are working in close partnership with DPCD and DOJ—is to start to define the appropriate roles and responsibility, because at the moment for the community, who contact our councillors, it is very grey. We live in a limited resource. We have people hooning. The community member, whoever it is happening to, would like to stop and they are going to ring whoever they can to deal with it. I am not in any way disputing the very good work, that we are aware of—we are aware of those partnerships—but what is happening on the street, and the feedback our council get, and they are wanting to respond to those council needs which are immediate, rather than strategic, which is a lot of the work that we have heard of today.

Mr LEANE—In line with that conversation, we have had a situation where there were eight security guards, and people on the outskirts of the area and their perception was overwhelmingly positive. In the short period of time, whatever it is, we are going to have 35 new police. The perception issue should be out of control. Compared to eight security guards it should be fantastic. But call me a pessimist if you like but any government, police force, council that can 100 per cent eliminate graffiti and hooning, would have to have a magic wand. Do the police have to get 70 more police? Do they have to get 170? Do they have to get 270, compared to—you have to have realistic conversations with the people you represent.

Councillor BOLAM—That is a comment, and being a comment, I can disagree with that comment. The public do not feel safe. We have had this conversation with the police commissioner and we have been told in very certain terms—and Mr Battin made a comment before—that he cannot provide proactive policing until the next allocation. He said that publicly at a public forum. He is quoted in the paper saying that. We cannot get one police officer to man our Safer City Centre. We have had to close it down. It has been running for four years and we cannot find one officer at all. You tell me, out of 35 officers coming to Frankston, why can't we find appropriate resources—they need to perform proactive policing. There is a huge deficiency here. That is what I am trying to get at.

Mr LEANE—I understand that, but what I am trying to get at—

Councillor BOLAM—I am not trying to be—

The CHAIR—You are not inviting debate either.

Mr LEANE—No, that is fair enough. Eventually there will be more police and that is a good thing but the council is never going to come out—even if the police come out and give you 170 extra police—and say, 'It is now safe in Frankston, 100 per cent safe.' There is never going to be a declaration of safety in any municipality by any government, no matter what level, even by the police force. Sometimes there probably needs to be a bit of attention taken to the perception of safety stuff, and the media as well.

Insp. SHARP—Can I throw a little bit of light on this and it might help very quickly. I do not know what you define as proactive, Kris. To us 'proactive' is certainly, is it well staffed, or tuck into recidivist child offenders, make sure they are not breaching curfews. That is proactive in that area. We have people out on foot patrol all the time. We do not man the Safer City Centre any more. The reason we do not do that because it is a waste of resources having a member or two sit in that area. We put them two or three up out in the shopping centres. That is proactive. It is reactive when we answering a call. Anything else is proactive. Walking through the shopping centres, talking to shopkeepers,

that is all proactive policing. So I do not know where you are coming from with, 'We haven't got any proactive police.'

Councillor BOLAM—I am not going to incite debate—

Mr SCHEFFER—No.

Councillor BOLAM—But your commissioner explained that to me in very clear detail, with Mr Shaw in the same room. If you have an issue with the terminology—

Insp. SHARP—I do not have an issue with it at all because I know what it means and I know what we put out which is really at odds and ends with what you think.

The CHAIR—I appreciate the issue. I also appreciate we have not heard from Mark who has sat patiently for two hours without saying a word. Mark, I do invite you to say something, and also the local member, Geoff. I am looking at Sandy—he would have to sign the form if he wanted to say a few words as the member of parliament in this area. I know Mr Dickson wants to say a few words and I am sure the committee would like to tidy up. Given we have about 15 minutes to do all that I will perhaps ask that questions, answers and statements be short.

Mr WHITBY—I will try and be very quick. I come at this whole thing from a very different point of view. City Life is a welfare provider here in the city. We are privately run in the sense that we are a charity and I am the director. I started the organisation back in 1989. I live in Frankston, I love Frankston. I think Frankston is an amazing city. That needs to be said. I work right in the middle of the city in the CAD and I probably work with people that most of the people here would say are giving problems. I know them all, I am aware of the issues and to be honest—I think it was Brian who said earlier, 'Some of this stuff is a self-fulfilling prophecy'—I do not think Frankston is as bad as it seems. It is a lot better than the perceptions are. The Sam Newman stuff and all the other negative stuff that gets said around our city are really bad press for our city.

We had a campaign a few years ago called 'I Love Frankston'. It was really helpful. One of the ongoing processes—I was on a committee with Steven the other week and we were talking about some of our perceptions of our city. I think personally that the perceptions of Frankston are far worse than the actuality. The drug issues are not as significant in my world, and I work there, as they appear to be to outsiders. It is very easy to stand on the edges and look in and say, 'This is the situation.' Go on the inside and you realise they are not what they seem. I feel the greatest problem in our city is alcohol abuse, more than drugs, to be honest. Unemployment is a big issue. The majority of the people we work with have some mental issues and medical problems. One of the greatest problems in our city is homelessness. We have a lot of rough sleepers in Frankston. This one thing that gets handballed forever. I have been on many committees over the years. I am working with the former mayor at the moment on a particular proposal, and I have worked with Kris. We have tried to handball this thing around, it is a big issue. Rough sleepers is a big problem in our city.

Frankston has the biggest problem in the train line. People catch the train here, they have the beautiful beach. People come in the summertime and set up camp on the beach. All these issues bring crime into our city, or perceptions of crime. From where I sit, I think if we had a campaign to redo our perceptions, fix some of the perceptions, it would change a lot of how Frankston has changed in the last few years. Particularly, Frankston Council have done some amazing things. They have made our beach amazing. There are so many wonderful things about Frankston. There are still these hotspots of Young Street. If I can speak on behalf of Young Street, I work right behind it. A lot of the problems in Young

Street are teenagers, they are not drug addicts. They are kids that come from the TAFE college and they are simply hanging around there, doing what teenagers have always done. They are smoking cigarettes and drinking Coke and swearing. That is what kids do.

Honestly, it is scary if you are an older person and you walk up and there are 30 teenagers doing those things, but they are teenagers, that is what kids do. We foolishly allowed a fast food outlet right on the corner in the middle in a poor position. If we were able to address some of those issues it would fix perceptions in our city in my estimation. Before I said that Frankston is a great place. One of the things I have done over the years, I have worked on a lot of committees and we have some tremendous networks in Frankston. I am a member of what is called the Frankston Relief Providers Network, all the different welfare agencies come together to talk about the needs. It is an amazing network. We interface with each other, we talk about the needs, we work on the problems together and we host issues. It is exciting to see that. There are some incredible initiatives in Frankston. It is a great place. It has birthed many of these things. I do not know if you know but Neighbourhood Watch was birthed here at Frankston. Many other good things came out of the city. This city has great potential. As a group we need to start speaking positively, not negatively, because those perceptions go out of this room into the world.

The CHAIR—Thank you. I am glad you mentioned Neighbourhood Watch because it was named in our reference. No-one has mentioned it here at the table. I will put it back to Geoff and the other committee members. The thing that came out of Dandenong was they are dealing with 169 different nationalities with all different cultures, customs and way of doing things. How do you provide a program—which is part of our terms of reference—say a community safety program that tries to coordinate all those different nationalities and customs and ways of doing things, behavioural things, into a community safety concept for all? I suspect Frankston is not dissimilar in having a multicultural population or communities that need leaders to help drive the safety programs. You need someone to coordinate it. I think it was going back to Johan's comments where we were all city here thinking, 'How do you provide the cohesiveness for these programs when you have the police saying certain things and council is saying something else and other agencies saying something else?' That is something we have to, through the submissions process, put together to take recommendations back to parliament in response.

Mr WHITBY—If I can make one comment about that whole thing about the employment of six or seven security guards to wander the city. From our point of view, from being on the streets, they see licensed thugs. It did not help our city's image. I felt it was a terrible thing to place in the middle of our city. We have a great relationship with the police. They come and visit us constantly, a great relationship with the ambassadors, they come and meet with us. But these guys they employed, honestly, it was very bad press for Frankston, from my perspective.

The CHAIR—There seems to be two views of a perspective.

Mr WHITBY—A perspective. I am only giving a perspective.

The CHAIR—All right. I do want Geoff to have the opportunity to say a few words if he wishes, he does not have to, and then the committee might like to wrap up with some questions.

Mr SHAW—The image of Frankston is so important. Everyone has mentioned here a perception or an image. I also love the city. I have been here since I was seven

years of age and have run a business here. We did a survey recently of 22,000 households. Over a households sent it back and the top one was, Matt?

Mr BERRY—Law and order.

Mr SHAW—Law and order was the No. 1 by far. There was about 10 choices.

Mr BERRY—14 in total.

Mr SHAW—That was from residents of Frankston. Their perception of Frankston is also unsafe for them. Hospital was next which is another safety issue as well. We take it on board. We know the police commissioner said, 'Yes, there is a shortfall of police in Frankston. There needs to be added resources pumped into here.' Jane at the start was talking about the Frankston redevelopment and \$5 million. Jane, along with John, is organising the plan for the activities area, and the transit interchange. There are developers ready to go in Frankston. Jane was also talking about the population. There are some terrific developments on board that will pump up the image of Frankston. There is a plan and everyone is doing their bit. There are many positive things around the table from all sources.

We were talking about a self-fulfilling prophecy. You can keep talking about the negatives but we have to pump up the positives, because there are so many positives, as Mark said. Yes, there are these areas, whether they are perception or reality, for those 1,000 or so people who put safety and law and order as No. 1. That is a reality. That was the No. 1 issue on the survey. I can share those with you if you wish.

One other thing. Alcohol is an issue. I do not like going down Nepean Highway and see a pub open from 8 a.m. till 4 a.m.—that is unbelievable—every day, the gaming place down there. I do not think having a strip joint on the corner of Nepean Highway and Davey Street, down here, is a flash thing either for the image. Perception as well with buildings but also there is some reality there.

The CHAIR—I would like to give the committee the opportunity to ask questions. I know Steven wanted to raise a question but I might be able to do it, hopefully, in a question from the committee that you can pick up rather than reigniting that full debate again.

Mr LEANE—I wanted to ask Mark, you said one of the biggest drivers of issues is alcohol. Do you see it as average alcohol or is it worse—

Mr WHITBY—I think it is an Australian problem. We have some very poor placed pubs in our city. We have one that is open right in the middle of our shopping precinct. It is right next to the cinema. It has had management problems and all sorts of stuff. You look at the clientele there, it creates issues. Alcohol is one of those things, it is hard to manage. You are not supposed to carry open bottles in the city, but they do it. It is hard to police.

Insp. SHARP—On top of that it has almost been a tourist destination here, there are a lot of externals come in—

Mr WHITBY—In summer particularly. A lot of alcohol gets brought in because it is a great place to be.

Insp. SHARP—We closed Sorrento down over New Year's Eve. It used to be a real hotspot and now you cannot bring alcohol in at all. We do not have any problems down there at all now.

Councillor BOLAM—Can I add that council passed two resolutions in the chamber last year and, Chairman, you spoke about it before, having a liquor overlay within the CAD. I understand in the City of Melbourne there have been a number of overlays applied in various areas, and our council resolved twice last year to encourage the former Minister for Consumer Affairs to adopt that overlay here in Frankston. This was due to the proliferation of drinking venues opening up in the CAD. You might find that useful.

The CHAIR—Thank you.

Mr LEANE—Can I ask about the \$5 million plan. On Nepean Highway is part of that plan going to be—it seems to me a huge opportunity, a beautiful bay, a great spot, on site you can build up and look out into the bay. Is part of the plan to build some nice office space and—

Ms HOMEWOOD—Yes. I am an ex-VCAT member and we do have opportunities for limitation and what a lot of councils feared is they zoned those areas entertainment zone. We are removing that from MSS because what that usually transfers to at a VCAT level is long, extended hours for pubs and it is about getting a balance. As Geoff was saying, we are not particularly interested in having people pissed on the street at 4 o'clock in the morning. We do not see it brings a lot of good for anyone really, to be blunt.

Mr McCURDY—A quick question for Brian. At Dandenong this morning, the people who run the Neighbourhood Watch Program were talking about, Neighbourhood Watch has dropped away a bit since—not the partnership dissolving but less and less police input to Neighbourhood Watch. From a command perspective where do you see the resources, or how high on the list would Neighbourhood Watch be?

Insp. SHARP—Probably not high enough. It is a 'get to if you can'. The Neighbourhood Watch ball has been dropped from a policing point of view, certainly around our area I think it has to a degree. Members are often required to go to the Neighbourhood Watch meetings but they are rostered other duties as well, be it a burglary or something else. Also from a community point of view, as someone mentioned earlier, it is hard to keep the momentum going with the public. You also mentioned about all the nationalities. We do not have that issue as big as Dandenong but it is coming out that way. We certainly need to put more resources at it, there is no doubt about it.

Mr BERRY—Mr Chairman, in the absence of any members of the public, having grown up in Frankston, is it appropriate for me to make some comments for the benefit of the committee?

The CHAIR—It is not appropriate in the fact that we cannot record your comments. My understanding is it might be more appropriate once I close the meeting, if you want to make some comments, rather than putting it on the record.

Mr BERRY—No, that is fine.

Mr BATTIN—One more question. You were talking before about your Licence Accord and safe taxi rank, there is obviously an issue around alcohol. That is inevitable, and you have the lock-out.

Councillor BOLAM—Yes.

Mr BATTIN—Can you let us know how you find that in the area, the 2 a.m. lock-out, and what is the current licensing on the place? Are they open to seven, or is it various?

Councillor BOLAM—There is a bit of a variance. The majority of the eight clubs have a late night licence, close at 3 a.m. At 2 a.m. the lock-out comes into effect, and at three most clubs close. There are two or three clubs within the area that operate until 5 o'clock. Council adopted the 2 a.m. lock-out in 2007, and last year it come up for extension and we voted unanimously to extend that 2 a.m. lock-out proviso.

Mr BATTIN—Has it been a positive result on both sides?

Councillor BOLAM—Yes.

Mr BATTIN—We looked at the Queensland model, and I know there was a Victorian model trialled. We looked at a Queensland model at Fortitude Valley. It was very successful.

Councillor BOLAM—I am not sure that the publicans like it but it has heeded good results.

The CHAIR—Very quickly, Steven, your comment.

Mr DICKSON—I want to get back to a comment you made much earlier in the presentation about restriction of alcohol in some areas. We did not get back to that comment you made.

The CHAIR—I thought we had discussed it.

Mr DICKSON—I was talking about outlets, the location of the outlets. Council has the opportunity to object to some liquor licence outlets, particularly, by example, recently we had an application in Young Street in Frankston which is our main focus. This outlet wanted to sell small refrigerated, packaged alcohol. We already have a problem. We did not want to make it more accessible in that particular location, so we appealed the matter to the Liquor Licensing Commission, and in consultation with the lawyers for the commission they have indicated that the commissioner is reticent to place conditions on a permit. They are not wanting to get into a whole range of conditions on a permit. Therefore that was not the tool that was offered to us. On the basis we would have to either object to that permit or withdraw our objection. Then it comes back in that formal appeal setting that they provide.

Council really, before we determine whether we are objecting or not objecting, has to go and negotiate an outcome with the applicant on the basis that the applicant might want to soften their application because if we object they may lose. That is a poor structure of coming up with good outcomes. We do want some restrictions on where we want to put alcohol. We want to restrict it in areas where there is already a problem. In that whole area of licence applications there needs to be a refining as to the process and an opportunity for local government to come up with justification as to why an application should not be supported and why some licence conditions could be provided.

Mr SCHEFFER—Coming back to Brian, I understand you obviously cannot respond to policy questions, only operational ones but nonetheless we tried to ask you about Neighbourhood Watch that you mentioned before. You said it often falls to a low priority. Is Neighbourhood Watch a useful initiative these days or is it more of one of those things that Victoria Police has to deal with?

Insp. SHARP—It has fallen away to be that at the moment, and it needs a lot of work to get it back to where it was. When it was in full flight it was excellent. I do not know whether Renee wants to comment further on that but we seem to have lost a bit of traction with it.

Ldg Snr Const. BLOOMFIELD—Has it ever been fully evaluated?

Insp. SHARP—Never full evaluated, no. That is my understanding as well. It has never actually been fully evaluated.

Ldg Snr Const. BLOOMFIELD—To test its merit in terms of crime reduction or crime prevention, I am not aware if it has or has not been evaluated. I think in terms resources that is something to consider.

Insp. SHARP—Our priority is certainly response to attend the jobs, and Frankston Police has been very busy, as has been pointed out today. At one stage they had what they called discretion times of about six or seven minutes. That is when they were not going from job to job. It was very difficult to fit it all in but hopefully with the resources that are coming our way we will be able to attack those sorts of things.

The CHAIR—Thank you. In finishing, can I thank you all very much for your participation. The committee appreciates the effort you went to. I see there is quite a lot of written work that was provided to us prior to this meeting. We appreciate the response back from the council, Kris, and from Victoria Police, and also to the other agencies, City Life, and Simon's presentation which I found very valuable. I will now close the meeting.

Witnesses withdrew.

Committee adjourned.

DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Locally Based Approaches to Community Safety and Crime Prevention

Melbourne — 27 June 2011

Members

Mr B. Battin	Mr S. Ramsay
Mr S. Leane	Mr J. Scheffer
Mr T. McCurdy	

Chair: Mr S. Ramsay
Deputy Chair: Mr J. Scheffer

Staff

Executive Officer: Ms S. Cook
Research Officer: Mr P. Johnston
Acting Committee Administrative Officer: Ms. D. Woof

Witnesses

Mr A. Brideson, State President,
Mr B. Samuel, Secretary,
Det. Insp. M. King, Chief Commissioner's Representative, Community Crime Prevention Appointment, and
Mr B. Horman, Immediate Past President,
Neighbourhood Watch Victoria Inc. Board of Management.

The CHAIR — Welcome, gentlemen. Thank you for taking the time to talk about our first reference. I will not go through the detail of the reference, because I am sure you are familiar with it, but I do have to make clear some conditions around this public hearing of the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975 and further subject to the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 and the Defamation Act 2005 and, where applicable, the provisions of reciprocal legislation in other Australian states and territories. Any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege.

I am sure you have all received, read and understood the guide for witnesses presenting evidence to parliamentary committees. If you have not, Sandy probably has a copy, but I take it that you have. We are recording the evidence and will provide a proof version of the Hansard transcript at the earliest opportunity so that you can correct it as you see appropriate. I was going to invite Andrew as the lead presenter to speak.

The CHAIR — Andrew, I put a point to you from my observation — the committee might well have different ones, so I am speaking for myself. We have done some research on this, both from some visits and from speaking to different people. The people I have spoken to acknowledge that the Neighbourhood Watch brand is strong and that it is easily recognisable and visible, particularly in small towns.

Mr BRIDESON — I would certainly agree with that.

The CHAIR — Outside the major cities the structure has fallen apart. There seems to be a lack of community interest. It seems to be an elderly demographic that is showing local leadership in Neighbourhood Watch in small towns. They continue to seek statistics street by street where now the information is coming from a more regional area — I could be wrong on this, but this is the feeling I am getting — and there is not enough research, modern technology and relating information. Neighbourhood Watch is still using the old letters that go out in the mailbox and provide a bit of a summary on crime statistics and activities around local towns. They are not using the internet or other mediums to be able to provide the type of quick information that people are now using.

A number of other crime prevention programs akin to Neighbourhood Watch are running which are not dissimilar but much more functional. My personal view, again, is that maybe Neighbourhood Watch is looking for the police to help provide a structure that can provide the sort of work that Neighbourhood Watch was doing previously. That is just an observation. I guess it gets back to relevance in today's society of Neighbourhood Watch and how it can deliver the sorts of outcomes that people are looking for from our community in light of the lack of community structure and leadership in taking Neighbourhood Watch forward. I do not know if that is where you are sitting.

Mr BRIDESON — I would certainly agree with all of your observations, apart from the fact that we are looking to Victoria Police to provide the structure. I believe the structure we are putting in place — we have not totally got there — based on police service areas, which align with local government areas, is the way forward, and it can be done without the police. We can do it with good, sound committees with responsible leadership at the local level. It is a problem getting those people, as you said.

We are trying to get to the next generation of community members — the younger generations — through the use of the internet. We are going online with a new website on 21 July. Each PSA will have a page on the website so that they can put up all of their local news, knowledge and newsletters. If I said today, 'Stop printing newsletters', it would

take away the *raison d'être* for 99 per cent of Neighbourhood Watch members. The program would collapse overnight. Most Neighbourhood Watch members see their role as doing their monthly walk around 500 or 600 houses and putting an old-fashioned newsletter in the letterboxes. We are trying to move right away from that and get into the internet phase.

Mr SAMUEL — That is the transition we were talking about before. When we abolished the figures we should have transitioned so that we had a new model coming in like the old one. Exactly the same thing applies here with newsletters. Whilst it is an outdated form, if you say tomorrow, 'It's no longer needed', everyone will get up and walk out. Instead we should say, 'This is a new model; keep the old model going until you are comfortable with the new model and then eventually drop it'.

Mr BRIDESON — I live in the city of Stonnington. Neighbourhood Watch is virtually dead in the city of Stonnington, yet when you drive around every lamppost on every corner has a Neighbourhood Watch sticker that says, 'You live in a Neighbourhood Watch area'. That is from the past; it is not what currently exists.

The CHAIR — Who is watching?

Mr BRIDESON — Exactly. Who is watching? There is no formal structure within the city of Stonnington or the city of Port Phillip. I could go through a number. The statistics I have given you show whether Neighbourhood Watch areas are active or not. Whilst our branding is terrific — and we had some research done by RMIT students 24 or 30 months ago that showed statistically that our brand is up there with Coca-Cola and all of the other top brands — it is not actually working on the ground in the majority of the state. We have very good pockets here and there, but we have to reinvent ourselves. The big question is: how do we do it? We are attempting to do it through the internet and engaging the younger generation.

Mr LEANE — Through your submission you touch on new technology and moving to new technology. Isn't new technology where Neighbourhood Watch has found itself a bit behind the eight ball in terms of what it used to do compared to now? Everyone who walks down the street has a camera or a movie camera in their phone. To start with, on mobile phones they can ring 000 or Crime Stoppers without even going home. The numbers are falling in a lot of membership-based groups like footy clubs and stuff like that — even political parties. The demographics are getting older. To play devil's advocate, Neighbourhood Watch may go to a new technology-based era, but isn't that sort of facility already being supplied with Crime Stoppers and those sorts of facilities? If I have a concern that something might happen in my neighbourhood in the near future, because I have been observing something — it does not have to be a perceived crime; it can be a concern — I can ring Crime Stoppers. Where do you see Neighbourhood Watch, given that we already have that provision?

Mr SAMUEL — I have a good answer for that very good question. About two years ago we had RMIT do a lot of research for us on the program and on the way in which it was going forward, and basically it was young people in their 20s doing the research both at an area level and at a PSA level. When you mention the technology, it is interesting that some two years prior to that we had established a community village, and in the two years we probably racked up a maximum of 100 people. Myles was intimately involved with that research, so he knows the results. Each student was asked to do various programs — and we are more than happy to provide you with this research, because it provides a lot of interesting information — but one student decided to set up a Facebook page. Was it two years ago, Myles?

Det. Insp. KING — A bit over two years ago.

Mr SAMUEL — Two years ago Facebook was still relatively new. Within 48 hours she had 150 friends hooked up to Facebook. It dawned on my then that this is the way in which it has to go, and it has to happen. We are trying to use that technology because while people are resigning from certain organisations, if you have a look at the groups that are forming in electronic media, either through Facebook or any one of the number of other options, they are joining not in their hundreds but in their thousands. We are saying that there are certain basics in terms of community safety that still need to be done. We need to change the whole modus operandi to 21st century communications. That is what we are looking for in terms of development of the organisation.

Mr BRIDESON — We have also been talking with businesses that say they can develop a mobile phone application specifically for Neighbourhood Watch so that when you are walking the dog or walking down the street or just around the block for leisure and see something going on you can open the app. We have to work out where that call goes and what action follows. It is not as simple as saying we can get an app; it is about how we follow through to get a result. There is that possibility there.

Mr LEANE — WA has the Eyes on the Street program where ‘tradies’ or groups of ‘tradies’ or whatever sign up. They would have a pro forma to fill out and all sorts of stuff. We spoke to Neighbourhood Watch in WA as well, and there were a few other community-based programs that were a little similar. The question I asked them was: it should not get to a point where it is confusing, so shouldn’t there be a central point that you would encourage people to report to? If something horrible happened, I would ring 000. If something suspicious is happening, I can ring the 1300 Crime Stoppers number and leave it at that. The response from the assistant commissioner was, ‘If we can have an opportunity to broaden out where our information is going to come from, we don’t care’, but eventually it does go to Crime Stoppers if there is a concern.

Mr BRIDESON — The Northern Territory Neighbourhood Watch has recently gone online, and it is now an internet-based organisation. It is in the very early stages, and I am in contact to find out how it is working. Theoretically we have a greater prospect of penetration into neighbourhood homes through the internet rather than through our antiquated system of letterboxing, in which probably only a very small percentage of houses in Victoria are actually letterboxed. It is a thing of the past, and the potential to get into more households is much greater.

The CHAIR — Can I just ask, Andrew, originally I got involved locally, and we bought those eraser things and got the bikes, the fridges and all of this stuff stencilled, and there was actually a bit of community spirit in putting authorisation on your goods and stuff or, you know, names and things. Then there were other agencies like Lions and Apex, and police were involved in community meetings. That tended then to slowly drift. I do not think there are any sort of structured meetings of Neighbourhood Watch in my little local town. As Shaun said, people tend to use Crime Stoppers. Where do you see Neighbourhood Watch? I know you talked about local government, and WA has a very strong link between its crime prevention programs, local government and with WA police. In fact they rang me three times over the weekend wondering whether we got all of the information, how the committee is looking at it and was their presentation useful et cetera. So it was a good follow-up on their participation, I guess. Apart from the technology, where do you see community actually getting some input and delivery of the program?

Mr BRIDESON — Yes, that is a good question. I think we have covered that in our written submission, but community involvement is more around building a sense of

community. Neighbourhood Watch is one of the ways in which we can build a sense of community by talking to each other, meeting et cetera. We have outgrown that, and organisations such as Apex and the other groups that Shaun mentioned. We need now to form very close and formal links with local government. When you look at how our community is structured you look at local government. Most things around our neighbourhoods centre on local government. I cannot emphasise strongly enough that each local government area should have a community safety crime prevention committee built on the Western Australian model.

A couple of weeks ago I sat down with Bob Falconer, who was a commissioner in Western Australia. That is the last copy of his book, and he has lent it to me; I promised him that I would get it back to him. I am happy to lend it to Sandy if she wants to photocopy it or if you do not have a copy. That really outlines a very good model. It works, and I think you have seen that it works. We need to build on the strengths of local government, and we need Neighbourhood Watch to use local government as a vehicle to keep the crime prevention program alive. Without Neighbourhood Watch coming in on the back of another organisation, we are going to wither on the vine.

I do not whether you want me to elaborate anymore on how I see that it could work, but I have tried to spell it out. Simply you have a community safety crime prevention committee with a local government representative. You have a police representative, who presumably would be the alter ego of the Neighbourhood Watch coordinator. You have school groups, aged groups, ethnic groups and you have any other community groups involved in that crime prevention community safety committee. They can then go away and do all the research and set up a program of how we can improve safety in the community. It just does not have to be about crimes. It can be about broken fences or roots that have damaged foot paths. It is really community safety in the broadest possible terms. It is not just crime related.

Mr McCURDY — But, Andrew, local governments are not all that excited about taking on new responsibilities either.

Mr BRIDESON — I know they are not.

Mr McCURDY — Is there a chance that the same thing could happen that has happened with the police? A lack of interest and all of a sudden — —

Mr BRIDESON — I suppose there is always that possibility, but it is up to the community to take responsibility for itself and take charge of its own direction. That is something about which we as responsible citizens have got to educate the community: that there is a problem out there, it is a community problem, let us all sit down, work it out and move forward.

Mr SAMUEL — In a business sense it has got to be advantageous to a local council, because the local council sells itself on several key things and one of those is the fact that it is a clean and safe community. The clean side of it they can take care of, the safe side of it is really about involving the whole community. If they engage in those processes, it is a win-win situation for everyone, because the community becomes all that much safer and the council in turn wins because the area becomes far more livable. The council ends up having more people wanting to move into that area, it gains more rates, taxes and whatever it is. Financially it is a win-win situation for everyone.

Mr BRIDESON — Local government always says, ‘You are foisting more upon us, but you are not giving us the money to do it’. There is a very simple solution. I speak to a lot of people on this very issue because I am a little bit passionate about getting more

community involvement. They say, 'Just charge another dollar a household. I would be happy to pay a dollar a week on my rates if I know I am going to have a much safer community to live in'. It is actually a furphy to say that local government cannot afford it. Of course they can afford it.

The CHAIR — I think in WA they were giving out \$20 000 grants to local councils to conduct their programs.

Mr BRIDESON — I am not sure whether government grants is always the way to go. Once you start getting on the baby bottle, if you like, the community then expects that. Once the government grants stop, then, you know, it is bad government. The community has to take responsibility for itself.

Mr SAMUEL — I agree.

Mr LEANE — What is a major impediment of going to that model? What do you see — —

Mr BRIDESON — Lack of communication between ourselves and all other groups and the inability of local government to actually accept that it is its responsibility. They are not going to listen to little old Neighbourhood Watch, are they? I have spoken to Rob Spence at MAV. He addressed our annual conference last year. I started to make contacts with MAV to see if we could get this rolling and I met with some community safety officers or whatever they were from local government, and there was not a commitment there. There needs to be some leadership shown, and I do not know by whom — by the Minister for Local Government, the police minister, the Premier or by this committee — to get these people more involved and get them to think outside the square. Just because it has not been done in the past does not mean it cannot happen now. There has never been a better time for this sort of model to be implemented in Victoria.

Mr HORMAN — I wonder if I can come in on the last point that Andrew is making. I do not know if you have spoken to Bobby Falconer, but Bob is a close mate of mine, and besides working with him in the job I have also worked with him on committees. I know he is very passionate about what they did and how they did it in WA. I have no doubt that one of the things that Bob would stress, as I want to stress, is that I believe it needs a whole-of-government approach. I know I am going back in history, but I go back to when we had something called Vicsafe — it disappeared. We had Crime Prevention Victoria. It disappeared. That was replaced by the Crime and Violence Prevention unit. It disappeared.

The new government has not been in power long, and I understand that it now has something called a crime prevention section. My question is who knows about it yet? I have got to say that sitting on the board of Neighbourhood Watch, wearing that hat, I did not know about it. Working on the Crime Prevention Advisory Committee, I did not know about it. Working on the Melbourne Safe City Leadership Committee, I did not know about it. Chairing the Melbourne Injury Prevention Committee, I did not know about it. Working very closely with the Victorian Safe Communities Network, I have never heard them mention knowing about it either.

One of the things that has happened over that period of time is that a number of things have dropped off, which brought about a whole-of-government approach. At one stage we had the Victorian Community Council Against Violence. The public servants who worked with it were then moved back into the Department of Justice. We had something set up called the Ministerial Crime Prevention Council. It ultimately disappeared. That was then replaced after the Victorian Community Council Against Violence disappeared. It was

then replaced by the Victorian Community Council on Crime and Violence. It stopped meeting. So a number of very important things that used to bring a whole-of-government approach stopped, such as the Burglary Reduction Task Force, which met at the Department of Justice but which was chaired by a commander of the police. It has stopped meeting. All of a sudden a lot of government support, direction and sometimes resources, including funding, dried up.

If we go back to when we first set up Community Safety Day, it got more government interest and became Community Safety Week. It then got even more government interest and became Community Safety Month. We had a part-time coordinator, who became a bureaucrat within the Department of Justice. What has happened in the last couple of years? That position has disappeared. As Myles knows well, the role passed to a bloke called Inspector King, who then renamed his section the Safer Communities Unit. He was given the Department of Justice community safety month website, which was totally incompatible with the Victoria Police website. So a lot of the things that were going reasonably well with directions, resources, booklets, reports and everything else gradually disappeared. I do not know whether the committee, in looking at a number of issues today, has the time to look at taking some new steps and some bigger steps into the future. I would like to think it is the time for this and for a rethink of the whole-of-government approach.

When we had the community safety and crime prevention board we had five secretaries of departments on the board — Bill Scales from Premier and Cabinet, Peter Harmsworth from Justice and on we go; there were five — and there were two mayors, one representing a city municipality and one representing a rural municipality, and a community rep. I happened to be the community rep. All of sudden you could get things done because there was leadership from the top; decisions were being made and things could go out and be followed up. At the time the secretariat work for those types of boards was provided by either Vicsafe, Crime Prevention Victoria or whomever. They provided the secretariat role. I was co-chair of the last one with David Mann. We had Christine Nixon, John So and so the list went of who was around that board. When it disappeared it was our informal belief, because it was not put in writing, although the committee members were thanked for the contribution they had made, that the funds that supported that board went to VicPol for it to handle the community consultation and community engagement roles.

I do know from every member on that board who I have spoken to that none of them was ever asked to come back and consult with VicPol on any of the types of crime prevention community safety projects that were involved. I am not saying VicPol did not do it; I am saying that none of the members who were on it have told me that they have ever been asked to be involved. I am not saying VicPol did not do it, and I am not saying there were not other equally well-qualified people to provide advice and assist them. I just urge this committee to consider a whole-of-government approach going forward. It comes from government, and you have talked at length about local government. That is where it comes from.

You talked earlier about grants being made. I remember being on the committee when the government at the time gave \$20 000 grants to local governments if they would set up a community safety officer and write community safety into their management plans. I recall when we tried to get on to graffiti there were substantial sums of money offered to local governments that would set up graffiti removal and prevention programs. There were those sorts of funds available. I would always then try to run to Neighbourhood Watch and others to support those sorts of programs where the initiatives were taken and

where resources could be made available for that to happen. It has not happened for a number of years, and I urge the committee to think about it.

Mr SCHEFFER — Bill, going back to some comments that you made previously about the concept of crime prevention and its continuity with community safety, can you expand on how you see those two, whether they are separate concepts or two aspects of one concept?

Mr HORMAN — Thanks for that question. In my concept of community safety, crime prevention is part of it. In my view what it is really all about is community wellbeing and community engagement. When you are looking at a volunteer base, you will get different people amongst your volunteers who have different backgrounds, expertise, enthusiasm, motivation, willingness to work and all those sorts of things. I think it is very wise for the organisation across the board to cater for and utilise the people out there who are prepared to volunteer. If government or anyone else looks at all the volunteers that we have around the place, they should pose the question: how would we survive without volunteers? Whether they are CFA volunteers or whether they are whatever sort of volunteers, we are very dependent on them. You can often get volunteers provided they are interested in doing what they are being asked to do.

I am a firm believer that if it is about community wellbeing — and that is why I said earlier that sometimes the words ‘crime prevention’ have some negativity around them — and you can provide that range of things for your volunteers to do, they will get interested in doing them, because they will see it more as assisting their community. It is like how a community, if it has a problem, will get together to talk about it and see what can be done about it. That goes back to how Neighbourhood Watch was born. At the time there was a real problem around household burglaries. We have probably all lived in a neighbourhood where some sort of problem has come up. It could be graffiti or it could be hoon driving, for instance. The community wants to respond to it because its members want some sort of response to make their community and neighbourhood a better sort of place.

That is why when I look at the concept of communities I want to look at community engagement, community consultation, community building and community wellbeing, and I would rather think inclusively than exclusively. Does that help?

Mr SCHEFFER — Yes, it does. A lot. I really have a question for all of you. Since doing this review of necessity you end up talking to people about their experience of Neighbourhood Watch. The story that I have from people of my age is that yes, they were heavily involved back in the 1980s and the early 1990s and it was a really important part of their building a relationship with their community, their kids growing up together and all this sort of stuff, which is well and good. It certainly built a community. What my question is, given there were a lot of people engaged then, did it really make a difference? You talked about burglaries going off the boil a bit in terms of the hotspot crimes that were happening. What are the crimes that are happening now, and can an organisation like that, even if you could reconstruct the 1980s, address those problems? I give one example: Neighbourhood Watch would not be equipped to deal with family violence.

Mr HORMAN — With great respect, I disagree.

Mr SCHEFFER — Okay. I would be very interested to hear about that. So something about its evaluation, whether it worked or whether it was just about general community building, did it make a difference to crime?

Mr HORMAN — One, I believe it does. Two, it is why when the police force was restructured, and I am now talking about police service delivery and police service

areas, and why when it was first mooted that Neighbourhood Watch should become more involved in being organised around PSA areas I had no problem with that conceptually. I can give an example where I was phoned one day by a police coordinator who said, 'We have a new superintendent out here and he has asked me to be on the target coordination committee. How do you see my role?'. He is a policeman asking me as a state person: how do you see my role as a member of the committee? I said, 'That is bloody fantastic'. There goes that word again. I see that as fantastic because what he is going to do is tell you about the crime trends and the issues in their area, which is relevant to your Neighbourhood Watch area, and then look at what Neighbourhood Watch can possibly do to provide feedback information, maybe even observations, to the police. I see that as terrific.

You raised family violence as an example; I do not rule that out either. Let me give you an example. Who do people talk to about family violence? Sometimes people do not want to talk about it at all, but even when people do not want to talk about it, there are often indicators of where family violence is going on with blinds pulled and you hear the domestics taking place and all that sort of stuff. Yes, they can have a role in it. Sometimes people who are the victims of it will talk to a friendly neighbour rather than going to the police because they do not want their husband charged and locked up because they get beaten up more. But they will talk to someone who is looking after them.

It is the sorts of issues that you can identify from a police perspective. One of the main areas of concern within your PSA is what can the Neighbourhood Watch do to provide some sort of assistance. Let me give an example, still back on family violence. Let us say an area is very concerned about the degree of family violence. That seems something which I would envisage can then be fed back into the local Neighbourhood Watch area, letting them know it is around, giving them the indicators that they can start to look for, giving them a little bit of advice and information how they can get onto it. Again I want to use the example of when we had in place the Victorian Community Council Against Violence. We did a lot of work around domestic violence, and the reports and the books are still out. As part of that, and particularly using a bloke by the name of Graham Burrows, we then got into the training of doctors in the issues around domestic violence. Up until then doctors were not being trained to deal with the patients who they were having come before them who really were being beaten up. Perhaps they were not physically beaten, but psychological harm and that sort of stuff. It is how you can use the information coming, and you start to develop strategies and then programs to assist. Again I come back to community wellbeing.

The CHAIR — I am happy if other committee members wish to ask questions, but I ask if you could move towards closing statements as we need to finish this session shortly. If there are any comments anyone would like to make in closing, I ask you to do so.

Mr BRIDESON — We hope to be advertising for an executive officer's position next weekend. The current government has made a grant available to Neighbourhood Watch for that position. It is the first time ever that Neighbourhood Watch will have its own employee, and we think that is a positive. One of the duties of this superperson we are going to employ is to make sure that we have ongoing funding, because it is a tenured grant — if that is the correct word — it is not ongoing funding. We are looking forward to that position. I would just like to say in relation to the question about leadership — where do we go? — we now have a Minister for Crime Prevention in Victoria; it is a first. What does that minister do? To date I think he is still trying to work out what it is that he has to do. We think at the board level one of the things that the new Minister for Crime Prevention could do is to implement a whole-of-government strategy for crime prevention

and community safety, to make the necessary linkages with local government and to work with his fellow ministers, particularly the local government minister, to implement some of the suggestions that we have put forward. I am sure you will see from interstate and you will hear from talking with other people that it is a model that we think can work, but the leadership has got to come from somewhere. It has got to come from government, therefore it has got to come from the minister, the Premier et cetera.

It may be that the Minister for Crime Prevention wants to set up a bureaucracy to run crime prevention in Victoria. I am a bit reluctant to recommend that there be another bureaucracy — I would rather see the money go to the grassroots level — but perhaps consideration could be given to a commissioner or somebody whose responsibility it is to make sure crime prevention and community safety issues are all tied together and, more importantly, delivered to make our communities better places to live in. That is probably a note that I would like to finish on. I would like to thank you all for the time that you have given us. If you would like to come back to any of us at any time, please feel free to do so. We are more than happy to cooperate. Would you like to make a photocopy of that? My life is not in my own hands if I do not get it back.

The CHAIR — Thanks, Andrew. Did you want to say anything else, Detective Inspector?

Det. Insp. KING — I suppose the only comment that I was going to make takes me back to my initial remarks that really the responsibility for community safety or crime prevention has to be with the whole of the community, and I make that comment in the context of currently you have Neighbourhood Watch areas, which in this day and age to me is a misnomer because it should be the entire community is your Neighbourhood Watch community. It is every household right across the state that has the responsibility for community safety. It is an old pundit I have used for many years — and I introduced it when I changed the name down to Safer Communities — it is safer communities through community safety, and that is the whole of the community at every level, be it government or community, it does not matter.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much.

Mr SAMUEL — Thank you very much; much appreciated.

Witnesses withdrew.

DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

**Inquiry into Locally Based Approaches to Community Safety and Crime
Prevention**

Melbourne — 27 June 2011

Members

Mr B. Battin	Mr S. Ramsay
Mr S. Leane	Mr J. Scheffer
Mr T. McCurdy	

Chair: Mr S. Ramsay
Deputy Chair: Mr J. Scheffer

Staff

Executive Officer: Ms S. Cook
Research Officer: Mr P. Johnston
Acting Committee Administrative Officer: Ms. D. Woof

Witnesses

Ms M. McPherson, Chief Executive Officer, and
Mr P. Schier, Senior Policy Officer, Victorian Local Governance Association.

The CHAIR — Welcome, Maree. Before you do your introduction, perhaps I could just read you this note in relation to addressing witnesses and the conditions surrounding that. This is a public hearing of the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975 and further subject to the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 and the Defamation Act 2005, and where applicable the provisions of reciprocal legislation in other Australian states and territories. Any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. There is a guide for witnesses presenting evidence. I am sure you are familiar with that, being from local government.

Ms McPHERSON — Yes.

The CHAIR — We are recording the evidence, and we will provide a proof version of the transcript at the earliest opportunity so you can correct it as appropriate. We have allotted 30 minutes to this session, if that is all right, so at 3.45 p.m., we will close. Thank you very much, both of you, for your time today in presenting to this committee. You understand the reference, obviously, and the briefing notes?

Ms McPHERSON — Yes.

The CHAIR — We also have some briefing notes from yourself and Darren, who is not here, I understand. It is Philip. I will allow you to make introductions, if you like, and then to make a presentation. If you are happy to, we might ask questions along the way, or if you prefer, you could make your presentation and we will ask questions at the end.

Ms McPHERSON — We have a formula that we were going to follow, but we are probably able to take questions as we go anyway.

The CHAIR — The danger is that our questions might well be captured later in your presentation. See how we go.

Ms McPHERSON — Thank you for the opportunity for us to be here today. We are really pleased to be making this presentation. A couple of things — I guess you have some briefing notes from myself, so you know who I am, as chief executive officer of the VLGA. Philip Schier is a senior policy officer with the organisation. Philip has been a councillor and a mayor of the Mount Alexander shire. He is currently undertaking a masters in planning.

Mr SCHIER — Community planning and development.

Ms McPHERSON — And he has a whole range of other career experiences that are probably useful in this environment as well. Our plan today was for me to give you a very brief background and overview and then for Philip to speak about the findings of the survey that we have done with our membership in order to bring the evidence here for you today.

You may know a little bit about the VLGA. We are one of the peak bodies for local government in Victoria. We also have a community and individual membership chapter to our organisation, so it is broader than the local government membership that we have. Fifty-six of the 79 local governments in the state belonging to our organisation, and we have a large number of other members from community organisations and individuals. With those local governments that belong to the VLGA, we capture around 85 per cent of the state's population, so it is a reasonable catchment.

In preparing for today, we sent out a survey to all of the 79 councils across Victoria asking some of the questions that the committee was interested in hearing about and trying to capture a picture of the crime prevention activities that local governments are involved in and also trying to capture their views. We only received 11 responses. However, those 11 are very valuable in that they are a very good mix of the types of local governments in size, rural or metropolitan; there is a very good blend within those 11 responses.

For us, that probably raises a resource question in itself: that many local governments are so occupied in doing the business of being local government that they often do not have an opportunity to respond to these sorts of activities. We thought it was worth raising that with you, particularly for the smaller rural local governments, and I am sure many of you would be familiar with those, with some of the challenges that they have, including the natural disasters earlier this year. They do not necessarily have dedicated staff to respond to these sorts of activities.

We do have a good mix. It is broadly representative without speaking for the whole local government sector. We have a copy of a document which is a summary of the survey outcomes that we are going to leave for each of you. I think we have got enough for each of the committee members. There is a longer document we have brought. We have one copy of that, which we can table with you today. We can either table it here or send it to you electronically, whichever the committee would prefer, but it captures all of the responses. It basically has all of the responses to our questions, but we are happy to table that with you and give you copies of the smaller one now. So we will do that.

If Philip is ready, I will invite him to take you through the key findings that we have picked up from our membership, then we can do the questions.

Mr SCHIER — You will find those key findings on the first page of that summary document. That is there in the dot points, and it is followed by a summary of responses from those 11 councils to the 14 questions that were asked in the survey, and these longer documents have the full answers from each of those municipalities. In terms of our presentation, the easiest thing is to quickly go through those key findings that summarise those responses.

Firstly, there is considerable variability in the degree to which different councils are directly involved in community safety and crime prevention activity. It commonly occurs under the banner of community safety — councils frame it in that positive way rather than using the term ‘crime prevention’ in engaging with their communities. It is notable that the larger metropolitan councils tend to have a greater level of involvement and a more diverse range of activities. They are the ones that are more likely to employ a dedicated officer, usually under the title of a community safety officer, and once again under that label rather than ‘crime prevention’. Some of those bigger metropolitan councils have a significant range of safety-related programs, and some of them are detailed in their responses.

There seems to be a greater focus on community safety in outer metropolitan and growth areas than in inner suburban areas. It is true that across the board most councils mentioned that they felt that their role was supporting Victoria Police in police work and crime prevention rather than being a prime responsibility of local government. Particularly the smaller rural councils had a small role, really, in supporting police and working through a community safety committee where police and other local community agencies were represented rather than seeing it as a direct role for council. Those committees often had diverse representation, including police, council officers, community organisations and sometimes state agencies as well.

An issue came through in some of the responses saying that councils felt a necessity to respond to perceptions about community safety, but they did not necessarily match the data coming from police about the real crime statistics. There were perhaps high levels of public concern about street violence or about what young people were seen to be doing which did not necessarily match real crime figures, but councils were feeling obliged to respond to that perception level. Diverting considerable resources to responding to the perception may perhaps reduce the resources you have to work on things that might actually match the data.

There is quite a diversity of specific programs, particularly in the larger councils, as I said, that have more extensive programs. But if you were to try to draw out some of the common themes, they would be road safety programs and street and public places safety, including beaches. There are a couple of councils, including the Bayside council and also Bass Coast council, which have specific issues around schoolies week and summertime peak activity when there is a big influx of people from outside the community. They said that is something they have to respond to and give resources to. Other areas are graffiti, family violence and the responsible serving and consumption of alcohol. Cybersafety is an emerging issue. Not too many councils are directly engaging in that, but it was mentioned as something that they had a feeling they might have to become more involved in. A significant number of councils are doing work in the area of family violence including violence against women and the White Ribbon campaign and so on. They were not necessarily mentioned in the surveys, but it came through our women's policy officer who does a lot of liaising with councils in that area. A lot of the programs, particularly around drug and alcohol use, are targeted at youth.

There is a summary statement at the end. In terms of assessing whether these programs are having an impact on actual crime statistics, most of the councils said it is very hard to measure. What would a correlation be between a council-based program and a partnership in a community education program, which would definitely be able to say, 'That has had a specific outcome in terms of an impact on crime figures'? The councils themselves do not have the resources to do the really detailed follow-up which would be able to measure outcomes, apart from the things that you can measure like the number of events held or the level of awareness of an issue and by translating that into being able to say, 'These programs are effective in raising community safety or in reducing crime figures'. The resources are not there to do that.

There is a note at the bottom. Those are the findings from the 11 responses we had. There is a good cross-section, but if you spoke to the other 68 councils, you might get some other information too. The other thing I would say in terms of the representation is that there is an under-representation from the smaller rural councils in terms of the proportion of the number of councils in the state. There are a couple which are represented — Moira and Bass Coast — but probably the lack of responses says quite a bit in terms of general lack of resources to be engaged specifically in this area, as Maree said at the beginning.

Mr SCHEFFER — Philip, can I just ask you about the second dot point on the key findings which talks about community safety and health and wellbeing on the one side rather than crime prevention on the other. In your comments you mentioned, and I am not trying to put words into your mouth, that perhaps crime prevention had a pejorative overtone. Could you expand on that and talk about what the dynamics are in those two concepts?

Mr SCHIER — I guess perhaps pejorative in that crime prevention is just a negative phrasing of community safety issue — —

Mr SCHEFFER — How is it negative?

Mr SCHIER — Just in terms of the language used. It is preventing the bad rather than trying to support the positive of public safety, I suppose. I guess it is an interpretive thing from me coming from those responses.

Mr SCHEFFER — But from the 11 responses you got you would say there is some evidence to suggest that councils are choosing a wellbeing and community safety dynamic rather than the crime side of it?

Mr SCHIER — There are probably two things under that. One is that health and wellbeing strategies are common to nearly all councils now, so it fits within the existing local government framework — —

Mr SCHEFFER — Yes.

Mr SCHIER — They say, ‘Where does this fit within council?’. It is within that broader community wellbeing area. I guess I am drawing from the responses that set out that committees are called public safety committees or they fall as a small subsection of what might be a broader health and wellbeing part of the council. If you look at the bigger metro councils, they might have a significant team working in that area and a dedicated officer. For a smaller rural shire it might be a subset of one person’s job, so they may be attending meetings with a community safety committee. That might be the extent to which the council is directly involved.

Mr SCHEFFER — Just linking that to, I think, the seventh dot point — about halfway down — —

Mr SCHIER — I have not numbered them, sorry.

Mr SCHEFFER — The perceived community safety issues and real issues. I guess my question fits into that general area about levels of community anxiety. Part of what we have been talking about in this committee is the way that when you implement strategies to prevent crime or to deal with antisocial behaviour, one of the consequences is that it also raises some level of community anxiety around that. We have talked a bit about, for example, parents not letting their kids walk to school on their own. That then spins off into obesity and that general kind of thing about community safety. Could you just reflect on that a bit for us?

Mr SCHIER — It was really just picking up on what came through in a few of the responses. It was paired with the general response of a lack of real resources in local government to deal with this area. To a large degree it was not seen as core business. Essentially it is seen as core police business which council can support rather than core council business. They said, ‘We have not got a lot of resources in this area’. There seemed to be a little bit of frustration coming through from a couple of the responses saying, ‘We have limited resources and we are having to act more on perceptions than perhaps on realities’.

Ms McPHERSON — I suspect to some degree that your question also goes to the fact that local governments are often at the front line of developing the programs to address those sorts of issues, such as the walking to school programs and the kinds of innovations that happen at that coalface to deal with what residents are telling councils they would like them to do to manage some of the challenges that might be in local media, for instance. But then how do you match that with the data that is coming from Victoria Police about local statistics?

Mr SCHIER — I guess my interpretation is that to a certain extent when you get a written response from a survey you have to ask: what does that actually mean? I put on my hat as an ex-councillor to say that at a local level and with local media it is similar to what you might see in state level media, where the focus on particular incidents can magnify the sense and perceptions in the community about levels of risk and safety. There is a need to respond because it has got a fair bit of attention in the media and, as you were saying, the community is more anxious as a result. The need to be seen to be coming up with something to respond to that might not match the data that is coming out. How at risk of street violence are people?

The CHAIR — There appears to be almost a reluctance by local government to take on a program that actually does not fit in their box, thinking it is the primary responsibility of Victoria Police perhaps more so than local government.

Mr SCHIER — And also there are some things that come through with some funding support for a project that might initially be responding to an issue. It might not be just a perceived issue but a real issue in a particular area. Sometimes there is a reluctance to take on programs because there is a history of program funding running out and then local government is expected to keep the program running out of its own resources. That is a perennial one for local government.

Mr McCURDY — I was making the assumption that resources may be limited to get the survey returned. There is obviously not going to be a huge uptake if there is a greater workload. Even though it is an area they might see as important in the community, they may not want to take up the responsibility.

Mr SCHIER — I think it often depends on the sort of support that comes with it. If it is a well-targeted package of measures or maybe a partnership with Victoria Police, if the support is there and ongoing and if it is addressing a significant issue in the community, then I think the uptake would be there. It could be a very flexible approach that can be tailored. One of the things that came through is that the needs are quite variable in different communities. If it has the flexibility to be adapted for local use and really target the particular issues in a given community, there is likely to be a higher level of uptake.

The CHAIR — Did you question the local governments that do not have community safety officers as such about how they interact with the community in relation to Neighbourhood Watch or other crime prevention programs?

Ms McPHERSON — We have something on Neighbourhood Watch, haven't we?

Mr SCHIER — Neighbourhood Watch was mentioned by, I think, only 3 of the 11 councils that responded. Casey mentioned it a few times, but for the others it was almost only a passing reference as something they are involved in — they might send somebody along to meetings and so on. If you have a look at the history of Neighbourhood Watch, I do not know whether this was a reflection in general terms that it is diminishing as a community-level response.

Mr SCHEFFER — Why do you think that is? Do you have any evidence on that?

Mr SCHIER — I do not really have an opinion on it. This was really about gathering responses rather than having the opportunity to ask follow-up questions after getting responses that make you ask questions. The short answer is that I do not know.

Perhaps at the community level Neighbourhood Watch has been replaced a little by the community safety committee response, which is perhaps a bit broader and can be targeted to specific areas of safety that might be quite outside what Neighbourhood Watch has traditionally done, which is having people look out for each other in their neighbourhood at the local street level. If you have an issue of after-hours alcohol-related violence or, as in some communities in the growth areas, higher youth populations, a more targeted response can happen. It may not be a street-by-street local safety issue that Neighbourhood Watch has responded to.

Mr SCHEFFER — You talked before about local governments being reluctant for very good reasons to take up what they see as policing issues. Is it fair to say, where the issues are couched in terms of community safety — looking at urban planning, the children’s programs you mentioned before, neighbours, Meals on Wheels and all those sorts of programs, which have to do with the safety and security of people — that councils are willing to adopt them very clearly front and centre as things that councils do, but if it is a policing matter, they bracket it off? What are the continuities there? They are obviously very closely related at the edges, aren’t they?

Ms McPHERSON — That is a really good question. One of the additional points we thought we might mention if it came up is the more passive way in which local governments interact at this level — things like public space design and how to integrate public open space safely within communities so that open spaces can be used at all times of night and day. There are a whole range of interfaces with local government in relation to this work, but the more difficult areas are perhaps where they intersect with policing. Crime prevention through environmental design is something we thought we might talk about.

A lot of work has been done around prevention of violence against women, as Philip mentioned earlier, and there are even things like animal management, food safety and all those other elements that fit into a community safety portfolio but are not necessarily about preventing crime. I think a much broader picture emerges than the role that local governments see themselves as having. I am not sure whether Philip wants to add to that.

Mr SCHIER — It was mentioned that some things are core local government business because of a statutory responsibility — animal safety, for example. If you are talking about dog attacks and those sorts of things, they are seen as being part of a council’s remit. That is in contrast to something that might be seen as a police role.

The CHAIR — Given that you represent 56 councils, do you think local government should have a role in promoting and providing initiatives for these community safety programs?

Mr SCHIER — I think the message coming through from the survey is that where it fits clearly at the community level — that is, the level at which local government connects with local communities — the answer would be yes, if it can be shown to have a clear link to areas where councils have responsibilities, such as public spaces. Those things include street-level violence when an issue in a pub spills out onto the street or where you have a concentration of nightclubs and so on in a particular area. The other thing that came through was around where it is a broader community education role, such as youth programs on road safety or drug and alcohol education. It may then be a primary care partnership with local government, schools and the police all working together on something like that.

Ms McPHERSON — There is certainly a leadership role. Looking at some of the summary responses, what comes through is the strong relationship that exists between Victoria Police and the councils that responded, and I think that would be replicated across most of the 79 councils. I guess there is a leadership element in drawing groups of people together to look at what is happening in a particular community and then asking, 'How do we collectively address that together?'. That is really what the community safety committees are all about.

Mr SCHEFFER — You may have mentioned this, but are you able to say anything about the formal connection between local governments and police? Generally, as far as you know, do councils meet on a regular basis with police to identify where the hotspots are and what the actual crime or public safety issues are?

Ms McPHERSON — The community safety committees do some of that work, and there are also what used to be called PCCCs — that is, police community consultative committees. I do not know whether they still have a connection with local government.

Mr SCHIER — They are certainly not universal; I am not familiar with them. I think the community safety committee is the key ongoing connection.

Mr SCHEFFER — Okay. You did mention that.

Ms McPHERSON — That is the formal link, isn't it?

Mr SCHIER — Yes. It is probably a council officer, or a small group in a larger council, participating at that level. Other than that, things are probably a bit more ad hoc in response to specific issues. If something is a very clear local issue that needs a response, a specific working group might be formed.

The CHAIR — Thank you. Do you have any closing remarks?

Ms McPHERSON — I do not think so. We thank you for enabling us to be here and to provide this information. We have tabled the major response document. If there are other materials or anything else you want us to provide, we are happy to send that through. Thank you for your time.

The CHAIR — Thank you sincerely for surveying your councils. We appreciate it. Even though it is a small sample, if you like, it gives us a guide.

Ms McPHERSON — It is a good sample.

The CHAIR — There is also the background you have done on the more significant document, so thank you for that effort. We appreciate it.

Committee adjourned.

DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Locally Based Approaches to Community Safety and Crime Prevention

Geelong — 8 August 2011

Members

Mr S. Ramsay
Mr S. Leane
Mr J. Scheffer

Mr B. Battin
Mr T. McCurdy

Chair: Mr S. Ramsay
Deputy Chair: Mr J. Scheffer

Staff

Acting Executive Officer: Mr M. Roberts
Committee Administrative Officer: Ms D. Woof

Witnesses

Councillor J. Farrell,
Ms J. McMahon, General Manager, Community Services,
Mr S. Bentley, Place Manager, and
Ms L. Armstrong-Rowe, Community Development Officer.
Mr J. Frame, Chairperson, Local Safety Committee; City of Greater Geelong;

Inspector C. Peers, Liquor Licensing Division; and
Inspector G. Thompson, Operations Support Manager, Number 1 Division, Victoria Police;

Dr D. Palmer, Associate Professor, Deakin University; and
Mr D. Holroyd, President, Geelong Nightlife Association.

Councillor FARRELL—I would like to begin for thanking everybody for being here today and I would also like to acknowledge that we meet on the land of the Wathaurong people today and pay my respects to their elders.

The CHAIR—Thanks, Councillor Farrell. Can I also thank the City of Greater Geelong for their hospitality. We appreciate the city for going to the trouble to host us here this afternoon. I am chair of the Drugs and Crime Joint Parliamentary Committee made of five committee members. We are dealing with two references at the moment. One is a reference from the Minister for Police in relation to security in emergency wards of Victorian public hospitals. We have had a discussion with Geelong Hospital and Barwon Health this morning on the matters of that reference. But again we encourage any of the witnesses who would like to make mention of that particular reference, that could add some value to our deliberations. We are happy for you to do so.

The second reference is more about community safety programs. It is mentioned in our reference Neighbourhood Watch is one of the programs that we are looking at specifically. But obviously there is a number of programs at work at the moment that we are looking at in detail. I do not know if you have anyone specifically here from Neighbourhood Watch but you may like to make mention of that program or other like programs or improvements we could look at as part of our deliberations.

We found out this morning that there were some people present that would have liked to have spoken or indicated they would like to speak and had not previously registered. If time permits we do encourage those that are not registered to speak, if they do want to speak, and there is time allowed, that we can accommodate them if possible. If they could register with Danielle, which is a requirement, then certainly we are looking forward to hearing what they have to say.

I do have to provide an address to the witnesses, and I am going to do that collectively this time. I did it individually this morning and it was a bit tedious. As I understand, all the witnesses providing evidence are at this table. I will at a point in time go through that address, that you are aware of the conditions around the evidence you are providing.

Councillor FARRELL—I would like to begin by saying it is fantastic that you are here today. We really appreciate the opportunity as a community to present to you. As Shaun mentioned earlier, the committee was here two years ago. A lot of the discussion at that time was around alcohol and violence within Victorian communities and it was really pleasing to have input into that inquiry at that time. We have a very different presentation for you today. Although we will be talking at some length about what happens in the CBD, we also want to talk to you about some of the community initiatives that happen outside of the CBD, and also about how the community safety portfolio or work is embedded across a great range of what council does. We are hoping to give you an overview of how our council and our partners deal with both community safety and perceptions of community safety.

You would be aware that we have been approached by other councils to assist them with their work in community safety and that is a range of groups and organisations across the state. I would particularly like to thank our local police command who have always worked in that area very closely with us to support other councils in their work around improving their community safety. You will hear a lot today about relationships. The relationships that we have in our area are incredibly important to us. I do not think there is anyone sitting around the table who would not agree that the strength of those relationships has delivered some quite innovative initiatives. It has also enabled us to do

some good evaluation of the work that we do. A lot of times there is a combined approach or a combined response to issues as they arise in our community.

You will hear also this afternoon about plans we have about improving community safety, particularly in the area of alcohol, and alcohol planning. Since 2009 this council has had a community safety portfolio. You may not be aware that we all work under the portfolio system in the council. Two years ago the council acknowledged that community safety was an important part of council's work and that was established. By way of explaining the diversity of the work that comes into that area, we have a Drugs Action Plan Committee and that is a regional plan that works from here through Surf Coast, Queenscliff to Colac, and our regional plan was funded about three years ago.

We also have a Gambling Advisory Committee that works across four municipalities, again another great partnership in improving community safety. I am sure that everyone has read about the numbers that rolled out in *The Age* on the weekend, \$2.6 billion in losses across the state. Our Gambling Committee works across four municipalities, as I said, but we also have venue operators, community members, and church based workers, as well as gambling support workers there. We work across another partnership with a Graffiti Reference Group. VicPol is a very strong component of that, as are Department of Justice, council workers across two of our departments—that is community development and engineering—and we also have youth workers in that space as well.

The policy perspective here is one of harm minimisation. We know that we cannot solve all the problems all the time. What we work towards is a partnership approach to improving both community safety and the perceptions of community safety. We also work outside of the municipality. As I said we have some regional responses, but both myself and two of our council officers in community development work at the Local Government Alcohol and Other Drugs Issues Forum, which is quite a long title, but it is a group auspiced by the Municipal Association Victoria and works across a whole range of alcohol and drug-related issues. In fact our meeting on Thursday includes a discussion on pharmacotherapy, as well as a discussion on the Victorian Auditor-General's report on the effectiveness of the Department of Justice's strategies on preventing and reducing alcohol-related harm, which I am sure has crossed your desk at some stage.

One of the areas of work that we will talk about later is around alcohol planning. The incoming state government has made two very quick changes to the work that councils do in this area: one is legislating around secondary supply, and this council has been a very strong advocate for that work over a long period of time. That was a pleasing change to the legislation. But more importantly from council's point of view is the work around planning permits being required for packaged liquor outlets. Again this council, with a lot of others, has been working hard over a long period of time to have some control over that. It is well proven research that wherever you introduce more alcohol outlets, the antisocial behaviour increases. For council to have the ability to control that in our municipal is an important one for us, but it has opened up a whole area of policy and planning which is not, apparently, in our planning municipal strategic statement and we are working very quickly to fill that gap. We will talk about that a little later. For now I would like to hand over to John Frame who is the chair of our Local Safety Committee and he will talk to you about the work of that committee.

The CHAIR—I am required to read this address to the witnesses. If you could bear with me for that. Also it might be useful before we launch into the presentations, to give you a feel of where we are up to. We are required to complete this reference and make a recommendation to parliament in March next year. Submissions have closed, however, we are still awaiting a whole of government submission and it might or might

not include a submission from VicPol, the two largest stakeholders in the crime prevention area. There is still an opportunity for those that have not as yet provided submissions to do so. Also any comments made out of the public hearing part of this day certainly will be taken on board through Hansard as well and added to the drafting of the paper.

If you will bear with me I will read this, and I will only read it once, hopefully, and then everyone will be aware of their responsibilities under this particular hearing. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975 and further subject to the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, the Defamation Act 2005 and, where applicable, the provisions of reciprocal legislation in other Australian states and territories. Any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. I assume you have all read the guide for witnesses presenting evidence to parliamentary committees. I think Sandy Cook has supplied that, or Lisa has, thank you. We are recording the evidence and will provide a proof version of the *Hansard* transcript at the earliest opportunity. You can correct it as appropriate. Once again, thank you for this opportunity to bring together obviously a number of stakeholders today in Geelong to help us with our reference, and I would invite Mr Frame to make his presentation.

Mr FRAME—Thanks, Chair. Well, the Geelong Local Safety Committee has met for about the last six years and it grew out of the former Police Community Consultative Committee. The committee membership has obviously representation from Victoria Police, City of Greater Geelong, local youth agencies, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the Taxi Directorate, Deakin University, the Chamber of Commerce, Neighbourhood Watch and community members. It is very broadly based. Indeed, looking around the table, pretty much all the people around the table are members of the Local Safety Committee. The committee has a local safety plan which has four objectives, and they are to identify and respond to safety issues throughout greater Geelong to facilitate initiatives to enhance safety in neighbourhoods, to facilitate initiatives to enhance safety within the home, and to promote and support road safety initiatives.

In terms of the committee arrangements, each of those objectives is reported on quarterly to make sure that the overall plan is updated continually and people are able to have input into that plan. We found that one of the strengths of the committee is that it is not in fact owned by any particular agency. As I said, it grew out of the old Police Community Consultative Committees, and up until we had some issues around police numbers in Geelong a few years ago, it was chaired by the local police service area manager. But a view was taken at that time that it was placing perhaps individual police officers in a difficult position to advocate for more staff with the chief commissioner. That was how I finished up coming to chair the committee. I had been a member of the committee as a community representative prior to that.

As I said, it is not owned by any particular agency. We have administrative support that is provided by both VicPol and the City of Greater Geelong. We are able to avoid that trap that sometimes happens when a government entity looks at in fact running some of these committees. Over the past four years we have taken an interest in a whole range of issues that might be considered by some to be outside general community safety issues. One of those is the prevention of violence against women, and the Safety Committee receives regular updates and provides support to efforts in Geelong, such as letters of support for funding and support of the Blue Ribbon Campaign. In fact a number of the members of the committee are White Ribbon Ambassadors.

Personally I do not think violence against women is outside the community safety ambit at all. I think it is a very important part of community safety generally. We found—sometimes because of media campaigns—that it can be a bit of a track for committees such as this to simply focus on the big issues, like alcohol in central Geelong, and it is good to have such a broad membership that we can get pulled back into gear if we tend to be spending too much time on those particular issues because, as I say, we do have people who represent in a whole range of areas that helps to keep us on track.

The committee has, as a member, Dr Darren Palmer from Deakin. We have been very interested in supporting the involvement of Deakin University in evaluating a lot of the various programs that have been undertaken here in Geelong. It seems to the committee that quite often there are calls for more cameras, more police, more something, without any evaluation of the effectiveness of some of those calls. The work that Darren and his people have been doing, which Darren will speak a little more about later on, has been very helpful in giving some focus and indeed evaluating and seeing whether we are getting value for money out of some of the stuff that we have put into place.

I mentioned public perception, and that is pretty important, I think, in all of this because quite often what appears on the front page of the local newspapers can become the driving force of our responses and we have to be careful that we make sure that any responses that do come are properly based, properly founded and have some evidence base to them. I did mention at the outset the way that I happened to become chair of this committee was the one around police numbers, and again we still have that particular issue bubbling around at the moment. I certainly do not expect the two gentlemen on my right to be able to comment on that necessarily, but I am not these days so constrained. It is perhaps something we do need to think about and I know some other contributors may comment about the level, and the continuing level, rather than—I think it has been said that from time to time there are special efforts in terms of crackdowns on alcohol fuelled violence and those things, and then at other times there does not seem to be a lot of response. There is probably a bit of a view around the place that it would be nice to have a few more people so we did not have to rely sometimes on those special efforts, blitzes—call them what you will. They are some of the things that the committee is doing. I will perhaps leave it at that at the moment.

The CHAIR—We have eight speakers in about an hour and a half, or an hour and a quarter and we are going to try not to interrupt too much but maybe after each presentation or each piece of evidence, if any committee members want to raise a specific question, probably now is a good time, otherwise we will allow this next witness to provide his or her evidence. Any questions from the committee? No. Inspector Thompson.

Insp. THOMPSON—Thanks, Chair. The local police, we see ourselves as having an important role in facilitating community safety and crime prevention throughout the area and have been doing this for some time. It is probably over the last 12 to 18 months, I think that point has been brought up a fair bit, and not only through visible police presence but also in support of various committees and forums we have had throughout the Geelong area. The Local Safety Committee is one example of that. Local police do attend a number of different meetings and forums and committees. We like to think we have a valuable input in relation to those committees relevant to community safety and crime prevention. At one end of the spectrum I would like to say that the Local Safety Committee could be seen at one end, and at the other end you would have issues such as the Corio Norlane Safety Committee which is at a lower level, totally run by police, but dealing with similar issues at a local and lower level.

We do have communication between those two committees and that is a good, solid process. Another example would be the Regional Safety Group that needs to address various, particular local issues, such as hoon behaviour, or those specific issues relevant to their local community, immediate suburbs and so on. Whereas the Local Safety Committee look at it at a broader level. Victoria Police and local committees look at it at closer suburban type environment levels.

Other issues, mentioned previously by Jan, relate to the Graffiti Reference Group where we have a clear and obvious role around prosecution, but we also like to think we can be involved in our prevention program. As far as Victoria Police, particularly at the local level, what communities expect in relation to safety issues is the appearance of a police car which generally occurs. However, what happens behind the scenes is something completely different and includes a whole range of other interventions and consultations with stakeholders at various levels, which we have already mentioned here.

There are still a few others that I would like to mention as well, and through these mediums to address preventative and safety measures; develop, implement and maintain, and addressing police service delivery, not only through the police walking around in uniform but also behind the scenes stuff. At the local level, particularly from the police station point of view, we have a Police Community Engagement Unit with a crime prevention officer who provides advice and assistance to the community relevant to safety measures, and also provides advice to victims of crime. That could be the individual, that could be businesses, retailers; it could be the licensing industry, anything. There is our community liaison officer who provides advice and assistance to the community generally through our Neighbourhood Watch Program, which is pretty strong down here in Geelong. We have our multicultural liaison officer who is the police representative to the new and emerging communities, and acts as a strong liaison between these communities and other local initiatives, such as the issue relevant to family violence.

There is our youth coordinator, established to guide and assist both police through the resource officers across the area, but also local partners in implementing the youth strategy. She is the key stakeholder in the newly developed Barwon Youth Partnership, which is a government initiative. Geelong is a pilot area. There is establishment of a Local Governance Committee providing strategic direction and ensuring deliverables are met amongst the local providers which I think, having been involved in the area over the last 12 to 14 months, is a really strong way to address a number of those issues which directly aim at our youth. The Newstart Program, which is a new initiative that has been recently introduced into Geelong—I know it has been up and running in the western suburbs—we see it as a valuable tool, with police, with youth, with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development where we had the police working with the teachers, working with the community and the parents to provide, guide and assist those youths that are high risk within the educational environment. I know from our last program that we have run, recently finished, was extremely successful and well received by the community and the school.

On another issue, Emergency Services Mental Health, Drugs and Alcohol Services Liaison Group, assist emergency services, communicates across a broad range of issues and provides a platform to discuss and address, amongst other things, police response and referrals. Basically where I am aiming at here is the mental health issue. Victoria Police does have the mental health liaison strategy. We believe we have grasped that one pretty well down here, and as a result of our liaison through this committee have addressed police response/Barwon Health treatment with regard to psychiatric issues, and also offending and prevention as well. There is also the licensing accords that Carl, and I believe Darren, will be discussing a bit later to address poor perceptions of safety and

report of assaults in designated areas around the Geelong region. They can talk a little bit more about that.

In conclusion, it is a situation where we would like to think through the Local Safety Committee, and all these other committees, that the understanding of crime prevention and local safety initiatives are well acknowledged and well addressed through our initiatives and through our partnerships and liaisons. Thank you.

The CHAIR—Any questions from the committee?

Mr LEANE—You mentioned there were smaller committees that were maybe suburb based, issue based. Were they initiated by VicPol or initiated by the locals?

Insp. THOMPSON—One example would be the Norlane one which is police initiated through an initiative of a sergeant at the Corio Police Station getting in touch with his local community, drawing the community in and forming a basis in relation to addressing local needs, local issues, that community involvement. The Whittington one is the City of Greater Geelong where they have contacted us and we will send a representative off to form that partnership and keep the information flows going. You have two examples in the same area started off by different people.

Mr LEANE—They are not tied in with Neighbourhood Watch, they are autonomous.

Insp. THOMPSON—I do not believe it is Neighbourhood Watch specific. However, the representative that will go to the Whittington community meeting could be the community liaison officer who is in fact our Neighbourhood Watch representative. That is how we like to feel that we really have a good grasp in relation to digging in and drilling down to the community through our Community Engagement Unit.

The CHAIR—We have recently been to Western Australia where we had presentations from WA Police and their Crime Prevention Department which is undergoing restructure, you might be aware, and local council, and this might be borne out later. The link between the WA Police and council is very strong in relation to their crime prevention programs, in fact almost to the point where the locally based initiatives are superseded almost. Neighbourhood Watch is an example where its relevancy was being lost, probably because of the demographic of the leadership within Neighbourhood Watch and the need for the local street statistics, and the involvement of the local people was waning over time. Because Neighbourhood Watch is identified in our reference, we really need to get a grasp of—and I think it has already been mentioned it is quite strong in this region, but in other regions it is not. If you remember, part of the recent announcements made by the Minister for Crime Prevention, one was that they were going to appoint a manager for Neighbourhood Watch. Obviously he feels it has some long-term value. We might not at the end of the day but that is what we are working on.

There was also money available for local councils, I think \$10,000 grants made available for certain aspects of crime prevention or safety programs. In WA I think it was \$20,000. That link and the need for funding, and the relationship between police and council we would like to hear at some point; probably not now. But you have made mention of it, I am wondering how important that is. You seem to have so many groups doing so many different things, how do you coordinate them all to get to the outcome you are looking for? Also if I might quickly add: at the end of the day we can make a difference. We are making recommendations on improvements to community safety programs, or something that state government can invest in to both improve the funding aspect and also the structure aspect, and the legislative aspect. When we talk about liquor permits, retail

controls, something where we can make a substantive difference in recommending legislative changes that might improve or reduce risks. At the end of the day we want to get down to the nitty-gritty of what we can do as a committee to recommend to the parliament that will make a significant change to culture, behaviour and penalty that is applicable.

Councillor FARRELL—I am sure that some of the people around the table will have a little bit of a wish list as they go through.

The CHAIR—If I can say, Inspector Frame, that name rings a bell, where he is not subject to any hindrance of political speak. We encourage some grassroots, earthy opinions of how you think we can improve the process. We know how successful Geelong is but I am sure it has some flaws and I am sure there is room for improvement.

Councillor FARRELL—Carl, is there anything you would like to add?

Insp. PEERS—I think I was going to wait until Darren spoke about some of the issues in relation to liquor licensing. If there is a need to expand, I can.

Councillor FARRELL—Okay. I will pass to Darren Palmer from Deakin University who is going to talk about the evaluation processes that we have been looking at.

Dr Palmer—I will start at the end and then come back, if you like. One comment I would make about Neighbourhood Watch is the international research evidence is very clear in terms of its limited effectiveness. A lot of resources, a lot of opportunity costs around those resources go into Neighbourhood Watch, but the benefits that come out of that effort are very limited. The second and related comment I would make around the funding for local government and local community crime prevention initiatives is that kind of money that was mentioned is very low compared to the kinds of funding we put into other areas of activity. I think it has been one of the real unfortunate things in Victoria and elsewhere over the last two decades or thereabouts that as we have developed more and more knowledge around crime prevention, ideas about what might work better and the like, we still do not fund anywhere near to the extent to which we should; not only at a program level but also at the evaluation and research around these issues.

If we really want to come up with innovative strategies and solutions then we really need to be funding these at a much higher level than we currently do and have over a long period of time. That is my grumpy start to things to kick us off. More generally it is really important to talk about the research. When I first came to Geelong one of the things that really did impress me was the way in which—there were a whole lot of networks that were in operation that brought people with different perspectives around the table. That enabled us to think about different kinds of research questions and issues—I am talking from the research perspective—including trying to get a sense of the strengths of these networks and how it plays out in terms of program and policy implementation, development and ideas. That is a really crucial part. I would agree not everything is perfect but it is a crucial part of the story of Geelong and the region.

That also plays out in terms of another key point to make around crime prevention and community safety, that ultimately everything must be local. We can have these theories about what works in the UK or the US or in other parts of Australia. We do not know how they are going to work until you play them out in a particular local context which is inside an LGA effectively and underneath it at that level. That is really important that is borne out by the research evidence time and time again. It is not to say it is always acknowledged but it is there.

The second general thing to say about the research is one around sustainability. In the Geelong region, we—myself, particularly with my colleague Peter Miller—have been able to attract a considerable amount of external funding, as well as funding from the local area. This is really important because you can develop your research, develop your baseline knowledge around the programs, the impact that they are having, but you have to have ongoing sustainability to that research in terms of funding, in terms of people and the like. What we have seen in the past in Victoria, and again elsewhere—it is not only about Victoria—is there might be this kind of brief period of excitement where funding is provided for various things but then it dries up and you lose your capacity to keep on monitoring what is going on.

The other important issue that partly relates to that, but it is something which is not necessarily about costing, that could solve an enormous number of research problems, and that is access to data. It is a crucial issue. Lots of local arms or state based agencies in Geelong and elsewhere have enormous amounts of data that they are collecting on a routine basis and collected in novel ways, facilitating research. But most of the time the access to the data is controlled centrally and it does not necessarily lend itself to a good, strong, robust analysis in the way in which we should be able to do it. I know there are privacy concerns but I really believe those things can be overcome with goodwill. When you are talking about crime prevention, we are not only talking about things like police crime data and the like, it is also things like health statistics and the like. I think developing that relationship, which we have done fairly well in Geelong, is important.

The next general comment I would make around the issue of research is that the research can have different purposes. It is really a question of what are we trying to do with the research? Are we trying to evaluate the effectiveness of a particular initiative or program? Are we trying to establish baseline knowledge about what is going on and then the new programs slot in? Are we trying to do some experimental research. That is a gap that has emerged in Victoria in the last 10 years or so. From my experience, Geelong, over the last decade, has been a place that has been willing to be innovative, creative, experimental in terms of the different ideas around community safety and crime prevention. I hope that would continue, but again with the research trying to assess and be willing to accept at different times that the evidence that comes out of the experimentation does not necessarily always tell a highly positive and exciting story. That is the risk you take with innovation and experimentation.

The other issue is—[DANTE] is mentioned there in the notes. This is a Drug and Alcohol in the Night-Time Economy Study for about half a million dollars started a couple of years ago. It will report to the funding agency in October this year. We cannot release the findings. But it is a comparative study between Geelong and Newcastle which are relatively comparable on a whole lot of different levels, but there are differences—different states, different regulations and different practices as well. We have some interesting findings which we think will be produced some time after October.

The other important experimentation, I guess you would call it, which we are currently working on at the moment, to try to overcome the very simplistic surveys that ask people, 'Do you want more police on the streets?' or, 'Do you want harsher sentencing?' Those kinds of interdimensional questions where you are starting to develop work that comes out of environmental studies, called 'contingent evaluation', where what we are asking people in the Geelong region is, 'Given a pool of money, how would you like to break it up? Do you want more police? Do you want more sentencing? Do you want more community development? Do you want more prevention programs?' We have already done a pilot study and we are finding that in fact despite some views that the community is wanting dramatically harsher penalties and more police, more law enforcement, when you confront

people with contingent evaluation options or choices that people have to make, in fact there is a lot more support for drug and alcohol treatment programs, prevention initiatives as well. We need to do the study on a larger scale which is what we are going to do over the next year or thereabouts.

Finally, to get back to one of the questions you asked in one of your references, at least, in terms of security at emergency wards, I would refer the committee to a recent report released in around about April this year. It was funded by the Australian Research Council. It is a national study of the private security industry in Australia. It is a very detailed study by two very eminent researchers that raise a whole range of problems around private security; the regulation of private security; the training standards of private security; the accountability or lack thereof at times of private security, and issues in relation to use of force of private security. It is a very big report but they raise some very serious concerns about the use of private security, either in public spaces or in these hybrid public private spaces, like, for instance, casinos or hospitals and nightclubs as well.

To sum up, there has been some great opportunities to do very interesting research in Geelong. We have been quite successful in obtaining a good amount of funding. We hope to continue to be able to do that. Certainly at the state government level there is much more scope to invest more heavily in crime prevention policy programs, initiatives, and include research funding in that.

The CHAIR—Thank you. Any questions from the committee?

Mr BATTIN—Do you have that report, do you, for the one in April?

Dr Palmer—No, but I can send it through. I cannot remember the name of it.

Mr BATTIN—If you could get that one, it would be great.

The CHAIR—Thanks, Jan.

Councillor FARRELL—I would like to take the opportunity to talk to you about a place based response to an issue that we had about five years ago. We talked a lot around the networks that we have in the area and the partnerships, but I would like to talk briefly about a very localised issue and a localised response that was supported by existing relationships. I live in a town called Ocean Grove which has a population of about 11,000 people. It has always been a rite of passage for young people to enjoy New Year's Eve on the beach. On New Year's Eve 2005 there were major issues around alcohol and violence to the point where a large group of young people went into the local caravan park. There were not a lot of police in the area on the night and we had not had this kind of problem before and there was a lot of distressed caused in that community on that New Year's Eve. At 9 o'clock the next morning my phone rang and it was the local caravan park operator who was ringing to say, 'What are we going to do about it? Your council, your problem, you fix it.' At 5 o'clock that afternoon we were in a meeting with that venue operator and the officer in charge of Bellarine Police Station and we started a process about how we were going to very clearly support our young people to continue to have that right to be on the beach on New Year's Eve ongoing, but also how to minimise the risk of harm to both themselves and to local residents.

Since that time that committee has been convened and supported, and it is supported and convened by the local sergeant. We have had a change of staff but it has been a handover from year to year and now includes a wide range of groups—the CFA; the local coast manager; Barwon Coast Council; St John Ambulance comes; the traders, the owners of the caravan park. Those meetings are convened on an as needs basis. They ramp up

coming through October, November, December, and there is always an evaluation process at the end of that. Some of the initiatives that have been put in place, Barwon Coast as the land manager has put in a lot of money around lighting. One of the obvious initiatives was to light the place. They have also developed fireworks on New Year's Eve which has brought lots more families into the area. Instead of it being a young people only event, lots more families are coming to it.

Council has assisted with by-laws around alcohol. No open alcohol containers in the area. Also we provide road management. One of the issues was some of the young people using their cars as a portable esky. They would have access backwards and forwards to their cars during the afternoon and evening and that is no longer an option. One of the other things that has been incredibly important has been the support of VicPol, often riding with our by-laws people from about 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Leading up to New Year's Eve there are visits to the local packaged liquor about supporting the initiatives of not selling alcohol in glass containers on New Year's Eve. There are also a lot of patrols during the afternoon so we can identify where things happen. One of the initiatives was also VicPol brought in the mounted police about three years ago, and it is amazing to see the young people there, not seeing that as anything confrontational but quite enjoying seeing the horses on the beach. That has been a part of that initiative.

One of the important parts of this is that it has been a local issue and it has been a local response, lots of partners around the table. I am not saying that we will not, one year, have the same issues again, but we have minimised the risk of those issues happening at a local level. We have also reclaimed the space for families in Barwon Heads and Ocean Grove who are quite comfortable coming into that space now. Most importantly, we have allowed the young people in that area to not be excluded from that space. One of the issues that we see time and time again is around a response to young people and the way they behave in excluding them from spaces. What we should be doing is bringing more people into those spaces and making those spaces more comfortable for young people to be in.

The CHAIR—We talk about drugs—amphetamines particularly, as being one drug that has been identified on a number of occasions to this committee—and alcohol and the relationship to domestic violence. Does the council have a policy in relation to planning permits for poker machines as other regional local governments do, and is there a relationship between crime and the access and use of poker machines in the CBD area, as against in the outer CBD area? I will refer to Ballarat where they have a strict policy in relation to providing planning permits for poker machines. They can directly link the access and use of poker machines to an increase in crime. Does that come on the radar? I know it is a bit of a left field question.

Councillor FARRELL—I can talk to the planning permit issue. I cannot talk to the connection with crime stats. I am not sure whether our VicPol reps can, but I can talk to you about our planning policies around gambling. As I said, I chair our regional group that works in this area. I also sit on a local government working group on gambling which is auspiced by the Victorian Local Governance Association which is a statewide group that helps in that area. Geelong Council was one of the early adopters of a social policy around gambling and we adopted that back in 2005. That was as a result of funding that was supplied by the Department of Justice to a group of councils, again auspiced by the Victorian Local Governance Association. One of the issues around planning issues is there is always such competition for the strategic planning to be done in councils. That was identified by the Department of Justice at that time. They put some money on the table for councils to develop their policies.

We started with a social gambling policy which mapped out areas of the municipality as, if you like, red, orange and green zones. We accept there is a very strong density of machines particularly in the northern suburbs of Geelong and the density of machines is probably a lot less in places like the Bellarine Peninsula and the south of Geelong. We adopted a policy that suggested that if applications come to council that they would not be supported in areas of high density or low socioeconomic advantage.

The other thing we have done is in 2008 when state government allowed councils to control planning permits for venues, we now have a land use policy that excludes all our strip shopping centres, which is a common thing across the state, but we have also mapped out places, both within and outside of the CBD as to where we can encourage or discourage poker machines. One of the issues we have is that we can only influence new applications. Although we know there are strong densities of machines in the northern suburbs, there is nothing we can do about changing that. We can only encourage movement and make it easier for venues to move from one to the other.

We have above average spend rates across Geelong. Where they are compared to Victorian regional local areas, we are high on the scale of all of those. We recently opposed an application in Lara. The Lara Hotel has 20 machines and wanted to increase it to 40. We opposed that at the Gambling Commission. We found out 10 days ago that the commission granted those licences and we are yet to go through the planning permit process at council. Then we have to decide as a council whether we will appeal either the commission's decision or—depending on what the decision is here—whether we will end up at VCAT. We are very strongly in that place. You may not be aware, we wrote to Michael O'Brien around pre-commitment strategies. As a council we have passed a motion that we have put postcards in all our customer service centres, encouraging our residents to write to Julia Gillard in support of a mandatory pre-commitment strategy. We raised that at the MAV state council in May and had support there.

We also raised it at the Local Government Australia convention in June. We did not get onto the agenda. They had a lot of motions and we did not get it through there. I cannot explain why. But we are really strongly committed to trying to reduce the harm that gambling produces in our area. The link to crime, I cannot help you with that. I do not know whether Gary or Carl can.

Insp. THOMPSON—It is probably not something that we have looked at. Being a pokie venue though, I would suggest that we probably should have some data relevant to it, and that would come through our licensing processes and connects through to council. But it is not something specifically that Victoria Police look at. Drugs, alcohol, licensed premises, yes, but whether that premises was specifically related to the poker machine issue, it would be new to me.

Insp. PEERS—I do not think I can add anything to that, other than from a policing perspective that I know Taskforce RAZON in town is starting to look at the gambling side of things, and how gambling drives crime in the local community. Our unit is starting to look at the gambling side of things too. At this stage we have no figures to assist us on how it drives crime.

Councillor FARRELL—We have Steve Bentley who is our place manager for central Geelong. He will now address you about initiatives in central Geelong.

Mr BENTLEY—I have Darren Holroyd next to me, so we will probably—

The CHAIR—Yes.

Mr BENTLEY—I would like to recognise where DPCD are going. There was a centre activity forum last month. We have implemented a whole range of safety initiatives in the city centre. We have had good support from the councillors to try different initiatives. I think part of it is seeing what works for your local community, whether it is scanners or transport options or safety cameras and the like. It was interesting, the agreed outcome of this forum the other day was where we have got. That is saying it is not all about cameras. It is sometimes an easy solution where people think, 'We'll create another bucket of money for more cameras.' You told us this about seven years ago, Darren. You said, 'Don't think the cameras are going to solve all your problems.' Well, they do not.

Probably the greatest agreement we have found here with the outcome of that DPCD forum was it is place-making. It is creating a place where there is a whole diverse range of people doing everyday things. If you get that mix right of people living and studying and working and visiting and entertainment from a whole broad demographic, then you become less dependent on cops and cameras and some of those interventions. We have been down that path. Having said that, I still think there is a need for security type measures. You do need a level of surveillance. I believe strongly in police presence, but the police presence that I advocate for, as place manager, is not in prosecution and the like, it is relationship building. It is that preventative stuff. It is being seen.

If anything, it is there to give the real agents of change and the enablers confidence to do what they do. It gives people confidence to want to live in a place. It gives people confidence to want to open later, to run a program or run activities. The police do not do much other than give others confidence, who then make it safer. That is a bit of a catch-22 situation. That is what I advocate for. I do believe that a commitment to evaluation and data collection is essential. As you go down the path and you trial different things and you want to know what works and what does not, to measure and do that over a long period of time so you can narrow down what does work, and setting up networks where people can get together and share their information, share their learning. But they will still have to take that and then apply it to their local area. That is important. Allocating long-term resources to measuring what difference you make is important.

The things we have touched on with the Safety Committee is relationships, shared responsibility and communication. They are the three key components. Relationships: it is about all the different parties, whether it is nightclubs, education institutions, the police or council, talking together on a regular basis and having that trust in each other so our Safety Committee model works well. You cannot do that via email. It is sitting around and talking to people. Shared responsibility: an example of that is in early days, nightclubs felt they had a responsibility inside, and if someone was drunk they would push them out the door and say, 'We've done the right thing, we've evicted them.' But then what? You have then created a problem out on the street. Now clubs and businesses feel it is a broad responsibility, that when they are out on the street they are still your customer or still your potential customer. To have that duty of care or responsibility is a good thing. Communication: it is again talking to each other. We have found with our camera system, if anything it is the radio network and having people talking with each other, that we can manage behaviour. It is managing the safety, if anything.

If someone is in a vulnerable position, either they have been in a fight or they are too intoxicated or it is innocent people, it is being able to talk to and support that person, again with less emphasis on saying, 'We'll try and catch them and lock them up.' It is saying, 'Someone has got themselves in a difficult situation, let's help them get home.' Linked to that—a critical part, if you are asking, 'What can the government do?'—is effective and accessible transport options day and night. I think it is absolutely critical. My observation, through the cameras, is that people are at risk at certain times. If someone has decided

that, 'It's time to go home and I want to go home,' and they cannot, that there is a high risk there. I know it is not easy running public transport of a night-time, and we have been quite committed to making sure that we have good options, as well as taxis. Even daytime stuff, again if people want to travel on public transport, it should be safe, it should be accessible for them.

Other than again I would speak strongly about these community safety, activity centres at DPCD. I think Dandenong, Frankston, Geelong and Maribyrnong working together, I see a lot of strength in that. About place—I have a bias towards place-making. It is not only about city centres, I think it is town centres where if people have a connection and a commitment to where they live, they tend to respect it more, rather than saying, 'I can go up into the city and I'll run amok and I'll smash someone's window. It's not my city so I don't care.' If there is a sense of place it is likely to be safer.

Mr HOLROYD—There is a trend in what John, Jan and Steve were all saying, we have a very good, healthy relationship with all the authorities, including the police in Geelong. We feel like we are leading the way. I do not know if there are any statistics anywhere to say whether we are doing a good job or not doing a good job here, but we feel like we are. I feel like the local press does not pay us out as much as they used to in the paper. For the last 15 years I have seen the trends change as we go along and the initiatives that have been developed through these healthy relationships that we have in these groups here. It is like a soup or something; all the ingredients are coming together very well. It is not only the cameras, it is the two-way radios, it is the scanners. People now are a lot more answerable. A couple of the initiatives that police have brought in over the last 12 months, on-the-spot fines, it makes people responsible. All of a sudden it is not bragging rights to be locked up for the night, there is a fine to go with it. Banning lists, we find, are working very well. You are not only banned from one venue, you are banned from a number of venues around Geelong. It hurts people if they cannot get into any venues around town. They have to really think about their actions. I think we are going the right way in a lot directions.

The local accord has operated since 1991. I feel it is still existing. It is probably the oldest in Victoria now but it is very stale. I have some ideas on how that should be developed. I believe at the moment there should be incentives to have licensees be a part of accords and to have ID scanners and to have two-way radios. To do that I think they need a discount on their liquor licence fees. If they go out and spend large sums of money on scanners and two-way radios and get involved in local accords, then there is an incentive for them to do that. At the moment there is a number of nightclubs in Geelong that have closed down which probably, in the opinion of most people at this table, would be the not so well-run venues. It has taken a little while to get rid of one of those in particular. The good operators should be encouraged, and the rogue operators, life needs to be made very difficult for those guys. In that way we can work together as a team.

On the police numbers issues we touched on—and John referred to before—we get these blitzes at the moment where you will have a huge police presence in the town on one night, but then for the next month or five or six weeks there is very little presence and you cannot get hold of police. I would like to see the local numbers increased. As Steve was saying, you get this rapport. The group going around build up a rapport. It is not rocket science in Geelong; a lot of the activity all happens in the one place. A lot of the violence happens in the one place. With that small increase in numbers but a continual presence, it would be far more an advantage to this city than having a large presence for one week and then nothing for the weeks following after that.

When you are dealing with a local group all the time even the licensees can build up a relationship with them as well, and they understand the problems that we have. Sometimes we have these RAZON groups come down from Melbourne, or compliance officers come to Geelong, that do not understand that a venue is—for one reason or other might be doing the right thing. There might be a drunk on the premises and you let him sit there until his mother comes and picks him up. It is safer for that person to be left where they are inside the premises until the problem can be handled, rather than having a group that come in and do not understand how you operate. Overall, I think Geelong is doing well but there are some areas we can improve in.

Mr BENTLEY—There is one more thing: what things could you assist with. One observation is—and this is probably a part where the council may well need state government support—packaged alcohol outlets near places like malls; a place where you know young people will gather. Sometimes having packaged alcohol too close in the wrong spot—I am not against packaged alcohol but I think there are clearly places where it is appropriate and where it is not. I know we have one in Geelong where I would say it is in the wrong spot and it makes things very difficult.

Insp. PEERS—I endorse what Darren has said on the issue of accords. I think it should be compulsory. We need to educate the licensees out there, that they are aware of their responsibilities. A good example is the two venues we recently closed down. Their education and knowledge of the industry was substandard. They can get a licence so easily if they can demonstrate they virtually have a clean slate. If we make it compulsory, they have to come along to the accord, they are educated, we set the standard and we speak as a team, as a community. I think, from the government's point of view, if you could do that it would be a fantastic tool.

The CHAIR—Any questions?

Mr LEANE—Your comment about the accord, I think in certain geographical areas—like, Geelong is a very good example where it has been a good accord. As Darren said there is a pretty concentrated entertainment area in the middle of town where the nightclubs and pubs are linked together closely. I am not against your idea about making it compulsory, I am wondering, would you consider it compulsory in areas where it could work? We had discussions with some nightclub owners in the CBD of Melbourne, and I am sure the ones we spoke to would love to have a similar thing, but there are so many venues and such a big entertainment area, the logistics of it would be virtually impossible.

Insp. PEERS—I know logistically it is an issue but the only guys we do get on the accord are the compliant ones. What we done here is, when I first came on board last year, we split our packaged accord which was a member of the high-risk accord. We saw those as two separate issues so you could have a packaged accord or progressing to your sporting clubs, your football clubs. That is how you can split those different outlets up. That is the way we are travelling down here.

Mr LEANE—Yes, thanks.

The CHAIR—Can I refer back to Steve's comments in relation to safe public transport at night, I think you alluded to. It was suggested to me, in relation to the bus interchange areas, people are uncomfortable about using the public transport system, that maybe high security needs to be at those interchange areas. Also we read quite often in the paper about the CBD, the malls in Geelong, about what is being done to provide greater security in those areas, if it is not lighting and it is not cameras, and it is not police visibility, what is it that needs to be done to make the mall area in the CBD more family

friendly, and people are attracted to that centre, rather than wanting to get away from it. Are you able to comment on that?

Mr BENTLEY—We have moved down that path. It is quite saturated with cameras. We have security guards, and we talked about a police kiosk and all that heavy-handed stuff. What we are moving towards now is essentially trying to activate and program the place as much as possible. We have farmers markets in there, we have school holiday programs. We are looking at putting in appropriate trading, which has been interesting, because some businesses go, 'We're already doing it hard and the council is going to stick competitors in there, you know. Focus on what you should be doing, council.' We are trying to get that European marketplace feel. We are not saying it is about putting old people in and the young people go. Everyone is welcome. You come on that premise, everyone is welcome, and it is about everyday people doing everyday things in that marketplace, and that interaction of generations and so forth. Yes, you are less likely to get people wanting to do the wrong thing.

Again some people say that is just dispersing the problem. That is what malls were probably intended to be like; that older style village where trade used to happen and interactions and conversations used to happen, and we moved away. In our city centre we are saying it is more than shopping, it is more than retailing, it is getting into other areas. Retailing is doing as bad as it has for 50 years. Even when we pop out of whatever we are going through at the moment, retailing will have to reinvent itself. City centres and town centres have to be more than a retail exchange. It has to be a place where there is arts and education and relationships and such. That links into safety, this whole, bigger place-making type mindset.

With the bus interchange, it is a fair initiative, daytime, of centralising the buses there. It has worked out well. We have had a 19 per cent increase of usage. We have a lot of people and a lot of buses. We are working through at the moment and council is working with police and public transport on how can we make sure that all these extra people can wait for buses in a respectful way. Business can still happen and the like. One thing of a night-time though, we as council—again with support from a few different agencies—run a night bus service. We were deemed to be not eligible for a NightRider state government funded service. I do not know why as Victoria's second city we are not eligible for a NightRider service. We were told the state did not think we needed one. We are a big community and to catch a cab down to the Bellarine Peninsula, which is very common, costs \$70 or \$80. Unfortunately my kids do not have that type of money in their pockets, and they tend to do risky things, you know, hop in a car where perhaps they would not have, or start walking. We run a night bus system where it is a \$5 flat fare. It is nudging 200 people. There is a demand there and we would like to state to assist.

The CHAIR—I think on the bus interchange it was suggested to me that maybe where the government is investing in security guards on railway stations between six and six that maybe—it is not only railway stations but other areas of high risk in relation to security requirements, whether it is the bus interchange or something else—it might be worthy of an investment of a full-time security guard between those hours to try and get a feel of—

Mr BENTLEY—We have put a safety officer on, rather than security, and they are funded by the Department of Transport at the moment. They keep thinking that it is an interim thing, and we keep saying, 'We think it's an ongoing thing.' Again, it is not so much about waiting for people to do something wrong and then nab them, it is about relationship building. It is about making the whole experience of public transport more enjoyable. Public transport should not be only for someone who cannot get a car licence—

you have either lost your licence or you could not get it—public transport is for everyone. If it is for everyone—it is like malls—then it tends to self-manage. I think you need less interventions. I keep coming back to that objective. I would say safety officers or relationship officers are there to provide information and report damage, pick up rubbish, a whole range of things, you know, talk to the trader that they feel good about being there. Then more people use public transport and because more people use it, it becomes self-perpetuating.

The CHAIR—Thank you.

Ms McMAHON—I wanted to add something to that too. In terms of that particular issue it is important that we do not perhaps throw the general solution to the general problem, and the importance around community safety in particular, and unpacking what those problems are and where they stem from. If we look at one of the examples, particularly around the mall that you mentioned, is there are certainly young people there who are well known to the police, and certainly well known to the system. They are part of the system, and the system has let them down. Throwing more security or more police at these relatively young kids—and I think some of them are probably in the order of eight, 10 or 11 years old, they are not at school, they are part of the DHS system—how are we supporting them, to help them to get out of potentially moving into more serious crimes or other things later on. The philosophy we have at council is trying to direct a whole lot of different solutions to the problem, but not taking the problem as one, but really unpacking them and trying to get a sense of what are the issues and how do we put that right resources in the right place to solve those as well.

The CHAIR—How is it working?

Ms McMAHON—Well, the short time I have been here at council, at various times it works very well, and sometimes it does not work very well at all. We have sat around the table internally and said, 'Okay, what do we know about this problem? What do we really know about these kids? How do we reach out to these kids in the system, as well as look at the people who are waiting for the buses, and shoppers, and try to make them feel safe as well?' I think sometimes it works well and sometimes it does not work well, but we are certainly strengthening our engagement with the department to see how we can get some better resourcing into those young kids and try and get them back on track, rather than continuing off the track.

The CHAIR—I have spent too much time on this issue but the council was discussing about providing accommodation above retail outlets in the CBD. Bringing people into the city, and family people, whether that reduces that risk or threat of antisocial behaviour. I do appreciate there are specific problems in specific areas. It gets back to the planning issues that have been raised with us a number of times in relation to planning. It has a big impact on crime prevention. I am talking about not stacking houses on top of each other but allowing space and green and areas where people can get outside and enjoy the fresh air and the environment. I know it all sounds a bit greenie but when you live in Hoppers Crossing and there is nothing for the kids to do it creates, to my mind certainly, an opportunity to get into some antisocial stuff.

Planning, I do see as an important issue in relation to trying to reduce the crime risks in quite strongly built neighbourhoods. The planning issues do not come up a lot, and I try and bring them up to get a feel. Geelong is not so bad but certainly if you go into the City of Wyndham where they have significant problems about growth and lack of space and lack of green, for people to understand other things rather than bricks and mortar and plasma TVs, it creates a different type of social behaviour.

Mr FRAME—Perhaps to pick up on that, as well as the work for the Safety Committee there is also the whole CBD reinvigoration that Steve is certainly very heavily involved with. This whole area of security, it is very much one of perception. The shopping centre owner or manager adjacent to the mall has one particular take on what should happen with those in them all, and other people have a lot of other ideas as to how it is to be managed. The work that is being done through DHS and through VicPol in terms of looking at specific people who are creating some of those problems, rather than this 'one size fits all' approach is the way to go. They also think the ideas that are being put forward in terms of accommodation in the CBD can assist greatly in turning it around.

We have to look at, indeed, the Melbourne CBD, 15, 20 years ago where there was very little accommodation in that CBD. The whole mix has changed and with that comes a greater feeling of safety. If your percentage of would-be troublemakers is well and truly overwhelmed by people living, working and recreating in those areas then you shift that mix around. That has to help overall. I do not think we are at that point yet but that is where we are trying to get to—Steve, I think I am right in saying.

Ms ARMSTRONG-ROWE—My job is to mop up really and fill any of the gaps. My role in community safety, one of the things I was going to talk about, was what do we do when it does not work? It would be lovely to sit around here and pretend that it always works for us and we have it all sorted, but there are times for us where it does not work or we do not get it right. That example of Little Malop central is a classic. You know, 15 years ago that space had an amphitheatre, it was closed off to traffic, it was very much a pedestrian mall and there was a lot of negative media, there was a lot of negative perceptions. It had a music store off it, there was a pool hall, there was an outpost in the middle that worked with people who were homeless, and did various things. It was seen to be a very unsafe place. A couple of incidents occurred, they received a lot of media.

In actual fact if you looked at the percentage of crime data for that area and the perception of the space, I think it has always had the perception that it is a more unsafe place than the data would say. How do you manage that? How do you manage people's perceptions about a place? It goes back to what Steve was talking about, about place-making. What is our role at council? Is our role to buy into those perceptions, or is it to try and counterbalance some of that. That is probably one of the challenges we have.

After it was all closed off and it was a mall and there was no traffic, et cetera, then we decided what needed to happen was the need to open it up, we needed to put traffic back in there and change the use of the space. But lo and behold we are back on the front page, 'It's a terrible place,' and that type of stuff. Over the years we have been doing a range of things for that. All you need is one or two really negative incidents to occur and the perception of a place can change quite quickly, no matter what you do, no matter how many cameras you have in there, how many people, how many meetings with traders, and those things. We are sometimes a little bit at the mercy of some of that. What do we do, we go back to our relationships. We go back to police and say, 'Look, we're getting a lot of traders complaining. We're getting people ringing up. We've a strong perception that this isn't a great place to be. Could we put some more foot patrols in there?' We have done some daytime monitoring of the CCTV so we can collect some better evidence about what is happening in there. We can increase people's sense of safety by letting them know that the cameras are being monitored, therefore we have people able to run triple O immediately. We encourage traders to ring triple O. We talk to traders. We program the space. We do all of that.

We may be displacing these people and they are still members of our community. They may not be necessarily spending lots of money in that space but they are choosing to be

there and they have a right to be there. One of the issues we have with some of this crew is, what is council's role with an eight-year-old who is not at school or not with their family. We have the same issues in Whittington with kids riding those little electric motorbikes through public open space. What needed to happen for those kids is not for council to come in and put in a few more bollards to stop them riding their motorbike, what needed to happen for those kids was better early intervention when they were in kindergarten, better connection with school, more support for families who are disconnected. The workers in that space will tell you that the young people that they are working with are well known to the services and the networks—the ones who are really disengaged and who are negatively impacting community safety.

It is not a simple solution for those people often. Similarly, people with long-term drug and alcohol issues who we see in our public space, they are often the ones who confront our perceptions of community safety, and the clearly obvious homeless fellow who is on the street who confronts our sense of safety. If you like, they are some of the challenges that we have. More locally in terms of challenges, I am going to throw in a couple because you said you would like to hear about those: resourcing for liquor accords. Liquor accords have been around for 20 years now. One of the issues is, whose role is it to resource accords? The state government are collecting a larger pocket of money from licensees, from licence fees. Is there some opportunity to resource liquor accords. Here at council in the past we have funded events, extra training for security at venues and events, guest speakers, those things. We will happily do more of that but it seems that state government collect the licence fees, but councils and local police are the ones resourcing the accord. It would be great to have some way of adding to that. That could strengthen accords.

One of the challenges we have is the compulsory rotation of the police inspectors. Every three years they all get rotated. Three at once; all three of our inspectors who we have key relationships with were moved and were changed. All of the work that we have done over three years together walked out the door, and three new ones started, and we have nearly broken them in and it is going very well so far. That is one of the challenges for us is how you maintain the relationships, so much of the work that people here have talked about. How do you maintain those relationships and projects when the personnel are changing? I do not think it is ideal that they would all change at once, but that is how it happened that particular time.

The other one for us is about Neighbourhood Watch. We engage with Neighbourhood Watch at a number of levels. It is an interesting one. This is an organisation whose membership is largely ageing. One of the challenges for them is getting new people and how do you do this. I think in some ways, Neighbourhood Watch has a challenge ahead of it, about how it does its business in 2011 and beyond. The idea of collecting all this information and spending lots of time and money, putting out little leaflets into everyone's letterboxes. It is not on the net. You cannot go into www.neighbourhoodwatch and find out what is going on. Wouldn't that be a fantastic opportunity, but how do you assist that organisation to move on. One of the concerns we have had in the past is if Neighbourhood Watch does not continue there is a lot of volunteer hours gone from the community. We recently had Neighbourhood Watch here distributing the 50 in 'My Street' bin stickers, a great job for Neighbourhood Watch to go and do on rubbish night, on Thursday night, go out and put a sticker on every bin in 20 or 30 streets.

The same with the 'Remove It, Lock it, Lose It' stickers, encouraging people not to leave valuables. Police have a high number of thefts from motor cars, so getting stickers on rubbish bins out in the streets saying, 'Keep your valuables out of your car'. That is really good stuff that Neighbourhood Watch can do but how does the model look going forward if that is what it is going to do. Thank you.

Councillor FARRELL—It would be ideal if at the end of the presentations if we could allow five minutes for people to share their burning issues that may have been missed around the table, if that is okay.

The CHAIR—We still have 10 minutes.

Councillor FARRELL—There was one issue I wanted to raise with you, and I will provide it in written form. I do not want to take too much time today. It is around council and developing liquor policies, given the changes to planning permit legislation. There is a lot of work going on in that area. It involves partnerships, it involves a whole lot of things around councils and picks up the point that you made before about [CPTED] which is Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, which is one of the issues that council has been looking at over a long period of time, but I will provide that in written form, if that is okay, rather than take up too much time now.

Mr LEANE—Can I go back to something that Lisa was talking about, whether the council should be in the business of dealing with perceptions of safety and how you do that. What is the relationship like with the local media, because a perception of someone that never goes to that mall, you are talking about, thinks it is the most scary, horrific place, people running around with chainsaws, compared to the reality of people that do go into that mall can be formed by what they read in the paper. So has there been any work done with the local media? Are they in partnership with everyone else as far as trying to deal with that issue of perception?

Ms ARMSTRONG-ROWE—We have not had a lot of luck, no.

Councillor FARRELL—They did make an approach to the Safety Committee to come and sit in our meetings. We had a very robust discussion around the table about how that would work. When we are in the room we do not always agree but it is safe to say when we walk out of the room we all stay on the same message. We felt the discussions in that room would be limited by the media being there, but what we did do in response was bring in one of the council's media officers to come into the room and look for opportunities that we could then take out of the room to the local media. I think it is fair to say we have not had a lot of luck with that. We have tried several times through John to promote different things that are going on through the Safety Committee. The perception in our local media is mostly around negative media, around this issue.

Insp. THOMPSON—I am going to throw my hat in the ring here. We have a local media strategy. Victoria Police has a media unit. I think we get on pretty well with our 'journos'. They are pretty much driven by their subeditors. Whatever the subeditors or the editors put in the paper that is what he or she will put in the paper. Any issues that are raised after the publication of that article that I or anybody, I think, it is fair to say, would have an issue with, you end up going back through your own liaisons, and the unfortunate thing is the paper is already printed and wait for the next day, and the community's confidence or thoughts have already been set. Sometimes it works well, when it does; unfortunately it sometimes takes a negative article to sway. If the COAG surveys come out the next day, that puts us all on the back foot. It is all a matter of timing.

Ms ARMSTRONG-ROWE—'Woman walks through mall every day for a month and nothing happens' is not really a headline we have seen. We see much more of the other stuff. All of us walk through there on a regular basis. I could not tell you how many times a month I have walked through there, and I can count on one hand the number of times I have seen anything that might be confronting. One of the issues is that because we have two shopping centres they have done a really good job. Their security has spent a

lot of time keeping out people they do not want inside there, so those people find somewhere to be, and it is not a great headline if nothing happens, but if you can find something to write about—

Mr BENTLEY—That strengthens the case for evidence gathering because quite often the discussion that is raised is an emotive one and if we are lacking in evidence then emotive issues get too much traction. We should not roll it out in reaction to an emotive campaign either, we should be regularly educating our community about the facts so they are informed and then emotive issues tend to get less traction. That is another support for good evidence.

Mr SCHEFFER—Thank you very much for that presentation. It was very interesting. It sounds like, despite your misgivings, things are going very well. What my question related to, it is really around a cluster of issues, evaluation, measuring success data and new directions that you, Steve, and others touched on in different ways. You said that data was centralised, and to some extent I guess it has to be. It needs to be consistent, it needs to be accessible and it needs to feed into planning obviously in that area. Are there models, or how would you see data gathering structured that it enables local access and a local feed into local planning, but also clearly satisfies the demands for a larger data set that we can look at across the state or indeed the nation.

Dr Palmer—I think there are two parts to the answer: (1) there are some models elsewhere, where you decentralise the data and data hubs, creating data hubs in major centres that give access to state based data, and national for that matter, in the regional hub. That is one approach and that is probably the large systemic approach. The other approach we used in another project which came out of binge-drinking funding, there was a local MOU that was between the city and Victoria Police and it was an analysis of parties going out of control, violence and mayhem, those kinds of things. We had a year's data on registered parties and also parties where police attended and we found that in fact despite *The Geelong Advertiser* did it now and then, in fact the main thing was that people had their stereos up too loud. It is not so much about parties but it is more about how you can have this local access to data around particular issues. That is a much more ad hoc, more time-consuming approach. The data hub, regional hubs would be a better systemic way—

Mr SCHEFFER—That was something you constructed in the City of Greater Geelong?

Dr Palmer—Yes.

Mr SCHEFFER—You did that locally. When you were talking before about data, I took it you were talking about, for example, police data centrally held.

Dr Palmer—That was more around things like assaults, those kind of offences. We had a very good relationship with local police. We felt it was best because you need subtleties with what is collected in the data, but we were forced to deal with central police headquarters. That created further problems because you centrally run data as postcode data. Postcode data is almost useless. You need to have data below postcode level. For instance, we are trying to talk about assaults in and around licensed premises, particularly in the entertainment area, a 3220 postcode. That also covers a range of other suburbs. It is not useful. Whereas locally to have this information, it is collected in much more detail on a local level. We also have it centrally but it seems if it is at a local level why can't you work out structures, then you can access it at a local level.

Mr SCHEFFER—Talking about issues locally, Lisa, you were talking about non-attendance at school of kids. Like, there are other data sets that might feed into the community safety. Could you put something together on that for us to think about because data is central to what we are thinking about here and that was a cogent point you were raising, and we might need something more on that.

Dr Palmer—Yes, I agree. It is well beyond police, it is also health data that is very important.

Mr SCHEFFER—Yes.

Dr Palmer—If I could add to that. The point that Lisa was making about the responsibilities of council vis-a-vis the state and Commonwealth for that matter. I have written elsewhere—we have been saying it for a long time—that local governments increasingly have been forced to take on a range of responsibilities around crime prevention and community safety without the additional increase in systemic funding, not the ad hoc, one-off program funding. It is a major issue that has not been addressed in the last 20 years when this has been happening. Go back 20 years ago, local government had almost no role at all in crime prevention and community safety. In that 20-year period, major developments. In terms of Victoria, Geelong is relatively well placed because it is a relatively big council in terms of area and in terms of funds and the like. You go outside to other local government areas and they cannot do this kind of work because they do not have the funding. I send students out there and they cannot go and talk to a community safety officer or crime prevention personnel because they do not exist. I think it is a state based issue.

The CHAIR—I am sure in that little question, the issues that the witnesses wanted to raise that have not been raised, we might cover a couple of these points.

Insp. PEERS—I have a little wish list. One that concerns me is gambling advertising, things that add to public order issues, antisocial behaviour. I would like to see a reduction in alcohol advertising. If we are serious about the matter, the number of deaths it causes in the community, under-age drinking, it is the whole package. That needs to be addressed. That is my first. My second, that Darren, Steve or Lisa touched on, was packaged outlets. Where they are placed, from a licensing perspective it is very hard for me to object to an application unless I have grounds. The onus needs to be on the applicant. He needs to demonstrate how it is not going to affect the amenities of the area. A good example was BWS—Beer, Wine and Spirits—wants to place an outlet near the police station. It is right beside the railway station, it is right beside another pub. There is going to be competition, cheap alcohol. There needs to be a greater say in that.

Another thing that concerns me is the length of time it takes to close some of these venues down that are operating incorrectly. A good example are those two I mentioned earlier on. It has taken nine months to close those places down. CFA members have more power than I have to close a venue down. I think that is farcical. It does not work. One that Darren did mention, I think we do need to reward those licensees that are doing the right thing. They are the ones, as I said before, are complying to the accords and there should be a reduction in their licence fees or a discount in some manner.

Mr SCHEFFER—You are saying that a potential proprietor of a liquor outlet, when they put in their planning they have to put in social impact studies?

Insp. PEERS—Yes.

The CHAIR—Are you suggesting if the state government imposed some restriction on a Dan Murphy's, for a commercial reason, advertising a run of spirits or beers or alcohol—

Insp. PEERS—Yes. It is like knocking back the happy hour. You do not advertise happy hours, why do you advertise cheap priced beer through the newspaper? It is the same thing.

The CHAIR—It is advertising its business. I am not disagreeing with you. Would you be so bold, while you are on a bit of a roll—the hours of a nightclub or beer barn or a premises selling alcohol or providing entertainment. We already have the two o'clock closing time. We had a pilot basically, different views stating whether it has been successful or unsuccessful. Is there a need to have an establishment open till five in the morning where patrons spill out—

Insp. PEERS—I would love to see—and I know Darren will not like it—the wheels turn backwards and 3 a.m. would be it, but that would be across the board. You would not have any objection by licensees—

Mr BATTIN—My grandfather said 6 p.m. is good enough.

Insp. THOMPSON—The local area has X amount of police and I think we are doing the best we can with those numbers. I will leave those thoughts that Darren and John raised because I do not think I am allowed to mention in relation to numbers. One of the other things relevant to prevention, I always remember a long time ago when I took an oath, my job is to uphold Her Majesty's peace, and the other one is to prevent crime. Over at the station we are all responsible to prevent crime, but a lot of our duties at the moment seem to be enforcement led. We have one crime prevention officer over there. To me that does not make sense and whether that is an internal issue I am not quite sure.

The other thing relates to what Darren raised before. Darren and I had very light conversations in support of information sharing. With regards to prevention, part of our whole role with Victoria Police is identifying various areas relevant to prevention, intelligence and enforcement. The middle area would be intelligence; intelligence in relation to information. We have the key stakeholders within this room now, they have all sat down and represented the Local Safety Committee and yet I do not really produce the information that I think I should produce to this Local Safety Committee. The issues relating to privacy and a few other factors would be relevant but we are all working for the same community and yet the information that I could go over and get now at my intelligence unit would be 100 per cent in line with regards to part of that role which Victoria Police does play relevant to prevention.

One of the first things we talk about at our tasking coordination meetings is prevention, not the crime. 'Let's worry about enforcement a bit later, but let's talk about prevention.' I can sit there and go, 'Okay, I can talk to my youth resource officers, talk to my crime prevention officer and talk to my multicultural liaison officer and here's the information. This is why, and this is the intelligence spread that I can provide.' I would love to be able to say, 'Listen, Darren, you're the represent in relation to the Local Safety Committee sitting back and getting all this information. This is where the police sit at a local level.' I think that would be a viable approach because some of the information we have, and some of the information I would love to be able to give to him, package it all together to be given back to this environment to make a positive approach with regards to the prevention levels, as far as the police are concerned, would be the way to go. Information is one thing and intelligence is another, and I think some of the intelligence Darren should have.

Mr FRAME—I would simply support what Gary has said. I do not want to keep beating this issue of police numbers, but to put that in some perspective, I worked here as a constable in 1967. We ran three divisional vans on the night shift. I do not think they are running three divisional vans on night shift now in Geelong. I know Corio is in place which was not there then, but we did have a station at Norlane that worked from two or three o'clock in the morning. I think there is a resourcing issue there and it is a fairly significant one.

Mr SCHEFFER—You did that raw data from 1960 whatever.

Mr FRAME—Yes.

Mr SCHEFFER—What would the police command say to that? They would have a whole range of things that they would—

Mr FRAME—Sure. At the end of the day we accept that the government will provide X number of resources to Victoria Police, and where they are put then becomes a matter for police command.

Mr SCHEFFER—They say policing has become a lot more modern with telecommunications and vehicles, a whole range of things, and you cannot put raw numbers, what it was in the 60s.

Mr FRAME—No, you cannot look at those raw numbers, but if you look at raw numbers of the population back then too, then you could run the argument and say, 'Back then you had three vans for'—however many people were there then. It would be lucky to have been 1,000 then, I would have thought. You have a much larger population now, and I accept there is a whole range of other things that have been put into place.

Mr SCHEFFER—Fair enough.

Ms McMAHON—For me I think crime prevention and community safety is a totally complex issue. The evidence of all the people who have been sitting around the table and talking today is an indication that no one solution is right for it. From my perspective it is about being mindful that we need to have different approaches to deal with various issues.

Dr Palmer—One further thing, it was mentioned before, a question of what works, and we were talking about the mall. We have to acknowledge that at times what works is interpreted quite differently and at certain times there are people who are very much about social exclusion, not inclusion. They are wanting to exclude certain types of people because they are not good consumers. They do not dress and look the same way as everybody else. When we are talking about crime prevention and community safety and the like we have to keep that in mind, keep a sense of proportion around these ideas about exclusion and inclusion, particularly when we talk about young people who are learning their way in life, and we want to do no harm, as much as possible do no harm. We want to try to develop ways to include, not exclude them.

Mr BENTLEY—One last comment it made me think about as a local example—and this is emphasising the importance of good design, and again back to the place-making principles of what I hear from place managers. If we can insist on planning standards that require good design and we feel strongly about. I heard someone talk recently that was being de-resourced. A good example is we are building an activity area down on the waterfront which is in essence a skate park. The public was very concerned and said, 'What are you building a skate park for? You're going to have bad people,

graffiti and all that stuff.' It was a very long process, a lot of engagement, but in essence it was designed well. It has won national awards and I think it is a very good example of putting something in a precinct where people said, 'You're crazy,' and it has worked so well, and it has been able to include young people. It came out of this place management thing where—that is one of the things people said, 'If you can design places right in the first place, rather than trying to retrofit with cameras and stuff, it's really one of the answers.'

Mr BATTIN—Obviously you have your youth precinct down here. What considerations do you take into place—a lot of skate parks are behind trees. The original design of them was you put them out of sight, out of mind, and that is where a lot of issues arise. I am not saying this is in Geelong. We can go through my electorate where a lot are behind trees, behind buildings, the back of the tennis courts, and you cannot see them from the road. That was a big issue because they are a place to hang out, and the kids who wanted to use it for skate parks could not. What did you take into consideration in the design when you were putting in the skate park?

Councillor FARRELL—It was a long process, as Steve said, that involved lots of young people. The very first thing that happened is we decided it would go on the waterfront, which is prime real estate, and there was criticism around that. The other thing is that it was not designed solely as a skate park, there were elements of basketball, music, a whole lot of things. It is a family space rather than a 12 to 18-year-old space. I go there regularly with my grandkids who are quite tiny on their scooters. It is a place where I would feel very comfortable. It is very open. As much as we would like to have trees for shade, we have shade spots in there. It is quite open and people see it as they go past. That was very much a part of it. It was also funded federally with the state and with council which was maybe the really important partnership. It was in excess of \$1.6 million. It was a fair commitment by this council to value young people in our region.

There is a lovely story that comes out of it. We had an iPod connection in there, and young people kept breaking into the connection and putting in their iPods. Our youth development team decided we would put the iPod connection out in the open but there are rules around it. If you play songs that are inflammatory or use bad language you cannot plug your iPod into that space. It is very much about young people. We also have a YAPA program where young people design the programs that go into that space. As well as giving them a space, we have given them ownership of design, ownership of programs. There are a whole lot of things that go on in that space that are not only skating.

Mr SCHEFFER—We have talked to people that are very much in love with surveillance cameras and I was noticing when we went around and you gave your presentations that you have stepped away from that. Were you saying, Steve, that Darren had done research on it in the past?

Mr BENTLEY—I think it is one of 10. If you said, 'What's the answer?' I think there are probably 10 things. It is about programs, people and space. Cameras have a role, no doubt about it. More often than not I see them as working best when someone has mistakenly perhaps over-indulged. You might see a young girl that has collapsed on the footpath because she has had too much to drink. We can notify people about that. She is vulnerable and she is at risk. We can get resources to her, be it an ambulance or a cab or whatever, and stop something happening, rather than saying, 'We caught someone breaking into a shop and the cops can ping them and send them to gaol.' There is a little bit of that, but if you use it to support the community, rather than prosecute your community, that is where they have a better role.

Mr SCHEFFER—What I picked up from the conversation was about surveillance, about evidence and prevention, and I do not have any evidence but I think that some elements of surveillance might be successful. I am not sure about prevention, and I do not know how much evidence sticks; sometimes it may and sometimes it might not. I am wondering, do you have any research around that? Have there been studies done on it?

Dr Palmer—There are several, some closed or some ongoing as well. Probably one that would go directly to the issue of surveillance and safety is funded by the Chronology Research Council. It has not been released yet. The funder controls it. That is a window that covers a four-year period. The DANTE research, which I mentioned earlier, will be October, and that is given to the funder. It is up to them to release it. This is federal money. In relation to the cameras, it is still the ongoing federal money. This is where the federal government has been putting money into CCTV systems in particular. Often it is a period to fund the infrastructure but then councils get left with having to maintain it, funding monitors, those kinds of things. There are a couple of other studies but in terms of the nearest release—there was one to the federal government as well. I am not sure where that is in terms of its release. It was more focused on cameras, buses, a couple of other issues.

The more general point is to say, going back seven or eight years ago there was more of an emphasis on hardware, on surveillance, on technology as the solution. I am probably overstating it a bit, but it makes the point. Whereas I think in time, as problems kept rolling on, even though you are putting some money into CCTV, then you put more and more, you realise there is a range of other things. I am overstating the case but it is really saying that crime is a complex thing. Why an individual does a particular thing, why a place turns into a criminal agenda place. It is complex in terms of understanding the causal factors. It is complex in terms of solving it. You can do heavy law enforcement for a period that might work up to a point, even though the international evidence is that it does not really work in terms of longer-term periods. Problems re-emerge, either in the same place or in a different place or in a different way. What has more or less developed in Geelong is a much more even spread of activities. Much more can be done but it needs funding to be done beyond more police. I support more police but I think there are other things as well that need funding.

Ms ARMSTRONG-ROWE—The only piece of research we still would like to do more in discussion about is going back and looking at not only our camera surveillance history, but we collect the incident sheets every night. We have camera monitors at key times and they have a radio handset, and then each of the venues, the night police patrol, the safe taxi rank, the night cleaning crew at McDonald's, and a couple of others, have hand-held radios. If there is an issue they use the radios to call and say, 'Look, there's a fight here,' so the camera monitor can then detect the cameras onto that and call the police or get someone around there or do something. The one piece of research we are really quite keen to do—because we know that cameras as a preventative on their own are not effective for intoxicated people. However, as a preventative tool if they are used in conjunction with eyewitnesses and a third party policing the people on the street, the bouncers at nightclubs, the cleaning crews, whoever, how many incidents are we able to prevent from escalating or to intervene early on, rather than waiting until someone is in hospital.

That is the one piece of research we would like, but the difficulty is who owns the data, having access to it. There are some complications around some of that. It is a tricky area in some ways. But it is not a dead issue, we need to work out how it could be done. It is complex because it is potentially Deakin, council and police all wanting to look at that

data and what it says. Then we have to trust our researchers and say, 'Here it is and let's see what the story is.' Do you know what I mean? We do not know. Sometimes people do not want to do the research because they do not know what it is going to say. Our guess is that it will say that we are able to prevent stuff by using the cameras in a certain way but we do not know.

Mr BATTIN—Do you have police in the control room with the cameras?

Ms ARMSTRONG-ROWE—Council staff. But there is also a monitor in the watch-house and it is passively monitored by police—three.

Councillor FARRELL—I am aware of the time and I will be very quick. You have heard from a multitude of people around the table today from a variety of organisations. I would hope that we have conveyed to you how strong the relationships are in Geelong and how important those relationships are to the work that we do in Geelong. I picked up three words that someone said earlier today—and I think it was Darren—that talked about innovative, experimental and creative solutions. They can only come out of place based issues and place based responses to those issues. That does not mean that we would not like to see several things happen at a state level. You have heard about incentives around licensing and the carrot and stick approach that we have talked about in our rooms for a long time, instead of the recalcitrant venue operators having the same licence provisions as those that do not work. Whether that is through a compulsory liquor accord or some other way, we feel quite strongly that that is something that could be influenced at a state level.

The NightRider buses is an important one for us. Melbourne is supplied with the funding to do that as a large regional city. Why are we excluded from that? We have talked about data provision and how important that is in the evaluations that are needed in this area. We have talked about support for police numbers across a whole range of agencies that we work with. We talked about camera networks. We believe locally that we cannot count what does not happen but we are fairly certain that a lot of things do not happen because of the cameras in place and the radio program. The other thing from a local government point of view is the resourcing of local governments to support accords, to support the work that is done with venues to have ongoing funding for evaluation of programs. Also there is a very immediate opportunity for the state government to assist us in developing our alcohol policies. As a result of recent legislation we are now in a position where councils across the state need to provide planning permits for packaged liquor. That is a new territory for us, although we have been advocating it for a long time. Whose responsibility is it? We talk about Department of Justice, Department of Planning and Community Development, police, local government—all have a role to play in that. We would like some support at a state level to develop those planning policies.

In closing, I would like to thank all my colleagues around the table for their support, both today and ongoing, and reinforce the fact that we work from a harm minimisation point of view across this area. This is about especially young people having a right to spaces, places and a social life, and it is our job to keep them safe. Thank you.

The CHAIR—Thank you. On behalf of the committee we would like to thank you all very much for making the time available this afternoon. There has been some good, constructive ideas that have come out and certainly some issues we can work on over a period of time to enlarge. We nearly did not have the opportunity, but I am glad we have, to be in Geelong and obviously to hear both this morning from a security point of view in relation to the Geelong Hospital, and also this afternoon the safety programs. Thank you, Jan, for organising your partners and stakeholders. I might ask one other

favour, if I can. I am not sure whether you are able to but I was wondering if we would be able to get a photograph with the committee and the Geelong presenters here if they wish. They do not have to but I thought we would like to at least mark the occasion,

Councillor FARRELL—We would be thrilled.

The CHAIR—Can I say we have a public hearing scheduled and we will try and keep to that. If there are people who have not registered but would like to speak in a public hearing, we certainly encourage that. We have about an hour or until 4.30 to do that. It is an opportunity for members of the public to present to the committee if they wish. They do have to register and they have to present on the same basis that the witnesses here presented this afternoon. Thank you very much.

Councillor FARRELL—Thank you.

Witnesses withdrew.

Committee adjourned.

DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Locally Based Approaches to Community Safety and Crime Prevention

Geelong — 8 August 2011

Members

Mr S. Ramsay
Mr S. Leane
Mr J. Scheffer

Mr B. Battin
Mr T. McCurdy

Chair: Mr S. Ramsay
Deputy Chair: Mr J. Scheffer

Staff

Acting Executive Officer: Mr M. Roberts
Committee Administrative Officer: Ms D. Woof

Witnesses

Ms K. Okotel, Community Lawyer, Barwon Community Legal Service;
Ms R. Rotherham, Division Co-ordinator, Neighbourhood Watch, Greater Geelong and Surf Coast Committee,
Mr S. Fisher, Quality Assurance Officer, Geelong Taxi Network;
Ms J. Lonzarich, Chairperson, Geelong South Public Tenant Group; and
Mr F. Covill, Community Representative, Geelong Local Safety Committee.

The CHAIR—We will open the public hearing part of this meeting this afternoon and welcome everyone here. I apologise, we are running a bit late. We started in Geelong Hospital this morning in relation to our first reference in regards to security in emergency wards, and then we have had a meeting with a number of witnesses this afternoon in relation to our second reference which involved crime prevention and community safety programs. We did want to allow the general public to make a verbal presentation to this joint parliamentary committee. We have allowed three-quarters of an hour for this session. Initially when we came here this morning we only had one witness to present but we now have four. On that basis, and given the time constraints, I would ask you to make your presentations fairly short and condensed, if possible, but to the point without stopping you from providing us with your views and the issues you want to present to the committee.

Our committee is called the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee. We have been given two references up to this stage, one of which I mentioned this morning which is looking at security arrangements in emergency wards of hospitals across Victoria, and we have already spoken to a number of hospitals, both interstate and in-state, and that reference will continue over the next few months. The crime prevention work that we are doing in relation to our first reference is looking at community safety programs, we are looking at Neighbourhood Watch, which was identified specifically in the reference, but other community programs across Victoria that have been successful and those that have been unsuccessful. Obviously through the submission period—both references are closed but we are still taking submissions, both verbally and written. I do suggest if there is anyone in this room that wants to provide a written submission they do so fairly quickly because our staff are starting to draft up the document given, firstly, our first reference has a short time frame, and the reference we are dealing with this afternoon is due to report back to parliament in March. There is now limited time for submissions to come forward in a written nature. Again I do encourage you, if you wish to make a written submission, to do so fairly quickly.

On my list I have Karina. Welcome. I understand you will be the first witness to present at this public hearing. I do have to read to you certain conditions around your evidence, and that will apply to all the speakers. I have Ronda, Steve and Janet, as I understand. Are there any other speakers that are registered to speak? Did I miss anyone out? I take it that four speakers will speak. Frank? Are you registered?

Mr COVILL—I am registered.

The CHAIR—Okay. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975 and further subject to the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, the Defamation Act 2005 and, where applicable, the provisions of reciprocal legislation in other Australian states and territories. Any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. I understand you have received the guide for witnesses presenting evidence to parliamentary committees. We are recording the evidence and will provide a proof version of the *Hansard* transcript at the earliest opportunity. You can correct it as appropriate. I also would like to flag that we do have press in the room as well. For those of you who might be speaking to the press, you do so on the basis that the evidence you have given does comply with the conditions I have read. Karina.

Ms OKOTEL—Thank you for the opportunity to present evidence to the committee. Barwon Community Legal Service provides free, independent legal advice, referral, casework and community education within the Barwon region. Our client base predominantly consists of people living with vulnerability and social disadvantage. Many of our clients are disadvantaged in terms of their lack of access to education, job security,

disability and age-related vulnerabilities, also by their exposure to domestic violence, drugs and alcohol issues. A significant proportion of our work involves assisting affected family members in applying for family violence intervention orders. The purpose of these intervention orders is to maximise safety for children and adults, prevent and reduce family violence and promote the accountability of perpetrators of family violence. The majority of our clients applying for intervention orders do not seek to impose criminal charges against the family member for their actions.

While family violence intervention orders by and large have a significant deterrent effect, there is a great need for measures to be taken which aim at reducing family violence from occurring in the first instance. According to a legal needs analysis of September last year carried out by our service, family violence is increasing in the region. Of concern is that our service often sees the same perpetrators of family violence re-partnering and committing family violence against another person. It is important that programs addressing family violence look at changing attitudes about what is and is not behaviour which is tolerated by the community. Conditions of a family violence intervention order should include rehabilitative measures, such as counselling, anger management and drug or alcohol rehabilitation or life skill training.

A further hurdle in preventing family violence is the difficulty in enforcing intervention orders once they are made. To establish a breach of an intervention order the police need to gather evidence before charges can be brought against a person. Typically it is difficult to produce sufficient evidence, hence often the practical outcome is that there is no consequence for the perpetrator for recommitting family violence. For example, a client of mine has an intervention order against her ex-partner. Since obtaining the order, her ex-partner has broken into her home and has also smashed a window at her home. Because it is her word against his, and because there is no third party to corroborate that her ex-partner attended her home in breach of the intervention order, the police have not charged him. Consequently my client continues to fear for her safety, despite having an intervention order in place, an order which if it included rehabilitation of the offender, such as requiring him to undergo counselling, may have had the deterrent effect which the intervention order has failed to provide.

Our service has also seen a steep increase in school bullying and stalking, including cyber bullying amongst young people. We are assisting a growing number of young people, particularly girls, to obtain intervention orders against minor children for serious conduct, including physical assaults. This kind of behaviour is steadily becoming commonplace, and young people are looking to intervention orders as the only means to stop this behaviour. There is a great lack of preventative measures available to stop this behaviour before the point where victims seek the protection of an intervention order. Where an order is made there again should be rehabilitative measures included, such as counselling and working with children and their parents to reinforce appropriate behaviours.

Our service has also seen a number of legal issues arising amongst new migrant groups and international students, particularly traffic or motor vehicle related offences. New migrant groups are generally uninformed about the rights and responsibilities in Australia. There is a great need for education about Australian law for newly arrived persons to prevent crimes being committed. In addressing this need our service has been involved in providing training to refugee clients of Diversitat, a local community organisation that conducts a refugee settlement program. We partner with Diversitat to tailor culturally appropriate training on Australian law for different ethnic groups. For example, Diversitat has asked our service to provide training for a group of newly arrived refugees from the same country who have particular issues within the community of excessive drinking and family violence. Hence our training will focus on these areas and we will address men and

women separately regarding family violence to ensure that the issue can be appropriately aired.

Community legal education activities like this are extremely important for the purpose of crime prevention. Our service is actively involved in community legal education, however, it would benefit the community for this aspect of our service to be expanded and suitably resourced. Community legal education could be extended to schools to educate children about school bullying and violence; to mothers attending maternal health centres on the issue of family violence; and to a wide variety of other groups in particular settings. Our casework experience indicates that there is a strong relationship between poverty and crime. Areas noted as having higher levels of poverty indicated, for example, by greater a concentration of transitional or public housing, have significantly higher levels of crime. Having limited resources in terms of appropriately targeting community legal education activities, concentrating on areas with higher levels of poverty, as well as specific groups like schoolchildren, would broadly cover the greatest need for community legal education in the most targeted way.

Anecdotally, we know that community legal education is both a crime prevention and victim empowering initiative. However, it is important that the effectiveness of community legal education be measured to better inform the role of community legal education in efforts to enhance community safety. Presently, we work with both Victoria Legal Aid and other organisations under the Federation of Community Legal Centres to learn from each other and ensure best practice is followed across community legal education activities. In conclusion, it is our submission that crime prevention can be enhanced by increasing community legal education to groups and in areas of greatest vulnerability, and by expanding powers of the court to order rehabilitative measures in intervention order matters to prevent criminal behaviours. In addition, it is important to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of drug and crime prevention measures and to adequately resource these measures. Thank you.

The CHAIR—Thank you. Any questions?

Mr SCHEFFER—Not a question but only to make a comment. That is a really excellent presentation where you have given a lot of good, potential recommendations there. We obviously need time to absorb what is a pretty dense presentation there. Thank you very much.

Mr BATTIN—Can we get a copy of that submission at all?

Ms OKOTEL—Yes.

Mr LEANE—Can I ask—and this would probably be from your personal experience or wider view—if any of those crime prevention set-ups—Neighbourhood Watch, for example. Neighbourhood Watch could be informed that there may be a family violence issue in a street, that people could look out for that particular family? Is there any interaction like that?

Ms OKOTEL—At present, no. It is complicated by legal privilege. If a client speaks to us we would need to get their permission.

Mr LEANE—That is correct, yes.

Ms OKOTEL—But that is certainly something that could be looked at in the future.

The CHAIR—In relation to intervention orders, is the suggestion that when a court places an intervention order on a person that the system then breaks down in the fact that it does not provide the rehabilitation, or is it not providing the protection of the order that it is supposed to be protecting? I am trying to understand where is the breakdown. The intervention order can be placed but then is the process broken down and the fact it does not offer any real protection to the person that is the victim?

Ms OKOTEL—In most cases an intervention order does seem to have a good deterrent effect for that particular relationship but there does tend to be a breakdown where we find there are a number of offenders that do not take the intervention order seriously and do breach it. Then there is a lack of consequences where it is not possible to gather enough evidence to show that they have breached it, because it moves from being a civil matter to a criminal matter. The burden of proof shifts from being balance of probabilities that someone has committed family violence at the initial intervention order stage, to proving that someone breached the order beyond reasonable doubt. That is where a breakdown happens. Also when someone re-partners we are finding a number of offenders keep coming up on the court books. They re-partner and commit family violence, and it is a bandaid reaction putting the intervention order in place in some situations.

In terms of what the court can order in terms of an intervention order, they can have a general order where someone is not to commit family violence, they can order that someone stay away from property, but in terms of proactive, rehabilitative orders, they generally do not exist. That may well be a step forward in terms of trying to change the behaviours which cause someone to commit family violence in the first instance.

The CHAIR—Thank you very much. I endorse the comments made by Johan, that is a well documented that will provide great value to our considerations.

Ms OKOTEL—Thank you.

The CHAIR—Ronda.

Ms ROTHERHAM—I am the division chairperson for Greater Geelong Surf Coast and Colac Otway Neighbourhood Watch Committee based here in Geelong. We have approximately 15 Neighbourhood Watch groups across Geelong and Surf Coast. They have certainly been dwindling over the past 12, 18 months for various reasons. We have a volunteer base of about 400 across that area. We are working to establish a committee in the Surf Coast Colac Otway area, but in the meantime the Greater Geelong committee is doing that job. We have a core group of volunteers who are very proactive and quite willing to travel across the Greater Geelong Surf Coast area to address crime trends as they are occurring, and in a way that Neighbourhood Watch is able to do. Our focus has changed over the past 12, 18 months from not only a single area, as Neighbourhood Watch has been renowned for over the years, but to a more police service area basis, as in the Geelong area, the Surf Coast area et cetera.

Our major focus over the past 12 months have been specifically theft from motor vehicles and also theft of vehicle registration plates. Our activities have been to attach bin stickers, in particularly Geelong West and East Geelong areas. There are 'park safe' decals that remind residents to lock their vehicles and remove all valuables, because that is the basic cause of these thefts, people leaving valuables in unlocked vehicles. That has been the focus of our efforts. With the 'Safe Plate' days, we attach one-way security screws to vehicles to prevent theft of registration plates. That has been our main focus. What is helping to focus our efforts more so is on a monthly basis we receive a report from the

Geelong police tasking and coordination meeting which gives us up-to-date information about the current crime issues that are occurring that enables us to address those issues fairly quickly.

We seem to have difficulty attracting volunteers. People these days seem to be protective of their leisure time. The case of both partners working does not leave a lot of time for voluntary effort in the community. That is a big difficulty for our organisation. On the other hand we are receiving unprecedented support from the Victorian government at present and I am sure that will enable us to promote the program from here. I am aware that you have already had presentations from Neighbourhood Watch and I am speaking only on a local basis here. That is about it, but I will put something in writing though and forward it to the committee as soon as possible. Thank you.

The CHAIR—Thank you. Any questions?

Mr SCHEFFER—The issue of Neighbourhood Watch as an organisation, we have not had a collective talk about it yet, but having listened to some witnesses and started to read and think a bit about Neighbourhood Watch, if I put the view to you that Neighbourhood Watch was an idea that history has now passed by, not only Neighbourhood Watch but a lot of organisations that grew in the 70s and 80s and came to quite a lot of prominence were based around the idea of a geographic community where people related to a street or a set of streets and knew their neighbours. We are now living in a world of virtual communities where we have instant information. We have Crime Stoppers, we have a whole lot of interactive functions where people can report crime and they can get information about their area pretty quickly, that an organisation like Neighbourhood Watch is not really very relevant today, and that is why you are having trouble—not only you but a whole lot of organisations—getting volunteers. The government might very well be wasting its money. What would your reaction to that be?

Ms ROTHERHAM—I certainly agree. The way the program was designed was a concept that was quite valid 26 years ago but, as you say, times have changed. This is where Neighbourhood Watch over the past 18 months has desperately tried to reorganise our focus, not only on that little neighbourhood area but more broadly. Also we are establishing, or we have launched a new website which is far more user-friendly, and more up-to-date news and information will be able to be placed on that. I have also established here a Facebook page which I am finding we are obtaining a lot more interaction via that media. It seems that people want to know what is going on, but they want to do it from their home and worry about themselves, rather than going out and getting involved in communities et cetera. That is why we are working hard with an online existence more so. But I do agree with you, time has passed us by.

The CHAIR—Thanks very much, Ronda.

Ms ROTHERHAM—Thank you.

The CHAIR—Steve Fisher.

Mr FISHER—Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity. I am Steve Fisher, I am the quality assurance officer for Geelong Taxi Network. On the books so far we have something like 500 drivers which we try and keep control of and keep records of and everything else. Some of the issues which have been coming up with the drivers is three years ago we had a spate of rock throwing. We notified the police, we even identified the house where they came from and the garden from which they picked up the rocks. To date nothing has happened. Now, another owner had a rock-throwing incident on the weekend, and this is his ninth one, believe it or not. To date no-one has been

injured but it is only a matter of time before someone is seriously injured with that. Also the violence towards the drivers on a Friday or Saturday night. The other night we had an armed robbery with a knife, two gentlemen were taken into custody by the police. It seems to be getting more and more on the violence side of things towards the driver. It does not matter what protection you give the drivers, there is always a way of getting them. They are meant to have safety screens in the car but it is the drivers choice as to whether they use those or not. Nine times out of 10 the driver will not use them because that, they can see, creates another problem with talking to the passenger or collecting money or other things.

We have had a lot of issues with runners, that is people not paying. Clearly the drivers are told when they go to report it that it is a civil matter and not a criminal matter. Clearly, in my books it is not, it is a criminal matter. If we took \$20 out of someone's pay packet each week they would be pretty dark on it as well, but this is a continuation of what is going on in the taxi industry. We also believe Mr Fels—which is a different thing altogether—is targeting the NSPs, which is the network service provider, and not necessarily trying to help the drivers to provide a better service. It is coming to the point now where on a Friday or Saturday night where the drivers will not work and will not clear some of the drunks out of the city. We are in talks at the moment with Mr Bentley in trying to improve the safe rank and getting taxi marshals on there as well. Clearly it is becoming a major problem. It is only a matter of time that I can see before something major happens.

We have talked to the police on several occasions and it is not necessarily their fault all the time because clearly they are undermanned. I do not know what we will do about it as regards to fare evasion or anything else, but it is becoming a major problem. It has happened 30 or 40 times a week. The reason that some of them are not getting reported is because they are told that nothing can be done.

The CHAIR—I understand the Geelong taxi industry is not part of the Fels inquiry. Is that right?

Mr FISHER—It is because we are supplying an awful lot of information to the Fels inquiry because we are the NSP, which is the network service provider.

The CHAIR—Right.

Mr BATTIN—You said there are screens in the car for crime prevention. What other things do you have in the vehicles that offer crime prevention or safety for your driver?

Mr FISHER—We have cameras but clearly in some cases too the person that hops in the car will rip the camera off the windscreen. Consequently that is \$2,000 every time they do that because it damages the camera and then you have to rewire the whole thing. The thing that annoys us—and I am sorry for getting on my high horse about it but nothing ever seems to happen with the person that is doing this alleged act, you know. In fact one driver was told when he was punched in the face one night, 'It's part of your job.'

Mr BATTIN—We cannot comment on individual cases but there are relevant paths for those. A lot of those ones you have mentioned I think you should be following them up with the ombudsman. You have cameras, you have screens, but in an ideal world what would you put in place to prevent crime?

Mr FISHER—I think if more people would charge for runners, fare evasion, and clearly we can identify a lot of them. They have no intentions of paying and they take off at the end of the trip.

Mr BATTIN—Do you have prepaid?

Mr FISHER—They do have prepaid, yes, but we are talking about during the day as well.

Mr BATTIN—Okay.

Mr FISHER—If the driver does not ask for prepayment after 10 o'clock then he is at fault as well. But technically some people just wave \$20 and say, 'Listen, I'll give it to you at the end, mate,' and they con them into it, and the driver says, 'Yes, all right, no worries.' They go further than what they have and the next thing you know they have taken off.

The CHAIR—It does remind me of an example we were given—I think it was in WA, and I will stand corrected—where the bus line service was talking about glass grafitti, or sgrafitti, something I was not familiar with at the time, whereby they had to replace the glass. The kids grafittied the glass and it then becomes unroadworthy or an occupational health and safety issue. They have to replace the glass, and they were talking many millions of dollars, yet the actual penalty to the offence was nuisance or something like that, where it should have been wilful destruction. I am thinking if the view from those guilty parties is that they can create destruction under the legal term of being nuisance, then they will continue to do it because the penalties really are not strict enough. It is the same thing as creating damage in a taxi. If it is merely a nuisance, 'Naughty boy, go home', then of course it is not providing any deterrent.

Mr FISHER—We have even had football clubs which have taken headrests out of our vehicles which deems it unroadworthy straightaway. We get the money from the football club itself, otherwise we would have taken civil action against them. I find it hard to believe some of the issues that are going on, and the drivers are becoming frustrated. Then they come to me, and it does not seem to be going anywhere, that is all.

The CHAIR—I hope the Fels inquiry—I know you say it does not look at the driver aspect so much but I am sure it will be part of that wider inquiry into the taxi industry.

Mr SCHEFFER—I wanted to ask you, how do you gather the views of your drivers and what do they tell you when they do?

Mr FISHER—If they have an incident that happens, what I encourage them to do is report it to the police straightaway. A lot of the times they do not. Then after that, the very next day or as soon as possible they come into me and fill out a police report of which then I will email to the person that I deal with and then hopefully we get an answer. To date we have had no answers on those things.

Mr SCHEFFER—I was really coming from where Brad was coming from. In terms of prevention, looking forward, what ideas do they have about their practice? I am absolutely not talking about blaming victims or anything like that but I did recently have a long cab ride from the airport from Tullamarine into the city with a cab driver of African origin, and we talked about this issue. He talked to me about how he felt a lot of his colleagues did not have the interpersonal skills often, and I am not saying it is their fault, I do not think there is ever an excuse for harming someone ever, no matter what, but at the same time as part of prevention we have been talking to emergency wards about difficult patients coming in that are stressed or one thing and another. Cab drivers often find themselves in a very sophisticated situation where they have to negotiate with people that are drunk, stressed, a whole range of things, that there would seem to me to be some merit

in assisting cab drivers to better understand, particularly if a lot of them do not come from Australian cultures, how to read people's behaviour, how to understand slang, how to pick up nuance. What might be a joke may not be interpreted as a joke. They are people at the forefront of dealing with very complex situations, not only driving someone somewhere and picking up the dough, it is a whole opportunity for a one-on-one conversation, for example. Is work being done in that area?

Mr FISHER—Yes, I usually talk to the drivers when they go through their training sessions and try and tell them that if they get a passenger that is becoming unruly in the car then do not get argumentative towards them or anything else. If they say the sky is pink, then it is pink at midnight, or whatever. But try and smile all the time and keep it low key. Sometimes that is not always possible.

The CHAIR—Sure. Thank you.

Ms LONZARICH—I am in public housing and I am chairperson of the Tenant Group for Geelong South. I was not prepared to speak, I was here more to listen because I was not sure what the gist of this was about. It is about antisocial behaviour with public housing tenants, housing more people with drug and alcohol use or mental illness. Obviously I have no objection to that but when somebody with those conditions, neighbours or whatever, play up, the repercussions from that are horrendous for the rest of the people living in public housing. Having been through it myself, there is nothing that can be done. Housing are limited, they are landlords, they are not social workers or anything else. The police are limited to what they can do. There is no support for these people—or it seems there is but not enough support for the people causing the antisocial behaviour.

It is an horrendous thing from go to whoa, the people causing it, they cannot be living happy lives. The people who have to live with it are certainly not. You lose sleep, you fear for your life sometimes. It is not good. There are not enough police. There is not enough money being spent on mental health. As I said, Public Housing, they are landlords and all they can do is evict that person, but from the time it starts, to the time they are even evicted can be months, up to two years in some cases. The situation is not good and it is getting worse. In East Geelong where I live, in the last three and a half years it has escalated. The police figures say it is not but that is because a lot of people will not report things. They might report it to Housing, but Housing do not seem to report it to the police. There are no accurate figures on what is going on because people are too scared to report it in case the neighbours retaliate. That is the situation at the moment.

The CHAIR—Thank you, Janet. We are aware of that and certainly, as years go by, we look back at what we did with public housing, and housing commission flats, the way they were structured and socialised, but we are learning from those mistakes. I take on board your comments. I might say it is not only public housing where you get the neighbour from hell.

Ms LONZARICH—Quite true. But what is happening in public housing is it is happening in the 55 and over units that are in clusters, and it is people who are, maybe, more alcoholics. They are being rehabilitated and put in public housing as sobered-up people, but they do not stay that way. It is affecting the elderly. Where I live there are 80-year-olds and they were affected badly by the antisocial behaviour that went on for two months with a guy threatening to kill us, throwing rocks, setting fire to the hedges. You are right, it is happening everywhere, it is not only public housing but that is where the majority of people are being housed that are affected by it.

The CHAIR—Thank you, Janet. We will take on board those comments.

Ms LONZARICH—Thank you.

The CHAIR—Frank, are you representing yourself or an organisation?

Mr COVILL —I am a member of the community of Geelong and I want to be quite sure you understand Geelong though you are probably bored to death already by now. I am a member of the Geelong Local Safety Committee and its work in this area. I think it is very significant. Over 19, up to 25 different organisations meet once a month, and although some of them obviously have their own enrichment prospect, in general they are give and take in a very good manner. I am lucky, being in the community, my position is not at risk in any way, so I can comment as I wish.

There have been some wonderful starts in Geelong. If you look at Nightlife, which you have no doubt heard about during the day, an organisation which was able to blend both CCTV, scanning and radios together through a variety of organisations, and this is the big thing about this safety committee. You go from the sublime to the ridiculous where in fact there is a very good program for child restraints in motor vehicles. All these things blend together and help with the safety of those in Geelong. Also such things as the talks that police and the fire service give to the migrants in Geelong helps to blend them into the community and again it saves us, in the future, other hassles. We must not forget Corrections, and particularly Community Corrections, in their key part in keeping our streets safe and preventing crime or even stemming it in some cases.

The committee has four main objectives and they rotate these through monthly. In fact what we thought five, six months ago might well be tempered by what we think today. Those four objectives are the Greater Geelong area which has Nightlife and those sorts of complications. Next we have safety in the community with Neighbourhood Watch and all those other agencies. The third is safety within the home itself, old men falling off ladders or whatever. The fourth objective is road safety. All your objectives revolve through this safety committee over and over again.

How do they get the message out? Well, mainly by brochures and talk. There is an effective one at the moment that is going around which is 'Community Safety is Everyone's Business'. It is a magnificent fridge magnet which tells people in no uncertain terms what to do if there is noise next door or the roof has fallen in or whatever. Of course there is 'So You Know', which is more a Nightlife affair which lists all the penalties for people who transgress in any way. Knowing the penalties, I think, is a very good thing.

Sorry to take up your time but I feel quite strongly that the community in Geelong gets a say and is able to assist in the blending of those organisations.

The CHAIR—Thanks, Frank. Is there a suggestion that they are not getting a say in the programs presently running?

Mr COVILL —I think they all have the opportunity to contribute to the safety in Geelong.

The CHAIR—You are very supportive of what is happening around Geelong in relation to—

Mr COVILL —Yes, very much so. You have so many different organisations, it is very hard to blend them to one purpose. Obviously a person representing a particular organisation has to fight for that particular position, but to be able to bring them together and keep them out of silos I think is good.

The CHAIR—Thank you. I understand we have covered all those that wanted to present to the committee this afternoon. I have my list as being complete. We have given plenty of opportunity to those that wished to speak to this committee and who have done so this afternoon. I thank you all very much. Thank you for the people that have put their time aside to come and listen. Again I want to re-emphasise both our references are still active and we certainly encourage those who have not submitted, to submit a written submission to the joint parliamentary committee for drugs and crime prevention, both on either the first reference which is about community safety programs, specifically Neighbourhood Watch as one—not the only one—but one that we are certainly going to look quite critically at, and also the security issues around emergency wards in hospitals where we had some discussion earlier with Barwon Health and Geelong Hospital this morning. I believe today has been of great value to us in our deliberations in relation to recommending to parliament later in the year and next year the two references. I close this public hearing. For the record it is 4.35.

Witnesses withdrew.

Committee adjourned.

DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Locally Based Approaches to Community Safety and Crime Prevention

Melbourne — 9 August 2011

Members

Mr B. Battin	Mr S. Ramsay
Mr S. Leane	Mr J. Scheffer
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Witnesses

Dr. R. Walker, Associate Professor / Health Promotion Course Coordinator,
School of Public Health and Biosciences, La Trobe University;

Mr J. Thexton; and

Mr R. Foglia.

The CHAIR — I welcome Dr Rae Walker, John Thexton and Raul Foglia. I understand Dr Walker will start by providing evidence to the committee, and then John has a PowerPoint presentation to take us through.

Mr THEXTON — Basically, we have a PowerPoint presentation, and the way we thought we might go is to chip in at various times, if that is okay with the committee, just to cover any particular points.

The CHAIR — And what form of evidence is Raul going to provide? Is it supporting evidence?

Mr THEXTON — Raul is a clinician with PACT. He was involved in the establishment of the original concept. He can say how it works.

The CHAIR — All right. We will let you three organise that. We have allowed from 9.15 a.m. until 10.00 a.m. for this session. We like to have an opportunity to ask questions, perhaps after your individual presentations, because obviously we need to get information that we are seeking as well as you providing information to us.

Given this is a public hearing I also have to advise you of certain conditions surrounding it, if you will bear with me for a second. I will then invite you to present to the committee. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975 and is further subject to the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, the Defamation Act 2005 and, where applicable, the provisions of reciprocal legislation in other Australian states and territories. Any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege.

I understand that Danielle has provided you with a guide for witnesses presenting evidence to parliamentary committees. We are recording your evidence, and we have Hansard reporters to do that. We will provide a proof version of the transcript at the earliest opportunity so you can correct it as appropriate. If you would now like to present to the committee, Dr Walker.

Dr WALKER — Would it be appropriate if we tried to present the whole story? There are certain sections of it on which I can elaborate if you wish. It might make more sense. I am very happy to respond and to talk in my area of expertise at any point through the presentation. Would that be — —

The CHAIR — That is fine. I understand there are three of you to present evidence to the committee, and you can do that as you wish.

Dr WALKER — We can provide it in an organised way, and then you can — I was going to use the word ‘interrogate’ us. We are very happy to stop and explore things.

The CHAIR — Thank you.

Overheads shown.

Mr THEXTON — Basically, the concept started around about 2000 when I had a meeting with Plenty Valley Community Health. The concern then was that people with drug and alcohol issues were continually coming to the notice of police. What we thought was that if we were able to intervene as close to the time of arrest as possible, we would be able to get them into drug and alcohol counselling and try to prevent their recidivism. Obviously a lot of the families of the various people who were involved were at their wits’ end. The people who we were looking to help at that particular stage were quite often people who were addicted to heroin or other drugs, and basically they were stealing to

support their habit. They were committing large numbers of burglaries, street robberies and that type of thing.

The other group that we were trying to address were people who were quite often heavy users of cannabis. In some cases they had psychiatric problems as well, which may have been induced by the cannabis or whatever; it is a bit hard to know which came first. Invariably these people were still be living at home. They were in their early 20s, and quite often they had been involved in damaging the house and assaulting other family members and the like. That is the cohort we started off with.

We got some funding through the Victorian Law Enforcement Drug Fund, and we employed Raul; it was a joint venture between Plenty Valley Community Health and Victoria Police. Raul came on board, and over a period of time the focus changed. What it became was an interdisciplinary team — Raul is a psychologist — to tackle a whole range of different things. As I think everybody acknowledges, nobody has just one issue; quite often they are interrelated. Basically what we had was a small segment of the population that took up an enormous amount of police and emergency services time and resources. It is a segment of the population that has enormous difficulty in effectively accessing health services, and Raul will talk about that as we go along. Basically, if you try to make an appointment for this group of people, it is quite difficult because they do not keep appointments; they do not turn up. Other things intervene in their lives and so on. They are quite difficult to get to the starting block. As I have already covered a little bit, they often have multiple and complex needs.

This slide deals with the interconnectedness of issues. It is taken from the document *Because Mental Health Matters*, which was produced in 2008. As you can see on the chart, around 30 per cent of homeless people have mental health problems and some 28 per cent of newly remanded offenders suffer mental illness and have rates of bipolar disorder and schizophrenia that are 10 times that of the general population. Almost 33 per cent of alcohol and drug treatment clients need access to private or public mental health services. Importantly, emergency department mental health presentations had increased on average by 6 per cent per year between 2001 and 2007–08, and the number of people who need urgent, intense mental health care has been rising at 10 per cent per year. Over that eight-year period there has been an 80 per cent increase in presentations to emergency departments. That is just one area, when we are talking about mental health, around the interconnectedness of issues.

If we look at the research in relation to these things, if this segment of the population can be engaged and can receive appropriate assistance, re-attendance by police and emergency services can be dramatically reduced. That has a number of implications for policing. One is that the police can then concentrate on other issues. As I say to my members, there are plenty of crooks out there; we do not need to be catching the same ones all the time. So it frees up police resources.

It is also an occupational health and safety issue, because quite often what happens is that police have to return, but they return to an address or a situation where there are escalating levels of violence. Obviously that is a safety factor for the police attending, but it is also a safety factor for the other family members and the person involved in that situation.

Research also shows that simple referrals — just handing a person a card — is virtually useless. You really need to be inventive and tailor the interventions to the individual, but the services at the moment do not have the capacity to provide that intensive outreach.

Mr FOGLIA — Basically what we do is enhance the capacity of the services to engage clients. The service provision is there but there is no connection with the clients really accessing and taking advantage of the services that are offered in the community. Our role is to meet the client, wherever they are, at the point of contact with police. Sometimes they are what we technically call pre-contemplators, people who are happy drug users or have no awareness of the complex implications of their behaviour. We meet them at that stage and try to work with them until they start really understanding or acknowledging that there is a problem they could address and that that may improve their quality of life.

It may sometimes take a one-off intervention or it may take five months of work until the person realises, 'Yes, I need help and there is help available if I want it'. From our end in practical terms it involves sometimes driving the client around. Driving in a car sometimes we make the most significant interventions in a very subliminal world. It is a very unorthodox way of engaging people and talking about anything, and people tend to disclose their issues. That is a very significant point.

The other very important issue is that we have very consistent responses from the clients; they are very pleased that we go to them. We actually take the services to them. Many times we get the comment, 'I never expected you to come and meet me at my place', because they are not used to that.

Mr THEXTON — We have probably stepped forward a little bit there, but with respect to recognition of the problem, the *Because Mental Health Matters* document stated that there needs to be a rethinking of some of the boundaries and pathways that have guided service provision. That was critical. It also stated that it requires new types of relationships and shared responsibilities for assisting people with mental health problems across sectors. I would say that that would also apply to drug and alcohol, homelessness and a whole range of issues. It went on further to say that we need a concerted effort to break down barriers between services that prevent effective response to those in need. From a policy perspective in relation to policing, the current strategic plan, *The Way Ahead — 2008–2013*, says:

For everyone in Victoria, police are often the first point of contact when they need help. Where we can we help straightaway, and through our partnerships connect people with community and government organisations who can provide ongoing assistance.

In some respects and in reality police are basically an outreach service and a way of connecting people who are, as we have already laid out, difficult to engage.

In many localities there are already good relationships between police and primary health-care agencies, but what we are talking about here is enhancing that. Basically what we are talking about is taking an interdisciplinary approach, because at the moment there are a whole lot of referral pathways from police to community services — for example, you have drug and alcohol — which is a fragmented and limited way of getting people across to those services. It is perhaps most advanced in relation to family violence, where referrals are made. There is a whole range of areas that really have no formal referral pathways.

The alternative is that we keep on developing these referral pathways to specialist agencies to deal with specific problems, or we do what NARTT — the Northern Assessment, Referral and Treatment Team, which was established with Plenty Valley Community Health — did, or we go down the path of the PACT, which is the police and community triage team, which is building on the original concept. That is basically enabling police to make referrals to one area and then community services coming

together and forming interdisciplinary teams. Some of the advantages of that are that in the past people have fallen through the cracks because they do not fit the criteria or whatever. Also the advantage with PACT and this concept is that a lot of it is really about building relationships. The PACT program is located in the police station, so it is about building relationships with the police, it is about building relationships with the community services and it is about maintaining those relationships.

I notice that a lot of people here are representing country Victoria. In country Victoria it works well. In one respect it has to work in country Victoria because you have limited resources; therefore people have to work together. Where it works well, it works really well. But I am sure you are aware of where it might be dysfunctional as well and not work at all. All of this is very dependent on developing goodwill. This program can be expanded, but not by trying to roll it out from the top down. It is about individual communities — and that could be on a municipal basis — showing that they are ready to take this on board. Some of that work was done by the Department of Human Services in respect of family violence. If they were to be funded, people had to form consortiums, so you had the people who dealt with the perpetrators of family violence having to come together with people who dealt with the victims of family violence. What we are doing here is expanding in some respects on that model.

As you can see in the slide there, it is a key to building trust between police, health workers and clients. It is about personal relationships. This is not a bureaucratic approach where you just put people on a conveyor belt and expect them to come out the other end, because the fact is that, if you take that approach, people fall off the conveyor belt and never get to the other end. This is about really connecting people. It is about relationships. Rae, would you like to talk a little from the community health perspective about the importance of trust?

Dr WALKER — Yes. In the primary health-care sector, the notion of interdisciplinary teams and the notion of partnerships are very well developed, and we have good evidence of very successful outcomes from working in that way. I gave the committee a brief CV. I have done a lot of research around trust and partnerships, and one of the keys to it that I think underlies the approach that John is talking about, about having a strong relationship approach, is that people have to trust in a service to meet their needs. The client group that we are talking about are people who actually do not trust. You would not expect them to trust police, and you do not expect them to trust health services. What Raul's team needs to do to get them to accept going to a service for assistance, which actually makes a difference to them, is to begin to build a degree of trust, and he mentioned that people are surprised that they take the service out to them. That is a huge step in beginning to build that basis of trust where people say, 'Okay, I will accept and go to this service'.

The reason for that is that when people are deciding to trust someone a lot of it is emotional, and that is the dominant aspect, and a lot of it is also reasoned, and that is less dominant, but there is always that combination. The subtlety about the relationships is being able to deal with both. What the agencies need to be able to do is demonstrate that they care about the client and that they are concerned about the welfare of police as well. Secondly, they have to demonstrate outcomes and have to demonstrate that they are competent. We have evidence of that from evaluations, but we also have evidence of it from the responses of clients to the service in that they actually take up a service that they have not taken up previously.

It is an eminently manageable and very successful approach if you do it the right way, so locating Raul in the police station helps him with his relationships with the police to get

the flows of clients through and also allows him, if he does his work in the right way, which he does, to actually build a relationship with the client. It is like a three-part system that he is working within, and there need to be relationships to say, 'Yes, he gets good outcomes and, yes, he is trustworthy and, yes, the services can actually help the client'. It is quite a subtle process.

That leads into the final point that, if we are going to get effective links across the silo between policing and health services that actually achieve the outcomes of people being better and not making the demands on the police, they have to be set up in particular ways. I think that is the key message that I would like to make. It is effective. Health services can do it, but there are some things we need to put in place to make it work.

Mr FOGLIA — I will add a point to what Rae was saying. That particular way includes us remaining involved with the client. When we make an effective referral, we do not just give the client a telephone number and that is it; we actually go with the client and make sure that physically the client is getting to that service. Then we remain involved with the client and the service so that, if the client drops out for whatever reason, we pick up the client again, we visit the client again and we try to re-engage the client.

Sometimes it is because the service was perceived as not being receptive enough because the clients had particular problems. Whatever the reason, we try to figure out what happened and how we can try again next time. It is constant engagement with the client; it is not that we disengage. We disengage certainly because otherwise we get tired and we cannot pick up new clients, but once the service-client contract finishes we check it out and, if necessary, go back to the same person.

Mr THEXTON — There are a number of different models that try to emulate some of the things we are talking about today, and one of those is the Court Integrated Services Program, which has been operating for a number of years. Where that is different from what we are doing is that in order for people to get into that program, which I think operates in Morwell, Melbourne and Sunshine courts, of course they have to be charged. Where we are different is that the person does not necessarily have to be charged. The criterion is that they are likely to come into contact with police again, and in many cases they have come into contact with police on numerous occasions.

Mr FOGLIA — Another significant difference is that we remain involved. CISP has a problem in that it goes through a period of time and has a pre-sentence focus, and then after that the client cannot go back. In our case the client can call us anytime. Once the client has been referred to us, they remain a client forever, so the client can just ring us and say, 'I have a problem; can you fix it or can you help me?' Then we step in again. It is not connected to a determined period of time or a particular situation that the client is experiencing.

Mr THEXTON — Another interdisciplinary team is PACER, which is the police, ambulance and CAT team emergency response, and again that is a different response to the PACT team. In actual fact Raul is located at Moorabbin police station in the same room is the PACER team. Basically the PACER team is a police officer and a mental health clinician, and they will go out to more crisis situations where the police have gone there and calmed the situation down. Then the PACER team comes in and takes over so that it frees up the police to go and do other duties. Again that is an interdisciplinary team and something that has been very successful.

In respect to this program, we did establish a program at Shepparton, which was the SMART team — the Shepparton and Moira assessment referral and treatment team —

and also a program at Echuca, which was the border integrated referral team. They worked for a time and were quite successful, but support dropped away. The PACT team at the moment consists of Raul and another clinician. To actually get this type of model up and running does take additional people, but what we say is that in doing that you actually better connect the services that are already there. It will cost money, but for the outcomes that you achieve it will save a heck of a lot of money. Overseas there was some work done on programs that were not unlike this, and for every \$1 invested they were showing outcomes of up to \$7, I think it was, so it is a really good investment.

We had better get down to how it basically works, and hopefully you have a feel of some of that. Health-care professionals form teams at a municipal or police service area level. In the case of the PACT team, they cover a police division that is made up of three municipalities: Glen Eira, Bayside and Kingston. This enables police to refer a wide range of people, including victims and offenders or any person in need of assistance. You might have situations where you actually have two parties involved in family violence —

Mr FOGLIA — Yes, absolutely.

Mr THEXTON — and you are seeing both parties, but you have a firewall between the two, so you can cope with a family sort of situation. Quite often it will be parents, children and so forth and so on. To deal with these situations in isolation is probably unrealistic too, because quite often it is not just the individual who has come to the attention of the police who might be dysfunctional; it might be the family unit that is dysfunctional as well, so it makes sense to try to treat the whole rather than just the individual.

Mr FOGLIA — Just on that point, John, very often when we go to a place and make an assessment, the assessment gives us very different information to the original referring member's information. So sometimes the person is referred for shoplifting and we end up working in family violence, or if they are referred from mental health, we end up working on communication between parents and their teenage children. Almost always we find a different picture when we go and sit down with the family and discuss the issues that are concerning them.

Mr THEXTON — That obviously leads into the next point, which is that each person referred develops an individual action plan and is supported if further referral is required. Hopefully we have covered some of the advantages, but it significantly reduces the number of referral pathways for police. On that point police are introducing a referral for youth, and one of the things that is happening there is that there are discussions about that service being co-located with the PACT team. So that means you get that cross-flow of information between the people that are dealing with youth services and the rest of the triage type of area.

You have got positive occupational health and safety outcomes, which we have already discussed. You have got experts who assess and refer clients to the most appropriate services — not police. As Raul has covered, many times the reason why the person has been referred is not the underlying issue. It provides a more integrated response across sectors. Raul, would you like to touch on that as to how it works?

Mr FOGLIA — As the situation develops with the client we can really cut into very different services. For instance, for a client that has been charged for a petty crime we would provide access to legal services, drug and alcohol services, sometimes mental health services, psychiatric assessment or ongoing counselling that in the main we provide or with appropriate referral on to other services. We really try to bring all of these

different sectors together, and we remain in both. We adopt a sort of coordination role, and we help the client to manoeuvre through the whole system.

Mr THEXTON — And because you have one professional talking to another professional, that quite often smooths the way without the individual trying to tell their story half a dozen times to half a dozen different agencies.

The next point there is about timely response. One thing we have not mentioned is that if you have got a timely response, we believe that we have got a window of opportunity and when a crisis comes along — most people would think that having a copper standing in your lounge room was a crisis — people are prepared to actually make changes. If you present them with a pathway to go down to make some changes, they are more likely to take that on board, but that window of opportunity is often quite narrow.

Often in respect of, say, a family violence situation the victim, who is often the female, might say, 'Look, I'm never going to go through this again. I'm not going to put my kids through this. I'm not going to put up with this ever again'. But give it a few days; things have settled down, and they might say, 'We might see how it goes'. They think about the implications, that they might have to shift schools, the financial burden and all of that sort of stuff, and it just becomes overwhelming. Likewise from the perpetrator's point of view; they say, 'Look, I know I did the wrong thing. I went overboard. It wasn't justified', but again give it a few days, and all of a sudden it has become the copper's fault or it has become the wife's, the partner's, the kids' or somebody else's fault, but not theirs. So you have a limited window of opportunity. The same goes for drug and alcohol issues and quite often mental health and a whole range of things.

It promotes trust and sustainable commitment, and that goes for the police trusting the program and for other services trusting the program as well as the client trusting the program. It enables a holistic and integrated response. Obviously this is not going to work 100 per cent of the time, because quite often it has taken people 20 or 30 years to get to the situation where they are, and sometimes it takes a lot of time and effort to break down the barriers. Quite often people might disengage but then return later on. That is some of the stuff that was found by Plenty Valley Community Health. Six months later people will come back and say, 'I realise I do need some assistance'. That is basically it.

I think we have probably covered all those points. Police resources can be better deployed. An effective partnership between police and primary health carers is not difficult to accomplish, but it needs to be continually nurtured and worked on so that you can maintain that trust. I know Brad was involved with another interdisciplinary team program, which was Operation Newstart, where you had a teacher and a full-time police officer working with at-risk kids. I think that was very much part of maintaining that relationship. You need to maintain that trust, collaboration and cooperation. A relatively small investment in health makes for significant gains in policing efficiency and overall monetary and social costs to the community. I believe this is a way we can get far better outcomes for not a great deal of extra money. Interdisciplinary teams are a really viable way for government services as a whole, but policing services in particular, to move forward into the future.

The CHAIR — Thanks very much, John. We appreciate that. I think it is an interesting and quite proactive program. I quite like the idea of the justice-health interface. I think in your submission — and thank you very much for making your submission to this inquiry — you have identified areas and gaps of perhaps confusion and lack of interaction. Your submission indicates there is a more holistic approach in this program. I do not know how it has been evaluated, and questions might come out of the committee

about PACT, whether it has been used in other places, how it is evaluated and whether it promises to give the sort of outcomes that you have been suggesting. I think it is an important concept. I like the idea, and I invite the committee to ask questions.

Mr BATTIN — I worked out in Dandenong, and we had a program there with Visy Cares. Have you looked at the Visy Cares model?

Dr WALKER — Not specifically, no.

Mr BATTIN — It is based around youth. It has youth mental health, sexual health and many different services within one building. At one stage Victoria Police were involved with that, and I was the representative down there and quite regularly attended. Is that the kind of program you want overall, where they have the interaction between all of the services? Is that something you see?

Mr THEXTON — The thing with that is that the PACT team concept is that you have a person or people in that team who make those connections. They support the people connecting with all those types of centres. This aids that type of concept.

Dr WALKER — A lot of those co-location initiatives work up to a point, but it is a very passive kind of approach. What we are talking about with PACT, but we also talk about very much in coordinated care programs within the health centre, is that it is much more active. Sure, you want people to be able to relate to one another, and co-location helps that, but in itself it does not do much for the problem. But when you get people who are actively involved in linkage, in building relationships and in assessment of people's needs, that is when you start to get the outcomes. In the health sector, trials of coordinated care go back 10 or 15 years and are effective and a major part of the current health reforms.

Mr THEXTON — The key to this is to form interdisciplinary teams with people from different disciplines. At Plenty Valley Community Health they had a family violence person come on board and work in a team environment with the workers. So it goes beyond coordination; it is actually forming that team. One of the things that happened at Plenty Valley Community Health was that the drug and alcohol workers learnt from the family violence workers, and they went off and did some more study in respect of family violence issues. The domestic violence people said to Raul at one particular time, 'How do you get the police to actually make referrals?'. They were saying, 'We have this program set up, and they will not refer to it'. It is about building those relationships.

Mr FOGLIA — And trust with police. I think another important aspect is flexibility, because you can bring different services or sectors together, but they all have their rules and responsibilities to their own stakeholders. We work very flexibly. We could not operate without flexibility to the client and to the police, because without their support we would not be able to reach out to the clients and to the service sector, so we have to adjust to whatever rules are there in front of us, and we do that. That is the mobility and flexibility, which is crucial for this kind of approach.

Mr THEXTON — One of the things at the moment is that even though we have referrals to domestic violence services, and police officers will tick the box and make the formal referral, one of the difficulties — I am not going to say it is in every area, but certainly it is some of the areas — is trying to get the domestic violence services to report back as to how many referrals they actually got. Perhaps they do not see a need for it, but from our point of view if a police member has ticked the box, we should be able to say whether it actually reached the service. It is those type of things. Where you have an interdisciplinary team situation people learn the importance of these things and they get

the other point of view — the other person's point of view and the other service's point of view. The other thing is that not everybody in the health sector thinks the same. There are different philosophies and slightly different ways of doing things. It is a matter of bringing those types of things together. You can do that in a team environment, and people get a better understanding.

Mr SCHEFFER — I have two sets of questions.

Mr THEXTON — And hopefully I will shut up!

Mr SCHEFFER — One relates to resources. I understand what you put in your presentation, that it is a saving for police because they can get on with policing and a whole lot of other things, and then the resources go to NARTT and to triage teams. You touched on that when you went through it. Has there been a proper costing and analysis of that done, because, as you know, so often with these programs people want to look at the dollars and how it actually turns out. It sounds like there are savings, but are there?

Mr THEXTON — In 2004 there was an evaluation done for Crime Prevention Victoria of the NARTT program. In the material you have before you there is some very preliminary work looking at reoffending rates and that type of thing, but it really does need an evaluation.

We have got the PACT pilot that is going for 12 months. It commenced basically around 1 March. It was actually launched on, I think, 25 January, by Andrew McIntosh, the crime prevention minister. There is an evaluation built into the PACT pilot.

Mr SCHEFFER — When will that be completed by?

Mr THEXTON — The pilot will run for 12 months, and the evaluation will be concluded at the end of that time.

Dr WALKER — Can I respond from a different point of view. There is a community health service in outer Broadmeadows that I am developing some research with around a particularly difficult housing estate. They work closely with police, but they have tried to deal with some of these really difficult issues. When they have crunched the numbers they say, 'We cannot provide that service using the current funding formulae. We do what we can, but we can't actually provide that integrated care'. They can calculate what they cannot do, but we do not yet have the evidence.

Mr SCHEFFER — That is good; that answers that. The other bit, quickly, is that you talked about the police as the first point of contact, and then you talked about flexibility. Of course there is a continuum between flexibility and arbitrariness on the other hand, and we always jostle with that. With family violence it is pretty well established — I understand that — but when they make the initial assessment, who is in and who is out and how quickly can that become unmanageable?

Mr FOGLIA — The program is voluntary, so when the police charge or otherwise they deal with the situation that is in front of them, and they offer the prospective client the support through PACT. The service is confidential, like any other service. It is presented as voluntary, is free of cost and is outreach based.

Mr SCHEFFER — But that gets you back to the position where you said that you are then leaving it up to the person who is having the problem, whereas I thought what you were saying was that you take a proactive view.

Mr FOGLIA — Yes, exactly, but the person needs primarily to say, ‘Yes, I would like some help’, and that is what John referred to before as the window of opportunity in the time of crisis when the person says, ‘Yes, I may need some help’. Then immediately we make a phone contact just to establish some initial rapport and confirm that the person has consented to be referred, and from there we offer to meet the person wherever they want. Usually it is at their own place. Sometimes they are uncomfortable in situations of family violence, and we may go into a room in the local community centre.

Mr SCHEFFER — I am really conscious of the time — —

Mr THEXTON — Just to answer your question, if the police member believes that the person is likely to come into contact with police again, then that is a matter for PACT. For one-off situations referral support is also being trialled and there is an electronic setup where it can go through to an appropriate agency. But the key is if the police member believes we are going to see this person again. That might be based on the fact that they have seen them 20 times before, or it might be based on the fact that this is the first time but there are things there that might show that we are going to see them again.

Mr McCURDY — What percentage of people fall into this category and will take up these opportunities? That is a resource-based question about how to fulfil the need further down the track. I am trying to get a gauge in my own mind as well.

Mr FOGLIA — With the NARTT program we reach, at some stage, up to 72 per cent of people who are referred will access some form of support. At the moment we do not have the figures. Anecdotally I can say that we have a different client cohort. It is much more complex, involving mental health, aged care, intellectual disabilities, substance use or really anything that comes to the attention of police. The current uptake, I would say, is around 50 per cent.

The CHAIR — I am sorry, we will have to close the session because we are locked in to a teleconference. I thank the three of you very much for coming here today. Thank you again for providing a submission to the inquiry; we appreciate that. What you have delivered to us is very interesting. I have not had the opportunity to read the submission in full, but we have had a summary, and the verbal evidence today has certainly helped us to understand the program. Good luck, and thank you very much again.

Witnesses withdrew.

DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

**Inquiry into Locally Based Approaches to Community Safety and Crime
Prevention**

Melbourne — 9 August 2011

Members

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Mr S. Leane	Mr J. Scheffer
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Witness

Professor R. Homel, Foundation Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice,
Griffith University.

The CHAIR — Ross, you appreciate we are recording the conversation, and we have Hansard reporters here for this teleconference. We have a little address to witnesses that I normally read out, but I understand it is not needed at this stage. Given the short time available, perhaps I will leave it to you, Ross, to take us through what you want to present to the committee this morning. As an apology, unfortunately due to funding issues we were not able to request the consultancy we discussed previously.

Prof. HOMEL — That is not a problem. I probably would not have had time to do too much more than have this conversation anyway, at this stage. I appreciate that you are interested in Pathways to Prevention. I am very keen to assist the Parliament, the government and departments to further the work of community-based prevention.

What we have been doing with Pathways over the last 10 years is a bit unusual, although the project has many features that are common to many from Victoria that I am sure you are familiar with, it differs in a number of ways. It has a strong emphasis on the developmental or life-course approach — the idea of getting in early, which of course is founded on the ideas that were published back in 1999 in a federal government report called *Pathways to Prevention — Developmental and Early Intervention Approaches to Crime in Australia*. In practice it has proved to be quite hard to keep that focus. There is a bit of a black hole or vortex effect sucking practice back into the high need end — that is, working with very risky, needy or vulnerable families — to the neglect of the front end, which is the preventative end. I just mention that as a tension that underlies all of this work. Essentially the word ‘pathways’ refers to this idea that people move through life and that if we mobilise community resources and other resources early on, we probably have a better chance to reduce the risk factors for the development of juvenile crime, substance abuse and associated problems.

The second point is that Pathways is very strongly founded on measurement and the collection of data. We now have constructed after quite a few years an integrated database of longitudinal child outcomes. We have nearly 6000 children on the database who are not all children who have been involved in the Pathways program; it is all of the children in all of the participating primary schools. We also have information on many of their families. Their parents have responded to many surveys. We have information from those families who have been involved in various kinds of pathway programs. That is the second point. We have put a lot of emphasis through our research practice partnership into measurement.

If I have to highlight one enormous weakness in Australia, at the moment in this area of community-based work and human services generally, it is the lack of attention to systematic data collection and quality improvement — improving the practice of organisations by actually knowing who they are seeing, for how long, in what kind of programs and what impact those contacts are having. It goes without saying that if you do not have that kind of information, you really are flying blind.

If you look at the evaluations that are published throughout the field in Australia, you see it is still very largely qualitative work. That is fine and absolutely essential — we have done it ourselves — but it is not enough, because until you start measuring systematically outcomes for children and their parents and connecting those outcomes back to what you have done with them and you have a carefully selected control group or comparison group, then you do not know what effect you have had.

Our preliminary analyses with the data we have got suggests, for example, that short-term contact with some families is actually worse than not doing anything. There actually appears to be some negative effects of that. There are obviously a lot of reasons why a

family would only be involved for a short time. It is hard to be too dogmatic, but our preliminary analysis suggests that not everything that happens routinely in community-based practice is necessarily beneficial for clients. Everyone means well, but until we start measuring systematically we do not know.

The third key point about pathways that makes it a bit unusual is that we work simultaneously with families, the community — particularly the ethnic community groups — and with schools, although we did start off in preschools. For the last few years we have worked across the primary age range, from about 5 through to 12. We have learnt a number of critically important lessons about how to do that work. One is that it is not enough to improve the quality of what goes on in the school, in the classroom or in a family setting. You have also got to build the connections between families and schools and between both of those and helping agencies in the community. Victoria has made a lot of progress in this area with community hubs and so on located in schools where community services can be connected more easily with families, but that is essential to do.

There are really three levels of action that involve doing this ‘developmental systems approach’, as we call it. One is that you improve the quality of the setting. Obviously if a child is coming from a chaotic family environment, you have to work with the family. Simultaneously you have to work with the school. The academic performance, behaviour and wellbeing of the child depends on what is going on in both settings. It also depends on how strong the bonds are between the family and the school. We have put a lot of emphasis on trying to improve learning outcomes for children — for example, by getting parents involved in the learning process at home and connecting with the school to do that. That really highlights the third level of action, which is to harmonise what goes on in different settings that affect the development of children. The school and the family are critical, but it is also important, particularly as they get a bit older, to work at the community level, with peer groups and community groups.

Just to run through that last point very quickly: there are really three levels of action — one is improving the quality of those settings for children, particularly family settings; secondly, it is improving the strength of connections between the different settings that affect the lives of children, particularly family and school; and thirdly, it is about harmonising the experiences and activities in those settings so we get optimal developmental outcomes. I could go on forever.

You asked about community engagement, capacity building, family strengthening and partnerships. These are all fundamental to what we are doing. I guess there is another way in which Pathways is a little unusual: we have not gone in as a university group with a you-beaut new program and said, ‘Implement this’. We have worked with the community and with Mission Australia, as the major organisation that delivers these services in the community, in order to improve practice. A lot of our data relates to understanding and analysing the effectiveness of a lot of the sorts of things that community agencies would do throughout Australia — things like playgroups, family support, parent groups and grief and loss counselling for children. There is an enormous range of activities. These are pretty standard. It is actually a strength, from our point of view, that we have not gone in and said, ‘No, you cannot run your parent group that way. You have to do a Triple P Positive Parenting Program, and you have to do it exactly by the book’.

What we are doing is collecting data to actually evaluate how effective those routine practices of community agencies are. We have used this community-centred approach with its emphasis on the improvement of community practice, and we have not come in with a formula or a prescription from outside — although we have strongly developed

views about what works. We have been involved in creative dialogue and sometimes arguments with our practitioner colleagues about how to do what they are doing better.

We are really trying to combine what is known as the research-to-practice model, which is the idea of taking a proven program usually through some kind of randomised control trial and implementing it in a real community setting. We tried to combine ideas from that school of thought with the community-centred approach, which is about improving local practice, engaging families, developing trust, taking things step by step and improving practice in the local context. I will stop at that point and invite some questions or responses.

The CHAIR — Thanks, Ross.

Prof. HOMEL — I suppose one question you would all like to know the answer to is: ‘Does it work?’.

The CHAIR — I will allow the committee to ask questions, particularly about Pathways, but I just want to ask you one question. It is something I am quite interested in. I had a discussion with the minister in relation to early childhood intervention in the context of community safety and crime prevention. I can see you have done quite a lot of written work on that.

Prof. HOMEL — Yes.

The CHAIR — Certainly in some of the holistic discussion I had with him, the minister was keen to look at ways in which we can actually educate, way back in the early primary or even kindergarten stage, about respect, law and order et cetera. I note that basically you have said that while it is important to have that early intervention at the childhood stage, the strategies may not always result in the prevention of crime or the sort of antisocial behaviour during that period or in later life. I wonder: if it is not early childhood intervention, what is it or what is it plus that might help to alleviate some of that antisocial behaviour in later years?

Prof. HOMEL — I think the focus on antisocial behaviour is appropriate and certainly a key part of what we are measuring, because we know that according to longitudinal research half of the four-year-olds who are getting to the stage of being uncontrollable — certainly exhibiting early signs of conduct disorder at age four — will be engaged in violent or delinquent behaviour by about the age of 14 — that is, 10 years later. Of course that means half will not, and it is only a relatively small percentage of children who are very troublesome. I am talking about preschool and even younger with playgroups; I do not quite know the system in Victoria, but we have creche and kindergarten here. They are three-year-olds, and then they go into prep when they are five years old. I think it is the same as Victoria in that regard. It is certainly really valuable to have that focus on behaviour early on. But it is connected with a lot of other things — healthy, functioning families, loving environments and teaching parents the skills they need to discipline effectively — which is what Triple P does so effectively, and a whole lot more.

As you mentioned, we have done quite a lot of work in this area. We did what is known as a meta-analysis a couple of years ago, which has been published. All of the best studies, almost all from the US, show that interventions like that, before the age of 5, have really substantial effects, on average, across a whole range of life domains, including crime and involvement with the criminal justice system in the adolescent years. We know this is a good approach. A number of those programs, like the Chicago project, are similar to the Pathways approach of working with families, schools and community centres.

With the focus on behaviour there are ways you can do that. For example, we have used social skills interventions as well as a language or communication intervention with four-year-olds in combination with family support. We know that the two together produce better results in behaviour than either on their own. They are both worth doing — that is, you work with the children in the preschool setting or the prep class setting and you can also work with the families independently, but it is better to do both together and harmonise those two activities.

We have done a bit of longer term follow-up with those children who were involved back in 2002 and 2003 in that preschool and family support work. I am being very cautious here about results, because we are just at the very early stages of getting into all of that database. It is very promising — for example, we know that one year later, at the end of grade 1, quite independently teachers were rating the academic adjustment and performance of the children and their behaviour better if they had been through one of the Pathways programs in preschool. Those teachers did not know which kids were which. It is independent evidence that the effects lasted at least a year, and we have some evidence that they lasted longer — that is, into the later primary school years, which is very encouraging but in line with the international evidence.

I would strongly support moves to increase resources for good programs to be introduced, particularly combining work with families and with the children, preferably in a community setting that takes account of their culture, language and so on. I think that combination is very powerful.

The CHAIR — I know we only have about 15 minutes; I am very aware of that. I will try to have the committee get through the questions they wish to ask as quickly as possible.

Mr SCHEFFER — I just want to come to the matter you raised in relation to data gathering. I think I have been on five parliamentary committees now and done dozens of references. On almost every reference we have had a recommendation about better data collection, so I understand what you mean. You talked about the 6000 children who were part of your data collection — that is, the families involved in the Pathways project. Could you outline to us briefly what that involved, what you learnt from it and what recommendation you might make at this point for a committee like this doing a reference like this for the Parliament?

Prof. HOMEL — There are really two halves to the data collection. One is to capture accurately the pattern of participation of children or families in a range of programs. There is usually a whole lot of stuff available at the local level through schools, community health centres or wherever you are doing this work. Through systematic data entry we need to capture which members of a family have done what and for how long, preferably also with case notes so that there is some idea of how intensive the work has been. Obviously there is a very big difference between a few phone calls and maybe turning up at a group parent support meeting and doing something over a six or eight-month period in a much more intensive way.

We have developed locally, in partnership with Mission Australia, what we call a participation database, but it does not work all that well. We have struggled — we have spent a lot of money — to extract data from that participation database which we are comfortable with and which we think accurately reflects the reality. Part of the difficulty is that community workers are not trained to do this data work. They do not understand the need for systematic data entry, they do not see the value of it to their routine work in terms

of developing a profile of their clients and their needs, and they are not typically paid at a level commensurate with that level of responsibility.

Secondly, these kinds of community-based agencies are always susceptible to funding crises — they get funds from here, there and everywhere — and every funding agency wants a different set of information and a different report. What has happened with our colleagues is they have chopped and changed the database to suit the needs of whatever funding agency they have to do a report for this month. We are absolutely convinced that community workers and social workers must not have the power to change the database. The database that captures patterns of participation has to be powerful and flexible enough to accommodate all the needs of reporting but remain as a stable piece of software, because you cannot use it for any kind of data extraction and evaluation purposes if it keeps changing. That is the very practical thing we have learned.

I was extremely encouraged a couple of weeks ago to have a demonstration of Mission Australia's new community services database, called MACSIMS — Mission Australia Community Services Information Management System — which is very powerful and very flexible and is actually designed for community coalitions and partnerships and not only programs run through Mission Australia. We are absolutely convinced that that second or third iteration of that database is a tremendous asset for the whole sector. We are not sure who else is developing these complicated systems, but certainly Mission Australia has, and we are very keen to see that become the basis of future work that we do. That is one half of it — the participation data. Essentially we capture, as I said, how long a child, for example, has been in a playgroup or in a social skills program, or whatever it might be, and also whether their parents or other members of family have been involved in different activities and for how long. We have a measure of intensity of involvement.

On the other side, on the outcomes, we asked schools to collect information for us, and they have been pretty good. Each year they appraise the behaviour of all the children in all the classes, which is our main measure of behaviour. We also know about school suspensions. We know about attendance rates. We have developed our own measure of child wellbeing, which is a really fun-to-play, 20-minute computer game called *Clowning Around*. The central figure is a cartoon figure — a clown. It takes, as I said, 20 minutes. Prep children are not quite up to the mouse control and the level of concentration required, but from grade 1 through to the end of primary school each child in each class in each of the seven schools has completed this game, so we now have systematic data on the social and emotional development of children, their connectedness to school, how they feel about school and also what are known as protective factors in their lives — are there adults who look after them; do they have a family meal together — a whole range of things which we measure through this game. That has become a key outcome for children. We have also developed a measure for parents, which is essentially a measure of their empowerment as parents to raise children effectively and to cope with the school and to get the help they need when they need it.

They are our core measures. We have a range of other measures as well through the Queensland Department of Education. As far as we know we are the only research group in Australia at the moment that has all the NAPLAN data for all these children, and we can now link that with our measure of social and emotional wellbeing. I should have mentioned that we also have the achievement test for the children. We have used the progressive achievement test, which is a standardised test of achievement. We have used that throughout the years, even before NAPLAN came in. It measures similar things to NAPLAN. We can link those educational achievements with the social and emotional wellbeing of children and also with their behaviour. It will not be any surprise to the

committee to learn that badly behaved children do less well in NAPLAN and also that badly behaved children have lower scores on *Clowning Around*. Their social and emotional wellbeing and the protective factors in their lives are not as strong.

We are beginning to circle the wagons here in terms of understanding bad behaviour and what it in turn affects, but also what affects it.

The CHAIR — Ross, I do not want to cut in, but I am aware there is only about 5 minutes to go.

Prof. HOMEL — What I will do is send to Sandy an overview of this database and a summary of some of our results, which I gave at the 10th anniversary of the pathways program a few weeks ago.

Mr SCHEFFER — That would be great.

Prof. HOMEL — How about I do that, and that way I can stop rabbiting on. Anyway, I hope I have given you a flavour.

Mr SCHEFFER — Yes; it has been very interesting.

Prof. HOMEL — As I said, this is unique, and it is not easy to do. It has been a huge investment over the last 10 years.

Mr SCHEFFER — That probably covers it. The rest of what you said was comprehensive. I think that is clear.

The CHAIR — I am sorry about that. If you wish to continue, after I abruptly cut you off, till the time you have to go, please do.

Prof. HOMEL — That is okay. I love to talk about this stuff. I wish I had more — —

Mr SCHEFFER — Sorry to interrupt you. Could I just ask one thing? We have obviously talked to a lot of groups in doing some work in this area. Do you link in with law enforcement bodies in all this work that you are doing? How do you pull in crime stuff?

Prof. HOMEL — It is a really good question, and if I had \$1 million, I would be out there tomorrow doing that. We have had — —

Mr SCHEFFER — Come to Victoria, and we will organise it for you — sorry, joke.

Prof. HOMEL — Actually I think the environment in Victoria — the social climate for this sort of work in Victoria — is very positive. I am very impressed. You have got wonderful organisations in the Brotherhood of St Laurence and other agencies. I hope you are talking to them about these things, because they are more advanced, actually, than almost any other community agency in terms of this data collection analysis stuff. Anyway, sorry, I digress. What was I — —

Mr SCHEFFER — Law enforcement agencies, I was asking you about.

Prof. HOMEL — We have a wonderful police superintendent, Tonya Carew, in the local area, and she has been outstanding. She has been coordinating or organising big meetings of all community groups. We would love to connect with all of that work because our latest work has been around the transition to high school. We have been

looking at the outcomes for those preschool children I described back in 2002 and 2003. They are now in high school, and we have 59 per cent of them actually tracked in their transition to high school, which is not bad given that quite a few of them have moved elsewhere in Queensland or outside of the state. It is quite hard, for a number of reasons, to get hold of them.

We are aware that there are a number of kids in that transitional phase who are having problems, and indeed it is sad that already one of them is in detention. We were tracking down one of the children, and the principal said, 'Yes, he's not here anymore. He is in juvenile detention', which is very sad at that young age. We would love to make that connection, particularly with the police and particularly with someone like Tonya, who is so brilliant about understanding that the crackdown approach does not work; you have to work with the community, you have to work long term and you have to work collaboratively. However, that is a long way of saying no, we have not yet. That would be the next logical phase. Getting to the moon took a lot more money than we have, and it is about that height.

Mr SCHEFFER — All right. That is all, from me anyway. Thank you, Ross.

Prof. HOMEL — Great pleasure. Thank you.

The CHAIR — Thanks very much, Ross. I appreciate your time, and it was good that we were able to cover most of the areas that we wanted to cover and hopefully that you wanted to cover.

Prof. HOMEL — Okay. Just tell them to measure things, and we will help them.

The CHAIR — Thanks very much, Ross.

Witness withdrew.

DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

**Inquiry into Locally Based Approaches to Community Safety and Crime
Prevention**

Melbourne — 9 August 2011

Members

Mr B. Battin	Mr S. Ramsay
Mr S. Leane	Mr J. Scheffer
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Witnesses

Mr D. Griggs, Manager, Community Safety and Wellbeing, City of Melbourne; and
Major B. Nottle, Experience Manager, Salvation Army.

The CHAIR — Welcome to this public hearing. Dean, I understand you are the manager, community safety and wellbeing, City of Melbourne; and Brendan, you are with the Salvation Army. Thank you very much for appearing before this joint parliamentary committee.

The Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee is a joint parliamentary committee of Parliament. We are dealing with two references at the moment: one is in relation to security in emergency wards of public hospitals, and the other one is looking at community safety programs, of which Neighbourhood Watch is part but is not the only program we are looking at. On that basis, we will be dealing with our first reference, which is about crime prevention and safety, particularly in relation to your programs at the City of Melbourne.

We have allowed nearly an hour and a half for the session, so there is plenty of time. We like the opportunity to ask questions. I know witnesses, when they are providing evidence, like to speak, but it is important for us to garner information that is important in producing our report to Parliament, which is due in March in relation to the first reference. I appreciate that there is plenty of time, but we want the opportunity to ask questions of you, particularly about the programs around the city of Melbourne, which we are interested in.

I have to go through an address to you as witnesses, so you are aware of the conditions around what you are presenting to the committee today. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975 and further subject to the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, the Defamation Act 2005 and, where applicable, the provisions of reciprocal legislation in other Australian states and territories. Any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege.

I understand you have received and read the guide for witnesses presenting evidence to parliamentary committees, and you may well have been through this before. We are recording your evidence and will provide a proof version of the Hansard transcript at the earliest opportunity, so you can correct it as appropriate. You are both here this morning to provide us with a verbal submission.

We understand that the mayor will not be joining us. There was some talk that he might be, but Tuesday is a busy day for the lord mayor.

Overheads shown.

Mr GRIGGS — In terms of the format I have put together a PowerPoint presentation. I have got a number of slides that outline our projects in the city of Melbourne and our partnership projects in particular, not just with the Salvos, but with others. I thought it was important for Brendan to come along in person to have a chat about a number of projects. By way of format I thought I would step through the slides, but I am more than happy to answer questions as we go through. The presentation itself could take 20 minutes if I go straight through.

In terms of what I want to cover and in looking at the terms of reference for the committee, I think I will cover what has been asked of us in terms of hitting the mark, so hopefully that will give you what you are after as a committee.

I want to talk about the lord mayor's and councillors' aspirations around city safety and, when they came into their term in November 2008, how the city looked and where they want to get to, and a number of initiatives they are looking at. More importantly, I want to

talk about the City of Melbourne's approach to community safety around building the resilience of communities. Then at the end I will talk a bit about the regulation and infrastructure parts that we do as well, so those are the elements.

Also what we are trying to do is change the story about Melbourne in terms of that continual headline that we see around alcohol-fuelled violence. We want to try to change the narrative, understand it a bit more and see whether that is really the reality or whether it is just headlines. That is the bit of work we are going to do in the next 12 months or so. Then I will talk about the future — the 12 months coming up — and the safety strategy we have just adopted. That is the framework of what I wanted to talk about.

In terms of aspirations, back in the early 2000s and leading up to the current terms of council there were continual headlines around Melbourne being unsafe and the perception that there is continual violence in town, the work we have done and the work that the councillors wanted to do was to align it with what we see on the right-hand side of the slides, which is New Year's Eve and Melbourne being a safe place for families, all Victorians and all Australians. There has also been some work done around working late at night and trying to change the mix of activities in the city late at night to try to change perceptions. I will touch on that in a bit more detail later on, but the late-night activation program is certainly something we are going to be doing much more of over the next 12 months to two years.

Just by way of a bit of data — this is not a data-heavy presentation; I have tried not to drown us in facts and stats about crime data and whether the city is safe or unsafe — it is important to note the change from 1997 to 2008 in terms of the licensing environment and the density of nightclubs, bars, taverns, cafes and restaurants with liquor licences. There has been a shift in density. I think you can see that by 2008 the environment has changed, and I think that changes the mix of activity within the city. That is something that as a council we need to be mindful of in terms of who is coming in and out of the city and for what purpose. We have done quite a bit of work with the licensed venues in the city, and I will talk about that as well. We have worked really hard with them and with Responsible Alcohol Victoria to work on those venues being good corporate citizens, and they have been there with us for the ride. It has been great.

Mr SCHEFFER — That looks like there is virtually no nightclubs in 1997 and then a whole lot in 2008, but when you jump down to cafe/restaurant/bistro it looks more or less the same. Is that the right reading of that?

Mr GRIGGS — It is similar, yes. The nightclub environment changed a bit, as well as for bars and taverns, whereas the cafes — —

Mr SCHEFFER — Is pretty constant.

Mr GRIGGS — Yes. I suppose it is the addition of those two top slides on the right.

Mr BATTIN — Is this one here based on the licence or on the actual business? Obviously there are cafes that have nightclub licences or have 24-hour general licences. Is that based on the actual licence?

Mr GRIGGS — From what I can gather, yes.

Mr BATTIN — So for some of those licences there may be a cafe sitting on a current licence that allows them a general licence?

Mr GRIGGS — I would have to check. I am sure it is licensing data.

I noticed in the terms of reference there was talk about the governance structures for our safety initiative. The previous council — I think it was in late 2007–08 — put together the Future Melbourne plan. A big community consultation was undertaken online with a range of forums, and I think 15 000 people had their say about the future of Melbourne. As I said, that was at the end of the term of the last council. But it was firmly adopted by the current council and frames the governance processes of Melbourne.

The council meets once a month at the end of the month, but there is the Future Melbourne committee that also meets. That is why the lord mayor cannot be here today. Future Melbourne meeting is on the first and second Tuesdays of the month and is preceded by a midday forum with staff and councillors. Future Melbourne is structured with a range of committees that all meet as part of the same meeting. The councillor we work directly with, Cr Kanis — she is the councillor for our issues and is there second from the right — is the chair of the People and Creative City Committee. There is a range of other committees, and during the Future Melbourne committee meeting, which is taking place tonight, the councillors will literally chair part of the meeting for their portfolios. Cr Kanis is the one who looks after city safety and the other issues I am responsible for.

That is in terms of governance within council, but we did have a city safety leadership committee that was chaired by the lord mayor and had a range of other external providers on it as well. That is now being reviewed, because we just adopted our new safety strategy a couple of months ago, and we want to look at that structure and see how that works for the strategy as we move into the next couple of years.

Future Melbourne articulates into the plan of the current council, and in terms of the city safety elements we are really looking to hit that first dot point there, which is to make Melbourne great for people to live in and visit, taking a broad view of safety. As I said, there are the community resilience and community development aspects of it, but then there are also the enforcement and regulation parts that we do. We try to have a balanced approach, and we take our cue from the council plan in that way. As I said, we work directly with a particular councillor. The lord mayor, of course, takes a very keen interest in this, and I will talk a bit more about the whole-of-council priorities for the next 12 months as well.

As I said, it is a holistic view. There is a range of strategies we work towards that help us make Melbourne a better and safer place. We have a strategy for a safer city that is, I suppose, the anchor for all of it, but then we have the policy for a 24-hour city, which is the second one on the slide as it cascades down. That frames up how we want to work across the city across a 24-hour period; making it active and safe and having a mix of activities late into the night, being mindful that there are rhythms of activity throughout the 24-hour cycle but that there is also the need for regulation and activation, as I said.

We also have a children's plan, a youth plan, an arts strategy and a homelessness strategy we have just adopted. We also have a recreation strategy. Like most councils we have a strategy for a lot of things, but buried within an inch of those are things that have an impact on community safety and crime prevention as well. So we are again taking a proactive approach. Brendan will talk a little bit about homelessness and some of the work the Salvos do closely with us. I suppose I am just trying to set the scene that it is not just about our little safety strategy but is a whole-of-council approach across a range of areas.

I have talked a bit about late-night activation. We do a perceptions of safety survey every two or three years. We did it in 2006 and again in 2009. You can see that people feel safe when there is more activity. That is where we have taken our cue in terms of trying to

provide a mix of things later into the evenings, and we are putting quite a few resources into that. We work closely with the police. A constant in terms of people feeling safe is having police around. We also have the camera program.

The CHAIR — We were in the city of Greater Geelong yesterday, and police visibility was an important tool in relation to how people feel. I notice here that it has actually gone back since 2006, so what is that inferring?

Mr GRIGGS — Given it is only a couple of per cent, I would have to test that in terms of whether it is a significant drop or not, but to me they are high numbers, and police presence is still up there. Anecdotally what we get back from the police and the community when we consult and talk to groups is that they like seeing police around. They feel better when there are police around, like in Geelong, I suppose. The 38 precincts program that has been set up in Melbourne, where the municipality is divided up into 38 precincts with a local contact for each of them, we see as a really important program, and we want to work closely with the police to promote that, particularly on weekends. Brendan will talk about the youth street teams. Having police out and about, walking around does make a difference. But in terms of the statistical drop I could probably make a few assumptions.

Mr SCHEFFER — How do we interpret that? If you look at ‘Activity’ on the slide, is that saying that in 2006, 36 per cent of people thought that having community activity was not really a factor in feeling safe and now more of them think it is a factor in feeling safe? Conversely, if you look at ‘Lighting’, you can say that in 2006 there was less lighting, so people thought it was more of an issue. Now there is more lighting, so fewer of them think it is an issue. I do not know how to read what it means.

Mr GRIGGS — In highlighting that I suppose what I was trying to point out was just the jump in activity, I think. It seems that people feel safer when there is activity later in the evening.

Mr SCHEFFER — That also corresponds to increased organised activity.

Mr GRIGGS — Yes, that is right.

Mr SCHEFFER — People could recognise it and see — —

Mr GRIGGS — Yes. It may be a response in fact that there is more activity and that there are more options and choices. You will see down the bottom that there is a little line that says ‘Know our city’, which is one of the things we are trying to tap into. It is getting back to that other headline as being a correct version of what is happening in Melbourne. I am interested, not that I wanted to have too much data in the presentation, in actually looking at the data to see what it really tells us in a meaningful sort of way. There are many ways that you can interpret it, but I think we are onto something with this late-night activity work. But it is certainly something we need to dig a bit deeper into in the next 12 months, and also those other stats there. That probably does not answer your question too well.

Mr SCHEFFER — No, that is fair enough.

Mr GRIGGS — In terms of building resilience, which is what I wanted to spend a bit of time on in terms of our programs and projects, which I think is what you are probably interested in, there are a number of things we do with different partners, but the Salvation Army has been a pretty key one in the last 12 months with the youth street teams, which is a program we are funding them to run for two years. Without stealing

Brendan's thunder, it is basically groups of young people working from 11.00 p.m. to 5.00 a.m. on Friday and Saturday nights in the city to basically assist young people who get themselves into antisocial activities or may need just a little assistance to get home or to hydrate if they have had too much to drink. Without saying too much, I might hand over to Brendan to give us an overview of the street teams and then a couple of the other programs we work on with the Salvos.

Maj. NOTTLE — With street teams, the idea came out of two things. We have been working with the police and the City of Melbourne on a number of pilot programs around trying to work with young people who are getting really drunk on Friday and Saturday nights and getting caught up in or actually perpetrating violence that is fuelled by alcohol. At the same time the City of Melbourne ran a website called 'Your city: your space', and they encouraged young people to contribute ideas to that website about how they thought things could happen to change the outcomes of alcohol-fuelled violence in the city. One of the ideas that some young people came up with was to actually have young people on the streets on Friday and Saturday nights who would act as positive role models. We have taken that idea and really developed it in close conjunction with the City of Melbourne.

What we do, and we have been doing this since the beginning of December last year, is every Friday and Saturday night have 20 young people get together at about 10.30 at night at the Salvation Army building at Bourke Street. They are coordinated by experienced and qualified youth workers, and then there is an overall coordinator for the night. Before the night starts, on both Friday and Saturday nights, the overall coordinator has to report to Melbourne East police station and Melbourne West police station. We are involved in briefing the police about our presence on the streets that night, how we can be contacted and what we are available to do. We also go to Crown Casino now and brief the security teams at Crown Casino.

It has turned out to be a really effective program because there are two things that develop as the night goes on. One is that we have the coordinator in a van, which is well marked with Salvation Army shields, and they have another person with them. They respond to telephone calls from the police and security at Crown Casino, rather than the police having their resources tied up with young people who are drunk and perhaps unconscious sometimes. There are often young girls who will go into nightclubs down on King Street. They will go outside on their own for a smoke or some fresh air, and then they cannot get back in. They leave their handbag inside, so they become very vulnerable very quickly. The police will call us to those situations, and we will take responsibility for that particular young person. That could mean taking them back to the Salvation Army, helping them sober up, trying to make contact with their friends so that they can reconnect with their friends or actually getting them in the van, taking them home and just getting them out of the city.

That concept has developed further to the point now where, when police charge a young person for being drunk and disorderly and they are locked up for 4 hours — sometimes when a person is released perhaps they will get into strife and get locked up again, and in the state of mind they are in sometimes the on-the-spot fine, the penalty notice or the banning from the city do not have any impact on them — the police will call us and we will take that young person out of the city. We will deal with any young person as long as they are not violent, because then that is putting our teams at risk. It has become a program that I think is really valued by the police because it actually takes pressure off them and frees them up to go back to their core business, which is law and order. It is doing a similar thing with security at Crown as well.

The other thing that happens is that we have these four teams on the streets around the city. They wear really bright green jackets; they are very clearly identifiable. They all wear backpacks and carry water, Chupa Chups and rubber thongs. Work with me on this one! The water is just to hydrate young people, but it becomes a really good engagement tool too. Often out of that people start to say, 'I've lost a friend; I don't know how I'm getting home', and we can help direct them to NightRider buses or, if necessary, get them in the van and get them out of the city. The Chupa Chups are just an engagement tool, and the rubber thongs are particularly for young women who lose their shoes during the course of the night. It sounds silly, but they are wearing stilettos, they are with their boyfriend and they are complaining because their boyfriend is dragging them around the city, and suddenly their pain is fixed.

Mr GRIGGS — You will see them there on the cover of *Melbourne News*, which is our newsletter, handing out the thongs. A journalist spent the night with them and did a sort of around-the-clock shift with them, so there is a centre page spread in there in terms of how the night runs and all the different activities they found themselves getting into.

Maj. NOTTLE — It has been a really interesting program, because often what happens is that when we get a person in the van — we only drive them home if they are in really bad shape — we end up having some really interesting conversations with young people. Some of them are accountants and doing reasonably well with their careers, and often what happens is they find themselves in the back of the Salvation Army van and start to think, 'Gee, life has gone down the tube very quickly; I'm suddenly being treated as a homeless person', and it gives us an opportunity for some terrific conversations. We have actually had some of the young people who we work with start to volunteer on the street teams, which has been really good.

All of the volunteers have to do training. We put them through about a 6-hour training program, and that involves first aid, dealing with conflict situations and really making it clear to the team members that, if they see any violence on the street, they are not to engage in that at all. They are to call 000, move back to a safe distance and just keep the operator informed of what is happening. What has started to happen is that these teams have become really good role models and a really positive presence on the streets. No-one from the teams has been injured and no-one has been threatened. Young people who are out partying tend to respond really positively to the teams that are out and about.

We have actually been talking to Metro and the transit police about whether we might be able to roll this idea out onto the rail network as well, because potentially it could complement the PSOs that are going to be placed at railway stations in a really positive way. They do the law and order work, and these guys are available to do the softer work that needs to happen around connecting with homeless people, people who are alcohol affected, people suffering from mental health issues and people who are homeless. These teams are there to work and perhaps extricate those people from those situations, so it helps to develop that perception of safety on the rail network as well.

Mr SCHEFFER — How do you deal with liability in case these young people are injured?

Maj. NOTTLE — We have a couple of things happening. One is that they are covered by public liability insurance. They are covered by volunteer insurance. Each team has a qualified and experienced youth worker with them, and they always remain in a team of four. They are never allowed to go off on their own, and if that happens, then we part ways in terms of just saying to the volunteer, 'You're not appropriate to be on this particular program'. We are really strict around that stuff.

Mr BATTIN — Brendan, first of all, congratulations; it is a great program. It is vital for Melbourne. What age groups are your volunteers? Obviously it makes a big difference if you have people who are too old — I like to think that 35 is not that old, but too old these days is not that old — to communicate with some of these younger people on the streets. How many of the people you deal with are under 18?

Maj. NOTTLE — All of our volunteers are 18-plus. The vast majority of our volunteers are 18 to 25. That has been one of the really encouraging things. We wondered how we would go in terms of recruiting enough volunteers, but young people are really keen to be involved in something like this. I think they see it as a great opportunity to be a positive influence on their peers, which has been really good. We do not see a lot of under-18s; in our work it would be a small percentage. But we have seen 12, 13 and 14-year-olds who have been drinking in the city as well. The police are right onto that, so they will call us to work with them on those issues when they arise.

Mr BATTIN — The program is obviously in Melbourne. Is there potential to roll this out further in places like the cities of Geelong and Ballarat and in the bigger regional areas? Obviously that would need a bigger commitment to their ongoing issues, especially down in Geelong. We keep hearing about violence down there.

Maj. NOTTLE — Yes, I think — —

Mr BATTIN — Sorry to jump in there.

Mr GRIGGS — No. I think one of the things we are going to try to look at as a capital city — and at the end of my presentation I have a quote from the lord mayor — is that we all come from communities. People who come into Melbourne are from other areas, and we have joined up with other central activities councils — I am not quite sure of the phrase — the bigger ones of Whitehorse and Dandenong, and I think Geelong might be part of it. There is also Maribyrnong; there are about seven in the greater Melbourne area.

I think the simplicity of the street teams is that they are very applicable to other areas. You may not run them for the same number of hours — 11.00 p.m. to 5.00 a.m. You would need to tailor it to a particular area, but I think as a model it is a ripper, and it does have that applicability. At the moment we have funded it through our own funding. We are moving into the second year, and basically we will do a bit of an evaluation in the next 12 months around its future and whether we expand it. I think there is potential for it — and Brendan and I have talked about it — at events, if there are concerts or even on New Year's Eve, or using it earlier on in the evening. At the moment it is very much 11.00 p.m. to 5.00 a.m. on Friday and Saturday nights. But as a model I think it is very transferable. We would be happy to talk to other councils about how we put it together. Maybe it is a state government discussion around whether there is funding for other areas — I am not sure. I think we are just scratching the surface at the moment.

Maj. NOTTLE — The police have spoken to us about being involved in other events as well. Recently there was a rave concert on, and they are citing that as an example where street teams might be able to work closely with the police.

The other thing we have noticed with street teams is the rise in Sudanese young people accessing the city. They move around in large groups; I have witnessed that. It is just their presence in large groups which causes people to feel unsafe. We have spoken to the police about that, and they have some concerns too around how to deal with some of those issues. We have started to recruit Sudanese young people for our street teams. We are just at the beginning of that process.

We had an excellent example of the effectiveness of that just a few weeks ago when the police called and said they had arrested a 16-year-old and had had him locked up in the back of a brawler van for 4 hours. He had been violent and aggressive. On this particular night I just happened to have a Sudanese youth worker with me. We turned up, they opened the back of the brawler van and there was the 16-year-old Sudanese boy. The police had not identified him as being Sudanese. He was very aggressive, but when the Sudanese youth worker started to connect with this 16-year-old boy he relaxed very quickly. I listened in on their conversation. The youth worker's cultural understanding completely changed that young boy's demeanour. There were things that the youth worker was saying that I would never have thought of. That is something we really want to develop with street teams, and I think it will be an effective tool that the police could draw on as well to help them, perhaps, take the heat out of some difficult situations.

Mr SCHEFFER — You talked about large cohorts going around town. Is that unique to the Sudanese community?

Maj. NOTTLE — It is, yes. We do not see — —

Mr SCHEFFER — Do you know why they go out in large numbers? Do they feel insecure? Is that a way of them feeling better about their inner city experience?

Maj. NOTTLE — I am not sure. From our experience, they do not seem to come into the city with the intention of causing trouble.

Mr SCHEFFER — No, I am not suggesting that.

Maj. NOTTLE — I think they want to party. They want to go to nightclubs, but they often get turned away. I think one of the key reasons why they get turned away is because of the size of the groups. That causes some aggravation for them. Then they go to another club and the same thing happens. As the night goes on they become more and more aggressive, and they are drinking.

Mr SCHEFFER — I understand from another reference I did on housing last year about the amount of housing for large family groups, for example.

Maj. NOTTLE — Yes.

Mr SCHEFFER — If you come from a large family group, then who goes out when starts to have an affect. If a couple of families go together, it is 23 people. Do you know what I am getting at?

Maj. NOTTLE — Yes, that is right.

Mr SCHEFFER — From the internal experience it may not be an odd thing.

Maj. NOTTLE — Yes.

Mr SCHEFFER — But how it is perceived in the community where it is not the norm starts to be misinterpreted as being potentially aggressive.

Maj. NOTTLE — Absolutely. I think a lack of understanding of Sudanese culture is a key issue. There was a 14-year-old Sudanese girl who was unconscious outside Melbourne East police station. There were three police with her for 1½ hours waiting for an ambulance to attend. The ambulance staff put that particular issue to the bottom of the list because there were police in attendance, so they did not fear for her safety. I was there when some Sudanese young people turned up and said to the police,

‘Just take her to the police station. Just put her in a cell. It is your job to look after her’. The police were saying, ‘No, we haven’t arrested her, so we can’t put her in a cell’. They said, ‘Just put her in a room somewhere’. They said, ‘No, we can’t do that’. There was that lack of understanding on both sides that was a significant cause of tension.

The other thing that the City of Melbourne has been working on is a laneway activation policy. One of the issues that comes out of that laneway activation policy is that a lot of activity that happens in laneways, particularly on Friday and Saturday nights, is alcohol based. This particular policy talks about trying to find alternative activities for laneways other than alcohol-based activities. The other thing that is talked about in that policy is trying to find activities on Friday and Saturday nights that will draw diverse groups of people to the city so it changes the demographic that is accessing the city. Perhaps that will help to self-regulate some behaviour. If there are young people, older people and families, then younger people might tend to pull in their heads a little bit.

We have picked up on that policy, and we have developed a dry bar around at the Salvation Army building in Bourke Street. The idea is that in the next fortnight we are going to open that dry bar and advertise it as a safe place where, if young people are out and they have been from bar to bar — they are not completely drunk but just out having a good time and looking for food, and often the only places where they can get food at 2.00 a.m. or 3.00 a.m. are McDonald’s or Hungry Jack’s, and a lot of those places are really unsafe at those times — we want to say, ‘Come here. Here is a dry place. Have a cup of coffee and get something that is reasonably nutritious to eat at a very reasonable price’. It then becomes a safe place for designated drivers where they can have a free cup of coffee and wait for their friends. It also becomes a safe place where parents can meet and pick up their children and then take them home. That is just another thing we are working on at the moment.

Mr McCURDY — How do we get that message out to the individuals? What form of marketing will you do for that?

Maj. NOTTLE — We use Facebook. We have built a little stage in the room as well. We want to get some reasonably good acts in there and use their Facebook and Twitter accounts and things like that to get the word out. We are hoping that if it is reasonably successful, the word will start to spread. We are working on that one at the moment.

Mr SCHEFFER — Excellent.

Maj. NOTTLE — I should just say that the council has been really excellent in the way they have worked with us. Our sense is that the council is very keen to see a lot of the issues around alcohol-based violence addressed, and they are really prepared to back anything that they think is going to work. It is not just in terms of money; it is a very active involvement and participation by council. They sit down with us regularly, see how things are going and contribute ideas. They are a really good sounding board. I think those sorts of commitments from council have been really helpful as well.

We started something called the AXA 614 youth bus. That goes out four nights a week from Monday to Thursday. It is a big double-decker bus that has computers, Xboxes and a barbecue that pulls out the side of it. The bus is out from 6.30 p.m. to about 10.00 or 10.30 at night Monday to Thursday. We park it down outside St Paul’s Cathedral on Flinders Street. Some nights it goes down to the Alexandra Gardens skate park and also down on Flinders Street at the end of Flinders Street station near Queen Street. We work with 70 to 100 under 25s a night at the bus. They are all in significant need. In terms of a lot of the

young people we see, on average 30 to 40 of those young people, who number 70 to 100 each night, are from residential care units. They are in the care of the state.

They often gravitate into the city because they get bored at home. In some cases there have been young people aged as young as 13 who are living in a house on their own, meaning with no other young person, with four youth workers. Young people just get bored out of their brain and gravitate to the city. They often meet up with other young people. Often that is where they get involved in talk like, 'There is the bus. That is the barbecue on the side'. They often get caught up in really negative behaviour around the city. We work really closely with the police around this particular project as well. The police will come to us and say they have seen young people or a particular young person who is causing some trouble around the city. We will really cooperate with police around helping them sort those issues out with the young people.

The other interesting issue around this is that not only do we have our youth workers, we also have qualified youth workers, a drug and alcohol worker and a lawyer from Youthlaw who comes out on the bus. They are working really closely with the Department of Human Services and the police in trying to get young people home. They also work really closely around trying to accommodate homeless young people who appear at the bus.

One of the other issues that these workers really have to be on guard for is paedophiles who gravitate to the bus. So we have a really strict rule around only under 25s are allowed to access any of the services at the bus. What paedophiles do is stand on the steps of Parliament House and observe the young people who are gathering at the bus. They will try to entice them with alcohol, drugs and things like that. If we see any older people hanging around the bus, we asked them to move on. If they refuse, we contact the police.

Mr SCHEFFER — Sorry, you mean the church, not Parliament House.

Maj. NOTTLE — Sorry, did I say Parliament House?

Mr SCHEFFER — Yes.

Maj. NOTTLE — Sorry, I apologise.

Mr SCHEFFER — Where did you mean?

Maj. NOTTLE — At St Paul's Cathedral. So they are on the steps of St Paul's Cathedral. The police will respond immediately when we call. We have asked ourselves the question: are we doing the right thing by having the bus there? Are we putting the kids at risk by having it in such a public place? But it draws young people who are in need. It is an opportunity for us to offer appropriate supports to them, but it also keeps them safe, because if they are in other parts of the city, then potentially they are vulnerable to the work of paedophiles around the city.

The CHAIR — Can I just ask, principally is the City of Melbourne funding the bus and costs associated with the bus? I am just wondering. A lot of your activity requires additional funding apart from the normal Salvation Army donations, so also, how involved is the City of Melbourne in funding a lot of that activity? Is it a significant part of the cost that is funded by the City of Melbourne?

Maj. NOTTLE — It is with street teams but not with the bus. With the bus, we got some really significant seed funding from AXA insurance. The bus cost \$265 000 to purchase and equip. AXA provide around \$90 000 a year for operating costs. Then we staff it with our staff. We cover the cost of that, and then AXA provides volunteers.

Mr GRIGGS — Our role in terms of the bus is around where it is placed, I suppose, and the opening up of the city where Brendan or the team think it is most suitable, so it is about giving the permissions for parking it on Swanston Street or outside Federation Square; it is that sort of partnership assistance. It is of such value to have work operating in town.

Maj. NOTTLE — There is the Couch drop-in centre. With the Couch, it is a drop-in centre that we run from 69 Bourke Street Monday to Thursdays from 5.00 p.m. to 9.00 p.m. It is a drop-in centre for international students. We received \$23 000 in funding from the Victorian Multicultural Commission last year; then we received \$25 000 in funding from the department of multicultural affairs, which is fantastic. We employ a worker and then staff it with volunteers. That provides a safe place for international students who are feeling really isolated and lonely. It is a place where they can socialise with other international students. It is a quiet place where they can access wireless internet and computers and do their homework. It is a place where they can access tutors.

It is also a place where they can access practical inputs. The police come and do seminars on personal safety. We have had community health nurses come and do seminars on sex education, which is a significant issue for a lot of the international students who we see. We have had migration lawyers. They come in one night a week from the international students legal advisory centre. They come and offer free legal advice as well. The Couch really arose out of Indian students being vulnerable in Melbourne. We want to provide a safe place. We see around 40 international students a night for four nights a week at that particular program.

Mr SCHEFFER — Do you work at all with the education institutions where they are enrolled?

Maj. NOTTLE — Yes, we do. We contact the private colleges. We are particularly interested in private colleges.

Mr SCHEFFER — These are not so much universities or RMIT. Could you talk about that a bit more?

Maj. NOTTLE — Yes. The reason we have targeted private colleges is because they are often the places that do not offer the support that international students need, whereas a lot of universities, like RMIT and the University of Melbourne, offer very good support for international students. We did not want to target them. It is more the ones who are really struggling.

Mr SCHEFFER — What is your experience when you talk to the colleges that these students are enrolled in?

Maj. NOTTLE — Generally it has been pretty good. Difficulties we have found on occasions include that some colleges want to forego their responsibilities in supporting students and think the Couch is a place where they can wipe their hands.

Mr SCHEFFER — An externality.

Maj. NOTTLE — Yes, and it is just saying, 'You fix everything'. We have had to say, 'No, we cannot, we are not resourced to do that. We will do what we can, but you have got a responsibility too'. That is what we say to the private college — they have got a responsibility too around providing supports.

Mr SCHEFFER — Do you think there is a role for local or state government to talk with these institutions?

Mr GRIGGS — When Brendan finishes I have got a few slides about our role with international students, so I will talk a bit more about that.

Maj. NOTTLE — I will just touch on that briefly. In terms of the City of Melbourne, it has an employee who takes responsibility for international students. He does an excellent job. He has had really good, significant input into the Couch. In terms of state government, obviously if we had more funding, we would be able to run it for more hours and provide greater services than what we provide. But I think it is not a bad service for \$25 000 a year. We are a little bit creative in how we get our volunteers.

The CHAIR — Is that the danger, though? I am listening to everything you are saying, and I am on the wavelength that Johan was on. You are becoming almost a creature that is providing a whole range of services. As I understood it, in years gone by the core function of the Salvation Army was to help the homeless and those who are drifting around the streets, getting them together and making them safe. Now suddenly you are running yourself out using your structure and volunteerism, I guess, to provide a whole range of services that you have not had to provide before. Now you are dependent on funding from different agencies and stakeholders to make it work.

I think that people exactly like those at the private colleges might well be doing the same and saying, 'There is this agency called the Salvation Army, and it is going to solve all the problems we had before; we will lump it on to them'. The police have particular roles and responsibilities in relation to the care of young people on the streets, and the Salvation Army is doing this. They have their street teams. Just ring them up, and they will fix that problem. Then you have got all these other agencies that do all of these sorts of things. I see you are getting yourselves into an environment where you are suddenly becoming the fixer of all problems. I am wondering if that is how you see where you might be heading without some caution.

Maj. NOTTLE — We really see our role as being a positive contributor to the city. We are committed to working with marginalised people, be they homeless people or be they international students. The international students we work with at the Couch are not cashed up; they are really struggling for a range of reasons, so I would see them as part of our core group as well. In terms of the bus, the young people who come to the bus are really in significant need, and so we see them as part of our core group as well. In terms of street teams, the young people that we work with are often in really vulnerable situations, so we would see them as our core group as well.

The CHAIR — Does that tell you there has been a letdown in the system somewhere else? We have some of the best social support mechanisms of anywhere in the world, yet you are saying there is still a portion of the community that is in desperate need of food. I find that quite hard to understand, given the richness of this country, its food particularly and the social network we have. To my mind if that is all important, there must be a breakdown in other areas that are not looking after the youth that we are looking at at the moment who are basically children.

Mr GRIGGS — I am just going to jump in there if I may. I was keen for Brendan to come because of the breadth of the work that they do in the city, but they are probably one of a number of partners that we have that are stretched pretty thin and are addressing the constant need that we see. Part of our role as local government is to try to have a picture of the municipality and to then roll that up into an advocacy piece around where the gaps are. There is the plugging of the holes and doing the work at the coalface in terms of the need that is out there, which the Salvation Army and others do, as well as a lot of great work they do around policy development and advocacy.

But that is probably part of our role as well, because we have three youth services that we fund that do the work on our behalf. We pay out about \$1.1 million in youth services for the city. We fund Frontyard Youth Services — a service in Carlton and also in Kensington. The most important part of that transaction is the conversation on what is happening around what we need in the city, what the gaps are and then how we as local government advocate to fill those — whether ourselves or with state government, federal government or other agencies. I just wanted to say that there is a lot of need out there, but there is also connecting that with policy and conversations like this about how to change it over the longer term.

Maj. NOTTLE — The other thing for us is that we are very careful about making sure that we are not duplicating other services that already exist. The Salvation Army is one of those brands that has the capacity to draw support, be it voluntary support or other forms of support, to help fill a gap. I think we have a responsibility to use that power to help meet some of the needs in the city. Around the police, we could say drunk kids are their responsibility or homeless people are their responsibility, but deep down I do not feel comfortable with that notion. I think the idea of the police being the first port of call for a homeless person is wrong. We are forgoing our responsibility — and when I say ‘we’ I mean the Salvation Army and other agencies like us — if we are allowing the police to be the first port of contact around homelessness. I really feel a sense of obligation to do whatever we can to help in each of the areas that we are covering. We have a good strong, robust board, and they hold me to account around all of the things that we are doing and ask these sorts of questions as well. I certainly do not feel any concern around us stretching ourselves to breaking point. It may sound that way at first hearing.

Mr SCHEFFER — If I could just come back to the point that I was raising, to recap, what was valuable for me about what you said was that it was a pocket of people who are vulnerable, where there did not seem to be an institutional arrangement to support them. You are doing it, which is fine and that is part of your charter and how you work. But because you have opened it up and identified it, it may well be that government at some level needs to build some structure, maybe regulation, into the way the colleges operate and what their responsibilities are. We have got the models. You said yourself that universities and RMIT have a capacity to support international students in ways that they have done over a long time. This may well need to be looked at in terms of the colleges. For me that was something I had not thought of until you said it, so I think that is a useful contribution.

Maj. NOTTLE — I think with some private colleges their motive for operating and their basis is simply profit. That is the reality. They do not want to spend money on providing additional services.

Mr SCHEFFER — But it is also because it is evolving. Organisations can start off a bit rubbery and improve as time goes on with some constructive criticism.

Maj. NOTTLE — True. I hope that answers your questions.

The CHAIR — Yes, we had better let you go.

Mr GRIGGS — I am wondering whether we might leave the Road Home, if you want to have a couple of quick minutes on that.

Maj. NOTTLE — The Lord Mayor’s Charitable Foundation founded a program that we run and have been running for 18 months. They funded it to the tune of \$876 000 for a year and then they have re-funded it for \$500 000 a year for the next two years. They launched that re-funding yesterday. There is an 1800 number attached to this program —

1800 COMMUNITY. Anyone can call this number in or around the city. It can be a resident, a business or police. If people see someone who is homeless, then they can call this number and get an immediate response any time of the day or night. A team will approach that person and then work with that person. We do not guarantee that we will move that person off somebody's doorstep, but we will work with them to get them into accommodation and organise the support that they will need.

Mr GRIGGS — I do not know if people are aware, but the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation is a separate organisation to the council. It is chaired by the Lord Mayor, but it is a separate entity in its own right. What is important for us is that we are part of that 24-hour response. If someone rings the council — often as a first port of call they will ring local government — and says, 'There is a homeless person', we will then ring the 24/7 response team, and we work really closely with them. We have just launched our homelessness strategy, and this partnership is a key bit.

Moving on to our work with international students, we have two programs. We obviously support the Couch with the Salvation Army, but we also have an international student welcome which is an event we hold at the start of each semester. We had it in the City Square Saturday before last. It is organised by a committee of international students; there is a committee of 12 or so international students that basically chooses the theme. We had about 2000 people down at the City Square last weekend for the second semester welcome. They decided they wanted a Lady Gaga theme. We said, 'Fine'. They wanted a fashion parade, so we had Lady Gaga blaring through the City Square and 2000 international students watching a fashion parade. It was a fantastic event. We run that welcome to the city for the second semester. There was another one at the start of the year which was down on Northbank, opposite Southbank. That is a key part of us welcoming those students into our city, and that will continue. We spend around \$52 000 annually on those two events. We have a project officer who works with that committee to make them happen.

We also run a program out at the airport, which is the international student welcome desk. Students get off the plane, there are 100 volunteers who work over a two-week period at the start of each semester, and they actively go out and find people who look like international students. Often they are pretty accurate; there are probably not too many people they would approach who are not international students. They give them a bag about Melbourne, they take them to the desk if they want any information and then they work with the universities to get them to their accommodation in the short term.

Each of the universities funds part of that program, and we contribute the staff. It is an annual program with sponsorship. There are also other sponsors involved in that as well as the institutions. The next bit of that is around the colleges and what the relationship with those will be. In terms of the bureaucracy of Melbourne, that program has just at the start of this financial year come into my branch. We are looking at how that program dovetails with the welcome. They get off the plane, they get a show bag and then a couple of weeks later they come to the welcomes we run at either Fed Square, City Square or down at Northbank. There is a bit of work for us over the next couple of years to look strategically at how we work with international students and the colleges.

Mr SCHEFFER — In that, have you got stuff about the study/work interface? A lot of them will be able to work in Melbourne.

Mr GRIGGS — Once they have graduated?

Mr SCHEFFER — Yes, while they are studying and then there are some issues there, too.

Mr GRIGGS — At the moment I have actually got a contractor doing a little bit of work around some of the welfare issues of the students. Are they working? There are anecdotal things of them falling on hard times, not having enough income. We want to do a bit of work to see if the social supports are correct, whether they are finding their way into part-time employment while they are here and then longer term whether they are heading back home or staying as part of our community. The other bit I have not got up there is that we are going to do a leadership program as well for international students. We are finding that there are the welfare programs and the social welcoming programs, but in terms of leaders in our own community, should they stay, that is the bit we want to work on. That is the next bit of work. We have a quite well-rounded program around students. Again, that comes back, I suppose, to that idea of crime prevention and a safe and resilient city.

The slide that will come up in a minute is about some of the work we also do, which is around injury prevention. If you go to the one with ‘injury prevention’ on the bottom, there is another edition of the *Melbourne News* there, with a person with a bike. Just briefly, part of my branch looks at injury prevention. This was around cycle safety. We find there is a sort of cohort of cyclists out there who do not use lights and are at risk to themselves and also pedestrians and cars in the city. We had a winter light-up campaign about the city, attracting people into the city, and we had different lights all around the city. We had buildings lit up and those sorts of things, and we extended that to bikes and gave away a whole bunch of bike lights if people filled out a survey around their cycling behaviour and safety. That worked really well. I suppose it is just another strand of what we try to do around safety.

The late-night activation program is on the next slide. We have a range of late-night activities that we bolt onto existing festivals. There are seven festivals in Melbourne. There is the jazz festival, the comedy festival, the film festival — I cannot remember all the others, but there are seven. Council has funded for the second year now late-night activities as part of those, embedded after 11.00 p.m., I think. They change the mix of what is going on in the city — and again they are alcohol-free events — to try to change the mix of the population that is in here, so they are not just people coming to nightclubs and staying late. They are available for families and those people who might not normally be out that late at night.

Interestingly, winding back to the beginning of that, it is based on not only the perceptions of survey data. I think when the Salvador Dali exhibition was here a few years ago, the NGV was open all night. We realised that there were queues at 3 o’clock in the morning, all the way down St Kilda Road, and thought, ‘Maybe people are interested in being in the CBD late, if there are different options other than just nightclubs’. That triggered a whole range of activity. We are looking at that a bit deeply as well in the next 12 months, around doing some surveys about what is people’s experience of the city late at night. There is a whole economy that happens in terms of either stockbrokers or those people who work late into the night, and we are interested in what their city experience is and how we might be part of that.

The CHAIR — And politicians.

Mr GRIGGS — And politicians, yes, I would imagine — very late at night.

The CHAIR — Some of our sittings go until 4 o’clock in the morning.

Mr GRIGGS — It is to try to gather that data and intelligence of that and what that means for us as a council. We have an annual event called the Drugs in Focus film festival, which is a stakeholder event. It is not like the Melbourne film festival, which is for the public; it is for the drugs and alcohol sector. Like other things in Melbourne, we like to do it in graffiti-coloured laneways, so we have it out the back of Hosier Lane, behind MoVida, the restaurant, if you know it. That takes place in June, and we had about 150 people there this year. That is around just educating ourselves and the drugs sector about emerging issues. We screened three films from around the world, from different film festivals, that had a focus on drugs and drug prevention.

We also work very hard with the licensees in the city. The photo is not particularly clear there, but I have brought a copy of it. We have just launched the *Venue Compliance Essentials*, which is a resource for nightclub owners or late-night venues around how to be good corporate citizens, I suppose. It was launched by the Lord Mayor. It is put together by ourselves, Responsible Alcohol Victoria and the licensing component of Victoria Police in the city, so Superintendent Rod Wilson was also part of launching it. It involves reps from the licensees as well. There is a foreword done by Mark Brennan, the director of liquor licensing, the Lord Mayor, Rod Wilson and Daniel Russian, who is a member of the licensees forum. It is a whole resource for venues, around compliance. When they are visited by the police in the evenings they have just the one folder that they can pull out and have a conversation with the police around how they are travelling with their venue. I think we had about 200 licensees come to the launch of it.

It is something we are really committed to, to have an ongoing conversation with those licensees in the city, around how their venue is run and how that impacts on the city and how we can work collaboratively. The team who put that together, from Responsible Alcohol Victoria, the police and ourselves, have just been flown over to the city of Wellington in New Zealand and have been spruiking the model there and in other capital cities that are interested in how we do that sort of work as well. It has been a great collaboration and something that I have been really impressed with.

The next slide is around places. I suppose it is just to extend that idea that our programs are not necessarily about just people but about settings and how the infrastructure of the city works. I have a slide there of New Year's Eve. The city really does come alive as a safe place on that night. I was in here with my family because I was interested to see how the city works on New Year's Eve. It was amazing and I think had a very safe sort of feel to it.

I also have there Moomba as something we are working on to have a more family-friendly element to it. There is also Signal, which you probably cannot see but it was on the first slide, our digital arts youth space down on Northbank. It is an old signal box that was used by the signalmen overlooking Flinders Street station, and it has now been converted into a youth space. It is full of Apple Macintosh computers and is used for various arts and youth programs. That is I suppose a safe place for youth in town, as well as the Salvation Army and Frontyard Youth Services, that we fund. You will see there, although it is not clear on the slide, amazing glass where you can screen different films and art installations. At the moment, if you walk through there late at night, there is a changing art installation done by young people and an audio sound track as you walk down to Flinders Street station. It is amazing.

Then, of course, we have our skate park — Riverslide it is called — down near the boatsheds. We are trying to make the city have a range of different settings to bring people in and make them feel welcome. That is a place for them to be so that they do not have to use their skate boards in places where there is conflict between them and other users of the

city. There probably always will be, but at least if we provide a skate park, there is more chance of them going down there.

There is also the regulation and infrastructure bit. There is a compliance component to what we do and public order, so there is a range of CCTV cameras around the city. You would be aware, I think, that we are up to about 55 camera locations. Coupled with them, there is also some infrastructure around safe city taxi ranks that is a key initiative of this council. I think we are moving into setting up the fifth and sixth safety ranks around town. We are trying to decrease the amount of hailing of cabs late at night by having central spots where people can get taxis in an orderly way so that there are fewer people running across roads to try to grab a cab. We provide a camera and a marshal at those ranks late into the evening, to give people a bit of a sense that they can wait safely for a taxi. We have done a submission to the Victorian taxi inquiry that is happening at the moment. We will be having a conversation with the people reviewing that, because we are big stakeholders in how taxis operate in the city.

Mr SCHEFFER — Are you going to talk about CCTV cameras later or is this the spot to ask you about that?

Mr GRIGGS — Yes, sure; please do.

Mr SCHEFFER — I saw that on one of those first charts there were four cameras. You have perceptions of safety at 9 per cent to 10 per cent. That was on one of the earlier slides.

Mr GRIGGS — Yes.

Mr SCHEFFER — Sometimes there is a lot made of the importance of the cameras, but we noticed in Geelong yesterday that they had it in proportion where it was one part of the toolkit but it was not the biggest thing. These percentages seem to indicate that probably the public thinks that as well. Do you have a further comment on that?

Mr GRIGGS — My view is, yes, I agree. It is part of a suite, I suppose, and that is why most of this presentation is about the programs that we do in the city to build that sense that the city is safe. The cameras complement that and are one tool or one string to the bow, I suppose. We are working closely with the police around how the footage is used and governed and shared, and there are arrangements around that.

Mr SCHEFFER — In our conversations with people we are told that that surveillance is about evidence gathering and about prevention. Has the City of Melbourne done any evaluation of those three purposes to which cameras are supposedly dedicated? Is it true? Do they prevent these things or support them?

Mr GRIGGS — It is a bit of a conversation we are having at the moment. I think they have been in for three or four years now — I could be wrong, because I am newish to Melbourne. I know from talking to the councillors there is a question around the deterrent element. It is something I am certainly interested in, and I think that at the moment they are looking at other locations for cameras. So I am not sure.

Mr SCHEFFER — Could you check that out and if you have anything, send it on to us?

Mr GRIGGS — Absolutely, yes. As I said, they are one element in that way.

I suppose changing the story is something we are interested in as well. It is back at the top of the presentation around those headlines of alcohol-fuelled violence. This was an article

from November last year. It was a great headline around how the city really is safe. It was in the *Sunday Age*, and we were rapt as a team that there was some good, balanced reporting about the city and safety. There was a classic photo of Ted Baillieu and John Brumby in the same play at school pretending to be gangsters. It highlighted for me that idea of trying to change the narrative and update it in terms of the story around the city being safe and having a good conversation about that and not just about the negatives.

This was the Melbourne Way, which was a forum that took place earlier this year. You will see Brendan there, third from the left on the panel, next to Sam Newman. It was a public conversation that ran over a full week and was in the *Herald Sun* and also on Melbourne talk-back radio about the Melbourne Way and starting to have a conversation about values and behaviour as well, emanating out of that single thing around antisocial behaviour. Some of the experiences in this whole thing were triggered by some of Brendan's work. We probably need a long-term generational change around a bit of respect and having a think about what Melbourne means to us. Maybe you would like to jump in, Brendan.

Maj. NOTTLE — No, I think that has covered it.

Mr GRIGGS — Again it is that thing of changing the story and having a deep look at what the public discourse is in Melbourne around safety and behaviour. It was something that was unique.

In terms of the future everyone is talking about social media, and I am interested as well around what the social media — Twitter, Facebook and all those different tools — might mean to community safety, city safety and crime prevention. I do not have any answers yet, but in terms of what is on the horizon I am interested in exploring that and also that idea I talked about.

That city rhythms graph up there is from the policy for a 24-hour city, so it talks about the rhythms of activity during a 24-hour period. What we are keen to do in the next 12 months is look at what those are. As I said, there are the activities late at night: what do they mean to us as a city and how do we engage with them? Sure, we know there are bars and nightclubs and things like that late at night, but what else is there? What is the story and how do we understand it?

In terms of our safety strategy, and this is for the next two years, we have just adopted the city safety strategy for 2011–13, and the themes of that are around people, place and partnerships, and a range of the projects I have already talked about under each of those headings. We will continue to do a lot of those projects, as I have mentioned.

Also the council under the Local Government Act 1989 — I think it is probably the City of Melbourne Act 2003 — needs to identify key strategic activities. There are 10 key strategic activities for the City of Melbourne for the next 12 months, one of which is around city safety. As part of that, as I have said there, we will be doing some research around what happens late at night to know our city and understand it. We are trialling a few things. We are going to have ambassadors, who you can see in their red shirts, all around the city. We are going to use them during the Australian Open later into the evening just to see how that impacts on helping people to find their way and also to see if their presence in the city works later into the evening.

I suppose a strong point to make is that our safety activities are not just about the CBD; we want to work closely with people in the suburbs and in the municipalities. We have a few programs around working in Carlton and Kensington and those more suburban areas, particularly around safety audits, which is a program that we run with the community. We

will continue our taxi rank work and install some more taxi ranks. I mentioned the police precincts earlier; we are going to help the police to promote those and encourage public understanding and take-up of that program, because we think the links with the police are key. The relationship between them and the locals is really important. The late night activation will continue as a big program as well.

I think that might be it. I have finished with two quotes. One is from the Lord Mayor; as I mentioned, I think it is from the Melbourne Way. He said, 'We all come from communities'. Part of what we want to do is start to talk to other councils and other municipalities about how we can work together on city safety. We realise we are a capital city. We have 700 000 visitors during the day and 90 000 residents; they come from somewhere, so what is the conversation we should be having with other parts of Melbourne? We have started that already by talking to some of the bigger councils.

The other ripper of a quote is from Superintendent Rod Wilson; it came from the Melbourne Way as well. He said, 'We can't arrest our way out of this'. We all agree enforcement is not the answer; it is a mix of all those things that I have mentioned. I think that part of the reason for having those two quotes up there is that we are all in it together so it requires a partnership approach. It is us, Victoria Police, the Salvation Army, the community health services that we work with and the needle and syringe programs in the city as well as businesses and state government.

I might leave it there in terms of the slides and the presentation. However, I am happy to keep talking.

The CHAIR — Thanks, Dean. I think we will ask you to have a rest and invite the committee to ask questions. I will kick off. It has been great, but I am still yet to hear about what the city believes or what the strategic plan is perhaps looking at — and these are issues that have come out of different areas that we have visited such as Geelong, Dandenong and Frankston — in the retail area, particularly in relation to packaged alcohol and the incidence of violence which seems to escalate around those areas. I would like a view from the city about whether they believe there are too many retail outlets and they need to curb the licensing of the outlets to reduce the violence. Alcohol does seem to be the common theme everywhere we go in relation to domestic violence or just basic antisocial behaviour in the street. The closing hours issue you have not raised. There was an experiment last year, I think it was, in relation to closing at 2.00 a.m.

Mr GRIGGS — The lockout.

The CHAIR — I guess there has been a review of that, how successful it has been, and whether the City of Melbourne believes reducing the hours of access to nightclubs and others or the number of liquor licences to serve alcohol would be successful if it was a broader policy within the city. They are the two issues perhaps. Alcohol has that common theme, and access to alcohol seems to be a common theme, and then antisocial behaviour, so I think the work that the Salvation Army is doing is great, as are certainly the activities the City of Melbourne is doing in relation to keeping people busy and bright and happy, but the fact is alcohol is still a perennial problem. It is easy to access and it has been misused, and it is therefore aggravating the antisocial behaviour. What is in the strategy to try to address that?

Mr GRIGGS — It is timely that you mentioned outlet density, because I have just come from the annual stakeholder forum for the intergovernmental committee on drugs as part of the national drug strategy up just around the corner. As I was leaving we were talking about outlet density, and up until that session this morning I thought that

understanding and curbing outlet density was a key thing to try to do to minimise alcohol-related harm in terms of capping outlet density. But the point was made this morning that, like CCTV, it is to be further understood whether outlet density or curbing outlet density has an impact, as we have assumed. I suppose the point I would make is that I think we need to understand it a bit more at the City of Melbourne. We have done some work on it previously, and there have been some studies done that I can access.

Mr McCURDY — Sorry, is that packaged liquor?

Mr GRIGGS — I think the comment was made about both — around packaged liquor as well as the density that I showed you before around licensing. The session that I was in had a range of licensing inspectors from across the country — so the police licensing inspectors from other states — and one made the point that sometimes it is good to cluster outlets because then you can couple that with transport to get people in and out — not packaged liquor but licensed venues. It got me thinking about trying to understand that a little bit more. It does not really answer the question. We have done some work previously on that, which — —

Mr SCHEFFER — Are you saying that there is evidence that is suggesting that the relationship between harmful alcohol consumption and the density of outlets is being sort of questioned now, or is it being refined?

Mr GRIGGS — Refined, I think. It was a point that was made that it just needs a little bit of further thought in terms of how it plays out in the city. I was in Brisbane a couple of weeks ago looking at Fortitude Valley and the work that the council does with police, and that sort of geography is different to what we have in Melbourne. That is a sort of very clustered, contained area with a whole bunch of people in it, probably needing more regulation, and that is what they have got up there, whereas Melbourne geographically is a pretty spread out sort of place. There is a national group of councils in the capital cities that get together to look at drug and alcohol policy, and there has been some work done previously on outlet density. That was more around packaged liquor, and that was suggesting that there is an issue with having too many clusters, or too much density.

The CHAIR — And placements; that was very clear in Geelong yesterday.

Mr GRIGGS — Yes.

The CHAIR — And also I appreciate we are nearly out of time and I want the other committee members to ask questions.

Mr GRIGGS — In terms of the second question that you had around the lockdown, a lot of that was before my time so I do not really know too much about how that played out. I know it was quickly done, and I think from what I have heard anecdotally it did not work that well, but I think there is probably some other — —

The CHAIR — I think it might have been sabotage.

Mr GRIGGS — I am not sure. I know there has been some work done around licensing and trying to bring back the hours that people were allowed to have licences until.

The CHAIR — I suppose the question then is: is having the ability for people to go in and drink and access alcohol at all hours of the night aggravating the issue around antisocial behaviour and getting people to a point where they are actually becoming quite aggressive? The argument is: do you shut the access off at 2 o'clock and send them all

home? Except now you are inviting them all in to have all these activities at all hours of the night. I am trying to get a balance of what is right and what is wrong.

Mr GRIGGS — The difficulty we have with a sort of hard and fast closure at 2.00 a.m. is there is nowhere for people to go unless they can catch a taxi. There is no public transport at that hour, so you have that window between 2.00 and 5.00 where you just end up with people in town and people are out on the streets inebriated unless they have got a lift or are able to catch a taxi and there are enough taxis. That is the challenge. Part of the next bit of work we need to do is around engaging public transport providers and how we can look at transport in and out of Melbourne.

The other bit I suppose I would say is around the venue compliance stuff and working with the licensees. There is a woman from Sydney who has done a Churchill fellowship and gone around the world looking at late night economies and also at how venues operate and the simple things that are done in other places in the world, where food is served before people leave or there are staggered hours of opening and closing and different regulatory environments for venues. I think in Paris their licence is renewed every 12 months, and there are incentives for good behaviour for those venues. There are different levers you can pull. Sorry, I am sure there are other questions.

Maj. NOTTLE — Can I just make a comment very quickly just around the density of venues? I think one of the issues that we see regularly is around pre-loading, so young people get drunk in the suburbs and then they come into the city because the liquor in the suburbs is a lot cheaper than in the city, so then city services end up having to resolve issues that did not actually start here; they started out in the suburbs. So that is a major issue too.

Mr McCURDY — Brendan, I am a huge fan of the work the Salvos do. Do you in your own mind feel that you are winning the fight? Is it a battle that is getting harder, or are we just more aware of it because scrutiny is far greater now than it ever was? I am just interested in your opinion.

Maj. NOTTLE — That is a really interesting question. I think awareness is far greater now than it was, too — like awareness of service availability — so we see a lot more people come into our services now than we did say 12 or 18 months ago. You feel like you are winning in one particular area and then another issue will arise. I thought we were doing okay in terms of the impact that street teams were having, and then the issue around Sudanese young people popped up, which poses another challenge. I do not think we are winning at the moment, but I think we are having an impact; I think that would be fair to say.

Mr SCHEFFER — Just on the data that you use, I think you touched on that going through and it is probably too big a subject to raise now, but we have had it raised by other witnesses. Could you provide us with some information about what kind of datasets you draw on to set your policy settings and also whether you think it is adequate and where the gaps are?

Mr GRIGGS — In terms of datasets, we do our own perceptions of safety survey, as I have mentioned before. Certainly there is consultation and discussions with stakeholders, but with the hard data I suppose there is census data and police data that is publicly available, but we are also looking at a bit of a data-sharing agreement with the police around building up a better picture of the city really and trying to work out a bit of an agreement at the moment around how we might share some data that is available.

Mr SCHEFFER — Our previous expert witness was saying Australia is very bad at collecting quantitative long-term consistent data and as a nation we are okay, or not bad, with qualitative data, and he really pressed that point. I think it is something that we need to be asking organisations like yours, because that clearly needs to be consistent, to take and meld with other datasets.

Mr GRIGGS — I would agree with that. We have looked at international examples of data from CBD areas, crimes stats and those sorts of things, and there is some really sophisticated modelling out there, publicly available, that is pretty detailed. We are not there yet, so I think we need to work a bit harder on that.

Mr SCHEFFER — Could you get something in writing to us about where you are positioned?

Mr GRIGGS — On this, yes, of course.

Mr SCHEFFER — The last thing I want to ask is about the media. How do you work with the media — I know this is a big subject as well, but just quickly — because it has been presented to us quite often that the media are part of the problem rather than the solution. It is difficult to get the sort of constructive stories that Dean has been talking about out there, and they tend to focus on the troubles.

Mr GRIGGS — I agree with that too. Our media team works closely with the media. That is part of those slides around changing the story and changing the narrative. We want to see more stories about the positive things. We pitched a three-month story to a few media outlets around the success of the street teams, and it did not get too far. Had there been perhaps more controversy about the street teams or how they were not working so well, we may have got some press, but pitching a story about that it has been successful and there has been this many levels of engagement did not get too far. That was a disappointment to us — as one example I can give you.

I think changing the narrative, and that is part of the data bit as well — we are keen to get good data that tells the correct story about Melbourne; whether it is good or bad, but the correct story. We are just not there yet. Also coupling that with a balanced conversation in the media is probably somewhere we need to go as well.

The CHAIR — Thank you both very much. One thing we did not really cover was how the community can engage. Neighbourhood Watch was a specific mention in the reference. I understand the City of Melbourne is somewhat different in relation to Neighbourhood Watch. If you get the opportunity or feel that you might like to give us the opportunity — while it is good to understand what is happening, from our point of view we want to make recommendations to Parliament so that the government can actually take steps to improve crime prevention or intervention, or make recommendations in relation to whether alcohol restriction or things like that are needed.

Given that I think you have got a bit of a feel for what we are looking for, and certainly we have got a better feel of what you are providing, if, during our reference phase, which finishes next March, and I am just flagging that there is time, I would certainly appreciate any additional comments you would like to make in a written form or verbally — we cannot, unfortunately, use the latter in the Hansard transcripts, but we can use written submissions — to perhaps provide us with some guidance about what we might make as recommendations as part of our reference.

Also, Brendan, I am not sure if the other committee members would like to, but I certainly feel I would like, if there is an opportunity, to perhaps join one of the street teams on a

night that is suitable and just get a feel for what is happening out there. I wanted to do that with the police. I think all of us have wanted to try to work it in, but it has been difficult. I think the work that you are doing, if we could see it from the ground level — for me anyway; the others can make their own judgement on that — we would certainly appreciate the opportunity, perhaps just for an hour or so, to join one of your teams and have a look at what is happening on the ground.

Maj. NOTTLE — Absolutely; you would be most welcome.

The CHAIR — We might follow that up with you, if that is all right. Thank you both very much; we appreciate it.

Witnesses withdrew.

DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

**Inquiry into Locally Based Approaches to Community Safety and Crime
Prevention**

Melbourne — 9 August 2011

Members

Mr B. Battin	Mr S. Ramsay
Mr S. Leane	Mr J. Scheffer
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Witness

Mr P. Bird, State Director, Victoria, Mission Australia.

The CHAIR — Welcome, Paul. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975 and further subject to the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, the Defamation Act 2005 and, where applicable, provisions of reciprocal legislation in other Australian states and territories. Any comments you make outside this hearing may not be afforded such privilege. I understand that you have received the guide for witnesses presenting evidence to parliamentary committees. We are recording all evidence and will provide a proof version of the Hansard transcript at the earliest opportunity so you can correct it as appropriate.

I invite you to make a statement to the committee.

Mr BIRD — We have sent in a formal submission, so really the purpose of me coming here is just to discuss and explain it a bit more.

The CHAIR — Thank you for taking the time to put in the submission to this inquiry.

Mr BIRD — It is a very important issue. Let me start by saying that Mission Australia is a large national organisation. We have 3500 staff. We work in 400 different communities, predominantly with vulnerable young people, children and families. We do have a very well researched project called Pathways to Prevention. That is a Queensland-based project, and I will leave you with the reports. In terms of actually having a crime prevention approach in a high-crime local area, this was developed with Griffith University with Ross Homel and is probably seen to be the best researched place-based integrated program in the country. Essentially Communities for Children, as I understand it, evolved from this piece of work.

This is still running. It is run in Inala, just outside of Brisbane, and it is really designed to reduce crime and respond to disadvantage in that suburb. It is a place-based integrated family approach. It is about working with a number of families in the area around identifying and responding to needs. That might seem very straightforward, but it is around linking up various government department services. It is around identifying ways to strengthen the families and provide both bridging social capital so that families from different groups interact as well as bonding social capital, with families within groups. We do things like run special playgroups and activities for Cook Islander groups, for instance, but also we run, or facilitate other activities, which enable different groups to come together. I will leave this here, but in terms of some great research over the last 10 years — this has been designed, developed and delivered over 10 years — that is the best effort that we have. I have to say that there is nothing like it in Victoria.

What I am going to talk about today is mainly around young people. Mission Australia works predominantly in Frankston, Greater Dandenong, Casey, Cardinia, predominantly through the northern suburbs and in Gippsland and Shepparton. We work with 8 to 19-year-olds predominantly who have left school, although some are at risk of leaving school if they are in school. Predominantly they have left school. We do that through a range of programs and services, predominantly through Youth Connections, which is a federally funded program, but we have other programs which enable re-entry back into education or transitions to training and employment, including partnerships with employers. So there is a range of services. Obviously for 8 to just below 15-year-olds there are very few options at school. When they get to 15 there is a whole variety of other options in terms of training and then transitions to employment. We do work with a number of employers. We have corporate partnerships where they provide job placements, and we do what is called the Transitions to Work program.

We see a couple of things. One is that we see a high number of young people leaving school, and leaving school at an earlier age. I have no data, but in the way that our programs work and the places that we work we would see that to be a trend. We would see an underlying cause as the increasing family stress, tension, breakdown and family violence that is happening in those communities. Those communities would not just be the disadvantaged communities; we would also see that in some of the growth suburbs, so in Casey, Cardinia or Wyndham we would see that happening as well — not your traditional Heidelberg West or Noble Park. Whether that is representative across Melbourne, I do not know, but that is predominantly where we work.

We would see — and it is backed up by the community indicators — that there is a correlation between the lack of educational attainment and the level of actual crime and the perceptions of safety. The community indicators show that in areas where there is a lower level of educational attainment and a low level of income there is a high level of crime and there is a perception of feeling less safe. We would also say that, in addition to the high levels of school leavers, Victoria has the highest level of youth unemployment in the country in the way that DEEWR measures unemployment, as 15 to 19-year-olds not in full-time work or full-time education, to the extent that the north-western region, which includes places like Broadmeadows, has 54 per cent youth unemployment, the highest in the country. We would say that because of the combination of young people, even children, leaving school and other factors, an inability to get into work correlates with a high level of crime. I think that is fairly obvious.

Before I get into the crime prevention program we undertook with Victoria Police, my first point would be the more we can work upstream to enable a child or a young person to remain in school and to remain in a supportive family the less crime we will see in that area. That includes the ability for that child or young person to transition into training and employment. To the extent that we have also done some research in Dandenong around the barriers to employment for young people — given that the area of greater Dandenong has jobs growth; that between 1996 and 2006 employment participation actually went down — there is a reluctance among employers in Dandenong to actually employ local people, as there is in Broadmeadows. Even if a young person gets up to the level of attainment that is required, there is still a need for employers to see that young person as productive, valuable labour for them. We would recommend to the committee that obviously if we can work upstream and enable that to happen, ultimately that will prevent a level of crime.

In the programs Mission Australia works with we also identified the vulnerability around young people and the at-risk factors. The next thing I will say is that obviously there is a correlation between the more at-risk factors a young person has and the level of crime, in our experience. The reason I say that is because we developed and established a program called the Youth Assist program with the Frankston police. That program, on which I sent some information, was developed on the basis that it was a program that utilised the cautionary powers of the police when a young person first offended to essentially work hand-in-hand with the police. We have a caseworker who works at the Frankston police station and provides a joint assessment with the police as to the at-risk factors around that person, provides what we call case management, which is an individual development plan, and then links that person in to the support services available in that area.

Our experience is that there is generally not a lack of support services, but we need to engage that young person with the right services at the right time. That program was called the Youth Assist program, and it had a steering committee that was co-chaired by Mission Australia and the head of the Frankston police station and had all the service providers around the table. That met every couple of months. It ensured that there was

cooperation from those service providers, and it made sure that any feedback from the service providers would be being fed back into how the program was developed, as in what potential gaps there were in services or where young people were able to get in to those services. That program has been evaluated by the University of Melbourne to have a reoffending rate of less than 3 per cent for first-time offenders.

Mr SCHEFFER — Compared with what benchmark?

Mr BIRD — There is no other control group. Anecdotally the police would say over 50 per cent of those young people would reoffend. At any one time there would be about 120 young people on that program from the Frankston area. Our experience and the police's experience would be that there would only be between 200 and 300 at-risk young people who would be committing crime in that area. In any one year 120 would be quite a good representation of those.

We broke that cohort into thirds. For a third of those young people just getting the parent into the police station was enough of a deterrent and they would not commit a further crime. About another third needed support and an element of one or more support services for themselves or the family, and that was sufficient for them not to commit further crime. The remaining third, about 40, had substantial at-risk factors, and you would expect them to be carrying on to do that regularly, but they needed quite intensive support. That is where Mission Australia was particularly of value in terms of working to an intensive case management plan to provide that intensity of support.

I should also say that Mission Australia also runs Social Enterprise, which involves businesses that have a program attached to them. We had the benefit of having a number of those young people enter into our Urban Renewal landscaping and construction business school. That is under the Construction Supplier Register and does landscaping and minor construction works. That actually enables a pathway into mainstream employment. That has over a 70 per cent outcome in mainstream employment.

For that one-third most-at-need cohort, which needs more than just a support service response — and they are 15 and up — we can actually provide more intensive support within that Social Enterprise, because that is an integrated model of accredited training. They get certificate II in horticulture or general construction, they get personal and group support, they obviously get paid work and that is in a work environment. We find Social Enterprise to be particularly effective with quite smart, high-needs young people. They are smart because they have evaded the system, and they are usually out of school from year 8 or under. To answer your question, there is a definite mix of the cohort there, but that bottom third would have been expected to recommit.

I have to say the other factor about the program is that because the Mission Australia caseworker, who also used Mission Australia case management systems and practices, was embedded in the Frankston police station, they were able to work with a youth resource officer to ensure that the program was implemented across the serving officers. The police have cautionary powers there, but we think it needed that person within the police station to constantly be in contact with those officers to ensure that they could use the cautionary powers. They understood the fact that they would have less work in the future through this preventive approach.

I think it was very important for us to be embedded in the police station and to be part of that infrastructure. It was also very important for the police to co-convene the steering group, because they have a level of authority that we do not, which meant all of the support agencies came and participated. Again, that model is far more effective than us

trying to convene the meetings as just another service provider. However, we were of value to the police because we could offer professional case management and an awareness and understanding of the support services that were on offer in that area and what was effective for that young person. I think we felt it was quite a good marriage there.

We presented that. We had a trial two-year program. We fundraised for that program. The cost was fairly effective at about \$110 000, which was the cost from our point of view, but that program was not picked up as a funding commitment by the previous government, so we finished it. We finished the trial and had it evaluated. Our approach is that we will trial a program for two or three years, and we will work hard to advocate for the program, and if it is not picked up as sustainable funding, we have other demands on that fundraising dollar. That was finished on 30 June last year. For us, in terms of a local community place-based approach, that is the most effective program or service we have designed and implemented in Victoria.

Mr BATTIN — Did you say it was evaluated?

Mr BIRD — It was evaluated by the University of Melbourne. I need to check with the police to release that report. The report was not made public; it was done between ourselves and the police.

Mr BATTIN — Because it would be interesting to see the results from that report. There are a lot of similar-style programs. Cardinia has one as well. It would be interesting to find out how many local YROs at the police stations are running these programs and with which organisations, to see an evaluation of how effective they are and to see whether they can be spread out. I know Casey is not as keen on this style of program with their youth workers, whereas Cardinia thinks it is fantastic, and they have had similar results to the ones you were talking about before, where 86 per cent of the kids who were expected to be repeat offenders are now no longer repeat offending. I would just like to see those results. That is the big thing, because you need results before you can push forward with it.

Mr BIRD — Let me check with the police. I am happy to disseminate it, but I can say on record that less than a 3 per cent reoffending rate was evaluated by the university. I should also say that we provided some training to the youth resource officers, and we did work through the privacy issue with Privacy Victoria as to what information we could exchange. It was obviously very important for us for that young person ideally not to tell the same story to a number of providers, so the more we could share that information the better. That kind of privacy issue was worked out in terms of working in a police station and not having access to their systems. We did not want the young person to then completely retell the story, so there was some selected information that we then received to enable us to do the case management plan.

Mr BATTIN — Is that an ongoing issue with privacy, when you are obviously working with two different agencies?

Mr BIRD — It was not for us, once we had actually got Privacy Victoria to rule on that. It would have taken us probably a month to get that worked through, but we were very clear with the police. We basically co-designed it with them over a three-month process. We work with people like Leanne Sargent in central office around the monitoring and evaluation. We work with more than just the Frankston police station. At that time we also had Steve Soden, the head of youth affairs in the police, to work with. It was intended that, if that did work, it could be replicated. My understanding is that the youth resource

officers potentially have other duties, and it would have taken the vast majority of their time in Frankston's case for them to implement this program.

The CHAIR — How are the youth resource officers funded? Are they funded through the city?

Mr BIRD — No, the police.

Mr BATTIN — They are sworn police officers.

The CHAIR — Are they?

Mr BIRD — Yes. They exist in all police stations.

The CHAIR — So where are the city councils? Are they partners in the program? You talk about Frankston City Council and police, so you have two stakeholders, and then Mission Australia. Is that right?

Mr BIRD — We partner with the police directly, so it is a joint program with us and the police. Then we had the service providers that were sitting around the table, including drug and alcohol services and mental health services, so headspace was represented. There are a number of transitions back to education or employment services. There are a range of service providers that are very local to Frankston, so they would be different to those in Dandenong or Preston or wherever. They have a range of services that are funded philanthropically, by state and federal government and locally.

The issue is that before we set that group up with the police there was no coordination of youth services. Victoria lacks the coordination or even the integration of youth services. A young person at risk would traditionally go through a number of programs or services, the police ropes course being a classic one to the extent where the police ropes course is almost a badge of honour now in their peer group. There would be a range of programs and services, and it is quite complex. Unless you are kind of working in the area, it is very difficult to understand that. We all have different contracts and different cohorts — the age ranges or the nature of the cohort. We all have different contracts that have different outputs or outcomes.

In sitting around the table we have had an agreement and cooperation between those services such that a young person who is referred out to those services by the case worker with the youth resource officer would have access to those services. They knew which were the right services at the right time, so there is a level of coordination. What we do not have is enough coordination and then integration. We refer to it as common referral and case management. A young person at risk ideally has one referral point. It is quite difficult for a parent, aunt, uncle or young person themselves to navigate what services are available in their area. I do not know whether any of you have tried. If you have a nephew who might have a mental health issue or a drug and alcohol issue — whatever issue they face — you might find a list or directory of agencies through the council's website or you might call the council, and that is probably your best hope to try to find out what is available. The visibility of what is available is challenging.

Then ideally we would advocate for a system where that young person at risk has one entry point — what we call 'no wrong door' — into the system, like we have tried to do with homelessness, such that they are able to be case managed over at least a two-year period, because they need a range of interventions in that period, as do their families, to enable them to resolve their underlying issues and to transition back into education, training or employment.

We have a system where they will enter the service system at different points. They might be referred by Centrelink, by their school, by the police or whoever. They enter into a program or service, and then there is a gap. Then they might reoffend, or whatever it is, and then they are into another program or service, and that continues. Some of these young people have been through a whole range of these services, but nothing has changed in their lives; they still suffer from that underlying issue, whether it is with themselves or the family. We have not taken a longitudinal approach to that. As such it is likely that they are going to commit more crime, because we have not resolved that. We have kind of pinballed them around different programs and services.

The Victorian government has something called Youth Partnerships, which came out of the Better Youth Services pilots. The Youth Partnerships were run in seven LGAs. They have the potential to provide more integration of youth services, and one is in Frankston. They have the potential; we will see whether they actually achieve that. Ultimately it is about ensuring that those young people at risk, who are highly likely to or have committed crime, actually get the integrated support over that longitudinal period that they and/or their families need. That is ultimately what the Youth Assist Program did. It kind of forced that through a steering group, a corporation of agencies and a case management approach. We would advocate that model, but equally there are other models that can coordinate and integrate youth services.

Mr SCHEFFER — On that last point, I have a macro question, I guess. We have had a number of organisations similar to yours come and give us presentations. For example, this morning we had a group working around Plenty Valley Community Health, and they had a sort of interdisciplinary triage system. The underpinnings of what they talked about were very similar to what you were saying about long-term support, multidisciplinary approaches and so forth. Then we had the Salvation Army come and talk to us about a range of programs they are running in the city of Melbourne, and now we have you talking about what you are doing. We talked to Ross Homel this morning.

The same story comes forward about a lack of integration. Personally I think it is great that lots of organisations are addressing themselves in a practical research way to these difficult issues, because that creates fertile ideas and thinking. You do not want state control of everything, but on the other hand the state provides a sort of coordination and a single structure. How do we reconcile that so that we stop this cycle that you have described of a lack of coordination? When you talked about the elements of a good coordination model, you ended up by saying, ‘And there are other ways of doing this’. That was almost your last point. How do we pull all this into a system that is a single system but also one that allows different approaches to be experimented so that we grow as a society?

Mr BIRD — That is a very difficult question.

Mr SCHEFFER — I know. That is why I am asking it.

The CHAIR — You always ask difficult questions.

Mr BIRD — I hasten to say that this is the Holy Grail of our sector, because we all know this should happen. Let me first turn to the barriers or the challenges. Again we are all funded under different contracts with different funders. Ours in particular are commonwealth government contracts, Youth Connections being the major one. We have a contract that says, ‘You will provide a service to this cohort, this age group and in these areas to provide these outputs’. Equally every other agency you have talked to would have other contracts, so the complexity is huge, and the complexity gets more difficult. You can

only look at a different area. As I said, the agencies around the table in Frankston would be different from the ones up the road in Dandenong or in any other area. The complexity is great for us, let alone for a young person or a family member who has to navigate the system.

To take the first point, we are working with Frankston council on something called the Youth Navigator, which is a web-based system where a young person, parent or whoever fills out a questionnaire. It tells them what services are available in their area, just at a very basic level. It provides some visibility. Again, we have the complexities compounded by the fact that the referral point could come from anywhere, from any individual — schools, police, family or friends. Ideally that referral point comes into some kind of centralised system, whether it is a telephone number, an email or whatever it is, even Facebook — something that young people relate to. Ideally when that common referral comes in and you start taking the information, it is just given once and is shared with subsequent agencies. There is an issue with privacy here across agencies and authorities.

The ideal is that there is a single referral point and then there is only one assessment. The referral comes in and an assessment is made. At the moment each agency does its own referral and assessment according to the service it delivers. Ideally there is one assessment. That relationship then continues over whatever outcomes we can achieve for a young person, whether it is six weeks or six years. That basic assessment is what we call a case management role over that period, especially for those young people who have the most at-risk factors. It links them in to the different services but maintains that relationship, because it is all about what services are available for the family as well. That is the ideal system. That system has been articulated from the Better Youth Services pilot in Frankston, so the group has articulated what that system would be. The issue now becomes how we implement a system, how we trial a system. I think that is where the state government can take some leadership, and Youth Partnerships is the mechanism to do that. You already have a program — —

Mr SCHEFFER — So the model of Youth Partnerships is right? What are the problems with it?

Mr BIRD — With the Frankston area my understanding is that the funding from Youth Partnerships will go into the Oakwood alternative school, so it does not necessarily directly improve the integrated youth services. The fact that the Youth Partnerships funding is going through DEECD, through the regional office, is a decision of the regional office. It is only in certain areas, and it is a relatively small amount of money. As great as the commitment — —

Mr SCHEFFER — What should happen?

Mr BIRD — The state provides the leadership and the framework to do this, and it sits well in DEECD. In essence the agencies, including us, that receive a range of funding need to agree that that is the approach we need to take, because each of us has to give up some sovereignty in this process. It just does not work with the state government funding agencies because there is a whole other world of federal funding and philanthropic funding. There has not yet been an agreement with those agencies. Then they have to work together in the process to enable that system to happen. But there has to be sufficient resourcing for that system to occur as well.

Mr SCHEFFER — Okay.

Mr BIRD — I think it has to come both from a leadership perspective from the state government and from a resourcing perspective, and I think there has to be an agreement from the sector.

The CHAIR — Are there any other questions?

Mr LEANE — I just want to touch on re-engaging young people as young as eight years of age into education. A lot of people in our community would not believe that there are children as young as eight who are not going to school. To be honest, I think it is something that has got away from us a bit so far — young people just not turning up to school. If you come across someone around that age group, it is not necessarily true that you can take them back to a mainstream school and that they will re-engage and stay there.

In relation to the work you have done, has there been any push back from mainstream schools or push back from education departments or, I suppose, from the community, that these kids are just brats and that they need to be sent back and told to stay there and the reality is that they will?

Mr BIRD — Okay, that is another good question. Let me explain the background to the program. We work with 13 to 19-year-olds who have left school. We know that the 13-year-olds who have left school for a period of time have significant behavioural and life skills issues. We discuss this with a range of people in DEECD. The southern regional office was keen to work with us on an 8 to 13-year-old program as a trial. They were particularly passionate about what they saw as a significant number of 8 to 13-year-olds who had left school, predominantly in North Frankston and Carrum Downs. We are working with seven primary schools. I will not mention how many, but it is a significant number; it is not a small number. If people of that age are out of school, then it is an issue with the families — often single-parent families. Obviously we work with the families as well as with the children.

With the regional office of DEECD we have developed a model that provides an element of family support, but it is also about working with the schools to enable that re-engagement of the student. Again, unlike South Australia, Victoria lacks a system where schools are committed to taking back students. At the moment the education system does not routinely record or report school leavers, so I cannot tell you how many school leavers there are. All I can tell you is that there is a growing number and that they are getting younger. In South Australia they record and report this, and schools have to be committed to taking them back. In South Australia there is something called ICAN. The Victorian government has put in place a policy called flexible learning options, which essentially is a student resource package — about \$6500 — that a school gets on enrolling a student. It is available to either schools or agencies to spend where we have a student and we can provide an alternative education setting as a transition back to school. Mission Australia believes in a model where there is engagement with what we call an alternative setting as a transition back to school. We do not necessarily believe in alternative schools.

We are encouraged by the Victorian government's policy direction; we think it is the right way because it provides an element of funding, but we would also recommend that the school needs to be committed in that process as well. We only started this program with the cooperation of DEECD and the cooperation of the schools, because that is the key part of this. Every child is a different case, and it will take a different amount of time to work with the family around the issues and get them back to school. There has to be an element of flexibility in the system. To answer your question, that program is not public. We are working with DEECD — and we are only six months into this program — basically to

look at the model, to see what is working and to inform the regional office as to what appropriate responses are. We see the cooperation of the seven schools as being critical, and we would not do without that. The schools are on board.

Is the community aware? No, only that we are working, obviously, with community partners, especially where the families are accessing or need to access support services. But as I said, that cohort is out there. Unless we pick them up at that level they are going to be disengaged for an extended period of time, and it is increasingly difficult to re-engage them back into education. Really, if a child is under 15, there are no other options. At 15 there is a whole raft of VCAL and VET options and other transitions and social enterprise options, but below that age it is extremely difficult.

Mr LEANE — Why would Mission Australia be anti alternative school?

Mr BIRD — We are not anti; we prefer the alternative settings. It is only because we have taken the school leavers from those alternative schools. If the young person faces barriers, you are putting them into another school setting. It is a question about resolving the issues around the family and the child together. What we find is that the alternative schools do a great job when the child is in the school, but they are constrained by how much they have in the way of resources in order to work with the families outside school. Our concern is that a student resource package is great but probably does not represent the true cost of running that kind of service with the child and the family. In South Australia they actually supplement the equivalent student resource package with other funding.

Mr LEANE — In South Australia is there any difference, as in dealing with absentees at a young age? Is it any different to Victoria? Is there any difference in the process if a young person gets expelled? What onus is on the school that is expelling that particular student as far as their future education is concerned?

Mr BIRD — I am not aware of that detail; I would have to check that. We are one of the providers of ICAN in South Australia, and we have presented the model to the DEECD, but I am not sure about that.

The CHAIR — I thought there was a required reporting mechanism for schools on missing students or truant children. Is there not?

Mr BIRD — Not that we are privy to.

The CHAIR — But that does not mean there is not?

Mr BIRD — I am not aware of that or whether that happens internally. We work with a number of schools around the state and we would see the opportunity for partnerships with schools, and some schools are fantastic. I respect that schools have limited resources themselves. Primary schools are experiencing this now as well, and the primary welfare officers that have been committed to by this government are a great step forward. We suggest that they would need to have an awareness of the service system in their area and in some cases could be employed by community services agencies, not necessarily by the DEECD, because they are the people that can have access to the child and family support structures. We think it is a valuable resource to have in schools, as are the SSSOs. The question is how much are they aware of the linkage into those services?

Most areas in Melbourne are not short of support services. Getting a child or a family into them at the right time is the challenge. Just being aware of them is the critical factor. Some schools are great because the SSSOs or the schools are aware of those. Some of them are

not so aware, and the service system is complex. If you add homelessness, mental health issues and domestic violence, it is a very complex picture.

The CHAIR — We have been having hearings for nearly five weeks now, and I suspect they have covered a lot of what you said. We are aware of the problems.

Mr LEANE — Would you mind following up that information with South Australia and Victoria and the differences if you do get a handle on it?

Mr BIRD — We have that information, so we are happy to provide that.

Mr LEANE — Thank you very much.

Mr SCHEFFER — In respect of the variance in data and the data that organisations such as yours work from, you said at the outset of your contribution that you did not have data about trends — for example, the increase in family stress — and I think you instanced Cardinia, Casey, Wyndham and areas like that. If you are operating on that shaky ground — you do not necessarily have to answer it all now — what do you rely on? And could you perhaps send us something about that, because it is a point of debate?

Mr BIRD — My evidence is only anecdotal. We work in areas where we have been told that single-parent households now make up between 50 and 60 per cent of the households in that growth suburb. You have families that have moved out to a growth suburb because they perceive that they will have a better lifestyle with a bigger house. We would see the pressures of travel and, post-GFC, financial pressures creating enormous family tension and stress, family violence and assaults.

Mr SCHEFFER — What you are saying stands to reason, but you are saying you are unable to access data around that?

Mr BIRD — I cannot provide you with any data. All I can say is that we work in the areas and we are told this and we work with the families. It would be great to get more consistent data.

Mr SCHEFFER — So the data in the datasets that come out of Cardinia shire, for example, that they regularly release — I cannot remember what the components of that are just at the moment — does not help you?

Mr BIRD — I do not think it helps. Community indicators are probably the best set; all of them go back to the census. In having a place-based approach you need that data, because you need to know where the focused resources or the gaps are. So I think the data or the evidence base is a limitation.

The CHAIR — Very timely; giving me a lot of data to fill in tonight, as I understand, in relation to the census.

Mr BIRD — Yes.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much for your time and for your submission to this inquiry. We appreciate that.

Witness withdrew.

DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Locally Based Approaches to Community Safety and Crime Prevention

Melbourne — 9 August 2011

Members

Mr B. Battin
Mr S. Leane
Mr T. McCurdy

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Mr J. Scheffer

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Witnesses

Dr L. Beyer, Sustainable Communities Planner,
Cr J. Donovan, Council Representative and
Ms P. Neil, Youth Development Unit Coordinator,
Detective Sergeant S. Brundell, Macedon Ranges Crime Investigation Unit
Representative, Gisbourne, Victoria Police
Sergeant G. Neil, Traffic, Officer-in-Charge, Macedon Ranges Traffic Management
Unit, Gisbourne Police, Macedon Ranges Local Safety Committee.

The CHAIR — Welcome and thank you very much for coming. We have about half an hour, so the number of witnesses worries me a bit if you all wish to speak.

Dr BEYER — We are happy with whatever you would like, if you just want to ask questions and for us to answer.

The CHAIR — No. You provided the submission to us, which we are thankful for, and we are more than happy for you to work collectively to address that submission in any way you see fit. We would like some time to ask questions of you, though, on your verbal presentation. Lorraine, are you the lead advocate?

Dr BEYER — I can be.

The CHAIR — I have to make you aware of certain conditions surrounding this evidence, so bear with me. I will just read this out collectively, to you all, if you are all presenting to this committee hearing. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975 and further subject to the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 and the Defamation Act 2005 and where applicable the provisions of reciprocal legislation in other Australian states and territories. Any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege.

I understand you have a copy of the guide for witnesses presenting evidence to parliamentary committees. We are recording the evidence, obviously, with Hansard here, and will provide a proof version of the transcript at the earliest opportunity, so that you can correct it as appropriate.

I now invite you to provide us with a verbal submission. Are you happy if we ask questions as we go, or would you like to present?

Dr BEYER — Yes, I think so. Cr Joan Donovan is going to open, just talking about how important council partnership is with the local police and others in our shire.

Cr DONOVAN — Certainly I am mindful of the time. I will just say that the shire council has thoroughly supported and worked in an active partnership with the local safety committee since its inception in 2004. The support that we give is considered to be a really important role of council, and it is totally consistent with our mandated responsibilities under the Local Government Act 1989. I think you would know all that.

One of the things that guides this is the regard we have to the overall quality of life of the people in our local community. We understand how heavily that quality of life is impacted on by crime and safety, so it has become a really important area of focus for us.

Council runs about 44 operational areas from cradle to grave, which is a quite enormous scope of work. Probably a lot of our residents are not aware that we have that range of services offered. Our public health risk includes community safety, crime and fear of crime. They have a significant impact on our community wellbeing and community functioning. We have become a very important partner, we believe, with the safety committee and through our various roles in the council. They do not include just roads, rates and rubbish.

We are very proud to have this planning power. We really see it as a beginning, not an end. It is a beginning to improving the wellbeing of our community. That is basically all I need to say. You have a copy of the other.

The CHAIR — Neighbourhood Watch is also identified in our reference, and I would be interested if you could just refer to it at some point as part of your government interaction with the community. I do not know if it exists. Having not read your submission fully, I am not sure if it was identified.

Dr BEYER — I do not believe it exists. Is that in our charter?

Sgt NEIL — No, we do not have it down here. I think our closest one to the shire was Trentham, which is now in a totally separate region of Victoria Police. There is a Neighbourhood Watch in the area. It is based out of Bendigo, where the coordinator is, but we have not had a Neighbourhood Watch within the Macedon Ranges borders probably since Jonah jumped out of the whale, realistically. It was very informal many years ago. We do have, though, a Rural Watch. Whereas Neighbourhood Watch is more urban based, we have a program of Rural Watch, which is more of the rural-type looking after and recording to their local police.

The CHAIR — Crime Stoppers.

Sgt NEIL — Yes, that type of thing. If you have much to do with rural people, you will know that invariably the only time they want to talk to their local police is when they see them down at the market on Saturday morning. They are too busy during the week to ring them up. It is just a fact of life.

The CHAIR — I am a rural person.

Sgt NEIL — I do not say that derogatively. We may catch up with him: ‘There he is, I will go and talk to him now’.

Dr BEYER — I might just add to that. If you look at our crime statistics and also the ABS measure of fear of crime, it is one of the lowest in the state, so we feel like we are doing something right in our shire even by just not having a Neighbourhood Watch. We actually want to protect what we have, which is largely a happy, healthy community which is safe.

When I was talking to Sandy on the telephone she mentioned that you were interested in the partnership work that we do. It has actually been very successful in our shire. That is what I have put in the submission that you have a copy of. I had a think about that, and I think these were key elements to why it was successful. It has really only been successful probably in the last four years, and I will put it down to consultation that council has done for some pretty significant and major strategic work that has happened over the last four or five years, and that has included the housing strategy, the health and wellbeing plan, the youth strategy, the aged and disability strategy and the family and children’s services strategy.

Instead of just consulting with stakeholders and then moving away and getting on with our job by ourselves, we have developed consultative committees as part of that. That is the second one: we have got key consultative committees, advisory groups and partnership clusters in the shire, and many of the members of the Local Safety Committee are on those as well, so it gives them a whole other network behind them when issues come up that they can draw on. I think that is part of the success as well of the partnership — the way it works — particularly across the health sectors, which are quite complex. The way they are funded is quite complex as well. You have mental health, community health and the GP sector. They are all really important, and it is difficult for them to work together or for people to understand how they work and how they function and how to tap into that,

because a lot of crime and safety issues have a parallel or connection with health and safety.

We have bimonthly meetings with the CEOs of all the health providers in the shire. On that committee we have police and social welfare people as well, so that feeds into the safety committee also. The members we have on our committee all come from different spheres. We have a state-elected representative in Donna Petrovich who chairs our committee, and she is marvellous. She gets things done. We have local government representation with Joan Donovan, who at that level can get things done. We have that political side, and then we have a range of police — traffic, child protection, CIB and so on — so that is really good resource as well, and youth.

Biyearly we have been running a planning workshop for our committee, and that has helped to focus and home in on those things we all have in common from our various spheres and also what the community and the stakeholders have been telling us in our normal daily work. That is being fed into our safety plan as well, the partnership plan that you probably have copies of. That was launched just a few months ago and that is our manifesto now. Did you get copies of that?

The CHAIR — No.

Dr BEYER — I will hand that around. We are also strategically focused on our committee. We do not get bogged down too much in the detail. Where detail needs to be done, like on the cyber safety issue, which we will talk about in a moment, it is the subcommittees or the sectors that are concerned working together that deal with it. Oftentimes we tend to stay behind the scenes and put people in touch with one another and basically be solution focused, but not taking the limelight.

Finally, I did mention the financial support. Fortunately local government has committed quite a lot of resources to developing that plan and all the consultation that went in with it, and also the workshop and the police are providing the administrative support, but other than that we do not have any funding for the committee. It does limit the scope of things we can do, but we do our best within our limitations. That is all I needed to say. Thank you.

The CHAIR — Given you are basically a rural shire, what sorts of crime are we talking about when you talk about your safety programs? What are they responding to?

Dr BEYER — I would say we are peri-urban. We have a lot of people moving through tree changes and so on. We are actually quite schizophrenic as a shire, because in the south, closest to Melbourne, it almost functions like a suburb of Melbourne, and we have a lot of people who commute. When you go north it is much more country, so we have to cater for all of those people. Perhaps someone else would like to talk about the crime rate.

Cr DONOVAN — The police can talk about the crime rate!

Det. Sgt BRUNDELL — We are effectively working off a low base of crime in the area. The population of the shire is not as great as other shires. In regard to the demographic, I guess we have a higher income earner that generally resides within the shire and with that we just have a lower crime rate. I have been there since late 2006, and what I have seen is that there is a lot of community support. People help each other, keep a lookout for each other and they are prepared to report matters to each other. After being in the police force for 25 years, that is quite refreshing. I have done a lot of policing in the metro areas and you do not get that same buy-in from the public. There is a real sense of

community spirit, I guess, that still exists within the Macedon Ranges. I am a resident there and it is where I chose to move to bring my family up for those reasons, and we are reaping the rewards of that. It is a different dynamic and a different environment than what you see in the metro areas.

The CHAIR — I ask that because we have just had a number of witnesses from the City of Melbourne. We were in Geelong with the City of Greater Geelong and we have been in Dandenong and Frankston. We have been confronted with issues around alcohol particularly and related crimes, drugs and antisocial behaviour by youth, and yet I suspect in your particular environment crime is quite different. That is why I ask the question.

Det. Sgt BRUNDELL — We do not have the public order issues to the extent that you will see and we have all seen in the CBD area. We just do not have that. But we do have issues, and I believe we draw the line in the sand when we do identify those issues and we take strong, affirmative steps to nip it in the bud, rather than letting it fester. I think we are very good at that.

Sgt NEIL — Many of our issues are self-generated — they come from outside of the shire into the Macedon Ranges. I would also say at this point that our residents, of which give or take — —

Dr BEYER — There are about 41 000.

Sgt NEIL — Yes. They are very influenced by the Melbourne press in the main, particularly the southern area with Gisborne being the main population there. But we live there and we will do what we can to ensure that our families are safe, let alone somebody else's. I am being honest. It is a front-line effect. All of my members live in the area. They want their roads safe for their families. I will bust a gut to make sure that if you do transgress, you will get nicked. It is very simple.

Mr McCURDY — When you said the issues come from outside, can you just elaborate on that?

Det. Sgt BRUNDELL — What we are seeing is because we have the urban growth pushing up and effectively flanking the Macedon Ranges from the south and mainly the west with the metro growth, we are seeing that most of our offenders are coming from those areas. We are only talking half an hour or less from Sunbury to the Macedon Ranges, so it is very easy for them to come up into the Macedon Ranges after hours where the level of policing is not as great — that is no-one's fault; it is just the way it is — so it is a lot easier for them to commit their crime. Having said that, because the community is more conscious of what goes on around them in that area, they report on it more quickly. We are able to take steps more quickly and we have results more quickly. It has an impact. There is a lot of interaction between the community and the police up in that area.

Mr SCHEFFER — As Simon has said, we have had a number of witnesses, some of them expert witnesses, and one of them said today that one of the biggest correlations with community safety — I think one of you mentioned the fear of crime stats and how that was a low level of crime — had to do with education attainment of the community and prosperity, I guess.

Dr BEYER — And knowing your neighbour.

Mr SCHEFFER — Yes. I want to just put a proposition to you that you have a great product in your community around community safety because you are well off, which is not so much related to your programs — they are positive of course, but they are not the determinant. Now you have a new community coming in, you are saying that in the future you have to look at what you are offering and how you are running it in the face of a different demographic. Are you looking at that shift?

Dr BEYER — Our growth rate is not huge. We do not have huge greenfield estates, for example. Also within the planning unit, the way the planning works in the outline development plans for each of the towns is to keep the towns contained and then there would be countryside between, so it is to keep the integrity of each of the towns. We have nine main ones, Gisborne being the biggest. Kyneton is very poorly off. There are quite significant pockets of disadvantage in the Macedon Ranges and poor levels of education.

We suffer in a way from having Mount Macedon in our shire. That is one of the most wealthy areas. When you look at our shire, you think, ‘They are well off; they are well educated et cetera’, but that pulls our averages up hugely and it puts us at a disadvantage when we apply for funding or when we really want anything, because we are connected to Bendigo as our regional centre. They go right up to the border and everything north of us is far worse off than us. We fall through the gaps but we still have family violence at high rates in our shire. We still have child protection issues. We still have all those issues, but they are not as visible and they certainly do not appear so significant in the statistics. For example, in Kyneton nearly one in four people is already over 64, so we have already reached the peak age population that is expected in Victoria and in Australia, and so there are a lot of frail aged people who live alone. So if fear of crime is going to happen, it will happen up there with people living isolated from one another.

As the local government services and the police are aware, we have partnership arrangements through emergency management as well in identifying those particularly vulnerable people. We are trying to keep ahead of that and keep people connected in various ways, even from just connecting footpaths together in our old infrastructure and so on so people can feel safe about not falling over when they walk. We do preplan all of that. We are trying to plan ahead. It is not all our own way by accident. It is actually something that has been managed well.

Mr SCHEFFER — Well argued; good case.

Ms NEIL — Our greatest strength, I guess, is also our greatest weakness. When you talk about the cities of Geelong and Greater Dandenong, those sorts of areas and the pockets of crime that they experience down there, they have a central location where young people gather — I am a youth services coordinator — and so you can have a magnifying glass on that area. We do not have that. We have these nine townships. Our role is to try to maintain young people within those townships and encourage them to have a sense of connection and therefore a sense of belonging and respect for their local towns.

If I could just grab a couple of minutes, whilst we are tracking beautifully — our crime rates are down — it does not mean that we are home and hosed. In the early 1990s we experienced one of the highest rates of suicide in the country. It rears its head from time to time. Back in 2008 it did again, and we got together with community and schools and looked at developing some sort of concept that will help young people learn a little bit more around mental health and what they can do to support themselves and their network. We developed a program called Live4Life. It operates in our five secondary schools. It has Victoria Police as partners, along with community health services and CAMHS. At

this stage it is geared towards year 8s only, because we are limited with resources but also because a needs analysis determined that year 8s were the age group, 14-year-olds, to whom we should be proactively targeting some education about being resilient, resourceful young people who can look at the issues of mental health and how it impacts on their life and what they can do about that.

We are in our second year, and it seems to be kicking some real goals and making a change around the stigma on mental health. There is an increase in people taking up counselling and support. We are running what are called youth mental health first aid course training sessions. I do not know if you are familiar with those yet. They are running along the same lines as physical health first aid. It is a two-day course. We trained all of our year 8 teachers last year — over 100 — in a 14-hour course. We have trained the community workers and youth workers in that as well. This year we aimed to run one parent session across our five schools. Parents are reluctant to head out at night-time and go to these sorts of workshops. At the moment we have just closed the book on our fourth session. There are 20 parents in each session, and the staff are looking at running a fifth one. The demand to take something like this up is quite large.

Mr SCHEFFER — How do you link that series of activities into community wellbeing, community safety and crime prevention? What is your concept of crime prevention?

Ms NEIL — I think if young people have a greater sense of their wellbeing and they feel a lot more secure within themselves, you are not going to see it play out as greatly as you do in other areas, where young people are actually lost and looking for stuff. You look at figures like 12.7 per cent of young people between the ages of 16 and 24 will develop a substance abuse issue. If we can try to be proactive in establishing some really good tools and patterns of behaviour for young people early — and 14 is not early enough; if we had the resources, we would head down to grade 5 and start there — we will have a more self-assured confident young person who has a greater resilience about themselves and will not be sucked into those sorts of behaviours as readily. We are yet to be proving that.

The CHAIR — What is the background? Are these young people in lower socioeconomic or single-parent families? Is there any sort of pattern to mental health issues?

Ms NEIL — No.

The CHAIR — With the suicides I presume you meant youth suicides.

Ms NEIL — It is across all aspects of life. There is no one determinant you can put up there, like those with low socioeconomic status or those that do not reach a year 12 qualification. You cannot do that. It is across the board. It does not discriminate. That is why the education we are looking at now is across all young people and is not singling out one particular group.

The CHAIR — Regardless of family background?

Ms NEIL — Regardless of family background. Access for all.

Dr BEYER — Our shire is the first to have that full-time worker, isn't it?

Ms NEIL — Yes. We are just trialling it. We are testing the waters with this, and it seems to be working. It is also creating greater pathways between the service sector and the schools. The other issue Shane and I have been working on is the cyber issue. I do not

know if that has come up in a crime prevention capacity, but it is certainly an issue for us in the Macedon Ranges. We sat yesterday in one of our working groups and looked at establishing a prevention, intervention and post intervention concept, so it is across everything, aimed at primary and secondary schools. Shane might want to talk a little bit about that.

Det. Sgt BRUNDELL — We had an incident two years ago in relation to some cyber sexting issues, which I think is the term that is commonly used by the media.

The CHAIR — We are talking about social media. Is it Facebook or Twitter, or what are we talking about?

Mr BRUNDELL — Mobile phones.

Ms NEIL — At this point, but we are covering the whole system.

Mr BRUNDELL — But it has really flagged it for us. When it happened there was a recent incident where a youth had committed suicide in another area of Victoria. We were conscious of it, and we did not want to see that happen to any of the people in the Macedon Ranges. When it was flagged we dealt with it quickly. Unfortunately it was too late to do anything from a prevention point of view, so we were left with no choice but to bring the offending parties in and deal with them through the caution program or charges. We did that, and it sent a clear message. The feedback I got from the children and students was that they knew what they were doing was wrong, but until the police did something they were prepared to push the boundaries. The intervention of police at that stage really had an impact.

That was brought back to the local safety committee for everyone to share to say, ‘This was an issue we had within the Macedon Ranges’. From there we have set up a subcommittee to look at how best we can now address this issue and make sure it does not recur or fester to try to mitigate it as much as we can. We have made some big inroads into it. We had a meeting again on the same afternoon, as Pauline said. We have really set a focus on what we want that to look like. We are trying to get some evidence-based material to build up a business case for that and ultimately to try to get some funding to get some sort of pilot project off the ground.

Ms NEIL — It is incorporating a diversion-style program as opposed to venturing an initiative. Again it is in collaboration with police and health workers, so it has a broader perspective when talking of young people and their parents about the misuse of cyber.

Mr BRUNDELL — Education is the key to it that we have seen, in that kids are all over it but the parents are not. Under this diversion whole process we are looking at bringing the children in, if they are suitable for it, and educating them in relation to their behaviour and how it is impacting on others. The parents would be a part of that process, so it is about educating the parents and saying, ‘This is what’s going on. You can’t bury your heads in the sand and pretend it doesn’t exist. These are the issues, and this is what we can do’. From that we are hoping that those communications will feed back out to the wider community and educate other students and other parents. Then we will start seeing a reduction in it.

Sgt NEIL — This started at a private school, by the way, not on your lower socioeconomic state side of it. It was one of the private schools in the area. Then we have got five or six secondary schools. We carry a lot of kids. Kyneton itself is the biggest bus-in school in Victoria. Either it is the biggest or it is next to Mildura for bussing kids in. We get them from all over the place.

The CHAIR — I am aware of five or six people in my region who I know who have been ringing me up for an upgrade of their secondary school for the last two months. So I am actually heading out there.

Sgt NEIL — Yes, they have got planning.

Ms NEIL — Just the last two months?

The CHAIR — I am a new member, so I am getting out there.

Mr McCURDY — Pauline, can I ask you something? You spoke about there being spikes in suicide rates. Do you know why?

Ms NEIL — I would only be guessing. Back in the early 1990s when there was an incredible spike particularly in the central Victorian area for young people, Kurt Cobain from Nirvana took his life. He was a popular performer. I am not sure if anyone knows Nirvana or Kurt Cobain.

The CHAIR — Do you think we are all too old?

Mr McCURDY — Was he part of the 27s? Was he the same as Amy Winehouse and the 27s?

Ms NEIL — Yes, and it was around the same period of time.

Mr LEANE — Dr Beyer, you mentioned at the start of your submission about low levels of crime rate and low levels of fear of crime. Who actually produces that rate of fear of crime? Is it the Victoria Police or — —

Dr BEYER — The Australian Bureau of Statistics does a crime survey every two years, on my understanding, and the standard measure for fear of crime is the question ‘How safe do you feel when you walk alone at night?’, and I think in our shire it is about 82 per cent who feel safe compared with 62 per cent average across Victoria, or in other areas. So it is significantly higher.

Mr LEANE — That is good.

Ms NEIL — Just on the alcohol issue, too, picking up with Dandenong, Geelong and central Melbourne, we ran a survey when the issues around King Street were really rearing their heads a couple of years ago because, as you were saying, Geoff, people in the Macedon Ranges read the Melbourne papers and think it is happening in their backyard and young people act accordingly. So we did a survey of over 2000 young people to try to determine what the drinking levels were and if there was an issue and what was at play.

The bottom line of the survey was that young people were tracking quite well in comparison to other statistics in central Melbourne, but the one that caught our attention was the main supplier of alcohol to young people, and it was their parents. And that is where our work needs to head: educating parents around alcohol and young people.

We see that still playing out today — and I am sure you have heard it all before — with the afterparties at whatever it might be. I do not think we have had one afterparty this year in the Macedon Ranges at any of the main secondary schools that has not resulted in a serious incident. So alcohol is creating some of the issues that we are seeing with the distress among young people.

Mr LEANE — And that is packaged alcohol?

Ms NEIL — It is all sorts.

Dr BEYER — We did ask that question because police and local government work together on assessing of licensing applications for alcohol, so we were really happy that that legislation went through for the third-person provision of alcohol to young people. That is fantastic, because we were thinking that that was what was needed. You need to give parents the backbone or the wherewithal to say, ‘Look, it’s illegal. I can’t do it’, because there is a lot of peer pressure and then the parents get it, and it is a high-pressure situation. You want your child to fit in and so on. It is quite complex, and that piece of legislation is particularly good, as is the planning permit for packaged liquor outlets, particularly with density.

We had a case in Kyneton that fortunately we won, but it was the only one that was knocked back over about five years, because we already have four packaged liquor outlets within a 100-metre radius, and schoolkids were going past. And the survey is fantastic, because we now have data sitting there that when another application comes in we can say that we know the problem is that a lot of kids are buying it from packaged liquor outlets or they are consuming it at home, so it is really good.

That survey is huge and really well constructed, and the Australian Drug Foundation has done an analysis of it as well and was very impressed with it. So with that and other things it is kind of like a kit bag where we keep local data that we can pull out for a whole range of reasons. Because we have such good connections within the shire and between our various agencies, we can share that throughout.

Mr SCHEFFER — Could you just elaborate on that data you are talking about? How do you put it together?

Dr BEYER — That was the alcohol survey.

Mr SCHEFFER — So you have done one in the shire?

Ms NEIL — That was it; that is what we did.

Dr BEYER — That was the same one.

Mr SCHEFFER — I wanted to ask you a question about data. With your committee and with the shire in general, do you have good access to datasets that would help you in your planning?

Dr BEYER — Yes, absolutely.

Mr SCHEFFER — Where do you get it from, mainly?

Dr BEYER — The council has analysed a whole range of data, such as Community Indicators Victoria data, pulled off all our local stuff and written it all up. If you go to our website, under ‘Shire profile/Statistics’ there is an absolute plethora of information there, including town population projections, service need projections based on the 2006 census — —

Mr SCHEFFER — And specifically crime prevention?

Dr BEYER — No, that is Community Indicators Victoria. The crime statistics we have pulled off, and then there are the unofficial statistics that we would not put on the website but that we know are happening — for example, family violence and so on.

Mr SCHEFFER — Why do you not put that on the website?

Dr BEYER — Because they are not official statistics that we could use. For example, a lot of family violence incidents are not always reported to police, but because of the way the funding is structured within the community health sector we only have enough money for family violence for 10 people a year, to give them counselling. What happens is that money is pulled off from other funding streams, and it might be from child protection or it might be from other funding streams, so if you really want to know the extent of family violence, you have to go through all these different agency databases, and they keep the data in funding streams. You can do it.

Mr SCHEFFER — It is difficult to access.

Dr BEYER — It is very difficult to access, but it is because of the way it is funded — or the lack of funding, really.

Mr SCHEFFER — Are there other kinds of data that you would like to have that are difficult to get hold of?

Dr BEYER — For qualitative data we have to conduct our own data collection. Council had a social planner, for example, but does not have one now, and they were doing social research and qualitative data. The reason why that has been moved now down to planning is because a lot of the major strategic work was completed and finished and so the resources were needed in planning, and that has shifted across.

Mr SCHEFFER — Is data a top order issue for you?

Dr BEYER — If you look at what we have done, we have got a critical mass, and then it is supplemented by other databases as well. I would say if you look at our website you will probably agree that we have got one of the best datasets in the state because of the way that local government has funded the resources in order to get it, but then it feeds land use planning as well social planning, planning for child care and all sorts of things.

The CHAIR — Would each of you be able to summarise or make any further comments as evidence?

Dr BEYER — I would like to thank you for inviting us to come and speak, because we feel that we are doing a really good job in our shire, and it is really because of the partnership. If we can assist, be a model or whatever, we would like to assist other areas to work as well as we do in our shire, because we are fortunate that we have a lovely community and there is a lot of connection there.

We probably do not need Neighbourhood Watch in a way because it is kind of already there unofficially because people know their neighbours, and when they do not know their neighbours people introduce one another, like through the home and community care workers and so on. Thank you very much for inviting us; I think we all welcome the opportunity to talk to you.

Sgt NEIL — I think the collaboration with the police has been fabulous too. Back in the 1980s in youth work, police and youth workers were always arch enemies in some respects, but thankfully the culture has shifted in both camps and I believe there is, particularly in Macedon Ranges, a wonderful connection and willingness to work together on whatever those issues are that come up from time to time, and the critical issues that come up. We are able to sit in the same room and work through them at the same time. It is critical, particularly with young people, that we have that relationship.

Det. Sgt BRUNDELL — From a safety committee point of view, this is the first safety committee that I have been part of and everyone is from different areas, but they are

at such a level in their own little agencies that they have clout, and so when we sit together as a safety committee there is no barrier to the discussions. Everything is effectively on the table, because the greater picture is that we all want the same goal at the end of the day. We discuss everything, and no-one says 'No'. Everyone is prepared to give it a go, and we try. So we are prepared to put our hand up at the end of the day for the benefit and safety of the community, and it is really good to see and it is really good to be part of that team.

Sgt NEIL — I think as a local safety committee we are virtually made up of our local health services, education, business, community, local government and police. We are not a high-level committee. I think we are good at what we do because we are the ones who are working on the ground and putting it on the ground. We get guidance, of course, from further up the food chain, but our commitment to achieving the common good is fantastic. We are all committed to the committee and making it work. We trust each other implicitly. We have respect for each other. It is a very open committee, and there is a free flow of information; I think if somebody got in there with freedom or privacy provisions, probably ears would burn. But we resolve the issues; we pick them up early.

The information comes into the committee through Pauline and the shire youth through our own youth people. We pick it up early, we analyse it and we deal with it. I think that is what is making us effective, although at times when you sit around the table you often wonder whether you are. But that is what is making it work at our level, not having X amount of senior managers sitting around a table having a cup of coffee and a couple of sandwiches. The people who make it work are those who are down below. I am quite proud of being a part of it. I am happy with our low base, whether it be crime or otherwise. That has taken a lot of work to keep it at a low base, given that our population expansion is mainly through Melburnites, if I can use that word — people moving up from the metro area. The rural population of our shire has diminished substantially as a total percentage of our shire. We are very urbanistic now, and it shows.

The CHAIR — You do not cover as much as the city of Wyndham.

Dr BEYER — No.

Sgt NEIL — There is another one. You are just blowing it out of the water down there.

The CHAIR — Growth: Dandenong has 169 different ethnic communities. You can imagine the programs required to deal with that diverse range.

Sgt NEIL — Unfortunately for me I have a daughter who has just built a house down at Derrimut, I think the area is called, which is virtually next door to Tarneit and all those places like Werribee et cetera, and they have only been in a couple of months and they have already been knocked over twice.

I think the other part — not that it probably is part of this committee — is let us start looking at urban planning, for crying out loud. How do you put so many houses in crisscross-type non-interconnecting estates and expect to have urban happiness?

The CHAIR — We have had some discussion about that.

Sgt NEIL — It is just not going to happen.

The CHAIR — I agree with you. I have a passion about environmental planning as well. We will have to wrap up, I am sorry. Some of us have other commitments. Thank you very much. I appreciate the effort you have gone to. Considerable effort has been

given by many of you coming from Macedon, but thank you very much for providing evidence today to us. Well done. It sounds like you have got a great safety program already functioning.

Ms NEIL — And it is chaired well, I must say.

The CHAIR — You are very lucky to live in a good rural area, too, with very good rural values. Hang onto them.

Ms NEIL — We would like to see you in Kyneton.

The CHAIR — You will; I have pledged. I am meeting the school the week after next.

Sgt NEIL — And 18 August is the next meeting.

Committee adjourned.

DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

**Inquiry into Locally Based Approaches to Community Safety and Crime
Prevention**

Melbourne — 10 August 2011

Members

Mr B. Battin	Mr S. Ramsay
Mr S. Leane	Mr J. Scheffer
Mr T. McCurdy	

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Witnesses

Ms J. Shield, Secretary, and
Inspector A. Dew, Police Liaison Officer, Victorian Safe Communities Network Inc.

The CHAIR — Welcome, Jan, and thank you very much for your time in giving evidence to the joint parliamentary Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee. Just before we start, there is an address I need to give you as a witness so that you are aware. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975, the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, the Defamation Act 2005 and, where applicable, the provisions of reciprocal legislation in other Australian states and territories. Any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. I understand you have received and read the information for witnesses presenting evidence to parliamentary committees.

Ms SHIELD — Yes.

The CHAIR — We are recording the evidence, and we will provide a proof version of the Hansard transcript at the earliest opportunity so that you can correct it as appropriate. Again, thank you very much for your time; we really appreciate it. We are dealing with the first reference, which is around crime prevention and community safety programs, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Ms SHIELD — Thank you for the opportunity to speak about community safety. What I will cover this morning is a little bit about the VSCN's — the Victorian Safe Communities Network Inc. — successes and challenges in community safety and some responses to the terms of reference, having regard to the fact that our responses will be somewhat limited to our perspective because we are a membership-based association.

Overheads shown.

Ms SHIELD — We are a professional association of policy-makers, researchers and practitioners working in community safety. We were established in 1996. We support our members to promote and implement effective and cost-effective measures that minimise the impact of unintentional injury, crime, violence and emergency situations. This is actually an all-encompassing view of community safety.

You will be aware that there have been many successes in community safety, principally in the areas of road safety, fire safety, water safety, burns and scalds, poisoning, product safety and things of that nature. You are all familiar with the road safety strategies that have been enormously successful. In fire safety, there are smoke alarms. One of the first things that was legislated was non-flammable nightwear for children, because children were being burnt on open fires and open heaters in cotton flannelette nightwear and long, flowing garments. That was one of the first changes. We now have swimming pool fencing in place to prevent toddler drowning. We have lowered domestic hot water temperatures, and the Australian standard supports that now. It took a long time to get that through. Sunscreen is for radiation burns, and that has been an enormously successful public health program, the Slip, Slop, Slap program, which has not been around for years and years but everybody remembers. Of course safety packaging for medications, which has also gone into other products like dishwasher powder, and other packaging arrangements have made access for young children less easy.

There are many challenges, and when we are working with local governments we might be looking at doing a seminar with them, and we are certainly looking at doing one with Bendigo at the moment. Alcohol-related violence is one of the challenges that they have, and a lot of that is related to the density of outlets, the opening hours and the strength of alcohol. Alcohol has increased in strength for some of the drinks that are available for young people dramatically in the last several years. There is drug-related crime, which

would be burglary, aggravated burglary, drug dealing and motor vehicle theft. Public violence and assault, particularly of young males, are enormous burdens on the community, as is sexual assault on young females usually. Then there is the whole spectrum of family violence, which has previously been considered to be a private matter but is now becoming better recognised as a public matter, a community matter, and the police now have protocols around how to handle that. It covers the spectrum of child abuse, intimate partner violence and elder abuse, not just violence between partners.

Road safety still has many challenges. I am a member of the Victorian Community Road Safety Alliance, which is run by VicRoads. I am the community member for Metro North West Melbourne, which covers half of the metropolitan area. From my discussions with people in north-west metro, transportation of children is a very large issue for people from diverse backgrounds — maybe recent arrivals — because of economics and not understanding the area. Access to information in CALD languages is difficult to get, and as you know it is not just a matter of translating it: it has to be appropriate to the culture that we are dealing with. Another issue is driver training and licensing. Some people continue to choose to drive without a licence, and they sometimes do not register their cars. Another issue in north-west metro and across Melbourne is hoon driving. It is of great concern to residents.

The CHAIR — Jan, I understand Inspector Dew has just arrived. I invite him to come to the table. Welcome.

Ms SHIELD — Thank you for coming, Inspector. Frank [Commander Frank Stockton] has broken his leg and he is not coming today.

Insp. DEW — You cannot rely on the fire brigade for everything!

Ms SHIELD — No. He is in the full leg cast.

The CHAIR — Jan, if Inspector Dew is going to provide some evidence to this hearing, I am sorry, I do have to make him aware of certain matters.

Ms SHIELD — Yes.

Insp. DEW — I was not intending to.

The CHAIR — Weren't you?

Ms SHIELD — In question time you may well be asked.

Insp. DEW — In question time, yes, sorry.

The CHAIR — Just to cover you and us, bear with me for just a second as I read out the address to witnesses, just so you are aware. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975 and further subject to the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 and the Defamation Act 2005, and where applicable the provisions of reciprocal legislation in other Australian states and territories. Any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. I understand you might well have been at these hearings before, but there is a guide for witnesses presenting evidence to parliamentary committees. Hansard is recording evidence here, and we will provide you with a proof version of the transcript at the earliest opportunity so you can correct it as appropriate. Thank you, Inspector, for coming along.

Insp. DEW — Thank you.

The CHAIR — Back to you, Jan.

Ms SHIELD — What the international community did in times gone by was to divide intentional injury from unintentional injury, so two different sectors would look after it. Intentional injury is in the basket of crime prevention. In probably the past 10 years that artificial divide has virtually disappeared. If you look at the continuum of community safety and crime prevention, there are not that many things that you could classify as pure accidents, but people called unintentional injuries ‘accidents’. They are not accidents, because they are predictable and therefore preventable. There is always something you can do.

You may recall an incident a number of years ago where two people were killed in a thunderstorm on the banks of the bay in Geelong. Only two people died. I put this question to my students: what was the mechanism of injury? It was that they were holding the metal poles of the shelter. There is a preventability factor there with the products that you use: you could use concrete or wooden shelters in a public place where people may well need to shelter from a storm. It is not a pure accident; it is an unintentional act.

But then you come to the area of carelessness: hot drinks spilt on children. When I worked at the Safety Centre at the Royal Children’s Hospital, we worked for a long time with child carers and family day carers to make sure that they did not have hot drinks at all and that the visiting parents did not have hot drinks either. It is easy to tip a full cup of hot liquid. There have been horrific instances of hot urns sitting on the edge of the table with the tap hanging over the edge. Young children like to reach up to those. Is it negligence if an unattended baby drowns in the bath? Is that parent going to be charged subsequently?

The same applies to criminal negligence where somebody is driving with unrestrained children in a vehicle and they are subsequently injured in a car crash. Almost never would parents be charged in that instance, because they have already served their sentence by having their children injured or killed, but that would be a possibility. And then there is unpremeditated violence, for example between football supporters, with one bashing the other and one retaliating, but eventually one of them becomes injured. An ambulance has to be called out, the police have to be called out, and if they are killed the coroner has to be informed. Then there is the area of premeditated violence — for instance, the revenge killing of an estranged partner or something similar to that.

We put the case for community safety and crime prevention working together because the effect of that is that you maximise your program impact. It is a better use of workforce skills, using common strategies and training — for instance, through the community safety officers who are employed by local government and the crime prevention officers employed by police.

In the past when we have had seminars — Alan might like to correct me on this, but this is something that I have experienced — I have been told by crime prevention officers that they liked to come to our VSCN seminars because our training was really good and they did not receive similar training in VicPol. The reason is probably around resource allocation and all sorts of other reasons, but they did not get the same sort of training that we were able to provide. It utilises common opportunities for prevention by modifying the environment, changing designs and educating the community and through legislation, regulations/standards. It also shares the costs. The costs are both personal and economic, but the costs are significant to the health system, the justice system, emergency services — I should put the ambulance service in there as well — and the insurance sector, but also to the community, families and individuals.

In the committee's first term of reference it asks about Victorian organisations involved in community safety and crime prevention issues. The ones that we deal with most are local governments, and they develop and implement their public health plans, road safety plans and community safety plans. Some of those are a requirement of state government; others are things that local governments choose to do. There are the state agencies, which also have a vast local presence, particularly the police, emergency services — the fire brigade, the CFA, the SES — and the health and transport sectors. VicRoads has a presence all around the state, as does the Department of Health, and they work in partnership locally. They are quite experienced at doing that.

The Royal Children's Hospital is a World Health Organization Affiliated Safe Communities Support Centre, which was designated in 1999 when I used to work there, shortly before I left there to work in state government; and the Monash University Accident Research Centre — that 'accident' term pops up looking quite out of place these days — is the World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Violence, Injuries and Disabilities, so it has looked at the unintentional and the intentional, but also there is clearly the disability sector as well.

The committee has asked about approaches to crime prevention and community safety policies, programs and initiatives. We have the principles that we support for people to follow, and we will talk to them about that if they wish us to do so. But it is wise to address both unintentional and intentional injuries; otherwise you are creating that artificial divide. Initiatives should be based on valid data and evidence of effectiveness and cost benefit. This is one of the things that you get little data about. On burglary, for instance, there will be some data about numbers, but not too much about effective interventions. I commissioned a literature review when I was working at Crime Prevention Victoria. The person who conducted the review did an extensive review of a range of databases that we had suggested, and there was not a whole lot in there about things that you do not already know intuitively. There was not much data. There had been little evaluation.

We encourage active community participation; that is very important. If you are looking at local programs, community participation is of enormous benefit. That is a little bit what the VicRoads Victorian Community Road Safety Alliance is based on. There are seven community members, one for each of the VicRoads regions, and then the other representation is at state government and NGO level.

Next, to create awareness via media and social marketing, holding events. Supporting enforcement of standards and regulations — that is a legislative area. Design safety into products and environments — and through standards that also become legislated. Recognise that there are both health and justice outcomes — people end up in hospital and they end up in corrections. The final point is to evaluate the outcomes, the processes and the impact. In relation to the outcomes, 'What changed in your program? How did you do it? Did you do it well?'. In relation to the impact, 'How far into the community did you reach?'

Effectiveness is always a difficult concept. My view of effectiveness is that it must have a beneficial effect on the participants. If you are running a program, it has to benefit the people who are participating in it. There cannot be a disbenefit for them. There is no point in running it if you can have disbenefit. We work with state and local governments, business and the community, particularly the police, emergency services, health, justice, transport and planning sectors. Our working methodology is to cooperate or collaborate across sectors and operate within the World Health Organization's Safe Communities framework.

Your fourth term of reference is about the supports and barriers in developing community safety and crime prevention initiatives. I would suggest that the supports are the collaborative efforts between police and emergency services, health, justice and all of the other sectors, but those relationships are well established. We have fantastic data from the Victorian Injury Surveillance Unit at Monash. That also feeds into a national data collection system, so we know who is being injured and in what circumstances. This is about personal injury, it is not about burglary; that is a different system of data collection. I think one of the barriers is insufficient implementation skills. A lot of people do not know how to implement a program. If you are running a program where you have a case community and a control community, and you are trying not to infect your control community with what you do with your case community, that requires a very specific set of skills.

There needs to be sufficient understanding of evidence, effectiveness, evaluation, community engagement, data collection and analysis and even the basic things of collecting your baseline data at the beginning of your project to see if, at the end of your project, something might have changed. There is probably a lack of statewide strategic frameworks and priorities. The health department is developing a prevention strategy. I am not quite sure how you prevent health, but that is what they are calling it. But they are also considering an injury prevention component of that. You will be pleased to know that we will be feeding into that. There is a sophisticated methodology for determining cost-benefit, but benefit and cost-benefit can only be assessed with appropriate evaluation based on qualitative and quantitative measures, and that is something that is also done rarely.

You have asked about crime prevention and not community safety [in reference 'e']; it is only the crime prevention that I have mentioned here. Programs must be based on evidence and effectiveness and cost effectiveness to have any prospect of success, because if someone asks, 'Did your program work and what baseline data did you collect?', how do you know it has worked? If you cannot determine that, you have wasted your money. Crime prevention programs are rarely subjected to rigorous evaluation. Community safety programs have been more rigorously evaluated, and that is probably because they have had a longer time at it.

The CHAIR — Is there an obvious distinction at the local government level between community safety and crime prevention in relation to community safety programs? They seem to overlap.

Ms SHIELD — Yes. We would prefer them to overlap, but I do not know if they actually do. What you will find in local government is that you might have an officer who is responsible for drugs and alcohol and you might have one responsible for community safety. I think that is a little bit patchy, too.

The CHAIR — We are just putting out a survey to local governments in relation to the question — —

Ms SHIELD — Okay.

The CHAIR — We are trying to understand the difference between — —

Ms SHIELD — It will be interesting to see the results — what they come up with. For instance, they will almost always have a road safety plan, but I would suggest that they will look at that in terms of the unintentional injury rather than the intentional injury. I am not quite sure about that. They may regard unintentional criminal offences in

motor vehicles as being in the province of police, but you would like them to work together with their local police on those issues. I am not sure about that.

The CHAIR — Which they tend to do. There seems to be a good relationship between community safety officers, the police and local government.

Ms SHIELD — Yes, they do.

The CHAIR — There seems to be a good relationship between the community safety officers, the police and other agencies.

Mr SCHEFFER — Jan, I thought you said before about focuses on crime prevention — —

Ms SHIELD — No, that one question [Reference 'e']

Mr SCHEFFER — Okay. That is right, because clearly community safety is part of — —

Ms SHIELD — Yes, of course, and those comments apply to both. You were asking about alternative models. I do not know how alternative this is because it has been going for a very long time — since 1989 — but the World Health Organization's Safe Communities model is a model of working. The results of the first trial of community-based injury prevention in Sweden reported dramatic reductions in injuries, probably because nobody had ever really done much. Mind you, Victoria was the first state in the world to have seatbelt legislation and by 1989, we had had that in place for 20 years. But other injuries were not addressed in a systematic way until the Swedes started a trial in the mid-80s and then published their results. That is pretty much when the Collaborating Centre on Community Safety Promotion was established at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm to accredit communities worldwide.

That program commenced in Victoria in the 1990s. The first councils to be accredited were in 1996 the Shire of Bulla, which is now the City of Hume, and the Shire of Latrobe, which is now, I believe, the Latrobe City Council. The VSCN was established during the international safe communities conference in Melbourne in February 1996, which coincided with those two communities of Hume and Latrobe being accredited. The City of Melbourne was accredited in 2000 and reaccredited in 2006. Casey came on board in 2009, and the five Delfin Lend Lease Victorian master-planned communities were accredited in 2010. That is a group that we have a partnership with. We ran a seminar with them in Pakenham when those five communities were accredited. There are other communities in New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia which have also now been accredited.

The World Health Organization Affiliate Safe Communities Support Centre at the Children's Hospital was accredited in 1999, as we mentioned before, and the WHO Collaborating Centre For Violence, Injuries and Disabilities at MUARC was established in 2005, but MUARC had obviously done a lot of work before that as well.

I will not go through all of these because this can be captured in the print version, but the World Health Organization's Safe Communities accreditation now has six requirements. When the RCH safety centre was going for accreditation in the mid-90s there were 10 and they were most rigorous — and they still are. But basically it needs to have a partnership-based steering committee, a cross-sectional group with representatives from the community; long-term programs for all ages, environments and situations and programs that target high-risk groups and environments and promote safety for vulnerable

people. The programs must document the frequency and causes of injuries, and that is particularly important in collecting baseline data at the beginning of your program. In one of the programs, when I still worked at the RCH safety centre, one of the evaluators asked us about the uptake in one of the communities of safety products from the children's hospital. They had not asked us to collect that data, and that data therefore was not available. You have to think about all the questions you might reasonably need to ask early in the piece. You need evaluation measures to assess programs, processes and the effects of change, and ongoing participation in the international networks.

Arrangements in other jurisdictions — and the WHO model is all around the world except Antarctica. There are 247 accredited safe communities. They are all around the continents, and there are about 20 preparing for accreditation this year and then another 30 or so on stream for the year after. We have 30 in Australia in, I believe, all states — I am not sure about the Northern Territory and Tasmania though. There are 10 certifying centres worldwide, including one in Australia — the Australian Safe Communities Foundation — and in New Zealand, so we usually use one of those two. There are 18 affiliate centres. This is no longer based at the Karolinska, and this is a recent move. It has shifted responsibility into Geneva, so it is centralised now into a proper department of violence and injury prevention and disability. I think that was probably an organisational decision of WHO.

The VSCN work program — we focus on professional development. Our main work this year was to conduct a conference with the Australian Institute of Criminology. We put a proposal to it that we would run a conference together — we would do all the legwork here, and they would finance it. We also had to finance it. It was called 'Young people, risk and resilience: the challenges of alcohol, drugs and violence'. We did a conference with it in 2008 looking at crime prevention, community safety and young people. Both conferences were very successful and well attended. We will also be doing later this year a workshop with the City of Greater Bendigo, and the two issues that its community safety forum discussed last Friday were emergency management coming up to the fire safety season and illicit drugs. It is probably more inclined to the emergency management one, which we have also run with the City of Manningham after the bushfires.

The CHAIR — Can I ask quickly: the outcome of that conference with the young people in relation to alcohol, drugs and violence — apart from just conference papers, is there actually some information from, I presume, responses to some of the speakers?

Ms SHIELD — We have had an evaluation done. We probably need to put it together for public consumption, and I have not done that yet.

The CHAIR — When do you think you might be able to do that? Is that likely to be in the short term or long term?

Ms SHIELD — Really it should have been done earlier this year, but I have been away. I am retired, so I have other things to do.

The CHAIR — When you are able to complete that, the committee might like to have a look at the outcome of the conference.

Ms SHIELD — It would also be good for us to advise our sponsors what the outcomes were. Policy development is one of the things we are doing, and at the moment we are going to be coordinating the sector's response — this is the community safety sector's response — to the Department of Health's injury prevention policy and strategy proposals. We need to put to the department what it is that the community safety constituency wants. What do we want it to focus on? You would probably need to look at

the data, and we have just received 10 years of mortality data. Mortality data is just the tip of the pyramid; there is a whole lot of morbidity data, and then hospital admissions, hospital presentations and then people going to their GP or being treated at home. There is a large injury burden, and it is disproportionately concerned with young people — people aged 1 to 44 — whereas what we tend to focus on are the diseases of ageing: the cancers, the heart disease, the arthritis et cetera.

Community Safety Month is a big thing for us. Community Safety Month started as a Community Safety Sunday in about 1997, then it became a week and now it is a month. It has been a month for about five years now. We work with local government and statewide agencies. There is a Community Safety Month advisory committee, of which the secretariat is at the fire brigade, and we are working on a partnership strategy for Community Safety Day 2012.

I am hoping the next picture — this is a bit embarrassing, really, given that I am in the picture. Delfin Lend Lease financed the development of a new logo. We had a really old logo that was very out of date, and this is the new logo being launched at the Saferoads conference a couple of years ago, and it is sitting there with road safety and police banners. That was the very first banner we got, which Myles King brought to us at the conference venue, hot off the presses. Community Safety Day, which was held at Docklands last year, we do not have the finance to do and the police do not have the finance to do this year. We are looking at holding it at a different venue next year, but that is why we are looking at — —

Mr McCURDY — How well was it supported last year?

Ms SHIELD — About 40 000 people. It is a free event, of course, so if you then have a free event — —

Insp. DEW — It is free to attend, but it costs about \$120 000 to run a day.

Ms SHIELD — That is right, and that is why we are looking at a partnership strategy for Community Safety Day 2012. It will possibly be held at Monash University. That is work for us to do. The Community Safety Month advisory committee is meeting next Friday to try to progress that a bit further. It is too late to do it this year. There is too much work involved to get it done in — when was our last meeting? It was 10 weeks away when we had our last meeting, so it is less than that now. Sometimes it is not bad to have a break though.

What happened at Docklands was that all of the emergency services were in attendance. Bushwalkers, St John ambulance, the motorcycle riders association, CityLink — everybody had a presence there.

Insp. DEW — Life Saving Victoria too, because you have the waterfront as well. That is one of the main benefits of Docklands: everyone can bring their toys and all the public can see where their money is going. There are great photo opportunities, and it is just a fantastic day. There is a transport hub as well, so it is very easy for everyone in Melbourne to get to, which is one of the issues with Monash University, to be honest. It suffers the AFL Park syndrome — it is very hard to get to.

Ms SHIELD — That is an issue, but it possibly might change with a different constituency. This was a mock rescue for a vehicle crashing in the middle of the intersection, but it showed VicRoads, SES, CFA, MFB, police — all of the services — working together, and St John ambulance too, I guess. I could not get them all; I had lots and lots of pictures of this day, but I could only put a couple on. There are people

attending, and there is a dummy lying in the middle of the street there. The people attending of course had to be kept back, as you would at a normal crash scene, but that was very popular.

I guess the other thing that it suggests is that it is a recruitment opportunity for the emergency services. I think federal police and the coast guard and customs — —

Insp. DEW — It is particularly good for the volunteer organisations that do not have major recruiting budgets: you know, the CFA, SES — they love it — and St John.

Ms SHIELD — These are the contact details of Commander Frank Stockton, and he might need a sympathy card or a get well card at the moment. He is not going to be happy having a full leg plaster.

Insp. DEW — Did he fall off a ladder?

Ms SHIELD — I did not like to ask. This was late yesterday, when he was trying to boot up. I did not have a response to his view of this presentation. He was not a happy camper yesterday. I will ask that question later. Was it intentional or unintentional? I think it might have been unintentional.

Insp. DEW — I think so, because these gentlemen — and Frank's a great scary guy.

Ms SHIELD — No.

The CHAIR — Jan, you did not mention Neighbourhood Watch in your presentation, but it is noted in our reference. Did you do that purposely?

Ms SHIELD — Neighbourhood Watch is a wonderful supporter of the VSCN. We have been on board with them for a long time, but we do not have formal links with them. We are very familiar with Andrew Brideson. I actually did have a picture of Andrew Brideson with two Neighbourhood Watch volunteers, but this was already large and I had to take three of the images out, so I did not show it.

The CHAIR — Do you have a view on the relevance of Neighbourhood Watch?

Insp. DEW — I am currently the chief executive of Neighbourhood Watch as well, so there is a sort of connect between the two of us there.

The CHAIR — Perhaps I will pose that question to you then.

Ms SHIELD — Yes, that would be better.

Insp. DEW — I think it is still very relevant. Obviously it has undergone a lot of changes since Andrew has taken over, with the problems from some very local groups, and they have moved over to PSA or LAC-based, local area command based, groups now. They are still developing. Some of them are going really well; others probably need more help. The funding to employ a CEO will really help — someone with marketing and media expertise working full-time to develop the program. That is what they lack. It is a volunteer organisation, and even the executive are volunteers. They do a fantastic job, but they are volunteers. To have someone working full-time would be of great benefit.

I think there is somewhere between 15 000 and 20 000 volunteers who are registered members. It is an untapped resource. I think to some degree the police have not learned how to properly tap into it. The local police task and coordination committees probably need to work closely with their local Neighbourhood Watch committees so that there is a

more regular exchange of ideas. We have become more aware of their concerns. We work out strategies to address them, and we say, 'Right, this is what we are going to do. What can you do to help us? We suggest you do this.' It might be letter drops. I think it is still relevant if you can get the right people driving it, and hopefully once they get their funding and get the CEO on board it should happen.

New South Wales is trialling a system with its Neighbourhood Watch. They call it Eyewatch. They have gone along the social media pathway, so that will be interesting. Andrew and I are heading to New South Wales to have a look at that in September.

The CHAIR — We were in Perth a few weeks ago, and they had Streetwatch.

Mr McCURDY — Eyes on the Street? No, Streetwatch.

The CHAIR — Eyes on the Street, sorry.

Insp. DEW — One of the things we are considering starting is something called Paw Patrol. I am usually based in Dandenong. I tried to start it last year. There are 12 000 registered dog owners in Greater Dandenong, and hopefully most of them walk their dogs. We are trying to make them more aware that they should notice things, and they do. They notice them, but they do not report them. So we are probably introducing a scheme to encourage them to be alert to their environment, to report antisocial and criminal behaviour to police and to report dumped cars, broken street lights and quality-of-life issues to council. It is very much in its infancy at the moment.

In England there was a much smaller version called Dogwatch, but unfortunately there is a company over here called Dogwatch that hires out Rottweilers to car yards so I do not think we want to be associated with them. Dandenong has 12 000 registered dogs, Banyule has 12 000 and Port Phillip has 6500. It is a vast control network that we would like to tap into. Even if 500 people got involved in it, it would certainly be wonderful.

Ms SHIELD — It is that natural surveillance strategy.

Mr SCHEFFER — Yes. It has been put to us though, just to run this particular argument, that you can put resources into propping something up in any organisation if you want, to engage people and to keep doing the sorts of things you are describing, but what is its real value in the end? Where does it really get you if it is not picked up in the system in general, your organisation, the police, Crime Stoppers or other things? Why bother? What does it really give us?

Insp. DEW — Well, you have 20 000 people who are involved in it, just for a start. There is a vast amount of social capital just by having those people involved, and a lot of people feel safer because it is there. A lot of people — —

Mr SCHEFFER — Or more anxious.

Insp. DEW — Well, maybe, but one way or another they are showing an interest in crime prevention. Hopefully they are feeling safer. You get your newsletter delivered. A lot of people still get the newsletters. They do not get the comprehensive crime stats that we used to give at their meetings, but my newsletter still tells me, 'There was a burglary in this street' or 'There was a burglary in that street'. There are probably 1000 houses involved, and while it is not good that there have been two houses burgled, it is not rampant. So I feel reassured.

Ms SHIELD — One crime prevention technique is to have more people on the street for natural surveillance so it becomes a normal thing to have people around. I can

remember when I was doing a building site theft reduction project and speaking to a Neighbourhood Watch group. One of them was telling me about a dog owner who observed thefts of appliances from building sites. They noticed it on a number of occasions and eventually reported it, and the perpetrator was caught. It does not stop all of the crime, but it stopped that person.

Insp. DEW — I think one of the issues Neighbourhood Watch has to address is that some people have this view of it being a retirement club. A lot of their volunteers are seniors probably because they have the time to be involved and stuff like that. Eyewatch in Sydney uses social media forums to discuss local crime issues. That is a way of engaging younger people. Realistically, even with the extra 1700 police over the term of this government, for which we are very thankful, there are still only 14 000 uniformed police. We need the help of organisations and the public to help us make Victoria a safer place to live in.

Ms SHIELD — The police cannot be everywhere all the time.

Mr SCHEFFER — I wanted to ask you about something that is a bit over on the side. This work that you are doing, which sounds fantastic by the way, operates as part of the public debate, and it is focused on what I call the ‘nanny state debate’. Some of the things that you mentioned, like hot drinks, for example — I have no quarrel with this by the way — or fences around swimming pools, speed limits or speed cameras, all those kinds of things, are part of a discourse, and I think an unsettling discourse, around nanny states and about how people should butt out of people’s private affairs. Do you deal with that debate at all? How should we address it?

Ms SHIELD — You have that debate every time there is a new thing being implemented. Swimming pool fencing was one of them. I worked at the children’s hospital at the time, and the evidence was compelling that if you have a swimming pool fence around a domestic swimming pool, it reduces deaths by drowning as long as it is properly functioning and all of that. There were vociferous debates that were held around that issue. There were public hearings. I can remember a guy from the Building Commission appearing at one of those hearings at a town hall, and he was practically howled down. It was just unbelievably horrible. I wrote letters to the papers about it, and people would come back and abuse you around whatever issue you raised. But now there is nothing about that.

Mr SCHEFFER — It operates in a larger frame. You can pick out any number of public policy issues where an evidence-based approach does not seem to have cut through, and then after a while people perhaps give up on it and it becomes naturalised. Do you think we might have better ways of communicating some of the policies that we might think make sense but that do not connect with a section of the community that it is important to bring on board?

Ms SHIELD — Probably.

Mr SCHEFFER — How can we better do it?

Ms SHIELD — One of the other examples that we use in teaching is bicycle helmets. They implemented bicycle helmets in Vietnam. By 31 December of whatever year it was introduced everybody had to have bicycle helmets, and they did. Vietnam is a compliant society because it has an authoritarian government. With bicycle helmets in Victoria I think the original research was done in 1983, and it found that people who came off motorcycles who were wearing helmets were less likely to be injured than people who came off bicycles who were not wearing helmets.

Public campaigns supported by VicRoads were to get bicycle helmet wearing prevalence high. At the time, before the legislation came in, about 66 per cent of children were wearing bicycle helmets. I am not sure what the data for adults was. You actually had to get a critical mass of people complying before you then introduced legislation, but there were a lot of programs around that. I cannot remember the names of the programs, but the bicycle helmet programs in schools teach children that they will not be able to come to school on a bicycle if they are not wearing a helmet. There are those kinds of supports counterbalancing the barriers. Once you have a critical mass of people agreeing that something is a good idea, then you can confirm that by legislation. What sometimes happens is that the legislation comes too soon. You gradually need to get a great deal of compliance first so that it becomes normal behaviour.

Mr SCHEFFER — So you think that the way we do it through public advertising through some sort of — —

Ms SHIELD — It is social marketing.

Mr SCHEFFER — Do you think that is about it and that we just need to keep working on that? That is important. During the last election campaign when I was on the hustings, men of a certain age have come up to me and asked, ‘What does your party say about speed limits or about cameras?’ and the rest of it. Leaving aside the administration of it and just the principle of it, they would say, ‘Well, you don’t get my vote’. So there is not a lot of cogency.

Insp. DEW — There is a certain amount of the community who you just cannot reach. Safe Communities used to have a spot on the 3AW Denis Walter show. I was on there speaking about something, and some guy rang up and said, ‘Booze buses are hopeless, they do not catch anyone’. I said, ‘That’s the idea. We are trying to be preventative’. He said, ‘You should be out catching murderers and stuff’, and I said, ‘We would probably save more lives by having the booze buses’. He said, ‘But you don’t catch anyone!’.

Mr SCHEFFER — What you are saying is that we have to keep doing what we are doing because there are some gaps in that?

Insp. DEW — Yes, but we just cannot reach some people, and I think we have to accept that as well.

Ms SHIELD — Reducing speed, alcohol and fatigue are the principal strategies for reducing road trauma. You are probably too young to remember, but the campaign in the 60s about the — —

Mr SCHEFFER — Shucks, keep talking!

Ms SHIELD — A lot of people do not know these things. The campaign by the *Herald Sun* — I do not remember what the number was — —

Mr SCHEFFER — Because you are too young too!

Ms SHIELD — I did not live in Victoria then, but it was 1100 or so people [who died on Victorian roads each year]; now it is under 300. Would people actually want to go back to that? I used to work in infringement management and enforcement services, and we dealt with people who were making complaints to either our contractor or the government about why they did not want to have speed limits either. That is not a decision you can leave to individuals. Somebody has to make the call on that, and it is not going to be the public because they would be going up the Calder at 180 kilometres an hour and

that would put everybody else at risk. What you will get from education is compliance by the majority of people. It is probably the 80/20 or the 90/10 rule: 10 per cent of people will not want to comply. They feel that they have the freedom to use public roads in the way they wish. They just do not. I do not know whether you can sustain that argument. We had correspondence around that sort of stuff all the time.

The CHAIR — Jan, can I get you off the road for just a sec. We have a couple more minutes, and I am looking to the committee. To start, I would like to know how we can better support some of the community safety and crime prevention programs. I guess we have a responsibility to report back to Parliament next March and make certain recommendations to Parliament on crime safety programs. We have talked about Neighbourhood Watch, and, obviously with the recent announcement of some investment in resources, an executive director role might enhance that. What other areas of investment can the government make in relation to encouraging community safety programs to be involved in crime prevention? It has to be a fairly short answer, I might add. Can you give us some idea of what you believe would be good steps for the government to take in relation to investing in supporting and aiding community safety programs to reduce crime in particular local communities?

Ms SHIELD — I am quite in favour of a strategic overlay. People think that if you put out a strategy around something, by definition you are then going to fund whatever falls out of that. In the 90s the health department put out an injury prevention strategy and there was no funding around that at all, but all of the stakeholders then had a clear direction about where they might want to go. Water safety, road safety, pedestrian safety — whatever it might have been — gave credibility to what they were already going to be doing. I think in communities local government is really the group that is best placed to run those programs, as long as there is some coordination. The local safety committees within local government are interdisciplinary, intersectoral committees, and they are often the ones charged with that task. It is also about having the resources.

I guess one of the ways that you could look at doing it is similar to the Victorian Community Road Safety Alliance, where VicRoads has taken the running. They have the regional presence, the government presence and the local government presence. A lot of the registered groups are combinations of local governments. Local governments are now working together. That was a big change from the local RoadSafe groups, which were just given money to do whatever with but there was no evidence around their effectiveness. The groups funded through the Community Road Safety Alliance have now had to put in their applications for funding based on data and evidence from their region. They had to run programs that were based on evidence of effectiveness, and they are evaluating them. They get one year of funding, and it is a three-year program. They have started their first year of funding. It will be interesting to see how they go, but that seems to be quite a good model because it has evolved to all tiers of government and it is regionalised — it is not centralised.

The CHAIR — I note in here you talk about environmental design. We did not talk about that this morning, but we have talked a lot about it during the hearings about early childhood intervention, particularly for kindergarten children and preps in relation to respect for law and order.

Ms SHIELD — Keeping kids in school.

The CHAIR — Yes, and all of that.

Ms SHIELD — There is a longitudinal study — I think John Toumbourou is coming later and he may well speak about that — called the temperament study. It is a longitudinal study of children. I can recall that at Crime Prevention we had one of the reports, and it determined that children are identified as being at risk in the preschool years. The only problem with children as a population group is that you cannot identify individuals and you would not want to stigmatise them. A lot of the strategies are around keeping kids in education and supporting them through the early years of learning rather than intervening in a punitive way.

The CHAIR — Ross Homel is doing quite a lot of work. We spoke to him yesterday, given you have been working with the institute.

Ms SHIELD — Yes, of course. Also Peter Homel.

The CHAIR — Peter is doing some work for us. In fact he is doing a survey for us with local government. You probably know that already. Are there any other questions from the committee? No. Thank you both very much.

Witnesses withdrew.

DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

Inquiry into locally based approaches to community safety and crime prevention

Melbourne — 10 August 2011

Members

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Witnesses

Mr P. Wheatley, Executive Director,
Mr R. Miller, Chair, and
Leading Senior Constable M. Mudie, Facilitator, Operation Newstart Victoria.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much for coming. My name is Simon Ramsay. I am chair of the joint parliamentary committee for drugs and crime prevention. You will all be speaking, so I am just going to read you a quick address as witnesses providing evidence to this joint parliamentary committee. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975. It is further subject to the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, the Defamation Act 2005 and, where applicable, the provisions of reciprocal legislation in other Australian states and territories. Any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. I understand you are familiar with the guide for witnesses presenting evidence to parliamentary committees. I note three nods. We are recording the evidence. Hansard will provide a proof version of the transcript at the earliest opportunity so you can correct it as appropriate.

A warm welcome, and thank you for giving up your time — we appreciate it. This committee is dealing with two references; one is community safety programs in relation to crime prevention. I think you would have read that reference. Given your expertise, I note that the other reference relates to security arrangements in public hospitals, particularly in emergency departments. We have actually been running the two references concurrently. We are seeking some guidance about that second reference as well, and you may or may not wish to make comment. I just flag that we are running the two references and we are hearing evidence relating to both references during the day. We are here to talk about Operation Newstart Victoria.

Mr WHEATLEY — Our attendance here today is a consequence of the submission we made to this committee in March of this year. In that submission we attempted to deal with each of the terms of reference that were published, and I hope we have managed to do that. I guess you have had some opportunity to read the submission in detail. Can I assume that you know about Operation Newstart, what it does and how it operates at a community level? Or would you like me to, for a few minutes — —

The CHAIR — We have got quite substantial briefing notes, and some of us have read a summary of the submission. I think we have 36 submissions, so we are having to take some time to go through them. Would the committee like a quick overview of Newstart?

Mr SCHEFFER — I think is probably good for it to be on the record.

Mr WHEATLEY — I have prepared a folder for each of you that is designed to talk about Operation Newstart and how it functions in the community. There are nine programs that are operating around Victoria at the moment: three in regional Victoria and six in the Melbourne metropolitan area. The programs commenced in 1997 in the Frankston region as an initiative of a police officer at Frankston police station and a school principal at Mount Erin secondary college. Every couple of years since 1997 a new program has been established, and at the moment we have considerable demand for more programs throughout Victoria.

Since we dealt with this reference in March there have been some significant changes to the way in which the future of Operation Newstart is going to have to be attended to. Operation Newstart is a partnership between the Victorian police and the education department. It has other partners, such as the Royal Children's Hospital, Save the Children and other stakeholders, but essentially its key stakeholders are Victoria Police and the education department.

Since we produced this document Victoria Police has indicated its intention to, for operational reasons, reduce its commitment from a full-time police officer for each program to a part-time position for each program. At the moment we are in the process of negotiating with Victoria Police the best outcome for Operation Newstart in that regard. At the moment we are experimenting in our Shepparton program. We have a police officer for 15 of the 30 days of the program. We have a full-time teacher-facilitator who plays the leading role, and, thanks to the generosity of Save the Children, we have a youth worker taking up the other 15 days in the program. It seems to be working quite well. That is a major change in focus. It has always been understood that it is a partnership between those two programs, so if that partnership changes, then we are going to be looking at a different model moving forward.

I wonder if we can indulge the committee for 5 minutes and show a brief DVD. Brad has seen this probably only 1 million times as a past facilitator of the program. I think it is pretty enlightening.

Video shown.

Mr WHEATLEY — In the presentation folder that I have just handed out, I think the first two or three pages are useful in putting that DVD into context. The first page is an investment logic map, which was undertaken a couple of years ago with the assistance of Victoria Police. It outlines the key drivers of this program. They are the currently limited support for at-risk youth in state secondary school systems and the overrepresentation of youth as offenders and victims of crime. I think it is very timely in view of what is happening in London and in the UK right at the moment. The proliferation of disengaged youth acting in a completely disorganised way over there is something we need to be mindful of here.

On the next page there is a description of the way the program is structured. Each program operates out of a secondary college which acts as the host to the program. Nine secondary colleges are hosts, and each program services those Victoria Police regions. You can see underneath the number of secondary colleges that refer students into the program. I think 216 schools are currently referring students into the program.

Mr LEANE — How often does the program run?

Mr WHEATLEY — It runs four times a year, each school term.

Mr LEANE — How many young people will be in one program?

Mr WHEATLEY — Eight.

Mr LEANE — Is it always full?

Ldg Sr Const. MUDIE — Yes.

Mr LEANE — Is there an over-demand from these schools?

Ldg Sr Const. MUDIE — I run the western program. We have the biggest catchment area; we have over 60 secondary campuses that we cover. We shut off interviews at 16. We interview 16 people for 8 spots; once we get to 16 we just close it down. We take four days to run 16 interviews, so we cannot interview everyone who is referred.

Mr MILLER — The same applies in the rural communities — Shepparton, Bendigo, Geelong and the central Victoria program, which incorporates Kyneton and

Castlemaine. They are oversubscribed, and there is a real demand for this program because it is a unique program. The combination of police with teaching is unique, but also the other important partners there are the parents. Before a student is admitted to the program, there has to be a commitment from the parents that they are going to support the program fully and the student who is taken into the program is making a commitment that they want to make a change. That is fairly significant.

It sort of goes back and is similar to the oath of allegiance that I used to take at school, which you, Brad, are too young to have done. We used to take the oath of allegiance. We talked about cheerfully obeying our parents, teachers and the law. That is very much what encapsulates Newstart: it is about teaching kids respect for their community, their elders and themselves. That is how the program works and why it is successful.

Mr LEANE — Has any thought been given to having a program for younger people than those of secondary school age?

Mr MILLER — Not in the style of Newstart.

Mr LEANE — I can imagine some of the things you do — —

Mr MILLER — When we take 13-year-olds into the program, which we do occasionally, there is a difficulty with them adapting, mainly because they do not have the maturity to look at themselves and say, ‘Look, I am part of the problem. It’s not my teacher and it’s not my mother — I am part of the problem’. The 14-year-olds and 15-year-olds can reflect on that, and they can react to it positively. If you were going to have a program that was aimed at virtually primary-aged children from, say, 10 to 13 years of age, you would need a different style of program. It would have to be a totally different approach from Newstart, which is aimed essentially at 14 to 17-year-olds. The majority, 50 per cent of our intake, are 14-year-olds and the rest are 15 and 16-year-olds. We aim at early intervention in those adolescent years. That is the important thing.

Mr WHEATLEY — Certainly Victoria Police are very intent on focusing next year on the recidivism issue with the lower age cohort, the 10 to 14-year-olds. While, as Ross says, 50 per cent of our cohort are 14, we actually suggested to Deputy Commissioner Kieran Walshe that we would like to consider ways in which we could focus on that younger cohort. His response was, ‘Look, what you’re doing with the 14-to-17-year-old cohort is so valuable that you’d want to think very carefully about thinning yourselves out too far in dealing with that younger cohort’. But we acknowledge that there are not a lot of programs for that 10-to-14-year-old group.

Mr BATTIN — Obviously you have positive results from your program, as we saw on the DVD. How do you analyse your programs, and what are the results from those analyses?

Mr WHEATLEY — Every student who comes into the program completes a strengths and difficulties questionnaire. It is a whole range of questions that they respond 1 to 5 on. I have included at the back of your folder the results of some research done on the strengths and difficulties questionnaires completed in 2010 by students, parents and teachers. It dealt with, I think, 118 parents, 46 teachers — or the responses to the student strengths and difficulties questionnaires — and 163 students. That was over a period of about three years; it was quite interesting. The work was undertaken by Dr Anthony Carlsson at the Royal Children’s Hospital integrated mental health unit. He found that based on test developer guidelines, a participant’s score on the SDQ can fall into the normal, borderline or clinical ranges. At the completion of Operation Newstart, there were more participants in the normal range but fewer participants in the clinical and borderline

ranges for emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity, peer problems, prosocial behaviour, total difficulties and impact subscales of the SDQ. Although at the moment we do not have the necessary research that is based on all this data, which is going to be undertaken, the initial responses are very positive that Operation Newstart does make a difference.

As well, we have done some work on all cohorts of Matt's program between 1999 and 2006. This report here focuses on Operational Newstart Western and it supports the findings of the children's hospital last year on the SDQs, but it also states, and I will quote this:

Overall, those who did not complete ONW had more frequent encounters with the law including field contact, court appearances and charges. ONW graduates have made significantly fewer court appearances, indictable charges, and total charges.

ONW has made a significant long-term effect on offending as seen in significant differences in offences after two years, between those students who graduated and those who did not.

Both from a policing perspective and from an education perspective we are confident that the program is addressing the needs of these young people.

The Nous Group undertook a research project last year on all students who had completed the Shepparton program over three years. There is a copy of that report here. Its findings basically support the findings of the other two reports. We would like to prepare more evidence and get more evidence together, but there is so much cost associated with it and we run a very lean organisation.

Mr MILLER — If I could just add to that, the important thing about the Nous Group is that they also look at the cost benefits to the community in terms of the funding of the program. From about page 55 onwards in this document is a really good analysis of the cost benefits to the community of kids not being involved with the law and being gainfully employed, engaged in schooling, trade training et cetera.

Mr LEANE — That was what I was going to ask you. Taking into account the crime prevention side of it, what are the outcomes on the education side of it — and Ross would be the man to ask? It was said on the video that some of these young people go to school once a week, if they are lucky.

Mr MILLER — That is right.

Mr LEANE — After going through the program, what has been — —

Mr MILLER — There have been significant gains.

Mr LEANE — As far as attendance is concerned?

Mr MILLER — Attendance back at school, finding a pathway or in some cases they go to school for another six months and then get themselves into an apprenticeship or an approved TAFE course. It brings that young person back to thinking confidently about themselves, that 'I can do it' and they lose that — I don't like the word 'loser' — loser mentality. They really gain some self-confidence that they can do it. I think in that video Chris Collins made the comment that sometimes with that eight-week program it is the first time these kids have ever completed something and feel good about it.

I have been involved in education for 47 years, and three years ago I retired from being a principal for 13 years. This is one program I am passionate about, because it really works. There are very few programs that have such an impact on young people. We know it is not a cheap program to run, but what you put into the program is what you get back. You get terrific results from this. If you look at the analysis of what it costs to incarcerate people, and if I remember correctly the average incarceration is about three and a half years, it is something like \$320 000 over that period of time. We are talking about \$10 000 per kid; it is a cheap investment. It is a really good investment.

Mr McCURDY — Ross, how do you see the Newstart program, in terms of an investment, in comparison with, say, the Duke of Edinburgh program, which is run for kids with leadership skills and is already in the schools?

Mr MILLER — They are both excellent programs. They appeal to slightly different kids. The Duke of Edinburgh kids usually are fairly motivated kids and they tend to be the high achievers. We have some high achievers in the Newstart program, but often those high achievers are rather introverted and again they lack that self-belief in terms of their social skills. But they are different programs. As an educator I am a great believer in having different courses for different horses. Some kids will perform well in a certain way. It is like members of a football team — some respond to a rev up and others you cannot say a thing to, because they will give you nothing. Kids are like that.

This program caters to those kids who have low self-esteem, and for many of them their social behaviour is atrocious. It is the sort of thing that Phil made reference to, the behaviours in London and that sort of thing. That is how they behave, and that is how some of them behave in a classroom. We have to turn that around. The Duke of Edinburgh kids tend to be at the higher end in terms of achievement. They are both excellent programs.

Mr WHEATLEY — Further to that, Operation Newstart is represented on a committee that is chaired by Dr Ian Williams at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, and its brief is to examine the impact of outdoor experiential programs on 14 to 16-year-olds. It is already discovering in the two and half years it has been going that there is a very positive relationship between the incidence of depression in young people and their lack of exposure to outdoor experiences. Perhaps I could also refer to programs such as Outward Bound, which are pretty well 100 per cent focused on the outdoor component. The difference between a lot of those programs and Operation Newstart is that Operation Newstart has four components. It has that outdoor component, which is around about 50 per cent of the program, but it also has the vocational component, the community service and, critically, the therapeutic component — that is the interaction with social workers and psychologists. We engage psychologists into the program through the Royal Children's Hospital, and each of the programs has access to those psychologists, and all the students do as well. It is those other components, I think, that give Operation Newstart its uniqueness and that point of difference from some of the other school-based programs.

The CHAIR — You are dealing with different needs though, aren't you? Basically you are taking those who are socially disadvantaged into an outdoor program that requires those ongoing services. I was going to ask Phil this question at the end. There cannot be a complete success rate. There must be some who drop out of the system or move into areas of criminal activity, I suspect, or into other things. Do you actually trace them through to see where they end up?

Mr MILLER — We do. We keep in contact with them for a minimum of 12 months. So there are two contacts made after the program within the first 12 months.

Of course if they remain in school, we can maintain that connection with them through the tracking that happens now in secondary schools. Matt is a good example where in his program he has had contact with people via Facebook going back 10 years.

Ldg Sr Const. MUDIE — Just a few weeks ago I decided to get onto Facebook and see how many kids I could track down. I have just few pages in front of me here, but I have a whole pile of them, and it was incredible. It was one of those things. I presented at a forum at the Royal Children's Hospital last week. They were talking about statistics and everything and about how to get this data, and we all know it is all anecdotal in this sort of field. You start questioning — 'Is it worthwhile or isn't it?' — so I got on here.

As a facilitator I spend a lot of time away from home. I have my own young family. I have a wife who reminds me of that constantly. I could sit down and read these things and show her responses from people from 10 years ago who are saying, 'You saved my life'. There is one here, and the opening line is, 'This program saved my life. I was on drugs, I was doing this and I was doing that'. I have spoken to kids on the phone as a result. There are so many guys who want to catch up with me. There are people who were going to drop out of school and are starting their own businesses now, and they put it all down to their involvement with Newstart. I have not watched the doco on the DVD for some time to listen to Wendy Bunston speak about how years down the track they are going to look back at this as being a significant experience.

There is one example here of a girl who was brilliant on the program. She came back on a leadership program and was brilliant again. She lost her way and got onto ice. She nearly died as a result and went into rehab. I was talking to her on the phone — I am getting emotional now — and she had her Newstart folder from her graduation and looked at it every day in rehab and asked, 'What would we say to her in this situation?' She still has it with her today, and she has it in her bedside drawer. She was on the program in 2003, and she is 24 years old now. I spoke to her yesterday, and she said, 'We have to catch up and see where each other is at'. It is really powerful stuff. I hear governments talking about putting money into these sorts of areas and running boot camps and all this. Do not reinvent the wheel. We have a brilliant program here that just needs some support. That is why I am sitting here.

Mr MILLER — One of the significant things, just to support the point Matt was making, is what the facilitators do. These are very uniquely qualified people, these police facilitators and educators who work with these kids. They have enormous skills. I know Victoria Police is actually sending young officers in training out to work with some of these programs, because there is a lot to be learnt from these people. What it does is give the kids in the program strategies to fall back on. I think this is pretty significant.

It is a terrific example that Matt was talking about — a girl who has been on the program, done well, gone on a bit of a dive but has had a strategy and something to build herself back up. That is what we try to do with the kids. They are not all going to leave the program and immediately go back to school and be perfect little guys who are going to get a tick in every box. They are going to have little hiccups or speed humps along the way, but they have a strategy and they have some ideas. As Matt said, we always say to them, 'Think: what would Matt do in this situation?' That is how we want them to respond to the program. That is why it is successful, because there is scaffolding there that lasts for the rest of their lives.

It is amazing what happens in eight weeks. If you could witness some of these kids when they come into the program on the first day and then see them at their graduation, which is a big part of the whole journey where we celebrate their eight weeks and the successes

that they have had; it is an amazing difference. These kids will get up, speak in public and address committees like this, when they would have never done anything like that. They do not even talk to their families when they first come into the program, and that is where it starts.

Mr LEANE — Do any of the people who go through it at the end of it go to a different school?

Mr MILLER — Some do go to a different school.

Mr LEANE — Ross, you might grab this or not, but one of the problems with the education system is that one size does not fit all and some kid might take three years to get through year 10. They get to year 10, get a traineeship and after those three years it is beaut. It is kind of what Matt is saying about these programs being very important and that they should be funded, and I absolutely 100 per cent agree with that, but I think there has to be some political will to understand that there have to be different alternative-type settings in schools.

I think it was late last year that something I discussed with the eastern region of the education department was that they were going to actually use a vacant school out far east to do a primary school similar to Croydon Community School for primary school kids. Then all of a sudden the *Herald Sun* puts on the front page ‘Brat school — isn’t it a horrible thing’, and all the politics come into it. Is there any advice you think you could give us to actually change the political will and community conceptions? Actually there is a financial benefit and, naturally, money talks. The social benefit is the most important thing, but any comments you have about how we get over that sort of stigma that presents itself every time would be terrific. This is where crime prevention starts. This is where it is all at.

Mr MILLER — I am a huge supporter of alternative settings. I really believe in that. Sometimes the interventions do not have to be for a long period of time. There are two programs that I know of that have high success rates in terms of intervention: one is Operation Newstart and the other is the Blackwood Annexe, which is situated near Hallora. That runs an 18-week or 20-week program, so it is a longer period of time. The kids that go there are really hard case nuts and have huge problems, which are usually connected with very strong family issues. I am a great supporter of all those programs. I do not know how many times I have met with various ministers of education to debate and discuss the issues. That is why I think Newstart is such an important program. We tick all the boxes in this document, which came out as a discussion paper last year from the previous government. I know there is an inquiry also happening along these lines of alternative settings at the present time. We tick nearly all the boxes suggested in this, which again is talking about pathways to engagement for disengaged kids.

The CHAIR — Ross, we need to be mindful that you almost have to pretend you are on radio, because Hansard cannot pick up documents. I even notice that Phil was going through his document; Hansard cannot pick that up.

Mr MILLER — I take your point, sorry.

The CHAIR — In giving evidence it is probably best to do it verbally or just note the name or title of the document you are referring to. I am mindful that we have about 5 minutes left in this session. There are a few more questions from the committee, and no doubt you also want to do a summary.

Mr SCHEFFER — First of all, congratulations on the program. I think it sounds fantastic. All strength to your arm; it has been a great presentation. What I want to home in on, having looked at the video and your website last night, is that it seems to me that there is good gender representation there. A lot of the young women spoke and so forth. Could you give us a bit of a statistical picture of how many young women are engaged in the program but also, underneath it, whether the people who over time participate in each of these exercises are reflective of the diversity of the community — for example, new arrival groups and so on? That is one question; I have another one after that.

Mr WHEATLEY — I think Matt might be able to address the issue of the gender side. I can speak a little on the way in which, say, our Dandenong program is involving itself in the multicultural community in which it operates. I think there are something like 140 different nationalities that operate in the Greater Dandenong area. We have had some issues with young students from the Horn of Africa. We have run programs specifically inviting schools to refer students in those groups into the Operation Newstart program, and we have found that to be very successful. Again our resources are limited, but there is every effort being made to work with those communities.

In Shepparton we ran a program for indigenous students in that area. We wanted to get a program going in the Latrobe Valley but were unsuccessful because we could not staff it from a policing perspective at the time, but that program would have focused entirely on the indigenous students in the schools in that area, where there were some really significant problems. That is that side of things, but Matt has much wider experience with the gender stuff.

Ldg Sr Const. MUDIE — Just on that, I will give an example of the multicultural backgrounds. I started a program yesterday. I have eight students: one Australian, a Samoan, Maori, two Karen people, a Singaporean and someone of Filipino/Chinese background. It is very multicultural. As far as male to female ratios go, the program is run by two male staff, so that can create some issues in itself when you bring females on. We have been running trainee police through our program since 2002, and whenever we have girls on the program we make sure that a policewoman comes out with us just for the needs of the girls.

We used to have mixed groups, but when you are working with at-risk kids, you have enough issues, and the sexual tension was just too much to deal with, so we went to single-sex groups and ran two boys groups and one girls group every year. We have a slightly different style group for each.

Mr SCHEFFER — So that means there is a two-thirds and one-third split?

Ldg Sr Const. MUDIE — For us, yes. I would say that is probably fairly well representative across the board.

Mr SCHEFFER — Is that a problem or is that just the way it is?

Ldg Sr Const. MUDIE — I think it is probably just that the style of program that we run is more appealing to boys. We have those outdoor components, yes, but we also have included art and these sorts of things to get girls more attracted to what we do.

Mr SCHEFFER — That brings me to my second point. I was looking down at your activities sample there, and accepting the point that you were making before about the four components, just looking at the outdoor activity, I think you describe it as adventure based. Then down the bottom you have got songwriting and then you have resume writing — let's not count that as writing — —

Ldg Sr Const. MUDIE — No!

Mr SCHEFFER — We will be realistic about it! Clearly when you talk about the diversity of different communities, we know the important role that music plays for young people. I think you said that this is all about reconnecting, teamwork and mutual respect with the music and drama, for example, and you are just scratching the surface. Is that because you do not have the involvement of people in the community, because we are a very sporting, outdoor culture, so I gather that it is easier to find people who can do that through the CFA, volunteer agencies and the police? Is it hard to get people that can work with young people of this type in dramatic areas, arts areas and not just the girls' domain?

Mr MILLER — Not necessarily. One of the features of Newstart is that the programs respond very much to their local community. This is not a program that is driven from the top. It is very much a program that starts within the community itself at the grassroots. I know Matt runs a terrific day with parents and participants, and a musical event. For example, there is a very strong arts program within the city of Casey, and the program liaises with the City of Casey in that respect. Rather than duplicating the service, the participants in the program are made aware of that community and the activities of youth there. In fact the local boards of management of each program have an important role to play, and usually there is somebody from the city represented on that panel.

Mr SCHEFFER — That is not in the sample, is it? This does not reflect that.

Mr MILLER — Yes, that's right. I am a visual artist; that is my background.

Mr SCHEFFER — I have the right man, then!

Mr MILLER — I am very interested in the sorts of things that I have seen Matt do, because I have no doubt that is a component that could be introduced to the program. There is no doubt that many of these kids are touched by their emotions and the drama and the music. There are things that we need to explore and develop.

Ldg Sr Const. MUDIE — If I can jump in, I think the biggest asset I bring to this program is that I do not rest on my laurels. I really try to evolve the program constantly. The kids write a daily diary about their experiences, and it is something they can look on years down the track. Some of these kids cannot put pen to paper. They really struggle. We bought eight digital cameras, and we go out and get them to take photos of things that represent happiness, sadness, anger and joy — all this sort of thing — and they actually produce an assignment, which then gets handed back to the school at the completion of the program. These assignments end up being 20 pages long. Granted a lot of it is photos with a few lines about what that represents, but it is something that the kids have achieved that they do not usually get to achieve.

Mr SCHEFFER — That is fantastic. You have answered my question really fully. It is just not reflected here. That is what I was asking. That is really good.

Ldg Sr Const. MUDIE — The last thing I wanted to say is that in regard to the families, that is crucial, and it does not have to be a parent. It can be an uncle or an older sister as long as they are an adult. If they are in a residential care unit, a support person from there can come out and be on this journey with them. We have four evenings where they come along. Some of those are just the parents and carers, some are combined with the students. Ross touched on a day where we have interactive initiative-type activities where they work with or against each other. We have even had overnight camps where the families have come out and experienced living in teepees and stuff with the kids, and we have a *Survivor*-based theme over a couple of days. There are so many avenues you can

take this program, and when you are talking about art, unfortunately, when you get people in to do those sorts of things it becomes quite expensive.

Mr SCHEFFER — Sure. I understand that.

Ldg Sr Const. MUDIE — We do a 2-hour music session, and it gets up to around \$1000. That is where we get restricted.

Mr BATTIN — One of the big things we talk about, and we have heard from so many people, is community involvement and families. They are probably two of the biggest crime prevention elements we have got. I was going to get you to elaborate on what you do with families, but basically you have just gone through that there.

Ldg Sr Const. MUDIE — The families sometimes get together and have reunions, because when their kids are at school mucking around, disengaged and doing whatever they are doing, they feel so isolated. The families come and see that there are so many other families like them around. We always have to have a box of tissues in the room whenever we sit down and have a talk. It is amazing that they will tell us things they have never told anyone before, and then they will relate well with each other and want to hook up again later on. We have the reunions for the students, which we organise, and the families ask us, ‘Do we get to have a reunion?’. We say, ‘That’s up to you. We are not going to follow up that part, but if you want to do it, you have got each other here. Sort it out’.

The CHAIR — So there are families. I had the feeling that maybe it was extended families, disjointed families, separated families and single families.

Ldg Sr Const. MUDIE — Yes, absolutely. It is not unusual to have a broken family with both the mum and dad sitting there in the same room to support their child. They may not speak in any other setting other than Newstart, but they will be there.

The CHAIR — And perhaps for the first time they will be communicating with their child.

Ldg Sr Const. MUDIE — Absolutely. It gives us an opportunity to say, ‘Hey, sure, Mum and Dad are broken up and they have their issues, but they are both here to support you, so whatever you think of them and whatever has gone on in the past, they are here to set you straight, so you have got to appreciate that’.

The CHAIR — I will leave it up to you if you want to make some summary comments before we close.

Mr WHEATLEY — Could I just add one thing? Ross mentioned that these are from-the-ground-up programs, which is very true. I included in your portfolio a copy of the graduation invitation to the program at Shepparton last term, and on the back of that it highlights the number of organisations within that Shepparton community that support the program. It is very typical of all nine programs the degree to which different stakeholders in the community rally to the support of programs like Operation Newstart and how valuable that is within those communities themselves. I think just in Shepparton there are something like 30 different organisations. There are the government agencies like the child and adolescent mental health services, the local police and the schools, but lots of corporate bodies marshal their resources to assist these programs.

Mr MILLER — Local business, Rotary.

Mr WHEATLEY — Yep, Rotary, the Freemasons and so on.

Mr MILLER — Again, it is finding a local solution to a local problem. That is one of the themes of the whole thing.

Mr WHEATLEY — The big challenge that we face for 2012, particularly for our Melbourne programs — not quite so much for our country programs because Save the Children are prepared to put some funding in towards the salaries of youth workers — is that we do not have funding support in the six Melbourne programs, and if we have a reduced presence of Victoria Police next year in those six programs, we are going to be struggling to fund the six youth workers that will be needed to keep the programs alive. That is where we are focusing our attention at the moment — or my attention as the executive officer of the organisation whose responsibility is to resource it.

Mr SCHEFFER — Matt, are you able to answer questions relating to the police or are you just here on — —

Ldg Sr Const. MUDIE — It depends on what the question is.

Mr SCHEFFER — Feel free not to answer it if you do not think it is within your responsibility. Is this program well regarded by the police, and is it being pushed up command to see if resources can be made available to support the kinds of things that have been put forward?

Ldg Sr Const. MUDIE — In regard to it being well regarded amongst the police, the troops that come out and have had experiences — —

Mr SCHEFFER — A good allocation of resources as opposed to hard policing?

Ldg Sr Const. MUDIE — Okay, I probably cannot comment on that.

Mr WHEATLEY — Can I comment on that? The deputy commissioner sent a letter to the executive committee on, I think, 13 July, and I have a copy of that letter here. I do not know whether it is appropriate to table it.

Ldg Sr Const. MUDIE — Just while Phil is getting that, can I just say one thing? In my time on Newstart I have been fortunate enough to present at the fourth and fifth international adventure therapy conferences, one in New Zealand and one in Edinburgh in Scotland. We presented to full houses, and the interest that was generated was around the fact that this partnership — running a program for at-risk youth which has a full-time police presence — was unique. Every question I was asked afterwards was, ‘How is it that the police run this full time?’. I had a professor from the United States who then emailed me. She wants to do a study and to come over to see what it is that makes this work, because in most programs police go in and out.

Mr SCHEFFER — I was asking this because Phil was saying that it is difficult, possibly in Melbourne, to get police support. That is why I was asking.

Mr WHEATLEY — Certainly our experience is that at the regional level the assistant commissioners and the superintendents or the line managers of the nine police officers in the program are very supportive of the program.

Mr SCHEFFER — There is supportive and then there is a preparedness to put in resources to the community dimension of policing or hard policing.

Mr WHEATLEY — Yes.

Mr SCHEFFER — And it is that difference that I am interested in.

Ldg Sr Const. MUDIE — Can I then say that in my position — I am a general duties member at Altona North police station — this is my 12th year of doing this full time.

Mr SCHEFFER — Excellent.

Mr WHEATLEY — The deputy commissioner says in this letter, which is dated 13 July:

From the outset, I acknowledge that the Operation Newstart programs are of benefit to the community and we are supportive of the role that they play in addressing issues relating to the cohort that they are directed at.

That has also been the verbal response from the previous chief commissioner, Simon Overland.

Mr SCHEFFER — Great. Thank you.

Mr BATTIN — Just a quick question in relation to the staffing. Matt is obviously restricted in what he can and cannot say. Within the positions that are there at the moment — the nine — the line managers have to support that, so basically the regional inspector has to support it; otherwise all those positions would not be there. But there are currently a lot of inspectors and superintendents who do support it but who at the moment are not getting that support up through the next level, and that is where the issue is at the moment.

Mr SCHEFFER — Is that a question or evidence?

Mr BATTIN — I am happy to say we are working with that at the moment.

The CHAIR — We had better bring this session to a close. I thank the three of you for providing your time to address this committee. We appreciate it. It is such a great program, and I wish you well with it.

Mr WHEATLEY — Thank you very much.

Witnesses withdrew.

DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

**Inquiry into Locally Based Approaches to Community Safety and Crime
Prevention**

Melbourne — 10 August 2011

Members

Mr B. Battin	Mr S. Ramsay
Mr S. Leane	Mr J. Scheffer
Mr T. McCurdy	

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Witnesses

Ms J. Edwards, Chief Executive Officer, and
Ms C. Neville, Strategic Adviser, Jesuit Social Services.

The CHAIR — A warm welcome to you both, and thank you very much for providing us with your time. Thank you again for your submission to the hospital violence inquiry. I understand you are going to cover both references in your evidence to this committee today.

There is an address I need to give you as witnesses in relation to you providing us with evidence. It is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975 and further subject to the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, the Defamation Act 2005 and, where applicable, the provisions of reciprocal legislation in other Australian states and territories. Any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. I assume you have read the information for witnesses who are presenting evidence to parliamentary committees. We are recording the evidence, and we will provide a proof version of the transcript at the earliest opportunity so you can correct it as appropriate. I now invite you to make your verbal submission to this committee.

Ms EDWARDS — Thank you. I thought I would begin by saying a little bit about what Jesuit Social Services is and what we do in terms of our mandate or authority to speak in this area. We began in 1977, which is nearly 35 years ago. We began working with young people in the justice system, both the youth justice and the adult correction system. We still maintain that work as the heart of our work. But over the nearly 35 years we have learnt from that group of people about, pretty much, what is working in our system generally. By sticking with that group of people and noting the trajectory they are on into the criminal justice system it has shed some light for us on things like the education system, the mental health system, access to employment and full citizenship, really.

That has led us to other areas of work, for example, with deinstitutionalisation, which is something we would largely support. We noted, though, that increasingly people with a mental illness and alcohol and drug issues were ending up in prison, so we started programs around that area of work as well with people with dual diagnoses particularly of mental illness and substance abuse. It also led us to intervene at the family level and to start parenting programs and then, more recently — but still about 11 or 12 years ago — to our work in disadvantaged communities and also with disadvantaged groups — for example, new arrivals.

I suppose what that means is that through our work with people who end up in prison we have seen factors of disadvantage that tend to typically be there, and we have also seen waves of groups of people, which end up peaking at certain times. For example, it was the Vietnamese particularly in the 1980s and 1990s. What we are at pains to do now is to try to avoid the influx of new arrivals into our criminal justice system, which has led us to do community development work with the African communities et cetera.

I suppose what we would say about that is that not only have we done the direct service but we have undertaken significant pieces of research to test what our front-line workers were saying they were seeing. In particular, I will refer to *Dropping off the Edge*, which is the research we have done. We engaged Professor Tony Vinson to map every postcode across Australia according to about 25 risk indicators plus also to map social cohesion. I think he was able to do that in Victoria and New South Wales — or maybe only in Victoria the first time — the states where we had the data around some proxies for social inclusion like volunteering; a sense that you have someone to go to if you are in need et cetera.

What we found was that when the social cohesion of certain areas was high it had a mitigating effect on the outcome of those risk indicators. But I will leave that to the side for now, other than perhaps referring to this research in relation to why we are here today, just to say that what we were able to demonstrate via that research was that 3 per cent of Australia's localities have double the rate of unemployment, more than 2.5 times the rate of long-term unemployment of the remaining places in Australia, almost double the rate of disability support and psychiatric admissions, more than double the rate of criminal convictions, approaching three times the rate of imprisonment and that their proportion of confirmed child maltreatment cases is more than 3.5 times that of the remaining localities. We know that in Victoria approximately 2 per cent of postcodes account for 25 per cent of the prison population, and 4 per cent of postcodes account for 50 per cent of the prison population. Again, it is not just the prison population where you find that; you also find those other factors to which we referred.

So while we have been working at the pointy end, in a sense, with those who actually end up in the criminal justice system, it has led us to look at prevention and early intervention, and a priority for the Jesuit Social Services is community safety. We believe that when we have a safe community where everyone gets to flourish, in fact everyone can flourish — not just those who reap the benefits of it most obviously economically. We know that the young people we see are also the victims of crime more than others, so we are very keen on promoting a safe community.

While we work on the ground very much at the intervention end, at a policy level we are very keen to see prevention and early intervention remedies. We believe they relate both at a personal level and a communal level. At a communal level our research has shown that where you have social cohesion factors, where you have factors relating to increased opportunities for, for example, three and four-year-old preschool, and where you intervene early, you can affect the trajectory of that community and its residents into criminal activity.

While I am going to talk to you about what we think should happen once they are captured in the criminal justice system, I did want to set it in the context of the need for a real focus on building socially and economically inclusive communities. That is what led us to that sort of research. By way of background I just wanted to say that, but I will now move to the area where we probably do most of our program activity and intervention, which is young people, particularly those young people who get caught in the criminal justice system.

We have also undertaken various pieces of research. Most recently we engaged Professor Tony Vinson and Dr Matt Ericson to do this piece of research: *Young People on Remand in Victoria — Balancing Individual and Community Interests*. We were concerned that our staff were saying that disadvantaged people (homeless people with mental illness, drug and alcohol problems) are more likely to be remanded in custody, so we statistically examined about 11 000 cases and their outcomes. I would like to refer to my notes around that.

What the report found is that while crime rates had reduced, remand rates did not reflect the lower crime trends. According to this report there had been a decline in the seriousness of the criminal histories of remandees in Victoria and an increasing rate of severe mental health and drug and alcohol problems. We would like the lessons from Victoria's successful community safety and justice programs, such as intensive pre and post-release support, to be extended to remand reform as Victoria's remand rate has increased — not as high as other states, thankfully.

We actually feel very proud of the Victorian justice system; we lead this country. In fact we lead the world in many respects, particularly with our dual-track system for 18 to 21-year-olds. I think we are doing quite well; we just want to make sure that that does not get turned back. We also know that young people who have early contact with the justice system are more likely to be drawn further into the system, including the fact that two-thirds of young people who end up in prison are likely to reoffend within two years.

We are also concerned about the unnecessary incarceration of people on remand. About 40 per cent of remandees are either found not guilty or sentenced to a period equal to or less than the time already spent on remand, so it is a fact that many are drawn into an incarceration situation where we say they get a good schooling in how to be a criminal. Many of them are found innocent or have already spent more time in there than they need to. Our understanding, when we looked at who is being placed on remand, is that remand is increasingly being used to accommodate Victorians with health and social problems and those who are homeless and have other problems, particularly alcohol and drug problems. I think something like 71 per cent of males had a history of drug and alcohol addiction.

Another concern for us is around intellectually disabled Victorians. We run a program for intellectually disabled young offenders called Perry House. This research showed that intellectually disabled Victorians serve, on average, a greater number of remand-only terms of imprisonment than people without intellectual disabilities. First-time Victorian remandees with intellectual disabilities served twice the period served by non-intellectually impaired remandees. Again we think that has a lot to do with social causes. A magistrate has someone in front of them and needs to feel confident that this person is supported, has somewhere to live and is having their various needs met or else they are more likely to say, 'Well, we had better put you in remand', whereas my child or perhaps your children would be much more likely to have a fixed address and a home to go to and would be put on bail. That is of great concern to us, especially when we consider that 40 per cent of those on remand end up either being innocent or having already served a sentence equal to or longer than they need to.

Mr McCURDY — Can I ask whether you know the difference between those two statistics? There is a big difference between —

Ms EDWARDS — Innocent.

Mr McCURDY — if it is 40 per cent innocent and if it is 2 per cent innocent and 38 per cent — —

Ms EDWARDS — Exactly. And we strove with great endeavour to try to get to the bottom of that. We were unable to, which brings us to one of the recommendations in this remand report around data collection in the justice system. We were not able to find that out. We tried. I agree it is a big issue. One of the difficulties is that someone might be in for a number of charges, so they may be innocent of that one but not another — so it is complex. I would say that in one area our New South Wales colleagues do better than us, and that is their crime statistics and data collection. We have recommended that we come up with something similar to that.

I suppose I started talking about the notion of disadvantage prevention, and I am now talking about who ends up in the system and the fact that indigenous people are about 13 times overrepresented, so that is another feature. Let us now move on to the point where people have come in touch with the criminal justice system. Victoria leads the way in many ways. What has been very strong in Victoria has been the diversion of young

people by the police in terms of warnings and particular programs that might divert people. And if they end up in the system, there is a strong focus on rehabilitation. For us, in terms of crime prevention we know that two-thirds of young people who end up in prison reoffend within two years. We also know that a program we run, as others do, called group conferencing, which brings together the victim, the offender, a police person and a lawyer, has resulted in 81 per cent of people not reoffending within two years of going through it.

Not all those crimes are the same so I am not trying to draw an exact parallel, but I am saying that KPMG recently did a report on this program and came up with those outcomes. So we are very pleased that this present government has increased the group conferencing function across the state; that is a good thing. We are saying that is the sort of thing that needs to keep happening. People get out of prison. Unless we want to just turn the key and give up, they are going to get out. So let us try to keep people out before they get in, and let us do things like restorative justice programs, community-based support and linking people in to catch up with their education and training.

Jesuit Social Services has just started a new initiative, and this government has given us half a million dollars over two years to get that going. It is called Jesuit Community College. What we are very keen to do is bring the expertise of the Jesuits, who have 470 years in education — sometimes directed to the more elite ends of our community — and bring that to bear on the more disadvantaged as a way of helping to promote the social inclusion of people.

Ninety-four per cent of males in Victorian prisons have not completed secondary school or do not have a post-school qualification. When I talk to people in Corrections, they will say that it is probably closer to about year 10. As one of the staff said to me, ‘And we all know that’s a euphemism for illiterate and innumerate’, because you can pass year 10 and still not be able to read or write or be functionally literate. We think we are just getting a revolving door there unless we do something around that training.

Just to finish from my point of view — and then I am happy to respond to anything you want to say — we are very concerned about the proposed changes and some of the changes that have happened to date around the abolition of suspended sentences. We are very concerned about the statutory minimum sentencing that is being explored at the moment and that the Sentencing Advisory Council is looking into. Our view is that we have a judiciary that is trusted.

I am not sure if you have seen the survey that was conducted by World Values Survey which says that the judiciary is trusted by the community more than any other group — much more than politicians, much more than the media, which is down at about 13 per cent, and much more than the church. The judiciary is at over 50 per cent. We would question where this latest *Herald Sun* poll and the testing of the community around their faith in the justice system, which we see as what this is about, is coming from. There has been research — for example, the Tasmanian research which explored the community’s response to sentencing and compared it to that of the judiciary. When the community were given the full facts of a case, they were actually more lenient than the judges in terms of the sentencing options that they came up with.

We think we have a judiciary that is trusted, largely. We think it is important that their discretion be maintained in terms of sentencing, that they have the training, that they have the case law, that they have precedent and that they have the full facts, not a 100-word blurb on a website or something like that whereby we get to vote on ‘What would you do as an outcome for this person?’. I am sure you are familiar with what I am talking about.

We are concerned about turning Victoria backwards in this area. We think we have led the way. We are doing better than other states in terms of offending, in terms of imprisonment rate and in terms of recidivism, and we would say, 'Let us strengthen those interventions rather than unpack it'. That is probably enough from me. I am very happy to respond to questions.

The CHAIR — There has been an alternative view, of course, that offenders and repeat offenders going through the judiciary system are not dealt with harshly enough, thereby not really providing that deterrent to other would-be offenders. I think it would be unwise to be reasonably flippant about that in that there was genuine community concern, obviously, about the suspended sentencing issue. Pre-election it was very strong; the community was looking for a much stronger signal from the judiciary about how to impose penalties on offenders and repeat offenders.

Ms EDWARDS — Our view would be that we need to be very careful about how policy is made. We believe that policy should not be driven by — I will be blunt about it — the front page of the *Herald Sun* or by other means which promote fear. We believe that it should be evidence based, and the evidence does not support that.

The CHAIR — I am actually trying to create some discussion.

Mr SCHEFFER — Just on that, at the moment we are all operating in the context of what has been going on in London and the UK. It is the background to this that a number of us were talking about informally earlier. This morning on the radio I heard Matt Grist from the UK think tank Demos. I checked its website, where he says some things that I would like you to reflect on. The first thing he says is that what has happened is inexcusable and he ticks off on that, so we do not need to go there. He says that this is probably not the time to make connections between public spending and this youth anger.

He then goes on to say that we should have a bit of a quick think about what some of the underlying factors are that will help us over this period of dealing with what he calls 'youth-without-conscience'. The things he mentions include, for example, that the long summer break for kids without means is an issue. Admittedly the Prime Minister was in Italy, and that was good for him, but a lot of people still sit in Manchester, Tottenham, Clapham and places like that. I guess the bottom line of that is: what do kids, young people, do?

The second thing he says is that work effectively does not exist for 16, 17, 18 and 19-year-olds, and that is a problem. He talks about the dramatic fall in youth employment. He then says that in the UK they need more 'structured education, training and volunteering for young people', which are exactly the three things you mentioned when you started. Then he makes some recommendations, saying that government should have a much greater interventionist role in making sure there is adequate provision of education. I end that by saying that this morning a caller to *AM* said that in London, for example, there are virtually no publicly funded gyms; they are all private.

Just in that context, can I just reflect on what are some of the dos and don'ts for government in Victoria so that we keep the good things that you have mentioned and that we have heard about from other witnesses? There is a lot of terrific stuff going on, and we do not want to lose that. With government having a pivotal role, what are the things you think government needs to be careful of?

Ms EDWARDS — Going back to early childhood, I think it is about the engagement of families. I think schooling and the preschool phase are incredibly important. Last night I was reading some research — I have forgotten the name of the

man who did it, but he is a New Zealander and is at Melbourne University — that is a meta-analysis of hundreds and hundreds of pieces of research. It is basically saying that at 20 to 22 months people's skills, in terms of maybe tying their shoelaces or what they have been exposed to, are a good indicator of where they are going to end up over a life period. So early intervention programs are really important.

When I say early intervention, if people have not themselves been able to complete schooling et cetera, then it is important that we give opportunities for those families to engage with the formal education system through preschool and school and provide opportunities for families to get involved in those places as well. It might be that there is a literacy class at night or that there are exercise classes. Schools do capture most of the community, and if they can be really family friendly so that families who perhaps have had a negative experience themselves at school earlier on can attach to those places, that is a really good model.

I think we also need to have a really flexible education system. I am thinking here particularly of people who have not been able to succeed and end up dropping out. We know that in some areas where we work — not in this state, but in New South Wales, which I just use as an example — about 1 in 10 are not making it from primary to secondary school, so there is a key transition period. I think that transition periods — preschool to school, primary to secondary school and then out of school — are the key times when we should be looking at flexible, whole-of-person, whole-of-family interventions. I say whole-of-person because it is not just literacy and numeracy, it is also picking up things that you were saying, maybe physical things such as gyms and a range of other things.

I know this government has expressed interest, and I am very pleased about this. Mary Wooldridge has spoken very strongly about whole-of-person, whole-of-family, whole-of-community responses. That is really good, because siloed interventions, like about someone's drug and alcohol issues or their education, tend not to produce the sorts of results we want. Any programs that are looking at the person in their totality and looking at the family and community they come from are really to be encouraged. With the new arrivals who we work with, many of them have missed out on basic schooling, and it is a challenge. I do not know what the answer is, but I do know they often feel uncomfortable — for example, being a big, tall lad sitting in a classroom when they actually have about grade 5 or 6 education competence because they have missed out on schooling.

Flexible models of education are really important. Also in terms of things that you have just referred to relating to the UK, again I think Victoria has done quite well. In Flemington, where we work with the African community, there was a history of tension between some of the Horn of Africa communities and the police. To the credit of the police they really addressed that and made sure they had officers put on there who really had community development skills and were engaged in the community. I think they are the sorts of things that can be touchstones for things flaring up or how you go about dealing with that. We were involved in that, inviting them to come in, listening and creating forums. The community was able to settle pretty quickly on a number of occasions because of the good community policing that was done. That is another important feature.

Ms NEVILLE — With any of this investment it needs to be sustained over a long period of time. What we are seeing at Jesuit Social Services is generation after generation of people who have been through child protection, juvenile justice and the adult justice system. It is not enough to have funding based on a political or electoral cycle. If we are

putting in — this is what the Tony Vinson research comes out with — we need to actually invest over quite a sustained period of time to see any sort of turnaround.

Mr LEANE — Can I ask a question on the juvenile justice side, which you have touched on? This committee looked at repeat criminal offenders in the last parliamentary term, and one of the things that was fleshed out was that there were only very limited diversionary programs for magistrates to send juveniles to. The obvious one was Ropes. We had a witness come in yesterday and say Ropes could be a badge of honour now, with some people thinking, ‘I’ve done it, you’ve done it’. I am interested in hearing your comments on diversionary programs, including what could be available and what is available. On top of that, a new policy that has been flagged is mandatory sentencing for juveniles for certain crimes. Can you see any diversionary programs that would be applicable for someone in that age group who has committed a serious crime?

Ms EDWARDS — I should start by saying I think it is appropriate that some people are incarcerated. We are not saying everyone should be diverted, but some people need containment and when they are being contained rehabilitation efforts also need to take place. Our concern is that those efforts need to be strengthened. I believe work is being done to look at that. You literally have a captive audience, and it would be good a time to address some of the things that have perhaps led to a life of crime. I am talking about both the therapeutic and the skills development levels. I am just putting that on the table. For some serious offences that is what I think should happen.

I think there is not enough in the diversionary end of things. For example, Ropes is well known. It is actually only operating out of a couple of places. We used to run a program called Start Over, which was funded through Crime Prevention and then the police, and that has not been re-funded. But we were not the only ones. It was run by, I think, Centacare in Ballarat. That has not been re-funded. But, having said that, the government has funded a new program called the Youth Support Service. I think that involves the employment of 20 or 25 new youth workers across the state, and this is to work with police. That is being rolled out only now, and I think that will pick up some of the diversionary end, in that if a young person comes to the attention of the police, they will be referred to this program. I am very interested in looking at that in a couple of years to see the efficacy of that. They are the sorts of things I think are important. We cannot comment on it now because it is not up and running yet, but I think it is a good move that that is in place.

It is always the balance between how you strengthen the mainstream things that are there, like schools — to be more flexible, to keep hold of kids and to wrap things around kids — and the specialist programs. It is always a balance, and I think we need to do both. For example, the Jesuit Community College is a mainstream college in a way, but what we want to do in that is deliver the training more flexibly and we want to add wraparound support for people. People also need to feel that they belong to mainstream things; like that, they are students rather than being just clients of a welfare service.

We are very keen on matching targeted interventions but also creating opportunities where people mix with a broader range of people, whether it be through mentoring or even with a broader group of disadvantaged people, but mixing that up a bit. I think the diversion has to be both specialist and strengthening the mainstream institutions that we have, and I do not know that there is enough of it. I think with this new intervention we need to wait and see what impact the Youth Support Service has. This substance abuse service is the organisation in Melbourne that is running it. I think it is a good organisation, and we will see the outcome of that.

The CHAIR — We have about 10 minutes left of this session. Kath, do you want to give a presentation, or are you just here in a supporting role?

Ms NEVILLE — I am really here in a supporting role, but I would just like to make one comment in reply to something you mentioned before about tough sentencing or statutory minimum sentencing being a deterrent. There is evidence we have — I am racking my brain to remember, but I can get back to the committee on where that evidence is — that shows tough sentencing is not a deterrent, especially to young people, and the reason for that is around maturation principles. They have not reached maturity, they make split-second decisions at 2 a.m., and they are not going to stop and think before they do that about what is on the legislative agenda or what the sentence might be. I just make that comment in reply to your earlier comments.

The CHAIR — Having said that, though, we have heard evidence in previous meetings where the crime and the punishment do not suit each other and in fact the crime is done on the basis that no real punishment is given.

Ms NEVILLE — Yes. I think that is one of the advantages of group conferencing, where you get the offender sitting down with the victim and the victim's family and they get to hear what the impact of their crime has been.

Ms EDWARDS — It is very powerful. By the way, the research — this research on which we will come back to you — shows that they are aware that there is a consequence, but they are not aware of the nature of the consequence, like that it is a two-year minimum. That is what we are saying, and I think that is the important point here. What has been suggested is that if people know they are going to get this two-year minimum sentence, they will not misbehave. I think the point is about the impulsivity of a young person. There is no evidence to support the notion that they are thinking, 'I will get a two-year minimum sentence, so I will not do it'. Again, we welcome the conversation, but we really think it is important that we do not go on anecdotes or what an individual person says but on real, evidence-based research.

Mr SCHEFFER — Earlier you mentioned the abolition of suspended sentences and statutory mandatory sentencing and talked about the *Herald Sun* poll and what research was telling us. What you are saying is that a body of evidence is being built. Are you the only ones? In other words, who else would support the position you have put? That is one thing.

The other part of it is that it creates a conundrum in society where you have a sort of 'scientific', evidence-based body of research that is building up, and then you have a community perception — you mentioned the *Herald Sun* — that has absolutely no regard for coherence. As members of Parliament and community leaders we have a responsibility to try to communicate that across to broad constituencies and to try to run across the interference run by non-evidence-based voices.

Firstly, who else is saying what you are saying, and secondly, do you have any ideas about how we can better communicate so that we get policy and laws based on evidence and not on knee-jerk public reactions?

Ms EDWARDS — There are a couple of things. In terms of who else is in that space, we get contacted as — there is a little group, I suppose, not that we are in a group — do many people, whether it be people like Youthlaw and a number of other organisations — for example, Smart Justice — there are a number of organisations that are communicating regularly about this.

Mr SCHEFFER — Is there a consensus there, or is there a dispute?

Ms EDWARDS — There is 90 per cent consensus. There might be contention about whether we should sharpen that bit or that bit; but there is pretty much a consensus. These are informed opinions, and you raise an interesting point: maybe what we are not good at is our advocacy around that and getting that out.

Jumping to the second part of your question — I should say that we actually had a forum, just a stakeholder forum, which brought together about 22 people from across I suppose the judiciary, community service organisations and legal centres to discuss that. We are actually holding another forum on 21 and 22 October. It is entitled ‘What does a humane, effective justice system look like?’. Frank Brennan, who is on our board and who is an active Jesuit, is actually going to facilitate that forum and Frank Vincent is going to be the keynote speaker on the Friday night. On the Saturday we have three areas. One is around prevention and diversion, the next one is around sentencing and the third one is around post-release support or intervention when someone is actually caught in the system. We will be having leading speakers and panels drawing people from the Northern Territory, New South Wales and Victoria. The reason we say those three places is that they are the areas that Jesuit Social Services is working in. They look to Victoria in many ways, by the way. We have just submitted to the Northern Territory Youth Justice Review, and you can look at our submission if you like. Again we advocate a lot of what Victoria is doing. That is a bit beside the point.

You said to me — —

Mr SCHEFFER — How we communicate.

Ms EDWARDS — Okay. I suppose in my passionate heart of hearts what I would love is leadership on this. There is evidence, for example that Tasmanian research, that shows that if people are given some facts and given the full story, then they will respond in a certain way. A lot of it is about how it is driven. I think that it is easy for any of us to kind of barrack, which what I say. I often challenge myself, ‘Don’t just barrack here, Julie, really get down beneath and understand what’s going on here’. I suppose, amongst our leaders, that is what I would be saying. Often we want to put a particular view across and it suits our purposes for whatever reasons to put a view across, but I think we need to be bigger than that. We need to be greater than that. We really need to serve our community well.

I believe in serving our community and getting a safe community, a really safe community, it is not just about locking people up. It is about going to the causes, and when somebody has already been going down that trajectory, then we need to be really smart about what we do and not just lock ‘em up. Having said that, some people will be locked up — and need to be — for a period of time, but I suppose I think that the greater good that we need to serve is around not just those individuals but the community — and I believe the community’s safety. If we link perhaps the communication around the facts and around community safety, so that maybe it is not just that we are saying, ‘Oh, this poor boy’s had a really hard time’, because I do not think people necessarily care about that much. That is not the argument; the argument is very much around the community and the safety of the community. Maybe we all need to learn how to communicate those messages better.

The CHAIR — There is a community view that people should be responsible for their own actions. I guess at some point you have got to stop apologising, regardless of their social demographic. I pose the UK issue, and Britain specifically. At the moment

there appears to be a young group mentality that has youths happily break into and enter a property and rip TVs off walls without any thought about what their actions might incur. Yet we seem to justify that action with the factors that Johan raised before.

Mr SCHEFFER — They are not justifications; I absolutely stood away from that. They do not justify them.

The CHAIR — But there is a common view that these people are from socially disadvantaged areas.

Mr SCHEFFER — No, I am not saying that.

The CHAIR — Not your view; I am saying there is a common view that their actions should be — —

Ms EDWARDS — Excused because of that.

The CHAIR — Not excused. If it were you or me who decided to go and hit a policeman over the head, break in and enter a property, rip a TV off the wall, create dysfunction with somebody else's personal property and walk out —

Mr LEANE — They would go to jail. What is different there compared to here?

The CHAIR — I am saying there seems to be a view that there are a whole lot of reasons why this activity is happening in the UK at the moment.

Ms EDWARDS — Can I make two responses to that? One is more specific, and I talk about group conferencing again. At Jesuit Social Services we really remember who we are: Jesuit Social Services. We are on about the formation of people to have strong values to take up their full citizenship; we are not on about excusing people's behaviour. We are on about encouraging people to take responsibility for their actions. That is why we love restorative justice, because our staff have sat in court with people where they have been told whatever they got — the outcome — and they have not got a clue. They go, 'What happened?', and they just do not know.

Whereas in a group conference, for example, they know. They are confronted; the police person starts off talking about what happened in the crime. The victim goes next and talks about the impact of that crime on them, and the young offender is listening and hearing perhaps the full impact of what happened — you know, 'I haven't been able to sleep since' or 'You stole my car and it had the baby capsule in it' or 'I haven't been able to go to work, and my wife is really distressed'. They are hearing that and they have someone, maybe a youth worker or someone from their family, listening to this. There is often a deep shame. We do not do it to shame; we do it to really help people come to terms with what they have done and the impact of that. Equally, perhaps the parents hear for the first time the young person expressing how they have felt. You know, 'Nobody has really been watching me. Nobody really cares about me', et cetera.

It is a restorative process, so I absolutely take your point about the need for people to take responsibility for their actions. We think that there are ways to make that a deep and meaningful process, rather than 'Pfft! Did my time; learnt more about how I can do that more easily next time et cetera'. That is the orientation that would go around that.

With regard to the sense of the community and what you are saying about justification, or what may be seen as that, from my point of view the things that we are saying are not about 'Therefore it's excusable'. What we are saying is, 'Let's understand what the trajectory is so that we intervene in that trajectory'. Once a young person is making those

moral choices to offend or whatever, we need to deal with that. I am talking about crime prevention and about how we might intervene so that they do not go down that path. We all need to be held accountable for our actions, but I think as a community we need to be held accountable for our actions too in terms of, 'Have we given these communities or these individuals access to the sorts of services and the sort of education system and the sort of mental health system that you and I take for granted?'. I think we all have to step up and take responsibility. So I think the young person does, but I think often what happens is once they come to a program or once they are before a magistrate they have often been failed many, many times by many, many systems, including child protection, the education system and a whole range of things. We as a community and as adults and responsible people will need to take responsibility for that.

The CHAIR — Julie, thank you. I think this has all been good. It is very stimulating, and I think it is good to pose some different views. Thank you both very much for being here this morning. We appreciate your time.

Witnesses withdrew.

DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

**Inquiry into Locally Based Approaches to Community Safety and Crime
Prevention**

Melbourne — 10 August 2011

Members

Mr B. Battin	Mr S. Ramsay
Mr S. Leane	Mr J. Scheffer
Mr T. McCurdy	

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Witnesses

Associate Professor J. Toumbourou, Chief Executive Officer / Associate Dean
(Partnerships), Faculty of Health, Deakin University; Communities that Care Ltd.

The CHAIR — Welcome, and thank you for giving us your time this afternoon.

Assoc. Prof. TOUMBOUROU — My pleasure.

The CHAIR — John, I am the chair of this joint parliamentary committee on drugs and crime prevention. I am sure you are aware of the reference that we were given and the submission that was put forward. As a preliminary introduction, John, I have to read you the address to witnesses who provide evidence to this committee so you are aware of the protocols of public hearings. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975 and further subject to the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, the Defamation Act 2005 and, where applicable, the provisions of reciprocal legislation of the other Australian states and territories. Any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. I understand you have read the guide for witnesses presenting evidence to parliamentary committees. We are recording the evidence, obviously, and will provide a proof of the Hansard transcript at the earliest opportunity so you can correct it as appropriate. I invite you to make your verbal submission to the committee.

Assoc. Prof. TOUMBOUROU — Excellent. I just want to firstly thank the committee for your work and to say that this is obviously a very good opportunity to be able to present to you; thank you very much.

My submission was really motivated by quite a lot of work that I have done, so I am wearing two hats as I sit before you today. I come to you partly as an academic. I have worked for a number of years as an academic, and I am a professor and chair in health psychology at Deakin University. More recently, I am the associate dean in the faculty of health and am responsible for partnerships in the workplace. Speaking with the Deakin University hat on, Deakin University is very passionate about community engagement and has actually specialised in this area as one of the core commitments of the university. One of the reasons for this is that we really believe that it is very important that there be academic partnerships working to try and strengthen communities and that this is an important endeavour. Deakin University is working with a lot of communities in the south-west of Victoria but also has commitments to other communities, and we have other partnerships. In terms of looking at public safety issues and also issues to do with injury prevention, these commitments are very important. There is quite a lot to be gained through working much more closely with communities.

I will talk to you now with my other hat on about the work that I do with Communities that Care. I wanted to talk to you about that hat. Communities that Care has been operating in Victoria for over a decade. It is a not-for-profit, limited liability company that sits under the auspice of the Royal Children's Hospital. I am the chief executive officer. It has a board that includes members from the Royal Children's Hospital, and also the Rotary Club of Melbourne has been a very strong supporter. There is support for Communities That Care by Deakin University, and Deakin University allows me to be the chair because it is very much wanting to support this type of partnership and sees it as very important. The reason that the Royal Children's Hospital set up Communities that Care is again that it is very much involved in the idea that it is an essential part of child safety.

The part of the commitment that comes from the Royal Children's Hospital is that the safer communities people actually sit on the Royal Children's Hospital Communities that Care board, and the reason that those people are keen on this particular approach is that we see the need to look at communities. They need to be places where children can grow up through the childhood period being influenced by the best parenting that can be

offered. Parents are obviously very important to monitor and supervise children and keep them away from areas that could cause injury. Obviously family conflict and these types of problems that can be faced in our community are very important areas again. These we regard as the social environment the children grow up in, but the social environment is not just for the families to control. Obviously there needs to be no bullying at school, so children can report and have a very important view about how it is going at school and whether or not there is antisocial behaviour around them.

Also, in the broader community we know that we want children to be safe, and there are a lot of influences as children grow up. We think of children in the early years, but there are also children growing up through the secondary school years. We know that there are a lot of things such as easy access to alcohol, public attitudes to alcohol and the way in which alcohol is provided at parties. All these sorts of things are very important sources of risk for children through the adolescent years, and I focus particularly on alcohol because it is a major issue and a major preventable source of injury to young people and adolescents. The Communities that Care approach is to use a survey that is done across the state, and we have been working very much with our partners in state government to try to have questions from our survey implemented in some of the survey work that is done by the state government. The 'How are you' survey was done by the early childhood and education department through the adolescent and child monitoring section. That was done in 2009 and used some of the items from the Communities that Care survey.

The survey is designed to measure what we describe as risk and protective factors. That language we will all be familiar with, because it comes very much from the same language that we use to think about risk and protective factors for heart disease. In fact it is the same epidemiological approach. The idea is that there are some things we can measure. I talked today about family conflict, I talked about monitoring children and I talked about bullying, but these are all — in our language — things we would regard as risk factors. They are not, obviously, the risk factors for heart disease, but they are risk factors that will affect the healthy development of children and increase the likelihood that those children are going to end up with problems. They can be problems that might involve them in violence, or they might be involved in hazardous alcohol use. All these things put children at risk of injury, and we know that these things are sort of a cluster of things that we want to reduce.

Communities that Care is working in a similar way to the safer communities programs that you will also have addressing you. In fact we have a very close partnership. What we do is offer a framework by which this type of work can happen. We have the child and youth survey, which is an important instrument, but we also do training work for coalitions in the community by which we try to encourage different areas within the community, with local governments being major partners that we work with. We work with child and youth professionals, we work with the health sector and we often work with police as well on our Communities that Care local community committees. These committees are being established now. We have been running pilot programs. This program initially came from America, and we have been piloting it now for a decade with three partners, two of them in Victoria. One of those is the Mornington Peninsula shire, which has done a very thorough job over the last decade of running Communities that Care and has six local areas, and there is also the City of Ballarat. It too has been running it for a decade, and in both cases they have done a fairly thorough job of implementing the program. They are now moving on to the next phase of trying to do an even better job in the future.

We have also worked with other states. We have worked with Greater Bunbury in Western Australia, so we see this as being a national thing but something we really want to strengthen in Victoria.

Working closely with the Royal Children's Hospital, we have a lot of very good researchers, particularly researchers from the Centre for Adolescent Health, which has been supporting the initiative. What we have been able to achieve is that we ran the survey. We have now run two statewide surveys in Victoria. One was done in 1999, and the repeat was the 'How are you' survey done in 2009, so there is now a decade of data.

What is unique about that data is that we have estimates for all municipal local governments of these levels of risk and protective factors. What I mean by that, just so I can be clear, is that if you were in, for example, the Bayside community, you might want to know, 'What are our levels of family conflict relative to the rest of the state?'. That would be a very good question to ask if you were interested in making sure that levels of family conflict were being kept moderate. You would be able to compare the rates of family conflict in Bayside using this data and how they have gone from 1999 to 2009, and you would be able to compare your trend in that municipality to the rest of the state. That is exactly how the data is being developed, and we are trying to encourage that kind of thinking. If you were in schools and providing schools in Bayside, you would also be able to look at whether or not children reported rates of suspension that were dropping over that period or increasing. You can also check bullying rates based on the children's reports, and you can also check whether children consider that there are opportunities at schools in that area for pro-social involvement and whether or not teachers provide rewards and recognition when children are doing the right thing.

The reason we measure protective factors of that nature is that we are trying to encourage these community coalitions to develop healthy environments, not just in the family but also at school and in the broader community. The program brings together coalitions that can use that data and then train them to do the next phase, which is the development of the prevention strategies plan. Communities that Care encourages a greater investment in evidence-based prevention at a local level, and this is the sort of work that has been going on quite well at Mornington Peninsula. We have done pre/post surveys in that municipality from 2002 to 2007, and we have been able to demonstrate that rates of alcohol use came down, smoking rates came down and illicit drug use came down on the student report, and also that risk factors that were targeted by the community came down and protective factors — such as this idea of opportunities and rewards and recognition in the family, in the school and in the community — went up. They were very much in line with what the community had tried to achieve. Those findings are in line with what is being achieved overseas, where the program is being trialled in randomised trials. We are very pleased by the work that has been done, and it has been done fairly carefully.

We are now moving with our national coalition. We did a survey in 2006 of 30 communities across Australia, and with our science team we have been able to pair 28 of these communities to have a randomised trial, where we have 14 communities that are now going to be tapped on the shoulder and followed up by doing a randomised trial intervention using the program, because we want to talk to committees such as yours with very firm evidence. That is one of the things the hospital is very keen on.

Mr SCHEFFER — Could I just interrupt there?

Assoc. Prof. TOUMBOUROU — Yes, sure. I have spoken for quite a while.

Mr SCHEFFER — No, that is fine. I just did not quite get the link. I do not know whether I had a lapse of concentration. You talked about it like a data set that you could get through the internet and have a look at on the website about different measures, and then you talked about how that can feed into planning. Then you talked about what some of the achievements have been. I do not quite get the link of how you get from the data to how you get behavioural change.

Assoc. Prof. TOUMBOUROU — Okay. I will just use one example. The children in a municipality are surveyed in a number of schools. We are trying to get a valid estimate of the behaviour and perceptions of children, so they are surveyed on a number of different scales that are relevant to their perceptions of the social environment they are growing up in. That information can then be analysed for things such as the level of family conflict children are reporting in your municipality.

We then provide, through Communities that Care, a menu of services by which family conflict is linked to the range of programs that address family conflict. For example, in Australia there is a program called Triple P, which is the positive parenting program, and municipalities have the potential to be sort of advocating for there to be more of that program to be run in their municipality. That would have an effect on reducing some forms of family conflict. But there are other things that can be done to reduce family conflict, such as offering parents support and family interventions. So they are listed in our menu of effective programs. If there is not much skill in a particular approach we also try to encourage participation in a program on our menu called Families and Schools Together. That is now being run quite extensively on the Mornington Peninsula.

Mr SCHEFFER — Who would facilitate that? Let us take positive parenting. So you would decide that there is an issue — for example, family violence — that you might want to deal with. Who promotes that? Do you promote that on the school level first? Are there information sessions?

Assoc. Prof. TOUMBOUROU — The menu that is developed by Communities that Care, these prevention strategies, come from literature reviews that we do of the scientific evaluations that are done for prevention programs with different age groups. The thing about that is it has been a very strongly developing area of science over the last couple of decades, so many of those programs have champions behind them. For example, the Triple P program is coordinated by a group in Queensland, and the FAST program has an agency in Collingwood that offers training in the program, and people can go to them for support in how to run it.

Local community groups have to raise money in order to get training done in the programs, but they can be advocates for the leveraging of other sources of money that might be there for creating healthy environments for children. What happened in Mornington, as a specific example, is they ran their own training and got a few people in schools who became familiar with how the program would run.

Mr SCHEFFER — That is the shire?

Assoc. Prof. TOUMBOUROU — Yes, the Mornington Peninsula shire auspices the workers for the program, the workers have a committee and the committee then raise the money to run training in their area. The schools volunteered welfare staff who attended the training, and the welfare staff worked with other agencies to run the programs into schools. Then they were able to measure the improvement in the family situation across the municipality. So that is an example of how the program works.

Our evidence is that as the total cumulative number of risk factors are reduced in children's lives, a whole range of things improve for the children. We believe it is a supplementary strategy to other things you can do in terms of creating a safer environment for children. What we have not been doing is, for example, looking at specific triggers of injury; we think that is very valid and important. What we are doing is creating an environment by which the children can get optimal parenting as they enter school and they build that commitment to school.

They also learn skills in social and emotional management, and that increases the chances of having an attentive, engaged child who can problem solve and make good decisions. They are the sorts of communities we are trying to create, where the end result will be lower rates of engagement in things like substance abuse. We are also hoping to achieve higher engagement in pro-social behaviours and pathways such as academic engagement and end up with a strong community, in the full sense of the word, by creating a very good environment for children to grow up in.

At this stage the program is run without a really firm link to government, and that is our next step. We have had some support, and it has been mostly through program funding, but there has not really been a full program by which local government could apply for these funds. So we are trying to work with the Deakin Health Economics group. We have a partnership with VicHealth where we have put together a prevention advisory group and we are looking to recruit people who are very interested within the Treasury, other ministers or others who might be interested from Parliament to assist us. We would be very keen on that.

The idea of this is that if we actually search the economic case for prevention, what you see is that it is actually a very firm and positive way of saving government costs in areas such as needing to build new prisons. If you do not do prevention, it becomes a greater future expense. We know we have a very high burden of mental health problems at the moment in our community. These can be prevented through the types of approaches we are talking about. If a child leaves school early, they can often become a greater user of welfare services, and there is less input into the tax schemes. What you are getting then is that all of these things are very costly to us, because if these happen through adolescence or childhood, then the future costs are horrific in terms of trying to support that person.

Economists know this, and there are many reports that have been written to show the case, but, for example, when Mornington make the achievements they have made, they said to us is that at this stage there is no way that there is anyone in state government who can actually reward that, because there is no scheme established to actually measure what we believe is a considerable achievement that is likely to have huge economic benefits for the state.

Firstly, we want the committee to be aware of these approaches that use community monitoring. It is a fairly sophisticated approach that builds on years of science that has been developing at places like the Centre for Adolescent Health, where we really have a lot of longitudinal evidence that has gone into this, and we are trying to bring together reviews of the evidence of what works in prevention so it can be applied at a local level. Local government have shown that they can do it, and they are doing what we think is a world-class job of running the program. The program has been championed in parts of America, it is run across the Netherlands and the Australian rollout is ready to do something more significant. We believe it is at the cutting edge and that it offers huge advantages, and we are trying to measure the economic benefits.

We would like to have state government involvement in all these things we are doing in order to help us demonstrate the economic benefits. We would like to ask the state government to please tell us what the goalposts are for our communities. So, for example, if treasuries were to say that they want to see rates of alcohol-related hospital admissions for youth coming down in those municipalities, we believe these coalitions can achieve that. If the view is that less violence callouts for youth in the age group needs to be a target, again these communities have the capacity to use this approach to reduce these things.

What we would like to see is that there be some reward for this, some sort of block grant or other financial mechanism by which the community achievements can actually be funded. The reason why that would make sense is because there is a strong economic case that as we are creating environments where children are exposed to fewer risks, there are more protective factors and you are reducing problems such as alcohol use and antisocial behaviour, you are reducing pathways into the crisis services that the state otherwise has to set up.

Mr McCURDY — So by celebrating those successes it will attract more resources?

Assoc. Prof. TOUMBOUROU — For prevention; that is right. One of the dilemmas I think we have all got, and your committee would be very aware of it, is that often what we have to do when we are in governance roles is respond to those issues that are the order of the day. For example, often the order of the day can be that where there has been a crime or you have somebody who is running amok because of a mental illness, you cannot afford to not do anything about it; you have to respond. Often the responses at that crisis end are very expensive, with very little likelihood that you will be able to solve the root of the problem, whereas the preventive approach tries to turn the lens on things that might not seem a problem for governance. For example, it is not really a problem for us sitting in this room that there is a child who is exposed to high family conflict, but actually what we do know is that if we leave that situation and we do not have a response to it, then the likelihood is that that child might become in the future a mental health client. So trying to reduce these pathways to problems makes sense, because the investment can be shown through economic return studies to be three, four, fivefold in terms of overall savings.

Mr SCHEFFER — John, just on that, it is a really interesting point that you have raised about how we tackle that. We know, and you know better than us, the cost nationwide of harmful alcohol consumption is between \$7 billion and \$8 billion. We know family violence is of about the same order. There seems to be this magic number between \$7 billion and \$8 billion that crops up; it crops up for eye problems, and there is a whole range of things. Clearly modelling has gone on, and there are fairly sophisticated ways of calibrating the monetary cost of these harms. So, so far so good in treasuries.

Assoc. Prof. TOUMBOUROU — Yes, that is right.

Mr SCHEFFER — Of course, the particular issues you have been raising have been kicking around for a long time. We have known intuitively, and then we start to put it together in a much more qualitative and quantitative way. But what is the disconnection now between the treasuries making that observation and then the link to seeing that, really, we need a transfer of that harm budget into a prevention budget?

Assoc. Prof. TOUMBOUROU — I think that is a really important point, and it is one that has been a bit of a bugbear for all of us. Whichever area you are in —

governance, academia or whatever — we are all confronting this problem. We know it is a reality that the proportion of the budget that is spent on prevention is actually very small compared to the amount we spend on the later stage treatments. One of the dilemmas is how to gracefully do the transfer of funds. Communities that Care offers one model, and I will just say there are some very good examples around the world where states have actually taken the model to scale. I will point out one, which is in Pennsylvania, and offer it as another example to the committee that you may wish to get more information on.

In Pennsylvania they had a scheme that had a braided funding approach, whereby they emphasised the counties across Pennsylvania. I should mention that Pennsylvania is a very large state; the population is three-quarters of Australia's population. They were dealing with a very large population, and the rollout there was to say that they would provide small amounts of funding that were, again, rewards for taking these steps of moving a county towards prevention. That was evaluated to have shown massive economic returns in terms of reducing the amount of crime in those counties that did this Communities that Care program, and they also improved school engagement. So they are some of the promises.

In terms of the question of why you do not get the investment in prevention, the reason is very complex, but it involves the fact that often what we have got with most governance models is that we have to be responsive to constituencies, but constituencies are only aware of the issues that they are seeing in their day-to-day lives. I think most people are aware that children need to grow up well, but people tend to think we should just use intuitive and traditional models, often, when we are raising children, so it is hard to encourage people away from practices that have become common within a particular locality, area or country. So, for example, we do see change, and often people are responsive to evidence. I would say that I am an optimist, and I think that is becoming more common, but if we take the example of taking on board the evidence of the harmful effects of smoking, we know that that has taken a long time to become something that the community owns and to be institutionalised.

There are other harmful practices that children are exposed to that take us a long time to recognise perhaps in science, but when we do recognise them in science it often takes a while before communities adopt them. Part of the problem for prevention is that it is just the changes that are occurring. Prevention is about championing more evidence-based things. One example is parents giving alcohol to children. The evidence has now strengthened. It is really probably the last five years that it has become really strong, but over the last decade it has been growing, that that is not helping and that it is actually leading to more binge drinking. There were probably parents 10 years ago who were doing that with the assumption that it would moderate their children's alcohol use.

The practice of giving alcohol to children is continuing, and as we talk I am sure there are lots of homes where that is going on, where parents are trying to encourage moderate alcohol intake by using the European model. It will take a long time for them to actually learn about the change. Then there will need to be education programs run, and slowly but surely that risk factor can be reduced. One of the problems with prevention is that it is a developing language.

Mr SCHEFFER — You are an optimist. Full marks to you. I am an optimist too, I hope. That is a matter that I have been interested in. There was a television program on SBS last night that you might have seen that was about climate change and why there is such a refusal to embrace it given the overwhelming scientific consensus.

Assoc. Prof. TOUMBOUROU — That is right.

Mr SCHEFFER — The point of the program was not so much about climate change but exactly the matter you are raising about how you translate what the scientific consensus and evidence points to into a social domain where people are prepared to embrace it. Being in politics I would argue that a problem is that there are a whole lot of counter agendas run against this kind of evidence. Where the program ended up and where I agree with it is that the scientific community, people like you, need to really step up, without entering into a political space, and enter into a better way of communicating the importance of evidence. Is that what this is part of?

Assoc. Prof. TOUMBOUROU — That is right. That is probably a very good way to put where we are coming from. Obviously the champions for this program have been a lot of academics and practitioners at the Royal Children's Hospital who have asked, 'How can we translate the evidence for prevention science so that people in the community can become advocates for it?'. It involves a lot of training and translation work that is done in the program to try to have a committee that actually gets the idea of wanting to be at the cutting edge of doing prevention science. They can also be critical consumers of what a lot of people in the community are doing.

For example, one of the things we are currently looking at is what happens in the communities. In addition to thinking about the programs that can be obtained from Communities that Care that have good evidence that they will be beneficial for children, it is also important to be aware that a lot of what is currently running in the communities has come from the best possible motives, but people are running things that are not effective. That applies to something that has emerged very strongly over the last decade in adolescent health: there has been a tendency to try to group children who have problems, and those programs have actually been unhelpful. They are actually causing harm. But they had been run with great enthusiasm in schools. Police take the risky children off if they have been showing signs of antisocial behaviour or have taken some risk-taking course.

Mr SCHEFFER — You mean like Newstart?

Assoc. Prof. TOUMBOUROU — Yes, that type of thing. The trouble with those programs is they build relationships between children with problems. We know that having peers with problems is a risk factor for going on to have worse problems. Now we are saying, 'Don't do it that way. Take on board the prevention science approach and carefully study the new evidence'. We do find that the communities we are working with are very enthusiastic to know what is at the cutting edge. As I say, we are having success in building new coalitions with communities that are saying, 'We only want to do what is evidence based'.

Communities that Care is about helping to form a coalition at a local level that actually wants to implement more evidence-based approaches and to advocate for change where they have identified that a program might not be doing what it is supposed to do, and about monitoring reports that identify that youth are experiencing an improvement in their social environments over time. The missing link, which we would really like to see, is this being understood and recognised from an economic costing analysis so that it could fit in somehow with state funding mechanisms and become part of the way business is done. So that is one of the messages. If there are still doubts about the effectiveness in Australia, we are hoping there will also be support for the national trial that we are just starting up.

The CHAIR — Shaun or Tim, do you want to ask a question?

Mr LEANE — I was going to put John on the spot. I think he has actually answered the question I was going to ask. Considering that what you have just been saying about locally based approaches for crime prevention is very relevant to what we are actually looking at, to help us to do our work — or do it for us — what would be one of your key recommendations that you think we should be putting in this report?

Assoc. Prof. TOUMBOUROU — I think we need to work together to build the evidence base. It is okay for me to come in as a champion of Communities that Care, but I actually want to come in also wearing my academic hat and to say, ‘Let’s work together to evaluate this’. There are 12 sites that are running the Communities that Care program and we have nine randomised sites in Victoria. What I would like to do is ask that there be a recommendation for a partnership with our study so that we can conduct it at the level of world’s best practice so that it can be evaluated. That would also involve working with three other states if this report were to champion the idea of supporting this type of a study.

I am not saying let us just put it off for years and just study. Actually what we are suggesting is: let us do this as a randomised trial. Let us get state Treasury people involved to say, ‘What economic measures should this program be addressing if it were to be really proven?’. Then, if everyone is happy with the results, let us work together on the next phase, which would be: let us get this implemented as common business and practice. We might be wrong, and I might be over-advocating for something that looks promising but there may be reasons why other things are more important, but I would like to know that as much as any of us would. I am thinking that if we did this for three years as a good test, at the end of that time, if the results were very promising, we should work together to try to implement it much more widely. My key recommendation is to ask for that support.

That might seem to be just an academic talking, except that it is rolling at the moment. A trial means that you have to actually do the work at those sites that have been randomly selected, but we have control sites and we are suggesting that we do not do the program in those. We are not announcing to those which the controls are, but we do need support to have good prevention programs running. I think it is a really great opportunity for this committee to make a big difference to crime prevention, injury prevention and safer communities. I think the thing that has been missing in Australia is this type of really good science. We have started it, but we do not have the funds to necessarily finish it to the standard that it needs. We need partners.

Mr SCHEFFER — I have two things. One is that you said pulling young kids who are at risk into groupings together may not have the positive outcomes that the operators of those activities think they will have, even though, from what they tell us, they do report very positive outcomes. We did not interrogate those, but that is what they say. There is an implication there about schooling too, isn’t there — about selective intake schools, for example?

Assoc. Prof. TOUMBOUROU — That is right; there is.

Mr SCHEFFER — Have you done any work on that?

Assoc. Prof. TOUMBOUROU — What we are trying to achieve with our community work is the idea, ‘Let’s all take ownership’. One of the things that I say about Victoria, and it is happening internationally, is that we are seeing in those schools and communities that are unattractive, if you like, for various reasons a big divide develop between those families that have the means and do not want their children going to those schools — they can move out of those communities — and the people who have fallen on

hard times or for whom, for whatever reason, there is a family breakdown. There may be a whole lot of reasons, but they are forced to stay there. You end up with big community differences. For example, Mornington has two local area groups that are in very disadvantaged places, yet overall the Mornington Peninsula also has some areas that have quite wealthy people and expensive homes. It is an example of a community that has potentially a resource and some disadvantaged people.

A whole-of-community approach can actually do things to try to break down some of those divides, and I think that is healthy for us. We need to try to encourage the idea that if you are in a school and are an attentive student and doing pretty well, you are actually going to do better if you are asked to do a bit of tutoring, have a buddy or do some mentoring than you would if you were not tapped on the shoulder to do that, because it can build your responsibility, your maturity and also your sense of being a part of something. That can have an effect on reducing your sense that you need to go and use alcohol or your getting depressed because you think you do not have any purpose. Those types of programs and building those types of relationships are what we are really strongly emphasising.

Mr SCHEFFER — The last thing I want to mention is that when the Victorian Safe Communities Network came in earlier today they mentioned that you are working on something called — —

Assoc. Prof. TOUMBOUROU — The Australian Temperament Project.

Mr SCHEFFER — Yes. In 30 seconds can you tell us about that?

Assoc. Prof. TOUMBOUROU — I said to you at the beginning that a lot of what we do is based on longitudinal studies. The Australian Temperament Project was one of the first longitudinal studies run. It started in 1983 as 2500 infants at four months old chosen from across Victoria. I did not start the study, but I was lucky to be tapped on the shoulder to get involved later on. We still have the study going with partners, but it is an excellent database for talking about the sorts of things we are talking about. What is the effect of infant adjustment by the time you reach your mid-20s on your alcohol consumption, your violence and other things? We can study it using this. We have done a lot of work on road safety and crime prevention from that report, and we have published a number of findings.

Mr SCHEFFER — It is sort of a non-punitive model, is it?

Assoc. Prof. TOUMBOUROU — No, it is a study, not a model. It is an investigation, a longitudinal study, that follows a panel of children over time. Because it is a statewide sample, for the children who get involved with crime we have a very good lens there to ask, ‘What were the influences on the children who got involved in crime in Victoria through their life?’. We can talk about the effect of families, schools and early temperament. Also then you can use that information to say, for example, ‘We learned from that study that the major influences were at early primary school and early secondary and were to do with school adjustment and families’, and that helped us to understand what sorts of prevention we should be advocating for. That is how it fits with what I have been talking about today.

The CHAIR — We are nearly out of time. I do have one question about the mobilisation strategies that involve communities. Apart from the parents being involved at the school level, what other areas of community mobilisation are there and what parts of the community are mobilised with those sorts of strategies?

Assoc. Prof. TOUMBOUROU — Mobilisation refers to people working together on a common plan. Obviously we want to have local government involved. We ask for regional heads of government departments to be on the committees and for school principals to come together. The thing that makes it mobilisation is that it is bigger than just the families and the parents. You actually have the citizens, and also we have a youth wing to these things, and they are all trying to work together on a common plan. The plan, and what they are actually doing, is that they have all read and have hopefully been to some of the training, so they understand what we are saying about the idea that we need to be doing evidence-based prevention and not just be champions for things we feel good hearted about. That is the sort of new message coming from this particular program.

The CHAIR — So the involvement is local councils, school principals and school leaders. What other parts of the community?

Assoc. Prof. TOUMBOUROU — The community health services sit on the boards. I will talk about Mornington because it is probably easier to talk about specific examples. At Mornington the police are there on those boards. One of the regional heads of health is sitting on the board there as well. Then they have Rotary groups, and church groups are often there as well. It is that type of very broad coalition.

The CHAIR — John, we are out of time, so thank you very much for presenting evidence to us today. It has been very interesting.

Assoc. Prof. TOUMBOUROU — Thank you very much. I want to honour the work that you all do and say thank you very much for your service. This is a very important topic, so I was very pleased to be called in. I hope that you end up with a report that is a bit more informed by the work we are doing, so thank you for the opportunity.

The CHAIR — Thank you.

Witness withdrew.

DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

**Inquiry into Locally Based Approaches to Community Safety and Crime
Prevention**

Melbourne — 10 August 2011

Members

Mr B. Battin	Mr S. Ramsay
Mr S. Leane	Mr J. Scheffer
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Witnesses

Mr J. Pocock, Director, Public Policy and Practice Development, and
Mr D. Hall, Senior Manager, Safe and Caring Communities, Berry Street.

The CHAIR — Welcome, Julian and David, to the joint parliamentary Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee. Before you provide evidence to this committee I have to read out some conditions surrounding the evidence. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975 and further subject to the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, the Defamation Act 2005 and, where applicable, the provisions of reciprocal legislation in other Australian states and territories. Any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. I understand you might have received the guide for witnesses presenting evidence to parliamentary committees. I note a nodding of heads.

Mr POCOCK — Yes. I did receive that, and I have had an opportunity to read it.

The CHAIR — We are recording the evidence and will provide a proof version of the *Hansard* transcript at the earliest opportunity so you can correct it as appropriate. If it sounds like I have read this too many times today, you are right. I think there should be a button to push for a recording when we have this many hearings. Thank you for your time and for coming here today to look at our first reference, with which you may be familiar — that is, the inquiry into locally based approaches for community safety and crime prevention. Over to you. We have allowed until 3 o'clock for this session. We like to ask questions and some of us like to ask more questions than others.

Mr POCOCK — I might just kick off with a little bit of background information about Berry Street to give you the broader context of how this work sits within Berry Street, then I will hand over to David, who has been the person who has really worked on the ground to create the project and do the work at the local level.

In terms of how it sits more broadly within Berry Street, and I am assuming that members of the committee will have at least some knowledge of Berry Street and our work, and that the agency started around — you probably would not exactly when we started; I would not expect that of you — —

Mr SCHEFFER — It was in 1877. We have good notes.

Mr POCOCK — It was 1877.

The CHAIR — We have a very good executive officer, who has provided us with very good briefing papers.

Mr POCOCK — Well done. The organisation has a background in and a core focus on child welfare and child-protection issues. It works around the safety of children and young people where children and young people have been exposed to neglect, violence or abuse. That is really the core reason Berry Street came into being. Over time the organisation has expanded and developed a range of programs which try to respond to the fact that what we know is that if children are not well supported and cared for, and if they do not experience high quality interactions with caring adults when they are young and when they are infants, then it can set them up for a trajectory that includes violence, crime and social exclusion, and not making a successful transition to adulthood.

Seeing that, and working with the children and young people who have experienced that, the organisation wherever it can tries to bolster its program base with other activities and services that try to address the life course consequences of child abuse and neglect. So in some contexts that means that we are operating as a registered training organisation and providing employment and training programs to young people. In other contexts it means that we are providing the open place service, which is for the Victorians who are forgotten

Australians, who grew up in institutional care and who later in life need particular support to be able to manage their lives at the stage they are at.

More broadly, and particularly in our Hume region — by Hume I mean regional Hume and not the city of Hume — the agency has a strong focus on community development and seeing children and young people in their local community context and trying to respond to the needs that come to us from communities to work more broadly with children and young people. In the Murrindindi shire a number of years ago there were concerns across the community at the level of antisocial, unsafe and at times violent behaviour that people were seeing within the community — I will let David talk about that in detail in a moment — and the trigger point was around bullying in schools. David was one of a number of people who led a community-wide response to that.

Mr HALL — To give you probably a little bit more context, the program in Murrindindi started 10 years ago. We are funded by a private benefactor to the tune of nearly \$750 000 a year, and we have been able to develop that program as an innovations hub. Prior to getting this project under way we identified an issue with children not being school ready starting prep, and we developed what is called the Early Learning is Fun, or ELF, program, which is a birth-to-school-literacy-and-attachment program. The ELF program has now gone statewide.

We also developed a year 10 Pathways program in conjunction with a secondary college. Once again we were identifying that kids were dropping out of school at the end of year 10, the end of compulsory schooling at that stage, and the incidence of drugs and alcohol and other antisocial behaviour was quite high. So the Pathways program was developed to ensure that every young person had study, employment or training as a viable option at the end of their year 10. That program has since gone into the Yea, Euroa and Shepparton schools.

The Safe and Caring Communities project came about, as Julian mentioned, because we identified that there was a high level of antisocial behaviour — not that Alexandra and that community was any different to any other rural community; I think it was very typical of rural communities. The level of respect and responsibility was not what we would have felt was appropriate. This project came about following a visit to me by the local school principal, who said that he had been approached by the local shire council. There had been a complaint about bullying at the secondary college, and his attitude at that time was, ‘Why are they sticking their nose in my business? The school is school business’. I said to him, ‘Since when has bullying been the province of schools? Isn’t it something that belongs to the whole of the community?’. I think the light bulb went on. We subsequently met with the mayor and one of the shire councillors and the opportunity I saw was that we had the taking up of a particular issue by our local shire council and our secondary college.

The concept was then taken to the police and community consultative committee. Those committees were heavily promoted by Christine Nixon at the time and the local sergeants felt a responsibility to have them; they were not always that keen on having to go there every month and run these things. This concept was put to them. We said, ‘Here is an opportunity to really expand what that committee is about. It is an opportunity to take on a new role. We do not have to form a new committee; there is already something happening’. That immediately gave us the input of the local police, all the other schools and a range of other partners.

We then said, ‘How do we move that into something bigger?’, and a number of issues were identified. The first one was: how do we look at what was happening at the school

and what can be done there. We looked at a range of different programs that were out there and eventually arrived at the Tribes program, which is an American program based on developing respect and responsibility in young people. We said that it was not just a matter of starting in the secondary college; we needed to go right back to primary. If we are going to change the culture of this community, we have to be starting at the point at which kids start school, then they have those principles embedded from day one through to year 12.

We were fortunate that the wellbeing officer of the local regional education department was au fait with the Tribes program and so was very supportive of us starting it. We were able to get permission from the region for four pupil-free days over and above the normal pupil-free days to train all the staff for the whole of the Cathedral cluster, plus the ancillary staff plus a range of other community members in the Tribes program. It was unprecedented in the history of education in Victoria to have a whole cluster of staff look at any sort of wellbeing training. The impact has been quite significant. The evidence from the schools has shown a decline in bullying and a decline in general antisocial behaviours within the schools. It has now been operating for five years within the schools, so we are getting a movement through from primary to secondary and a real uptake of those values.

The CHAIR — I do not normally interrupt, but I need to be clear because we have heard a lot about early — prep, kinder — intervention, whether it has been in wellbeing, law and order or respect. That tends to personalise the child right through from thereon in. Is it the teacher? Do you remember that they used to have policemen come into schools and go through the respect, law and order, values et cetera? You are talking about training teachers to provide that sort of wellbeing as part of that character building of young students. Is that where you see it at the end? I guess we are looking for a point for making recommendations to Parliament, if we were say that it is clearly demonstrated to us that from an intervention point of view there need to be teachers who are purposely trained to provide that wellbeing at a very early age; it then actually has an influence of reducing crime and antisocial behaviour down the track.

Mr HALL — We need to take it a step further than that. It is about the whole community taking responsibility. One of the essential parts of this particular program is that we then looked at how we could be imparting these same values outside the schools, in particular at sports clubs. We have had a particular issue in that community between the Thornton-Eildon football club and the Alexandra Football Club, which on most Saturday nights ended up in brawls up and down the main street of Alexandra. We introduced the Safe and Caring Communities Derby. Once a year when those teams played they played for the mayor's cup, with medallions awarded by the opposing team to the other team for the fairest and best, so the opposing teams had to stop and really think about the fairest and best. We took that a step further and involved a range of other community services and supports. There were show bags developed about respect and responsibility. Certainly with rural football, where everybody sits in their cars, the show bag is the ideal way of getting whole lots of community messages across.

We also looked at the work environment and developed a committee there. We worked very closely with WorkSafe. They came and presented. We had three breakfasts that they put on in the community — once again, specifically looking at the violence, bullying and those sorts of issues in the workplace. The local shire had just produced its own antibullying policy. The guidelines for that were then provided to all other employers in the community, so that they once again would think about and put in place their own antibullying, antiviolence sorts of programs.

The Tribes values we are feeding back into the home. Fridge magnets with the Tribes values have gone out to every family in the whole of the community, so that we are promoting the concept in the family. Once again, you do not confine these sorts of things to school or wherever; it has to permeate right through the whole of the community.

Mr McCURDY — Have you been able to evaluate whether those types of activities are successful?

Mr HALL — Yes. We have had Ballarat University do some evaluation of the Tribes program in the schools and its movement out, and it is showing absolutely excellent results.

We then looked at how to establish a code of behaviour or a statement by a community about how they felt the community should operate, so we developed an action research project and trained 12 facilitators. We have worked through a whole lot of community groups and things in terms of the community coming back with some statements about how they believe the community should respect and be responsible.

We also worked with the Department of Justice and we have had 12 mediators trained in the community. Now we have more mediators per head of population than any other area in the state. It has meant that the concept of alternative dispute resolution is now becoming embedded as part of the thinking of the community. You do not immediately go into adversarial relationships; you look at how else you can mediate issues and solve problems. We have tried to take that whole umbrella and say, 'If we're really to have a community that we want to live in and raise our children in, then we've got to be able to impact on every part of that community in order to make that community a safer and stronger community'.

It has been made all the more difficult with us with the fires. Our community has been totally and utterly dislocated from end to end. This particular project has been able to maintain a constant through that whole period of dislocation. We worked very hard to make sure that this committee kept meeting, although it was very difficult for them to do so, in order that we have a constant for the community and help to be able to move back to a state of recovery.

The program has been picked up by four other communities at various levels, none of them to the extent that it operates in our community. Mansfield, Rutherglen, Myrtleford and Kyabram have all had presentations from us and have picked up this method of operating and the holistic view of community and once again are reporting some very good results.

It has not been expensive in the longer term. For the first five years of operation it was operated with 0.3 of a project worker, so 1 1/2 days a week, to be able to really get this up and happening and working in our community. It is a matter of identifying community champions and of pulling in as many people from the community as possible. One of the things we did was from the original committee of 12 people we then got the range of subcommittees, and each of those subcommittees has approximately 10 people on it. We have seven subcommittees, and that then involves another 70 people. You go from your core group and then you are involving 70 more people. For a community the size of ours that is a huge input and a huge number of people involved, all selling the same message to their community.

Mr LEANE — What would be the size of the population that you are working with?

Mr HALL — The total population of Murrindindi is about 14 500, and we are looking at about 7250 in the eastern corridor of the shire of Murrindindi, so it is a huge local take-up and input.

The CHAIR — It is fairly rural, is it not, and a fairly close community shire, I would have thought?

Mr HALL — You have your main township of Alexandra. You then have Eildon and Marysville as your next biggest population areas. Then you have Thornton, Taggerty, Buxton, Narbethong, Yarck and Merton as smaller areas dotted around. You are looking at around 35 minutes travel from end to end of the shire. The fortunate thing is that we have only one secondary school, so all the primary schools feed to that one secondary school. In order to establish an innovative program you have a nicely encapsulated environment to be able to really demonstrate the efficacy of a particular program.

The CHAIR — I make note of that, because we had Macedon here yesterday, I think, and they had a very good close community safety program that was very successful by its nature, because it was basically a rural and local government thing.

Mr HALL — Julian and I were talking before coming in, and he put the question to me as to how I would see this sort of project operating in a more urban area. Prior to working with Berry Street I worked with OzChild doing intensive family preservation from Port Melbourne through to Seaford. I could identify various communities in that stretch around the bay where this sort of project could be put in place. You would never have the capacity to really demonstrate efficacy to the same extent because you have so many different schools and so many different contexts that it would only be in the absolute broadest terms of crime figures that you would be able to identify that sort of change, as opposed to a rural community where you would be able to identify the cultural change much more easily.

Mr SCHEFFER — I am going to be a little bit provocative with what I am asking. You say in your submission that the community identified the issue and it identified bullying. We have just heard Professor Toumbourou here — I do not know how much of his presentation you heard — talking about the importance of the evidence base. If you have a small community of about 7000 people, it may well be — I am just proposing this for your response — that the safest issue for them is to identify the kids, avoid family violence, avoid traffic infringements, avoid gambling, avoid the adult problems, put the focus on the kids and then get everyone working on that. In your methodology how do you test the issue that they collectively identify in a way that gets them to match that against some other measures?

Mr HALL — Opportunism. In terms of community development you need an opportunity for something to come up. I had identified that there was a need for something. Under-age drinking was a possibility, but it had not stood out.

Mr SCHEFFER — And over-age drinking.

Mr HALL — Yes. But it was not something that was immediately going to mobilise people. Graffiti was not a problem in the community. But when the bullying came up, that was one thing that everyone could identify with as a starting point. We have since moved: we now have an under-age drinking subcommittee. All areas of community safety now fit under the umbrella. In terms of mobilising the community, it was about getting an issue, and it was whatever. If there had been a car accident and some young people had been killed, we would have started with that. It is really about seeing what is

going to mobilise a community at that particular time and working out how to use that opportunity to then expand and further develop it.

Mr SCHEFFER — I thought you might say that; that is good. Did you at any point in this process match people's perceptions of themselves as a community and what data was telling them, because often that can be very transforming, can it not?

Mr HALL — It can. Certainly that was used through the action research project. We used crime data and the community indicators from the McCaughey centre, and we used some of that information to put to people what the evidence was and what their perception was.

Mr SCHEFFER — And were they different?

Mr HALL — In many cases, yes. Part of this project is also about community education. It is about helping people to really understand where they are at and how people are feeling.

Mr SCHEFFER — Thank you. That is very useful.

Mr POCOCK — The other thing I would say about the evidence base is that at Berry Street we prefer to talk about evidence-informed practice, because at times the evidence base does have significant holes in it. But in our view the way that the evidence informs this work is that it is critically important to start where the community is at, and there is good evidence for that, rather than having it imposed from the outside that this is the particular manifestation of antisocial behaviour that a community has to specifically address. That would be one thing.

Mr SCHEFFER — I was not proposing that as a dichotomy.

Mr POCOCK — I know. Secondly, there is good evidence to suggest it is critically important, given that children and young people learn their behaviours through their relationships, that there is a consistency of message and expectation in all of the different relationships that children and young people have: the relationships they have in the home, at school, at the sporting club and with the police. That is why this particular project has taken the view that an issue like bullying cannot be seen as just belonging to or being resolvable within a school context. It is important that children and young people in that community get a consistency of message in the home and in all the contexts in which they are operating.

It is particularly important, we would say, for vulnerable young people, who are often those young people who are not well engaged at school. We need to make sure that in our approach to community-based crime prevention we have a broader platform of intervention than the school system, because the reality is that still a very significant proportion of young people do not complete year 12, are not at school in those later years and are often disengaged along the way. We need our messages to be in the other places where those young people are, and often that is not at school.

Mr HALL — I will outline one of the other things that was behind my thinking. I grew up in rural Victoria. Back in those days you knew everybody in your community and there was an interaction. If you went out and did the wrong thing, someone would see you and that would be reported back to your parents or whatever. Your relationship with your police and schools was much closer. What I saw when I went back to the Alexandra community was that it was all siloed: you sent your kids to school and the schools were responsible for what the schools had to do, and you sent your kids to the sporting club or

whatever. What we have done in this project is to bring all of those things back together and say that we all have a joint responsibility. If we see someone doing the wrong thing down the street, it is not something that we just ignore; it is something we have a responsibility to deal with so that those sorts of behaviours are stopped before they become total antisocial behaviours.

That concept of bringing a community together and having a shared responsibility is one that has permeated this whole project, and that is one of the significant differences, I think. You cannot legislate for cultural change, but you can create cultural change by working with people from the bottom up.

The CHAIR — So the bullying is probably an easy one to measure. Has there been some success in that?

Mr HALL — Yes. We have strong evidence to demonstrate that the amount of bullying, certainly within the schools, has been reduced significantly.

Mr McCURDY — It has gone onto Facebook now.

Mr HALL — That is our next issue, and we are just starting to really tackle the cyberbullying. That is a whole new area to be worked on and investigated. It will be a jolly difficult one. We have evidence from the police that the amount of under-age drinking has reduced significantly. All right, that equally ties in with the alcopops legislation and those sorts of things, but in rural communities such as we are living in drinking is very strong in the culture, especially at the sporting clubs. The sporting clubs have all introduced programs to reduce the reliance on alcohol as a part of their club culture.

There is a whole range of these things all tying in together and making a significant difference. We have a family and relationships subcommittee, which has been working on the issues of family violence. The police are working much more closely on those issues. We have been able to introduce a lot more resources to the community. One of the unfortunate things about a rural community is that the access to funded services is very limited. Our family violence worker for that area comes across from Broadford, so you are looking at nearly an hour and a half travel to get a worker into the area. This project saw that worker based in the area two days a week every week. Once again, just by mobilising the community, getting them talking and increasing the awareness also saw the further support by other services to an area that would otherwise have been seen as a backwater and would not have received the supports that the community deserved.

Mr SCHEFFER — So is the main impediment to local success that there is insufficient resourcing? Is that a fair drawing out of what you said?

Mr HALL — Yes. In terms of the take-up by other communities, insufficient resourcing is the issue, especially in the first two years. We have now gone to a full-time person, but that was in order to get this project written up and also to start the work with some of the other communities in order for them to be able to develop similar programs based on similar principles. As I said, they do not have to start with bullying; it should be about what is unique to their community at that time, and then you build your umbrella from it.

Mr SCHEFFER — If you were given money, could you do a cost benefit of the effect of this project showing whether and to what extent there has been a reduction in crime? That is a question: you do not have the resources to do that?

Mr HALL — We do not have the resources to do it. If we had the resources, yes, we could clearly demonstrate the efficacy. As I said, the biggest impediment that we have is that we have had the fires, which have diluted and changed what would have been a very nice longitudinal study otherwise. That has had a significant impact in terms of dislocation. The movement of people out of the Marysville triangle area into Alexandra, Eildon and those sorts of areas, that whole total dislocation, has been significant, but the results would still come out, I am sure, demonstrating the efficacy of such a program.

Mr LEANE — I have just a couple of quick ones. When you initiated the project with the involvement of the police — and I am going to ask you a city slicker question: does Alexandra have a magistrates court or anything like that?

Mr HALL — No, they do not. The nearest Magistrates Court is at Mansfield or Ringwood.

Mr LEANE — I was going to ask you as well whether there was any role played by the judiciary.

Mr HALL — There has been. The Ringwood court covers an area through to the Marysville area, and then that Mansfield court covers the rest of the area. Both courts have provided funding and support to this project. The chief magistrate at Ringwood has actively participated in the project and has been a guest speaker for the committee. In both courts there have been reports of reduced numbers from our community.

Mr LEANE — And the initial contribution from the police when you were starting?

Mr HALL — I took the concept to the police and community consultative committee so that we would have it locked in from day one.

Mr LEANE — They were on board from — —

Mr HALL — They were on board from day one and do really see the whole efficacy of the program. They are about to appoint a new sergeant for Marysville. I have had two phone calls in the last week from prospective sergeants wanting to come and talk to us about our project because they have heard about it, recognise the efficacy and want to be able to be right up to speed with that.

Mr SCHEFFER — Earlier you talked about — I may have misinterpreted — a level of reluctance by local police because of police command's pressure. They have changed their attitude now?

Mr HALL — Yes, most definitely. They are very strong supporters — —

Mr SCHEFFER — So what happened at the beginning, and how did that change occur, as far as you know?

Mr HALL — They started to see the benefit. It made their job easier. Part of the program was breaking down the barriers between the police and the rest of the community. That has been extremely effective. The involvement of the police in the schools has increased significantly in a very positive manner.

Mr SCHEFFER — If we are thinking of expanding this, for example, would that have happened without leadership from police command? That is a judgement, I know.

Mr HALL — It is difficult to know. I think it is up to individual sergeants. The other thing that I did very early in the project was invite the local inspector to come over and be one of our guest speakers as well. It is a bit hard for local police not to be involved when you have their inspector there as your guest speaker. I was a little bit cheeky in some of the methodology, but it was about how we get that take-up in order that we get the ongoing support. Really it was a matter of getting those things happening, and it then grew its own legs, because people were then able to recognise the value that they were getting from it. No one wants another committee meeting in a rural town. There is a limited number of people who are on every committee, so you have to have a very good reason for people to come together if you are going to have another meeting of some sort, and you have to have value.

The CHAIR — Can I just ask whether the fires created any escalation in family disorder, if you like? I was actually at Murrindindi. When I was in another role I came up after the fires, and then I followed through with beyondblue with Jeff Kennett. Certainly there were some issues brought forward out of the fires. I am wondering whether we have moved on. It is at least 15 months or more since. How have families responded? Has there been a greater percentage of break-ups?

Mr HALL — There has been an increase in family breakdowns. One would have to say that they were relationships that were probably a bit tenuous before the fires, and the impact of the fires has just tipped them over the edge. In the first six months after the fires we certainly had young people acting out. We had the first graffitist at Alexandra. We had kids running amok in the local picture theatre. As an agency we were fortunate; we were able to get funding from the Darley group. Sheikh Mohammed funded two senior youth workers straight after the fires. The funding is for a period of three years, so it is going through to the end of 2012. We have been able to put that in place.

The other thing we put in place was a program in partnership with the Royal Children's Hospital: the Festival for Healthy Living program, which brings artists and health professionals together into the schools. Our particular patch, we believe, has been serviced better than any of the other fire areas because we were there, because we were operating a community development program and because we were very proactive in terms of how we got out and provided support in our community.

The CHAIR — We are nearly at the end of time, and our next guests are waiting. Unless there is some other issue or there are other comments you would like to make, we will conclude at this point.

Mr POCOCK — Probably just in terms of when you are framing your recommendations — we touched on the question of evaluation, and it is heartening to hear that across the committee you are obviously looking for good evidence of what works — it would certainly be useful from Berry Street's perspective if government took the view when it was funding things of insisting on evaluation, because at the moment it is quite the opposite. Most of our programs funded by the state government actually exclude us from using any of those funds for evaluation. Our board has made a very strong commitment to evaluation, and we are of a size where we can attract independent income. We have an evaluation fund of our own independent income, which we invest in evaluating different programs because we want to know that what we are doing is actually working, but it would be very useful if, in government putting any funding into programs for community-based crime prevention, a proportion of those funds had to be used for proper independent evaluation.

Mr SCHEFFER — When you put in a proposal do you have to have an evaluation as part of your proposal? Is it just not funded, or do you not have to have one at all?

Mr POCOCK — With most of our state government funding, if we put in a funding proposal, it has to exclude evaluation. If we put evaluation in — —

The CHAIR — In the funding, though?

Mr POCOCK — We can fund it ourselves. We can go off and — —

Mr SCHEFFER — Yes, but what I mean is: does whichever department you are dealing with insist as part of the project brief that there is an evaluation approach in it?

Mr POCOCK — No.

Mr SCHEFFER — So it does not need any criteria of success at all? Really?

Mr POCOCK — They will ask you things around the methodology of your service delivery and ask you to indicate how your service delivery is evidence informed or evidence based, but in terms of when you actually put a budget in and what you are going to spend the dollars on, evaluation will be excluded. You cannot spend money — —

Mr SCHEFFER — But it would have deliverables there, though, or else you would not get the dough.

Mr POCOCK — Yes, you would have deliverables there.

Mr SCHEFFER — Right, so isn't then the next step after the deliverables how you are going to work out whether you have delivered them successfully, which is evaluation?

Mr POCOCK — Most deliverables — —

Mr HALL — Outcome expectations are not necessarily based on the efficacy of the result. They are more often based on the numbers you are putting through.

Mr POCOCK — Yes. So you might be running a program which has got group sessional work, so the deliverables will be the number of group sessions. You deliver on how many people have been through, not whether it has actually changed anything. That would be a really useful approach to take in this area — that a proportion of the funds is to be spent on proper evaluation. I think that is in everyone's interest.

Mr SCHEFFER — It has been a long time since I was on your side of these things, but how long has this been happening?

Mr POCOCK — I have only been with Berry Street for two years, and prior to that I worked with other agencies that were mostly commonwealth funded, but I think the commonwealth is probably much further ahead than the state in this regard. It is certainly not all the way there, but it is more common at the commonwealth level that you will be required to demonstrate that you will spend, say, 5 per cent of any allocated grant funds on some proper evaluation of what you are doing. At the state level it tends to be the opposite.

The CHAIR — Thank you both very much.

Mr HALL — Thank you.

Mr POCOCK — Thank you.

Witnesses withdrew.

DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

**Inquiry into Locally Based Approaches to Community Safety and Crime
Prevention**

Melbourne — 10 August 2011

Members

Mr B. Battin	Mr S. Ramsay
Mr S. Leane	Mr J. Scheffer
Mr T. McCurdy	

Chair: Mr S. Ramsay
Deputy Chair: Mr J. Scheffer

Staff

Assistant Clerk Committees: Ms A. Sargent
Research Officer: Mr P. Johnston
Committee Administrative Officer: Ms D. Woof

Witnesses

Cr A. Clarke, Mayor, and
Mr R. Goeman, Acting Manager, Community Planning and Advocacy, City of Yarra.

The CHAIR — Welcome, Cr Clarke and Ross, and thank you very much, both of you, for your time. I apologise for being a few minutes late, but hopefully you might have found that little bit of discussion interesting in the back. It is a totally different locality with totally different issues, I suspect — Murrindindi from Yarra. Anyway, we will talk about that. I am Simon Ramsay, chair of the joint parliamentary committee for drugs and crime. You are aware of the references we are doing — or one anyway, in relation to your submission, which is locally based approaches to community safety and crime prevention. We are also dealing with another reference concurrently as well in relation to security arrangements in emergency wards of hospitals in Victoria. Sometimes we cross over through our discussions, but I suspect you might just want to stick to the reference that you have submitted to. We have an apology from Brad Battin, who is working in his electorate.

Just before you start, I understand both of you will provide evidence to this committee, and on that basis I have to make you aware of certain conditions around the evidence that you are providing. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975 and is further subject to the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, the Defamation Act 2005 and, where applicable, the provisions of the reciprocal legislation of other Australian states and territories. Any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. I understand you have seen or sighted the guide for witnesses presenting evidence to parliamentary committees. We are recording the evidence and will provide a proof version of the Hansard transcript at the earliest opportunity so you can correct it as appropriate. Thank you again, and I invite you to make your verbal submission to us.

Cr CLARKE — Sure. I do not know if you need background on Yarra.

The CHAIR — We have some good briefing detail notes.

Cr CLARKE — We are just up the road, and we are amalgamated from the old cities of Richmond, Collingwood and Fitzroy. We have nearly 80 000 people — I think we will know more detail about that after last night — and we have been growing at 1.8 per cent per year. We have a lot of rental — about 50 per cent rental — a lot of transient population and a high concentration of rooming houses in one part, in Fitzroy, with very disadvantaged people, and also we have the highest number of high-rises, so there are pockets of disadvantage in the middle of an increasingly advantaged community.

The CHAIR — You cannot get rental in Yarra for hide nor hair. My son goes to Melbourne University, and he has been looking for two years.

Cr CLARKE — Yes. It is like 1 per cent of the rentals are affordable for someone on \$37 000 or something. Trying to get those two groups — the advantaged and disadvantaged — to get together is a tricky one. We have a lot of entertainment precincts — specifically, Swan Street is the one in my ward that I am most familiar with, but also the Fitzroy area — and we have a lot of alcohol-fuelled issues, both personal and property issues. Then of course we have the biggest open street market for heroin in Victoria, being Richmond, again in my ward. Those are the drug issues. We have a Yarra safety plan which looks at those issues — I do not know if you want a copy — and also other ones about safety of transport. We have a lot of vulnerable road users out there; cyclists are quite vulnerable on the roads. The disadvantaged communities are mentioned, along with domestic violence, of course, in the disadvantaged communities. Of course it happens across communities, but those are the focuses of our Safer Yarra plan.

I guess we should stick particularly to the alcohol and illicit drugs, or we could talk about safety more broadly; I do not know where your boundaries are.

The CHAIR — They are pretty flexible. Neighbourhood Watch is mentioned in our reference. I am not sure if there is one working or operating successfully in your area —

Cr CLARKE — No.

Mr GOEMAN — Not that I am aware of, no.

The CHAIR — or any other community safety programs that involve the community. It is community engagement programs that we are interested in. Interestingly you talk about illicit drugs and alcohol, because it seems to have been a theme right through all these public hearings. So obviously one of the issues we probably will have to deal with is reducing, I guess, the opportunity for people to access alcohol in certain areas and in certain conditions.

Cr CLARKE — That is a licensing issue.

The CHAIR — You might want to make comment on that. Yes, licensing, planning, environmental planning.

Cr CLARKE — Yes. Last night I actually went to a planning discussion with residents. The developer happens to be the Corner Hotel, which people may know is a very popular music venue. It wants to increase its numbers. It is expensive to employ musicians. It cannot really compete. The residents talk about having their car fenders kicked in, their windscreen wipers pulled off, people vomiting in their front yards and urinating, defecating and screaming in the streets — the whole spectrum of bad behaviour. They come back every time there is talk of more licences in Swan Street; they all come back and say, ‘Just give us a break!’. They were back again last night, so that is quite an issue. I would feel safer, for example, walking down Victoria Street than down Swan Street on a Saturday night, because the aggression that comes with alcohol there is more frightening I think than in Victoria Street, where it is much tamer, particularly since the drug dealing and using seems to be more a daytime phenomenon. I am digressing a bit.

Mr GOEMAN — I suppose one of the issues for us is the complexity of the underlying issues, trying to unpack them and then the extent to which there is data to really inform any interventions that we make. Certainly in the two sheets that we have provided to you, the more brightly coloured one, entitled ‘Syringe report’, is our attempt really to use a data source that is available around the needle and syringe collection services provided by council and for us by contractors as well as a range of community health centres and the Office of Housing on their estates, and being able to really use that data that has been brought together from seven different data sources to then collaborate to try to design services that better impact on a lot of the amenity issues that come from illicit drugs. That is quite a difficult thing to bring together. That is not something that those areas have previously reported on on a regular basis. I am not providing this map as something you can inherently and easily understand, but more to show you, I suppose, the creative way we have tried to get an evidence base to inform the sorts of work that we are doing.

Mr LEANE — I am glad you said that it is not easy to understand it. I was going to ask you about these figures with the different shades.

Mr GOEMAN — The four months that this data applies to are January to April. They have the numbers relative to those suburbs.

Mr McCURDY — It is actually relative to the size, is it not? Richmond is obviously a much bigger area.

Cr CLARKE — Yes, North Richmond particularly and South Abbotsford.

The CHAIR — They are not all diabetics, I presume.

Cr CLARKE — Some are but not all.

The CHAIR — So is it heroin that we are talking about?

Cr CLARKE — It is principally heroin. There are a few other drugs in the mix, I understand, but heroin is the big one.

The CHAIR — Do you have a view about providing facilities rather than it being on the streets?

Cr CLARKE — Council has a resolution. Before I was a councillor in 1999 — when there were 300-ish people per year dying from drug doses in Victoria and it was a focus of attention obviously, and the road toll and the drug toll were on the front of the *Herald Sun* — there was a resolution of the council that we did want to trial a supervised injecting room. More recently the traders actually raised the issue. They wanted to have CCTV in Victoria Street, so we were looking at evidence that embraced approaches to tackling the whole drug issue. For a couple of years we have been working closely with multiple agencies to try to minimise those harms. We were looking at the evidence base, and the thing that really stuck out was that there was a strong evidence base around reducing syringes, reducing public injecting, reducing overdoses and introducing people to treatment from the Sydney supervised injecting room. We looked at that fairly intensively and thought: if it works there, why would that not work here?

The percentage reductions of discarded drug paraphernalia are quite substantial. I do not know if you can remember all that data. One of the big issues for residents is the constant syringes in the laneways and associated prostitution. People are dropping, and people are asking what they are supposed to do. We had a family that was just going stir crazy. We finally closed the laneway. They came out one day with two of their little kids and someone was overdosing in the laneway. They called the ambulance. The ambulance told them to give this person mouth-to-mouth, and the person was covered in ulcers.

These kinds of situations make our residents crazy, really. The idea that that person could be in a more contained space — let me make it clear, this is not condoning, this is about containing — is very appealing to us and to residents. Even residents who have rung me up and said, ‘What are you, mad?’, once I have talked to them about the data from Sydney they ask why we cannot have one here. That is what we have to focus on — what works. What I like is not relevant, really. I do not like the idea any more than anyone else, but I reckon it would be better than what we have now.

Mr GOEMAN — Certainly one of the issues we face is that it is obviously a very dynamic environment, so the very high profile police operations tend to just displace activity. Whilst it tends to be concentrated around North Richmond and the high-rise estates and the surrounding streets around there, over the last two years the significant police operations just tended to shift that activity further out through Abbotsford and other parts of Richmond. One of the downsides to providing some relief for those residents in those areas is that it also means that we just get far more issues around discarded syringes

throughout a much broader area, further away from where we have the needle and syringe bins; that sort of thing. I suppose that is one of the other added complexities to the issue of illicit drugs.

Cr CLARKE — And while there is a fair bit of dealing and using on the high-rise estates, a lot of those people do not speak very good English and they are not assertive like the other university-educated people around about, so when the drug dealing and using shifts into low-rise neighbourhoods we really hear about it. It gives the other people a break, but it just makes me think that if they were more empowered and able to communicate with us, what else would we be hearing?

I mean we already hear, especially from the workers on the estate, about the kids who, instead of playing cops and robbers, are playing dealers and junkies and that kind of stuff. Some of the stories from those areas can be pretty in your face. People are trying to get money by knocking on doors, hassling other people or pinching someone's handbag; that kind of stuff. It is pretty stressful for everybody, although it is not really a crime against people so much as just trying to get money to put in their arms. They take anything that is not nailed down. I left my bicycle parked in a high-rise one night and came back to find the helmet and the seat gone; it was just stripped. You cannot leave anything out in the high-rise that could be saleable; it just gets stolen.

Mr SCHEFFER — So what do you think the City of Yarra and local government's role is? How do you understand community safety crime prevention from a local government point of view?

Cr CLARKE — We have a local safety committee that meets regularly. Ross is on it, and he can talk more about it. The Neighbourhood Justice Centre, which you may know about, is the only one of its type in the state. They have a good record. I think it came under a bit of examination recently, and the data was very strong, so it is ongoing. They initiated a thing called Taking Action Together, where a lot of agencies, including council, got together and talked about what we could do. We get no additional resources, there is not going to be any policy change, so what else can we do? As staff are inclined to do, they said, 'All right, we will do more with less', so they came up with a lot of new actions, and each group took them away. So we had some crime prevention through environmental design-type things. The neighbourhood house, the police and various agencies had things they were going to do. Some of those things have been done, and some of those things have not been able to be done. It was that business of working very closely together, trying to think of the solution and gradually moving in on the problem. If you take a big hammer and hit it, it just moves over there, so we are going to have to surround it and move in on it in a health and amenity way as well as a law and order way. That is, I guess, the approach that we have been taking.

Mr SCHEFFER — How does the municipality rate in the fear of crime data? It seems to me that you would have to say that the city of Yarra probably feels one of the safest places in the world, really, when you are there.

Mr GOEMAN — Absolutely. That is what the data that we have available suggests compared to metro Melbourne, which rates Yarra much higher. Even the inner city municipalities — Melbourne, Port Phillip, Stonnington and us — have a significantly high perception of safety at night, and during the day it is relatively the same but very high. On that second map I have given you, the green-coloured one, is some of the survey data we have collected from households, ostensibly around customer service issues, but —

Mr SCHEFFER — I can never read these things. What does this mean?

Mr GOEMAN — This particular question was about it is the perception of safety at night. It is on a scale of 0 to 10, the darker green colours being lower perceptions of safety and lighter green higher perception of safety. Again, essentially the concentrations tend to be around the high-rise public housing estates. People who feel more vulnerable, have less opportunities, less options and are less likely to be out and active in the community, especially at night, tend to be the ones who have the lower perception of safety.

The CHAIR — So the Abbotsford area is where people feel less safe?

Mr GOEMAN — It is quite mixed. There is certainly a concentration probably around where the high-rise estate is and some areas in there where there is low perception, but as you move further out there is a much higher perception. One of those tools that we have is a way of trying to evaluate the impact of a lot of work we do in improving that perception of safety.

Mr SCHEFFER — What do you do?

Mr GOEMAN — Certainly from a lot of the feedback that came through the Taking Action Together project and some of the other work — we have had consultations with residents in some of the surrounding streets in Abbotsford — at least half of the issues that came out were not particularly drug related. A large amount of them were just general amenity things about litter, parking and a whole collection of things that, for whatever reason, people never felt confident to ask council to do something about or to raise them. Addressing a lot of those things gets people back to, yes, there are a lot of concerns around illicit drugs, but by and large they do not impact on people's safety. They are confronting, they are unpleasant, but Victoria Street is an incredibly active, vibrant place at night and during the day.

It is similar around alcohol. A couple of years ago we introduced a local law banning the drinking of alcohol in the streets. We have done two evaluations of that particular local law. It is again very difficult to get data to really understand what the issues were before or have been since.

Mr SCHEFFER — Why is it hard?

Mr GOEMAN — There is basically very little collected. There is a minimal amount that the police would have around violent incidents that they attend, but other than that we do not have data around a lot of the issues that would come up around damage and vandalism. We might be able to get some that come to council, but a lot of it just would not be reported.

In the second evaluation we did of the local law we did a survey of 360 residents across the Yarra and asked them about the issue of alcohol in parks, shopping areas during the day and in entertainment precincts. Across all three, alcohol was a significant concern, but when we asked people about their perception of safety it certainly did not figure. As Cr Clarke raised, those amenity issues are the things that people really want to be relieved of. Going back to your question about council's role, that is certainly one that does firmly sit with us.

Cr CLARKE — One of the difficulties with the local law is that the police enforce it, and often the police have got other priorities, so you do still see people walking around in Yarra drinking. Certainly we have got the big footy crowds that swamp us after

a match at the MCG and go to all the Richmond pubs, and as they close they move through the residential streets and to other pubs or just drink in the street. I guess a lot of the traders in particular thought, 'This is going to fix it. There will be a law, and nobody will do it anymore'. And we were kind of going, 'Well, maybe it's not going to be quite like that', because of course a lot of the people drinking in the street are from somewhere else; they are not our residents. I keep having arguments with the Boroondara councillors. People come into our area and behave badly, and then they go home to their nice, quiet suburbs.

There has been an expectation that the law will somehow fix it, and I think people are starting to be a little more realistic about that now. I had a meeting with the Smith Street traders a couple of weeks ago. They had a particular issue because there was a group of Aboriginal people who were drinking in the street and sometimes hassling people and so forth. They were keen that this local law would stop them from doing that. It did for a little while, and now they are coming back. The issue of handling that group who have got multiple disadvantages. We have been trying to get them engaged in other programs rather than the deterrent effect, trying to get them into, for example, encouraging some of them to go and play golf on the golf course, and they have been doing that. We have been trying to address it in a more strength-based community development way rather than a law-and-order way, given their backgrounds.

The police sometimes ask them to pour their drinks out and move on, but they cannot be there all the time. As soon as they go away the problem comes back. The traders are coming to an understanding that you cannot just have a law and suddenly it is fixed. We are still going to have to do the strength-based community development stuff with these people, and it will be a long project. There is nothing simple in local government. We have got our heads around that pretty well by now.

Mr McCURDY — Is that getting worse, all of that sort of thing?

Cr CLARKE — I do not think so. When you know the people, there is just such a huge history involved. They have been taken from their families. You know the stories. If that had happened to me, then who could say what my life would be like? I guess we just need to be really careful that we do not compound that disadvantage and that we use measures that are going to work and not exacerbate the problem, because it could become a bit of a flashpoint.

Mr GOEMAN — But again with a lot of that daytime drinking and long-term addiction, for the community it can be confronting and challenging. They may feel uncomfortable about it and whatever, but largely there is no associated violence or other things. It is one of the challenges of an inner city environment. We have a lot of mental health services, a lot of people sleeping rough on the streets; there is a lot of that confronting behaviour.

Cr CLARKE — By and large our community is very tolerant of that. Members of the community do not want the area to become a place where everybody dresses the same, behaves the same and looks the same. We want to have a diverse community and welcome people with less advantages, but sometimes we rub up against each other. We are trying to make sure we are moving in on the problems without inflaming anything or compounding disadvantage.

Mr SCHEFFER — So with your local safety committee, you started off talking about how it is structured, but who are the partners in that and could you talk about some of the programs that are being coordinated by the committee?

Mr GOEMAN — The council and Victoria Police co-chair the local safety committee. They are the key players. We also have representatives from the regional Department of Health and the Office of Housing — there are officers from a couple of the housing estates. There are representatives from the Neighbourhood Justice Centre; two of the community health centres, who provide a lot of drug and alcohol services connections; and the Yarra Drug and Health Forum, which is probably a unique thing in Yarra that has been operating for almost 15 years now. That is a group that is facilitating a lot of discussion around the complexity of issues and looking at the different responses around the world, bringing in international speakers et cetera. There are also representatives from Youth Support and Advocacy Services and a range of other services that come together. Rather than focusing on groups that have issues, it is much more focused on the groups that have some ability to influence and impact on the issues.

Mr SCHEFFER — All of the organisations you just mentioned, do they come together regularly, the whole lot of them, or do you have subsets?

Mr GOEMAN — No, together.

Mr SCHEFFER — They all meet at a big forum?

Mr GOEMAN — The local safety committee meets every two months. This year we have moved through each meeting focusing on one of the priority areas in our Safer Yarra plan.

Mr SCHEFFER — Which is?

Mr GOEMAN — The five different areas that Alison mentioned at the beginning — domestic violence, alcohol, drugs et cetera. On Friday we had a meeting at the Neighbourhood Justice Centre, and that was focused particularly around domestic violence. We had a domestic violence advocate in attendance — someone who had been through the experience — and someone from one of the local women's health services. We used that meeting as a way of talking about the different ways the issue manifests for the different organisations. This is a huge issue for the community health centres and the drug and alcohol services, although that is not necessarily the way they have connected it. Certainly the Taking Action Together Project was very much driven by that group, the key organisations and that commitment to respond to things.

There has been some really good work between Victoria Police and the community health centres, particularly around a lot of those high-profile police operations. For a couple of those they had coordinated drug and alcohol workers at the Richmond police station during the operation to provide direct face-to-face referral services, which were apparently very successful. It certainly facilitated very good relationships. A year or a year and a half ago, perhaps two years ago, some work was done around the high-rise estates. There was the perception that young people were problematic or there was problematic behaviour in the estates. The local safety committee coordinated some researchers to go out and look at that, and they found that largely it was not an issue.

Mr LEANE — On that note, have you had a buy-in from the schools or the education department to that safety committee?

Mr GOEMAN — Probably not, given that the issues we focus on are probably not as directly relevant for them.

Mr LEANE — That is fair enough. I was just wondering.

Mr SCHEFFER — The sense I am getting from what you are saying is that you have a big influx of people during the day who come to work in the area or come to eat in the area.

Cr CLARKE — There are about 56 000 people.

Mr SCHEFFER — Then you have got the entertainment precincts all the way through operating in the evening and all of the issues that fall out of that, and then you have a residential base in there that clearly likes living in that community or they would not be there.

Cr CLARKE — And they do not expect to have a completely quiet life.

Mr SCHEFFER — Yes, otherwise they would move out to the suburbs. They want to be there in the scrum, but there are sort of tensions around the edges. What you are describing is what I remember from 10 or 15 years ago when I worked in the area. Are you telling us that this is life in the city of Yarra and you just move along but there is not going to be an end point to this? Like the illicit drugs, for example: are you saying that it is not really ever going to be solved?

Cr CLARKE — If we knew how to solve it, wouldn't we have done it by now?

Mr SCHEFFER — Is that a fair assessment?

Cr CLARKE — The laws about drugs have been very successful — 98 per cent of people do not try heroin. Most people get it. I do not know how you reduce that 2 per cent who do try heroin. Maybe it has reduced over time, but you are not going to get them to stop tomorrow. It is about reducing the impact of that behaviour on them and the impact on everybody else.

Mr GOEMAN — Particularly with heroin, it is a certain group of highly vulnerable people that is going to use heroin. That is probably a constant.

Cr CLARKE — There are people with mental health issues. Being a council candidate you get to talk to a lot of junkies when you are in Richmond. I just think that I am safer if I am talking to them than if I am standing there and I have a handbag and they do not know me. The stories they tell you about their lives just make you think, 'Oh!'.

Mr GOEMAN — This has been a problem for 15 or 20 years in Yarra, and the extent to which it has changed has been because of a far more high-profile police focus. The CBD has sort of pushed it into Yarra. So you see it in Richmond, but previously it was Smith Street and Fitzroy and Collingwood were more of a focus, and now it is Victoria Street in Richmond.

The CHAIR — The demographic is changing a bit, though, isn't it? I get the feeling that Richmond has become a slightly different demographic than it was 10 or 15 years ago. Because of the impact on the livability of those people coming into Richmond they might not be quite so tolerant as they were 10 years ago. So that 2 per cent is fine. They can do their thing, and if they want to kill themselves, I guess without any intervention they probably will, but the moment it starts impacting on the livability of those who have moved into Richmond it reaches a point of tolerance where they say 'Enough is enough' in relation to the vomiting, the appalling destruction of private property et cetera.

Mr GOEMAN — The alcohol definitely has much more of an impact over a much wider area.

The CHAIR — And that has almost been created by the council or others. You are creating an environment where there are bars, where there is food and where there is night-life and entertainment. People are drawn to Richmond for that very reason.

Cr CLARKE — We had a case a couple of years ago at VCAT involving the cumulative impact of liquor licensing. What you find in planning is you have to consider each application on its merits and you are not allowed to think about anything else around it, but then we won that case and it became a red dot decision. It was the Corner Hotel, and I feel slightly terrible because they are one of the better managed venues in the city, but we refused them an increase numbers. It was based on the idea that this is all very well but when you put them all together you have to say, ‘Sorry, we have a mess here, so we have to reduce the number’. Unfortunately that is something that we can only do over time. We are already above the level that VCAT recommended, and then there is a subsequent practice note under which we are above that level number of liquor licences in the area. How do you take someone’s liquor licence off them once they have got it? There is still some of that stuff. It is not a hard and fast rule, as in there are no hard and fast rules in planning, so we have to try to apply that rule to liquor licensing when it is also a state thing. It is going to be a tricky thing to wind those numbers back, but that is certainly the intention of council.

Mr McCURDY — So are you trying to claw those back, if you get the opportunity?

Cr CLARKE — Yes. We do not want to kill off our night-life, but it would be good to reduce the volumes of drinkers who come out of the hotels late at night, especially given that the door of one of the main hotels is 30.4 metres, and the rule in planning is 30, from these very elderly Greek women, who are frightened to go out at night. It is just a bit close to have a very big heaving entertainment precinct, so it would be good to wind it back and make it more about live music with less of a focus on the standing up and drinking kind of place. I do not know how to do that.

Mr GOEMAN — We need to distinguish them from most of those licences, which are for restaurants and cafes.

Cr CLARKE — The sitting down, having a meal and drinking is not such a problem as the standing up and drinking to get drunk.

Mr GOEMAN — And there are the very late-night venues — not even late night, I suppose, but early morning — that finish at 3.00 or 4.00 in the morning.

The CHAIR — What about the retail liquor outlets? Do the young tend to congregate around them and then sort of create the antisocial stuff that goes with it?

Cr CLARKE — Sometimes the footy crowds will go to the BWS place, buy their grog, go across the street, drink it and then go to the pub, because that is cheaper. They will load up and then go to the venue, where it is more expensive.

Mr GOEMAN — There is no real sense that that is a particular problem. Probably around Swan Street that is more of an issue, but generally on Bridge Road most of the bottle shops are very quiet.

Mr LEANE — Melbourne CBD has the pre-loading cheaper alcohol problem as well, which you might have in your nightclubs.

Cr CLARKE — We did have a bit of an issue with people bringing a slab in a car boot and having a party in the street, and that was part of what the local law was designed to address. Can I just take issue with your thing about just letting those people who go on heroin kill themselves, because I actually think — —

The CHAIR — I do not think I quite said that, so hopefully Hansard will tell us that I did not.

Cr CLARKE — Sorry to misquote you.

The CHAIR — I said, if they wanted to, there seems to be 2 per cent hell bent on life expectancy being particularly short.

Cr CLARKE — I think the data are that for people who go on drugs there is a period and an age group where, if they can get through and not kill themselves, then they can go on to be okay. I would like to get — —

The CHAIR — It was more about the impact on the livability of those people moving into Richmond. You said there is a 2 per cent section that are invariably drug users, and I asked how we deal with that group. I did not actually mean that I expect them all to kill themselves at some point in time; I was actually talking about the impact on livability for the other 98 per cent and asking how you deal with them. At that point probably the 2 per cent is impacting on the tolerance of the 98 per cent. It might be at a point where you have to deal with both.

Mr GOEMAN — There is probably a little bit of a difference. Drug activity is much more of a daytime thing and something that people would tend to see if they were out and about looking at houses and would read about et cetera. Alcohol is something that happens far more at night, and a relatively quiet apartment at 2 o'clock in the afternoon might be a very different experience at 10 o'clock at night when you can hear all of the noises.

The CHAIR — Notwithstanding all of that, please take issue. We are going to take issue.

Cr CLARKE — About the 2 per cent you do not just say, 'Well, bad luck, it's your responsibility only', because there are multiple reasons, including things like mental illness, family background and whatever, that get people to that point. If they could go somewhere where they could be helped out of that and get through it, then that would be a better outcome for all governments, so I would hate to think that we only care about 98 per cent of people. Also I should say that the visible drug users are pretty visible, but they are actually a tiny minority. If you stand around near a health centre that has a needle and syringe program, you will see 'tradies', lawyers and people dressed like all of us.

Mr LEANE — People in suits.

Cr CLARKE — Yes. They are not the visible users, I guess; the visible users are the skinny, yelling, no-teeth people, and there are not actually very many of them.

The CHAIR — Just in Collingwood!

Cr CLARKE — We are keen to work with the state government to try to help. Obviously a supervised injecting room we cannot do without state government cooperation, so I urge you to look at the data on those. I know it is a political hot potato, but in New South Wales all sides of politics have said, 'Okay, this is not a political football; this is a health measure', and that has really helped the people in that area — the

98 per cent of people in that area. The approval levels for that facility just go up with traders and with residents.

The CHAIR — Is that the only area? You have identified the supervised injecting rooms. What about liquor controls?

Cr CLARKE — We always have ‘we encourage’ and ‘we should’, but being able to have proper rules in our planning scheme, being able to say ‘must’ and having something mandatory in our scheme that would help to scale back some of those difficulties would be helpful, but liquor licensing is fairly complex. We need support for the kinds of things we are doing. Especially with heroin it has been very successful getting the number of people dying down from 300 to 60 or something now across the state. Being able to do those small things with environmental design, cooperation, programs, looking at the evidence base internationally and having enough resources to do those things is a key issue for us.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much, Alison and Ross, for your time.

Committee adjourned.

DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

**Inquiry into Locally Based Approaches to Community Safety and Crime
Prevention**

Sydney — 19 September 2011

Members

Mr S. Ramsay
Mr B. Battin
Mr S. Leane

Mr J. Scheffer
Mr T. McCurdy

Chair: Mr S. Ramsay
Deputy Chair: Mr J. Scheffer

Staff

Executive Officer: Ms S. Cook
Senior Research Officer: Mr P. Johnston

Witnesses

Mr B. Thomas, Assistant Director-General, Crime Prevention and Community
Programs; and

Dr T. Matruggio, Assistant Director, Crime Prevention Division, Department of Justice
and Attorney-General;

Assistant Commissioner C. York, Northern Region Commander, and

Supt Commander H. Begg, Operations Programs, Sydney, New South Wales Police
Service.

Mr SCHEFFER—Thank you for coming this morning. We appreciate your time is valuable. It is great that you could come along. We have about 45 minutes, I think. You have seen a copy of the terms of reference. We have received around 18 submissions so far and we have had a number of hearings, such as this, in Victoria, and in Geelong, one of our larger regional cities, and also in Western Australia. It is fair to say we have heard from researchers, we have heard from experts in crime prevention. We have heard from police, of course, in Victoria and Western Australia, and from local governments—regional and urban—and we have heard from a range of local community organisations. That is broadly who we have been talking to. We are particularly interested in speaking to you this morning.

We are due to report in the second half of next year, so starting from now on we are really winding up with our hearings. The last thing I need to remind you of—and I think Sandy has already drawn your attention to—is that this hearing is under parliamentary privilege and that has been a new agreement amongst the states. Anything you say here is covered by parliamentary privilege but obviously if they are contentious matters that you raise outside the confines of the hearing, they will not be protected in that way, and I am sure you are all familiar with that part of it.

We do have some questions, of course. Perhaps if we start throwing open to you, if you would like to talk about crime prevention strategies in New South Wales and how you have gone about it and where you are up to.

Mr THOMAS—I am happy to start. I can give a bit of a potted history.

Mr SCHEFFER—Yes, we will all be interested.

Mr THOMAS—New South Wales has been involved in crime prevention—community based crime prevention—since the mid-1990s in one form or another. In 1997, parliament passed legislation, the Children (Protection and Parental Responsibility) Act which established, broadly speaking, a framework for crime prevention in New South Wales. The model that New South Wales initially adopted was a model based very strongly on experiences in the UK. Over there they had a model very strongly based around local authorities; and local authorities becoming involved in developing specific local crime prevention plans. At the time we looked to the UK for lessons in how to do that here. There were a couple of challenges in doing that. The UK model of local government is quite different to ours. In the UK the focus was very strongly on local governments having some type of expenditure dealing with the consequence of crime, with managing offenders or dealing with other types of consequences of crime.

The idea was invest our funds in some preventative activities and also some funds in the back end in terms of management of crime. Our local government context in New South Wales is quite different to that, in our local government, the planning law, the criminal justice system, managing offenders with general social services We pursued that approach for a little while but since then and now our focus of local crime prevention activities and local crime prevention planning has shifted.

Mr SCHEFFER—Didn't New South Wales build those changes into your Local Government Act?

Mr THOMAS—No.

Mr SCHEFFER—These were programmatic changes.

Mr THOMAS—That is right. The Local Government Act does not really mention crime prevention at all. As I say, it is the Children (Protection and Parental Responsibility) Act that has one small section in it that deals with local councils in developing crime prevention plans, and the Attorney-General approving those plans officially. Between that initial starting point and now, our focus on local crime prevention activity these days is very directed, it is very specific, it has a very strong basis on data and evidence. We have a very strong body in New South Wales called the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research that prepares and presents a high end of crime data for us. We also have some very specific targets as a state in terms of crime reduction set through our new government's state plan in terms of reducing personal and property crime. Our local crime prevention planning activity is based around those targets. We work with local councils on offences or types of crime that will lead to, we think, a reduction in those types of crime. The state has not objected to reducing that at all. We try and focus on areas where we think at least local government can have some sort of influence over crime that has occurred which is often around opportunity reduction and situational crime prevention.

We went from a process of a very broad based, in the mid and early 90s, community consultation and getting the community's views about what they thought crime problems were and so forth, and designing and funding plans based almost entirely on community-driven things to now essentially a consistent approach.

Mr SCHEFFER—Sorry, are you all going to speak?

Ms YORK—I will say a couple of words after.

Mr SCHEFFER—Okay. A quick comprehension question—and we might talk about it again later—when you have the feedback from the community about their perceptions of what the crime issues were, did that match what the bureau was putting together?

Mr THOMAS—Not always.

Mr SCHEFFER—Maybe we will come back to that later.

Mr THOMAS—I mean, one of the challenges in the locally based crime prevention plan and getting, broadly speaking, the community's views on crime problems is there is a legitimate question as to whose views you are getting. Fifty people in a room or 40 people in a room do not necessarily constitute 60,000 people, so the views you get, in my experience—and I have been involved in this process for a while—can be very seriously skewed towards people's personal interest or personal experiences. You can end up with a local crime prevention plan or a local crime prevention approach that is not really based on the crime problem at all but based on people's perceptions on what a problem might be. We had a very strong concern in terms of investing the resources and the time with the New South Wales government into going down a road where you might be funding something that is someone's perception of a problem, when the crime data tells us that the real problem is something very different.

In terms of our local crime prevention planning process, we do not accept any plans from a local level that are not based on real recorded crime data. There are some challenges in that. Not all crime is recorded—but it is, from our perception, the best and most reliable basis we have of evidence on what a local problem is. In terms of funding types of activities, in our experience was a lot of the activities that people put forward to be funded were people's pet projects. We had the experience of people sort of forum shopping with projects. They have a particular view of what they want to do and they come to us. 'It's a crime prevention project, absolutely awesome.' They just wish to help the project, and that

type of thing. We really do not fund anything these days that is not directly linked to that definable problem. If your local council area has a high rate of breaking and entering, from our point of view you need to do something about breaking and entering. If you are going to put forward strategies to address breaking and entering, you have to have some basis in the evidence of having had an effect somewhere else. We are not in the practice these days of funding anything and everything that people put forward but we have to have confidence that what someone is going to do has some evidence that it is going to have an effect. It is quite huge step from where we first started.

Mr SCHEFFER—Thanks, Brendan.

Ms YORK—Just to add from a policing perspective, from the New South Wales Police Force, we deal with it in two ways: we have the formal processes that Brendan went through about the state plan and the partnership that we have with council et cetera, but New South Wales Police Force try to embed it in everything that we do operational in relation to crime prevention. My comments today will be more about the broader crime prevention as well. Obviously, we have a number of different things that we do. When we talk about crime and the fear of crime, it is down to the local area commands to get into the community to try and see what their fears are. We do acknowledge that sometimes where fears are not reflective in those statistics and it is a challenge for us to decide where to put our resources for the best effect, because obviously they are limited. One is to react to crime but obviously it is a better strategy if we can prevent it in the first place.

For example, we have corporate spokespersons for different issues. In my normal role I am the corporate spokesperson for youth. We have one for domestic violence. It is our role to meet with other government departments, meet with community members, meet with lobby groups, where necessary, in the right forums to talk about what strategies we can put in to prevent crime. I would meet with the Department of Education, and what messages can we get out to youth in the schools, our youth liaison officers, school liaison officers, getting into the community, getting into the schools and strengthen the children in relation to security on Facebook sites or incidence of making them aware about their safety when they are out.

Mr SCHEFFER—Sorry to interrupt but how would you do that? Would your local area commands organise blanket visits to school or in the nuts and bolts of it, how would you do that?

Ms YORK—A number of different strategies. I think what we will do today is go down different paths because everything has quite a strategy behind it. Obviously we have a couple of forums at a local area command level. There is the principals forum where our local area commanders meet with the principals of the schools in those areas and talk about issues, build relationships, make sure that they are available for each other outside of those formal meetings, and talk about issues that are very relevant to the local area. We have school liaison police, there are 40 across the state that go into private or government schools, and work with the schools about strategies for bullying, and react to their problems at those schools within their area. Also at every local area command we have a youth liaison officer which is in our Crime Management Unit. They are, at a local level, a little bit more strategic about what is happening with our youth across that area. They do youth conferencing, they assist the police in alternatives to arrest and charge for young offenders, as well as look at strategies for operational activities, about putting more police out on different nights if we know there is a problem at a shopping centre or a particular area. They will work with the local police to do some targeted, tactical deployments in those areas to get in and deal with the youth in those areas.

Similarly for domestic violence. We have domestic violence liaison officers. They would get in with representatives from other government departments in that local area trying to give support services to victims et cetera and work at a local level where the spokesperson would then work across government at a higher level, so it flows down from the strategic policy setting down into the operational and tactical setting.

Mr SCHEFFER—The local commands would be working with the local organisations that support families around family violence issues?

Ms YORK—Yes.

Mr SCHEFFER—That level.

Ms YORK—Yes. Normally I work in the northern region. I am the regional commander from Gosford to Tweed Heads, and we have a trial at Brisbane Water that has turned into a positive program where we work with community services in the police station, when victims come in for domestic violence, and deal with them as a case, with both government departments working together, trying to make sure there are support services for the victim, as well as law enforcement procedures in relation to the offence.

Mr SCHEFFER—That is the kind of reactive approach, given what Brendan was saying earlier on about wanting to be proactive to prevent things occurring. How do you deal with that prevention side with the family violence issues?

Ms YORK—Very much education programs, communication out into the community. But our focus at the moment with domestic violence—and I am not the spokesperson of that so I cannot go into great detail—is very much trying to get people to come forward to report it because we think it is under-reported, very much trying to let people know that that is not acceptable behaviour. Our communication is driven around awareness—'Support services are available, please come forward'—as well as, to some extent, working within schools with children about the behaviour perhaps in the family home to try and get some understanding of acceptable relationship behaviour, as well as trying to target particularly repeat victims. If we have an alleged offence in the home, very much supporting that female so we can prevent any further incidents of violence.

One reactive process then leads to a whole lot of proactive activities that come into it, to try and make sure that she is safe, that even if she is removed or the alleged offender is removed, we give her the strength not to put up with that type of behaviour again. It is very much consulting on a broader crime prevention focus out into the community doing customer surveys. We are very strong on customer service at the moment in relation to are we giving the right service to customers, could we doing better next time, and that is getting out into the communities, the councils, in the more formal structures about meeting with them and what can we do in the local community to prevent crime, as well as Safer by Design courses, which we will go into a little bit later about designing the environment so that the opportunity for crime does not occur and working with councils, other government departments, transport et cetera to make sure it is safe out there. Very much, as I say, in a lot of things we do, we have the formal structures but everything else is looking at prevention because we know we cannot keep reacting with crime.

Mr SCHEFFER—Great, thanks, Carlene.

Supt Cmdr BEGG—There are two other things that police are actively involved in: the Community Safety Precinct Committees. That is a locally based committee chaired by the local area commander where local members, council representatives and community groups and individuals can come to the police station to talk about what

strategies are being used and work together to solve crime. For example, Broken Hill might have more than one Community Safety Precinct because of distance, but they are conducted quarterly. It also works closely with crime prevention partnerships. They are in 15 local area commands and they involve cross-government groups working together on crime problems within those areas. They get a lot of traction because it is a mandatory participation, like those agencies in those identical crime areas.

Mr SCHEFFER—Is that legislated for, when you say 'mandatory'?

Supt Cmdr BEGG—It is a policy requirement.

Mr McCURDY—Who ends up with that on their lap when you get all those groups together?

Supt Cmdr BEGG—Our Department of Premier and Cabinet oversee it. We have a police inspector who is on secondment and assists, certainly with the police side of things. There has been some really good work been done. For example, if you have an issue with kids hanging around at night, is it about public transport, is it about licensed premises being opened, those type of things. Another area that we are doing a lot of work in, which I believe we are talking about this afternoon, is our trial pilot which is the new process around Neighbourhood Watch. Neighbourhood Watch, like many areas across Australia, is a little tired and there are major changes in the people that want to participate in Neighbourhood Watch. The community is getting older and is perhaps not fully representative of areas. Neighbourhood Watch is getting a new platform and we will get to that presentation this afternoon.

Ms YORK—I was just going to have a second bite of the cherry but very much the commissioner is focused on alcohol-related crime. Obviously the statistics show how much alcohol is related to the crime, and very much getting in there and trying to prevent it with working with licensed premises, working through our partnerships with the community about Safer by Design, but also ensuring that there is security available, that they are looking not only licensed premises but the trading hours, there are certain restrictions if they have a number of offences reported that are linked to the licensed premises, that our police, when they record it on our computer system, drill down into, have they just left the hotel, how affected were they and where have they been drinking et cetera, and that goes in on our system. There is a certain amount we will tolerate and then after a certain amount we look at, what will we do about these premises. They are now moving from a low risk, to a medium risk, to a high risk.

We look at risk mitigation strategies to work with those licensed premises. They know if they are on a list as the top offending premises, and we can put our resources in appropriately and we can enforce some restrictions on them which has been quite successful in a number of areas about how we deal with those premises. We have liquor reports. The formal processes where we meet in the geographical area with the licensed premises and work through them with what other conditions that we are going to place on them and they are in no doubt about the fact that we are very serious about reducing alcohol-related crime and those liquor accords have been very successful.

Supt Cmdr BEGG—The members within the liquor accords work fairly closely as well. In some areas, if you are banned from one premises, you are banned from all. Those type of strategies are useful.

Mr SCHEFFER—How do they know that?

Supt Cmdr BEGG—Through communication of the liquor accord. If you have a bucks party going from one place, they tend to get on those little buses to the next place. They will make sure they communicate those things clearly, they will ring the next pub or hotel up and let them know that there is a group coming and they are on extra alert with those type of issues, so they do not become a problem if they know about those things beforehand.

Dr MATRUGLIO—We work closely with local government and we also do our own targeted crime prevention strategies that are project based, and we will monitor the crime statistics and identify issues which are increasingly problematic, for example, in correlated crime, we have retail crime going up. We will monitor those and we will link with strategies, more of a statement, if you like, or identify hotspots, and trial strategies to see if they work in locations as well. We are not only reactive in dealing directly with local councils and their specific problems, we will look at overarching problems as well and implement programs too.

Mr SCHEFFER—Let's throw it open.

Mr McCURDY—We were talking about preloading in Perth, and the Dan Murphy's and the beer, wine and spirits out in the regions and out in the suburbs. It appears in some cases the nightclubs are merely the victims because people are loading up, coming to the nightclubs. All the trouble seems to be at the nightclub but really the trouble started way back. Is any research done on preloading and the changes with the energy drinks and all that sort of thing going through?

Supt Cmdr BEGG—We have our drug and alcohol command. It has some senior policy officers who are very experienced in drug and alcohol, and they do a lot of work internally about where people are drinking; what issues are coming out. Part of that linking project that Carlene York spoke about, talks about where they have been drinking and how many drinks they have consumed. Through that they are able to track them with that preloading issue. Also nightclubs and licensed premises are more alert about people coming in. If someone appears to be drunk when they arrive, they are more likely to refuse them entry.

Mr BATTIN—Acting Deputy Commissioner York, you said before you are a spokesperson for youth.

Ms YORK—Yes.

Mr BATTIN—One of the questions I have is crime prevention—now the debate is at what age do you start to bring in crime prevention strategies. I think that is a really big focus, not only in Victoria but across Australia. Can you tell us, in New South Wales, where your focus is at the moment in relation to crime prevention programs, at what ages, and some of the ideas that the police programs are getting involved with the ages that you are dealing with them.

Ms YORK—Yes. We are having some discussions about whether or not it is the right age. Obviously you cannot commit a criminal offence until you turn 10. But we would be looking at—I have spoken to education—some younger ages to start to get the message through. Particularly, over the last six to 12 months, I have been very involved in social media. I did a project for the commissioner in relation to the challenges and opportunities of social media for law enforcement. Something that came out there is, the children with their iPods and phones at a much younger age, they are therefore susceptible to be a victim of crime at a much younger age. They are computer literate, they are getting

in, but they do not have the maturity or understanding to understand the risks they are then going into. We are looking at how do you do education strategies at a younger age.

The school liaison police are very much focused on the high schools, but we do have youth liaison officers that go into the primary schools to start educating them about prevention strategies, as well as safety issues. We have a program that features a big penguin which is more about the old stranger danger which has moved into—often the offenders are people that the children know now. We are trying very much to put the message through about acceptable behaviour and what they can do about that if they are concerned about something that is being done to them by a person that they know. We get down into the primary school ages for that as well.

Supt Cmdr BEGG—The program is about safe places, so regardless of a situation a child finds themselves in, it is about identifying who they can go and talk to and where they can find somebody safe. For example, a police officer, a teacher, or in the library or a shop. One of my earlier jobs was as the commander of child protection, and one of the projects we had was the joint investigation response team. That was focused on abuse against children. It was a multi-agency approach with Department of Community Services, police and health, working side by side. That multi-agency approach was critical in dealing with families. It is that one-stop shop, similar to the way that the domestic violence was working. I found that case management at an early stage is really useful. A lot of research talks about communication across agencies and, definitely, the earlier you get in and identify which families are going to be your key problem, it is working intensively with those before they reach that age where they can be charged with criminal offences. If it is an issue around—the parents have drug and alcohol problems, or the kids are not going to school, we can address those and prevent them entering the criminal justice system.

Ms YORK—So we have mandatory reporting of children at risk as well. If the police, if they are called to an event, for example, in a family home and there is violence or drugs or other information that would give you some concerns, the police would report a child at risk and then that brings in the other agencies that could assist us as well. Very much we are focused on dealing with prevention from the side of the offender, as well as the victim. Certainly in those school lectures about acceptable behaviour but also shared responsibility between the parents, the schools and law enforcement—because once we are involved it is really getting quite serious. But particularly there is another hat that I wear as the corporate spokesperson for women, the vulnerability of females with alcohol, of being a victim of crime, particularly sexual assault, if they are a younger teen, is of concern to us. A lot of our messages out to schools and out to the youth is about protecting yourself and being aware, and the usual things, say, when you go out with friends. We very much target both from the victim as well as the offender's point of view.

Supt Cmdr BEGG—Police are actively involved in the Police Citizens Youth Clubs. They do a lot of preventative programs. A lot of those are sport based as well, about engaging kids. They will start from quite young ages, I think about five, right up until their 20s and beyond. The other thing is focused on Aboriginal people. We have a five-year plan and part of that is crime prevention grants that we have for our area commands to meet the needs of local Aboriginal communities to prevent crime. It might be a sporting group. There is a very successful program that has been run at Eastern Beaches Command where a group of Aboriginal girls have come together, they have been doing some sporting activities, like boxing, but they have also been learning life skills, such as cooking and nutrition, and how to look after themselves. Out of those girls, I think only one offended and she was removed from the program. It has a really positive impact on the lives of those girls and also their peers.

Another program, one of the LACs out in the western region of the state, a lot of kids had bicycles but they were not wearing helmets. It becomes a safety issue. Under the funding they bought bike helmets, and all the kids then received bike helmets. It is about educating them to be safe but then also reinforcing the need to be adhering to the law.

Mr LEANE—You spoke about the challenge—the perception as a crime and the reality is a challenge. Is it something you think you have to take on, and I will give you an example as far as you spoke about a lot of work being done with domestic violence to get people to report it and what will happen then if you are successful, it will get reported and then therefore there will be more charges laid in assaults and then crime data will come out to say assaults are up. A similar thing happened in Victoria a few years ago, and then it was a good thing that assaults were up because women and children were reporting domestic assaults, so it was a good thing. But then the media and other stakeholders come out and said, 'What a terrible place we're living in. It's a nightmare out there,' and it showed footage of two drunk guys punching each other at a pub, and how totally divorced to what the reality is. Do you see it as a role to challenge the perception in the community in the media?

Ms YORK—First of all, the comment about the challenge was more about how you put your finite resources towards what you know is a particular issue, as opposed to sometimes what the fear of the community tells you is a particular issue. For example, sometimes in some older communities, the fear of crime is more about skateboard riders and youths hanging around together. Then you have a spate of break and enters happening or armed robberies and so I, if I was the commander, would have to decide where am I going to put my resources. Obviously we share it around but you prioritise. That is what I mean about a challenge. But getting back to your point about statistics, statistics can be good and bad for us, and no matter what we do the press will probably write a bad article more than a good article. We openly say that looking for a rise in statistics is a positive indicator when we are talking about domestic violence. We set the target each year—or have until this year—as wanting to get more reports of assaults in domestic violence, and we have also an indicator of legal action rates.

We want to make sure that the ones coming forward we have a legal action rate comparative to it. It is not only increasing the number of reports but it is also about the police doing something about it. We make sure that we are not doing it half-heartedly. We are up-front at the beginning that it is a positive indicator to get them forward. There is a debate all the time about whether that is good, have we reached the peak of what we can get in and it will start going down and therefore we will get bashed about by not being a positive indicator and it needs to be a negative indicator. But at this stage it has been a positive indicator. We are openly going out saying, 'Report your crime,' and we are reporting on that, and we will respond to the journalists in that way. If they decide to write it in some other way, I have no control over that. But we push it out, and every time we push it out to the articles we would be saying—again reinforcing—'People should come forward, they can trust us and we'll try and help them,' because obviously the research shows that mainly females are hesitant and scared to come forward and do not think they will get the help and support. We have come a long way in past years about how we can help them.

Mr BATTIN—You said you only want to fund things that are based on data and some sort of belief that there will be results. If Neighbourhood Watch comes here today, without being the new Neighbourhood Watch, would you fund them?

Mr THOMAS—It depends on what they were trying to do. If they were actual crime prevention activity, maybe not. If they were working with the police to increase

intelligence and operational information, possibly. We would fund things that were, in our programs, specific around the particular type of crime. If you had a group of people that were interested in burglaries in their area and there was a burglary problem in that area, and part of the strategy to reduce that burglary problem was community members being actively engaged in that—we have a program at the moment in a part of Wagga, a place called Tolland, which is a public housing estate in Wagga. Its spate of burglaries is significantly higher than the rest of the town of Wagga and significantly higher than the state's public housing, run by the Department of Housing. We are doing some work with the local police and the local Department of Housing about trying to tackle burglaries in that particular part of Wagga. A lot of that involves design changes to streets and to houses to make them less amenable to burglary, but you cannot do that without having people who live in the houses getting involved in that strategy. We are going around and meeting with community members and getting them actively involved in a strategy in that area to try and reduce burglaries. In that instance you need to directly engage them in that type of approach.

Mr BATTIN—But in areas where burglary is very low, that sort of activity would be wasted. Is that fair to say?

Mr THOMAS—This is specifically around burglaries. It goes back to the previous point though in terms of people's perceptions of what crime is and what the reality of crime is. I think Neighbourhood Watch or community people actively involved in crime prevention can be a good conduit for us to get the proper information to them about what the crime rates are and what the risks are in your local area. In New South Wales we have had a falling crime rate for the best part of 11 years. I think you could count on one hand the number of media stories that point that out. It seems just about every week we have one of those 6.30 TV shows talking about a particular crime wave or crime problem. We are just not convinced. We have had car theft in New South Wales has dropped on average 30 per cent a year since the year 2000. The number of cars being stolen in New South Wales, compared to what it was in the mid-1990s is night and day. Only in the last month I saw three articles talking about the problem with car thieves and what we are going to do about it.

Ms YORK—If you think about how many more cars also that are out there in the past few years, that is an unbelievable reduction.

Mr THOMAS—Yes. I think there is a really important role for community groups involved in things like Eyewatch and other things to get real intelligence—and the police know about what the problems are—to inform us about what communities perceptions of crime are, but also that we can get information back to them about the real rates of crime. I mean, we cannot control in general the media communicating about crime, but we can as much and as often as possible try and get real information out to the public.

Ms YORK—Could I just add a little bit to the answer to your question. Neighbourhood Watch has been around a long time and we have tried to revitalise that, not always with success, but it does work in some areas. It has got to the stage where, yes, it is not a strategy that will be successful in maybe my local area commands but it is a strategy that is successful in some of them. Where it is successful, where there are communities that want that, put out a lot of newsletters, police go to those Neighbourhood Watch meetings and interact with the community, we get information, there is a good relationship there and we will continue on with it. It has gone past the stage where we say everybody has to have one.

Mr SCHEFFER—Just building on that, leaving aside Neighbourhood Watch, because Helen is coming back later on and we will have a proper, detailed conversation about that then, but picking up on what both Carlene and Brendan said about local organisations, could you talk to us a bit about what makes for a well-supported and positive local organisation that can link into crime prevention strategies. What the community has been wrestling with is, what are really the nuts and bolts of what makes it work as a whole community network of organisations participating in a process that they have a shared understanding around. We have talked about schools; we have talked about entertainment precincts and venues; we have talked about sports, sports clubs; talked about multicultural, Aboriginal; we have talked about bikes—a huge network of people that to some extent have a crime prevention role, even though they may not realise it. Could you talk to us about what you think in your experience makes good networking, good participation, and what are some of the impediments to that.

Mr THOMAS—Sure. Our experience really shows that you cannot have a generic response to this. We get community organisations, or local organisations, effectively involved in crime prevention. It is around a definable problem. If you go to a set of people, 'Let's work together to prevent crime,' you can end up with a solution that maybe you can understand but it does not really have an effect. But if we can clearly define a particular problem that we are trying to resolve, it is clear about what the dynamics are that might be causing a lead into that particular problem and then if part of that solution is working with local community organisations and being clear around what those organisations can do to help resolve that.

Mr SCHEFFER—I know we talked about the bureau before and we talked about local data and explored that a little bit, but when you talk about the keys, the definable problem that is shared, how do you transact that in the community? You mentioned there were some particular hotspots.

Mr THOMAS—If I give you a couple of examples, there is one program that has been running for a little while in the town of Orange in the central west of the state. They have had a number of crime problems there—they still do, I think—but one of the problems they had there was during school holidays and public housing environments. You have a whole range of young kids, Aboriginal and other kids, involved in a whole range of activities that involved damage to property, threatening individuals, burglaries, and break and enters. Through some funds we gave the council they engaged a number of community organisations, youth groups and others to target specific activities around those young people. Some of them were simply keeping them occupied activities—and we know they have an effect. Programs that involved giving specific kids, at times when you are more likely to offend, other things to do, constructive things to do. We know that reduced crime.

Some of the other activities were trying to get some local offenders, through some sporting activities, involved in employment which had an effect. There was one program which was based around some boxing classes where they got some of the local Aboriginal boys involved in those, and through those then into the local TAFE and into some employment, and from that some young people who were starting to be persistently involved in trouble, getting involved in some constructive activity that they engaged in, in that first instance, which was boxing programs, and then into some employment.

There was another example of a program in Broken Hill, which is western New South Wales, where there was a number of young Aboriginal kids involved in car stealing—some of them very young. I remember a story at the time of some police pulling over a stolen vehicle, driven at a frightening speed, where you had one kid sitting doing the

pedals, and another kid steering the car. There was a local community organisation there that wanted to take that interest and funnel it constructively. They established a Go Kart Program and specifically targeted that group of young Aboriginal kids they knew were involved in the theft. It was a program open to all young kids but went out of their way to target that specific group. They got them involved in go-karting but it was a progressive program where initially they did become involved in driving a kart around the track, then you would become involved in more constructive go-karting activity, all the way up to some state level activity. I think they went on a trip to Victoria. The organisation did some pre-level screening of those young people about their risk factors before they started the program. We helped them in designing some of those questionnaires—talking about what their involvement in school was, what their relationship was with their parents, what their relationship was with certain peers. We know that young offenders offend more if they are hanging out with delinquent peers, if they do not attend school or if they have poor parenting relationships.

Part of the young people's ability to progress through the program was effectively to score better on that test each time, even though the young people did not necessarily know that. In coming into the program and this young person was not attending school, if they wanted to come back and progress they had to increase their level of attendance at school. The youth worker had to speak to their parents and get a better report from their parents on their general attitude. If they did not have them, they did not progress. It tried to use peer pressure in a positive way. You would get a group of young people trying to progress through that program together. If one of them is falling out, the others put pressure on, 'Come on, go to school so we can all get along to this.' It worked really well and reduced the offending of that particular cohort of people. In that town that small group of people was responsible for a significant proportion of that particular reported offence. Targeting them had a good effect.

They are examples of where you can engage a local community organisation around a very specific and definable problem. But if we are going to talk to local community organisations in a very generic way about what their crime concerns are and what they want to do—

Mr SCHEFFER—Can you share with us an example of where it did not work.

Mr THOMAS—If I knew you wanted the worst examples of a program we have had, there is a big city—I will not name it—in New South Wales that does have a relatively high rate of crime. We worked with the local council around trying to define some of the crime but they were more concerned about getting the community's perceptions about crime, and it ended up being an idea around trying to change people's attitudes around how they interrelate with one another, and what we ended up with was a proposal for a Smile campaign where under the proposal we would provide funds for a whole range of things that would try and get people to smile and be happier with one another more often.

That was an example of where people were really not interested in the evidence, were trying to please everybody that they were talking to, and coming up with something at the end that was idiotic and completely meaningless; while at the same time that particular area had some real crime problems around alcohol-related violence and domestic violence that people need to get on top of.

Ms YORK—I was going to add, if I could find the formula to do that we would be very successful. On top of what Brendan said, it is about focusing in that community to what their issues are. That is the first thing. I expect all my local area commands to have a

very good understanding of what their problems are in the community, which they do. They interact with the community, they are talking with the community and they can pick up what worries that community and look at what is going to be the best way. But it does come down to personal behaviour, I suppose. It comes down to the intent—my commander has organised to do something about it and targeting or trying to identify those in the community that would (10.03.33) as well. The good community members want to do something with that, particularly it is good if we can get some funding in relation to crime prevention because one is that makes the community feel good that everyone is concerned about the problems and want to invest in a successful strategy to fix that.

But if they cannot then it is being innovative in that local community to find some community members that can assist and—Brendan, I do not know about the one you said, but about Go Kart and different things. If you can find a go kart operator who would give you some hours of the day to do something for the children without any cost. So you are constantly trying to be innovative about what we can do to have the community input, as well as the police work with them, to be professional in relation to new interactions whether you have meetings and you have minutes and all that type of stuff, and have some formal process about it, but to engage with the community and those that want to do something with you. There is a lot of that goes on and then there are the more formal programs that we can look at with some success.

The other thing we tried to do is place our resources or the specialist resources where they can make the most difference. For example, we will have Aboriginal liaison officers. There is not a need for one of those in every command, but there might be a need for two in one command and none in neighbouring commands. They are very much focused about getting into the Aboriginal community and working with them and being our voice in that community but coming forward and saying, 'We think we might be able to do this,' or, 'We think we might be able to do that.' The ethnic liaison officers—where crime is becoming a problem in some of the ethnic communities—we are looking at targeted recruitment of those officers, placing them in the communities where they can do the most, and working with us from that point of view.

We also link those PCYCs with the youth liaison officers with specialist liaison officers to look at what we can do for community programs for young children in the community as well. Looking at what the problem is in the area and making it specific to that area, getting the parties—both community and police—engaged and motivated to do something about it, that is the formula, but you will find that sometimes we are very engaged with communities, but if a few of the drivers in that community move on or do not want to be involved any more, you can find that the program will lapse for a period of time until you can reinvigorate it again.

Mr SCHEFFER—Thank you.

Supt Cmdr BEGG—I am on the board of the Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards which are through the Australian Institute of Criminology. I get to read lots of applications for awards for different crime prevention programs right across Australia. There is a significant variance in the quality of those programs and the capacity of organisations. There are some amazing programs—and this applies to community groups and councils within New South Wales as well. There is a real opportunity—and we have had some discussion with attorneys-general and also police about how do we develop a toolbox to help community organisations. Some councils are really switched on about crime prevention and follow up a formula around it, but others do not because as police and as attorneys-general we are doing it all the time. Some of the other agencies

mean very well but they are not quite sure of the steps to go about it. As Brendan said, the evidence base is critical. Having that check list of how somebody works through it is, 'What's your problem? How do you define that? Where do you get the data from?' and then developing those clear objectives about what you are going to achieve in what time frame and reporting along the way.

A critical part that many agencies miss is the evaluation. How do you know if you have an impact on whatever you set out to do. If you do not do that evaluation, you do not know. One thing that I do not think we are as good as we could be is about sharing best practice. If somebody has done something really good here, how are we letting people up here know. That is a real opportunity in terms of crime prevention. It does not mean to say that every program is going to work in every community, but it saves people reinventing the wheel.

Mr SCHEFFER—We can perhaps come back to some of those things in a minute but in the meantime—

Mr BATTIN—I think we get too often tied up in programs. You said the Smile program: the entire program is just window-dressing, a bandaid. We do not try and find out what the solution was. In New South Wales how are you getting around that? You were saying is it more data based, but what is your plan for the next 12 months, two years on the program, to get around that so you can identify the problems, to put the programs in place; at the same time sell those to the community. There may not be a result for five or 10 years on some of these programs. That is what we were talking about before. If you do crime prevention with a five-year-old, you do not see the result until they are 15. The result, you never really know. How do get around that, and also selling it to the community.

Mr THOMAS—I think there are a couple of things there. Firstly, one of the things in government that we are not good at doing is say no to people, and we started a few years ago to very strictly and rigorously assess any of the applications. We funded other things. When I think of the first year we really started doing that we probably said no to 70 per cent of applications. That was quite a shift and it caused some critical feedback of the government at the time from some of our key stakeholders, but being really clear about what you do and do not do is, I would suggest, the first thought. What we have been doing recently is changing our process, as I mentioned, to be far more focused on the finite problems. But we have also recently engaged the Australian Institute of Criminology to do some work with us to identify from around the world particular program types that have an effect on particular types, particularly on crime types that have a high volume. What we will be doing for the next 12 months through our process is providing a clear toolkit to local government in terms of their work with us about what we fund, but then on what that evidence base is around programs that work. If you take break and enter, for instance, through the work we have done with the AIC we are able to identify four or five particular strategies that have shown to have an effect on reducing break and enter. We will be producing materials which are currently being developed. All those local councils that say, 'This is what the program is and the way it works.'

Mr BATTIN—Have you got the toolkit going or are you working on it?

Mr THOMAS—It is close to being finished—what the program is and the way it works, and in the practical implementation of, 'Here's a plan to implement it.' What comes back to us is an application based around evidence but with a very clear—

Mr SCHEFFER—If you can hold that thought. Simon Ramsay our chair has arrived. We will continue with this and we will do the handover a bit later on.

Mr THOMAS—What we are trying to do is to be far more direct. That is not to completely ignore certain innovations of people coming up (indistinct) at all. We still have some capacity to look at that and support that. But if we are supporting that what we would rather do is to do it as a far more, what we call, demonstration project that if someone does have something it does not really have any evidence but looks like a promising idea that we can take it and test it and properly evaluate it as a control study, so you have a basis of evidence that it is correct. We have done that a couple of times. We did it with some graffiti projects a couple of years ago. We are doing it at the moment in another break and enter project where we are involved with local council in trialing a particular thing with a very strict evaluation component around it. We can change it in one area and compare it to another area very specifically. If that does have an effect then it can move from a promising idea into an established and evaluated program. That does involve us taking a direct approach in terms of what we do and do not fund which is a big shift from where we started 10 or so years ago. It requires us to say no to as many people as we say yes to, which again is a big shift in government funds. It will involve, I imagine, some further criticism and advice from some of our stakeholders for (indistinct)

Mr BATTIN—It will be interesting to see the results of it, and also the process of how you got to that final—

Mr SCHEFFER—Yes, that is exactly right. Maybe we could talk a bit later, if Sandy and Pete could get in touch with you, perhaps some new materials that you could make available to us. That would be very useful to us.

Mr THOMAS—I suppose this is another one. We usually get a little bit more with the things that are having the biggest impact in crime rates, and we found that some of the things that were having the biggest impact on crime rates were design changes to products and systems and environments, and I mentioned stealing motor vehicles. Now with the change to the design of motor cars they are harder to steal than they were, and changes to the design that make them less attractive to thieves. With car stereos these days most people do not touch because the design means that if you remove them from the electricity supply you cannot reconnect them unless you have a PIN number. They are just as easy to steal but they are harder to reattach. That design change has reduced that particular item's focus for theft. A good example of system change which most people are familiar with is the shoe store which just displays single shoes. That is a very old-fashioned crime prevention technique, and it works.

We took some funds that were directed towards a not very productive program about three years and designed an approach to try and encapsulate how we can better explore these design ideas. We funded a centre at the University of Technology Sydney called the Designing Out Crime Research Centre. That centre is about to celebrate its second birthday. It brings together a range of people from different disciplines of that university—architects, engineers, industrial designers and some others—to look specifically at crime problems and to try and come up with some design ideas to think a bit differently about the crime problem to see if we can solve it in a different way. They are doing a stack of work with our Department of Housing, they are going to design some public housing estates from specific redesigns of houses to either manage the housing estate more effectively, and those designs are now starting to be implemented.

One of the famous ones is bins. If you have ever caught a train in Sydney in the last 10 years you will know there are no rubbish bins on railway stations because of the terrorist

threat. About 10 years ago our railway people removed all the bins because they were scared someone might put a bomb in one of those. This centre redesigned a bin that is easy for police and others to quickly inspect that bin to see if there is an explosive device in it. Those bins are now on our railway network which is quite good for the travelling public. They have come up with a whole range of other designs. Retailers are making changes to shelving in stores to make it harder for retail theft, changing the shelving design to make it more difficult for someone to steal from a supermarket environment. It is an innovative way that we are trying to embrace a whole range of different things to try and think differently—

Mr SCHEFFER—It sounds intriguing.

Mr BATTIN—Was that through investors?

Mr THOMAS—Yes. We fund it and it is managed by the board of management that I chair, and it is housed at the University of Technology, Sydney. It has staff from that university and I am on the board, Helen is on the board, the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research is on the board as well.

Mr SCHEFFER—Okay.

Mr McCURDY—Brendan, you also chair the Graffiti Management Group.

Mr THOMAS—I do, yes.

Mr McCURDY—I am intrigued. Are there any relationships or parallels between graffiti in neighbourhoods and certainly in crime rates, or more particularly with youth as well?

Mr THOMAS—There is certainly some evidence around. The physical decay of an urban involvement can be slightly involved in untoward activity. The general theories around it, if a place decays to a certain degree, people think no-one cares about it and they are more likely to go in there and do other things. I think we have had some experience here in some of the western housing estates, some practical, concrete examples of where that did happen, some places became rundown and became the focus of other criminal activity. Graffiti has certainly been part of that. It is not the only part of that. It is part of the whole management of the place. Graffiti, as a crime, is one of the most common offences in New South Wales (10.17.49) it is the crime that probably costs the public purse the most outside of just law enforcement, in terms of removing and cleaning (indistinct) costs them to deal with graffiti and they deal with about 40,000 tags within the public transport system. That is all funds that could otherwise go to things that people need. But there is some evidence around the degradation of places, and graffiti playing a part of that.

I know on our rail network they do a pretty strong relative customer satisfaction survey, and one of the things that regularly comes out of that is the people's hatred of graffiti on the public transport network. They really dislike it. They say it makes them feel less safe. They feel less safe on a train carriage that has graffiti on it, than one that does not, even if there are no other things in there that make them feel less safe. That type of thing, we know it does affect people's perceptions of safety, and we know people's perceptions of safety affect their behaviour.

Mr SCHEFFER—To follow up on that, as I said at the outset we have talked to a wide range of people and we have travelled around a bit. It seems to me—if you take a place like Melbourne, and I am sure Sydney is probably very similar—there is a kind of

continuum where you have graffiti as street art, as distinct from managed pieces that are put there by an authority—local council or whatever—talking about a graffiti which comes from people, and graffiti as defacing property. There is a kind of continuum that is often a bit difficult in there. One view that has been put to us is you have to stop it altogether, and in a city like Melbourne that uses graffiti in a very positive way in its tourism advertising, and it also uses it quite constructively—for example, I saw a program on ABC TV about using graffiti for people who are blind and having companions describe the graffiti walls to them is a very positive thing. There are different signals coming through, right through the view of saying any kind of graffiti tolerance gives the wrong message. Do you have a view of where you sit in that continuum?

Mr THOMAS—The state does. We deal with graffiti essentially as when someone defaces another's person's property without their consent. So whether it is a big organised piece of art or whether it says, 'Joe was here,' it is defacing somebody's property.

Mr SCHEFFER—Commission is the key.

Mr THOMAS—There is some evidence around Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design standards, that breaking up a monotone wall with a number of other colours can reduce the likelihood of graffiti being caught on that wall because it is harder to do. It was a school of thought that graffitiists and other people's graffiti has no evidence really at all, especially not in this country. It might have something in the organised gang culture in the States but here it has no evidence whatsoever. Just breaking up a monotone wall, we know, is hard for someone's graffiti because it is harder to graffiti on both colours because most of the graffiti is done either by spray can or by texta pens. It is harder to do. It is less visible when it is done. We know in some places if you have a place that is heavily graffitied and you do paint a mural on the wall, it can have an effect on reducing the amount of graffiti that comes on that wall because it is harder to do.

There was a movement in New South Wales 10 or so years ago where some local councils were leaving walls where people could legally go and do graffiti. Most of the evidence we had from these councils is that increases graffiti in the passage-ways to that wall. As people go to and from that place they tend to graffiti it a lot more and we have not seen it reduced by graffitiing in a particular area. We did a survey two years ago with graffiti offenders about why they do it, because there was a of information about why people do graffitiing. Dichotomous arguments on one hand with people saying it is all criminal acts, and on the other hand it all misunderstood artists. We asked as many graffitiists as we could find the simple question why they do it and almost none of them said they do it as an artistic expression; almost all of them said they do it because it is illegal and the attraction of doing graffiti was the rush of doing an illegal thing, and people focus on doing it in those areas where it is likely to be very public and where the risk of getting caught was quite high because it increases their prestige amongst their peers, and that people practise illegal graffiti on legal places. People go to those legal walls to practise their tags in a legal place. There certainly is a place from a design point of view for murals, if you like, irrespective of what those murals are, just because it breaks up a monotone colour, but the notion that if you provide a legal outlet for people who are committing graffiti, it will reduce the amount of illegal graffiti, from our point of view there is no basis for that.

Mr BATTIN—When you were talking to the graffiti artists/criminals, whichever way you want to go, based on their thoughts or thought process by doing it, if they get caught what the result is?

Mr THOMAS—Court is not a huge element for something like graffiti, due to it is not a long-term gaol sentence or anything. They take that into consideration that is not a very harsh penalty, therefore 'we can do it.'

Dr MATRUGLIO—Committing a graffiti offence is quite light. It is very hard for police to find the offenders and bring them to a court, and they are aware of that so they will do it at times and places and—

Mr THOMAS—It is more the likelihood of apprehension than penalty as opposed to really thinking about what the penalty might be.

Mr SCHEFFER—I am a little bit fixated on these guidelines. We have touched on the issue of evaluation and how important it is to have projects evaluated, but could you talk to us a bit more about how you go about evaluation?

Mr THOMAS—We can talk about some of the demonstration projects. One of the good examples was the graffiti ones we did a couple of years ago where there was some talk about what works and does not work in terms of reducing and removing graffiti. It is interesting from the point of view, not so much about the crime but how we went about it. We picked three interventions: one was designing out crime, so design interventions to a particular place; the other was the process of rapid move, that is removing the graffiti and the time it comes off; and the other one was getting local community members engaged in the management of space and the removal of graffiti and so forth. We wanted to test those—

Mr SCHEFFER—That managing space, you did not mean using it for a range of activities?

Mr THOMAS—No, physically managing it.

Mr SCHEFFER—Physically getting rid of stuff, yes. Okay.

Mr THOMAS—Because they were the three most common approaches that local government and others were using to manage their graffiti. They wanted to get some evidence around doing those things. We worked with eight local councils for them to implement these things. We worked with them to pick particular physical locations that were graffiti prone, to focus both on an intervention, that is where we would do something, and another site where we would not do anything at all and making sure those two sites were very similar. One of the locations was a park in the western part of Sydney and one of the walls we picked was walls all over the park. One of those is a design intervention, so we picked a wall in the park and we picked another wall in a similar park where we did not do anything for a period of time.

We worked with those councils to implement a number of those design changes. They included fencing, green screen, putting plants in a particular area. Some of it was mural based, I think, in Leichhardt, around some factory walls there. In another area we funded local governments to rapidly remove graffiti every time it came up. It was daily removal. Again we picked similar areas where there was no other similar type of intervention. In that area that was a business, main street type location. Two others were picked by two programs where their volunteers would go out and remove. What we did was measure the recurrence of graffiti over a period of time in the site where you did the intervention and in the site where you did the control and tracked that against a pre-established base line of graffiti appearing in those areas so you could see if there was a change in the trend or not. Then you worked with those local councils in managing those particular things.

The result of that, they found that the volunteer removal approach had no effect at all and it was almost impossible to maintain over a long period of time. The rapid removal of graffiti did not have an effect on the recurrence of graffiti, but it did have an effect on people's perception of the area. They thought it was a better area, but the design changes all worked, they all had an effect on the recurrence of graffiti. As a result of that we put in a report to the government, and the government is now funding a specific program to work with local councils to redesign the hotspot areas.

Mr SCHEFFER—That is like a very concrete way of working out different ways of removing it. What about some of the other projects you talked about that involve a community perception that needs to be negotiated, and the perception needs to be contrasted to the evidence base and then something worked through in a bit more detail. You really have people wrestling with themselves around what is happening in their community.

Mr THOMAS—I mentioned what we were doing at Tolland in Wagga. That is a work in progress, working with the police, trying to reduce break and enters and some other offences in that public housing estate. We are about to embark on a survey of all residents in the housing estate on their perceptions of crime and what they perceive, as being their crime problems, that we can come back after the strategy has had its effect, hopefully, and start to measure their perceptions in terms of any particular changes. In terms of evaluation there are two things: one is pure evaluation—this is what I mentioned—when you are really testing something, and trying not to put as much science around what you are doing. The other is what you often do in the local community which is more about performance mainly. It has more people with involvement in a particular activity, how many people have gone through it; what is the level of performance and involvement in that type of activity, which is a different type of thing and a more intermediate thing and something that can engage the community directly in.

These days we probably would not find a community organisation to do a project and your own evaluation that was pure evaluation work. We would be doing that with them, from the point of view that it flies with our level of expertise and our level of control and our level of data analysis that you really cannot expect a local community or to have, because they do not. You would never expect people to evaluate their own programs because it is not giving you a good result. In terms of that performance management we do work with people that we find also do effectively have a good understanding of what they are doing.

Mr SCHEFFER—Helen, you were talking about your experience, looking at a range of projects nationally and there would be evaluation components in those project plans. How does this relate to what you do in that setting?

Supt Cmdr BEGG—As Brendan said, an independent evaluation is the best practice, but because many of them are not community organisations, their capacity to fund a university to do an evaluation is quite limited. Having a framework what they look at and capturing those elements that Brendan mentioned, what impact did the program have, what change in behaviour or what statistics—and obviously they can do some work internally about a particular number through a program, what are the post-program results, and having a survey disciplines, what worked well and what did not work well.

Mr SCHEFFER—You set that up in the application, do you, they have to go through a few steps?

Supt Cmdr BEGG—It is not as prescriptive as that. The application includes an evaluation, 'Have you had an evaluation done?' Then attach it and we will put criteria around that.

Mr SCHEFFER—If it is generally a good project but there are weaknesses in the evaluation, do you then go back to them and say, 'Let's negotiate how the evaluation might be strengthened'?

Supt Cmdr BEGG—Under the program there is no capacity to do that, but what we are looking at is some further research about what sustainable projects have been over a number of years of the awards and see what has worked over the longer term because that is a test as well. If there is crime problem and you put an intervention in, how sustainable is that intervention? If you have something that is going to last for six months and then you have to redo it because you have a new cohort of people or it is not embedded in the community. I think one of the questions you have is community engagement or community capacity building and some other quite immediate ones. I think there is a space for both. Obviously the capacity building takes a lot more time and a lot more money. Sometimes you might have an immediate crime problem that you have to address to get the community in a space to go through that engagement process.

Mr SCHEFFER—Stepping right back—we have had quite a long conversation of all the different things you have been doing and we have had that conversation with others, as I have said, and we all subscribe to its value—has any work been done that you know of, or have you done any work about what the cost benefit of all this really and truly is? Where could we see is a big evaluation in terms of prosecution and some terms of costs to local communities, social outcomes. We talked about family violence before. Are you able to give any kind of picture of what that looks like at this point?

Mr THOMAS—Yes, some. The area of whole cost-benefit analysis in this whole crime area is quite new and it is not something that regularly happens as a matter of course. We recently created a position of an economist specifically to start doing this and start building evidence around getting a proper cost and rates for what we are doing, that we can make some clear decisions around the cost-benefit analysis. We had a whole strategy last year around trying to reduce the rate at which people were breaking into and stealing stuff out of cars. It was going up significantly in New South Wales. We were able to do a really clear cost-benefit analysis, and an amount of money was spent and money saved for the public to fight crime.

One of the challenges we had in the whole cost benefit area in Australia is a dearth of costing information. There was some work done about 10 years ago by the Australian Institute of Criminology trying to cost particular types of crime, but we did some work recently comparing those costs to comparative costs from similar jurisdictions—New Zealand, UK and the United States—and what we found was that the costings we had been using in Australia were significantly higher for the same types of crime and they were in similar jurisdictions. The problem with that was if you were applying the costing information. It is the only real study we have in Australia around costs of particular types of interventions. You will find that interventions in the States that were shown to be cost-effective here, was showing to be cost-ineffective because we are underestimating the costs.

Mr SCHEFFER—For example, the figure that is bandied around—and I have seen in the reports—say, family violence, we were talking about before, where they say (indistinct) the year to the national economy. Are you saying the methodology, as an example, that that is based on, is not as robust as we might think it is?

Mr THOMAS—I do not know about that.

Mr SCHEFFER—Okay.

Mr THOMAS—The methodology that was done by the AIC two years ago was based on the best figures they had at the time. What we know compared to similar jurisdictions—and that worked—

Mr SCHEFFER—Who do you mean when you say 'similar jurisdictions'?

Mr THOMAS—The US and New Zealand in particular. Our estimates are far lower for the same types of crime. We are going through the process at the moment to try and establish specific costings for New South Wales that we can establish as a basis that we can base our cost-benefit analysis on, but unless we have that base information it is difficult to do a cost-benefit analysis. As I say, if we use those AIC figures for a break and enter project and you use the Australian figure, you get a very different result than if you use the—

Mr SCHEFFER—Do you have a sense of what the methodological difference is that produces these different outcomes, or are you not up to there yet?

Mr THOMAS—We are using a methodology at the moment which is quite a new methodology called 'willingness to pay'. It is a methodology that is used in public health and environmental economics. It tries to put a value on a particular problem by how much an individual is willing to pay to avoid it which has done some significant telephone surveys of people in New South Wales based on this particular methodology to try and put a proper costing on how people perceive crime in a particular community. It is quite easy—if you take a break and enter, for instance—you can work out what the costs are in different things. You can work out the cost of replacing a broken door, replacing a television that was stolen. What is more difficult to put a cost on is changes of behaviour as a result of that break and enter and how that is their perception. This willingness to pay methodology—and we are happy to give you some information on that if you like—tries to engage that resident to say, 'Well, if there are activities in that area that you can reduce to likelihood of suffering that particular type of crime, how much are you prepared to pay to avoid that crime happening to you?' As I say, it is an economic methodology we use in a whole range of different areas and we are applying it to get some results. We do not have those yet but we will by the end of the year.

The CHAIR—The danger in coming late is asking questions that have already been asked. But if I can quickly ask—and it has probably been discussed—I notice the Attorney-General plays a significant role in relation to local council funding, whereas in Victoria we tend to use the Department of Justice. Has there been a question asked about the different roles?

Mr THOMAS—No.

The CHAIR—Perhaps if you could tell me why the Attorney-General's Department is involved as much as it is in relation to the Department of Justice?

Mr THOMAS—They recently had a change in structure of government in New South Wales so our department is now the Department of Justice and the Attorney-General. It is effectively the equivalent of the Department of Justice in Victoria, but not the same though. The Attorney-General does play a formal role in the crime prevention process where if the local council has crime prevention plans, I think it is the Attorney, on

the advice of the Minister for Police and the Minister for Community Services can endorse it, and if it is endorsed then we can apply for funds.

The CHAIR—A quick one if I may is the issue of alcohol seems to be a common theme amongst many of our youths. Would you be willing to advocate for harsher conditions around retail outlets selling packaged beer where there appears to be an increase in violence or assault or antisocial behaviour? Have you provided any motions to parliament in relation to stricter use of alcohol or hours at nightclubs to reduce antisocial behaviour? Getting down to the basics about what communities can do in relation to trying to reduce violence?

Mr THOMAS—Whether or not the government wants to impose harsher penalties is a policy matter for government, but in New South Wales we have had a regime in place for the last couple of years where licensed premises that have rates of assault above a certain level are subject to specific licensing conditions. Restrictions on their ability to sell alcohol after certain times, closing times, and restrictions on the ability to sell alcohol having glasses, as opposed to plastic cups. Since that regime has been in place we have seen a reduction in alcohol-related assaults for the first time in a long time, I think. There was a very specific focus on that—we started that in Newcastle which my colleagues might be able to give you some detail on—and licensees and licensing conditions which did have a significant effect on reducing alcohol-related assault in particular precincts. But over the last couple of years the state government moved into ramp up the linking between violence and licensing conditions. We have since that came into place seen a reduction in violence across the board. There are still some places that are problematic but it has reduced it significantly.

Ms YORK—If you want I can talk about the Newcastle model, what I know. I was not at Newcastle at the time but it is held up as the model of best practice across the state and we have looked at a number of similar strategies across the state. That was particularly working with the licensed premises about the closing times and being very harsh on the closing times, servicing plastic glasses, looking at special events where we have low alcohol beer. We would not allow full-strength alcohol beer. They have been very proactive also about the policing strategy. We have a lot of walk-throughs. We have licensing sergeants attached to each command. They will do proactive strategies, particularly on Friday and Saturday nights, where they will walk through the premises, they will inspect them, and they will look at the intoxication of the patrons. They will issue breaches as a result of it. They will check the security that they are doing the right thing. We will do inter-agency operations as well.

We will take the council—particularly the fire brigade—looking at their safety issues, because a lot of times if they are breaching their responsibilities under the Liquor Act, they are breaching the responsibility under council regulations and other things. The fire brigade has been very useful, council has been very useful. Where we do not get a lot of breaches, sometimes there are issues that they will pick up about the safety of the patrons, as well as working with those licensees to make sure—and we mentioned before the safety of the patrons outside. We look at transport to get people away from there, if they want to leave—taxis, buses—and it is all interconnected within the community to ensure that we are trying to reduce the alcohol-related crime. It is certainly a matter that our commissioner is very strong on. Every week he is in the press, concerned about alcohol-related crimes.

I was doing press interviews today and I came in for a stand-up yesterday about alcohol at young people's parties, gatecrashers and things like that. It is certainly something that we are pushing for very stringent conditions on those licensees to make sure they abide by

their regulations. We can also close down the premises if it is too serious at night. We can make an order upon the licensee to close the premises. We can do that, I think it is up to three days. There is a substantial commercial impact if they are not doing the right thing.

Mr SCHEFFER—Do you exercise that?

Ms YORK—We do.

Mr SCHEFFER—I think we are just about through with the matters that we wanted to raise with you. Is there anything else anyone wants to add? Can I, on behalf of the committee, thank you very much for your generous time this morning. It has been incredibly useful and very interesting. There are some matters that Sandy and Pete will follow up with you which should be useful, and you will be provided with a transcript of the discussion today and you can make what changes you think are appropriate to that record. Thank you very much.

Mr THOMAS—Thank you.

Ms YORK—It was remiss of me to not pass on my deputy commissioner's apologies when we came in. I will formally pass that on that he has been unable to attend.

Mr SCHEFFER—Thank you very much.

Witnesses withdrew.

Hearing suspended.

DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

**Inquiry into Locally Based Approaches to Community Safety and Crime
Prevention**

Sydney—19 September 2011

Members

Mr S. Ramsay
Mr B. Battin
Mr S. Leane

Mr J. Scheffer
Mr T. McCurdy

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Witness

Adjunct Lecturer G. Clancey, Sydney Institute of Criminology, University of
Sydney.

The CHAIR—Welcome, Garner. Thank you very much for your time presenting to the Joint Parliamentary Committee of Drugs and Crime Prevention in Victoria.

Mr CLANCEY—Thank you.

The CHAIR—I will quickly read you the requirements in relation to taking evidence at a public hearing. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975 and further subject to the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, the Defamation Act 2005 and, where applicable, the provisions of reciprocal legislation in other Australian states and territories. Any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. I understand you have read or sighted the guide for witnesses presenting evidence to parliamentary committees. Obviously we are recording the evidence and will provide a proof version of the *Hansard* transcript at the earliest opportunity. You can correct it as appropriate. I understand you are here to make a submission to us. We have allotted till quarter to 12 for this session. Over to you. If you are happy to take questions as we go along or make your submission and then take questions—

Mr CLANCEY—I am happy to take questions as we go on.

The CHAIR—Thank you.

Mr CLANCEY—Thank you for the opportunity to make these comments. I will make some fairly broad comments and then hopefully you will ask some questions that drill into your specific requirements, but from my point of view there are some things that are worth raising. I suspect others raised some of these issues. From the outset can I say that I think one of the key challenges around this area is really around data sharing. I think localised responses to crime prevention and community safety require the exchange of data between key agencies. My experience, practical experience and also some research experience suggests that agencies are often in a position—an invidious position really—where they are unable to share some of the data they have available and that can mean that some of our crime prevention responses are not particularly well targeted.

I understand some of the resistance on occasions for sharing the data, particularly around privacy concerns, that you would not want to undermine that, but there are certain offences where I think privacy concerns are not really a major consideration and yet it can be very difficult to access that data. On a similar point can I also say that the best responses, in my opinion, particularly from a local crime prevention perspective are premised on a very good understanding of spatial and temporal trends in local crime. Now, again I suspect others have mentioned this but we are getting better at understanding the exact locations where crime occurs and the time when crime occurs.

That data for me is central to any response. I will give you an example of the importance of the temporal understanding of crime. Much of our crime will happen Friday night and Saturday mornings, Sunday mornings, associated with alcohol. Many of our services are closed at the times you would probably want them open, in terms of response to those issues. Having a much better shared understanding of temporal trends I think is really critical. In New South Wales we have made some great leaps forward in extracting that data from the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, BOCSAR, and sharing that information with local agencies. It has helped improve local planning because people were talking about where the crime is occurring rather than this nebulous view that crime has gone up or down in the local government area. That does not tell you a great deal. Most of our local government areas are incredibly large. We do need to know where the crime is occurring and maybe some of the drivers, particularly around temporal trends.

If I can move to a sense of what might help some of this work happen, and from my perspective one of the things that undermines good work in this area is an absence of clarity, either policy or legislation. Legislation for me is something worth contemplating. The UK has the Crime and Disorder Act and it has forced agencies to collaborate in a way that I think is relatively unique. What we struggle with in this country in the absence of legislation is agencies who choose not to participate, opt out of any informal arrangements that might occur at a local level. That really undermined the quality of the responses and the effectiveness of the responses. Looking at something like legislation or a very clear policy framework is really important in this space. My experience of many, particularly local government workers feel uncertain about the future because often the future is painted in different ways, depending on political agendas, depending on crime trends. There are a variety of things that can change the focus and that can affect the quality of performance, particularly from local government personnel.

Ensuring some clear process, whether it is a policy framework or a legislative framework I think is worth contemplating. It is probably self-evident but resourcing them also becomes a critical component, and some sense of sustainability around resourcing and funding. Many of the agencies participating in localised crime prevention and community safety work, non-government organisations, often have very short funding cycles. There is an absence of certainty about whether they will continue to be funded in two years time or 12 months time. Does that really matter? I think it absolutely matters because to retain staff you have to have a sense that your job is going to be around for a little while. I see lots of organisations that do really interesting and positive work going under because of their inability to retain staff. A very good worker gets to know—say, for example, a youth worker knows the young people in the area. They know all of the agencies, they know of particular problems and then their funding is jeopardised or that worker says, 'I've gone to a government job because it guarantees me a job for life.' Resourcing is an obvious element that needs to be considered.

I might mention that capacity building in this space is quite important because what we are talking about is an interdisciplinary issue. Crime prevention is owned by no-one. There is no single agency that has responsibility for crime prevention. Police are obviously the prime agents, but if you look at some of the best examples, crime prevention has nothing to do with policing. It is early intervention work done by health providers, education providers. It is designing out crime that is done by architects and design professionals. As a result of that multidisciplinary approach I think we need to have a shared language. We need to build capacity within the relevant sectors to be able to talk to each other, to be able to understand the data sets that are available and to develop joint responses. For me that requires some degree of training and a degree of professional development. There is a major absence of professional development in this space.

The Institute of Criminology has been trying to meet some of those needs here locally by running seminars, workshops, developing self-paced learning packages, things that allow people to at least understand the theory and the context of their work so they are not working in conflict or in isolation. One of the other things that I do think confounds work in this area or makes a challenge for us assessing the quality of the work which ultimately undermines localised responses is our ability to demonstrate effectiveness. One of the things that frustrates that is really the difficulty about defining what we are doing. Crime prevention is incredibly broad. If we are talking all crimes then we are talking many thousands of crime types. It gets very complex at a local level if the agenda is looking at a multitude of crime types at one time, and if we are thinking about issues that really have to have a macro response.

Motor vehicle theft is a good example. The establishment of the National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council provided an opportunity for states and territories to be sharing intelligence to align their registration practices. We needed a response of that level for that crime. It cannot only be dealt with at a local level. One of the challenges is understanding where the key levers are and how we intervene locally, but also at a Commonwealth level and at a state and territory level. That might do as a preamble. If you are happy to move to questions I would prefer to answer questions.

The CHAIR—Thank you. You have raised a couple of issues and one was about the legislative requirements. I am trying to understand what you meant by that in relation to intervention, resource, structure. If you can elaborate on that. The other one is that I would be quite keen to hear about some of the successful models out there in relation to local community crime prevention activities. We have a national Neighbourhood Watch but in Victoria our reference does clearly indicate that Neighbourhood Watch is to be part of the inquiry. I am wondering from your perspective whether you see those local community groups working and how they can work better. We are travelling interstate to look at some of the successes of different states crime prevention strategies but also obviously some of those we are trying to navigate away from. If you can elaborate on those two.

Mr CLANCEY—Certainly. In relation to legislative requirements, I mentioned the Crime and Disorder Act in the UK is an example. Why I am drawn to elements of that—and I am not suggesting it has been a complete success given recent events—but in terms of the nature of that legislation it is really about saying that crime prevention is an inter-agency responsibility. We will dictate centrally that local government and police will be lead agencies in prevention of crime locally, and they identified that crime audits must be conducted periodically over certain periods of time, that there is a very clear understanding of local crime issues. They mandate which agencies are at the table who participate in local responses. They also mandate data-sharing which for me, as you probably guessed, is a bit of a critical issue. It is really about structures that are centrally imposed.

You can well imagine some of the local agencies feel somewhat set upon by such a process, but I think the fact that it forces an agenda that all agencies are responsible for and there is clarity about their responsibilities, for me is an appealing aspect. I am not suggesting it would work everywhere but there is merit in at least considering how that might look. One of the reasons it potentially works well in the UK is the alignment of government boundaries. They are all around local authorities. One of the greater frustrations I see in New South Wales is the non-alignment of agency boundaries—police 81 local area, 152 local government areas, a multitude of education districts. People are talking at different mediums at cross-purposes often because you have different players in the room just by virtue of where the geographic boundaries draw. For me that compromises the quality of the work.

In moving to your Neighbourhood Watch and successful models, I might talk about Neighbourhood Watch and then talk more generally about successful models. Neighbourhood Watch is an institution that probably had greater success when it was established because of the enthusiasm that it engendered to participate in that activity. In today's society with people being time poor and much more mobile, I think there are probably lower levels of participation. Many voluntary organisations are struggling with the same issue; how to get people to participate. A piece of research from the UK that I think is very interesting in the context of Neighbourhood Watch is this notion of repeat victimisation and near repeats. This notion that if a home is broken into that risk is

communicated, if you like, 400 metres either side of the home that is victimised. The risk is elevated for the next 28 days.

Why is that research interesting in this context? Often we could do more to mobilise people around an incident, rather than expect them to participate in an infrastructure for years which, in some respect, is what Neighbourhood Watch suggests or infers. There can be ways of mobilising responses that get people involved for a much shorter period of time that fits with their life circumstances, rather than joining up to Neighbourhood Watch for the long term.

I think some of the benefits of Neighbourhood Watch in the international reviews are about people obviously knowing each other, talking to each other. Some of the difficulty is sustaining them. That has been one of the key criticisms. Is it successful? There is some international literature to say that it has had moderate success. You will have heard of The Campbell Collaboration, a clearing house of international literature. They have a report on Neighbourhood Watch that points to some moderate success. But I am interested in alternative approaches, rather than having to subscribe to an organisation that has all of these administrative requirements that then needs popping up in the long term.

Successful models, can I say, is a real challenge—and I am sure everyone has said this to you. I am often more interested in the ingredients of what works rather than saying, 'This model works and we should replicate it.' Our literature, the crime prevention literature, is replete with examples of our inability to scale up an intervention. It works in location X, we scale it up and we struggle. We struggle to implement it in a multitude of locations. Why? Often the local champions are the ones that matter; the people who know their community, know the circumstances is the important ingredient for me. We need to build programs around those people rather than always presume that we should take something that has worked somewhere else and apply it. I think that is a frustration for government because you want to ensure the greatest level of resource allocation to the greatest number, but I am not always as confident that that is going to work as building up localised responses, and having flexible funding arrangements to respond to good practice in local areas. Therefore, I am often more interested in the ingredients of success rather than particular models of success. It is a non-answer in some respects but—

The CHAIR—It is an answer. Thank you for that.

Mr SCHEFFER—I wanted to follow on the matter that Simon raised about legislation, and you talked about the UK Crime and Disorder Act. What you referred to was the requirements that it places on government agencies to share information and do various other things. Can you draw the link for us how that then impacts on the local community areas. You talked about community organisations and the pressures on them by changes of government administration and policy directions in relation to resourcing, and also like non-government providers because, as you said at the outset in your presentation, they are the ones that really drive crime prevention in the end. How does that legislation link to that level?

Mr CLANCEY—My understanding is there are a couple that it links. One is to identify the important role played by society and non-government organisations. That is recognised.

Mr SCHEFFER—Yes, that is recognised.

Mr CLANCEY—Beyond that there are opportunities to then bid for funding. Once you have done your crime audit and understand local crime conditions you can bid for funding. Some of that funding will be directed towards the non-government

organisations. There is also a heavy emphasis on community consultation, and focusing on understanding community problems; not only from a data perspective. We all know that crime data can be incredibly misleading on occasions. You will hear the real stories by talking to people who might not ever report crime to police. There is also a heavy emphasis on engagement with the local community, and ensuring that what is understood about crime problems is not only through a centralised data source.

Mr SCHEFFER—What is implied in your presentation is that changes of administration and rethinks of policy create an instability in delivery which is counterproductive, and by legislating, as far as possible, it would have a greater chance of following through, through successive governments and successive administrations. Is that a fair appreciation of what you were saying?

Mr CLANCEY—Yes. I think putting in place the structures that generally longer-standing periods of government will ensure greater levels of continuity. Some of that can then also, in terms of the practices that are required under the legislation, but providing some certainty through a legislative framework does provide a much better likelihood of these practices being embedded. My sense of some of this work in Australia is we get frustrated because we cannot demonstrate results as quickly as we would like, and then we change our policy position. We change the policy mix. For people on the ground who are doing the work that can be eternally frustrating. The language changes, the rhetoric changes and the expectations of them change. That is very difficult, particularly in communities and locations where the work has to be done over the long term. Many of these are not quick fixes. You need a sense of continuity.

Mr BATTIN—Talking about the continuity, we have spoken before in relation to young people, probably similar questions I have asked the last group. Some of the research and what have you is going towards crime prevention at a very young age. That is not really assessable for 10, 15 years and we will never really know the results of what did or did not happen with that. Your view on how we get that out into the public and how you change the governments, councils and public perception on ways to get these programs out so people do see the positive outcomes of them, crime prevention at five years old.

Mr CLANCEY—Yes. We have to start, firstly, at capturing the evidence better. I am sure everyone has said this to you. We do not do evaluation particularly well in this country, would be my argument around this work. We often fund the programs and then do not allocate the funding at the outset to the longitudinal piece of research. This work has to be evaluated longitudinally. It is really about improving our data capture and evaluation measures before you can then start sharing the good stories. We can share good stories because they exist in this country. Some of the work happening through the Pathways to Prevention Project in Queensland is a very good example of that where we are capturing intermediate outcomes. In terms of your comment about crime, it is true, you cannot demonstrate a crime prevention outcome if the young person has not reached 10, but you can demonstrate improved literacy levels, improved participation in school, reduction in problematic behaviours in school. They are intermediate outcomes that are linked very closely, as you would well know, to a crime prevention outcome.

The more young people can participate in school, the lower rates of truancy, the lower rates of deschooling, then that is a pathway to lower rates of crime. We can demonstrate intermediate outcomes and I think we should be better at capturing that information. We get it out to the public, I think, is a real challenge in any of this space. Crime, when crime rates are going up, is of great interest. At the moment you could say some significant crime categories are falling in this country. It tends to have lowered its political interest

which in my opinion is a good thing, but how do we communicate that to the public and trying to use some really specific examples of where this work is working well. Most people are attracted to a good news story where we are seeing embedded practices in communities and in schools working. How to get the media to buy into that is a whole other challenge. If it is on the front page of the news, maybe not such good news.

In terms of getting the word out we really need to be capturing some of those stories and building an evaluation base, that we can start talking up these outcomes that we have probably not been so good at thus far.

Mr LEANE—You touched on a major concern in this area when you said crime prevention is owned by nobody which you would think would be a critical issue. Do you believe the UK legislation that went towards some way in solving that ownership problem?

Mr CLANCEY—I believe so. I would be interested in the views of others but I believe so because they mandated a lead agency, like police lead agencies. There is a great degree of clarity in that. Others are involved, as you can imagine—corrections, education, health, welfare agencies.

Mr LEANE—But unless there is someone at the top—

Mr CLANCEY —Yes. Unless there is someone at the top to drive it, to administer it, to maybe advocate to high levels of government—

Mr LEANE—That is true, yes.

Mr CLANCEY —Because this work requires advocacy up the chain. My area, location X, a highly impoverished location, we have done some wonderful design out crime work. We are building in some community communication, but the reality is the big challenge is housing allocation. How do we ensure that we negotiate with the housing authority in terms of how they allocate people into public housing or state housing. That requires some lobbying at more senior levels. With that identified structure it allows you to also navigate the vertical issues that are associated with ownership of crime prevention responsibility and budgets. Often the budgets will work in places that are not traditional crime prevention budgets. Education and housing, they are the ones who often get the biggest slice of the pie than localised crime prevention.

Mr McCURDY—You have also had experience in CCTV in public spaces. Can you tell us a bit about what we are learning through that process.

Mr CLANCEY —I think you have captured that well, what we are learning, because we are on a process of discovery. We are certainly not at a point where we know it all. What we tended to learn by the large-scale evaluations that have been conducted in other jurisdictions, it is not a panacea. It is probably no surprise to you, it is not a panacea. People put in the cameras and think that is the answer. A whole multitude of factors go into a good, functioning system: good technology; good communication with the police—because you want responsiveness, and it is less effective if it is only an evidentiary tool—good capture of images. Some of the technology that has been used in some locations does not get the good image. It does not get the good image because we have not put in the right lighting next to the cameras to ensure that it operates effectively. We have not pruned the tree that sits right next to the camera. I can point to lots of examples where the vision is obscured by structures or landscaping. They are important variables to make it work.

The best piece of research you can guess comes from the UK, given that they have most cameras in the world. It is really about all of those elements working together and monitoring of the cameras being such a crucial role. The problem is, monitoring is where the cost is. It costs money to have someone sitting there watching all of these cameras and calling police saying, 'There's an incident occurring now on the corner of Macquarie and Phillip Street, get there.' The Campbell Collaboration has done a review of all of the best evaluations of CCTV programs in the world. They say very modest returns from investments, three to four per cent reduction in crime. This can be a very expensive form of crime prevention intervention. Some local government areas maybe spend a million plus on monitoring annually. One of the challenges that does not get drawn out so well is once you put the cameras in, (1) what happens when crime comes down? It is politically very difficult to pull the cameras back out. (2) once you put cameras in, where do you stop?

I know of a number of areas that have had cameras put in and then the suburb next door says, 'We're in the same local government area, why haven't we got the cameras?' It becomes this expanding infrastructure that becomes less suitable to responding to the local issues at hand. We are still learning but I would say most councils, if they are considering, should really think about how all of these elements have to work together to get a good outcome. CCTV tends to work best in carparks and retail outlets, casinos, and places where you control access and egress. You can monitor people moving through the location. Public space is such an amorphous beast. You can still have drug deals being done right under the cameras and you would not know. It tends not to be so effective in that regard. The other issue is, people are often intoxicated so they are not the rational offenders that we think they are. It does not prevent, it is good for evidentiary. There are some challenges around public spaces and CCTV.

Mr SCHEFFER—When you say 'modest returns' and three per cent reduction in crime rates, what is a good return?

Mr CLANCEY—A good return is street lighting. The review of street lighting is closer to 20 per cent, and street lighting reducing crime in the day not only night. There are unusual characteristics where people feel better about the area so they are more likely to use the area. That means there are more eyes on the street, which is what our goal is, get these areas activated. In comparison that would be a good return for street lighting.

The CHAIR—The environmental issues around planning, if you could touch on that, perhaps after Brad has had his question.

Mr CLANCEY—Yes.

The CHAIR—The other one is some city councils now are encouraging residential in what is traditionally retail, particularly upper storey, trying to bring families into those areas that are more at risk—CBDs. If you can make a comment on that when Brad asks his question.

Mr BATTIN—You said with street lighting it is getting more people out there, more eyes out there. Is it fair to say the best programs are the ones that get more people within an area to have more eyes out there to prevent crime?

Mr CLANCEY—I think they are really important. They can be very successful but should also be matched with some social interventions, that we do not think, 'Populate an area and crime will go down,' because we also should be conscious of crimes that occur in homes; domestic violence is the scourge of this country. It is not going to be prevented through activating the space, but, yes, if we can activate the spaces and get people moving

through them, then we will have people feeling much safer and generally lower crime rates which is a nice segue maybe into the comment about planning and mixed use. If I start with mixed use, the notion of when we historically have had clear zoning practices we have learnt that that probably has not worked so well because cities are vacated at 5 o'clock and become no go zones. We are now switching that around for mixed use development.

I completely endorse mixed use development. It can be a very successful way of broadening out the time span that that space is activated. If you do have retail, maybe some office blocks and then residential on top then that area is activated almost right throughout the day, unlike the really strict planning regimes that said 'one use, one zone'. That leads to designing out crime. We have been very good in this country in embracing the concept. We have not necessarily known how to embed it into practice. I am withdrawal often spruiking the Victorian guidelines, the Safe by Design guidelines. I personally think they are the best in the country. Are they being used and utilised as much as possible? I am not sure. I think we can do more to engage with the built environment professionals—the architects, the urban designers—to ensure this stuff happens. Some of that is legislative. We have done a review of crime risk assessment reports in New South Wales. Our sense from that small sample is the areas that had development control plans that say, 'You must consider crime risks,' tended to have better analysis of crime risks than those areas where that policy guidance did not exist. You can embed these things through legislation to ensure that the development sector takes notice of some of these often very simple design requirements, and not necessarily very expensive.

You can modify where the living room is that it overlooks the park. Suddenly there is some relationship between home and park, or home and street, by virtue of how you design in where that living room is going to be, or putting a balcony on. They are simple design techniques that can make them feel safer in their communities because they are seeing that other people are watching them and they are visible to others.

The CHAIR—What about planning in relation to not so much internal architectural planning in a house but the public space issue where you have these houses that are chock-a-block against each other with no greenery, no trees, no natural escape from the concrete.

Mr CLANCEY —I think there is a link with some of this work and what is happening in the health space. There is a nice convergence of ideas. What we are seeing through crime prevention for environmental design and healthy design, is that these neighbourhoods should be walkable. There should be places that people feel good about being in, they want to live in. Building residential estates that are unappealing visually, that are unhealthy physically, we will end up seeing through some of our buildings in years to come some of the problems we have seen in our public housing estates. People do not want to be there. The property prices will fall, they will be degraded, people will only buy them for rental purposes which means high rates of mobility, and that is where we see problems arise.

Mr SCHEFFER—Can I come back to the UK Crime and Disorder Act. In your subsequent comments you have raised another question for me. You talked about the nexus between crime occurring in a particular space and really having its genesis in the housing facilities for that particular cohort. It does not limit itself to housing obviously. It extends to health, it extends itself to planning and education. As an example I could say within Victoria that local councils might want to prevent a packaged liquor outlet because they might believe that density is too great, but they are told by their own legal people, 'Don't go there because it will go to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. It

will get knocked out because it's not in the Environmental Planning Act. That's a problem, forget it.' Are you saying in the UK legislation there are provisions in that legislation that mandate particular strategies that go to crime prevention? How do you do that? The Housing Act then links through to this Crime and Disorder Act? I cannot understand the mechanics of that.

Mr CLANCEY —Can I say I think you are extending some of the Crime and Disorder Act into other areas. It is less about mandating some of those other domains, it is more about mandating that those agencies represented participate in the discussions around crime prevention planning.

Mr SCHEFFER—If you take your example, to explore it a bit more, you have a particular crime activity occurring in an area and you yourself said its genesis might be in a housing issue. How would the connection be made?

Mr CLANCEY —The connection would be made through the audit of what the local crime problems are, and the explanations for those crime problems. If I gave any of you a hotspot of any local government area you will see very clear concentrations of crime. The analysis will say, 'Most of our crime is occurring in this area that may well be a public housing estate.' That then is the trigger to have the conversation with the housing authority, 'What are we going to do about this?' We know there are some environmental design solutions that we can put in place.

Mr SCHEFFER—The housing authorities might be going beyond that. But if the housing authority says, 'Actually, we're about housing value. See you later. You deal with the crime problem, not our bag'?

Mr CLANCEY —That is where they are vertical relationships and arrangements because it is driven by a central authority, home office. There is a capacity to raise it up and then have more senior bureaucrats responding to the relevant bureaucrats in housing authorities. It comes back down the chain. We have been told there have been the council and tribunal playing ball. 'It's time you play ball with this group because it's a real problem.' Does that make sense?

Mr SCHEFFER—Yes, that is good, thank you.

The CHAIR—All right. Thank you very much, Garner. We appreciate that. You have covered a lot of ground. Obviously you are very passionate about the work you do. Thank you very much for your time.

Mr CLANCEY —My pleasure.

The CHAIR—There is plenty of food for thought there.

Mr CLANCEY —Good luck.

Witness withdrew.

Hearing suspended.

DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

**Inquiry into Locally Based Approaches to Community Safety and Crime
Prevention**

Sydney—19 September 2011

Members

Mr S. Ramsay
Mr B. Battin
Mr S. Leane

Mr J. Scheffer
Mr T. McCurdy

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Deputy Chair: Mr J. Scheffer

Staff

Executive Officer: Ms S. Cook
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Witness

Professor D. Weatherburn, Director, New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics
and Research.

The CHAIR—Welcome, Prof. Weatherburn, to the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee, joint parliamentary committee of Victoria. Don, we are taking evidence and I will read you the requirements in relation to taking evidence at a public hearing. We have allotted until 12.30 for this session.

Prof. WEATHERBURN—Okay.

The CHAIR—We are certainly very interested as a committee to ask you questions about your presentation as well and hopefully time will permit. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975 and further subject to the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, the Defamation Act 2005 and, where applicable, the provisions of reciprocal legislation in other Australian states and territories. Any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. I understand you have read or sighted the guide for witnesses presenting evidence to a parliamentary committee. You have probably done it many times, I would suggest. We are recording the evidence and will provide a proof version of the *Hansard* transcript at the earliest opportunity. You can correct it as you see appropriate. I understand Sandy sent you the basis of the inquiry.

Prof. WEATHERBURN—Yes.

The CHAIR—We do not have to go into detail about that. Over to you. Thank you very much.

Prof. WEATHERBURN—Thank you very much everyone. What I thought I would do is be as brief as I can and tell you what type of information we provide to assist in the process of crime prevention. I should say by way of background, the bureau itself is not directly involved in crime prevention or directly involved in policy development in the department at all. Our job is to do the research, find the facts and let others fashion policy on the basis of that. We have a Crime Prevention Division who you are probably going to speak to, if you have not spoken to them already. I will go through the data we use, the typical situation used in dealing with community crime prevention.

I have also included a couple of documents, and I will pass them on, some of which have a bearing on reducing reoffending, but I think that is outside your terms of reference at the moment. There is one paper though that is worth looking at, about liquor outlet density which has been useful for crime prevention.

Overheads shown.

Prof. WEATHERBURN—The types of data that is typically used for the purposes of crime prevention that come from the bureau are trends in offences where the offences occur, what sorts of premises, offender information, incident information, seasonal and daily patterns and (indistinct) distribution. So I am going to quickly illustrate each one of those and then I thought we might usefully have a chat about it rather than me rabbiting on. This is a bit hard to see. In case you cannot see, what you have, this is a typical local government area—

The CHAIR—Don, we need to pick you up on the microphone.

Prof. WEATHERBURN—Okay.

The CHAIR—If you could take the microphone with you.

Prof. WEATHERBURN—You cannot really see this but what it shows you is a list of offences on the left-hand side and you have both the number of incidents and the

rate per head of population for Canterbury local government area, a typical local government area. A local government coming in will want to know what is going on in their neighbourhood. Basically, this tells you two things: first of all what the prevalence of that particular kind of offence is in the local government area. For example, you can see in the Canterbury local government area, robbery is the particular problem. You would not know that from this, but I know it. You have a rate of 155.6 per 100,000 population. For unarmed robbery that is very high. You can see the 24-month trend—this is the third column from the end. The red indicates that it has gone up over the five-year period, and the yellow indicates it has gone down.

You can see, looking back over the last five years, in Canterbury the instance of domestic violence assault—reports of it—have gone up 10.3 per cent over the five-year period. Over the 24-month period—that is the third column from the end—the only thing that has gone up is fraud, 21.4 per cent. I would advise them over the phone that the reason fraud has gone up is that petrol prices have risen and people are going to service stations, filling up with petrol and driving off without paying. The first point is, they get to see how their area compares in terms of offences. On the far right-hand side you can see how that area ranks across the state. Canterbury ranks number 76 for a domestic assault. It ranks very high for robbery. It ranks five for robbery. That gives them a quick perspective on how they stand in relation to other areas and which crimes are getting more frequent and which crimes are getting less frequent.

Once they are seeing that, of course, what they are going to want to know is more detail about the offences. This tells them, on the left-hand side, you have the various premise types. I will read them out to you—I will not go through them all—adult entertainment; financial institution; office; personal services; car parks and so on. You have a whole list of possible locations for crimes. You can see where each of these crimes are happening. You can see, not surprisingly, that 409 incidents of domestic assault occurred in residential dwellings. No surprises there but it is quite interesting to see the majority of non-domestic assaults are happening in outdoor public places, and quite a few in educational places, and 62 of them occurring in retail wholesale areas. This is only for Canterbury. It will change for every local government area. You can see where your robberies are happening, mostly outdoors, also in shopping centres and so on. This is the first stage of crime prevention planning. You know what the trends are, you know which crimes to worry about, and now the question is where are they happening. That is what that slide would tell you.

Mr LEANE—That is an interesting statistic that I can see where you have the non-domestic violence related to styles. There are quite a lot in residential as well.

Prof. WEATHERBURN—Yes.

Mr LEANE—It is not that far off the public space really when you—

Prof. WEATHERBURN—Well, a lot of the non-domestic assaults are still amongst people who know each other even though they are not related. People imagine non-domestic assault as classic stranger danger and minding your own business, that does not typically happen at all. All too often they get drunk, go home, have a fight. Police are well aware of that. Moving along, our information on victims and offenders is not very satisfactory. This is about all we have. We know their age, we know the gender of the victim and we can break it down by offence. But at least you get some sense of whether they are juveniles or adults. We can also break it down by whether they are indigenous or not indigenous. We do not have any other information on the racial origin or ethnic origin of offenders. We did try to collect that information but the collection was too unreliable to

maintain. We have pretty limited information. We also have the socioeconomic status of the suburb where the offender lives but that is about it.

The offender is pretty much the same story. We know their age, we know their gender and that is essentially about all. Just how useful local governments find that information, I do not know, I am not terribly happy with it, but we are having some difficulty trying to improve on the quality of the information we have about victims and offenders. The main problem is the collection process. Police are very busy. All this information comes from police. They have very limited time to collect information about the offender beyond what we collect.

Now you are looking at probably one of the biggest issues for police. When police attend an incident, it does not matter what type of incident it is, they are obliged to go through a standard procedure to determine whether or not they think it is alcohol-related. It is not a foolproof procedure but there are certain guidelines for it. You can tell what proportion of the crimes are alcohol-related. It is always quite intriguing to see how much of the assault offences are alcohol-related. In domestic violence you have 73 per cent non-alcohol related in Canterbury. Bear in mind that percentage will vary enormously from one local government area. In Kings Cross it would be a very different story. In the case of robbery about one in 10 are alcohol-related. Break and enter, obviously not alcohol-related. It would be a fool that got drunk before doing a break and enter but they do do it. It gives you some sense of what leverage you might have in relation to alcohol.

One of the big things for local governments is when did the offences occur? When do they need to marshal their resources to deal with these problems. There are some quite strong seasonal effects. I have highlighted a couple. I did not go through every one. If you look at domestic assault you can see that it peaks in January and December. People are happy to get together then but so are people that are unhappy and they tend to drink more and before you know it you have problems. You can see there are other things that tend to peak in January and December as well. Motor vehicle theft tends to peak there, and stealing from a motor vehicle. If your only crime prevention strategy is one of alerting people to the higher risk has a much better effect from telling that December is a bad month, than telling them broadly, 'Watch out for your vehicle,' and they can perhaps take the top off that particular problem.

These numbers will mean nothing to you, but I will leave them with you and you can look through them at your leisure. What you are looking at here is time of day. It is crucial to prevention to know what time of the day. This is telling you what percentage of the offences occur in different three-hour blocks throughout the day, according to what day of the week it is. This would not normally just be sent to a local government area and left—

Mr SCHEFFER—What is the top row?

Prof. WEATHERBURN—The top row is the day of the week. The second row is the three-hour timeslot. We have broken it down. The time period, the peaks for crime, varies on the day of the week, depending on the day of the week. What would normally happen is that a local government would be sent this, and then someone from bureau would walk them through it and explain the process to them. If a presentation was required you might do a graph to make it a little more digestible. What you are seeing is something that would normally take 30 minutes to explain to someone. They would work through it with them. I am rushing through it, but this does give you some idea of what they are after.

Far and away the most useful thing that we have been doing is our crime mapping service. We have two techniques from crime mapping. One of them is the creation of crime hotspots, a complicated process trying to work out where exactly is a mathematical formula that determines where the hotspots are. Unfortunately I did not have it for Canterbury, I have it for Blacktown, and you can see where the hotspots are. Of course, this is incredibly useful information for crime prevention because instead of looking over the entire locality you realise that you can marshal your resources around particular points. This for non-domestic assault but of course the hotspots will vary for different types of offences. By marshalling your surveillance might help you choose where to put your CCTV; it might assist in liaising with police to determine where they are going to send their patrols; it might assist in identifying what are called crime attractors—ATM machines or other things that are drawing offenders in.

This would be the starting point for a more localised inquiry into the factors that are associated with crime. Sometimes people do not want to see the hotspots, they want to see the raw data. That is not so helpful. This is the same offence, Blacktown, non-domestic assault, but each individual offence is listed there. You can see at once the advantage of putting these things through the mix and getting the hotspots out of them because it is a little bit harder working out the clusters, but either kind of information is available to people. There is, however, one problem we have been grappling with, and that is the issue of privacy. One of the problems with this type of information is that you are potentially revealing information that the victim of the crime may not want revealed. We have had quite some difficulty liaising with local governments who want the information broken down as finely as you can. We, on the other hand, do not want anyone complaining that they have been identified publicly as a victim of crime.

Up to date we have been providing these maps quite readily on the web site, but when it comes to the point maps, we require the local governments to sign an undertaking that they will not reveal this information to any third parties.

Mr SCHEFFER—On the point map, does the concentration—what does it correlate to? To some extent it would correlate to population density anyway. But then it would correlate to other factors. Using that as an example, could you talk about that a little bit?

Prof. WEATHERBURN—It is a good point. As a matter of fact—I was not going to mention this but I will now—we do two kinds of maps: this kind which simply looks at the raw frequency, either as a hotspot or as a point density. Both those maps, the hotspot and this one, are simply mapping the distribution by number. As you correctly point out, if you have larger numbers of people you will see more crime hotspots. I will say something about that in a minute. We also provide hotspot maps which map the distribution of crime compared with the state as a whole, where the density is higher than the average or lower than the average. You can look at it either way.

What we have found though is local governments—and it is a curious thing. Whereas normally a statistician would only be concerned about the rate per head of population, local governments want raw numbers. As far as they are concerned, the fact that there might be 20,000 people going through a place that has 200 assaults, whereas some other place which has a higher rate but lower number, it does not seem to count for them. As far as they are concerned, the reputation of an area derives directly from the total number of incidents. It is a bit like Kings Cross up here. There is not much consolation saying to people in Kings Cross, 'Well, you do have a very large number of offences occurring here, but per head of population, including transients, it's not that bad.'

One of the things you notice in crime prevention planning at street level is that people cease being so concerned about the rate and become especially concerned about the overall volume. That is partly because from a local government standpoint the reputation of an area is made by volume, not by risk. Is this making any sense?

Mr SCHEFFER—But you as a statistician pull this together—I am putting words in your mouth now. You do not agree with that emphasis on the raw figures, you would say it is a more useful indicator to look at the rate per population?

Prof. WEATHERBURN—I would say it depends very much on your purpose. If I was advising citizens of their risks, yes, I would totally agree with the rate analysis—and we constantly say, 'Look, Sydney has the highest number of offences, it has the highest rate, but that's because of the huge transient population that comes through.' The reference is always back to the vulnerable or the size of the population at risk. Over the years I have certainly learnt, for some purposes, especially where a local government, for example, is concerned about the reputation of an area and they are concerned that people may not be using an area or certain groups of people may feel it is not safe to go to that area, it is very difficult persuading them that the raw number does not matter. The raw number is what people are responding to. But I take your point and it is a very big issue.

The same thing happens with licensed premises. Some of our worst licensed premises in terms of raw numbers may not be the worst in terms of risk, but we have no capacity to measure the flow-through of licensed premises, of patrons.

Mr SCHEFFER—Is that something—I am not being critical when I say this but it sounds, from what you are saying, you have had a go at trying to get a different perspective on it but that is what the customer seems to want. They want the raw figures and that is the world.

Prof. WEATHERBURN—Yes.

Mr SCHEFFER—On the other hand, if that objective is to give the community an accurate presentation of what kind of risk they are exposed to, where that law enforcement and crime prevention is looking after them, then we would want them to have more accurate information. Essentially it behoves government and other agencies to try to get that message through nonetheless.

Prof. WEATHERBURN—Look, I think this is absolutely right but you may not be aware how deep-seated this problem is. Let me give you a simple illustration. When, around Australia, police report crime they generally do so at the state level, and even when they adjust for population—that is to say the rate per head of population, let's say, robbery in Victoria is 10 per 100,000 of population—that in itself is misleading because it does not give you a picture of the risk from one community to the next. You often see police realising that the best way to get their crime rate down is to focus on areas of large population because halving the risk in Bourke, for example—I cannot think of a suitable outlying area in Victoria—or Mildura, where I was born, will have very little effect on the overall statewide trend; halving it in Footscray might.

There has not yet been a thoroughgoing approach to this volume in terms of risk, even on the part of police. If you were to do it that way—and my view is you measure your success in terms of changes in the number of local government areas that have a risk higher than some threshold. I am conceding the point I am fleshing it out a bit further. If you are serious about measuring changes to risk and improvements in risk, you really have to keep a focus on the local government area or some geographical area that is quite small, otherwise, simply saying you have halved the rate of murder across the state tells

you nothing about how that risk might have changed within a particular local government area. I think it is a good point. That is basically all I was going to present. I do not think there is anything more.

The CHAIR—Do you find the local government areas are particularly sensitive about getting bad news in relation to the crime statistics?

Prof. WEATHERBURN—You get two very different kinds of reaction. There is certainly a group that respond like that, that are fearful of having this information. There is another group, a growing group, that are keen to get hold of it. The initial reaction in a crime-prone local government area is to not want to deal with this and not want it publicised. But things seem to be changing quite rapidly at the moment because we recently wrote to every local government in New South Wales offering a free service, analysing their crime data for them in a bespoke manner, especially designed for them, and the take-up rate has been quite good. Marrickville Council is one I recall that was not too keen about this in the beginning but I think when they realise there are tools for addressing this crime problem, it is not all bad news, and they get enthusiastic about it.

Mr SCHEFFER—How does that work? You make the offer and then you go along. How do you do it?

Prof. WEATHERBURN—The way it works is that if they express an interest, if they write back saying they are interested in this, my staff would meet with their staff to work out exactly what their concerns are, or what should be a matter of concern, and work out what maps might best suit their purposes or what sorts of reports, along those lines might best suit their purposes. We would simultaneously refer them to the Crime Prevention Division of the Department of Attorney-General and Justice so if they wanted any outside assistance from that body they could obtain it—that is also free of charge—or they may wish to hire a consultant.

Mr SCHEFFER—So when they say to you, 'These are our concerns,' what do they derive those concerns from?

Prof. WEATHERBURN—They may well have people typically complaining about a problem and they are not sure how serious that problem is. For the sake of argument, this is entirely invented: a lot of people express concern about assaults or offensive behaviour in and around a particular location, say, a neighbourhood park or on the beach, then they would ask us to do a map of the distribution of people picked up for offensive behaviour or offensive language. They know that some of this may not be reported but it is all part of a bigger picture. We would provide that information.

Mr SCHEFFER—That could, to some extent, confirm their intelligence or refute it in some way.

Prof. WEATHERBURN—It could.

Mr SCHEFFER—Then where do you go next with that?

Prof. WEATHERBURN—It is not a case of where we go. After they have obtained the information we cease to be involved in the process. They may use the information in their meetings with police. They may say to the police, 'We've been to the Bureau of Crime Statistics. This is what we see that confirms what we're concerned about.' I am not in the meeting so I do not know what they say but I presume they may ask for additional patrols or—

Mr SCHEFFER—One of the charts you put up showed the red spots, one of them being family violence figures going up.

Prof. WEATHERBURN—Yes.

Mr SCHEFFER—You said—and we heard that before—that is probably a consequence of people reporting and disclosing.

Prof. WEATHERBURN—Well, I am not sure about that. Did I say that?

Mr SCHEFFER—Okay. But we have had it told to us that you could interpret it—let's put it that way—as a higher rate of reporting. Now, that is an interpretive thing. Do you engage in that—because you just did then with us. Would you do that with them?

Prof. WEATHERBURN—Only to the extent of saying that it could be. I mean, I am frankly very wary of blaming that every increase in domestic assault is nothing more than an increased reporting of it. The honest answer is you would not know, you do not know, looking at those figures. Across the state you know because you have a victim survey where people are asked if they have been victims of assault, and did they report it to police. I can say at a state level there has been an increase in a willingness to report. I could not say that at a local government area level. I do not think the figures on domestic assault would be too much use for them in judging whether the risk of domestic assaults are going up, for the simple reason that, frankly, no-one knows whether this is a change in the willingness of local residents to report it.

Of course, contextual information might help if the local community groups have been running a campaign, it might lean more favourably to the reporting theory. But if a new pub had opened locally and the problem had gone up, you might lean the other way.

Mr LEANE—The book you wrote, *Law and Order in Australia: Rhetoric and Reality*, in 2004, how far apart is it now, the rhetoric and the reality? Is it further apart or is it closer?

Prof. WEATHERBURN—I think things are getting more rational partly because crime in Australia—property crime at least—has come down very substantially. The level of irrationality about law and order policies declined somewhat; not only in New South Wales but elsewhere. That has given people breathing space. If you are asking me have we now reached Nirvana, no, we are an awful long way from that. I still see plenty of programs that are known to be ineffective in the getting of funding, but you do not expect those transformations overnight.

The CHAIR—The perception is that crime is increasing. We had a gentleman here prior to you, and I thought his comment around, 'If it bleeds'—

Prof. WEATHERBURN—'If it bleeds, it leads'.

The CHAIR—Yes, lead stories. We have a lot of regional cities that always lead front page domestic violence and bashings in the CBD. In the conversations we have had over nearly seven months I am hearing the view that the problem has decreased and that generally the population is more safe in relation to assault or crime—

Prof. WEATHERBURN—I am not sure about assaults. Certainly the homicide rate has come down quite substantially over the last 10 to 15 years, and all the property crimes have come down substantially, that is to say, break and enter, motor vehicle theft, robbery of various kinds, stealing from a motor vehicle. All those theft offences have

come down. I cannot recall a situation for Victoria, but in New South Wales, assault really has not come down. It has come down in some locations.

Mr SCHEFFER—Yes, I was going to follow up, because I thought that in Victoria what the story was on the last sets of figures was that in certain hotspots, assaults have gone up and that they were broadly located, for example, to venues, but in other parts of the state it has not gone up.

Prof. WEATHERBURN—Look, I will be perfectly frank with you. I have real problems with the Victorian assault figures. The police in Victoria have a process of recording assaults that has always been hard for me to understand. Let me put it this way: the Victorian Police figures suggest that the Victorian assault rate is something like twice the New South Wales rate. But if you look at the National Victimisation Surveys there is no difference between the two states. There has always been this concern that the Victorian Police will not record, for example, a domestic assault unless the victim is willing to give evidence. Now, we are in the process of quite rapid change in that, as far as I know, in Victoria.

Mr SCHEFFER—Are you saying that the Victorian rates appear to be higher than they should be?

Prof. WEATHERBURN—I am sorry, I have said it the wrong way around. The New South Wales rates appear—if you compare them to the Victorian figures—twice as high as Victoria.

Mr SCHEFFER—Right, okay.

Prof. WEATHERBURN—My apologies. I got that around the wrong way. I hope that does not confuse things. I have real problems with the Victorian assault figures for two reasons: partly because of that, and partly because I think Victorian recording practices in relation to assault are now changing. I would wait for them to settle down to whatever they are going to end up being.

Mr SCHEFFER—They are being brought more into line with the way New South Wales does it?

Prof. WEATHERBURN—You would have to speak to the Victorian Police, but I have had a number of inquiries from your ombudsman, from your police, from your Office of Data Integrity, a special office there, and I had the impression—and I may be wrong—that there are some changes afoot in the way that Victorian Police record assault. It is not only Victoria, assault is the most problematic of all the offences. Queensland also has a different recording practice. It too has been reluctant to record an assault where the victim will not give evidence. It is not specific to Victoria.

The CHAIR—Do you want to say anything else, Don?

Prof. WEATHERBURN—No, I hope it has been helpful to you.

Mr SCHEFFER—We had some questions asking you to comment on how the information that you collect can be useful to local communities. I take it from your response to one of my earlier questions that you do not go that far, you do the data and then leave it to them to make other arrangements on how they handle it. Is that fair?

Prof. WEATHERBURN—Yes, broadly speaking. We do presentations to community groups and to local government, but we do not give advice on crime prevention, other than the most general kind, 'Don't leave your goods on the back of the

seat when you're driving away.' There is an agency within our host apartment that does all that work in-depth. We try not to tread on each other's feet.

Mr SCHEFFER—The other question I had too, you were talking about BOCSAR being independent. I wanted to ask you whether you are created under an act or whether you are a creature of the government of the day.

Prof. WEATHERBURN—We are a creature of the government of the day. You would probably need clarification on what I mean by 'independent'.

Mr SCHEFFER—Yes.

Prof. WEATHERBURN—When we produce reports, I do not seek approval to release those reports. When they are ready I give them to the government. I usually give three or four weeks, with one exception, for them to digest the results and then I put them up with a press release that I write myself. The government does not attempt to control or research agenda. It does not control or attempt to audit the reports that we produce. It does not interfere with my direct dealings with the media. It has not ever threatened our budget if I give them bad news.

Mr SCHEFFER—Given that you are a professor, particularly to university, you are also a bureaucrat in another sense. Our practice as a committee has been not to ask bureaucrats policy questions, but I will ask you as a professor because it is a policy question, not an operational one.

Prof. WEATHERBURN—Sure.

Mr SCHEFFER—Do you think it would be better if BOCSAR was not trying the legislation to absolutely secure that independence, no matter how governments change or the policy changes?

Prof. WEATHERBURN—I think so. Absolutely. You see, from my point of view the job is not worth having if I cannot have that independence, it is not a problem to me, and I think everybody here understands that. But in earlier stages of my career I have come under pressure from governments, and others might fall prey to those pressures. I think it would be far better if your obligations and your powers were clearly spelt out. Having said that, it would be better to have a bureau that did not have that than none at all. Yes, I think it is better to have it as a creature of an independent statutory body. It is somewhat anomalous in the sense that the bureau is not a statutory body. For example, they have recently established a Bureau of Health Information in New South Wales which is a statutory body. Perhaps when I leave, the bureau might become one. I do not know. As far as I am concerned, as long as no-one interferes in our work—

Mr SCHEFFER—We will not be making any recommendations to the New South Wales government.

Prof. WEATHERBURN—I think one of the dangers in not having agencies and statutory bodies, there is always a tendency for research organisations to drift incrementally into policy. I think that is fatal. You need to keep the policy development process separate from the fact-finding process. You do not want a situation where someone who is being asked to evaluate policy is in the same room helping people to develop the policy. There goes their objectivity. That is a policy I adopt as my views on things, but it would be better if that was clearly spelt out, in my view.

The CHAIR—Can I ask in relation to Neighbourhood Watch programs you might be familiar with, you know how they advertise the crime statistics, particularly in a

local area, do you see that data being useful in future in relation to providing stats on crime in local areas or do you see another structure for a local model, for what is happening in the local streets?

Prof. WEATHERBURN—Sure. Well, Neighbourhood Watch itself does not have a good track record in terms of evaluations. In general the evidence is that it does not work. It is not quite true of what is called cocoon watch which is where you alert people in the immediate vicinity of a burglary to the fact that a nearby house is being burgled. I do not know the answer to your question if it is, is it best to have this information provided by local police, or a crime prevention group, in conjunction with advice on how to protect yourself against burglary, or whether you leave people in a modern day and age with the capacity to find out for themselves. I do not think there has been any rigorous assessment of that. Certainly people who use our web site do make great use of the crime maps. I am guessing they are trying to make some assessment of the risks in their vicinity but I do not know for sure.

The CHAIR—Part of the inquiry is looking at today the Neighbourhood Watch program we have in Victoria and how it is being used now and what its future might be. A lot of the work has been identifying whether crime is being reported locally, and people then get a sense of how they might have to respond to that.

Prof. WEATHERBURN—Yes.

The CHAIR—I was wondering in the new day and age whether that data is useful.

Prof. WEATHERBURN—Certainly. When Neighbourhood Watch started many citizens were probably drawn to it because they did, for the first time, get direct information about crime in their neighbourhood and that was extremely interesting. These days—certainly in New South Wales—that would be passe. Anybody can have that information. You can see it on the web. The effectiveness of Neighbourhood Watch or cocoon watch does depend a bit on the demography and lifestyle of the residents. If you have, as you do in western Sydney, most neighbourhoods are pretty much empty during the day which is when the burglars strike. There is no-one to watch. It is not as if you have retired people there who can keep a lookout for your property. In a street like mine, say, in the eastern suburbs, you have four retired people in one street and it might be more effective in that context. My instinct would be to treat Neighbourhood Watch or cocoon watch as a possible option and apply it where it seems sensible to do so, rather than a one size fits all approach to crime prevention.

The CHAIR—It is interest with your mapping, I had not thought about it, but if you are buying a house in a suburb you might well want to go and have a look at your mapping to decide what the incidence of crime, assaults and general violence is before you make a decision whether you want to live there or not.

Prof. WEATHERBURN—That is right, yes. Another one of the concerns is that we have had a number of people from security firms wanting to get hold of this information to market their wares. This is another concern. The last thing you want for people who have been victims of crime to be further burdened with this type of thing. There are some real dilemmas to be sorted through.

Mr SCHEFFER—Could you talk about that a bit more.

Prof. WEATHERBURN—We have had security companies wanting access to our data, I presume, so they can sell products and services to local people—and I am not

philosophically opposed to that—but I would hate to have someone knocking on their door, knowing that the reason they are there is because they have been identified as the victim of a burglary. At the moment we provide aggregated information of that hotspot variety but not any information that identifies the location of crime that is on a dwelling. You cannot get detailed point maps.

Mr SCHEFFER—Neighbourhood Watch in Victoria has set up a new web site and they have links to security companies on there which—

The CHAIR—They are advertised.

Mr SCHEFFER—Effectively advertising their sponsors. Is that part of what you were driving at? Do you see that as a difficulty?

Prof. WEATHERBURN—Well, it is not a difficulty for us. The crucial thing here is, I do not have a philosophic objection to security companies offering services to people. I do have a problem with them using information about whether a person was a victim of crime to do that. What we do, when it gets down to that, is identify the number of offences occurring on a street. We put a number, a blog, in a street. If it is a crime on a private dwelling, we do not show it. If it is in a public place, we show it. All you see for crimes on private dwellings is hotspots. You cannot identify the individual. Perhaps I am being too cautious. I understand the British have had some problems with people suddenly discovering that other people know they were victims of crime and they do not want this information broadcast. I think that is reasonable.

The CHAIR—All right. If there are no other questions from the rest of the committee we thank you very much for your time.

Prof. WEATHERBURN—My pleasure.

The CHAIR—We appreciate it.

Witness withdrew.

Hearing suspended.

DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

**Inquiry into Locally Based Approaches to Community Safety and Crime
Prevention**

Sydney—19 September 2011

Members

Mr S. Ramsay
Mr B. Battin
Mr S. Leane

Mr J. Scheffer
Mr T. McCurdy

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Witnesses

Assistant Commissioner C. York, Northern Region Commander, and
Supt Commander H. Begg, Operations Programs, Sydney,
Chief Inspector J. Maxwell, Human Resources, South West Sydney, and
Inspector L. Kennedy, Project Officer Customer Service and Programs, Sydney
Metropolitan, New South Wales Police Service.

The CHAIR—Welcome, and thank you very much for your time. The hospitality in New South Wales has been very generous. We have two references: one dealing with community safety and crime prevention which we are here to talk about; we are also doing a second reference in relation to security in emergency wards at hospitals. I raise that because I thought you might like to make mention of that. Our Deputy Premier and Minister for Police passed a reference to us to look at an election commitment providing private security officers in emergency wards of public hospitals in Victoria. As you probably understand that has caused a little bit of concern in the community about having armed guards in public hospitals. We have been asked to look at security arrangements in hospitals and see if in fact there is a requirement to have private security officers or armed security staff in emergency wards. That is our reference and not really related to the hearing today, but if you wish to make comment on that from a New South Wales perspective I would be happy to hear that.

I will read you the conditions under which you are providing evidence to this hearing. I will quickly read you the requirements in relation to taking evidence at a public hearing. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975 and further subject to the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, the Defamation Act 2005 and, where applicable, the provisions of reciprocal legislation in other Australian states and territories. Any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. I understand you have read the guide for witnesses presenting evidence to parliamentary committees. We are recording the evidence and will provide a proof version of the *Hansard* transcript at the earliest opportunity. You can correct it as appropriate. Superintendent Begg, are you the lead speaker in this presentation?

Supt Cmdr BEGG—Thank you for the opportunity this morning. This afternoon we are going to specifically focus on a pilot project that we are running in New South Wales which is 21st century Neighbourhood Watch known as Eyewatch. Chief Inspector Maxwell will walk through that particular presentation and give you the opportunity to explore any questions that you may have. Inspector Leith Kennedy is in our customer service area and they have been working on a number of initiatives about engaging the community and improving customer service. He is going to talk about some of the particular programs that we have around that area.

Ms YORK—I would like to say a couple of things, the commissioner, Mr Scipione, is very interested in the way in which we communicate with the public and interact with the public. He himself has a technical background. He is always looking for opportunities to improve the resources of the police. As I mentioned this morning I did a project for him on social networking and what the opportunities and challenges are in relation to social media for law enforcement. One of the things the commissioner is very attuned to is the different ways in which the community communicate with each other now. He wanted to be on the front foot in relation to some of the ways in which we deal with the public. If you had an opportunity to look at our internet site for the New South Wales Police Force, you will see we now post our own YouTubes. We have a multimedia unit that goes around and videos arrests or operations that we do in a proactive way, that we look at getting our message out to the community prior to the Channel 9 or Channel 10 news putting their spin on that news. People can go and freely have a look at some of the search warrants we have done or operations, random breath testing and different things, across the whole of the state. They can look at the good things that New South Wales Police are doing, or at least the true version of an uncut video.

We utilise it for appeals for information so we can get CCTV video. We take direct information from members of the community through the local phone recordings and

different other mechanisms to get the video to us for crimes or incidents and we can appeal to the public for information. The commissioner very much wants it to be two-way and interactive communication, not only getting information or putting out information but adding some value to the communication. I do not know if you have had an opportunity to hear about what Queensland did in the floods but certainly they used Facebook and Twitter very successfully when the more traditional methods of communication broke down because there was no electricity and the floods were moving very quickly. There was no way they could take the calls for service with a person on the end of the phone to give information.

They put out lots of information to the community about what suburbs were affected, what roads were affected, and also getting information from the community about what they were seeing as well. Josh might go over the way in which we utilise friends but they went from about 20,000 friends the day before the floods to about 200,000 friends. People were linking on and getting the information direct from the police without a huge resource intensive burden placed on the police. Mr Scipione is very much looking at that communication for us as well and getting the messages out.

This model, the Eyewatch project, was developed—and I am sure you will go some of that—in a way in which we wanted to interact with the new means of communication out in the community whilst keeping some of those traditional models in place as well. Over to you, Josh.

Chief Insp. MAXWELL—Thank you for the opportunity to talk to today. Project Eyewatch was born around October last year. Myself, Superintendent Stewart Smith and with the operations manager in south-west region, we had a discussion about how we incorporate social media into the Neighbourhood Watch world, given we had a fair indication of where the new government was going to go and given the Liberal and National Coalition have put out a policy paper about reinvigorating Neighbourhood Watch in the 21st century. As a result of that conversation we received some directions from the executive. The executive then asked us to look at this in a small project team and work up what this would look like. We did a fair bit of research on the internet and so forth, looking at all the different social networking mediums and we went right across quite a few.

We used Facebook in this particular process, only because (1) it withstands the rigours and you have 800 million people using Facebook around the world. In Australia alone we have 11 million people using Facebook in some way, shape or form virtually every day of the week. We are the highest nation per capita of users anywhere in the world. It is really looking at how we might approach that Neighbourhood Watch process that has been operating in New South Wales since 1984 into the 21st century, how would we invigorate the younger generation into Neighbourhood Watch and get in touch with the police. Hence the concept of Eyewatch was born. Over the next three or four months we trialled it in a pilot site in a closed group environment within the Facebook environment and from that perspective we then ironed out a number of the bugs and so forth.

When the government was elected we then produced a position paper, a research paper, up through the executive to the minister, and the minister asked us to roll out a pilot project. That pilot project ran for two months from July to August and a report has been furnished to the executive late last week in relation to that pilot program with 15 recommendations therein to move the project into the next phase next year. Currently we have 35 commands that have been through our induction training process which is a full day of training at our simulated operations unit at Parramatta. This is where we bring all the command teams and their civilian precinct coordinators—which I will explain in more

detail shortly—to that particular facility and run them through a whole range of training. I would extend an invitation to the members or a representative from the Victoria Police Force or Victorian government to come up and have a look at that particular training program. We have three days of training on the 27th, 28th and 29th of this month, and further training later in the year.

That training melds the police and civilians together, understanding how the Facebook system works and how we are going to use Facebook in not only local level information going out from a local area command page—and I will show you the difference between this shortly—but also how we build community using a social network environment in closed groups which afford those communities significant protections. Over and above that within that closed group environment we overlay a police layer of security on top of that and we can stop people we do not want coming into those groups, such as paedophiles, criminal gangs, those sorts of things, getting to the community that way and exposing our community to that type of thing. We have been very successful with our program thus far. We have over 10,000 fans since we commenced this project six to eight weeks ago and over 1,200,000 hits. I will show you that as we go through.

That is a very broad overview. What I have is a very short presentation with a couple of key issues to go through, where we have come from, why we have done this particular process and where we go into the future. Neighbourhood Watch is such an invaluable tool, police in democratic societies need information from communities. As we did the research we were going back looking at Neighbourhood Watch from America, from the UK, right through to Russia and a whole range of other areas. It is something that communities still want. Certainly one of the reasons why is because the people of New South Wales indicated to us in no uncertain terms—and certainly to the new government—that they want to be heard at a local level. They want to be involved, not only in local problems but being involved in the local solution building. I can find examples of what as we go through the presentation as well.

We also want to make this mobile because we know what the world today is. Everybody is time poor. We are all running around with a whole range of things today, with the kids sport on weekends and those sorts of things. We want to have a look at how we can engage them in that mobile framework, hence the use of iPads and smart phones also allows us to use that platform to be able to engage on a 24/7 basis. We are not restricting people to come to a specific meeting, sit down with those people at a meeting, go through an agenda and most of those meetings may go for three or four hours, and sometimes you walk out of those meetings saying, 'What did we really achieve?' The Facebook process makes it very sharp, short and succinct in that online meeting process that we have developed.

Part of the research, and the key points for us, is that every major organisation across the world is engaging in social network and that is a recommendation from Assistant Commissioner York's research as well. It is very much at a high level in terms of coming up from a public affairs area, and very rarely do we get that interactive feedback coming back from a social network. It has been very effectively used around the world in terms of emergency management, as we saw in the Queensland floods, the New Zealand earthquake disaster and also the Japan earthquake. But we had to bring it down to the community level, the local level, for that engagement process and community ownership. We have a short video in relation to the concept of this. It goes for about two minutes and it really shows you what the key concept is and how we are getting people chatting online.

Video shown.

Chief Insp. MAXWELL—The research from us, we looked at our computerised system, database system, our radio systems in terms of our method last year. The data was pretty straightforward. There were 517,000 calls we attended as a police force last year, purely on suspicious activity. Only nine per cent of that related into something that required a police investigation or an intelligence report. I should say there is another 50,000 plus calls for that type of activity. What we are trying to do is look at a better way to engage with our community in relation to those issues, that we feel safe and can talk to police on an ongoing basis and whenever they are available as well. The process of Eyewatch is really about giving greater access to our police. Rather than have a centralised area, such as public affairs streaming out information that may be pertinent to the entire state but not to the local level.

Superintendent Smith is a commander of the rural area, and waiting for the media list to go out on Monday, go to the local papers or the local media on the Tuesday, get published and edited on Wednesday, finally released on Thursday, there is an information lag. What we are developing is a system to allow us to get that information out very quickly and virtually in real time. That is the open page process—and I will show you that shortly. We are also looking at facilitative forums in the community. Rather than bring people to a meeting we can allow these people to have an immediate online or be involved in that process on that basis. At the moment we have 25 Neighbourhood Watch groups that are migrating into this particular process and that is six to eight weeks of activity. The biggest group we have is the Riverstone community groups and they have 470 members within that group sharing information about what is going on in their community. It is a semi-rural community in the north-west of Sydney.

What we are trying to look at is exactly that, a very much high-value community network where police are back to those principles of 'community are police; police are community', and by engaging the social networking 24/7 capabilities, that is where we want to go. There are four clear principles that we are looking at—I will go through those with you shortly—but this is a schematic of how we are doing our business. We have the precinct closed group that I spoke about before, and I will show you that shortly. Precinct members apply to become of that precinct closed group. They have to go through a number of tests and that is a check at the local police station to make sure they are not part of a criminal element. We then have a precinct coordinator who is a non-paid civilian person who is volunteering their time with the New South Wales Police to coordinate that particular precinct.

The precinct can be geographical; it can be issue motivated; it can be from an ethnic origin. We have been very loose on our descriptions of how precincts are set up. Those precincts can be anywhere for any particular issue. To give you an example we have a Westfield group at Parramatta. That is a large retail establishment with retailers in that area. That has been operating now for four weeks. They have 150 of their retail members working in a closed group and they are talking about theft, they are assisting their CCTV capabilities in identifying offenders, and missing persons that get lost in that environment as well, and antisocial behaviour in the precinct. The Westfield group are going to migrate that process across into our other commands as they come along, such as the eastern suburbs which have started last week as we have gone through the process.

They are the groups, and then we feed information into our police through our local area command page and then we feed that information back to those groups and back to the general community. First we break it down into four key areas: we have a geographical issue group responsibility and this is our Facebook page group. This is where we have our precinct coordinator which is a volunteer in police, or a community member of the community safety precinct committee, I believe you have been briefed on this morning.

Those members are volunteering their time to coordinate precincts for their particular group, whether it is a geographic group or whatever the case may be.

Along with that within the local area command we have crime prevention officer and they are becoming our police facilitator within those precincts and they become a linchpin to the success or otherwise of this particular process between community and police, supported by the crime coordinator, the crime manager and the local area command. This is where the local area command are right in the picture in our local area commands across the state that they have taken responsibility about the information going out from their command—good information, crime information and the offenders and so forth that we are looking at.

We are looking at corporate sponsorship and those types of issues from the (indistinct) operation where this program sits at the moment. The command operation program has been prepared and of course we link directly with public affairs. They build—all our pages through our pages are consistent. Our rules are consistent and that then falls to the project team with public affairs to manage all that. The New South Wales state plan—I do not know if you have a copy of it. It was only released last week—New South Wales 2021, Project Eyewatch is well and truly embedded into the community, the actual strategies for police within that particular state plan. It is an onus on us to make sure we get this project up and running in this pilot form, review it and see what we go with from there.

The four key principles: we really want to get back to our communities. We will focus on people who need our help. This is how we can talk to people on a daily basis. It is quite interesting that I am receiving quite a number of what they refer to as private messages in Facebook but are prepared to give me crime information and intelligence information that would not necessarily be reported to police or reported to Crime Stoppers. People do not want to pick up the phone but they are more than happy to type you a message with that information in it. To give you an example, a week and a half ago I received an unsolicited private message from a gentleman who, for obvious reasons, I will not name. That gentleman indicated a suspect who had come out on parole, and one of his parole conditions was that that particular gentleman had to give clean urine samples. The information was he was buying urine and giving clean samples that were not his. An intelligence report was submitted, the drug board and our prosecutors and a team up there went out and did a field test. After a five-hour stand-off that gentleman gave a sample and that sample was tested. This was the type of intelligence information that we say is part of this process, part of this particular project.

Principle 2: empowering accountability. This comes down to the key issue about the community being able to drive where police resources need to be. We will really get in and engage the community. That is really what we are trying to achieve so that people are free to talk to us. People often do not pick up the phone, they do not want to report a specific crime but they are more than happy to fire off information about specific issues. What we are trying to build is a real problem-solving aspect between police and the community through this process.

We will balance our priorities—and this is where it is about police being absolutely honest with our community, turning around and saying, 'Yes, we can deal with that particular problem,' or, 'No, because of our resources and our priorities we can't.' Then it is clear to the community, their expectations, of what we can and cannot do. We have to balance all the things we have to do across the state.

Then what we really want out of this is developing community capacity and sustainability. We want to make sure we never drift away from the community as we have done over the years, we come back and we become jointly responsible for dealing with crime problems. We are also finding we are becoming very much a reference point for problems that may not necessarily be a policing issue but may need to be a whole government strategy or another agency that we can get involved in the process. Through the commentary, through the email audits and through the comments and posts within the Facebook environment, gives us the evidence to take back to local government, to our local councils and to the state government if necessary.

The sponsor for this is obviously Minister for Police and Emergency Services who has approved this particular project. This is a video we have put up on YouTube. It clearly articulates his expectations from the project.

Video shown.

Chief Insp. MAXWELL—I will take you through our set-up in relation to our pages and the groups and the differences between them. Are you all Facebook savvy?

Mr BATTIN—Yes.

Mr McCURDY—Can I ask, is this on top of Neighbourhood Watch? This is the replacement?

Chief Insp. MAXWELL—No, it is together.

Mr McCURDY—Still together?

Chief Insp. MAXWELL—Absolutely together. It was clear from government and clear from the commissioner that we still wanted our Neighbourhood Watch groups, but it is about making sure that we can bring people who would normally go to a Neighbourhood Watch meeting, get them involved right across the community. What you see here is a number of our pages. We have established 35 local area command pages and three specialist pages, one being the Project Eyewatch page which basically all the local area commands come to. It is the central repository and they can take information they need out of that particular page, which is one on each.

We also have one for rural across New South Wales. They are farmers, police and everybody involved in the rural regional communities can talk to each other outside of geographical boundaries or whatever the case is, our specific boundaries, and they can talk about all those types of issues—stock theft, yield theft, water theft—because we know that rural crime is dramatically under-reported across New South Wales and I would suggest across Australia from communications we have seen thus far. That allows us to spread information about what is happening in the rural areas.

We also have the Blue Mountains Police Rescue page. That is specific information about conditions within the Blue Mountains—trek information, safety information, all those types of things. We are building that page so that people overseas, when they are thinking about coming to the Blue Mountains, there will be a whole range of resources. One page is for people to get to, and we put pictures and so forth in relation to rescues that have happened as a reminder to people that up in the Blue Mountains it can get dangerous in certain locations. Again we can migrate that into north-western Victoria and two other locations in remote areas as well.

To give you an example of that, the local area command, we will go to Newcastle city. There are 2,093 people that like this particular page. Every time the Newcastle police

force put information out there, they get an application within their user group within their own profile. We are talking about a whole range of issues—

Mr LEANE—Do you have to go through a police check to like a page?

Chief Insp. MAXWELL—We are leaving that absolutely open for anybody to come into because we are not giving away world secrets here. It is information you can give to the public anyway. So we put a lot of crime prevention information, crime prevention tips out there. I will be talking with the marina command body end of October, and it is envisaged we will have the marina command page very similar to the rural crime page, where we will talk about marine-related issues across all the marina pages. We get information as simple as this: 'Is it illegal to grow marijuana plants in your house?' That particular person then is given the information in relation to a specific place where we believe plants are being grown. That has been given to Newcastle detectives this morning and they will be no doubt knocking on doors tomorrow or Wednesday.

Specifically, we are finding that most of the issues that have been discussed—and it would not surprise you—alcohol-related crime, youth crime, graffiti and traffic issues. Every time one of those particular issues comes up within the Facebook environment on pages, that is where it attracts most of our impressions and so forth. I have some video in relation to some armed robberies, and for me as an administrator on the page, that (indistinct) Newcastle command. We know that nearly 5,000 people have looked at that particular image, and hopefully, as a result of that video, we will be able to identify those particular offenders. That is one of the examples of our pages. Are there any questions in relation to this?

The CHAIR—Victoria Neighbourhood Watch is using the web site more as a medium for those that do not want to attend meetings. With Facebook do you find there is a certain demographic that will not use it at all?

Chief Insp. MAXWELL—The demographic data has usually been—I can show you the demographic data here, the Newcastle page. Most of our demographic is 40 per cent females from 25 to 45 that are using this particular process. We know what all the key issues are. Again I will put a caveat on that, that is based on what people put on Facebook; 70 per cent of people put real information onto Facebook and, of course, other people put a whole range of different—

Mr SCHEFFER—Can you read out the text? It is a bit small.

Chief Insp. MAXWELL—Certainly. You have females at 70 per cent; males 29 per cent. You have a majority of females 26 per cent between the 25 to 34 age group and 21 per cent between 35 and 44. From a command perspective we can see who is interacting with us on a regular basis.

Mr LEANE—So the over 55 demographic is a lot smaller.

Chief Insp. MAXWELL—Certainly. It is quite interesting, those that are using Facebook. In the Tweed Valley on the coast of New South Wales, right on the Queensland border, there are about 13 Neighbourhood Watch groups that have been very active for a long period of time and they still get together and have meetings. They are now migrating on 25 October to train with the precinct coordinators. They are very keen to get involved in this particular process because they are monitoring and mentoring school children and they are learning from the school kids how to use Facebook, as well as bringing a lot of experience to the school kids in that environment. It is building a strong relationship in the Tweed Valley. The majority of people up there that are involved

are 55 and above. The precinct coordinators we have trained thus far, one is 73 and one is 72. The 73-year-old manages 15,000 veterans via email.

Mr SCHEFFER—On the general usage of Facebook amongst the older cohorts, I understood that there was a very widespread use of older people using Facebook. Is that right? Is this running counter to that? Are they using Facebook but not doing this, or are they not using Facebook at all?

Chief Insp. MAXWELL—No, our information is they are using Facebook. More and more of them are using Facebook to interact with their families—see photos and so forth. We have only been going for six to eight weeks.

Mr SCHEFFER—Sure.

Chief Insp. MAXWELL—We are now migrating a range of the older groups into the Facebook world and we are engaging people like ComputerPals at Parramatta who are retired people, who are then training their friends on how to use Facebook. We are finding that more and more people are using it. What we are also building is something that is not only for now, it is for the future. Social network is here to stay, we know that. Will we stay with Facebook? I cannot tell you that. If something better comes along, better support from a security perspective and so forth, we will certainly keep abreast of that. Are we attached to Facebook in any commercial arrangement? No, we are not. It is free, as is the Gmail system we use to set up our force profiles.

Mr LEANE—Getting back to the question Tim asked and I think you answered Neighbourhood Watch and Eyewatch are going to operate in conjunction.

Chief Insp. MAXWELL—Absolutely.

Mr LEANE—Is there going to be a point where Neighbourhood Watch will become redundant, because Eyewatch is a more simple, realistic form of sharing communication in real time?

Chief Insp. MAXWELL—It is probably not a question to say 'yes' to because how long that lead time will be, I do not know. There are groups out there that still want it. They use their Neighbourhood Watch time frames as very much a social gathering.

Mr LEANE—Yes, and that is fair enough.

Chief Insp. MAXWELL—That is fine.

The CHAIR—That is a transition phase.

Chief Insp. MAXWELL—Absolutely. Again that is why we are not very restrictive in our business rules and how people engage across our communities because every community is different. We built this so that people can meld their system to their particular group in whichever way they want. We have another group in the north-west of Sydney in Winston Hills and they said four months ago, 'We need to migrate into something,' and I thought, 'Well, how to do it,' and now we are coaching them through that particular process. But that group, it will take them at least 12 to 24 months until they are more across Facebook.

Mr SCHEFFER—It seems to me a lot of the evidence we have is saying to us that Neighbourhood Watch has really gone past its used-by date. It was pretty good in the 80s and so forth but it is really over. It seems to be what this is really doing is replacing Neighbourhood Watch but being very polite about it, and leaving it simply to atrophy on

the branch, as it were, and this is really the future and you are getting on with that and Neighbourhood Watch is really gone but you are still giving it a tick for political reasons. That is probably too much of a policy question for you to answer.

Chief Insp. MAXWELL—Probably, sir.

Mr McCURDY—Can I throw another view that says, 'Maybe we're not sure that this will work yet.' I know it is a network that everybody is using, and whether they will use it for this purpose, and while you still have Neighbourhood Watch running, there are still opportunities—if you lose that Neighbourhood Watch group right from the word go, you may never get them back, this is not going to plan—

Chief Insp. MAXWELL—There are certain areas within the state where we are finding the take-up is very slow in these groups, and that is fine. We are happy for them. There may be one or two individuals within that Neighbourhood Watch group who then become the group and then they interact with police and feed the information back. The key issue out of all this is that we are getting information out to the general public a hell of a lot quicker than we used to do under the Neighbourhood Watch process. But having been two months, some of the prime information—it is two months old and it is not relevant at that particular time that they are having a meeting. The other benefit of using this information is that we need real live information about what is happening in the community every day, rather than waiting for meetings to happen at a given time and then trying to cover all those issues that happened in the previous month or the previous two months.

The CHAIR—We have a slight dilemma in that our next witness has arrived and we are scheduled to finish at quarter to three. I know there were some components that you wanted to discuss as well as Eyewatch. Perhaps we will give you the opportunity for other witnesses to present, if you would not mind.

Insp. KENNEDY—Yes, quickly, I am going to cover the Community Awareness Policing Program, CAPP, and our community engagement strategy. To give you a little bit of background, in 2007 when our current commissioner took office, Mr Scipione, we were alerted to the fact that customer service was an issue for our organisation, and 26 per cent were customer service related complaints. We did an audit on victim follow-up and we only have a recorded 26 per cent of victim follow-ups. If you report something to police you have a 26 per cent chance of hearing anything ever again, which is not ideal, and in addition to that, a national policing satisfaction survey which is a measure of how we stand against our quality states, our satisfaction by that time was 63 per cent. There are a number of factors which led to the development of a customer service charter which was an issue of our commissioner.

There was an extensive consultation process behind that which led to the development of few commitments and a clear definition of who our customers are. We took a position as an organisation that we would not include criminals as our customers because for police that is a very hard thing to swallow, so our customers are obviously witnesses, victims of crime, partner agencies and internal colleagues. Our four commitments in the charter are to be professional, keeping people informed, which is critical; taking appropriate action and being accessible to the community. There were a number of measures developed, and programs associated with training our people in relation to customer service. Two of those programs have evolved from our community engagement guidelines and our Community Awareness Policing Program, which I will refer to as CAPP.

Firstly, CAPP, again is an initiative of the commissioner. He visited the FBI and they have something overseas called Citizens Academies whereby they rotate recognised community leaders through these academies and they have a chance to walk in the shoes of law enforcement officers. Over a number of evenings and a number of days they do structured exercises with specific learning outcomes. They leave the program generally as advocates to police or law enforcement officers and, if not, they definitely have a greater understanding of what we do, why we do things and understanding how we do things. That is the idea. The commissioner asked for that to be developed in New South Wales. We developed the CAPP program and in line with that we invite recognised community leaders to join us for a number of weeks to walk in our shoes.

For example, on the first evening the group of about 15 to 20 people were on a search and rescue scenario maritime base, because New South Wales Police has responsibility for rescue. One person will be the media liaison officer and have to do a media conference. Someone will be tasked with dealing with a family member who is upset. Someone will have to make decisions about resources and expenditure. They really do feel the pressures in every single scenario that we give them. We take them to the Riot Squad. We talk about why we have a Riot Squad, what their key duties are, and then we put on a demonstration of what would happen at the high-scale end of public disorder. They have a chance to view the practical side, feel what 35 kilos of equipment is like to wear in summer et cetera.

They go to a number of commands in the structured course and they are hosted by one of our executive. The types of people that we pick for this program are community leaders. For example, we have had Cardinal George Pell, from the Roman Catholic Church. We have had had Archbishop Peter Jensen from the Anglican Church. We have had sporting leaders like Steve Waugh; David Gallop, head of the NRL. We have had professors, media et cetera. We run a couple of these a year. The commands that post us have to fulfil their normal duties, therefore, the people that we pick are people of importance in their respective communities, and it has been highly successful so far. That is CAPP. Did you have any questions about CAPP?

Mr LEANE—You said 'media'. You have some pretty special shock jocks in New South Wales. We have some specials as well. You have not managed to hook in anyone like that?

Insp. KENNEDY—Without naming names we have had editors from major papers, we have had radio announcers, anything from public broadcasting right through to the commercial.

Mr LEANE—Does it change their perception?

Insp. KENNEDY—Absolutely. Independence of the media will always be independence of the media, but when you put someone in the shoes of the police officer making decisions about calling off a search based on medical advice from a doctor about how long a person can survive in the water, or you put them onto a virtual firearms simulator and you show them a scenario—it might be someone getting out of a car, on the screen, who is aggressive; or it might be you are in a shopping centre and there is a person who has mental health issues or whatever, they are up there standing on the range by themselves with an appointment belt and a training firearm and they are trying to engage with this person who decides to pull out a knife, any argument about whether you can shoot, all that type of stuff, there have been no specific comments come out of it. I have a DVD in the pack here where you can watch and listen to some of the quotes that people have done. Victoria Police have sent a contingent down to New South Wales Police

recently and they have run one CAPP under the former police commissioner. I do not know if that is continuing but they have taken it up.

Community engagement: again this was another idea of our police commissioner. He sent to Deputy Commissioner Catherine Burn, who is our corporate sponsor for customer service, a link from a very small community web site which talked about their local police being available for a community surgery on a particular Saturday morning, and the commissioner asked could we look into that and what are the possibilities for New South Wales in terms of engaging communities in that way. Also there is a number of areas of research which tell us from BOCSAR, the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, that 80 per cent of New South Wales residents mistakenly believe that crime is increasing. Crime categories underestimate the incarceration rates, those perceptions, whether you get the perceptions from the media or whatever.

The idea of community surgeries in the UK was that it was an opportunity where the average person can go down and talk to the commander of a particular area. Our equivalent in New South Wales would be a superintendent or a local area commander. The idea of having a local area commander there is that they are decision-maker and that when concerns are raised at a community meeting they can make decisions about particular issues. We developed a model in New South Wales and we trialled it in the rural and metro areas. We did not want to be too prescriptive in how local area commands run their particular engagements but nonetheless we provided some examples. They might want to do a 'face the people' type session which is a typical community-type meeting. They might want to pick an area, street, a housing area et cetera where there are no problems, tell the community that they are coming by way of local media, letterbox drop, and that they would be available there to talk about whatever issues.

There is a number of ways you can do it but it is about engaging the people that we do not normally talk to. It is not necessarily about a person that would continually come to a regular community safety precinct committee championing a specific issue. It is about chatting with mum and dad who get their impression from the local paper about crime, and correcting these perceptions and giving our message directly to the community. We trialled a number of areas and they did it in a number of different ways. Barwon local area command, which is a rural area in Moree in New South Wales, they conducted it in a Housing Commission area. They did a multi-agency approach, that as an organisation we could make appropriate referrals if it is a Housing Commission issue, and if it is a policing issue then we would take it on.

In Sutherland in South Sydney they did it by way of going down several local shop areas and chatting with the butcher, chatting with the newsagent. They received information about Joe Bloggs selling drugs upstairs and there was a drug bust as a result of it. It is an intel-gathering exercise as well. The feedback from the community, and also from the police, was very positive in terms of gathering information about crime, correcting misconceptions. Even at constable level—because the local command is encouraged to take a selection of their staff with them, be it a crime prevention officer or two general duties constable—it is a chance for them to interact with people and get feedback, comments like, 'You do a great job.' But when you are going from job to job in a truck, you might not necessarily hear that. It was a very positive thing even for our people. We developed a model and a measure process whereby we have asked all commands to do a minimum of five per year and we have left it open in terms of how they do it. They could even do it in terms of electronic engagements. I have some information packs for you.

The CHAIR—Thank you very much, Leith. We are very close to out of time.

Mr SCHEFFER—One quick question. The precinct groups, you said before, that one of them contacted you about a marijuana-growing thing. Are the people involved in those groups, is their privacy secure? You are not tempted to check that person who informed to see whether—

Chief Insp. MAXWELL—That will come out in an investigation anyway.

Mr SCHEFFER—Good, thank you.

The CHAIR—Thank you very much. I wish there had been more time. I would like to talk to you about Facebook. I would really like to know down the track how successful that has been in engaging with perhaps a different demographic than the traditional Neighbourhood Watch. I notice you have kept the brand with 'faces' which seems to be a trademark well respected right across the world. Thank you all very much for your time. We appreciate it.

Witnesses withdrew.

Hearing suspended.

DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Locally Based Approaches to Community Safety and Crime Prevention

Sydney — 19 September 2011

Members

Mr S. Ramsay
Mr B. Battin
Mr S. Leane

Mr J. Scheffer
Mr T. McCurdy

Chair: Mr S. Ramsay
Deputy Chair: Mr J. Scheffer

Staff

Executive Officer: Ms S. Cook
Senior Research Officer: Mr P. Johnston

Witnesses

Ms M. Southwell, Chairperson, New South Wales Local Government Community Safety and Crime Prevention Committee, and Community Development Officer, Community Development, Bankstown City Council; and

Mr J. Maynard, Senior Project Coordinator, Safe City, City of Sydney.

The CHAIR—Margaret and John, thank you very much for your time. We are a joint parliamentary committee of the Victorian parliament, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee. We have two references: one that you will be talking about today, community safety and crime prevention, and the other reference is dealing security in emergency wards at hospitals. We are in New South Wales for two days hear from representatives from different groups in relation to both inquiries. Margaret, you are chair and crime prevention officer at Bankstown Council.

Ms SOUTHWELL—Yes, I am the crime prevention officer at Bankstown Council and the current chair of the Local Government Crime Prevention Community Safety Network.

The CHAIR—Right.

Mr McCURDY—Local Government of New South Wales, is that what—

Ms SOUTHWELL—I guess it is a network that we have established ourselves rather than being established by the department—

The CHAIR—John, you are senior project coordinator for Safe City.

Mr MAYNARD—That is right.

The CHAIR—We are taking this evidence down as a transcript and I will have to read you the conditions around which you are providing evidence to this committee. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975 and further subject to the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, the Defamation Act 2005 and, where applicable, the provisions of reciprocal legislation in other Australian states and territories. Any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. I understand you have sighted the guide for witnesses presenting evidence to parliamentary committees. You have probably presented before. We are recording the evidence and will provide a proof version of the *Hansard* transcript at the earliest opportunity. You can correct it as you see appropriate. We have scheduled to finish this session at about 3.30, to help you with your presentation. Over to you.

Ms SOUTHWELL—Do you want to start?

Mr MAYNARD—Okay. Thank you for the opportunity, firstly, to provide some input into this inquiry. The first point I would make, for someone who has worked at four councils over the last 14 years, is that crime prevention and community safety in local government of New South Wales has only been around since the mid-1990s or so. In that sense we are still the pioneers. We are finding our way to some extent in terms of where we add the best value in terms of making our community safer places.

I think there is recognition that local government does have a role to play. It is the level of government closest to the people. We do consult regularly with our constituencies and we are across a number of issues around vulnerable communities and the public domain in particular, is of particular relevance to crime prevention. Of course we have always played an indirect role in crime prevention through the provision of street lighting and infrastructure and so forth, and even clean streets can affect people's perceptions of crime. We also have a long history in our community services in local government working with Aboriginal communities, people with disabilities and so forth, those broader capacity building initiatives which in and of themselves can be useful in reducing and preventing crime.

Since those positions have been established there has been a big take-up across the state. At this point in time it is well recognised in local government. It is a complex, challenging and rewarding role and there is certainly no 'one size fits all' solution when we are talking about the range of longstanding, multifaceted and, in many ways, intergenerational social issues which we are aiming to address. We also acknowledge that each of our communities are different and they each face their own unique crime and safety issues. You cannot always look at a specific issue across a local government area. Sometimes we will be looking at a specific locality in terms of our response.

Obviously the key to what we are trying to do is to work in partnership. There is no 'one size fits all', no silver bullet, no magic formula with what we are trying to do. Essentially we rely on partnerships which we are able to establish which have trust, transparency, commitment to quality, accountabilities and clear definitions of roles and responsibilities. If we can get all of those things right we are well on the way to getting somewhere in terms of working in genuine partnership with all of our stakeholders.

Is it working? Well, I think it is. We have added some value to the crime prevention debate over the last 15 years or so. Certainly if you look at New South Wales crime statistics over that period, long-term trends for the major categories of crime are decreasing pretty much across the board. Of course there are always a number of reasons why crime figures go up and down. Chief among them can be things like an improved economy, increasing affluence, low unemployment and so forth. Good policing—but we also think that local government has played its part. We can work with our local communities, for example, in getting people to increase reporting of crime, to accept responsibility for their own issues in their communities. We accept that as a government we have a response to make but we would also continue to put that message back onto the community that crime prevention is a shared responsibility, and each of us are responsible for our own and each other's sense of security.

We can split the function of the local government officer into three: firstly, it is around education and information. We work with the police around reinforcing those community safety messages, such as, take your valuables with you when you park your car; report crime; get to know your neighbours, look out for your neighbours; crime prevention, like charity, begins at home, and other key messages around protecting yourself in public places and protecting your personal property as well. We do that through community events, community consultation and we work with our identified communities.

Secondly, we work on situational prevention. That is all that public domain stuff which you may have heard about. For example, in the City of Sydney we have a protocol with our seven local area police commands across our local government area. Those are development assessments which may carry a crime or safety risk, given out to all the various police commands and to our own Safe City unit and we pull those comments together in terms of looking at the types of things that can affect people's safety when a development, in particular, is on the plan. We look at things like what type of social fabric developers are trying to create, how a communal space is used. If you make a claim that these spaces are for people to congregate in, all sorts of facilities, they provide spaces to get people to congregate, to get people to know one another, because if we are not careful we build new medium-density developments, they are lived in by professional couples, and these developments are empty often during most of the day. That makes them susceptible to break and enter activity. More than anything it can create communities for strangers, where people do not know each other because they are not around. We want to try and break that cycle, make sure the developer considers the social fabric, of the sense of neighbourliness that they are trying to create on the plan.

Thirdly, we do social crime prevention. We will look at specific target groups within our local government area and work on targeted issues. For example, we have a lot of international students in our City of Sydney local government area. They come into the country often with language issues, very unfamiliar with the environment they come to reside in. They will walk around with their iPods on, texting on their mobile phones, and they might have had a few drinks. They are susceptible and they are targeted. We make sure we are getting to colleges and student institutions. We have translated information where possible to assist the police in again promoting the community safety message.

More recently we have been working with the Education Department here in New South Wales. We are very interested in what we call the middle adolescent years, the 10 to 15 age group. It is a time where, according to the Director-General of Juvenile Justice was recently quoted at a public forum saying that up to 80 per cent of juvenile crime in New South Wales occurs within six months of disengagement from school and therefore there can be consequent contact with the Human Services system. That is a fairly telling statistic. Again it comes down to where does local government come invested to play its role. We think this 10 to 15 age group really does offer some scope there. 'It is a time where'—a psychologist said to me—'understanding consequences of managing emotions and decision-making coincides with new risks and challenges, and the transition from primary to high school.'

What we are getting in some of our local communities is young people getting enthusiastic, that first flush of enthusiasm that comes with going into high school. That then tends to drop off for some young people. They can be disruptive when they are at school. We have new legislation in New South Wales which stipulates that you need to be 17 before you leave school now. What that has done has left a gap for these 15- and 16-year-old young people that have been out of school for a long time and for them it is no longer relevant to send them back to the mainstream school. We had a spate of juvenile criminal activity in our of our local areas where we knew who the offenders were, we knew where they lived, we knew how old they were and we knew what types of offences they were committing. In terms of working with the state, we normally work with the Attorney-General and Justice Department but our backgrounds in local government are, of course, in the Human Services sector, so there can be a disconnect there. We do not have access to a Human Services funding program in New South Wales.

The response from the community was, 'Well, we need to help these young people to get them back to school as a starting point in terms of making our community a safer place.' We lobbied the Education Department, we put together \$500,000 to fund an alternative education program in a youth centre which was decorated by the young people to claim a sense of ownership and that was staffed by government staff to support these young people who up until that had not been attending school at all. Then local government comes with the role that coordinates the stakeholders of that project, link the young people on that program with broader community initiatives, link the parents into that program because we know that some parents have difficulties conceptualising what mainstream education is, particularly indigenous families whose experience of school may be predominantly negative. We have also had a change in our legislation in New South Wales where there is now recognition of alternative education programs within the Education Act.

All young people between five and 17 come under the responsibility of the Department of Education and Training in New South Wales, but where they do miss more than 30 days it becomes an issue of prosecution. Schools are required to prosecute parents for their child's non-attendance. Now we have had a change to the Education Act which now gives schools the opportunity to refer young people to these alternative education programs

because as principals are telling us, 'We have nowhere to send these children,' who may still be interested in learning but they just require a different pathway in terms of achieving the same outcome.

Mr LEANE—Can I just ask, when did the act come in?

Mr MAYNARD—It only come in this year, changes to the act, for the alternative education programs. I think 17 came in at the end of 2009. Last year is the first year where you had to be 17, or be able to recognise employment or training program aspects. It is not just school. We think that particular area offers tremendous promise in terms of, as I said, intervening at a key transition point in an adolescent's life. It is a time where they start to commit more serious crimes, those that do. That is acknowledged by the courts when they often look at the backgrounds of these young people and come across invariably unstable backgrounds. It is the point in the continuum of that young person's life where the needs of the family and the types of crime that are being committed are at their closest. When an adult starts to commit crimes when they have had a disadvantaged background, it tends to be ignored by the courts more because, 'Well, you've had your chance.' Again I think this policy area around the middle adolescent years offers tremendous promise. I will leave it at that for now.

The CHAIR—Thanks, John. Any questions? No? Margaret.

Ms SOUTHWELL—I will pass these around. I would like to give you a bit of a background to my role at Bankstown, some of the projects we have worked on, but then also talk about the network and what we are using that for in terms of professional development and things like that. Briefly, Bankstown is located in south-western Sydney. It is a highly disadvantaged area. Lots of multicultural communities, a large Arabic, Vietnamese and Chinese-speaking community. We also have emerging issues with new communities. There is a large African community moving into the area as well. We have a large population of over-60s but also because the accommodation is reasonably affordable, young families as well.

One of the benefits we have at Bankstown is that the LGA and the local area command are boundaries, unlike in the City of Sydney where they are dealing with seven local area commands. Ours are the same, it is one local area command that we are dealing with which makes it a bit easier to work with the police. These are statistics about some of the issues in Bankstown. It used to be the second-highest place in New South Wales for motor vehicle theft. There is a number of reasons for that in terms of commuter carparks and shopping centre et cetera. It has dropped quite significantly over the last four or five years. That has been a statewide trend as well. There have been some positive moves in terms of crime statistics in Bankstown and across New South Wales. One of the things we find is that our resident surveys and the feedback that we are getting from people in the community is that crime and safety are a real concern. Not only is it something that they see is a high priority but it is something that they want local government to be doing something about as well.

One of the reasons why they see it as a priority is probably media. Bankstown—if you were in Sydney—you would know it for Middle Eastern crime, youth gangs, stabbings, gun crime, shootings, and things like that. If you talked to residents, most of them feel like it is a good place to live, but that is the type of media attention that Bankstown gets. Bankstown Council's response to crime—we have a community safety committee, it is represented by councillors, emergency services, including police and fire brigade, and some community organisations that work on local issues. We have a community safety plan which I have circulated which has been endorsed by the Attorney-General and

Justice Department. We have a safety and security development control plan. Any large residential complexes that are being built in the area need to be assessed for safety and security.

We have a CCTV network in our CBD. We have various alcohol-free zones. There is a full-time community safety and crime prevention position. We also have a budget of about \$50,000 for programs for that position each year, plus other money that we receive for grants and things like that. Council is also involved with the Community Drug Action Team. That is a New South Wales health initiative. There is a community based domestic violence liaison committee. There is the liquor accord which is licensed premises, and that is really set up by the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing, but managed locally by the licensed premises. In Bankstown we have eight Neighbourhood Watch groups that are still active. They still circulate newsletters and they meet monthly.

I know that New South Wales Police were here before. One of the concerns that has been raised by Neighbourhood Watch members, they are all seniors, is about Facebook and having access to that. A lot of them do not use the internet. That is a real concern for them. The other thing is that the Neighbourhood Watch meeting is a chance for them to come out and meet and talk with people. In turns of reducing social isolation for the senior community, it is good for them to get out and meet those people.

We have a number of working parties on local issues. In the early 2000s there were very highly reported gang rapes in the Bankstown area and there was quite a bit of stigma associated with that. We ran the Reclaim the Night march in the area for a number of years. We have White Ribbon Day events or, for example, a working party might start up if there are issues at a skate park or things like that. We also have a community safety precinct committee which is run by the local area command. The Bankstown area was nominated to have a crime prevention partnership which was a committee set up by the Attorney-General and Justice Department. The effectiveness of the safety precinct committees and crime prevention partnerships really comes down to the local area command because they have a role in driving that in the local community.

I have picked out a couple of the projects that we have run at Bankstown, to highlight maybe some of the challenges that we have had in implementing programs, but also a bit about the role that council can play. We saw a rise in fail to pay for petrol, and steal from motor vehicle offences with numberplate theft because of the high petrol prices. Working with local police we held some information stalls at shopping centres and commuter carparks, and we distributed packs of one-way screws. You can screw them on but you cannot screw them off. They cost council about \$1.80 a packet. We distributed those to residents. What we wanted to do was see how effective it was. We collected their details and then later we sent a survey out. We surveyed about 800 residents and received quite a good response. We found that about one in five did not put it on their vehicle; either they lost it before they got home or they could not be bothered.

The issue is with the evaluation, because when we got the results back, no-one that had installed the screws on their vehicle had their numberplates stolen. If you looked at that, you could say that is a success. But then no-one who had not installed the screws on their vehicle had had them stolen during that period either. You are weighing up the pros and cons.

The CHAIR—It is all about perception.

Ms SOUTHWELL—Yes. They would not be able to steal it off those vehicles but your risk being a victim. At the same time, the New South Wales Attorney-General's

Department ran Operation Tabella with local area command; a similar project but the driver of that project was that police would install the screws on your vehicle for you. We ran that at different parts around Bankstown but what we found was that it is very resource intensive. You would need large amounts of police or volunteers to be installing it on your vehicles. Given that you have no idea of whether it is making an impact or not that is a quite expensive initiative. The fact that there are about 80,000 registered vehicles in Bankstown and we might have screws on maybe 2,000 of them at the moment. If we are going to do this, and if we see this as a serious crime, then maybe this is the sort of initiative that needs to be statewide that all new vehicles need to have these installed on them. From a local level it is quite hard to look at the impact of that.

The next thing I have there is our CCTV network. Compared to City of Sydney we have a very small network. We are looking at about 14 cameras in our CBD. That was because we had a large amount of crime in that particular area around the train station. We have worked in a partnership with our local sports club who monitor the cameras for us for free. That means a large amount of ongoing costs for that are reduced because of this partnership. We have a memorandum of understanding about how they operate the system, monitor the data, how they store it and who has access to the data. There is high use by police of the footage for investigations and prosecutions. Because we have a partnership it is monitored 24 hours a day, and there is fibre optic cable through the CBD which runs back to the sports club. It is a high quality image as well.

Some of the problems that local government might have in having a CCTV network is opportunity for funding. There is limited funding grounds in New South Wales that would cover the cost of setting up a network, but also the ongoing costs of monitoring and maintenance of that network. Also there has been limited evaluation about the success of some of those programs. We do not know in Bankstown if it has moved the crime elsewhere. We know that people feel like the CBD is safer but we do not know if the surrounding streets or other town centres have become unsafe as a result. What we find is that police really push for CCTV. It is obviously of benefit for them in terms of their investigations and prosecutions, but in terms of monitoring it, police will not monitor it, and again it is a high cost.

I will talk about the domestic violence awareness campaign that we have run. It started as a public awareness campaign but what it has moved into now is more of professional development for workers. We found it hard to monitor the success of the campaign, particularly because domestic violence is under-reported. If the campaign is working and the figures go up, is that a good thing or a bad thing. Also it is hard to know how to target the right residents. We have been working with GPs and child-care workers recently because they are working in an environment where they might be identifying victims or noticing the effects of domestic violence, teaching them about local services and how they refer on.

This program has been awarded in the Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards but, as I said, it is hard to evaluate how these types of programs are successful. Also the Attorney-General's Department will not fund domestic violence initiatives. They see that as another department of government's responsibility, but our community is telling us that it is a significant issue which is why we included it in our crime prevention plan.

The last two initiatives—I know we are tight on time—I will skip over those. Midnight Basketball is a national program. You have probably heard about it before. They definitely have information online. We have set a tournament up in Bankstown but our main issue is making it sustainable. Ongoing funding for programs like that is a concern. Why we set this up was because residents were really looking for after-hours activities for young

people that were safe and affordable and supervised. There is a real lack of those kind of activities. That highlights what John is saying as well.

The last one, U-Turns for Youth, is a youth crime prevention initiative working with young motor vehicle theft offenders. It is a six-week TAFE program where they do an introduction to an automotives course and also, one day a week, they will be doing a life skills workshop, and to interlink them back into education or into employment. We have finished one round of the program and about to start a second round with eight young people. Some of the issues we have found with this is organisational capacity and being able to find funding that will pay a project worker to be able to do a long-term program. A lot of the funding programs will not support the wages of staff, and the organisation has to have the capacity to do it.

John has touched on the role that local government might have in situational crime prevention but because of their role in designing and maintaining space, and approving development applications, they have a real ability to influence the built environment. Also council can be a main contact for residents. It is quite hard for residents to see what is a policing issue and what is a council issue. We often get calls from residents about, 'People are taking drugs outside my house. Can you put in a street light.' They are too afraid to report the drug-taking to police because they fear 'The drug dealers will come and knock down my fence' or something. There is a blur between what is council's role and how can we change that issue. Some of the limitations we find in New South Wales is that we do not have guideline for CPTED. There is no consistency across different LGAs about what their development control plan might be. Neighbouring LGAs could have very different policies. What you can build on one block, you might not be able to build next door. It is quite hard. Again there is limited evaluation.

In terms of the social and developmental programs, council is in a really unique position because they are heavily involved in networks and local services. They have a good ability to foster partnerships at a community level. They are often representing the community on different issues. Unfortunately in New South Wales there is not much funding available for social and developmental crime prevention programs, because it is seen that it is not the role of local government. That is blurred when residents are telling us they want particular services and the state government is saying, 'That's not really your role to provide that.'

The CHAIR—Can I just ask—we were in Western Australia and the government, through the department, and through the crime prevention department provided grants to local councils conducted in one of the crime prevention areas. I think it was \$20,00 per council and in Victoria we are starting to have a similar system, we only have half the amount. Does New South Wales have a specified grant system through crime prevention to local government?

Ms SOUTHWELL—Yes. If your crime prevention plan is endorsed, as it is called, the Safer Community Compact by the New South Wales Attorney-General and Justice Department, you can have access of up to \$50,000 per annum for funding, but they will only fund certain initiatives. They are in the process of reviewing that and they are looking at putting out some new regulations by the end of the year, I think, that will impact how we receive funding—one of the issues that I will move into with the local government network is that there is not much consultation between that department and local government. They are changing the way that funding program works without consulting any of the people who will be accessing that funding program. A lot of councils might see the \$50,000 and that the work that you have to do to get access to that money would not be worth the money itself. It depends on their position financially.

The CHAIR—Which is interesting, given the links between local council, community and police in crime prevention being linked. I find it difficult to understand how a government would have a need for some significant contribution between local government, police and the Office of Crime Prevention which sits in the Attorney-General's Department.

Ms SOUTHWELL—I know that we are going over time but just quickly, the Local Government Community Safety and Crime Prevention Network, that was established because we saw there was a lack of connection between councils. There were not many opportunities for professional development on networking. Lots of councils were doing the same thing but there was no communication and no sharing of that knowledge, also, as John touched on, a lot of people in the role are coming from a Human Services background. There is no set qualifications. They do not have to have a criminology degree, they do not have to have experience in something particular. There is a diverse workforce who might be implementing programs in a different way. The network was established in 2009. Currently we have about 57 members from across New South Wales, a majority of metropolitan councils, but we do have regional in New South Wales councils as well.

At the moment we have quarterly issues based meetings in Sydney and that might be meetings on alcohol-related crime and we would get guest speakers in to speak on those issues, to share knowledge about that. But we do have an email network that circulates information. If people have a request about a particular issue, like, 'I'm experiencing this issue, can you help me,' we would send that out over the network. We have workers from Queensland and also New Zealand who participate in that email network as well.

The network was set up to be able to disseminate information and assist us in our jobs by sharing information, but also to advocate for professional development opportunities so we can get a standardised qualification or background for workers to improve professionally and assist in the day-to-day working of that role. The network also aims to facilitate improved program evaluation. Some of the things I highlighted with these projects is the difficulty to evaluate. We wanted to develop something to know what is best practice in the area. We wanted to be able to build something that we can use to advocate to different levels—local, state and federal government. As I mentioned, it is quite strange that there is no consultation or communication and we wanted to set up something that we would have a better position to be able to advocate for; also recognising the strength in partnerships, creating a multidisciplinary approach and looking at how we can better, as a workforce, approach crime prevention.

We have done some network surveys. Basically not all councils have a community safety and crime prevention role. Some people have somebody in a part-time position or they might be sharing the role with either use in community safety or use in road safety. Most of the people are coming from a community development background, and they would have done the New South Wales Police Safer by Design course, but more and more people are coming in with a background of criminology. Further training needs have been identified in terms of CPTED and urban design, increased information on that. Also how to identify and develop evidence based approaches and how to improve evaluation techniques.

People want to see professional development that will assist in their day-to-day jobs. There were some common issues that came across LGAs. A lot of LGAs said alcohol-related crime was something that their residents were concerned about, antisocial behaviour, graffiti and domestic violence. They are all considered priorities issues in a lot of the LGAs. Some of the common issues that local government workers have is access to

data. We do have the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research would provides very detailed information, but it provides information at an LGA level. When you are looking at an area—our area is 80 square kilometres—you might have a particular problem with parking and you want some information about that, or a town centre, it is very hard to drill down and get that area specific information. It is also hard to get information on offender profiles. Who is it that is committing the crime in the area? Often that depends on your relationship with your local police as to how you get that information.

That ongoing access to data also affects evaluation and how you are able to go back long term and look at the impact of that program. There is also the issue of unreported crime. One of the things that Department of Attorney-General and Justice, they really have a statistics based approach and they want to fund issues that they see as an issue in your area. For example, I have pulled some figures from Bankstown, last month in Bankstown, police received seven reports of graffiti. We have two proactive teams of graffiti cleaners and they report every incident they clean. Seven reports to police, and they cleaned 484 incidents of graffiti. You can see that police data might not indicate it is a problem, but we know the problem is much greater than what that data indicates.

The CHAIR—And the cost.

Ms SOUTHWELL—Yes, exactly. Because the Attorney-General is funding programs that they identify in light of statistics as an issue, we might not be able to apply for funding for graffiti programs because the data is not there in police data. The last point I have there is the relationship with the Department of Attorney-General and Justice that the funding body has a great impact of councils with smaller budgets. Because we do have a separate program budget for community safety, we do not need to rely so much on getting our plan endorsed and supported by them. But some smaller councils might be in a position where they need to do a lot of work to get their plan endorsed. You cannot get funding until your plan is endorsed, and we know of some councils that have been working on plans for 18 months to two years to try and get them endorsed by the department.

There is the issue of the lack of consultation: the emphasis on statistics rather than what our residents might be telling us are the issues. We obviously, at a local government level, have an issue—the prerogatives—they are the issues of our residents, and I guess vying with from other departments of government has been an ongoing issue for New South Wales as well.

Mr SCHEFFER—On that last point on the perception your community is bringing to you, compared to the approval—it appears from what you are saying to be requiring a different standard of evidence. Is that fair enough?

Ms SOUTHWELL—Yes.

Mr SCHEFFER—Yet you mention the graffiti which complicates that bit. How does that get bridged, because it seems as though there is right on both sides, but my gut reaction would be—and it is personal—to distrust the community perception for the reasons that you yourself said about media and about attitudes and there has to be a reality check on that. How do you bridge that?

Ms SOUTHWELL—Yes, there has to be a balance between that. Obviously residents can tell you what is happening on the street but, for example, if a car is stolen in their street that is a major concern because it is affecting them directly. If that was one car that was stolen in Bankstown in one month, police would be rejoicing. They would be

like, 'Only one car was stolen, that's fantastic news,' but for the local residents that is obviously a concern for them. With graffiti, we are in a position where we can provide alternative statistics. We know how much we clean it off. There might be other ways to get evidence for—talking about drug-taking, our cleaners might be picking up syringes or—

Mr SCHEFFER—On that we had heard evidence earlier in the day saying that the cleaning off, on evaluations that have been done of a few different models of dealing with graffiti, was the least effective, in fact almost not effective. Whereas a much better way was to treat the environment through different colour applications to walls and different textures and so forth. I do not particularly want to go into all that kind of detail, but we have been hearing these different things about approaches and you are saying that you have that much investment in trying to clean that graffiti. If I were a funder I would be looking at that data and saying, 'That's not a model that is going to be effective. It's just throwing bad money after good, so we want you to do something else.'

Ms SOUTHWELL—That comes down to residents as well. Our residents are telling us they want a clean suburb. They want it cleaned. Obviously if we know that an area is a problem we are not going to clean it off every week, we will try and do something about that. It is the balance between providing the service the residents want and doing something to prevent that problem as well.

Mr MAYNARD—That also can be done through the planning process, a development and control plan, which mitigate against long sections of blank wall and that kind of thing. You can hold developers accountable, to some extent, for graffiti before it happens. The city's position is we are a bit better resourced than Bankstown and we clean it off within 48 hours. That is our policy. But, yes, we do run into those conflicts around different kinds of offence-related issues. For example, we would argue in local government that it is our responsibility to consult with the people who are most in need, those who are most vulnerable, those who are more likely to have been victims and/or offenders. If we hear from the state, for example, 'You have a big problem with steal from motor vehicle in the suburb,' some of the people we are consulting might not even own motor vehicles. Again you get that disconnection as well.

The CHAIR—Okay. Thank you both very much for your time and your contribution this afternoon. It is appreciated.

Mr MAYNARD—I might add one more thing that I think is probably relevant to our Victorian counterparts, as much as it is to ourselves. We do not have a national crime prevention policy. There is a real lack of strong leadership at the federal level. That affects our intra-governmental efforts to coordinate what we are trying to do across the country. We would really be looking to federal government to adopt a position, some type of brainwave that I think can help us.

The CHAIR—It is interesting because all the lead agencies seem to be very willing to compare notes in relation to what they do within states. We are breaking for coffee and if you have time please stay around. I am sure there are a couple of other points you might wish to raise but if not, thank you again very much for your time.

MR MAYNARD—Thank you.

Witnesses withdrew.

Hearing suspended.

DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

**Inquiry into Locally Based Approaches to Community Safety and Crime
Prevention**

Sydney — 19 September 2011

Members

Mr S. Ramsay
Mr B. Battin
Mr S. Leane

Mr J. Scheffer
Mr T. McCurdy

Chair: Mr S. Ramsay
Deputy Chair: Mr J. Scheffer

Staff

Executive Officer: Ms S. Cook
Committee Administrative Officer: Mr P. Johnston

Witnesses

Mr R. Watson, Deputy Director; and
Dr O. Camacho-Duarte, Postdoctoral Research Fellow,
Designing Out Crime Research Centre, University of Technology, Sydney

The CHAIR—Welcome, and thank you very much for joining us. This is a joint parliamentary committee of Victoria, Drugs and Crime Prevention. We are taking evidence on two inquiries, but the one you are hopefully going to speak to us about is community safety and crime prevention which we are doing some work on. I do have to read you some conditions around the presentation you are giving this afternoon. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975 and further subject to the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, the Defamation Act 2005 and, where applicable, the provisions of reciprocal legislation in other Australian states and territories. Any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. I understand you have received and read the guide for witnesses presenting evidence to parliamentary committees.

Mr WATSON—Yes.

The CHAIR—We are recording the evidence and will provide a proof version of the *Hansard* transcript at the earliest opportunity. You can correct it as appropriate. I would invite you now to provide us with some information, thank you.

Mr WATSON—Thank you, and thanks for inviting us. My name is Rodger Watson, I am the centre manager for the Designing Out Crime Research Centre. This is my colleague Dr Olga Camacho Duarte. Olga is a post-doctoral research fellow which means that she has graduated with a PhD. This is the period in her career where she researches close to graduating.

The Designing Out Crime Research Centre is a partnership between the New South Wales government and University of Technology of New South Wales. We operate out of the Faculty of Design Architecture and Building. That gives us a basis in urban design and the built environment. However, we do go outside that scope. We use design methodologies to explore problems and to come up with design solutions, whether they be products, systems or advice on urban environments and architecture. We have been around since 2009. Our primary mode of problem exploration until recently has been utilising our design students. We run what we call a winter school. We engage problem owners—be they state governments, the Department of Housing is one of our main clients; RailCorp, New South Wales Police, retail sectors and local government.

We engage with them to explore crime problems that they may be dealing with. We go through a period of problem exploration where we gather information as we are talking to them. They come and talk to our students who are enrolled in an intensive five-week course. Invariably these students are final year or masters design students from either architecture, planning or some of the design disciplines, such as interior design, industrial design. These students form teams of up to about five or six students. They are briefed with the problem by the stakeholder—City of Sydney has been one in the past, as I mentioned, Housing New South Wales and RailCorp. They are briefed with the problem and then they go away and implement their design techniques to explore the problem and come up with solutions.

We have recently had our third winter school. We now have about 20-odd projects that we have been through that process on, ranging from public housing, transport, night-time economy, a lot of situations where drugs might be an issue. We have not focused directly on drugs. We tried to take a broader crime focus, a focus that explores the situation in total and takes a socially responsive approach. Our approach is not necessarily on drug programs or things like that, it is more on the actual physical environments and the systemic environment image, crime adverse.

One of the projects that is most relevant to what you are looking at is our partnership with Housing New South Wales. They were on board from the start with our first winter school and they liked our work so much that we entered a formal partnership with them. They, along with the University of Western Sydney, the Social Work Department, have provided us with \$100,000 of funding to work on design explorations with them over a three-year period. We are focusing on the Mount Druitt area of Sydney. Mount Druitt is characterised by predominantly public housing and levels of high disadvantage. Drug use is part of that, but high levels of unemployment, low educational attainment, and an urban environment that is conducive to public disorder.

We have been working on this project with them for about six months now with the University of Western Sydney. To start with we would like to show you and describe some of the work we have been doing with them. Olga, do you want to add anything about the partnership?

Dr CAMACHO DUARTE—The partnership is called the three-year Community and Environment Project. It was formalised in April this year but there are proceeding projects that we developed in the past as Rodger has mentioned before. One of the proceeding projects is some work on the Shelby Community Centre. At the moment we are writing some articles on the case studies for this project, but in a nutshell, the Shelby Community Centre was a facility funded by Housing New South Wales for the Shelby community and the community did not embrace the community centre very well. They were break-ins and graffiti and vandalism in the facility, in and around the facility. When these things started happening, Housing put up a bigger fence and barbed wire and that made things more difficult because people took that as a very aggressive response. The break-ins did not stop, and the graffiti and the vandalism around it continued.

When the students looked at this problem and talked to Housing New South Wales, the community regeneration team in Mount Druitt and different stakeholders from the community and different people, they came up with a design solution that involved a redesign of the fence, removed the barbed wire and improved the condition of the fence by involving the participation of the community. The idea that students from the local TAFE will build the parts of the fence and the community in an activity together will build the fence with help from different people, construction people. That happened, and also some of the radius around the fence was a community garden, and painting with some brighter colours and all that.

The extent of the ideas of the students that were implemented were probably—I would say maybe 60 per cent of ideas were implemented, not all of them. Whatever was possible they did implement, and the situation changed. The community centre people had a much better connection with the local people and there were many more activities. The break-ins stopped, the vandalism stopped and the graffiti stopped until recently. We have not done a very—applied an evaluation but we have seen the results of this intervention in that community centre that really improved the conditions.

We brought this poster, because this year the project involved looking at the local shops. Local shops in different sectors of the Mount Druitt area are a problem because usually they have a liquor shop, sometimes a chemist that also provides the services of a methadone clinic and also a fish and chips shop, something like that. The options for people to buy local are very limited. Fresh foods are not the best in these local shops. Transport is difficult. To go Westfield in Mount Druitt or to the larger retail precincts is difficult for people, and a lot of people do not have cars in Mount Druitt. They present a problem.

To summarise, what the students did this semester, we try always to have cross-disciplinary group of students in every class. But this semester we happen to have more architects and interior designers of the students. The group analysed the area. This is one of the local shop areas with four or five tenancies, but it is surrounded by units or apartments, a preschool or a kindergarten, a Salvation Army facility, a community centre and a petrol station. What they identified is a sort of mode for services and retail but they are all separated, they are all facing inwards, they all have fences around, there is no connection and it makes it an unpleasant, difficult place. On top of that those areas do not come with many playgrounds or facilities in the public space because of vandalism. If we place some amenities in this park they are going to be destroyed and vandalised. That is what happens.

The students proposed different types of ideas. At one level they proposed that for the shops to be more effective should be mixed use. If they put some housing on there, on the second and third floor, perhaps some shops on the first floor, that will improve a lot of the situation there. We also encourage the students to work with the criminology frameworks on the situation of crime prevention. For example, crime prevention through environmental—all the types of frameworks around that. We tried to complement those frameworks with design research, design methods and design ideas. We have this multidiscipline approach. We give them lectures on different topics but also we invite them to explore the ideas and we also take them to the site and they talk to different stakeholders in the community and they talk to our Housing contacts in the community regeneration team and that is how they come up with these ideas.

That was one of the main ideas that we understand might not happen but some of the ideas, for example, there is a strip currently that has some 90 degree parking and it is not very much use, because they saw a small community garden in this facility, the community centre. The students proposed that could be an area that could have some enclosure at night but during the day it could involve a number of community gardens, the movable one, with some street furniture, playgrounds, and they propose to add a number of training rooms along this area so it will reduce those divisions between the buildings but also will create facilities that cannot be supervised, that cannot be enclosed at night, that can be used for groups that already have a lot of programs and projects developing in the area relating to crime prevention and alcohol consumption, allocation of programs and different types of things like that.

This is at the very early stage and what we do with this is we take those ideas as to housing and we see which ones they think may go to the next level and we look to continually developing those ideas. Some of those ideas are currently being developed in another class we are doing, a Master of Design, and the seed for smaller projects are under development right now. At the beginning of next month we are going to go to Housing and we are going to have an activity where our students are going to present their ideas in the form of trade shows or something like that. We will get some connection between the students and the community, and Housing New South Wales staff and they will give us feedback and we will see how we can continue developing those projects.

The centre supports us with some funds for prototyping of different things. Related to these community garden ideas is a mobile community garden. The students are developing that idea. When it gets to a prototype stage the centre will provide us with more funds to prototype the idea and test it in the area. In general, Housing New South Wales, the community regeneration team is happy with what we have done, and in my role as a postdoctoral fellow I am also following up these ideas with desktop research for the projects. I have been applying for an internal grant at the university to get some more funds for research. We are trying to really make these accordingly, therefore, that it is

practice oriented, that the projects of the students get implemented in Mount Druitt but also with the research in the grant area with design, the social aspects of housing and urban planning.

Mr WATSON—I guess this is an example of the model that we use. We use designers but their actual disciplines, such as architecture and urban planning, but we also use an approach that engages in design thinking. Design thinking holds that no problem can be solved in the context in which it arose originally. It would not be a problem if it could be solved within its original context. This takes an existing urban environment that is not working, and that it is not working is characterised by evidence of alcohol use, smashed glass, graffiti, burnt-out shops, a lot of areas that are not used, a lot of open space that is not used. It looks at this area as a potential urban hub. Your community shops should be somewhere you can go to meet your everyday needs; this area does not presently.

The students took it outside of its original frame and worked out a way of making it work for the people of the community. The urban planning masters this semester are working on another town centre not far from here. They are doing economic modelling on redeveloping areas hypothetically; redeveloping areas of Mount Druitt and applying urban planning techniques to work out what housing density would support a vibrant community and a vibrant local economy. That comes down to mixed use in line with Housing New South Wales policy of deconcentrating areas. It also pays great respect to the built environment. If you ever want an example of a badly designed area then Lethbridge Park is definitely one. The design here is using the existing structures. It is not knocking everything over, it is adapting it for reuse to enhance the space. That is an example of what we have done. As I said before, this is one of 20 or 30 such projects that we have done over the last three years. It is an example of the model.

Dr CAMACHO DUARTE—We would also like to add that because these are projects developed with design students, we are experimenting. Sometimes some projects become very interesting and sometimes they dissolve because they may not have more attraction. But even at the most simple level, design students have this ability to envision things and present ideas in a number of ways, and that is really positive particularly for the community regeneration team model because a part of what I personally see as some of the challenges they have to deal with is working with so many partners and trying to get the ideas on board. When an idea is good and is visually attractive there tends to be more discussion. I see that as something positive. I have been in this position for the last 10 months. I have not completed a whole year and I have not gone through the whole circle. Next year my research project involves evaluating what has been done in a more systematic way. What I can see in the beginning is that the quality—we get the students from the final years, the master's students.

The quality of the work is quite good. Housing, because they do not have much funding, they get very good benefit from what we do because it is a consulting fee level of quality work done by the students, guided by us and all the academics at UTS. When we need some type of special expertise we look through our UTS networks because we want to encourage this cross-disciplinary work and I think it works. I am particularly interested in this role and in this project and look forward to see what happens in the future with it.

The CHAIR—Thanks, Olga. I know Mr Battin has to go very shortly so I would invite him to ask any questions.

Mr BATTIN—I have one. We have talked a lot about environment design in crime prevention. One thing I did take from it, when you were talking about an area that

was already established and you said 'poorly established originally'. Some of the areas I have worked within have the same issues there, cost-wise. Obviously it has to be processed for cost. On a project like that, is it classed as an expensive project or is it moderate?

Mr WATSON—Some of this is already costed. On Bougainville Road there is an underpass where pedestrians have to walk under the road rather than across the road. It is already funded to be closed up. Some of these ideas will be implemented with that, such as the implementation of public garden or recreation space. That major earthworks is happening and now it can be done in a way that adds to the amenity of the space. As far as costings for the implementation of the rest of this, the urban planning course that is running this semester, they are looking at a different site. But if they were looking at this site they would look at how much private money could be brought in through rezoning the shops to allow development of units in a public-private partnership kind of way and how that would add to the viability of the space, but also add to the economic potential of redeveloping other areas within that space.

Dr CAMACHO DUARTE—We are also developing in our briefs to students, we are encouraging the students to interpret their own briefs. When we give them a brief, 'This is the project, we're going to work on this community centre,' or something, we tell them, 'There's problems of vandalism and you need to take that into account. There's problems with money, you need to take that into account.' For instance, one of our groups this semester is developing a design but that design is also involving ideas around facilitating a better understanding of grants. There is grants to communities provided by New South Wales. The students idea is that instead of them developing some project to be implemented, they are developing their tools around grant applications. They are using examples of City of Sydney grants and they are designing the tools to facilitate a community group to get together and develop a grant where they can apply for a couple of thousand dollars or something like that. That is also very interesting from their approach because this particular group of students, they are communications students. They deal with graphics and all that, but they are finding very appealing in their project they can really contribute to different community groups, develop and build capacity. They are implementing that.

Little by little we start finding what are the main challenges for communities and for these groups to get ahead with their plans. We try to base the work of the students and what is already happening. There are community gardens, how can we grow them, how can we be relevant and how can we, through design, help them to advance and make them more engaging and more useful and better for the community. We encourage community gardens because what that works in public housing. That is what we have seen that works. We want to complement and support what is already there, like better communication in the community and better relationships evolve in a way that helps to reduce a situation of crime or vandalism or antisocial behaviour in the future.

Mr WATSON—Just taking a large picture view, briefly, and as a state government committee you have the benefit of being able to take a large-scale view, looking at town centres and how their local economies contribute to the broader economy, this is not a functioning space. Some of these things can be put into place to better integrate the people living in these areas into the community and to employment and education. One of the things that we always struggle with as criminologists is counting the cost of crime. It is very difficult to put a tangible cost on the crime that is happening in this physical environment and the broader suburb. But we can hopefully argue that by reducing some of those risk factors by using this as a space to improve health, education

and employment outcomes, then we can effectively make a dent in the cost of crime to the community.

Mr SCHEFFER—Getting back to talking about capacity building, could you talk to us a bit more about how the community living around this precinct was engaged in it, because you have talked a lot about the students and you have talked a lot about what your ideas were and so on. But what was the experience of the community itself? How were they value adding to the plan.

Dr CAMACHO DUARTE—We are starting in that area because our main partner is Housing New South Wales, our collaboration always goes to them. When we have a site visit, our contact person in Housing invites people from the community to join us. People from the community they invite are locals. For instance, last time we went on a site visit we saw the Lethbridge Park Primary School community liaison officer who is a tenant in Housing New South Wales. She has a job there and she has the knowledge of the young kids and what they need. We talked about the school, and with the closure of the underpass, how are they going to manage the kids going to their homes in the afternoon with the traffic and all that stuff. At this moment we are engaging with the people, the tenants, who are community leaders as well. We have seen them at a few events and with those site visits with the students we talk to them. We would like a more open, bigger community consultation but until now it has not been possible because Housing is very aware that the community of Mount Druitt has been over-consulted. There are a lot of programs that happen. Like, they do a community consultation and then nothing happens and they get very frustrated and it goes on and on.

Our approach with these projects is that when we have something to show them, we go and show them and we invite them, and little by little we are building those relationships where we can then get Housing to allow us to disseminate the information further. We only want to come back to the community with ideas that are possible.

Mr SCHEFFER—Thank you.

Mr LEANE—You mentioned winter school. Is this a program that the student will go to over and above their degree they are doing?

Mr WATSON—It is an elective. It counts towards their degree but it is an elective.

Mr LEANE—Are they students that are interested in crime prevention and community development?

Mr WATSON—Yes. When you talk about working on crime-related issues, people instantly picture CSI and things like that. We need to break that down in the early stages of the course and focus them on what they can have an influence on and what the real context is.

The CHAIR—No other questions? Well, it is a very appropriate time that we finish. Thank you both very much for your time. We appreciate it. The local government does not automatically endorse the plans done by the students, does it? There must be a fair bit of toing and froing in the concept to the reality of—

Mr WATSON—Yes, and a lot of the work of the students is focused on housing and property. Where council property is impacted upon, and certainly in this we have had to tweak their local environment plan and zoning and stuff like that. It is more what is possible designed to debate as opposed to—

The CHAIR—That is good, thank you.

Witnesses withdrew.

Committee adjourned.

DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Locally Based Approaches to Community Safety and Crime Prevention

Ballarat — 18 October 2011

Members

Mr S. Ramsay

Mr B. Battin

Chair: Mr S. Ramsay

Staff

Executive Officer: Ms S. Cook

Committee Administrative Officer: Ms. D. Woof

Witnesses

Mr P. Appleton, Acting Director, People and Communities;

Councillor D. Hudson, People and Communities Portfolio Councillor, and
Chairperson, Community Safety Advisory Committee;

Councillor J. Philips, People and Communities Portfolio Councillor; and

Councillor C. Bromfield, Councillor, and

Deputy Chairperson, Community Safety Advisory Committee. City of Ballarat;

Ms J. King, Director, Student Connect, University of Ballarat.

The CHAIR—Welcome. I am Simon Ramsay, I chair the joint parliamentary committee of Drugs and Crime Prevention. Whatever you say will be recorded in *Hansard* obviously and you will get the opportunity to see that proof. I will have to read you your rights, so to speak, in relation to evidence that you are going to provide to this committee. You understand we are dealing with an inquiry in relation to locally based solutions to community safety and crime prevention. We certainly look forward to your contribution. Afterwards we are opening it up to the public to allow them also to provide us with some insight into the programs they are presently engaged in.

All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975 and further subject to the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, the Defamation Act 2005 and, where applicable, the provisions of reciprocal legislation in other Australian states and territories. Any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. I understand you have received and read the guide for witnesses presenting evidence to a parliamentary committee. We are recording the evidence and will provide a proof version of the *Hansard* transcript at the earliest opportunity. You can correct it as appropriate. I would certainly invite you to make your verbal submissions.

Cheryl, can I ask you to thank the Ballarat City Council also for allowing us to use your chambers. It is much appreciated.

Councillor BROMFIELD—Most definitely.

The CHAIR—Thank you. Whoever wants to start.

Mr APPLETON—The City of Ballarat has a long history of being involved in crime prevention and community safety based initiatives. The council has a pivotal role in promoting and developing strategies which enhance community safety and wellbeing. Council quite firmly believes that a safe community is one where people go about their daily lives and activities in an environment without fear or risk of harm or injury. Pivotal in our process around community safety over the last few years has been the development of community safety action plans, the latest of which is in its fourth year of implementation from 2008 to the 2013 version.

This particular plan focuses on six key areas of intervention, notably around partnerships, recognising the importance of key collaborations that are essential components of implementation; community strengthening, highlighting a number of neighbourhood based crime prevention initiatives; urban and safe design and healthy environments, specifically looking at how a built environment can play an important role in ensuring safety, and a welcoming and attractive use of particular areas; safer roads, access and movement, particularly around promoting active living, walkability; in relation to alcohol-related harm, supporting planning, regulatory and policy measures which reduce the opportunity for alcohol misuse; and, finally, in relation to family violence prevention, creating a safer environment for women through supporting community awareness based projects of family violence issues.

The Community Safety Advisory Committee was established in 1998 and is now in its 13th year of operations. Critical components of that is the strong collaborations that have been factored in, in relation to the membership of that particular committee. By way of highlighting that particular membership, it was highlighted through council's involvement with Victoria Police; the Committee for Ballarat; Women's Health Grampians; the Family Violence Prevention Network; the University of Ballarat; the Bridge Mall Traders Association; Corrections Victoria; Delacombe Neighbourhood Renewal Project; the

Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council; Sports Central, which is our sports assembly for this region; Neighbourhood Watch; Ballarat Taxi Cooperative; the Department of Planning and Community Development; the Ballarat Liquor Accord, ensuring there is crossover between the role of the Community Safety Advisory Committee and the liquor accord process; and finally the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

During the lifetime of the current community safety action plan, a number of key projects have been delivered. Firstly, the establishment of a second City Safe taxi rank within the CBD. In our last review, 90,000 patrons used those two taxi ranks on a Friday and Saturday evening throughout the 2011 financial year. Secondly, the expansion of public place closed circuit television cameras within the precinct; a noticeable improvement in relation to the designated driver program; the white ribbon day initiative, focusing in partnership with the Child and Family Services and Women's Health Grampians, has been a notable, important calendar within the Ballarat community; community projects up in Wendouree and specifically in relation to the Delacombe Neighbourhood Renewal initiative, and indeed around community safety month, a number of key community based projects. Tomorrow we have a conference on regional and rural safety attended by over 70 delegates coming into council.

We also have a project called the SMART Network which is 'surviving substance misuse and alcohol risk-taking', and the delivery of two key projects: SMART Answers—a two-day conference featuring young people, their families, and Ballarat welfare sector agencies, have been successful now over a six-year period with successful conferences in 2007, 2009 and 2011—and a SMART Ask project—a project which works with year 9 students across the region based on an experiential model where young people are at the forefront of being in a party scene and looking at some of the key elements that they need to make in terms of their decision-making processes.

In relation to evaluations, three key projects have received external evaluation over the recent past. The City Safe taxi rank was evaluated by Monash University Accident Research Centre; the public place CCTV systems through MGM Consulting; and Boat Smart programs by the University of Ballarat. In terms of measurement, key to how we are monitoring our community safety action plan is a process called Community Indicators Victoria in which every LGA received 300 indicators in 2007. We increased our sample size to 1,500 at that time which gives us a clear snapshot and some key safety base issues around perceptions of safety, around family violence, crime and alcohol-related harm. We are currently working with VicHealth on the promotion of another set of indicators, so we will be able to look at some baseline data between the two areas at the time.

In terms of new directions that could be taken, certainly to strengthen state government's legislation in relation to the availability of alcohol, particularly in lobbying for taxation reform on alcohol; that consideration potentially be given to the current taxi licence systems, to enable more taxis to be available during peak times at weekends, which is a particular problem in the city centre which my colleagues will allude to in a second; and, finally, a pilot flat fare taxi service model in regional Victoria, again to address some of the issues associated with late night transport arrangements. I will hand over to Councillor Des Hudson who is chair of our Community Safety Advisory Committee.

The CHAIR—Thanks, Des.

Councillor HUDSON—Thanks, Simon. What Peter has alluded to is certainly a very diverse nature of different programs and projects that we have been involved in through the life of the document. Within that, that gives us certainly a structure to maintain but with any various safety issues you have to be flexible enough to be able to address emerging trends and issues. One of those is the conversation we first had with Simon a number of weeks ago, and then we have also now been able to elevate that up and raise that with the minister in relation to a particular bus interchange in Ballarat. We certainly see a whole range of different aspects; issues around young people, and not that they are any different here in Ballarat but the focus and media attention that is placed on young people often will have sectors of the community thinking that all young people are out of control or likely to be antisocial. We know that is not the case. Probably 90 per cent of our young people are well connected, well engaged and doing the right thing. But there is a proportion of those young people that choose for a number of different reasons to engage in antisocial and criminal activity.

The initiatives we have been talking about, the white ribbon day campaign to try and further messages for change across our community, to look at how we can strengthen our communities by having people publicly being advocates for reducing violence against women is a real significant stand. The diversity of our community safety committee has continued to grow in recent years. When I first began chairing that, probably six or seven years ago, it was largely represented by council and then police with a handful of others, but I think we have a good mix of a whole range of different players that we are now into the space that we want to look at partnership approaches to a lot of issues. It is now only down to council to resolve issues, it is not only down to police, but it is how we as a community can do what we need to; how we can lobby, how we can bring other partners on board to have a share in some of the issues that we identify. We are open for any questions, I guess.

Mr BATTIN—Your area here in Ballarat, you have such a wide-ranging area of communities. How do you address it differently with your crime prevention in the city, or do you have to change the message at all through to your people in the more rural areas as well?

Councillor HUDSON—I think that is often a reasonable ask when you have that diversity of rural areas. But one of the new initiatives is the minister's regional crime prevention forums as well. We have attended that and sat at the table for the very first one that was out at Golden Plains in July, and we would see our opportunity to again partner with that organisation as well, to ensure that rural communities are part of safety committees. But at times there is a lot of other information from statewide initiatives, or information, such as theft of livestock or other things that can be distributed, not necessarily the greatest priority from the more city-centric focus.

Mr BATTIN—You mentioned CCTV cameras before, how have you found the effect of CCTV cameras in this area, or have you got results of pre and post to see—

Mr APPLETON—We have put some baseline data together and they have had a positive impact in terms of the level of crime detection. Having said that the jury is out in relation to how successful they have been in terms of the public perception, and also the business stakeholder perceptions.

Mr BATTIN—Has it had an element of crime prevention or is it more an evidence tool?

Mr APPLETON—It is really the evidence tool around crime detection that the cameras are primarily used for. When we did a lot of the analysis it was clear from our reading of some of the anecdotal work we have done that it really solely around a crime detection tool, as opposed to seeking to play a crime prevention role.

Councillor HUDSON—Whether it impacts or not on the final evaluation, one of the issues we found is that where our CCTV is located is in one of our more historical areas of Ballarat. Issues around signage was always going to be difficult. How you then have people coming in that readily identify, 'Yes, there are cameras in this area,' where there are clear signage policy and guidelines in other areas that is in your face, and you know, 'Okay, there is an element of CCTV that's there.' We constantly reinforce it. We did a lot of media around—for probably two years—in building up our case in putting CCTV into that area, that I think our community is comfortable knowing that CCTV is a tool that is there. But whether or not it ever changes the issue for a person that is heavily alcohol intoxicated at the time, that is being aggressive, for them to think—and I agree with Pete that probably the jury is out—but for other crime, hopefully people feel safe going into that environment.

Ms KING—I would like to add, because where the closed-circuit television cameras are placed there are university residences in the Camp Street area for the Arts Academy, that having those cameras put in place is quite useful because we have students coming in and out of where they live in an area that is adjacent to the late-night precinct area. The other thing not to be overlooked is that when all those cameras were put in, there was also quite a marked increase in the lighting that was provided in that area, as part of the cameras picking up stuff, if it is too dark you cannot see it. As well as the value of the cameras being there, I think the improved lighting made the amenity of the area a lot better. Also, even if you are a bit intoxicated and do not think about cameras, people can see you and that is a benefit as well.

When the cameras were implemented and we had the opportunity to go into the police station and have a look at the standard of the vision, that is in an area where police can look at it, although it is not monitored like you have someone sitting there monitoring it, it is used in a way that if they saw something happening that they would dispatch people to go and do that, which is completely counter to the way I have seen this issue reported in the local newspapers. They seem to overlook the fact that it is a benefit and seem to home in on the fact that there is crime in Ballarat. Well, yes, there is, there is crime everywhere. It is what you do to address it is the issue. I wanted to highlight that because we have students living in the middle of the CBD area.

Councillor HUDSON—That was one of the strong messages we went out with, saying that the funding model where we first able to put in a CCTV program, we wanted to make sure we were building in the infrastructure, going with good fibre optics that would allow potential expansion and quality of vision. We had a look at Geelong and having walked their sites and looked at theirs when they were using wireless and remotes, they were having issues with bandwidth, the quality of the footage that was coming through. We wanted to make sure that what we were putting in was going to give us good quality that from an evidentiary point of view it was going to hopefully achieve the best possible outcome. Clarity of being able to identify, 'Yes, that was the person,' and being able to then point to, 'Yes, that person meets what's on the vision.' From that point it has been fairly effective. It has been a constant message about saying, 'This is not a monitored system.' It has the capacity to go back, look at, capture, or if there is a particular event that is running, then that provision is there for someone to actively monitor and then direct resources if required.

Councillor PHILIPS—Some people feel that the CCTV is a 'big brother watching' approach, but it also has the spin-off effect that for those that are intoxicated that their friends and minders are aware of it and start pulling them into gear. The effect of that is a benefit I have seen in the city here. That works well for the city and to some degree, yes, you want to manage it but it is a good way forward to managing high use and high demand areas, particularly into the late hours or the early hours of the morning.

Ms KING—Are you able to go and have a look at those cameras and see the standard of the vision because when you see Crime Stoppers on television and you see little camera shots, you could not pick out who they are. If you had the opportunity to go and have a look at it and understand the level that it is at, it would be really useful to understand and the fact that they can move them and zoom them in, and do that type of thing.

Mr BATTIN—Without looking at these ones, I am ex-police in Melbourne and I have seen many—and I know exactly what you are saying, you can sit there with some cameras and you have no idea of what is really happening. But we have also seen in Western Australia they have a system that I would probably say is one of the leading systems, and I would imagine if you are up with them, with their system you can move them around. You can basically do a 360 with theirs, the whole way around. They zoom, they are very clear.

Councillor HUDSON—It gives you that flexibility too.

Mr BATTIN—We saw those at night too and that was a really good reflection on how they do work. Away from the cameras now, I suppose, is a question—Simon, if you do not mind.

The CHAIR—No.

Mr BATTIN—I am going to ask you a broad question, to give me your key elements in crime prevention in your area. What do you see are the key elements for this area here to continue to prevent crime in the future?

Councillor HUDSON—If we could get a good balance of media, that often media will drive a particular perception. One of the strongest brandings that we have done is that Ballarat is a safe city. Statistically we know that is the case. You can raise a family, you can participate, you can recreate, you can enjoy going about your life, going to work. But the power of the media in being able to downplay in various programs that they may run at times, will play a huge role in terms of determining how people feel safe and secure in their local neighbourhoods.

Mr BATTIN—Would that be something similar—recently it was released—I know the Premier came out and did one on road safety with the 60 editors.

Councillor HUDSON—Yes.

Mr BATTIN—Do you think that would have a benefit there where we discuss with the regional papers to assist—

Councillor HUDSON—I think they have a key role in coming to the table and being a part of it. We have had different, varying relationships with forms of media in Ballarat. The previous chair of the community safety committee for the first two years of this life of council was the general manager of 3BA Power FM. He saw his role as being

part of an advocate for the community to join in their voice and was a real strength. We have had numerous attempts at trying to engage local newspapers, the Ballarat Courier. From time to time we have had the editor come and participate, get involved in the discussion, but they have the power to influence so many people. The current one that the Premier is involved in, talking down the road toll, if we are going to get those clear messages out we have to have the reach, and we as a committee can sit around and talk about issues but we have to get it out to the grassroots people that they too think about when they have a young person in the car, or some strategies around how they skill them up, is really important.

Ms KING—The other reality too is that as you increase police numbers, which is very welcome in our community, you might increase the crime statistics because, guess what, you are catching more people. So the perception of whether it is safe or not safe, and the crime statistics, yes, you will pick up more, and you might pick up more things because you have CCTV, but the actual experience is what Des is talking about, people living in the area, that is what it is about. I am happy to catch people who are crooks, that is all right, it is just my living experience.

Councillor BROMFIELD—Again the fact that we have an increase in crime statistics over recent weeks is a testament to the increased policing that we have in Ballarat which I think is absolutely wonderful. We will have increased apprehension and obviously prosecution because of that. We will have an increase in stats which the media will play out to say that Ballarat is an unsafe place to live. But hopefully that will balance out in the very near future.

Councillor HUDSON—In being able to add strength and add value, we have an application that has been built up at the moment for the minister's crime prevention fund for relocatable CCTV, the portability, that for us a lot of our fixed system is in around the alcohol entertainment precinct. We have issues with hoon behaviour, we have issues with property damage, we have had issues with graffiti right across various corridors of our community. We need that portability to be able to focus on emerging issues as they arrive. The late night entertainment precinct is fine but certainly from a policing point of view, knowing that young people aged 14 to 16 and 17 that are often committing quite a number of offences, especially property, if we have that flexibility to be able to move and focus on different hotspots from time to time, to be able to at least identify and then bring some level of accountability. But with that we also need to balance that with other opportunities and diversion options for young people to re-engage them. Certainly some of our young people that are committing the high volume of graffiti offences, to be able to link them in with art programs and other opportunities to express their desire—what the City of Melbourne has done successfully with their laneways projects, they are now destinations to go and have a look at urban art and street art—rather than doing an enforcement of saying, 'No, I'm going to arrest people every time,' we have to think a little bit higher and a bit more long-term as to how we re-engage people that are doing the wrong thing.

The CHAIR—If I could, if I may, lead into a question. Your community safety programs seem to be more focused to youth rather than any other demographic and I presume that is because there is a higher incidence of antisocial behaviour in that demographic. Our role really is to see, rather than talking about increasing police numbers or otherwise, if government can improve or provide support in how the community can be an active and proactive player in relation to participating and engaging in programs that will reduce that incidence of antisocial behaviour. You talked about Delacombe, and we were recently out at Wendouree West and we have seen some of the issues out there. The renewal program, I think it is still undecided whether they have been successful or not in a way that they were run out.

But do we get back to the whole crux of what is creating the antisocial behaviour in that demographic, apart from the fact they get bored, that it is a pack mentality at a certain time. It seems that at certain hours, and a pack mentality, they start to become antisocial because they are with mates, showing off. Is there an opportunity maybe in the education field in early intervention that respect for others and other property is an opportunity for us, or is that a misguided hope that maybe we can at an early age start to instil character, values et cetera that will reduce that type of behaviour in later life?

Councillor HUDSON—I think it is a number of ongoing conversations we need to have, whether it is in an education setting. But at one point in time I was the school resource officer with police, and the amount of contact I had with young people talking about a whole range of different issues that was very proactive, and even now talking about issues of cyber safety and cyber crime, and the awareness of young people in accepting people randomly on Facebook—and I have talked to 15- and 16-year-olds that have had 1,200 or 1,300 contacts that are just random—is a bit of an issue. It is no different when we are doing road safety or the SMART Ask program that Pete alluded to. We need to invest in our young people. We need to invest so they are informed to make better choices. Historically what I have seen is that the world for teachers has become busier and busier, and they have often been in the area where everyone says, 'Let's let teachers do that.' Schools are one component of the solution, but we need to make sure there are opportunities for young people to participate outside of school hours.

Sport, which is often seen as that great connector of young people, is becoming more and more unaffordable for a lot of young people. When I began playing junior cricket as a 13-year-old you could virtually use the club bag, you paid your fees and that was it for six months. But now the expectation is that virtually every child has their own bat, has their own pads, helmet, everything else. The start-up fee for a family is probably \$400 to \$500 to kit them out. That becomes beyond the reach of people to be able to participate. Even the movement away from our structured sports, the emergence of extreme games and other opportunities, we need to focus on creating those spaces. I was involved in the creation of our regional skate park facility down at the M.T. Fraser Reserve, and with a whole lot of consultation—the community was feeling, 'The kids are antisocial, it will be all drug-taking, will get graffiti and stuff down there,' and yet it has been an outstanding success. Engaging with the young people, they led the design. We built it with them and it is a space they flock to and love to be there.

In a city our size, sometimes we build regional facilities and we do not build neighbourhood facilities. We need to engage young people in the area where they are still within reach of mum or dad but they are able to then socialise a little bit on their own. That is an area that we need to build some capacity in.

Councillor PHILIPS—Apart from going back to the parenting component and saying, 'Bring your children up correctly and know the rights and wrongs,' is something that I am not quite sure how you would ever achieve that. I agree with Des around the engagement and the opportunity for young people to be involved. I hearken back to my days when I was a young person out in the country area where we had Young Farmers and those types of organisations that were not necessarily only for young farmers but they were for a range of people having a community farm and enjoying things and getting the values right. It comes back to almost a level of mentoring from older children to younger children and picking up on that component and passing that message down the line that, 'What you're doing is okay, but that's not okay,' and understanding that level is something that I think is pretty important. In knowing the value of engagement, as Des says, or getting people to do things and participate—whether they design a skate park or a

playground or whatever it is—they have a level of ownership out of that. From that they have a level of pride that goes with that and they stick with that then.

If they see people that are outside that, they say, 'Stop,' or try and pull it up, and have a level of maintenance in looking after that. They have pride in what they do as well. It is picking up on pride, picking up on involvement and to some degree that flows on for the capacity to be able to get from A to B. It comes back into a transport network that we often hear young people talk about how they get around the city when the buses have stopped running or the town has shut down of a weekend and things like that. Some of these issues start happening from there. Some of those points are very crucial in the whole big picture of engagement. For every young person that wants to play sport, there is probably another one that does not want to play sport and wants another level of involvement/engagement. 'The library is shut, where do I go?' It is things like that. How do we do all that. They are some of things that I see from young people's perspective. I am probably in that space at the moment where I have a 19-year-old but hearing their level of concerns and where they go and what they do, they simply do not involve themselves in what goes on in the city because they do not like it. It is building it from the parent down and from the young ones up. It is a dual role.

Councillor BROMFIELD—I would like to go back in regards to teaching values to children. I believe there is a clear role in the education system for teaching values. I know it is the responsibility of the parent. We all have our individual values and, let's face it, there is a percentage of the population out there whose value systems are quite questionable. If you look at it as a generalisation, those are the children who tend to come from families who lead into trouble. The Education Department can play a role in teaching them clear values, social responsibility, being accountable, respectability and being responsible for themselves and for others. Also there is the education system in early primary school, but they need expert external support with programs. There are specialists who can come in and teach drug and health education at an early age, because the teachers do a fabulous job in educating our children but they are not specialists in drug and health education, and the social issues surrounding that.

There is government funding that they have a choice of using external providers or doing it themselves and I believe the schools that provide the education themselves in that area are disadvantaging the children. It should be compulsory for it to be done by a specialist provider.

Ms KING—I think part of the problem with young people who get up to no good around the town is probably a lack of employment for young people in our area. The unemployment rates are different in rural-regional places than they are in the city. Idle hands that are not very willing to get out and have a go are probably the ones who do not get jobs. There is a level of perhaps educational disengagement, disengagement from the workforce and basically they get involved in antisocial stuff which is what you see around the town, it is very visible. Whereas there are a lot of other really fantastic young people who are hard at work doing all sorts of terrific stuff. Unfortunately, highlighting what Des said before about the media, last Friday evening I went to the City of Ballarat Youth Awards and they were fantastic, there are some wonderful young people. On page 14 there was a small photo of one person, but someone who does some small, silly thing would be on the front page with a great big picture.

You talk up that type of stuff, it is like my perception of when they report, you know, some fool is found on the road driving at 140 K's an hour. The next person thinks, 'I'll have to drive faster than that,' just because they heard that, which it would be better not to report that, to keep that quiet because you are egging people on. Some of that reporting in

the paper I think eggs people on to have a go at doing something even more outrageous, that they will get on the front page of the paper and that type of thing. I think the media has to be very careful about how it deals with this information.

Councillor HUDSON—We certainly saw that with one particular campaign in relation to safety in our Bridge Mall area. What we saw on the front page of two young blokes that were wrestling was, 'Out of control', but it was actually a mock-up photo. It was presented as if this is a daily occurrence, this is how it was when we were there taking the photo, not the fact it was actually an orchestrated one of asking a couple of people to get into a pose, which was disappointing again.

The CHAIR—Can I ask how much alcohol plays in the antisocial behaviour of Australian youth demographic that we are talking about, more so than anywhere else?

Councillor HUDSON—I think we have a very strong alcohol culture within our community. The program that Pete alluded to, the SMART Ask program, I am one of the presenters in that. My discussions with year 9s is that there is a very common occurrence that they are certainly drinking. Whether they are drinking to bingeing elements, depending on statistical stuff, but they are certainly comfortable in and around an alcohol participating environment. The accessibility of alcohol is one of those issues. We have not only quite a large number of hotels but we are seeing more and more bottle shops, like Premix King or others, that are coming into our community, but they are also locating close to where there are school areas. Some planning control around those—similar to our gaming policy—we do not want them out where there is the cumulative harm. We want them in areas where there is a deliberate choice and a disconnect from easy access. But that is certainly going to be one of the issues for us.

Again it is the discussion of liquor accords, trying to get people to sign up and have a role, an active role, rather than saying, 'Yes, we're a member of the accord,' but to partner with us or with the safety committee saying, 'We too don't want to see young people that are overindulging. We identify the risks. Let's have some partnership options,' would be a great outcome.

Mr BATTIN—When you are talking about the bottle shops, do you find that is an increasing issue with people preloading before they go out, so you are buying a six-pack or a dozen, or whatever it is these days, but have a few before they go out?

Councillor HUDSON—Certainly if you look at the late-night entertainment venues, maybe around 10.30 or 11 o'clock at night, are probably not that busy. It would be natural to think they are either at home or maybe still at sporting groups and they are loading up because of the economy of scale, they can drink far cheaper at home and then when they go out they might have a few more or top up, but they have already done quite a significant amount of drinking at home in amongst their friends before they do go out.

Mr BATTIN—I know there is a change with councils because councils do not really have a say at the moment with bottle shops, whereas that has been addressed.

Councillor HUDSON—Yes. We can go forward as part of the last round of consultations that we as the planning authority are very close to our community to know what is probably okay and what is not. We probably ideally want to be in that space to say when we have a level of density that we are comfortable with and then to be able to say, 'We've got enough.'

Ms KING—It would be an interesting research thing to breath-test people when they are lined up to go in.

Mr BATTIN—To nightclubs?

Ms KING—Yes, to find that out, because I think you are exactly right, and the extension of hours later and later is because people buy less when they go out. If they are open longer they will stay longer and eventually buy as much as they would have bought if they were only open for three hours or something like that.

Councillor PHILIPS—That takes a level of control away from the nightclubs to be saying, 'Hang on, you've had too much to drink, or you're on to your fifth, sixth, seventh drink,' or something like that. They do not know what has been consumed beforehand. They are only assessing when they come in as if they were a sober person. It's a starting point for them. They have to put a line in the sand or a benchmark point and work from there. If somebody is already very well intoxicated by the time they get in but can get themselves past security and manage to get in safely, then it may be only one or two drinks that will make a huge difference to whether they are falling down drunk or able to get around in a reasonable fashion.

Councillor HUDSON—In relation to the liquor accord, it is normally the owners/licensees of nightclubs that participate in the liquor accord. Locally there are steps being explored to then introduce a second tier which is more your sporting clubs and hotels, and outlying almost rural hotels for them to become part of the discussion as well. Everyone is on the same page and that is something we are keen to see explored over the next three to six months, at least bringing them to the table and allowing them to have a voice and engage in the dialogue.

Councillor BROMFIELD—Can I cover off the alcohol issue. We have a large percentage of alcohol misuse but we do not have a lot of access to rehabilitation centres. We have the number of beds available for rehabilitation service, a region, not only Ballarat, and they were insufficient to service the needs of Ballarat alone. We find when they are in crisis they are unable to get assistance. They are sent away, 'Come back later,' and you usually miss that window of opportunity when they are seeking help because the services are not available for them, sufficient services are not available for them. Also mixed up with that are those who fall between the cracks of the dual diagnosis—drugs and alcohol and mental health issues. They fall between the cracks because they do not fall under a category to be serviced with this group and they do not fit the criteria for another. Sometimes the opportunities are missed. We are not servicing the needs of those with mental health issues within the community and those with drug and alcohol abuse or substance addiction.

The CHAIR—Thank you for that. We are scheduled to finish now but I want to, if we can, wrap up and there is an opportunity to make some closing remarks if any of you wish. Perhaps in a nutshell give us guidance about what you think is good about what you are offering to the community safety programs you have in place and if there are areas of improvement you could make; the relevance of Neighbourhood Watch, which was part of our reference, how that is working or not. Bearing in mind I think, Sandy, we have someone from Neighbourhood Watch coming in later on. Do not be too harsh in criticism but at least give us some guidance about how that fits in with your program. We want to hear the success of Ballarat's community safety program very quickly and where it can be improved.

Councillor HUDSON—Certainly, as Pete alluded to, we are in the fourth year of our action plan. There is quite a lot that has been ticked off in relation to transport with Safe City taxi rank, with the lighting projects, with CCTV have been real strengths. We need to continue our message through the support of state government where there are initiatives that create opportunities for young people, things such as FReeZA funding, the

importance of being able to put on regular activities for young people, that is the strength. Often there might be an event on but then there are three months before another event. We have to keep them engaged, we have to keep them busy at a whole range of times and we will get better outcomes from that point of view.

I agree that there are certain sectors of the community that participate in Neighbourhood Watch. They are generally the older demographic, but it is important that they have that sense of feeling, secure in their environment as well. But Neighbourhood Watch has probably not been part of the community safety action plan. We have good police representation on there and that is able to filter down to them, but they have partnered with a number of the different activities that have been in the action plan as well. One of our focuses has been about creating safer neighbourhoods for people to feel safe in their home environments. That has been positive as well.

Councillor BROMFIELD—I think Neighbourhood Watch play a really key part in our community because safety is a community issue and they clearly demonstrate that. The issues they are facing is that they are predominantly an aged group of people, and if there was a program or promotion to encourage younger people to become involved in Neighbourhood Watch—because they do not have the energy and the resources to do the work that they want to do.

Councillor PHILIPS—I would like to make a comment around Neighbourhood Watch, being a country person. I was heavily involved with Neighbourhood Watch when it first started up. It has certainly lost its impetus out in the country areas now. It has not been driven anywhere near as hard, and I think that is a big issue on crime in the country areas. Possibly we are not seeing that, and finding you have to mostly deal with issues in small groups is the only way that seems to be working at all. You might have half a dozen neighbours to work with and you have an understanding of what is going on around you, but for the bigger picture in the country areas it is probably a difficult one. I understand that particularly around the fringes of Ballarat there is a lot more housing going up and coming into those areas and there are a lot of people—I once knew everybody in the area; I do not know half of them now. It is a changing environment. It would be good to see that strengthen and revisited, particularly in the country areas. In the city, the buses, the CCTVs and the lighting, I think that has been good. I would like to see some more strengths around transport, particularly for the younger people, around the city—whether it be more buses or taxis et cetera—getting people in and out of the area quickly and not hanging around so much and then they do not have a chance to get into an argument or find antisocial things to do.

Ms KING—I have been on the various safety committees for quite a few years and I think the involvement of the police with the committee is really crucial because there is a connection into the community for the police's benefit and our benefit of being able to hear what is happening with them is really very useful.

The CHAIR—Thank you. Everybody right? Thank you very much, we appreciate your time.

Witnesses withdrew.

Hearing suspended.

DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

**Inquiry into Locally Based Approaches to Community Safety and Crime
Prevention**

Ballarat—18 October 2011

Members

Mr S. Ramsay

Mr B. Battin

Chair: Mr S. Ramsay

Staff

Executive Officer: Ms S. Cook

Committee Administrative Officer: Ms. D. Woof

Witnesses

Mr L. Florence, Chairperson, and

Mr D. Fisher, Member, Neighbourhood Watch, Ballarat PSA.

The CHAIR—Thank you very much for your attendance, and thank you for those people behind. This is a joint parliamentary committee of Drugs and Crime Prevention, which is one of the major joint parliamentary committees in the parliament. We are conducting two inquiries: one in relation to security in emergency wards of public hospitals, and we have dealt with some of that reference this morning, that is the second inquiry; the first inquiry is into locally based solutions to community safety and crime prevention. We have heard this morning from the City of Ballarat, and Ballarat University about some of the work they are doing in relation to community engagement with community safety programs.

We thought it would be useful to allow an open session in relation to others who might like to present to this committee in relation to this inquiry. Thank you for those that have attended, and I do note there are some young ambassadors to Ballarat at the back with the mayor who, I understand, has been taking charge of them today. Welcome. I suspect this is probably your first attendance to a joint parliamentary inquiry. Put that down as one to remember. I am sure if you continue to take your leadership roles you will be involved in many others in the future. These are wonderful opportunities to really investigate in detail not only social issues but issues concerning communities right across Victoria which the parliament has charge of and leads to a number of recommendations that will be reported back to parliament and obviously the government in response. It is an important part of the democratic and political process of forming legislation to help communities across Victoria. Thank you for joining us, albeit for a short time, mayor. I will appreciate if you have to go early. While you are here, I did in the last session thank the Ballarat City Council for the use of your chambers. We appreciate that as well, and also the fact that you are here this afternoon.

I will quickly move on. Under the conditions of a public hearing I still have to read you the conditions around the evidence that you are providing. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975 and further subject to the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, the Defamation Act 2005 and, where applicable, the provisions of reciprocal legislation in other Australian states and territories. Any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. I understand you both are giving evidence and have read the presenting evidence parliamentary guide. We are recording the evidence and will provide a proof version of the *Hansard* transcript at the earliest opportunity. You can correct it as appropriate. I am also obliged to advise that we do have media in the room, and have had, during this hearing.

Perhaps if I could ask for your evidence to this hearing, or submissions, to be fairly brief, perhaps in substance but not so much in detail. I will ask, who is going first?

Mr FLORENCE—I will.

The CHAIR—Lindsay. You are the Ballarat Neighbourhood Watch chair?

Mr FLORENCE—Chairperson. I am a retired police superintendent here in Ballarat as well. That is current to what I have to say. Neighbourhood Watch has traditionally been geared around prevention into house burglary and property burglary. We, in Ballarat, have moved away from that and looked at the reduction of numberplate theft and reduction of car theft by having safe plates with safe screws, one-way screws. We have gone into Lock it, Remove it or Lose it, which is prevention of car theft, and theft from motor cars. We still do property marking which has been a traditional Neighbourhood Watch role. We still do such things as bicycle safety and the like.

What has been of concern to the local Neighbourhood Watch is that over a number of years, Neighbourhood Watch has become somewhat irrelevant stagnant. We are concerned that it no longer represents a progressive organisation. That has been reflected by the Neighbourhood Watch board. In a lot of ways the Neighbourhood Watch program was a successful one, but that single focus on house burglaries and whatever prevented us moving into the more wider roles of crime prevention. That led us locally, as a Neighbourhood Watch group, to try and make ourselves more relevant to the police and more relevant as a community based organisation. We did that by looking at our own structure. Instead of a number of small area based Neighbourhood Watch groups, we have moved towards a more police service area or local government area Neighbourhood Watch with a single committee, rather than a number of small committees.

We have developed an organisational structure. That has led to the development of an action plan which we are now able to report against. We have done this primarily in conjunction with a Neighbourhood Watch coordinator, albeit that that has a limited role in terms of our ability to get full engagement with local police. Where we come from we see Neighbourhood Watch as an opportunity for police to engage, to consult, to involve us so that we can ultimately participate in a greater range of crime prevention programs. Currently, I do not think Neighbourhood Watch does that itself, but I do not think the local police place enough emphasis on that structured and coordinated community engagement. Police certainly plan their activities and they engage with government entities and government departments and other type activities but rarely do they actually engage the community at that base level.

I see that as being one of the issues. Our local structure, that we have developed has led to the development of a local website. We put a lot of emphasis into that to be a form of community consultation, a way to inform the community about crime prevention activities and about what we are doing; that is our organisational structure, our action plan and our website have been requested by other Neighbourhood Watch in Melbourne and they are now mimicking us in some of those areas as well towards their own restructure. Overall, I think Neighbourhood Watch has lacked a degree of leadership. It has been allowed to stagnate.

The CHAIR—From the top, you mean?

Mr FLORENCE —Yes, I do. A good example of that is Neighbourhood Watch Victoria saw the need to revitalise and they had the view that they wanted to go down a certain path to make Neighbourhood Watch more relevant to modern policing and modern communities, but they also said, 'Well, it's out there, you design the model that best suits you.' In some ways that gives you some level of integrity and a level of freedom to do that, but it does not really set the direction in which they want to go; it does not harness the energies of the people that want to be involved in the organisation. That is what I mean by lacking direction. What I mean by the police and the community engagement, in my former role I had spent a lot of time talking about structured community engagement. It is not the ad hoc business activities, it is not the ad hoc individual crime prevention program, it is to inform and run public forums and surveys and ask the people what is needed from their perspective.

I think one of the fears for Victoria Police is that they see that if you go down the path of true community engagement then there will be a fear that the community will drive their activities rather than the police themselves. I saw that as a member of the police force and I see it equally as much as the chair of Neighbourhood Watch. There is an opportunity for Neighbourhood Watch to revitalise, but I also think there is an opportunity for police through this group to encourage a more broader, community based consultation program

which is about informing, consulting, participating and ultimately empowerment in some of these crime prevention programs.

Some of the issues: clearly it was a direction and a strategic direction that I saw. The recent decision by the government to fund in part the CEO for Neighbourhood Watch is a clear indication that that is a positive step. I see that as needed for the local Neighbourhood Watch people to have a person that we can get direction out of and a strategic plan. To me, Neighbourhood Watch is still relevant. Those crime prevention programs that it was based on since 1975 are still relevant. The people still want to be involved. But unless we can make ourselves more relevant and more appealing to the general public then numbers will continue to dwindle and we will find ourselves fading away like a lot of other programs.

The issue is about marketing. I think it is about ultimately funding and it is about attracting the right sort of people to that organisation. Conversely, the police should undertake, as I said, a more structured community engagement. This is not to say the police should engage with the public on every single activity, but there are many opportunities about local crime, and about local crime issues, and about the perception of crime in the community that police have an opportunity to be more open. I would certainly encourage that through this committee.

Perhaps my evidence to you can be summed up by saying that if Neighbourhood Watch was to demonstrate a more professional and relevant approach then maybe we can attract more members, we can be more successful in our crime prevention programs and ultimately we can be of better use and contribute more to community safety.

The CHAIR—Thanks, Lindsay. Can I put it to you that maybe given today's lifestyle that we have become so self-absorbed by our own activities and not interested in our neighbours, such as we were in history, that the coordination and relevance of past Neighbourhood Watch has been a victim of that? Is that right?

Mr FLORENCE—Yes, I agree. The original focus of Neighbourhood Watch is about prevention of house burglary. If we look at its success over those 35-odd years, I think it stands alone as an ongoing community based crime prevention program. That serves not only as a positive in terms of what it can achieve, but it also serves to create a perception in the wider community that that is all Neighbourhood Watch does. That is not all that Neighbourhood Watch does. Therefore it is a positive and a negative. But your comment about the lifestyle of communities, I think that is also reflected in a number of organisations, such as Rotary and Lions and those entities. It is very hard now to get people to volunteer in the true sense. That is why it is so important to be able to present a professional approach, strategic direction and action plan, and have a marketing strategy around that, as to why it should be relevant and why people should take time out of their busy lives to participate in community activities for the betterment.

The CHAIR—Are you a stakeholder in the local council's community safety program? We have had them here giving evidence to this committee in the last session, but I was not clear about your involvement in that.

Mr FLORENCE—I do not go, as a Neighbourhood Watch representative, but one of the police coordinators we have on that committee is a police member. There is in Ballarat a structured proactive unit group which includes a Neighbourhood Watch coordinator, a school youth officer and a few others. Those two work out of the same office, and one of those members is a councillor. In part-answer to your question,

Neighbourhood Watch is not invited as a participant, but by a backdoor approach we have input.

The CHAIR—Doug, do you have a contribution?

Mr FISHER—I have a couple of issues I have written down too. To somehow try and get young people involved in what Neighbourhood Watch is all about. It helps along the lines of making a safer community for all the people in the area. The last thing I have is the judicial laws have to be made harsher, that the wrong-doers and the other ones that come up behind them can think twice and know what the penalties are and subsequently stop themselves doing it. Simple as that. I know it is an issue that probably grates on somebody's nerves but I think it has to be looked at.

The CHAIR—Doug, can I put it to you, my daughter has bought a house in a housing estate in Torquay. It is a brand new estate. She would not have a clue who her next-door neighbour is, and shows no interest in who the next-door neighbour is, and I suspect that is typical of young people.

Mr FISHER—A lot of the young ones, yes.

The CHAIR—In the old days we used to bring a plate of scones, introduce ourselves, say, 'We're such-and-such,' but that does not appear to be atypical now. The point is, is it because of today's living that that whole neighbourhood approach has been lost in relevance or in use, and how do you engage the young into being able to socialise within its community, actually start caring and taking action and engaging in what was a traditional Neighbourhood Watch type system? I think that was the question, you need more young people being involved, but there seems to be a reluctance—and Brad might want to comment because he has had lots of experience in some of these youth programs. There seems to be a reluctance for the young to be involved in the caring and sharing that were basically the values of Neighbourhood Watch of old. Is that wrong or right?

Mr FISHER—What I can see about Neighbourhood Watch is that a lot of them, the volunteers are pensioners, with a bit of time on their hands.

The CHAIR—That is what has been told to us, that it is the only the older demographic that is engaging in Neighbourhood Watch. Their relevance is losing its impact.

Mr FISHER—As they grow older they are not replaced by young people.

The CHAIR—Why is that though? That is the question I am asking. I am using my daughter as a perfect example who is not—

Mr FISHER—I know that in our own street you do not get to know half of them. You can say giddyay to them and they say giddyay back but there are a lot of them around that you do not see them at all. It is hard to get to know anybody.

The CHAIR—My point is, what can Neighbourhood Watch do to start instilling that old value of looking out for your neighbour and engaging in, say, community safety programs that reduce the risk of crime?

Mr FISHER—I think Lindsay went on to that.

The CHAIR—The website we talked about, but I am wondering what else.

Mr FLORENCE—One program that we have planned in our action plan for this year is to conduct community forums and that is still in the planning stage, it is certainly not completed, but the early discussion around that was to invite people through letter drops and say, 'This is a community forum,' and it was about exposing to the general public the range of activities for Neighbourhood Watch to try and inform them that we are not a group of retirees that are past their prime, and we do approach crime prevention across a range of activities for better safety and more improved community safety outcomes. That is part of the marketing strategy and that is where we need to go, to get Neighbourhood Watch before the public again, because currently it is seen as 'that group of old people who are no longer relevant', but to respect people, respect people's property, stop stealing, general behaviour on the streets - alcohol, all of those things - none of those values have changed over the years and yet the very values that Neighbourhood Watch are promoting are seemingly outdated in the perception of the community.

That is why I am saying we as a group at Neighbourhood Watch must look at ourselves but we also must look for that broader consultation process with the police to help us be of relevance. To me there is a whole group of Neighbourhood Watch people out there, they are volunteers, they all have good intentions and they are very supportive of law and order and of the police. They are an army of volunteers that are not being used to their full potential.

Mr BATTIN—I think that is right, the hardest thing is getting younger people involved and it is the way of doing it. I know you are saying you are doing letterbox drops but whether it is the perception—it is changing that perception before you can actually get them out there. That is where the target is: how do you change that perception. Doing a letterbox drop, you open it, look at it, and the first thing you see is Neighbourhood Watch, and the perception automatically is, 'That it is the old Neighbourhood Watch'.

Mr FLORENCE—Yes, but we still have to go down the path of public forums, if we do not conduct these open forums and we do not ask for the input and we do not ask to consult with the people, then the follow-up question to me is, "how do we know what the young people want if we do not ask them"? How do we know what would bring them to Neighbourhood Watch and ask them to participate in terms of their community profile and community participation if we are not relevant to their needs. The only way you can do that is to ask them.

Mr BATTIN—Have you done that before at a local level?

Mr FLORENCE—In a former life, yes, but as Neighbourhood Watch, no.

Mr FISHER—I have found when walking down the road early of a morning you see some people and you say giddyay. Some speak back, others look at you and others grunt and you do not feel like you should talk to them, those people, but the older ones they will stop and have a yarn and tell you what their problems are and what is on their mind as far as the local community is concerned. But the young ones more or less write you off, 'You're an old duffer.'

The CHAIR—All right. Anything else you would like to say?

Mr FLORENCE—No, but I would reinforce the fact that Neighbourhood Watch is an excellent program. It needs to be revitalised to make itself more relevant to modern society.

The CHAIR—Right. Thanks, Lindsay, and thank you, Doug.

Mr FISHER—Thanks very much.

The CHAIR—Good luck in your endeavours to revitalise Neighbourhood Watch.

Mr FLORENCE—We are getting there.

The CHAIR—That is good. You are right. I think the model you are pursuing is being looked at in a state based approach. It will be interesting to see where it ends up.

Mr FLORENCE—We are ahead of the possie, so to speak. Thank you all.

Mr FISHER—Thanks very much for letting me have my say.

The CHAIR—Pleasure.

Witnesses withdrew.

Committee adjourned.

DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

**Inquiry into Locally Based Approaches to Community Safety and Crime
Prevention**

Melbourne — 24 October 2011

Members

Mr B. Battin
Mr S. Leane
Mr T. McCurdy

Mr S. Ramsay
Mr J. Scheffer

Chair: Mr S. Ramsay
Deputy Chair: Mr J. Scheffer

Staff

Executive Officer: Ms S. Cook
Senior Research Officer: Mr P. Johnston
Committee Administrative Officer: Ms D. Woof

Witnesses

Mr A. Brideson, Chairperson, Neighbourhood Watch Victoria Inc; and
Superintendent T. de Ridder, Strategic Services Superintendent, Chief Commissioner's
Representative, Neighbourhood Watch Victoria Inc. Board of Management.

The CHAIR — Thank you for your time. It is good that you could make yourself available to give us an update on Neighbourhood Watch. We have a specific staff resource collating a lot of material, so it is very timely that you are here today to give us an update. We are trying to catch the minister up on the funding going into Neighbourhood Watch, and in relation to the recommendations we provide him I think we have to look at this nearly each month.

Mr BRIDESON — I think so. Things are happening fairly quickly.

The CHAIR — Welcome to you, superintendent. This is a joint parliamentary hearing of the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee. We are working on two inquiries at the moment. One is in relation to community safety programs for crime prevention, and Neighbourhood Watch has been specifically identified in that reference. We have allotted about an hour for this session.

Mr BRIDESON — That should be plenty of time.

The CHAIR — I have to read, as you have heard many times, the requirements in relation to providing evidence. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975 and further subject to the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, the Defamation Act 2005 and, where applicable, the provisions of reciprocal legislation in other Australian states and territories. Any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. I am sure you have both received or read the guide for witnesses presenting evidence to parliamentary committees and the conditions there attached. We are recording the evidence and will provide a proof version of the transcript at the earliest opportunity so you can correct it as appropriate. Once again, thank you for your time.

Mr BRIDESON — I am not sure how you want to go. Sandy did provide some questions, and I have made brief responses. I do not know whether you want us to start with those, and then there are probably a couple of other points that we can let you know about just what is happening.

The CHAIR — Bear in mind that since we last met a number of our inquiry hearings have taken some information in relation to Neighbourhood Watch. When we were at Ballarat — Shaun was not available at that meeting — we met with Neighbourhood Watch there, as we have with other municipalities. We might well ask you some questions arising out of those discussions.

Mr BRIDESON — That is right. You may want to test evidence that has already been presented with us.

Supt de RIDDER — Do you want me to talk briefly about some of the positives that are happening just by way of update? We have recently got a new assistant commissioner. I work at North West Metro, and the new assistant commissioner is Steve Fontana. He has been asking regularly for the superintendents to be focused on Neighbourhood Watch, and just in the last few months we have been getting a little bit of interest from some of our PSA managers, or LAC managers, as we now referring to them in the current vernacular. We are also getting some interest from divisional superintendents who are keen to look for opportunities to get Neighbourhood Watch back up and running. Of course we see the opportunity with the appointment of the new commissioner as something that will help us kick-start some future commitments to Neighbourhood Watch, as well as the fact that our website is starting to get a little bit of traction — the Neighbourhood Watch website. So against some of the obvious negativity that we have got — and we are obviously absolutely cognisant of the problems we have

got with Neighbourhood Watch — we see that there are a number of positive signs starting to come to the fore as well.

The CHAIR — Is that a direction within the force to prioritise some activity in Neighbourhood Watch at the moment?

Supt de RIDDER — It is a direction from Assistant Commissioner Fontana. He is the AC for North West Metro, and North West Metro is where 50 per cent of the crime is. He sees that there is a significant amount of social capital tied up in Neighbourhood Watch and a great opportunity for us to use the volunteer network within Neighbourhood Watch and use the brand to do some of the 1 per centers that we operational police do not get time to do. That is his philosophy, and he has been pushing that. We are starting to see some real positives from it.

Mr BRIDESON — I had a meeting with Assistant Commissioner Kieran Walshe last week, with a couple of other of our board members, and the AC indicated that the role of police coordinators will change. We will be forming new linkages with Victoria Police and developing a new memorandum of understanding between now and probably by the time this inquiry finishes. So there will be a new relationship coming into play in the not-too-distant future, but Supt de Ridder has been with Neighbourhood Watch for many years, and he was the author of the report that I forwarded to you prior to the inquiry starting.

The CHAIR — Andrew, would you be able to give us an update? Since we met there have been a number of funding announcements in relation to Neighbourhood Watch by the minister, and also to my understanding you have got a dedicated CEO now.

Mr BRIDESON — No, we have not as yet.

The CHAIR — Could you just take us — —

Mr BRIDESON — Money was approved in the state budget: \$550 000 to set up an office with a state manager or chief executive officer. We have not decided on the title yet. We got to the stage of actually advertising, and I made the appointments to meet with the candidates. The Department of Justice intervened and said, 'I think we need to cancel because there is the likelihood of Neighbourhood Watch taking over Safety House', and that would require a whole new position description. Since then, at the behest of the minister, he provided funds for Cube Management Solutions, an independent consultancy, to do a strategic review of Neighbourhood Watch, with the aim of setting a strategy or a plan for the next five years, including taking Safety House on board and eventually merging with them. We are currently at the stage where I am expecting to meet with the Department of Justice this week to formulate a new position description and to advertise. At the moment we do not have a state manager; things have developed relatively quickly. We have also started very initial negotiations with Crime Stoppers, which may also come on board. I must say it is very early stages yet, but the indications are that they are willing to talk. The plan, which has not yet been approved or discussed by the Neighbourhood Watch board, is that there may be a new community safety organisation. It will have one executive officer, it will have a staff — —

Supt de RIDDER — Probably one board.

Mr BRIDESON — Yes, one board, with representatives from the current Neighbourhood Watch, Safety House and perhaps Crime Stoppers. Each of those separate programs will be maintained, but there will be smoother, sleeker administration and governance of the new entity — if it comes into being. That is what we are aiming for.

We are fairly well advanced with Safety House. I am currently the president of Safety House as well as Neighbourhood Watch. Two other board members of Neighbourhood Watch are also on the board of Safety House. We actually have the Safety House AGM this evening, and we will be consolidating our plans and taking that merger to the next step. So that is well and truly under way. I would think that by the commencement of the 2012 school year Safety House and Neighbourhood Watch will be amalgamated, with a single constitution, and it will be a new incorporated association.

Supt de RIDDER — And we will be well on the way in relation to Crime Stoppers. We see it as natural. With the old paradigm of Neighbourhood Watch being there to provide information to the police, it makes sense to link the phone number and the idea of Crime Stoppers providing information to the police.

Mr LEANE — Absolutely.

Supt de RIDDER — It is long overdue that those should be merged, and we are very committed to making that happen. It seems that the board of Neighbourhood Watch and the board of Crime Stoppers are now in sync with that commitment.

Mr BRIDESON — I think the important thing to note is that the Neighbourhood Watch board is the driver, and we are pushing as hard as we can for a stronger combined organisation. We believe that we will have the strength to go out and market for private sector funding, which in theory should be much easier to obtain than each of the three struggling entities alone.

The CHAIR — Are you suggesting that all might morph into a community safety organisation with another brand, or are you keeping the Neighbourhood Watch brand?

Mr BRIDESON — No, we will keep the three brands because the evidence that we are getting from the memberships is that each of those three brands is very strong. With limited resources it would be very difficult to create and then market a new brand. For example, we might call ourselves the community safety network of Victoria, hypothetically. There will be one board of governance, and then there will be the three organisations that will keep doing what they are doing but in a different way.

Supt de RIDDER — It will not interfere with the integrity of each of the parts of it because obviously Crime Stoppers, Neighbourhood Watch and Safety House have internationally established brand recognition, and we certainly do not want to be cutting those out and starting from scratch with something new that covers all three.

Mr BRIDESON — There may well be other community safety organisations that we do not even know about that may become involved or want to become involved with us. I was just telling Sandy before we came in that I came across another community safety organisation called driveway safety Victoria. I do not know if the committee has heard of it, but somebody sent me some information because this week is Kidsafe week, and I think it came from Kidsafe Victoria. They are linked in with driveway safety, and that is really something that I would see as fitting with Neighbourhood Watch or Safety House.

Mr LEANE — Could I just make a comment on that? It is one of the things I was going to discuss when we were wrapping up this reference, and it sort of dawned on me when we were in Perth. In Perth they have Eyes on the Street, Crime Stoppers, Neighbourhood Watch and all these different entities, with different contacts and websites. My argument would be that if I see an obviously bad crime, I will ring 000. If someone sees something where they think there could potentially be something going on,

I would be advising them to ring Crime Stoppers — that is, if they suspect something. The thing I was going to bring up is that, to be honest, it just seems to be too disjointed and a little bit too hard. I think you have made an encouraging statement that you are going to align it to one point of contact, with no confusion about what number to ring or what website.

Supt de RIDDER — Yes, and the website would have several different faces, but the back end would all be the same.

Mr LEANE — Yes, that is right, where the information has gone through.

Supt de RIDDER — A significant part of that for us was with the website that has just been launched. One of the things we felt was really important with our website is that people out in the community need to know what it is to be committed to the philosophy; even if they may not line up as volunteers, that they understand what the philosophy of crime prevention is; so we do not have a newsletter that appears hundreds of times but does not get read over the course of them being in a house; and that they actually understand what the philosophy is of being involved in crime prevention, looking after your house and looking after your neighbour's house. This stuff is available through the website, and it makes it very clear. I think it is encouraging that we are now starting to see some buy-in, and we have only just launched the website, so it is very positive.

Mr SCHEFFER — I did check out your new website, although some time ago, and I saw that you have some sponsors on it. I checked out the background by going to the websites of the sponsors. I noticed you have security companies that are, in my opinion, creating a climate in the viewer that you had really better get your personalised CCTV cameras up, get your locks right and get your secure gates. It is a private business that is making dough out of people's anxieties and getting them to invest in a whole lot of technology around their houses. Is that the direction you want to go? Is that a good look for Neighbourhood Watch?

Mr BRIDESON — Can I make a comment on that? Neighbourhood Watch is starved of funds. We do not have any income apart from the advertising from our central magazine, which is roughly \$5000 or \$6000 a quarter. We have just done a deal with that company, iPATROL, which is a division of SECUREcorp.

Mr SCHEFFER — Yes, that is it.

Mr BRIDESON — We got an up-front donation or grant of \$10 000 from them, plus a percentage of each sale of this iPATROL security system is directed through Neighbourhood Watch. It is a funding source. I think it is a direction that Neighbourhood Watch and other not-for-profit organisations really have to go in to gain funding. We have to become a little bit more commercial in our outlook, but I can see the point you are making.

Mr SCHEFFER — Do you think it would be useful to do an evaluation on the consequences of the website? This is a thing I have been talking about all the way through. I am sure you are very alive to it, and people working in the field are, but there is a balance in the community between responsibly alerting people to dangers that are around — because we are not living in a fantasy land, people get into trouble, there are exposures and we need to make sure that people are very aware of that — and on the other hand making sure that people in communities develop a trusting relationship with each other and that they give people the benefit of the doubt. We have to strike a balance between those two. I felt, looking at this, that it was really moving in a direction that I was

not comfortable with, but there may be evidence to the contrary. I am just putting it on the table is an issue.

Supt de RIDDER — We have not had time to evaluate it. One of the things that we discussed at the board was that when people think about Neighbourhood Watch it makes sense for us to be the conduit for the community to obtain information about state-of-the-art security and what is available. But at the same time we are going to be able to use the website because we can change it literally overnight to provide that reassurance at the front end to the community about the fact that Victoria is a very safe place. We can provide some real information about crime and crime trends that are occurring, some alerts about things like scams and so on. But we take on board what you are saying about that.

Mr SCHEFFER — Just to take our view, there could also be links to safe design, getting better sightlines in the house and making sure it overlooks back lanes. But that is not there; it is the other side that is there. Maybe that is a future thing. I know you cannot do everything at once; I understand that.

Supt de RIDDER — Neighbourhood Watch has had a very long association with security audits, and that is something that will be included. We will definitely take that on board as feedback.

Mr BRIDESON — I think it is a great suggestion.

Supt de RIDDER — That is for sure. People doing a personal security audit or obtaining a security audit from someone who knows what they are looking for — that is actually significant.

Mr BRIDESON — One of the reasons we exist is to try to reduce the fear of crime in the community. We are trying to balance all the time.

Mr SCHEFFER — Yes, absolutely.

Mr BRIDESON — Another benefit I see of the website is that there is a built-in form of accountability, and I am very big on accountability with Neighbourhood Watch. I am probably getting a bad name within the Neighbourhood Watch fraternity because I demand accountability, but we now know which Neighbourhood Watch committees are putting in by the website. I did an audit of the website last week, and I think there are currently 36 areas not using the website. There are only about 18 that are making limited use, but a few of those, particularly Bayside, Geelong and Whitehorse, I think, are using it to the hilt — they are reporting all of their local activities. I think Latrobe Valley is even putting on crimes that have been committed in their area. They are putting crimes before the community and asking for assistance in solving them. This is a development which I did not think would occur, but — —

Supt de RIDDER — It is positive.

Mr BRIDESON — It is positive. You do not always know where computer technology is going to lead you.

The CHAIR — Andrew — and I might ask Brad to help me here — we were in Ballarat last week and we met with a community safety project that was run by local council and local police, and then we met with the Ballarat chapter of Neighbourhood Watch. They are not involved in the community safety program which is being run by the police, the local council and stakeholders. I asked a question — I might have to refer back to Sandy because I cannot remember exactly what the response was because I was

surprised that they were not an active participant in the community safety program. They were seen, as I think we have talked about, as traditionally being sort of an older demographic that has their monthly meetings and is more concerned about the local stats and not so much involved significantly in the safety programs. I hear what you are saying from the board level that out there with the troops something else seems to be happening — —

Mr BRIDSON — It is interesting that you mention Ballarat, because I attended a meeting up there a couple of months ago and my eyes were really opened in two ways. When I saw the age of the membership I felt I might have been one of the youngest there. They had no plans to go out and bring new members in. The other aspect was that they are not computer literate. I only have the names of two people from the Ballarat Neighbourhood Watch area on my computer list. One is the police coordinator, Janine Walker, and the other is the chairman of the area, Lindsay Florence. That is the only communication I have. When I asked questions of the members up there, it was very obvious that the information I am sending out from the board is not getting any further. The members did not know what was happening in Neighbourhood Watch. There was a significant breakdown in communication between the board and the members. I cannot do any more; I cannot make people get that information out. But in a lot of areas it is happening.

Mr SCHEFFER — Can you do direct mailers by post?

Mr BRIDSON — We do not have the resources. I still do not know how many members we have, and I still do not know who lives where. We do not have the resources. I am basically running Neighbourhood Watch from my home at the moment. It is impossible. I do not have a secretary or anything. It is whatever time I put into it — things happen. There is just no way known I can communicate by Australia Post.

Supt de RIDDER — Just to put some context around your observation, that is entirely our observation as well. What we have in Neighbourhood Watch is a lot of people who think volunteering is attending meetings and who do not volunteer to do anything outside of that meeting. They do not actually put their hand up to do any of the programs. There are many programs that our Neighbourhood Watch coordinators and some people involved in Neighbourhood Watch try to get involved in. I had a conversation a couple of weeks ago with one of our Neighbourhood Watch coordinators who was going to be doing the safe screws day at Bunnings. Having advertised this within all of his many areas, he had one person willing to come out and spend the morning putting safe screws on people's number plates. This is symptomatic of what Neighbourhood Watch is like.

We have the wrong personnel, and we have got the wrong personnel across the whole state. There are some pockets where it is working — I think Ballarat is one of the ones where we think it is not too bad — but mostly we know we have to get the basic building blocks in place so that we can capitalise on the social capital value of Neighbourhood Watch. That is going to have to involve a little bit of pain, because we are going to have to part with a lot of people who see Neighbourhood Watch, I think significantly, as a private club they are involved in where they get to associate with the police. That has been painful because we have stopped doing newsletters, we have stopped providing crime stats, we have stopped visiting Neighbourhood Watch areas and we have asked them to establish themselves as PSA committees.

It is early days, and it is no surprise to me what you said about Ballarat. That is not a surprise; that is exactly my observation, too. We have got a very strong brand, but, significantly, we have the wrong personnel involved in running that brand. We hope to

address that in the future — as a result of the website, as a result of merging Neighbourhood Watch with the Safety House program and with Crime Stoppers, and as a result of perhaps being able to obtain some funding through sponsorship and getting some new people involved. The website might attract people to volunteer to do some stuff, maybe even from their bedrooms or their studies or wherever or maybe actually physically turning out and doing some of the many programs and projects that we know do work to build community and doing some of the 1 per cent of crime prevention stuff that operational police do not have time to do. That is the plan, but it is very early days. We are about 1 per cent of the way along that journey, and we are aware of that but we persevere because we know that the social capital value of Neighbourhood Watch is quite strong.

The CHAIR — To be fair to them, they knew their shortcomings and they were willing to adapt to a website and electronic forms of communication — for example, in fact, having meetings electronically. I think they are willing to change; it is just about taking the members with them.

Supt de RIDDER — None of this is a criticism of the very good people who have lined up to do crime prevention work through Neighbourhood Watch under the old paradigm. It is just a reality that now community is a very different thing. People can be in a community without leaving their home; they can be in many communities across the whole of the community. The old paradigm of looking after your neighbours by attending a meeting in a discrete number of homes does not work any more. It is not efficient for us as police to relate to that old paradigm; we need a new paradigm.

The new paradigm is going to be IT based, and it is going to be based on the organisation of Neighbourhood Watch matching the organisation of police through a local area command and through the local area commander actually saying to Neighbourhood Watch, ‘We would really like you to do X, Y and Z to help us make the community a safer place’. Some of that might be via just IT, some of it might be via turning up at Bunnings on a Saturday to do some other stuff, some of it might be via letterbox drops in specific areas where we are looking for a particular crook or a particular car, and some of it might be about doing things like walking around with your dog and reporting suspicious activity, looking at streetlights that are out or looking at other hazards and reporting that to the local community. There are myriad things we know can be done, but somehow we need to be able to access those people who are willing to do that in the community. Unfortunately the current arrangements do not facilitate that because we still have a very loyal band of people who have been turning out and helping us for the last two and a half decades or more. We need to identify those new people.

Mr BRIDESON — I was just going to say that the board, for the first time ever in Neighbourhood Watch history, sought the resignation of an entire Neighbourhood Watch committee in the last couple of weeks just because they were not doing the right thing. There has to be a standard set for volunteers. When you have a group that does not even obey its own constitution at an AGM, it has to be called to account, and the board took the drastic decision to vote, in short, to sack that particular board. We are prepared to make hard decisions to move Neighbourhood Watch forward.

The other interesting thing that has happened, too, in the last couple of months is that we have formed a very good relationship with Jim’s Mowing. You may have read about it in the press. All the Jim’s Mowing contractors have had a police check, so they can automatically become members of Neighbourhood Watch. We are doing a trial program in the Mornington Peninsula and Frankston areas with the Jim’s contractors. It does not matter what field — it can be mowing, antenna installation, bookkeepers or

whatever. They are the eyes and ears of both Neighbourhood Watch and Crime Stoppers, so Crime Stoppers, Neighbourhood Watch and Jim's have formed an alliance. All of the crime stats and reports are being monitored in those two areas, and in February we will be analysing that with a view to going statewide. Queensland has contacted us, and South Australia has contacted us. They think it is a brilliant idea and want to implement that in their states. It is another direction involving community members and businesses that are community minded in a way that benefits the whole community.

Mr LEANE — You will have to excuse my ignorance on this, but I would have thought that Crime Stoppers would have been administered by VicPol. Are you saying that it is an autonomous board that runs Crime Stoppers?

Supt de RIDDER — Yes. Similar to Neighbourhood Watch, we actually have a significant number of staff who we employ, to the equivalent of a small police station, I guess — people who man the phones — —

Mr LEANE — Employed by whom, though?

Supt de RIDDER — They are employed by Victoria Police. We have a detective senior sergeant who runs that, but the board of management of Crime Stoppers is an independent board, and the direction — —

Mr LEANE — Is that a national board?

Supt de RIDDER — No, but there is a national identity for Crime Stoppers. Every state has Crime Stoppers, and there is a national identity, similar to the national identity we have for Neighbourhood Watch.

Mr LEANE — Is there a good reason why it is set up like that, with the board and autonomous — —

Supt de RIDDER — I do not necessarily — —

Mr SCHEFFER — Sorry, could I just ask something? Is the board an incorporated body? What is the legal standing of the board?

Supt de RIDDER — I think so.

Mr BRIDESON — Yes, I think it is.

Supt de RIDDER — It is now.

Mr BRIDESON — Yes, it is an incorporated board.

Mr SCHEFFER — I always thought it was run by the police.

Mr BRIDESON — No. There are sort of two arms. There is a board and a volunteer side of Crime Stoppers, and then there is the Victoria Police involvement, which takes the calls and then distributes those calls to the various components.

Mr LEANE — So who are those officers who do the hands-on calls? They are employees of VicPol, but who are they accountable to and who is VicPol accountable to?

Supt de RIDDER — VicPol is accountable to the government, of course, but they work as part of the crime area. They are based at St Kilda Road in the crime building. There is a detective senior sergeant who traditionally runs that.

Mr SCHEFFER — Sorry to interrupt you, but is the board like a community advisory body to VicPol?

Mr BRIDESON — No, to Crime Stoppers.

Mr SCHEFFER — No, the Crime Stoppers board. Does that have an advisory function to VicPol?

Supt de RIDDER — I think you would need to talk to Crime Stoppers about the exact arrangements, because we are only trying to answer based on our knowledge. In some ways there is a parallel because Victoria Police commits a lot of people to Neighbourhood Watch also, and those people are not necessarily answerable to the board of management. I am not a voting member on the board of management; I am an appointed representative of Victoria Police. The chief commissioner has appointed me to the board of management to be an adviser — to provide support, guidance and leadership and obviously to be the conduit. So there are parallels. To support Crime Stoppers, Victoria Police has put a lot of staff on. To support Neighbourhood Watch we put a lot of staff on; we have 23 full-time coordinators, for example, obviously not to mention my time, although a significant amount of my time is in a voluntary capacity. The point is that you would need to talk to Crime Stoppers to get the actual detail about those arrangements, because even though we obviously have a little bit of knowledge, we — —

Mr LEANE — How is safe house set up?

Supt de RIDDER — Safety House.

Mr LEANE — Yes. How is Safety House — —

Mr BRIDESON — In relation to Crime Stoppers, they have a full-time, paid executive director.

Mr SCHEFFER — Who is funded by?

Mr BRIDESON — I am not sure. I do not know whether he is funded by partial government funding, but certainly the corporate sector — I met with the executive director last Friday, and he informed me that it is very difficult to gain private sector funding and that, theoretically, he thinks the model we have put to them is a very sound model.

Supt de RIDDER — Yes. That is across the board. Money is very tight in these sorts of areas.

The CHAIR — Crime Stoppers staff would not be sworn officers, though, would they? They would be like telecommunications — —

Supt de RIDDER — Yes, they are public service staff employed by VicPol.

The CHAIR — So they just get the phone call, write it down and pass it on to the respective agencies.

Supt de RIDDER — Yes, and obviously a significant number of those calls are about very significant crimes and result in tremendous — that is a great source of information. That is why we want to line up the 20 000 or 30 000 people who probably think of themselves as being — is it that many? Yes, there are probably 20 000 or 30 000 people who identify themselves as being involved in Neighbourhood Watch. There are probably not that many of them who are actually active, but we want to make

sure that they know that they obtain information — as they do, just walking around the community; we all obtain information about things — and they can use that 1800 number as the conduit to provide information to the police.

The CHAIR — Sorry, Andrew, I cut you off there.

Mr BRIDESON — That is all right. Just in answer to Safety House, they are undergoing significant financial problems. Their funding stream was withdrawn. They were funded by — I think the organisation was Wheelchair Victoria, who do not have a particularly good reputation. Wheelchair Victoria, or whatever they call themselves, were taking around about 64 to 66 cents in the dollar. There came to light a conflict of interest between their former executive director and Wheelchair Victoria, so I think there might have been additional funding going somewhere, but that is currently being investigated by Community Affairs Victoria, and that was at the point when the minister sought assistance from Neighbourhood Watch, because otherwise Safety House would have dried up. They have a mortgage over a property, which we currently have on the market. It is important for them to come on board with us for pure financial reasons and community benefits reasons that that program continue. That is why Neighbourhood Watch is prepared to share the executive officer's position with the running of Safety House to keep that program going.

Mr LEANE — Safety House has got their own board?

Mr BRIDESON — The minister asked the previous board to resign, and that was in late August. That was when we got a shared board, and there are now two Safety House members on our Neighbourhood Watch board. So, if you like, we are engaged at the moment, and the marriage will occur in the future.

The CHAIR — Following on from Shaun, I am a little unclear; was Safety House the old program where you had designated houses that had to comply and be accredited to house people who might want to seek safety or refuge and kids could go into a house and — —

Supt de RIDDER — Yes, kids walking home from school.

Mr BRIDESON — People involved in Safety House not only need a police check but they must be accredited to work with children as well, so there is a double check. There are currently 84 active areas in the state at the moment, but I think at their peak they probably had well in excess of 300 or 400.

Supt de RIDDER — Sorry, sir, you were going to say it is quiet? It has been — —

The CHAIR — No, I said I have not seen it actively promoted in the last few years.

Supt de RIDDER — No. It is all to do with funding.

The CHAIR — In fact I have not seen the signage at all.

Supt de RIDDER — It is still there. There are a lot of active areas. Again, as with Crime Stoppers, there are parallels with Neighbourhood Watch.

Mr BRIDESON — There are couple of other things that I thought were important. Regarding Neighbourhood Watch Australasia, you would have read a press release a couple of weeks ago, as did Tony and I, that there was federal funding made available to Neighbourhood Watch Australasia. Tony and I are on the national executive. We were not involved in putting together that submission; in fact I had to ask for a copy of that

submission. I do not believe that the funding that NHWA has been promised will eventuate, because I think once the federal public service gets involved in asking the hard questions, the money may not be forthcoming. I would be expecting very little if any of that federal funding came Victoria's way.

Mr SCHEFFER — What hard questions? Since you mentioned hard questions.

Mr BRIDESON — Yes, um — —

Supt de RIDDER — Don't look to me!

Mr BRIDESON — I describe Neighbourhood Watch Australasia as more of a club than an organisation that can actively promote things from a federal perspective. I really think it is the domain of the states to run their respective organisations' administrations. Part of the agreement with the national body is that each state be allowed to run itself independently. I think the aims of the federal body need to be revisited again. Since my involvement with NHWA, I have been constantly asking those questions.

Mr SCHEFFER — So that is what you are putting to the commonwealth?

Mr BRIDESON — Yes. In fact I did download a copy of their submission to federal government. I was quite surprised when I did a word count and I found that it extended to 711 words. That is not the way the Victorian government, past or current — or I am sure future — would promise a large amount of money. So it is really very early days. There needs to be an executive meeting of NHWA in Melbourne in November. I am not sure whether I will be attending that or not. I am just not happy with the federal authority. Anyway I have far too much to do in my own bailiwick to get involved in federal issues.

The CHAIR — So does the money go from the commonwealth to Neighbourhood Watch Australasia and then trickle down to the states by application?

Mr BRIDESON — I do not believe that has even been thought through.

Supt de RIDDER — It is a commitment, I think, rather than necessarily — —

Mr BRIDESON — There is a commitment.

Mr LEANE — I do not know what the media release said, but I heard on the radio that 'The federal government have blah blah blah, and proceeds of crime to go to community crime prevention groups like' — 'like' not 'to', but 'like' — 'Neighbourhood Watch'. That is what I am pretty sure I heard on the radio.

Mr BRIDESON — One of the difficulties is that New Zealand is a member of Neighbourhood Watch Australasia. I cannot see the federal government allowing money to be spent in New Zealand, for example, and they are a legitimate partner in NHWA.

Mr SCHEFFER — Yes, but it could be joint contributions with the New Zealand government as well.

Mr BRIDESON — Possibly, but I do not know.

Mr SCHEFFER — My takeaway from what you are saying, Andrew, is that while there should be some sort of overall coordination, perhaps the brunt of it should be operated on a state basis because that is how police are organised and so forth.

Mr BRIDESON — Exactly. I also say — and I will be quite honest and up-front — that the immediate past federal president was a Victorian, and she did not have the approval of the Victorian board of management, nor did she have any current working involvement with Neighbourhood Watch. So there are some tensions.

Mr LEANE — Can I just go back to a state issue? Previously, Andrew — and I do not want to verbalise you — I think you said that the minister funded something for Cube management consultants. What is that, and can you — —

Mr BRIDESON — Cube management consultants is a private company. They specialise in public sector employment. The minister wanted to make sure that Neighbourhood Watch is legitimate, is going to do the right thing in receiving a government grant and that the money is going to be spent in the correct manner; in other words, that it is not going to be wasted. Through the Department of Justice, a grant was made from the DOJ to Cube to develop the strategic framework.

Mr LEANE — The strategic framework to do what?

Mr BRIDESON — To take Neighbourhood Watch and Safety House into the next five years — to develop a strategic plan.

Supt de RIDDER — To give us the guidelines that we need to — —

Mr BRIDESON — I have forwarded a copy of that. You possibly have copies. It is a pretty good document. It was only completed Thursday of last week, and it is still to be ratified by our board.

Mr SCHEFFER — So this is produced through that process you just described?

Mr BRIDESON — Yes. That really sets out our future directions for the next five years.

Mr LEANE — I am just wondering, seeing as we are doing a reference that is looking into Neighbourhood Watch — —

Mr BRIDESON — I have given it to you because I think it may well help you. I hope it does. It is certainly going to help our organisation.

Supt de RIDDER — It might confuse too.

Mr BRIDESON — There are quite a lot of motherhood statements in it of course, but read it. Put all that to one side.

Supt de RIDDER — Can I just get back to that Australasian thing, just to put the perspective from the police side of things. The Australasian group is a relatively fledgling sort of group. We obviously wish them very well in establishing some kind of national clearing house arrangement for information, establish some working groups that will achieve some things at the national level and provide some advice, guidance and support for the efforts that we make here. One area in which they are doing some work is, for example, vulnerable communities. They are looking to create some crime prevention initiatives that are going to strengthen some of the outback and rural communities, say, with indigenous groups and indigenous outback communities. There is a lot of crime and there are a lot of social problems there, and using some old crime prevention modalities like Neighbourhood Watch may strengthen that. So there is some good work being done, but it is very early days, and our fervent hope is that the money that is being made available does actually go to support those efforts. But it is very early days.

Mr LEANE — Are they working with the federal police?

Supt de RIDDER — There are federal police represented on the Australasian Neighbourhood Watch board.

Mr LEANE — Really, it is all a bit strange when you think that we are talking about neighbourhoods. I try to reconcile what the federal police actually do and their responsibilities, and then you are talking about neighbourhoods and local crime prevention initiatives. It is really hard to reconcile. You do not need to comment — —

Supt de RIDDER — No. I say the main representation for that board is the ACT, where obviously the federal police do have a very similar policing role to what we have here in Victoria. They look after crime and the community. That is their representation; it is not necessarily looking after airports, although there is also an Airport Watch push, which is being supported again by the federal police under the Neighbourhood Watch modality. It is early days, and we are hopeful that that money will go towards some really good work at the national level.

Mr BRIDESON — That has just reminded me there is another area Neighbourhood Watch is getting into. As a result of the website, the chairman of a local group contacted me. I did not even know they existed. He did not know that the board was open to communications. It is the Watergardens shopping centre out Melton way. That shopping centre has organised Neighbourhood Watch amongst the retailers. It is a great model, and it is something we would like to promulgate throughout the rest of Victoria. They have got together in an effort to reduce crime in their shopping centre, which I think is very laudable. I will keep you up to date as things develop, because sometimes it is getting ahead of even where our board is thinking.

Supt de RIDDER — It is definitely a moving feast at this point.

The CHAIR — I suppose it makes it a little bit difficult for us as well, given we have been given a reference to look particularly at Neighbourhood Watch, and we are finding you are actually running about 20 miles ahead of us. Our recommendations might not fit in with the strategic plan — —

Mr SCHEFFER — Not only that, the government is running ahead of us too. You would think someone would wait until we actually get our work done, but anyway we live in the real world.

Supt de RIDDER — Yes, that's right.

Mr BRIDESON — Yes, but we are actually pushing it for our own survival.

The CHAIR — Tony, are there any other comments you would like to make?

Supt de RIDDER — No, thank you, sir, but I am obviously available for clarification purposes about any of the information. I apologise I was not able to be at the last meeting. I was actually overseas when the other gentlemen attended last time.

The CHAIR — We appreciate your time today. Thank you, and thank you, Ian.

Committee adjourned.

DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

**Inquiry into Locally Based Approaches to Community Safety and Crime
Prevention**

Melbourne — 27 February 2012

Members

Mr John Scheffer
Mr Shaun Leane
Mr Tim McCurdy

Mr Brad Battin
Mr Simon Ramsay

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Witness

Ms Julianne Brennan, Director, Community Crime Prevention, Department of Justice.

The CHAIR - Welcome, Julianne, to the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee. I suspect you've met us all before so I'm not sure if we need to go through the introductions again. But having said that, we do have one new staff member, Stephen Pritchard, who you might not have met, he's new to the research team. Pete Johnson; Tim McCurdy is from the Committee; Sandy Cook, the Executive Director; myself as Chair; Johan Scheffer as Deputy Chair; Brad Battin and Shaun Leane. After just having said I won't bother introducing the committee members I have; maybe it's for the benefit of the others who haven't been here before.

I do have to read out the conditions under which you're here, Julianne, so if you bear with me for a second and then I will ask you to make a presentation to the committee. I think you've been previously advised on the information that we are seeking from your department.

Ms BRENNAN - Yes.

The CHAIR - And thank you very much for attending here this afternoon.

Ms BRENNAN - You're very welcome.

The CHAIR - Welcome to the public hearing of the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975 and further subject to the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, the Defamation Act 2005 and, where applicable, the provisions of reciprocal legislation in the other Australian states and territories. Any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. I understand you have received a written Guide for Witnesses Presenting Evidence to Parliamentary Committees. We're recording the evidence and will provide a proof version of the Hansard transcript at the earlier opportunity so you can correct it as appropriate. Welcome again and over to you.

Ms BRENNAN - Thank you. Thanks for the opportunity. What I'm going to do is just work through a very brief overview of the crime prevention portfolio and the new Community Crime Prevention Unit in the Department of Justice, what our objectives are and some of the work we've been doing thus far and then, of course, any questions that the committee may have for me.

As you would be aware, following the 2010 election, the Premier created a stand-alone crime prevention portfolio with Minister Andrew McIntosh at the helm. As far as we've been able to establish that's the first time that there's been a dedicated crime prevention portfolio established, certainly in Australia, reflecting the strong priority that the government has put into addressing community safety and the \$39 million that they've allocated in the 2011/12 budget over four years to support community crime prevention initiatives. To support the government's direction on community crime prevention, the Secretary of the Department of Justice, Penny Armytage, established a Community Crime Prevention Unit and I've been given the privilege of heading that up as the Director, so from July 2011 the unit commenced.

Each of you should have a presentation in front of you. I've just moved to the second page of that which sets out the portfolio objectives which are therefore the objectives of the Community Crime Prevention Unit. So leading the development and implementation of a crime prevention framework; promoting co-ordination across all levels of government to embed crime prevention into relevant policies and services; identifying and targeting priority crime behaviours and introducing specific strategies to address those; and then

building and maintaining engagement and capability in local communities to implement effective crime prevention initiatives. The next two slides in your pack are illustrations of the breadth of crime prevention and the way that each tier of government and the community needs to cooperate to address the issues that drive crime.

As you will see from that diagram on slide three, crime and victimisation are really driven by a lot of complex and interrelated causes that really result from wide ranges of factors and influences across people's lives, as well as the environments in which they live and the situations and opportunities that influence both offending behaviour and also victimisation.

One of the most common assumptions that we face is that crime prevention is really about police and correctional and justice responses, but when you look at that diagram and see the interrelationship of the factors, it's quite clear that this is something that actually requires the community and government as a whole to work together to make an impact. So while the police, courts and corrections are integral to addressing crime prevention, and having a comprehensive approach to that, the kinds of drivers of crime and criminal activities, and indeed victimisation, are complex and really require a collaborative effort; it's beyond the mandate of the justice system alone. In particular, we need to rely on health, education, community development and infrastructure systems as well, which are an important part of addressing some of those underlying drivers of crime and social disorder.

To address that, one of our key objectives that we're currently working on is leading the development of a crime prevention framework to help focus on the key priorities. The nature of the things that can drive crime are extraordinarily broad and I think it's important that we focus on what some of the key priorities are for action. The Victorian Coalition government has given us a very clear mandate that they have a strong focus on local communities and they and the local governments which represent them have a clear and important role to play in crime prevention, so one of the key initiatives that we've developed since our establishment, working with government and across the regions is to establish regional crime prevention reference groups. The Department of Justice has eight administrative regions across the state and there are crime prevention reference groups established in each one of those regions. Most of the regions, particularly those that are bigger, have at least two regional crime prevention reference groups. Those reference groups are designed to support the work of the department but more broadly to establish partnerships across government represented in those regions with local government and with the local community. So very much about playing a vital role in developing locally based initiatives for community safety and crime prevention, with a strong recognition that one size does not fit all in this space; the challenges that are faced by community in Mildura or Bendigo are often quite different from those that are faced by communities in East Gippsland or in the Grampians, for example. The establishment of the regional crime prevention reference groups is bringing together those various parties to ensure that there is a local focus on: what are the issues that are facing our community, what are our priorities?

The Australian Institute of Criminology in all of its reviews of crime prevention initiatives in Australian jurisdictions, plus also internationally, have established the clear need to invest in dissemination of good practices in approaches to crime prevention and also developing the wider crime prevention workforce particularly among local government. This includes work to improve crime prevention capabilities through the development and dissemination of resources and tool kits, to assist in improving the skills and capacity at the local level of those involved in crime prevention initiatives, and to strengthen and

improve the effective dissemination of the crime prevention evidence base. So, again, the role of the reference groups will be vital in engaging the community in not only identifying the issues but identifying appropriate local responses, and part of our role in community crime prevention is to assist in that by providing evidence bases to assist.

As the AIC itself has noted, this investment is critical and will need to be undertaken over a number of years. There's significant gaps in some of the knowledge base at the local level in what works, what doesn't and what are the appropriate responses to different issues. We will continue to work with the AIC on developing those resources but, importantly, our commitment is to continue to work with local government towards those goals.

Mr SCHEFFER - Could I just ask a question before you move on. Who are members of those committees and how are they identified?

Ms BRENNAN - With the regional reference groups we have all of the CEOs of councils have been invited, senior members of Victoria Police - many of the regional reference groups are cochaired with an Assistant Commissioner level at Victoria Police. Usually there's a family violence or sexual assault representative, either the regional integration coordinator or the chair of the local regional groups. Some of the groups have judicial and legal representatives on them, so in some cases magistrates themselves, in other cases registrars, Victoria Legal Aid. Indigenous community leaders, so the chairs of each of the Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees are invited to participate. In some cases we have youth services and youth bodies represented on the regional reference groups; CALD community representatives and community health services, so those who are delivering victim services, homelessness services, family violence and other services. In many cases there's also representatives of business and local associations. If there are local community safety committees, quite often the chair of that is sitting on the group. We've tried from the centre to again leave it to the regions, within some broad parameters, to develop the membership as it suits the region and I think that these will evolve as time moves forward but the other critical part of it from a government perspective is to ensure that we have representation from the other key departments so health, education, Department of Planning and Community Development, DHS in particular sitting around the table.

Mr SCHEFFER - Perhaps, Chair, we will come back to that later, I guess, but just the last little piece of factual information, are they ministerial appointees?

Ms BRENNAN - No.

Mr SCHEFFER - So how do they get there?

Ms BRENNAN - They've been invited.

Mr SCHEFFER - Your department invites them?

Ms BRENNAN - Yes, we've invited them to participate and then the committee itself also has discussions about who they believe, given their focus and regional issues, should also be on the committee. So that covered off a bit of my next bit on who would be in the regional reference groups.

Mr SCHEFFER - Sorry.

The CHAIR - Can I just ask - I did sit on one with the Minister in Geelong -do they meet regularly?

Ms BRENNAN - They do.

The CHAIR - They're structured on a formal basis?

Ms BRENNAN - They are structured on a formal basis. We started establishing them from July last year and the Minister and I attended at least one initial regional reference group in each region. The Minister spent about two hours at each forum listening to the local community and the issues that they raised about the things that were of concern to them, the initiatives that they were already putting underway, and the role that they thought this group could play. Each regional reference group has been asked to establish and confirm their terms of reference. We've provided, , a framework but again they will tailor that according to their region. Most of them are meeting regularly on a quarterly basis but some have met more frequently than that to do strategic planning, to collate information about what's going on in their region. So they are a regular forum and we expect quarterly meetings but in some cases regions have initially chosen to meet more frequently to work through some of those issues and tailor the terms of reference to their particular needs.

The CHAIR - They've obviously picked a Chair?

Ms BRENNAN - The regional reference groups are chaired by the Department of Justice Regional Director for the region. In some cases, the Regional Director is cochairing with Victoria Police, particularly where it's an Assistant Commissioner. So if an Assistant Commissioner of Victoria Police for that region has said that they're willing to participate, in many cases they're cochairing the meeting with the Regional Director. Because we've asked the Regional Director to set them up, the Regional Director is the Chair.

The CHAIR - Do they make direct recommendations to the Department of Crime Prevention in relation to specific issues within their region?

Ms BRENNAN - Yes, they do. So that's the intent. The intent of the regional reference groups is really to be a point of partnership collaboration between the department and broader government, so the other government departments that are there and the local communities and particularly the local government that represents the local community. It is a partnership forum that's designed to both move information up through community crime prevention about what are the issues in the local region, help us understand what the different issues facing each region and use that to inform our future practice and the framework and the priorities as we move forward but also as a mechanism for us to disseminate information down and out to the community about good practice, about education and engagement in crime prevention initiatives.

When I talk about - which I'll just get onto now - some of the specific community crime prevention grant programs that we ran there's a clear and vital role for the regions there in actually recommending what are the projects that need to be funded in that region.

Mr LEANE - Can I assume that the eight regions align with Vic Pol regions?

Ms BRENNAN - Not quite now. Initially they very closely did but Victoria Police have since reduced the number of their regions, but they're roughly equivalent.

The next slide talks about our immediate priorities, which has been the key focus for the unit since our establishment. We've worked through establishing the regional reference groups. The other part of it was to focus immediately on the delivery of the government's \$39 million Community Crime Prevention Program. So, again, with a strong direction from the government about the priority afforded to local people and their local communities, we've recognised that communities are best placed to identify and prioritise the issues of concern to them and develop responses and that our role is to support them to do so. The budget initiatives will help build community crime prevention capacity at the local level by supporting the community to help identify local crime concerns and interventions and promote involvement and understanding of the way locals can personally help and also minimise their own vulnerability to crime.

The key elements of the government's Community Crime Prevention Program are the Anti-Graffiti Plan, the Community Safety Fund, the Public Safety Infrastructure Fund, a boost for Neighbourhood Watch to assist that organisation to reinvigorate, and also the introduction of a new grant stream to reduce violence against women and children.

In relation to anti-graffiti, it's quite clear from the surveys that are done at both the state and national level that graffiti is a significant issue of concern to the community. For example, in 2009/10 the Australian Bureau of Statistics survey indicated that one in five Victorians thought that it was a significant concern in their local area. The government's graffiti response includes a number of separate initiatives under that anti-graffiti plan. We have the Graffiti Removal Program, which the Community Correctional Service delivers on our behalf. They partner with councils and the Department of Transport and VicRoads to remove graffiti from community assets. Using supervised teams of offenders with purpose-built graffiti removal trailers, they clean up graffiti from those state and local assets, private property as well as the rail corridor.

There's also a rapid response initiative which is in addition to the regularly scheduled work under that removal program. The rapid response initiatives enables local government to identify priority cleanup which will be addressed within 48 hours. So if there's particularly offensive graffiti that appears there is the capacity to provide a quick response in addition to the scheduled service. Currently we've got 23 metropolitan councils with whom we partner and three regional councils.

In addition to the regular cleanup we also provide up to \$25,000 grants to local government to partner with their community in prevention and removal activities and project partners within community includes community groups, sporting groups, service organisations, local police, schools and other youth groups. There's also a component of education and coordination in there. We provide information and publish and disseminate information to raise awareness about the anti-graffiti laws and, for example, those include things like retailer kits to ensure that they have information about the laws applying to the sale of spray paint cans to young people under 18, and we also disseminate information about the laws through local councils, schools, local police and youth groups.

For example, we had a marquee at the Royal Melbourne Show last year and at that show over 11 days we handed out 13,500 information kits about the graffiti laws and raising awareness about those and methods that were available to clean up graffiti and how communities could partner with that. That was a very successful marquee, it actually won the Best Exhibitor Award for an outdoor award and certainly it reached a huge number of people. So that education function of maintaining the awareness about both the

anti-graffiti laws, but also about the facilities available for community to get involved in cleaning up graffiti is an important part of the function.

In terms of outcomes, there are about 48 teams of offenders each week cleaning graffiti from local community assets every week of the year. From July to December they've cleaned 162,000, nearly 163,000, square metres of graffiti. That's the equivalent of about eight MCG playing fields and that's again, as I mentioned, over 23 metropolitan local government councils and three regional councils.

We have finalised the first round of the graffiti grants, the \$25,000 grants. There were 32 applications received from local government for grants. 18 projects have been funded across 17 councils; nearly \$300,000 in funding is currently going out. The kinds of projects that were funded under that round one of the graffiti grants were the development of community graffiti removal trailers that are available for use by neighbourhood houses, by local community groups, scout groups, etcetera; the delivery of graffiti education programs, predominantly in conjunction with schools, again raising awareness about the seriousness of illegal graffiti and the penalties that apply; removal kits and vouchers for residents and businesses to assist them in maintaining their local area; and also the installation of murals at graffiti hotspots as a technique to actually prevent the reoccurrence of graffiti in areas that are subject to targeting by graffiti vandals. That covers off the graffiti outcomes to date.

In terms of the other grant programs, we've got \$25 million of grant programs that are rolled out over that four year period from 2011/12. The Community Safety Fund provides grants of up to \$10,000 for councils and local community groups, sporting and business groups, to implement practical crime prevention initiatives, and we also have the public safety infrastructure fund which provides grants of up to \$250,000, and councils are eligible to apply for public safety infrastructure fund grants and, again, it's about providing infrastructure to support crime prevention initiatives through environmental design and also for CCTV.

In relation to those two programs, we were delighted with the level of response to the first round that we received across the state. From the community safety fund, we had 355 applications, which was a huge response for the first round of a grants program, and nearly \$1 million in funding was put out to 155 projects and, very pleasingly, we had a very high response from regional and rural Victoria, and in fact most of the funding was distributed to regional and rural Victoria. But we are talking about quite often very small communities and looking at providing enhanced security and crime prevention initiatives around those hubs of the local community that are used by so many people in those rural and regional areas. So we were very pleased with the response that we had to the first round of those. With the Public Safety Infrastructure Fund, we received 105 applications from local government and we're currently in the process of finalising the assessments on those and we anticipate making recommendations to the Minister shortly.

In relation to reducing violence against women and children, on 7 February the Minister announced that in response to the key priorities identified by the regional reference groups in those trips that I mentioned that the Minister made around Victoria, the government would provide \$7.2 million over the next three years in grants to help reduce violence against women and their children. The grants will fund prevention and early intervention projects across community service organisations and local governments in each of the departmental regions and they will be funded for a three year period. They're programmatic grants over a three year period commencing from this year.

The Regional Crime Prevention Reference Groups will play a really key role in those grant processes. Those regional reference groups will play a pivotal role in identifying the expressions of interest that come in from their region, which are the one or two projects that they think are the priorities for funding in that region and that will then come through to us at Community Crime Prevention and we will partner with expert agencies to then determine the final applications that will be invited to do a full application process for funding.

Dedicated funding has also been set aside to fund projects that are going to be developed by Indigenous communities across the state and we're partnering with the Koori Justice Unit in the Department of Justice to deliver those grants and the Koori Justice Unit will be, and is currently, consulting with the Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees to shape those grant programs and to deliver those, so I anticipate the Minister will be making announcements of the detail of those grants in March.

Those are the current status of the grants programs that we have in place. It's been a very busy year since we started in July, and I think we have a lot of very exciting work to do with our regional reference groups and local communities but thus far, as I said, I'm delighted with the response we've had from local communities and the local regional reference groups and their engagement in understanding that they have a role to play and to identify what the regional issues are that are of importance to them and how we can support them to address that at a local level.

In conclusion, just to reiterate that I think for too long crime prevention has been seen as an activity that's really an adjunct to the main game of enforcement and prosecuting and punishing crime and it's been seen that police and the criminal justice system sort of have the sole responsibility for crime prevention, rather than as partners with other sectors of the community. What I think is fantastic about the work that we've done so far is that we are getting such a good response from the regions about seeing that there is a role at the local level for that engagement, and we will continue to work through those mechanisms to develop a shared understanding of crime prevention and a shared responsibility through educating and promoting crime prevention initiatives at that local level and using that to engage the whole community in the work of addressing this important area. and particularly to work with local residents across the state about understanding how they can play a part, both in their broader community but also ensuring that they're helping to protect themselves and taking appropriate steps about what they can do to reduce their vulnerability to crime.

That's really a snapshot of where we are. I hope that meets your needs but if there's any questions, I'm happy to take them.

The CHAIR - Thank you very much. It's a good overview of what's happening in the new department so thank you for that, Julianne. I will invite committee members to ask questions.

Mr BATTIN - Julianne, thank you very much for the presentation, it was fantastic, all the preparation into it. One of the biggest criticisms of any crime prevention program through councils that we've experienced anywhere in the county wherever you speak to someone is actually assessing the programs and actually coming back with an evaluation of the program. With all the new funding that's coming out now and what's coming through with it, is there anything in it that says they must send back a response of evaluation of each program? Like to put CCTV cameras in at \$250,000 and it does

nothing was a waste of \$250,000, or do they have to come back to you and say this is the result of the program or the initiative?

Ms BRENNAN - Evaluation is critical and I think it's really important to understand sometimes the difficulty in evaluating crime prevention programs. Quite often, because of the nature of the work and what you're trying to do, it can be very difficult in the short-term, and particularly smaller projects, to show a clear evaluation of how much crime did you prevent in that initiative and quite often it's about the engagement and the process. What we're doing is tailoring the evaluation mechanisms depending on the type of project and the size of project. So for \$10,000 local community grants, for example, it would be unreasonable to expect local community groups to put a significant amount of that money aside for an evaluation. But what we have done is worked with the AIC and our interstate colleagues and developed a very simple template that will help us get at least some idea of if these are the things that you said you wanted to achieve with this project, did you achieve them? Then we will do a programmatic evaluation on top of that.

In relation to the bigger grant funds where we've got, for example the public safety infrastructure funds of \$250,000, it is actually a requirement that before funding is given to a local government they must submit an evaluation plan, particularly if it relates to CCTV, and that they have in place processes upfront to ensure they're capturing the information to measure whether they said what they were hoping to achieve with that was in fact achieved. For those programs there are more significant funding amounts so we will have a formal evaluation requirement in them.

Again, with the programmatic grants, such as the Reducing Violence Against Women and Children, we will actually require independent evaluation of those programs. On top of that, we will then do programmatic evaluations internally, where we will engage providers to look at the processes that we followed, what the response from the community is and whether it's hitting those targets about engaging local community into the process.

Mr BATTIN - Thank you.

Mr LEANE - I was just interested in the portfolio objectives, the dot point where it says identify and target priority crimes and behaviour in the community. Is there a formula that you've created or have had to apply between the identifier and the target because I would imagine that communities might be identifying issues that, as you said, evidence based may actually prove that they're not a big issue as the community perceive, and I think that you've actually proven somehow that you've created some good formula because I think the campaign to reduce violence against women and children was developed out of this process. I've got to say it's actually something good there, so have you had to apply a formula or have you got one?

Ms BRENNAN - It's not as simple as applying a formula, unfortunately; I'd love to know if someone had one. As I said, the range of issues that influence crime are legendary, there is so many interrelated complex factors. I think the key issues we're identifying are from the input from the regions and making sure that we are listening to what local communities are saying their concerns are, but also taking input at the state level and particularly from Victoria Police, including their state policing office, and looking at the data about those issues so what are the things that are actually driving the reported crime but also listening to the local community about their perceptions as well as their experience and what they think are the priorities in their area. But always again having Victoria Police engaged in every step of the process and it's critical to have them at

that regional reference group level to be able to balance the data, and again with other departments by collating the data from different sources you do get a different picture.

It is about understanding what communities think are issues, and sometimes there may be issues that community is saying is a problem and whether or not the data upholds that, there is always a difference between what happens with the reported data and reported crime and whether or not there is a difference between what people are experiencing and reporting. So it is important not to just apply a standard formula but to have that iterative process, and from a state level and from the kinds of priority focuses that we can influence, it is about saying what are the things that are common themes and how can we work with the community to address those? But it is an iterative process of identifying them and going back to the evidence base and saying: can we see evidence to support those and what are the things that we really need to focus on? But there is no straight formula.

Mr LEANE - Was there any thought put to your fifth point on the immediate priorities as far as the Neighbourhood Watch and the funding? In our travels I asked the question does Neighbourhood Watch report domestic violence if they believe it's going on in their neighbourhood and the answer was no, pretty quick. Has there been any thought about actually encouraging existing groups to get on board with your anti violence against women and children program?

Ms BRENNAN - We certainly are working with the key peak bodies in developing that program, and certainly that's the kind of thing that we're looking for coming out of that program. It is about regional partnerships and so therefore I'd expect that groups that are active in that space would be encouraged to participate in any of those projects that are developed at the local level. Neighbourhood Watch, for example, the funding that the government has committed to them is to give them a State Manager and support them to reinvigorate. The government also provided an additional \$25,000 to assist them in developing a strategic plan, to think about what is it that Neighbourhood Watch does at the local level, what is it we need a State Manager to do. But those are also very localised groups and you will have groups that have evolved slightly different in each local area and region. Again, our role, and where we're directing our energies, is getting that partnership at the local level so that the local groups in each local level can participate and using local government who also have mechanisms through their own structures and groups that they deal with either directly under crime prevention local safety committees or through their livability or well-being committees to engage different local groups. I think there is opportunity to engage existing groups and that's exactly what we're intending to do, but what we're not trying to do is prescribe that from the centre because really we want that to be responsive to the local issues and the local community.

Mr McCURDY - Actually my question has just been answered, about the input into the regional groups.

Mr SCHEFFER - Could I just follow up the issue relating to family violence that Shaun raised. You've got about \$7 million over four years, three year projects?

Ms BRENNAN - Over three years.

Mr SCHEFFER - And they're basically going to come through from the local regions around their identification of what the issues are. I don't want to get into policy stuff that you can't answer, I understand that, so I'll try to restrict you to operational matters. The question is how are you going to generate new ideas? You're calling for new

ideas or are you going to use the additional money for proven ideas? What I hear from the sector is that they're turning themselves inside out to think of new things when they've got a whole lot of pressing demands on the existing strategies. I know we've moved a long way from: It's a domestic, it's a private matter and we don't need to deal with it. We've shifted it into the space of it being a crime, and let's be really clear about that, that's educational, that's punishing people, that's doing a whole lot of things in the police space, but then we've got services saying they've got massively increased case loads, they try Outreach, which works, they've got really good relations with Vic Pol, they provide increasing legal advice and support so that women can become more self reliant and that they don't become service dependent as a result of leaving the domestic place, so they're doing all those things. My question to you is: are you going to come along and say okay, think up something else that's smart. Or are you going to say: we hear the need, here's some more money. Because that's what they're saying they want.

Ms BRENNAN - I think there's two parts to the answer to that. Firstly, these grants are specifically targeted at prevention and early intervention, they're not targeted at service response and delivery. They're broader than family violence, it's violence against women and children, and very much prevention and early intervention. Certainly that's the feedback I've had on the public consultation processes through the Violence Against Women Action Plan consultation that's currently being run through DHS, but our intent is to focus on that prevention and early intervention.

In terms of the scope of it, the Minister will be announcing the detail of the eligibility criteria but we're not recommending that it's being limited just to new ideas; it's about saying: what's the need, what are the projects that you think you need in the region? We don't want to discourage new ideas either but we would be looking at things that do contribute to the evidence base, or are consistent with the evidence base, of what are appropriate things that are demonstrated to work or where there's a gap that we need to - -
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Mr SCHEFFER - Sorry to interrupt, so what does that look like? What might a project that gets a tick look like, because that's about improving evidence base, is that like a research project?

Ms BRENNAN - It will be more about what is the evidence and we're working very closely with Vic Health and what is the evidence about what works in prevention and early intervention and adapting that to the regional needs. The projects could be anything that focus on prevention and early intervention, they could be things that are saying: well, okay, we know that this works with that particular group but could we actually trial and see whether that works with a designated cohort? Or we know that this works and what we need to do is roll that out across a broader area in the region. It will be up to the regions to come up with those projects within the broad parameters but until the Minister has actually announced the detail of the scope and the eligibility, I can't say much more.

Mr SCHEFFER - Because I'm struggling to see what that might look like; I can't conjure up myself - I understand prevention is about community education, about telling people they shouldn't do certain things, and if they've got certain behaviours happening in their family they should go and seek help early, and I can understand that, they're things we're doing already and there's money being supplied to those. I understand what you're saying about data and information, okay that could be a research program about different sorts of measures, but I don't quite get what really you're talking about.

Ms BRENNAN - Some of the regional partners or groups in different regional areas will come up with different initiatives that they think are gaps in their area. For example, someone could say: we've got this project that we think works with the mainstream but there's this particular community group, a newly emerging community, and nobody has ever seen whether that will work with them. Or that's a particular issue in our group and that's the kind of project that we'd like to do, for example.

The reason why I think I'm not being clear on it would be this, this, or this is that as long as it's around prevention and early intervention I think the scope will be quite broad, and you could get some of the things that are targeted at the community generally, you could get some initiatives that are targeted at a specific cohort, and you will certainly have the dedicated projects developed for Indigenous communities. But they could be around sexual assault, they could be around violence more broadly and tackling that, but a range of different projects looking at how do we prevent and intervene early. So some of them could be targeted at the general community, and some of them could be targeted at particular groups that are identified as at high risk of either committing violence or being victims of violence and early intervention programs at that point. So there really is a fair bit of scope as to what those kind of projects might be but there's a fairly clear evidence base that Vic Health has developed - a framework that they have and we will work with them to ensure that that's available for people to help inform the kinds of projects. The key thing for us is that it does adhere to the best practice principles of how you do these kinds of initiatives in preventing violence against women and children and that we do have projects that are focused on building those at a regional level in response to the issues that that community is prioritising.

Mr SCHEFFER - Okay.

The CHAIR - Thank you. Just on that, just from memory, I think the reference group that I sat on was talking about quite a lot of planning issues with local government in relation to bringing residential into the CBD particularly where there was a high incidence of crime and trying to encourage student accommodation and accommodation above the retail sector which hopefully will change the demographic, the larger bigger picture stuff than the CCTVs and lighting. Anyway, thanks Julianne. Any other questions?

Mr LEANE - The boosted funding for Neighbourhood Watch to implement a State Manager, is that over a period of time?

Ms BRENNAN - That's over a four year period from 2011/12.

The CHAIR - If we make a recommendation to disband Neighbourhood Watch, what will be your response?

Ms BRENNAN - It wouldn't be for me to respond.

The CHAIR - Very diplomatic.

Mr SCHEFFER - I'm very glad the Chair just opened the way for me there, I wasn't going to be quite so bold as you. I only speak for myself on this, I can't speak for the whole committee, but I felt it was a little bit frustrating, a bit peremptory of the government to announce all this funding to put money in and do the things that you mentioned when we were actually asking some of the fundamentals around that in this committee. So whatever recommendations we put up we now need to be mindful of the

fact that the reality of what is happening on the ground has actually moved ahead or in parallel which the work of the committee was supposed to be doing.

Mr BATTIN - It's probably a question for the Minister.

Ms BRENNAN - I point out that those commitments were election commitments.

Mr SCHEFFER - I understand that. What my question is to you is whether you as a department did any evaluation or policy work inside the department that lead to the announcement on the changes to Neighbourhood Watch with the funding - is it a Chair or a State Manager?

Ms BRENNAN - State Manager.

Mr SCHEFFER - Did you do policy work prior on that and see how that would work?

Ms BRENNAN - No, not in essence. I mean, the government has made an election commitment and confirmed that upon election saying that the funding was provided for a State Manager and also to support accommodation, so we've been working with Neighbourhood Watch to give effect to that commitment.

Mr SCHEFFER - But my questions is did you do feasibility, work out some different models on how that might work best, given the government has made a policy decision, election commitment, agree with all that, no problem, did you develop some options out and can we have some of that?

Ms BRENNAN - We didn't develop options for how Neighbourhood Watch should run because Neighbourhood Watch is an independent community organisation and they have a board, they have a terms of reference, they have their constitution that sets out how they operate. What we did do is work with them and realise that they probably needed some assistance in terms of rethinking their forward strategic plan and so the government provided an additional \$25,000 for them to engage professionals - - -

Mr SCHEFFER - But that must mean that you thought what they were doing was of sufficient merit and sufficiently in line with what the government policy was to hand over those dollars to them to do that, so you must have done some scoping, some assessment, of whether they were going to be able to deliver it, the settings, that the direction they were going to move in was good, you wouldn't just give...

Ms BRENNAN - We're giving effect to the government's election commitment to provide funding for a State Manager to assist the organisation to reinvigorate. We've asked them to consider carefully how they propose to do that and to evidence that they can achieve a reinvigorated...

Mr SCHEFFER - So they provided you with a plan of how they would go about it and on that basis you gave them the money?

Ms BRENNAN - Well, we're still in the process of going through the funding agreement with them. Neighbourhood Watch is still in the process of looking to engage a State Manager, they've commenced recruitment, but we're working with them on them setting those key objectives and milestones as a result of that additional funding for strategic planning.

Mr SCHEFFER - With respect, I understand the position that you're in but my point is it sounds to me as though government commitment to do it, that's fine, that's absolutely the government's prerogative and responsibility after the election, then you go along to - and you don't have to answer this - but you go along to Neighbourhood Watch and they say we want the money and you give it to them for this, this and this and what I'm asking you is was there work done to assess whether that was the right way to go and you're saying that you did it on the basis of the government's policy?

Ms BRENNAN - We didn't conduct independent policy work of the government's election commitment, the election commitment was to support the organisation through funding for a State Manager and accommodation, so that's what we've given effect to, we haven't developed other policy options about is that the appropriate use of the funding. The organisation has said that's what they need to be able to reinvigorate, and that's what we're working with them to deliver.

What we did make an assessment of was that they needed additional support to clarify their strategic direction to get the maximum impact from that state manager and we have worked with Victoria Police to address other issues of the government's commitment in terms of accommodation for them. But we will work with the organisation to set some clear milestones and reporting to evidence that they've got a plan and that they're reporting regularly against that plan in order to get the funding. So there will be milestones against which the funding is dispersed that are agreed with Neighbourhood Watch as reasonable indicators that they're actually achieving reinvigoration and that's demonstrated through some key performance indicators. Have we gone out and done a whole piece of policy work on Neighbourhood Watch or how that's structured? No, we haven't.

The CHAIR - All right. Thank you, Julianne. It's important to know because actually we're devoting a full chapter of this inquiry report to Neighbourhood Watch, I think that was why we're interested to know how far the department has gone in relation to policy framework in relation to Neighbourhood Watch. Thank you for that response. Any other questions?

Mr SCHEFFER - Could you add any last points on where you think you will be in 12 months or two years?

Ms BRENNAN - Having run the first round of the grants program we will be taking a careful look at what our learnings are about that. Again, the regional reference groups at that point will have bedded down and I think that we will have a much better evolved process that we'll be able to review and see how that's working, but certainly the primary focus will be to continue to roll out those grants programs and assess how they're impacting and the community reaction and engagement to those and we will also, as I said, be looking at the key parts of focusing on how we build capability and developing additional resources and tools. So our first priorities will be getting those grant programs underway and as we move through we will take some learnings out of the kinds of applications we've received, making an assessment about the capabilities are that are being evidenced in the applications at the local level and identifying what additional support we need to provide them to continue to build that and to provide feedback as to those programs have rolled through - what can we tell about what worked and what didn't - and to also feed that back into the loop for future years.

Mr SCHEFFER - Would you be expecting to put out public reports?

Ms BRENNAN - We'll certainly be communicating the outcomes.

Mr SCHEFFER - To the public or just to the government?

Ms BRENNAN - Yes.

Mr SCHEFFER - Thank you.

The CHAIR - Can I just have one last question. Your relationship with local government, I got the feeling that there was a push to have local council provide more of a greater coordination in the community safety programs whereas I see the reference groups may play a bigger role in a more holistic approach in relation to departments and agencies. Is that your view? I'm just sort of wondering is the expectation that the reference groups play a more critical role than, say, local government in relation to the sort of community safety program activities?

Ms BRENNAN - I think it's not about saying there is a hierarchy - that one is more important. The regional reference groups, from our perspective, are about providing that partnership forum where there is the state government players with local government and various other community representatives there. It's not intended to duplicate or override the individual local government work that they're doing, and many local governments have local safety committees, they've got crime prevention or community safety as integral parts of either well-being, livability or some other local committee plan. What we're trying to do is provide a bridge between the individual local council municipality area and the region so that we are then saying the local area is doing work, the region is helping to coordinate. We have, in some cases, 10 local government areas in that region, what learnings can we take, how can we as the state departments also provide information and how can we also feed that up through my unit and other fora into the government's policy thinking?

Mr SCHEFFER - But the difference - I'm glad you raised that as well - the difference is that local governments are elected by local communities and here you've got a committee which is set up out of government policy, which is fine, but that's where the money is so in the end it's those regional groups that are going to have the final call on how their dough has been expended and local government, which is the democratic arm, that level is just one voice amongst the various bodies and organisations that you mentioned earlier so there is a difference there.

Ms BRENNAN - Many of these funding programs are open directly to local government councils so individual councils are still empowered to determine what it is that they would like to seek funding for at that local government level. Importantly, a lot of local government does a lot of work already in - whether or not they call it crime prevention or community safety but it's embedded in a whole range of policies that they're constantly prioritising what they're going to invest in at a local level. This additional funding that the government has provided to support that is directed at local government and local communities, it's not going to the regional reference group per se. That group is about assisting people to say: what are our priorities? We've got 10 issues, what are the three most important ones? Or helping to inform each other and say: what is education doing with youth partnerships and young people in this region and is there something we could partner with on that? And to help get everybody coordinating and working together.

I don't think it's as simple as saying it's just about funding; I think there's a great value to the regional reference groups that's quite apart from funding. It's about promoting that partnership collaboration and information sharing that's not necessarily about additional funding, it's actually about how do we work smarter with what we have, how do we align our directions and be clear on what our priorities are? There's a lot of money that's already out there being used on a range of projects. The feedback we've had from the regional reference groups is quite apart from the grant funding, it's the partnership, the ability to share information that is actually a really critical part of that work.

The CHAIR - All right. Thank you. We've been here for an hour so I do appreciate the time that you've been able to put aside for us and also for taking questions in a really open, frank and honest way so thank you very much; we appreciate it.

Ms BRENNAN - You're very welcome.

The CHAIR - Thank you to your partners in crime at the back there too.

Ms BRENNAN - Some of my new staff.

Mr LEANE - Partners in crime prevention.

Ms BRENNAN - Thank you very much and best of luck with the rest of your hearings.

The CHAIR - Thanks very much.

Committee adjourned.

DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

Inquiry into locally based approaches to community safety and crime prevention

Melbourne — 16 April 2012

Members

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Deputy Commissioner T. Cartwright, Crime and Operation Support, Office of Chief Commissioner,

Superintendent P. Brigham, Assistant Director, Community Engagement Division, Media and Corporate Communications Department and

Inspector T. Langdon, Safer Communities Unit, Community Engagement Division, Media and Corporate Communications Department, Victoria Police.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much for your time, Deputy Commissioner.

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — I am Deputy Commissioner Tim Cartwright. I will assume the role of deputy commissioner, regional and road policing, from 1 July. For the past nine months I have been the deputy commissioner for crime and operation support, which includes intelligence gathering and forensic services. In the past I have been the assistant commissioner for north-west metro. Until my promotion one of the current responsibilities I have is for the community engagement strategy and the violence against women and children strategies.

Part of this community engagement gives me the overarching responsibility for the crime prevention portfolio. With me is Superintendent Peter Brigham from the media and corporate communications department, which currently holds the safer communities portfolio as well, and we also have here Inspector Tony Langdon, who is responsible for that unit.

I understand that you would like me to do an opening address. Is that correct?

The CHAIR — We would. I might just read the conditions under which you are providing evidence to this committee, Deputy Commissioner. Welcome to this public hearing of the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975 and further subject to the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, the Defamation Act 2005 and, where applicable, the provisions of reciprocal legislation in other Australian states and territories. Any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege, and I understand you have received the guide for witnesses presenting evidence to parliamentary committees. We are recording the evidence and will provide a proof version of the Hansard transcript at the earliest opportunity so that you can correct it as appropriate. As I said at the outset, I chair this committee, which is a joint parliamentary committee.

Thank you again for your time. So often witnesses to this committee are outflanked by members, but I think you have done that today, so that is good support. I also understand that Sandy has provided you with a number of questions which we have proposed for you but you might well cover in your presentation.

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — Yes. I think some of them will be covered in my opening remarks.

The CHAIR — Okay. Thank you.

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — I have brought along a number of supporters. We are actually in transition. The former OCD — the operations coordination department — was reviewed and we have seen some separation of some of the units formerly under there, including the safer communities unit. The responsibilities are not where they rested a couple of months ago so I have actually brought along some people with some broader experience in that area.

The CHAIR — I am sorry just to interrupt again. I should have said at the outset that I assume you have also had a copy of the terms of reference in relation to the inquiry we are conducting. And the reason you are here, obviously, is because we want to understand the role that Victoria Police plays in crime prevention through its community safety programs.

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — Thanks, Mr Chairman. Yes. I understand that. I have seen the terms of reference; I have read them. We have the questions, and I will talk directly to those if I can.

The role of crime prevention for Victoria Police is no surprise to any of us. It has been there since modern policing times. Sir Robert Peel, one of the first founders of policing in the modern world, said that we judge police on the absence of crime. Nothing much has changed in that regard, so one of the key indicators for us as to how well we are performing is the absence of crime, and crime prevention.

It is still part of the duty of every constable in Victoria and in most of the Western world. It is part of our oath of office. It is also still in our official documentation — documents like our *Victoria Police Priorities and Standards 2011*, which have been signed off by the chief commissioner. It emphasises unacceptable levels of crime affecting people and property as a priority for us. So that continues. I would say that as leaders in crime prevention — and I think we do have a role as leaders in crime prevention for the community — we have seen some good results over the last 10 years, including a 19.5 per cent reduction in property crime. Property crime makes up about 75 per cent of all the crime that is reported to us. Crime against the person is more complex and challenging.

One of the things the committee has asked us to consider is our current approaches and strategies and where we might go in the future. The crime prevention officers have been in existence for many years and continue to exist. We have a crime prevention officer for every local area — LACs, as we call them — which basically parallel with the local government area, so each of those has a crime prevention officer. Each division in the state — the state is divided into around 23 divisions — has a Neighbourhood Watch coordinator as well. So these people are responsible day to day for that hands-on crime prevention.

I should say at the outset that our role in crime prevention extends from the most local — simple things like advising people on how and where to lock their bikes safely — right through to national and international complex issues around paedophilia, sexual servitude, organised crime and crime importation. They all have aspects of crime prevention, and our relationships with other agencies, with other government departments of course vary in complexity just as much. At the base the local government areas are still critical to everything we do. They share similar objectives about community safety. We have our relationships of course with the areas within the Department of Justice in Victoria, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Health, and typically we will work closely with those agencies in achieving similar objectives.

At the local level the service organisations like Lions and Rotary are still very important to us, and in local government, as I have said, there will be voluntary agencies. Universities increasingly give us assistance in all sorts of ranges and areas. At the state level we have those government departments, at the national level we have things like the National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council, which I sit on, and Crime Stoppers Australia, and of course Neighbourhood Watch at the local level as well. They are all critical to us. We have a number of areas of success which I can talk about and a number of areas of challenges.

I gather from the terms of reference that the focus of this committee at the moment is more on the local level and perhaps the immediate challenges at the local level, but one of the things that we see as an opportunity is use of the electronic media such as use of

Facebook, and a specific question has been suggested to me around Eyewatch, which has been introduced in New South Wales, which I can talk to the committee about also.

One of the immediate challenges for us, as with all sorts of areas of the community, is getting volunteer assistance. The demographics of the community have changed a fair bit and it gets harder to find volunteers. In the past we had have ready volunteers at home during the day, but that gets more challenging at the moment so we have to find new ways to engage the community, and we think Eyewatch is one of those ways. Our initial test of the project suggests that a younger community, particularly young males, are open to this as a way of communication. It gives us an opportunity to put out alerts, warnings and crime prevention messages, so that is particularly interesting for us. I understand that Neighbourhood Watch Victoria is about to appoint a new CEO. We think there are some opportunities with Neighbourhood Watch and Crime Stoppers Victoria to do some work together, and we have encouraged that, but they are stand-alone organisations in their own right and we have to respect that right and the approaches of both of those organisations. Even though we are strongly represented on their respective boards, there are matters that they need to address.

The CHAIR — Can you just at some point, Deputy Commissioner, talk a bit more about — you said that Neighbourhood Watch is critical to your organisation. I would like to hear more about how critical it is, because I must say that some of the evidence we have heard suggests that in its present form Neighbourhood Watch is not providing criticality, if you like, in relation to what has been done in the past and what it might do in the future.

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — Thanks, sir, for picking that up. If I said Neighbourhood Watch was critical, what I meant to say was that relationships with organisations like Neighbourhood Watch are critical to us; we need to have partnerships. I agree that Neighbourhood Watch does not produce what we formerly saw it produce. In my view it was formed around a particular problem, which was household burglaries. As I said, we have reduced that problem significantly. The other thing I would say about Neighbourhood Watch and its challenges is that it is now a largely older demographic and it is probably not comfortable with some of the modern technologies that we have the opportunity to use like Eyewatch. That is why we see Eyewatch as important, and it will actually bring a new group of people into that crime prevention space. That is a way of perhaps reinvigorating Neighbourhood Watch.

It is no secret that we have worked with Neighbourhood Watch in recent years to try many different avenues to reinvigorate it, and I would be prepared to say that they have not been largely successful. Neighbourhood Watch was revolutionary in its day, but that was some 20 years ago. I do not know if that answers your question, Sir. But that would be basically it.

The CHAIR — The other one, if I may, because I know the committee wants to ask questions, is: why would people use Eyewatch and not Crime Stoppers? What is the difference?

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — Good question. This is why we think that Neighbourhood Watch and Crime Stoppers need to work closely together. Both have access. Just recently Crime Stoppers has launched its mobile access facility. Perhaps there are different sorts of audiences or different methods of dissemination. As we see it, Eyewatch will be controlled from the local level, so the local inspector will put advice onto his or her Eyewatch site. For instance, for this area we might say that there have been

household burglaries in East Melbourne over the last couple of weeks and we are looking for a red van that has been spotted. It is that sort of local information. Crime Stoppers tends to be more high level. It might be a particular suspect who is wanted across the state or be in the top 10 nationally. They may well merge some of that information, but we see the advantage of Eyewatch being that people can subscribe specifically to their local area or a geographic area which is of interest to them. Typically you will subscribe to the area where you live. You might subscribe to the Eyewatch page for the area where you work. At the moment Crime Stoppers does not have that sort of flexibility.

Another advantage we have seen from New South Wales is the capacity to use it for road policing. We still lose nearly 300 people a year on our roads. Hoon driving is still a major concern to many parts of our community right across Australia, so we see Eyewatch as an opportunity to target those sorts of road policing messages as well. Again, Crime Stoppers would struggle to have that sort of local impact. I do not know if the gentlemen on either side of me have any other suggestions as to separation.

Supt BRIGHAM — I would just add that with road policing we are looking at some of the road behaviours where there is criminal conduct. In the past there have been offences of culpable driving but these have been broadened now and we have trained investigators investigating conditions and looking for evidence of higher level criminal conduct where charges are laid. Therefore I suppose in that capacity it is looked at as a crime — as a criminal offence — and so that comes under the spectrum of crime prevention.

With the Eyewatch program, there is actually a tab on the Facebook page which is a link to Crime Stoppers. It is actually called 'Provide information'. A person can click on that tab and it takes them through to Crime Stoppers. Crime Stoppers now has an online reporting mechanism where people can fill out an information report online and provide it to Crime Stoppers.

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — Probably to encapsulate it, Eyewatch is for us to push out information; Crime Stoppers also takes information back in. Eyewatch does not have the same sort of capacity to say, 'I suspect Tim Cartwright of being a burglar' or something like that. It is not built along those same sorts of lines.

Supt BRIGHAM — No, it is not, and we do not want people putting that sort of information on a public forum either.

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — No.

Supt BRIGHAM — There is an avenue there for them to provide that privately off the page.

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — Perhaps I can finish off my opening remarks with future directions. I have not talked about our tasking coordination, so our use of intelligence, which is critical to our crime prevention officers and critical to all things we do. These days, like most policing organisations, we drive our focus through intelligence gathered. Typically we have practitioners who will talk to us about vulnerable times, vulnerable places, properties and about people who are probably recidivists and most likely to commit crime; it is that sort of intelligence. That is what we use to focus our resources.

I should say that the crime prevention officers are part of local teams. They do not work in isolation; we expect them to be part of the teams and be briefed according to the intelligence. What they do is very much based on the intelligence that is provided. The safer communities unit, which is centrally located, develops strategies and is responsible for coordinating the training and development of those crime prevention officers across the state. The intelligence aspect is critical to us.

I have not spoken about some of our disruption activities such as the Echo task force or the livestock strategy, but again I do not think from the terms of reference that they are necessarily the things that the community is interested in, but we are happy to talk about those as well.

Disruption for us at all levels is an important aspect. Superintendent Brigham spoke about the criminal activities involved in hoon driving. We see a lot of people injured, we see property damaged and we see local people put in fear, and typically these days we use much more intrusive techniques than we have in the past. We will use covert technology and we will use human sources. We use those sort of investigation techniques to prosecute hoon drivers because they create fear, so hence the very close connection with Eyewatch.

The other thing we have in place now that I should have mentioned earlier on is that we have regional community engagement inspectors located in each of the four regions. They are responsible for coordinating the activities of all of our, if you like, proactive programs — our liaison officers, our crime prevention officers and our Neighbourhood Watch officers, so making sure those people work in at the base where they are front-line police and are actively involved, and that they are capable as well.

One of the shifts we have seen recently is a shift to a focus on the regions taking accountability for these sorts of activities more than the centralised model, which is what we had formerly. Now the crime prevention officers belong to the regions but they get strategic advice and training coordinated by the centre. Strategies developed by the centre will then be passed out to the regions and put in place that way.

I think that probably covers the things I would like to say to you initially. I am happy to discuss any of those sorts of areas more as you want.

The CHAIR — Thank you. Do either Peter or Tony want to say anything?

Insp. LANGDON — No, not at this stage.

The CHAIR — I will pass to the committee members to steer the direction we want to go in with our line of questions.

Mr SCHEFFER — Thank you very much for the presentation. You mentioned some of the crime prevention community safety programs that you run or that you run in partnership with other organisations. Could you just step us through some more of those? What is the extent and range of programs that you work with? What we are mainly concerned with is the partnerships that are in place for community safety — crime prevention programs.

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — The range of partnerships is very broad depending on the problem. Perhaps I could start with a state-level example of Operation Firesetter, which also has a local application. This was put in place in response to Black Saturday. Typically that would see us doing a number of things, including working with

local government areas in terms of safer places, at-risk places and how we do that sort of basic safety. We also have a crime prevention component of that, so again perhaps we would see our crime prevention officers or some other officers going out to local communities and talking to them about what we want them to watch out for, including the risks and the sorts of behaviours that are suspicious. Of course we work with the fire brigade and the CFA. They need to provide us with information just as we need to provide them with information.

Perhaps I can use a local example of the recent shootings in north-west metro. As you would expect, we have high-level investigations, so we see partnerships between the Australian Federal Police, the Australian Crime Commission and organisations like that. In those events we have strong relationships with local government areas around community reassurance, so we go to Moreland council in that instance, or to Hume City Council, and talk about how we can make the local community members feel safer. We would use local newspapers and local media to get the message out about visible police presence, about us making arrests, but we also engaged them with simple things like reclaiming the streets — like community barbecues and the councils coming out and talking about the activities we do. You would have those sorts of relationships as well. I am just trying to think — —

Mr SCHEFFER — You have got Hoon Hotline as well.

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — Hoon Hotline is a really good example, so we will use the Hoon Hotline as well. While we are talking about that particular outbreak, we actually used the Hoon Hotline as well, because people who commit a certain sort of crime do not usually restrict themselves to that, so we use the Hoon Hotline. We find that people committing shootings and some of those major crimes are actually driving like hoons. We find them through simple measures. It is like Al Capone — if we cannot catch them for the biggest things, we will interfere and disrupt. We will take their cars from them, we will take their assets from them and we use other agencies to help us with that — like the Australian Tax Office, but they are the high level. Local government is important in reassurance.

Perhaps another one which is a simple example is the Look, Lock and Leave campaign. Our intelligence tells us, not surprisingly, that public transport hubs are particularly vulnerable for us, so we will work with the transport authorities and with major shopping centres which might have big car parks. We will work with the local service agencies. I can think in that case we would work with Rotary. Those sorts of community organisations provide volunteers on the ground.

Mr SCHEFFER — Thanks for that. Could you provide us with a complete list?

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — We have a prepared list, and we have committed to provide that within the next couple of days.

Mr SCHEFFER — Okay. Fantastic. That would be good.

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — It will not be exhaustive, but it will give the community a fair sort of range.

Mr BATTIN — In one of the prior public hearings we spoke about a program which I was involved with with the police, Operation Newstart, which runs across the state and has expanded since it started in Frankston in 1997. Although not funded by

Victoria Police, the program is staffed by Victoria Police and had a full-time staff member at each of their locations. I believe that was under review to be changed. Can you update us on what has happened with that program and how you see the future of Operation Newstart continuing? Obviously in my view it is a great crime prevention program the police are involved in.

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — It is and has been. I was involved with Newstart North myself and saw some great products. One of the challenges we face is where we put our limited resources, so Newstart has been reviewed. We are still involved but not to the same level that we were. My understanding was that each of the Newstarts had a full-time police officer involved with a full-time education officer, so we would see that officer doing nothing for the year other than the Newstart, which was terrific for those kids but a very limited application of the small resources we have had, so we made a decision, around Newstart at least, to draw back a bit around that. It is always a challenge for us, the balancing act; it is where you get best bang for your buck. I can provide more on the review if you would like, but my understanding is that is where it is at at the moment.

Mr BATTIN — Just on that, what are the major challenges you face in Victoria Police in crime prevention going forward? Resources is obviously one.

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — Resources are always a challenge. It is a challenge for any government agency; it is a challenge for government where you put your dollars. Resources are a particular challenge and, with the best will in the world, communication with other government agencies, with stakeholders. I have never heard any CEO or anyone in senior office say we have got our communications strategies right, so we have to keep focusing on that. The other challenge for us of course is to keep the community interested and engaged. Neighbourhood Watch, which we spoke about, has probably had that opportunity; the opportunity has passed. We have to find new markets to access people who are going to help us in the crime prevention message, who are interested. Eyewatch is a great example. Prior to Eyewatch, just a couple of months ago, I was speaking to a young man who is associated with a family. He was using our Twitter accounts. He would just have the feed on his phone, and he would pick that up, like they do, every hour or so and say, 'There's been an accident here', 'There's a collision there', 'This road is blocked' and 'Police are looking for this sort of car'. There is a guy in his 20s with a lot of connections. He is looking at his phone hourly. One of the things he watched was our Twitter accounts. Again, there are better opportunities there.

The challenges are engaging the community still, as they always have been. The other challenge is making sure that we put our resources to the best possible use where we get the biggest bang for the buck and, even within the organisation, making sure that the people who are involved in the proactive programs — we call them that — are not seen as different from anyone else. Crime prevention is really about business as usual for us, but sometimes there is a tendency for us to see crime prevention officers as dedicated to that and not part of the mainstream, which is counterproductive.

Mr BATTIN — Finally on that one, with the recruits there was also the other question coming along: what training do the recruits get in relation to crime prevention? A lot of people think it is a 20-week course and then you are a copper; we all know it is a two-year probationary course and everything.

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — It is a two-year course.

Mr BATTIN — If you have not got the details to pass on to us, details of what they get specifically in crime prevention training — —

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — I can talk about that now, and I will give Tony a 30-second warning; I will throw to him on training. We do not provide specific training on crime prevention at the base level. That training comes later, and I will throw to Tony in a sec. We get the foundations right about law, ethics and firearm safety. It is always a challenge. Community engagement is important to us. We do not address them specifically on that, but we do have specific courses for crime prevention officers, investigators and forensic officers who attend crime scenes. Tony, I will throw to you on that note.

Insp. LANGDON — Thanks. That is correct. The fundamentals are learnt at the initial stages of the recruiting process and then they go out and do their additional training at the police stations. Whilst it is not actually a mandated educational program out there, it is fundamentally the core of how they do their business when they are sworn police officers out learning that trade. In relation to detective training school, they do two scenario work-based training in relation to crime prevention. It is orientated around disruption methodologies. By way of example, they use the Box Hill train station to identify risk and how they would treat that risk — that is, through environmental design, closed-circuit TV, community engagement, intelligence-led response — and then the other one is in relation to high-volume crime and as detectives what they would do to treat that issue. The fundamentals go back to crime prevention, so they would use their crime prevention officers, they engage the community et cetera.

What is of interest is the protective services officers' new course. They get a session in relation to it where we get an external crime prevention officer from out on the street who comes and educates them for a session. I am aware that they are looking towards reinvigorating some form of education for the recruits, but I do not have the detail exactly at this stage. The reason I say that is one of the sworn officers from the safer communities unit is going to go out to education and they have started to talk about developing an educational program using that person's expertise in relation to crime prevention.

Mr LEANE — Two areas: we are at the pointy end of drafting this report. We had a long discussion last time we were here around there being a number of groups doing certain things in crime prevention — and it could be encouraged that more groups do it or not. One thing about these sorts of reports is that it is good to clarify responsibilities so they do not get clouded. One of the things we discussed in giving a clear message in a report like this that talks about all the little groups and big groups doing things is that Victoria Police has the lead responsibility for law enforcement and the lead responsibility for crime prevention. We had a discussion about whether we are right in saying that.

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — That is a good question, because crime prevention is so wide. Perhaps another example is violence against women and children. Traditionally police have not been seen as leaders in preventing crime in that area, but over the last couple of years Victoria Police particularly has assumed a leadership role where there was a leadership vacuum. We have actually seen an increase in our reporting rates of something around 50 per cent and our charging rates of something around 200 to 300 per cent in the last five or six years, so we have assumed a leadership role there. I was thinking about this myself in preparation. We would be leaders in crime prevention, but I do not think we are the only leaders or we are the only ones accountable. One of the things we do not have is the capacity to allocate government resources. Typically a government

will want to spend money on crime prevention initiatives. We are not geared up to allocate or administer those funds.

I think the livestock community practice is probably a good example; it is right across the state. We can assume a leadership role in that one, but we really need other agencies — the farmers federation, the transport industry, all those sorts of people — to be engaged also. So we are a leader there. I am trying to think of a couple where we actually do not take a lead on crime prevention. I would say by and large we are, but there needs to be recognition that we are not always the leader. It is fine for others to come out, so I would expect in terms of loss of stock for commercial practice the industry itself would need to pick up that leadership role. We are never going to be able to bombproof logistic centres or tracking of stock or even corporate frauds. We would expect that the industries themselves would be leaders in those areas.

Mr LEANE — That gives us a really good clarification because we had a discussion a little while ago about whether we were actually saying the right thing. The other thing I was going to touch on is that we went round the state, looking in regional areas and at different crime prevention methods and initiatives, and an alarm bell went off in my head a little bit, I have got to say, because in WA they have Eyes on the Street, so the tradies are all encouraged to keep an eye out and all that sort of stuff and then they go on to their Eyes on the Street website maybe and they send in whatever they send in, and the alarm in my head went off for this reason: isn't it always better just to have a simple message about reporting crime or reporting information on potential crime or previous crime? Having the luxury of sitting across the table you can say that the new Eyewatch is a great way for you to get out information, but it is not necessarily a great way to drag it in. I would have thought that if I went down the street now and witnessed something that I think is a crime, you would want me to call 000.

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — Correct.

Mr LEANE — If I had a concern that there could be something a bit suspicious going on, you would probably want me to go to Crime Stoppers?

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — Correct.

Mr LEANE — So that is a sort of simple message. I am going to be a smart-arse, so please return serve, but when I saw the announcement on Eyewatch — it might have been the minister because I know it wasn't VicPol — it was talking about going onto your phone, then you log in, then you go onto this Facebook site and then you actually have the luxury at one point of going straight to 000. So I have got my phone, I log into Facebook and then down the bottom is 000. By the time I have done that I could have just dialled 000. So as I said, I know I am sounding like a smart-arse, but — —

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — No, that is an opportunity. You have actually given me a Dorothy Dixier on that one. It is certainly not the intention for the Eyewatch to be used in that manner. We could never monitor it that way. The suggestion was that you would be able to use it for 000, but that was not what we intended it for.

The other suggestion was that you would be able to respond and send it back and the police would see that and react instantly. We cannot. To have a 24-hour presence just monitoring Eyewatch — we couldn't do it. It would be a waste of our resources, and hence the Crime Stoppers number and the 000 number.

Mr LEANE — And that is, like I said at the start, the simple message.

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — That is an absolutely simple message.

Mr BATTIN — You would still have it on that website I would imagine. The same as when you ring up your local police station, the first message you get is, ‘Thank you for calling Dandenong police station; however, if this is urgent, hang up and dial 000’.

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — Correct. And the simplicity of the message is absolutely clear.

Mr McCURDY — Just clarifying for me about Eyewatch, in the event of us rolling out a program like Eyewatch, would you see it integrated with Neighbourhood Watch or just completely separate? We have heard different discussions over the time about where Neighbourhood Watch is now as to where it used to be. Is it something that you would look at as completely stand alone?

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — No, we actually see it as a way of reinvigorating Neighbourhood Watch, so you actually might see a different group of people coming in with a different sort of focus. The traditional Neighbourhood Watch is still very much focused on burglaries in the streets, putting out the crime statistics — it is a marketing tool, and its days are done.

So we would actually hope that we see reinvigoration. Together with that, I understand that the CEO of Neighbourhood Watch will be co-located with our Crime Stoppers office in Victoria Police, so that will give us some more opportunities to gather the technology. I think I am right on that, guys? I am looking at my colleagues.

Insp. LANGDON — If I could just explain a little bit further, the fundamentals of Eyewatch are that we have the platform the police are using at the moment and it is integrated with the Neighbourhood Watch concept. What follows behind that are what we call closed groups. So the query in relation to Neighbourhood Watch, we would consider — and we have had discussions with Neighbourhood Watch — that they then form what we call a closed group. So not only do they have it in hyperspace but they have a Neighbourhood Watch activity going, and also closed groups are associated only with those people who actually can get into that group and have that dialogue on Facebook time, but they also do that in real time.

It gives an ability to achieve two things: you are engaging the parts of the community which are starting to talk on social media only and feel more comfortable doing that, but we still engage with the face-to-face conversations with our Neighbourhood Watch counterparts.

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — So can I ask the question, Tony: you are saying then that people can join a group, they say, ‘I live in this area, I want to join this group’, they are allowed to join the group, then they have conversations within that group about local problems?

Insp. LANGDON — Correct, they do. And that is the whole idea. Then the local area commander jumps into that conversation, and it is probably a little hard to explain because we are not doing it real time, but we actually start working in that environment. And it is not only Neighbourhood Watch; you could get your local traders association to form their own group, and there are rules of engagement attached to that. You can get your large shopping centres like Westfield — they can actually form their own groups.

The idea is to get the community started to become engaged to proactive identification of harm or possible crime within their area. It has been proven in New South Wales that they feel very comfortable talking in that medium.

The CHAIR — So is that consistent with the review that you have done, I assume, internally in relation to appropriating resources to Neighbourhood Watch groups? Are you still committed to that?

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — We are still committed. Can I say that we have done a number of reviews and we are still looking for the answer. That is probably the best way to say it. It is a movable feast. We just have to find how we can best use what is available without necessarily distancing an existing group or disenfranchising them while engaging others. That is why we are pushing Eyewatch so strongly. We think this is the solution for where Neighbourhood Watch goes in the future.

The CHAIR — Can I, if I may, do a part B and ask the following in relation to Neighbourhood Watch: I had a conversation with someone, and I won't embarrass him by naming him, but he was a policeman in the north part of the state, and we talked about Neighbourhood Watch activities and he said there were no activities and, 'We do not have any sort of relationship at all with Neighbourhood Watch as such, but more so with local council via a safety committee, which is a conduit for the police there'. As I understand it, where Neighbourhood Watch is not functioning, local councils tend to pick up that local engagement and then the police sort of attach themselves to that group, and then attach themselves to the reference group which has just started now with the new structure, and then obviously the government becomes involved in relation to grant moneys for crime prevention. So is that where you see your engagement long term?

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — That would be one of the solutions, and it is absolutely right that a number of the local councils have local safety committees as they call them, of various guises, and we tend to sit on those. But some areas of Neighbourhood Watch are still active. In some areas there is still a large volunteer base that we could just disenfranchise and say, 'Neighbourhood Watch is finished', but realistically, why would we do that? These are people who live in the community, who would probably feel less safe if we were to do that, so we would be cutting off our nose to spite our face; that would be my summation. I do not know if that fully answers your question, Mr Chairman.

The CHAIR — It is not solving our dilemma to do with Neighbourhood Watch, but thank you for the response.

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — I am afraid I do not have a silver bullet on where we go, but — —

Mr BATTIN — You were talking before about Eyewatch, and I think you said before the commander or someone at the station would then get involved in that conversation. That is a role you see for your Neighbourhood Watch coordinator?

Insp. LANGDON — Do you want me to answer that?

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — Yes. There is a discussion I think on that one, Tony.

Insp. LANGDON — How we envisage that occurring is the local area commander that we were talking about has the ability to determine who has

administration rights. We have provided advice on who we think should be involved in inputting information and controlling information and answering questions on Eyewatch. Invariably they have all gone to their Neighbourhood Watch coordinators and their crime prevention officers to have an active involvement in it. It is not something we have mandated, because we enabled the local area commander to decide how they want to run the system — it is best we give them guidelines of activity — and we are running a pilot program at the moment. I envisage that once we have finished our pilot program we will come up with the best practice for Victoria Police on how we treat that. To answer your question, they have all gone to a crime prevention officer or a Neighbourhood Watch coordinator to help them administrate it.

Mr BATTIN — On the Neighbourhood Watch coordinators position at the moment, obviously Neighbourhood Watch has reduced in size — the numbers have gone down and the volunteers have gone down, and activity is definitely reduced. I know there were a couple specifically in my area. I am a former member from Dandenong — we used to go out from there — and there were a lot of issues in relation to replacing a coordinator there for a long period of time. Is that still something that has happened within Victoria Police? I understand it can be a resource issue, but there were 22 Neighbourhood Watch coordinators. Are all roles currently filled, or are they open roles that have been open for a while?

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — As far as I know, if we have got any vacancies, we will be advertising them, so we do not have an intention to do away with them. But I would say that generally we are trying to move away from the specialised roles to end up with a group of people who can support each other, so we would want to see community engagement skills in there, a mix of crime prevention skills and Neighbourhood Watch knowledge all under the one umbrella so that whatever the problem is you can pull that group of expertise together and focus on them. At the moment we tend to have silos, or that has been a challenge.

Mr BATTIN — Thank you.

Mr SCHEFFER — This is a question relating to how you are organise internally. We understand that the safer communities unit within VicPol is no longer in existence. We just seek confirmation that you are both from — —

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — The inspector is in charge of the safer —

Insp. LANGDON — I am in charge of it.

Mr SCHEFFER — Okay. It still functions.

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — These gentlemen behind me — there are no secrets — are still here.

Mr SCHEFFER — Sorry that I missed that with you. Then the second part of my question is: how then do you relate to the government departments? You mentioned that on your way through, so could you talk about that?

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — It is one of the questions I specifically asked Tony. As part of the review, as I said earlier, of the operations coordination department, a number of areas have gone into different parts of the organisation. Safer communities now sits under the media and corporate communications department,

because part of it is very much about accessing technology and promoting the message about communication, so that area now sits under our media and corporate comms, and it will continue. Last year one of our other initiatives was to get blue shirts, if you like — police — back on the front line. We looked at the roles that are engaged in areas such as safer communities. We have now seen the senior sergeant's role and a couple of sworn roles were replaced by unsworn staff with research expertise who should be able to develop strategies for us. They will report through to the inspector and provide some policing professionalism, develop the strategies, disseminate them across the state and say, 'This is the best practice model for dealing with car thieves', or, 'Here is some experience we have picked up on burglaries, numberplate thefts, petrol drive offs' — there are all sorts of strategies.

Mr SCHEFFER — What is the relationship between you and the crime prevention office?

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — The crime prevention office is responsible day to day for building the relationships with other agencies within justice. Do you want to talk about that, because I know you have a particular view on that?

Insp. LANGDON — I have been newly appointed. My belief is strongly that we cannot function alone, and government agencies sometimes do have a tendency to act in silos, so the challenge for me is to actually break down those barriers and become more actively involved in DOJ and other relevant agencies, which we believe we can form strong partnerships with for future development crime prevention concepts.

Mr SCHEFFER — How do you do that practically? Do you meet with the new office?

Insp. LANGDON — Correct. I am engaging at the moment to achieve those outcomes.

Mr SCHEFFER — Because it is a new office — of course with the new government — did you provide operational advice on how that might be best structured?

Insp. LANGDON — Not me personally, and I do not believe anybody from my unit did either.

Mr SCHEFFER — No, but did VicPol?

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — I do not know if we were consulted.

Mr SCHEFFER — So you were outside the process whereby that office was structured?

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — As far as I know, yes. That was before my time at this level, but I am not aware of any consultation, because I think that was just a matter of government policy and practice.

Mr SCHEFFER — So it is presented, and then you link into it as exists?

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — As exists. But having said that, we have relationships day to day with all sorts of levels of justice. I have regular meetings with my counterparts within the justice department.

Mr SCHEFFER — I understand that in terms of liaison, but what I am specifically interested in was when the government comes in and as part of its policy decides to set up the office. My question was whether VicPol had any kind of role in providing operational advice on how it might best be to set up that office,

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — I do not think so. I will check that — we can confirm it, but I do not think we did.

Mr SCHEFFER — Thank you. Last night I saw the television news — SBS or the ABC; I have not been able to locate it this morning — cover the launch of some CCTV cameras in Prahran. The journalist asked Minister McIntosh and then after that a representative from VicPol — I do not recall who it was — about whether CCTV cameras were effective. Neither the minister nor the representative from VicPol could answer it. If I remember correctly, the officer from VicPol said that he could not point to any research that indicated its effectiveness. I wonder if you could point us to any research or provide us with information on why there is such support for CCTV cameras in the face of that report?

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — I think it would be fair to say the research would be mixed on success as a prevention strategy. What it is for us, though, is a great investigation opportunity. It allows us to manage events in real time quite often, but it also allows us to identify people post fact. We would use the CCTV very often to identify people involved in an incident. Typically in the CBD we use it also to monitor events that are of concern. Our control room will watch the CCTV through that, but its main use is after the event to detect, and the research has always been doubtful on whether it prevents crime.

Mr SCHEFFER — Is VicPol at all prepared to undertake research on the new installations of CCTV cameras in the context of crime prevention?

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — We would be prepared to do anything that we are asked in terms of that sort of research generally. We would engage or encourage universities to do that sort of research for us; they are better equipped.

Mr SCHEFFER — Do you self-initiate that — put out commissions?

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — Generally what we will do is say to people seeking to research Victoria Police topics — and there are quite a few — is, 'Here is a list of topics we see as priorities'. Typically in that case we would say we want to see CCTV and the implementation of new areas of CCTV researched. Whether that would be big enough to attract the universities to have a look, I do not know. I am not sure. I would imagine that with the commitment of government funding there would have to be some evaluation criteria around that. Again I would need to check, but I would have thought —

Supt BRIGHAM — My understanding is it is an annual program and decisions were made late last year for this year's research projects, but there are other research projects and other opportunities that come up along the line.

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — But I would have thought if the government has granted the funds to at least partially install CCTVs, there would be evaluation criteria that would need to go with that.

Mr SCHEFFER — The minister was not able to point to it. Perhaps the last thing I will say on that is while you mentioned that while there might be some different views or different findings from research on the crime prevention aspect, you said it was useful to provide evidence where a crime had occurred?

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — Yes.

Mr SCHEFFER — What is the — I do not know how you would measure this — percentage of effectiveness? How many prosecutions do you get from evidence where the CCTV footage provided the clincher?

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — I am trying to think, because I was asked this question recently and responded in writing to it. We struggle. I think we are asked to say how often CCTV had identified offenders, and we cannot categorically say — or we could not easily say. We might typically have a suspect, and we say, ‘We think this is Tim Cartwright’. We then review the CCTV footage, and that is enough for us to go and interview Tim Cartwright and say, ‘We put it to you’, and he will confess or otherwise.

Sometimes people will ring us — typically Crime Stoppers — after the release of a CCTV image and say, ‘We think that is that person’. Whether or not the CCTV categorically allows us to identify people, what it often does as well is exculpate people. Where there has been particularly a fight — a brawl — we are able to then look at the image and say, ‘This person clearly was on the outer and just happened to be caught up in it’, so it allows us to focus our investigations as well, which is another aspect of the tool. Rather than chasing each one of the 10 people who might have been involved in a group, we can narrow it down to the individuals who are the principals.

Supt BRIGHAM — Can I just add to that? On occasions it has enabled us to prove that an offence did not take place. And with the Eyewatch program, there is a recent example from New South Wales where CCTV footage of a female who committed a theft was put up on the Eyewatch website. It was not good enough to identify that person for court purposes, but this female’s friends saw it on the page and told her that she had been found out or whatever, and she went down to the police station and gave herself up.

Mr SCHEFFER — Is that significant or just a very rare occurrence that that occurs?

Supt BRIGHAM — The fact is, I suppose, New South Wales is using this prolifically now with CCTV, so it provides us with an interface where we can put up images the same day to seek identification. One of the challenges is to identify people. When we get CCTV footage of an offence occurring, often with people with baseball caps, whilst you have got the footage of the offence, you do not actually have identifiable footage of the offender.

The CHAIR — I suppose with CCTV the successes of CCTV will never be defined on the basis of deterrence, so the amount of crime that does not take place because of CCTV is unquantifiable. That was not a question I was going to ask.

Can you identify, or would you be willing to identify, any sort of impediments to successful crime prevention programs? Is there anything that we should be looking at to have greater success both in the policy and also the program for crime prevention, money aside?

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — I note some of the successful ways that we have overcome the silos approach in other areas of crime prevention and community safety. It was the way that we have packaged the money when we say, ‘If you want access to this money, you need to demonstrate strong relationships with other agencies’. I am just trying to think. There was one recent example in the community engagement space where money was offered but to apply you had to be able to demonstrate that you had engaged an agency that you had never worked with before. I think in that case an example was the Jewish community and some of the indigenous communities working together on community engagement strategies, so actually encouraging some really novel sorts of ways to tackle problems that we have had in the past. One of the things I would suggest is the way we package the funds is set up to encourage people to work together. I see that one of the greatest impediments is working in silos and not taking advantage of the enormous range of support we have in the community. We tend to look in our backyard, maybe even at other government agencies, but quite often you will find industries, philanthropics and all sorts of people who you might not have thought would have had an interest will have an interest and be able to help.

The CHAIR — All right. Thank you very much, the three of you, for coming here today. We appreciate it.

Deputy Comm. CARTWRIGHT — Thank you for the opportunity. We will provide a written submission in the next couple of days, together with additional liaison.

Committee adjourned.