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**Keynote Address**  
**EARLY INTERVENTION –**  
**YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES**  
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### **Criminal Careers and Crime Prevention**

Every crime requires three ingredients: a motivated offender, a suitable target and an opportunity. Our intention is to develop policies to deal with the problem of crime. In this context people here today are involved in developing partnerships to attain two main objectives:

- trying to reduce the supply of motivated offenders;
- making crime more difficult to commit.

In exploring these we confront policy agendas of considerable complexity. We also find ourselves confronted by boundaries, which on the surface can be easily mapped, but which, in reality sometimes appear convoluted and unconquerable.

There are boundaries between levels of government. Local Government, which is closest to the people, but does not have the resources to deal with crime prevention in an overarching way. Perhaps that lies with the State Government, but we know that the Commonwealth has a role to play also, and the boundary issues are certainly complex. Of course, these are not the only sorts of boundaries - there are boundaries within service providers - boundaries between those who provide health services, or police services or community services, consumer services, or education services - all of which have an impact on the well being of young people and their behaviour. Then there are boundaries between the auspices of services – services delivered by the public sector, those delivered by the private sector, and those delivered by the not-for-profit community sector - and within all of these are shades and variations of complexity.

- ⇒ To deal with the first objective, reducing the supply of motivated offenders, I could outline a catalogue of policies relating to intervening in the lives of individuals, families, schools and communities, and in particular at the important transition points. At the other end of the spectrum, but dealing with the same issue of reducing the supply of motivated offenders, the institutions of diversion and incarceration also play a role.
- ⇒ To deal with the second objective, we can unpack the conjunction of criminal opportunities, and test policies about designing for safety, community policing, protective behaviours and so on, within a context of situational crime prevention and a legal framework.

Crime is the result of complex changes in economic, social and cultural factors such as unemployment, dysfunctional families, child abuse, poor education, community breakdown, economic inequality and substance abuse. If crime prevention is to succeed it should focus on broad social outcomes, for example reducing social exclusion. Compelling evidence suggests that those who feel excluded from participation in community life are more likely to offend against that community. Addressing this sense of exclusion can reduce the risk of offending.

Crime prevention is guided by strategic intentions and approaches but is ultimately defined by results. The hard strategic framework involves policies to prevent crime, improve safety and reduce disorder while recognising that there is no one single, definable cause of crime. While the financial costs involved with crime are staggering, significant human costs are also involved: the effects on young people with reduced life options; impacts on the next generation; and the conspicuous over representation of Indigenous people in the correction system.

Most kids don't get into strife. Only a small number of people offend repeatedly. It is those people we are interested in when we discuss a criminal career.

Some interesting data from the UK found that over 40% of males and over 10% of females are likely to be found guilty or cautioned for indictable offences at some point during their life-times (Farrington 1996). Most have that sole experience and don't come back - but some do and we need to know more about them, their careers, and appropriate intervention strategies.

A recent study at the Australian Institute of Criminology which examined the records of 35,947 young people who appeared in New South Wales courts on a total of 71,560 occasions between 1992 and 1997 found that most appeared only the once.

We then examined the records of 5509 individuals who recorded a proven court appearance during the period from 1 July 1992 to 30 June 1993, while under the age of 18 years and found:

- 37.3 per cent of juvenile offenders in the cohort under analysis recorded a subsequent proven court appearance during the period under observation.
- The average time between consecutive appearances for the offenders in the cohort was 17.9 months for the whole cohort.
- The intensity of offending among juvenile offenders in the cohort under study reaches its maximum at ages between 15 and 17 years. Young offenders in this age bracket have the highest risk of contact with the juvenile justice system.

The lesson that we learned was that programs which target young offenders who reappear relatively soon after their first court appearance may contribute to a reduction in recidivism and rates of juvenile crime generally (Carcach & Leverett 1999).

In simple terms:

- Of those who do have contact in the form of a court appearance, the majority has only one appearance.
- The longer juveniles stay out of trouble, the less likely it is that they will reappear in court.
- However, a sizeable minority of juveniles do make several court appearances leading to conviction.

These are the guys (and they are mostly guys) who have criminal careers.

- A small number of persons in a birth cohort are responsible for the majority of the crimes committed by a birth cohort (Wolfgang, Figlio & Sellin 1972).
- A small minority of offenders commit the significant majority of offences (West & Farrington 1977).

- However, a small proportion of “chronic” offenders (about 5% or males) account for about half of all offences.
- An early age of onset of offending foreshadows a long criminal career and many offences.
- Young offenders tend to be versatile and rarely specialise (e.g. in violent offending).
- They are also versatile in committing other types of antisocial behaviour, including heavy drinking, drug-taking, dangerous driving and promiscuous sex.
- Young offenders commit most crimes for rational or utilitarian reasons. However, a minority of crimes (especially vandalism, shoplifting and taking vehicles) are committed for excitement or enjoyment or to relieve boredom (Farrington 1996).

Even though people have been studying young people for a long time there is so much we don't know about criminal careers. BUT it is important to know the answer to a number of key questions if we are going to divert young people away from a life of offending.

These questions are:

- What is the life-style of these offenders?
- At what age do they begin their crimes?
- What kinds of crime do they commit as juveniles, and does their pattern of criminal behaviour change as they grow older?
- How many crimes do they commit in a year?

What is their employment pattern?

- What is their involvement in drugs?
- What distinguishes those with long careers from those whose careers are brief?
- What distinguished high-rate offenders from those who commit crimes infrequently (Greenwood 1983, p. 403).

Let's go through these questions one by one.

### **What is the life-style of these offenders?**

The Pathways to Prevention Report (more later) found:

- Childhood factors of difficult temperament and poor social skills.
- Family factors of poor parental supervision and discipline, substance abuse, family violence and disharmony, long-term parental unemployment, and abuse/neglect.
- School factors of school failure, deviant peer group, bullying, and inadequate behaviour management.
- Life factors of divorce and family break up, death of a family member.
- Community and cultural factors of low income and poor housing, neighbourhood violence and crime, and lack of support services.

### **At what age do they begin their crimes?**

We don't know when kids start offending, but we do know that it peaks at ages 15 to 17. In a New South Wales survey of 5,178 secondary school students about year 10 was the peak year for male offending. Over  $\frac{3}{4}$  or 76.7% of males owned up to committing a serious offence at some stage in their life. 59.5% of females owned up to committing a serious offence (NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics & Research 1996, p. 22).

**Year 10 students who have ever participated in crime**

Offence type	Male %	Female %
Assault	54.8	31.9
Malicious damage	49.4	39.3
Receiving or selling stolen goods	35.6	20.4
Shoplifting goods worth \$20 or more	23.7	17.7
Break and enter	19.5	5.7
Motor vehicle theft	13.5	3.2
Any of the above (ever)	76.7	59.5

Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics & Research 1996, p. 22

**What kinds of crime do they commit as juveniles, and does their pattern of criminal behaviour change as they grow older?**

- Property offenders - juvenile males have highest arrest rate compared with any other group, including adult males.
- However the value of the property is less than for adults.
- 86% of offences are property offences, not crimes of violence.
- Juveniles are arrested at higher rates than adults for offences such as common assault and robbery.
- Stealing followed by break, enter and stealing appear to involve juveniles of both sexes most frequently.
- Juvenile crime is frequently committed in the same geographic community as the juvenile's place of residence.
- More likely to offend **WITH** peers.
- Most juvenile crime is unplanned, opportunistic and episodic.
- One third or roughly 40% of juvenile crime is committed during the hours of 2pm-6pm on weekdays.

**How many crimes do they commit in a year?**

A question for further research.

**What is their employment pattern?**

Another question for research.

**What is their involvement in drugs?**

Very little is known about juveniles, drug use and crime. We do, in Australia, have a strong drug use culture, and an important project at the Australian Institute of Criminology (DUMA) is finding that people who are arrested (for any crime) have high rates of drug usage. We will soon be testing a sample of juveniles who have been arrested and held in custody.

We do know that by far the most frequently used drug is alcohol followed by tobacco, with cannabis and solvents some way behind, and a range of other drugs being used on a smaller scale.

But things change quickly. And it should be kept in mind that the nature and type of drug use differs between groups within the community and in different social settings.

Evidence gathered in a recent AIC project with young men suggests that young people commence drug use without knowing the harm it will cause. The young men said that they got into drug dealing when they could not afford to sustain their habit.

**What distinguishes those with long careers from those whose careers are brief?**

Another question for research.

**What distinguished high-rate offenders from those who commit crimes infrequently?**

Another question for research.

The last few years have seen increases in recorded crime around Australia, though since 1998 there has been a levelling off, and in some states a notable fall. We are not in the grip of a crime wave, though between 1995 and 1998 the numbers of most major crimes rose, and in Tasmania, the rate rise was greater for most, than for Australia as a whole.

**Changes in Recorded Crime in Australia and Tasmania 1995-98**

Crimes in Order	Australia		Tasmania	
	Number 1998	Trend 1995-98	Number 1998	Trend 1995-98
General theft	565,214	Slight rise (+15%)	13,872	Sharp rise (+25.6%)
Unlawful Entry/ Burglary	435,670	Slight rise (+13%)	14,315	Sharp rise (+26.1%)
Assault	132,967	Sharp rise (+30.7%)	2,231	Up & down (+9.5%)
Motor Vehicle Theft	131,572	Up & down (+3.5%)	2,991	Up & down..(+32.8%)
Robbery	23,778	Sharp rise (+63.3%)	187	Steep rise (+192%)
Sexual Assault	14,568	Up & down (+11%)	216	Sharp rise (+35%)
Homicide	333	Decline (-6.5%)	9	Up & down (-33.3%)

Source: Derived from ABS Recorded Crime

There has been a significant rise in the number of charges laid against juveniles.

**Increased charges laid**

What we are seeing by examining the Tasmanian data is that at the beginning of the decade the charges laid for break and enter were much the same for juveniles and adults. For adults over the six year period the rate has gone up by 166%, while for juveniles it has gone up by 230%.

At the beginning of the decade the charges laid for motor vehicle theft were much the same for juveniles and adults. For adults over the six year period the rate has gone up by 118%, while for juveniles it has gone up by 294%.

Charges Laid for Break, Enter & Stealing in  
Tasmania

	Adults Rate per 100,00 Population	Juveniles Rate per 100,00 Population
1991-92	116.11	124.71
1992-93	199.24	280.25
1993-94	185.23	429.13
1994-95	185.17	444.88
1995-96	173.22	568.45
1996-97	237.09	399.07
1997-98	308.33	411.44

*Data compiled by the Australian Institute of Criminology*

*1991-92: Data derived from data on persons involved in crimes cleared (Australian Institute of Criminology).*

*1992-93 to 1995-96: Data adapted from unpublished data on the number of charges laid classified by Age and Gender (Tasmania Police, Crime Statistics Unit).*

*1996-97 to 1997-98: Data derived from Tasmania Police, Annual Report, Department of Police and Public Safety.*

## Charges Laid for Motor Vehicle Theft in Tasmania

	Adults Rate per 100,00 Population	Juveniles Rate per 100,00 Population
1991-92	34.78	37.74
1992-93	74.50	84.07
1993-94	32.95	109.14
1994-95	43.89	170.98
1995-96	52.19	196.71
1996-97	54.13	141.44
1997-98	75.68	148.60

*Data compiled by the Australian Institute of Criminology*

*1991-92: Data derived from data on persons involved in crimes cleared (Australian Institute of Criminology).*

*1992-93 to 1995-96: Data adapted from unpublished data on the number of charges laid classified by Age and Gender (Tasmania Police, Crime Statistics Unit).*

*1996-97 to 1997-98: Data derived from Tasmania Police, Annual Report, Department of Police and Public Safety.*

We might like to discuss why this has been the case.

Increases in offences often bring forth a call for a more severe and more punitive criminal justice system. This is not always good practice, it is not always good politics, and it is certainly not good economics.

A **developmental** approach with young people works from the basis that law enforcement comes into play more to *deal with* offending, and less to *prevent* offending. The aim is to work cross-sectorally to turn potential future offenders into good citizens. If they grow up to be offenders behind bars they cost the community in the order of \$50,000 p.a., not to mention the emotional and financial costs to the community in the course of getting them into prison; nor the likely social security payments after their release. Investing in appropriate developmental activities - primary health care, early childhood supports, education and training, is more likely to turn them into productive taxpayers.

It costs approximately \$150 per day to keep a person in Risdon prison – and on average there are 269 people in prison on any day. There's about \$42 million worth of capital tied up in prisons in Tasmania. At the same time there are over 1700 people serving community corrections orders. But the cost there is around \$5 per day. We know that a lot of people say that these offenders are getting a slap on the wrist, and should be put away. If one fifth of those serving community orders were incarcerated, then the recurrent cost would be in the order of \$19 million per year, not to mention the massive capital required. That \$19 million would blow the State budget, but think of how many better ways that money could be spent - it could, for example, create over 700 full time jobs in the tourism industry.

Locking people up is not the answer - education and employment are much better answers. Explorative, qualitative research has indicated that given employment opportunities, especially those built on a base of education and training, offenders would end their criminal careers (Shover 1996, p. 186). Research has shown that offenders

are more likely to terminate their criminal careers the higher their current legal earnings (Pezzin 1995, p. 46).

There is a challenge here in Tasmania where the school Year 12 retention rates are below the national average, and below that of every other State. Labour force participation rates for both males and females are lower than in any other state.

When we combine these snippets of crime and criminal careers, we know a bit about the kids who end up in trouble. We can observe:

- covert antisocial behaviour (e.g., lying, stealing);
  - overt antisocial behaviour (e.g., aggression, fighting);
  - poor school performance;
  - abuse of hard drugs or alcohol; and
  - association with delinquent peers.
- (Blumstein et.a. 1986, p.3).

In developing a set of strategies, mindful of the boundaries I outlined at the beginning of the talk, we can see the need for a coordinated and focused crime prevention strategy.

In a mixed approach to crime prevention, strategies could simultaneously:

- promote community safety;
- address behavioural and behaviour development elements of crime prevention within families, schools and other institutions;
- implement immediate situational crime prevention strategies such as developing safer communities through better urban design and policing.

In all there are a number of approaches that shape a framework. Let me propose a four part strategy:

1. Strengthening social capital.
2. Working with people.
3. Building partnerships.
4. A commitment to an evidence-based approach backed by evaluation.

### **Strengthening Social Capital**

If we can, in our communities move towards outcomes such as:

- improved feelings of confidence, pride and safety within communities;
- enhanced access to employment and training opportunities;
- an increase in average levels of education;
- accessible and relevant local services

then we are on the way to a safety culture, built on a basis of strong social inclusion and support.

Crime prevention strategies have been found to be most successful and sustainable in the context of an improved social and economic environment which involves a range of social institutions.

However, we have to realise that it all starts very early, and it is here that we must take note of the important work done on identifying **Pathways to Prevention**. This is the name of a significant report completed recently for the Commonwealth Government,

and written by Professor Ross Homel from Griffith University, in conjunction with several eminent colleagues.

***Pathways to Prevention*** was developed by the National Crime Prevention Unit of the Attorney General's Department. It is the result of consultation with an interdisciplinary consisting of psychologists and criminologists thinking about crime in a systematic way. The report represents new thinking about crime prevention, and has implications for social structures, social policies, and the nature of the 'social welfare' industry.

## **PATHWAYS TO PREVENTION**

### **Risk and Protective Factors Associated with Anti-Social and Criminal Behaviour**

(This summary is drawn from *Pathways to Prevention: Summary Volume (1999)*, National Crime Prevention, Attorney General's Department, Canberra).

<b>RISK FACTORS</b>	<b>PROTECTIVE FACTORS</b>
<b>Childhood Factors</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• birth injury</li><li>• disability</li><li>• difficult temperament</li><li>• insecure attachment</li><li>• poor social skills</li><li>• low self esteem</li><li>• hyperactivity/disruptive behaviour</li><li>• impulsivity</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• social skills</li><li>• good coping skills</li><li>• internal locus of control</li><li>• attachment to family</li><li>• empathy</li><li>• school achievement</li><li>• easy temperament</li><li>• problem solving skills</li></ul>

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**Family Factors**

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- single parents
- teenage mothers
- poor parental supervision and discipline
- substance abuse
- family violence and disharmony
- father absence
- long-term parental unemployment
- rejection of child
- abuse/neglect
- supportive caring parents
- family harmony
- responsibility for chores or required helpfulness
- strong family norms and morality
- secure and stable family
- supportive relationship with other adults

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**School Factors**

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- school failure
- normative beliefs about aggression
- deviant peer group
- bullying
- peer rejection
- poor attachment to school
- inadequate behaviour management
- positive school climate
- prosocial peer group
- responsibility and required helpfulness
- sense of belonging/bonding
- opportunities for some success at school and recognition of achievement
- school norms re: violence

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**Life Factors**

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- divorce and family break up
- war or natural disasters
- death of a family member
- meeting significant person
- moving to new area
- opportunities at critical turning points or major life transitions

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**Community and Cultural Factors**

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- low income and poor housing
- population density and housing conditions
- neighbourhood violence and crime
- lack of support services
- social or cultural discrimination
- medial portrayal of violence
- access to support services
- community networking
- attachment to the community
- participation in church or other community group
- a strong cultural identity and ethnic pride

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**Working with people**

There are three clear categories here:

- those who commit crime;
- those who are the victims or have a higher risk than most of being victims;
- those who legitimise and/or promote a culture which is conducive to crime.

In addition, it is also important to recognise variations amongst people at the community level. Account will need to be taken of issues such as gender, ethnicity, family composition and family circumstances.

Issues here (in order, related to above):

- Incarceration, community based supervision, diversion, restorative justice;
- Victim support, safety planning, retribution, compensation; and
- Criminal cultures and subcultures, promotion of disorder, drugs cultures.

### **Building partnerships**

We must harness the constructive and integrative institutions in our community, for we know that crime prevention is not a simple mechanistic isolated activity. Parts of the partnership must include:

- **Local communities:** communities are the central institution for crime prevention, the stage on which all other institutions perform - families, schools, labour markets, retail establishments, police and corrections must all confront the consequences of community life.
- **Families:** basic family practices in child-rearing, marriage and parental employment have a significant impact on the criminality of both children and fathers.
- **Schools:** measured purely by the amount of available time to reduce risk factors for crime, schools have more opportunity to accomplish that objective than any other agency of government.
- **Labour markets:** programs aimed at linking labour markets more closely to high crime risk areas and individuals are likely to have substantial crime prevention benefits.
- **Commercial settings:** the control of commodities like alcohol, cash and firearms can make a great deal of difference in the rate of crime in specific places and venues.
- **Police agencies:** there are many police practices that reduce crime, and some that even increase crime, however, an effective police presence is an essential ingredient in establishing and maintaining a threshold level of public order and safety.
- **Other agencies of criminal justice:** there is very little evidence that increased incarceration has reduced crime, yet variations in how the criminal justice system treats admitted offenders can make a significant difference. The effectiveness of any correctional treatment, however, will depend on the community, family and labour market context into which the offender returns.

### **A commitment to an evidence-based approach backed by evaluation**

The reduction of crime is a laudable objective embraced by all. Every MP will have constituents spelling out what should be done, every talkback radio host will have callers proposing solutions, and every citizen will have a view. The views will range from nurturing the un-nurtured and understanding the misunderstood, to strengthening families and communities, to building higher walls and getting stronger locks, to policing more aggressively, to imposing severe sentences and throwing away the key, to inflicting cruel and unusual punishments - flogging, dismembering, boiling in oil and worse! Behind every simple solution there is a complex problem.

In very few areas of public policy does **everybody** consider themselves an expert - we leave defence policy to defence experts, health policy, transport policy, economic policy,

communications policy, etc to appropriate experts, but on crime reduction policy everybody has a “they oughta” story.

The literature is full of crime reduction strategies and programs.

It is really important to stick to the evidence of crime reduction. There is a substantial body of evidence - rigorously developed, and often replicable. Of course, things that are shown to work in Maroubra or Manchester may not necessarily work here in Tasmania.

There is a lot more evidence to be gathered, and this is part of the task ahead. We would however, be extremely naive if we were to believe that political decisions are made on the basis of scientific evidence alone. Having the good sense to see where science is tempered by political realities is part of the policy package in crime reduction.

At the AIC we have developed a data warehouse. Data driven policy puts us on the front foot as we can delve into the warehouse, while at the same time judge appropriate use of data. Data is also very important for our academic colleagues who can be persuaded to join in the venture of adding value, and enriching our perspectives.

In short we need to know what works, what doesn't and what's promising.

As I said at the outset, we are only concerned with two stories:

- reduce the supply of motivated offenders
- make crime hard to commit.

I have outlined a lot of strategies and processes for reducing the supply of motivated offenders. The *Pathways to Prevention* material is of vital importance and prevention techniques should be designed to counter specific risk factors. On the basis of well-designed experimental research, the most hopeful methods of preventing youth crime are as follows:

- Frequent home visiting by nurses to women during pregnancy and infancy, to give advice about prenatal and postnatal care of the child, infant development, proper nutrition, and the avoidance of smoking, drinking and drug use in pregnancy. This causes a reduction in child abuse.
- Preschool intellectual enrichment programs designed to increase thinking and reasoning abilities of young children and hence increase their school success. The Perry Program, which emphasises planning, doing and reviewing, has been proved effective in preventing delinquency.
- Parent training, designed to train parents to notice what the child is doing, to monitor the child's behaviour carefully, to state house rules clearly, and to make rewards and punishments contingent on the child's behaviour, in order to build up internal inhibitions against antisocial behaviour.
- Social skills training, aiming to teach children to stop and think before acting, to consider the consequences of their behaviour, to understand other people's feelings, and to solve interpersonal problems using negotiation rather than using aggression.

These techniques are also designed to build up internal inhibitions against antisocial behaviour.

- Peer influence resistance training, which involves teaching young people to resist pressures from their friends to commit antisocial acts. This teaching is most effective if it is carried out by high-status peers rather than by parents or teachers.
- Teacher training, encouraging teachers to communicate clear instructions and expectations to children, to teach children socially desirable methods of solving interpersonal problems, and to notice and reward children for socially desirable behaviour.
- School anti-bullying programs, which involve developing a clear policy on bullying, providing information to dispel myths about bullies and victims, encouraging children to help victims and to include children who are being left out, and improving monitoring and supervision in the playground.
- Community crime prevention programs, which include physically improving neighbourhoods and providing recreational facilities for young people. Unfortunately, evidence of the effectiveness of these programmes is not convincing.
- Situational crime prevention programmes designed to decrease criminal opportunities, involving increased surveillance, making it harder for offenders to obtain their criminal targets by increasing physical security, and cocooning victims. The major problem with these programs is that they may merely displace crime to other places or victims rather than prevent crime.

### **Communities that Care**

- It is a very flexible risk-focussed prevention program, developed in the United States, that can be tailored to the needs of each particular community.
- It begins with community mobilization. Key community leaders are brought together and a Community Board is set up consisting of representatives from various agencies.
- The Community Board then identifies key risk factors in the community that need to be tackled.
- The Community Board then develops a prevention plan, by choosing techniques from a menu of strategies that are known to be effective in tackling these key risk factors.

The prevention plan is then implemented and its effectiveness is assessed (Farrington 1996, pp. 29-30).

The second, making crime harder to commit is a talk for another day - and a talk where Local Government comes well into its own with leading practical plans and strategies.

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