DEVELOPMENTAL CRIME PREVENTION

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As you have just heard, my name is Paul Friedman, Director of Crime Prevention Queensland, Department of Premier and Cabinet. The Queensland Crime Prevention Strategy – *Building Safer Communities* details the Queensland Government’s policy commitment to be tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime. It was launched by the Premier, The Honourable Peter Beattie MP, in December 1999. The vision of the Strategy is to build safer and more supportive communities in Queensland through targeted, coordinated and consultative initiatives that reduce and prevent crime.

To achieve this long-term vision, the Strategy has five goals:

**Goal 1- Strengthening communities**

**Goal 2 - Supporting families, children and young people**

**Goal 3 - Reducing violence**

**Goal 4 - Enhancing public safety**

**Goal 5 - Dealing with offending**

To achieve these goals through the Strategy the Government provided new or enhanced funding for 44 crime prevention programs across 13 government departments. In addition to these strategy programs there are many other programs either run by departments directly, or by NGOs with government assistance, that have crime prevention outcomes. All of these programs are generally grouped under the categories of:

- Community Based
- Criminal Justice System
- Developmental
- Situational

Although, all of these programs can be effective in tackling crime prevention from various angles and in various ways and in various locations, my focus today will be on Developmental Crime Prevention. I also want to talk in a little more depth on a particular developmental program that combines community based crime prevention principles as well. As you have just heard, early intervention strategies in crime prevention can have long term benefits for crime reduction and for addressing other social and behavioural problems. Developmental crime prevention can be seen in the same light because it seeks to identify risk and protective factors early on in an individual’s life and intervene in the development of potential criminal behaviour and offending. Additional advantages of developmental crime prevention programs can, generally speaking, demonstrated high success rates and also can be particularly cost effective for governments to implement and fund.

**Speaking of Costs -The Costs of Crime**

In 1997 the Australian Institute of Criminology estimated that crime costs the Australian community at least $18 billion per year. The criminal justice system alone accounted for $6.4 billion per year. On a very rough calculation by me that’s around $1.28 billion on the criminal justice system side of crime alone for Queensland. It was estimated in 1990 that one homicide alone costs the community $1 million. This excluded the costs of the prosecution and trial itself but included the income foregone by the imprisoned offender, and the costs of supporting the surviving dependants of both victim and offender. From these kinds of figures it is clear that governments must find a way forward to deal with the issue of crime.
It is therefore not surprising that developmental crime prevention and early intervention strategies are becoming increasingly noted for their ability to address crime early in the life course and to provide cost benefit alternatives to criminal justice responses and policing. Developmental crime prevention encourages positive relationships and personal development enhancing life opportunities for its participants. As a minimum, the aim is to identify risk factors and offer appropriate support, training and encouragement to individuals who lack basic fulfilment across key social institutions such as school, family and peer groups. It must be emphasised, however, that developmental crime prevention is an ongoing and complex process and is certainly not a quick fix to criminal behaviour. Coping with various life challenges is a long term commitment for many of those identified as being at risk. In addition, sustainable results often take a long time to produce and this can impact upon public support. Taxpayers are keen to see results for their dollars today, and educating them on the long term benefits of ongoing initiatives is an area that requires better promotion.

So what are “risk” factors?

As sited in the Pathways to Prevention publication from National Crime Prevention, risk factors can incorporate child/birth problems (such as disability, prematurity, birth injury, behavioural and social problems), family problems (such as parenting problems, family violence or abuse), school related problems (incorporating failure, bullying and peer rejection), life events (such as divorce or family break-up), and Community/Cultural factors (including lack of support services, isolation and poverty). Although risk factors cannot, on their own, predict future offending, they are valuable in determining possible behavioural and developmental problems that may arise down the track. In addition, it is important to recognise the cumulative impact of negative environments and stimuli over time.

Across Australia many developmental crime prevention programs have been applied in various jurisdictions with encouraging outcomes. Programs typically cover areas such as:

- Parenting and early childhood support
- Health care assistance and home help
- Literacy training and alternative learning programs in primary and secondary schools
- Anti-bullying initiatives in schools
- Programs addressing violence (such as Northern Territory’s Violence Intervention Program which incorporates counselling for individuals, couples and groups)
- Self esteem and self-empowerment development and training
- Job skills training and development (such as the “Hand Brake Turn” initiative in Victoria which offers automotive training for young unemployed people and/or those who have been involved in the Juvenile Justice System)
- Establishment of youth centres for recreation (such as the “Geraldton Streetwork Aboriginal Corporation Committee” in Western Australia which established a youth centre for recreation purposes and as a venue to facilitate learning programs for literacy, numeracy and job skills training).
- Establishment of Theatre/Art groups (such as Rip and Tear Theatre Group in Tasmania, which developed into Big Hart in 1993. This project was set up to offer marginalised children the opportunity to participate in experimental arts/theatre. The project is based around personal development and has demonstrated positive outcomes for participants in terms of crime prevention.
Early school leavers programs (such as Victoria’s “Crossroads” initiative – the program aims to enhance access to education, further schooling and job training and to improve retention rates or re-entry rates in schools).

Sport and recreational programs – (such as the “Sports Challenge Australia” program, designed to use sport as a tool for developing children’s networks with peers, family and community groups).

**Developmental Crime Prevention in Queensland**

Initial evaluations of developmental crime prevention programs and initiatives are producing positive outcomes in Queensland. Many of the Queensland Government’s priorities such as the *Putting Families First* initiative emphasise the importance of support services and child development from an early age. These programs are often linked to health or educational based outcomes and therefore largely fall under the jurisdiction of State Health, Family and Educational providers. Developmental programs under the Queensland Crime Prevention Strategy are largely associated with Queensland Health and Education Queensland. These programs incorporate the following:

- **The Expanded Child Health Centre Project**  
  This Queensland Health program seeks to develop effective early interventions of care that address the needs of the most vulnerable families with children aged five years and under.

- **The Family CARE Nurse Home Visiting Trial**  
  This Queensland Health program aims to reduce the incidence of child abuse, neglect and a range of negative health and social outcomes for infant, mother and family in the first 2 years of an infant's life where the infant is at high risk of poor health and social outcomes.

- **Indigenous Parenting Support Program**  
  This Queensland Health initiative aims to improve the health and well being of Indigenous pregnant women, parents and their children in rural and urban areas through the provision of culturally appropriate and clinically relevant parenting support.

- **Literacy in Primary Schools**  
  This Education Queensland initiative aims to improve the literacy attainment of students educationally at risk.

- **School Behaviour Management (including anti-bullying and anti-violence programs)**  
  Provided by Education Queensland, the objective of this initiative is to provide inclusive and safe environments free from harassment and violence.

- **Positive Parenting Program**  
  This Queensland Health initiative provides access to free early intervention and parenting support programs from at least 30 locations across the state to help families address behavioural and developmental problems. Positive Parenting Program or “Tripe P” (as it is commonly called) was developed by Professor Matthew Sanders and his colleagues from the University of Queensland, School of Psychology. The Triple P project aims to enhance social and family environments for children by providing parenting support, knowledge and resources.

- **Pathways to Prevention Demonstration Project**  
  This project operates in Inala in an application of the principles of the 1999 National Anti-Crime Strategy research project Pathways to Prevention - Development and Early Intervention Approaches to Crime in Australia. This project is the first of its kind in Australia and is based on the concept of intervention at crucial transition points which mark new life experiences.
For example, one component of the program is supporting the relationships of children and their caregivers when children are starting school. The project is premised on the finding that if challenges of life transitions are not satisfactorily resolved, a cumulative effect can result raising the likelihood of subsequent involvement in delinquent and criminal behaviours. The impact of a special program is perceived to be greater at these specific life phases. As discussed earlier the cost benefits of investing in human development is extremely important for addressing crime prevention, particularly for children. By providing positive reinforcements at crucial life stages children have the support they need to achieve their potential.

Fiona Stanley from the Institute of Child Health Research in Western Australia claims that a number of child developmental disorders in Australia have actually gotten worse in recent years. These include indicators such as:

- Low birth weight
- Neurodevelopmental disorders
- Asthma
- Type 1 diabetes
- Chronic bowel disease
- Autism
- Mental health
- Eating disorders
- Learning disabilities
- Aggressive behaviour and violence
- School drop out and truancy
- Juvenile crime and
- Illicit drug and alcohol use and
- Child abuse – refer to increase in non accidental injury – causes of cerebral palsy in Western Australia.

The Pathways Project commenced in July 2000 and is targeted at three to six year olds, their families, schools and communities in Inala. The first part of the project is run through two programs: the communication program and the Family Independence Program with priority given initially to indigenous families. The process will be repeated for the Samoan and Vietnamese communities. As the project progresses a broader range of programs will be developed. Sponsors of the project include the Barnes Foundation, Mission Australia, the Key Centre for Ethics, Law, Justice and Governance at Griffith University, Crime Prevention Queensland, Department of Families, Queensland Health and Education Queensland.

The latest progress report on this project outlines work currently being undertaken by Griffith University such as – Communication and Social Skills Programs which focuses on transitions from preschool to primary school and addresses learning and behaviour issues in schools, including assistance and resources provided to aid teachers. Mission Australia runs the Family Independence Program within Pathways to Prevention which focuses more heavily on parenting and family support, learning and behavioural development in schools and community development. This also covers Indigenous specific programs and programs targeted at Pacific island and Vietnamese families in the area. These programs typically include language and educational support, parenting and promotion of networks.
across cultures. The program is also planning to implement a Vietnamese specific Triple P program later this year. The project structure of Pathways to Prevention incorporates a project reference group, scientific advisory panel, development and evaluation group, local stakeholders, family independence programs, data collection and management and school based programs.

The Pathways to Prevention is most likely one of the biggest coordinated efforts to address developmental crime prevention and early intervention across Queensland, if not across the whole of Australia. Outcomes for 2002 include improved behaviour (Rowe inventory), involvement of parents, caregivers in school functions/activities and positive feedback from teachers. It is intended that the program will be evaluated in 2004, and although the evaluation is expected to be quite complex, given the nature of the project, any outcomes for the area will provide valuable direction for any possible future developmental strategies.

Other Developmental Initiatives in Queensland

The Queensland Government also has a range of programs, initiatives and information on developmental crime prevention occurring outside of our crime prevention strategy. Some of these products include:

- Work undertaken by the Commission for Children and Young People, including their release of *Children and Young People in Queensland – A Snap Shot 2002*. This document outlines key factors and indicators of well-being for children, including access to health, education, housing and support networks. The report details the importance of physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development for children and young people and the correlation of these factors with criminality and victimisation.

- The Office of Youth Affairs, Department of Employment and Training “Two Way Street” resource handbooks details the importance of involving young people in community and government consultation. This initiative has positive developmental benefits for young people because:
  - It helps develop networks and build relationships across diverse groups
  - It promotes respect, goodwill and encourages involvement in decision making
  - It helps to build community pride and values the opinions of young people
  - It aims to connect with young people across a broad range of areas. For example through schools, in the community, via the internet and so on.

- Educations Queensland’s CAS project (Community Access Schools Pilot Project) which is jointly funded by Queensland Housing and Education Queensland under the Community Renewal Program. This initiative seeks to enhance the educational services to children and their families and to provide ongoing support across communities. The focus of this program is to develop the connection and relationships between schools and communities. Eight schools have participated in the project including: **Garbutt State School, Cairns West State School, Goodna State School, Kingston College, Loganlea State Hight School, Parramatta State School and parts of Redbank State School and Kruger State School and Woodridge State High School**.

  Overall, the project has demonstrated success for both education based outcomes and community outcomes. As outlined in the Community Renewal Program Final Report of February 2002 these outcomes include:
  - Improved school attendance and retention rates
  - Increase in level of student’s safety
• Less vandalism to school property
• Fewer occurrences of juvenile offending
• Positive attitude changes for students and enhanced learning environment
• More interaction with students, the school and the community
• Increase use of school facilities by the community
• Greater openness in the community
• Resource sharing and partnerships between schools and communities

• Queensland Youth Parliament (run by YMCA) incorporates youth forums, development and community participation via a representative network in the role of a Member of Parliament lobbying for issues of concern for youth in the community.
• The “Natural High” alternative initiative run by the Alcohol and Drug Foundation organises sport and recreational activities for youth, including archery, canoeing, surfing and cycling for example.

The Effects on Policy Development

Despite the long term benefits of implementing developmental crime prevention initiatives there are still problems experienced by governments and non-government organizations alike. One of the major problems with Developmental Crime Prevention is that, generally speaking, such programs can be considerably difficult to evaluate. Measuring necessary social indicators can prove complex but it is important to understand the needs of those residing within our communities. In order for this to occur a greater collection of data and research is required. Enhanced data collection for key social factors may aid in the distribution of resources by identifying those people or groups of people who are making use of current services and those that are not. Effective allocation of resources and cost benefit returns for crime prevention are key government priorities that can be more effectively addressed with continued research and evaluation. As I mentioned earlier, getting public support on such initiatives are also problematic. There certainly seems to be an increasingly awareness of the benefits that social and developmental crime prevention in our communities. Unfortunately, the media can often play a major role in shaping the public’s understanding of such issues and therefore reinforcing the traditional view that crime prevention equals more police, greater powers and harsher punishments.

Conclusion

In summary, Governments and community groups are becoming more acutely aware of the need to act early in the life course to minimise risk factors for children and young people. The Queensland Government’s priority of “Putting Families First” and the establishment of the Community Engagement Division within Department of Premier and Cabinet in April 2001 emphasise the importance that our Government places in the development and well being of young people and adults and enhancing government and community networks. Implementing developmental crime prevention programs can help to target those at risk from the outset and provide assistance and resources to match. The positive feedback being received from many current programs and the need to provide on-going evaluation and research will see the future development of these important initiatives across Queensland and Australia. However, public support of these initiatives is required help produce suitable environments for ongoing implementation and evaluation. This can be achieved by increasing the public’s awareness of positive crime prevention strategies occurring in our communities and to highlight outcomes from any future evaluations of early intervention studies that occur throughout the country.