Social and Economic Consequences of Violent Crime and Property Crime
Adam Graycar

Two weeks ago, an extortionist threatened to poison Arnotts Biscuits if certain demands were not met. As the saga unfolded, the consequences of the crime started to spread right through the community.

An enormous amount of police time and money were expended - meetings, conferences, communications of all sorts in two states to start with. Police also announced substantial rewards for information.

Arnotts spent a lot of money taking out full page advertisements in newspapers around the country, and their shares dropped significantly in value. Senior company executives would have met for many hours to deal with this crime. They brought extortion experts in from overseas, and as the products were being withdrawn from supermarket shelves, production virtually ceased and hundreds of staff (mostly casual workers) were stood down. The loss of income to Arnotts, its shareholders and employees was very significant. It is likely that many of those stood down had no resources, and so there may have been approaches to welfare agencies for cash assistance.

If consumer confidence does not return to Arnotts some of these people may become social security beneficiaries.

Supermarket shelves were being emptied of Arnotts products. There is an expense to the supermarkets in having people both stock and unstock shelves, and working on tight margins the supermarkets would not be getting any turnover on a normally fast-moving range of products and no return on all those square metres of empty shelves. The warehouses supplying the supermarkets would have their business affected, as would the trucking companies and drivers responsible for delivery.

The peak bodies in the food industry and the grocery industry had emergency meetings, bringing people from around the country, and they discussed developing tamper-proof packaging for food. The development costs and the production costs would be quite staggering.

Other companies are reviewing their procedures and products, and insurance companies would be nervously working out how to deal with any insurance claims. Whatever the outcome, a lot of time and effort will be spent by the insurance companies and if there are payouts, the whole community will bear the cost.

Consumers may be wary of certain products in the short to medium term, and the industry may be destabilised.

For some time to come, a lot less money will be circulating in the economy, with all sorts of consequences for the well-being of many many people.
The extortion was apparently perpetrated because of a homicide about five years earlier. The family and friends of the victims of this homicide suffered a significant loss. All those who went to the funerals would have taken time off work, and many would have suffered some emotional distress. Some close relative may have suffered some longer-term stress disorder, with all the psychological and financial consequences, and possibly loss of earnings and health-related expenditure.

It is possible that relatives may have collected a life insurance payout, and apart from the cash the life insurance company incurred administrative expenses in processing the claims.

A substantial policy investigation would have taken place, many people would have been questioned, thus taking them away from other activities. People living nearby may have been afraid to go out - local retail trade may have suffered.

A person was arrested and convicted. The process of the trial involved monetary and personal costs. Whether the person convicted was the right person or not, the community has incurred costs to the correctional services system. If, as the extortionist suggests, he was not the right person, he would have endured loss of freedom as well.

The ramifications that flow from that are significant, but whichever way it ends up, there are costs to the family of the offender and the victims - psychological and financial, there are costs to the community, and the danger of increasing levels of fear, which set off another spiral of costs.

These two crimes are high profile and dramatic. Very few crimes have any public profile, or attract any publicity. But they impose a tremendous cost on individuals, families, the community and the economy. The costs are both monetary and non-monetary, and the consequences are many and far-reaching. Slides 1, 2, 3, (at end)

Building on work done at the AIC a few years ago, the Office of Law Enforcement Coordination has provided new estimates of the monetary costs of crime at somewhere in the order of $19 billion per year. Slide 4, (at end)

Violent crime has a monetary cost of approx. $1285 million. (Each homicide in Australia is estimated to cost around $900,000). We have about 350 homicides each year, the estimated total cost of which is $313 million. All non-fatal assaults (including sexual assaults) are also estimated to cost over $936 m. per year, while robbery costs $36 m.

The monetary value of property crime far exceeds that of violent crime, but assessing the non-monetary cost and consequences is much more difficult to do. It is notable however, that fraud is the biggest single cash item.

The burgeoning of white collar crime and computer crime demonstrate the new challenges facing us, and the pursuit of illegal financial gain against consumers, business, and government has very different (and no less threatening consequences) than street...
crime and domestic crime. One thing that should be noted however, and that is that the monetary value of the fraud for which Alan Bond was recently convicted is equal to that of all the household burglaries in Australia for 84 weeks.

My colleagues Peter Grabosky and Russell Smith (1996) have outlined the current and emerging risks of fraud. They identify the ramifications of globalisation, and the criminal impact on activities such as primary production and business generally. They show that technological change, especially in telecommunications and the movement of money leave many victims of crime. They argue that demographic change will create new targets for criminals who perpetrate fraud against elderly people and migration fraud, and they highlight that fraud against small business could shake the cohesive foundations of our society. I won’t go into fraud in financial services or in public administration, but the social and economic consequences are severe.

Social and economic consequences of major fraud may be a tendency for individuals to refrain from making investments and embarking upon new commercial ventures. Individuals may be reluctant to take up new technologies through fear of being victimised. It will be interesting to follow the development of electronic funds transfer, particularly electronic cash on the Internet. There is also the problem of computer and telecommunications crime leading to a decline in technological development owing to the fact that companies fear the possibility of being made liable for losses (e.g. Internet service providers and telecommunications carriers).

On a positive note, computer and telecommunications crime may lead to increased technological developments in the security industry as companies attempt to thwart the efforts of offenders by devising technological solutions to new crime problems.

Given the high costs of crime to the Australian community, crime prevention and control are quite properly becoming a priority. Crime is known to be a localised problem, and some scholars have recognised the role played by neighbourhoods for its prevention and control. Focussing on street crime, for the moment, there are three areas in which the consequences of crime may be felt, that policy makers can address.

1. The place where the crime takes place.

2. The fact of repeat victimisation: does victimisation once make somebody more likely to be a victim again?

3. The role of incivility in the community: i.e. does crime cause incivility or does incivility cause crime?

**Locality And Place**
There is a significant international literature that demonstrates that high or increasing crime levels makes communities decline. Those who can afford it move to other locations, there is a weaker attachment of residents to their neighbourhoods and house prices fall in value. In some American cities increased crime has led to the
downward spiral of rental values and residential property prices, and this has led to no-go areas, decline in business activity and loss of tax revenue. [A study in Boston found that a 5% drop in crime in the city would result in a $30 million increase in tax revenue for the city. (Taylor 1995).]

Small business can be a significant loser. The appearance and character of the neighbourhood business area on the main street are a visible sign of commercial activity to both passers through and residents. They are a barometer of the health of the local community. Bonnie Fisher did a small study in Columbus Ohio and found that crime, fear and disorder can negatively affect a neighbourhood business area, and that this has negative financial and operational consequences. Business owners were concerned about social and physical disorder, customer safety, vandalism, theft, burglary and attacks/robberies on staff and customers. (Fisher 1991). This could become the Australian story in some parts of some of our cities - indeed many could point to locations in Australian cities that negative effects on local businesses.

The effect which crime today has on people’s use of public places, and the impact this has on commercial life, economic growth and development is an important area for study. Apart from the economic consequences, social behaviour suffers, such as people changing their day to day activities to avoid the threat of crime. Changes to avoid physical contact with risky situations may, in fact increase fear, and lead to yet another spiral of fear and avoidance.

While we are fortunate to escape the fate of many North American cities, whose streets are virtually deserted after dark, I suspect that many Australian small businesses would be more prosperous if there were a more vibrant street life.

The most recent Australian data however, do not present a picture of fear and loathing in the urban environment, though people feel less safe after dark than during the day.

<table>
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<th>Persons Feeling Unsafe in Certain Situations</th>
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<tr>
<td>Walking or jogging locally</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travelling on public transport</td>
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</table>


This table gives us some indication of where some of our preventive energies might lie.

While violent crime has devastating consequences, it seems that our streets are not as unsafe as people might think they are, and our homes, are not as safe, as is generally believed. As the tables in the Statistical Profile (Mukherjee, & Carcach 1996) show,
almost two-thirds of homicides (64%) and of sexual assaults (62%) take place in residential locations, as do over one-third of assaults (36%). If, in fact we add in burglaries, considerably more crimes take place in our homes than on the streets, but the perception of fear is greater on the streets than in the home.

There are major policy and political ramifications of volume of crime, place of crime and perception of crime. There are many in our community who dismiss assault and abuse in the home as a private matter, and while gun advocates argue that the emphasis on gun reform ought to be to keep in check criminals with guns on the street, the majority of firearms homicides take place in the home. Of all firearms homicides in Australia, over three-quarters occur in a private residential setting and fewer than one-quarter occur in the street or some other public place. (Mukherjee, & Carcach 1996: 12-15). Dealing with violent crime requires innovation and long-term policy planning, and cross-sectoral implementation.

**Multiple Victimisation**
A small number of victims of property and violent crime become victims on multiple occasions. Some could argue that the consequences of crime in some instances are more crime, others could argue that some people are simply unlucky, careless, hapless or unguarded.

Data show that once burgled, people may be susceptible to a subsequent burglary, as the offender knows what is still in the house, knows how to get in, and knows that certain valuable items taken on a first visit will be replaced. In another area of property crime, telemarketing fraud has concentrated at times on multiple victims. Some organisations have “sucker lists” (Grabosky and Smith) and the white collar offender knows the vulnerability of victims.

In the area of violent crime, multiple victimisation is observable in a number of areas. According to the National Crime Victims Survey (ABS 1994) of those victims of non-sexual assaults or threats of violence, 56.8% experienced a single incident, 17.8% were victimised twice during the year, and 25.4% were victimised more than twice. Some people live a lifestyle that exposes them to risks - they may have a fondness for rough pubs, they may be vociferous when drunk or at sporting events and may pick fights and lose. Multiple victimisation is notable in two other areas - in both cases the consequence of the crime is more crime, and they are bullying and domestic violence.

In both of these cases, it is very important not to blame the victim, and to focus on protective behaviours and appropriate enforcement activities. Victims of bullying are perceived by offenders as weaklings and this often invites further attacks. Victims of domestic violence often find that the attack, and lack of powerful or authoritative response generates further attack, and thus with no break in the cycle, a revolving door syndrome takes hold.

There is a broader, community-wide aspect of multiple victimisation. Any geographic analysis will show that a small proportion of localities and/or addresses will generate a disproportionately large number of criminal incidents. Wesley Skogan has claimed that “probably the most important criminological insight of the
decade has been the discovery, in a very systematic fashion of repeat multiple victimisation ... it turns out that what appears to cause crime to pile up very heavily in high crime areas is to a certain extent because more people are victimised, but more so, because some people are victimised repeatedly.”  (NIJ 1996: 3)

From an analytical point of view Skogan suggests that one of the most important questions is why, in the same way that a small percentage of repeat offenders commit a larger proportion of crime, does a small percentage of repeat victims contribute a large percentage of victimisation? Finding out the answers will help focus our scarce resources where they can have the greatest impact.
Disorder And Incivility

Another important issue is the “Broken Windows” theme enunciated by Wilson and Kelling (1982). Briefly stated, they argued that indicators of incivility, such as broken windows, litter, abandoned motor vehicles, and general disrepair, communicate a message that no one is in control of a location and that no one cares - “one unrepaired broken window is a signal that no one cares, and so, breaking more windows costs nothing”. Wilson and Kelling’s theory is that the begging drunk or the bothersome lout, is the first broken window.

This in turn tends to invite behavioural incivility, which Albert Reiss (1985) once dubbed “soft crimes”, such as disturbing the peace, public drunkenness, loitering, and rowdyism, which reinforces the message that predatory criminals and louts can move in with little worry of being challenged. If the community cannot keep an offensive individual from annoying passersby, real villains could believe that they can have an open go.

It must be pointed out, however that 100 years ago inner city life was worse both in the level of predatory crime and disorderly behaviour (Grabosky, 1977; Skogan, 1990). Today, it is suggested there is less tolerance for disorder and interpersonal violence. “Over a long term urbanisation has had a settling, literally a civilising effect on the population involved”. (Skogan, 1990: 6)

It has been well documented that over the past three decades, in the worst areas in the USA, crime has shifted from being an effect of social and economic conditions to being a cause of those conditions as well (Schuerman and Kobrin 1986)

Australian streets are not nearly as disorderly as are some American streets, and we have to be very careful not to import inappropriate theory from other places. We do not have the burnt out areas that are characteristic of some North American cities, nor decayed and abandoned neighbourhoods and streets left to squatters. We do have some indicators however, discarded syringes, road signs that have been shot up, abandoned cars, litter and beer cans etc. These are a world away from irreversible decay, but can be addressed in programs as diverse as “Clean Up Australia”, Tidy Towns, and the Australian Violence Prevention Awards.

There is however, a genuine concern about incivility as a broad based response by many people in a competitive and uncertain environment. This incivility will not necessarily turn into crime, but proactive responses will strengthen our community, and be part of our crime prevention arsenal.

What types of responses can we mobilise to deal with incivility and disorder, and associated criminality? In essence, there are two approaches - a law enforcement input and a community mobilisation and economic development input. Both are very important, and I’ll spend a couple of moments on each, but neither will deal with the root causes of incivility.

Law Enforcement

One approach is to emphasise community policing, targeting and counteracting disorder and building confidence rather than focussing attention on crime fighting activities. Another policing strategy involves crackdowns on manifestations of disorder a more
aggressive form of policing, a “zero-tolerance approach” which has been credited, in part with the reduction of violent crime in large American cities like New York. There are some monumental ethical issues involved in balancing community perceptions and expectations, with individual rights.

A policing approach can only work if we ensure that our police are among the most trusted and highly skilled occupational groups in our community. The trust seems to be there in general, with a 1996 ABS survey reporting that 7 out of 10 people are satisfied with the police, with women and elderly people having higher satisfaction ratings. [70.4% stated that they were satisfied and 8.8% dissatisfied Females were more satisfied than males, and satisfaction levels increased with age. Of those aged 18-29, 63% were satisfied while those aged 65 and over registered an 82% satisfaction rate.] (Steering committee, 1997: 695).

Perceptions of what constituted a problem in their neighbourhood has speeding cars and dangerous noisy driving topping the list with 68.6% of respondents, followed by housebreaking at 61.6%. Next at 49.1% was motor vehicle theft followed by graffiti or vandalism 44.7%. Less than one in five saw family violence, sexual assault or other physical assault as a problem in their neighbourhood while one-third saw louts or gangs as a problem.

While levels of dissatisfaction with police were less than 10% in every category, the survey showed that 21.7% of respondents were dissatisfied with the way police dealt with public order problems. There is clearly a reaction to disorder and to the policing of disorder. Perhaps people tolerate it less and want firmer police action. Disorder is certainly an issue on the crime prevention and crime response agenda.

**Community Issues**
A second approach involves remobilising communities to deal with disorder and crime. This is very much on the agenda with Aboriginal communities. Community groups attempt to control disorder and crime through activities that make people aware of opportunities to join in community and crime prevention activities and develop support systems and role models. This needs to blend with local economic and physical development. Recognising that police alone cannot solve deep-seated problems that result in disorder and crime, local labour market programs, attacks on homelessness, control of alcohol sales and consumption in prescribed areas, emphasis on community mental health and designing out disorder through local planning regulations can all be utilised as appropriate.

**Investment**
But these will not attack the root causes. We need to consider other investment strategies. We know that the criminal justice system is a very expensive means of social control. We also know that it is far from being the most productive means of social control. In no way should this be interpreted as critical of the dedicated men and women who work in our criminal justice system.

But we now know that massive new investments in criminal justice will not produce commensurate reductions in crime. By all means, we should strive for continuous
improvement in our institutions of criminal justice, but we should also take a wider, more strategic approach to crime in our society.

Social institutions outside the criminal justice system may offer very attractive investment payoffs. In 1990 the senior business executives who comprise the (American) Committee for Economic Development noted that

“It would be hard to imagine a higher yield for a dollar of investment than that found in pre-school programs for at-risk children. Every dollar spent on early prevention and intervention can save $4.75 in the costs of remedial education, welfare, and crime further down the road” (Quoted in Bright, 1991: 83)

Social institutions other than those in the criminal justice system may offer more attractive investment prospects. For example:

**Health.** We know that a range of health factors contribute to the risk of offending, and that some of these are identifiable at or before birth. Such identification thus permits targeting of intervention programs. The following are arguably the first line of defence against crime.

- Maternal health generally
- Peri-natal screening for prospective mothers at risk of neglect and abuse
- Education programs for expectant parents.
- Reducing substance abuse by women of child bearing age.

**Education.** We know that poor school performers are at significantly higher risk of offending. It stands to reason, therefore, that

- pre-school enrichment programs for children at risk;
- remedial education programs for poor school performers; and
- truancy reduction programs generally

are likely to be good crime control investments.

Not only that, but they are likely to produce a variety of side benefits. All things being equal, the higher the aggregate level of educational achievement, the greater the labor force productivity, and the better our economic competitiveness. Why not aim for productive tax paying citizens rather than long term welfare recipients?

**Family support.** In 1990, The National Committee on Violence, which was based at the AIC, concluded that the family is the training ground for violence. By this the Committee meant that most aggressive behaviour is learned in the family, or at the very least, the family is crucial to mitigating the influence of external risk factors such as those which emanate from peer group, mass media, or substance abuse.

It stands to reason that programs to identify dysfunctional families and to provide them with support sufficient to permit them to function satisfactorily will help reduce
pressures on the criminal justice system when the offspring of those families reach the age of 15 or so. Early intervention programs such as the “Triple P Program” (Positive Parenting of Preschoolers Program) in Queensland, which helps parents to deal effectively with children who are exhibiting behavioural problems, is a good example.

The AIC has been advancing the cause of crime prevention in Australia for over twenty years. It is unfortunate that we are unable to quantify the contribution we have made to preventing crime and reducing the costs of criminal justice. Because, by my calculations, if we were to succeed in achieving a one-off saving of one-half of one percent of this year’s costs of crime and criminal justice in Australia, it would be worth $96 million dollars - there would be enough money in the bank to run the Australian Institute of Criminology for the next 29 years!

In addition to the above developmental interventions, we can also invest in situational crime prevention: the design of public space and the configuration of social settings in a manner which reduces criminal opportunities. How familiar are today’s architects and town planners with basic concepts of crime prevention through environmental design?

We can also mobilise communities against crime. Today when we ask the general public about crime, their instinctive response is to call for longer prison terms. Their frustration is understandable, and they are unlikely to be responsive to arguments based on cost-effectiveness. To be sure, the use of imprisonment will remain an important part of our response to crime, but we must strive to use it in a discriminating manner. What we should try to do is to enlist community resources and energies to reduce crime through arguably more important upstream intervention.

By identifying the consequences of crime, and encouraging community awareness of risk factors for crime, and by showing how collective action can neutralise these risk factors, we can invite community ownership of crime prevention initiatives, and thereby harness powers which simply don’t reside in agencies of government. By increasing citizen engagement in furtherance of crime prevention, we may well achieve goals which have thus far proven to be elusive. To the extent that we increase citizen competence and reduce dependence on government, we are indeed on the way to a more comfortable Australia.

The idea of criminology contributing to a reduction in crime is not as far-fetched as cynics would have us think. For criminology has come a long way in just a very short time. I am delighted to be here at a time when Australia is a recognised leader in crime control, rather than a slavish follower of overseas fashions. We should avoid this latter course, because despite the universality of the human condition, our problems will differ in some respects from those which afflict nations overseas.

Australian criminology has a worldwide reputation, and some of the more recent work such as Professor Ross Homel’s Surfer’s Paradise project and Professor John Braithwaite’s Re-Integrative Shaming Experiment, or RISE, as it is called, have received international recognition.
Work of this kind has the potential to reduce crime in Australia, and thereby to reduce the social and economic impact of crime. Many of these achievements are discussed in the Institute’s publication, *The Promise of Crime Prevention*, (Grabosky and James 1995) which reviews demonstrably successful crime prevention programs.

We are beginning to learn that even in Australia, solutions may be context-specific. Success or failure of a crime control program will depend on context: the capacity of the community in which it takes place, the quality of its leadership and institutions, etc.

A multifaceted cross-sectoral approach to dealing with the consequences of crime involves three (simultaneous) approaches

- means aimed at reducing incivility and disorder
- developing crime prevention programs
- structuring and enhancing a quality law enforcement and justice system

I want to focus only on the first, incivility and disorder, not because I don’t think that the others are unimportant, but because other speakers will deal eloquently with them.

Family policy needs to be highlighted, as the ingredients of poverty, suffering and abuse result in misery and a lack of a framework or reference for future stability. Traditional certainties have disappeared - the legitimacy of many of the old rules and old structures no longer hold. Everything is questioned, and parents and teachers do not have the answers.

These are difficult times. Lifetime employment security is a thing of the past. How many people can say with confidence that they will be in the same or better job a year from now? Of those who have children, how many can say with confidence that their children will be doing as well as they are?

Despite the protestations of some, there is no turning back. Conditions may be improving for some, but not for those who are at the highest risk of criminal offending. Stresses arising from changing relationships between men and women, between young people and adults, and the stresses of the transition to a global economy are real, and will impact enormously on every part of our community.

These stresses are borne disproportionately by that segment of the population which is at highest risk for aggressive behaviour: Young males, who are poor school performers, unskilled, and with a history of substance abuse. The levels of frustration and stress which they experience are arguably unprecedented in our lifetime.

We have a particular problem with Aboriginal youngsters. Civility is difficult to instil within a culture of exclusion, one in which education, health, housing and employment deficiencies make prospects bleak. Today an Aboriginal youngster is 21 times more likely to be incarcerated than a non-Aboriginal youngster.
If patterns stay the same, the looming demographic boom of Aboriginal teenagers will mean an explosion of Aboriginal youngsters in juvenile detention. We know that police lockups and juvenile detention centres are not the places to learn civility. This will not come by imposition from outside, but will only come within an environment of mutual support and respect in individual communities.

The Arnotts event hurt a lot of people and cost a lot of money, but most of the population walked past the empty supermarket shelves and simply said, “what a pity”. White collar crime has the potential to cause massive harms to the community. But we know that most people are not afraid of Arnotts extortioners or corporate crooks, but are afraid of hoons and yobbos, and afraid of being broken into and afraid of being attacked by a stranger.

Smart and trusted police are the key to order maintenance, but their job is impossible without community agreement on a threshold of safety which is met “when a failure of public civility is so unusual that it is noteworthy”. (Murray, 1994: 78). In addition to a threshold of safety, there must be a community commitment to the building and support of nurturing institutions that promote civility.

Behaviour is restrained either by morality or by the enforcement mechanisms of the state. Both have to be equally valued.

The agenda for developing civility as a pervasive and valued social goal is before us. There is a combination of family policy, school policy, crime prevention, health care, urban planning employment opportunities and better policing, all of which must come together make Australians feel safer and be safer.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


National Committee on Violence (1990) *Violence: Directions for Australia*, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra.


Slide 1  DIRECT CONSEQUENCES OF THE OFFENCE

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Slide 2  IMPACT ON SOCIETY

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Slide 3  COSTS TO OFFENDERS

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<td>(while in prison) and to offender on</td>
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Slide 4  Dollar costs of Crimes and Criminal Justice System

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