

## **Executive Summary**

### **Part One: Conceptual Framework for the Costing of Juvenile Justice**

1. A conceptual framework has been established for understanding the benefits of juvenile crime and delinquency avoidance. For analytical purposes, we distinguish between the costs attributable to the actual commission of juvenile offences and the costs attributable to crime prevention.

2. In assessing the costs of juvenile crime and the benefits of delinquency prevention programs we are aware that costs tend to be both immediate and budgetary while the majority of benefits are deferred. Because of the difficulties of quantifying, in precise terms, how much crime is committed and because of difficulties in differentiating juvenile justice administration from that of adults, figures presented in this report are estimates only. Most figures presented are for the financial year 1986-87.

### **Part Two A: Some Direct Costs of Crime**

1. We believe that \$150 million is a reasonable estimate of the costs to the community of car theft committed by juveniles.

2. Our estimate of the total cost of household burglaries committed by juveniles is \$90 million. This figure does not take into account the cost of burglaries of commercial premises.

3. Our estimate of the cost to local governments of vandalism committed by juveniles is about \$4 million annually. This is a highly conservative estimate, given that some damages may be regarded as normal wear-and-tear, and not identified as a result of vandalism.

4. Juvenile involvement in arson and vandalism (non-local government) costs the country \$35 million. With telephone vandalism, an additional cost is estimated to be \$11 million. For vandalism on public railway systems the cost is \$10.5 million.

5. Juveniles could be found responsible for shop-stealing to the value of \$300 million annually.

6. Because of the lack of reliable data, we have only estimated the cost of violent crime committed by juveniles in terms of in-patient bed day costs. The figure for this is \$1.2 million.

7. Our highly conservative estimate of the direct cost of some major categories of juvenile crime to Australia in 1986-87 is \$601.7 million.

## **Part Two B: Crime Prevention Costs**

1. A total of approximately \$500 million would be utilised in the administration of juvenile justice in Australia that is, on police, courts and juvenile corrections.
2. It is estimated that the police in Australia spend in the order of \$350 million on law and order matters relating to juvenile offenders.
3. The expenditure on children's courts for the country as a whole is approximately \$15 million, with perhaps an additional \$12 million for Legal Aid, prosecution and private legal costs. We believe that cautioning juveniles charged with various offences is anywhere between five and 10 times more economical than dealing with juveniles through the court processes. In a similar case, a Children's Court hearing costs police about half that of a trial by judge and jury.
4. The total Australian expenditure for detaining young offenders in juvenile institutions is approximately \$70 million.
5. Approximately \$12 million is spent by state government departments having responsibility for administering non-custodial sanctions imposed by the courts on young offenders. We also estimate that remanding or committing juveniles to institutions costs taxpayers some 12 or 13 times more per day than does a probation or community service order.
6. It is possible that of the total private security industry budget about one-quarter, or \$250 million, is spent on preventing juvenile crime.
7. When we add together the direct cost of juvenile offending and both private and public sector expenditures on juvenile crime prevention, we derive a figure of approximately \$1.5 billion. This is our estimate of the cost of juvenile crime to the community.

## **Part Three: Juvenile Crime Prevention Programs**

1. In considering juvenile crime prevention programs, it is important to recognise that a small minority of juveniles commit a large proportion of all juvenile crime.
2. Though there are some advantages in targeting prevention programs at high-risk individuals, there are also economic and political arguments for targeting at-risk communities and groups.
3. There is strong empirical evidence to suggest that pre-school based prevention strategies - such as pre-school education - reduce the potential for individuals to engage in delinquent behaviour. Components of these programs that appear to be successful include well-trained staff, a low staff to pupil ratio, good relations between staff and parents and the use of an effective curriculum model derived from principles of child development.

4. There is strong empirical evidence to suggest that school-based strategies focused on low-income schools can reduce delinquency levels. In particular, evaluation studies show that schools which are generally 'instructionally effective' are also effective in reducing the potential for individuals to engage in delinquency.

5. Parent-effectiveness programs (such as that of the Oregon Social Learning Center) which attempt to reverse child disruptive behaviour significantly reduce delinquent and anti-social behaviour patterns.

6. A variety of studies indicate that some wilderness/survival/adventure programs may be useful ways of dealing not only with youth deemed to be delinquent but also young people generally. However, the components of such programs have to be carefully considered given the available literature on what parts of these programs are, and are not, productive.

7. Similarly, with sport and recreation programs, evaluation studies show that while such programs can be promising, careful consideration has to be given to the targeted group of individuals, the sporting program itself, and the way in which the program is delivered.

8. The cost-effectiveness of job training and placement schemes in preventing delinquency has been demonstrated by research conducted on the United States Job Corp Program. A sophisticated advancement of this scheme is the French Crime Community Prevention Program. This scheme is wider than the Job Corp program and encompasses nationally and locally co-ordinated recreational and sporting activities as well as job placement. Though not as yet scientifically evaluated, the French Crime Prevention Scheme appears extremely promising. Victoria has recently introduced a Good Neighbour program based on the French model.

9. There is no current evidence that various forms of psychotherapy or counselling have any impact on delinquency. We strongly caution against employing expensive individual or group therapy or counselling programs for children identified as 'pre-delinquent'. In addition, easily implemented programs - such as drop-in centres - which often rely on some form of counselling - generally lack evidence to show their effectiveness.

10. Crime-prevention schemes which aim to remove the opportunity and make the costs of crime greater than the benefits appear most promising with certain categories of behaviour. Known as situational crime-prevention and employing the techniques of target-hardening and good environmental design, these techniques have already been shown to be effective in the areas of telephone vandalism. Their potential in other areas - reducing graffiti and vandalism on trains, house-breaking, vandalism on public housing and in other behaviours - is considerable.

## Conclusion

1. We have estimated that the direct cost of juvenile crime is at least \$610 million. This figure is a rough estimate only and does not include all categories of crime. The need for better costing and reporting of juvenile crime by state agencies is critical especially if juvenile prevention programs are to be successfully evaluated.

2. It is apparent that incarcerating young offenders is perhaps 12 times more expensive than releasing juvenile offenders under some form of non-custodial supervision. Both types of disposal are equally effective in terms of recidivism rates.

3. Though we have analysed conventional and experimental methods of both processing and preventing delinquency, we believe that a strong economic argument can be made for directing resources away from the criminal justice system and into social programs in order to prevent delinquent behaviour. By focusing on educational, health, housing and employment problems of the young and disadvantaged, it may well be possible to reduce our need to put increasing resources into the criminal justice system.

4. In confirming the above point, we note that our evaluation of strategies that prevent delinquency confirm the efficacy of pre-school, school and parent-effectiveness programs as effective ways of reducing delinquency.

5. Though other programs have not been evaluated so thoroughly as the strategies noted in point 4. above, there are grounds to believe that some wilderness/sporting/recreational programs may be effective in reducing delinquency. In addition, job placement and community programs targeted at juveniles (such as the French crime prevention scheme) appear promising.

6. Situational crime prevention strategies aimed at reducing the opportunities juveniles have for committing crime are cost-effective with certain categories of behaviour. This point is illustrated by the \$9 million reduction Telecom made in one year in its theft and vandalism to public telephone costs.

7. We deplore the lack of proper evaluations of juvenile prevention programs that marks Australian work in the juvenile delinquency field. Millions and millions of dollars have undoubtedly been wasted not through the lack of good intentions but by the lack of proper evaluation strategies. Programs are copied from one part of Australia to the other without any evidence that they are cost-effective. In future, government funding for prevention strategies should be conditional on those who promote such programs building in properly conducted evaluation strategies.