

Introduction

Purpose of the Project

This project has two major purposes. The first purpose is to provide an overview of the costs of juvenile justice in Australia. The second purpose is to assess, at least in a preliminary way, evidence relating to the benefits the citizens and governments of Australia receive from the various expenditures they make on the various components of the juvenile justice prevention and treatment system. Given these two purposes, an adequate conceptual foundation for examining juvenile costs is essential. This report consists of three parts. Part One presents a conceptual framework for examining costs. Part Two, using this framework, presents evidence on some of these costs for Australia (both of crime and crime prevention). Part Three examines the benefits of particular program interventions and is supported by some examples of International Program evaluations as summarised by David Williams, in Appendix C. Special emphasis has been given to overseas material owing to the paucity of data in the Australian research literature.

Without such a foundation any examination of the relative efficacy of major expenditure categories (for example, expenditures on police versus expenditures on the courts) or the relative worth of particular programs is impossible. Such a framework is also a precursor to any expansion, or re-organisation, of juvenile justice expenditure data if it is to be used to examine the costs and benefits of the Australian juvenile justice system.