Fear of Crime, and Fear Reduction Strategies

P N GRABOSKY*

Introduction

Fewer and fewer Australians remember the days when they could leave their homes unlocked at any time of the day or night without having to worry, and walk with complete nonchalance in almost any neighbourhood.[1] Today, fear of crime has become an important issue of public concern, a problem which detracts from the quality of life, and which adversely affects social and economic well being.

While the fear of crime expressed by some citizens is well-founded, other individuals are at less personal risk than they might believe. Their fear, however, is no less real.

Fear of crime, whether warranted or ill-founded, can be addressed by public policy. Governments may not be able to eliminate crime completely, but they can contribute to its reduction. They can also take steps to reduce public perceptions of insecurity.

The pages which follow will review what we know about fear of crime in Australia. We will then suggest a number of strategies for the reduction of fear which appear to have met with some success, either in Australia or overseas, and whose wider application in Australia may be worth considering.

What is fear of crime?

What do we mean by "fear of crime"? Attempts to measure or to explain fear of crime may be complicated by failure to distinguish between perception of general risk, fear of personal victimisation, concern about crime as a public policy issue and anxiety about life in general. Canadian researchers have also suggested the usefulness of separately investigating the salience of fear of crime as a personal concern versus the perceived extensiveness of areas thought to be dangerous.[2] Kelley notes that fear of crime is complex, in that some people may be afraid of particular types of crime, but not of other kinds of offence.[3] Moreover, some individuals may be fearful of crime in the home, but not in public.

Generalisations about the fear of crime, or comparisons of levels of fear over time or across jurisdictions may fail to take these differences into consideration. On the other

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hand, consistent findings relating to correlates of fear which persist despite these differences are, by definition, more robust. Levels of fear of crime in Australian neighbourhoods appear not to differ significantly from those prevailing in other western industrial democracies.

Explaining fear of crime in Australia

A number of factors have been associated with fear of crime, in Australia and elsewhere. Interpretation of those relationships which are observed, however, should always be done with caution.

Gender

One of the factors most consistently and strongly associated with fear of crime is gender.[4] Almost everywhere, females in general tend to be more fearful of crime than are men. Australia is no exception. Kelley found that women were much more fearful of being alone in their own home, and of walking in their neighbourhood at night, than were men.[5] Kelley's findings are particularly noteworthy in that they control for, or take into account, general anxiety and a number of other possible alternative factors.

Recent research in Queensland also revealed that females are consistently more fearful than men, both alone at home at night, and walking alone in one's neighbourhood.[6] Research in the United States confirms that women report significantly greater perceived risk and fear of crime than men, regardless of how fear of crime was measured.[7]

It is often noted that females tend to report greater levels of fear, despite the fact that males tend to be at greater risk of victimisation. This apparent paradox may perhaps be explained in part by the fact that those offences committed predominantly against women, such as sexual assault and violence in the family, are particularly likely to induce fear.[8] One might also add that for a variety of reasons, many relating to the perceived efficacy and appropriateness of the criminal justice system, these very offences have been much less likely to be called to the attention of police.

It might also be suggested that traditional sex roles in Australia have been learned in a manner which imparts in females a lesser degree of self-confidence and perceived autonomy than those roles learned by men. (For insight into the situation in the United Kingdom see Goodey.[9]) Women may also perceive their physical strength to be less than that of a potential attacker.

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4   Mugford, S, "Fear of Crime: Rational or Not?" (1984) 17 ANZ J Crim 267; Rossini, G, Victims of Crime: An Overview of Research and Policy (1988) Office of Crime Statistics, Adelaide; Gordon, M and Riger, S, The Female Fear (1988); Lamnek, S, "Fear of Victimization, Attitudes to the Police and Mass Media Reporting" (1991) in Kaiser, G, Kury, H, et al (eds), Victims and Criminal Justice at 637 and Keane, above n2.
5   Above n3 at 73.
6   Fear of Crime (1994) Queensland Criminal Justice Commission, Criminal Justice Research Paper Series 1, 2.
7   LaGrange, R L and Ferraro, K F, "Assessing Age and Gender Differences in Perceived Risk and Fear of Crime" (1989) 27(4) Criminology 697.
8   Braithwaite, J, Biles, D and Whitrod, R, "Fear of Crime in Australia" (1979) in Schneider, H J (ed), The Victim in International Perspective: Papers and Essays Given at the Third International Symposium on Victimology at 220–8.
9   Goodey, J, "Fear of Crime: What Can Children Tell Us?" (1994) 3(3) Int R Victimology 195.

Overseas researchers have suggested that females' experience with harassment of various kinds can contribute to fear of crime on their part. Stanko observes that the greater fear of crime expressed by some women may reflect their perceived risk of abuse at the hands of spouses or family members, as much as by strangers.[10] In the Netherlands, Junger tested the hypothesis that women are more fearful of criminal victimisation than men because of their frequent experiences of sexual harassment.[11] Findings from a small study of Dutch women suggested a strong relationship between fear of crime and sexual harassment experiences within the family. There was a weaker relationship between fear of crime and sexual harassment experiences outside the family. The fearful subjects scored high on factors which indicate they may be less competent to cope with potentially dangerous situations.

In Australia, Kelley reported that fear of crime is strongly associated with one's having received harassing, obscene, or threatening telephone calls.[12]

Age

It is generally assumed that the decline in physical resiliency which accompanies the ageing process would lead one to be more fearful of crime as one becomes older. Kelley found that older Australians were significantly more fearful of crime in their own home than were younger people.[13] Other studies, however, suggest that relationship between age and fear is more complex, and that the elderly may not be significantly more fearful.[14]

Indeed, Kelley[15] found that younger Australians are more fearful of violence in general than are the elderly, presumably because their lifestyle places them at relatively greater risk.[16]

Income

Kelley found that all else being equal, Australians with higher levels of education and income tended to be less fearful than poor people.[17] These findings are consistent with overseas research.[18] Queensland researchers also found that fear of crime is higher for low income persons.[19] They noted that "socioeconomic status has a strong influence on perceptions of individual safety".[20] This may reflect the fact that persons who are better off financially are able to afford better security, or simply that persons who are better off are less likely to associate with individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, who tend to be at greater risk of offending.

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10   Stanko, E A, "The Case of Fearful Women: Gender, Personal Safety and Fear of Crime" (1992) 4(1) *Women Crim Just* 117.
11   Junger, M, "Women's Experiences of Sexual Harassment: Some Implications for Their Fear of Crime" (1987) 27(4) *Brit J Crim* 358.
12   Above n3.
13   Ibid.
14   Above n6, see Gray, D and O'Connor, M, "Concern About and Fear of Crime in an Australian Rural Community" (1990) 23(4) *AANZ J Crim* 284.
15   Above n3.
16   Clarke has found that victimisation risk increases for all age groups with the frequency with which one spends time in public places, but that older people who go out are still at much lower risk of victimisation than are young people. See Clarke, R V, "Crime and the Elderly" (1990) 1(1) *J A'lasian Soc Victimology* 15.
17   Above n6.
18   Above n14 at 285.
19   Carcach, C, Frampton, P, Thomas, K and Cranich, M, "Explaining Fear of Crime in Queensland" (forthcoming) *J Quantitative Crim.*
20   Ibid.

Previous victimisation

Another factor often associated with fear of crime is previous experience as a crime victim, either directly, or vicariously through the experience of relatives, friends, or acquaintances. Kury, who analysed the 1989 International Crime Survey, found that victims in Australia and most other places surveyed reported a greater tendency to avoid certain places after nightfall than non-victims, and that respondents who had experienced multiple victimisations tended to express "stronger feelings of unsafeness".[21] It should hardly come as any surprise that the old adage "once bitten, twice shy" can explain some variation in fear of crime.

One should note, however, that these findings are not always consistent. For example, research in Queensland reported that previous victimisation may not be significant by itself.[22]

Kelley found that in Australia not all crimes have the same impact on their victims.[23] Perhaps surprisingly, victims of assault appeared no more fearful of being alone in their home than were non-victims. On the other hand, persons who had been the victim of burglary, mugging, car theft and particularly, obscene telephone calls tended to be significantly more fearful. Recent research in Queensland found that victims of domestic assault reported significantly greater fear of being out alone at night than did victims of non-domestic assault and property crime, whose reported levels of fear did not differ significantly from those of non-victims.[24]

Media exposure

Crime tends to be newsworthy. The Australian public appears to take an interest in crime news, and the supply of such news is abundant, especially around election time. Frequent exposure to news coverage of crime may lead one to overestimate the probability of personal victimisation, especially since the risk of becoming a victim of crime tends to be unequally distributed across Australian society.[25]

Overseas, Liska and Baccaglini concluded that the effect of newspaper coverage is complex, with some forms of coverage increasing fear and other forms of coverage decreasing fear, and that the effect of official crime rates on fear is mediated through the newspaper coverage of crime.[26]

Lamnek found in Germany that fear of crime tends to be related to media reporting of crime when the media user can identify with the location of the crime or the characteristics of the victim.[27]

Williams and Dickinson reported that in Britain, readers of tabloid newspapers with more sensational crime coverage reported higher levels of fear than readers of broadsheet newspapers, whose crime coverage was less predominant and less dramatic.[28]

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21   Kury, H, "The Victim's Experience and the Fear of Crime" (1994) Paper presented at the Eighth International Symposium on Victimology, Adelaide.

22   Above n19.

23   Above n3 at 73.

24   Above n6.

25   Because of differences in lifestyle and resources, some Australians are at much greater risk of becoming the victims of crime than are others.

26   Liska, A E and Baccaglini, W, "Feeling Safe by Comparison: Crime in the Newspapers" (1990) 37(3) *Social Problems* 360.

27   Lamnek, above n4.

28   Williams, P and Dickinson, J, "Fear of Crime: Read All About It? The Relationship Between Newspaper

Environmental considerations

Various physical and social aspects of one's neighbourhood tend to be related to fear of crime. Recent research in Queensland identified lack of neighbourhood cohesion, as represented by the feeling that neighbours tend not to help each other, as an important factor associated with fear of crime.[29] Kelley found that the presence of sociable neighbours helped reduce fear. He also found that persons living outside of metropolitan areas tend to report less fear of crime than do city dwellers.[30]

Other factors related to fear of crime may be collectively described as "incivilities". These may take the form of litter, graffiti, vandalism, or other aspects of the built environment which reflect a general state of disrepair. In addition, these factors may include the frequent presence of vagrants, or unruly gatherings of young males. These characteristics, individually but especially in combination, seem to suggest that the location in question is "out of control".[31] The message which these characteristics convey induces fear of crime in some, and is an invitation to crime by others.

Kelley reported that fear of crime is very much higher in those Australian neighbourhoods where it is common for unruly young people to congregate.[32] Queensland researchers also identified numerous indicia of incivility as associated with fear of crime. In addition to the prevalence of grafitti and vandalism, these include the presence of intoxicated persons and vagrants.[33]

Fear of crime can also be related to exterior site features of a location. Recent research on university campus security in the United States reported that fear of crime was highest in areas with refuge for potential offenders and low prospect of escape for potential victims.[34] Thus, the mere design of public places can contribute to feelings of security or fear.

Neighbourhood change

Fear of crime has also been found to be high in neighbourhoods experiencing unexpected increases in minority, elderly and youth populations.[35] Krannich, Berry and Greider found that communities with rapidly changing populations and related economic changes experienced heightened fear of crime, even where there was no apparent increase in criminal activity.[36] It stands to reason that the uncertainty which accompanies change may be reflected in fear of crime. The reassurance and peace of mind which accompanies a predictable and stable social setting can be jolted by the unexpected.

Crime Reporting and Fear of Crime" (1993) 33(1) *Brit J Crim* 33.

29   Above n19.
30   Above n3.
31   Wilson, J Q and Kelling, G, "Broken Windows" (1982) 19 March *Atlantic Monthly* 38; Skogan, W, *Disorder and Decline: Crime and the Spiral of Decay in American Neighborhoods* (1990), and Killias, M, "Vulnerability and Fear of Crime" (1991) in Kaiser, G, Kury, H and Albrecht, H J (eds), *Victims and Criminal Justice* at 617.
32   Above n3.
33   Above n19.
34   Fisher, B and Nasar, J L, "Fear of Crime in Relation to Three Exterior Site Features: Prospect, Refuge, and Escape" (1992) 24(1) *Environment and Behavior* 35.
35   Taylor, R B and Covington, J, "Community Structural Change and Fear of Crime" (1993) 40(3) *Social Problems* 374.
36   Krannich, R S, Berry, E H and Greider, T, "Fear of Crime in Rapidly Changing Rural Communities: A Longitudinal Analysis" (1989) 54 (2) *Rural Sociology* 195–212.

The factors listed above are not necessarily exhaustive. Other factors might contribute to fear of crime from time to time or from place to place. Moreover, they may interact with each other or with other factors, in a manner which may serve to enhance or to mitigate fear of crime. For example, it has been suggested that confidence in the police can be a mediating factor in the fear of crime.[37] It hardly need be suggested that the fear of crime and the difficult problem of crime itself are of such complexity that no one policy or program can be relied upon as a panacea.

The best available research in Australia identified females, persons living in areas where unruly young people tend to congregate, city dwellers and older Australians as significantly more insecure in their homes.[38] It should also be noted that these factors are not always of equal importance. The two which appear most consistent and significant are gender and perceived incivility in one's neighbourhood, particularly the presence of unruly young people.

We turn now to a discussion of some of the strategies for the reduction of fear which the above research suggests.

Solutions

Those who would design programs to reduce crime and the fear of crime should bear in mind that individuals differ widely in terms of their general anxiety and psychological resilience. Neighbourhoods too, differ extremely in a number of ways. Some of the factors associated with fear of crime are less amenable to policy intervention, and policies may be designed accordingly. Gender, an important factor associated with fear, does not lend itself to policy change. On the other hand, fear reduction initiatives can be designed specifically to target women.

In any event, policymakers should proceed with caution, as not only is there no single "magic bullet" for crime prevention and fear reduction, some crime prevention initiatives may actually create crime and generate more fear.[39]

Reducing incivility and disorder

To some extent, incivility may be in the eye of the beholder; one person's incivility is another's fun. But despite this element of subjectivity, the association between fear of crime and perceived concentration of rowdy youth in one's neighbourhood is one of the more consistent and striking findings to emerge from recent research on the fear of crime. This has profound policy implications.

Freedom of movement and freedom of association are important values in Australian society. When exercised to an extreme, however, these freedoms may conflict with what many Australians might regard as no less a fundamental freedom; the right to feel secure in one's own home, or in a public place.

The range of policy instruments which might be used to control street-level incivility ranges from the draconian to the creative and benign. While a more repressive society

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37   Bennett, T, "Confidence in the Police as a Mediating Factor in the Fear of Crime" (1994) 3(3) *Int'l R Victimology* 179.

38   See Kelley above n3 and Carcach above n19.

39   Grabosky, P N, "Counterproductive Crime Prevention" (1995) in Homel, R and Clarke, R (eds), *Crime Prevention Studies* Vol 5, and Skogan above n31 at 17.

might use such methods as curfews, quarantine areas, or corporal punishment, more moderate interventions may achieve significant fear reduction benefits in a less intrusive fashion.[40]

The concept of alcohol-free public places is one example. The designation of certain locations as dry areas will create places where drinkers are less likely to congregate, and, given the disinhibiting effect of alcohol, to express uncontrolled exuberance. Conversely, such designation will make a location more attractive to families and those averse to excessive forms of expression. For example, Ramsay reported on an English experiment in which public drinking was restricted in the streets and other public spaces of central Coventry and six other locations.[41] "Before" and "after" surveys of the public indicated a lessening fear of crime, a finding which suggests the importance of incivilities in shaping the public's fear of crime, and the success of public policy in reducing fear.

One can also design public places in a manner likely to discourage unruly gatherings. Youth, for example, are less likely to gather in any location in which classical music is audible. Planning and zoning restrictions may also be used to control behavioural manifestations of disorder. Areas or enterprises such as licensed premises or venues relating to the sex industry, which may attract a clientele with potential for incivility, may be kept segregated from public places suitable for family entertainment.

Street policing

Until about two decades ago, it was common in Australia for minor breaches of public decorum to attract the criminal sanction. Public drunkenness, vagrancy, prostitution, offensive language, and a variety of other minor misdemeanours were met with arrest. The traditional law enforcement response to unruly gatherings entailed selectively enforced prohibitions on loitering, or vesting police with the power to disperse people. From the mid 1970s Australian jurisdictions, for reasons of cost, ideology, or benevolent intent, began to regard incivility as a matter more appropriate for health or welfare authorities. Public drunkenness in particular came to be regarded as no longer appropriate to be dealt with by the criminal justice system.

Although the use of the criminal sanction to maintain civility has fallen from favour, there are those who have suggested that police control of vagrants, drunks, and rowdy youth can reduce fear of crime.[42]

Aside from the potential to generate ill feelings on the part of those on the receiving end of police directions, such powers may be resisted by civil liberties and human rights advocates, not least because they tend to be used most visibly against disadvantaged minorities. For this reason, coercive street-level powers would seem most appropriately employed not indiscriminately as a general strategy, but in those extreme circumstances which a wide cross-section of the community would regard as appropriate.

Moreover, although situationally effective, these "prohibitory instruments", designed to drive away incivility, may achieve little more than displacing loutishness from one location to another. A more positive approach could entail the creation of recreational set-

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40   Even more sinister are those societies (primarily those in which a small economic elite coexists with a large underclass) in which annoying youth are at risk of dying at the hands of volunteer patrols.

41   Ramsay, M, *Lagerland Lost? An Experiment in Keeping Drinkers Off The Streets in Central Coventry and Elsewhere* (1990) Crime Prevention Unit Paper 22, User Report No 199011 London, Home Office; and Ramsay, M, "A British Experiment in Curbing Incivilities and Fear of Crime" (1992) 2(2) *Security J* 120.

42   Box, S, Hale, C and Andrews, G, "Explaining Fear of Crime" (1988) 28(3) *Brit J Crim* 340; Carter, D L and Sapp, A D, "Police Response to Street People" (1993) 62(3) *FBI Law Enforcement Bull* 5.

tings and opportunities which would invite and permit a more constructive expression of youthful energy.

The proposal to organise "midnight basketball" competitions in the United States may have been made the object of ridicule by "law and order" conservatives, but one can appreciate the merit of channelling youthful energies into a good basketball match rather than the streetcorner harassment (or worse) of female (and other) passers-by. Alternative locations identifiable and attractive as recreational areas for youth may be designed expressly for that purpose.

In other circumstances, where unseemly congregations include drug users, the homeless, or the mentally ill, appropriate health, housing, or other support facilities might be made available.

Many indicia of disorder, from graffiti, to vandalism, to a general ambience of disrepair are amenable to public policy interventions requiring little imagination. These include design considerations, as well as the use of damage-resistant materials. Locations could be set aside for "street art" where the creative energies of potential graffitists may be channelled more constructively.[43] Suffice it to say with regard to any incident of vandalism or graffiti that the sooner it is rectified, the better.[44] Graffiti tends to attract more graffiti, and possibly worse. So does vandalism. Both create the impression in the minds of many citizens that the surroundings are out of control. Immediate rectification can contribute to the reduction of fear and crime.

It would appear that decisions regarding the best means of coping with incivility in its various manifestations are best left to local residents. Hardly a revolutionary proposal, this is the essence of community policing.

Police community relations

The conventional response to the problem of fear of crime is to increase the presence of police. Aside from being very costly, this approach may overlook the fact that fear of crime is not distributed evenly across people and places. Moreover, the mere presence of additional police is by no means certain to reduce crime or fear. For example, Bennett reported on a replication of the Houston (Texas) Citizen Contact Patrols program in the West Midlands and the Metropolitan Police Forces of the United Kingdom.[45] The program sought to provide a continuous police presence and to encourage proactive contacts with local residents. Although the program failed to reduce fear of crime, contact patrols were effective in increasing public confidence in the police.

Under the circumstances, there appears to be merit in two alternative approaches: one would target police in areas characterised by disproportionate crime or fear; the other would seek to "leverage" community resources to complement traditional law enforcement presence.

Moore and Trojanowicz reviewed a number of strategies employed by police agencies to reduce fear of crime.[46] They found that increased foot patrol reduced citizens' fears.

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43   Easteal, P and Wilson, P, *Preventing Crime on Transport* (1990) AIC.
44   Geason, S and Wilson, P, *Preventing Graffiti and Vandalism* (1990) AIC.
45   Bennett, T, "Getting Back in Touch" (1990) 6(3) *Policing* 510; and Bennett, T, "Effectiveness of A Police-Initiated Fear-Reducing Strategy" (1991) 31(1) *Brit J Crim* 1.
46   Moore, M H and Trojanowicz, R C, *Policing and the Fear of Crime* (1988) US Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice.

Some other programs that successfully reduced citizens' fears were a police community newsletter designed to give accurate crime information to citizens, a citizen contact program and a police community contact centre. One implication of both the foot patrol and fear reduction programs is that closer contact between citizens and police officers tends to reduce fear.[47]

It should be noted, however, that these innovations based primarily on enhancing direct police contact with the public, have not proven to be universally and consistently successful. In 1983–84, the Houston Police Department tested five strategies designed to reduce fear among citizens: crime victim recontact, newsletters, citizen contact patrol, police community stations and community organising.[48] Neither victim recontact nor the newsletter appeared to have any fear reduction effects. There was, however, some good news. The citizen contact patrol, the police community station and the community organising response team were all related to lower levels of fear of personal victimisation, reduced perceptions of crime and social disorder in the neighbourhood and improved evaluation of police service.

Davis and Daly reported on a community-based problem-oriented patrol unit in a particularly dangerous public housing complex in St Petersburg, Florida with the acronym "PRIDE" (Police and Residents Immobilising a Dangerous Environment).[49] A program evaluation reported improved perceptions of the police, decreased levels of fear, and improved perceptions of the quality of life in the local community.

The Baltimore Police Department implemented two community policing strategies for one year: foot patrol and "ombudsman policing", in which officers worked with community residents on identifying the most serious crime problems in the area and devising means of addressing those problems. A rigorous evaluation indicated that ombudsman policing, when practised with a full-time staff, produced highly significant improvements in public evaluations of police effectiveness and behaviour, reduced perceptions of disorder and awareness of victimisation in the areas, and increased feelings of safety.[50]

In Australia, programs like Home Secure and Safety Audit in Queensland[51] and Home Assist in South Australia[52] target vulnerable locations or particular groups who may be unusually fearful with advice and reassurance, as appropriate. A police-citizen contact program called "Country Town Policing" is being piloted in the Australian Capital Territory, and is currently undergoing evaluation.

More generally, firm assurances from the highest levels of government and law enforcement that violence against women in its various manifestations is criminal and will not be tolerated, may also serve to reduce fear.

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47   Trojanowicz, R and Bucqueroux, B, *Community Policing: A Contemporary Perspective* (1990).

48   Pate, A M, Wycoff, M A, Skogan, W G and Sherman, L W, *Reducing Fear of Crime in Houston and Newark: A Summary Report* (1986) Police Foundation, Washington, DC, and Brown, L and Wycoff, M A, "Policing Houston: Reducing Fear and Improving Service" (1987) 33(1) *Crime and Delinquency* 71.

49   Davis, G and Davis, N, "An Application of Community Policing Strategies: The PRIDE Patrol in St Petersburg" (1992) St Petersburg FL: St Petersburg Police Department.

50   Pate, A M and Annan, S O, *Baltimore Community Policing Experiment: Technical Report and Appendices* (1989) US Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice.

51   Above n6 at 101.

52   Doherty, B, "HomeAssist: A New Approach to House Security" (1992) in McKillop, S and Vernon, J (eds), *National Overview on Crime Prevention* at 247–58

Co-production of safety

Another general strategy for fear reduction may entail augmenting police resources with resources from the community. Ideally, organising neighbourhood residents in programs such as Neighbourhood Watch, can increase neighbourhood cohesiveness and provide re-assurance to individuals who may be fearful of crime.[53]

Fisher examined individual-level participation in two types of crime prevention pro-grams: block watch programs, and crime prevention seminars and workshops.[54] The pro-grams were implemented over four and a half years in eight neighbourhoods in seven cities in the United States beginning in 1982. Those who participated in block watch meetings experienced an increased sense of community, crime prevention efficacy, and perceptions of informal social control, and a decreased fear of crime. Those who partici-pated in crime prevention workshops or seminars did not experience these effects.

Norris and Kaniasty, in a small Kentucky study, investigated the influence of precau-tionary behaviour, including the use of security hardware and informal neighbourhood co-operation on subsequent criminal victimisation, fear of crime and psychological distress.[55] Precaution had no preventive effects on the occurrence of subsequent crimes. Use of neighbours was the only precaution not to increase fear of crime. The most promising strategy was protective neighbouring, but the promotion of citizen-initiated prevention ap-peared inadequate as a policy response to problems of crime and fear.

In a review of overseas research on Neighbourhood Watch, Rosenbaum found some evidence to suggest that citizen participation increases fear of crime, racial prejudice and other crime-related perceptions.[56] Further, he found little evidence that block/neighbour-hood meetings cause residents to engage in neighbourhood surveillance and other activi-ties to reduce crime opportunities.

Why might it be that community mobilisation along the lines of Neighbourhood Watch is not universally effective in preventing crime and reducing fear? Unfortunately, mobili-sation of community resources tends to be easiest in those communities which are already cohesive, and more difficult in those neighbourhoods, characterised by anonymity and high residential mobility, where they are most sorely needed. In addition, in some Neighbour-hood Watch settings, social interactions at meetings may increase rather than decrease fear.[57]

Other means of enlisting citizen support for crime prevention has shown some promise. The Netherlands appears to have met with some success in recruiting citizens to provide surveillance on public transport and in residential neighbourhoods.[58] Specially designated

53   Bennett, S, "Community Organisations and Crime" (1995) 537 *Annals of the American Academy of Politi-cal and Social Science* 72.

54   Fisher, B, "What Works: Block Watch Meetings or Crime Prevention Seminars?" (1993) 16(1) *J Crime and Just* 1.

55   Norris, F H and Kaniasty, K, "A Longitudinal Study of the Effects of Various Crime Prevention Strategies on Criminal Victimization, Fear of Crime, and Psychological Distress" (1992) 20(5) *Am J Com Psych* 625.

56   Rosenbaum, D, "The Theory and Research Behind Neighbourhood Watch: Is it a Sound Fear and Crime Reduction Strategy" (1987) 33(1) *Crime and Delinquency* 103, and Rosenbaum, D, "Critical Eye on Neighbourhood Watch; Does It Reduce Crime and Fear?" (1988) in Hope, T and Shaw, M (eds), *Commu-nities and Crime Reduction* at 126–46.

57   Miethe, T, "Fear and Withdrawal from Urban Life (1995) 539 *Annals of the American Academy of Politi-cal and Social Science* 14.

58   van Andel, H, "The Care of Public Transport in the Netherlands" (1992) in Clarke, R V (ed), *Situational*

wardens, primarily recruited from the ranks of the young unemployed, serve as safety, information and control officers in the public transport system. Although preliminary evaluation suggests no significant reduction of fear on the part of passengers, a noticeable decline in fare evasion was achieved. Volunteer groups such as the "Guardian Angels" may achieve temporary fear reduction, but their long term impact on crime and fear seems inconclusive.[59]

Telecommunications technology

One of the factors most closely associated with fear of crime is having been subject to threatening, offensive or obscene telephone calls. While years ago such calls may have been officially dismissed as relatively inconsequential or trivial, their relationship to fear of crime is such that they deserve serious consideration as a matter of public policy. Technologies now exist to discourage intrusive telephone calls. Caller ID, which indicates the telephone number of an incoming call, enables the recipient to identify the source of an intrusive call, and removes the cloak of anonymity previously enjoyed by a harassing caller.[60] Clarke reported that the availability of caller ID in New Jersey was associated with a significant decrease in the reported incidence of nuisance calls.[61]

Environmental design

Since the advent over two decades ago of crime prevention through environmental design,[62] there have been numerous attempts at crime prevention and fear reduction by modifying certain aspects of the built environment. Perhaps the most common of these is enhanced street lighting.

Ditton and others investigated the effects of improved street lighting on crime in two areas of Glasgow, Scotland.[63] Following the relighting campaign, feelings of safety for those outside at night improved substantially. Improvement was significantly greater for women than for respondents generally, and the number of pedestrians increased significantly following relighting.

Painter evaluated the impact of improved public lighting on crime, fear and community safety in three London boroughs.[64] Surveys of households and pedestrians before and after improvements were made found that crime, indecency and incivility were markedly reduced in the immediate period after relighting, and this effect persisted over the subsequent 12 month period. An immediate and striking finding was a reduction in fear of crime and an increase in feelings of personal safety.

Ramsey and Newton reviewed the impact of improvements to street lighting on both crime and fear in the United Kingdom.[65] They found that in general, lighting improve-

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      Crime Prevention: Successful Case Studies.

59   Above n43 at 20.

60   Civil libertarians might argue that caller ID constitutes an invasion of the caller's privacy. It would seem, however, that the recipient's privacy deserves no less protection.

61   Clarke, R V, "Deterring Obscene Phone Callers: The New Jersey Experience" (1992) in Clarke above n58 at 124–32.

62   Jeffery, C R, *Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design* (1971).

63   Ditton, J, et al, "Street Lighting and Crime: the Strathclyde Twin Site Study" (1992) Glasgow, Criminology Research Unit, Glasgow University 78, Appendix.

64   Painter, K, "The Impact of Street Lighting on Crime, Fear and Pedestrian Street Use" (1994) 5(3) *Security J* 116.

65   Ramsay, M and Newton, R, "The Effect of Better Street Lighting on Crime and Fear: A Review" (1991) Crime Prevention Unit Paper 29, United Kingdom Home Office.

ments were more likely to have a positive impact on fear of crime than on the incidence of crime itself. One exception to this was in localised "blackspots", in which lighting had been particularly inadequate. In these areas, crime and incivility are also amenable to reduction.

Vrij and Winkel conducted two studies in the Netherlands relating to the relationship between lighting of public places and fear of crime.[66] In the first study, subjects were asked about the safety of various locations in a Dutch town. Places identified as unsafe tended to be quiet, deserted and poorly lighted. The second study was an experiment with street lighting in an unsafe location. Results suggested that increases in the level of street lighting decreased fear.

Improved lighting of public places may thus reduce fear of crime. But this is not the only aspect of environmental design which can contribute to fear reduction. Poole examined crime and disorder in indoor shopping centres in four European countries.[67] He concluded that social interaction within the building and the standard by which it is managed were key factors in crime and disorder problems. The physical human presence of authority was the biggest factor in eliminating or lessening fear of crime. Also important were closed-circuit television systems, access to telephones, and psychological cues giving the impression of regular maintenance, such as the presence of fresh flowers. Poole recommended that entrance doors be designed on a human scale, and that window design in retail units permit easy visibility both into and out of stores.

Conclusion

Reducing the fear of crime, and crime itself, is a challenge faced by all Australians. The nature of crime is sufficiently complex that no one agency of government can assume sole responsibility for it. While some of the examples of promising strategies for fear reduction noted above were essentially police activities, others were related to the basic functions of local government, community welfare agencies and telecommunications authorities. Effective implementation of fear reduction programs will depend essentially on collaboration between a variety of relevant institutions.

Nevertheless, Australia's police services will remain the area of government which citizens who are fearful of and concerned about crime will look to first. Among the challenges faced by Australian police today is that of developing crime prevention and fear reduction programs, and to evaluate these programs rigorously and objectively. By discarding those programs which do not succeed, and by refining and expanding those which do, Australian police services can make an important contribution to crime prevention and fear reduction.

But as we have seen, many factors relating to crime prevention lie beyond the immediate purview of police. The greater degree of fear expressed by women can in time be reduced by broader public policies which provide them with equal economic opportunities, take violence against women seriously and reduce women's vulnerability to harassment.

Physical manifestations of the quality of neighbourhood life can be enhanced by concerted efforts by all levels of government, especially local governments. Here, such basic

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66   Vrij, A and Winkel, F, "Characteristics of the Built Environment and Fear of Crime: A Research Note On Interventions In Unsafe Locations" (1991) 12(2) *Deviant Behavior* 203.

67   Poole, R, *Safer Shopping: The Identification of Opportunities for Crime and Disorder in Covered Shopping Centres* (1991) Police Requirements Support Unit, United Kingdom Home Office.

considerations as litter control, repair of vandalism, improved lighting and design of public space can make significant contributions.

Here governments may foster the restoration of civility by financial incentives and inducements. Economic instruments which provide incentives for neighbourhood improvement may well pay for themselves in crime prevention savings. Low cost finance for the restoration of abandoned or dilapidated premises, or of run-down areas can be worth the investment, when traditional market forces operate to produce neighbourhood decline. Nor indeed can the task be left to governments alone. Individual Australians must bear significant responsibility for taking basic crime prevention precautions, including looking after their neighbours and caring for their neighbourhoods.

Notwithstanding their continuing role as entertainment, Australian news media have a responsibility to present balanced, objective reporting of crime and criminal justice issues. In a society which values a free press, it would be inappropriate to suggest that some form of sanctioning or censorship should be imposed on irresponsible fear-mongering. The best antidote for misinformation is more information, accurate and comprehensive. On the other hand, some limitation on the freedom to drink, congregate and behave uncivilly in public may be appropriate at certain places and times.

Programs designed for fear reduction should be carefully designed and implemented, and subjected to rigorous evaluation, to ensure that they in fact serve their purpose. Community surveys, such as those used regularly by a number of Australian police agencies as part of their community policing and performance measurement activities, are ideally suited for this task. Carefully refined measures of fear and sophisticated analysis of survey data will allow policymakers to move beyond the use of rhetoric to improve the quality of life in Australia.

Acknowledgments

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68   Above n6