

## Public safety/getting around safely

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### 1. Introduction

During this module, we will explore the issue of community safety, asking how safe you feel within your community, and what you could do to make your community a safer place to be. The group will look at examples of what other people are doing to improve the safety of their communities, both within Australia and overseas.

#### Discussion starter

- Are there views or opinions within the community, not represented in your group, that it would be beneficial to hear?
- Who would you like to invite to speak to your learning circle group?

### 2. Thinking about our community

Community means different things to different people. A community can be geographically based (like the place you live or identify with), it can form as a network of people with whom you associate (like a church, sporting club, or volunteer group), or it can be an idea of unity (such as ‘the Indigenous community’ or ‘the Australian community’).

#### Activity: ‘What I like about my community’

- Talk in pairs or as a whole group, taking equal time to respond to the question ‘What do I like about my community’?
- If you did this activity in pairs, each person could introduce their partner to the whole group, and summarise the answer they heard. Check with your partner if there’s anything you left out, or anything that they need to clarify.
- Someone scribe on paper/whiteboard. Draw two columns. In the left-hand column, list the ‘likes’. When everyone has reported, discuss your findings.
- For each item on the ‘likes’ list, ask: How did your community get that way? How does it stay that way? Write your ideas down in the right-hand column next to the relevant item. There might be lengthy discussion. If you can’t agree, write down some of the different ideas that have been coming up.

#### Discussion starter

- Did people mention any item more than once?
- Is there one ‘community’ where you live, or is it made up of a variety of

‘communities’?

### **3. Community safety**

Perception of crime is still a problem in NSW, with a new Productivity Commission report showing the state’s citizens feel less safe than most of their counterparts.

Concern about crime is one of a number of performance ‘glitches’ uncovered by the commission in its annual report card on state services.

The 2003 Report on Government Services also highlights flaws in the key service-delivery areas of health, education and community services ensuring the document will be hotly debated in the final weeks of the NSW election campaign.

It has already become a political football, with NSW ministers contesting some of the findings and the Howard Government using it to attack federal Labor over its policies.

On crime, the report notes that while nationally 91.3 per cent of adults felt ‘safe’ or ‘very safe’ at home alone during the day, only Western Australia at 87.2 per cent had a rate lower than NSW.

NSW also came second last in a study of adults who felt ‘safe’ or ‘very safe’ in their homes after dark, with similar results for safety perceptions on public transport and while walking or jogging after dark.

Last year the Premier, Bob Carr, acknowledged his concern over the public’s perception of crime by making the reduction of community fear a key performance indicator in the contract of the Police Commissioner, Ken Moroney.

However, the report makes clear that statistical comparisons among states are not always fair. For example, the ACT and Northern Territory do not have suburban train networks, so perceptions of public transport there differ from the rest of the country.

‘An important objective of police services is to “reassure the public” by ensuring that the community feels safe (within themselves and regarding their property) in public and private,’ the report states.

‘Perceptions of safety are reported here, although these perceptions may not reflect reported crime for many reasons: for example, reported crime may understate actual crime, under-reporting may vary across jurisdictions and many factors (including media reporting) may affect public perceptions of crime levels and safety.’

NSW citizens led the country in their perception of the prevalence of some specific crimes. In NSW, 78.4 per cent of people thought illegal drugs to be a ‘major problem’ or ‘somewhat a problem’ in their area, compared with 73.9 per cent nationally and a low of 63.4 per cent in the Northern Territory.

NSW continued to have the highest number of officers at the level of constable and senior constable, had the highest proportion of female staff (32.3 per cent) and the biggest drop in complaints against its officers.

But the report refers to an unpublished survey of community attitudes towards policing which shows that NSW citizens still harbour concerns about their constabulary.

The state was less inclined to profess satisfaction with police performance. NSW was also behind other states in terms of perception of police honesty.

How about public honesty? Just over 60 per cent of NSW respondents in the same poll admitted driving more than 10 km/h over the speed limit 'sometimes' within the last 12 months.

The Sydney Morning Herald 7 February 2003

Our community 'works' more than it 'doesn't work'. That's because people, processes and resources make it work, every day. Some of these people and processes may be visible, and some may be woven into the fabric of the community in such a way that they are taken for granted. If we can build on these, we can develop and strengthen the forces of public safety already at work within our community.

Crime prevention can work as an active partnership between government bodies (such as local councils, police, schools) and individuals, groups and businesses within the community. Let's look at what is happening within your community.

**Activity: Places I feel less safe**

- In groups of three or four, or as a whole group, discuss two places you feel less safe in your community. They may include places you otherwise enjoy, at different times of day.
- Draw up a table with four columns, (or use the table provided in [Additional Resources](#) at the end of this module).
- Someone write each person's comments in the first column (see example below).
- When everyone has spoken, go through the list column by column. Try to identify *specific details* involved in the issue, in which people or organisations may be involved or interested, and any other comments.
- If the activity was done in small groups, have someone report back to the whole group.

**Discussion starter**

- Were there many similarities within your group? Differences? How do you explain the differences?
- Is there anything you or the group would like to take action on? How will you do this?
- Did this exercise lead you to feel differently about your community?

**Activity: Photo display: our place**

The group is invited to participate in a photo display for next time you meet. This is an exercise which helps people remember—and celebrate—what they like about their place. It's also a chance to think about places where they feel less safe.

- Divide into small groups. Arrange to meet before the next session to take the photos.
- Take four photos each to show what you like about your community, and then two photos each to show a place where you feel less safe. (Exercise care and sensitivity. For example, if there's a car park where you feel less safe at night, it's best to take the photograph during the day. Don't place yourself in danger.)



there was no gang violence reported. Cairns was 30th out of an available list of 42 areas in terms of its reported rate of juvenile offending.

### **Impact of the media?**

Concerned by the media reports in the *Cairns Post*, the Australian Community Safety and Research Organisation (ACRO), decided to see what impact the newspaper stories were having. In their report, 'Missing the Mark' (1995) they found:

Although respondents felt crime in their suburb had generally not increased at an alarming rate and that crime in their suburb had not increased more than crime in the CBD (both accurate judgements) they also reported that they had a considerable fear of crime and that they were most concerned about youth crime. (p. 24)

Some people had said they thought there was a crime problem in their suburb. However, except for one victim of property crime, all other respondents said that there wasn't a problem in their own house or street, but that there was one 'over there'—pointing off in different directions. The authors of the report wrote:

One is left wondering where exactly the 'problem' exists. ... It is a reasonable conclusion that the recent media reporting of crime in these suburbs has indeed influenced residents' attitudes about crime and a resultant effect may be an increase in the fear of crime and an increase in the concern about youth crime. (p.25)

Quite possibly our own fear of crime is shaped by the way crime is represented in the media.

### **Activity: What's happening in your community?**

In the previous section, you looked at individual and group perceptions of community safety. Here are some ways you could test these perceptions against what is really happening in your community.

- Are there facts/figures on crime in the local community that your group could access?
- Who could you invite to speak to the group about levels of crime within the community?
- If particular groups are targeted within your community (as either offenders or victims of crime), consider inviting members of these groups to speak to your group.
- Collect newspaper stories about crime in your area. Are the crimes reported objectively? Whose views are being represented in the stories and whose are missing?

### **Discussion starter**

- How accurately does your sense of safety relate to what you know about the levels of crime within your community?
- How can we ensure that we do not develop an unrealistic perception of crime?
- What are some of the things you do or can do to help you feel safe?

## **4. An example of a safety audit: the Safe Women Liverpool Project**

A safety audit is a way for local communities to inspect an area that is perceived to be unsafe and to identify safety problems within that area. In this study we will look at the Safe Women Liverpool Project Safety Audit study conducted in the mid 1990s.

**Discussion starter**

- How widespread do you think is women’s fear of being mugged, robbed or raped in public places? Is this an issue in your community?

**What is a safety audit?**

A safety audit is a way of inspecting a place that is perceived to be unsafe. It involves walking around an area and documenting—through notes, photos or video—any impressions and factors that influence whether an area feels safe or unsafe. It can look at:

- lighting
- landscaping
- buildings
- potential hiding places
- toilets
- public telephones
- automatic teller machines
- levels of maintenance (for example, graffiti-free)
- signage
- how the space is used
- access, and
- level of available assistance.

**Who is involved in a safety audit?**

A safety audit can be done on your own or as a group. Involving ‘stakeholders’ in the area helps everyone to understand the problems more fully, and encourages a range of solutions and many different viewpoints. Participants in the safety audit should be as diverse as your community—for example, shopkeepers, people with disabilities, police, individuals from differing ages and cultural backgrounds, gays and lesbians, users of public transport, car drivers, pedestrians, young people, parents with children or carrying shopping, people with literacy difficulties, public transport personnel and local council workers.

**Liverpool Station Area Safety Audit**

There were 25 participants in this community safety audit, 12 women, 13 men. The audit area was divided into four sub-areas, with about six people allocated to each area.

**Organisations participating:**

- Police:** Liverpool Police Patrol  
South West Region Police  
NSW Police—Strategy & Review
- Liverpool City Council:** Landscape Architect  
Youth Development Officer  
Councillor
- Health:** Liverpool Community Health  
Drug & Alcohol Services  
HIV

	CityRail Westway Bus Co. Metrolink Bus Co.
<b>Housing:</b>	Department of Housing
<b>Community:</b>	Safe Women—Liverpool Project Women’s Resource Centre Liverpool Women’s Health Centre Outer Liverpool Community Services Liverpool/Fairfield Transport Development Project
<b>Businesses:</b>	Railway Hotel Scott St Methadone Clinic
<b>Media:</b>	Good Weekend Magazine (The Sydney Morning Herald)
<b>Other:</b>	University of NSW—School Town Planning

**A sample of issues noted in the audit:**

- ‘Centre of park feels OK, edges feel ominous because of darkness.’
- ‘Tennis lights strong, friendly voices from the courts made this area feel desirable.’
- ‘The narrow cattle chute into the kids playground without the tennis court lights would make me uneasy, too many nooks, crannies and hidey holes.’
- Hiding spots between phones and toilets were noted.
- Out-of-date alcohol free zone signs.
- Graffiti noted.
- ‘Video shop on George St very bright, plenty of people coming and going, browsing inside. This feels safe to me.’
- ‘Alleyways are extremely dark and fear provoking.’
- Paving in need of repair.
- ‘Bike shop ... has bright lighting. Shop has security bars inside the window allowing for good vision into shop.’
- ‘The first takeaway food shop is now closing. The next one a short distance from the first is open until 5 am. They report that things in this area hot up around 2 am with fighting etc ... I feel very unsafe in this area.’
- ‘As I walk through this area it feels disjointed. Large open spaces, some lit, others not. Traffic and people appear to go where they please. Broken things around the area makes me want to hurry through. When things are not working I think no-one cares. There’s too many things to try and work out all at the same time.’

**What sort of recommendations were made?**

Many recommendations were made about such matters as lighting, positioning of phones, fencing and graffiti removal. One of the issues that came out was that no-one was clearly responsible for the area—there were a number of authorities who had an interest, but there was no coordination.

**Some comments from the auditors**

‘The future of community safety is bright if the Liverpool Safe Women project is any indication. It is a classic example of what can be achieved by the community working together to create a safer environment for all.’

Dave Darcy, NSW Police

‘Safety is a sense of freedom.’

Sandra Sunjic from Drug & Alcohol Services

‘A safe community can only come from the combined efforts of residents, business, police and council.’

Alison Megarrity, Liverpool City Councillor

‘I would like to see Liverpool as a city where everyone, regardless of sex, age or other defining characteristics, can walk the streets without fear and in safety, at any time of the day or night.’

Richard Carbury from the Scott St Methadone Clinic

‘The safety audit was a healthy thing to do. For those of us who drive it was good to get out of our cars and offices to see what the real people are experiencing and then trying to see things through someone else’s eyes, to try and really experience what fear and safety concerns are about.’

Mark McPherson, HIV Services

#### **Activity: Holding your own safety audit**

- Is there an area in your community that would benefit from a safety audit? A ***Community Safety Audit Kit*** has been developed by the Glenorchy City Council, Tasmania (details for obtaining the kit are listed in the [Additional Resources](#) section at the end of this module).

## **5. Can good environmental design prevent crime?**

#### **Activity: Imagining a difference**

- Close your eyes for two minutes and in your imagination, go on a journey you regularly undertake—only this time, there will be many things on this journey which encourage you to feel safe and relaxed in your community. At the end of two minutes, open your eyes and share your experiences with the group.
- In your imagination, what was different? What did your imagined journey have more of? Less of?

The module *Setting the Scene* looked at crime prevention and some of the approaches to crime prevention. One of these approaches is crime prevention through environmental design. Crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) is based on the idea that some crimes are committed because the environment creates opportunities for crime. CPTED seeks to change the design or other aspects of an environment, thereby reducing opportunities for crime—for example, people usually feel safer walking down well-lit streets.

One of the most important aspects of the environmental design approach is that it is centred on the community—that is, the needs and experiences of residents of the community must form the basis of any effective design.

Without the views of those who are most affected by fear of crime, an untrue picture of the problem will be obtained. Without the expertise of those who must use potential crime sites on a daily basis, the planning process is incomplete.

*Working Guide for Planning and Designing Safer Urban Environments*, 1992, p. 3.

In Australia, the editor of the report from a Queensland workshop on crime prevention through environmental design, stated that the most effective approach is one which

seeks to understand the complex dynamics in the community and which finds a balance between physical changes and social interventions.

Wendy Sarkissian, *Safe as Houses*, 1996.

### An example from Toronto, Canada

In the early 1990s, people in the city of Toronto became concerned about the impact of the *fear* of crime on its citizens, especially women. Their experience was that that social housing projects, commercial establishments, and even neighbourhood parks were being used or enjoyed less because of the *fear* of increased crime. International studies suggested that this *fear* of crime could actually contribute to economic decline in downtown areas. This fear could be as destructive as the crime itself. Something needed to be done.

An approach was taken involving crime prevention through environmental design. The key was to trust people as experts in their own experience of getting about in their community—to trust their sense of where dangers lay. Researchers and planners found that often the design of places contributed greatly to people’s fear of crime.

This was not an approach that simply said that bad planning and design caused crime: it did not argue that ‘if you fix this or that then all crime would be solved’. But it did identify good practices and principles that made a location feel safer and friendlier.

#### Factors that enhanced safety and security in public spaces

The following table provides examples of the factors that were found to be important in the Toronto experience:

<b>Awareness of the environment</b>	
<b>Lighting</b>	‘Are you able to identify a face 15 metres away?’ ‘Do architects’ drawings ... take into account that the space will be used at night?’
<b>Sightlines</b>	‘Are sharp ‘blind’ corners avoided?’
<b>Movement Predictors</b> (predictable or unchangeable route or path that offers no choice to pedestrians, for example, pedestrian bridge)	Find alternatives, for example, safer pedestrian crossings instead of overpasses and underpasses. ‘Is lighting adequate and consistent, avoiding pools of shadow?’ Provide well-marked alternative well-lit and frequently travelled night route.
<b>Entrapment Spots</b> (spaces near movement predictors)	Can the entrapment spots be modified or eliminated?
<b>Visibility by others</b>	
<b>Isolation: Ear and Eye</b>	Important not to over-depend on video- cameras; aside from cost, will only help if there is a 24-hour attendant. Rely on informal surveillance (for example, people living close by with sightlines) and hardware such as well- signed telephones, emergency telephones or alarms.
<b>Land Use Mix</b>	One-use neighbourhoods (for example, industrial estate, dormitory suburbs) encourage crime because they are unused at particular times; by finding compatible land uses there is more community life

	and therefore more safety. But the development has to be in scale to fit in with the community, physically and socially.
<b>Activity Generators</b>	A street vendor can keep an eye on a through-route. So long as the use is complementary, the place is made secure by populating it.
<b>Sense of Ownership/Maintenance</b>	For example, is sexist, racist and homophobic graffiti promptly removed? Replace graffiti with murals.
<b>The ability to place yourself in your surroundings</b>	
<b>Signage and Other Information</b>	Exits, main routes, maps, recognisability, how close to safer places such as busy streets ...
<b>Overall Design</b>	Look for quality and beauty, legibility (obvious recognisability of a route or building), and unambiguous space (for example, often gaps between 'private' and 'public' space are left ambiguous, and become dead space).

*Working Guide for Planning and Designing Safer Urban Environments, 1992.*

#### Activity

- Spend 10 minutes as a group in a public place. Examine the area for the factors identified in the Toronto experience. Return and discuss how this area rates.

#### The Australian experience

Many local government bodies within Australia have taken an interest in the implications of good urban design in reducing crime.

The Leichhardt Municipality of Sydney doesn't have a particular crime problem, but through its Main Streets Program it is encouraging zonings which get people to use the streets, for example, for al fresco dining. In upgrading Glebe Point Road, large old poplars lining the streets are being replaced by native trees which have narrow trunks (so people can't hide behind them) and foliage above street lighting levels.

In 1998, then-Mayor Kris Cruden said: 'We are incorporating as much lighting as we can and being careful with the trees we plant so we don't create hiding places or interfere with sight-lines.' Early morning street-sweeping services have been re-introduced in and around main streets and restaurant strips to encourage civic pride. 'I think if people know an area is cared for they feel safer,' she says.

'What we are trying to do is encourage a community atmosphere. In the old days things happened on the streets. We are trying to bring that back with coffee shops and outdoor restaurants. Even though my daughter tells me the last thing Australia needs is another coffee shop when I look down Norton Street and Glebe Point Road (which are full of them) I don't see streets where people are afraid to be out at night'.

*Plan it Safe: A guide for making public places safer for women, 1998, p. 22.*

#### Reclaiming a public place

In January 1995 in Darlinghurst, Sydney, a lesbian named Mary was violently raped and assaulted. In response to this crime, local residents, businesses, South Sydney Council and community artists came together to form the Mary's Place Project. Mary's Place is Sydney's first space dedicated to eliminating hate-related violence.

Flood's Lane has been renamed Mary's Place and it has been landscaped and painted with vibrant street art. The project has used principles of environmental design for crime prevention, including putting in creative lighting, reconstructing fences and putting in mirrors to overcome blind spots.

The Mary's Place Project has been very important for many reasons. It has helped to raise community awareness about anti-lesbian and homophobic violence. It has also helped to encourage a community commitment to, and involvement in, reducing this violence and improving safety.

It also helps the community to reclaim the place and this may help with healing.

*Plan it Safe: A guide for making public places safer for women*, 1998, p. 24

### Activity

- Check your local council or shire to find out if there is a program or project involving better design for crime prevention. Bring along any brochures or reports, or invite a speaker.
- Critique this project using your knowledge of the local community. What has been/is positive? Is there anything else that needs to be included? Are the most vulnerable groups in the community being considered/consulted?
- If there is no such project being undertaken in your community, consider spending some time as a group discussing the environmental design of your community (or part of it). What groups would need to be consulted? Which body or government department might be interested in taking action on this?

## 6. Age and crime prevention

### Discussion starter

- Is any particular age group significant in your community as either offenders or victims of crime?
- What do you see as the major issues for the particular group/groups identified?
- Are there any programs within your community that are aimed at such a group or groups?

In this section, we will look at two age groups: young people and the elderly.

### Public safety and young people

**Give youth fair go - judge.**

**Teens portrayed unfairly as generation of delinquents,  
Chief Justice says**

Young people in WA needed more public space where they could go to enjoy themselves, WA's top judge said yesterday.

Chief Justice David Malcolm, speaking at the WA Children's Summit at the University of Notre Dame, said young people were often portrayed unfairly as a generation of delinquents.

Children's justice, health, education and protection were among the issues discussed at the one-day summit, which was organised by Liberal MLC and Opposition children's spokeswoman Barbara Scott.

Justice Malcolm said WA young people spent most of their leisure time with friends or in groups, which meant they attracted attention and were particularly visible to security officers and police.

'Minor offences committed by the group tend to be noticed and reported much more readily than other forms of offences,' Justice Malcolm said.

He said there was a widely held—but inaccurate—public perception in WA that young people were generally delinquent and that many of them were involved in violent crime. Juvenile offending attracted disproportionate media and public attention.

'In the context of juvenile crime, most offences are relatively minor in nature,' Justice Malcolm said. 'Few young offenders become serious or repeat offenders.'

There was a shortage of suitable places for young people to gather.

Between 1990 and 2000 the number of individuals and offences dealt with by the Children's Court had declined. This was largely due to the introduction of the formal cautioning system and referral to juvenile justice teams, he said.

Burglary and theft offences were the most common offences dealt with by the court, with one in four receiving custodial sentences.

While the Children's Court and Juvenile Justice Teams had achieved some success, they could not address all the root causes of crime. The criminal justice system was heavily focused on the offender.

'Few, if any, resources, have been directed to assist at a grass roots level in addressing what is one of the most significant factors in the causes of juvenile crime, that is, the dysfunctional or disordered family,' Justice Malcolm said.

He lamented the loss of the state government advisory committee on young offenders—disbanded in 1993—which he said demonstrated many viable approaches to community based juvenile crime prevention. Simple detention of juveniles reinforced the development of criminal careers.

Justice Malcolm said any program aimed at reducing youth crime needed an understanding of youth culture. Approaches should deal with all problems facing children and teenagers as well as their families in a coordinated and integrated manner.

'Governments need to be more sensitive to youth rather than seeing them as a marginalised group from the outset,' he said.

*The West Australian* 26 October 2002.

Based on decades of local and international experience and research, it can be said that most crimes committed by young people tend to be:

- non-violent (in fact, most young people have major concerns about their own physical safety)
- opportunistic (that is, not planned)
- related to boredom and lack of access to recreational and social activities
- limited to one or two acts of a non-serious kind, usually not taken any further
- aggravated (that is, tends to encourage the young person to more serious crimes) if the official intervention is insensitive or disproportionate.

**Discussion starter**

- Does this research accord with your own observations or personal experience?
- Imagine that a close teenage relative is caught red-handed shoplifting at the local mall. It seemed out of character, but the child’s parents don’t want to be complacent. They ask your advice. Keeping the factors listed above in mind, and your own moral code and practice, what advice would you give these parents?

**Causes of crime amongst youth**

Research reveals a number of factors that increase the risk of a young person offending. Examples of these risk factors include:

<b>Risk Factor</b>	<b>Specific example of risk</b>
1. Family	Parental criminality Poor parental supervision Harsh, neglectful, erratic discipline Low family income/isolation
2. School	Lack of commitment to school (including truancy) Disruptive behaviour (including bullying) Low achievement School disorganisation Exclusion from school
3. Community	Community disorganisation Opportunities for crime Availability of drugs High child densities
4. Individual/peer	Temperament Alienation/lack of social commitment Early involvement in problem behaviour Friends involved in anti-social behaviour High proportion of unsupervised time spent with friends
5. Early adulthood	No qualifications or skills No work experience Unemployment/low income No advice/support Homelessness

**Activity**

- Divide into small groups of equal numbers. Each group takes one of the risk factors (family, school, community, individual/peer and early

adulthood), so that each group covers a different risk factor.

- Looking at the list for your risk factor (above), identify any that may apply to your local community. Record your responses in a table such as the example below.
- Brainstorm specific community responses or support that could reduce the risk of young people offending and what people you might need to involve.
- Report your findings to the group.

**Sample table**

RISK FACTOR:

Example of risk which might apply in your community	Some preventive measures, community responses or support	Who you might involve

**Discussion starter**

- Do you agree with any of the recommended responses from each group? Which ones?
- Which recommended responses do you think are the most important?
- Of these, which require least and most community resources? Which require least and most federal, state and government resources?
- What steps might be taken to begin implementing some of these suggestions?

**Public safety and older people**

Research conducted with older people has indicated that, although older people are the group least likely to become victims of crime, many older people live with a high degree of fear and anxiety<sup>1</sup>.

This fear can become so overwhelming that older people become isolated in their homes, too fearful to venture out, and [they] secure their homes to such an extent that access by the emergency services is prevented.

Sandra Woodbridge, *Partnerships in Crime Prevention*, 1998, p.23.

**Crime Prevention programs with older people**

The following are examples of some of the crime prevention programs for older people.

**Crime Information and Prevention for the Elderly, South Australia**

In 1995, the Elderly Citizens Homes of SA, a retirement accommodation and care services organisation, introduced the above program to help older people reduce their level of fear and increase their understanding of public safety. A project officer works with the elderly residents, discussing:

- issues to do with crime
- reducing opportunities for crime
- the justice system
- basic security measures and personal safety advice.<sup>2</sup>

### **Elder Abuse Prevention Program, Western Australia**

This program aimed to reduce the incidence of elder abuse through:

- increased community awareness of the issues related to elder abuse
- the development of a set of guidelines for community service providers
- early recognition of risk factors and action to defuse potential abusive situations
- re-education and support for abusers to terminate their abusive behaviour
- provision of community support and education to relieve the burden of the caring role.<sup>3</sup>

### **Glenorchy City Crime Prevention Strategy, Tasmania**

This project involved crime prevention strategies that were adopted in response to growing concern in the Glenorchy community about crime. Both short- and long-term factors that contribute to crime and fear of crime were addressed, with older people being a particular focus of the project. Strategies adopted included:

- development of a greater sense of public ownership and belonging in parks, reserves and public amenities
- the redesign of the local bus interchange
- a sponsored sensor light scheme for people who are fearful for their safety at home
- a street youth worker and youth resource centre
- strategies to ensure future developments meet crime prevention standards.<sup>4</sup>

## **7. Public transport and crime prevention**

### **Activity**

Stand up and form a line from the person who most uses public transport to the person who least uses public transport.

- Talk over the reasons for your usage level with the person next to you.
- Hear a range of comments from the group. For example, ask a person at the beginning and end of the line, and someone in the middle.
- Is public transport use evenly spread, or is your group concentrated at one end? Do people have particular times they do and don't travel on public transport? Talk it over.

### **Discussion starter**

- What are your impressions of public transport?
- Try to summarise the group's impressions in a statement. (If the group wants to, arrange to send the statement on to your local public transport authority for its information.)
- What would need to change for your use of public transport to increase?

## **Research into safety and public transport**

### **Out of session activity**

- Take a trip on a form of public transport in your area, noting down your impressions and reflections about safety. Bring the report back to the group next time you meet.

Most planners around the world recognise that public transport tends to be popular when it is:

- frequent (services every 10 minutes)
- perceived as safe (for example, regular presence of trained staff)
- comfortable and attractive (that is, no graffiti, ripped furnishings signifying lack of care)
- affordable.

Enthusiasm for public transport tends to drop off when these factors are diminished or absent. It appears that fear of crime on public transport can seriously contribute to the decline in its use.

As part of a study on fear of crime, Charles Sturt University's Centre for Cultural Risk Research conducted a transport study in 1998. It found that teenagers had the greatest fear of crime on public transport, while their parents had significant fears for their children when travelling at night, particularly at deserted bus-stops and stations, as well as on trains. Older people avoided public transport at night. All felt that train travel was less safe than bus travel. All argued for significantly more uniformed security people on trains, and re-staffing of trains at night.

Teenagers had different responses according to gender:

- Female teenagers were fearful of the 'unpredictable stranger', being frightened particularly of sexual and physical assault. All ages of men were suspect, because teenage women felt subject to continuous sexual harassment (especially on trains), ranging from looks, through to touching and actual assault. Avoidance strategies included travelling in groups.
- Male teenagers did not so much fear the 'unpredictable stranger' so much as identify groups who bully.

(Source: *Fear of Crime, Volume 2, 1998.*)

Research into safety and fear of crime suggests that:

- The majority of people describe travel by public transport as safe or very safe by day.
- People feel much less safe after dark.
- Women, the elderly and people of identifiable ethnic appearance tend to express greater concern about their personal safety at night.
- Young men tend to feel vulnerable to other young people, especially when travelling alone. Young men fear being mugged or attacked, and young women fear being sexually harassed or assaulted.
- People tend to feel more secure in the country than in urban settings.
- Isolation or absence of staff or other passengers can significantly increase fear of crime; too few people around can encourage robberies and vandalism.
- Presence of drunks or potentially violent people increases concern.
- Older people can feel concerned about groups of young people.
- Walking or waiting in badly lit areas increases anxiety.
- A well cared for travelling environment, including waiting facilities, can increase confidence.
- Public transport staff themselves have anxieties similar to their passengers; low level harassment can be an accumulative strain.
- Improving public transport needs to be approached with the whole journey in mind. Bus stops, railway platforms, associated car parks, the few streets away from railway stations and bus stops, are all important parts of the public transport event, and influence the decision to take public transport.

#### Discussion starter

- Are these findings relevant to your community?

- What helps you to feel safe on public transport?
- What steps could be taken to improve the level of safety or sense of safety on public transport within your community?
- Does the group want to provide this information to public transport providers or other relevant bodies in your community?

## **Crime prevention programs**

Below are two examples of public transport crime prevention programs in Australia.

### **Entertainment Victoria**

This program was a community-based initiative, using bands and other forms of entertainment to reduce the opportunity for crime and fear of crime on public transport. Council, community volunteers, young people and local police are involved in the project. The number of people using public transport has increased, and families and older people are more represented.

### **Not just trains and buses, NSW**

Blacktown Youth Services Association undertook this project with funding from the Juvenile Crime Prevention Division of the Attorney-General's Department. The project focused on areas where young people congregated, including train stations, bus interchanges and surrounding areas. It worked to address the causes of crime committed by young people and to reduce the level of community concern surrounding juvenile crime.

## **8. Public safety and gender**

Research shows that experience of crime is not gender neutral. Women report feeling more afraid of crime in public places than do men. Where both men and women report feeling a fear of crime, it is usually of different types of crimes.

The Safe Women Project identified the following reasons for this difference:

- Crime is gendered (that is, sexual harassment and sexual assault are predominantly perpetrated by men against women).
- Many women have past experience of physical violence.
- Police and judiciary sometimes respond poorly to women's reports of violence: many women have reported that some police acted as though they did not believe them. Some women reported that they felt some police did not take them seriously, or that the police tried to blame the woman. Many women from non-English speaking backgrounds and Aboriginal women have reported receiving racist and discriminatory responses.
- Knowledge of violent incidents spreads through community networks: sometimes members of the community know more about the actual incidence of violence in the community than shows up in the statistics. In Port Hedland, Western Australia, people in the community knew and spoke about rapes and assaults that had occurred, although these incidents were not necessarily reported to the police.
- The media tend to over-emphasise violent crime.
- Few women perceive themselves as physically strong and capable of self-defence.

### **Activity**

- Divide into two smaller groups—one for men, one for women.
- Why do you fear crime?
- What sort of crime do you feel most apprehensive about?

- Identify places where you experience any fear of crime.
- Meet and share your findings.

**Discussion starter**

- What were the major differences between men and women?
- If someone was developing a crime prevention program for your community, what would they need to know about the different feelings and perceptions of men and women?
- If a crime prevention program for your community focused primarily on women’s needs (working on the assumption that if a community is made safer for women, it is made safer for everyone), would this be sufficient?

**Wind-up**

The last part of each learning circle session is an opportunity to reflect on what has been learnt, to evaluate how the session has gone, and to allocate any tasks the group agrees need to be done before the next session. You might find it useful to sum up your discussion under the following headings:

**Difficult points**

- Are there any areas where you need more information? You might like to invite a guest speaker or find more information from an expert group or government department. Don’t forget local libraries, community groups and the Internet.
- Briefly summarise those areas where you have agreed to disagree. This will identify minority views as still being valid.

**Decisions**

- Is there anything that the whole group has decided about your discussion?
- Is there anything you would like to do differently next time?
- Did you achieve what you had hoped?
- Is there any other action you want to take? This might include contacting your local council or politicians about an issue the group thinks important, or it might be sharing a meal, or watching a video.

**Finally**

- Remember to collect articles for a local media file.

**Additional Resources**

**Places I feel less safe**

Place where I feel less safe	Specific details of concern	People, organisations who might be involved or interested	Notes, comments, other...


## More Information

### COMMUNITY SAFETY IN PUBLIC SPACES

City of Greater Dandenong (Vic),  
*Safety matters : City of Greater Dandenong community safety site*  
<http://www.greaterdandenong.com/safety/>

Crime Prevention Victoria 2001, *Local safety survey 2001*  
 Available at <http://www.crimeprevention.vic.gov.au/>

Crime Prevention Victoria 2000, *Multicultural perspectives of crime and safety study*  
 Available at <http://www.crimeprevention.vic.gov.au/>

Gordon, C, Turner, N, Dussuyer, I and Knight, R 2002, *Women's experience of crime and safety in Victoria*  
 Available at <http://www.crimeprevention.gov.au/>

Isnard, Adrienne 2002. *Townsville safety audits 1997–2000*. Paper to Crime Prevention Conference, Sydney 2002.  
<http://www.aic.gov.au/conferences/crimpre/isnard.html>

*Local crime prevention plans*  
[http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/cpd.nsf/pages/homepage5\\_cpplans](http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/cpd.nsf/pages/homepage5_cpplans)  
 Full text of many crime prevention and community safety plans developed by local governments in New South Wales

National Campaign Against Violence and Crime and the National Anti-Crime Strategy 1998, *Fear of crime*, summary document and two volumes outlining the literature review and the fieldwork research. Available at the National Crime Prevention website:  
<http://www.crimeprevention.gov.au/>

Northern Territory Office of Crime Prevention 2003, *Guide for community crime prevention partnerships* (2003)  
<http://www.nt.gov.au/justice/ocp/docs/guide.pdf>

*Safe women project : plan it safe* (1998)  
[http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/swp/swp.nsf/pages/swp\\_toc](http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/swp/swp.nsf/pages/swp_toc)  
 Practical educational kit comprising a range of strategies and options to promote safer public spaces for women.

White, R 2001, *Hanging out: negotiating young people's use of public space*  
 Available from <http://www.crimeprevention.gov.au/>

White, R 1998, *Public spaces for young people: a guide to creative projects and positive strategies*  
 Available at <http://www.crimeprevention.gov.au/>

## **PUBLIC TRANSPORT SAFETY**

City of Unley (SA), *Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design project*

Educational materials aimed at developers, landscapers, residents, business owners, and owners of public space were developed as part of this project, available from

<http://www.unley.sa.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=347>

Crime Reduction (UK), *Public transport toolkit*

<http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk/toolkits/pt00.htm>

Department for Transport (UK) 1999, *Young people and crime on public transport*

Available at <http://www.dft.gov.uk/>

Department for Transport (UK) 2001, *Crime and disorder on public transport*

Available at <http://www.dft.gov.uk/>

New South Wales Attorney-General's Department 2000, *New South Wales Government policy statement and guidelines for the establishment and implementation of closed circuit television (CCTV) in public places*

[http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/cpd.nsf/pages/cctv\\_index](http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/cpd.nsf/pages/cctv_index)

*Safer communities: strategic directions in urban planning* (1998)

Papers from the conference organised by the Australian Institute of Criminology and Victorian Community Council Against Violence.

<http://www.aic.gov.au/conferences/urban/>

Sarkissian Associates Planners and ACT Planning and Land Management 2000, *ACT crime prevention and urban design resource manual*

[http://www.actpla.act.gov.au/publications/crime\\_prevention/ResManual.pdf](http://www.actpla.act.gov.au/publications/crime_prevention/ResManual.pdf)

South Australia Attorney-General's Department, Crime Prevention Unit, *Safety on public transport project*

[http://www.cpu.sa.gov.au/sa\\_sopt.htm](http://www.cpu.sa.gov.au/sa_sopt.htm)

Wilson, D and Sutton, A 2004, *Open street CCTV in Australia*

<http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/tandi2/tandi271.html>

## **Notes**

1 For example see Marianne James and Adam Graycar, *Preventing Crime Against Older Australians*, Australian Institute of Criminology, 2000.

2 *Violence Prevention in Practice*, Australian Institute of Criminology Research and Public Policy Series, 1996.

3 *Fear of Crime: Volume 1*, Centre for Cultural Risk Research, Charles Sturt University, 1998.

4 For an overview of the project see <http://aic.gov.au/publications/rpp/03>. Other crime prevention and community safety projects are contained in the Tasmanian Crime Prevention and Community Safety Directory, available from the Department of Police and Public Safety, Tasmania, at <http://www.police.tas.gov.au>.

5 *Violence Prevention in Practice*, Australian Institute of Criminology Research and Public Policy Series, 1996.

6 *Fear of Crime: Volume 1*, Centre for Cultural Risk Research, Charles Sturt University, 1998, p.221.

7 From interview with ex-resident of Port Hedland.