The Ghost of Crime Prevention Future

Peter Homel
Research Manager
Crime Reduction and Review
Sydney University Institute of Criminology
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Australia’s national research and knowledge centre on crime and justice
What do we know already?

- Growing evidence to suggest that well-planned and sustained crime prevention work significantly contributes to:
  - Reduced crime and victimisation
  - Improved community safety
  - The achievement of safe, secure, vibrant and economically viable communities
  - Reduced criminal justice costs (both economic and social) and enhanced social and human capital
Basic approaches to crime prevention

**Social or structural**

- Commonly directed at underlying social and economic causes of crime
- Includes action to improve housing, health, education and community cohesion through community development measures
- Focused on long-term prevention and frequently led by human services sector

**Environmental**

- Seeks to change the specific characteristics of the environment that cause criminal events
- Includes measure to reduce criminal opportunities and offender motivation, and to increase risk
- Often focused on crime reduction and will be criminal justice led
What goes wrong with crime prevention work?

- A lack of leadership and imagination
- An emphasis on good intentions ahead of evidence and good practice
- Inadequate and inappropriate sustainable resources
- An over-emphasis on programs rather than enduring social and civil institutions (the “bolt-on” effect)
- The absence of a skilled and professional crime prevention workforce
- An inability to “scale-up” from project to ongoing work
Conditions for effective crime prevention

- A belief in the possibility of prevention
- A practical grasp of crime prevention theory
- Clear goals and vision directly linked to strategies
- Strong and consistent leadership and supportive structures
- A capacity to manage collaborative multi-agency action
- A willingness to work with responsive governance processes
- Commitment to evidence based practice and measurement
- Effective communication processes designed to promote engagement and sustainability
Australia’s crime prevention experience so far

- some impressive successes
- fragmented initiatives
- ad hoc coordination
- misdirected and unfocused activity
- inappropriately and poorly resourced
Are we improving?
Factors likely to influence future crime in Australia

- Developments in technology
- Patterns of alcohol consumption
- Social exclusion
- Demographic change
- Need for investment in early intervention
- Attitudes towards violence
- Family breakdown
- Media portrayal of crime
International trends
ICPC survey findings 2010:
1. Crime prevention policies are no longer limited to reducing rates of crime, but also aim to improve the quality of community life and our ability to live together.
2. Although considerable progress has occurred, prevention policies are still marginalised within the broader scope of public safety policies.
ICPC International Report findings

- Growth in the shared culture of prevention
- Increased access to tools to assist implementation
- Increased professional training & knowledge sharing
- Evaluation techniques more diversified & specialised
- Key success elements are better understood:
  - Need for trust between populations & institutions
  - Non-violent conflict resolution techniques spreading
  - Ongoing community engagement & involvement
ICPC report recommendations

- Safety and prevention strategies must constitute public policies in and of themselves and not be annexed to other policies
- Evaluation processes contribute to the improvement and adaptation of implemented projects and strategies by identifying the most effective and promising practices
- Regional and local agencies need sustainable and institutionalised financial resources and real powers of management
- Professional cultures are required to integrate methodologies and know-how that are prevention specific
Some possible issues for Australia

- Continuing efforts for violence reduction
- Improving safety for Indigenous Australians
- Community responses to organised crime
- Preventing technology enabled crime
- Further efforts to reduce reoffending
- Increased focus on evidence based practices and strategies
- Strengthening professional crime prevention skill
- Promoting community cohesion and inclusiveness
- A greater focus on early intervention