

Community Safety and Crime Prevention in Local Government Fact Sheet

Crime prevention and community safety projects are internationally recognised approaches to reducing crime, promoting community safety, promoting social cohesion and providing a platform for community and economic development (AIC 2012). Fairfield City Council has a long-standing commitment to community safety and crime prevention, having established the Crime Prevention & Community Safety Program in 1998. Central to the success of the Program has been the strong partnerships that have been formed with a range of stakeholders including government and nongovernment agencies, Police, businesses and residents. The diverse and complex nature of crime requires a collaborative, integrative approach to crime prevention (Hemel 2004).

Fairfield City Council is committed to ensuring our City is a safe community and has taken an active role in community safety and crime prevention developing projects, initiatives and education resources addressing resident concerns.

What is Community Safety and Crime Prevention?

A range of strategies must be used to reduce the incidence of crime as no strategy individually can effectively address all the factors that influence crime. The following is the range of crime prevention strategies:

- Early intervention/developmental - this strategy is based around the provision of support at critical times in social, physical and mental development to prevent later offending
- Community development - this strategy is based around a combination of programs aimed at building up communities to be able to address their own social problems
- Situational/environmental - based around the improvement of the physical environment in which people live and reducing the opportunity of crime through effective urban design and planning
- Law enforcement - involves investigating and arresting offenders to prevent repeat offending and deter potential offenders.

Community safety is more than just the level of crime; it is also about how safe people feel in their community, a feeling that can be influenced by many factors. To

create a safer environment for people to work, live and play in, all members of the community must work together.

Role of Local Government

Traditionally, the community has relied on the police and the criminal justice system to prevent and reduce the incidence of crime in the community. While they do a great job, much of their work deals with crime after it has occurred, rather than preventing it. For effective crime prevention, we have to work towards intervening before a crime is committed.

The role of local government in the community allows it to play a vital role in crime prevention. Today, local government is much more than just providing basic services - it is about creating vibrant and liveable communities. Through reduced crime and a reduced fear of crime, people feel safer in their own community and subsequently, have a greater quality of life.

Major factors contribute to a fear of crime including personally experiencing crime; being socio-economically disadvantaged and encountering conditions in the neighbourhood that are the result of crime such as graffiti, vandalism and litter; or the ongoing presence of people intoxicated by drugs or alcohol.

These conditions can encourage people to participate in crime, increasing the cost to Council to deal with graffiti, vandalism and other criminal activities. Other people may become less inclined to be out in their neighbourhood and participate in community life. Fewer people in the streets means less natural surveillance and can lead to further increases in crime.

For local government to succeed in creating vibrant communities, it must create areas where crime is low and a high sense of trust and ownership of the neighbourhood is maintained among residents