

TRYING TO MAKE THE EVIDENCE FIT

LOCAL CRIME PREVENTION PLANNING

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<http://www.aic.gov.au/conferences/2005-cp/>

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Introductory Considerations

I stand before you ...

“Crime prevention is widely misunderstood”
(Sherman, Farrington, Welsh and McKenzie, 2002: 3)

Nothing works '70s

‘Evidence’ is disputed:

- Kirkholt

‘Evidence’ is dismissed
(and then ‘discovered’):

- Glueck’s longitudinal study

Low levels of reporting
of crime critical to
planning 15% of sexual
assaults reported



PUZZLED

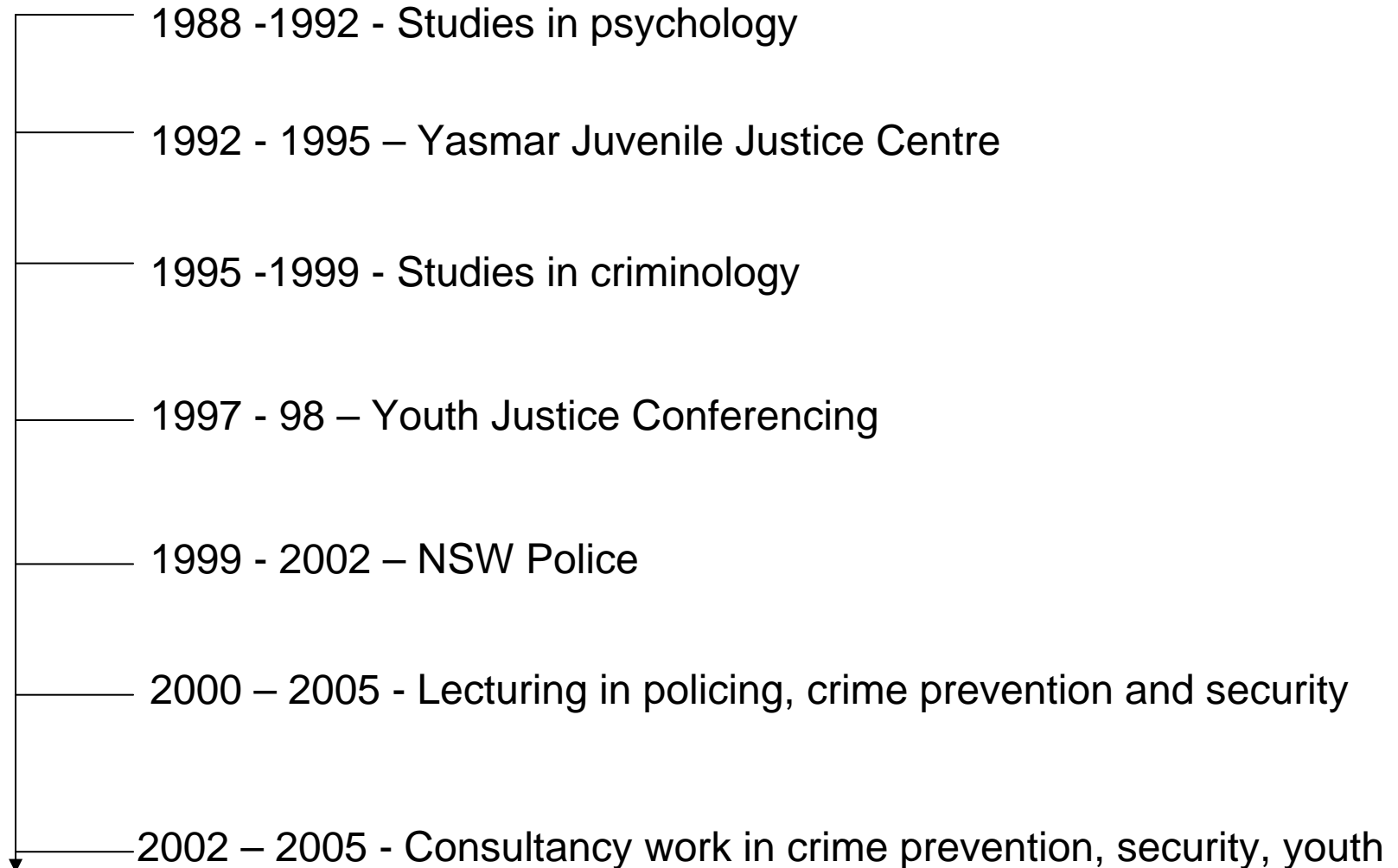
Prison Works '90s

‘Evidence’ is not static:

- 70% / 30% in 1994
- 30% / 70% in 2005

Paucity of evaluations
with so much left unknown –
less than 10%; few of which
approach the ‘gold’ standard
(Straton, et al 2002)

My Personal Journey



Goals of Presentation

- Consider implications for local crime prevention planning in NSW through reviewing our work on the Wellington (NSW) Crime Prevention Plan
- Link these considerations with evidence-based policy (and practice) debates more broadly
- Advocate for local ownership of crime prevention, despite paucity of evidence

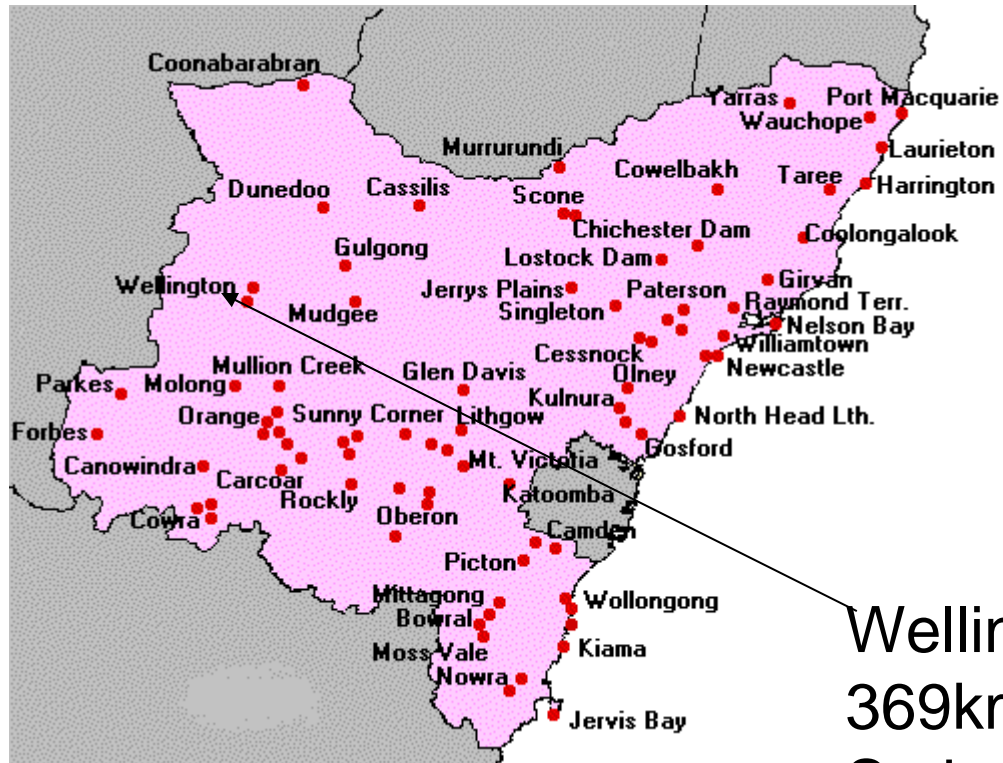
Wellington Crime Prevention Plan 2004-2007

Some Observations

A Guiding Voice

- “ ... we ... need to be aware of the **possible tension between local democratic control (however defined) and the goal of social inclusion.** The danger of ‘punitive populism’ invading community safety at the local level needs to be acknowledged. **Community safety partnerships may have the potential to encourage a stronger and more participative civil society; however, they may also encourage a ‘defended exclusivity’ among communities”**
(Hughes, 2002: 133)

Where is Wellington?



Wellington -
369km north-west of
Sydney

Some Background

- Wellington LGA 4076 square kms
- 8,239 residents in 2001 Census (57% live in Wellington town)
- Population growth of -0.36%
- 17% of the population ATSI (55% of whom are under 19 years of age)
- 10% unemployment; 33% earn less than \$200 per week
- 3.1 times state average of young mothers
- Important Aboriginal sites – Wiradjuri first people
- Council – small and falling economic base; very limited capacity (no CPO or the like)

Local Crime Data

- The rate of assault, sexual offences (particularly sexual assault), theft (particularly break and enter dwelling), arson, malicious damage to property, weapons offences, breach AVO and bail conditions and other offences in Wellington LGA are between 1.5 and 3 times the State average
- Persistent drug problems (significant heroin use)

Crime Prevention Plan

- Initial plan developed (1999); rejected due to heavy policing focus and absence of community consultation
- Six months provided to develop the plan
- Widespread consultation (satellite towns, regional coordination group, Aboriginal community members and organisations, young people, snr citizens, business development group, licensees, police, court user's group, govt services, local media, council / councillors, etc.)

Crime Prevention Strategies

Tackling the Causes of Crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Men's group• Program for 'at-risk' young people• Parenting program (satellite town)
Making Locations Crime Resistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improvements to street lighting in park and main street• Engraving program (satellite town)• Licensing accord
Increase the Capacity and Resources within the Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Co-located youth service• Family contact centre• Family support worker• Emergency accommodation
Increase the Response of the CJS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Integrated domestic violence response• Reporting of crime initiative• Police liaison with satellite towns

Key Approaches

- Inclusive – widespread consultation
- Educative – provide advice throughout; plan's preamble explains reasons for crime and prevention approaches
- Problem-solving – town meeting action plans; link to funding; initiate responses immediately
- Reflexive – living plan; not static
- Capacity – avoid duplication; community ownership (not just Council)

Key Challenges / Flaws

- Over 12 months for endorsement – momentum lost
- Cynicism and capacity
- Local politics and division
- White Commodore brigade
- Linking to regional planning
- Shared understanding of crime prevention tenets
- Impact of small number of 'serious' offenders
- Prison – impact unknown

Outcomes ?

- Crime prevention – possibly none as determined by crime statistics
- Enhanced capacity - possibly
- Better understanding (by the community and of the community) – maybe
- Greater harmony – unlikely, but possible (flag, blockade, consultation)
- Further services – hopefully
- Improved democracy – would be nice
- More responsive criminal justice system
- Less law and order rhetoric - possibly

Local Crime Prevention Planning (in NSW)

Some Thoughts

Rationale for Local Crime Prevention Planning

- Local solutions for local problems
- Local government effective lead agency, given knowledge of local conditions and problems
- Local negotiation necessary due to problems with crime data
- Local ownership necessary for local participation – our problem / their problem
- State and Commonwealth governments too remote (despite ‘control’ of major ‘causes’ of crime)

NSW Legislative Council Hansard 1998

LOCAL CRIME PREVENTION PLANNING

The Hon. J. W. SHAW: Positive action on crime prevention is occurring through liaison between local councils, local communities and State governments. The response from councils has been so positive that this initiative has proved to be one of the most significant crime prevention planning exercises ever undertaken in New South Wales to target street crime.

Prior to the legislation introduced last year, the law did not allow for or facilitate the preparation of crime prevention plans by local councils with the assistance of the State Government. In the past, crime prevention has usually been limited to ad hoc community education, through public information campaigns and the Neighbourhood Watch scheme. While those activities served a purpose, obviously more work was required to bring together community groups, business leaders, police and Department of Community Services workers to fight crime.

The Safer Communities Development Fund has allocated more than \$2 million to support over 40 community-based crime prevention initiatives across the State.

Local Crime Prevention Planning in NSW – Potted History

Early 1990s	Small number of local councils (i.e. 4 plans, 3 CPOs, 19 Committees from 138 surveyed) involved in crime prevention
1995	NSW Crime Prevention Division established in NSW Attorney General's Department
1997	<i>Children (Protection and Parental Responsibility) Act 1997</i> gazetted – Part 4: to work towards a safer environment by fostering community involvement in the development of local crime prevention plans prepared on the initiative of local government councils (with the assistance, at the request of the councils, of the Attorney General) for measures to be taken within their areas to reduce crime
1999 / 2000	Standing Committee Inquiry into Crime Prevention through Social Support endorses importance of local govt. in crime prevention
2001	Review of the CPPR Act – increased participation of local councils in crime prevention planning (36 plans, 25 CPOs, 47 committees)
2004/ 05	AIC Review of Local Crime Prevention Planning – results pending

Key Recommendations of 2001 Review

- Of the 33 recommendations, the following are perhaps most significant:
 - Retain councils as lead agency
 - Seed funding for smaller councils
 - Increase funding available more broadly
 - Improve support and development of CPOs and local crime prevention committees

Determining the Effectiveness of Local Crime Prevention Planning

How do we conceptualise local crime prevention planning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Do we see crime prevention simply as about social engineering or is it potentially democratising?” (Cunneen, 2001: 19)
What ‘evidence’ do we seek based on this perspective?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation, relationships, capacity or crime data?
Is the current ‘evidence’ sufficient?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime data is notoriously problematic
Have we invested sufficiently (time and money) to draw meaningful conclusions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little in the way of a govt response to the 2001 review; less than \$2m annually for funding; limited local evaluations of any standard
Is ‘evidence’ enough or do other factors matter more?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never just about the ‘evidence’ – political variables (tough on crime, electoral cycles, perceptions, etc.)

A Reminder – It Ain't Just About Evidence



- \$164.5 million capital expenditure for the NSW Department of Corrective Services 05/06
- \$257.7 million until 09/10 for 1000 new beds (including Mid-West Correctional Facility in Wellington)
- \$1.5 million (03/04) Safer Communities Development Fund – local crime prevention

Is community involvement in crime prevention inherently good?

- If so, we shouldn't allow it to be reduced just to a series technical processes.
- Crime prevention is inherently ideological. We should strive to find more detailed evidence if we believe that there are social goods derived from community ownership / involvement.
- The complexity of evaluating local crime prevention planning requires ever more complex evaluation tools and approaches, which we rarely invest the time or money into assessing.
- Place these decisions within a socio-political context and not reduced to simply, (flawed) technical considerations.

Concluding Remarks

- Evidence-based policy is a given
- However,
 - let us make sure that local crime prevention planning is given sufficient support before determining effectiveness
 - let us remember the goal of including communities and the merits of participation
 - let us not overstate the ‘evidence’ and remember that no ‘evidence’ can be considered ‘detached, value free and neutral’ (Marston and Watts, 2003: 157)

- “It should not be assumed that evidence-based approaches to crime control offer a guarantee of success in dealing with crime. They can fail because the crime problem to which they are addressed was misdiagnosed; because the research on which they were based was flawed or incomplete; because we failed to intervene in the way we intended; because our intervention program failed to alter the things we were trying to alter; or because it altered them (or other things) in unexpected ways” (Weatherburn, 2004: 38)

Thank You

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