Closed Circuit Television in Public Places - Basic Considerations for Local Government
Developed by Garner Clancey October 2007

Many local governments have or are considering installing closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras in public areas as a crime prevention initiative. There are many issues that should be considered in great detail before embarking on such a course of action. A small number are considered here.

Effectiveness of CCTV Public Places in Preventing Crime

There continues to be considerable debate regarding the effectiveness of CCTV in preventing crime in public places. The authors of a comprehensive Australian study stated that:

> "The effectiveness of CCTV as a crime prevention tool is questionable. From this research it appears CCTV is effective at *detecting* violent crime and/or may result in increased reporting as opposed to *preventing* any type of crime".[1]

Welsh and Farrington, in contrast, found some positive benefits of CCTV systems. They undertook a meta-analysis of 19 CCTV evaluations and 13 improved street lighting evaluations conducted in both the UK and the US. The settings varied covering city centres, residential / public housing, car parks and public transportation. In relation to the impact of CCTV and street lighting in these locations, they were able to conclude that:

> "with the exception of CCTV in residential / public housing (only one study), all of the settings in which either CCTV or improved street-lighting schemes could be evaluated showed desirable effects on crime... In city centres, improved street lighting was more effective than CCTV".[2]

Clearly, these two studies alone do not reflect a detailed literature review and cannot be taken to represent existing research findings. However, they do reflect the potential diversity of findings emanating from the empirical literature. Deciphering this research is important to determining whether CCTV is effective in preventing crime in public places.

Cost

Other than effectiveness, a central consideration associated with installing CCTV relates to cost. Wilson and Sutton collated information on the annual operating costs of public CCTV systems in different parts of Australia. These costs are somewhat dated, but they do provide some insight into the potential ongoing expenses of running, maintaining and monitoring a CCTV network.

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[1] Wells, H.; Allard, T. and Wilson, P. (2006) **Crime and CCTV in Australia: Understanding the Relationship**, Bond University, Queensland.

[2] Welsh, B. and Farrington, D. (2006) 'CCTV and Street Lighting: Comparative Effects on Crime', in Perry, A.; Macdougall, C. and Farrington, D. (eds) **Reducing Crime: The Effectiveness of Criminal Justice Interventions**, John Wileys and Sons.

Location	Annual Cost
Ipswich	$444 000
Sydney	$900 000
Fairfield	$340 000
Melbourne	$400 000
Adelaide	$310 000
Toowoomba	$85 000
Brisbane	$270 000

Operating costs clearly differ across locations. This is in part due to monitoring arrangements. Some CCTV systems involve limited monitoring of footage. The monitoring of footage will be directly associated with the timeliness of the response by police or other security personnel. It has been suggested that the way in which the "cameras are operated, monitored and controlled by human operatives on a day-to-day basis, is fundamental to any claims regarding the overall effectiveness, sustainability and usefulness of such technological systems of surveillance".[3] Careful consideration of monitoring arrangements (and costs) is therefore critical to any deliberations regarding CCTV systems in public places.

Further to these ongoing annual costs, Klepczarek highlights some of the hidden costs associated with installing a CCTV network in a public place. These include:

- lighting upgrades
- removal of obstructions
- signage
- vandal resistance
- auditing and evaluation of the system
- training of staff
- ongoing maintenance[4]

Given the significant costs and potential hidden costs associated with establishing and maintaining a CCTV network, it is important that all relevant issues are canvassed in some detail prior to embarking on such a course of action. The following questions have been developed to help ensure that all major issues linked to each feature of a CCTV network are properly explored.

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[3] Smith, G. (2004) 'Behind the Screens: Examining Constructions of Deviance and Informal Practices among CCTV Control Room Operators in the UK', **Surveillance and Society**, 2 (2/3), p. 377.
[4] Sergeant J. Klepczarek, 'To CCTV or not to CCTV-that is the question: but is it the answer? A practitioner's point of view', *Paper presented at the Graffiti and Disorder Conference*, Brisbane, 18-19 August 2003.

CCTV Network Component	Considerations
Cameras	• What cameras should be used (including considerations regarding fixed or pan, tilt and zoom and day/night operation cameras)? • Where should cameras be positioned to ensure greatest field of vision? • In what direction should cameras be pointed so that the sun, bright lights or other variable lighting has only a minimal impact? • How to protect the cameras from damage (including excessive heat and cold)? • How many cameras are needed to cover an area, bearing in mind that this will be critical to performance of the system? • Will the cameras be wireless or operate on an optic fibre platform? • How often will they be cleaned and require maintenance? • What signage is required to inform the public of their operation and how many signs will need to be erected? • What requirements are there for installation (including excavation)? • What fixtures, trees and lighting will need to be altered / improved to enable the cameras to work effectively?
Monitoring	• Will the cameras be monitored? • If so on what basis? • Who will monitor the cameras? • How will these staff be trained and what ongoing training will they receive? • What type of control room is required? • Where will it be located? • Who will have access to the control room? • Will there be a supervisor / supervisors? • What type and size monitors will be utilised? • What will the staff to monitor ratio be? • What communication systems will operate in conjunction with the CCTV network? • What relationship will exist between police and the control room? • What instructions will be provided to guide the work of control room staff?
Footage	• How many frames per second will be captured by the cameras? • What system will be used to store the footage? • How long will footage be stored for? • How will police and external agencies access footage? • Who will process requests for footage?
Governance	• Who will develop the Code of Practice and Standard Operating Procedures guiding the operation of the network? • What will be the central focus of the system (i.e. what crimes will be targeted)? • What auditing and evaluation procedures will be adopted?

These are just some of the critical questions and issues that need to be considered prior to forming a position on the merits of CCTV in a particular location. Comprehensive analysis will be required to adequately address each of these issues. Through this comprehensive analysis, the real installation and ongoing costs will emerge and only then will informed decisions be possible regarding the relative merits of CCTV in public places.