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LET/OSTANDINGCOMMITTEE030

27 September 2002

Committee   Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs
Parliament   House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Inquiry into crime in the community: victims, offenders, and fear of crime

I write to you as Chair of the Crime Prevention Officers' Forum in order to make a
submission to this Inquiry.

The Crime Prevention Officers' Forum is a senior officers' group which supports the work of
the Australian and New Zealand Crime Prevention Ministerial Forum. The Ministerial Forum
comprises Ministers with responsibility for crime prevention from New Zealand and from
each of the Australian jurisdictions[1], including the Commonwealth.

The purpose of this submission is to inform the Committee of:

1.   The Ministerial Forum;
2.   Its background;
3.   Its objectives; and
4.   Its current work.

1.   The Crime Prevention Ministerial Forum

As stated, the Ministerial Forum comprises Ministers with responsibility for crime prevention
in each of the Australian jurisdictions and New Zealand. It is chaired by the South Australian
Minister for Justice and Attorney-General, the Hon. Michael Atkinson, MHA. The South
Australian Crime Prevention Unit provides the secretariat function to both the Ministerial
Forum and the Officers' Forum.

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[1] The Queensland crime prevention strategy is a whole of government strategy and, as such, is the responsibility
of the Queensland Premier. However, the Premier is represented on the Ministerial Forum by the Queensland
Minister for Police and Corrective Services.

Further information about the members of the Ministerial Forum can be viewed at the Australian and New Zealand Crime Prevention Forum website: www.crimepreventionforum.info.

2.   Background

As stated in the Information Sheet prepared for this Inquiry, the general power to legislate with respect to crime is that of Australian States and Territories. States and Territories have traditionally approached their responsibility in this area through the provision and maintenance of police forces and criminal justice systems. These systems, especially in the past, primarily emphasised crime deterrence and enforcement by heightening the risk of detection and punishment of crime. However, for some time now, there has been widespread recognition that police and other criminal justice agencies cannot successfully combat crime on their own. In recognition of this, from the early-mid 1990's, all States and Territories moved to implement a broader approach to crime prevention.

In November, 1994, the National Anti-Crime Strategy was established by Australian Premiers and Chief Ministers. The establishment of the Strategy was based on recognition of the value of cross-jurisdictional cooperation and an endorsement of the value of crime prevention an a means of addressing crime that is additional to criminal justice responses.

Each of the Premiers and Chief Ministers appointed a Lead Minister to be responsible for the development and implementation of the Strategy which was to build upon approaches already existing in each of the jurisdictions.

When these Lead Ministers met in June 1995, they endorsed five principles for crime prevention. These are as follows:

(i) Crime prevention is the responsibility of all sectors of the community - State and Local Government, police, business and industry, non-government welfare and community groups, residents' groups, schools and other service providers.

(ii) Different types of crime and crime prevention are suitable for approaches at different levels. For example, government agencies have a role to play at the policy level as well as at the local service delivery level. Individual businesses can implement crime prevention practices within their own businesses, while industry associations can work at a broader level, perhaps with local or State or Territory Governments.

(iii) Strategic approaches to crime prevention are more effective than individual or one-off projects, and State and Territory Governments have to lead the development of crime prevention strategies with stakeholders from all sectors of the community. Strategic approaches include priority setting and targeting action. It is necessary to focus on key areas and to set clear goals so that action is not diffused and efforts dissipated.

(iv) Development and promotion of best practice in crime prevention based on research findings is critical to ensure impact and best practice outcomes.

(v) Bipartisan commitment to crime prevention action across a broad range of policy areas should be sought by all State and Territory Governments to achieve reduced opportunities for

the commission of crime, and to improve the social and economic conditions that may impact on offending. Commitment to crime prevention from leaders should be clear and unequivocal, and should be in the form of both philosophical commitment and long term structured commitment to funding and otherwise resourcing innovative projects.

Following the formation of the Lead Ministers' Group, the Commonwealth was invited to participate in the National Anti-Crime Strategy. A model of cooperation was developed which defines the Commonwealth's responsibility for crime prevention as lying in those of its portfolio areas that impact on crime and community safety such as employment and income support, as well as in the areas of research, training, evaluation and information dissemination.

In 2000, New Zealand also accepted an invitation to participate in the Strategy. At this time, the Lead Ministers' Group agreed to change their name to the Australian and New Zealand Crime Prevention Ministerial Forum.

3.   Objectives

The current objectives of the Ministerial Forum are as follows:

(i) To support strategic thinking and policy development on crime prevention by Australian and New Zealand leaders.

> This is to be achieved by:

> (a) Creating an environment in which Ministers can engage in informed thinking about changes in crime trends and lead action to better prevent crime; and

> (b) Developing and implementing a communications strategy at an Australian/New Zealand level to promote effective approaches and emerging issues in crime prevention.

(ii) To promote strategic research in crime prevention.

> This is to be achieved by:

> (a) Facilitating the setting of an Australian/New Zealand research and development agenda in crime prevention in partnership with policy makers, practitioners and researchers; and

> (b) Anticipating trends affecting crime prevention.

(iii) To encourage innovation and evidence-based program implementation in crime prevention.

> This is to be achieved by:

> (a) Taking a lead role in setting standards and defining best practice in crime prevention, evaluation processes, and competencies and training for crime prevention practitioners; and

(b) Promoting the role of local government and local communities in community-based integrated planning for crime prevention.

(iv) To promote collaboration within and across governments in partnership with the non-government and private sectors.

This is to be achieved by:

(a) Coordinating improved communication and information sharing between key stakeholders from all sectors on crime prevention issues of Australian/New Zealand significance;

(b) Taking a lead role in identifying key stakeholders and brokering crime prevention partnerships between them; and

(c) Encouraging, recognising and rewarding collaborative efforts and partnerships which are across government, community agencies and the private sector.

(v) To promote and integrate crime prevention principles and practices into the core business of other agencies.

This is to be achieved by:

(a) Disseminating information to agencies regarding the role and function of the Australian and New Zealand Crime Prevention Ministerial Forum;

(b) Connecting key stakeholders to crime prevention research and findings which are relevant to their core businesses, and assisting the development of ways in which they are able to effectively translate such research and findings into policy for their agencies; and

(c) Presenting particular crime prevention issues to relevant Ministerial Councils.

4.   Current Work

The current work of the Ministerial Forum is based on the need to achieve the above-stated objectives by pursuing the strategies previously agreed upon.

Development of a crime prevention website

The Ministerial Forum has recently developed a crime prevention website which is on line and available at www.crimepreventionforum.info[2]. This website is part of the Forum's communications strategy and includes a number of features designed to promote effective approaches to crime prevention, improve communication and information sharing on crime prevention issues, and disseminate information regarding the role and function of the Forum.

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[2] With the exception of the Commonwealth, each of the jurisdictions represented on the Forum have appointed an administrator to administer the website on behalf of that particular jurisdiction. Training of administrators is only partially complete and the website is not yet functioning to its full potential.

Development of a crime prevention research agenda

At their 2001 meeting, members of the Ministerial Forum endorsed a process for identifying and prioritising research needs in the area of crime prevention. As a result, seven priority research areas have been identified[3] and action plans are being developed in relation to each one. This work progresses the objective of promoting strategic research in crime prevention.

Training of crime prevention practitioners

As one of its first tasks the former Lead Ministers Group put in place 10 pilot projects to investigate crime prevention issues of national significance. One of these is the Integrated Framework for Crime Prevention Training project. The main objective of this project is the development of crime prevention competency standards which will provide a nationally consistent benchmark of the skills required for crime prevention and community safety workers. It is the aim of the project to have those competency standards endorsed by the Australian National Training Authority so that they might be incorporated into the Local Government National Training Package. The Centre for Research in Education, Equity and Work, University of South Australia, has been contracted to develop competency standards and support materials to assist training delivery and assessment.

This work is an important step in encouraging innovation and evidence-based programs in crime prevention.

Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards

2002 is the inaugural year of these awards which are to be announced by the Minister for Justice and Customs, Senator the Hon. Chris Ellison, in October. The awards build upon the successful Australian Violence Prevention Awards which have been administered on an annual basis by the Australian Institute of Criminology. Following discussions with the AIC, the awards were broadened to enable all types of crime and violence prevention initiatives to be rewarded, and sponsorship of the awards was moved from the Heads of Australian Governments to members of the Ministerial Forum.

National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council

This Council was established for an initial period of five years in 1999 and is jointly funded by the Ministerial Forum and the Insurance Council of Australia. The Council has worked with industry to address issues relating to car theft such as vehicle design, legislation, component identification, and national information exchange between jurisdictions. The Council has also funded the CARS Database which combines police, insurance and registration authority data into a single comprehensive motor vehicle theft database. CARS has recently developed an analyser which allows stakeholders to query motor vehicle theft

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[3] These seven areas are as follows: (1) Community governance of crime prevention, (2) The factors which impede or support the perpetuation of violence from one generation to another, (3) The critical indicators of future crime trends and required crime prevention strategies, (4) School alienation and criminal activity, (5) The elements of parenting programs that work to reduce child neglect and abuse respectively, (6) The impact of specific strategies in reducing violence in public places, and (7) The factors which influence people's confidence in the criminal justice system.

and recovery data which is supplied by insurance companies and police authorities across Australia.

More information about the National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council can be obtained by viewing their website at: www.carsafe.com.au.

Crime Prevention in Indigenous Communities

At their 2001 meeting, Australian members of the Ministerial Forum agreed to contribute to the achievement of outcomes under the Reconciliation Framework developed by the Council of Australian Governments.

Between them, the jurisdictions represented on the Forum are implementing a range of initiatives designed to address crime and violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In order to ensure that those projects address the principles set forth in the COAG framework, members of the Officers' Forum are presently testing a matrix which has been developed to record and categorise each initiative.

As requested in your guidelines, I (*)enclose a disk containing an electronic version of this submission.

Should you wish to discuss any aspect of the Forum's work, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

Sue Millbank
Chair
Crime Prevention Officers' Forum