Crime is a complex phenomenon but (at least to me) an interesting one. Many members of the community are puzzled by it, are often misinformed and sometimes react to it inappropriately. Teachers can help to deal with those problems and, indeed, with crime itself. I suggest that we start by addressing six questions.

1 CRIME – WHAT IS IT?

It should not be difficult for teachers to understand what crime is, because it is just the breaking of rules. Every educational institution has rules and every community has rules (if only to enable its members to live together in some sort of harmony); and just as every school has its rule breakers, so does every society: and each must find generally acceptable ways of dealing with them.

Since rule breaking seems to be a part of human nature (speaking collectively), crime will not go away (politicians’ promises to abolish it notwithstanding). It has always existed, is now and will forever be with us, although it may change in type, intensity, perpetrator, consequences, time and place. The criminal justice system, required to deal with the problem in some way, can only carry out an undertaker role, disposing of the results as best it can and cleaning up after the event. The criminal justice process, by the use of investigators, prosecutors, defence representatives, courts and corrections, tries also to confine the problem within tolerable limits by assuring detection, conviction and punishment or correction and thereby a measure of deterrence and (hopefully) rehabilitation. The retributive component of the process is also intended to make the law-abiding among us feel better.

Crime is undesirable because of its consequences. All of us live with the knowledge (and for some, the fear) that we, or those close to us, may become victims of crime – or even offenders – at almost any time. There may be harmful consequences in both events and we would prefer to avoid that situation.

Crime is also undesirable because it is conduct that contravenes the standards of behaviour that we have set for ourselves in our community, through our elected representatives in Parliament. Standards of legality, morality, honesty and propriety are breached when crimes are committed and our society is diminished to an extent every time it happens.
To get a taste of the extent of criminal offending in NSW, its beginnings in the community (and perhaps the extent of its official under-reporting), consider a study made in 1996 of self-reported crime by a representative sample of 5,000 secondary school students (from the total of 441,234 at the time). The figures, extrapolated, show that of all secondary school students:

- 39.3% had committed an assault outside sport (29% in the last 12 months);
- 38.6% had committed malicious damage to property (27.2%);
- 22.8% had engaged in receiving or selling stolen goods (15.3%);
- 15% had shoppedlifted goods of $20 value or more (9.3%);
- 9.4% had committed a break and enter (5.4%); and
- 6.8% had stolen a motor vehicle (4.7%).

So 61% (or 269,152 overall, by extrapolation) had committed at least one offence (48% or 211,792 in the last 12 months); but in the financial year 1996-97 (to take a close example) only 16,113 juveniles were brought to court for any offence, a figure less than 8% of the total of the 1996 survey last 12 months self-reported offenders\(^1\). (These figures are consistent with those from surveys in other parts of Australia and overseas at various times.)

Rates of official reporting of crime do vary from time to time, from place to place and from crime to crime. In Australia more than 95% of motor vehicle thefts are reported to police; 75% of home burglaries; 50% of robberies; 30% of assaults; and about 20% of sexual assaults. Hardly any drug offences are reported – they are only dealt with when detected by police.

Each year in Australia about 4.5% of the general population, adult and juvenile (for NSW that would be about 315,000 people, but the proportion is probably higher in other jurisdictions) appear in court on at least one charge – but most of them do not come back again. In 2005 there were 204,735 criminal matters completed in the Local Court of NSW.

In England and Wales 34% of the male population have a conviction by the time they are 30.

But before too much alarm spreads, consider also that over the last 5 years, as reported by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR)\(^2\) – a part of the NSW Attorney General’s Department – there have been reductions across the State in many categories of crime\(^3\), so we are not in the grip of a crime wave (except perhaps for graffiti – included in the figure for malicious damage to property and responsible for its 8.1% rise in 2004 to 2005).

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3 For 2004 to 2005 there were reductions in: robbery with a firearm (26.7%), break and enter a dwelling (11%), break and enter a non-dwelling (7.8%), motor vehicle theft (12.4%), steal from a motor vehicle (9%), steal from a dwelling (5.4%) and steal from the person (12.5%). There was no significant change in: murder, assault, domestic violence assault, sexual assault, other sexual offences, robbery without a weapon, robbery with a weapon not a firearm, steal from a retail store and fraud. Only malicious damage to property rose (8.1%).
WHAT ARE WE DOING ABOUT IT?

Politicians jump on the fear of crime that we all have (to an extent) and the media beat it up for all they are worth. We are familiar with that and need not spend time on it here. By and large, it is irrelevant to what goes on in the real world (although that process can lead to the creation of new laws, often ill-considered, and it does spread unnecessary alarm in the community).

So how are we presently preventing and dealing with crime? (Books have been written on this subject and there is room for many more.4)

In the criminal justice system there are continual attempts to improve methods of preventing crime, detecting it, prosecuting and correcting offenders. All of those activities, however, are constrained by the resources able to be applied to them and are proceeding in a piecemeal, often uncoordinated fashion. When the public financial pie is limited – as it always is – then the sharing out of its slices must be prioritised. While crime is politically “sexy” – because it is an easy drum to bang and it makes a loud and instant political noise – any new money applied to it is usually put into the first stage of recruiting more police (not an effective strategy in itself, but an apparently popular one) and the last stage of locking up more people in prison (which suffers from similar shortcomings). But if more resources were applied to prevention, then we might need fewer police and prisons and less involvement of the mechanisms in between.

Even partial prevention is better than often ineffectual cure and there is always more that can be done at the source of criminal offending. To the extent that the criminal justice process deters anyone from offending, well and good; but even that is coming too late. Only social and educational programs can really deter in advance by preventing crime. By and large, people who are well educated, in good health, comfortably housed, in employment or otherwise usefully occupied and in stable and positive personal relationships do not commit crime (unless they become excessively greedy, over-sexed or unusually intoxicated).

To improve the impact of any deterrent effect after the event, we might also consider providing further resources for proven alternative means of disposing of the criminal “body” – such as the Drug Court, Circle Sentencing, juvenile and young adult conferencing and other forms of diversion from the strict course of the criminal courts.

WHAT ARE THE RESULTS?
(What works – and what does not?)

One obvious result of our present approach has been an enormous increase in the prison population. A few facts and figures for NSW follow and they tell a story5.

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4 One excellent work from which I have drawn liberally and quote in this paper is “Law and Order in Australia: Rhetoric and Reality” by Dr Don Weatherburn, Director of BOCSAR (The Federation Press, 2004)

5 More information is available from the Department of Corrective Services website: www.dcs.nsw.gov.au
- Each year about 15,000 persons pass through NSW prisons and at any one time there are around 9,000 inmates (sentenced and on remand).
- Another 19,000 persons are subject to supervision at any one time under community based orders.
- The daily cost of an inmate is $161 for open custody and $187 for high security – or, in total, around $90 per head of population per annum.
- About half of the inmates are there for offences of violence; about 1/10th for sex offences (about one third of those - say 300 - in the medium-high to high risk category).
- Nearly 80% of prisoners are drug or alcohol abusers; about 70% have intellectual disabilities of some kind; about 8% (over 700) have a psychiatric disorder (or recognised DSM4 mental illness).
- Standards of education of prisoners are generally low – 60% are at a level below Year 10 and the level of functional illiteracy is high, many being truly illiterate in any language. Some cannot even tell the time.
- Aborigines, comprising 2% of the general population of NSW, make up 17% of the prison population – Aboriginal women making up 26% of the female inmate population and men 16.5% of the males.
- In NSW, on average, each prisoner has $7,000 in unpaid fines – in Australia, the average for unpaid fines plus family support payments is $8,000 per inmate.

Of course, some offenders must be kept away from the community – they are simply too dangerous to be allowed to live among us – and some must be isolated for the rest of their lives. At present there are 30 natural life prisoners in NSW, one a woman.

Since 1990 and the passage of the Sentencing Act 1989 the number of prisoners and the length of sentences have increased substantially and they continue to increase. These increases have been reflected elsewhere – in the decade 1995-2004 the Australian prison population increased by 40% while the population growth was about 11%.

There is much debate as to whether prison deters criminals and thereby prevents crime. In some individual cases, it probably does – but is it a product of the system generally? In 1987 the Australian Institute of Criminology reported that for every 1,000 crimes committed in Australia, 400 are reported to police, 320 are recorded by police as crimes, 64 result in the detection of an offender (and one person may commit more than one crime), 43 persons are convicted and one is imprisoned6. On those figures it might be argued that doubling the prison population could affect only a further 0.1% of crimes committed.

It is reported that studies into whether persons given a custodial penalty are less likely to re-offend than those given a non-custodial penalty usually find little difference in rates of re-arrest, re-conviction or re-imprisonment.

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The incapacitation effect of imprisonment, of course, is real – while in prison an inmate cannot offend in the community. A recent BOCSAR report established that present levels of imprisonment in NSW (of about 1,135 domestic and commercial burglars who each commit an average of 38 burglaries a year when free) prevent about 45,000 burglaries per annum. But to get even a further 10% reduction in burglaries would require a 34% increase in imprisoned burglars at a cost of about $26 million per year.

Recidivism (or re-offending) is an issue. In 2004-05 the percentage of inmates and offenders in NSW who served their sentences (in prison or in the community) and who returned to prison within two years was 43.5%. BOCSAR’s Crime and Justice Bulletin Number 91 of January 2006 reported on the “Risk of re-offending among parolees”. It tracked 2,793 prisoners released to parole in the 2001-02 financial year. By September 2004 it found that 67% had reappeared in court, 64% had been convicted again and 41% were back in gaol.

Of course, the vast bulk of offenders are dealt with by non-custodial measures and do not reappear in the criminal courts.

To sound a positive note in all this gloom: there are some things that our communities (including schools) are doing that can have a crime prevention effect. More will be said about crime prevention and early intervention later, but examples of what works are as follows.

- Highly visible policing – but we cannot have a police officer in every home or on every street corner or a marked police car on every stretch of road.
- Deliberate targeting of repeat offenders – but there are human rights issues there that must be balanced.
- Targeting of crime “hot spots”, including liquor outlets with records of anti-social behaviour, public areas and mass events.
- Removing weapons from the community and from individuals.
- Intervening in disadvantaged families with young children (3 and 4 years old) and providing assistance and guidance.
- Keeping children at school, preferably to Year 12.
- Reducing truancy.
- Keeping young persons occupied (and not necessarily by paid employment).
- Increasing effort and risks of offending and reducing rewards, provocation and excuses – e.g. target hardening by such things as bank screens and vehicle immobilisers; controlling access to premises and property; etched identification on electrical appliances; vehicle identification that cannot be transferred; burglar alarms; lighting and video surveillance at places of risk.
- Concentrating attention on the supply of drugs.
- Drug courts.
- Circle sentencing.
- Youth and young adult conferences.
- Removing graffiti (so as to reduce the reward from offending).

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7 BOCSAR Crime and Justice Bulletin Number 93, January 2006 “How much crime does prison stop? The incapacitation effect of prison on burglary”
Planning communities so that ghettos of antisocial influences do not develop.
Growing older (most transient offenders are male aged 19-30 and persistent offenders usually stop in their 40s).
Incapacitation by incarceration for some categories of offenders (but at a high cost).
Fear of apprehension (the greatest deterrent of all).

Some measures touted by commentators and sometimes tried by administrators do NOT work to reduce crime.

- Increasing penalties (a blunt instrument does not become sharper by being made heavier).
- Mandatory penalties$^8$.
- “Zero tolerance” policing$^9$.
- Additional police$^{10}$.
- Having police talk to schools about the consequences of drug use$^{11}$.
- Neighbourhood Watch programs$^{12}$.
- Intensive supervision of released prisoners on parole (as opposed to standard treatment).
- Targeting drug users.
- Transferring juvenile offenders to adult courts.
- “Boot camps”, wilderness experiences and the like.

4 WHAT CAUSES CRIME?

For crime to occur there must be:
- motivated offenders (people with a need, desire and/or drive to commit crime by breaking the particular legal rules); and
- incentives and opportunities to commit crime.

People are daily confronted by opportunities to commit crime, but most people do not succumb or do not even notice.

Motivated offenders may be transient offenders or persistent and their motivations will vary. Transient offenders are often “one-off” offenders, never heard of again in

$^8$ After a public campaign against inadequate sentencing in NSW, in 1883 Parliament legislated for mandatory penalties for a list of offences. After a public campaign against the injustices wrought by this measure the legislation was repealed. It was in force for 53 weeks.

$^9$ The successes of New York policing attributed to “zero tolerance” were actually the result of factors such as the appointment of large numbers of additional police, their better management and deployment, computer systems for tracking crime hotspots, a program of weapons confiscation, a drop in “crack” cocaine use and improvements in the labour market.

$^{10}$ Research in the USA shows that a 10% increase in police produces a 3% drop in serious crime. In NSW a 10% increase in police would cost $130 million p.a. in recurrent costs alone. To really make a difference and get a 20% reduction in serious crime the NSW Police would have to be increased by 67% at an annual recurrent cost of at least $860 million.


the criminal justice system. They tend to be opportunistic, often impulsive and the offending may arise especially in adolescence by association with delinquent peers. So monitoring the company kept by youths at risk of such offending may help to prevent it. Individuals, places and times may become more crime prone for a multitude of reasons.

Of the transient offenders of all ages who are prosecuted, most have one court appearance only, with 15% having up to two and a lesser proportion having more. As court appearances increase, so does the chance of more appearances and so does the severity of offending – and the earlier an offender starts, the longer the offending goes on.

Thus they become persistent offenders, the main features of whom (many of which appear at an early age) include:
- lower IQ;
- poor parenting (which might be by parental neglect, parental conflict and discipline issues, deviant parental behaviour and/or attitudes or family disruption without the operation of effective protective factors);
- poor performance in primary school;
- truancy;
- troublemaking at school;
- mental health problems;
- low income families;
- a convicted sibling;
- alcohol use (but not other drugs, to any large extent).

Persistent offenders, of course, are recidivists and the rate of re-offending varies from crime to crime. Burglars are prolific; sex offenders less so.

Poor school performance (controlling for such things as socio-economic level and misconduct) is a strong predictor of offending, of frequent offending, of serious offending and of persistent offending. Indeed, in Ohio, USA it is reported that long range prison capacity is estimated by looking at third grade test scores. It follows that individual, targeted programs designed to improve school performance benefit not only the job prospects of the student. Such programs might start simply with learning to read, given the high number of illiterates in prison; but they need to be continued throughout formal education so that initial benefits are not lost.

Motivated offenders need incentives and opportunities to offend. Incentives may arise from financial need, peer pressure, mood disturbance (for example from intoxication), greed and so on. Opportunities arise all the time. Every product innovation spurs crime. Don Weatherburn in his book cites the following examples.
- When mobile phones took hold they were stolen at an increasing rate. During robberies and burglaries in NSW in early 1995 only about 120 mobile phones were stolen a month – by early 2001 there were more than 700 a month. The advent of digital phones increased their appeal because the subscriber identity module (SIM) card could be replaced after it was cancelled. (The original

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13 “School-to-Prison Pipeline”, Bobby Iafolla, Boston’s Weekly Digest on the Internet, accessed 19.6.06
owner was often required to buy another phone to honour the time contract with the service provider. It was cheaper to buy a stolen phone!

- In the 1980s there was a rapid increase in motor vehicle theft. Many vehicles were dumped or “torched”. Often they had been insured for more than they were worth. “Agreed value” (above market value) insurance was the cause and was leading to an increase in false claims.
- Motor vehicles have vehicle identification numbers (VINs) and “write-offs” have been sold with them attached. This way they attract a higher price, because professional thieves buy the wrecks to transfer the VINs to stolen cars when “re-birthed”\(^{14}\).
- Following the Port Arthur massacre every Australian jurisdiction passed laws requiring the registration of firearms and the licensing of owners. Registration was not required for “deactivated” firearms, but definitions of deactivation varied from place to place. The Queensland definition was such as to allow a deactivated firearm to be readily reactivated, so a cross-border trade rapidly developed. (This has now been addressed.)
- Coin-operated home heaters in housing estates in the UK provided gold mines for thieves.
- The popularity of credit cards has led to fraud of various kinds.
- Legal gambling has allowed the laundering of large sums of money.

There must be added to all these, of course, the common or garden varieties of criminal offending – domestic violence, assaults (sometimes fatal), child abuse, petty theft and so on. They all have their complex causes. A recent survey in Queensland, for example, showed that 49% of prisoners had offended in order to get money to pay off debts.

In an urbanised environment there are some particular opportunities presented.
- A switch from public to private transport provides opportunities involving motor vehicles and their contents.
- Two income households have increased material wealth that may be unattended for long times.
- The breakdown of the extended family removes traditional networks of socialisation.
- Distances between home and place of work or recreation mean that premises are unattended for routine times and opportunities are presented for violence and dishonesty against travelling commuters.
- Self-serve retailing increases the opportunities for theft.
- Reduced staffing of commercial premises, especially at night, makes them more vulnerable to crime.
- Increased availability of alcohol contributes to public disorder.
- Development of user pays facilities alienates some from formerly publicly available pursuits.
- The growth of insurance cover contributes to carelessness in the custody of goods.

\(^{14}\)The ABC 4 Corners program on 26.6.06 reported on car theft. One apparently effective deterrent is the spraying of identifying microdots all over the underside and engine compartment of a car. Subaru reports that the theft of new model WRX vehicles so treated has fallen by 92% as a consequence.
5 WHAT MORE CAN BE DONE ABOUT IT?

At present we spend a vast amount of money and effort at the wrong end of the process – identifying offenders and punishing them. Australia spends about $7 billion annually trying to maintain law and order: on police, courts and corrective services – about $350 per head or near enough to $1 a day for each of us. That increases steadily at a rate of 2.4% p.a. in real terms.

If we could transfer some of that expenditure to the front end – into more effective crime prevention – we would all be a lot better off. The direction for such an approach must come from State and Territory governments, acting where appropriate with the federal and local governments. Priorities to be addressed will vary from time to time, but to identify them and deal with them in an effective way we need more than ad hoc reactions to immediate crises. We need\(^\text{15}\):
- a mechanism for setting and reviewing crime control priorities;
- a capacity for rapid analysis of particular problems;
- a mechanism for establishing any partnerships required to address these problems; and
- a capacity to monitor the implementation of and evaluate any solution agreed to by these partnerships.

At present we do not have such abilities, so we must struggle on with the tools that are available.

The control of incentives and opportunities requires:
- better crime problem analysis – at present we have a patchwork of information that is often of poor quality and lacks coordination and evaluation;
- wider dissemination of the results of that analysis; and
- much closer cooperation between police and agencies with significant responsibilities in matters affecting public safety and security.

All the time a new “crop” of criminal offenders is coming on line (as others lose interest or just grow out of offending). How can the number be kept down?

The supply of motivated offenders can also be reduced by government action\(^\text{16}\).
- The federal government, through its tax and welfare systems, can help to reduce the number of families with dependent children living in poverty and the level of long-term unemployment (reported figures at present need to be considered carefully – “employment” may be for as little as a day a week).
- Long-term unemployment in Aboriginal communities, particularly, needs to be addressed.
- The federal government can also do more to assist those juggling the competing demands of work and family life (by, for example, flexible working hours, maternity and paternity leave arrangements, tax concessions for parents staying at home during a child’s early life, making child care and after-school care more affordable, accessible and beneficial to children’s development).

\(^\text{15}\) Weatherburn, op. cit. – pages 210-211
\(^\text{16}\) Weatherburn, op. cit. – from page 212
At the State and Territory level, child welfare agencies need to move from a focus on prosecuting those who neglect and abuse children to prevention. There should be a seamless system of care and support for children at risk of involvement in crime (because of their background and circumstances) from infancy through pre-school to primary and secondary school and on to employment (moving in at the school stage as soon as children show difficulty in performance or alienation through truancy or otherwise, schools working closely with parents).

That brings us to schools and teachers. You have a great deal more to do than providing a sound formal education. You need to be able to help, or even guide, parents in the creation of socially competent and responsible citizens – their children, who must be taught the social skills they need in order to interact effectively with other people. And the earlier the better. Poor parent-child attachment, poor parental supervision and erratic discipline increase the risk of involvement in crime. Doing poorly at school, the array of incentives and opportunities to which children are exposed, their learning from active offenders, lack of employment or involvement in structured activity and drug use all contribute.

If you think of the early years of life as a series of events and experiences, some of which dispose the child to later crime and some of which protect it, then the balance between those risks and protective factors needs attention.

Child neglect correlates directly with criminal behaviour. For every 1,000 additional reported cases of child neglect in NSW, nearly 500 juveniles end up involved in crime. Poor parenting short of reportable neglect also contributes to juvenile offending. A two-pronged attack is required – creating a social and economic environment that is conducive to good parenting and direct intervention in the lives of those at risk.

Direct and early intervention does work.

* The Perry Preschool program begun in the 1960s in the USA targeted 3 and 4 year old children from very poor families in a very deprived area. They attended preschool lessons designed to teach them reasoning, self-discipline, setting and achieving goals, playing and working cooperatively with other children. A teacher visited the parents once a week to provide advice on parenting and practical and emotional support. The program lasted between three and five years, depending on the child.

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17 In the Sydney Morning Herald last weekend there was an article about the trial of the Miller Early Childhood Sustained Home Visiting Program. It was inspired by the Elmira program in NY State, USA in 1978, followed up 15 years later. For the first two years a qualified nurse visits the mother every second week before birth, weekly for the first six weeks after birth and monthly from six months of age. One of the following criteria must be satisfied by the mother: depression, mental health problem, domestic violence, under 19, substance abuse, serious life stresses, without support, first sought antenatal care after 20 weeks pregnancy. The trial is showing positive results, but it is only for early infancy – for crime prevention to be enhanced, continuation programs may be required. (Another article in the same newspaper showed the differences in child development between children with Internet access and those without.)

18 Weatherburn, op. cit. – Chapter 7

19 See “Pathways to Prevention: Developmental and early intervention approaches to crime in Australia” (1999) Attorney-General’s Department, Canberra
They were then tracked to age 27 and it was found that only 7% of participants had been arrested for 5 or more offences, against 35% of those who had not participated. Only 7% had ever been arrested for a drug offence, against 25% of non-participants. Participants were also much more likely to have graduated from high school, had significantly higher earnings and were more likely to own a home.

* A program in Montreal in Canada\(^\text{20}\) has also shown the benefits of a program targeted at disruptive boys in kindergarten from low socio-economic backgrounds. Parents were taught to monitor their children’s behaviour and to reward them when they were good. They were taught how to handle family crises and how to discipline children without using abusive punishment. The children also had daily training sessions in playing and interacting satisfactorily with their peers. Problem-solving and self-control in conflict situations were addressed. By age 15, those who had participated in the program (for which they had been randomly selected) had committed significantly fewer offences than others who had not.

* The Seattle Social Development project\(^\text{21}\) is another such example. In addition, in that program, the children’s primary school teachers were trained to notice and reward socially desirable behaviour under a procedure called “catch them being good”. The teachers were also trained to teach and manage their classrooms in ways that promoted stronger attachments between children, their families and the school. By comparison with children not in the project, these children attained higher levels of academic achievement and in later life had less heavy drinking and lower involvement in violence.

In addition to deterrence from crime, of course, programs of this kind for young children have produced better social skills, better school performance and happier families.

* In the teen years, as well, benefits can be achieved. Multi-systemic Therapy\(^\text{22}\) is an intensive family-based treatment program (several hours a week) directed at improving parental management of teenagers and helping teenagers cope with family, peer, school and neighbourhood problems. This treatment (over four months with a trained counsellor) is designed to encourage more effective parenting, greater family cohesion, lower levels (or no) contact with delinquent peers, increased contact with law-abiding peers and better school performance. One evaluation showed a 28% lower rate of arrests and 48% fewer cases of detention in custody.

Early intervention with infants, kindergarten children, primary school children and teenagers produces results. It is also cost-effective. The Perry program produced overall savings of US$7 for every US$1 spent; the Seattle program US$1.80 per US$1; and Multi-systemic Therapy US$8 per US$1.

There is an enormous range of programs in Australia. The Commonwealth government provides $3 million p.a. for them; the NSW Government allocated $55.6


\(^{21}\) See “Pathways to Prevention…” op. cit.

\(^{22}\) See: www.mstservices.com
million to the “Families First” program; Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia have programs known as “Triple P” parenting programs; there is “Parenting SA” in South Australia; the ACT has a family support program. But these programs do not provide the kind of intervention in the North American programs already mentioned that can be assured of helping to prevent juveniles becoming involved in crime. Australian intervention is still slanted towards detecting and dealing with neglect and abuse. In the year 2002-03 Australian State and Territory governments spent $899 million on child protection, but most of it on investigations and support of already damaged children removed from their families. (By 2004 in Australia there were about 130,000 reports of child maltreatment a year, about a quarter of which were confirmed.)

Schools can play their part. They provide regular access to students in the years when they are most at risk of involvement in crime. Improved school performance, lower truancy and reduced drug use do operate to reduce involvement in crime. If students drop out of school and fail to obtain jobs they become frustrated, bored, depressed and angry. This will happen at a point where the supervision and control of the school environment cease and at an age when young people become highly prone to offend. Children at risk of failing require additional attention especially, in Australia, Aboriginal children (whose school failure and criminal offending rates are disproportionately high).

- Just keeping children at school to Year 12 reduces criminal offending. This is all the more important with the virtual collapse, over recent years, of a full-time employment market for 16 to 19 year olds. Unemployment rates for those who fail to finish secondary school are double the rates for those who do.

- Preventing truancy is effective. Truants have an offending rate that is two to four and a half times higher than those who attend school. Monitoring and rewarding attendance at school can be effective. Rewards can be, for example, points that can be redeemed for such things as school excursions. Sometimes parents must be engaged in addressing the problem (because they may condone truancy for various reasons).

- Helping to reduce illicit drug use is beneficial. There is double the chance of involvement in property crime by a student who uses cannabis at least three times a month. The most effective programs seem to provide information about short and long-term effects of drug use, teach students how to resist the social pressure to use illicit drugs and, importantly, provide continuing support over an extended period.

6 WHAT DO WE WANT?

In summary, what we hope to achieve by multidisciplinary approaches to crime prevention and the treatment of offenders are law-abiding individuals in a content community. It doesn’t sound too much to ask; but even though it can never be wholly achieved, we should not stop trying.

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23 Weatherburn, op. cit. – Chapter 7 for analysis
24 See the Ford Foundation “Quantum Opportunity Program” which provided graduation incentives. A Rand Corporation evaluation showed that it was more cost-effective than early intervention or “three strikes” mandatory sentencing.
The community generally does benefit from the proper guidance and correction of individuals and teachers of all descriptions have a significant role to play in that process.

I can do no better than to conclude with the words of a most eminent educator of NSW. In his occasional address at the graduation ceremony in Education and Professional Studies at the University of New England on 8 April 2006, Dr Paul Brock AM said this, after considering the forces required to sustain our democratic civilisation (and the comments apply equally to the maintenance of a law-abiding society and the measures we adopt to achieve it):

“To what can we look today? Surely it must be to education – in all its depth, breadth and rigour in all of its intellectual, moral, spiritual, physical and cultural dimensions. And accessible to all. Anywhere and everywhere in the world. An education which, among its other values, is committed to helping students in the universal human need to search for truth and meaning.

In particular, a quality of public education that is informed, honest, critiqued and properly resourced. That is both properly idealistic and properly sceptical. That celebrates the virtues of compassion, justice, human rights. And which repudiates tyranny, ignorance, fundamentalism of all kinds and terrorism – whatever be its sources around the globe.

... This is a huge task. But without a truly educated global world we will all be condemned to suffering the inevitable consequences of failing to learn from history and running the risk of wiping out the world as we know it.

... We have a responsibility as educators not only to support the intellectual and personal growth of our students, but to help them develop as ethically and morally responsible citizens aware of injustice, misery and, indeed, of evil. And of justice, happiness and, indeed, of goodness. As educators we have a responsibility to try to ensure that our students learn from history and do not end up merely replicating our historical failures, but build upon our historical successes.

To do this, we educators must be – among other things – men and women of awareness; sensitively and finely attuned to the world in which we live. Such awareness and sensitivity to the significance of things happening within our world and drawing out the educational (in the broadest sense of the word) consequences is at the heart of being a good educator – both within and beyond the boundaries of classroom and lecture theatre.”