

SCHOOLS AND THE COMMUNITY

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Introduction

In exploring the role of schools and community in crime prevention, the immediate questions that spring to mind are –

1. what is the nature and focus of crime prevention ?
2. what is it we expect schools to do ?
3. how are schools and community working together in this area ?

Few would argue against the idea that schools have a role, perhaps even the central role, in developing young people who are good citizens, and that good citizenship means, among other things, being respectful and law-abiding, not engaged in or supportive of criminal activity.

But I think we expect much more than this of schools in relation to crime prevention. Being respectful and law-abiding can be an example of compliance behaviour, achieved in some circumstances through the use of fear, coercion, punishment or reward. I believe the community wants young people and adults to behave in ways that are respectful and law-abiding because they have internalized values that guide them to behave that way even in the absence of sanctions or supervision.

So for schools we broaden the focus of crime prevention from the task of attaining compliance behaviour to the task of citizenship and values education – a highly fascinating and debatable issue in education.

The 2002 Yearbook of the Australian College of Educators is devoted entirely to the issue of values education and I commend it as a most significant and contemporary resource. (1)

The chapters explore what values are to be taught, how values can and are being taught in Australian schools and the impact of cultural, ethnic and religious contexts. A particular challenge for teachers is the extent to which “western” and “asian” values are in conflict. For example the juxtaposition of values underpinning individualism (the free-market economy, reward for effort, individual responsibility) versus obligations to family and community before self.

The role of curriculum, school organisation and pedagogy are considered in detail. I will refer to some of these aspects in this paper as they relate to crime prevention.

The Nature and Focus of Crime Prevention

1. What behaviour is the focus of crime prevention by schools? Is our target crimes that are committed by juveniles (such as theft, assault, possession of illegal drugs) or are we addressing crimes that *may be committed by juveniles later in life as adults* (such as fraud, sexual assault, murder)?
2. To what extent are we operating with a paradigm that assumes a continuum between mild forms of anti-social behaviour at schools and criminal behaviour in adolescence and adulthood? If such a relationship exists, what factors either reinforce or break that continuum for individual students?
3. Given that socio-economic disadvantage is likely to be the most predictive risk factor, should our effort be focussed on equity programs for disadvantaged young people and their families?
4. What is the impact of gender and how should this be addressed?

These are important questions to consider in defining the scope of crime prevention strategies by schools.

In relation to crime committed by people of school age, statistics published by the Australian Institute of Criminology (2) indicate that:

- the rate of juvenile involvement in crime has not changed much over the last few years;
- most young people's crime is at the less serious end of the property crime continuum;
- a small number of re-offenders are responsible for much of the crime committed by juveniles; and
- most children who appear in court do not re-offend.

As of 1999-2000:

- juveniles accounted for about one quarter of the total offender population
- compared to adults, juveniles are less likely to commit violent offences such as homicide, assault and sexual assault than property offences
- motor vehicle theft offences peak among males aged between 16 and 19 years
- offender rates for unlawful entry with intent peak among males aged 15 to 19 years
- most robbery offenders were between the ages of 15 and 19
- for homicide, the male offender rate is highest among individuals aged 20 to 24 years.

Bearing this in mind, let us now turn to a model for crime prevention cited by the Australian Institute of Criminology (3). This model has three elements - *situational crime prevention*, *social crime prevention* and *developmental crime prevention*.

Situational crime prevention aims to reduce crime through the management, design and augmentation of the physical environment.

In schools, this includes

- the design of buildings and grounds to control access, facilitate supervision and to provide zones of physical security
- installation of surveillance cameras and alarms
- provision of barriers such as fencing and gates
- provision of security patrols
- involvement of the community in programs to monitor and report on unauthorized activity on school sites, eg programs such as SchoolWatch
- increasing the use and occupation of school sites to provide adult presence and levels of authorized activity which deter intruders and illegal activity.

Such interventions have been demonstrated in New South Wales' schools to be successful in reducing the opportunity for crime to occur and enhancing the safety and welfare of students and staff in schools.

2 Australian Crime – Facts and Figures 2001, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra, 2002

3 Preventing crime in Australia 1990 – 2002: a selected register of crime prevention projects, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra, 2002

Beyond the school site, but still focusing on students, these preventive situational interventions includes strategies such as managing the length of time students are concentrated at transport nodes and engineering the arrangements for travel to sport or other out-side activities.

Situational crime prevention strategies aimed at adults are used throughout the community in such areas as:

- design and management of public space, public transport, recreational and shopping centres
- Police presence on trains and at events
- provision of lighting and barriers for open space and shop-fronts
- security services and the full range of security measures for residential, commercial and community facilities.

Social or community crime prevention measures seek to prevent offending by changing the social rather than the physical environment, and this is where the role of schools and community organisations becomes pro-active rather than reactive.

The object is to reduce criminal behaviour by changing social conditions, for example by strengthening community bonds, or increasing levels of informal social control and so deterring actual or potential offenders.

Social crime prevention measures are generally thought of as those that focus on making young people at risk of offending feel more integrated into the community, for example through provision of youth 'drop in' centres, internet cafes, the provision of recreational facilities such as Skate Ramps, supervised discos and Rock Concerts funded by local government or churches and charitable organisations, the provision of Police and Citizens Youth Clubs and services coordinated from them.

A recent Commonwealth report (4) noted that the roots of criminal offending are complex and cumulative, and are embedded in social as well as personal histories.

The risk of crime is exacerbated by not providing meaningful social pathways for a diverse range of young people, and by not promoting the attachment of individuals and communities to mainstream social supports and developmental institutions such as families and schools.

In a school context, some **risk factors**, as they might be termed, that may contribute to the risk of criminal activity of an individual include:

- failure at school
- normative beliefs about aggression
- normative peer group that is not mainstream
- being the perpetrator of bullying
- peer rejection
- poor 'attachment' to school
- inadequate behaviour management.

4 Pathways to Prevention – Developmental and early intervention approaches to crime in Australia, National Crime Prevention, Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department, Canberra, 1999

The particular role of schools in this aspect of crime prevention is addressed through :

- the creation of social conditions in schools that value cooperative behaviour, teamwork, tolerance, acceptance of difference and respect for one another (eg. changes in school organisation accompanied by changes in teaching approaches such as the focus on middle schooling, creation of schools within a school, team projects)
- recognition that the quality of relationships between students and students, between teachers and students and between the teachers themselves has a powerful influence on the development and expression of pro-social behaviour (eg. whole-school development programs)
- provision of skills training for young people to assist them to develop positive relationships (eg. peer mediation, peer support, anti-bullying and anti-harassment) and to use non-violent means of conflict resolution and anger management – thus changing the social interactions between students
- providing direct teaching and activities that value and develop good citizenship, focusing young people outwards on the needs and welfare of others
- involving parents and the community in identifying and reinforcing the values of the school.

Such a task can be an uphill battle, some may say an impossible battle, for teachers where there is a significant disparity between the social conditions and accepted ways of behaving at home and those of the classroom.

How can teachers take on this task of values education and citizenship and create a social learning environment that will somehow inoculate young people against crime - and, at the same time, turn out youngsters who are motivated and switched on to learning? The answer is that it all goes hand-in-hand. High learning outcomes are achieved in an environment where there are clearly articulated values, high expectations and supportive relationships.

There is considerable guidance to be gained in this task from the last ten to fifteen years of literature, research and practice in the fields of school effectiveness, school improvement and achieving cultural change in schools.

Some of the key concepts to emerge from this literature include:

- a high degree of agreement about what are the characteristics of effective schools
- the critical importance of leadership for the development of social capital
- the importance of alignment – of values and beliefs
- that it is possible to turn around low performing schools through capacity building.

In contrast to the environmental (either physical or social) changes sought by situational and social crime prevention measures, **developmental crime prevention** focuses on the individual.

In this case, prevention is based on attitudinal and/or behavioural change by potential offenders, actual offenders, prospective victims or actual victims.

Developmental crime prevention involves the early identification of potential offenders or victims and intervenes in some way to keep them from realising that potential or, works with those who have already offended, or been victimised, to prevent further offending or victimisation from taking place.

For example, at the offender level, prevention could take the form of early childhood intervention for those deemed to be 'at risk' of offending. Such intervention generally involves the community and takes the form of family support, parent training, mentoring and inclusion in a range of special programs at school or in the community.

However, this is essentially a deficit model approach. Teachers know there can be significant problems inherent in this approach, primarily the negative impacts of stigmatisation and labeling on level of expectations and self-esteem, both of which have very direct links with level of academic achievement and post-school aspirations.

Researchers have noted that characterising adolescence as a time of turmoil and trouble serves only to stigmatise and promote negative perceptions of adolescents and does little to help solve the potential problems of young people. (5)

A more constructive approach to the demands of adolescence draws on the concept of *human resilience*—defined as “the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances. (6)

Instead of adopting a deficit perspective on youth issues, resilience-focused research seeks to identify positive factors in adolescents' lives that help them to cope with the expectations of them by society. (7)

The concept of teacher resilience is also relevant in this area and there is a growing body of international research to support the notion that resilience in teachers is necessary for successful implementation of cultural change in schools.

Recently I attended an interagency conference in Broken Hill at which Dr Victor Nossar from the NSW South Western Sydney Area Health Service referred to the Kauai Longitudinal study (8). This is a fascinating study on the whole cohort of children born on the island in 1955. It identified the factors associated with high risk children (poor and disadvantaged) growing into well-functioning adults. These “protective” factors included: temperamental (personality) characteristics of the child that helped elicit positive responses from adults, skills and values that led to efficient use of whatever abilities these children had, parenting that reflected confidence and fostered self-esteem in the child, supportive adults who fostered trust and acted as surrogate parents and opening of opportunities at major life transition points.

These are the kinds of protective factors that schools and community working together can maximise for all young people.

I have used the word “all” to make a point. The importance of population health and mental health strategies is worth considering at this stage. A number of economists as well as epidemiologists and health workers now recognise that developing resilience in whole populations not only improves health and mental health outcomes but also reduces total expenditure on justice and social services and increases income and therefore tax contributions.

5 Howard, S & Johnson, B, Resilient and Non-Resilient Behaviours in Adolescents, Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra, November 2000

6 Masten, A, Best, K & Garmezy, N, Resilience and development: Contributions from the study of children who overcome adversity, Development and Psychopathology, vol 2, 1990

7 Howard, S, Dryden, J & Johnson, B, Childhood resilience: Review and critique of the literature, Oxford Review of Education, vol 25, 1999

8 Werner, E, Smith, R, Overcoming the Odds: High Risk Children from Birth to Adulthood, Cornell University Press, NY, 1992

It is unlikely that anyone would argue that we shouldn't intervene with "at risk" youth and children. However, if the need for intervention exceeds our resources or if the interventions can not be demonstrated to be effective, we will be seriously looking for alternative approaches that are cost effective.

Early intervention and working with populations rather than targeted groups or individuals may well turn out to be the most effective strategy for the long term. A significant change of effort in this direction will require a very significant cultural change from within the army of professionals and volunteers currently working in the area. The enormity of this change should not be underestimated. In the meantime, policy-makers are left to grapple with what is going to have face validity with the electorate and its lobbyists and what is financially viable, in order to get some balance between targeted intervention and long-term strategy.

So this brings us back again to the second element of the crime prevention model, changing the social conditions in ways that will inoculate young people against crime. I would like to outline some of the approaches being taken by schools and their communities to achieve this.

National Framework

At the national level, a conceptual foundation for addressing pro-social conditions has been established through MCEETYA. This is the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs. Membership of the Council comprises State, Territory, Commonwealth and New Zealand Ministers with responsibility for the portfolios of education, employment, training and youth affairs.

This is seen in *The Adelaide Declaration on the National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century* (MCEETYA 1999) and in *The Auckland Declaration Stepping Forward – Improving Pathways for all young people* (MCEETYA 2002).

The *National Goals* include

- developing the capacity to exercise judgment and responsibility, in matters of morality, ethics and social justice
- the development of a just, open, socially cohesive and culturally rich society, free from all forms of discrimination
- developing active and informed citizens, able to exercise their rights and responsibilities.

The *Stepping Forward – Improving Pathways* statement is a commitment to providing leadership and establishing a common direction in developing transition opportunities for young people, particularly those most at risk.

Values in Education

In a study commissioned by the Australian Federal government, *Schools and the Social Development of Young Australians*, (9) the authors surveyed a sample of Australian schools, teachers and students on social objectives relating to school students' attitudes about themselves (self confidence and self esteem, optimism, respect for others, social competence, awareness and appreciation of social conventions, motivation, respect for learning and attitudes to lifelong learning).

9 Ainley, J, Batten, M et al, *Schools and the Social Development of Young Australians*, Australian Council for Educational Research, Commonwealth of Australia, Melbourne, 1998

The report concludes that teachers in Australian schools place considerable emphasis on developing tolerance and respect for others, caring for others and developing capacity to work cooperatively. It also reports that students value such things as 'cheering up a person who is not happy', 'trying to understand someone else's problem' and 'helping a friend who is in trouble'.

Values in New South Wales Schools

The Values We Teach is a document now 10 years old. It outlined the core values of public schools in New South Wales and served to guide values activities in schools and the development of individual school statements about welfare, discipline and code of values. The values included -

- recognising right over wrong
- honesty and courtesy
- health, fitness and well being
- discipline, punctuality, reliability
- experience, expertise and authority
- friendship, companionship and friendly rivalry
- self-discipline, independence and responsibility.

NSW public school students are taught to respect the rule of law and Australia's democratic institutions and procedures. They are taught their own rights and responsibilities, and those of groups and governments under the code of law and systems of justice. NSW public schools teach the value of Australia's democratic institutions and procedures and the rights and obligations of governments, individuals and groups under the rule of law.

At present a new document, *The Values of NSW Public Schools* (2001) is under consultation. Its aim is to clarify for parents, teachers, students and the community, the values that imbue teaching and learning in public schools and reassure them of public schools' core commitment to a well rounded education which produces morally literate human beings and ethically competent citizens. The values in this document are -

- love of learning
- aiming for high standards
- care and respect for ourselves and others
- care and respect for families and communities
- respect for work
- proud Australians and citizens of the world.

Values and School Culture

These positive influences or *protective factors* that may contribute to reducing the risk of an individual engaging in criminal activity include

- a positive school climate
- prosocial peer group
- responsibility and required helpfulness
- sense of belonging/bonding

- opportunities for some success at school and recognition of achievement
- appropriate school norms concerning violence.

Many schools in NSW and other states utilise a range of survey instruments with students and staff to measure aspects of school climate and culture. One of these survey tools is the *Quality of School Life (QSL)* developed by ACER and used widely by schools in NSW for their annual school reports. The data are used by individual schools identify areas for improvement.

Aggregated data from these surveys in NSW schools show some marked differences between primary and secondary schools which reflect both the developmental stage of the respondents and the different environment of primary and secondary schools in general.

Curriculum

In respect of crime prevention measures, **what** is taught and **how** it is taught can be the key to providing students with the **protective factors** that were just mentioned.

Civics and Citizenship

A particular area of the school curriculum that has had a focus recently, potentially in relation to crime prevention, is that of civics and citizenship. This is a national initiative.

Although Civics and Citizenship is not a subject in itself in NSW schools, the history syllabus provides scope for some excellent examples of major topics that highlight significant civic and citizenship issues in our nation's history.

Students are guided through a wealth of fascinating social issues in Australia's history such as : our voting rights; the white Australia policy, the first policy passed by the Federal Parliament in 1901; the conscription debate during World War I; the Home Front debate during World War II, which placed restrictions on what people at home could do during the war; the immigration debate, which was prevalent throughout our history and still is; Aboriginal citizenship issues; the 1967 referendum; the changing role of women in our community; reconciliation; multiculturalism; the republic; and even the flag.

These topics provide opportunities for students to think about the nature of their own potential contributions to society through examining the positive and negative effects of individuals and groups over recent times.

Personal Development/ Health and Physical Education

All states have syllabuses in this area. This Key Learning Area arose in NSW in the late 70s from the need to locate sex education in a personal development context. Syllabuses now cover the K – 12 spectrum and include age and stage-appropriate curriculum to encompass aspects of an individual's wellbeing, including social, mental, physical and spiritual health. Health priorities for young people are addressed in the areas of drug education, fitness and physical activity, child protection and nutrition.

Senior Years of Schooling - HSC VET in Schools Courses

In *The Values of NSW Public Schools*, 'respect for work', captures the central and prestigious role of vocational and career education in the NSW public education system.

In the last 10 years vocational education and training (VET) courses have become increasingly popular with students in Years 11 and 12 as they seek to commence training for their career while they are at school.

One in three senior school students in New South Wales now studies a vocational course as part of their Higher School Certificate (HSC).

Completion of a VET course as part of the HSC gives school students two forms of accreditation; an industry recognised qualification (or credit towards one), as well as university recognition and credit towards the HSC.

The study of vocational subjects can provide many students with experience and skills that academic study cannot match – a direct link with employment in an area of personal interest to the student, constant opportunity for skill development, feedback and self esteem.

Teaching Practice

A key feature of the extent to which teachers can provide positive schooling influences in students' lives depends on the ability of teachers to engage students in their learning.

Activities to Engage Students

The recently released ***Vinson Report*** (10) makes particular mention of a number of local educational innovations that revolve around three major themes that provide a basis for categorising and briefly summarising the achievements of the schools concerned:

- adapting and devising teaching and learning practices that engage the interest of young adolescent students,
- teaching arrangements that assist students to successfully negotiate challenging transitions, and
- aligning school practices to more general organisational principles that promote quality outcomes.

Productive Pedagogy

Productive Pedagogy is a term used to describe a comprehensive model of good classroom teaching practice. It gained popularity quickly in Queensland under the School Reform Longitudinal Study (SRLS) being conducted from 1998-2000 in Queensland schools. This large-scale study is a concerted attempt to ascertain which elements of student learning experiences in classrooms, the organisational capacities of schools and systemic supports contribute to improved learning and social outcomes for students.¹¹

It has been used by many schools in New South Wales and Victoria as a way of revitalising teaching particularly in challenging school environments. In summary, *Productive Pedagogy* focuses teachers on four dimensions of the teaching and learning process:

- Enhancing the intellectual quality of learning tasks - recognising that knowledge isn't a fixed body of information, encouraging students in higher-order thinking, taking a problematic approach to knowledge. It requires students to do learning work rather than busy work.

10 Vinson, T, New South Wales Public Education Inquiry, 2002, <http://www.pub-ed-inquiry.org>

11 Hayes, D, Lingard, B & Mills, M, Productive pedagogies - Education Links No. 60, Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study, Graduate School of Education, The University of Queensland, 2000

- Providing relevance (or connectedness) - helping students to make connections between different aspects of school learning as well as connections to their past experiences and the world beyond the classroom.
- Providing a socially supportive classroom environment – allowing students to influence activities. It also involves a high degree of self-regulation by students and the creation of an environment by teachers that constantly supports learning, has high expectations and which encourages them to take risks in learning.
- Recognition of difference – being inclusive of non-dominant groups and and recognising differences and group identities.

Connecting Students to the World Beyond School

Much of the improvement literature focuses on *transition points*. Starting school and leaving school are two of the most critical.

School-to-Work Plans

In 2001, under the NSW Government's *Ready for Work Plan*, more than 420 schools involved 58,912 students in School-to-Work Planning programs in Years 9 to 12 of high school.

Students receive an attractive log-book and structured activities to develop their personal plans and to help them define their study and career paths.

Work Education

During 2001, the Department expanded work education programs in schools. More than 130 schools implemented the work education course in Years 9 and 10 of high school to support student learning, in and about, the world of work. This is an accredited part of the syllabus which has been especially successful with students at risk of leaving school early.

Schools Working With Community

Families First

Families First is a coordinated Government strategy to help families raise healthy, well adjusted children. It has four main fields of activity:

- supporting parents who are expecting or caring for a new baby
- supporting parents who are caring for infants and young children
- assisting families who need extra support
- strengthening the connections between communities and families.

It is a \$117 million strategy that will cover all areas of NSW by 2003 and seeks to utilise effective partnerships across government and non-government services.

My firsthand experience observing this program includes a highly successful program in which schools and community workers were teaching unemployed fathers how to join in and teach playground games to their sons in Kindergarten. The goals are connecting fathers and sons, connecting fathers with other fathers in the community and assisting the school to provide male role models for students.

Parents as Teachers

Parents as Teachers is an early learning program for parents with children up to three years of age. The program acknowledges the influence of parents on the learning outcomes of children and the importance of the early childhood years as a period of major development.

Parenting consultants support parents by making regular home visits, holding meetings and distributing information on child development.

The program targets families with young children who are living in disadvantaged communities, particularly first time parents.

From each of 10 centres, located in schools, 35 to 40 parents receive regular home visits. An additional 150 to 200 families access the program through a variety of activities such as playgroups and meetings which are held throughout the year.

Key achievements of the parenting consultants include:

- improving parents' knowledge of child development and behaviour
- providing practical strategies to support children's development:
- encouraging parents to take an ongoing role in their child's education
- enhancing children's self-esteem, and their language, social and problem-solving skills
- providing children with positive learning experiences
- identifying problems that may affect children's learning including social and emotional problems.

Schools as Community Centres program

The *Schools as Community Centres* program aims to prevent disadvantage at school entry for children of families living in disadvantaged communities by planning and integrating service delivery to better meet their needs. The program targets families with children up to five years of age.

It operates from 16 schools. Each centre reaches up to 80 families per week on a regular basis and a larger number of families for specific initiatives.

The program is jointly funded by the NSW Departments of Education and Training, Community Services, Health and Housing.

Examples of particular activities include early literacy support at home, parenting information, volunteer childcare, training in shopping and cooking for healthy eating, and speech and occupational therapy programs.

Some of the significant achievements to date are:

- increased enrolments in transition-to-school programs
- increased emergent literacy behaviours
- children showing more cooperative behaviour at school entry
- Aboriginal families and workers developing strategies to meet family needs
- increased referrals to local services.

KidSmart Early Learning project

This project is an innovative national teaching and learning partnership between the Department, IBM Australia and the Australian National Schools Network (ANSN). It is part of an international initiative to support early childhood educators to make meaningful use of new technologies in childcare and pre-school settings. In 2001, 15 of the Department's pre-schools located in low socio-economic communities participated in the trial program.

The Department provided funding and personnel to support this project and IBM provided each participating centre with a computer, educational software and printers. The project also provides professional development for early childhood teachers to support their use of strategies for stimulating children's interest in computer-based learning.

Providing young disadvantaged students with access to technology that will motivate and enhance their learning is establishing a good foundation for engagement in learning, success in schooling and high aspiration from an early age – all of which are *Protective Factors* in crime prevention.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Two current initiatives in the NSW Department of Education and Training demonstrate how the three elements of crime prevention, *situational, social and developmental*, are being integrated to provide enhanced safety and to support young people in avoiding crime.

Establishment of a School Safety and Security Directorate

Recently, crime prevention in NSW government schools was given a clear focus and significant resource base.

In response to a Forum of *Community, Parents and Police* convened to address crime and social problems affecting schools, a new directorate of School Safety and Security was established in the NSW Department of Education and Training.

The directorate has the role of supporting teacher and student safety, as well as improving the physical security of schools, addressing student behaviour, attendance and discipline, developing and implementing crime prevention strategies, liaising with Police and supporting schools during critical incidents.

The directorate has a brief to establish, at every level of the organisation, liaison and cooperative activity between education and Police. This is facilitated by the appointment of a former Assistant Commissioner to head the directorate and the secondment of senior Police to the state office of Education. The impacts are already being seen in the development of common understandings at the strategic level and the regular meetings of school principals with Local Area Commanders and Crime Prevention Officers. This supports a range of activities including effective joint programs to improve attendance such as *Operation Roll Call* and the exchange of information that can prevent incidents occurring.

An area of the directorate's work of particular interest to this Conference is that of crime prevention workshops. These workshops are designed to be delivered jointly by Police and teachers working together. The initial modules were aimed at Year 8 students – the age at which adolescents are most at risk of anti-social behaviour however modules have now been developed for primary school children targeting the kinds of behaviours that are known to begin earlier.

An external evaluation has been conducted to assess the impact of the workshops on students' understanding, attitudes and relationships with Police. The results have been extremely positive and will be presented in one of the sessions at this Conference tomorrow.

Priority Action Schools Program

The Priority Action Schools program was another key recommendation arising from the *Community, Police and Parents Forum*.

A 12-month trial will assist some 60 NSW schools affected by local community social and crime problems with funding of more than \$16 million allocated over the next two financial years.

The trial will include primary, central and high schools characterised by high concentrations of socio-economic disadvantage which is manifest by indicators such as:

- poor student behaviour and attendance
- low student outcomes
- high student turnover and low retention into post-compulsory schooling
- high proportion of beginning teachers.

The trial will aim to improve educational outcomes, reduce disruptive behaviour, violence, vandalism and suspensions and improve attendance in selected schools.

Schools are being encouraged to form new partnerships between groups of schools, TAFE, police and the departments of Community Services, Health, Housing, Juvenile Justice, Sport and Recreation and local community and youth organisations.

The participating schools have a great deal of freedom to identify for themselves what will make a difference in their context – this might include changes or enhancements to structure and organisation of the school, strategies to support staff, eg. through training and mentoring, introduction of new curriculum or teaching strategies and the establishment of support programs for students.

Priorities already being identified by schools include:

- reduced class-teaching time for senior staff to give them more time to mentor and support staff and students
- school-based training programs for teachers, students and parents in areas such as whole school change, conflict resolution and behaviour management
- increased assistance for students in basic life skills where hygiene, nutrition and health are issues of concern
- intensive literacy and numeracy support programs
- assistance from community agencies and specialists such as counselors, health and welfare workers
- smaller class sizes and other alternative staffing models such as team teaching
- specialist teachers and other staff in areas such as behaviour management, special education and counselling.
- close cooperation with local TAFEs to provide targeted education assistance for young people at risk, especially for students in the 15 to 19 age group.

The bottom line will be to enhance opportunities for students to engage more fully in the learning process.

Postscript

The United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* provides that education shall be directed to the:

'...preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes and friendship among all peoples, ethnic national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin.'

Teachers and educators believe that it is through fostering an understanding and acceptance of others, the adoption of shared values and creating the conditions for success in learning that social issues such as crime prevention can be successfully addressed.

Crime prevention, on a small and a large scale, is a function of schools, addressed both through *what students are taught* (the curriculum and values of the school) and the *way that students are taught* (pedagogy and the social environment).